

RE-PRESENTING THE PHYSICAL ACT:

*AN EXPLORATION
OF THE
PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF THE BODY
THROUGH ITS
SCREEN REPRESENTATION*

VÉRONIQUE CHANCE
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Declaration by Candidate.

I _____ hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any other award. Where other sources of information have been used, I confirm that these have been indicated and acknowledged in the thesis.

Signature:

Date:

Abstract

This thesis considers the dynamic relation between the physical presence of the body and its presence as a screen image¹, through which I examine the impact of visual media technologies on our conceptions and perceptions of the body as a physical presence. The effects of these technologies on traditional notions and conditions of physicality and representation mark, I suggest, a shift in our relationship to, and understanding of the body as a physical presence as we become more used to interacting and communicating with the body through the immediacy of screen images.

This has led I further suggest, to questions regarding the body as a material presence and to the technologically mediated image becoming associated with notions of disappearance and disembodiment. I understand however, the condition of the body as being very much embedded in a material world and I approach this project therefore, through the proposition of 'the physicality of an image' through which I argue for a reconceptualisation of the materiality of the body through its physical presence as an image.

The research examines the relationship between video and performance in fine art practice, through which I consider the rhetorics of presence in relation to the politics of representation and reproduction inherent throughout the histories of their close alliance. It is my assertion that early experiments by artists using video to document performance acts during the 1960s and 1970s reveal a prescient understanding of the development of visual media technologies in ways that prefigure our contemporary moment.

My understanding of this dynamic is extended through a consideration of concepts of visibility and invisibility and of formal structures of representation, to arrive at the paradoxical notion of embodied vision through an affective dimension of the body as it could be applied and conceived of as material or physical in relation to (or as a consequence of) temporal concerns in film and video works.

¹ 'Screen-image' is understood here less in relation to a cinematic meaning of the term than through its historical association with and relationship to performance practices that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Whilst the focus is mainly on the uses of video, I also acknowledge the historical importance and uses of experimental film in this configuration. Both of these inform my own understanding of a contemporary screen image, especially through relationships to the projected screen image in video installations in particular.

Use of Footnotes

The writing of this thesis has covered extensive ground through which I have crossed into other fields in the histories of performance studies and experimental film in particular, in order to thoroughly explore their association and relationship in the research and exploration of a physical dynamic in the video image that I have tried to work my way through and articulate throughout this thesis.

I have therefore felt it necessary to expand on particular subjects, contexts and critical terms that it was not appropriate to deal with in the body of the text, but that nonetheless needed to be addressed significantly in order to demonstrate a wider and more detailed understanding of the subject. As a consequence the footnotes, especially for Chapters Two and Three are particularly extensive. Whilst they still function as footnotes it is important that they are acknowledged in the reading of this thesis for a wider and more concrete understanding of the overall research project.

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To my Parents and to Richard

Preface

Whilst the emphasis of the thesis is historical it also asserts how historical approaches have informed contemporary artists' consideration of the impact of new technologies on their work.

The artists referenced below are those whose practices acknowledge historical contexts whilst offering new insights into spectatorship by using traditional and emerging screen technologies.

Initially it was the work of Matthew Barney that spoke most directly to the notion of physicality in the moving image both in the physical exertion he performs in these works and through the foregrounding of his body's physical presence through sculptural elements proximate to the video screens, as if to physicalize the recorded actions. Although better known for *The Cremaster Cycle*², Barney's earlier video works clearly underpin the latter's conceptual roots, with the human body and the presence of objects involved in the transformation and generation of physical form. Collectively titled *The Drawing Restraint*³, a project he continues to this day, these works directly demonstrate connections to performance practices of the 1960s and 1970s, through the testing of Barney's body's limits in studio experiments building on his past as an athlete and '*remain only as relics and documents in the form of film, video, photographs, and artefacts*'⁴. In their insistence on materiality and the body, these works relentlessly problematise the relationship between performance, the artefact and documentation, all concerns central to this thesis.⁵

² *The Cremaster Cycle* was an epic five-film project produced between 1994 and 2005. The title refers to the cremaster muscle, a thin muscle covering the male testis and spermatic chord which is responsible for the raising and lowering of the testicles, and is important in the determination of the male gender, appearing nine weeks after a foetus is conceived. Barney uses the descension of the cremaster muscle as a metaphor in his film series, which begins from a state of undifferentiated gender and weaves a narrative through the idea of the organism's struggle to resist gender-definition to the point where (male) gender can no longer be denied. See Spector, N; Goodeve,T and Wakefield, N, 'Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle', Guggenheim Museum Publications, (2002) Reprinted (2004)

³ The title *Drawing Restraint* refers to the activity of drawing as a central drive for the work: at the heart of Barney's activities is the relationship between self-imposed resistance and creativity. This manifests itself in his attempts to create drawings whilst being hindered by obstacles and physical restraints.

⁴ Keller, Alexandra and Ward, Frazer "Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-Avant-Garde Blockbuster", in Cinema Journal 45, No.2, Winter (2006) p3

⁵ Although Barney's earlier conceptual concerns in processes of creation are apparent in later work, the early work places more of an emphasis on directly performed physical actions and tasks as sequences in themselves within particular settings and less emphasis on high end production values in the highly costumed and elaborate film sets, characters and narratives which characterise the later cinematic works such as *The Cremaster Cycle*.

Similarly, Pipilotti Rist considers the flesh of the body as a material and mutable form in the representation and performance of her embodied subjectivity through the technological mediation of the screen. Known for her single and multi-screen installations, her work relates to my concerns through its critique of the visual in the deployment of technology and seductive mechanisms inherent in popular culture, to directly address the viewer. Whilst multi-projected works such as *Homo Sapiens, Sapiens* (2005) immerse the viewer in a lush spectacle of sexuality, using heightened colours and sound to embody architectural and personal viewing space, the single screen work *Open my Glade* (2000), articulates the phenomenological notion of the screen-image as physical 'flesh of the world'⁶ through Rist's literal flattening and distortion of her face against the image-screen, as if trying to break through its surface into the viewer's space.

This recalls works by Ana Mendieta and Paul McCarthy, whose actions were similarly concerned with exploring the body as 'flesh' in the interconnected surfaces and spaces of body, image and screen.⁷ However, whilst the 'meshing' of the body with the screen image could be seen within a pervasive climate of the expansion of network television, Rist's later work '*negotiates a very different image system*'⁸, in her public address from a giant LED screen high up in New York's Times Square. Whilst the work must vie for the attention of viewers who, surrounded by myriad images may not even notice the work, it also tackles the globalised nature of the twenty-first-century's system of image commodification, using its very tools '*to shift the viewers just outside themselves and experience a flash of identification*'⁹ in a broadcast that has no commercial intention, but seeks to 'assault' spectators emotionally. If Rist's work is understood in its relation to feminine subjectivity and experience, it is because its staging of seduction and pleasure is as much a critique of the 'male gaze'¹⁰ as it is about

⁶ This is a deliberate reference to Merleau Ponty's notion of perception in which he emphasises the human body as the primary site for knowing the world in the idea that the body and what it perceives in the world that surrounds it cannot be separated (they are each intertwined with the other). This idea is articulated most emphatically through the notion of the body as 'the flesh of the world' (*la chair du monde*) in his last incomplete work 'The Visible and Invisible' published posthumously.

⁷ Ana Mendieta's *Glass on Body* (1972) had her press her body and face against a pane of glass, an action which she 'materialised' through a series of photographs; Paul McCarthy's *Press* (1972/74), is a single-screen video work that shows him pushing his face and upper body against a pane of glass to give the appearance that he is pressing against the video screen itself in an attempt to burst through it.

⁸ Jones, Amelia 'Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject', Routledge, (2006), p226

⁹ Obrist, Hans "Interview [with Pipilotti Rist]", Pipilotti Rist, Phaidon, (2001), p15

¹⁰ The 'male gaze' is a term most often connected with feminist film theory especially through the work of Laura Mulvey in the objectification and display of women on screen by the (usually male) director

how the development of visual technologies affects the viewer's experience. These concerns intertwine in the representation of Rist's own body that seeks to redefine the norms of femininity in the representation of '*discordant beings who fall, scream, grimace, smash or float*'¹¹, against the body of the electronic image, the screen.

Whilst my emphasis is less on such notions, the presence of body as embedded (and embodied) within mechanisms and experiences of viewing is a key concern.

In a different way Harun Farocki's examinations of the mechanisms of viewing through the intertwining of technology, warfare and capitalism, like the writing of Paul Virilio, speak to my concerns, less through their commentary on weapons technology than through their critique of the nature and role of the image in the twenty first century. Although not 'performance', Farocki's recent work using dual moving image projections allows a more direct subjective comparison between the uses and processes of analogue film and digital video.¹² These are positioned to confront the viewer with parallel worlds of assembled images in relation to his or her own embodied viewing position in space, effectively using images to comment on images to question (and compare) processes of mediation.¹³

Works such as *Eye Machine* (2001, 2002 & 2003), refer to the embodied act of viewing through the 'instrument' of technology, using the spatial configuration of dual projection to emphasise the '*calculable nature of digital images*' in a comparison between analogue and digitally produced images. Using footage from laboratories, archives and production facilities Farocki highlights their role in the development of weapons technology whilst examining image processing techniques such as electronic surveillance, mapping and object recognition to examine the image's role in the relationship between man, machine and technology.¹⁴

behind the camera, in which she is portrayed as both an erotic object for the characters within the film and also for spectators watching it. See Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', (1975; 1992)

¹¹ Ross, Christine "Fantasy and Distraction: An Interview with Pipilotti Rist", in *Afterimage*, Vol.28, No.3, November 2000, p9. Also cited in Jones, Amelia 'Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject.', Routledge, (2006), p218

¹² Farocki is a German artist of Czech descent, whose works as a filmmaker, sit more easily within the histories of European avant-garde montage cinema and the 'essayist' tradition of filmmakers such as Chris Marker and Jean Luc Godard. However, his consistent critique on the image is particularly important through his exposure of the technologies and institutions that produce and circulate them.

¹³ This was particularly apparent in his recent retrospective and survey exhibitions at the Jeu de Paume in Paris from 9th April to 7th June 2009 and at the Raven Row Gallery in London from 19th November 2009 to 7th February 2010, that had both older works shot on film and newer works shot on video shown side by side or reconfigured into comparative views within the same installation.

¹⁴ Blümlinger, Christa, "The Art of the Possible: Notes About Some Installations by Harun Farocki", in Leighton, Tanya 'The Moving Image: A Critical Introduction, Tate Publishing, (2008)

The twelve-screen installation *Deep Play* (2007) further emphasises the latter through the technological mediation of the human body in the presentation of simultaneous ‘view/s’ of the 2006 FIFA World Cup final from different perspectives. Unfolding in real-time as an array of visual information, the work frames players’ bodies in a network of technology and cultural spectacle that visually bombards the viewer: Farocki shows his own footage of the game, official television footage, player statistics, animation sequences, and stadium surveillance, the network ‘staged’ so as to demonstrate current conditions of visuality and their influence on representation and subjectivity. With the twelve monitors fixed to the four walls of the surrounding space, the viewer has a sense not only of being part of the ‘game,’ but also of being ‘viewed’.

This reaches another level in the work of Blast Theory, which challenges audiences through different modes of spectatorship and participation using the format of a computer game, taking place simultaneously onscreen and in ‘real’ environments. The notion of being viewed is implicit in the titles of works such as *Can You See Me Now?* (2001-2005), a participatory performance which player/participants access online at specified time-slots from various locations. The online environment replicates that of an existing city, which participants navigate whilst being ‘chased’ by members of Blast Theory, who appear as screen avatars, while also physically present in the real streets of the city. The player/participants must avoid these ‘chasers’, whose objective is to get within five meters of them. Once ‘seen’, the player is ‘out’. The Blast Theory ‘victor’ takes a digital photograph of the real space where the participant was ‘seen’, and posts it on the work’s web interface.

It is less the ‘gaming’ format of the work that interests me than the inbuilt ontological framework that uses physical and online environments to conflate concepts of presence in live and online human participation. The work becomes more complicated than a standard computer game, where interaction only occurs online; ‘players’ hear verbal commentary from Blast Theory ‘runners’ through live audio-stream as they communicate with their teammates using walkie-talkies. The ‘runners’ use GPS devices to track participants’ positions in the real city and online players hear their reactions both in their physical encounter of the city and as they plot their next move. Players are thus constantly reminded of the actual human body moving behind its online representation and a sense of materiality is thereby consistently

maintained. This is further emphasised by the use of informational networks within public space to engender uncertainty in the unforeseen or unpredictable.

This work speaks to my concerns because it challenges established notions of embodiment within performance discourses predicated on the assumed opposition between live performance and technological reproduction. Instead, these are '*brought into conversation in such a way as to minimise the significance of definitive boundaries and undermine their distinction.*'¹⁵

Film historian Vivian Sobchack has observed that, whether we realise it or not, we are implicated into a kind of material investment through our encounters with technology in a way that has an '*affinity with a number of different cultural and social functions, forms and content*', and '*stimulates us through differing modes of presentation and representation to different aesthetic responses and ethical responsibilities.*'¹⁶ Similar to the technology that went before it, recent developments in digital screen technology:

*'differently solicit and shape our presence in the world, our representation in it and our sensibilities and responsibilities about it. Each differently and objectively alters our subjectivity while each invites our complicity in formulating time, space and bodily investment as significant personal experience.'*¹⁷

The proposition developed here and in my artwork is that in our subjective engagements in today's 'mediatized' environment, a reconsideration of performance through documentation in 'live' recording and representation, offers new insights into the nature of liveness. It also enlarges on previous observations on the nature of presence in attributing the notion of presence to real-time recording and representation, shifting subjectivities and representations of the body, and reconfiguring the notion of presence to new dimensions.

¹⁵ Klich, Rosemary "Performing Posthuman Perspective: Can You See Me Now", in Scan Journal Vol 4, Number 1, April (2007), no pagination (accessed online at http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=91)

¹⁶ Sobchack, Vivian "The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Photographic, Cinematic and Electronic Presence", in Sobchack, V 'Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture', University of California Press (2004), p136

¹⁷ Ibid, pp136-7

Introduction

Today when the notion of 'distance' has given way in physics to the notion of instantaneous transmitting power, physical optics wind up in a 'fluctuation of appearances' in which distance is no longer...presence's depth, but merely its flickering...

[T]here is no true presence in the world- in one's own world sense of experience- other than through the intermediary of the egocentron of a living present; in other words, through the existence of one's own body living in the here and now.¹

This thesis is a consideration of the dynamic relationship between the physical presence of the body and its presence as a screen image, through which I examine the impact of visual media technologies on our conceptions and perceptions of the body as a physical presence. I propose that recent developments in and the increasing availability of, in particular, digital screen technologies², have necessarily affected conventional notions and conditions of physicality and representation, redefining our relationships to the body as a physical presence and our understanding of what it means for the body to be physically 'present'. As images, representations of the body are able to be transmitted, received and displayed more 'immediately' from physical distances both significantly closer and further away from us. The body 'as' an (screen) image, it seems to me, is something we have become accustomed to directly encountering, communicating and interacting with and has I suggest, become a particular marker of our time.

As notions of 'presence' and 'liveness' have come to refer not only to the 'live' physical (bodily) 'presence' of a living person but also to their 'live' screen representation (or screen 'presence'), the distinctions between what is 'live' and what is recorded, once very separate and distinct from each other, have become much more difficult to distinguish, as they increasingly become part of the same viewing experience, through the development and more extensive use of 'real-time' (screen) technologies, which allow instant replay and instant interaction with the body's 'presence' as a 'live' image.³

¹ Virilio, P 'Open Sky', trans. Julie Rose, Verso, (1997), p38

² By screen technologies, I mean predominantly those technologies through which we can regularly transmit and receive images, such as cameras, videos, televisions, computers, mobile phones etc.

³ This has become commonplace not only through the 'live' television broadcast, which now no longer seems a particularly new phenomenon, but also through the use of web-casts and cameras, which allow people and events to be recorded, broadcast and experienced simultaneously and for people to directly

Although 'live' interactions and transmissions are nothing new and have been able to be experienced for some time now through the development of technologies of the telephone, radio and television screen, it would be difficult to dispute that the last fifty years or has seen a significant period of technological change with the rapid expansion of technology and increasing pace of technological advance, particularly in terms of the recorded image, first through the development of television and video, and then through the more recent and ongoing development of digital technology, which overlaps with and supersedes the development of the former.⁴

These have had a powerful effect on our lives and on the world around us through the proliferation of machines and tools that have not only become more accessible to the artist, but also to a wider consumer public, for whose lives such tools have become an everyday part: '*our current cultural [and social] formation*', one could claim, has become '*saturated with and dominated by mass-media representations*⁵ and '*much of our communication involves nothing other than watching each other*⁶.

In other words, it could be proposed (and it has been by theorists such as Paul Virilio, whose work also informs this project) that the screen image has replaced much of our physical

interact with each other in 'real-time', globally without the need for physical displacement or for physical bodily interaction.'Live' public events such as sports matches and pop concerts and also theatrical and other 'performance' events, including dance and performance art events, also increasingly incorporate the co-existence of both the actual event and its image in the display of both the physical body and its simultaneous 'live' screen representation. In addition the use of close-ups and instant replays, which give audiences a better 'view' and instant edited highlights of the main event is a familiar feature of many of these public events.

⁴ These could be divided into two significant periods in terms of the development of the 'electronic image', first through the development of the analogue image, which relates to the 'capture' of the world and its representation, processing and transmission as continuously varying intensities of light 'data'; and then through the development of the digital image which is based on a mathematical system of numbers and abstract signs whose 'data' can be processed by the computer and infinitely manipulated. Until very recently, the development of analogue and digital image technologies have overlapped each other and have continued to be used synonymously and interchangeably and many questions concerning issues of presence and 'real-time' transmissions that seem particularly relevant in the current climate of digital technologies were indeed inherent in the development and transmission of the first electronic images through television. The development and presence of digital technologies with their increasing capabilities, quality and speed of digital image transfer makes these questions seem particularly pertinent. Digital media's apparent lack of substance, being made up of 'pixels' and 'code' (compared with the material substrate of a metallic tape) also point to more pronounced notions of transience and immateriality.

It is important at this stage to distinguish between these two types of electronic image, if only to draw attention to the differences in how an image is captured, processed and transmitted and how this I contend, must inevitably in turn affect systems of representation and how we view the world around us. Although it is probably too early to tell, the speed and distance of data transfer and the dependence we place upon it in a global context, must surely lead us to ask if technology is '*now poised to shape all systems of representation and as a result, influence our behaviour and actions?*' (Meridieu, F de, 'Digital and Video Art', trans. Richard Elliot, orig. pub. by Larousse as 'Arts et Nouvelles Technologies' (2003); English-lang. Edition pub. Chambers Harrap (2005), p11

⁵ Auslander, Philip, 'Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture', Routledge, 1999; new edition 2008, p1

⁶ Harkin, James "Stars of CCTV", The Guardian, Saturday 04.02.06, pp27-8

contact and communication with one another as increased interactions with screens and information technologies promote notions of 'disappearance' and 'disembodiment'.⁷ (This association (of the image) with notions of disembodiment is further compounded through much of the current discourse on 'cybernetics' and information technologies, that implies that '*embodiment is not essential to human being*', with human being understood as '*a set of informational processes*', rather than [a] *being* in a material world).⁸ This project, contrary to such notions, understands the condition of the body and of the human being as being very much embedded in a material world on which we must surely continue to depend upon for our continued survival.⁹

This thesis proposes that through the increasing ease of access to technologies enabling the transfer of higher definition images and 'real-time' interactions, rather than associations of disembodiment or a sense of physical absence, we might assume a more acute sense of physical presence, despite (or in spite of) the continued associations of transience and absence that are still attributed to the (actual, physical) non-presence of a screen image¹⁰. I contend that through what we might call an increased sense of a kind of 'suspension of disbelief' in the physical absence of the body represented and through the direct 'face to face'

⁷ See esp. Virilio, P 'Open Sky', trans. Julie Rose, Verso 1997. Virilio's project attacks ideologies surrounding media technologies from an existential and phenomenological point of view through an interrogation of the impact of screen technologies on our perceptions of time and space and the body. For him, the screen is the locus for '*lost dimensions*' in the physical distance between people, places and things that he suggests have now reduced physical distance to the time delay and signal of a live televisual broadcast (see later on in this Introduction for a more extensive discussion). One could also argue that in being able to 'see' and communicate with someone directly through their screen presence, we might come to prefer it since we are still seeing them without the need for physical displacement. On the other hand however, one could argue that despite our engagement with screen images, little has changed in our daily physical contact with one another and that despite these changes, we still prefer to see people 'in the flesh'.

⁸ Hayles, N.Katherine 'How We Became Posthuman: Virtual bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics', University of Chicago Press, (1999), p4. I am referring to proclamations made by theorists such as Jean Baudrillard, who in his book 'The Ecstasy of Communication', writes that '*The human body, our body seems superfluous in its proper expanse*', (MIT Press, 1988, p18.), and in 'Body Invaders: Panic Sex in America', Arthur and Marie-Louise Kroker ask the (rhetorical) question: '*If today, there can be such a fascination with the fate of the body, might this not be because the body no longer exists?*', (Palgrave Macmillan, 1987, pp20-21), Artists Stelarc and Orlan have also been known to make similar (ecstatic) pronouncements.

⁹ See N.Katherine Hayles' critique of the 'erasure of embodiment' in current discourse in her book 'How We Became Posthuman: Virtual bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics' (see reference above). Investigating the fate of embodiment in an information age, Hayles argues for the importance of reconceptualising the materiality the body in an age where it no longer seems to matter.

¹⁰ The television image, made up of electron beams that travel over the surface of the screen in scanned lines, presents itself as constantly fragmented and renewing itself; the digital image, made up of pixels of information 'code', presents itself on light-emitting flickering monitors or computer screens; the data-projected image of the public event, art-installation or home cinema system is simply a light-data beam that uses the 'support' of a wall or screen to make the image appear to be physically present.

encounter of a 'live' screen image, we are made more aware paradoxically, not only of its physicality and presence, but also of our own bodily presence and physicality in our physical reaction and relation to it.¹¹

In the face of such encounters I ask how we might approach an image¹² through its physicality (which on the surface, I admit, appears to be a contradiction in terms) and I approach this project therefore, through the consideration of such a proposition, which I shall term 'the physicality of an image'. I am not suggesting that this physicality is the same kind of physicality as that of a live 'in the flesh' body (although my interest does lie in arguing for a corporeal and visceral dimension, or 'fleshiness' to the mediated image). If we can talk about a recorded image as being 'live' and if we can 'feel' it as being present 'here' and 'now', through our own direct bodily interaction and sensation, does this not then constitute a physicality, albeit of a different kind? Furthermore, I propose that the physicality of the body made present in a moving image, such as video (whether recorded or live), might rather reinforce the notion of its physical presence, rather than its absence, through a representation, positioning or view of the body or a physical action that might make us more aware of the body's very corporeality and physicality.¹³

In addition, the use of recordings, or, at live events, the use of continuous live feedback,¹⁴ on physical screens of things we cannot actually see because of physical distance or because something blocks or shows another view,¹⁵ might further reinforce the sensation of physical

¹¹ This is already something that has long been associated with television and cinema in terms of the single screen, pre-recorded image, particularly through the intimacy of the domestic t.v. screen whose image 'speaks' directly to the viewer sitting in front of it, and in the 'immersive' space of cinema. On the one hand the viewer has no doubts that what they see before them is an illusion in terms of an image, but on the other hand they want to deny its physical absence in its representation or presence of something that looks and feels 'real'. '*They suppress the obvious fact that the apparent presence of a person on a screen is nothing but an electronic fabrication. In spite of clever mimesis, there is clearly nobody there. Through the suspension of disbelief, viewers ignore the apparatus that creates an illusion and instead, imaginatively read the flickering screen as a faithful representation of reality.*' (source: Catherine Elwes 'Video Art, A guided tour', pub. I.B. Tauris, London 2005, p13).

Real-time recording or 'live' relay makes the suspension more acute through the immediacy of interaction. The ability to communicate here and now with imperceptible delay produces a stronger sense of (physical) presence or of 'being there' whilst the image itself remains nevertheless, an illusion.

¹² By image I mean predominantly reproductive screen and camera-based images.

¹³ For example, does the representation of repeated physical actions that are clearly demanding and strenuous in video for instance, draw attention to the body's physicality? If the action is performed unclothed does it draw more attention to the body's physicality through its physical and material substance and corporeality and an attention to the body's movement through its flesh? This also raises questions of intimacy and spectatorship in its relationship to the viewer and to the possible assumed narcissism of the artist performing the actions.

¹⁴ Such as sports, music or theatre events, as well as performances in an art context and more recently conferences, talks or symposia.

¹⁵ I am also thinking here of how the camera or video close-up can be used on screen to show more detail of a live body, making the image of the body more foregrounded 'visible' than the actual body

presence through the simultaneous juxtaposition or co-presence of the body and its screen-image and their interaction with and supplementation of each other. Does this situation not then bring a physical dimension to the image by virtue of what is seen and by the relationship that this then has to the viewer? If the viewer cannot actually see the physical body at a live event, or if the live image dominates then the image relayed effectively becomes a physical replacement or substitute for the actual and physical live presence of the body. In this situation then is the body as a live image perceived by the viewer as if it were the live body itself, even though he or she knows that what they see is effectively an illusion? This raises the further question of whether, in such situations, the notion of physicality in the mediated image paradoxically relies on an element of physical distancing, rather than physical proximity?

It is with these questions in mind that I turn to the work of Paul Virilio and in particular to his book 'Open Sky'¹⁶. Virilio's outlook on the relationship between the body and technology is useful to me in this context because he specifically draws our attention to the impact of media technologies on the transformation of our perceptions of the body and its image. Although very pessimistic and almost apocalyptic in nature, he nevertheless exposes how ideologies surrounding such technologies are perpetuated and makes us aware of how our perceptions can be moulded through the ways in which we are asked to see the world around us by way of our increasing dependence on the presence of cameras and screens and thus on a conception of body 'as' an image.

Virilio goes on to interrogate the implications of these technologies for our perceptions of time and space and the body, describing the material and political consequences of our physical and perceptual relationships to the body and its image and their effects upon our concepts of physical proximity and distance. He talks of the ways in which technology 'mediates' our perception of these things, bringing objects that are physically beyond our reach 'closer' to us

itself. As a consequence, at a 'live' event we might rather watch an image on the large screen because it gives a better 'view' and the television screen's physical closeness makes what is shown on it seem more present, direct and intimate.

More pertinent, perhaps, to the question of physicality is the use in medical surgery, of 'key-hole' cameras that provide a continuous live feed of images of what the surgeon cannot physically see, but is able to physically feel. Through the simultaneous actions and interactions of seeing and feeling, the screen image becomes the physical guide used to perform complex surgery.

¹⁶ Virilio, P 'Open Sky', trans. Julie Rose, Verso (1997)

through the immediacy of their screen representations. '*[T]he very notion of 'physical proximity' is in danger of finding itself radically changed*'¹⁷, he claims, as what was once inaccessible in physical and/or temporal distance is brought nearer through a '*media proximity*' of the image that enables meetings between people to occur '*here*' and '*now*' at opposite ends of the globe.¹⁸

For Virilio, the screen is the locus for such shifts of perception and of representation and for what he calls '*lost dimensions*', that is, the loss of the common standards of measure of the spatio-temporal relations between people, places and things by which we previously interpreted and perceived our place in the world and our physical relationship to it. By Virilio's assertion, through the development of technology, we no longer measure distance by the physical dimensions grounded in the perspectival principles of the physical distance between objects, places and things, but by the time delay ('*of the shortest durations*'), in the signal of a live television broadcast -'*a perspective in which the old time line of the horizon curls itself inside the frame of the screen*'¹⁹. Such shifts in the standards of measure enabled by technology, force us therefore to re-think and to re-adjust our position in the world and our perception of reality and its representations, as new (intangible, immaterial) theories of speed and light come to dominate contemporary scientific thinking and to replace old (tangible, material) theories of space and time. For Virilio this affects not only our perception of things and places but also our physical movements as the '*decline in time distances*', through the immediacy of screen interactions and use of '*remote control*', reduce the need for physical displacement.

Virilio fears this will disorientate and displace our human faculties, taking us '*out*' of our bodies and into a new disembodied, abstract field of experience and of being as, according to him, we become increasingly subject to interactions with screen representations through the power and domination of technologies over which we have little control.²⁰

¹⁷ 'Open Sky', as before, p44

¹⁸ For example, through the use of teleconferencing and satellite systems that allow 'live' interactions between people through their 'live' presence as an image, or on a more domestic level, through the use of 'webcams' and 'webcasting' on the Internet.

¹⁹ 'Open Sky', as before, p3

²⁰ For Virilio, the term '*mediatized*' not only means the effect of media on the image but also refers to its etymology, where '*to be mediatized meant literally being stripped of one's immediate rights*', something which he refers to in an earlier text and which, according to him, has been structured into power and the structure of perception through perspective for centuries. (ref. Virilio, P 'The Art of the Motor', trans. Julie Rose, University of Minnesota Press [1995], p6, 30). This is also shown in Virilio's ongoing concerns

*'Faced with the stereoscopic nature of a reality divided between optics and optoelectronics, acoustics and electroacoustics, touch and teletactility, we have been given notice to quit our customary ways of seeing and thinking, in order to apprehend a new kind of relief that goes so far as undermining the practical usefulness of the notion of horizon and with it perspective that previously allowed us to recognise ourselves here and now'*²¹

Virilio's thinking is grounded in the phenomenological principle central to the writings and teaching of Merleau-Ponty, which sees the body as a physical entity, perceived and perceiving itself through its direct observational and physical relationship to the world and to the things inside it. This relationship is rooted in the body's concrete and or 'lived' experience of the world -that is, in its relationship to objects, people, and processes experienced through direct observation and through the human faculty of ocular vision and perception (in other words, things 'seen through one's own eyes'), where '*everything I see is in principle within my reach, at least within the reach of my sight, marked onto the map of the 'I can'*'.²²

In 'Open Sky' (and other texts written from the mid 1980s and throughout the 1990s²³), Virilio laments the loss of ocular perception through the development of '*a vision industry based entirely on the motor*' as he fears the displacement of vision by cameras and machines as technologies and machines increasingly '*see for us*'. He fears that these media may create a '*standardisation of vision*' and '*a mechanisation of perception*'²⁴ leading to the degradation of vision and of experience, so that in an age of broadcast technology and now, of online and 'real-time' digital technologies, we can no longer have faith in or '*believe our eyes*'.²⁵

throughout his texts with the uses of technologies and technological visual apparatus and cameras in warfare.

²¹ 'Open Sky', as before, p44

²² Quoted in Virilio, P 'The Vision Machine', trans. Julie Rose, British Film Institute (1994), p7 (original reference: Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 'Le Visible et L'invisible', Paris: Gallimard [1964], page not referenced)

²³ See also, 'War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception' (1984); Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology (1986); The Aesthetics of Disappearance (1991); Lost Dimension (1991); The Art of the Motor (1994); Politics of the Very Worst (1999); The Information Bomb (2000).

²⁴ 'Open Sky', as before, p92, 94

²⁵ 'The Vision Machine', as before, p38. This loss in the faith in sight forms the basis for Martin Jay's study of what he terms '*ocularcentric discourse*' in his book 'Downcast Eyes: the Denigration of Vision on Twentieth Century French Thought', University of California Press, (1993). Jay's book offers a historical survey of visuality, which attempts to convey how beliefs about vision and the eye came to dominate Western thought. Jay offers a critique on the privileging of sight in the traditions of Western art and philosophy, through a historical analysis of vision that looks at ways in which twentieth century French thought went about challenging its primacy. Virilio however, wants us to reinvest our faith in sight as he asks if we are '*about to lose our status as eyewitnesses of tangible reality*' through our '*over-exposure of the visible*' due to '*the development of sightless vision machines*' (p91). Paradoxically, he calls for a '*right to blindness*' in order to counteract the '*discrete pollution of our vision of the world through the sundry tools of communication*' (p96)

*'I personally fear we are being confronted by a sort of pathology of immediate perception that owes everything or very nearly everything to the recent proliferation of photo-cinematographic and video infographic seeing machines. Machines that by mediatizing ordinary everyday representations end up destroying their credibility.'*²⁶

No longer being able to believe one's eyes is thus, for Virilio, no longer a sign of astonishment or of surprise, *'but rather a mark of conscientious objection that now objects to the hold of the objective image, of the image not only mediatized by the live or recently pre-recorded TV broadcast, but also by an excessive mobilization of public space'*²⁷ (not only in the bringing closer of places, through technology, that are physically far away, but also in the mechanisation of mobility itself). Here, Merleau-Ponty's thought is brought into question, where *'the bulk of what I see is in fact and in principle no longer within my reach. And even if it lies within the reach of my sight, it is no longer inscribed onto the map of the 'I can'.'*²⁸

The presence of live or 'real-time' technologies allows us to interact with each other from physical distances, which are often very great and in ways that completely differ from our typical conception of the structural field of our human (physical) perceptions and actions, where according to Virilio, the sense of space and time become flattened or compressed into the screen space of 'real-time' and where events unfold in one's immediate field of vision in an *'intensive present'* or presence irrelevant of actual spatial and/or temporal values or relations. Virilio sees this as a distortion of reality (*'without a distant horizon, there is no longer any possibility of glimpsing reality'*²⁹), which he considers to be highly problematic, foreseeing as he does a consequent future of human relations based almost entirely on the *'long-distance [on screen] encounter'* with images or other representations, at the cost of more intimate encounters with the physical presence of the body.

*'How can we rationally manage the split, not only between virtual and actual realities, but more to the point between the apparent horizon and transparent horizon of a screen that suddenly opens up a kind of temporal window for us to interact elsewhere, often a long way away?'*³⁰

²⁶ Open Sky, p90

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ The Vision Machine, p 7

²⁹ Open Sky, p 6

³⁰ Open Sky, p 37

For me, these ideas resonate with and have direct implications for, in particular, those arguments that have historically been presented in connection with issues of representation and reproduction in the contexts of performance art, where, traditionally, the physical presence of the body has been considered paramount to its value as a 'live' act with its representation and/or documentation being considered as secondary or supplementary to it.³¹ As the use of 'real-time' technologies and recorded images become more integrated into the live performance act it becomes less easy to differentiate between what is live and what is represented. It is on this basis that my project seeks to interrogate the paradoxical relationship between the physical presence of the body and its presence as a screen image.

Virilio's work then for me, serves less as a pessimistic vision of the future than as a basis for understanding the potential implications of media technologies on our perceptions of the physical presence of the body and its 'mediatized' representation, insofar as it focuses on the role of technology in transforming our perceptions of the physical body through an analysis of the seductive function and power of the image and its significance and presence in our contemporary situation. My understanding of his work is that it is not so much an act of resistance to technology per se as a call for a reconfiguration of human perception in the face of technological developments, away from an automated, technology-driven vision-centred model of perception towards a more 'concrete' and grounded model as he seeks to uncover a bodily basis for perception in our relationship to media technology through a re-investment in vision itself.

Virilio calls for a '*right to blindness*' as he associates this condition with the '*sightless vision*' of the 'Vision Machine' (of cameras and screens), and takes it as the basis of an ethics of perception. I agree with Mark B.N. Hanson when he says of Virilio, in his book '*New Philosophy for New Media*', that

³¹ These references refer to arguments proposed by Peggy Phelan and Amelia Jones respectively, which I discuss in more detail in Chapter 2.

'More than simply a right not to see, blindness might [in this sense] be understood as a right to see in a fundamentally different way. For if we regularly experience a pathology of immediate perception in which the credibility of images has been destroyed, isn't the reason simply that image-processing [through the use of technology] has been disassociated from the body? And if so, what better way can there be to resist the industrialisation of perception than by reinvesting in a bodily basis of perception?'³²

If today we can no longer '*believe our eyes*' we are forced to find other ways through which to establish belief: through a re-investment into the activation and '*experience*' of our bodily senses. I seek something like this in art practice through my insistence in retaining some element of an unmediated presence and bodily '*experience*' in the use of media-image technology.

³² Hansen, Mark B.N, 'New Philosophy for New Media', MIT Press (2004), p104 (Reference to Virilio, 'Open Sky', p90).

Chapter 1: How Can One Approach the Claim to the Physicality of an Image?

'[W]hether in video or performance, artists were pointing instead to their own bodies. By watching themselves create art with their bodies in a 'mirror', whether actual or in the form of a video image, they made images of their bodies the art itself. Experimenting with the filming of a single body part, a certain pattern of movements, or a side of the body they usually could not see... artists discovered a new kind of visual intimacy.'

*'Video offered a new alternative means by which to pursue [artists'] formal and conceptual interest in process and duration. Equally important, video offered a potentially more direct and open form of communication with the spectator, whose [own] presence and relationship to the work of art had become a fundamental concern... recognition of the active role of the spectator formed an integral part of the formulation and making of work.'*²

My intention in this project is to address this question of physicality through an examination of the close relationship between video and performance in fine art practice and the ways in which these have co-existed and overlapped throughout their historical development. Specifically, I wish to address their relationship to the body and its representation, both as part of a 'live' performance act and as a body 'caught' on video (either through the documentation of a live act, or as a recorded action performed specifically for the camera), through which I seek to emphasise and reaffirm a more tangible, concrete and corporeal relationship than is often assumed with the notion of video, and, latterly, through more recent developments in digital media technologies.³ It is my contention that the body 'captured' on video not only stresses its very physicality and presence through its existential presence as an image [as a physical document and tangible record of an action or an event], but also in the very direct relationship it has with the viewer, in processes of spectatorship and communication, through which I suggest its physicality becomes concretised.⁴

Rather than attempt a genealogy or a broad historical survey of video and performance art, which would be impossible within the scope of this thesis (and do a disservice to the

¹ Biesenbach, Klaus, "Video Acts", catalogue essay for the exhibition 'Video Acts', Single Channel Works from the Collections of Pamela and Richard Kramlich and New Art Trust, P.S.1 Contemporary Art, New York and I.C.A. London, November 10th 2002 - April 2003, p13

² "Acting Out", catalogue essay by Julia Bunnage, Clarrie Rudrum, Annushka Shani, Alessandro Vincentelli, Victoria Walsh, curating students on the Royal College of Art Curating MA course, © R.C.A. 1994

³ Video as a recording transmitted by light is by its nature an ephemeral medium. On the other hand, however, as a document of live performance, it becomes a tangible and material record of an event that once performed has 'disappeared' into the past. The material record of a performance brings the event back into the realm of the present (it exists 'now'), as well as being a reminder of a past event.

⁴ I will discuss how the uses, interplay and overlapping of different temporalities and spatial environments particularly emphasise this.

importance and contribution of both of these areas to the development of contemporary art-practice), I wish through references to historical precedents and specific artists, to identify particular trajectories of practice which lie in the very complex and paradoxical relationships that have existed between these two forms of artistic practice and which will then serve to determine particular questions that I contend are relevant to and help us understand our contemporary moment that is, our relationship to perceptions of the body and its mediated image as a consequence of developments in media-image technologies.⁵

I take my cue from an essay that appears in the October Journal of Winter 2000, where author Anne Wagner, writing on the rhetoric of presence inherent in performance and video practices, claims that ever since they formed their close alliance during the late 1960s and early 1970s both video and performance artists

*'have courted effects of presence, in the endless present... that their medium so ably supplies. [In doing so] They do their utmost to invoke settings and artefacts and experiences that connote the problematic real of technologically mediated experience'*⁶

Wagner's emphasis is on the particular relationships between artist and viewer that developed during the 1970s, as a consequence of performance's alliance with reproductive technologies that came to question art's relationship to vision (and thus the relation of artist and viewer), and which came to be a central subject and point of focus in a number of artists' work.⁷ This thesis proposes the importance and significance of reconsidering and re-evaluating these relationships at a time when as a consequence of recent developments in digital screen image technologies and their proliferation into mainstream culture (and therefore into art), the question of presence in relation to the body and its screen image, is once again on the agenda.⁸

⁵ Two exhibitions that have been particularly useful to me in this context, in pointing out these specific relationships between performance and video practices through the context and representation of the body on video are 'Acting Out: The Body in Video, Then and Now' (Royal College of Art 1994) and 'Video Acts: Single Channel Works from the Collections of Pamela and Peter Kramlich and New Art Trust (P.S.1. New York and I.C.A. London 2002). Catherine Elwes' recent book, 'Video Art, a guided tour' (I.B. Tauris, 2005) has also proved invaluable in providing a comprehensive yet concise survey of the history of video art.

⁶ Wagner, A "Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence", in October 91, Winter 2000, pp81-100

⁷ Wagner discusses the work of Bill Viola, Laurie Anderson, Vito Acconci, Dan Graham and Joan Jonas, amongst others.

⁸ For an analysis of the impact of media technology on live performance see Auslander, P 'Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture', Routledge (1999). Although Auslander's text relates to the broad spectrum of performance (especially in relation to theatre and music), his concerns are relevant to my

I see these relationships as set out in the 1960s and 1970s and identified by Wagner, as being directly relevant and analogous to our contemporary situation because the contexts and questions of representation and reproduction that developed from this alliance are inherent throughout the recent histories of performance art⁹. These propose the physical presence of the body in relation to the live act and its representation through documentation, reproduction and representation as always being in contention. On the one hand the actual physical presence of the body has been considered paramount to the live performance act and its documentation as secondary or supplementary to it¹⁰ whilst on the other hand the documentation of live performance on video that has contributed greatly to the recognition and development of video (and paradoxically, of performance itself, through its pedagogical and cultural dissemination), as a significant art form in its own right.¹¹ Thus one could say that since the invention of video technology, its historical development and that of performance in art practice have consistently existed in a situation of mutual dependence with the growth of video and its availability to artists during a particular period from the late 1960s and early 1970s also reflecting cultural advances in electronic technologies at a time when '*concurrently with the growth of video art, performance art too, was becoming [recognised as] a primary artistic medium*'.¹² I contend that consequently, the use of video has, in its parallel concurrent

project insofar as he questions the concept of liveness as a consequence of cultural developments in (mass) media technologies. I discuss his work in more detail in the next chapter.

⁹ That is, since the period of the 1960s and 1970s. NB. Although the origins of performance art can be traced to much earlier periods within the history of 20th century art, I choose to focus on this particular moment as a marker for a significant shift in its development through its recognition as a major artistic practice alongside the advent and use of video as an artistic medium and at a time when the body itself becomes part of the practice and process of making art and used as a material in itself. I see the arguments of representation and reproduction as stemming in particular from this shift in practice at this moment, as I will attempt to draw out in this chapter. For a definitive history of performance art that encompasses earlier periods see especially Goldberg, Rosalee 'Performance Art: From Futurism to Present', Thames & Hudson (1979, 1988 and 2001)

¹⁰ See Peggy Phelan's essay "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction" in relation to this view in her book 'Unmarked: The Politics of Performance', Routledge (1993), pp.146-166. In this essay Peggy Phelan argues for the liveness and experience of performance against the ability of recordable media to document and reproduce it. Written as a statement about the ontology and 'event' of the live performance act, she claims that any recorded or documentary footage, photographs or indeed any other kind of record, are so distinct from the performance itself that they effectively transform it, thus reconstituting themselves as different artworks that cannot replace or stand in for the performance itself. This is discussed more fully in the next chapter.

¹¹ I outline this argument further in the next chapter with particular reference to Amelia Jones' essay: "Presence in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation" (Art Journal, Vol.56, No.4, Winter 1997 pp.11-18), the exhibition "Art, Lies and Videotape: Exposing Performance" (Tate Liverpool 2003; ex.cat. ed. Adrian George) and Derrida's notion of the Supplement in his essay "That Dangerous Supplement", in 'Of Grammatology', tr. Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press (1975; corrected edition 1998), pp. 141- 164

¹² Klaus Biesenbach, "Video Acts", catalogue essay to the exhibition ' Video Acts: Single Channel Works from the Collections of Pamela and Richard Kramlich and New Arts Trust ', P.S1. New York and ICA, London 2002, p1

development with performance art practices during and since this defining period, played a central role in contributing to a wider understanding of the term 'performance' that has in turn led to a broader extension of performance art's context and meaning, through its particular position in relation to the body as a (physical) subject in art.

This is largely the view propounded by Amelia Jones in her book: 'Body Art: Performing the Subject', who picking up on the emergence and conception of the term '*body art*' during the same period, examines '*the profound shift in conceptions of subjectivity*' that she claims stem from this particular moment, through a trajectory of artwork that seeks to differentiate itself from more defined notions of performance art (that it should take place in a theatrical setting in the presence of an audience) and that includes works that also

'may or may not initially have taken place in front of an audience: ... that take place through an enactment of the artist's body, whether it be in a "performance" setting or in the relative privacy of the studio, that is then documented in such a way that it can be experienced subsequently through photography, film, video and / or text'.¹³

Jones' articulation and examination of this term is particularly relevant to my project since it posits the emergence of a trajectory of practice that explicitly implies not only the physical presence and existence of the body in the work from the start, but also points to a wider examination of the term *performance* through its functional status within the broader context of art practice (that also includes *photography, film, video and / or text...*) and its relationship to the viewer.¹⁴ For the purposes of this project I therefore approach an examination of the body in video within this framework -not as performance as such, but as work that 'enacts' or

The invention of less expensive and more manageable video equipment in the 1960s revolutionised the medium of the moving image, which previously limited to film-making, was costly and time-consuming. Video's ease and speed of capture, edit and playback opened up new possibilities to artists that made it an attractive new medium to work with. Today as we see another resurgence of live performance in art at a time when video too, has now fully established itself as a major contender within contemporary art and where the presence of digital or 'new' media technologies have also entered into artistic practices (as a consequence of their proliferation in mainstream culture), the questions regarding live performance, and its documentation and representation, have become, I suggest, more pertinent than ever.

¹³ Jones, A 'Body Art: Performing the Subject', University of Minnesota press, (1998), p13. Jones cites as examples works such as those by Yayoi Kusama, Carolee Schneeman, Vito Acconci, Yves Klein and Hannah Wilke

¹⁴ Jones defines this relationship as one of '*intersubjectivity*'-that is: '*a site where reception [in the viewer] and production [in the art work] come together* (source: Jones, A p.14) This is largely informed by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological writings which see the body in terms of its 'lived' experience and its relationship to others constituted through the reciprocal relationship between seeing and being seen. Jones refers in particular to Merleau-Ponty's theory of the '*Chiasm- The Intertwining*' that he develops in his later writings, in which he describes the relationship to vision in explicitly tangible terms and through what he calls the *flesh of the visible*. I discuss this further in Chapter Two.

performs the body through its representation, and that uses the body and its physical actions as a process and subject for making work.

The term '*body art*', however, is positioned as the specific phenomenon, condition and consequence of the particular climate and time period from which it emerged (in both the United States and Europe), with the body being seen as a material in itself entering into artwork in a particularly dramatic and charged way.¹⁵ Although this attitude has much to do with the particular social and political concerns within the interventionist and protest culture of the time it has continued to influence artists' work and positions in relation to fine art practice with regard to notions of subjectivity, embodiment and spectatorship ever since and thus, I would suggest, to inform and (re)define the politics of representation and reproduction inherent in performance and performance related art practices -particularly within another significant period of technological development- to the present today.

By positioning myself in relation to *body art* practices, therefore, I recognise on the one hand that I am making direct references and connections to a specific time period and cultural climate with whose specific social and political concerns I cannot align myself in the same way, however I do align myself more explicitly to the very particular shift in sensibilities in relation to the body and its representation that developed as a consequence of this time period and its activities and as a consequence of developments in image technologies that continue to shape and to inform the practice of contemporary artists today.¹⁶

In order to understand the complexities of any particular arguments in relation to the body and its representation¹⁷ and their relevance in contemporary art contexts, it is important to understand the emergence of body art practices more fully and to take a look at the historical

¹⁵ Many performance and body art practices of the time aligned themselves to political causes such as feminism and anti-war protests, for example, artists such as Yoko Ono and Carolee Schneeman explored their identities as women against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and in the wake of the atom bomb; Chris Burden's notorious '*Shooting Piece*' (where he asked a friend to shoot him in the left arm), could also be seen in relation to US involvement in the Vietnam War; Marina Abramovic's early work can be seen as a marker of protest against the political regime in the former Yugoslavia; Valie Export's work can also be seen as addressing feminist and gender issues.

¹⁶ That is not to say that performance art practices do not retain a strong relationship to social and political engagement, far from it -for example, a conference on Performing Rights was held at Queen Mary College, University of London from June 14th-18th 2006, which explored specifically, relationships between performance, activism and human rights. However, this is not the primary concern of my own engagement with this project, which centres more specifically on issues of representation and presence in relation to the technological mediation of the body within our particular climate.

¹⁷ By representation here, I mean both as live performance and its document. Although this may appear to be confusing, it is important in this context, where the body itself is the material and process for making work and where in live performance, the entire body is the artwork itself.

conditions and contexts by which these came into fruition during this particular moment and to which both video and performance art practices predominantly aligned themselves and developed, simultaneously and independently, as significant art forms in their own right.

The emergence of both performance and video art practices during the late 1960s and early 1970s reflects a particular defining moment within the recent history of twentieth century art when artists, following the spirit of social and political activism inherent in that period, began to react against what they saw as the grandiose and outdated traditions of fine art practice embedded in the then dominant practices of painting and sculpture under the high art establishment of Greenbergian Modernism¹⁸. This saw the work of art as constructed through appeal to uniqueness, 'purity' and material autonomy -that is, the 'meaning' of the art object lay inherently within it and the intentions of the artist. Within this framework, the dominant way of viewing and interpreting an artwork was with the viewer, positioned as a distant and passive recipient of the art object, 'contemplating' its aesthetic beauty according to the 'correct' established codes and principles set by the art 'establishment' (critics, art historians, collectors etc.), who determined what 'good' and 'bad' art should be. Many artists began to look for new forms of expression that would challenge these conventions and, rejecting the mediating role of what they now considered obsolete in the material art-object, they began searching for more direct, immediate and 'active' relationships with the viewer that would also reflect the political urgency of the period.¹⁹

¹⁸ Clement Greenberg was an American art critic who was closely associated with the promotion of mid-twentieth century American modern art, particularly Abstract Expressionism and 'Post-painterly Abstraction', a term he coined to distinguish it from the former and to emphasise a style of painting that placed modernism in a continuing trend of abstraction that stressed the notion of autonomy and 'purity' in the 'hard-edged' paintings of artists such as Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelly (whose work explored relationships between tightly ruled edges and shapes) and the 'colour field' paintings of artists such as Kenneth Noland and Louis Morris (whose work explored the tactile and optical aspects of large, vivid fields of 'pure', open colour). Thus Greenbergian Modernism stressed medium specificity in the flat two-dimensionality of the picture surface, and was against any illusion of three-dimensionality, forcing the viewer to consider its painted surface before its status as a picture. (See "Modernist Painting" in 'The Collected Essays and Criticism', Vol. 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-44, The University of Chicago Press (1986); "Modernist Painting", (1960), reprinted in Battcock, G 'The New Art, A Critical Anthology', E.P. Dutton &Co. Inc. (1966)

¹⁹ This had already begun to happen ten years earlier, paradoxically, through the intense physical bodily 'actions' of painters such as Jackson Pollock and Lucio Fontana, whose 'drips' and 'slashes' in their paintings had begun the tendency for 'deconstruction' to be incorporated as a process in the making of artwork. Although the actions themselves sprang from very different motivations, and what they left was in effect an object in the form of a residue of their actions, this set the scene for the physical use of the body and for physical actions in themselves as a means of making art. (For an extensive survey of this period, see the exhibition catalogue 'Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979', Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1998), which contains a number of illuminating essays. See also Amelia Jones' observations in her book Body Art: Performing the Subject', University of Minnesota press, (1998), pp15-16.

Performance art, existing as a 'live', immediate, fleeting moment or event, became an attractive proposition to artists because it challenged the materiality of art through its status as an unrepeatable event and offered an alternative to the material art object insofar as performance was understood as an 'ephemeral' practice, through the physical but also transient presence of the body, where nothing stood between the artist and their audience. By using their own bodies as and with props that 'disappeared' after the event, '*no object or artefact remained...to be collected, sanctioned and sanctified by the critics, historians and collectors controlling the art establishment*'²⁰. This reflected, in particular, the ethos of the time within conceptual art, which insisted on an art of ideas over product and an art that could not be bought and sold.²¹

More predominantly and paradoxically, it reflected the concerns and tendencies in Minimalist art practices (particularly those of sculpture), where '*recognition of the active role of the spectator formed an integral part of the formulation and making of the work.*'²² Minimalism proposed that meaning lay in the relationship between the work and the spectator in '*concrete lived experience*' (from phenomenology), in the sense that instead of considering the internal compositional relationships of objects (as in Modernism), the viewer negotiated the relationships between him or herself, the objects and their shared immediate physical contexts, leaving him or her to become '*more reflexively aware of themselves as terms in the aesthetic equation.*'²³ Minimalism was thus understood to be the experience of art as public,

²⁰ Elwes, C, 'Video Art, a guided tour', I.B. Tauris (2005), p6 It is not surprising that many of these objects and relics have nevertheless still become highly collectable items.

²¹ This is largely Peggy Phelan's view in relation to the documentation of live performance. When she says she is against performance's reproduction and documentation she means she is against its commodification as a by-product of the work, which can effectively be bought or sold. Thus her essay on 'The Ontology of Performance' to which I refer can effectively be read as a critique of the commodity. ('*Performance resists the balanced circulation of finance. It saves nothing; it only spends*', in "*The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction*", as before, p148). Contemporary artists such as Tino Sehgal also take this view by insisting on the transient nature of their work. There is no documentation of his performance work, which takes place '*through directing people rather than [by] creating objects*', and its distribution takes place by verbal transaction. However this does not stop him selling his work as an idea that is passed on through verbal instruction. (Source: ICA Bulletin, January 2005)

²² Bunnage,J; Rudrum,C; Shani,A; Vincentelli,A; Walsh,A "Acting Out", ex. cat. for exhibition 'Acting Out: The body in video then and now', R.C.A. (1994), p5 Although this might seem at first contradictory in relation to the material art object, it is Minimalism's reconfiguration of the viewer's relationship to the object (against modernist tendencies), which became of particular interest first to performance artists and then to artists using photography and video as performative strategies in their work. Physically present for the duration of the performance, objects, as the body, were still seen as transient. Later, artists such as Dennis Oppenheim abandoned the object altogether in favour of using his own body to create and experience sculptural forms, which were then often shown as still photographs.

