Nostalgic Media: Histories and Memories of Domestic Technology in the Moving Image

Dissertation

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By

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Abstract

Nostalgic Media: Histories and Memories of Domestic Technology in the Moving Image investigates the history of four consumer technologies – slide projectors, Pixelvision toy cameras, home video, and video games – and their appropriation in experimental cinema and contemporary art. Considering the socio-cultural emergence of each technology alongside close analysis of films, videos, and gallery installations, I demonstrate how cinema artists harnessed these technologies' plural histories in their practice. Analyzing the work of numerous American experimental filmmakers and figures from the international art world, I argue that cinema artists have turned to ephemeral moving-image technologies as a part of what I call "nostalgic media." Through an interdisciplinary approach that draws upon histories and theories of cinema studies, art history, psychoanalysis, and media archaeology, I contend that the practice of nostalgic media interweaves personal and cultural memory with technological history, displaying a longing for the past not yet experienced.

In contrast to the postmodern condemnation of nostalgia as a sentimental and stereotypical return to the static, idyllic past, I illustrate how these artists use experimental cinematic forms to reveal nostalgia as a moving image, one that highlights how contingent memories of film and technology alter their form over the passage of time. Intervening in current debates concerning obsolescence and rapid technological

development, my project embraces nostalgia as a time-based process that resists the

determinism of technological progress and examines how artists intertwine the

disappearing past into the fabric of an ever-changing, globalized present.

for Norma and Charles Hansen, Paul and Evelyn Maple, Zelma and Barron White

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Fields of Study

Major Fields: History of Art

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Introduction

Nostalgia cannot orient to a world we can touch, but only to one that is out of reach, a world to which no further responsibility is necessary or even possible.
–Ian Bogost

Memory is the freedom from the past. But what is without a present does not accept the present of a memory either. Memory says of an event: that was, once, and now never again. The irremediable nature of what is without a present, of what is not even there as having been, says: that has never occurred, never even a single first time, and yet it is resuming, again, again, infinitely.
–Maurice Blanchot

What do you do when you come across some thing or someone who has been absent from your life for a long period of time? What occurs in the moment when the thing you presumed lost appears again? Does it look the same? Do you treat it the same? Does it fascinate you in new ways? What do you remember about it? Do you remember what it is, what it was, what it has been? Or do you remember its absence, the gap between the two of you? Why is it here? How do you deal with the time passed? What do you do when you are confronted by nostalgia in a physical, material form?

This dissertation confronts these questions through an exploration of what I call *nostalgic media*. Nostalgic media pose a problem to contemporary theories of nostalgia, which typically label nostalgia as a sentimental longing for "the good ole days," an ahistorical and uncritical bear hug of outmoded ideas and objects from the already misremembered and romanticized past. Further, in the early 21st century, nostalgia has

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become a prevailing market strategy of late capitalism, leading both to the "return" of

previously obsolescent media forms as well as the ongoing production of films, television

shows, technologies, and software that evoke aesthetic styles, affects, and clichés of past

eras.[1] Still indicative of the postmodern critique of nostalgia is Fredric Jameson's

canonical analysis in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. He

argues that nostalgic artists "approached the 'past' through stylistic connotation,

conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image."[2] For Jameson, this purely

aesthetic recovery ends up "evading the present altogether…by losing itself in

mesmerized fascination in lavish images of specific generational pasts."[3] While a number

of scholars have critically engaged Jameson's ideas, predominantly by emphasizing

nostalgia's critical potential for particular individuals and marginalized social groups, his

critique persists in laying out the stakes of nostalgic imagery. Per Jameson, nostalgia

turns the past into a glossy, static image disconnected from the material conditions of the

past and the present, and presents a still picture of a rosier world forever out of reach.[4]

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[1] Of course, this is not a new phenomenon. Frederic Jameson identified such aesthetic strategies in his classic analysis of the nostalgia film. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press), 280–296. For a consideration of nostalgia as a marketing strategy, see Steve Olenski, "What Was Old Is New Again – The Power of Nostalgia Marketing," *Forbes*, August 14, 2015 accessed March 1, 2017, https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveolenski/2015/08/14/what-was-old-is-new-again-the-power-of-nostalgia-marketing/#7147371f6881.

[2] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 18.

[3] Ibid., 295.

[4] For prominent critiques of Jameson, see, for example, Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Verso, 2001) and Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (London: Routledge, 2007), particularly 92–136. For a response to Jameson particularly in light of digital cinema, see Jason Sperb, *Flickers of Film: Nostalgia in the Time of Digital Cinema* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015). For an example indicative of Jameson's criticisms of nostalgia, see Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe props and Technicolor Aesthetics in Contemporary American Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).