²³ Keller, A and Ward, F 'Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-Avant-Garde Blockbuster' in Cinema Journal 45, No.2, Winter 2006, p4

embodied and temporal since the interaction between artist and viewer was dependent on the viewers' physically grounded awareness of themselves in (a) space. Many early performances therefore had artists negotiating with props and objects or their own bodies as material to be manipulated or moved about within a given space; later, Minimalism's concerns with the temporal were to have a particular affinity with the film and video practices that developed out of their associations with performance art.²⁴

During this period, the use of video too, was becoming an attractive alternative proposition to artists due to its status as a reflection of the development of new technologies through which artists could also voice their political concerns. As such, it was initially used as a tool of 'self-opposition' – that is, as a means by which to challenge and expose the role of video itself in the dominance of mainstream broadcast media, as well as its earlier connections with US military warfare, whilst also, paradoxically being exploited for its specific capabilities²⁵. With video, artists could immediately capture the simultaneity of image, sound and movement in 'real time' (that is, at the same time as its occurrence and for its actual duration in time) and it also opened up the possibility of live playback (that is, the immediate and simultaneous recording and playing back of an event as it occurred). It thus aligned itself not only to the recording and transmission of a past event, but also to the capture and immediate transmission of an event in the present. As such, it could also be considered as suitably immediate and ephemeral to constitute a live performance in itself since it could exist only

²⁴ This idea forms the basis of Roland Barthes' influential essay "*Death of the Author*", which appeared in his book 'Image Music, Text' published by Fontana/Collins in 1977, in which he argues that the meaning of a text or image lies as much with the reader or viewer as it does with the artwork, its creator and its exponents. The term 'Death of the Author' refers to the notion that the 'birth' of the active participant can only happen in the author's demise- a suitable analogy, when considering the ephemeral nature of live performance, which once over, is left in the viewer's memory. This text was consequently to become particularly influential to performance and video artists, since its underlying democratic principles were seen as encouraging them to do away with the idea of the unique art object of modernism, transforming the role of the viewer from '*passive recipient of received ideas to active participant in the creation of meaning*' in the work. (Source: Elwes, C 'Video Art, A Guided Tour', p8) Amelia Jones' concept of 'intersubjectivity' can be seen as a reformulation of this relationship, where the relationship between self and other is posited as reciprocal: "*the relation of the self, the relation to the world, the relation to the other: all are constituted through a reversibility of seeing and being seen, perceiving and being perceived and this entails a reciprocity and contingency for the subject(s) in the world*" (Jones, A, p41).

²⁵ I raise the question of video's paradoxical status here due to its use as a reaction against Modernism on the one hand and artists' specific explorations of its specific capabilities as an emerging technology on the other. In his essay "*Did the Portapak Cause video Art? Notes on the Formation of a New Medium*" (in *Millennium Film Journal*, Vol.29, Fall 1996), author Jon Burris addresses '*an apparent contradiction in the relation of technological tools to aesthetic expression*' in the historical emergence of video art that differentiates between those artists whose work was very much linked to technological (and Modernist) concerns (such as the work of Woody and Steina Vasulka, in the United States) and those whose relation to technology was essentially functional in its consideration as an extension of works in other media (such as the work of Vito Acconci). This is discussed more fully in the final chapter.

when 'animated' by a live electric current and presented images through 'flickering' light rays which it could transmit through live playback without the need for a tape. As a consequence, and with the rapidly expanding field of television, it began to be used as a tool and prop, which could also form part of live events.²⁶

The early 1960s thus saw artists such as Nam June Paik and Allan Kaprow begin to use video alongside the use of their entire bodies in live performance events, installations and presentations that reflected the cultural climate of the time and which provided a creative platform for experimentation with new technologies and other art forms (such as literature, film, dance and music) in relation to artistic practice. Influenced in part by earlier art movements such as Dada and Surrealism and the later work of John Cage and Merce Cunningham, these initially took the form of '*Happenings*' (initially instigated by Kaprow and taken to mean an event that could be performed only once), and existed primarily in order to break with conventional pre-existing notions of particular art genres and their established codes of authority and meaning, and thus provoke lively international debates and exchanges of ideas.²⁷ Set up to challenge art's relationship to its audience in '*the encounter between*

²⁶ Nam June Paik is considered to be of the earliest pioneers of video art, having been amongst the first artists to have acquired a Sony 'Portapak' (the first portable video recorder and camera) when it first went on sale in the US in the mid 1960s, and to have experimented with the notion of real time recording; David Hall became particularly significant in the UK in the early 1970s, for his work exploiting the medium and properties of broadcast television. In a key work '*This is a Television Receiver*' (1971-6), he sets out to critique, destabilise and deconstruct myths of reality, illusionism and audience belief inherent in the medium (This work has recently been reshown at the Ambika P3 Gallery in London in the wake of the current 'digital switchover', alongside a contemporary reworking of another key work '101 TV sets', now '1001 TV Sets (End Piece)', to mark the end of analogue TV in the UK. See <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/news-and-events/events/2012/end-piece>). However, it is artists such as Joan Jonas and Dan Graham whose explorations of these properties in relation to the body and its image who are particularly relevant to this thesis, where the mediated video image and the live presence of the artist and/or the viewer become particularly foregrounded in the work, becoming part of the performance itself. See case study on Dan Graham at the end of this chapter.

²⁷ '*Happenings*' was a general term formulated by the media, following Kaprow's own initial '*18 Happenings in 6 Parts*', performed at the Reuben Gallery in New York in 1959. According to performance historian Rosalee Goldberg '*None of the artists [involved] ever agreed to the term, and despite the desire of many of them for clarification, no 'happening' group was formed [as such]*'. (Source: Goldberg, R 'Performance Art, from Futurism to Present', as before, p132). At the same time, a number of artists involved in some of the '*Happenings*' events formed the *Fluxus* group, who operated under a similar ethos in terms of interdisciplinary artistic activity and played an important part in the opening up of definitions of what art can be. Founded in 1960 by the Lithuanian/American artist George Maciunas, the name was originally used as the title of a magazine featuring the work of artists and composers centred around musician John Cage. The name from the Latin for 'flowing' has a more extended meaning in English, connoting fluidity, including notions of fluctuation, change and instability. Thus the 'purpose' of *Fluxus*, as defined by Maciunas was to '*promote a revolutionary flood and tide in art, promote living art, anti-art*'. In this sense the group was said to have much in common with the spirit and ethos of Dada. The group first came together in Germany where Maciunas was stationed with the US Army. Subsequently events were held in Paris, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, London and New York. Other important artists involved with the group include Joseph Beuys, Dick Higgins, Alice Hutchins, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Ben Vautier, Robert Watts and Emmett Williams. Active in the 1960s and 1970s the group continues to operate today. (Source: Fluxus: selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman collection, Museum of Modern Art (1988) p12)

artist, technology, performance, props and the audience',²⁸ these events were seen as processes by and through which artists made their work. Performing in both indoor and outdoor environments, and in theatrical and non-theatrical spaces, these artists saw themselves as 'active' agents in relation to the world around them and to those within it. Focusing on the continuous two-way relationship and dialogue between artist and viewer, they regarded themselves as '*simultaneously acting and being acted upon'*,²⁹ with the viewer in the role of 'active' participant in that process.³⁰ The meaning of the work in this formulation now lay in the relationships between the viewer/audience as 'witnessing subjects' to and participants in the event, the process of the event itself and the artist's intentions. Thus both video and performance art practices both came into their own simultaneously, in the late 1960s, as parts of an interdisciplinary practice and movement that encompassed a whole number of other arts practices which took a 'performative' approach to art. With the possibility of incorporating any number of media as well as the artist's body within the same event, the notion of the artist/audience relationship soon extended to the creative and active space opened up in these multiple encounters (between the artist, technology, props and audience), relocating the creation of meaning to the multiple dialogue created between all of these.

In many of these events and in live performance works in the 1970s, artists were working with their bodies in ways that tested the limits of the human body in physical activity and feats of physical and psychological endurance, as if to emphasise the very physicality and corporeal presence of the body that would disappear once the event was over.³¹ Strictly anti-narrative and often using the rhetorics of repetition in the work, many performances consisted of the repetition of a particular activity or action, which only stopped when the artist had literally

²⁸ Elwes, Catherine 'Video Art, A Guided Tour', I.B. Tauris & University of the Arts, London 2005, p8. See also Roland Barthes 'Image, Music, Text', Fontana/ Collins, 1977. Barthes' text is particularly important in this context in establishing that the meaning of a text or image lies as much with the viewer as it does with the intention of the artist and the interpretations of the wider art establishment. He encouraged artists to dispense with the notion of the unique art object, and to transform the role of the viewer from passive recipient to active participant in the creation of meaning.

²⁹ Nemser, Cindy "*Subject-Object Body Art*" in Arts Magazine Sept-Oct (1971), p39

³⁰ Viewers were often presented with a programme, outlining the format of the event, which included detailed instructions that they had to follow very carefully.

³¹ For instance, artists such as Marina Abramovic whose own performances and those with her collaborator Ulay, tested the limits of pain in its physical, emotional, psychological and ritualistic guises; the early work of Chris Burden was similarly characterised by its danger and extremity with his acting out of death defying stunts; Vito Acconci spent long periods of time incarcerated in specially constructed enclosed spaces that allowed him to communicate to visitors and thereby address power relations between himself and others. In the UK Stuart Brisley explored the essential qualities of what it means to be human, challenging the human body in physical, psychological and emotional ways.

exhausted themselves.³² In some of these events the trace and residue of the activity became almost as important as the activity itself, and provided immediate material evidence and confirmation that what had happened had indeed taken place. Sometimes these traces and the spaces themselves would remain on view long after the event was over with the idea that the body's physical presence in the 'residue' of the performance could still have a powerful effect on those visiting the space after the event.³³

Despite the desire for transience and for the ephemeral in live performance and perhaps precisely because of these very properties - taken literally, a performance could only 'exist' in the memory of those who had seen it- towards the end of this initial experimental period of the 1960s some artists, began to look for ways of recording their work in order to be able to both disseminate it to wider audiences and to save it for posterity. On the one hand they wanted to preserve the legacies of the period as '*integral to the history of twentieth century art*',³⁴ whilst on the other hand they were looking for wider recognition and ways of supporting further projects (artists also needed the documentation of work as a means of being able to impart information about previous work). The intention was not to 'replace' the live event with a recorded one, but to find ways in which a sense of the event could be captured and 'fixed' so that it could be seen and experienced by others after it was over³⁵. Video with its status as a documentary medium and with its ability to capture and record events in real time and for

³² Barry leVa's '*Escape Velocity*' (1970), was one such work, where the artist ran back and forth across a space crashing into opposite walls, until he could go on no longer. Traces of blood left on the walls following the event became the visual markers of his actions following the event.

Bruce Nauman later extended this format into video, using the monitor as a spatial boundary and the length of the videotape as a timeframe for the duration of the work, which continued until the tape ran out. Nauman's work was particularly influenced by the principles of the Judson Group of dancers based in the Judson Church in New York in the 1960s. An offshoot of the Dancers' Workshop Company, previously based in San Francisco, and led by Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown, amongst others, these dancers took the view inspired by pioneers of dance, such as Isadora Duncan, Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman -of '*dance as a way of life that uses everyday activities, such as walking, eating, bathing and touching.*' The ethos of the group was to use improvisation based on everyday movement '*to find out what our bodies could do, not learning from someone else's pattern or technique*'. Using 'free association' techniques, that is, unrestricted movement that developed according to its own principles, and simple props that extended the possibilities of bodily movement, the work revolved around task oriented movements, such as changing clothes or pouring water from one cup to another, which '*allowed each performer to develop a series of separate [individual] movements that expressed their own sensory responses to light, material and space*' (source: Goldberg, Rosalee 'Performance Art: from Futurism to Present, as before, pp.139-141).

³³ Joseph Beuys once stated that his intention was to '*charge a space with feeling so powerful that after the performance the space remains 'charged' enough to have some effect on future visitors.*' (Source: Nemser, C, as before, p42)

³⁴ Biesenbach, K "Video Acts", catalogue essay, p12

³⁵ This is the premise of Amelia Jones' essay "*Presence in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation*" (Art Journal, Vol 56, No.4, Winter 1997, pp11-18), which can be seen as a precursor to her later book on '*body art*', aforementioned, where she sets out her position regarding her approach to performance: '*not having been there*,' she posits, '*I approach body artworks through their photographic, textual, oral, video, and/or film traces.*'

their duration became the perfect medium for this purpose. However, this was not without its controversies amongst both artists and writers (which still continue to this day), as to what this implied in relation to the 'undocumentable' nature of performance and its relationship to those experiencing it live and 'in the flesh' at a specific time and in a specific place. In being able to record the event, video and other (reproducible) media such as photography transformed the performance act into a reproducible object, which raised issues about the commodification of the work, as well as questions about the values of performance itself. The video document as a testament to and material record of the event *'incorporated the temporally and spatially removed viewer as a witness to the performance [whether they had been there or not], making it both a material object and a recording of a moment in time'*³⁶

I contend, however, that it was precisely through recording their work in this way that artists then began to discover and exploit the properties inherent in the 'medium' of video in itself, as a process for not only further exploring this new technology, but also for further exploring and understanding the body as a physical subject through its mediated representation and its (inter)relationship with the viewer.

To begin with, the early documents of performance works recorded on video were not intended for the public domain, being regarded primarily as records and residues of the live event. Their primary purpose was to accurately record the duration of the live performance in real time, thus '*establishing the time-based facts of an event*' and conveying a sense of what had happened. Therefore these were initially regarded more like historical documents and seen as secondary (or supplementary) to the original live performance act, which was still the primary motive for most artists working with performance in the late 1960s and early 1970s '*with its cathartic and transformative potential mobilised in a live confrontation between artist and audience'*'.³⁷

Because of their status as records of an event, rather than artworks in their own right, early video documents had a low aesthetic value, often due to restrictions imposed on the recording, such as the camera being placed in poor light, fixed in a wide or distant position, or being used to 'capture' everything at once, resulting in poor picture and sound quality and loss of detail. Consequently, the video document was generally considered unable to convey

³⁶ Biesenbach, K, op.cit

³⁷ Elwes, C op.cit, p10

much of the impact, existential energy or 'charge' of the original live performance and much of the 'meaning' intended through the close encounter and exchange between artist and viewer was 'lost' in its documentation. Therefore, the 'experience' of seeing the work through the video document, as a recording after the event could not be regarded as being in any way similar to 'experiencing' the work live.³⁸

However, it was through their precise awareness of the limitations of video as a method for documenting live performances that artists began instead to turn towards the creation of actions and live events specifically for the camera and monitor. By making work that accepted the particular limitations of the medium (such as poor picture quality and the inability to edit), and by exploiting its distinctive technological features (such as its ability to record in real time and to capture and playback an event as it was occurring), artists were able to use these specific characteristics and aesthetics of the medium to further explore their conceptual interests in process and duration as well as ideas of physical presence, and physical endurance, which they had already begun to examinee through live performance. Through a direct interaction with their screen image, artists were also able to further extend their relationship with the active and affective role of the viewer by creating 'performative' situations that would force them to respond and interact with each other in more direct and intimate forms of communication, which also became an integral part of the formulation and making of the work. In many of these situations the video became a mirroring device that was intended not only to reflect the artist's own image in the process of making the work but also (along with the use of mirrors themselves) that of the viewer. This was especially present in the work

³⁸ This is what Amelia Jones disputes when writing on performance through the rhetoric of *body art*. In an earlier essay on *experiencing performance as documentation*, she claims that '*the documentary exchange is equally intersubjective*', arguing that the 'meaning' of live performances can be formed *retrospectively* in the *documentary traces* and interpretations that circulate after the event. It is these ideas that form the backbone and central thesis to her later book on *body art*. This view has led to some criticisms of Jones, who is seen by some critics such as Catherine Elwes as '*mythologis[ing]* or *impos[ing]* [her] own *interpretations on events that [she] sometimes hadn't seen and that were experienced quite differently at their point of origin.*' (Source: Elwes, C, as before, p10) Whilst I would agree that experiencing a live performance is fundamentally different to experiencing it through its documentation, I do not believe Jones disputes this. I further believe that the criticism misses the point of Jones' project, which is to address the shift in subjectivities and thus the shift in our interpretive relationship as viewers through the creation of different meanings that the document as the record of an event opens up in terms of our 'experience' of the work and of the body. In doing so, Jones questions and redefines the nature and function of performance and therefore its 'meaning' through the 'performativity' of the document. I am interested in how Jones' formulation impacts on the video document as an artwork in its own right; a document that does not function simply as the record of a live event, but that is either part of the event itself, or that was only ever intended to exist in its documented form as a performance to camera.

of Joan Jonas, Vito Acconci and Dan Graham³⁹, which followed a strong precedent in the work of Minimalist artists such as Robert Morris, who used mirrors as a means through which to both engage and disorientate the viewer. Their use in conjunction with video not only pointed towards this tradition, but also raised further questions about the artist's relationship with the viewer.

Thus we see a particular trajectory of work emerging from this period in both the United States and in Europe, which involves artists performing actions and creating events specifically for the video camera and television monitor, where the camera and the monitor as objects and the physical presence of the body as an image become particularly foregrounded as parts of the process and products of the work. These works tended to be developed either as live performances, with the video technology being part of the performance itself (such as in work by Joan Jonas, Peter Campus or Dan Graham), or as pieces in which the artists (often in the spaces of their studios), performed to and recorded with, the camera, in the absence of an audience, actions specifically designed to this end, to be shown to an audience at a later date (such as in work by Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci). Often artists worked in both formats.

Each of these formats developed its own particular aesthetic and distinctive genre, which became identifiable characteristics of those particular formats and of particular artists. Whilst live video performances often incorporated the role of video as a recording device as an essential component of the work, (where '*the mechanism of video image generation and the process of performance art documentation were laid bare*',⁴⁰ and both live and recorded video images were shown in juxtaposition with the live presence of the artist and /or viewer),⁴¹ in

³⁹ Joan Jonas used body-sized mirrors to construct illusionary spaces, often directly referencing Minimalism through her use of reflective geometric forms. See esp. *Mirror Piece* (1970); Vito Acconci used the television screen as a kind of mirror through which to directly address the viewer and/or himself. See esp. *Air Time* (1973); Dan Graham used mirrors as a screen through which to directly address the audience in live performances, pre-empting the use of live play-back in video, which he used in later works. See esp. *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (1977) and *Present Continuous Past(s)* (1974). See also the exhibition catalogue from 'Video Acts', I.C.A, (2002), which is particularly strong on this point. Whilst art-historians such as Rosalind Krauss were critical of such works for what she claimed was their narcissistic tendencies, what she and others failed to acknowledge in this relationship, was the possibility of the artist's direct appeal to the viewer. (See Krauss, R "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism", in October, Spring 1976). This has been made more evident in contemporary takes on both Acconci's and Graham's work by the contemporary collaborative duo Forsyth and Pollard that far from being narcissistic as Krauss' essay claims, is more a reflection on our contemporary subjective engagements with screen images.

⁴⁰ Elwes, C op.cit, p10-11

⁴¹ Joan Jonas called this a '*parallel narrative*'. In Jonas' performances the live video was linked to monitors on stage, which allowed her to reveal close-up details of her performance, whilst maintaining a

many of the early performances to camera, the frame of the monitor acted as a container and three-dimensional boundary for the body and was also used as a marker to guide the artists' physical movements. In Vito Acconci's work, for example, he used the monitor as a 'talking head' in order to lure the viewer into conversation.⁴² In addition, because of the inability to edit, artists often performed for the whole length of the videotape, using it as a specific timeframe for their actions. For instance, Bruce Nauman's early videos frequently involved him carrying out repetitive task-like actions in his studio, performed under particular conditions and recorded for as long as the action or task took to play out, often using the length of the videotape as a time frame. Although seemingly unrehearsed, these actions were actually carefully choreographed, with the camera carefully placed and Naumans' movements orchestrated to remain within the boundary of the television screen he used as a guide⁴³ This added a new dimension to the concepts and processes of repetition and duration, parameters already widely used in live performance, in which the durational aspect of the performance was crucial for creating a sense of physical empathy in the viewer.

My particular interest in the work of these artists lies in how it was able to engage at this particular moment, very specifically, with the medium and mechanism of the technology (of mainstream broadcast television and video), in order to examine our relationship to the body and to the world around us through the experience of technological mediation. This, I suggest, reveals a prescient understanding of current visual technological developments in the relationship between artist and viewer. This thesis makes particular reference to the aesthetic and technological structures of this particular period in its engagement with the emergence of video practices (particularly those that align themselves to performance in the uses and development of non-narrative, process-based, task-like structures) that emphasise the physicality of the body, expanding on these concerns to state a case for the physicality of an image in an embodied approach to thinking about and experiencing video. I realise that in placing an emphasis on the body in the emergence of video practices from this period I am following a particular trajectory of artists whose concerns have more to do with the physical

physical distance form the viewer, anticipating the use of large screen in public events today. See esp. 'Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy' (1972)

Peter Campus' work on the other hand, was more revealing of the viewer, playing on the viewer's perceptual process and their awareness of their own image in a space. See esp. 'Shadow Projection' (1974)

⁴² See esp. 'Command Performance' (1972)

⁴³ See esp. 'Stamping in the Studio' (1970) and 'Wall to Floor Positions' (1968).

nature of the body in live performance. I have purposely knowingly omitted to discuss in great length the work of artists such as Nam June Paik in the United States and David Hall in the UK, amongst others, whose work using video was more emphasised in its emergence as a new technology and who saw its possibilities as a tool to both embrace and critique of broadcast television.

I conclude this chapter with a case study on the early work of Dan Graham, which for me epitomises the work of the period in its engagement with video through the notion of presence in the performed relationship between the physical body and its representation as a mediated image. It was particularly distinctive for the uses of time delay mechanisms in the recording processes of video and television systems to produce perceptual effects of past and present actions and occurrences that directly involved the viewer/visitor as an interactive participant in the process, along with the use of mirrors as literal reflections and representations of present time. Continuing from his previous engagement with performance and film, Graham elaborated on their temporal disruptions of ‘present-tense’ experience by blurring the distinctions between past, present and future ‘tenses’. These earlier works were seen by Graham ‘as a way out of my earlier Minimalist and structuralist assumptions based on a phenomenology of presence’ and were grounded in what he referred to as the ‘present-time consciousness of the artist (who in the performance was temporarily replacing the art-object), and the spectator’s present-time perceptions.’⁴⁴

What was distinctive in these earlier works was the presence of the artist himself, which stood in as a physical representation of ‘present-time’, through the live interactions he initiated with a perceiving audience. The performances were thus set up as means to subject the notion of present-time through the mediating presence of the artist, to what he saw as a ‘critique’: ‘In introducing my own subjectivity’, he claimed, ‘as well as giving primacy to the spectator’s perception process, the work constituted an abandonment of the hermetic, anonymous quality of earlier “Conceptual Work”.’⁴⁵

I wish to emphasise the importance of these earlier performances, which Graham used as a means of establishing the parameters of his later ‘architectural’ work from which he absented

⁴⁴ Graham, Dan “Performance: End of the ‘60’s”, in ‘Two-Way Mirror Power’: Selected Writings by Dan Graham on his Art, MIT Press (1999), p142

⁴⁵ Ibid, p143

himself, leaving the spectators themselves to become the performers in the work. My own interest is in the distinctiveness of Graham's approach, which I think departs somewhat from the trajectory of other artists with whom he was associated at the time, such as Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, Joan Jonas and Peter Campus. On the surface one may see similarities between his and these artists' approaches in the uses of live screen media, in the phenomenological emphases of their work, in the blurring of distinctions between sculpture, installation and performance and in the construction of spatial effects that disorientated the viewer, but a deeper analysis shows that his approach derived from almost utopian concerns that referred more specifically to psychological and sociological ideas and experiments of the time, that seemed to offer alternatives to the Establishment or to academic beliefs and were based on the hope that '*the (inter) personal could re-politicize the body politic*' -that is, that radical techniques used in '*psychology, ethnology, consciousness-altering states induced by meditation techniques, and feminism*',⁴⁶ could generate new possibilities in both '*personal and group behavior*', the models of which could be used simultaneously by artists and in the creation of a kind of sub or counter-culture. Whilst Graham was not alone in his interests, (in making the work he knew that his audience and that many other artists also shared the assumed models of behavior which formed its basis), the way in which he used these models of behaviour as a structure and testing ground in his performances was quite unique, in the sense that he considered the performances less as 'art' in the conventional sense than as experiments or 'learning exercises'; one might even say 'demonstrations':

*'They were never performed, at first, with the aim of media documentation and never as saleable for gallery exhibition. For me and for the students participating in the performances, they were merely try-outs, ways of testing situations or means of expression uninhibited by the need to make perfect, finished works.'*⁴⁷

His own view on his position as an artist reinforced this notion in the sense that Graham did not really see himself as a 'performance artist' and did not really aspire being one as such, but was more interested in

⁴⁶ Ibid, p142

⁴⁷ Ibid, p143

*'the position of the art-guru (enhanced by media reproduction and occupied by artists such as Joseph Beuys, politicians such as the Kennedys, rock figures such as the Beatles), or in illustrating the ideas of psychologists such as R.D Laing and Gregory Bateson.'*⁴⁸

Furthermore, he found himself doing performances in a particular climate during which many other artists were also doing so as a democratic and alternative means of making and showing work. Whilst many of the artists he was associated with ran counter to Modernist concerns of the 1960s with the '*presentation of the present as immediacy- as pure phenomenological consciousness without the contamination of historical or other a priori meaning*'—concerns, which were seen very much as those of the Establishment, particularly with regard to painting- Graham intentionally referred to Modernist notions of 'phenomenological immediacy' to foreground an awareness of the viewer's own perceptual processes, whilst at the same time critiquing it to highlight what he saw as a paradox in the notion of presence in '*the impossibility of locating a pure present tense.*'⁴⁹

In these performances he used mirrors and windows as physical mediating and spatial units and structures to define both cultural and psychological boundaries. Thus in '*Performance, Audience, Mirror*',(1977) he stood facing a seated audience, in front of a large mirror that covered the wall behind him and was parallel to the facing audience, who were reflected in it. The performance then ran in four stages, each one a different enactment of the mediated relationship set up between performer, audience and mirror.

In the first stage he faced the direction of the audience and over five minutes began a general and continuous description of his external movements and the various stances or positions he believed were signified by this behaviour. The audience, as it watched Graham's movements and heard his descriptions, was also able to see individual reflections in the mirror, as well as

⁴⁸ R.D. Laing was a Scottish psychiatrist particularly prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, for his views on the causes and treatment of mental illness. Heavily influenced by existential philosophy, his views ran counter to the current orthodoxy at the time by taking into consideration the expressed feelings of the individual patient or client as valid descriptions of 'lived experience' rather than as symptoms of a separate or underlying disorder. Gregory Bateson was a prominent anthropologist of the same era, whose work also intersected other fields of social science, linguistics and cybernetics. He became known for his extensions of systems theory and cybernetics to the social and behavioural sciences. In particular, he developed a theory of schizophrenia as stemming from 'double bind 'situations -that is, the perceived symptoms and statements of patients were seen as an expression of distress, which he thought should be valued as a cathartic and transformative experience. See Laing, R.D, 'The Divided Self', Tavistock Publications (1960) reprinted by Penguin Classics (2010); Bateson, Gregory 'Steps to an Ecology of Mind', University of Chicago Press (1972); Reprinted (2000) with foreword by Mary Catherine Bateson. See also the Luke Fowler's recent film collage about R.D. Laing 'All Divided Selves', shortlisted for the 2012 Turner Prize.

⁴⁹ Graham, Dan Two –Way Mirror Power': Selected Writings by Dan Graham on his Art, MIT Press (1999), p144

being able to simultaneously ‘perceive itself as a public body (as a unity).’⁵⁰

In the second stage he continued facing the audience, looking directly at it, but this time in the same manner in which he had previously described his own behaviour, he began to describe the audience’s ‘external’ behaviour. However, whilst the audience saw itself instantly reflected in the mirror, Graham’s verbal description was deliberately slightly delayed, thus overlapping and undercutting the ‘present’ in the mirror view the audience had of itself both as individual members and collectively.

The third stage saw Graham still standing, but now turned to face the mirror, his back to the audience. As previously, he began describing his own gestures and what they signified through his reflection in the mirror. Whilst both performer and audience faced the same direction and saw the same mirror view, what Graham himself saw as he began to describe the movements of his body was from his front view, whereas what the audience was seeing was his back view physically in front of them and their front view in the mirror’s reflection.

In the fourth stage Graham remained facing the mirror, observing and beginning to describe the audience whose reflection he saw in the mirror as a reversal of the second stage. Both left and right movements of performer and audience were this time the same due to both of them facing into the mirror. As a result of his changing his physical position, Graham’s visual perspective also altered, thus in turn, affecting his verbal description.

The whole sequence was repeated, with the first stage recurring a third time before Graham stopped the performance mid flow, a continuation by now unnecessary.

If ‘Performance, Audience, Mirror’ is intended as a critique of the notion of presence through the live presentation of ‘the present-time consciousness of the artist’ and the use of the mirror as a physical live mediating device for a demonstration that is literally reflected in the perception processes of the spectator, then this is further anticipated in some of Graham’s earlier works using video. In these, the mirror becomes a dominant physical and psychological feature apparent in the overlaying of reflective surfaces and in the physical presence of mirrors, windows and televisions screens, where the work extends to the perceptual processes of the audience/visitor, who becomes the active participant and performer in the

⁵⁰ Ibid. p125; also quoted in Hand, Brian “Audience to Ourselves”, in Circa, No.92, Summer 2000, pp34-37

work. Furthermore, the work exists not only in the space of the gallery, but also in public space, emphasising Graham's interest in relationships between private (individual) experience and the socialised experience of encountering one's presence amongst others. Both demonstrate Graham's concerns with psychological projection, extending his conception of presence through the inclusion of closed-circuit video as present time, and the nature of the live video image understood less as a document of a past event, but as being simultaneous with its perception by an audience or viewer perceiving it. Here Graham's considerations of video in relation to architecture are emphasised through his use of windows and mirrors as physical mediating and spatial 'units' or structures that define certain cultural and psychological boundaries. Video functions 'in architecture' as both window and mirror simultaneously, through its capacity to intercede and to replace some of these boundaries, thus subverting the effects and functions of both.

Graham addressed the same concerns in two key installation works: '*Present Continuous Past(s)*' (1974) and '*Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade*' (1976). In the former (gallery-based) work Graham constructed a three-sided room for the viewer to enter. Two walls at right angles were mirrored and on a third wall there was a monitor screen, above which a video camera was placed, facing into the room. A camera was set up to record what was immediately in front of it (the viewer) and the reflection on the opposite (mirrored) wall. The image 'seen' by the camera appeared eight seconds later on the video monitor via a tape delay set up, placed between two video recorders, the second of which played the recording back. A viewer watching the monitor in the present would see both the image of himself or herself eight seconds before and the reflection in the mirror from the monitor eight seconds before that, producing an infinite regression of '*time continuums within time continuums*' always separated by eight second intervals.

The latter work, as the title indicates, took place in the public space of a shopping arcade, in two facing and parallel glass shop windows. Each shop window contained a mirror on its back wall, which reflected both what was in it and the view through the window. Both windows had monitors placed in front of them with cameras placed on top of them. In Graham's words:

*'The camera on top of the left monitor faced inward toward the mirror, whereas the camera on top of the right monitor faced outward toward the window. The view from the camera in the left window was transmitting live to the monitor in the right window, but the view from the camera in the right window was transmitted 5 seconds later delayed to the monitor in the left window.'*⁵¹

In both these works the installation enacts a superimposition of moving images through the various devices that Graham uses, producing a disorienting effect on the viewer. In the former, the use of time-delay in the video-image of the viewer exacerbates this as he or she sees multiple images of him or herself as '*Continuous Pasts*' simultaneously. The viewer is asked to consider how his or her body (present in the space and as an image reflected both in the mirror and on the video screen), is placed in its relation to other 'viewers' in the space. The effect of this set up is that whilst the viewer may become self-conscious as a result of viewing his or her own image as a continuous process, he or she is unable to get away from this and is forced to participate in the work, since whatever he or she does and wherever he or she goes, his or her own body and the bodies of others are visible from all sides and all surfaces that they encounter. Furthermore, whilst the mirrors reflect the viewer's image in the present in a way that can also function to displace the viewer spatially, Graham, by introducing a time-delay in the video 'feedback' image, draws attention to the differing effects of its perceptual processes through its ability to displace the viewer both spatially and temporally. Thus this work becomes a demonstration of both the recent past (in the video image on screen), the present (in the mirror-image) and the future (in the viewer's anticipation of what they will soon see on screen in the time-delay image of a recent action or movement).

The latter installation works on the same principle but this time in the public space of a shopping arcade and using both the architectural glass windows of the building as well as mirrors installed inside as reflective devices. The fact that it is installed in public space, whilst having the anticipated effect of making the viewer more self-conscious or alienated from his or her body-image, may also have the opposite effect in '*enhanc[ing] the narcissistic tendencies of the spectator.*' The work refers to the ways in which the shop window intentionally plays on the perceptual processes of the viewer in the frontal display of its

⁵¹ Dan Graham in 'Two-way Mirror Power; Selected Writings by Dan Graham on his Art, ed. Alex Albero, with introduction by Jeff Wall, MIT Press 1999, p47

goods, which Graham likens to the Renaissance picture plane, the three-dimensional space inside the shop window, echoing that inside the painting. He refers to the ‘view’ inside a shop window and in front of the spectator as a ‘substitute’ for the real world behind him or her, which can only be seen as a dim reflection, as can his or her own self-image. What is on display inside must thus have the undivided attention of the spectating potential customer and the goods must appear to meet his or her needs.

In the work Graham places a full-length mirror at the back of the shop window, parallel to the glass in front, making the spectator’s view and body in real space not only visible to him or herself but also in the opposite shop window, also mirrored in the same way. The video shows views of and from the inside the opposite shop window and also from inside the spectator’s own window space, through the view’s reflected image from the mirror in the shop window on the other side. The video thus:

‘provides interior front and back perspectives, front and back views of the spectator looking into both shop windows and of the spectators in the “real-world” space in the corridor between the two [shop-window] cases.’

*He or she is able to see ‘both sides of his “picture”, as well as well as both sides of the opposite [window] case’s picture; and himself and spectators looking at the opposite [window] case from front and back simultaneously’.*⁵²

What is important here is Graham’s use of video precisely as a ‘present-time medium’, demonstrated through the spatio/temporality it ‘presents’, as *‘continuous, unbroken and congruent to real time, which is the shared time of its perceivers and their individual and collective real environments’*. In particular, he is careful to differentiate clearly this notion of presence from that of film, which he sees as *‘an edited re-presentation of the past, of another reality/another’s reality for separate contemplation by unconnected individuals’*.⁵³ More pertinently, whilst this work anticipates today’s social and cultural preoccupation with screen-based technologies in the proliferation of images, in both public and private spaces, it also emphasises an embodied and material relationship between the viewer and the video screen.

⁵² Ibid, p49

⁵³ Graham, Dan *“Film and video: video as present time”*, Ibid, p52

Chapter 2 Being: Material/Immaterial, Presence/Non Presence

(or On the Practice of Visibility)

*'Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.'*¹

'There is no possibility of an unmediated relationship to any kind of cultural product, including body art.'

*'It is precisely the relationship of these bodies /subjects to documentation (or more specifically to re-presentation) that most profoundly points to the dislocation of the fantasy of the fixed, normative, centred, modernist subject'*²

*My body as a **visible** thing is contained within the full spectacle. But my seeing body subtends this **visible** body, and all the visibles with it. There is a reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other... Once again we must... eschew the thinking by planes and perspectives³*

What does the concept of 'liveness' or live presence mean today, in an age of technology-driven 'live' screen recordings and representations and how do such technologies impact on arguments embedded in the historical contexts of performance art practice concerning the representation of the body and its documentation or re-presentation?

This chapter draws on such arguments as a means to consider about concepts of physical presence and the subjectivity of the body in the context of its representation in an age of immediate technological media reproduction and representation. It is my belief that historical and recent developments in visual media technologies not only emphasise our relationship to and dependence on the image as a means of representing and confirming the existence and subjectivity of the body as a physical subject, they also paradoxically reveal the function of image and of technology as a means of interrogating the very limits of that existence and of the notion of subjectivity itself.

My position is largely informed by Amelia Jones' articulation of '*performed subjectivity*', first outlined in her essay "*“Presence” in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation*"

¹ Phelan, P "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction" in 'Unmarked: the Politics of Performance', Routledge (1993), p146

² Jones, A "Presence in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation", in Art Journal, Vol. 56, No.4, Winter (1997), p12

³ Merleau-Ponty, M, 'The Visible and the Invisible', Northwestern University Press, (1968), p138.
(Original published in French under the title le Visible et l'Invisible, editions Gallimard, (1964)

(1997)⁴, and later developed in her book: ‘Body Art: Performing the Subject’ (1999)⁵. Whilst the earlier text specifically focuses on the problematics of ‘*experiencing performance*’ practice ‘entirely through its documentation’,⁶ in order to explore the ontological dynamic of live and recorded performance through the emergence of Body Art practices in the 1960s and 1970s, the book takes up the notion of the ‘*radical shift in subjectivity*’ that is implied in the essay, (in the transition from modernist to postmodernist modes of practice), so as to develop the notion of a ‘*transfigured subjectivity*’ that is specifically identified in the relationship of the performing body/subject to documentation, and viewed through the ‘*multiplicitous existence, enactment and re-presentation*’ of the works themselves ‘*as documentary traces*.⁷ Jones’ reading is informed by the psychoanalytical and phenomenological aspects of feminist post-structural theory (specifically with reference to the work of Jacques Lacan and Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the ‘gendered’ reworkings of their theories by Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray), in which the traditional (masculinist, art historical) relation between perceiver and object is radically challenged and reworked to consider the subject always through its relationship to others in ‘*acts of interpretation that are themselves performative*’.⁸ The term *performative* is used by Jones here to highlight the ‘*open-endedness of interpretation*’, which is understood as ‘*a process, rather than an act with a final goal*’ and acknowledges ‘*the way in which circuits of desire and pleasure are at play in the complex web of relations among artists, patrons, collectors and both specialised and non-specialised viewers*.⁹

⁴ Jones, A, “*Presence” in Absentia*”, (as above, see note 2) pp11-18

⁵ Published by University of Minnesota Press.

⁶ Jones, A, “*Presence” in Absentia*”, p11

⁷ Jones, A Ibid. p12

⁸ Jones, A ‘Body Art: Performing the Subject’, University of Minnesota Press (1998), p.14

⁹ Jones, A and Stephenson A “*Introduction*”, in ‘Performing the Body/ Performing the Text’, Routledge,(1999), p1 With regard to the performative dimensions of ‘making meaning’ that Jones sets out, it is important to acknowledge the linguistic origins and notion of the term ‘*performativity*’, which Jones articulates more specifically in her book of essays: ‘Performing the Body/Performing the Text’ (1999). The term was first developed by J.L. Austin in relation to the concept and use of language in speech, by which he distinguishes ‘*performative utterances*’ from ‘*constative utterances*’, identifying in the ‘*performative utterance*’, language whose utterance ‘*does not describe the world* [e.g. the snow is white], *but acts upon it* [e.g. ‘I pronounce you man and wife.’]. (See “*How to do Things with Words*”, in ed. J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, Harvard University Press (1975).

The term has since been revised extensively by theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler to open up processes in the production of meaning in arts subjects such as theatre, film and performance studies and in relation to the experience of subjectivity and identity in the postmodern world (See especially “*Signature, Event, Context*”, in Derrida, J ‘Margins of Philosophy’, ‘ trans. Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press (1982), pp307-330 and Butler, J ‘Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity’, Routledge (1990) and ‘Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex.’, Routledge (1993)). Peggy Phelan and Rebecca Schneider (as well as Butler) have also been particularly influential in situating the term in relation to the gendered and sexed body. (See especially, Phelan, P “*Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*”, Routledge 1993 and Schneider, R ‘The Explicit Body in Performance.’, Routledge (1997)

This chapter outlines Jones' position regarding '*performance as documentation*', expanding on the ontological dimension of her argument in relation to Peggy Phelan's influential and oppositional text: '*The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction*' (1997) in which the author claims that '*performance in a strict ontological sense is nonreproductive*'.¹⁰

Jones identifies in the term '*body art*' the affirmation of an ontological dimension that extends the concept of performance to encompass work that '*may or may not initially have taken place in front of an audience*', but rather takes place through an

*'enactment' of the artist's body, whether it be in a 'performance' setting or in the relative privacy of the studio, that is then documented such that it can be experienced subsequently through photography, video and/or text.'*¹¹

Jones' position and extension of the term *performance* is particularly productive for me in establishing my own engagement with the term, where the use of the term '*enactment*' can be used to describe an expanded notion and understanding of the concept of performance (and thus its ontological dynamic) through its active relationship to the audience or viewer of the work.

I also turn to Philip Auslander's essay, '*Against Ontology: Making Distinctions between the Live and the Mediatized*', which is written from a strictly anti-ontological position in direct opposition to Phelan's text and concerns the '*situation of live performance within this televisual environment*'.¹² Whilst Auslander is dealing with a broader conception of performance that includes, radio, television, theatre, dance and music, as well as art his

Jones' use of the term also points to a dual meaning in her exploration of practices that '*enact*' the body (and subject) in a '*performative fashion*', as a means of '*pointing to the act of interpretation itself as a kind of performance*'. (See especially Jones, A and Stephenson, A (eds.) '*Performing the Body / Performing the Text*' 1999, p1). I expand on its meanings and uses in the course of this chapter, with particular reference to Jones and Phelan in my discussion of the ontological dynamics of their respective positions, focusing on Jones' notion of '*the act of [experience and] interpretation itself as a kind of performance*' with regard to documentation and also to formulate an extension of her argument through the '*lived viewing experience*' of experiencing an artwork (or performance) through its documentation, with reference to the work of Philip Auslander

¹⁰ Phelan, P 'Unmarked' (As before), p148

¹¹ Jones, A 'Body Art: Performing the Subject', p13

¹² "*Against Ontology: Making Distinctions between the Live and the Mediatized*" in *Performance Research* 2(3): 50-55 (1997). Auslander's text is one of many by him that deals with this subject, which is most comprehensively articulated in his book '*Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*', Routledge, (1999) (2nd edition reprinted 2008). Other texts by Auslander that I have consulted with regard to this include: '*Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics*' in '*Contemporary American Performance*', University of Michigan Press (1994) and '*Liveness: Performance and the Anxiety of Simulation*', in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. Elin Diamond, Routledge, pp198-213.

arguments regarding the distinctions between the ‘live’ and the ‘recorded’ (even if I do not always agree with them), are particularly relevant and pertinent to my own (and to this chapter in particular), and serve as a useful basis for trying to understand the effects of media technologies on contemporary culture and on contemporary performance and performance-related art practices. They also go to the heart of complexities and controversies surrounding the reproduction and distribution of recordings of the live performance event that have existed throughout its historical development. Whilst my own position remains ontological in the sense that I am seeking an ontological dimension to the representation of the body in video work,¹³ and I see flaws in Auslander’s argument with regard to his understanding of the concept of ‘liveness’ and his interpretation of Phelan’s text, his work enables me to extend the notion of performance as documentation through an alternative viewpoint to Jones’, and one with a particular emphasis on ‘*mediatized*’ or ‘*technologized*’ forms of representation¹⁴.

I then return to Phelan’s text to examine more thoroughly the ethics of her ontological position, which are grounded in the ‘*undocumentable* [and unrepreatable] event of performance’, and in what she calls ‘*the experience of subjectivity itself*’. These are emphasised in the political dynamics of experiencing live performance through the ‘*visible*’ and physical ‘*presence of living bodies*’ and their subsequent ‘disappearance’ (or ‘*invisibility*’) after the event. Written as a resistance to the system of commodity exchange and reproduction in art and the ‘*circulatory economy fundamental to it*’, Phelan stresses the ‘*realm of invisibility*’ in ‘*the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame can have an experience of value which leaves no visible trace afterward.*’¹⁵

The essay concerns itself with understanding the nature of presence and visibility, with the question of ethics being tied to the nature of power and representation in our relationship to

¹³ I identify my understanding of an ontological dimension to the body through its documentation in relation to Amelia Jones’ exploration of the subject in her ‘Body Art’ book, where she associates the notion of the ontology of the document through the body’s representation in video, film, photographs and text documents. These, ‘*supplementary mediations*’, she claims, ‘*produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, or originary perception. Immediacy is derived...*’ (Source: p35, ‘Body Art’, as before) Jones refers specifically to Jacques Derrida’s notion of supplementarity in his text “*That Dangerous Supplement*” (in ‘Of Grammatology’, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976, pp141-164), in which he writes about the relationship between speech, writing and representation. Derrida argues that the recourse of speech into representation is dangerous because it serves to ‘*make speech present, when it is actually absent,*’ adding itself ‘*as the fullest measure of presence*’. Jones argues similarly that it is precisely this lack of presence in the document which by ‘*acting as a “supplement” to the “actual “body of the artist-in-performance”*’ in effect also becomes supplementary to itself, thus emphasising a notion of physicality in the process.

¹⁴ Auslander’s terms (see footnote 19 in the Introduction regarding Virilio’s use of the term ‘*mediatized*’).
¹⁵ Phelan, P ‘Unmarked’, p149

these and through what Phelan perceives as ‘*a failure to see oneself fully.*’¹⁶ Phelan uses this ‘*failure to see*’ to look at ways in which the dematerialisation of vision might ‘*delineate a possible ethics of the invisible*’ and open up certain possibilities. These are examined through the Lacanian psychoanalytical dimensions of power and representation in our unconscious ‘*encounters with the other*’ (and with others), and used as a means of embracing invisibility, to give performance what Phelan argues is its very strength.¹⁷ I want to re-think Phelan’s argument from a position and *ethics of visibility* that is also suggested in her claim that ‘*Performance art usually occurs in the suspension between the “real” physical matter of the “performing body” and the psychic experience of what it is to be em-bodied*’¹⁸, to consider the question which (contra Phelan) asks what does it take to value the material, visible (tangible) body now? I will examine this question in relation to Lacan’s theories, expanding on my own observations and in relation to Merleau-Ponty’s theories of visibility and invisibility, to which Amelia Jones is particularly indebted in her articulation of the ‘*intersubjective engagement*’ and ‘*exchange*’ between performer and spectator.¹⁹ Jones wants to move away from what

¹⁶ Phelan, P (in conversation with Marquard Smith), “*Performance, live culture and things of the heart*”, in Journal of Visual Culture, Vol. 2(3): 291-302, Sage Publications (2003), p296

¹⁷ According to Phelan ‘*Performance implicates the real through the presence of living bodies. In performance art spectatorship there is an element of consumption: there are no left-overs, the gazing spectator must take everything in. Without a copy, live performance plunges into visibility- in a maniacally charged present- and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control...*’ (in ‘Unmarked’, p148)

Phelan’s use of the term ‘real’ refers to Lacan’s use of the term ‘the Real’ in reference to ‘*that which is really “there”, “in its place”...It is the present, as opposed that which is re-presented through language in the symbolic order [or through forms of documentation].*’ However, Phelan also indicates that in its own disappearance, the ‘*living body*’ becomes radically alienated from the Real and as such it becomes unattainable: ‘*performance uses the body to frame the lack of Being promised by and through the body- that which cannot appear without a supplement...*’ (Phelan, ‘The Ontology of Performance’, p151) (N.B. Phelan’s use of the term ‘*supplement*’ is in accordance with the Derridian notion of the word by which he refers to the instability and incompleteness of texts in writing that can be continuously supplemented by the uses of other texts and thus alter meaning retrospectively. This model has been used in performance theory to refer first to the relationship between text and performance in theatre and subsequently to the uses of documents (and processes of documentation) in performance art practices (in the uses of photography, video as well as written documents) as ‘*supplements*’ to the ‘*actual*’ body in performance. See footnote 13 and Derrida, J “*That Dangerous Supplement*”, in Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, John Hopkins University Press, (1976) pp141-164) My discussion of Amelia Jones’ position in relation to ‘*performance as documentation*’ expands on this in the body of the text.

¹⁸ Phelan, P ‘Unmarked’, p167 I take my cue from Marquard Smith’s suggestion in a recent interview that if Phelan’s engagement with the invisible comes from her concern with ‘*the difficulties of understanding the nature of visuality*’ and in ‘*looking for ways in which the dematerialisation of vision might make certain possibilities available*’, then if ones ‘[takes] as a starting point ... this point of convergence of the real physical matter of the performing body and the psychic experience of what it is to be embodied, it may well be that some kind of ethics of visibility can emerge too?’ (“*Performance, live culture and things of the heart*”, Peggy Phelan in conversation with Marquard Smith, as before, p296.

¹⁹ See especially Jones’ subtext ‘*The Ontology of the Subject: Through the Body/Again*’, in the first chapter of the book: ‘Postmodernism, Subjectivity and Body Art’, in which she outlines the historical and theoretical basis for her concerns in the book (in Jones, ‘*Body Art*’, as before, pp37-46). Jones’ conception of intersubjectivity has its roots in the French trajectory of phenomenology, informed by Alexandre Kojève’s lecture on Hegel in a series of 1930s seminars given in Paris to Jean-Paul Sartre,

she sees in certain discourses as '*reductive Lacanian models that reduce art reception to purely visual models*' to a more existentialist and phenomenological re-thinking that '*re-embod[ies] the subject of making and viewing art.*'²⁰

My own concern centres on whether it is possible to delineate a similar convergence (in the '*suspension between the “real” physical matter of the performing body and the psychic experience of what it is to be em-bodied*') in the experience of performing and viewing video works as performance (and in a way that might suggest a more physical engagement with and an understanding of the work 'as physical' and as 'em-bodied').)

In a recent essay, '*Reactivation: Performance, Mediatization and the Present Moment*' Philip Auslander suggests one possibility in the notion of '*reactivation*' provided by Walter Benjamin's observations on the interaction of audience and art work, as '*mediated by reproduction*', in the essay "*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*." In it, Benjamin makes the claim that technical reproduction as a '*copy of the original*' can place the latter '*into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself*', thus '*permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his [or her] own particular situation*, [and the technique of reproduction to] *reactivate the object reproduced*'.²¹

Auslander uses Benjamin's notion of '*reactivation*' to suggest that '*the playback of a recorded performance should be understood as a performance in itself*', regardless of its ontological status: that is, as a performance that '*unfold[s] at the time and in the place of listening*' (or in my case, in the time and place of looking, or of both looking and listening and I would add, of experiencing the event as a recording. Auslander (through Benjamin), is not suggesting that

Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jacques Lacan, in which the 'self' is theorized and articulated as '*both embodied and ...in relation to a self/other dialectic*'. (Jones, 'Body Art', as before, p40)

²⁰ Jones, 'Body Art', as before p11. This particular allusion to 're-embodiment' the subject is made with reference to a particular set of cultural discourses in the United States that stage the subject in Lacan's theories of the self '*through a disembodied - if psychically invested- sense of vision that produces her/him as image*' and thus self/other relations in strict opposition. Jones argues that this more '*instrumental*' understanding of self/other relations '*does not do justice to the complexity and indeed phenomenological bases of Lacan's work*' (see Jones, p40 and note 68 on p258). (As an example, Jones refers to Laura Mulvey's formulation of the 'male gaze' in her essay "*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*" and its influence in art critical writing). Jones sees in Lacan and Merleau-Ponty's theories '*the splitting or dissolving of the [centred] Cartesian subject*' of (essentialist) modernism and in Merleau-Ponty's theories in particular, an '*emphatic critique of vision-oriented theories that polarise subject/object relations*' that posits this relation as a '*co-existence*' of self/ other and insists on the '*fully embodied nature of intersubjectivity*' (Jones, Amelia in 'Body Art' as before, p40)

²¹ Quoted in Auslander, P, *Reactivation: Performance, Mediatization and the Present Moment*", in 'Interfaces of Performance', ed. Maria Chatzichristodoulou, Janis Jefferies and Rachel Zerihan, Ashgate 2009 p83; original text in Benjamin, W "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in 'Illuminations', trans. H. Zohn, New York, (1969), p222

the documentation or reproduction is the same as experiencing the performance '*in its original circumstances*' or in the same '*time and place in which it occurred*'. Instead it suggests a different kind of performance that '*brings the performance to me, to be experienced in my temporal and spatial context*' [now], as a different, but nonetheless valid '*restaging*' or '*reactivation*' of the original event that I can experience as a performance '*in the here and now, with myself as audience.*'²²

Auslander's notion of *reactivation* comes very close to what I am trying to get at in his consideration of the document as a different '*restaged*' performance to be experienced in the '*here and now*', that implicitly does not make claims to be the same (experience) as its original status as a live event but nonetheless comes into its own as a live performance through its received (or '*reactivated*') re-performance as documentation. His argument is useful in that it challenges traditional assumptions regarding the authenticity of the experience of a performance that relies on a viewer's presence at an originary (or '*original*') event, suggesting that

*'the authenticity of the performance document resides in its relationship to its beholder...not from treating the document as an indexical access point to a past event, but in perceiving the document itself as a performance'.*²³

However, it still relies on the document's status as a secondary representation (or re-performance) of an '*original*' event or circumstance, to which it ultimately refers, despite claims to its own identity as a performance. It also refers more specifically to audio recordings of music and musical events, as opposed to visual reproductions and recordings in an art context.²⁴

²² op. cit. p84.

²³ Quoted in Ibid, p82; Original text: Auslander, P "The Performativity of Performance Documentation.", in Performing Arts Journal (PAJ), 28/3 (2006), p9

²⁴ In an earlier essay Auslander makes his position clear with regard to this distinction, suggesting that audio recordings are for him performances that occur in the '*present tense*', '*in the moment of listening to them*', whereas video performances occur in the '*past tense*' '*as historical records documenting a specific event that took place at a particular time and place before a specific audience*' and therefore act as a '*means of recreating the historical rather than as performances experienced in the present*'. I do not agree. I will elaborate on my position with regard to this in my examination of Auslander's text (see Auslander, P "Sound and Vision: Record of the Past or Performance in the Present?" presented at the CHARM [Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music], Symposium 1 April 14-16 2005, http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/about/symposia/p7_2_2.html)

Auslander suggests that it is in the notion of *reactivation*, that a renewed status in the reproduction (and re-production)²⁵ of an art work or performance can occur, as an event that focuses on the moment of reception by an audience, arguing that it is at '*the point at which the reproduction discloses the original as a an event occurring in the here and now*' that it becomes '*a production in the present tense, not a replication of an historical past*'.²⁶

This implies a mutual dependency between an original event and its reproduction that goes beyond Amelia Jones' claim in her essay for the document as an indexical confirmation of an event '*having happened*' (in the past) and instead depends on the original event as a '*disclos[ure] of the original [performance]*', that was performed at a particular time and place and is now being re-performed (as a different performance) '*under different circumstances*'.²⁷

I examine Auslander's essay drawing out the basis of his argument through a closer exploration of Benjamin's original term, in order to problematise the complex relationship between 'original' and reproduction that is implied in the essay in the context of technological reproduction, through its relationship to an audience and its experience of the 'event' (reproduced), extending his argument to visual means, particularly in relation to the documentation and reproduction of an event through video.²⁸

²⁵ I am deliberately making a distinction here between the terms 'reproduction' and 're-production' to mean in the former the act of reproducing something in terms of a recording or documentation of an 'original' event and in the latter to mean to perform something again or a renewed performance.

²⁶ Auslander, P "Reactivation", as before, p85

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Whilst Benjamin's notion of *reactivation* speaks to the idea of the document as a reproduction that can be understood as a performance in itself, its main emphasis discusses the way in which reproduction devalues the presence, authenticity and historical significance of the original work of art, which he describes as a loss of '*aura*'.

'*Aura*' is what Benjamin ascribes to the authority of the unique, original work of art. It refers to a kind of aesthetic 'presence', grounded in spiritual experience, which Benjamin asserts can only exist in the unique work of art and which would be 'lost' under the development of modern techniques and technologies of mechanical reproduction, in photography and especially film. It also refers to the kind of 'intersubjective' experience, in the viewing of an original artwork (which has a particular tradition and history), that through its existence and 'presence' in a particular place, at a particular time, 'gazes' back at its viewer. "*Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be*" (Benjamin, "The Work of Art", as before, p220). The term is mainly associated with the essay '*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*' in which it is most elaborately defined. However, a number of critics have picked up on what seems to be (and what Benjamin himself later acknowledged), an instability and inconsistency in Benjamin's original argument that implies the term is somewhat paradoxical. See my analysis of Benjamin's text in the next chapter and Benjamin's own development of the term in his essay "*A Brief History of Photography*" in Amit Chaudhuri (intr.) and J.A. Underwood (tr.), 'One Way Street and Other Writings', Penguin Modern Classics, New Edition, (2009), in which he attributes the notion of aura to photographic portraits. For further articulations of the relationship between *aura* and reproductive technologies see also Miriam Hansen' "*Benjamin's Aura*", in Critical Inquiry, Vol 34 No.2, pp336-376 (2008) and especially Samuel Weber "*Art, Aura and Media in the Work of Walter Benjamin*" in Weber, S 'Mass Mediauras: form, technics, media', Stanford University Press (1996), pp76-107

More pertinent to my concerns however, is an earlier essay by Auslander that shifts the argument more emphatically towards an understanding of the concept of performance as documentation in the absence of the existence of an original live event. Taking Yves Klein's famous constructed performance document '*A Leap into the Void*' in which the 'event' 'documented' never took place, Auslander asks '*What difference does it make to our understanding of [this] image in relation to performance documentation that one documents a performance that [never] "really" happened?*'²⁹

In his analysis he outlines two categories of performance documentation: the documentary ('which represents the traditional way in which the relationship between performance art and its documentation is conceived', as a record of an original event and evidence of its occurrence); and the theatrical

('of the kind sometimes called 'performed photography'... 'in which performances were staged solely to be filmed or photographed and had no meaningful prior existence as autonomous events presented to audiences [and] the space of the document becomes the only space in which the performance occurs').'³⁰

It is to this latter category (of the theatrical in performed photography), to which Auslander suggests that Klein's 'performance' belongs. What is crucial to our understanding of this category is the autonomous existence of the photograph as a record of an event '*that never took place except in the photograph itself.*'³¹ Auslander also draws our attention to the fact that even when a photograph (or moving image) is used as 'secondary' documentation of a 'primary' event occurring in the presence of an 'immediate' audience, this is often 're-staged' in the absence of an audience solely for the purposes of documentation. This ultimately blurs the distinctions between the two categories and raises questions as to the integrity of the '*actual circumstances under which performances are made and documented*'³². It also challenges traditional assumptions about the necessity of an audience's presence as witness to a performance as an 'original' live event and its contribution to our understanding of the concept of the work itself.

²⁹ Auslander, P "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," in PAJ 84 (2006), pp1-10

³⁰ Ibid, p2

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid, p4

It is from this latter proposition (in relation to the presence of an audience as witness to an original event) that I wish take up my position with regard to what Auslander terms the '*performativity of documentation*'³³, that goes beyond the notion of *reactivation* to consider the document as an entity in and of itself in the absence of an original event (or at least in the absence of an original live public event at which an intended audience is present). My interest here is with regard to the performativity of the document, where the notion of performativity is constituted in the act and creation of the document itself. In her essay, Peggy Phelan refers to J.L. Austin's '*performative utterance*', and to his contention that '*a performative utterance cannot be reproduced or represented*',³⁴ using it as an analogy to back up her argument regarding documentation. What is significant in Auslander's formulation is how he turns this argument on its head by suggesting that '*the [very] act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such*'.³⁵ This resonates with me very strongly, as it points to a blurring of the distinction between the document, its creation and its representation (and re-presentation). Auslander's essay claims that performance documents are effectively performances in themselves that do not depend on the existence of an 'original' (live) event or on whether an audience witnessed it. Furthermore, it suggests that the event itself need not even necessarily have actually 'happened' at all. This implies that

'the crucial relationship is not between the document and the performance but between the document and its audience' and that the authenticity of a performance document lies '*in the relationship to its beholder rather than [in its relationship] to an ostensibly originary event*'.³⁶

This points to an authority in the performance document that suggests its relationship to performance is '*phenomenological rather than ontological*', and leaves us to ponder the question (as Auslander does at the end of his essay), as to whether then

'our sense of the presence, power and authenticity... derives not from treating the document as an indexical access point to a past event but from perceiving the document itself as a performance that directly reflects an artists' aesthetic project or sensibility for which we are the present audience'.³⁷

³³ Ibid, p5

³⁴ Phelan, P "The Ontology of Performance", p 149

³⁵ Auslander, P "The Performativity of Performance Documentation", p7

³⁶ Ibid, p9

³⁷ Ibid

Whilst my own position tends towards the notion of the '*performativity of documentation*' as articulated by Auslander in his essay, there appears to be something missing from his argument in the relationship he describes between the document and its audience. This is the consideration of the temporal relationship that is implied between the beholder and his or her experience of the work (in the moment during which it is being viewed and/or heard). I would argue that this is crucial to the '*sense of presence, power and authenticity... in perceiving the document itself as a performance...for which we are the present audience*' and makes the phenomenological relationship that Auslander suggests even more implicit (although, contrary to Auslander, I maintain the existence of an ontological dimension). This is the main subject of the discussion in the next chapter.

First I wish to lay the ground for my own position more fully with regard to the consideration of documentation as performance. In order to do this I have to return to Jones' essay in which she outlines the basis of her concerns very simply and on a practical level from the start. Having grown up through an 'explosive' period in contemporary art-history in the 1960s and 1970s, in which key performance art works were being or had already been performed by major artists we now commonly associate as important figures in the development of performance art practices³⁸, she admits to her own subsequent experience as a young art-historian, of studying performance from this crucial period '*entirely through its documentation*' (because she would have been too young or too uninformed to have experienced them in person).

When invited to contribute to a collection of essays in a special issue of Art Journal on the subject of performance in which the essay first appears, she deliberately uses her lack of experience '*of being there – in the flesh as it were*', to provide a counter-narrative to the other essays, prompted by the '*problematic of a person...doing work on performances you have not*

³⁸ Jones, A, "Presence in Absentia", p.11 Jones cites artists such as Carolee Scheeman and her work 'Meat Joy', performed in Paris at the Festival of Free Expression in 1964; Yoko Ono and her performance 'Cut Piece', performed in Kyoto a year later; Vito Acconci's 'Push Ups', performed on Jones Beach in 1970; Barbara T Smith's 'Ritual Meal' performance in Los Angeles in the same year; Adrian Piper's 'Catalysis' series performed in the streets of New York in 1971; Valie Export's *Eros/Ion* performed in Frankfurt the following year; Gina Pane's 'Sentimental Action', performed in Milan in 1973 and Marina Abramovic and Ulay's 'Relation in Space', performed at the Venice Biennale in 1976. I have included the dates and places of each performance, that Jones' refers to, to acknowledge the importance placed on the particularity of a performance being performed in a particular place at a particular time, which is often emphasised in arguments against documentation, with the importance of 'being there' to experience the performance in that place at that time.

seen in person,’ to force the issue of ‘not having been there’, and thus argue her approach and position.

Jones argues that the problems raised by her not being there in person, ‘*are largely logistical, rather than ethical or hermeneutic.*’ Whilst she acknowledges that the experience of viewing a document in the form of written document or photographic record is ‘*clearly different from that of sitting in a small room watching an artist perform*’, she claims that ‘*neither has a privileged relationship to the historical “truth” of the performance*’. In other words, neither can claim a better understanding of the work or of the artist’s intentions; whilst a certain knowledge of the work can be gained by ‘*participating in a live performance situation*’, other kinds of equally valid and specific knowledges can also develop ‘*in relation to the documentary traces of such an event.*’ Crucially, she claims that an understanding of a work (and its particular nuances of context, narrative and/or process) can often come with hindsight and distance, with the opportunity to look back and evaluate a performance retrospectively.³⁹ More importantly, and relative to my own concerns, she uses the essay to force the agenda on the performative nature of the artworks ‘*through their photographic, textual, oral, video and/or film traces*’, identifying in the term ‘*body art*’ (as opposed to the more general term performance art), the specificity of her particular interest in work that ‘*may or may not initially have taken place in front of an audience*’ and that is ‘*informed by an embodied, phenomenological model of intersubjectivity*’, locating her concerns in the ontological dimensions of the body as subject and object of the work.⁴⁰ Moreover, she insists on the relationship to documentation and representation as the challenge to what she sees as the ‘*masculinism, racism, colonialism, classism and heterosexism*’, built into the ‘*the fixed normative, centred, modernist subject,*’ of late 1950s and 1960s modernism.⁴¹

³⁹ However, according to Jacki Apple, author of another essay in the same journal, ‘*selective memory can come easily to critics and curators engaged in restaging history, even with the best intentions.*’ Furthermore, in the taught environment of an art school or university, a younger generation can often come to ‘*associate a rich and diverse art form only through its stars and the most sensationalised or commercialised works. Left to further reinterpretation by those twice removed from the live experience and context of the original work, it is not surprising that even sufficiently documented works are misrepresented, while significant works have all but vanished in the art world’s memory and slipped into history’s void.*’ (Apple, Jacki “Resurrecting the “Disappeared”: Recollections of Artists in Absentia”, op. cit, p6)

⁴⁰ Jones’ claim to an ontological dimension being present in documented works is what particularly interests me here as it radically departs from traditional understandings of the term vis-à-vis performance, which insist on its ‘existence’ as only being able to be secured through the physical, actual presence of the performer.

⁴¹ Jones’ project is strictly feminist in its concerns both as a critique of what she sees as the dominant ‘male’ interpretations in art-historical discourse and also in alignment with the particular social and

My own project acknowledges the relevance and importance of Jones' work in her (feminist) critique of '*conventional masculinist models of artistic interpretation*' that is specific to the emergence of the '*body art*' practices she exemplifies, but has its own emphasis on the phenomenological dimensions of Jones' work that reference Merleau-Ponty's thought, specifically in relation to the '*problematics of presence and absence that are brought to the surface*' by '*body art*' practices that stress the '*embodiment [and performance] of subjectivity*' and the '*inter-subjective*', reciprocal relationship of art work to viewer. I will come to this later.

Thus it is through a series of case studies of key performances that she experienced entirely through documentation (except for one, which she acknowledges she experienced in both live and in documented form), that Jones enacts her relationship to the work itself, to the body and to documentation. Carefully chosen, they are symptomatic of '*body art*' practices in that they themselves enact highly charged, provocative narratives of female sexuality and subjectivities (the artists using themselves as subjects and objects of the work), that specifically draw on the histories of predominantly male Western art-historical discourse and the viewing of artworks in their enactment of the male gaze, through the acting out of their own pleasures and desires with the material flesh of the body itself. These include: Carolee Schneeman's '*Interior Scroll*' (1963), in which the artist '*pulled a long thin coil of paper from her vagina.., unrolling it to read a narrative text to the audience*'; Yayoi Kasuma's Self Portrait Photographs (1960), in which the artist '*[enacts] herself as pinup on one of her vertiginous landscapes of phallic knobs', '[highlighting] her naked, Asian female body*' with a series of polka dots that cover her flesh; Annie Sprinkle's, '*Post Post Porn Modernist*', in which the artist (and former sex worker) '*displays her cervix to audience members... and beckons audience members to file by and take a look.*'⁴²

political time-period which she is describing (of the late 1960s and early 1970s), within which '*body art*' practices emerged. Within this framework Jones' conceives her text as providing the link between Merleau-Ponty's '*critique of the Cartesian subject*' to Simone de Beauvoir's '*feminist rethinking of the existentialist and phenomenological theory of the social subject*' (Jones' words) in her seminal book '*The Second Sex*' (Jonathan Cape; Alfred A Knopf; trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (2009); Originally published as '*Le Deuxième Sexe*', Editions Gaminard (1949)). Jones' project is an attempt to link these theories to the '*phenomenologically inflected, feminist poststructuralist models of performative subjectivity*' in the work that she describes.

⁴² It is important to acknowledge these works that emphasise the particular context that Jones is addressing in her writing, which informs and is the driving force of her work. This is the tendency as she sees it, in art discourse, to downplay or ignore body art practices from 1970 onwards, which Jones relates to '*conventional masculinist models of artistic interpretation*' -that is, in 'reigning' modernist interpretations and models of 'pure visuality' that climaxed in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the work

For Jones, the point is that the female subject in these works is '*not simply a picture*' (to be looked at, fetishized and gazed over like a painted nude),

*'but a deeply constituted... subjectivity in the phenomenological sense, dynamically articulated in relation to others [including Jones, viewing the images here and now in her chair]... in a continually negotiated exchange of desire and identification.'*⁴³

And her 'presence' is made apparent not just through the actual physical presence of a live performance but '*in her fully revealed sexual [material and corporeal] subjectivity*', which Jones claims can also be experienced through documentation as much as it can through live performance. '*Would I have been able to experience her sexed subjectivity more "truthfully" had I been there (to smell and feel the heat of her body)?*' she asks.⁴⁴ By asking this question Jones' deliberately rejects other accounts of these practices that make claims for the status of live performance through the 'guaranteed' physical, 'real life' presence of the artist/performer and the direct experience of the performance by the viewer/audience, where '*nothing stands between spectator and performer.*'⁴⁵ She maintains that

of art historians such as Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, amongst others. Thus she traces a particular intellectual history in the United States and Europe, foregrounding specific performance-related artistic projects that exemplify the '*problematics of presence and absence brought to the surface by body art,*' and highlighting the phenomenological dimensions of French poststructuralist theories, that stress the '*embodiment of subjectivity*'.

⁴³ Jones, A, "*Presence in Absentia*", as before p12 Whilst Jones is clearly referring to the historical relationship to the representation of the female nude in art in her use of the term 'picture', particularly in relation to the history of painting, I think she is also alluding here to Lacan's theories of the picture and of the gaze, which also radically challenge conventional relationships to representation. It is in his essay '*What is a Picture*' that Lacan considers the presence of the viewer in a reciprocal relationship between seeing and being seen, suggesting that it is in our own act of looking that we have to consider ourselves as subjects who are also looked at in the world and who, in our identification and assimilation with the picture (and subject) we are looking at, become constituted as subjects in our own right: '*in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say I am a picture. This is the function that is found at the heart of the institution of the subject in the visible. What determines me at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside...*' (In Jacques Lacan, Jacques-Alain Miller 'The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI' (1977) p106). My own interest in Lacan's conception is particularly in its performative relationship to photography as the subject, who, 'caught' in the field of the gaze is described as an embodiment of light: '*It is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects. Hence it comes about that the gaze is he instrument through which light is embodied and through which...I am photo-graphed.*'

⁴⁴ Jones, A, "*Presence in Absentia*", as before, p13. Although Jones is referring specifically to Carolee Schneeman's 'Interior Scroll' performance, when she makes this remark, this question is applicable to the other case studies she uses in the essay and more particularly to the issue I am discussing here, which is whether one has to 'be there'.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Jones cites Ira Licht's proclamations of '*information directly through transformation*', in the 'Bodyworks', exhibition catalogue, Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art 1975, and other claims for direct unmediated experience made in the early 1970s by Rosemary Mayer and Cindy Nemser and more recently by Catherine Elwes, who writing on performance art by women in 1985, argued that it '*offers women a unique vehicle for making that direct unmediated access [to the audience]. Performance is about the 'real-life' presence of the artist... Nothing stands between spectator and performer.*' (See Elwes, Catherine "Floating Femininity; a Look at Performance Art by Women", in Kent,

'it is precisely by using their bodies as primary material [that], body or performance artists highlight the representational status of such work rather than confirming its ontological priority' emphasising that 'its dependence on documentation to attain symbolic status... expose[s] the impossibility of attaining full knowledge of the self through bodily proximity [alone].'⁴⁶

Therefore, '*having direct physical contact*', she argues, '*does not ensure "knowledge"* [of the artist's] *subjectivity or intentionality any more than does looking at a film or picture of this activity*',⁴⁷ but rather emphasises the ontology of the document in the need for such engagement in order to '*deliver itself [more] fully.*'⁴⁸

Jones' insistence on the need for documentation to 'supplement' the actual body of the artist in live performance directly challenges the ontological priority of live performance that is maintained by many critics and writers on performance. In particular, she seems to sit diametrically opposed to the ideas of writer and performance studies historian Peggy Phelan, known for her strong stance on the ontological dimension of live performance as being strictly non-reproductive. For Phelan, performance's 'being' is directly '*through the presence of living bodies*', where as (strictly) live performance (and '*without a copy*'), it '*plunges into visibility in a maniacally charged present*' and '*the gazing spectator must take everything in*' in the present time before it '*disappears into memory*' after the event. According to Phelan this is what gives performance its very strength, where by '*disappearing into the realm of invisibility*', it '*eludes regulation and control.*'⁴⁹

Defined by its ephemeral nature, it cannot be documented (when it is, for Phelan, '*it ceases to be performance*') Phelan's project therefore '*considers the ontological claims of live*

Sarah and Moreau, Jacqueline (ed.) 'Women's Images of Men', London: Writers and Readers Publishing, (1985), p165.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Jones develops this idea more fully in her later book 'Self Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject', Routledge (2006), in which she explores the way in which artists have used new technologies of representation '*to explore and articulate shifting modes of subjectivity.*' In the fourth chapter: "*Cinematic Self Imaging and the New Televisual Body (Cinema, video, digital video)*", she examines the ontological differences in the production and reception in a range of different televisual media, starting with artists' film and video projects from the 1970s to more recent works from the last decade, which she suggests '*activate the potential of the of the televisual screen to mesh with the flesh of the other.*' Here Jones is less engaged with the articulation of the performativity of the document than with the televisual's capacity to '*represent and enact flesh*', an idea that extends from her phenomenological engagement with the work of Merleau-Ponty and the notion of the flesh as '*the flesh of the world, continually defined and experienced in relation to everyone around us.*' ('Self Image', p159). Whilst this development in Jones' work resonates with me strongly, particularly as a notion of physicality, I want to remain for the moment focused on the performative potential of documentation that informs and grounds this later development and my own concerns.

⁴⁹ Phelan, P 'Unmarked', as before, p148

*performance as means of resisting the reproductive ideology of visible representations*⁵⁰

locating the subject in ‘what cannot be reproduced’ and in an ‘ideology’ of invisibility and disappearance.

Phelan’s position is grounded in Lacanian psychoanalysis and feminist theories of representation in which the relationship between the real and the representational are foregrounded in the ‘unequal’ and ‘marked’ relation between seeing and being seen and between a self and other dichotomy (the latter, a relation that Jones strictly opposes). This is examined through the politics of visibility that is woven into discourses of the real and used as a means of exposing the ways in which the ‘*visible real*’ (as that which is really there) is employed as a system of belief in the establishment of discursive and representational notions of the real.⁵¹ ‘*Representation*’, claims Phelan, *follows two laws: it always conveys more than it intends; and is never totalising.*’ This emphasises that fact that whilst the ‘excess’ of representation creates supplements that enable ‘*multiple and resistant readings*’, it also ‘*fails to reproduce the real exactly.*’ As such the concept of the Real (as defined by Lacan and taken up by Phelan), is also defined in the notion of its own endless impossibility or failure (to

⁵⁰ Phelan, P ‘Unmarked’, p31

⁵¹ The idea of the spectator as ‘witness’ to the live event is an example of this. It is important to stress as Phelan does in her text that there are differing notions of the real within Western discourses. Within the history of theatrical performance the real is what performance ‘*defines itself against* [as a live event], even while *reduplicating its effects* [in the ability to be performed again]’; In Lacanian psychoanalysis it is the notion of full Being itself as a totality and is generally distinguished from other forms of the real with the use of a capital R. (See p3 in ‘Unmarked’).

The Real as defined by Lacan should also be understood in conjunction with the other categories of the ‘symbolic’ and the ‘imaginary’. Together, these form a triangle of psychic fields that function to situate subjectivity within a system of perception and a dialogue with the external world. The ‘*imaginary*’ is most clearly articulated in what Lacan defines as the ‘*Mirror Stage*’, which concerns the process of self-identification in the early development of the subject, where as an infant he or she comes to recognise his or her own self as an image in a mirror and in doing so can also recognise that his or her reflection is both a reflection of his or her own face and also only a reflected image (the image reflected is both him or her and at the same time not him or her; it is other). The *Mirror Stage* serves as a fundamental basis of Lacan’s Gaze theory, in the desire to see and be seen and in the desire for the (reciprocal) gaze of the Other. In doing so it marks the paradoxical nature of the *Mirror Stage* (and of the Gaze) in the ‘failure’ of self-seeing, in that in seeing oneself in the image of the other, one also sees the other in one’s self image. This constitutes itself as a (misrecognition and as a) loss. It is this (notion of) loss or failure that particularly concerns Phelan: ‘*All seeing is hooded with loss- the loss of self-seeing. In looking at the other (animate or inanimate) the subject seeks to see itself.*’ (Unmarked, as before, p16) Whilst Lacan is interested in the implications of this on the development of the subject, Phelan claims her concern is with the ‘*political and aesthetic consequences of the different access certain people have to “the image of the other”*’, locating this in particular in the desire for a reciprocal gaze (and the reciprocal nature of desire) that Lacan’s theory suggests: ‘*The desire to see is a manifestation of the desire to be seen, in live performance as well as in the spectator’s relation to inanimate representation.*’ (p18) The idea of self-(mis)recognition is picked up again in the latter part of Chapter 3 with regard to Mark B.N. Hansen’s references to the work of Bruce Nauman and Brian Massumi’s articulation of the of ‘the bleed’ that conceives of the failure of self-seeing in the notion of ‘the body without an image.’ (Phelan, P in ‘Unmarked’, p16and p18; See also Lacan’s “*The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I*” in ‘Ecrits: 1-7 [Ecrits: a selection, tr. Alan Sheridan, New York: W.W.Norton (1977)].

make real) and thus resists representation.⁵² But seeing by and in itself also produces its own distortions (or misrepresentations) in the impossibility of being able see all ('eyes fail': it is impossible to see everything; thus seeing the real is materially impossible). Thus the real also confirms its paradoxical need for supplementation as an affirmation and belief of its own existence or 'being' (the old adage 'seeing is believing', being rooted in the ideology of the visible in Western art historical discourse), where '*to see is nothing if it is not replied to, confirmed by recourse to another image, and/or another's eye*'⁵³ that is negotiated through and by representation/s.

Phelan wants to expose the ways in which this '*visible real*' operates as a 'truth-effect' for establishing representational notions of the real, suggesting in live performance that by '*seeing the blindspot [of disappearance] within the visible real [of the physical presence of living bodies], we might see a way to redesign the representational real*' as something that might be more reliable. Thus for Phelan,

[Live] '*Performance insofar as it can be defined as representation without reproduction can be seen as a model for another representational economy, where the reproduction of the Other as the same [the Other being representation], is no longer assured.*'⁵⁴

Phelan admits to the way in which '*the body-in performance puts forward its own lack*' in what Jones claims is '*its inability to deliver itself fully*', but rather than use this to explore the ontological dynamic of performance by recourse to an extended notion of performance through the subjectivity of the body in representations and supplements (and through the interpretation and meaning of the work) as Jones does, she insists on using the performer's body itself to expose this lack, marking '*the body itself as a loss*' in order '*to pose a question about the inability to secure the relation between subjectivity and the body per se*'. In doing so, she ensures in the process of loss (in what has 'been seen') and in the impossibility to realise

⁵² Phelan, P 'Unmarked', p2.

⁵³ Ibid p18

⁵⁴ Ibid p3. For Phelan there is an insufficient understanding of the relationship between the real and the representational that is bound up in the politics of visibility, power and identity and leads to '*mistake the relation between the real and the representational*' and thus to a confusion between the two. This confusion arises according to Phelan because '*the real is read through representation and representation is read through the real.*' ('Unmarked', p2) To support this view she points to Judith Butler's observations in her essay, "The Force of Fantasy: Feminism, Mapplethorpe and Discursive Excesses," in which she claims that '*the real is positioned both before and after its representation; and representation becomes a moment for the reproduction and consolidation of the real*' (Butler, J "The Force of Fantasy, Feminism, Mapplethorpe and Discursive Excesses," in Differences 2(2) (Summer) p106)

the real, (in both live performance and its representations) that the desire for the real is continuously maintained but never realised.⁵⁵

*'Performance, claims Phelan 'uses the body to frame the lack of Being promised by and through the body- that which cannot appear without a supplement... performance marks the body itself as a loss... for the spectator the performance spectacle is itself a projection of the scenario in which her own desire takes place.'*⁵⁶

It is within this continuous tension or suspension (between the real of the physical matter of the presence of the body and its almost immediate subsequent disappearance), where the power of performance, for Phelan lies. Phelan calls this immateriality '*unmarked*' (in that '*it shows itself through the negative and through disappearance*'), which she expresses more precisely (and performatively), as an '*active vanishing*', [as] *a deliberate and conscious refusal to take the payoff of visibility'*.⁵⁷

Phelan's argument is laudable inasmuch as it is rooted in the political dimensions of a critique of the commodity that resists '*ideologies of capital and reproduction*', which gives live performance its edge and from which it derives its uniqueness and '*independence from mass reproduction*'. My own concern has less to do with the nature of reproduction as it concerns the '*circulatory*' economy of value and currency in mass-reproduction/s that '*determine 'value' in the art-world*', but rather how the nature of reproduction in the recording and representation of the body as (a) subject and as art can itself also constitute (a) performance and how that can leave '*an experience of value*' with its audience that is not determined economically, but materially, visibly, physically, experientially, and also ontologically.

My own concern has to do with a certain thinking around the body and its representation and reproduction (particularly its representation through technological means) that appears to resist being thought of in ontological terms. Peggy Phelan's text for instance, suggests that it is only possible to think of the body ontologically as a live, physical and real presence. I want

⁵⁵ *Taking in the visual world* says Phelan '*is a process of loss... To apprehend and recognise the visible is to eliminate as well as absorb visual data. Just as surely as representational technologies order visual apprehension to accord with a constructed notion of the real, so too do human eyes... The camera modelled on the human eye, reproduces the (faulty) sight of the eye. Together the eye and the camera in mimetic correspondence, naturalise the visible real by turning it into something 'seen', in 'Unmarked', as before,* p14

⁵⁶ Ibid, p151-2

⁵⁷ Ibid, p.19. This is a direct reference to a refusal by Phelan to be a part of the '*visibility-is-currency economy*' that she claims '*determines value in the "art-world"*'. (See my further elaboration on this in the text)

to have the possibility to think about and experience the body as an ontological presence through and as mediated representation. Thus I look to Jones through the phenomenological dimensions of her work that reference Merleau-Ponty's thought, specifically in relation to the '*problematics of presence and absence that are brought to the surface*' by the '*body art*' practices she exemplifies, which stress the '*embodiment [and performance] of subjectivity*' and the '*inter-subjective*', reciprocal relationship of art work to viewer through the performative dimensions of performance documentation.⁵⁸

In her essay Jones suggests that the body in live performance is '*not self sufficient in its meaningfulness, but relies not only on the authorial context of "signature" but also on the receptive context*' in which the viewer or spectator 'interacts' with this [performing] body, through an interpretive exchange that determines meaning that is clearly contingent on the '*register of the action itself*' on its audience.⁵⁹ This implies that a document of the body in

⁵⁸ Jones, A 'Body Art: Performing the Subject', University of Minnesota Press 1998, p15. Jones bases her concerns in relation to the twentieth century phenomenological critics of Cartesian perceptivalism such as Merleau-Ponty, who challenged dominant conceptions of Western art-historical thought, especially in the post-war period. Particular to this was the notion of the Cartesian subject as conceived by René Descartes' dualistic conception of a disembodied, transcendent consciousness that is opposed to the physical ('brute') object of the body (See Jones, A 'Body Art', p37; original source: Descartes, René 'Discourse in Method, Optics, Geometry and Meteorology', tr. Paul J Olscamp, Indiana University Press, 1965, p28). Jones claims a similar conception in art modernism from the same post-war period led a number of artists to draw instead on phenomenological modes of subjectivity to '*enact their embodied subjectivities in relation to audiences with this intersubjective exchange constitutive of the work of art*', pointing to Cindy Nemser's article "*Subject-Object Body Art*", as one of the earliest discussions on the subject of '*body art*'. In this article, Nemser quotes from Merleau-Ponty in order to provide the conceptual link to phenomenological concerns in '*body art*' practices.(See Jones, A 'Body Art', p37and Nemser, C "*Subject-Object Body Art*", p38; original source: Merleau-Ponty, M 'The Primacy of Perception', Northwestern University Press, 1964)

Jones makes links to French theories of subjectivism and signification through the development of post-structuralism during this period, which she claims '*confirm the usefulness of exploring body art through a phenomenological and feminist framework, as all three phenomena are interrelated in their compulsion to dissolve and/or interrogate the modernist subject*'. (Jones, A 'Body Art', p39)

In addition she explains the importance and influence of the work of sociologists such as Erving Goffman, on artists such as Vito Acconci, who was also familiar with the writings of Merleau-Ponty. Goffman's book 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life', (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959), '*discusses the self as a performance in relation to others, a negotiation involving complex intersubjective cues and behaviors.*', and draws on the work of sociologists, cultural theorists and psychoanalysts '*link[ing] together theoretical explorations of the self and performative bodies of body art*' (Jones, A 'Body Art', p39). For more on Acconci's relationship to the work of Merleau-Ponty, see Kate Linker's book 'Vito Acconci', New York: Rizzoli, (1994).

⁵⁹ Jones, A "Presence", as before, p14 It is worth establishing the particular concepts behind Merleau-Ponty's thought that are important to Jones' own articulation of his theory and which provide the theoretical grounding for and are central to concerns in her '*attempt to rethink body-art.*' Jones spends some considerable time determining these in the first chapter of her book in order to explain the significance of the body[as]subject and the ontological dynamic that is at the core of the work she describes (see Jones, A 'Body Art,' especially pp32- 46).

Merleau-Ponty's thought is centred on lived, embodied nature of human consciousness and perception in the significance of the body and the self and in what he terms the body-subject. This is established in his earlier writings, in 'Phenomenology of Perception' (1962) and 'The Primacy of Perception' (1964) These concerns have their roots in the notion of the embodied self, articulated through his or her relationship to the world and to others and in terms of the body's capacity to act in relation to these. The concept of perception is at the heart of these relationships, emphasised in the need to recognise that human beings are subjects and concrete entities that are part of a material world in which '*perception*

performance, ‘can be just as clearly contingent... in the meaning that accrues to this action’, dependent as it is on how the image is contextualised and interpreted (and I would add, experienced). Thus Jones argues, whilst a document of an event can seem to act as a supplement to the actual body of the artist in a performance event, so too can the body itself be exposed as supplementary (to itself), in its existence ‘as both the visible ‘proof’ (of itself) and of its endless deferral’, and as both an indicator and continuous reminder of (its) physical absence.⁶⁰

Jones draws heavily on Jacques Derrida’s essay on the supplement (and as I have previously noted, so does Phelan in her argument against documentation), in which he writes about the relationship between speech, writing and representation. In it he suggests that ‘*the infinite process of supplementarity has always already infiltrated presence.*’ Whilst for Derrida this presents a danger to speech in making it present “*when it is actually absent*” (as it does for Phelan with regard to live performance), for Jones this serves to bring the notion and sense of (bodily) presence to the fore. Here the word ‘sense’ is particularly important to me in establishing an embodied notion of presence by which body ‘supplements’ (as mediated representations of the body), also (as Derrida goes on to argue):

occurs and subjectivity is formed.’ For Merleau-Ponty existence is not in thinking but in embodiment, thus all thinking is embodied. As such actions of the body (subject) are inseparable from the perceiving body (subject) since it is through the body that the world can be accessed. Thus our identity (or subjectivity) is (in)formed through the physicality of our bodies and shaped by our experiences in the world. This is developed through an interconnection (or ‘*intersubjective*’ relationship) between acting and perceiving, ensuring no distinction between the act of perceiving and the thing perceived. This latter relationship is made more implicit in Merleau-Ponty’s later work, in his final, unfinished text, ‘The Visible and the Invisible’ (published posthumously in 1968) in which the notion of the *Chiasm* is developed as an ontological thematic. This is conceptualised in the fully embodied nature of ‘*intersubjectivity*’, developed from previous work and conceived as an overlapping reciprocity of self and other as simultaneous subject/objects (rather than *oscillating positionalities*). It is to these concerns that Jones is particularly indebted. This insists on an embodiment that goes ‘*beyond vision-oriented models of self and other*’, to theorise a *chiasmic* intertwining of self and other through ‘*the doubled and crossed situating of the visible in the tangible and the tangible in the visible*’ and in the overlapping of the *flesh of the world* with the body itself. For Merleau-Ponty, vision is conceived as a *tissue*, a ‘*flesh of the visible*’, that indicates carnal being and a ‘*flesh of things*’, that is considered less as a thing, but rather as ‘*a possibility, a latency*’. (Merleau-Ponty, M in ‘The Visible and the Invisible’, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis, pub. Northwestern University Press, 1964, pp134-5; orig. Editions Gallimard 1964) This thinking is particularly productive for me in trying to establish a sense of physicality and tangibility in the experience of making and viewing of video works in which the sense (or sensing) the presence of the body itself (in the work) is very much a part of the work. Jones locates her concerns predominantly in the ‘fully sexual’, nature of Merleau-Ponty’s conception of the body/subject, exemplified in the ‘*merging of the active, cognitive being with the sexual body*’, that is instrumental in his earlier work. Jones addresses this through a specifically gendered and feminist reworking of his theory, that is indebted to Simone de Beauvoir’s influential text ‘The Second Sex’ (See Jones, A ‘Body Art’, p41) My own relationship to Merleau-Ponty has less to do with the implicitly gender-specific reworking of his theory that is particular to Jones’ project than with trying to (re)think through his conception of the ‘*visible in the tangible and the tangible in the visible*’, as a viable ontological concept in relation in experiencing a sense of the body that I claim is particular to video representation.

⁶⁰ Jones, A “*Presence*”, p15

*"produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, or originary perception. Immediacy is derived... The play of substitution fills and marks a determined lack."*⁶¹

Phelan would agree with this and would use it to back up her argument against documentation (although she admits to the paradox *"that in writing a testimony to the power of the undocumentable and the nonreproductive I engage the document of the written reproducible text itself"*⁶²). However, I think that she may be missing something that is particular to mediated representation that lies in the very notion of what Derrida is saying and that has to do with what he calls '*originary perception*' and to '*produc[ing] the sense of the very thing*' (in this case, in producing the sense of the very thing -the body). I am wondering whether this notion could not in fact be akin to, or (re)thought about as this '*suspension between the "real" physical matter of the "performing body" and the psychic experience of what it is to be embodied*' that Phelan talks about? This is not to make a claim for mediated presence as being the same (thing) as actual, physical presence, but that in being able to perceive or experience a '*sense of the very thing*' as an embodied presence, or as being embodied, could this not constitute a meeting point (that could be described as the '*suspension*') that lies between these two? Derrida's description of the supplement as having '*infiltrated presence*' (and I would extend this to having an infiltrated presence) seems to me to be particularly apt here. Jones too, suggests that '*rather than confirming the ontological coherence of the body-as-presence, body art depends on documentation, confirming-even exacerbating- the supplementarity of the body itself.*'⁶³

Whilst as she points out, this has tended towards the use of documentation as 'proof' of an event having occurred or to '*entail some previous "real" event*' as a more authentic (or real) experience, she identifies in her claim for the document as performance a shift from the '*site of presence*' from '*arts object to art's audience, from the textual or plastic to the experiential.*'⁶⁴ What is significant for Jones about this shift is the shift in the reception of the artwork to audience as a '*new destabilized siting in reception*' made in the audience's experience of the artwork through and as documentation. In particular, she refers to Henry

⁶¹ Derrida, Jacques "*That Dangerous Supplement*", p 154

⁶² 'Unmarked', as before, p31. This she claims is also '*the paradox of Lacan's Real*', as that '*toward which we aspire and whose failure to realize is utterly assured*'. In recognition of this failure Phelan writes to '*record the memory of the image of the future that will not be- the one I will never see.*'

⁶³ Jones, A "*Presence*", p15

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Sayre's book 'The Object of Performance', in which he discusses the series of infamous photographs documenting Rudolf Schwartzkögler's supposed suicidal self-mutilation of his penis, an event that was entirely fabricated.⁶⁵ Jones points to '*the construction of a wholly fictive space*', that Sayre in his desire to link the photograph to the 'real' event, appears to ignore.⁶⁶ However, in doing so, she claims, he also indicates his '*unquestioning belief in the photograph of performance as "truth"*'. More pertinent and in relation to my own argument here, (as with Yves Klein's 'constructed photograph', mentioned earlier), is the absence of the 'original event' ever having taken place. As with Klein's 'Leap into the Void', Schwartzkögler's event '*never took place except in the photograph itself*'.

The series of photographs are presented as (if) documentation of a staged event, and are intended to make(us)-believe that the event really happened. They thus play into systems of belief regarding the historical (and continued) use of photographs 'as proof' or confirmation of an event's occurrence despite photography's own history to the contrary and advances in digital technology that would tell us otherwise.⁶⁷ Jones' argument therefore suggests that even in the absence of an original event (Schwartzkögler had another artist 'pose' for his '*entirely fabricated ritual castration*'), that the

⁶⁵ Sayre, Henry 'The Object of Performance', (University of Chicago Press, (1989). Jones' view is particularly indebted to an essay by Kristine Stiles, in which she critiques Henry Sayre's book pointing out that the photographs are not of Schwartzkögler himself, but of another artist, who posed for his '*entirely fabricated ritual castration*'. (Jones, A "*Presence*", p16 and see also Stiles, K "*Performance and its Objects*", Arts magazine 65, no.3, November 1990, p35)

⁶⁶ In relation to this idea, it is important to refer to Roland Barthes essay "*Rhetoric of the Image*", which Jones also mentions, in which he provides an analysis of the interpretation of the image through its function as representation and re-presentation. In particular, he refers to the photograph as a 'recording', which establishes '*an awareness of having-been-there*' in a convergence of '*spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority*' that he claims is particular to the photograph as a representation of a particular (real) scene or event. In this sense, for Barthes the photograph is '*never experienced as an illusion, is in no way a presence*'.

Interestingly, and more relevant to my own concerns, Barthes goes on to distinguish between film and the photograph as a '*radical opposition*' by which film ('*no longer seen as animated photographs*'), has the '*having- been-there*' of the photograph, gives way before a '*being-there of the thing*.' (See Barthes, R "*Rhetoric of the Image*", in 'Image, Music, Text,' ed. And trans Stephen Heath, New York: Hill & Wang 1977, pp32-51).

⁶⁷ For a critical analysis of the digital image 'revolution' with regard to photography, see Mitchell, William, J 'The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-photographic Era', MIT Press 1992. This text is one of the first to critically examine the nature of photographic veracity in relation to the emerging technologies of digital image manipulation. Also worth a look is Lev Manovich's later essay, "*The Paradoxes of Digital Photography*", in which he presents the logic of the digital image as paradoxical, by questioning '*alleged physical differences between digital and film-based representation of photographs and the notion of realism in computer generated synthetic photography*.' (Source: <http://manovich.net/articles/>, published in 'Photography After Photography', Exhibition catalogue, Germany, 1995)

*'the presentation of the self – in performance, in the photograph, film or video – calls out the mutual supplementarity of the body and the subject', (with 'the body as material object in the world seem[ing] to confirm the "presence" of the subject' and 'the subject giving the body its significance as "human"', as well as of performance or body art and the photographic document.'*⁶⁸

In other words, that the performance or 'body art event' '*needs the photograph to confirm its having 'happened'* and the photograph '*needs the performance or body art event as an ontological "anchor" of its indexicality.*'⁶⁹

I do not entirely agree. Whilst I understand on the one hand that whether or not an object or event actually 'existed' or 'happened', the reference to (or belief in) an 'original' object or event, still serves nonetheless as the '*ontological anchor of its indexicality*' in relation to its photographic 'documentation', even if that documentation is in the end fabricated (with the photograph or video referring back to the existence of the object or event itself). On the other hand, it also confirms Jones' dependence on the status of the photograph as '*an access point to the [assumed] reality of the performance*', even whilst knowing of the existence of entirely fabricated events and documents such as Schwartzkögler's (the mythology surrounding this story and its circulation 'as' an event that may or may not have happened become surrogates for the 'original' event, eventually 'becoming' the original' event itself). In her essay Jones in fact insists on this relationship (between the document and the original event), in defence of her writing about performances at which she was not present, whilst admitting to her dependence on such documents to acquire meaning and knowledge of the 'original' performance/s.

It would seem then that Jones needs the existence of the original event to provide her with an '*ontological anchor*' for the document as index so that she can argue for the ontology of the

⁶⁸ Jones, A "Presence", p16

⁶⁹ Ibid. It is worth mentioning here Rosalind Krauss' essay "*Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America*", (that Jones also refers to in her text), in which Jones acknowledges '*the philosophical reciprocity of photography and performance*', by specifically positioning the two as different types of 'index', through which each function as an '*art of the present*'. Krauss points to '*the pervasiveness of the photograph as a means of representation... But it is not just the heightened presence of the photograph itself that is significant. Rather it is the photograph combined with the explicit terms of the index.*' -that is, as a combination of relationships '*in the installation of presence by means of the index*', in which the index operates through continuous references to an 'original' object (or body) in the documentation and creation of work, where the work becomes '*the overwhelming physical presence of the original object, fixed in this trace of the [photograph or] cast.*' In this sense for Krauss, the index functions as an '*art of the present*', in the '*substitution* of sheer physical presence for the more highly articulated language of aesthetic conventions (and the kind of history they encode).' (Source: "*Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America*", October, Vol. 3 (Spring, 1977), pp. 79-81(Whole text: pp 68-81) Jones points out however, that in failing to "go beyond" the contingency of aesthetic codes' both photography and performance as indexes '*announce the supplementarity of the index itself.*' ("Presence", as before, p16)

document itself. My own concerns have rather to do with whether it is possible to think about the document ontologically, independently of an 'original event' (whether it is fabricated or not), and in the absence of an indexical reference. More specifically, whether that ontology might be more particular to film or video as it is (re)experienced in documented form (as opposed to still photography) and more pertinently, when video is experienced (as) live.⁷⁰

In order to try and tease this out I want to turn to Philip Auslander, whose writing '*questions the status of live performance in a culture dominated by mass media*'.⁷¹ My encounter with Auslander's work has been primarily through his book 'Liveness in a Mediatized Culture',⁷² in which he asks the provocative question '*Are live performances and recordings really different from each other?*' and suggests that '*media technology has encroached on live events to the point where many are hardly live at all.*'⁷³ Whilst his concerns are much wider with regard to notions of live performance and its many cultural contexts (that include the performance of theatre, music, sporting events, courtroom trials, as well as performance within an art context), he spends some considerable time discussing relationships between live performance and the uses of technological media within the live event to make his claims, asserting their (traditional) oppositional, binary status as 'reductive'. Within this tradition he claims, '*the live comes to stand for a category outside representation.*' Auslander's aims then are '*both to exploit and to challenge the traditional way of thinking about liveness and its cultural position [in the 21st century], by employing its terms [of opposition] and opening those terms themselves to critique.*'⁷⁴

However, rather than arguing for an ontology of the document, by extending the notion of performance to '*photography, video and/or text*', through the *enactment* of the artists' body,

⁷⁰ My thinking refers back to Roland Barthes' distinction between the two, which I referred to earlier (see footnote 65). Barthes suggests that the '*kind of temporal equilibrium*' that is established in the photograph of '*having-been-there*'... '*diminishes the projective power of the image*' in the photograph, with the present ('it's me'), continuously referring back to a past ('this was so') that he claims '*must be related to a pure spectatorial consciousness and not to the more projective, more 'magical' fictional consciousness on which film by and large depends*'. (Barthes, R "Rhetoric", pp44-45) I would also add that it is the particularity of the photograph as a still (and not moving) image (digital or otherwise), that suspends the image as a temporal equivalence of the present into the past (whereas a moving image, even if referring to a past event, allows the image to project the present forwards through the passing of an event in time in the movement of the image being watched now).

⁷¹ Auslander, P, 'Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture', Routledge (1999), Back cover.

⁷² Two editions of this book have been published. Except where stated, I am primarily referring to the first edition, published in 1999.

⁷³ Auslander, P, 'Liveness', as before, Back cover.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p3

as Jones does, Auslander explicitly argues against ontology in his articulation of his position regarding media representation, or as he terms it '*mediatized performance*'.⁷⁵ That is, '*performance that is circulated on television as audio or video recordings, and in other forms based in technologies of reproduction.*'⁷⁶

Auslander's primary concern here is with '*the relationship between live performance and what may now be called "old media"* (e.g. television, film, sound recording)', as opposed to primarily basing his discussion with regard to the impact on live performance of digital media technologies.⁷⁷ This is helpful with regard to my own concerns since the root of my interest is the particular relationship between video and performance that developed in the 1960s and 1970s (that also had to do with the emergence of video and television as electronic media technologies into the mainstream) that I claim reveals a particular (and prescient) understanding of media in its effect on notions of presence through '*the problematic real of technologically mediated experience.*'⁷⁸

Auslander bases his argument against ontology on the perceived '*oppositional relationship between the live and the mediatized*', stating his desire to '*both exploit and deconstruct that opposition*',⁷⁹ which he bases on (traditional) ontological distinctions made with regard to live performance through its resistance to the market and media and the dominant cultural economies they represent. This is a position that Auslander says he finds untenable since his view is based on the claim that the incursion of media into the live event has diminished distinctions between the two to the point where one might question '*whether there really are*

⁷⁵ This view is set out in an earlier essay "*Against Ontology: making Distinctions between the Live and the Mediatized*" in *Performance Research* 2(3), Routledge 1997, pp50-55, which I will go on to discuss.

⁷⁶ Auslander, P 'Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture', Routledge 1999, p5. Auslander refers to Baudrillard's definition of the term *mediatized* in his book 'For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign', (trans. Charles Levin, St Louis: Telos Press, 1981), that suggests that media is 'not a neutral term describing products of the media, but part of a larger "socio-political process of bringing all discourses under the dominance of a single code" ('*What is mediatized is not what comes off the daily press, out of the tube or on the radio: it is what is reinterpreted by the sign form, articulated into models and administered by the code*'). Auslander departs from this definition somewhat by using the term to define cultural modes of production (which Baudrillard rejects) whilst retaining in his use of the term more specifically in relation to Baudrillard's '*characterisation of the mass media as the cultural dominant of contemporary western/ized societies*' (p5).

Inasmuch as Auslander's claims to the treatment of live and 'mediatised' performance '*as parallel forms*', he suggests a closer relationship to Fredric Jameson's use of the term to mean '*the process whereby the traditional fine arts... come to consciousness of themselves as various media within a mediatic system*' (See Jameson, F 'Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', Duke University Press, 1991, p162). For a further quite different definition and reference to the term see Paul Virilio 'The Art of the Motor', (trans. Julie Rose, University of Minnesota Press, p6), and also my reference to this in the Introduction.

⁷⁷ Auslander, P 'Liveness', p5.

⁷⁸ Wagner, A "Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence", in October 91, Winter 2000, pp81-100. See my Introduction in Chapter 1, p 3.

⁷⁹ Auslander, P 'Liveness', p4

clear-cut ontological distinctions between live forms and mediatised ones'. In particular, his argument rests on the assertion that

*'if live performance cannot be shown to be economically independent of, immune from contamination by, and ontologically different from mediatised forms, in what sense can live performance function as a site of cultural and ideological resistance as [advocates of the ideologies surrounding live performance such as], Phelan, and others claim?'*⁸⁰

Auslander devotes a large part of the second chapter to discussing this with particular reference to Peggy Phelan's position. He begins with an overview of the status of live performance '*in a culture dominated by mass media*', discussing historical relationships through the relationship between theatre and early television in the United States, before going on to examine '*the more recent phenomenon of live events modelling themselves on mediatised representations in [what he claims is] a reversal of the historical pattern*', turning to performance theory to '*challenge its grounding of the distinction between the live and the mediatised in ostensible ontological differences...*'⁸¹

Whilst the argument that Auslander presents are indeed challenging and thought-provoking, given the historical precedence placed on Phelan's position within the context of live performance, I have some difficulty with his approach as he bases his argument within such a broad cultural context that includes live performance primarily within the (mass media event) contexts of theatre and television (and also music), that he seems to ignore the particularity of many (smaller and more intimate) live performances within an art context, that have to do with the presence of '*a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame*'⁸², in which the discussion regarding ontological distinctions are particularly heightened and where the relationships between performer and audience for example, are completely different.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p7

⁸¹ Ibid, p8

⁸² Phelan, 'Unmarked', p149 He fails to mention the importance of a number of artists (most notably artists such as Nam June Paik) who were particularly influential in the development and integration of (electronic) media into art, initially through live (art) performance 'Happenings' events in the United States and whose work directly confronted the language, technological, cultural and political contexts of its expansion and extension into the mainstream (although he does briefly mention 'Filmstage', a series of multimedia experiments carried out by theatre, film and performance artists in the 1960s that combined live performance with film and he mentions Carolee Schneeman and Robert Whiteman's involvement in 'Happenings' events in a footnote. See Auslander.'Liveness', p37). Regarding the questions of ontology and intimacy in particular, Vito Acconci's, uses of video in his performance work was a means of extending the confrontational and intimate dynamics of his performance work, where the '*video monitor [acts] as one point in a face to face relationship: on-screen, I face the viewer, off-screen.*' (Source from Acconci, V "Some Notes on My Use of Video" (1974), in 'Vito Acconci', eds. Frazer Ward, Mark C.Taylor , Jennifer Bloomer, Phaidon 2002).

Although he refers to '*performance art's incorporation of video*', as '*evidence of the incursion of mediatization into the live event*'⁸³, the examples he uses in relation to art refer to artists such as Laurie Anderson and Spalding Gray, whose work is more music and theatre related and takes on the language and technology of (mass) media into the arena of live performance more readily. This has allowed them as Auslander admits '*to make the smooth transition into acting on film or television.*'⁸⁴

Moreover, he completely disregards Phelan's position on issues of presence and visibility in its insistently rigorous political performance context, claiming his concern is '*only with her fundamental ontological premises.*'⁸⁵ But are not the two intertwined? The basic premise of Phelan's position is the issue of 'real' bodies: '*without a copy live performance plunges into visibility- in a maniacally charged present – and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility, where it eludes regulation and control.*'⁸⁶ This statement of Phelan's has by very definition both an ontological and a political premise that are inseparable from one another. Thus contrary to what Auslander claims and in order to better argue his point against ontology, this should surely be considered as a whole, not in part.

However, there are some elements of what Auslander says that do warrant some consideration. In order to understand his position more fully I wish to trace his argument back to an earlier essay "*Against Ontology: Making Distinctions between the Live and the Mediatised*",⁸⁷ in which he sets out his concerns more distinctly within the environment and context of the televisual. Whilst he maintains his claim to the '*tendency in performance theory*

⁸³ Auslander, P 'Liveness', p7

⁸⁴ Ibid, p29 Laurie Anderson is primarily known for her experimental performance work, particularly in the 1980s, in which she manipulated the sound of her own voice and created instruments and electronic sound devices that she used in recordings within large live public performances, where live and recorded sound were used interchangeably. However, her background is rooted in the emergence of contemporary American performance art work in the early 1970s, in which her work involved both photography and performance. In her book on Body Art, Jones refers to Anderson's own participation alongside the 1975 "Bodyworks" exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and to her remarks concerning the term 'body art' '*that testify to the philosophical conundrums put into play by body art, which highlights the fact that the body is both insistently "there" and always absent*'. Moreover, Jones points to Anderson's observations with regard to documenting her work, in which she notes her initial opposition to documenting her work as a means of avoiding its appropriation and commodification and to her later decision to document her performances on film '*in order to make them more real, more faithful to the event.*' (Jones, A 'Body Art', p32). Interestingly, she claims that Andeerson '*has come to epitomize the integration of the body and technology*', which she develops in a later chapter to stress the ontology of the body through the exploitation of technology. In a disavowal of the '*fantasy of disembodiment*' often associated with the supposed transcendence of the body through technology, Jones acknowledges that whilst technologies '*such as video and computers*' have introduced '*radical dislocations into the conception of the body/self*', they have, she contends, also '*emphasise[d] the embodiment of this subject as, in fact a body/self.*' (Jones, A 'Body Art', p206).

⁸⁵ Auslander, P 'Liveness', p 39. See footnote 23.

⁸⁶ Phelan, P 'Unmarked', as before, p148

⁸⁷ In Performance Research 2(3), Routledge 1997, pp50-55

*to place live performance and mediatized or technologized forms in opposition to one another,*⁸⁸ he suggests that rather than ‘asserting the value of the live’, a more productive outlook and potentially [significant] oppositional gesture’ might be to ‘[use] the technology of reproduction in ways that defy [the] economy [of mediatisation and repetition].’⁸⁹

Using as an example Christine Koslov’s 1970 installation ‘*Information, No theory*’, in which ‘new information continuously replaced existing information’ on a magnetic tape loop placed inside a tape recorder fixed in ‘record’ mode, he points to the ‘functions of reproduction, storage and distribution that animate the network of repetition’ as being undermined by ‘the very technology that brought the network into being.’ In this context, he suggests (in a statement that turns the basis of Phelan’s position around), that ‘reproduction without representation may be more radical than representation without reproduction.’⁹⁰

More pertinently he refers to Phelan’s own discussion of a 1992 performance by Anna Deveare Smith that ‘incorporates [film] media images of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots’ into the performance in a way that ‘seeks to preserve and contain the chaotic flood of images the cameras mechanically reproduced’.⁹¹ According to Auslander, Phelan’s observations emphasise ‘the degree to which Smith’s performance is indebted to the camera’ in such a way that interprets the relationship between film and theatrical performance as one in which ‘the camera’s own performativity needs to be read as theatre.’ Auslander suggests that whilst Phelan ‘describes a subtle interaction between live and mediatized forms that goes beyond a simple opposition’, her requirement that the action of the camera be read as theatre ‘tends to re-inscribe the traditional privileging of the live over the mediatised -in other words, as Auslander interprets it, ‘it is [only] by entering the space of the theatre, or being seen as theatre that the media images can become subject to critique’.⁹²

I’m not sure I agree, since surely what Auslander is asking us to consider is precisely the incorporation of media into the live performance arena (whether it is theatrical or not). Furthermore, that Phelan wants us to ‘read the camera’s own performance as theatre’, surely suggests that she wants us to consider its inclusion into the performance as a whole, despite her earlier assertions regarding the differences between the two being based upon

⁸⁸ Ibid, p50

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Ibid, p51

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Ibid, p52

'[television] cameras [giving] you only "images", whereas 'theatre gives you living truth.'