This project challenges these ideas by posing a seemingly simple question: What kind of image is a nostalgic image? In contrast to those who condemn nostalgia as a sentimental return to the frozen, idyllic past, *Nostalgic Media* reveals nostalgia as a perpetually unfolding moving image. By looking to how nostalgia can uncover the contingency of memory as it alters its form over the passage of time, my dissertation reformulates nostalgia as a time-based process. Each chapter investigates the history of one domestic, consumer technology (slide projectors, Pixelvision toy cameras, home video, and console video games) alongside its contemporaneous appropriation by cinema artists. Utilizing media from the recent past, these artists offer an alternative view of nostalgia that relies not on the re-creation or citation of stereotypical aesthetic styles, but rather on particular material technologies that artists have lived alongside over varying periods of time. Conversant with the recent rise of media archaeology, these artists harness the cultural and artistic histories of each domestic technology. They also work in time-based registers that intertwine disappearing material pasts into the fabric of an ever-changing, globalized present.[5] Considering the socio-cultural emergence of each technology alongside close analysis of their appropriation in numerous films, videos, and gallery installations, I contend that the practice of nostalgic media interweaves personal

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[5] For an overview of media archaeology and its implications, see Jussi Parrika, *What Is Media Archaeology?* (London: Polity, 2012) and, *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications*, eds., Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parrika (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

and cultural memory with technological history, hovering between the cinematic and the domestic, displaying longing visions of the past not yet experienced.[6]

Chapter One examines the technological and market emergence of the slide projector and its later adoption in artistic practice. I focus on three artists who utilize the slide projector in strikingly different ways: James Coleman's projected image installations, Augusta Wood's multi-layered photographs, and Luther Price's hand-crafted 35mm slides. For many scholars, Coleman's work stands as representative of the slide projector's artistic adoption. Notably discussed in the context of what Rosalind Krauss calls "the post-medium condition," I analyze the role of the slide projector within the historiographic reception of Coleman's work, revealing the device's contextual slippage within a pluralizing artistic field. Then, I consider the distinctive work of Augusta Wood and Luther Price who highlight the ways in which the slide projector stages nostalgic experience as a spatio-temporal process of movement, transformation, distortion, and disillusion. The slide projector becomes invariably marked by shifting personal and cultural associations. The artists' return to the domestic technology of the slide projector establishes the foundation of nostalgic media practice in which nostalgia for the past faces the anxiety of disappearance.

Chapter Two turns to the Fisher Price Pixelvision toy camera, a device produced and marketed to children. Although never commercially successful, a number of artists, most notably Sadie Benning, embraced the amateur toy as a professional artistic tool. Moving beyond Benning' well-known work, I analyze three Pixelvision films – Joe

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[6] For a consideration of the cinematic and domestic as crucial *dispositifs* 20th and 21st century artistic practice, see Noam M. Elcott, "The Phantasmagoric *Dispositif*: An Assembly of Bodies and Images in Real Time and Space," *Grey Room* 62 (Winter 2016): 42–71.

Gibbons's *The Stepfather* (2002), Michael Almereyda's *The Rocking Horse Winner* (1997), and Peggy Ahwesh and Margie Strosser's *Strange Weather* (1993). These artists utilize the amateur camera to uncover the boundary between objective reality and perpetual experience, childhood and adulthood, amateurism and professionalism, individuals and their environment. I argue that their works showcase the intimate illusionism of Pixelvision, offering shimmering spaces irrevocably suspended in a divide between childhood and adulthood, fantasy and reality, truth and fiction. Caught in between worlds, the films reveal a voyage through division, drifting in the lingering, impossible time of nostalgic experience.

Chapter Three considers home video technology, such as the VCR, which allowed for the personal ownership of commercial films and enabled individuals to establish familial intimacy with objects and figures from mass media. Emphasizing the notion of "playback," I analyze four videos with distinctive methods of home video appropriation: Omer Fast's *T3−AEON* (2001) and *CNN Concantenated* (2002), Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010), and Michael Robinson's *Light Is Waiting* (2007). In each work, the viewer's past relationship to appropriated material becomes a central concern. Confronting the images, politics, and formal logic of home video, these videos use "playback" technologies that permit infinite replay of seemingly fixed material, all the while indicating the ways perpetual repetition inevitably alters memory and leads to visual and historical distortion. Their works embody the temporal warping of content and context in popular media forms.