Phelan's wish to have the camera's performativity read as theatre must then surely suggest that in such an instance and 'as theatre' it also becomes part of theatre's (and Phelan's) '*living truth*'.⁹³

Auslander's purpose to '*destabilise these theoretical oppositions between the live and the mediatised*', which he finds in Phelan's assumed (and traditional) privileging of these two, leads him to consider what he terms the '*electric ontology of media*', by which he contemplates the presence and absence of the televisual image as analogous to live performance, with particular reference to Sean Cubitt's observations on the subject in his 1991 book '*Timeshift: On Video Culture*'. In this text Cubitt suggests that through the electron scanning mechanism of the television broadcast of an image, there is the constant inability to form a 'complete picture', '*the broadcast flow is ... a vanishing, a constant disappearing of*

⁹³ Ibid, (Original source in "*Preface: arresting performances of sexual and racial difference: toward a theory of performative film*", in *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 6(2): p6). Whilst this might seem a somewhat paradoxical position for Phelan to take, a brief reference to a more recent discussion in which Phelan reflects on her position regarding live performance might help clarify certain misunderstandings that she claims critics such as Auslander have concerning her views. When pressed about her position regarding 'the undocumentable event of performance', she replies:

"I was not saying... that we must not have photographs, videos or sound documentation of performance... I teach and use them all the time. I'm not against technology. But I think when one is showing a video one is showing a video; one is not as it were having the performance be re-performed. Video is a different medium and pursues a different aesthetic... I was trying to point out what distinguishes performance ontologically from the photographic and recording arts. Performance's ephemeral nature, I was arguing is absolutely powerful..."

Phil Auslander misreads my essay in significant ways. He likes to say he doesn't believe in the unconscious and I think he thinks this relieves him of having to the obligation to contend with the psychoanalytic dimension of my argument [through which much of Phelan's position regarding the nature of visibility is foregrounded.]..."

I was not in anyway trying to say performances cannot have video, audio or technology. I was trying to notice where performance's political power lies... I am not so stupid as to think performance eschews technology... the definition of theatre. That's a technology!"

Now we have streaming video, web casts, all sorts of media capable of recording and circulating live events. They can give us something that closely resembles the live event but they nonetheless remain something other than live performance. But these are very useful and very interesting tools and I am not against their use at all.

But in terms of the ontological question, it's simply not the same thing. For me live performance remains an interesting art form because it contains the possibility for both the actor and spectator to become transformed during the events' unfolding.

Of course, people can have significant and meaningful experiences of spectatorship watching film or streaming video... But these experiences are less interesting to me because the spectator's response cannot alter the pre-recorded or remotely transmitted performance, and in this fundamental sense, these representations are indifferent to the response of the other. In live performance, the potential for the event to be transformed by those participating in it makes it more exciting to me- this is precisely where the power of performance lies." (extract from "*Performance, live culture and things from the heart: Peggy Phelan (in conversation with Marquard Smith)*", in '*Journal of Visual Culture*', SAGE Publications (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi), Vol.2(3), (2003), pp294-5).

I do not entirely agree with Phelan either, particularly with regard to the notion of re-performance (which I come to later in the main text via Auslander), and her assertion that a remotely transmitted or live-streamed performance or video would remain 'indifferent' and not allow the event to be 'transformed'. I would argue that a live video stream by the very fact that it is live could allow a spectator (or participant) to have a direct response and interaction with a performance and thus enable the performance to alter and thus be 'transformed'.

what has just been shown... TV's presence to the viewer is thus subject to constant flux: it is only intermittently 'present'.⁹⁴ This suggests to Auslander that the notion of disappearance 'may be even more fundamental to television than it is to live performance,' since the television image is 'always simultaneously coming into being and vanishing and there is no point at which it is fully present.'⁹⁵

As such it cannot exist as a remnant of some past event, but rather as some '*lively, and forever unresolved process.*' Thus, it could be argued, that the television (or televisual) image, as an image that is perpetually coming into being and which, therefore, can only ever exist in the present, prevents its consideration as a form of reproduction. This, observes Auslander, is what differentiates the televisual from the film or photographic image, which as fully recorded images '*slide toward instantaneous memory*' (whereas television images, become '*actual*' in their production and transmission '*in the present moment*', whether or not the material shown is live or has been previously recorded). Therefore, according to Auslander, images broadcast on television cannot only be considered as reproductions or repetitions of performances but must be considered as performances in themselves.

Auslander, claims that the same is true for video (and other analogue media), in its existence as a recording on a magnetic tape, (which at the time of writing his essay in 1997, was still very much in use),

'deteriorates over time and with each use, they are physically different objects with each playing... The tape I initially placed in my VCR or audio player started disappearing the moment I began watching it or listening to it'⁹⁶

Therefore according to Auslander the very qualities that Phelan ascribes to live performance - its disappearance and its existence only in the present moment (the qualities that distinguish it from technical reproductions), must mean that live performance cannot be ontologically exclusive ('*televisual and other technical reproductions, like live performance become themselves through disappearance.*').⁹⁷

Writing this in 1997, however, Auslander was already attune to the implications that advances in digital (screen) media might have on this position, since by then it was known that '*at least*

⁹⁴ Cubitt, S 'Timeshift: On Video Culture', Routledge (1991), p31

⁹⁵ Auslander, P "Against Ontology", p52

⁹⁶ Ibid p53

⁹⁷ Auslander, P 'Against Ontology', p53

some digital media ostensibly do not degrade.' Whilst in 1997 it was still too early to tell whether or not this would prove to be the case, more than ten years on this is still very much in question, particularly when it concerns the copying of material from one format to another and with regard to the storage and preservation of digital material over time.⁹⁸

Although there is still much that is unknown about the implications of digital reproductions for the preservation (or not) of recorded and transmitted material this puts into question Auslander's original suggestion regarding the ontology (and performance) of mediatisation as being predicated on disappearance and on its existence only in the present (at least as it concerns digital reproduction and representation). In terms of the televisual, however, by its very process of transmission through the compression of data, the digital television image loses information by definition and relies on the eye's inability to perceive subtle variations to 'complete' the image; one could argue that it also lends itself to performance in a different way, through its non-linearity and possibilities of (immediate) viewer >screen interaction. The display of images is further complicated by a dual system that currently operates either through the use of a traditional monitor that has a conversion box to enable it to receive a digital signal, but which is transmitted by laser line by line in the manner similar to that described by Auslander, or it operates in a completely different way (that would refute his argument), through a thin layer of liquid (LCD) crystals that illuminate when a digital signal reaches the monitor and electricity passes through them, making the whole image appear more immediately.

⁹⁸ This is currently of great concern for curators and museums. In theory, digital information as a numerical system does not degrade over repeated usage. However, how long the material will last is still very much in question with expected lifetimes of storage disks and devices variable or unknown or subject to obsolescence. (see Lunt, B.M, Sydenham, R, Zang, F, and Linford, R *Digital Data Preservation: The Millennium CD and Graceful Degradation*", Paper, Proc. FHTW 2007, Brigham Young University, USA (2007) and Baker, M and Shah, M "Preserving Digital Data", SMPTE Technical Conference and Exhibition, October 18-21, 2006 Hollywood, California, USA). What is known is that digital media does not operate at all in not the same way as analogue media. Whereas analogue media devices such as VCRs and audio tape players (and televisions) operate through a linear system and process of scanning physical data from recorded material, digital devices such as CD players and digital video players read numerical data from a compact disc or a DVD (and in the case of digital television, from compressed digital data signals). In the case of the former, the scanning process that produces an analogue signal allows for greater accuracy in the recording process. However, as described in the text above, repeated usage and recording over and from the material means wears it out over time. In the case of the latter, it is possible for the digital signal to be 'sampled' at varying rates, which affects the quality of the material being recorded. However, in theory, digital information once recorded does not degrade from repeated usage and can be copied repeatedly with no apparent loss of information. However the benefits of digital over analogue are still very much in contention.

Although my own concern is not primarily with regard to a discourse on the liveness of television per se, it nonetheless has an importance to this discussion, particularly through its association with the historical emergence of video practices, in which its own ontological status and ‘coming into being’ on a social, cultural and political level was very much a concern for artists and through which its associations as a medium to notions of liveness (in terms of immediacy and intimacy), were particularly explored.⁹⁹ In addition it is worth noting, as Auslander does in his book later on, that broadcast television in its supposed social and democratic function is predicated on the notion of liveness (and thus ‘*characterised as a performance in the present*’), in that in its emergence, material was predominantly intended as and broadcast live: ‘*the most utilitarian feature of television lies in broadcasting events exactly when and as they happen.*’¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the role television has played in the function of this immediacy to notions of proximity, not only in relation to what is being broadcast and shown on screen as a live event, but also in relation to the physical proximity of the viewer to the image on the screen itself, particularly within the home environment. Auslander observes

‘*the close proximity of the viewer to event that it enables- [from] the fact that events from outside are transmitted into the viewer’s home*’ and also in relation to the ‘*the position of the television viewer relative to the image on the screen.*’¹⁰¹

It is interesting to observe how in the large-scale cultural events (such as rock concerts and sporting events) that Auslander refers to, the use of ‘*giant video screens... provides a means of creating in a large-scale [live] event the effect of “immediacy and intimacy” associated with*

⁹⁹ In particular artists such as Nam June Paik in the USA, ‘*at a time when television was still a novelty, foresaw the popularity of this new and exciting medium*’. (Source: http://www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/exhibitions/namjune_paik/default.shtml) Paik’s fascination with television was to become a predominant feature of his work throughout his life, in which he subverted and challenged accepted notions of the way in which it functions as a medium. He was also one of the first artists to recognise the potentials of video (against what was seen in television in 1950s and 1960s America as institutional, commercial and authoritative), as a more democratic (and potentially anarchic) medium. (See Chapter One for an overview of the historical context and origins of video art as it concerns its relationship to performance). A recent retrospective exhibition at Tate Liverpool explored Paik’s important lifetime contribution to the emergence of media art. See link to website above and the exhibition catalogue, which explores his legacy in relation to late 20th Century art.

It is also important to note the contribution that a number of British artists have made to that history, notably, artists such as David Hall, whose work explored ‘*notions about the relationship of video technology to the institution of broadcast television*’ (in Meigh-Andrews, Chris ‘A History of Video Art’, Berg (2006), p7

¹⁰⁰ Lohr, Lennox R ‘Television Broadcasting: Production, Economics, Technique’, New York: McGraw-Hill, (1940), p52, quoted in Auslander, P ‘Liveness’, p15.

¹⁰¹ Auslander, P ‘Liveness’, p16

smaller live events.' Thus '*in order to retain those characteristics*', claims Auslander *large-scale [live] events must surrender a substantial measure of their liveness to mediatisation'* and in doing so they take on the qualities once ascribed to television, that '*enabled it to displace live performance.*'¹⁰² In other ways however, the role of television (and now also the Internet) has exacerbated its role in relation to the function of immediacy and notions of proximity through the current cultural phenomenon and proliferation of what is known as 'reality' television, by which 'ordinary' people allow themselves to be exposed to others in the intimacy of their home environment on a mass scale.¹⁰³

As observed previously, the notion of proximity in relation to the television screen image in particular, was a specific feature in the early video (monitor) works of Vito Acconci. Artists' Iain Pollard and Jayne Forsyth's recent re-working of Acconci's monologue work '*Walk Over*' recently shown at the South London Gallery as a large-scale video projection, whilst drawing attention to the notion of intimacy in the image of a lone figure who approaches the screen and addresses the viewer, surely loses the intimate nature of Acconci's original address in his 1973 version that was shown on a small television monitor. However, the artists do not purport to be making a replica of the original, but '*[trace] the distance between the 1970's original Walk Over and the present dismal moment [which in the]... 35 years that have elapsed... have seen massive transformations in the political landscape.*' That Forsyth and Pollard display their reworking of Acconci's piece on a large screen is surely synonymous with our times and as a particular phenomenon of the 21st century, in which screen technologies allow us to bare our souls to all on a big scale. Thus

*'Acconci's grainy black and white is replaced by high-definition video that recall[s] the mediations of reality television... By accommodating the new ubiquity of the digital image, Forsyth and Pollard situate their piece in a much broader frame than the original's confessionalism. In doing so, they highlight the way that Acconci's equation of truth with the speaking body is compromised in the present mediascape, which authorizes itself through the constant circulation of pseudo-revelation.'*¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid, p 32

¹⁰³ Ibid, p 16

¹⁰⁴ Conor Carville in Frieze Magazine, Issue 119, Nov-Dec 2008-online version:
http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/iain_forsyth_and_jane_pollard/

This notion of proximity has a strong resonance with the desire for mass proximity that Walter Benjamin observes in his essay '*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*'.¹⁰⁵ It is by no small measure that Auslander refers to this essay in his book on 'liveness,' by giving a specific nod in his direction by directly referencing this text with the title of his introductory chapter: "*An Orchid in the Land of Technology.*"¹⁰⁶

For Auslander, Benjamin's '*notion of a mass desire for proximity, and its allegiance with a desire for reproduced objects, provides a useful way of understanding the interrelation of live and mediatized forms.*'¹⁰⁷ My own interest in this essay has to do not only with regard to Auslander's observations in his writing, but with a broader concern with the nature of reproduction that the essay concerns itself with that I wish to align to the concerns of this chapter in particular. Whilst I have already indicated my interest in the notion of 'reactivation' that provides the stimulus and focus of a more recent essay by Auslander earlier on in this chapter, this is a very small part of the essay and there are other aspects to Benjamin's analysis that are worth considering for the resonances that they hold in the relationship between the 'original' work of art and its reproduction (for the terms 'original work of art' we could substitute the terms 'live performance' and for reproduction we could substitute 'documentation').

Therefore I wish to go back to the original essay to draw out the basis of its main concerns in this problematic relationship (between the original and its reproduction) before returning to a more specific critique of Auslander's own application. In doing so I extend his argument to visual means in the relationship between viewer and audience in the experience of viewing video works that I tie to my own concerns in arguing for an ontological dynamic to this relation.

¹⁰⁵ Benjamin, W "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in 'Walter Benjamin: Illuminations' edited and with Introduction by Hannah Arendt, Translated by Harry Zohn, Fontana Press (1973; this edition, 1992), pp.211-244

¹⁰⁶ Auslander has also used this title in a more recent essay that specifically develops the relationship he ascribes to Benjamin's work to live performance: "*An Orchid in the Land of Technology: Walter Benjamin and Live Performance*", in Andrew Beck, ed. 'Cultural Work: Understanding the Cultural Industries,' Routledge (2003), pp161-168 The quote itself refers to the '*strange mingling of artifice and illusion [as a] construction of the pictured world, which we nevertheless take as far more intimately actual than anything we could find in the live theatre*' Thus for Benjamin "*the sight of immediate reality has become an orchid in the land of technology.*" (source: Wood, Michael. "*Modernism and film.*" The Cambridge Companion to Modernism. Ed. Michael Levenson. Cambridge University Press, 1999. Cambridge Collections Online. Cambridge University Press. 31 March 2011).

¹⁰⁷ Auslander, 'Liveness', p35

The focus of Benjamin's analysis in his essay is the historical progression of unique "auratic"¹⁰⁸ cultural forms to forms of mass-production through which he explores the origins of the work of art in relation to what he sees as a new era of art history that has been brought on by new methods of mass-production. Written in 1936, and at a time of intense political upheaval and considerable technological change, its arguments relate to the specific climate of the place and time in which it was written and through which it draws its central concerns in the advent of mechanical reproduction. Benjamin argues for the democratic nature of such developments that are considered through their technical, cultural and social qualities, that he claims will bring art closer to the people as products of mass culture; in doing so he also considers the loss this will bring to the status and authenticity of the unique and autonomous work of art.

Because of its relationship to the function and emergence of developments in new technologies within the social, political and cultural realm, Benjamin's essay can also be seen as anticipating current concerns regarding the way in which recent technological developments such as home video, reality television, and the Internet, have altered the ways in which people think about technology, and how these have increased opportunities for them to communicate and to become more visible. These also parallel the dual concerns that Benjamin highlights in his essay, that whilst on the one hand these developments may be democratic in their accessibility and encouragement of new means of expression, on the other hand these do not always necessarily serve positive social or political functions.¹⁰⁹

For me the essay has a strong resonance with the main concerns of this chapter in the problematizing of live performance and its documentation. There are strong echoes of Peggy Phelan, for example, in what Benjamin ascribes to the 'unique work of art' and in what she attributes to the uniqueness of live performance, (although it is less easy to discern what Benjamin's own position is exactly, in relation to the original work of art and its reproduction). Early on in his essay he states: '*Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking*

¹⁰⁸ See my earlier footnote on Benjamin's concept of aura in this chapter.

¹⁰⁹ At the end of his essay, Benjamin warns of the relationship between '*The growing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses*', and the latter's relationship with fascism through which (by means of mass reproduction and the '*formation of masses*'), it '*renders politics aesthetic*'. p234 Today, a corresponding caution might be in the increasing attention being paid to visibility, whether it is in terms of being watched or in the need to expose ones-self to others.

in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be'. Further on he continues: '*The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity... The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical and of course, not only technical—reproducibility.*'¹¹⁰

However, he then goes on to differentiate between 'manual reproduction' and 'process reproduction', claiming the independence of the latter in '*bringing out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye, yet accessible to the lens*', and which (in a manner not dissimilar to Auslander), with the assistance of certain processes, '*such as enlargement and slow motion, can capture images which escape natural vision.*' Thus a technical reproduction, he goes on to suggest, '*can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself.*'¹¹¹

Furthermore, it is in relation to this concept of the 'out of reach[ness]' of the original, that Benjamin starts to develop the notion of *reactivation* (that Auslander picks up on), in which the original as a copy can '*meet the beholder halfway*', to be '*received in the studio of a lover of art*', or where a '*choral production performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.*'¹¹² Nevertheless, despite this he asserts, the copy as a '*product of mechanical reproduction*', is not the same as the actual work of art (it cannot 'touch' it) and its quality as a consequence is '*always depreciated*', since as a reproduction (and not an original), its authenticity has been '*interfered with.*' In addition, the authenticity that Benjamin ascribes to the original work of art has also to do with its '*historical testimony*', in relation to its durational existence in time and space and the '*history which it has experienced*', that also gives the (original) work of art its authority.¹¹³ This is one of the aspects of the original '*that withers in the age of mechanical reproduction*', that for Benjamin gives it its 'aura'.

However, he also asserts that the technique of mechanical reproduction can also whilst '*detach[ing] the original object from the domain of its tradition*' and '*substitu[ting] a plurality of copies for a unique existence*', permit the reproduction '*to meet the beholder or listener in his*

¹¹⁰ Benjamin, W "The Work of Art", p214

¹¹¹ Ibid

¹¹² Ibid pp214-5

¹¹³ Ibid, p215 Interestingly in his notes, Benjamin relates this sense of authority (and historical testimony) to the difference a live stage theatrical production and its filmic representation in '*the poorest provincial staging of Faust [being] superior to a Faust film in that ideally it competes with the first [original] performance at Weimar.*'

own particular situation' and thus 'reactivates the object reproduced.'¹¹⁴ As a counterpart to the 'contemporary crisis' however, and in its 'cathartic aspect', this process of renewal, 'shatters a tradition' in what Benjamin sees as the destruction of the 'traditional value of cultural heritage' that for him has strong associations with contemporary mass movements in their relationship to the (great) historical film and in the latter's social significance.

As well as its reference to the historical object Benjamin also connects his concept of aura with reference to natural objects in the '*unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it might be.*' This is conceived in terms of 'human sense perception' in the experiencing of 'natural' objects such as '*a mountain range on the horizon*' or '*a branch that casts its shadow over you.*'¹¹⁵ (This could equate to the notion of disappearance in the transient experience of live performance that Phelan talks about in the desire for the real and its confirmation in the paradoxical need for supplementation). For Benjamin, this relates to the '*desire of the contemporary masses to bring things "closer" spatially and humanly*' whilst at the same time wanting to '*overcome the uniqueness of everyday reality by accepting its reproduction.*' Thus comes the urge to overcome distance by means of '*get[ting] hold of an object at very close range by means of its likeness, its reproduction.*'¹¹⁶

However, a reproduction such as that in a magazine or newsreel is not the same as the (original) image '*seen by the unarmed eye*' and Benjamin differentiates between the '*uniqueness*' and '*permanence*' of the latter against the transitoriness and reproducibility of the former (here, unlike Phelan, he links the notion of permanence to the original (object) and of transitoriness to the reproduction), and describes the 'aura' that has been 'destroyed' as a

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p216

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p217 The '*urge to overcome distance*' also resonates with the writing of Paul Virilio, in which he considers the implications of technologies of perception (such as the telescope, photography, film, television and the Internet), on our perceptions of time and space, particularly how these technologies allow us to overcome concepts of distance by allowing us to see farther, thus altering (even disciplining) our 'logics' of perception. This is apparent throughout his writing, but is particularly dominant in his essay "*Big Optics*" (1992), and in his book '*Open Sky*' (trans. Julie Rose, Verso 1997) in which he mourns the loss of a '*distant horizon*' in the real-time perspective of digital technology and yearns for a return to the real space perspective in the origins of geometry. (See also my analysis of the work of Paul Virilio in the Insert before Chapter 1).

Media theorist Lev Manovich also sees a strong relationship between the work of Benjamin and Virilio, and considers the latter Benjamin's '*true intellectual descendent.*' See the essays "*Distance and Aura*" and "*Film/Telecommunication -- Benjamin/Virilio*" (dates unknown; <http://www.manovich.net/TEXT/distance.html> and <http://www.manovich.net/TEXT/Benjamin-Virilio.html>).

consequence of reproduction as having been ‘extract[ed]’ and the object itself as having been ‘pry[ed] from its shell.¹¹⁷

The uniqueness of the work of art and its ‘aura’, according to Benjamin, is also linked to ‘*the fabric of tradition*’ through and by which an (ancient) object or artefact adopts particular significance, meaning and use within a specific traditional context in relation to an historical period in time. For example he claims that an ‘*ancient statue of Venus*’ may have been held as up as ‘*an object of veneration*’ within a particular time period in Greek history, whilst within the predominantly ecclesiastical society of the Middle Ages it was considered ‘*an ominous idol*'.¹¹⁸ Nonetheless, whatever meaning or significance the object holds and however different that might be from one period of time to another (or from one society to the next) both have to do with the fact of being ‘*confronted*’ by the uniqueness and thus the ‘*aura*’ of that particular object or artefact. Benjamin locates the ways in which these (unique) objects that hold significance often have their basis in ritual and cult value through which their uniqueness and ‘*aura*’ is embedded within their function in social and cultural tradition, in the ‘*location of [their] original use value*.¹¹⁹

However, he also recognises that as a consequence of their past relationship and placement in (often religious) ritual or cult value, works of art have acquired a kind of ‘*aura*’ that gives them a status of uniqueness and from which a work of art as a ‘unique object’, claims authority or autonomy as an ‘original’ work of art that derives from its non-reproducibility. Benjamin calls this a ‘*doctrine of l'art pour l'art*’ -that is, a ‘*negative theology in the form of “pure” art*’ from which later ‘unique’ artworks derive their (sense of) authority.¹²⁰ This could be seen as having a particular resonance with Jones’ critique of dominant discourses in relation to the kind of authority and autonomy of the ‘unique’ work of art that was to develop in the post war period of the 1950s and 1960s in art modernism and that forms the basis of her work in her ‘*attempt to rethink body-art*’ through its reproduction as documentation. Whereas for Jones ‘*experiencing performance as documentation*’, allows her to ‘*dissolve [through body art] the metaphysical idealism [and notion] of the Cartesian subject*¹²¹ in the dominant conception of modernism and Western art-historical thought in the post-war period, for

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p218

¹²¹ Jones, A “*Presence in Absentia*”, as before, p37

Benjamin the social and political function of mechanical reproduction ‘emancipates the work of art from its parasitic dependence on ritual’, and thus from the notion and ‘criterion of authenticity’.¹²²

In particular, with regard to the photograph, in its capacity to be reproduced an infinite number of times from a negative, ‘the work of art reproduced, becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility’.¹²³ Unlike Phelan who sees the nature of mass reproducibility as entering into the ‘circulatory’ economy of capital and therefore sees value in the limited accessibility of the live performance artwork, Benjamin wants to liberate the artwork from its historical exclusivity of access founded in the cult value of ceremonial objects in order to reach a wider public. He finds this in the ‘exhibition value’ of the artwork, which through public exhibition and technical reproduction increases its opportunities to be seen (this is not dissimilar to the argument Jones presents in relation to her access to early key performance works entirely through their documentation). Benjamin sees in this a new function for art, exemplified in the reproducible forms of photography and film.

However, he also introduces a paradox in the status of the photograph, which somewhat displaces his argument with regard to ‘aura’ and its attribution to the unique object that is found in the cult value of the (early) photograph in its function as a portrait that serves ‘*in remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead*’. He sees ‘aura’ in ‘*the fleeting expression of a human face*’ in these photographs that he claims comprises their ‘*melancholy, incomparable beauty*’¹²⁴. Despite this, he suggests that the significance of the photograph lies in its

¹²² Benjamin, “The Work of Art” p218 (references to Jones are as in footnote 8 in this chapter). In relation to the idea of ritual, it is interesting to consider the wider implications of cultural ritual that has informed the field of performance art practices and performance studies, both in relation to the work of individual artists and also in relation to anthropological concerns in the study of individual and group identities, particularly in the United States. With regard to the former, in her book on ‘Body Art’, Jones draws attention to the photographic documents of the artist Ana Mendieta, in particular, her ‘Siliueta’ series (1973-1980). Mendieta, who was born in Cuba and moved to the United States at the age of thirteen, involved her body in ritual acts that were informed by particular spiritual rites observed in her early childhood in Cuba. These acts were documented by photographs in which the body’s presence is marked by its physical absence from the scene represented in the (photographic) image. For Jones ‘These luminous eerie photographs present the impression of her body on the landscape, often in vulvar formations reminiscent of stone-age “goddess” sculptures’. What is important about this work for Jones is its ‘disrupt[ion] to modernism’s desire for presence and transparency of meaning in the assertion of her body through its physical trace on the landscape’ (see Jones, ‘Body Art’, as before, p26) For me, it also problematises Benjamin’s thinking around his association of ritual with the idea of “pure art” that he suggested ‘denied any social function of art’ and ‘any categorising by subject matter.’ (Benjamin, W “The Work of Art”, p218)

¹²³ Ibid, p218

¹²⁴ Ibid. p219

exhibition (as opposed to its ritual) value,¹²⁵ which for him demands a different kind of approach from the viewer. Rather than (the) '*free-floating contemplation*', assumed in the viewer's engagement with character of the unique, rarefied work of art, photographs, according to Benjamin, '*stir the viewer; he feels challenged by them in a new way.*'¹²⁶ What is interesting about this claim is the way in which it implies a more direct, performative engagement and response from the viewer with the artwork through which he challenges the artistic value attributed to painting against photography's status as art.

What appears to be more problematic for Benjamin in this development in the function of art (and the removal of its autonomy through mechanical reproduction) is the development of the photographic image through film. Whilst the photograph as a still image can rise above a status of cult value through its emancipatory status in exhibition value, he finds in the early status and theories of film '*an insensitive and forced character*' expressed in a kind of devotional approach to film that '*forces theoreticians to read ritual elements into it*' and to speak of film '*as one might speak of paintings by Fra Angelico*'. This he claims, gives film a '*contextual significance*' that approaches the '*sacred*' and the '*supernatural*', and thus a kind of fake '*aura*' that he maintains the medium does not deserve.¹²⁷

More pertinent to his concerns (and to the concerns of this chapter), is the argument Benjamin goes on to present regarding the public presentation of a performance given by a stage actor, which is '*presented to the public by the actor in person*' and that of a film (or screen) actor, which is '*presented by a camera*'. Here he finds significant differences (or consequences) that set these apart. These have echoes of Phelan's later observations regarding live performance:

¹²⁵ My understanding of Benjamin's term 'exhibition' is in the wider usage of the term, to mean (the photograph's) public display, not just within a gallery context, but also public display in published form, for example in a magazine or catalogue. Benjamin himself refers to '*picture magazines*' and '*pictures in illustrated magazines*' in relation to the photograph's distribution in printed form. The significance of this is in the photograph's availability to a wider public. See also Benjamin's essay "A Short History of Photography" (1931), in which the concept of '*aura*' and its relationship to the photograph is first developed. The essay was first published as "Kleine Geschichte der Photographie" and appears in Rolf Thiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser(eds.) Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften, vol.II, 1, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp (1972) pp.368-85. It appears in English in Michael. W Jennings 'Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol.2: 1927-1934', Harvard University Press, (1999), pp507-531

¹²⁶ Benjamin, W 'The Work of Art', p220

¹²⁷ Ibid pp220-1

*'The camera that presents the performance of the film actor to the public, need not respect the performance as an integral whole. Guided by the cameraman, the camera continually changes its position with respect to the performance. The sequence of positional views, which the editor composes from the material supplied to him constitutes the completed film.'*¹²⁸

Thus the performance is presented by means of the camera's movement in relation to the actor, that as well as comprising a number of different positions and (optical) viewpoints, also include '*special camera angles, close-ups etc*'. Also significant with the presentation of a performance to camera (as opposed to a presentation in person to an audience), is the actor's lack of direct identification with an audience, by which the actor '*can adjust to the audience during his performance,*' (what Phelan would refer to as transformation). Thus the audience's identification is not with the actor, but with the camera and for actor the camera replaces the audience (or the camera is the means by which '*the actor represents himself to the public*'). In other words, '*the part is not acted for an audience but for a mechanical contrivance*' and '*the camera is substituted for the public*'.¹²⁹

For Benjamin this 'effect' of film removes the '*aura*' that he claims that is tied to the actor's (real) physical presence on stage and '*emanates*' from the figure he portrays (as a live performance), which cannot be separated for the spectators from that of the actor, '*for aura is tied to his presence; there can be no replica of it.*' He sees this as a crisis in theatre. For him '*there can be no greater contrast than that of the stage play to a work of art that is subject to or, like film, founded in mechanical reproduction.*'¹³⁰ In particular, he asserts that whereas the stage actor is able to identify with the character of his role, the actor's performance in film is severely compromised in a role that is comprised of several '*separate performances*' and '*mountable episodes*' that are shot often out of sequence and subsequently put together to present the semblance of a unified scene. In relation to this, he draws attention to the constructed nature of film that allows scenes shot in the studio and scenes shot outdoors

¹²⁸ Ibid, p222

¹²⁹ Ibid. pp222-223 In relation to this Benjamin quotes observations made on the subject by the playwright Luigi Pirandello, in his novel '*Si Gira*', that bear remarkable familiarity to those of traditionalists of live performance, such as Phelan and stress a disassociation and loss of the corporeal sense and realness of the body in film (it is important to stress however that Pirandello's remarks refer to silent film) : '*The film actor feels in exile-exiled not only from the stage but also from himself. With a vague sense of discomfort he feels inexplicable emptiness: his body loses its corporeality, it evaporates, it is deprived of reality, life, voice, and the noises made by moving about, in order to be changed into a mute image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into silence... The projector will play his shadow before the public and he himself must be content to play before the camera.*' (referenced in Benjamin's text as Luigi Pirandello, * *Si Gira**, quoted by Leon Pierre-Quint, "Signification du cinema", *L'Art cinématographique*, op.cit., pp14-15)

¹³⁰ Benjamin, W "*The Work of Art*".as before, p223

(often months apart), to be merged into one single scene and for unsatisfactory elements to be reshot and ‘cut’ into the scene.¹³¹ For Benjamin (predating Lacan’s observations on the ‘mirror stage’), the relationship of the actor to the camera he looks at whilst performing is an uncanny one that equates to the same kind of ‘*estrangement felt before one’s own image in the mirror*’, from which the image reflected (in the camera) ‘*has become separable, transportable*’, to be presented before an awaiting public that the actor, whilst performing to camera knows that he will never directly face. Thus the performance he gives is one over which he has little contact and control, determined as it is by its final presentation as a commodified product for an audience and public that exists in the form of ‘*the consumers who constitute the market*’, and that lie ultimately ‘*beyond his reach*’.¹³²

Consequently, the film makes up for the ‘*shrivelling of the aura*’ in the loss of the actor’s stage presence ‘*with an artificial build up of personality outside the studio*’, cultivated in the ‘*cult of the movie star*’ and administered with ‘*money from the film industry*’.¹³³

Furthermore, in what seems remarkably prescient of today’s preoccupations with self-exposure on television, Benjamin points to the desire of ordinary people to be filmed and to the promise of film in the form of the newsreel that gives anyone the opportunity ‘*to rise from passer-by to movie extra*’, and to become ‘*part of a work of art*’, thus creating a climate in which ‘*any man can lay claim to being filmed*.¹³⁴ In the increasing opportunities for public participation in the making and production of films, Benjamin foresees the loss of ‘*distinction between author and public*’ in a way that could also be seen as anticipating Roland Barthes’ notion of the ‘*Death of the Author*’ in his essay on the subject.¹³⁵

More pertinently, he points out in a footnote, the consequences by which this ‘*change in the method of exhibition caused by mechanical reproduction*’ creates conditions that ‘*determine*

¹³¹ Ibid. p223-224 Interestingly, the ‘montage’ he refers to, bears un uncanny resemblance to the montage of Yves Klein’s constructed still photograph: ‘*Thus a jump from the window can be shot in the studio as a jump from a scaffold, and the ensuing flight, if need be, can be shot weeks later when outdoor scenes are taken.*’

¹³² Ibid. p224

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid p225 It is important to note the particular distinction that Benjamin makes here in terms of cinematic practice between the utilitarian uses of documentary film (by communist filmmakers such as Vertov and Ivens), through which work (in terms of labour) is ‘*performed*’ and ‘*given a voice*’ by ‘*players*’ who are ‘*not actors in our sense but people who portray themselves*’, primarily in their work process, and what Benjamin sees as the ‘*capitalist exploitation*’ of film in Western Europe, that ‘*denies consideration to modern man’s legitimate claim to being reproduced*.’ Instead, he claims ‘*it tries hard to spur the interest of the masses through illusion-promoting spectacles and dubious speculations*.’

¹³⁵ Ibid. See f.n. 24, p31, for an outline of Barthes’ concept. Although Barthes is specifically referring to written text, his ideas can and have been applied to the question of authorship in art, especially performance, where it is the viewer/audience that determines the meaning of the work, not its creator/s.

the public display of rulers', making it possible to 'exhibit a member of government directly and personally before his nation's representatives'. Developments in camera and recording equipment 'make it possible for the orator to become audible and visible to an unlimited number of persons and the presentation of the man of politics before camera and recording equipment becomes paramount'. Thus the function for 'those who govern' (as well as for the 'professional actor'), becomes one of (self) exposure and of exhibitionism before the camera, through which '*the star and the dictator emerge victorious.*'¹³⁶

Benjamin puts this down to the way in which Western film lends itself to '*capitalist exploitation*', through which the film as a marketable commodity entices the interest of the masses in '*illusion-promoting spectacles*'. For him the filmmaking process is itself an artificial spectacle, where it is impossible to assign a viewpoint to a spectator that would not include '*extraneous accessories*' such as camera equipment, lighting, and various operators and assistants from the 'scene' in one's line of sight. Thus in a film studio we are constantly reminded of the reality of film's artificiality and superficiality through the reality of the presence of mechanical equipment that only becomes illusionary through cutting and editing after the shooting process (whereas within the space of theatre, '*one is well aware of the place from which the play cannot be immediately detected as illusionary*' and through its immediate relationship with the audience, it remains within the '*sight of immediate reality*') This aspect of reality as '*the height of artifice*' is what Benjamin describes as '*an orchid in the land of technology*'.¹³⁷

Auslander uses this analogy to describe the relationship between live and '*mediatized*' performance in the current climate of live events that include '*the presentation of a previously recorded event as live; the incorporation of video into the live event; and the precedence of the mediatized over the live even for the performers themselves.*'¹³⁸ His position is informed and supported by a number of references across a range of cultural forms that tend toward large-scale performance events, where the '*mass desire for proximity*' is particularly apparent in the uses of giant video screens in sport and concert 'performance' events and arenas that would seem to directly refer to Benjamin's concept. However, as I have previously noted, I am not sure his argument holds up for smaller, more intimate performances in an art context,

¹³⁶ Benjamin, W "The Work of Art" Footnote 12, p 240

¹³⁷ Ibid, p226

¹³⁸ Auslander, P, "An Orchid in the Land of Technology", in Beck, Andrew 'Understanding the Cultural Industries,', Routledge (2003), p161

where the desire for ‘mass- proximity’ in the way Benjamin envisaged it is less apparent and where the relationship to ‘mediatization’, I would argue, is problematised through more intimate, and affective concerns in its relationship to and uses of media.¹³⁹ (I will return to this and to Auslander further on).

Returning to Benjamin’s original essay, I wish to draw attention to the comparisons he goes on to draw between the cameraman and the painter through their paradoxical (and opposing) relationships to reality, which seems to contradict somewhat his previous concerns regarding the artificiality and superficiality of film. Whereas initially he seems to position himself with regard to the authenticity of the stage performance (and sees film as an artificial spectacle), here he appears to become concerned with film’s proximity with and to immediate reality. My interest here is primarily in the contradictions that Benjamin draws out through the tactile and physical qualities he attributes to film and the analogies he draws between film and reality. By examining these more closely I hope to gain a better sense of Benjamin’s position and through this a further insight into Auslander’s own take on his relationship to ‘*mediatisation*’. In doing so I intend to draw a more concrete and informed analysis and critique of his examination of Benjamin’s notion of *reactivation* in a way that will draw further insight into the

¹³⁹ Although, Auslander admits to his examples being of large-scale performances in the main, he claims that ‘*Even in the most intimate of performance art projects, in which we are only a few feet away from the performers, we are still frequently offered the opportunity for the even greater intimacy of watching the performers in close-up on the monitors, as if we can only experience true intimacy in televisual terms*’. (Auslander, P, reference as previous footnote, p163). I do not agree as this suggests that the use of media only has the function of reproducing (a copy of) what is going on live, whereas frequently when media such as video is used in live (art) performance, whether live or recorded, it is used as part of the live event in a way that is particular to the concept and development of the performance itself. Artists such as Joan Jonas and Angelica Festa (whom Phelan refers to extensively in her essay), are examples of artists who have incorporated the uses of media (especially video), in this way for some time.

In addition Auslander omits to refer to the recent growing phenomenon in any of his texts (even the most recent, updated version of ‘Liveness’, published in 2008), of one-to-one art performances, in which live performances are specifically created and performed for an unmediated ‘audience of one’ with no recourse to the use of monitors unless it is a specific part of the work. My feeling is that the growing trend of this type of performance may in part be a reaction and call for more intimacy and unmediated experience in the current cultural climate. In a recent study guide to the art-form produced for the ‘Live Art Development Agency in London, author Rachel Zerihan suggests that ‘*In thinking about the increasing popularity of One to Ones, I keep returning to the opportunity of closeness and connectivity that One to Ones offer, in this globalised, disparate and insecure environment in which we live. The potential of One to One performance to enable a shared and intense desire to connect, engage and discover another elucidates something about the ephemeral liveness of what might lure us toward this close encounter.*’ (Source:

http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/resources/Study_Room/guides/Rachel_Zerihan.html, p4) Zerihan is co-editor with Maria Chatzichristodoulou of a new book that problematizes this further in a collection of critical responses and interrogations of the notion of intimacy in emergent and hybrid contemporary performance practices (See ‘Intimacy Across Visceral and Digital Performance’, Palgrave Macmillan, (2012))

concept and more specifically, its relationship to my own concerns and to the questions I ask at the beginning of this chapter.

Using the analogies of a surgical operation, Benjamin draws comparisons between a 'magician'¹⁴⁰ (in relation to painter) and 'surgeon' (in relation to a cameraman), to suggest that the painter '*maintains in his work a natural distance from reality*' whereas the cameraman '*penetrates deeply into its web*'. What interests me here is the very physical and visceral nature of the analogy that Benjamin draws in his comparison between the cameraman and the surgeon through the physical '*penetrating*' and proximate relationship he has with his patient: '*He greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body, and increases but little by the caution with which his hands moves among the organs*'.¹⁴¹

However, it is not by directly looking face to face at his patient that the surgeon maintains his relationship, but through touch ('*it is through the operation that he penetrates into him*').¹⁴² By doing so, he maintains closeness to its reality through its permeation. Accordingly, suggests Benjamin, there remains a significant difference in the images obtained by a painter (who deals with the whole, or total image from a distance) and those obtained by a cameraman (who assembles an image from '*multiple fragments from a proximate distance*'). The representation of 'proximate' reality is thus for Benjamin more significant in film since through the '*thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment*' it shows '*an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment*'.¹⁴³ Whilst on the one hand one could argue that this reinforces the superficiality and artificiality of film by problematising its relationship to the real through the mechanical, on the other hand there is something there in the concept of the merging of reality with mechanical equipment that suggests a physical transformation through a kind of '*spatio-temporal displacement*'.¹⁴⁴ that for me seems very physical and very concrete. It is a notion, which I think is worth holding onto.

¹⁴⁰ By the term 'magician', Benjamin is referring to its historical and anthropological associations with the (spiritual) healer, as a medical practitioner, rather than the common concept that is associated with the term in the context of current popular entertainment.

¹⁴¹ Benjamin, W "The Work of Art", p227

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ I attribute this terminology to Miriam Hansen in her critique of Benjamin's Essay: "*Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology"*", in New German Critique, 40 (1987), p185 (Essay pp179-224)

The idea of proximity is also suggested in the attention Benjamin draws to the social significance of film in changing the public's attitude towards art, suggesting that through mechanical reproduction it changes from a '*reactionary attitude*' to a '*progressive attitude*'. This latter attitude he claims is characterised by '*the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert*', giving the artwork '*great[er] social significance*'. However, this he asserts comes through '*the [increased] distinction between criticism and enjoyment*', by which '*the conventional is uncritically enjoyed*' and '*the truly new is criticised with aversion*'.¹⁴⁵ By appealing to a wider public therefore, Benjamin is suggesting that the mechanically reproduced work of art cannot be critically enjoyed (in other words that there is a trade off between enjoyment and criticism). For him this is no more apparent than in film, in which '*individual reactions are predetermined by the mass audience response they are about to produce*' (whereas a painting is more likely to be '*viewed by one person or by a few*'). Painting on the other hand '*is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience*' and does not lend itself to simultaneous mass reception in the same way, even when publicly exhibited. Rather, as a consequence of its lasting (physical) presence, its collective reception occurs by '*graduated and hierarchised mediation*'.¹⁴⁶ This sense of an 'eternal' presence, according to Benjamin is what gives painting its superiority over other, more ephemeral, art forms¹⁴⁷, but which at the same time lends its reception to a more reactionary (rather than progressive) response from the public.

Of greater concern to Benjamin and to my own concerns is the extension made by him of the presentation of the self by means of mechanical equipment through film, made through film's representation of his or her environment by mean of the 'apparatus' of the camera. By doing so he suggests that the camera has '*enriched our field of perception*', by which through a heightening of the senses in both optical and acoustical perception '*Film has brought about a similar deepening of apperception*'. Referring to the use of film in the analysis of human

¹⁴⁵ Benjamin, W "The Work of Art", p227

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, pp227-8

¹⁴⁷ It is difficult to tell what position Benjamin holds in relation to this. In a footnote, he compares painting to music, referring to a statement by Leonardo in which he claims "*Painting is superior to music because, unlike unfortunate music, it does not have to die as soon as it is born... Music, which is consumed in the very act of its birth is inferior to painting which the use of varnish has rendered eternal*" It would appear from this that for Benjamin (contrary to Phelan's concerns regarding live performance), there is value in the lasting presence attributed to painting, rather than the transient presence attributed to sound. (Ibid. p242 f.n.15; Benjamin cites his source from Trattato, I, 29).

behaviour he claims that filmed behaviour '*lends itself more readily to [scientific] analysis because it can be isolated more easily*' and observed '*from more points of view*'.¹⁴⁸ Picking up from earlier observations in the functions of the camera he comes back to use of the '*close-up*', which '*under the ingenious guidance of the camera*' allows us to focus on the '*hidden details of familiar objects*', and to '*explore commonplace milieus*' thereby increasing our understanding of the '*necessities which rule our lives.*' It also invites us to venture further afield and to '*adventurously go traveling*'.¹⁴⁹ in order to explore in the familiar and commonplace, the unfamiliar and the extraordinary. Thus the use of close-up (in both photography and film), in opening out and *expand[ing]* space, '*reveal[s] entirely new structural formations of the subject*'; likewise, the use of slow-motion in *extending* movement, not only '*presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones.*'¹⁵⁰ In other words, the camera allows us to see what we would not be able to see with the naked eye alone. In particular, Benjamin pays attention to the way in which the camera intervenes with the temporal in its ability to capture detail in the '*fractional second*' of everyday (human) movements of routine familiarity such as posture in a walking stride or in reaching for an object. He refers to this as '*unconscious optics*'.¹⁵¹

However, he contradicts this position later, claiming a distracting element to film, which he attributes to its primarily tactile quality, '*being based on changes of place and focus, which periodically assail the spectator*'.¹⁵² This is due to the speed of the moving image/s, which changes so quickly that it becomes impossible to grasp a scene. Unlike the painting that allows time for spectator contemplation, the movie frame by contrast '*cannot be arrested*'; '*the spectators' process of association in view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant sudden change.*'¹⁵³ For Benjamin this constitutes the '*physical shock effect*' of the film that '*cushioned by heightened presence of mind* is expressed through physical sensation.¹⁵⁴ As such it lends itself to being received through a mode of collective mass

¹⁴⁸ Benjamin, W "The Work of Art", p228-9

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p.229

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. pp229-230

¹⁵¹ Ibid. p230

¹⁵² Ibid. p231

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p232 Benjamin attributes this to '*man's need to expose himself to shock effects [as part of] his adjustment to the dangers threatening him*' in the modern world. For him '*film corresponds to profound changes in the apperceptive apparatus...that are experienced on an individual scale by the man in the street in big city traffic on a historical scale by every present day citizen*'. Again, there are familiar echoes here to Paul Virilio's concerns in relation to the advancing technologies of telecommunication by

participation and consumption (from those who seek distraction) rather than through singular spectatorship (which requires concentration). Thus claims Benjamin, whilst '*a man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it, ... the distracted mass absorbs the work of art.*'¹⁵⁵

In doing so the attention given to the work of art becomes one that is approached through '*tactile appropriation*' and is accomplished less by means of (close) examination than by an '*attention as by habit*'. To Benjamin this presents '*a covert control*' of the masses by which art is able to '*mobilize the masses*' but does so through '*reception in a state of distraction*'.¹⁵⁶ Film in particular, he maintains, finds its true purpose in such '*profound changes in apperception*', by which '*its shock effect meets this mode of reception half-way*.' Whilst it may on the one hand diminish cult-value by placing '*the public in the position of the critic*', it is a position, which he claims '*at the movies ...requires no attention*.' Thus '*The public is an examiner but an absent-minded one.*'¹⁵⁷ Hence he goes on to make the association between '*the increasing formation of the masses*' and Fascism through the '*introduction of aesthetics into political life.*'¹⁵⁸

which their speed of transmission collapses physical distances and uproots familiar patterns of perception. The fundamental difference between Benjamin and Virilio however, as Lev Manovich points out in his essay on the subject, is that Benjamin, writing in 1936, '*uses the real landscape and painting as examples of what is natural for human perception*', the natural state of which film threatens to invade. By contrast, Virilio, writing in the latter part of the 20th century, has assimilated film '*as a part of human nature*' (what he calls small optics) and sees it as '*the continuation of our natural sight*'. Instead, for him modernisation through telecommunication (or big optics), what for Benjamin was modernisation through film, '*is accompanied by the process of the disruption of physical space and matter.*' (Source: Manovich, L "Film/Telecommunication—Benjamin/Virilio" from www.manovich.net/TEXT/Benjamin-Virilio.html). What interests me here is the way in which both Benjamin and Virilio draw analogies to a physical assault on the senses as a specific condition of modernisation through advancing technologies.

¹⁵⁵ Benjamin, W "The Work of Art", p232 It would be interesting to consider what Benjamin would make of contemporary engagements with film that whilst continuing to take place collectively in the cinema, have also moved into more intimate home environments, where with the easy availability of DVDs and movie downloads from the Internet directly onto home computers, engagement is much more through intimate and singular spectatorship. Furthermore, the introduction and development of screen media such as computer games, 'enhanced' television and other forms of interactive screen and 'web' media have continued to shift our notion of and engagements with the moving image through approaches that encourage more active participation from the viewer (now termed 'user') experience. Whilst my own concern is not through a discourse of 'new media' as such, it is important to acknowledge such shifts in contemporary social and cultural engagements with media, that nevertheless affect and impact on the uses of technological media in art. For a more detailed analysis of the relationship between 'new media' and its relationship to Benjamin's essay, see Bolter, J; MacIntyre, B; Gandy, M; Schweitzer, P "New Media and the Permanent Crisis of Aura", in 'Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Technologies', Sage Publications, Vol. 12(1) (2006), pp21-39. In this essay, the authors apply Benjamin's concept of aura to new (digital) media, making a particular relationship with the notion and uses of 'mixed reality' ('a group of technologies that blend computer-generated visual, aural and textual information into the user's physical environment'), to argue for the invocation of 'aura' in new ways.

¹⁵⁶ Benjamin, W "The Work of Art", p233

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. pp233-234

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

However, as film scholar Miriam Hansen points out in her critique of Benjamin's essay, his belated timing would have been an issue with regard to his reservations concerning the social and political uses of film:

*'When Benjamin wrote his artwork essay...the media of "technical reproduction" were lending themselves to oppressive social and political forces- first and foremost in the fascist restoration of myth through mass spectacles and newsreels, but also in the liberal-capitalist marketplace and Stalinist cultural politics.'*¹⁵⁹

Had the essay been written a few years earlier therefore, Benjamin's withering emphasis on the aesthetics of film in the latter part of his essay might have been more '*marked by an enthusiasm for the possibilities of the new medium*' that was celebrated by Dada and Surrealist groups during the 1920's, and in a way that would have been more likely to have '*[reconciled] – the cinema's aesthetic and political potential.*'¹⁶⁰ Despite this, the ambivalent nature of Benjamin's essay suggests that there is more to it than that, which we see in the '*shifting of emphasis from a definition of what film is, to its failed opportunities and unrealised promises.*'¹⁶¹

This brings me back to Auslander's observations regarding the notion of '*reactivation*',¹⁶² a notion that Benjamin himself comes back to at the end of his essay (and which Auslander fails to pick up on) with his statement on the '*shock effect*' of film, which '*meets this mode of reception halfway.*' This concept of the '*halfway*' as I observed earlier in this chapter is what particularly concerns Auslander in relation to the notion of '*reactivation*' in the sense that it is the meeting point of where the original (object or performance) as reproduction or recording physically encounters the beholder to be '*reactivated*' in his or her current (and present) space and situation.¹⁶³ What interests me is the way in which this is conceived as a physical displacement ('*the cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio*'), and also how it is the original by means of reproduction (in other words, the recorded document), that serves to '*reactivate*' the original though its renewed status of live interaction with the beholder. This

¹⁵⁹ Hansen, Miriam "*Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: "The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology"*", as before, p181

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. Hansen goes on to stress that '..with the growing threat of fascism ... he perceived a complicity of aesthetic ideology... with the fascist aestheticisation of politics and war' (p.182)

¹⁶¹ Ibid, p182

¹⁶² I am referring back to Auslander's essay of the same name: "*Reactivation: Performance, Mediatization and the Present Moment*", in Ed. Chatzichristodoulou,M; Jefferies, J; and Zerihan, R, Ashgate, (2009)

¹⁶³ See Benjamin, W "*The Work of Art*", p220-1 and cited in the text above, p 83

halfway meeting point (which as Auslander rightly points out, is much more than halfway, since it has the original leave its locale to join the beholder over in his), '*troubles a simplistic understanding of what Benjamin might be saying*',¹⁶⁴ It is this '*'troubling'*' that for me has an important resonance for the ways in which we might approach an understanding of concepts of 'liveness' or live presence today.

I stated previously that Auslander's interpretation of the term still relies heavily on the document's status as a secondary representation (or re-performance in his understanding of the meaning of the term '*reactivation*'), of an original event, and I went on to refer to an earlier essay by Auslander on "*The Performativity of Performance Documentation*",¹⁶⁵, that shifts the emphasis more definitively towards an understanding of the performance document in the absence of an original event. However, whilst this earlier essay speaks more pertinently in relation to my own concerns regarding the conception and autonomy of the performance document being understood as a performance in itself, I also observed that it lacked a consideration of a temporal relationship that I believe is crucial to an understanding of the '*sense of presence, power and authenticity... in perceiving the document itself as a performance*', in the way Auslander conceives it.

Whilst re-examining in more detail Auslander's *reactivation* essay in the course of writing this chapter, I have become aware of the importance of such concerns to an understanding of the concept of '*reactivation*' as originally conceived by Benjamin, which is very apparent within the wider context of his 'Work of Art' essay and taken up by Auslander here. Such considerations were missing from the earlier text but do start to be addressed in the course of this particular essay on '*reactivation*'. I see this essay as providing the conceptual underpinning that the earlier essay lacks. Therefore I feel I need to give the '*reactivation*' essay closer scrutiny than originally intended as a means of providing a sounder basis for the concerns of the earlier essay, the ideas of which are more aligned to my own. Focusing on the spatio-temporal dynamics that are implied by the use of the term in the essay, I use my analysis of Auslander's essay to draw together the wider concerns that I have covered in the course of this chapter and also as a means of preparing the ground for the temporal considerations that are taken up in more detail in the course of the next chapter.

¹⁶⁴ Auslander, P "Reactivation", p84

¹⁶⁵ Auslander, P "The Performativity of Performance Documentation", in PAJ, 84 (2006), pp1-10

Auslander opens his essay with a specific reference to the basis of Benjamin's own temporal considerations in '*that human sense perception is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstance as well.*'¹⁶⁶ Moving on from this premise, Auslander sets out his concerns on the basis of audience perception and engagement to emphasise the relationship '*between reproductions and their audiences*' as opposed to the traditionally conceived relationships between live performance and its documentation that tend to be weighted towards '*the event and its mediatised versions*'. Situating the focus of attention onto the audience in this way makes an immediate connection with the notion of the 'beholder' as originally conceived by Walter Benjamin. More specifically Auslander makes an immediate allusion to the notion of *reactivation*, by loosely referring to his previous texts in which he states he has

*'argued that the playback of a recorded performance should be understood as a performance in itself regardless of ontological status' and that 'its phenomenological status for listeners is that of a performance unfolding at the time and in the place of listening.'*¹⁶⁷

Whilst he stresses his focus is on recordings ('as opposed to live broadcasts, webcasts or live performances incorporating such elements as live video projections or internet feeds')¹⁶⁸ he is referring to recorded music in this instance, and is clearly setting the scene for the conceptualisation and notion of '*reactivation*' without actually naming the term in the immediate. In relation to this it would indeed be interesting to extend the notion of '*reactivation*' to live broadcasts as Auslander suggests and it is not clear why he chooses not address this in the essay, given his interest in the conception of liveness and his own emphasis in the essay on the '*impact of mediatisation on our sense of temporal and spatial relationships.*' Perhaps the scope of the essay as it is set out here does not allow for what would have to be an elaborate discussion and it would be better dealt with separately as a more focused follow-up to this text. In this sense I understand why he wants to separate the two and focus on recordings. As he suggests:

¹⁶⁶ Auslander, P "Reactivation", p. 81; Source: Benjamin, W "The Work of Art", p222

¹⁶⁷ Auslander, P "Reactivation", p81

¹⁶⁸ Ibid p81-2

*'The impact plays out differently in the case of say live video used in performance than in that of recordings. Whereas the audience for a recorded performance experiences it in the present whilst being aware that it is a repetition of the past, the audience witnessing live video in a performance may be more concerned with spatial displacement of the image than with time-shifting.'*¹⁶⁹

However, although I agree that the two are bound to be experienced differently, I'm not sure I agree entirely with the implication that live video would not be concerned with a temporal displacement. Surely the notion of immediacy across spatial displacements has an impact on how the notion of temporality itself is conceived? It may not be the same kind of temporal displacement that Auslander discusses here (or that Benjamin himself conceives), but surely it is a temporal shift in our understanding of the notion of temporality itself through live broadcasts that is impossible to ignore.

I also want to point out that I have some difficulty with the way in which Auslander's key references in relation to recorded performance in this essay seem only to refer to examples of recorded music, as opposed to being applied to a wider understanding of recordings, including visual recordings, such as film and video (despite maintaining that his treatment of '*all forms of documentation, recording and reproduction as equivalent*')¹⁷⁰. Since a large part of Benjamin's essay concerns the use of film and its viewed experience, my understanding of the notion of '*reactivation*' would naturally extend by definition to moving image recordings that may also include with them the use of sound.¹⁷¹ Therefore I wish to address Auslander's concerns (and also Benjamin's) on that basis. What is also important is that it is in through this essay that Auslander attempts to reconcile ontological and phenomenological

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

¹⁷⁰ Auslander, "Reactivation", as before, p83

¹⁷¹ Although he does not state it implicitly here, in an earlier essay "Sound and Vision: Record of the Past or Performance in the Present?", written in 2005, Auslander attempts to clarify his position by suggesting that '*audio recordings function...as performances that are taking place in the moment I'm listening to them, videos and films do not. I experience them much more as historical records documenting a specific event that took place at a particular time and place.*' (Source: www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/content/events/s1Auslander.pdf p2).

I do not agree inasmuch as the premise of Auslander's statement is based on the (audio) recording's '*phenomenological status*' and thus on the perceptual presence of the performer (through the performer's '*bodily gestures encoded in the recorded sound*') and the embodied response experienced by the viewer who hears it. I would argue that having such a bodily (or embodied) response is not exclusive to the experience of listening to recorded audio performances but can also apply to the experience of viewing film or video works that may or may not include the use of sound (for example, the premise of Amelia Jones' Body Art project and the examples of artists' work that she discusses is very much based on this phenomenological premise).

perspectives¹⁷² as ‘a way of understanding how we experience mediatised performances as unfolding in our perceptual present, even as we acknowledge their connections to events that occurred elsewhere and elsewhen’. Since the notion of ‘reactivation’ is conceived through the conflation of both the past and the present, this acknowledgement may help address what is missing from a temporal point of view from the previous essay (“*The Performativity of Performance Documentation*”).

Returning to Benjamin’s original statement, the notion of ‘reactivation’ by definition, immediately sets up a spatio/temporal displacement between the ‘original’ (artwork) and its audience (the beholder) with the metaphorical allusion that an ‘original’ object or musical production could physically uproot itself from its original situation or context to be ‘received’ in the viewer’s (or listener’s) current (domestic) space and situation:

‘Technical Reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.’¹⁷³

Whilst this does not allow the original to be viewed or experienced ‘*in its original circumstances*’, it enables it (through its reproduction) to be transported forward ‘*to my temporal and spatial context now*’, suggesting a forceful one-way physical shift as if by time travel, which precludes the need to go back the other way (to the original circumstance). As such, while this may seem to initially deny the original the importance of historical origin or circumstance (Benjamin’s loss of aura in the reproduction is precisely its loss of authority and authenticity, through its loss of historical specificity) or ‘*deactivate the original*’, as Auslander puts it, it is the very notion of the word ‘reactivation’ that allows the original to hold onto its connection to the past, whilst being encountered and experienced anew in the beholder’s present time and present circumstances through its reproduction. Thus the notion of ‘reactivation’ as conceived by Benjamin is understood here ‘*as an event that occurs when a*

¹⁷² The essay “*Against Ontology*” (Performance Research 2(3)[1997]), which is also discussed earlier, writes from an emphatically anti-ontological position in the denial of a relationship between live and mediated forms as ‘*ontologically given*’ and “*The Performativity of Performance Documentation*” (PAJ 84 [2006]), concludes ‘*that perhaps the authority of performance is phenomenological rather than ontological*’, setting up a binary that Auslander himself professes to work against.

¹⁷³ Auslander, P “Reactivation”, as before, p83

reproduction is beheld, and the renewed status it confers on the original, rather than ‘on the reproduction and the diminishment of aura’¹⁷⁴. This is what for him begins to define the performance status of reproduction as the performativity of performance documentation. And it is this notion of the (renewed) ‘event’ ‘occurring in the here and now’, or in the present moment ‘of its reception’ that Auslander wants us to hold onto in our understanding of the concept and the way and which it is relevant to our current concerns in our experiencing of technological mediations. An important distinction he makes with regard to this is the difference between ‘technologies of reproduction’ (that ‘create fixed records of performances’), and ‘technologies of production’ (that ‘generate real-time performances’). However, Auslander maintains that whilst this distinction can be sustained in relation to the technological artefact; the beholder’s experience is less clear-cut since ‘all reproductions yield productions of the reactivated original with the beholder as audience’.¹⁷⁵ Thus each time the original is *reactivated*, it is as a (re)new(ed) and different experience that is revealed and beheld in the present under ‘different circumstances’ and not as a ‘replication of an historical past.’ Conceived in this way, the original maintains historical significance by measure of a continued link with its original historical context, which through its recording and (re)production in the present enables it to ‘unfold in real-time’ as a renewed experience ‘happening to me in the here and now, whilst also acknowledging it also ‘happened then.’ It is here that the meeting point occurs between ontological distinctions and phenomenological experience (and between ‘aura’ and technological reproduction) as mutually co-dependent (in Jones’ terms, ‘the body art event needs the photograph to confirm its having happened; the photograph needs the body art event as an ontological anchor of its indexicality’).¹⁷⁶ Or as Auslander would have it, ‘aura becomes visible on the basis of technological reproduction’ (or in other words ‘the live [becomes] an effect of mediatization’).¹⁷⁷

Whilst I can understand the logic of this way of thinking, I am not sure I quite agree. In his book on ‘Liveness’, Auslander elaborates further on this idea by suggesting that it is only as a consequence of the development of recording technologies that it has been ‘possible to perceive existing representations as “live”. Prior to the advent of those technologies.. there

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p85

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Jones, A “Presence in Absentia: experiencing performance as documentation”, details as before, p16

¹⁷⁷ Auslander, P p86

*was no such thing as “live” performance, for that category has meaning only in relation to an opposing possibility.*¹⁷⁸

Of course on the face of it Auslander is in effect right, but the way I think about it is that just because the term itself may not have existed as such does not mean the live event itself did not exist, even if it was not determined or defined by the term ‘live’. In addition, by defining the term ‘live’ in relation to an opposing possibility, surely Auslander is setting up an oppositional binary that he claims he is so much against. Furthermore by setting up the opposing possibility in relation to the ‘live’, is he not reinforcing the interdependence of each to the other rather than suggesting new possibilities for determining what we might mean today by the term ‘live’ tout court? (Which is what he is effectively proposing in ‘The Performativity of Performance Documentation essay, and which is why I feel more drawn towards it).¹⁷⁹

Auslander insists that he is not, but that rather that the relationship is one of ‘*dependence and imbrication, rather than one of opposition.*’ He explains it thus:

*‘the mediated is engrained in the live [which] is apparent in the structure of the English word immediate. The root form is the word mediate of which immediate is, of course the negation. Mediation is thus embedded within the im-mediate; the relation of mediation and the im-mediate is one of mutual co-dependence, not precession. Far from being encroached upon, contaminated or threatened by mediation, live performance is already inscribed with traces of the possibility of technical mediation (i.e. mediatisation) that defines it as live.’*¹⁸⁰

Therefore, the im-mediate, in the notion of the ‘live’ as Auslander conceives it, does not precede mediation but ‘*derives precisely from the mutually defining relationship between the*

¹⁷⁸ Auslander, P ‘Liveness’, details as before, p51

¹⁷⁹ During the course of writing this thesis a new edition of Auslander’s book ‘Liveness’ has been published, which discusses this in more detail. Key to this edition are the fundamental changes that Auslander addresses in the contemporary usage and concept of the term ‘live’ as a consequence of technological developments, especially through recent emergent (digital) technologies. I discuss this in more detail as it pertains to the notion of *reactivation* further on. See Auslander, P ‘Liveness’, Second Edition, Routledge, (2008), p 60-62

¹⁸⁰ Auslander, P ‘Liveness’, First edition, (1999), p 53 Auslander’s reasoning with in relation to this has to do with his assertion that the earliest usage of the term ‘live’ in the Oxford English Dictionary appeared in 1934 ‘*well after the advent of sound recording technologies and the development of broadcasting systems.*’ Assuming that the dictionary researchers into the historical usage of the term have presented a correct and complete history suggests, he claims, that ‘*the concept of live performance came into being not at the appearance of basic recording technologies that made the concept possible, but only with the maturation of mediatized society itself.*’ It is also worth stressing that the earliest recorded usage of the term ‘live’ in relation to performance was in the context of live and recorded sound on the radio which through the advent and usage of broadcasts and recordings one could not see, made it difficult to distinguish what was live and what was not. (Previously, claims Auslander, differences between live performances and recordings using early recording technologies such as the Gramophone, ‘*remained experientially unproblematic*’, since listening to a gramophone record and going to see a live performance were experientially so different, it was not possible to mistake the one for the other). See Auslander, P ‘Liveness’, Second Edition, Routledge, (2008), p59

immediate and the mediated.' (Hence his claim that live performance '*cannot be said to have ontological or historical priority over mediatisation, since liveness was made visible only by the possibility of technological reproduction*').¹⁸¹

Accordingly, if we come back to Benjamin's term '*halfway*', that is such a defining term for Auslander, perhaps this term '*reactivation*' by '*enabl[ing] the original to meet the beholder halfway*' suggests some kind of irresolvable tension (the '*troubling*' of a *simplistic understanding*' that Auslander refers to), that is continuously held in suspension (perhaps as an echo of Phelan's '*suspension*' between the real of the physical matter of the presence of the body and its almost immediate subsequent disappearance), here played out through the original and its mediation and between current experience and an historical (or different) circumstantial context.

In relation to this it is worth considering the likely possibility that as a consequence of technological developments (especially recent emergent [digital] technologies) the term '*live*' in its conception and contemporary usage has now changed fundamentally from its original definition, presenting a further tension, '*troubling*' or '*suspension*' between an '*original*' and its (*mechanical*) reproduction. In a new updated version of his book '*Liveness*', Auslander certainly suggests this is so. In addressing the question of definition in relation to the term '*live*' and its relationship to its historical and contemporary conceptualisation, he claims that over time the term has come to be used to describe situations outside its original conditions, traditionally understood through the physical and temporal co-presence of performer and audience. In particular, phrases such as "*live broadcasts*" and "*live recordings*" have come into current usage and are accepted without question, with the former being used to describe situations in which performers may be temporally but not spatially co-present and the latter to describe a situation which occurs '*when the audience shares neither a temporal frame, nor a physical location with the performers but experiences the performance later and usually in a different place than it first occurred*' (in other words '*reactivation*'). This suggests that the definition of '*live*' or '*liveness*' '*has expanded well beyond its scope*',¹⁸² to be (re)conceived and

¹⁸¹ Auslander, P '*Liveness*', Original Edition (1999) p54

¹⁸² Auslander, P '*Liveness*', Second Edition (2008) p60 Auslander gives further examples of this 'continuing process' which he summarises in a table that lists 'types of liveness' alongside their 'significant characteristics' and 'cultural forms' as they have historically emerged, from 'classic' liveness to websites 'going live'. He also refers to 'two new forms of liveness', as proposed by Nick Couldy in his

(re)articulated to incorporate emergent technologies. This prompts the question that if everything is now ‘live’, is the term then not in danger of losing its meaning altogether? If as Auslander suggests the term as a concept can only have meaning *‘in relation to an opposing reality’* and if the *‘opposing reality’* itself in reproduction is now termed ‘live’, how does it then become possible to conceive of the term ‘live’ if the opposing reality in reproduction is itself no longer there (and if in effect itself no longer has meaning)?

One answer might be found in the notion of the ‘event’,¹⁸³ that the term *‘reactivation’* as conceived by Benjamin and taken up and expanded upon by Auslander suggests as an event occurring and happening to me in the here and now or in the present moment, (or more precisely, initiated through the notion of immediacy as defined in spatial terms in which the

essay “Liveness, ‘reality’ and the mediated habitus from television to the mobile phone”, in ‘The Communication Review’, 7(2004), pp353-61.

These are: “online liveness” and “group liveness” and defined as follows: “[O]nline liveness: social co-presence on a variety of scales from very small groups in chat rooms to huge international audiences...on major Web sites, all made possible by the Internet as an underlying infrastructure...[G]roup liveness[:]... the “liveness” of a mobile group of friends who are in continuous contact via their mobile phones through calls and texting.’ Presumably since this was written, one could add to both forms, the recent phenomenon of ‘twittering’. Thus the notion of liveness becomes articulated less in relation to ‘specific performer-audience interactions’, but in terms of its connectedness with others and ‘of continuous, technologically mediated co-presence with others known and unknown.’ (Original Source: Couldy, N, as above; in Auslander, P ‘Liveness’, Second Edition (2008) p61)

¹⁸³ I am aware of the significance of the term ‘event’ in the history of Western philosophy (particularly its prominence since the beginning of the twentieth century) and in modern physics in which the term raises issues in relation to 4-dimensional ‘objects’ and foregrounds theories of spatio/temporal relations. In particular, one of the most prominent issues circulating around the term in philosophy (and more recently in art) has been *‘its ontological destabilization of the ‘object’ in favour of flux, indeterminacy and immanence’*. Primarily used as a critical/analytical term, it also has strong associations with performance art practices and their histories (especially in relation to Dada and Fluxus ‘events’) where the term has been applied more descriptively and in relation to define a set of aesthetic and performative practices and processes that focus on their relation in reception and intent rather than on a description of a physical occurrence. In relation to film it *‘furthers the notion of the dissolution of the object and materialization of the ‘event’ by following the principle that “cinematic images are not representations, but “events.”’* The term ‘event’ here corresponds to the *‘experiential temporalities of “single images” which taken as a whole constitute the spectator’s experience of a film’*. (sources: <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/event.htm> and Shaviro, Steven. *The Cinematic Body Theory out of Bounds*. v. 2. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, c1993.)

In the last few years Alain Badiou’s philosophical text ‘Being and Event’, (originally written in 1988 as ‘*L’être et L’évenement*’), has risen to particular prominence in cultural discourse. Echoing Heidegger’s ‘Being and Time’ (and also Sartre’s ‘Being and Nothingness’), in its title, it follows on from Deleuze, concerning itself with tackling the question of ontology, through the articulation of a post-Cartesian, post Lacanian and post-phenomenological subject that has mathematics at its core in its relationship to the nature of being. (English translation published by Continuum, 2007).

It is beyond the scope and intentions of this thesis to attempt a discussion of the ‘event’ any great detail, but I will attempt at some kind of understanding of the term as it pertains here more specifically to the notion of *‘reactivation’*. The subject of the ‘event’ will of course come back to haunt me in the course of the next chapter, that concerns itself more specifically to the subject of temporalities and will allow me to expand on what I can only begin to address here. For a brief overview of the term see: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *Events*, Roberto Casati and Achille Varzi, online version: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/events/> (First published Mon Apr 22, 2002; substantive revision Mon May 8, 2006)

'original' [object or performance] reproduced '*regains temporal immediacy by appearing in the perceiver's space.*').

On the other hand the very notion of '*reactivation*' itself presents a temporal problem in the sense that if everything is 'live' and 'in the present moment', does not the term then become redundant, since it is already actively 'in the present'? If everything is in the present then in effect there is nothing left to '*reactivate*.' As Auslander suggests towards the end of his essay:

*'Benjamin's description of the original's meeting with the beholder halfway through reproduction, suppose[s] a kind of perception informed by an active sense of the recorded performance's temporal alterity, the sense that it does not belong fully to the present even as it unfolds before us.'*¹⁸⁴

If everything was in the present moment and there was no perception of 'temporal alterity', 'it would no longer be possible to form a present horizon from which to project the horizon of the other'.¹⁸⁵ He points to a number of critics who have suggested that one of the characteristics of postmodern culture in the advent of digital reproduction (or rather production, since the term reproduction as '*reactivation*' supposes an original) is '*a distinctive temporality*' that has shifted the emphasis in the dominant cultural concern from a preoccupation with time to a preoccupation with space, leading to '*reduction of time to the present*'.¹⁸⁶ Theatre and performance theorist Sue-Ellen Case ponders on specific terms (or categories) synonymous with digital media, such as the term 'real-time' '*in which both duration and presentness occur*' and the way in which these [*are also*] countered by the digital image.' She compares how

*'images recorded on video- which imply they happened some where at some specific time differ from those on a website, which seem to exist within an electronic space that connotes no "where" or time outside of its frame. Although images might be loaded onto the web at a certain time, that time is not necessarily a referent in their composition.'*¹⁸⁷

I do not quite agree. As I mention in my Introduction, I think video practice since its emergence in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as a reproductive technology (whether analogue or digital) has always 'troubled' notions of presence as a consequence of its strong

¹⁸⁴ Auslander, P "*Reactivation*", as before, p91

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ This refers to Fredric Jameson's essay "*The End of Temporality*" in Critical Enquiry, 29 (Summer 2003), p713

¹⁸⁷ Quoted in Auslander, "*Reactivation*", as before, p91; Original text: Case, Sue-Ellen "*The Emperor's New Clothes: The Naked Body and Theories of Performance*", in SubStance, 31/2-3 (2002), p194

alliance with performance practices; the emergence of digital media simply exacerbates this relationship because of its stronger emphasis on immediacy and the 'present moment'.¹⁸⁸ Auslander points to Susan Broadhurst's observations that:

'digitally processed contents require different than ordinary habits of reading... [that] demands thinking in terms of "indifferent differentiation"... A thinking that makes little distinction between the referent and meaning, or for that matter between "reality" and representation', or as Auslander suggests, between 'past and present'.¹⁸⁹

This brings me back to Auslander's earlier paper from 2006, "*The Performativity of Performance Documentation*", in which he argues for the concept of performance documentation in relation to 'events' that never actually happened at all. I previously mentioned that the linchpin of this argument is Yves Klein's infamous 'constructed' '*Leap into the Void*' photograph and Auslander's contention that as an artwork that has no prior existence, it makes no difference to the meaning of the image and our understanding of it 'as a performance.' (Presumably having a photograph [or video] as evidence of an original event comes from an ideological understanding of photography as a purveyor of truth and reality). Thus Klein's 'photograph' is of a category one could on the one hand call '*performed photography*'¹⁹⁰ and yet the event it depicts was never actually 'performed' as such (even solely for the camera), since it was 'constructed' from two separate shots that were later '*unified in the darkroom*'. With no 'origin', it perpetually 'exists' (or performs) the 'present moment', that is also the moment it is 'beheld' by the viewer. (However, the viewer may not know the true 'origin' of the photograph as a construction, since the image is intended to make us believe the 'event' actually 'happened.')¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ See Wagner, Anne "*Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence*", in October 91, Winter 2000, pp81-100

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in Auslander, P "*Reactivation*", as before, p91; Original text; "*Intelligence, Interaction, Reaction, and Performance*", in Broadhurst, S & Machon, J(eds.), 'Performance and Technology', Hounds Mills, (2006), pp147-8

¹⁹⁰ Auslander includes in this category (which he also calls 'theatrical'), '*cases in which performances were staged solely to be photographed or filmed and had no meaningful prior existence as autonomous events presented to audiences. The space of the document... thus becomes the only space in which the performance occurs*' (PAJ, p2) Examples of these that Auslander refers to include Marcel Duchamp's photographs of his alter ego Rrose Sélavy, Cindy Sherman's photographs of herself '*in various guises*', and Matthew Barney's '*Cremaster*' films, which have him perform physical feats as part of the 'narrative'.

¹⁹¹ This is also questionable as Auslander also refers to Klein's two versions of the photograph in a footnote attributed to Amelia Jones that suggests that Klein intentionally reveals its constructed nature in the appearance of a cyclist in the street in one version of the image and its absence in the other. (PAJ, p9)

I also point to the main premise of the article, which is that of both the reaffirmation (and the negation) of the document as

'an access point to the reality of the performance', and also to the implication that *'[d]ocumentation does not simply generate image/statements that describe an autonomous performance and state that it occurred: it produces an event as a performance'*.¹⁹²

Moreover, such 'events' are constituted through the performativity of documentation rather than through their authenticity as documents of an 'original' event or whether an audience was present at an 'original' event. These are further complicated by the notion of performativity in work that is constituted in the act and process of creating the document itself, blurring the distinctions between the document, its creation and its representation.¹⁹³ What is significant for me in the latter is the problematising of the original and (its) documentation in a way that confuses traditional reference points between these two and thus their temporal distinctions. In this situation, clearly there is an 'original' performance that occurs at a given moment in a given situation. However, if the documentation is not of the performance itself but is itself what constitutes the performance and is encountered by an audience in result of the process of its making, it cannot refer to an 'original' in the same sense, as a copy or reproduction, yet still holds to it as a reference point as the result of a performance action. The only way the audience can access the 'original' performance is only through documentation from the consequence of the event, rather than from (seeing) the actual performance itself. In other words, the audience's primary experience is only (and can only be) through its engagement (in the present) with the performance documentation.

¹⁹² Ibid, p5

¹⁹³ The example that Auslander uses refers to Vito Acconci's 'Photo-Piece', by which the artist follows a simple, but specific set of instructions to take a series of photographs of people he sees in the street. ("Holding a camera aimed away from me and ready to shoot, while walking a continuous line down a city street. Try not to blink; each time I blink: snap a photo"). Whilst the photographs Acconci takes constitute the artwork and partake of the traditional functions of performance documentation of the activity, they are also the result of his self-prescribed performance actions that play into the performance tradition of failure (the photographs being the result of his failure not to blink) and the carrying out of a process of repetitive mundane activity as an automatic function, rather than having a narrative or 'content' in the conventional sense. However, the photographs themselves do not show Acconci performing, but are rather photographs of taken by him whilst performing, which further complicates the nature of the performance since on the one hand they act as evidence that the performance 'occurred' (that Acconci carried out his own instructions). On the other hand the performance itself 'was not available' to an audience in any form apart from its documentation. For Auslander, this points to a central issue in his text: that of '*the performativity of documentation itself*' (in other words, '*the act of documenting an event as a performance is what constitutes it as such*'). (PAJ p5)

At the end of his essay Auslander suggests that '*the crucial relationship is not the one between the document and the performance but the one between the document and its audience*', to posit the notion that perhaps the authority of the performance event is '*phenomenological rather than ontological*'. However, what we have seen in the further development of the "*Performativity of Performance Documentation*", through the notion of '*reactivation*' is that the two are intertwined.

The notion of '*reactivation*' suggests a reference to an 'original' performance in another place and situation, through its renewed status as documentation in the 'beholder's' own space and situation, thus its ontological status is clear through its reference point to the original event but at the same time it also partakes of a different ontology through its reactivation and the viewer's engagement with document itself as a performance. Likewise the "*Performativity of performance documentation*" as outlined by Auslander asserts its ontological status in the performativity of the document itself that is determined even less through the existence of an 'original', to the point of there not being a 'original' at all.

I realise that what I have discussed here with regard to documentation deals quite broadly with the subject as it concerns the nature of reproduction and representation through different concepts of live presence and viewer engagement and interaction. The next chapter considers more specifically the nature of representation and reproduction through an extended engagement and consideration of video practices in particular as they concern 'concrete' representations of the body engaged in physical action/s. It is my contention that the body 'captured' on video not only stresses its very physicality and presence through its existential presence as an image [as a physical document and tangible record of an action or an event], but also in the very direct relationship it has with the viewer, in processes of spectatorship and communication, through which I suggest its physicality becomes concretised. This is considered in the next chapter through the particularity of temporal associations that I contend are particular to video as a moving-image 'medium', extending the temporal considerations I have only been able to touch upon here.

Chapter 3 **Moving: Movement, Temporalities and Metaphorical Allusions**

(or On Conceptions of Immediacy, Real-Time and Duration in Experiencing Video Works)

Today the scene and the mirror no longer exist; instead there is a screen and network. In place of the reflexive transcendence of a mirror and scene, there is the non-reflecting surface, an imminent surface where operations unfold- the smooth operational surface of communication... The simple presence of the television changes the rest of the habitat into a kind of archaic envelope, a vestige of human relations whose very survival remains perplexing... The real itself appears as a large useless body.¹

To tie visuality to the body... is to render it impure, an impurity that 'Anémic Cinema,' sends skidding along the whole circuitry of the whole organism in the kind of permanently delayed satisfaction we connect with desire. What seems to drive the repetitive pulse of one organ dissolving into the image of another is a sense of the erosion of good form... it is here that Duchamp invents the pulse as one of the operations of the formless, the pulse that brings the news threat we "see" with our bodies.²

When I think of my body and ask what it does to earn that name, two things stand out. It moves. It feels. In fact, it does both at the same time. It moves as it feels, and it feels itself moving, Can we think a body without this: an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation whereby each immediately summons the other?³

How does one approach concepts of time in an age of immediate screen communications, interactions and representations? If our engagement with the notion of time today has been effectively '*reduced to [a time of] the present*', does this then constitute '*the end of temporality*' as we know it, as Fredric Jameson suggests in his 2003 essay on the subject?⁴ On the other hand, can video's prolonged engagement with notions of 'real-time' and the 'present moment' in its representations and engagements with the human body as a mediated image, help reposition and redefine our current cultural concerns and preoccupations with immediate presence?

If our concerns are with the immediate, how does this affect our conception of and engagement with the notion of duration as a temporal element of viewing and experiencing video or moving image works? How do experiences of duration (both in the temporal elements of the work itself and in the experience of viewing the work) come into play? Does

¹ Baudrillard, J "*The Ecstasy of Communication*", in Foster, Hal (ed.) 'Postmodern Culture', Pluto Press, 1985 (First Published as 'The Anti Aesthetic', Bay Press, 1983)

² Krauss, R "*Moteur!*", in Krauss, R and Bois, Y-A 'Formless: A User's Guide.', Zone Books, (1997) p135

³ Massumi, B "*Introduction: Concrete is as Concrete Doesn't*", in 'Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation' Duke University Press (2002), p1

⁴ Jameson, F "*The End of Temporality*", in Critical Inquiry Vol. 29, No. 4, Summer (2003), pp 695-718.

movement in the image itself and the viewer's own movement in negotiating the work play a part?

This chapter considers the importance video practices in extending temporal boundaries in art through its development not only as a documenting medium of live performances but also as a key component and exponent of performance in its own right, through which (as was discussed in the last chapter), the conception of the term 'performance' has been extended through video's own extended notions of performativity. It is my belief that from its earliest beginnings as an extension of performance practices in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, video has '*provided artists and viewers with a time-delay mirror through and in which to observe themselves, others and the wider society.*'⁵

In particular, it has played a key part in the development of installation art and can be seen as a precursor to multi-screen, interactive and virtual environments through which I suggest the engagement and participation of the viewer has been extended and called into play.⁶

With regard to this I wish to draw attention to the '*multiple, sometimes contradictory durational impulses at work*'⁷ in the temporal dynamics of our engagement with video (and with video installation in particular), that I suggest extend from earlier durational explorations made by artists, '*to disrupt dominant conventionalities of time, notably acceleration and temporal linearity*'⁸ as a means of countering the sense of compressed time in video's association with notions of immediacy.

In this discussion it will be important to acknowledge the role that artists' film has had to play in this development, especially in extending spatial boundaries through the expansion of film as an image projected onto multiple surfaces in space (evident in 'structuralist' and

⁵ Leighton, Tanya "*The Antagonistic Relationship between Video and Television*", in Leighton, T (ed.) 'Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader', Tate publications, 2008, pp200-203

⁶ Notions of 'Multimedia Environments' are particularly synonymous with more recent digital and 'new media' environments. However, there are historical precursors that extend prior to the developments that happened in the 1960s and 1970s. The notion of 'multimedia' can be seen to be synonymous with the utopian visions of the Bauhaus in the 1920s, for example, with Herbert Bauer's 'Design of a Multimedia Building' (1924), which incorporated a loudspeaker, flashing sign, rear projected film screen and a smoke machine. (see <http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2009/bauhaus/>). My own concern is not with the notion of multimedia environments as such, but with video as a mediating technology and device for representing and experiencing the human body as a subject in art.

⁷ Mondloch, Kate "*Installing Time: Spatialised Time and Exploratory Duration*" in Mondloch, K 'Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art', University of Minnesota Press, (2010), p40

⁸ Ross, Christine, "*The Temporalities of Video: Extendedness Revisited*" in Art Journal 65, Fall (2006), p83

'expanded' experimental approaches to filmmaking)⁹ and also with regard to more formal concerns in the consideration of the image and its relationship with its material and technological 'apparatus', particularly in the consideration of the screen itself as a key component of this relationship and the projected image in particular, as a dominant means of showing contemporary moving image work.¹⁰

I am aware that this relationship has sometimes been overlooked through the somewhat autonomous historical trajectories of film and video observed by many art-historians and theorists that have tended to privilege one 'medium' over the other and/or to conceptually separate these two, or to completely ignore the historical relevance of film in the emergence of video as a contemporary form of art. It is important to acknowledge that many artists known as pioneers in the development of 'video art' through its association with performance, such as Vito Acconci, Dan Graham, and Bruce Nauman first began working with film and that many key works associated with these artists were actually recorded on film, rather than on video. Yet in reading historical accounts of these artists' work, or in viewing the artist's work (often now transferred to DVD), this difference is not always recognised. This prompts the question as to whether the historical relationship between film and video is more complicated than it first appears. Whilst this is not the main subject of discussion in this chapter, it is worth mentioning nonetheless as this may help explain a certain disjuncture or paradoxical, if not fragmented trajectory in the historical development of artists' moving image works.¹¹

⁹ The term 'expanded cinema' was coined in the 1960's by Stan VanDerBeek and identifies '*a film and video practice which activates the live context of watching, transforming cinema's historical and cultural 'architectures of reception' into sites of cinematic experience that are heterogeneous, performative and non-determined. Works identified as Expanded Cinema often open up questions surrounding the spectator's construction of time/space relations, activating the spaces of cinema and narrative as well as other contexts of media reception.*' (Source: <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/eventseducation/symposia/18016.htm>)

¹⁰ By using the term 'moving image', I mean to encompass artists' work that includes both film and video and other 'time-based' or 'temporal' media. Whilst the use of this term is not ideal or may appear too generic with regard to the particularities I am trying to identify in my claim for a physicality in video, I want in my use of the term to draw attention to relationships between multiple forms of moving image media that I will be addressing here.

¹¹ Recent Publications that address these concerns include: Leighton, Tanya (ed) 'Art & the Moving Image', Tate Publishing, (2008), and Meigh-Andrews, Chris 'A History of Video Art,' Berg, (2006). Whilst the former provides a very comprehensive account of the mutual and antagonistic relationships between the two through key texts and essays by a number of theorists and writers, the latter focuses more on a critical and structuralist approach to the emergence of video as a 'distinctive medium' and practice that situates it amongst the late modernist approaches of British video artists and the influences of experimental and avant-garde cinema tracing its development through connections to later advancements in digital media.

Film's own historical roots in the modernist avant-garde certainly suggests that this is the case, with its allegiance to medium-specificity very much '*focused on the nature of the cinematic medium itself*',¹² even whilst expanding the 'flatness' of the cinematic screen into three-dimensional space. By contrast, the emergence of video with its initial opposition to medium specificity, in its allegiance to conceptualism and the socio-political critique of broadcast television, and its existence in '*endlessly diverse forms, spaces and temporalities*',¹³ appears to occupy a more chaotic, heterogeneous territory that seems on the surface to resist modernist interpretation and theorisation.¹⁴ However, its association with notions of immediacy and presence (terms also associated with high Modernist concerns) would also seem to be at odds with postmodernist ideals that emphatically deny the notion of immediate presence.¹⁵

¹² Krauss, R 'A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition,' London, Thames & Hudson, 2000, p24

¹³ Ibid, p31

¹⁴ In his essay "*Transformations of the Image in Postmodernity*", Fredric Jameson comments on this by suggesting that whilst film's history allows it to have '*developed enough to produce several proposals for a specifically filmic aesthetics*', video's entry into the artistic arena comes '*too late for that kind of theoretical codification*' where '*the discrediting of the older modernist idea of "progress" ... spells the end of evolutionary time in the arts and augurs a new kind of spatial proliferation of artistic modes that can no longer be valorised in the older modernist ways*', in Jameson, F 'The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on Postmodern 1983-1998, London: Verso, 1998) pp99-100

¹⁵ These terms themselves have complex histories and associations, which reveal different meanings according to the contexts and art-historical periods in which they are used, which might explain this apparent contradiction. The definition of 'immediate' assumes no intermediary or intervening agent in the relation between a person, object or a thing to one another. In this context the term implies actual contact or a direct personal relation and it would seem that the term 'immediacy' is the negation of the term 'media'. Thus its application within the realm of high Modernism (particularly in painting) would seem to have a certain logic that revolves around the notion of 'purity' in the direct (unmediated) physical presence of the artwork, its apprehension by the viewer and his or her appreciation of its formal, material, physical qualities through 'sight alone', something that was close to the concerns of one of Modernism highest proponents, Clement Greenberg. (See Greenberg, Clement "*Towards a New Laocoön*" and "*Modernist Painting*" in 'The Collected Essays and Criticism', Vol. 1, *Perceptions and Judgments*, 1939-44, The University of Chicago Press (1986).

Another proponent of Modernism Michael Fried had a more problematic relationship with the term through its association with the notion of presence and its relationship to object perception in space in Minimalist sculpture in which the 'presence' of the object is perpetually discerned and impacts on the viewer's perception of space. Fried opposed the durational aspects that this implied in the viewers negotiation of the work that denied for him the work's immediacy and thus its autonomy. In his essay "*Art and Objecthood*" (1967), he provides a dialectical opposition to the term 'presence' in the term 'presentness' as a synonym for immediacy, suggesting that 'presentness' has a capacity for transcendence characterised by a kind of "instantaneousness", in which '*at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest.*' (Source: Fried, M 'Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews', University of Chicago Press,(1998) pp148-173)

The denial of presence in the context of postmodernism has to do with (the denial of) the '*immediate relation of human judgements to what they judge*', (to what is immediately given in experience in the Modernist relation of judgement to the 'pure' non-representational work of art and to sense perception as an immediate conduit for 'reality'). Postmodernism denies anything is 'immediately present' and hence is to an extent also in denial of perception as such ('*understood as immediate, transparent reception of the given*'). This denial is most clearly expressed in arguments about interpretation, that denies that the meaning of a text or an artwork can be 'authoritatively' (or immediately) revealed through reference to authorial intentions. '*On the contrary, an author's [or artist's] intentions are not immediately available, nor are they more relevant to the meaning of the work than any other set of considerations*' (in Cahoon, L (ed.) "*Introduction*", in 'From Modernism to Postmodernism', Blackwell

One of the key questions I will address is whether structuralist approaches to filmmaking in historically aligning themselves to more Modernist concerns through attention to notions of materiality, presence and duration in the viewer's engagement with the physical object of the artwork, effectively contradicted and complicated video's attention to notions of real-time and immediacy in its initial anti-modernist and conceptual early development, causing a somewhat autonomous historical trajectory of film and video to develop. Furthermore, I will suggest that whilst on the surface these differences may initially be quite apparent, further examination will reveal that these may not be as clear-cut as it first appears.

With the proliferation of large-scale multi-screen installations and environments since the 1960s and 1970s and particularly in recent years, the relationship between the two has become much more evident with the attention to spatial dynamics becoming much more of a concern in the reading and viewing of the work, in which '*the tension continually shifts between illusionist/virtual and material/actual*', and where '*viewers are asked to be both here (as embodied subjects in the material exhibition space) and there (as observers looking into screen spaces), in the here and now.*'¹⁶

This shift in spatial dynamics in which the performative dynamics are staged in the real-time and real space encounter of the embodied spectator proposes a reinterpretation of conventional ways in which screen-based works (and screen-based video works in particular) have been both experienced and interpreted. Above all, the attention to the screen itself as technological interface and material support seems to have become more apparent and to present an ambivalence in its status as both an 'illusionist window'¹⁷ and a

publishing 2003; See also Roland Barthes "*Death of the Author*", in 'Image, Music, Text', Fontana/Collins (1977) and footnotes 56 and 214).

Within the context of media histories and theories (especially those of technological media), the term immediacy is understood primarily as the media mechanisms through which connections are made and meanings understood, (immediacy referring to the way in which these are '*condensed*' or '*remain hidden*') Thus the paradox in the relationship of (technological) media to the notion of immediacy is that '*while immediacy is the abridgement of media in favour of the connection between the elements that are being mediated, immediacy relies on the existence of media to further reduce the theoretical [temporal and spatial] distance between those same elements.*' (Source: The Chicago School of Media Theory: <http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/> keywords/immediacyimmediate/).

¹⁶ Mondloch, Kate 'Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art', University of Minnesota Press, (2010), p61

¹⁷ Although the reference to the 'illusionistic window' has particular relevance historically to painting, with the implied metaphor of the canvas as a virtual window that opens onto a space 'beyond the frame' going back as far as Leon Battista Alberti's fifteenth century formulation, the film image and the cinematic image in particular also has a long historical association with this conception in the perspectival illusionism traditionally associated with cinematic screen space. More recently the computer screen interface has also taken up this metaphor with the Microsoft PC 'Windows' interface directly acknowledging this. In her book 'Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art' Kate Mondloch recognises this association opening her fifth chapter with reference to '*computer science prodigy*' Ivan Sutherland whose '*prescription for the "ultimate display"* came down firmly on the side of

physical, material object that on the one hand recalls the attention to technological apparatus and ‘film apparatus theories’¹⁸ associated with structuralist and cinematic film theories, whilst on the other hand ‘troubling the assumption of the viewing subject’s enforced passivity vis-à-vis the apparatus’¹⁹ that encompass more responsive viewing experiences. Furthermore, the emphasis on materiality in the experience of viewing itself, suggests a renewed relationship in the phenomenological and subjective encounter of the individual viewer with the consideration of the physical nature of the work itself appearing to contradict previous notions of immateriality and dematerialisation, emphasised in historical associations with post-modernist and conceptual concerns and more recent links with the emergence of digital technologies.²⁰

representational illusionism. The screen should function as an Albertian window ; a flat surface through which to behold simulated ,virtual spaces.’ (p77); New Media theorist Anne Friedberg investigates this further in her book ‘The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft’, MIT Press, (2006). Taking Alberti’s metaphor as her starting point, she tracks shifts in Alberti’s model of (fixed, single-point) perspective, linking histories and developments in architecture, glass and transparency and the emerging apparatus of photography, cinema, television and digital imaging. Whilst Alberti’s model of perspective has long been challenged by developments in painting, architecture and moving image technologies, Friedberg notes that ‘for most the twentieth century, the dominant form of the moving image was the single-image in a single frame’, with more experimental fractured modes of representation remaining largely confined to the experimental avant-garde exemplified in early modernism. Her book proposes a ‘new logic of visuality’, framed in the virtual co-existent, overlapping, multiple windows of the computer screen interface. (Source: Back cover.) Whilst I understand Friedberg’s logic, her focus remains largely on multiple ‘windows’ or screens within the surround of a single outer computer or film frame. This appears to contradict her argument on some levels since whilst the ‘windows’ within the screen may ‘co-exist and overlap’, their existence remains within the single screen and frame of the computer that surrounds them. The viewer thus remains in a fixed position on the outside of the ‘window’ looking in.

¹⁸ Film apparatus theories were particularly predominant in the 1970s and were marked by an attempt to combine an analysis of the materiality of cinema with its architectural and ideological effects by which cinema’s institutional ‘apparatus’ were conceptualised into a fixed relation between the film, the film projector, the screen and the viewer/spectator. Important in this relation was the theorisation of the screen, both as material surface and site for psychic projection. These theories were heavily informed by Psychoanalytic theories, especially by Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage in Lacan, Jacques “*The Mirror Stage as formative of the function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*”, in Ecrits. (see my note in Chapter 2, which expands on this). Whilst these opened up the spatial configurations and dynamics in the relations between the film spectator and its material apparatus, the former largely considered as a seated spectator within the traditional cinematic film theatre space, remained a passive receptor in this relationship. Since the 1970s film critics and theorists (and feminist film theorists in particular), have criticized apparatus theories for making generalisations and assumptions regarding film spectatorship that give a largely ungendered account of subjectivity and ‘*for theorising spectatorship in such a way as to leave no room for oppositional practices or resistance.*’ (Source: Mondloch, K, ‘Screens,’ p115, n6).

Writers particularly associated with these theories are Jean-Louis Baudry (“*The Ideological Effects of Basic Cinematographic Apparatus*” (1970), and “*The Apparatus: Metaphysical Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema*”, in Rosen, Philip ‘Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology’, Columbia University Press, (1986) pp286-98 and pp299-318) and Christian Metz (‘The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema’ (1975); trans.Cecilia Britten, Annwyl Williams, and Ben Brewster, Bloomington, Indiana University Press (1982); Others include Jean-Louis Comolli , Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen.

¹⁹ Mondloch, Kate ‘Screens: Viewing media Installation Art’, University of Minnesota Press, (2010), p3

²⁰ The notion of dematerialisation was conceived by John Chandler and Lucy Lippard in their seminal text “*The Dematerialization of Art*” published in 1968 in the magazine *Art International*. In this text they identified the notion of dematerialisation with conceptual art that ‘emphasizes the thinking process almost exclusively’ and ‘may result in the object becoming wholly obsolete’. Whilst they do not refer to

My own interest has to do with the complexities and apparent contradictions in the embodied nature of viewing or experiencing artwork that is configured in this relationship that appear to complicate previous assumptions regarding the nature of our engagement with moving image works. Whilst most of these histories place video's own histories firmly in its association with the emergence of broadcast television, with Korean/American artist Nam June Paik considered as its main protagonist,²¹ I wish to point to possible alternative versions of those histories that we have come to associate with the emergence of video, that extend from more performative modes of attention, address and reception in the spatio-temporal dynamics of the work that could be seen to provide a challenge or resistance to the

specific works of art, Lippard's follow-up anthology '*Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*' published five years later, refers to a diverse range of artistic practices and reflections that have particular associations with George Brecht's 'Fluxus' inspired 'events', Allan Kaprow's 'Happenings', and early video works by artists such as Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci, as well as earth works by Robert Smithson and Richard Long and writings by Joseph Kosuth and Sol Le Witt. Although the term is characterised by a lot of uncertainty and apparent contradictions, these are unified in the common rejection of formalist definitions of medium specificity associated with modernist concerns. Recent associations with the term in the advent of digital technology are commonly linked to notions of immateriality in the perceived replacement of the traditional physical dimensions of artworks by software and digitised data.

²¹ Most histories place the emergence of video with the advent of the portable 'Portapak' camera in the United States, placing Nam June Paik as the 'point of origin' for 'video art.' Others acknowledge Andy Warhol as an important early contributor, whose use of the 'new' camera may have preceded Paik's. In the introduction to her book 'Art and the Moving Image', Tanya Leighton identifies Andy Warhol's portrait of Edie Sedgwick, 'Outer and Inner Space' (1965), as '*one of the earliest works to reflect on mediation*' and on '*film's relationship to video and televisual liveness.*' (Leighton, Tanya in 'Art and the Moving Image, pp22-23)

It is interesting to note that inasmuch as Warhol's engagement with early video has to do with its immediacy, his engagement with film was known for its durational concerns with for example, the works 'Sleep' and 'Empire', both lasting approximately eight hours. In addition these films were shot at the sound speed of 24frames per second and shown at the silent speed of 16 frames per second, resulting in slow motion.

Video's appearance as an emergent technology with the capacity for immediate playback and 'real time' representation placed it in direct relationship and correspondence with television, itself 'coded' as the 'immediate' in live image transmission. (See Kaisen, W "Live on Tape: Video, Liveness and the Immediate" in Leighton T 'Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader', op.cit. pp258-272.) However, as Liz Kotz observes in a recent essay regarding the history of video as projection, '*This pervasive repression of the TV monitor and the medium's long entanglement with mass communication haunts work in video projection.*' (Kotz, Liz "Video projection: The Space Between Screens," in Leighton, T 'Art and the Moving Image', as before, p376)

I am not denying the importance of television's association and place in the history and emergence of video art practices, which can seen as a founding condition of its history and language. However, this association has often dominated discourses regarding video, placing its historical development firmly within the contexts of broadcast television's association with mass-media communication and socio-political critiques of television that appear to overlook the importance of other historical trajectories and approaches to its development. British pioneering video artist David Hall whose early work is often seen as a critique of broadcast television claims to distinguish video practice from broadcast television: '*Video as art seeks to explore perceptual thresholds, to expand and in part to decipher the conditioned expectations of those narrow conventions understood as television. In this context it is pertinent to recognise certain fundamental properties and characteristics, which constitute the form. Notably those peculiar to the functions (and 'malfunctions') of the constituent hardware- camera, recorder and monitor- and the artist's accountability to them.*' (Source: David Hall "British Video Art: Towards an Autonomous Practice", Studio International, May-June 1976, pp248-252.) Yet, by consistently making works that are conceived and specifically made for television broadcast and transmission or where the television monitor itself is the structural support, surely he is emphasising this relationship even whilst he is critiquing it. Likewise Paik's embrace of television as a medium of creative interaction contradicts his initial 'attack' on it as a medium of mass culture.

associations that video has tended to have with notions of immediacy, and with what Fredric Jameson has referred to and criticised as video's '*total flow*'.²² These pay attention more specifically to an extension of temporal dynamics and durational concerns in the presentation and viewing of moving image works and to the shifting modes of subjectivity in the (re)presentation and reception of the body as a mediated subject in the work. Whilst it cannot be denied that video's association with the notion of immediacy comes from the camera's ability to instantly produce an image that can be immediately visible on the screen, attention to its durational concerns as a strategy and means of countering and reflecting on these temporal concerns is less commonly observed. However, for many artists working with performance in the late 1960s and early and 1970s, the notion of duration was a key element of their work that reflected concerns with endurance as a means of exploring and experiencing the physical and psychological limits of the human body. These included artists such as Marina Abramovic, Vito Acconci, Chris Burden and Bruce Nauman, amongst others.²³ This also became a strategy for artists whose performance work extended to

²² In his criticism of video, "*Surrealism without the Unconscious*," Fredric Jameson situates the experience of watching video firmly within the context of the television monitor (as distinct from the experience of watching film on a movie screen with its '*mesmerising images*'), which he describes as '*a situation of total flow, the contents of the screen streaming before us all day long without interruption...*' in Jameson, F 'Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', Duke University Press, (1991) p70.

²³ Whilst Acconci's and Burden's work have now departed from these toward other concerns, the notion of duration remains a strong and defining element in the work of both Abramovic and Nauman in different ways. In her recent 700 hour work 'The Artist is Present' performed at the Museum Of Modern Art in New York in 2010, Marina Abramovic 'sat motionless and silent on a wooden chair inside a circle of light in the huge atrium of Moma, seven hours a day, from mid-March until the end of May. Anyone who was prepared to queue could sit opposite her just as long as they agreed to remain silent and motionless and to stare back into her eyes.' Abramovic referred to this work in a subsequent interview as '*a pared-down, long-durational piece that destroys the illusion of time*' (source: O'Hagen, Sean 'Interview: Marina Abramovic', The Observer, Sunday 3 October 2010, accessed online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/oct/03/interview-marina-abramovic-performance-artist>). Her subsequent exhibition at the Lisson Gallery in London in October 2010, included two durational video works 'Sleeping under the Banyan Tree'(2010), and 'Confession'(2010), both 60 minute looped DVD video presentations.

Bruce Nauman's work 'Mapping the Studio I (Fat Chance John Cage)' (2001) is a four-screen, seven channel projected digital video work that "*maps*" the environmental goings-on at the artists' New Mexico workplace' at night. Four wall-sized screens are positioned next to one another 'so as to make a large, room-sized enclosure' onto which the seven projectors simultaneously emit at regular intervals, seven large projections across the four screens, each of which represent a different view of the artist's studio. The work was '*painstakingly recorded over forty-two nights in a four-month period*'. Shot in real time, there is very little 'action' shown on screen, apart from ' *fleeting, ambient night-time noises (trains, coyotes, wind, rain and so on)* [that] *intermittently enliven the imagery*', and the artist's cat and some field mice '*who periodically interrupt the static silence of what is otherwise a rather uneventful record of Nauman's mute past creations and works in progress.*' Of this work critic Peter Schjeldahl has remarked that in order to see all of the work completely and to miss nothing '*it would take roughly forty hours and fifteen minutes*', thereby removing the prospect of ever being able to view the whole work in its entirety. As seven simultaneously projected videos, each of roughly five hours forty-five minutes, this duration is shortened to approximately six hours. Thus the duration of the viewer's experience varies according to his or her independent actions (the length of time he or she decides to stay in the installation). In relation to this Nauman has noted '*It just felt like it needed to be so long that you*

explorations using video, in which the use of video was considered not simply a means of documenting the act itself, but as a temporal mechanism that defined the length of the performance.

In a recent essay concerning '*The Temporalities of Video*',²⁴ Christine Ross locates this in the notion and application of temporal 'extendedness' in early video practices '*that sought to investigate the making of time- the consideration of time as a material – through its exploration of extendedness, delay, boredom, banality, non-productivity and repetition.*'²⁵

Citing examples in Bruce Nauman's series of 1968-69 video performances that took place in the artist's studio, which showed him engaged in the

'repetitive seemingly banal, and futile actions designated by their titles', she refers to his approach that '*took advantage of the actual length of the tape to transmit actions with no beginning or end, according to a structure of redundancy that would not only allow the spectator to 'come in at any time' but also render editing ultimately unnecessary.'*²⁶

This attention in video to the '*exploration of 'real', unedited time*' she contends, was intended as an aesthetic strategy and means of '*countering the compressed time [in the accelerated culture] of TV and radio.*'²⁷ This view is supported in later observations made by one of

*wouldn't necessarily sit down and watch the whole thing but could come and go'...I wanted the feeling that the piece was just there ...ongoing being itself'. In this respect he relates the work as '*closer to sculpture, [as] something that could be described as perpetually taking place.*' (Sources: Mondloch, Kate 'Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art', University of Minnesota Press (2010), pp45-47; Schjeldahl, P "Night Moves: The Indifferent Grandeur of Bruce Nauman", in The New Yorker, January 28 (2002), pp94-95; Bruce Nauman and Michael Auping, "A Thousand Words: Bruce Nauman Talks about 'Mapping the Studio.'" Artforum 40, no.7, March (2002): 121)*

²⁴ Ross, Christine, "*The Temporalities of Video: Extendedness Revisited*", in Art Journal 65, Fall (2006), pp83-99

²⁵ Ibid, p83

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid. Writing about the 'distinctive' features of video in 1976, scarcely 10 years after its first use by artists, David Antin remarks that the '*most striking contrast between video pieces and television is in relation to time*', drawing attention to the '*commonplace*' way in which artists' videos are described as '*as boring*' or '*long*'. This is not intended as a means of denigrating the works in question, but rather as a means of pointing out a particular approach or attitude by artists in their use of video that makes it distinct from television. That artists' videos are perceived as '*being boring or long*', he claims, '*has little to do with the actual length of the tapes,*' (which are often shorter than most television programs), but rather '*with the attitude of ...the artists using video to the task at hand*', that is, in their '*attitude toward time. The work ends whenever its intention is accomplished. The time is inherent time, the time required for the task at hand.*' Quoting from early video artist Les Levine's observations that '*the work is boring if you demand it to be something else. If you demand it to that it be itself then it is not boring*', he suggests that the assertion of boredom in video comes less in its comparison with paintings or sculpture, but '*in comparison with television, which [because of its earlier association with the use of video-tape]...has set the standard of video time*', that is in the '*illusion of immediacy*'. Thus he stresses, '*The time standard of television [that is its allegiance to the notion of immediacy] is firmly based on the social and economic nature of the industry itself, and has nothing whatever to with the absolute technical and phenomenological possibilities of visual representation by cathode ray tube*' (in "*Video: The Distinctive Features of the Medium*", in Handhardt, J (ed.)' *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*', Visual studies Workshop, Peregrine Press (1986), p154-155

video's current chief protagonists Bill Viola, in which he refers to '*technology's acceleration*' and contribution to the '*lack of time*' in our lives and to the ways in which he has addressed this in his own work by '*favoring uneventful actions to increase the spectator's sensorial, attentional and cognitive faculties, so that 'one might liberate oneself from the habit of viewing objects as we see them.*'²⁸

Thus Viola's strategy of extending time has involved the technologies of high speed cameras and slow motion to '*amplify and examine visceral expressions of emotion.*'²⁹ As such, expanded time (as much as immediacy) as Ross also observes, has in addition operated for some artists using video as an aesthetic strategy and means of problematising the opticality³⁰ of the image by drawing attention to the way that perception (and perceptual processes) relates to [notions of and relationships between] time and space. For example, both Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham used time-delay mechanisms as a means of effecting processes of temporal and spatial dislocation in the viewer and as a means of critiquing the notion of immediacy in video. Referring to this in his work Graham describes it as: '*presenting the present as immediacy- as a pure phenomenological consciousness without the contamination of historical or other a priori meaning. My video time-delay installations and performance designs use this modernist notion of phenomenological immediacy,*

²⁸ Ibid, pp83-4

²⁹ Gelgud, Nathan "Time Passages: Bill Viola's slow-motion video art installation at NCMA plays with the viewer's sense of time." Independent Weekly, 20th February 2002 online at: <http://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/ArticleArchives?category=1179071>

³⁰ Opticality has a particular association with later high Modernist concerns expressed through Clement Greenberg's fundamental principle of 'pure opticality' in Minimalist painting as foreclosing aesthetic judgment. This is expressed in the idea that modernist art is apprehended through the experience of 'eyesight alone', and is no longer a judgement of the mind, making criticism unnecessary. The notion of opticality appears in some ways to contradict Modernism's emphasis on flatness and anti-illusionism, although Greenberg in his references to the term admits that '*The flatness towards which Modernist painting orients itself can never be an absolute flatness,' and that whilst 'the heightened sensitivity of the picture plane may no longer permit sculptural illusion, or trompe-l'oeil, but it does and must permit optical illusion.'*' Referring to Mondrian's abstract paintings he refers to '*the first mark made on a canvas [that] destroys its literal and utter flatness...an illusion that suggests a third dimension. Only now it is a strictly pictorial, strictly optical third dimension.*' (Greenberg, C 'Modernist Painting', (1960), reprinted in Battcock, G 'The New Art, A Critical Anthology' (1966))

Greenberg's principles have been widely disputed and critiqued, most notably by art historian Rosalind Krauss, whose project of the 'Optical Unconscious' (MIT Press, 1993) is a revision of Greenberg's narrative in the light of post-modernism. Although Krauss' concerns remain tied to Greenberg's notion of medium-specificity, her concerns depart from his emphasis on 'essence', to encompass a more theoretical framework in structural linguistics and psychoanalysis that challenges the much-flaunted modernist principle of 'vision itself.' Her chapter on the work of Marcel Duchamp discusses his 'assault' on visual purity, focussing in particular on the '*precision optics*' of his 'Rotorelief's' (1935) a series of abstract, rotating disks also used in his earlier 'Anémic Cinema' (1925-26) that '*transformed their two dimensionality into an illusory volumetric fullness that appeared to burgeon outward toward the viewer.*' (p96). This is later developed into Krauss' notion of the 'pulse', which places Duchamp as the progenitor of a line of artistic practice focussed on 'assaulting' the regime of visual autonomy. I discuss this further on in this chapter.

foregrounding an awareness of the presence of the viewer's own perceptual process; at the same time they critique this immediacy by showing the impossibility of locating pure present tense [or presentness].³¹

This has contributed to further considerations in the acknowledgement of ambient space and its relationship to the viewing subject, extending and elaborating on previous phenomenological concerns in the contexts of Minimalism (and Minimalist sculpture in particular), in which the awareness of the viewer's own body in space and its direct relationship to and negotiation of the work is considered through the durational aspects of his or her experience in the real time and real space of his or her present (or immediate) situation (What Robert Morris described as '*the present tense of immediate spatial experience*').³² This has encouraged the viewer to engage with a more exploratory notion of duration that is determined '*by the length and time they spend with the work*' rather than necessarily by the predetermined length of the work itself. For instance, Bruce Nauman's '*Live Taped Video Corridor*' pieces from the late 1960s and 1970s used monitors positioned at the far end of a narrow corridor to lure the viewer into the space. The closed circuit systems operating on the monitors set up to capture the viewer's own image and the perceptual processes effected through time delay mechanisms further encouraged the viewer to explore the situation he or she found themselves in.³³

³¹ Foster, H. Krauss, R. Bois, Y-A, Bucloch, B, 'Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism', (2004), p564

³² See Morris, R "*The Present Tense of Space*", op. cit. p176 This text is written as a challenge to Michael Fried's position in his essay "*Art & Objecthood*" in which he criticises Minimalist sculpture (and Morris' work in particular), for its durational aspects (see footnote 15 in this chapter). In it Morris appropriates much of Fried's terminology, re-inflecting it with his own phenomenological concerns in the durational aspects of bodily experience: '*for my model of "presentness" is the intimate inseparability of the experience of physical space and that of the ongoing immediate present.*' (See Fried, M "*Art & Objecthood*", p167 and Morris, R "*The Present Tense of Space*", , in 'Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris', An October Book, MIT Press, (1978), p177).

³³ Mondloch, K 'Screens: Viewing media Installation Art', op. cit, p41 Mondloch uses the term '*exploratory duration*', which she attributes to Anne-Marie Duguet's use of the term in describing the time-based aspects of artist Jeffery Shaw's work. She points to Duguet's own adaptation of the term from Gérard Genette's notion of performance as having a '*procedural duration*' in her book '*L'Oeuvre d'Art*', Éditions du Seuil, (1994). My own reason for pointing this out is in its relationship to performance and to my interests in the performative engagement of the viewer with the durational aspects of viewing video works. However, whilst a more exploratory duration can give more freedom to the viewer in terms of giving up control over the time the viewer spends with the work, this can also be counter-productive. Some critics have questioned the freedom this gives to viewers in determining their own viewing time-line in a way that encourages a kind of '*temporal flânerie*' in contemporary spectatorship, the '*random wandering of the flâneur, the visitor/spectator*', particularly in the experience of viewing multi-screened projected works. (See Paini, Dominique "*Le cinéma exposé: flux contre flux*" (tr.'Movies in the gallery: flow on show', Art Press 287 (2003), p29; quoted in Monloch, K ,as before, p54.) Others have pointed to the recent tendency in projected video works to use 'loops' as 'a key mechanism of addressing the viewer through time', observing that whilst this may 'sometimes [be] a genuine part of the temporality of the work', it is also often used '*merely as an*

Expanding on this in the relation of video installation to the multiple temporalities in a viewer's experience of the work, Margaret Morse refers to:

'a form that unfolds in time- the time that a visitor requires to complete a trajectory inspecting objects and monitors, the time a video track... requires to play out, or the time for a video track to wander across a field of monitors, and one might add, the time for reflection in the subject her- or himself, that is for the experience of a transformation to occur'.³⁴

This is similar the kind of transformation that is said to occur in the viewer with regard to experiencing live performance in that the temporal unfolding that Morse describes allows the potential for the viewer to become transformed over time by the experience.³⁵ In her text Morse makes several other references to the relationship between video installation and live performance, positioning it as '*part of a larger shift in art forms toward "liveness" that began in the 1960's*' and which, like live performance, exists temporarily and ultimately has to be experienced in person in order to be experienced at all. Within this field she locates '*two planes of language*':

a 'here' and 'now', ('in which we can speak and be present to each other') and an 'elsewhere' and 'elsewhen', ('inhabited by people and things that are absent from the act of enunciation'), situating video installation within the former category '*on the plane of presentation and of subjects in the here and now.*'³⁶

Thus as much as the term 'temporal unfolding' indicates an extended notion of temporality, this is figured through its relationship to (rather than against) the notion of immediacy in the viewer's durational experience of the work in the 'here and now'. Whilst on the surface this may appear to contradict the emphasis I wish to place on durational concerns, it is important to stress as Ross does in her essay that the

exhibition device' in allowing a work to be repeated automatically (Ross, C "Temporalities", op.cit, p.96).

³⁴ Morse, M "Video Installation Art: The Body, the Image, and the Space in Between", in Hall, D & Fifer, S 'Illuminating Video: an Essential Guide to Video Art', Aperture(1990; Reprinted 2004) pp165-6.

³⁵ I am referring here to Peggy Phelan's observations that "*Performance remains a compelling art because it contains the possibility of both the actor and the spectator becoming transformed during the event's unfolding...*" Although Phelan stresses the "*possibility of mutual transformation of both the observer and the performer*" stressing that the "*spectator's response cannot alter the pre-recorded or the remote performance*", in Phelan, P 'Marina Abramovic: Witnessing Shadows" in Theatre Journal 56.4 (2004) p575. I do not agree. If the 'spectator' is no longer simply a spectator but is also part of the work, the capacity to be (mutually) transformed as both performer and spectator then surely becomes possible. It is worth asking, as Morse herself does: '*who is the subject of the experience?*' (in Morse, Video Installation Art p159). For a more detailed discussion, see also Chapter 2.

³⁶ Morse, M "Video Installation Art", as before, p156

'dichotomy between extendedness and instantaneity [in video practices], is often more apparent than real. Even in works that engage with extendedness and real-time ... the durational is never simply a negation of instantaneity and acceleration'

but rather part of a wider enquiry into current preoccupations with immediacy that in its temporal investigations *'reflects on the waning of time, the fragilisation of the sense of history and the contemporary reinforcement of presentism'*. Thus she claims *'video art must be seen as contributing to this enquiry as a practice that produces both temporal extendedness and instantaneousness.'*³⁷

My own investment in these relationships concerns the way in which these have contributed to notions of physicality and to processes of 'physicalisation' in the viewer's embodied experience and used as a performative strategy for his or her negotiation of the work. However, whilst the concept of physicality (or physicalisation) is well-understood and documented in relation to the historical contexts and uses of film as a material in itself, in its development by artists as an extension of earlier sculptural concerns, and in its exploitation of and uses of its apparatus in space, its application is less easily understood and applied to the contexts of video practices, which appear to have a more ambivalent and complex relationship to the use the term, in that the 'materiality' of video is much more difficult and problematic to specify.

*'Unlike film whose intrinsic properties could be easily foregrounded as the very substance of the work, the question of video's ontological specificity [has been] much more complex, its formal language more difficult to articulate.'*³⁸

This has to do with video's own difficult historical relationship with Modernism, which has been complicated by its emergence during Modernism's final stages. Whilst on the one hand there were attempts to place video within the Modernist discourse as a technological development of filmic concerns, with the imperative of '*seek[ing] out its ontological specificity*' as a 'medium' whose '*intrinsic properties could be foregrounded as the very substance of*

³⁷ Ross, Christina "The Temporalities of Video: Extendedness Revisited", as before, pp87 and 85

³⁸ Leighton, T "Introduction", in Leighton, T "Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Introduction", op. cit, p22.

*the work*³⁹; on the other hand this relationship was curtailed by the social and political ideologies of the 1960s and 1970s, which sought to liberate artists from the notion of medium-specificity, looking towards postmodernism and at ‘*changing the standard artist/viewer relationship and the rigid criteria of the commercial art world*’.⁴⁰

In the mid 1980s, writing on “*Post-modernism and the video-text*”, Fredric Jameson proposed that a ‘medium’ is defined by the combination of three distinct components: ‘*an artistic mode or specific form of aesthetic production*'; *a specific technology generally organised around a central apparatus or machine*'; and ‘*a social institution*', including a set of common forms, functions or uses.⁴¹

However, as Liz Kotz points out in a recent essay,

'unlike older forms such as painting, whose historically entrenched role stabilises a relatively coherent field, for newer media these conditions perpetually go in and out of sync, producing different momentary formations of 'video' that soon dissolve into technical obsolescence. The incessant technical mutations of what we might call its 'material support' render efforts to define or theorise video particularly precarious'.

Furthermore, she adds, especially now, ‘*as videotape, monitor and cathode-ray tube give way to DVDs, digital storage devices and electronic screens*’, this becomes even more apparent. ‘*How can video be a medium*’, she asks, if *it no longer has a central apparatus or machine, much less a specific form of aesthetic production or set of social or vernacular uses?*⁴²

This was a similar question posed by Rosalind Krauss, who in a series of articles since the 1990s ‘*has striven to maintain the legitimacy of medium specificity and the notion of medium, as such*’, in order to maintain separate distinctions in forms of artistic practice in the current contemporary climate of digital or ‘new media’.⁴³ These concerns appeal to the idea of

³⁹ Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yves-Alain Bois, Benjamin Buchloh, ‘Art Since 1900’, Thames & Hudson 2004 p562

⁴⁰ Sturken, Marita “*Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form: Great Expectations and the Making of a History*”, in Hall, D and Fifer, S J, ‘Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art’, as before (1990), p116-117

⁴¹ Jameson, Fredric “*Reading without Interpretation: Postmodernism and the Video Text*” (1986), in ‘Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism’, Duke University Press, (1991), pp199-223

⁴² Kotz, Liz “*Video Projection: The Space Between Screens*”, in Leighton, Tanya ‘*Art and the Moving Image*’, as before, pp371-385

⁴³ Earlier on in 1976, following the emergence of video as an artistic concern, Krauss had attempted to cast the ‘medium’ of video ‘as [a medium of] narcissism’, claiming the predominance of artists’ self-

'differential specificity' in an attempt to re-articulate or '*reinvent*' the notion of the medium as such. Taking her lead from post-Minimalist artists such as Robert Smithson, Robert Morris and Richard Serra who employed strategies that 'expanded' previous conceptions of artistic mediums, she points to the creation of a new model of specificity in the 'post-medium condition', in which '*ideas override the centrality of a particular medium*', offering up film as fundamentally 'aggregate' condition that exemplifies these concerns:

*'the medium or support for film being neither the celluloid strip of the images, nor the camera that filmed them, nor the projector that brings them to life in one motion, nor the beam of light that relays them to the screen, nor that screen itself, but all of thee taken together, including the audience's position caught between the source of the light behind it and the image projected before our eyes.'*⁴⁴

Thus for Krauss it is precisely in its complexity and diversity that the 'apparatus' of film offers an understanding of medium that is non-reductive and that can be understood as a dynamic set of interconnecting procedures, structures and operations that allows artists to examine and convey its structures in critical and compelling ways. However, Krauss does not extend these concerns to video practices towards which she presents a particular antipathy, and insists on maintaining a dichotomy between the 'self-differing' condition of film and the 'constitutive heterogeneity' of intermedia work. In adopting this position what Krauss fails to recognise is the relevance her formulation might have to the current diverse art practices that exploit and transform cinematic or filmic elements through other technical means, especially in video (and video installation in particular) and more recently, digital media.⁴⁵

representation mediated through the closed-circuit system and instant feedback mechanism of the video camera, as its 'formal language' and 'structure'. However, whilst her argument is very persuasive, what she failed to observe is that in many cases the artists' representation of the 'self' is made in direct relation that of the viewer (See Krauss, R "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism", in October, Spring (1976))

⁴⁴ Krauss, R 'A Voyage on the North Sea', as before, p30

⁴⁵ Ibid, p 31 Her later amendment to the essay "*Two Moments from the Post-medium Condition*" (October 116, Spring 2006), does include references to video works, expanding on the term 'technical support' understood as an attempt to reconcile traditional and contemporary media through artists' exploitation of contemporary commercial 'vehicles', such as cars, or television, *in recognition of the contemporary obsolescence of the traditional mediums, as well as acknowledging their obligation to wrest from that support to a new set of aesthetic conventions.*' However, her continued over-emphasis on the obsolescence of traditional media, prevent her from acknowledging how her formulation might in fact be extended in productive ways for contemporary moving image installations that '*reconsider the material and technical specificity of cinematic components, and sets out to disentangle them from the traditional cinematic viewing position.*' It is worth noting that paradoxically, Krauss' earlier notion of the 'expanded field' was intended to refer to the way in which postmodernism opens onto multiple sets of formal possibilities in a given medium, rather than close it down by insisting on any singular operation. What is implied in the use of the term is that '*medium specificity does not dissipate into the pluralist practices of contemporary art; but rather that the qualities and uses of different media are so*

According to American curator Jon Burris, from its earliest days there appears to have been ‘*an apparent contradiction in the relation of technological tools to aesthetic expression*’ in the historical emergence of video art that differentiates between those artists whose work was very much grounded in ‘*a discourse firmly embedded in a the notion of the avant garde*’ linked to technological and Modernist concerns in the ‘*newness of the medium, its apparatus and implications*’ (such as the work of Woody and Steina Vasulka, in the United States)⁴⁶ and those whose relation to technology was essentially functional and conceptual in its consideration as an extension of works in other media (such as the work of Vito Acconci). This apparent inconsistency of intention and production he claims, is an important indicator in the complexity of the relationship between technology and aesthetics, and of the dynamics by which video establish[ed] [its] aesthetic foundations. Furthermore, the ‘*immediate and simultaneous emergence of multiple genres*’ contributed to a ‘*range of sometimes contradictory attitudes, aesthetic approaches, political and ethical stances.*⁴⁷

Writing on the “*Paradox in the Evolution of an Artform*” in the emergence of video practices, Marita Sturken points out that ‘*early preoccupation with video’s inherent properties* [through its relationship to the ‘medium’ of television in particular], *was part of the self-consciousness of the new medium.*⁴⁸ Whilst some artists used these ‘properties’ to explore the more formal ‘techniques’ and ‘effects’ of a new technology using the technical capabilities of video to determine meaning in work that ‘freed’ them from the need of a subject; others used it as a continuation of phenomenological and conceptual concerns already existing in their work,

expanded that they stand in a new formerly unimaginable field to one another.’ Thus her assessment of electronic and digital media as ‘constitutively heterogeneous’ contradicts her previous argument on the ‘expanded field’, particularly since it is here that ‘*a larger corpus of cinematic ‘intermedia’ work flourishes*’. Consequently, as has recently been observed, ‘*there is no reason why this sort of artwork contradicts Krauss’ theory of a medium as the material and technical ‘supporting structure’, but in contrast to her predilection for obsolete media, she excludes it from the outset.*’ In doing so, she excludes any potential for examining how the ‘differential specificity’ of film as a medium might become transformed by other newer media such as video and digital media and help invent newer and different artistic forms. (These observations are helpfully supported with reference to Ji-hoon Kim’s essay on “*The Post-Medium Condition and the Explosion of Cinema*”, in Screen 50:1, Spring 2009, pp114-123)

⁴⁶ Woody and Steina Vasulka are considered early pioneers of video art in the United States and are particularly known for their approach to the new technology of video that ‘*respond[ed] to the old modernist imperative that each art form seek out its ontological “specificity”- in this case, that they investigate video not as a device to record (much less as an object to attack), but as a medium whose intrinsic properties might be foregrounded as the very substance of the work.*’ (Source: Foster, H. Krauss, R, Bois, Y-A, Bucloch, B, ‘Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism.’, (2004), p561)

⁴⁷ Burris, Jon “*Did the Portapak Cause Video Art? Notes on the Formation of a New Medium*” in Millennium Film Journal, Vol.29, Fall (1996). Jon Burris is the Executive Director of [Artspace] at Untitled, Oklahoma City, United States.

⁴⁸ Sturken, Marita, as above, p117

but for both kinds of artists it was the apparent characteristic of mediation in the immediacy of video that seemed to appeal to their concerns. Thus whilst artists such as Vito Acconci, Peter Campus and Bruce Nauman in the United States and David Hall in the United Kingdom, expressed discontent with medium-specific definitions, using video as an expansion to their range of other practices (in performance, sculpture and process art in particular), they were nonetheless also paradoxically exploring what they saw as its particular 'characteristics' in the mediating 'effects' of video in 'instant replay', scale and its relationship to the viewer.⁴⁹ These works extended from face to face interactions using the 'black box' of the television monitor as the physical interface, to the consideration of whole spaces that provoked a more performative and participatory response from the viewer. On the one hand these pointed to notions of intimacy and real-time as two further 'properties' of the 'medium' of video whilst also drawing attention to the ultimately distancing nature of mediation. Effects and processes of spatial and temporal dislocation produced in the subjective 'decentering', of the viewer in such works thus became characteristic '*almost givens of video art*'⁵⁰ in the early 1970s during which it seems the attention to notions of immediacy was presented on the one hand through '*aggressively addressed spectator participation*' and on the other hand in direct ambivalent relation to Modernist immediacy in the '*presentation of the present as immediacy, foregrounding an awareness of the presence of the viewer's own perceptual process.*'⁵¹

At the same time in both Britain and the United States there was a continuing engagement by artists with exploring the specific nature of materiality in film⁵², which '*drew attention to the physicality and spatiality of the film apparatus whilst asserting the dominance of film's*

⁴⁹ That this was initially expressed through the 'black box' of the TV monitor meant that video and its mediating effects were very much framed through an association with the language and apparatus of broadcast television and used as a means of critiquing the paradoxical nature of televisual '*nowness*'. Hence spectator participation became characteristic of such work, staged through the '*alienating encounters*' in which the viewer '*continually confronts a collapse of identification between [his or] her experience as a body/subject and [his or] her image or representation*' on the TV monitor screen.' (Source: Kraynak, Janet "*Dependent participation: Bruce Nauman's Environments*", Grey Room, 10 (2003), p24)

⁵⁰ Foster, H. Krauss, R. Bois, Y-A. Bucloh, B., 'Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism.', (2004), p564

⁵¹ Ibid. (<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/source-text/46/>; original source from Dan Graham's essay, "*Video in Relation to Architecture*", in Dan Graham: Video/Architecture/Television: Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Hg.), Writ-ings on Video and Video Works 1970–1978', Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, New York University Press, New York (1979), pp62–76.

⁵² In the United Kingdom these interests came together through the formation of the London Filmmaker's Coop and included artists such as Peter Gidal, Malcolm LeGrice, Nicky Hamlyn, Tony Hill, Annabel Nicholson, Tony Sinden, amongst others.

physical parameters in the viewing experience itself.⁵³ Contrary to popular belief, the term ‘Structural film’ ‘was initially defined against related modernist ideals’,⁵⁴ setting itself up as a radical opposition to the capitalist industrialisation of film in Hollywood cinema in an outright rejection of its forms and conventions through the conception of ‘pure cinema’ (a term that was to prove paradoxical, given the association of ‘purity’ with High Modernism and with material specificity).⁵⁵ Coined by American P. Adams Sitney, he specified in ‘Structural film’, four fundamental characteristics in ‘fixed frame, loop-printing, flicker and rephotography off screen’, through which he saw its potential ‘not as the dismissal or condensation of film’s temporality, but rather as the ‘elongation’ of the temporal’.⁵⁶ This was characterised by ‘a more meditative, contemplative mode of viewing that marked a paradigmatic shift within modernist aesthetics’.⁵⁷

⁵³ Leighton, T ‘Introduction’, in ‘Art and the Moving Image’, as before, p21

⁵⁴ Joseph, B.W, ‘Beyond the Dream Syndicate’, referenced in Leighton, T, as above (Original text: Joseph, B.W ‘Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage’, Zone Books, MIT Press, (2008))

⁵⁵ Structural Film has been identified as one of two ‘avant-garde’ strains, which emerged at the same time as a reaction to Hollywood. The other in contrast to the conception ‘pure cinema’ in its outward rejection of Hollywood, challenged Hollywood more directly by distorting and recombing its forms and conventions in genre and narrative structure, but stayed within the distribution circuits of commercial film (for example the films of Jean-Luc Godard and Alain Resnais). Film historian Peter Wollen has addressed this in his influential text “The Two Avant Gardes” (Studio International 1975), which distinguishes a ‘political strain’ of the avant-garde from a ‘formalist strain’, in Structural Film, the former going back to the era of Soviet cinema and returning in the 1960s with filmmakers such as Godard.

⁵⁶ P. Adams Sitney, ‘Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde 1943-1978’. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979 p370

⁵⁷ Sitney wrote an article defining his understanding of Structural Film (See “Structural Film” by P. Adams Sitney in Film Culture No. 47, 1969) This was widely criticised by the founding members of Fluxus who claimed that many of the characteristics that Sitney attributed to Structural Film already existed in works associated with Fluxus. In addition, Peter Gidal in the United Kingdom, produced his own conception of the term, outlined in his article “Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film”(1976), which was published in the British Film Institute’s ‘Structural Film Anthology’. This was similarly concerned with the materiality of film and its representation, but departed from what Gidal saw as idealistic in Sitney’s definition. Gidal’s definition provided an important framework for the British avant-garde filmmaking network and had an important influence on a number of artists and filmmakers around the ‘London Filmmakers’ co-op’, especially John Smith (Source: Leighton T, “Introduction”, in Art & the Moving Image, as before, p22).

In 1979 British Filmmaker Malcolm Le Grice also wrote the article “The History we Need” to accompany the catalogue of a major exhibition ‘Film as Film: Formal Experiment in Film 1910-1975’, for the Hayward Gallery in London. In it he too identifies avant-garde film with an exploration of the essential limitations and properties of the film medium. Amongst these were: “(1) Concerns which derive from the camera; its limitations and extensive capacities as a time-based photographic recording apparatus; Limitations: frame limits, lens limit (focus, field, aperture, zoom), shutter. Extensions: time-lapse, ultra high speed, camera movements(panning, tracking, etc.)..(2) Concerns which derive from the editing process and its abstraction into conceptual. Concrete relations of elements...(3) Concerns which derive from the mechanism of the eye and particularities of perception...(4) Concerns which derive from printing, processing, refilming and recopying procedures; explorations of transformations possible in selective copying and modification of the material...” (Le Grice, Malcolm, in “Thoughts on recent Underground Film”, in Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age, London BFI, 2001, pp14-15; referenced in deBruyn, E “The Expanded Field of Cinema, or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square”, in ‘X-Screen: Film Installations and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s’, MUMOK Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, 2004) The exhibition was organised to provide a comprehensive overview of this ‘formalist’ tradition. Whilst this presented a rare opportunity to survey the history of avant-garde film in a museum context, it went against the traditions of the

In particular, it radicalised itself through '*innovation at the level of content, through the formal rigidity of the structural film, and in 'the insistence on the generally anti-narrative "personal cinema" made by the individual filmmaker*'. Such attention to the 'purity' of the cinematic form and the material specificity of film however, meant that its reasoning and logic was effectively Modernist. Also known as 'Conceptual' film, its

*'essential concern [was] with materials and language, which took the form of a general subordination or interest in representation, especially narrative, with a corresponding emphasis on the materials and resources of the medium, on the conditions of production and display and on the specific kinds of signification of which film is capable.'*⁵⁸

This was expressed by an increasing concern with the nature of its physicality, a notion, which extended to the (extended) space of its exhibition.⁵⁹ In its most radical form this expanded to a

avant-garde in its outward rejection of the commercial system, which it had previously shunned. Le Grice was thus very sceptical at an attempt by the institution of the museum to create a comprehensive account of avant-garde history.

⁵⁸ James, David.E 'Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties', Princeton University Press, (1989). (Quoted in Yue, Genevieve "*The Last Picture Show: Film and Video Installation in the Late '60s and Early '70s*", Issue 28: Cinema and the Gallery, September-October (2003). No pagination. Accessed online at http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2003/28/last_picture_show_installation_60s_70s/.

⁵⁹Paradoxically, Structural Film had initially emerged out of the earlier wider conception of Expanded Cinema, which had initially begun in the spirit of Fluxus events and 'Happenings', in the early 1960's and had seen the '*beginnings of an 'intermedia' condition in 'the permeation of boundaries between art and film; and the creation of hybrid filmic objects, installations and performances.'*' The practice focused on '*the scene of the projection- the particularities of attending the screening of the work itself and examined 'relationships between reality and apparatus and the reconceptualisation of film's inherent 'illusionism' into the 'material' of film'*', paving the way for '*numerous new artistic possibilities such as film installation and the film environment.*'

Whilst initially access to 16mm film equipment was relatively affordable and straightforward, the emergence and availability of cheap video equipment onto the domestic market in the United States at the end of the decade and '*widespread state support for the production of media workshops*' meant that the whilst on the one hand this '*encouraged different forms of experimentation*', it also marked a shift (and a split) in artists' concerns. On the one hand film gave way to '*new forms of electronic information*' in the emergence of video as a new technology whilst on the other hand film as an older 'discarded' technology was seen by artists as an escape from '*the totalising logic of mass communication*', allowing them to explore '*the phenomenological and physiological conditions of perceptual experience for the viewer and to exploit the realm between the autonomous space of the museum and the spectacular realm of mass media.*'

Thus the climate of 'intermedia' saw the emergence of interdisciplinary events that embraced the impact of technology on art, '*problematising the conventional distinctions between art and technology and involving other experimental art media and technological inventions*', whilst at the same time pushing the boundaries of film into theatricalised 'cinema pieces' that '*combined live action and film*' and '*radically altered relationships between film, performance and the audience*' using the spatio-temporal possibilities of older moving image technologies to challenge viewers' habitual ways of experiencing the nature of illusion and reality. These were to be exemplified at the extremities of Structural Film in works and performed events that expanded beyond the film itself and out into the environment of its exhibition. (Source: Leighton, Tanya "*Introduction*", in 'Art and the Moving Image', as before, p14)

*'cinema of expansion without camera, and also without screen or film stock', a cinema in which 'anything can be used as a screen, the body of a protagonist or even the bodies of spectators; anything can replace the film stock, in a virtual film which now only goes on in the head, behind the pupils.'*⁶⁰

These works combined film and performance to effect intense perceptual processes and physical responses in the viewer, disrupting conventional ways of viewing and engaging with the work. The 'flicker' film in particular, became known for its aggressive 'assault' of visual perception, which constituted a form of '*neural transmission*' in which '*the retina [that is of the viewer] becomes a target.*' Viewed in a darkened space, the intensity of alternating black and white or pure colour images emanating aggressively from the screen '*pushed the limits of the viewer's perceptual capabilities, generating [often] hallucinatory after images.*'⁶¹ Thus whilst the project of the Structural film was rooted in Modernism and a medium-specific practice, it went beyond the reductive Greenbergian understanding of the medium as equated with the artwork's physical support '*to investigate all dimensions of the cinematic dispositif, including its spatial and temporal elaboration of the vectors connecting subjects to objects.*'⁶² As such, it can be seen as a model for other art forms, most notably in what became known as 'sculptural film'.⁶³ Furthermore, its phenomenological concerns through

⁶⁰Quoted in Leighton, T, p17, from Deleuze, G 'Cinema 2: The Time Image', trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Gelata University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p215. A precursor to this can be seen in Nam June Paik's 'Zen for Film' (1964), which bears remarkable similarities to some of the later performative structural film projects, although at the time this was not recognised. In this work a roll of 16mm clear film leader was run through the projector gathering with it scratches and dust with each successive showing. This made each screening a unique experience.

⁶¹ Mondloch, K, 'Screens', as before, p7-8. The 'Flicker film' was pioneered by Peter Kubelka in Vienna and developed by Tony Conrad and Paul Sharits in the United States, amongst others. Conrad's film 'The Flicker' is a film consisting of only alternating black-and-white film images. '*During the projection, light and dark sequences alternate to changing rhythms and produce stroboscopic and flickering effects; and while viewing these, they cause optic impressions which simulate colors and forms. In the process, the film also stimulates physiological in place of psychological impressions, by not addressing the senses as such, but rather triggering direct neural reactions.* Tony Conrad, who has devoted himself to an intensive study of the physiology of the nervous system, created with «The Flicker» an icon of the structural film, which succeeds without a narrative or reproducible imagery. Since the seen is not captured through the eyes, but rather first produced in the brain.' Heike Helfert : "Tony Conrad: The Flicker" (accessed at <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/the-flicker/>). In Britain, Malcolm Le Grice similarly made work based on an intense engagement with the primary elements of projection, combining film and live performance. His first work 'Horror Film 1' (1970) comprised '*three film loops composed of nothing but changing colours projected [and] superimposed on one another so that in a larger field of light two smaller fields appear congruently central. While Le Grice [himself] moves in the projection beam slowly from the beam back to the projectors, his coloured shadow outlines become larger, until finally, alone his hands fill the entire surface. The spectators experience simultaneously the real action and the accompanying change of the film image,[which] sublates the traditional separation between the production and reception of the projected image*' (source: deBruyn, E "The Expanded Field of Cinema", in 'X-Screen', as before, p135).

⁶² Butler, Alison "A deictic turn: space and location in contemporary gallery film and video installation", in Screen 51:4 Winter (2010)

⁶³ This is what Rosalind Krauss described as the '*Expanded field*' of post-minimalist sculpture, which she outlines in her essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" (in October vol.8, no.1 (1979), pp30-4). It is also what informs her understanding of structural film which in her text 'A Voyage from the North

which the embodiment of the viewer can be examined and mobilised by the parameters of space can be seen as a kind of prototype for an approach to moving image performance that has its roots in Fluxus expanded film which would extend to later performative concerns in artists' approaches to video and video installations. For example, early film works by Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham drew on these traditions in work that employed performative strategies and dealt with the physiology of perception, which they developed in later works using video. Bruce Nauman's 'Rotating Glass Walls', is

*'made up of a space on the walls of which four film loops are projected. The films show how a glass plate is brought to rotate around a horizontal middle line. The shot is chosen so that the midline marks exactly the upper edge of the image, and the side edges are not to be seen. In this way it is impossible for the observers to get any sense of size or a spatial orientation of what is shown. While the lower half of the rotating glass wall moves towards and away from the spectators (on opposite walls), its appearance fluctuates between an transparent non-surface and a three dimensionally perceived, material body.'*⁶⁴

In Dan Graham's 'Body Press',

*'shots of an undressed couple standing back to back in a mirrored cylinder are shown on opposite walls. These show each person leading film cameras tracing a spiral movement across their bodies from hips to eye level. When each return to their starting point these are exchanged and the procedure repeated. The image recorded is of the human body made up of fragments of mirror-like movements of the person opposite as well as distorted reflections in the curved mirror surface. By virtually binding the camera to the body, Dan Graham shows the constructed nature of the subject of both spectators and performers, which is only constituted in the act of perception: the perception of others and being perceived by others.'*⁶⁵

It is here that I wish to locate my own concerns in examining our engagement with contemporary moving image works. Writing about immersion and participation in recent video installations, Ursula Frohne makes the comparison between earlier approaches to film and video in the work of Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, Chris Burden and Joan Jonas and

Sea' (Thames & Hudson, 1999, p26), she situates in relation to post-minimalist sculpture through a comparison between the three dimensional structural film installation work of Michael Snow and the phenomenological concerns in the work of Richard Serra. In an earlier essay on the work of American Structuralist filmmaker Paul Sharits, she had observed that his 'locational' film works marked a turning point in film production because they '*incorporated the real, physical environment*', and '*the viewer's actual experience between the parallel planes of the screen and projector*', into the work itself (see Krauss, R "Paul Sharits", in Cathcart, Linda (ed.) 'Paul Sharits; Dream Displacement and Other Projects', New York: Albright-Knox Gallery, (1976); reprinted in Film Culture 65-66 (1978): 92; See also Windhausen, F "Paul Sharits and the Active Spectator", in Leighton, T 'Art and the Moving Image: a Critical Reader', as before, pp122-39).

⁶⁴ de Bruyn, E "The Expanded Field of Cinema", in 'X-Screen', as before, p162

⁶⁵ Ibid, p178

more recent works in terms of their ‘reception aesthetic’ that is based on ‘*a distinctive psychology of reception with a performative disposition*’. These works she claims

‘use the medially heightened physical presence of the (virtual) protagonist to transpose a sense of action to the (real) spectator and also use physical psychological and institutional framework conditions to imply a real-life situation.’⁶⁶

She refers to the way in which film and video works that developed from performances and happenings events in the 1970s came to occupy the ‘*void between artist and audience*’ in work that had an ‘*emphasis on presence and place*’ and where the ‘*immediate presence of both performers and spectators*’ became the main characteristic. The development of ‘video performance’ she maintains, take these ‘*situational-based artistic forms of expression*’ a stage further, expanding on previous works by ‘*creating complex compositions that interweave action and recording media without actually abandoning the ‘aura’ of the live act as the point of orientation for the audience.*’ She links these to Minimalist approaches in ‘*the importance placed on the viewer*’, in work that depends on his or her presence ‘to experience a certain ‘*sense of duration*, *echo or endlessness*,’ emphasising the ‘*significance of the time factor in video as a medium in itself*’ and the way in which this ‘*accentuates the performative nature of the relationship between the spectator and the artistic formulation.*⁶⁷

Frohne points to Dan Graham’s early work ‘Body Press’ as an ‘*early attempt to experimentally investigate the transition or breach between representation and physical experience*.’⁶⁸ This work prefigures Graham’s later video installations in which the viewer and the ‘viewed’ are brought together in spatial constructions using time-delay mechanisms and multiple mirroring devices in which the participating spectators ‘*no longer see*

⁶⁶ Frohne, Ursula “*Dissolution of the Frame: Immersion and Participation in Video Installations*”, in Leighton, T ‘Art and the Moving Image’, as before, p361

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p362 The work involves a man and a woman who each guide cameras around the contours of their naked bodies, whilst standing back to back in a cylindrical mirrored space. After a while they exchange cameras and continue the performance, whilst the images are projected life-size onto the opposite walls. The viewer is confronted by ‘*a treble mirroring*’ representative of the viewpoint of the performers, camera and spectators, which Frohne claims through its ‘*cubist fragmentation of perspectives helps restore the physically tactile aspect of the performance to the filmic images, while intensifying the portrayal of the bodies- both in their relationship to real space and to the space of projection- in an ‘image bursting’ dynamic that shifts the filmic representation closer to that of sculptural presence*’ See also footnote 64 in this chapter and “*Dan Graham, Body Press*”(1970-72), in David A Ross (ed.), ‘*Seeing Time: Selections from the Pamela and Richard Kramlich Collection of Media Art*’ (ex. Cat.), san Francisco Museum of Modern Art, (1999), pp70-71

themselves in terms of the gaze alone, but through their own physical involvement.' Frohne refers this 'dynamic' transformation as a '*spatialisation of the temporal.*'⁶⁹ She goes on to suggest similar concerns of '*affecting the viewer*' in the work of Steve McQueen, referring to the work 'Deadpan' from 1997. In this film installation work first shown at the ICA in London in 1999, McQueen re-enacts a scene from the Buster Keaton silent movie 'Steamboat Bill, Jr.' (1928) in which he stands motionless in front of the façade of a house that starts to fall slowly toward him. As the window's 'opening' falls exactly over the space where he stands, he remains standing motionless, unaffected and unscathed by the experience. The scene is repeated on a loop again and again.⁷⁰ The work is particularly effective in its approach, which like many performance works from the 1970s is '*aimed at provoking physical and psychological reactions from audiences*'.⁷¹ This is made more intense by the scale of the work, which emphasises the corporeality of the body depicted through its relationship to the viewer's own body and his or her awareness of it in relation to it. Frohne refers to viewers being '*pulled into the event*' as they become aware of themselves watching the scene. This is emphasised by the reflection of the projected image on floor, which serves to decrease the physical distance between the viewer/s and the scene/screen as he or she becomes physically part of it. That the action is continuously repeated only serves to reinforce this and it is the insistence of the repeated action alone, along with the absence of sound, (aside from its cinematic references) that for me is the particular strength of the work.⁷²

⁶⁹ Frohne, U "Dissolution of the Frame", as before, p362. See also my analysis in Chapter 1.

⁷⁰ Sited in an enclosed, darkened space with the larger than life image covering a wall from floor to ceiling, the viewer is confronted by the sheer physicality of the image in the scale of the work, which positioned as it is, with the projection screen flush with the floor of the space, gives the illusion when the wall of the house starts to fall that it is actually falling out of the projection screen and into the room itself. The repeated action only adds to the intensity of the experience as the viewer, who in his or her anticipation '*becomes increasingly physically aware of the repeated event*' and of his or her own physical presence as part of it. (Aside from my comments in relation to Frohne's text, my understanding of McQueen's work is based on my own observations and experience of seeing the work when installed at the ICA in London in 1999).

⁷¹ Frohne compares this to the anticipation shown in the documentation photograph of Chris Burden's famous 'Shoot' piece from 1971, which shows him '*standing in anticipation of being shot in the arm*', referring to Michael Newman's observation in relation to the repertoire performance works from the 1970s '*that aimed to hit the viewer in the centre of his physical presence.*' (in Newman, Michael "McQueen's Materialism", in Steve McQueen (ex.cat.), ICA, London and Kunsthalle, Zürich, 1999), p363

⁷² I am not saying that the cinematic references are not important in this work (the shift in suspense and meaning from a humorous event depicted in the original film to a fear-inducing dramatic occurrence in McQueen's remake is particularly powerful), but it is not my main concern here. My concern is in the work's relationship to performance in the formal qualities and effect of the action itself and its enacted physicality.

The relationship to performance is particularly apparent in several of McQueen's earlier works developed throughout the 1990s in which he is also visibly present. These are short non-narrative, predominantly black and white film (and some colour video) works that combine physical gestures of the human body with functions of the camera to draw the viewer into the space of the screen. The tension in these works is sustained through the presence and actions of the human body engaged in activities that present a powerfully restrained physicality, with the lack of sound emphasising the suspense and visual tension in the image. These works recall the early works of artists such as Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham through the use of the enlarged projected images filling the wall of the darkened space to achieve '*an involving physicality*.' Referring to this in relation to the viewer's physical experience of the work, McQueen states:

*'Projecting the film onto the back wall of the gallery space so that it completely fills it from ceiling to floor, and from side to side, gives it this kind of blanket effect. You are very much involved with what is going on... The whole idea of making it a silent experience is so that when people walk into the space they become very much aware of themselves, of their own breathing... I want to put people into a situation where they're sensitive to themselves watching the piece.'*⁷³

In his essay on the work of Steve McQueen T.J. Demos connects this strategy to the early use of the projected image in the 1960s and 1970s by artists such as James Coleman, Paul Sharits and Peter Campus. Demos is particularly insightful in his observations regarding McQueen's strategic use of both film and video in his work that '*recalls the intersection of performance art and experimental film during the 1970s in which simple physical gestures*

I am aware that McQueen's work was shot predominantly using 16mm film, as opposed to video, and the fact that the film itself also references a specific film lends a particular 'filmic' quality to his work. However, his approach to video works uses many of the same conventions that he uses in his films (particularly in terms of his use of the camera) and the films themselves have often been shown as projections from films transferred onto video. Thus whilst there are differences in McQueen's use of film and video, and reasons why he chooses to work with one format or the other, I would say that his work is primarily concerned with critically examining the relationship between the two in an approach to materiality and physicality in the projected image as a form that encompasses and draws on the histories and properties of both.

⁷³ In "Let's Get Physical: Steve McQueen interviewed by Patricia Bickers", Art Monthly 202 (December 1996-January 1997), pp.1-5. McQueen's more recent film projects depart from these earlier works, although his approach is nonetheless informed by them, I contend, through the continued intensity of bodily engagement and experience in the subjects he portrays. Using extended sequences and moments of intense silence with little dialogue, his subjects display a penetrating sense of objectivity and physical control that is symptomatic of his earlier works. See 'Hunger' (2008) and 'Shame' (2011). See also Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith "*Flesh become Words*", Frieze Magazine online 09.09.08; David Gritten: "Shame: Steve McQueen Interview", The Telegraph online (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmmakersonfilm/8994878/Shame-Steve-McQueen-interview.html>); <http://www.filmquarterly.org/2012/01/non-film-steve-mcqueens-shame/>)

*facilitated reflexive inquiries into the status of the documentary medium.*⁷⁴ Referring to the early video work ‘Catch’ in which McQueen and his sister stand in a yard throwing a video camera back and forth to each other whilst it is recording, he remarks on the ‘*experiential conditions of the physical use of the camera over and above any illusionistic function that might eclipse the reflexive signs of own production.*⁷⁵ In other words the video production becomes ‘physicalised’ by the manner in which the result ‘indexes’ the body that creates it, and in doing so it is also ‘*marked by what cannot be shown*’ in the video’s incapacity to ‘catch’ a decipherable image whilst it is being thrown. Video is thus ‘*thrown toward the boundaries of its capacities to represent*’, in a repeated action that continuously fluctuates between representation and its failure. Demos has compared the work to Dan Graham’s ‘*Helix/Spiral*’ (1973) in which two people film each other:

‘one spiralling around and filming a stationary figure, who would in turn trace the entire surface of his body from head to toe, with the camera’s viewfinder, all the while filming his counterpart. The piece allowed each participant to oscillate between subject and object, disrupting the opposition between the two.’⁷⁶

It also similarly recalls Graham’s ‘*Body Press*’, described earlier. With regard to more recent works, one might be reminded of Catherine Yass’ work ‘*Descent*’ (2002) for which the artist lowered a camera to the ground from a crane over a construction site in Canary Wharf in London. The film was screened upside down, adding to the image’s perspectival distortion. In addition a series of still photographs, shot from the top of the building as the camera descended to the ground, created in the images what has been described as ‘*a giddying sense of freefall*’.⁷⁷ However, unlike in McQueen’s and Graham’s work, Yass’ camera is not in any way connected to her own body.

⁷⁴ Demos, T.J “*The Art of Darkness: On Steve McQueen*”, in October 114, Fall 2005, p66 In his text Demos compares McQueen’s video work ‘*Catch*’, with the work ‘*Just above my head*’ shot on 16mm film.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p67

⁷⁶ Ibid. p67.

⁷⁷ Her most recent work ‘*Lighthouse*’ (2011), centres on the Royal Sovereign Lighthouse, positioned five miles out to sea off England’s south coast. Like many of her most recent films such as ‘*High Wire*’ and ‘*Descent*’, the film addresses the architecture of her subject in its environmental and social contexts through the exploration of a set of formal relationships and ‘dizzying’ viewpoints that produce both a physical and emotional response in the viewer. Yass describes the work as a ‘temporal drawing’ ‘*in which the camera is always moving as it follows a trajectory around the lighthouse, turning, circling, spiralling, inverting, and submerging. The effect is at times so disorientating that it becomes uncertain as to who or what is moving and sinking - the camera, the lighthouse, or the viewer*’(source: Press Release, for ‘Catherine Yass: Lighthouse’, 13 January – 11 February 2012, Alison Jacques Gallery, London. ‘Lighthouse’ was commissioned by De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex.)

What is important here in Demos' observations is his articulation of the materiality of video that McQueen's repeated actions with the camera puts into process through the capture of images that '*refer less to exterior referents*' than to the camera's own '*internal technical incapacity.*'⁷⁸ Although the camera does capture images that refer indexically to things in the world, its incapacity to render them legible claims Demos '*elicits the specificity of video's technical support by touching on its very limits.*'

Thus when watching the piece the viewer sees a video image that is '*anterior to its focussed resolution on the exterior visual field*'. As a result '*the modes of perception peculiar to it become visible as it attempts to represent what it can, delivering its own optical processes in place of a transparent image.*' It is through this process of transformation experienced by the viewer in his or her embodied '*identification with the camera's vision*' and in the simultaneous '*breaking [of] its naturalisation as a form of human perception*' that the video image takes on a materiality. The large-scale of the projection produces '*a physical experience of nauseous disequilibrium*' in the viewer, where '*the sudden shifts from stasis to jarring movement dislocate one's sense of stability.*'⁷⁹

As such the emphasis on the physicality of the spectator marks a shift of emphasis from the '*disembodied, passive subject of classical cinema*' to an embodied physical encounter with the image with the visual distortions produced by the video image also '*counter[ing] the illusionistic basis of conventional forms of the medium*' (and of the cinematic in particular).

Demos points to Okwui Enwezor's observations that

'by making the conditions under which the projected film image is experienced both visually and bodily, McQueen renders the space of cinema into a zone that is simultaneously haptic and optical,' a situation which is reinforced by the '*physicality and raw immediacy of the encounter between the viewing subject and the films.*'⁸⁰

More important than this however as Demos stresses, is the process of dislocation and '*visual dis-identification*' carried out by the viewer's embodiment -'*materialised in the act of*

⁷⁸ Ibid. For an account focussing on McQueen's 'materialism', see Newman, M "McQueen's Materialism", in 'Steve McQueen, ICA, London and Kunsthalle, Zürich, (1999) pp21-34; see also Bickers, P "Let's Get Physical: Steve McQueen interviewed by Patricia Bickers," Art Monthly, No. 202, Dec 1996-Jan1997.

⁷⁹ Demos, T.J "The Art of Darkness", as before, p68

⁸⁰ Enwezor, Okui "Haptic Visions: The Films of Steve McQueen", in 'Steve McQueen, ICA, London and Kunsthalle, Zürich, (1999) p38

observing'.⁸¹ He identifies this as '*a rupture from the image*' in the dual effect and process carried out by the image of continuously throwing the represented subject into disarray, and its effect of dislocating the viewer.

This is put to startling effect in the work 'Drumroll', made a year later in which contrary to previous films the focus is strictly on the '*camera-centred spatial dynamics*',⁸² alone in the absence of any human intervention in the filming process (although McQueens own presence, as in the other works, is a constant). The work documents the visual trajectory of an oil drum through the three simultaneous viewpoints of three separate video cameras attached to one side and the two ends of the oil drum as it is rolled by McQueen through the busy streets of Manhattan. As with the previous work the work is a '*record of its own construction*' - the visual distortions produced by the camera's attempts to capture what it sees work to disorientate the viewer with the oil-drum rolling with '*vertiginous speed*' only being able to seize '*glimpses*' of the views between the sky and pavement along its path. The effect is intensified by the large-scale simultaneous three-screen '*triptych*' projection that fills the entire length of a wall. In addition the decision by McQueen to keep the real-time ambient sound captured by the three cameras intensifies the experience into an encounter with the cacophony of city life and urban experience with the effect being that of not only a visual, but also an auditory '*assault*'. The effect of watching the three simultaneous rotations that constitute work has been described as a

'nauseating dizziness', '*a bumpy ride in which the viewer is at once internal to the action by identification with the camera and external through the triptych structure*'. The effect is one of '*extreme decentring of the camera from any possible subject position*', since we can '*neither take the position of any of the cameras, nor...of the artist who rolls the drum*'.⁸³

In both these descriptions of McQueen's work I am reminded of Rosalind Krauss' conception of '*embodied vision*', a notion she links to the effects of repetitive movement in artists' film and video works that operate to destabilise the visual by disrupting the visual continuity of the image.⁸⁴ She traces this back to the work of Marcel Duchamp through the optical effects

⁸¹ Demos, T.J., "Steve McQueen", as before.

⁸² Storr, R "Going Places", in 'Steve McQueen', ICA, London and Kunsthalle, Zürich, (1999) p15

⁸³ Newman, Michael "McQueen's Materialism", as before, p 30.

⁸⁴ Krauss' formulation is linked to her appropriation with Yves-Alain Bois of Georges Bataille's concept of the '*informe*', or '*formless*' (an '*operative*' term used by Bataille to describe the function of words

of ‘*Anémic Cinema*’ (1925), a film he made with Man Ray of his ‘*Rotorelief*s’, a series of rotating printed abstract spiral discs, the turning of which she relates to the production of an ‘antimovie’ (by the fact that the film both acknowledges and contravenes the continuity of movement in the image of an object that ‘*though it turns, turns in its place*’), but which she claims goes further in ‘defin[ing] the film’s attitude to motion’ through a description of movement that is very physical and almost three-dimensional:

‘For as they turn they create the illusion of a rounded form burgeoning out to the viewer...Swelling and retreating, the spiral transforms the forward thrust of action into the hiccup of repetition, and the continuity of motion into the syncopated rhythm of a pulse or beat’⁸⁵

Krauss sees the repetitive ‘throb’ or ‘pulse’ of repeated movement in the film (also emphasised in the flickering effect of the film itself), as emphasising the materiality of the image through the introduction of a temporal dimension that disrupts the field of vision and visual autonomy by bringing the body into the very fabric of the work (the continuous swelling and deflating of the spirals recalling ‘*a succession of organs, breast, turning into eye, turning into belly, turning into womb, or even the pulse of erotic friction*’)⁸⁶. For her this provides the link between visuality, the body and art, where she sees vision as inseparable from corporeality and the image as thus inseparable from the physicality of the body, as it

‘opens up the very concept of visual autonomy- of a form of experience that is wholly and purely optical, owing nothing to time- to the invasion of a dense corporeal pressure... because the pulse itself, in its diastolic repetitiveness, associates itself with the density of nervous tissue, with its temporality of feedback, of response time, of retention and protension, of the fact that without this temporal wave, no experience at all could happen.’⁸⁷

Krauss extends this notion to a line of practice in artists’ film and video that ‘exploits repetitive movement within a fixed frame to work the devolutionary pressure of the pulse

through their tasks). Krauss and Bois attack dominant notions of Modernism grounded in the belief of the primacy and ‘purity’ of vision over the other senses, putting Bataille’s notion to work through vision, in an alternate ‘modernism’ that sets out to (in Bataille’s words) ‘break the subject up and re-establish it on a different basis.’ The ‘pulse’ is outlined here as one of four performative ‘operations’ and is of interest to me here because of its manifestation of embodiment through a trajectory of film and video practices. Unlike her later articulation of the ‘Post-Medium Condition’, Krauss does direct her concerns to video (as well as film) in this earlier formulation, providing in her consideration of the role of the body, a supplement to what seems to be lacking in the latter account. (Source: Krauss, R and Bois Yves-Alain ‘Formless: A User’s Guide’, Zone Books, (1997))

⁸⁵ Ibid p135

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

effect against the stable image of the human body' referring to Bruce Nauman's early video works '*Bouncing in the Corner II*' (1969) (in which the image of his torso repeatedly propels itself off the corner of the studio and toward the camera and then slams back into the walls again), and '*Lip Synch*' (1969) (in which the image of the upside down lower half of Nauman's face repeats the words 'lip sync' out of sync with the soundtrack); and Richard Serra's film work '*Hand Catching Lead*' (1971) (in which through the repetitive opening and closing of his hand Serra attempts to catch scraps of lead that continuously fall into the fixed frame of the image). Kraus links this latter work to the tradition of the 'flicker film'⁸⁸ observing in structuralist filmmaking a desire to

*'reduce cinematic experience to the most basic components of its material and phenomenological supports,' through the idea of 'making the movie screen itself palpable', or rendering visible the film frame as physical support..or making the trajectory of vision shared by camera, projector and spectator the subject of a single constructive act.'*⁸⁹

More particularly it is to the repetitive movement originating in the 'flicker film' in the '*trajectory from what could be thought of as a relative visual or structuralist "purity" to the corporeal dimension of seeing*' to which Krauss attributes the '*structural operation to dismantle the stability of the image as such.*'⁹⁰ Referring to the work of the filmmaker Paul Sharits and the films of Minimalist sculptor Richard Serra, she describes this as '*an act of violence*' against 'good form' (that is in the ability of the viewer to grasp '*the wholeness of form all at once,*' as emphasised in the visual 'coherence' of Modernist concerns)⁹¹, in the

⁸⁸ Krauss notes Serra's regular attendance at the 'Anthology Film Archives', an underground organisation based in New York in the 1960s, that gathered together a number of artists interested in both seeing and showing experimental film and also linked to the development and emergence of structuralist filmmaking and to structuralist filmmakers such as Michael Snow, Hollis Frampton and Paul Sharits, whose work it promoted.

⁸⁹ Krauss, R "Moteur!", in Bois, Y-A & Krauss, R, 'Formless: A User's Guide', Zone Books 1997, p136

⁹⁰ Ibid, p137

⁹¹ Of his work, she describes it as developing from an '*imageless fluctuation of pure colour*' into a '*visual pulsation into which flashes of recognisable imagery burst*'. What is of concern to Krauss here is how this operates as a means of '*invad[ing] the fixed image.*' She describes how in the work '*T,O,U,C,H,I,N,G,*' (1968), '*flashes of automutilation*' in the recurring image of a man holding a pair of scissors up to his tongue, are '*yielded up by the incessant pulse of the flicker*', in a way that cuts into the filmic illusion, the flicker effect enabling a sense of materiality that gives the viewer '*the sense that he or she is actually seeing the [individual] frames passing through the projector gate.*' Similarly in Serra's film, his repetitive action of attempting to catch the 'stable' substance of lead and the inability of the material to '*hold itself intact*' as it continuously falls through his hands can be seen as '*a demonstration of his own determination to invade the fixed image*' through the process of '*something continuously in the act of making and unmaking itself.*' This is emphasised by the falling lead, the gravity of which continuously and repeatedly pulls '*against the form's ability to hold intact*', whilst at the same time mimicking the activity and materiality of the filmstrip '*passing downward through the gate of the camera or projector*', with the incessant action of Serra's own '*flexing*' hand

way in which the embodying of vision here to '*[open] up the aesthetic object to a kind of ongoing rhythmic or pulsatile exchange with the viewer.*'⁹² Thus what Krauss articulates in her 'alternative modernism', is a bodily 'impurification' of vision that has its basis in not only the embodied nature of vision, but also in the affective dimension of perception with the body being considered as '*the precondition not just for vision but for sensation as such.*'⁹³ This is best exemplified in her description of James Coleman's '*Box (ahhareturnabout)*' (1977), a film of a boxing match that is

'cut into short bursts of three to ten frames, interrupted equally by short spurts of black', producing a 'pulsing' movement that '*both breaks apart and flows together over those breaks...emphasising movement itself as a form of repetition, of beats that are separated by intervals of absolute extinction... the urgency of the rhythm'*

functioning in the viewer's corporeal anticipation and expectation of '*the return of another and another.*'⁹⁴ Furthermore, the gestures of the boxers themselves from the original film footage are seen by Krauss to '*embody this rhythm*', the repetitive actions adding to and intensifying the sense of rhythm, which are themselves '*doubled aurally*' by a voice-over from the original soundtrack that seem to emphasise '*both the drive of repetition and the ever-waiting possibility of the onset of nothingness.*'⁹⁵ Moreover, the viewer's own body becomes complicit in the action '*automatically contributing to the filmic fabric*'⁹⁶ through its perceptual system in the 'afterimages' that occur as a residual consequence of watching the incessant 'flicker' of the film. Krauss describes the afterimage as a place 'in between' frames where we can 'see'

*'not the materials surface of the frame, nor the abstract condition of the cinematic field, but the bodily production of our own nervous systems, the rhythmic beat of the neural network's feedback, of its "retention" and protention", as the nervous tissue retains and releases its impressions'*⁹⁷

adding to the physicality and violence of the process. (Source: 'Formless: A User's Guide', as before, p137)

⁹²Hansen, Mark B N 'New Philosophy for New Media', MIT Press (2004), p25

⁹³Ibid. p27

⁹⁴Krauss, R in 'Formless; A User's Guide', as before, p161 Coleman's film concerns the found footage of the Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey fight from 1927, which Coleman cut in order to generate the 'pulsing' effects.

⁹⁵Ibid p162

⁹⁶Ibid p163

⁹⁷Ibid. p161

Thus the work functions as a displacement transforming the rhythm of the representation of the boxing match ('away from the representational plane of the sporting event.'), into that of the viewer's bodily response. Significantly, Krauss talks of the sound of the boxers' breathing in the soundtrack as '*giving voice not just to the boxers' bodily rhythms, but also to those of the viewer as well.*'⁹⁸

The intensity of rhythm functions for Krauss to invert its representational status in the sense that repetition itself becomes the determining nature and content of the work. This is located in what she describes as a 'shock' effect (in the '*portrayal of black-gloved fists punching into white, yielding flesh... echoed in the viewer's own body by the luminous explosions of the afterimage*'), the boxing match itself acting '*to produce the feeling of tone or affect of this rhythm, to qualify it as violent*'. However, Krauss claims that the work is not 'about' the violence of the sport (of boxing) itself, but rather that '*the image of this brutal sport is "about" the violence of repetition... its structure of the beat felt as a set of explosive endings always abruptly propelled into motion again..*',⁹⁹

Whilst this argument that Krauss presents is particularly persuasive with regard to ascertaining a sense of physicality and ontological dimension to the image (in the sense that the image's 'being' -its 'determining nature', is the physical violence and force of the repetition), there seems to be some contradiction in what she says with regard to bodily experience in that by assuming the violence of repetition as the image itself, she reasserts its objective status (as the aggregative and self-differing condition of the filmic medium), rather than locating the emphasis of the repetition through the 'pulsatile' rhythm of the viewer's own affective bodily experience in relation to it. Thus as media theorist Mark B.N. Hansen observes, '*the work-not the body remains the privileged term in the aesthetic equation*', the after-image operating as a mirroring 'echo' and '*infinitely proliferating oscillation*', in the interchange between artwork and viewer.¹⁰⁰ In addition, whilst she

⁹⁸ Ibid. p163

⁹⁹ Krauss reads the nature of repetition here in relation to Freud's '*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*', in which he asks whether repetition should be '*considered as the throb of Eros or should instead be seen as something that lies beyond pleasure, threatening it with violence.*' He relates this to his experience of listening to the repeated dreams of trauma victims, theorising a structure by which '*a patient is doomed to the compulsive repetition of an event, particularly an event which, far from being pleasurable is an extreme source of anxiety and terror*' (source: Krauss, R "*Pulse*", in Krauss, R and Bois,Y-A '*Formless: A User's Guide*', Zone Books,(1997), p163; see also Freud, S "*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* ", in '*Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*', Penguin Classics, New Edition,(2003), pp43-103)

¹⁰⁰ Hansen, Mark B.N. '*New Philosophy for New Media*', MIT Press, (2004), p29

attributes the function or 'operation' of the 'pulse' to both film and video works, she fails to address the differences between the two in the way in which the works are informed by the very function of the intervals or spaces 'in between' the frames as a determining feature and structural condition of the 'flicker film' in particular. As T.J. Demos observes in his essay on Steve McQueen:

'with film's dissolution into video, the filmic interval is obscured, even erased, for in video, there is no discrete break between frames. Rather, video is constituted by an interlacing of electronic scan lines, whereby contiguous images roll together... Consequently, it is impossible for video artists to exploit the potential of the interval in the same way as one could with film.'

All it can do he claims, is '*approximate something like the filmic interval—that black bar between filmic frames-, by rendering the "cut" visual.*'¹⁰¹

I wish to return briefly to this essay as it is Demos' reflections on McQueen's work across both film and video that I think are particularly relevant in relation to this and bring interesting and useful insights to considering contemporary moving image works (in their addressing of the uses and the legacies of both film and video and also in addressing the question of materiality in video in particular). Importantly, he points to the way in which McQueen's work '*addresses the context of installation*', indicating the relevance of this to contemporary practitioners and suggesting the use of the term '*the projected image*', as a more appropriate term that encompasses both and that reaches

¹⁰¹ Demos, T.J., "*Art of Darkness*", as before, p74 It is worth mentioning here, as Demos also remarks in parenthesis, that artists such as Joan Jonas have '*materialised video's scan lines as a way to disrupt its spectatorial capture, and to sensitise viewers to its technological mediation*', as in the work 'Vertical Roll.' (1972). Demos' reading is in fact informed by Krauss' earlier essay on video "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism" (October No.1, Spring 1976.), in which she talks about the way in which time in the work '*has been forced to enter the video situation, where time is understood as a propulsion toward an end.*' Here the visualisation of time becomes the subject of the work '*as the course of a continuous dissolve through space.*' What concerns me here is how Krauss' description of how this operates seems to echo some of her later observations on the 'pulse' with regard to how time functions here to destabilise the image only contrary to the 'pulse', time here operates as a means to an end as opposed to infinitely: '*In this work the access to a sense of time has come from the fouling of the stability of the projected image by desynchronising the frequency of the signals on camera and monitor. The rhythmic roll of the image, as the bottom of the frame scans upward to hit the top of the screen, causes a sense of decomposition that seems to work against the grain of those 525 lines of which the video picture is made. Because one recognises it as intended, the vertical roll appears as an agency of will that runs counter to an electronically stabilised condition...*' The work operates to deliberately mimic the vertical roll of film so it is surprising that Krauss does not refer to it as part of an extension of her discussion in a way that might be more insightful with regard to video, particularly with regard to her observations on its physical reality in which she describes video '*as a body centred between the parenthesis of camera and monitor*', referring to how '*the motion of continuous dissolve becomes... a metaphor for the physical reality of the tape deck*', and to its '*visual reference through the monitor's action to the physical reality of the tape*' (sourced from Leighton, T 'Art and the Moving Image', as before, esp. pp216-217).

*'back to the late 1960s and 1970s, when artists employed film and video to investigate the experiential conditions of the site of exhibition, or to focus on the temporality, materiality, and narrativity of the projection, without essentialising the medium.'*¹⁰²

The use of the term '*projected image*' becomes '*increasingly relevant*' he goes on to say '*as video has come to displace the technology of film, such that even Structural films from the 1960s and 1970s- which were tied to the specificity of film as a medium-are now commonly, but paradoxically, being transferred to video for public presentation in galleries and museums'*,¹⁰³ as is McQueen's own film work, which by its transferral to video removes the phenomenological distinctions between the two (or I would say brings a phenomenological dimension to both) and thus blurs '*the specificity of the original means of production*'.¹⁰⁴ Demos suggests that McQueen's work in both film and video, each in its own way 'elevates' the interval '*as a structural condition of the work*', locating his understanding of the term through Gilles Deleuze's articulation of it as an '*essential condition of film*' (as opposed to through movement or illusion), thus complicating our understanding of both Deleuze's definition¹⁰⁵ and his own reading of it in his consideration of video. As previously outlined, the 'interval' is understood as the gap '*between*' frames and thus considered a particular

¹⁰² Demos , T.J ., "The Art of Darkness", as before, pp73-74

¹⁰³ Demos does not mention the work of artists such as Tacita Dean for whom the use of film, both in production and in exhibition remains a central concern

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p74 In her essay on video projection, Liz Kotz also emphasises this, going on to define the term '*projection*' through its relationship to displacement and dislocation, perspectival and projective geometry and the latter's association as a means of rationalising vision. In addition, she extends this to its implications to relations in both time and space, linking this to its capacities for distortion and illusion and to psychoanalytic conceptions that imply '*a confusion between inside and outside, [and] between interior psychic life and external reality.*' She locates these conceptions in the histories of film theory in how '*techniques of projection offer ways of joining a space, an image and a subject*', linking these to the fixed position of the subject as a means of stabilising a system of visual relations. However, she also points to specific forms of spectatorship inherent in the histories of cinema that '*demonstrate the power of this orchestration*' in '*engendering a psychic mobility paradoxically dependent on physical immobility*' and to the tendency of film exhibition to remain '*confined to theatrical formats, severing the space of the image from other lived spaces*'. Video projection on the other hand, she contends, '*with its greater mobility and technical flexibility...would seem to offer all kinds of rich possibilities for rethinking and restructuring these core relationships- between viewing subject, moving or still image, architectural space and time-that are so fundamental to visual culture.*' (see Kotz, Liz "*Video Projection: The Space Between Screens*", in Leighton, Tanya '*Art and the Moving Image*', as before, pp371-373).

¹⁰⁵ See Gilles Deleuze, 'Cinema1: The Movement-Image', and 'Cinema 2: The Time Image', both trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Roberta Galeta, University of Minnesota Press, 1986 and 1989. These texts constitute Deleuze's major reassessment of film and cinema theory. The first concerns itself with the subordination of time to movement, especially in relation to the linking of frames in the connection of images using the philosophy of Henri Bergson and drawing on the work of a number of major filmmakers to identify three distinct principle types of '*image movement*' in the '*perception-image*', '*action-image*' and '*affectation-image*'; the second concerns an analysis of movement's succumbing to time in film and the representation of time in the cinematic treatment of memory, loss, thought and speech, underpinned by Bergson's understanding of time as an open and variable duration (or '*durée*'). What is significant about this second analysis is the articulation of a different sense of time, away from the sequential to its experience as a more open-ended possibility.

condition of film. Demos through Deleuze's definition, adds to this a consideration of the gap 'within' the frame, in that '*each individual frame of exposed film captures a moment of duration of time*' (as in a still photograph), with the interval increasing '*through the succession of frames, offering extended periods of duration*' (Demos refers to McQueen's film '*Just Above My Head*' in this context through its use of the continuous single shot of a walking man, in which '*protracted duration replaces narrative development*' and '*the monotonous simplicity of the activity emphasises the interval as prolonged extension of time, which is furthered by the film's looped presentation.*')¹⁰⁶

The interval 'between' frames by contrast refers to the black line separating each individual frame, which is typically concealed in classical cinema through the illusion of movement giving a sense of continuity (what Deleuze previously referred to as the 'movement image'). The 'gaps' between frames as articulated by Krauss as sites for 'interruptions' or 'shock' effects and are what '*begin to generate sites of radical ambiguity... or shocking and inexplicable interruptions between scenes,*'¹⁰⁷ (Demos refers to McQueen's video '*Catch*' in this context, exemplified by '*those moments when the static images of the figures are sundered by the thrust of the camera in the air, an action, which manifests the irrational interval-the senseless but necessary material between substantive shots.*')¹⁰⁸ Most significant in relation to Deleuze's earlier formulation in the 'movement image' is the loss of the sense of sequence, continuity and temporal chronology, '*when the interval no longer logically connects [the] before and after*', the 'time-image' connoting disruption, when '*film ceases to be images in a chain.*'¹⁰⁹

Demos claims that McQueen's early task-based works in film and video carry out Deleuze's formulation of the time-image through his use of repetition in that his repeated actions 'liberates' them from a sense of narrative and from 'past cinematic conventions'. In doing so, they '*advance a sense of seriality that paradoxically unleashes the unexpected and gives rise to a sense of duration that characterises the time-image.*'¹¹⁰ Furthermore, by emphasising the structural conditions in both they point toward the '*limitations of the very*

¹⁰⁶ Demos, T J "*The Art of Darkness*", as before, p71

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p72

¹⁰⁸ Demos also refers to McQueens later film '*Western Deep*' in this context, '*where the intervals between and within frames merge into one long stretch of dark duration.*' (Ibid.)

¹⁰⁹ Demos is citing Deleuze from '*Cinema 2: The Time Image*', p180; Demos, p72.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

technology of representation', 'bracket[ing] the substantial ontological security of the representation itself.' In doing so he claims, *'they desubstantialise and render contingent the interior of their images'*¹¹¹ - that is, they emphasise a status of 'liminality' (or of unfixed identity or non-stasis), exposing the 'interval' as a site of 'radical instability', thus placing the image's ontological status into question (as no longer 'Being', but 'becoming')¹¹². This is characterised by an 'unfolding' of temporality according to 'undetermined options', as opposed to '*conforming to a restrictive self-same notion of identity, one where "Being=is"*'.

Thus, according to Demos, 'the time-image',

*'enacts the liberation from the mechanicity of technology, from the irrevocability of traditional forms of narrative, from the rigidity of chronological understandings of time...all of which characterises McQueen's use of film.'*¹¹³

Demos' analysis of McQueen's work through the lens of Deleuze's film theory reveals that whilst it provides a productive understanding and complication of his text for a possible consideration of video, it also highlights certain limitations that cannot be applied to video in the same way as film. This is revealed through the specificity of video and in the fact that video is not the same as film (as previously indicated, with regard to the notion of the filmic 'interval', all video can do is to '*approximate*' it through the visual). Thus, as Demos points out *'the continuity of video's glistening pixels replaces the filmic intervals between frames, which would be visible if the film were to be viewed at [a] reduced rate of projection'*.¹¹⁴ This

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² In relation to this Demos refers to what Deleuze calls '*the power of the "Outside"*' (after Maurice Blanchot). Temporality is '*invited into the interior of the film*'. Or in Deleuze's words: '*The whole thus merges with what Blanchot calls the force of "dispersal of the Outside", or the "vertigo of spacing"; that void, which the image must cross over in order to carry on, which is no longer part of the image as a sensory-motor bridge, but is rather the radical calling into question of the image*' (From Cinema 2, p180; quoted by Demos, p73), that is, it concerns the idea of a temporal discontinuity since the image is called into question in the act of 'becoming'. The 'outside' (following D.N. Rodowick's description), being '*the force of time, which incommensurable with space changes the function of the interval. There is no longer a rational interval assuring continuity in space and succession in time (as in the movement image). Rather the force of time produces a serialism organised by irrational intervals that produce a disassociation rather than an association of images. The interval is no longer a filled by a sensorimotor situation; it neither marks the trajectory between an action and a reaction nor bridges two sets through continuity link. Instead, the interval collapses and so becomes "irrational". not a link bridging images, but an interstice between them, an unbridgeable gap whose recurrences give movement as displacements in space marked by false continuity*' (see Rodowick, D. N 'Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine', Duke University Press, (1997), p143)

¹¹³ Demos, "*The Art of Darkness*", as before pp72-73

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p74 Demos is referring to the deceleration of the image in Douglas Gordon's work '*24 Hour Psycho*' (1993) in relation to this, in which he projects a video of the original Hitchcock film in its entirety, slowed down to twenty-four hours.

significant material difference is what makes the notion of the 'interval' in video impossible to be exploited in the same way in that Deleuze sees the 'interval' in film:

*'as a repeated negation of the filmic image, offering an imminent space of absence', whereas in video the interval 'mutates into a shimmering field of pixels rolling across the screen's surface; the negative rupture structural to film transforming into a positive image in video.'*¹¹⁵

Consequently, if the filmic 'interval' is defined as a 'space between frames' and considered as 'a portal to the temporal "outside"', then the continuity characteristic of video contradicts this interruption by 'sealing' the gap. Demos calls for a new site of interruption that he suggests is possible in considering McQueen's work that simultaneously crosses both sites of film and video through his *'intervention into the conditions of projection.'*¹¹⁶

Demos finds the missing 'gap' in the way in which McQueen's use of video projection '*effectively pushes the interval so that it materialises between the virtual image [of video] and the actual space of its projection.*' What is significant in this formulation is that the materialisation is made through the physical presence of the viewer who positioned '*in between*' the image and the projection (or between image and exhibition space), effectively becomes an embodiment of the gap '*... posited at the crossing between luminosity and embodiment, virtuality and actuality.*'

Demos' reworking of Deleuze's formulation to include the notion of an interruption in (projected) video places it into an oppositional site that *[pits] its role as virtual image against the physical conditions of the space of its projection*', re-articulating his formulation through '*the display conditions of video's projected image*' in the uncertainties effected in the limitations of illusion and the viewer's physical functioning within it that allows him or her to have a foothold inside spectatorial space and thus against disembodied, passive spectatorship. Most importantly it creates a rupture in Jameson's notion of continuity in video as 'total flow', inviting in physical proximity, critical 'distance' from the image in the context of the historical development of the projected image and its investigation into spatial concerns '*as an arena for perceptual sensitivity*' through the apparatus of film and video. As previously

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p77,104 See especially Rosalind Krauss' "*Sculpture in the Expanded Field*", October, Spring, (1979), and 'A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post Medium Condition (Walter Neurath Memorial Lecture), Thames & Hudson, (2000)

indicated in this chapter this is emphasised in the development of the projected image from sculptural concerns that emerged in the convergence of the two from the contexts of Minimalism and Post-Minimalism when '*sculpture gave way to temporality*' and the projected image became '*physicalised*'¹¹⁷ as a '*complex negotiation of two related developments*' in '*performative, process-based Minimalist sculpture and a structural film attendant to its sculptural qualities*'¹⁰⁵ in which the notion of an '*embodied virtuality*' in the use of the projected image is '*contingent upon the materiality of the production process and upon the viewer's own situated physicalised interaction with the projected image.*'¹¹⁸

I would like to take this a stage further through a more considered articulation of the affective dimension the viewer's physical engagement with the projected image in video for an extended and more complex understanding of materiality located less in the apparatus and more in sensory (or '*empirical*') experience.¹¹⁹ To do this I would like to return to Krauss' articulation of the '*pulse*' to consider how the limitations of her formulation could be supplemented for more contemporary concerns. There is no doubt in my mind that her articulations do consider some form of sensory engagement in the consideration of work that '*functions to produce a profound affective response via its rhythmic impact on the viewer's body.*'¹²⁰ However, her insistence in over-privileging the objective status of the '*image*' through its representational content (located in the '*aggregative and self-differing condition of the medium*' bound to an obsolescence in film), in the shock-effect and '*echo*' of the image itself in the viewer's own body, rather than through a consideration of bodily experience from a more affective, sensory and autonomous sense of experience, very much limits her argument, particularly in relation to more recent works, where, as Mark Hansen observes,

¹¹⁷ Demos, "*The Art of Darkness*", as before, p78

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p79

¹¹⁹ I borrow my use of the term '*empirical*' from Mark Hansen whose observations I will be referring to. Hansen's use of the term is rooted in an understanding of the (digital) image that goes beyond the purely visual, arguing that it '*encompasses the entire process by which information is made perceivable.*' Placing the body in a privileged position '*as the agent that filters information in order to create images*', he contradicts existing notions of disembodiment and '*technological transcendence*', arguing for the '*indispensability of the human in the digital era.*' Hansen's thinking is informed by Bergsonian philosophy through which he examines '*new media*' art and theory, updating his argument '*that affectation and memory render perception impure*', in that we '*select only those images precisely relevant to our singular form of embodiment*', to suggest that in the digital age we '*filter the information we receive to create images rather than simply receiving images as preexisting technical forms.*' This gives the image an embodied status in that the image itself *becomes* rooted in concrete experience through '*the body's process of perceiving it*' (source: Lenoir, Timothy "*Foreword*", in Hansen, Mark B N '*New Philosophy for New Media*', as before).

¹²⁰ Hansen, Mark B N, '*New Philosophy for New Media*', as before, p31

'digital processing [in video] operates precisely to decouple body from image'.¹²¹ This is articulated through a '*radical disjunction*' between the actual rhythm or pace effected in the movement indicated in the image of the work against the '*affective experience of the viewer, whose every whit of attentiveness is insistently focussed on anticipating the shift in the next frame.*'¹²² Thus what Hansen appears to be articulating here are two temporalities: one in the actual condition and fabric of the image and the other in the viewer's bodily response in relation to it.

Hansen points to the 'inadequacy' of Krauss' conception in its '*failure to subordinate the representational component of the artwork to bodily sensation*'.¹²³ Whilst I agree that Krauss' formulation does not foreground this, I am not sure if the subordination of representational content is what we are talking about here, but rather an affective or bodily response that necessarily includes a response to what is being represented (in the sense that there has to be some element of identification with what is being represented in order to for there to be a response at all). Even whilst this may be in the way of an interruption or disjunction, there is surely a correlation or relationship between the two.

Hansen comes up with an intriguing paradox in the work of Paul Pfeiffer that operates on the one hand precisely in relation to this very correlation (of repetitive representational content and pulsatile experience), whilst on the other hand working completely against it in his work '*The Long Count*' (2001). It is an interesting comparison to Coleman's work and to Krauss' analysis since the work also concerns footage from boxing matches,¹²⁴ but in this work the paradox is that Pfeiffer has digitally removed the source of the '*represented shock*', the images of the boxers themselves, so that what remains are '*ghostly traces of their former selves*', effected from the '*deliberately rough editing process*', which has transformed the

¹²¹ Ibid, p29

¹²² Ibid. I am referring to Hansen's observations of Douglas Gordon's 'decelerated' projection in his reworking of Hitchcock's 'Psycho' to last twenty-four hours and the effect that the slowing down of this work has on the viewer's '*frenzied*' anticipation of the next frame. Hansen also points out the importance of how the slowed down projection operates '*to strip the work of representational content*' such that the film's content can only be '*generated in and through the viewer's corporeal, affective experience*', as opposed to '*as an echo of the objective self-differing condition of the medium*'.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ The footage is from the final rounds of three of Muhammad Ali's most famous fights that took place between 1964 and 1975. These were '*I Shook Up the World*' in the United States against Sonny Liston in 1964; '*Rumble in the Jungle*' in Zaire against George Foreman in 1974; and '*Thrilla in Manilla*' against Joe Frasier in 1975.

images of the boxers' '*massive figures into ... insubstantial contours weaving in the ring and bouncing off the ropes in constant flux.*'¹²⁵

Shown on three very small monitors, each secured to a pipe extending from the wall at eye-level, what is shown are looped images of clips from three boxing matches, without the boxers. Instead, the footage consists

'exclusively of fluid warping of air, rhythmic stretching of the [boxing] ring's boundary ropes, undulating crowd excitement and cheering, all overlayed with a soundtrack composed of recorded interviews with the boxers, edited to remove their words and thus leaving only sounds of breathing and background static.'

By removing the represented body in the image (in effect to disembody the image), one would think this would operate to disassociate the viewer's bodily response from that of the image, or at least from any association with any idea of physicality, materiality or concreteness. However, precisely because of the trace left by the roughness of the editing something is there that now functions as an interruption or disruption in the image of the otherwise empty space with the rhythmic movement of the action and the edited sound giving emphasis to (or acting as a reminder of) the bodily content in the work, despite its representational absence in terms of the images of the boxers' bodies themselves. In fact, it is precisely because of its representational absence that according to Hansen the work succeeds from the point of view of its affect and thus constitutes a physicality -that is, it *'functions to produce an affective response via its rhythmic impact on the viewer's body,'*¹²⁷ not as an '*mirroring echo*' of what is represented or of the content of the work, but through the viewer's body that *'furnishes the site for the experience of the work.'* Furthermore and more controversially, Hansen points to this as '*the "work's" self-differing medial condition.*' - that is, he suggests that it is through such work that we are '*brought face to face with the*

¹²⁵ Ibid. Cited by Hansen from Singer, Debra "*Paul Pfeiffer*", exhibition catalogue, 'The Contemporary Series', Whitney Museum of Art, December 13, 2001 – February 24 2002, no pagination.

¹²⁶ Hansen, Mark, B.N, 'New Philosophy for New Media', as before, p31. At the time of writing I am not sure of the reasoning behind Pfeiffer's choice of scale and method of presenting this work. For a more affective bodily engagement with the work, I would have thought that a larger-scale or projected image would have been more appropriate.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

*potential of the digital to effectuate a new ... and more direct connection with the affective power of an image.*¹²⁸ By removing the represented body

*'the bodily experience of rhythmic repetition or pulse, is itself the medium of the work [as] the site where the "layering of conventions" that constitute any medium (including, and indeed especially, in the case of today's supposed universal medium, the digital), must be said to take place.'*¹²⁹

Relating this to the larger scheme of things and especially in relation to Krauss' formulation of the '*self-differing condition of the medium*', Hansen insists on the specificity of the digital to supplement her argument calling for the development of an '*aesthetics of contemporary media embodiment*'. For it is in the digital, he claims, that there is the '*limitless potential to modify the image*' and most importantly, '*to modify the image in ways that disjoin it from any fixed technical frame*' –that is, he maintains, '*the digital calls on us to invest the body as that "place", where the self-differing of media gets concretised.*'¹³⁰ However, he warns that this investment should not wait its future '*obsolescence*', (if as he points out, the digital' can be referred to as a medium, which is itself questionable). Rather, as Hansen also observes in a footnote, not only is there much to question regarding whether we can talk of it as a medium, but

'there is [also] much to question whether the digital will become obsolete in the same way that the slide-tape or animation, not to mention the gramophone, film and typewriter have (allegedly) become obsolete.' Thus '*what is at issue [in this context] is not so much a concrete medium as a condition for mediality.*'¹³¹

In other words, what Hansen is proposing by his investment in '*an aesthetics of contemporary media embodiment*' through the digital, is a reworking of Krauss' formulation whereby the '*post-medium condition*' is expressly '*named by the digital*', and '*the body itself is invested with the responsibility of preserving within itself the self-differing condition of media*'. That is, by '*naming*' the self-differing condition of media, as the '*digital*', it must

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid, p276, fn. 20

*'(since it has no other "natural" physical support) ' include 'the process of embodiment as an integral part of it ... to give it a place [and] to transform its endless self-differing into a concrete experience of today's informational (or post-medium) environment.'*¹³²

Hansen's reworking of Krauss' formulation provides an up to date consideration of how we might think about the nature of the 'post-medium' condition, specifically through the shift in the 'status' of the medium as a consequence of developments in digital media (or 'digitisation'), which sees the transformation of media from *'forms of actual inscription of "reality", into variable interfaces for rendering the raw data of reality'*.

At its core, is an affirmation of the 'affective' body as *'the "enframer" of information'*,¹³³ which Hansen claims *'correlates with the fundamental shift in the materiality of media'*. Thus, in the wake of the *'de-differentiation of media'* he sees the body as consequently taking on an increasingly central role that is marked by the shift in the correlation between 'media' and 'body' -that is, *'as media lose their material specificity, the body takes on a more prominent function as the selective processor of information'*,¹³⁴ in the sense that the artist him or herself, has to select the ('medial ') interface through which to realise his or her aims (rather than the selection being directly specified by *'the material constraints of the data'*).

Hansen sees this as a supplementary action, which necessarily places the body at the heart of the activity. Moreover, within this formulation the viewer also takes an active and participatory role through his or her embodied activity in a selection process by which mediated data is *'transformed into a perceivable image'* -that is, *'the body's scope of perceptual and affective possibilities, ...informs the medial interfaces'*, thereby shifting or 'displacing', the *'framing and function'* of the 'interface' *'back onto the body'*, from which it came. This is what Hansen calls a *'refunctionalisation of the body as a processor of information'* and what he claims is specific to digital or 'new media' art in that it *'calls on the*

¹³² Ibid, p32

¹³³ Hansen's reworking is informed by a reconsideration of Henri Bergson's theory of perception, outlined in his text 'Matter and Memory' in which he places emphasis on the body *'as a centre of indetermination within an ecentro universe'*. According to Hansen's reading, it *'functions as a kind of filter that selects, from among the universe of images circulating around it and according to its own embodied capacities, precisely those that are relevant to it.'* The body thus acts as a *'privileged image among images'* and such functions as the embodied centre (or basis) of perception and by which the nature of perception is correlated with the concrete life of the body as an *'aggregate of the material world.'* Significantly, these supposedly render the nature of perception impure. This is set out at the beginning of 'Matter and Memory' in which Bergson 'deduces' perception from matter. See Bergson, Henri ' Matter and Memory', tr .N.M.Paul &W.S. Palmer, New York: Zone Books, (1988),pp17-19 and Hansen, pp2-5

¹³⁴ Hansen, Mark B N "New Philosophy for New Media", as before, p22

*body to inform the concept of "medium" whilst also 'furnish[ing] the potential to action within the "space-time" of information.'*¹³⁵

Hansen's formulation is useful in relation to my concerns in terms of reconceptualising a contemporary notion of physicality and materiality that is located in the theorisation of an embodied experience with media. Whilst his emphasis regarding the nature of an '*embodied basis of perception*', are relevant to my own, they are very much situated with regard to the development of media within the context of 'new-media' in particular. My own concerns, whilst they include an attention 'the digital' as a consequence of recent developments in moving image technology, (which is what makes Hansen's concerns relevant), they place less emphasis on 'new media' or 'the digital' per se as the central focus that defines the nature of our relationship to art in the twenty-first century, and are more concerned with how we can consider the nature of the image by rethinking the nature of its materiality through our embodied relationship to it. The nature of the projected image within the context of installation in particular seems to me to lend itself to such a consideration through the direct relationship between the viewing subject and the projection screen, in which the latter necessarily operates as a physical material object and interface in the existence of a physical form that shapes both its immediate environment and its relationship to the viewing subject. Thus the 'screen object' and the viewer's active bodily experience become a central concern through which an understanding of the nature of materiality in relation to the image can be conceived, understood and experienced as a contemporary concern.

Within this framework I wish to turn to an earlier essay by Hansen, in which he considers the nature of video installation through particular attention to what he himself calls the '*materiality of the image*'. Referring to Margaret Morse's essay on video installation¹³⁶, in which she places emphasis on the experiential he calls for a more informed discourse on and an appreciation of the nature of 'video art' that he suggests exists in the paradoxical concerns of video installation in the experience of presence. He identifies this in the

¹³⁵ Ibid, pp22-23

¹³⁶ Morse, M "Video Installation Art: *The Body, the Image, and the Space-in-Between*", as before. Hansen refers to an updated version of Morse's earlier text: "*The Body, the Image and the Space-in-Between: Video Installation Art*" in Morse, M 'Virtualities: Television, Media Art and Cyberculture', Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana university Press, (1998), pp155-177. I will be primarily referring to Morse's earlier text, except where stated.

'presentational or participatory basis of video installation', through which he establishes the sensory in the '*affectively lived body of the viewer-participant*' -that is, through an understanding in the '*experience facilitated by video installation art*' that takes place '*in the experiencing body of the individual viewer-participant, or perhaps more precisely, in the very bodily processing of sensation as affect.*'¹³⁷ This is rooted in Walter Benjamin's articulation of filmic 'shock' in his essay '*The Work of art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*', in which the physiological notion of 'shock' is understood through its tactility.¹³⁸ Hansen's intention is to update Benjamin's conception by expanding on his concerns in relation to technological advancement by alluding to the manner by which video installation

*'functions to drill our bodies in a manner which helps us adapt ourselves to the demands of contemporary image culture, and specifically to discover new embodied capacities capable of addressing the affective control it increasingly exercises over us.'*¹³⁹

Thus Hansen supports and expands the claim made by Margaret Morse in her essay for '*the privilege video installation holds as an art form that exposes the particular interpenetration of image and built environment characteristic of our contemporary cultural moment*', through the corporeal '*by stimulating of a process of learning, not through with the mind alone but with the body itself,*' and through what Morse terms '*at the level of the body ego and its orientation in space.*'¹⁴⁰ Morse backs up this claim by citing several examples of '*concrete components of video installations*', in '*the artist's non-presence, the active role of the visitor as performer of the piece and the liveness of the work*', all of which claims Hansen, '*place*

¹³⁷ Hansen, Mark B.N. "Performing Affect: Video Installation as Physiological Mimesis", accessed from <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/WritingScience/NaumanPaper.htm>. (undated c.1999/2002; no pagination); also presented as "Performing Affect: Interactive Video Art and the Cybernetic Body" at the national conference on Interactive Narrative at the University of Southern California, June 4-6 1999 and due to be published in Kinder, Marsha and McPherson, Tara 'Interactive Frictions Anthology' following the conference. I have been unable to locate this publication.

¹³⁸ See my reference to this in Chapter 2. In short, Benjamin foregrounds film as '*the privileged agent of the adaptation*' that is central to his concerns in his identification of an 'anthropological materialism' whereby film (independently of its status as a representational medium), forms a training ground for man's physiological adaptation to technology. '*Film serves to drill [dient..zu ben], man in those apperceptions and reactions caused by interaction with an apparatus whose role in his life increases almost daily. To make the tremendous [ungerheuer] technical apparatus of our time into a object of human innervation—that is the historical task in whose service film has its true meaning.*' Thus what Benjamin identifies in filmic perception as a 'shock-effect' are the physiological processes underlying cinematic spectatorship, which is what for him constitutes its tactile dimension.

¹³⁹ Hansen, Mark B.N. "Performing Affect", as before, no pagination.

¹⁴⁰ Morse, Margaret "Video Installation Art", as before, pp158 & 153 (pp161 & 156 in updated version)

*the visitor in the piece and establish him or her as its experiential subject, not by identification but in body.*¹⁴¹

What is significant about this is that it establishes the visitor's body as a site of interruption (or '*interpellation*') and a constitutive part of the work that not only determines its '*interactive dimension*' but also its '*aesthetic dimension*.' As such the visitor's body becomes established as (and in) '*the space in between*' as a 'crucial element' of the installation insofar as '*the space in between*' becomes '*actualised in the body of each visitor*' and (to cite Hansen), '*the video installation is as much in the body of the visitor, as the visitor is in the installation*.' This he claims, calls for an unpacking of '*just how the body is stimulated in video installation*' and of how this itself may itself encompass '*a form of learning*'.¹⁴²

Hansen's proposal is to clarify and develop these concerns in his attempt to update of Benjamin's account of the '*shock effect of film*' by '*contrasting the materiality of film and video*' and locating the 'material' in video by '*pinpointing the location of physiological in the video image*',¹⁴³ and identifying through this its capacity to generate physiological shock. This he claims, differs fundamentally from film '*since video does not involve an intrinsic element of shock at the perceptual level*', but instead '*whatever physiological function it may perform*' remains external to it as a medium and must be therefore incorporated into it. Hansen suggests that fundamental to this process is video's ability to '*trigger[s] an affective reaction that opens a prereflexive and prerepresentational sensory dimension of the experiencing body*',¹⁴⁴ in the sense that this 'sensory dimension' works in direct correlation with the body and its relationship to the larger environment. Thus video installation he claims, '*comprises a practice of sensation*', that functions to '*train our affective capacities for new uses and challenges*' in ways that would allow us more agency in our relationships and interactions with the contemporary media apparatus to which we are exposed.

Referring back to Benjamin's essay, he reminds us of Benjamin's insight in identifying in film the '*investigation of a crucial facet of aesthetic experience in the technological age*' specifically identified in the '*new function of technically-advanced art as an agent for our*

¹⁴¹ Hansen, Mark B.N. "*Performing Affect*", as before, no pagination.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

*bodily adaptation to the technology that shapes our environment.*¹⁴⁵ However, he goes on to claim that whilst Benjamin recognises the importance of the physiological dimension of this function, his analysis does not go far enough in unpacking these processes and mechanisms, whereby the shock-effects generated by '*technically – advanced art*' operate to 'perform', what could be referred to as a '*pedagogy of the body*'.¹⁴⁶

As an initial example of an extension to Benjamin's thesis, Hansen points to film critic Steven Shaviro, whom he claims develops a physiological understanding of cinematic perception as an '*effect of the pre-articulated 'materiality of sensation presented by film'*'¹⁴⁷ - that is, as a perception that concerns images that are considered less as '*vehicles of signification*' and more as '*visual forces in themselves*'.¹⁴⁸ Developing the idea of shock in what he claims is a new kind of perception (in that it is '*below or above the human.. multiple and archaic, non-intentional and asubjective.. no longer subordinated to the requirements of representation and idealisation, recognition and designation*'¹⁴⁹), he suggests that cinema's effectiveness is less concerned with its '*representational truth*' than with its '*visceral insistence and its movement*'. Echoing previous articulations concerning structural film (and the 'flicker' film in particular), he claims this comes '*from the way [in which] it directly stimulates the optic nerves, bypassing cognitive and reflective faculties altogether.*'¹⁵⁰ This begins the process of '*unpacking exactly how film impacts on the spectator's material body... as a product of the sensory immediacy of images*', with 'shock' functioning as a catalyst for the '*physiological shift in our embodied habits of vision*'.¹⁵¹ Shaviro's account correlates with the way in which we as cinematic spectators become 'in thrall' to the image¹⁵² as passive 'victims' of its sensory 'violence' by which perceptual processes operate

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Hansen, "*Performing Affect*", as before, no pagination; From Shaviro, Steven 'The Cinematic Body' Theory out of Bounds'. v. 2. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, (1993.), p31
¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p33

¹⁵¹ Hansen, "*Performing Affect*", as before, no pagination.

¹⁵² He relates this to what Maurice Blanchot terms '*the passion for the image*' in his account of the hold images have on us: '*Why fascination? Seeing implies distance, the decision that causes separation, the power not to be in contact and to avoid the confusion of contact. Seeing means that this separation has nonetheless become an encounter. But what happens when what you see, even though from a distance, seems to touch you with a grasping contact, when the manner of seeing is a sort of touch, when seeing is a contact at a distance? What happens when what is seen imposes itself on your gaze, as though the gaze had been seen, touched, put in contact with appearance? Not an active contact, not the initiative and action that might remain a true touch; rather the gaze is drawn, absorbed into an immobile movement and a depth without depth. What is given to us by contact at a distance is the*

unconsciously in the ‘eye’s retention of virtual images.’¹⁵³ Hansen reminds us that this is precisely what Benjamin is referring to in his articulation of the term (shock) as the type of ‘passivity’ that we experience in front of the ‘cinematic’ image being what generates its physical (or ‘tactile’) effects, (in the experience of film that ‘hits the spectator like a bullet, it happens to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality’).¹⁵⁴

Shaviro introduces the notion of ‘an irreducible interval or gap within perception’¹⁵⁵ as a means to clarify tactile experience identifying in the ‘shock effect’, a split between two levels of perception: a ‘primordial or pre-originary’ level ‘at which the image imprints itself on the retina as unarticulated, excessive sensation and derivative’, or ‘receptive’ level, ‘at which qualitative perception first emerges’. Thus the experience of shock occurs in ‘the temporal discord between these two levels’ -that is, in the ‘physical impact generated by the imprinting of the image’ as ‘autonomous from the qualitative perception to which it subsequently leads.’¹⁵⁶ In doing so Shaviro’s analysis begins to clarify a process of what Hansen terms ‘physiological mimesis’ (that through the ‘temporal discord’ and autonomy it brings to ‘shock experience’, perception becomes inevitably connected to the body). For Shaviro,

‘The disengagement of a primordial or preoriginary level violently excites, and thereby fascinates the film-viewer. Perception is turned back onto the body of the viewer, so that it affects and alters that body, instead of merely constituting a series of representations for the spectator to recognise.’¹⁵⁷

In other words, Shaviro suggests that before there is any possibility of any engagement with anything representational in film and ‘as a material condition of possibility, the spectator has already been exposed to the violence of sensation.’ Citing Benjamin he stresses the replacement of contemplation by ‘tactile appropriation, which is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit.’¹⁵⁸

image, and fascination is passion for the image ...’ (In Blanchot, M ‘The Writing of the Disaster, trans. Ann Smock, Lincoln and London(1995), p101

¹⁵³ Hansen, “Performing Affect”, as before, no pagination.

¹⁵⁴ Benjamin, Walter “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, as before, p238

¹⁵⁵ This notion comes from Gilles Deleuze’s articulation in Cinema 1: The Movement Image (1986) identified previously in this chapter as the ‘gap’ between frames and between stimulus and response. Shaviro equates Deleuze’s notion of the latter with the gap between ‘imprinting or a sensation and its reception’, shifting the locus of the image’s force from the image to the body of the spectator.

¹⁵⁶ Hansen, “Performing Affect”, as before, no pagination.

¹⁵⁷ Shaviro, S ‘The Cinematic Body’, as before, p51

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p52; The reference to Benjamin is in “The Work of Art”, as before, p240.

Thus in his expansion of Benjamin, Shaviro establishes the importance of an alternative to dominant psychoanalytic and semiotic models of cinema in what Hansen terms a ‘*psychophysiology*’ of cinematic experience. However, according to him, like Benjamin, Shaviro fails to make clear the physiological processes that are ‘*activated at the primordial or preoriginary level of perception*’ and the ‘*corresponding modifications that attune the body to its technological environment*’¹⁵⁹. Although he ‘*invokes the notion of mimesis or contagion...to describe the process by which the viewer is brought into immediate contact with images on screen*’¹⁶⁰ as an extension of Benjamin’s ideas, his emphasis is too general in his description of the fragmentation the viewer experiences ‘*as a victim of an excess of sensation*’ and does not go far enough in establishing concrete details of such fragmentation ‘*as it occurs in the body of the spectator.*’¹⁶¹

In order to begin to address the concrete material processes Hansen claims constitute sensation he proposes an interrogation of the assumptions underlying Shaviro’s analysis in the notion that sensation is ‘raw’ and ‘unarticulated’ emphasising in the fragmentation of embodied perception by the sensory ‘force’ of the image ‘*tactile convergences between the viewer and the viewed.*’ These processes he stresses however, can only operate ‘*a relative disarticulation of perception*’, in order to open up ‘*another level of perceptual articulation in the differently articulated bodily capacities which constitute physiological processes of sensation.*’¹⁶²

Returning to briefly to Benjamin, he stresses ‘*film’s analogical relationship with urban shock experience*’ as being foregrounded in ‘*both the concrete technical properties of film*’ itself, and its status ‘*as a technically advanced art form.*’ Therefore, claims Hansen, if film

¹⁵⁹ Hansen, Mark, B.N. “*Performing Affect*”, as before, no pagination.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid. Shaviro has published an updated response to his earlier text that criticises ‘*its aggressively polemical thrust*’, and denouncement of the 1970s/1980s psychoanalytic film theory of critics such as Laura Mulvey for its ‘*iconoclasm and image phobia*’ and its construction of ‘*a theoretical edifice as a defence against threatening pleasure*’. Despite these failings he recognises his attempt in the earlier text towards a re-articulation and theorisation of affect and embodiment through cinematic perception in ‘*an approach to film that focused on bodies and their affects, instead of ideologies and representations*’. He disagrees with his earlier claim that ‘*film is inescapably literal. Images confront the viewer without mediation...We respond viscerally to visual forms...*’ claiming now that this is wrong since ‘*it simply sides the literal with the figurative, or with presence against mediation*’, and creates a binary opposition between terms. What he claims he was ‘groping’ towards, but not able then to express fully, is the idea that ‘*the cognitive—far from being opposed to the visceral or bodily—grows out of the visceral and is an elaboration of it*’, thus alluding to the notion that cognised emotions are the effects of bodily states and emphasising the fact that ‘*there is no way that any sort of seeing or hearing could be described as direct and unmediated*’ (source: Shaviro, S “*The Cinematic Body Redux*” (2008), accessed from www.shaviro.com/Othertexts/Cinematic.pdf).

perception is a training '*for life in the mechanical age*', as Benjamin would have it, it does so '*through the sensory violence that it performs against the eyes: insofar as it necessitates a virtual retention of images, film opens up a new domain and corresponding faculty of molecular perception.*'¹⁶³ This, he maintains, has only increased in importance with the advances in technological development. Furthermore, he stresses that if film can '*lay claim to its exemplary status*', it can only do so through '*the categorical shift it operates*' in the nature of our relationship to the outside world. That is, '*by drilling us with tactile, physiological shock stimuli*', which it operates as '*a pedagogy of the body that facilitates adaptation through habit, not contemplation.*'¹⁶⁴ Thus video installation, he suggests '*constructs a confrontation between human perception and pure virtual perception... that holds a similar privilege for our physiological adaptation to contemporary audiovisual culture and its technological infrastructure.*' What is at stake, however, in the transition of film from its status as a precursor of video and more recently from video to video installation, is '*a shift in the status of subjectification and its constitutive, reciprocal relation with technology.*'¹⁶⁵

As similarly identified previously in this chapter, Hansen notes this in the differences between film and video installation, in that film montage '*opens an interval (between primordial and qualitative perception) that generates sensory shock*', whereas video

¹⁶³ This is what Benjamin termed the '*Optical Unconscious*'. In his essay "*A Short History of Photography*", Walter Benjamin defines this as an unconscious visual dimension of the material world that is normally filtered out from people's social consciences, thus remaining invisible, but which can be made visible using mechanical recording techniques such as photography and film: '*Only photography can show him the optical unconscious, just as it is only through psychoanalysis that he learns of the compulsive unconscious.*' (Walter Benjamin, "*A Small History of Photography*," in 'One-Way Street and other writings', trans. J.A. Underwood, with introd: Amit Chaudhuri, Penguin Books, (2009) pp.172-192). Rosalind Krauss' book '*The Optical Unconscious*', is intended as a 'nod' to Benjamin, but departs from his political concerns to ask how the optical field (the world that we see) can have an unconscious? Its focus is intended as a more personal and explicit development of the concerns that structure her earlier projects of '*Passages in Modern Sculpture*' (1977) and '*The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*' (1986), in an expansion of and departure from the 'mainstream' modernism to which she had previously been committed in the 1960s, under the egis of Clement Greenberg. Her main argument develops three main claims: '*That modernism is tied to the privileging of pure opticality; that this creates a hierarchy of taste and practice that excludes too much, especially the art that comes, as it were, from the unconscious; therefore this latter art should be granted a valued place in the history of modern art, indeed, in the history of modernism, as it is modernism's repressed other.*' Krauss thus argues for a different history of modernism than that created by Greenberg, that '*releases unconscious drives and desires through painted seeing*' -that is in works considered not so much through an identification with their imagery but by their positioning of the spectator, '[through] *their rhythms, their repetitions and variations, the ways they make him [or her] see*'. (Sources: Krauss, R 'The Optical Unconscious', Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993 and Smith,Terry 'The Optical Unconscious', Book Review, in *Modernism/Modernity*, 2.1 (1995) 193-196). See also f.n.30 earlier in this chapter.

¹⁶⁴ Hansen "*Performing Affect*", as before, no pagination. Hansen points specifically to Benjamin's remarks at the end of his "*Work of Art*" essay in terms of what he sees as film's role '*in mankind's larger task at moments of technological rupture*': '*For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation alone. Thy are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.*' Benjamin, W, '*The Work of Art*', as before, p240; cited in Hansen's footnotes to the essay, no pagination.

¹⁶⁵ Hansen, "*Performing Affect*", as before, no pagination.

installation, he claims, '*stages a startling and violent confrontation between our habitual human (i.e. natural) point of view and the virtual perspective(s) from which others see us (our image as an image in itself)*'.¹⁶⁶ In other words the '*status of subjectification*' shifts from '*producing human perception as the subject of that shock*' in film, to '*constitut[ing] the embodied human as the agent of pre-perceptual affectation*', in video installation. Thus in its development from film, claims Hansen, video installation provides a form of '*aesthetic experimentation that can help us adapt at the level of embodied affect*' to the outside environment, which is itself characterised by '*experiential alienation*':

*'in the ubiquitous encounter with strange and rootless images (especially self-images) and the loss of agency ensuing from increasing distribution of perceptual and cognitive tasks into systems involving non-human components.'*¹⁶⁷

This he maintains, allows us to contextualise Morse's earlier claim regarding the '*contemporary privilege of video art*' in her contention that '*the 'video' in video installation stands for contemporary image culture per se*', each installation,

*'an experiment in the redesign of the apparatus that represents our culture to itself: a new disposition of machines that project the imagination onto the world and that store, recirculate, and display images, and a fresh orientation of the body in space and a reformulation of kinaesthetic experience.'*¹⁶⁸

However, he disagrees with Morse's assertion that video installation acquires this status '*on account of its cognitive and imaginary functions*', but rather that it

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Hansen refers to term 'posthuman', in relation to this context, citing Katherine N Hayles' analysis in her 1999 book 'How We Became Posthuman', University of Chicago Press, and examples of the '*contemporary social distribution of perception and cognition into cyborg systems*'. Hayles also mentions '*intelligent agent programs*' such as '*automatic email sorters*' and '*news story compilers*' as well as what she refers to as '*ubiquitous computing*'.

¹⁶⁸ Morse, M "Video Installation", as before, p158. This runs counter to Fredric Jameson's claim for the uniqueness and privilege of video as '*total flow*' that similarly places it within a cultural context of the circulation of images and through the transforming properties of the '*apparatus*', but claims its machinery '*uniquely dominates and depersonalises subject and object alike, transforming the former into a quasi-material registering apparatus for the machine time of the latter and of the video-image or total flow*'.' (in Jameson, F, as before (1991).

*'exposes the logic of the contemporary televisual apparatus by compelling us to experience in a properly affective register, what its normal operation can only obscure: [that is] the completeness of the virtual status of perception, including perception of the self.'*¹⁶⁹

As such, it serves, he claims, *'not as a catalyst for any kind of cognitive critique, but for an affective adaptation that has no cognitive or representational correlate'*,¹⁷⁰ functioning as a kind of expansion of what he terms the 'perceptual uncanny.'

Hansen goes on to analyse Bruce Nauman's corridor installation works from the early 1970's, that he sees as being exemplary of this and to examine the potential of video installation, as an *'interactive form of performative body art that engages the affective experience of the viewer.'* Nauman's installations extended from his earlier explorations of *'temporally protracted performances of elementary bodily activities'*, using both film and video performed within the confines of his studio,¹⁷¹ to incorporate video itself in the construction of a confined space within a gallery setting. The transition to video installation enabled him to

*'shift the locus of the aesthetic performance [from himself] to the spectator (in an environment in which the artist is physically absent) and [which] through certain spatial and architectural constraints, compel the viewer to experience what the artist intends.'*¹⁷²

Nauman's 'video corridor' experiments culminated in an installation at the Nick Wilder Gallery in New York in 1971. In this work, a number of 'corridors' were constructed *'only three of which were passable'*. In the longest, central one, the walls narrowed as the viewer/participant walked down it, already forcing him or her to manoeuvre his or her position. Three closed-circuit (or live) video cameras were positioned on top of the walls (one in the central corridor) and monitors positioned alongside, offered 'views' of the empty (impassable) corridor spaces either side, as well as images of viewers entering the central

¹⁶⁹ Hansen, as before (no pagination).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ These included a series of manipulations of different parts of his body shot in close-up, often using slow-motion (for example, '*Thighing*', in which the artist rubs his thighs with his hands; or '*Bouncing Balls*', in which he makes his testicles bounce; or '*Pulling Mouth*', in which he pulls his mouth apart with his hands, amongst others), and task-like activities performed within constricted spaces (using square perimeters marked out with tape) in his studio performed for a specific duration (for example, '*Bouncing in the corner, No. 1*', in which he repeatedly does this for an hour, or '*Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Round the Perimeter of a Square*', or '*Walking with Contrapposto*', in which he walks bath and forth in an exaggerated manner inside a constructed corridor space). For descriptions of these see <http://www.eai.org/artistTitles.htm?id=318>

¹⁷² Hansen, "*Performing Affect*", as before, no pagination.

corridor, ‘captured from a bird’s eye-view and from behind.’ As he or she approached the monitors, his or her image ‘grew increasingly small, affording a disturbing, counterintuitive perceptual experience.’¹⁷³

Hansen refers to Morse’s description of her own feeling of disorientation and disassociation in her experience of Nauman’s work, which is expressed particularly vividly in her text: ‘*To me it was as if my body has become unglued from my own image, as if the ground of my orientation in space had been pulled from under me.*’¹⁷⁴ It is this ‘*effect of bodily disassociation*’ that Hansen claims pits video installation as ‘*one of the exemplary art forms of our emergent post-human culture*’:

By ‘rupturing habitual patterns of (self) perception’, he maintains, ‘video installation environments facilitate an affective apprehension of the self-image-in itself—the self-image made autonomous from our natural, single-perspectival viewpoint.’¹⁷⁵

What Hansen is referring to is the experience viewers have of Nauman’s installation (and many other video installations of that time by other artists) in its use of the mechanics and effects of closed-circuit television as a means to disorientate or dislocate the viewer and as a means for him or her to confront his or her own (self) image and embodied dimensions in space.¹⁷⁶ He refers to this as a kind of ‘splitting’ that perturbs the viewer/participant’s ‘habitual perception of [him or] herself’, disturbed as it is by the ‘real-time relay’ of his or her image that is ‘*displaced from its habitual perspective and with a slight delay onto a monitor placed within the space of the installation.*’¹⁷⁷

Similarly, in her essay Morse also refers to live, closed-circuit installations involving one or more cameras in relay, installed within a larger ‘interactive’ and architectural space, (including Nauman’s), that dismantles the ‘*symmetrical relationship of the body and the image, [breaking] the illusion most fundamental to mass culture and to broadcast television*

¹⁷³ Ibid

¹⁷⁴ Morse, M “Video Installation”, as before, p153 (pp55-6 in updated version)

¹⁷⁵ Hansen, “Performing Affect”, as before, (no pagination).

¹⁷⁶ I am thinking of artists such as Peter Campus, Dan Graham, Richard Serra, Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider, and early explorations by Bill Viola, all of whom were engaged with similar explorations in live closed-circuit works.

¹⁷⁷ Hansen, Mark B.N., “Performing Affect”, as before.(no pagination)

– that broadcast images are meant just for you’¹⁷⁸ This emphasises one of Hansen’s main assertions with regard to the ‘dismantling’ of cognitive critique through the process and experience of ‘sensory shock’: that the latter is triggered ‘at the level of affective response, not representational content.’¹⁷⁹

Hansen’s emphasis appears to be very much on the viewer’s perception of his or her own self-image as a form of what he terms the ‘*perceptual uncanny*’ as mediated by the television monitor screen, which somewhat limits his argument to a focus on the ‘televisual’. Although he does attribute in a footnote a similar sense of ‘bodily disassociation’ to multi-monitor recorded installations, in which the spectator’s point of view is

‘fractured through a distribution that allows the simultaneous apprehension of overlapping and incompatible perspectives’, which he claims ‘produces an affective reaction not unlike that of the closed-circuit works since it involves the shock-generating confrontation between human perceptual capacities and the multiple, virtual image of the thing or image in itself’¹⁸⁰

this is still limited to a focus on the television monitor screen as a means of mediation. His references to Morse’s observations are thus centred on the ‘*particular reconfiguration of the televisual circuit*’ that he asserts is ‘*characteristic of video installation works*’, and which he links to the trajectory opened up by Benjamin in his observations of ‘*film’s differences from theater*’. Key to these concerns is the ‘*fragmentation imposed on the film-actor’s body*’ where ‘*not only is the film actor’s self-preservation mediated by the camera, but his representation of his own body is fragmented into various part images*’¹⁸¹ (in Benjamin’s words: ‘*His creation is by no means all of a piece; it is composed of many separate performances*’¹⁸²). Hansen relates this to the process of editing by which ‘*what we might think of as many separate parts that are only put together after the fact,*’ but his concern is mainly centred on the subjective experience of the ‘film-actor’ that he suggests anticipates the fragmentation of self-image in video installation, citing in Benjamin’s description

¹⁷⁸ Morse, M “Video Installation”, updated version, as cited in Hansen: “The Body, The Image and the Space in Between: Video Installation” (1998), in Morse, M ‘Virtualities: Television, Media Art and Cyberculture’, Bloomington Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, (1998), p171

¹⁷⁹ Hansen, Mark B.N., “Performing Affect”, as before. (no pagination)

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Benjamin, W “The Work of Art”, as before, p231

*'The feeling of strangeness that overcomes the actor before the camera...is basically of the same kind as the estrangement felt before one's own image in the mirror' but which now in 'the reflected image has become separable, transportable.'*¹⁸³

Thus claims Hansen,

*'inserted into this trajectory, closed-circuit video installation can be understood as a radicalisation of the bodily fragmentation introduced by film', since it 'functions by placing the viewer-participant into the position formerly occupied by the actor.'*¹⁸⁴

As such he or she experiences his or her self-image 'detachable' from his or her perceptual perspective, but with video installation Hansen asserts, the participant's experience of estrangement is much more heightened since he or she is able to see his or her self-image in real-time '*simultaneously with the habitual perspective that produces a normal self-image.*'

It is this that constitutes for him a contemporary notion of the '*uncanny*' as a '*skewed phenomenal confrontation with one's self image*', which he claims is '*emblematic of everyday experience with the advent of a lived world fully saturated by visual images.*'¹⁸⁵

Morse's argument on the other hand, makes more distinctions between different kinds of video installation, distinguishing more emphatically the differences between live or closed-circuit video installation:

(that '*plays with presence*' and '*[shifts] back and forth between two and three dimensions*' as an exploration of the '*fit between images and the built environment and the process of mediating identity and power.*'), and recorded video installation (that '*can be compared to the spectator wandering about on a stage, in a bodily experience of conceptual propositions and imaginary worlds of memory and anticipation.*')¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Hansen, Mark B.N. "*Performing Affect*", as before, no pagination.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. Hansen's reference to the '*uncanny*' derives from Freud's conception of the term in his essay "*The Uncanny*" originally published in German as "Das Unheimliche" in 1919. It refers to an instance of when something can be familiar and yet unfamiliar (or foreign) at the same time, resulting in the feeling of it being uncomfortably strange or uncomfortably familiar. In this case Hansen refers to a footnote in the essay in which Freud refers to his own experience of being confronted with his own image unexpectedly as a reflection in the mirror of an open (swinging) door of a train compartment. Of the particularity of this encounter, Hansen emphasises in Freud's confrontation of his self-image as '*nothing less than his virtual self-image: himself (or his self) as he (it) would appear to the gaze of another*', and one that '*designates a moment of at which one gains a perception of one's virtual image [as] an 'objective' or absolute image that is ordinarily outside the domain of experience.*' (The version of "*The Uncanny*" that Hansen refers to appears in 'On Creativity and the Unconscious', New York: Harper Row, (1958))

¹⁸⁶ Morse, M "*Video Installation Art*", earlier version (1990), as before, p159

through the ways in which these can be differentiated by tense (the former as an expression of the present and the latter referencing the past within an experience in the present). Within this she acknowledges the hybrid and complex nature of video installation as an art of the present in the possibility of being able to '*explore physically more than one tense*' where '*reference to the past and future can coexist with the present, provided that all are figured and grounded in the experience of here and now.*' Whilst she acknowledges that it is '*hard to imagine the art form as much as it is [hard] to imagine the contemporary world without television*' she also stresses that video installation '*is not directly related to or dependent on the institution and apparatus of television*'. That although these

*'completely overpower the art-form in size and reach, television broadcasting, cable and the video cassette as usually consumed are each but one kind of video installation that is reproduced over and over again in a field of open and otherwise unrealised possibilities.'*¹⁸⁷

Morse also stresses that from its beginnings video installation has been a '*mixed medium; closed circuit with recorded video, slides and photography.*'¹⁸⁸ Writing this in 1990, she had presumably not yet anticipated the impact of video projection on the recent development of contemporary video installation, although she acknowledges the impact of mediation as being at the heart of its relationship to contemporary image culture in a way that is particularly perceptive of later developments:

*'Exploring the materialisation of the conceptual through all the various modes available to our heavily mediated society is at the heart of the cultural function of video installation.' (Therefore, if 'video' is representative of 'contemporary image culture per se... Then each installation is an experiment in the redesign of the apparatus that represents our culture to itself...')*¹⁸⁹

Whilst she refers to the significance and predominance of television monitors as sculptural objects in video installation, she recognises in their use the '*immediate references to the American video installation- the home TV set – that TVs and even video monitors inevitably bring to mind*' and talks of works that instead develop '*the parameters of video installation beyond the monitor image/object itself*'. In relation to this she refers to 'video sculpture' that

¹⁸⁷ Ibid p155

¹⁸⁸ Ibid p159

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

'present[s] an act of inverting what is inside to the outside', extending this notion to the idea of images being 'emptied out', 'processed through image culture and offered to us again as image ghosts and mental apparitions in three dimensions.' Furthermore, she broadens the limitations of this 'act of inversion' to the consideration of installation as an 'exteriorisation' of the artist's own '*interior, mental life*' that takes shape most obviously in video projections, where '*there is no monitor, only the visitor's body and perceptual system in relation to an image projection system, an interrelationship embodied in ghostly images, nothing but light*'¹⁹⁰ and by contrast to situations in which the projection of interiority are '*given massive form, equivalent to the very walls around the visitor.*'¹⁹¹ Whilst this may on the surface appear to constitute an image '*least anchored in materiality*', as Morse also observes, she recognises that '*they also emphasise the different degrees to which installation work occupies three-dimensional space... insofar as [the] spatial positions outside the two dimensional field are charged with meaning [as] an essential aspect of the work.*'¹⁹²

Crucial to these concerns is the conception of three dimensional space made possible by an installation in what she calls '*the space-in-between*' -that is, in the '*actual construction of a passage for bodies or figures in space and time*' and in the '*action of a subject in the here and now,*' the 'frame' of the installation being '*the actual room [or rooms] in which it is placed*', itself reconfigured as the '*ground over which a conceptual, figural, embodied and temporalized space [in which] the installation breaks.*'¹⁹³ The visitor (or spectator) of a video installation thus

¹⁹⁰ Ibid p162. Morse is referring here to the work 'Mem' by Peter Campus in which a video camera is mounted on the wall of a completely darkened room at a height of approximately two metres. It points along a path almost parallel to the wall. A live video image is projected onto the adjacent wall, approximately 150 cm from the camera. A video projector is also placed close to the projection surface, so that the video image is projected onto the wall at an angle of 30°. As a result, the projection field and the video image converge slightly towards the direction of the camera. As the viewer enters the narrow, corridor-like recording area, his or her head and upper body are recorded and projected onto the wall. As he or she moves along the invisible 'corridor' of the camera field, the live image becomes either bigger or smaller and the image is distorted due to the camera and projector positions. (Source: Slavko Kacunko in: Peter Campus. Analog + Digital Video + Foto 1970–2003 Wulf Herzogenrath/Barbara Nierhoff (eds.), Bremen, 2003.)

¹⁹¹ Morse, M, as above. This comment refers to Bill Viola's 'Room for St. John of the Cross'(1983) in which the viewer experiences the saint's imagination as an '*overwhelming subjective view of a risky flight over mountain peaks.*' Morse also refers to the contrasting image within the same installation of '*an exterior surface of calm contemplation presented within the interior of a hut with a still image of a snow-capped mountain*'.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid p154

*'enters a charged space-in-between, taking on an itinerary, taking on a role in a set in which images move through different ontological levels with each shift in dimension, in a kinaesthetic art, a body art, an image art that is rather an embodied conceptual art.'*¹⁹⁴

This, shift in dimension and its relationship to the embodied experience of the visitor/spectator is what for Morse particularly identifies and distinguishes installation from other works of art and what '*ultimately distinguishes the one type of installation over the other*', the distinction being less in relation to tense or medium '*than whether or not the visitor spatially enters two as well as three dimensions or remains in "real" space*', and the ultimate question being, '*who is the subject of the experience?*'¹⁹⁵

So whilst there may be a relationship in installation to performance in that a performance may include '*installation-like sets*', for Morse, performance '*differs from installation, nonetheless, because the artist occupies the position of the subject within the installation world.*' Likewise, whilst an installation may be interactive (in the sense that a visitor becomes a participant in the work and by default 'interacts' with its various elements), Morse claims interactive work differs from installation in that '*room is made for the visitor to play with the parameters of a posited world, thus taking on the virtual role of "artist/installer", if not the role of artist as declarer and inventor of that world*',¹⁹⁶ the main difference being that the 'worlds' created via interaction are predominantly ones digitised on a computer-screen. As such therefore, these are not ones '*that a visitor can enter bodily*'. Thus Morse maintains, '*Unless there is charged space outside the screen or a passage for the body, we have left the realm of installation.*'¹⁹⁷

I would not entirely agree, since this makes the assumption that all digital interactive works are experienced passively and inactively on (the computer) screen rather than being considered in the light of contemporary developments in digital video and its relationship to the development of 'new media' installations, of which the notion of interaction plays a big part. Whilst this has probably to do with the timing of Morse's writing in 1990, the questions she raises regarding the nature of interaction and how interactive, interactive video actually is are important, if not in terms of analysing the nature of the experiential subject who in turn

¹⁹⁴ Ibid p163

¹⁹⁵ Ibid p159

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p159

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, see footnote 17 on page 507 in Hall, Doug & Fifer, Sally-Jo 'Illuminating Video: an Essential Guide to Video Art', (1990)

plays a part in determining the nature of the interaction. Since one could in a broader sense claim that all installation art is interactive, (in the sense that '*the visitor chooses a trajectory among all the possibilities,*' and that '*this trajectory is a variable narrative simultaneously embodied and constructed at the level of presentation*') the questions Morse raises are significant: '*The visitor interacts with what or whom? Is the interaction dialogic (i.e. between two subjects) or does it amount to a range of choices within a system of organisation (who is the subject then?)?*'¹⁹⁸

More pertinent perhaps is how Morse sees the various configurations of an image as video installation, (whether projected or shown on a monitor, or whether live or recorded or a mixture of both), that when shown on multiple 'screens' or channels and in varying spatial and temporal dispositions, '*force a viewer to watch [or to experience] the images differently*' -that is, they make the work '*impossible to put on television*' (and I would add to this, to be 'screened' in a cinema space) and to be viewed traditionally from beginning to end.

Possibilities in juxtapositions of the live and the recorded in extended durational and shorter repeated sequences, in contrasting projections of interiority and exteriority and in a '*migration of images*' across a space give video installation says Morse, a '*poetic dimension*' as a practice '*that deemphasises the content of images in favor of such properties as line, colour, vectors of motion, with content of their own to convey.*'¹⁹⁹ This allows a choreography to emerge in the work that for her '*adds another kinaesthetic dimension of transformation*' - that is in the '*transformation from monitor to monitor*' or from screen to screen, '*from two to three dimensions and back again.*' This is most apparent she claims, when the different ontological levels that emerge '*do not match*' and '*the conceptual is transformed in its*

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, as above.

¹⁹⁹ Morse, M, p164 That is not to say that there is no other content in such works but that possibilities in video installation allows content to be configured and approached differently and in a less conventional sense. Morse refers to the exhibition 'American Landscape' from 1986, in which the exhibited installations '*exploit these poetic possibilities in very different ways*' and also include some work with strong narrative dimensions, for example, in Mary Lucier's three screen work 'Wilderness'.

*passage through various material manifestations*²⁰⁰ or when the ‘conceptual realm is no longer contained within a gallery space, but spills over into public space’.²⁰¹

Transformation also comes in the form what Morse terms a ‘transcendence’, ‘not from elsewhere, nor in a controlled regression to a preconscious state via identification with the not self as self’, but of visitor’s experience with the implication that a change has taken place, in the sense that ‘*that he or she has learned something*’. This takes us back to Hansen’s earlier observations with regard to Morse in which he remarks on her claim for ‘*the privilege video installation holds as an art form that exposes the particular interpenetration of image and built environment... by stimulating of a process of learning*’ and the connections he makes in this to Benjamin’s insight in relation to identifying in film, a ‘*pedagogy of the body*’ as a ‘*training for life in the mechanical age*’.²⁰²

Thus as Morse stresses, learning here does not imply ‘*knowing better...nor is it knowing unleashed from the habitual realm of a body that never learns, but rather endlessly repeats. Rather, it exploits the capabilities of the body itself and its senses to grasp the world visually, aurally and kinaesthetically.*’²⁰³ In applying this concept to video installation, Morse emphasises the importance of an ‘*intertwining of corporeal and conceptual transcendence*’, without which the installation would be ‘*nothing more than an exhibition, a site for learning knowledge already known.*’ Learning in and from installation therefore requires learning in ‘*each experience itself and its interpretation.*’²⁰⁴

I would like to come back to Hansen because although he limits his argument with regard to ‘*physical shock*’ in film and its development in video installation to the ‘*uncanny shock*’ one experiences in the misrecognition of one’s own self-image, the references he makes are

²⁰⁰ Morse, M, p164 Morse cites various examples in the work of Curt Royson’s ‘Room with Blinds’ or ‘Flat World’ (both 1987), that ‘are like large paintings folded over, creating mismatches at an optical level [where] two and three dimensions intersect’, and Dieter Froese’s installation ‘Eavesdrop’ (1989), which ‘literalises’ the phrase ‘eavesdropping’, by ‘dropping a live video camera from the eaves of the museum where the piece is to be installed’, in a work somewhat reminiscent of Catherine Yass’ later ‘falling’ recorded video camera work ‘Descent’ (2002), for which a camera was lowered to the ground from a crane (see earlier footnote in this chapter).

²⁰¹ Ibid. Morse refers to the work of Antonio Muntadas, in relation to this, in which the artist intervenes in social-institutional spaces of ‘The Board Room’ (1988), the Museum and the Mall (see ‘*haute CULTURE* Parts 1 & 2 1983 and 1984), allowing the conceptual space to ‘*break unevenly over a spatial realm charged with social meaning.*’ Interestingly the mechanics of the latter work, which has a see-saw with tilted monitors at each end that capture the opposing spaces of the museum and the mall, recall the mechanics of Steve McQueen’s early work mentioned earlier.

²⁰² Hansen, Mark B N “Performing Affect”, as before, no pagination.

²⁰³ Morse, M , “Video Installation” p165

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

similar to Morse's in that he situates his notion of shock in the everyday, lived and embodied experience of contemporary image culture and in the '*affective domain of (subjective) response that comes to characterise human experience.*'²⁰⁵ This marks a fundamental shift in the '*qualitative function of shock*' in that the 'shock experience' characteristic of contemporary image culture functions here not only as '*a physiological reaction to (an entirely different) external stimulus (the virtual image)*' but in the opening up of '*a domain of sensory experience*'. This is marked by the production of agency '*not as a mechanical effect, but as protracted affective response.*' In other words unlike Benjamin's filmic notion of '*physical shock*', which '*imprints its rhythmic force directly on human physiology,*' Hansen's contemporary notion of shock (not unlike Morse's articulation of transcendence) '*functions as a trigger for an internal transformation,*' which he sees as a kind of '*regression back to the prereflective, prerepresentational flux of synaesthetic sensation*', that is, as the stimulation of the senses through mediated bodily experience.²⁰⁶ Although this also comes about through a '*punctual encounter*' as it does with film, this is extended through a process of preparation and adaptation (what Morse refers to as learning), to produce a '*qualitatively distinct experience*', in the bodily reaction to an '*overlaying*' of a virtual image '*onto an actual embodied point of view.*'²⁰⁷

In relation to this Hansen goes on to refer to Brian Massumi's notion of the '*bleed*', in his account of former actor and U.S. president Ronald Reagan's transformation from actor to politician, which for him '*serves as a paradigm for uncanny shock in the media age*' and helps him articulate a notion of materiality in the video image in the affective dimension of video installation. My own interest in this is in how this takes the notion of transformation and learning onto another level, disrupting intersubjective relationships to consider a spatial relationship to vision that is nonetheless located in the body or least passes through it

²⁰⁵ Hansen, Mark.B.N. "*Performing Affect*", as before, no pagination.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. Synesthesia is typically described as sensation felt in one part of the body when another part is stimulated or as the evocation of one kind of sense impression when another sense is stimulated, for example, the sensation of colour when a sound is heard or vice versa. Synesthesia is often described as a joining of the senses (sensations in one modality producing sensations in another modality). (Source: UK Synesthesia Association: <http://www.uksynesthesia.com/whatis.html>)

²⁰⁷ Whilst Hansen insists on the 'self' image as symptomatic of this, I wish to extend his notion to a broader understanding of embodied and sensory experience, as articulated in Morse's understanding of an '*intertwining of corporeal and conceptual transcendence*' in the '*capabilities of the body itself and its senses to grasp the world visually, aurally and kinaesthetically*'. (Morse, M. "Video Installation", p165)

experientially. Massumi's analysis attributes a '*particular spatiality*' or '*quasi-corporeality*'.²⁰⁸ to the function of 'overlaying' in the story of Reagan's account of his recognition of himself as a young actor on screen as others see him. What disturbs him is less a misrecognition of his own image, but rather the recognition by him of himself as himself, as a '*plain, old, everyday self*' as an actor 'playing an ordinary role in [an] ordinary way,' that Reagan defines as '*mirrorlike*'.²⁰⁹

Massumi points out the partiality of the mirror-image in the fact that there is only a '*single axis of sight*' and that '*you [therefore] only see yourself from one angle at a time and never effectively in movement.*'²¹⁰ He goes on to suggest that Reagan's conversion (from actor to politician) stems from a desire to make his image complete '*to see the lack of specular identity, and in the process to transform it into a peculiar kind of fullness*'.²¹¹ As Hansen observes from Massumi's analysis, Reagan thus seeks a form of vision in what mirror-vision lacks -a kind of vision that '*sees only the movement*', what Massumi calls '*movement-vision*'. He describes this as '*an included disjunction*', in that:

*'It is a continuous displacement of the subject, the object and their general relation: the empirical perspective uniting them in an act of recognition. It is an opening onto a space of transformation in which a de-objectified movement fuses with a de-subjectified observer.'*²¹²

In other words, it is a movement described from the perspective from which it is seen, from the perspective of the observer. However, this perspective is no longer an intersubjective one (that is no longer consisting of objective time and space), but that of a '*virtual observer*', in that it is one that is concerned with:

²⁰⁸ Massumi develops the term '*quasi-corporeality*' through his analysis as '*a vision that passes into the body and through it to another space*'. This is explained more specifically further on following Massumi's analysis, which it directly refers to.

²⁰⁹ Massumi, Brian "*The Bleed: Where Body Meets Image*" in 'Parables for the Virtual', Duke University Press, 2002, pp46-67 (the version Hansen is quoting from is in Welchman, John (ed.) *Rethinking Borders*, London: Macmillan, 1996)

²¹⁰ Ibid, p48. Massumi elaborates: '*If you keep your head motionless and your eyes level, you can see parts of yourself move, for example, your arms from one perspective. You can change perspective by immobilising your body and moving your head. But if you try to move your body and your head together in an attempt to catch yourself in motion, you only succeed in jumping from one frozen pose to another. The movement in between is a blur, barely glimpsed. You can never see yourself "moving normally" as another sees you. Either you see movement, but the movement is partial... or you make a live movement at the price of losing sight of yourself in the duration. Every time you see yourself, well, there you are.*'

²¹¹ Ibid p50.

²¹² Ibid, p51

'only with the movement (of the subject's self-departure)':

'Not : I see you standing then walking. But I (other than) sees me (now you) standing (from the side), standing (from behind), and so on.'²¹³

When Reagan takes on this position (of the virtual observer), he enters the space of movement-vision and '*leaves the intersubjective world of the other-in-the self, self and other identity-bound in mutual missed-recognition, for a space of dislocation, the space of movement-as-such, sheer transformation.*' That is to say, he enters

'into a space that opens an outside perspective on the self-other, subject-object axis. The tangent point at which movement-vision meets mirror-vision and diverges from it is the space between the subject-object poles, super-imposed, fractured, multiplied.'

It is for Massumi (and for Reagan) '*relationality in itself, freed from its terms.*'²¹⁴ In terming this 'overlays', the 'bleed', Massumi recognises it as a spatial consideration of vision that '*passes through into the body and through it into another space.*' It is for Reagan he concludes, a form of completeness, which he describes as an '*infolding*' -that is, a folding of '*all the relative perspectives on a single event.*'²¹⁵ It is this 'event' that 'bleeds' into his normal life that for Reagan provides the stimulus for his shift into politics. Politics as both Hansen

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid. Massumi relates this to what Raymond Ruyer terms '*survol absolu*' in a notion of what might be translated as 'absolute over-sight', but which also hints at something like an 'over-flight'. Massumi cites Ruyer's definition of this as '*existence-together as primary form,*' which he explains as '*consciousness at a lived point of indistinction with sensation and perception.*' In 'oversight' (or 'over-flight'), he cites (again from Ruyer), '*solid bodies are opened onto a fourth dimension*', which is characterised as an '*absolute surface* of relation, that constitutes a '*transpatial domain.*' (From Ruyer, Raymond, '*Néo-finalisme*', Paris: PUF, 1952, pp95-115; cited in Massumi's notes to the chapter, p264) My own interest in this is in how the notion of solid bodies opening onto a fourth dimension, might constitute a new notion of materiality for the contemporary video image.

²¹⁵ For Reagan that event occurs in his one and only successful accomplishment as an actor in which he is required to '*portray a scene of total shock*' in the film 'Kings Row' (dir. Sam Wood, 1942). The scene is of '*a handsome young 'blade'*', played by Reagan who has an accident and wakes up to find that the bottom of his body has been amputated. Reagan recalls how '*Coming from unconsciousness to full realisation of what had happened in a few seconds*', presented him with '*the most challenging acting problem in my career.*' He recounts how he '*had to find out how it really felt, short of actual amputation*' and how he '*rehearsed the scene before mirrors*' and in a myriad of different situations but found himself '*stumped*' (for want of a better word). In the upshot, he explains how, '*the prop men had arranged a neat deception*', by cutting a hole in a mattress he was to lie on, '*with a supporting rig underneath*'. He consequently climbs into the rig and spends a '*whole hour contemplating [his] torso and the smooth undisturbed flat of the covers where [his] legs should have been*' and gradually the event comes to terrify him in the sense that he feels '*something horrible had happened to [his] body*'. When the scene finally comes to be shot, he lies back ready for the call to 'action!' He describes his shock as he opens his eyes and lets his gaze travel downward: '*I can't describe even now my feeling as I tried to reach for where my legs should be... I asked the question- the words that had been haunting me for so many weeks- 'Where's the rest of me?' There was no retake. It was a good scene...The reason was that I had put myself, as best I could, in the body of another fellow...Seeing the rushes, I could barely believe the colored shadow on the screen was myself*' (cited in Massumi, B "The Bleed", in 'Parables of the Virtual', pp52-53). The line uttered ("Where's the rest of me?"), became the title of Reagan's 1965 autobiography.

and Massumi suggest, ‘will allow him to multiply incalculably the contexts through which he drags his founding event of reality-producing acted amputation, extending the trajectory of its trace, widening the space it colours.’²¹⁶

Hansen refers to this experience of Reagan’s as an overlapping or ‘bleeding’ of ‘primal phantasm and empirical life’, that produces an experience of affect: ‘a welling up of intensity that was prepared by the extensive overlaying of relative perspectives Regan performed in preparation for his great moment as an actor.’ Thus he enters the space of ‘movement-vision’ and in Massumi’s terms enters an

‘in-between space composed of accumulated movements bled into one another and folding in upon the body, an in-between time of after but before after, in a gap of suspended animation following the preparation of the event but preceding its culmination. He is in the space of the duration of an ungraspable event.’ As such, he is, as Hansen cites ‘only emotion.’²¹⁷

It seems to be particularly appropriate that Hansen should refer to Massumi’s concept in relation to Bruce Nauman’s corridor pieces concerned as they are with spatial and perceptual dislocation in relation to the viewer’s experience of the work through an encounter with his or her own image on screen, particularly since what Nauman is playing with is also the partiality of the viewer’s (mirror) image (or at least with disturbing what the viewer expects in relation to the view of his or her self). The viewer/participant in the work becomes ‘dislocated’ through the experience of seeing his or her image in a way that he or she does not expect, for example, from behind or growing smaller instead of bigger, or completely absent as he or she approaches the monitor. Hansen refers to art critic William Wilson’s description of the feeling provoked by the work, as ‘one of vague dread and invisibility:’

²¹⁶ Ibid, p55 (cited in Hansen, “Performing Affect”, as before, no pagination).

²¹⁷ Massumi continues: ‘The feeling of the event washes through him (or that in between of space and time), a wave of vibration that crests in the spoken lines. This time, the repetition of the lines produces the event. But the event as produced, is different. It has the reality of an acted event, a performance: short of actual. The “short of actual” is expressed as a prolonging of the intensive in-betweenness of the event in the empirical world. It is a subsidence of the emotion, a flattening of the wave as it spreads to fill a wider area. Reagan will now be extensively what he just was intensively. He will be an abundant blend of the ordinary everyday and the exemplary event’. (p57) And in the process, he will feel himself (and his self) to be complete.

*'At the end of the first passage the two TV are stacked, showing the passage itself. Enter and you see yourself on TV, from behind. The back of your neck prickles as if someone watched. The other screen shows the same scene but your image is absent. You feel vaguely that you have disappeared. Looking back at the image of the figure behind, you wonder if that is really you. The camera is located so that it is impossible to see one's face.'*²¹⁸

Thus the habitual view that one expects (the 'plain, everyday view' of Reagan), is disallowed, negated even, since on one monitor it is not even there. This further relates to Massumi's concept in his elaboration of '*movement-vision*' in the notion of '*the body without an image*' (and also connects in an intriguing way with Hansen's analysis of Paul Pfeiffer's work, '*The Long Count*' described earlier, in which the artist has digitally removed or '*decoupled*' the image of the boxers' bodies from the footage of a boxing match so that the movement alone remains). Massumi describes '*the body without an image*' as

*'an accumulation of relative perspectives and the passages between them, an additive space of utter receptivity retraining and combining past movements, in intensity, extracted from their actual terms. [Thus] it is less a space in the empirical sense that a gap in space that is also a suspension of the normal unfolding of time. [Nonetheless], it can be understood as having a spatiotemporal order of its own.'*²¹⁹

In its spatial aspect Massumi elaborates, '*the body without an image*', is '*the involution of subject-object relations to the body of the observer and of that body unto itself*', and can be thought of as the '*overlaid*', or '*superimposition*' of the accumulated total of '*all relative perspectives in which the body has been implicated, as object or subject, plus the passages between them: in other words, as an interlocking of overlaid perspectives that nevertheless remain distinct.*'²²⁰ This is what Massumi terms '*quasi-corporeality*' as '*an abstract map of transformation.*' : the '*involution*' of space makes these '*relative perspectives*' total, registering movement as '*included disjunction*'. As such,

²¹⁸ Wilson, William, L.A. Times, date not referenced; cited in Hansen, "*Performing Affect*", as before, (no pagination).

²¹⁹ Massumi, '*Parables of the Virtual*', as before, p57

²²⁰ Ibid

*'subject, object, and their successive emplacements in empirical space are subtracted, leaving the pure relationality of process. Simultaneously, he adds, its 'additive subtraction' [that] constitutes 'the body without an image', translates it into 'another kind of time'. This is explained by the idea that 'pure relationality, if extracted from its terms can be understood, at the extreme as a time out of space, a measureless gap in and between bodies and things, an incorporeal interval of change'*²²¹

According to Hansen, Massumi's notion of the '*body without an image*', can '*help us understand the affective dimension of video installation art... since it designates the position of the virtual observer of movement-vision.*' Accordingly, it can thus '*help us clarify what happens in the confrontation with a virtual image*' that he claims '*catalyses the shock operative in video installation art.*' Although this is expressed within the context and framework of particular aesthetic experience, he maintains that '*the body without an image*:

*'produced through the experience of video installation art possesses a spatiality proper to it [in that echoing Massumi] this 'quasicorporeality' consists of the infolding of the body of the observer of the relative perspectives in which a given installation implicates it, plus the passages between them. Since this process of infolding dissolves the privilege exercised by the body's habitual point of view, the resulting body as an image can register movement as 'included disjunction', a pure relationality of process.'*²²²

Whilst Hansen's argument is indeed convincing, I do not think he goes far enough to consider Massumi's concept for a broader understanding of video installation in all its manifestations and the implications concerning the body's movement in space (or indeed the spatiality of the body) in the reconfiguration of our relationship to viewing and to experience that it provokes. In his text Massumi further develops the notion of the '*body without an image*' to consider other forms of perception, suggesting that the spatiality of the body can be understood '*more immediately as an effect of 'proprioception.'*' He defines this as '*the sensibility proper to the muscles and ligaments as opposed to tactile sensibility... and visceral sensibility.*'²²³ Tactility, he explains, is '*the sensibility of the skin as surface of contact between the perceiving subject and the perceived object*', whereas proprioception

²²¹ Ibid, p58

²²² Hansen, Mark. B.N. "*Performing Affect*". as before, (no pagination).

²²³ Massumi, 'Parables of the Virtual', as before, p58 Massumi defines tactile sensibility as 'exteroceptive' -that is, on the surface or external point of contact of the skin or on the outside of the body, and visceral sensibility as 'interoceptive' -that is, on the inside of the body or internal. He relates the concept of 'quasi-corporeality' to José Gil's notion of the '*Infra-linguistic*', in his book '*Metamorphoses of the Body*', trans. Stephen Muecke. University of Minnesota Press, 1998. Gil's notion in anthropology and Massumi's concept of '*the body without a image*' in media theory are both appropriations and expansions of the idea of '*the body without organs*', developed by Gilles Deleuze

*'folds tactility into the body, enveloping the skin's contact with the external world in a dimension of medium depth; between epidermis and viscera. The muscles and ligaments register as conditions of movement what the skin internalises as qualities: the hardness of the floor underfoot as one looks into the mirror becomes a resistance for enabling station and movement; the softness of a cat's fur becomes a lubricant for the motion of the hand. Proprioception translates the exertions and ease of the body's encounters with objects into a muscular memory of relationality [as a] cumulative memory of skill, habit, posture. At the same time as proprioception folds tactility in, it draws out the subjects reactions to the qualities of the objects it perceives through all five senses, bringing them into the motor realm of externalizable response.'*²²⁴

I would like to conclude this chapter with this thought as a proposition for a material, embodied and spatial consideration of video, tying up with my original approach to this project in the proposition of the physicality of an image and the reconceptualization of the materiality of the body through its physical presence as an image. For what can be more physical than the notion of perception considered through the registering of muscles and ligaments '*as conditions of movement*' and in the translation of '*the exertions and ease of the body's encounters with object as muscular memory of relationality... of skill, habit, posture...*'²²⁵ and most of all of learning?

Massumi's articulation of 'proprioception' refers less to an optical effect of a subject's encounter with the image than to his or her reactions to '*the qualities of the objects it perceives through all five senses.*'²²⁶ I wish to draw out Massumi's notion a little more to consider how it could be relevant for a contemporary understanding of materiality and physicality in the video image, particularly with regard to its spatial, experiential and temporal considerations. As I briefly noted, Massumi's conception develops out of Raymond Ruyer's notion of '*survol absolu*', which he translates as '*absolute over-sight*' and also hints at an alternative translation in the term '*overflight*' (*vol*, being the French word for flight). What is of most interest to me here is the consideration in Ruyer's conception of '*solid bodies* [opening] *onto a fourth dimension,*'²²⁷ which immediately opens out his concept into the spatial domain and locates the (solid) body as physical. Furthermore, the consideration

and Félix Guattari in 'Anti Oedipus', trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane, University of Minnesota Press, (1983), and 'A Thousand Plateaus,' trans. Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, (1987).

²²⁴ Ibid, pp58-59

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ From Ruyer, Raymond, 'Néo-finalisme', Paris: PUF, 1952, pp95-115; cited in Massumi's notes to the chapter, p 264. See my footnote in the last chapter.

in translation of the term ‘flight’, hints both at movement and at the temporal in the sense that movement takes place over a period of time and thus has durational connotations. What is particular about Massumi’s development of Ruyer’s concept is his articulation of ‘*the body without an image*’, described as a notion of vision in movement (or movement–vision) and as a vision that ‘*passes through the body into another space*’. He refers to this space as an ‘*infra-empirical space*’ – that is, a space that suggests it is located in the experiential as an ‘*accumulation of relative perspectives and the passages between them*’ and ‘*an additive space of utter receptivity*²²⁸ but which within that is rather concerned with a ‘*gap in space*’ and considered as ‘*a suspension of the normal unfolding of time*.’ Moreover, ‘*the body without an image*’ in terms of ‘*infra-empirical space*’, is articulated as ‘*what the blind-sight of movement-vision sees.*’

Whilst on the surface this may indicate a contradiction in terms of a notion of vision, what interests me is its location in the body itself. It also suggests a possible correlation with Virilio’s call for a ‘*right to blindness*’ that I refer to at the start of this thesis in terms of the notion of blindness forming the basis of an ‘ethics of perception’ and being understood as the right to see ‘*in a fundamentally different way*,’ (through a re-investment into a bodily basis of perception). Thus ‘*what the blind-sight of movement-vision sees*’ might be considered less of a contradiction than a means of seeing and experiencing differently, ‘*through the body.*²²⁹

There is also an interesting link here with regard to Peggy Phelan’s concerns with understanding the nature of presence and visibility that I discuss in the second chapter in which the question of ethics in live performance is tied to ‘*a failure to see oneself fully*’, and where the ‘*failure to see*’ is used as a means of looking at the ways in which the dematerialization of vision might delineate a possible ‘*ethics of the invisible*’ that could open up certain possibilities. Perhaps Massumi’s own concern with one’s failure to see oneself fully and his consideration of the ‘*gap in space*’ as a ‘suspension’ of time might in this case be rethought in terms of Phelan’s claim that ‘*Performance art usually occurs in the suspension between the “real” physical matter of the “performing body” and the psychic*

²²⁸ Massumi, B ‘Parables for the Virtual’, as before, p57

²²⁹ Ibid. The reference relates back to Virilio’s proposition for a ‘*right to blindness*’ and to Hansen’s take on this in the ‘right to blindness’ being the trigger for the investment of ‘a bodily basis’ for perception. See my Introduction, with reference to Virilio, ‘Open Sky’, p90 and Hansen, Mark B.N, ‘New Philosophy for New Media’, MIT Press (2004), p104.

experience of what it is to be em-bodied", and through what I then propose in a rethinking of Phelan's assertions (following Marquard Smith's suggestions in a conversation with Phelan), in the emergence of an ethics of visibility through a similar convergence in the experience of performing and viewing video works as performance.²³⁰

This is considered more fully in the Conclusion through a consideration of the way in which the uses of digital technologies have impacted on the spatial dynamics and experience of viewing in the recent development of video practices.

²³⁰ See Chapter 2 with reference to Phelan, P "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction" in 'Unmarked: The Politics of Performance', Routledge (1993) and Smith, Marquard "Performance, live culture and things of the heart", Interview with Peggy Phelan, Journal of Visual Culture, SAGE Publications Vol2(3):291-302 (2003)

Conclusion

In the final chapter of her recent book 'Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art',¹ Kate Mondloch thoughtfully ponders the implications of the digital (screen) in relation to the spatial dynamics of viewing to consider the critical consequences brought about by recent changes in media technologies to our understanding of spatial relationships enabled by digital computer networks that function to further complicate and 'destabilise' the experience of viewing. Whilst these extend the already well-worn and 'indeterminate' territories of spectatorship in identifying relationships between viewer and the viewed and between real and 'virtual' spaces previously explored in '*environments employing film and video*', the multiplication of spaces enabled by these changes suggest fundamental and powerful 'uncertainties' for the contemporary viewing subject that are particularly noteworthy for a rethinking of notion of physicality through the use of video that I am proposing.

Mondloch follows an approach that (not unlike my own), examines a range of screen-based installations created over the last fifty years, tracing the construction of screen spectatorship in art from key film and video installations of the 1960s and 1970s to the 'new media' art works of today's digital culture. Mondloch concludes her investigation by focusing on installations '*conceived and executed with digital computer screens*', whereas my own concern is more on the implications for video reception and spectatorship that recent digital developments have necessarily imposed on the uses of video in art and that as a consequence suggest new ways of thinking and reading video practices. These are grounded less in the 'narrative' associations and understanding of video as (spectacularised) 'cinema' that seem to be prevalent in current viewing scenarios and readings of artworks using video and more in the social and cultural implications of viewing that recent technological developments in video have had on our understanding and engagement with images. Thus the body that I have referred to throughout this thesis is considered as much the body as the subject of engagement through relationships and interactions with images on screen as well as the body that is itself represented as a subject on screen (whether as an image or through other means).

¹ Mondloch, K 'Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art', University of Minnesota Press, (2010)

This thesis began with a concern surrounding contemporary notions of disappearance and disembodiment that seem to be related to representations of the body as technologically mediated as a consequence of developments in visual media technologies. Refuting such an understanding of the contemporary condition of the body my quest has been to reinstate a notion of the body that is grounded in the material and physical and which by implication in the proposition of ‘the physicality of an image’ is thus a provocation on the nature and status of image in the 21st Century. Pinning down the screen image through an engagement with video in particular allowed me to make specific historical associations that were important in determining an understanding of notions materiality and physicality that were themselves fraught with questions of representation, but that would in turn allow me in the reinvestigation of particular alliances with performance and film practices, to unpack approaches to physical presence and thus reach an understanding of the notion of presence through the experiential properties of viewing in engagements with media technologies that are markedly prescient of contemporary concerns.

Like Mondloch I drew attention to the uses of video in performative and experiential explorations and spatial environments that investigated the permeation between the space outside the screen, the space on screen, the space between the viewer and the screen, and the space of the screen itself, extending these considerations to the *‘real-time views of spaces geographically removed from the viewer’s own space’* in video works that existed ‘well before the introduction of networked computer technologies’², but that in emphasising destabilising and disorientating effects of spectatorship point to ways in which we might approach the notion of physicality and embodiment in our engagement with the contemporary video image.

Developments in electronic communications as Mondloch points out:

‘enable the instantaneous transmission of images, [which], when used in conjunction with screen reliant media technologies...also facilitate real-time control. These technological developments make it possible for computer-based art works to link not only the viewer’s physical space with representational environments conceptualized as “inside” or on the screen, but also more profoundly to engender (tele)presence and action between these two realms and actual remote locales.’³

² Ibid, p78

³ Ibid

In other words she claims that digital computer-based art works and environments enable the viewer to actively '*manipulate all kinds of resources from a distance and in real time.*'

Whilst my own concern is less focussed on computer based art works specifically, the uses and integration of the computer in the production and viewing of contemporary (digital) video works must include these considerations by implication. Thus the viewer is able to be both physically and psychologically involved in the 'narrative'⁴ or sequence of images on screen in a way that not only acknowledges the physical presence and role of its 'apparatus' but can do so using the 'real-time' space of a '*representational media environment*' and which '*constitutes a different place altogether.*'⁵ As Mondloch points out, the consequences for spectatorship are significant in that '*there are subjective effects to being in many places simultaneously.*' Whilst on the one hand this refers to and reinforces familiar critiques concerning the relationship of the subject with the digital 'screen' interface in the resulting loss of 'spatial locatedness'⁶, on the other hand it also foregrounds the connective possibilities provided by digital means in creating new dynamics of viewing through the paradoxical tensions created between

*"being both here and there"- psychologically and physically invested simultaneously in the gallery space and in screen spaces and being "neither here nor there"- being overcome by so many screen-reliant spaces as to be effectively prevented from being consciously present in any of them."*⁷

This has become particularly synonymous with computer gaming, which presents scenarios in which players become '*active participants in remote virtual screen-based realms*'⁸ and also in the physical space in which they are located. It is therefore not surprising that some artists

⁴ My use of the term 'narrative' is less in relation to its traditional meaning in terms of the telling of a story but relates more to an unfolding or developmental process involved in the viewing of images.

⁵ Ibid, p79

⁶ For example Baudrillard's assertion that '*Today it is the very space of habitation that is conceived as both receiver and distributor, as the space of reception and operations, the control screen and terminal, which as such may be endowed with telematics power- that is, with the capability of regulating everything from a distance, including work, consumption, play, social relations, and leisure.*' (in Baudrillard, Jean "*The Ecstasy of Communication*", in Foster, Hal, 'Postmodern Culture', Pluto Press (1995), p128. Paul Virilio similarly claims that '*the interval between the reality of distances (of time and space) and the distancing of diverse (video graphic or info graphic) representations is abolished*' and '*if space is that which keeps everything from occupying the same place, this abrupt confinement brings everything precisely to that 'place' that location that has no location. The exhaustion of physical or natural relief and of temporal distances telescopes all localisation and all position. As with live televised events, the places have become interchangeable at will... Speed, distance obliterates the notion of physical dimension.*' (from Virilio, P "*The Over-exposed City*" in Leach, Neil (ed.) *Rethinking Architecture*, London Routledge (1997), p385)

⁷ Mondloch, K 'Screens', as before, p79

⁸ Ibid.

have begun to use this platform and context (of gaming), as a means of exploring the impact of new technologies, using both real and ‘virtual’ spaces that exist both on and off the (computer) screen and both inside and outside the confines of the gallery space. Often presented live and in real time, viewers become ‘participants’ over a multitude of platforms, screens and locations simultaneously in ways that fundamentally change the role of the viewer/audience and how he or she experiences the work.⁹

My own concern is not within the realm of gaming or with the notion of ‘participation’ as such, but rather has to do with the implications and issues that such possibilities present for the future of video practices in not only the nature of the interaction between viewer and screen itself but also in the subjective effects of physical experience. As Mondloch observes,

‘Inasmuch as the real-time electronic transmission of signals and information enables telepresence and teleaction- the ability to be functionally present and/or to act at a location other than one’s physical location – it constitutes a crucial epistemological break in the arena of viewer-screen interactions. This momentous shift allows the viewing subject to have power over not just the simulation on screen but over material reality.’¹⁰

The very nature of the digital image transfer suggests, if not ‘embodies’ the notion of transformation and mutation through, at the most basic level, the technical possibilities of being able to transfer or convert an image (or a sequence of images) from one format to another. This process of direct digital data conversion known as ‘transcoding’ incurs a loss of information in the conversion process, often due to limitations in format support or storage capacities, resulting in technological breakdowns, if not disruptions and distortions in the transferal process of the original material. At the same time the possibilities of image transfer in the direct transmission and distribution of ‘data’ over (tele)communications networks known as ‘streaming’ whilst enabling the ‘realtime’ or live emergence and convergence of both real and ‘virtual’ spaces, also often produce loss of information and communication in unpredictable signal breakdowns and disruptions that corrupt, disrupt and destabilize the data being transmitted. Such ‘interruptions’ or ‘breaks’ are an inherent structure of the contemporary transmissible image and could be reconsidered as ‘gaps’ or ‘suspensions’, or even ‘physical shocks.’

⁹ One example is the artist group Blast Theory, previously mentioned in the Preface.

¹⁰ Mondloch, K ‘Screens’, as before, p80.

Contemporary video installations have in recent years been particularly characterised by large-scale projections that have allowed video to take up more space within the gallery and have enabled viewers to encounter, if not participate in all kinds of engagements with moving image works that are collectively referred to as 'video' or 'film' interchangeably and that 'immerse' viewers in room-sized audio-visual environments. As a consequence some curators and critics have sought to 're-position' video as a contemporary reinvestigation of earlier phenomenological concerns of artists such as Dan Graham, Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman and Peter Campus through an address to the phenomenological and inter-subjective engagement between the viewer and the image onscreen and the viewer's physical orientation in space. Indeed this was my own starting point for an engagement with and claim to the physicality of an image at the start of this thesis.

However, whilst many artists working with video installation do indeed engage with three-dimensional space and encourage active spectators as part of their installations their engagement with the image and its '*underlying structures*', appears to more recently derive from a more two-dimensional 'pictorial' engagement with the image that seems closer to the historical (narrative) concerns and (staged) structures of painting and photography in particular, rather than to the more procedural or durational structures that are characteristic of early spatial engagements with film and video. Indeed, in a recent essay on Video Projection, film and video historian Liz Kotz picks up on this and refers to artists such as Stan Douglas, Diana Thater, Doug Aitken and Douglas Gordon, whose '*pictorial and narrative orientations*' she claims, '*align them more with the monumentally-scaled colour photographs of Jeff Wall, Cindy Sherman [and] Andreas Gursky.*' She goes further to refer to

*'their carefully staged and mawkish 'cinematic' tableaux, both large-scale photography and video projection are strategically suspended between the high culture aspirations of painting and the pop-culture appeal of Hollywood; and both trajectories vector toward the large, flat-panelled monitor or plasma screen- technical means of presenting luminescent fields of colour that are ultimately high tech paintings.'*¹¹

This alignment to painting and cinema is what Kotz claims has made video projection so appealing to artists. I would be inclined to agree. This shift was as she suggests, enabled by

¹¹ Kotz, Liz "Video Projection: The Space Between Screens", in Leighton, T 'Art and the Moving Image', Tate Publishing, (2008), p375

the availability of smaller and cheaper data projectors, which ‘freed’ the video image from its ‘historical containers’ of the television monitor and cinema-like viewing rooms allowing video works to be *‘proliferated in all manner of new configurations.’* Whilst on the one hand this initially enabled the video image and the projected image in particular, to extend beyond conventional ‘theatrical’ and ‘cinematic’ settings, on the other hand as Kotz is keen to emphasise,

‘the shift to the wall as a pre-existing frame not only naturalizes the [pictorial] rectangle [of the image], via architecture, [it] also effaces the extent to which the structure of the tableau remains embedded in the very technology of video. Replacing a small box- the monitor- with a larger one-the room, hardly allows one to escape the logic of the [cinematic] apparatus.’¹²

Thus in the late 1990s we see much of the work using video projection moving ‘more emphatically toward cinema as content and form.’ Whilst the narrative works of some of these artists may have in their use of the projected image as Kotz claims, ‘harness[ed] video to generate new permeations of simultaneous, multi-screen cinema,’ the ‘black-box’ format in which many of these works were predominantly shown has drawn video, as Kotz suggests ‘back into older filmic conventions’¹³

I would not dispute a certain logic to the relationship between video and cinema that through the advent and availability of ‘home-cinema’ video viewing and recording has enabled artists, as Kotz acknowledges, to ‘reread’, ‘reconstruct’ and ‘recompose’ cinema into other forms, the availability of newer technologies making previously painstaking and laboured (and perhaps more considered) procedures easier and resulting in what she refers to as ‘banal academic exercises’ that [re-stage] *fetishized moments in classical cinema*’ or work that becomes formulaic its uses of arbitrary procedures that reference ‘already canonical films.’¹⁴

Despite work in the mid to late 1990’s that saw projected durational films and videos by artists such as Steve McQueen, whose work appeared to have closer links with earlier Minimalist and Conceptual concerns (despite its also clear references to cinema), it seems that many artists particularly known for their work using video, such as Doug Aitken, Matthew Barney, and Bill Viola, whose early work employing lower tech media initially seemed to embrace

¹² Ibid, p376

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, p377

more phenomenological and durational models of subjective experience, have now ‘cleaned-up’ their acts in preference for a more seductive, ‘cinematic’ engagement with the image, using high-end technology that appears to embrace today’s image culture of display and media-spectacle.

Viewers may well find themselves ‘immersed’ in such environments, which on the one hand can ‘provide genuine forms of desubliminatory, anti-disciplinary environments,’¹⁵ but which on the other hand also allows them to remain passively rooted to the spot in ‘thrall’ to the image on the wall before them.¹⁶ Rather than being actively encouraged to participate or to become a part of the work, visitors are often encouraged to take a seat that is already provided in the space to ‘watch’ the (often looped) ‘film’ from beginning to end without ‘interruption’ or ‘break’, where the high-end spectacular production ensures the technology ‘never fails or falters.’¹⁷

It is to this latter concern that I wish to address a future for the video-image in a more considered attention to the unforeseen in the fallibility of technology, in artwork that indicates and foregrounds ‘displacement, dislocation, transfer’ through a structure that is ‘no mere pictorial device’, but that acknowledges the physical and experiential in interruption and that can incorporate ‘accidents’, (signal) ‘breakdowns’ and ‘interference’ as part of its integral structure. Referring to the ‘structure of the transmissible image’ in digital video, Kotz refers to ‘the matrix through which images must pass before they can inhabit the surface as printed text’¹⁸, also pointing to the fact that in digital video the pixels make up the screen ‘through which the two dimensional image must pass before it can be transmitted electronically.’¹⁹ For me this has an interesting analogy with Massumi’s articulation of ‘movement vision’ as a vision that ‘passes through the body into another space’, and which he foregrounds as ‘the body without an image’. If we consider the language that he uses here, it is almost identical:

¹⁵ Ibid, p379

¹⁶ In a recent Round Table discussion on the Projected Image in Contemporary Art, artist Anthony McCall confirms this by saying that ‘I’m often struck by how in these installations with projected film and video the gallery visitors are motionless.’ (See “Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art,” in October 104, Spring 2003, p76)

¹⁷ Kotz,Liz “Video Projection: The Space Between Screens”, as before, p384

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid,

*'The body without an image is an accumulation of relative perspectives and the passages between them, an additive space of utter receptivity retaining and combining past movements, in intensity, extracted from their actual terms. It is less a space in the empirical sense, than a gap in space that is also a suspension of the normal unfolding of time. Still, it can be understood as having a spatiotemporal order of its own.'*²⁰

Kotz quotes from Richard Dienst's description of the '*transmission of a moving picture*', in the '*descreening and re-screening of light through a video signal*:

*'What is transmitted at the simplest level is simply a stream of pulses that scan a field at a certain speed: light entering the camera hits a plate where it can be registered line by line, translating a two dimensional spatial arrangement into a sequential signal. When this signal reaches the other end, it is translated back into a field by projecting the electrical intensities line by line onto another screen.'*²¹

In Massumi's terms, it '*passes through the body into another space*.' Thus as Kotz further clarifies,

*'in video, scanning and projection are a means of translating electronic signals into a two dimensional picture: what was previously inside the monitor... is now transferred to the large container of the room or screen.'*²²

As previously noted, the scanning process and mechanism of video ensures in its production a continual transformation of the image as a constant mediation and negotiation between 'visible' screens and 'invisible' electrical currents that translate and frame light as information. As such like Massumi's notion of 'the body without an image', it can be '*understood as having a spatio-temporal order of its own*' through which signal interference and disruptions are as Kotz suggests, '*integral to its workings*.' :

*'Video, as a temporally generated grid, produces a continual transformation of the image. It is in the interplay between this screen of scanning- that translates electronic signals into moving images- and the screen of projection- that transmits these optical images into architectural space', she claims, '*that video occurs*'.*²³

²⁰ Massumi, B 'Parables of the Virtual', as before, p57.

²¹ Dienst quoted by Kotz in "Video Projection: The Space Between Screens", op.cit, p384. Original Source: Dienst, R, 'Still Life in Real Time: Theory after Television', Duke University Press, (1994), pp4-5

²² Kotz, L "Video Projection: The Space Between Screens", op.cit, p384

²³ Ibid, p385

I am inclined to agree and would further propose that it is through such an understanding of 'the unpredictable' in video that it could be possible to conceive and to understand the video image as thoroughly physical.

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