Chapter Four analyzes the virtual spaces of video games. Played both individually and collectively, video games negotiate a collision between the limited, material world of the home and the limitless, immaterial world inside the game. Establishing close connection to fellow players who operate simultaneously in and out of the domestic environment, video games reveal nostalgic media as operating on the boundary between play and reality. I follow three artists (Harun Farocki, Cory Arcangel, and Phil Solomon) who challenge the boundless nature of game worlds. I show how, by using game avatars and numerous cheat codes, these artists ignore the games' pre-constructed narratives in order to inspect moments on the games' literal outer limits where its immaterial code attains abstract, aesthetic form. I argue these artists analogize video game space to the intimate, domestic sphere. Ultimately, they examine the precarious scope of memory and investigate the boundaries of nostalgia and mortality.

Chapter 1: The Slide Projector's Open Ending

> However skillful the photographer, however carefully he poses his model, the spectator feels an irresistible compulsion to look for the tiny spark of chance, of the here and now, with which reality has, as it were, seared the character into the picture; to find that imperceptible point at which, in the immediacy of that long-past moment, the future so persuasively inserts itself, that, looking back we may rediscover it.
>
> –Walter Benjamin

On October 22, 2004, the Eastman Kodak Company produced their final Carousel slide projector at a factory in Rochester, New York. Four months later, an exhibition entitled *SlideShow: Projected Images in Contemporary Art* opened at the Baltimore Museum of Art. Situating the device within its newly found condition of obsolescence, BMA director Doreen Bolger recalled the long history of the slide projector and its potentialities as an artistic medium.

> "SlideShow" records the history of this ephemeral medium and explores the reasons why artists pursued slide work as a creative outlet…Slides are still familiar to many of us, whether from home viewings of vacation snapshots and other family occasions, classroom experiences in art history, or research presentations at medical or scientific conferences. But slides are rapidly becoming less familiar: they have been preempted by the ease and accessibility of digital photography. By understanding the operative characteristics of slide projection, we may better be prepared to consider how differently we receive data in today's complex world of computer imaging. *Indeed, we are on the verge of thinking nostalgically about a once cutting-edge technology.*

Though slide projection will soon be lost from the realm of the everyday, the edgy artwork it inspired captures and conveys its essence.[1]

The question of familiarity underscores artistic and public interest in the slide projector. Marked by increasingly distant memories, the slide projector rotates through multiple contexts: home viewing, academic classrooms, and, now, edgy artwork. With their primary role overtaken by the "ease and accessibility" of digital technologies, slide projectors simultaneously become obsolescent technologies and objects of nostalgia. Seen in this way, obsolescence and nostalgia bind together in a memorial process that responds to present conditions by threatening to obfuscate the particular features of a formerly quotidian, decidedly ephemeral technology. Counteracting these supposed regressions, artists return to a decidedly modernist sense of innovation in their appropriation of the device, one that illustrates historical differences in digital and pre-digital image reception and highlights the device's "operative characteristics" in order to reveal the lost essence of an innovative technology.

But what of those rotating contexts? Does the slide projector belong to one place more than others? Does a familiarity with the slide projector in a non-artistic context alter its operations in another? Did the slide projector need to be an artistic device in order to reveal its essence? Is this a recognition of Hollis Frampton's suggestion that "no activity can become an art until its proper epoch has ended and it has dwindled, as an aid to gut survival, into *total* obsolescence"?[2] Is it total obsolescence that opens an audience onto

[1] Doreen Bolger, foreword to *SlideShow: Projected Images in Contemporary Art*, by Darsie Alexander (University Park: Penn State University Press and the Baltimore Museum of Art, 2005), ix. Emphasis added.
[2] Hollis Frampton, *Circles of Confusion: Film, Photography, Videos : Texts, 1968-1980* (New York: Visual Studies Workshop, 1983), 112.

their nostalgia? Could nostalgia act as a blended, memorial bridge between the plural contexts of the developing, mutating, and expanding technology? As an object of nostalgia, could the essence of the once-familiar technology be that it has no single essence? That the device must be familiar and unfamiliar, old and new, absent and present, amateur and professional, at the same time? That, like nostalgia, it is rooted in a material past and projects into an uncertain present and future?

A 1962 print advertisement for the Carousel slide projector recognizes these dilemmas (Fig. 1). In the ad, two convivial couples sit together in a living room. To the right, a woman holds a small saucer and raises a cup of coffee. Further to the left, a well-dressed man lifts a remote control. A long wire connects the remote to a new slide projector, set off from the living room itself so as to be prominently featured in the center of the ad. The couple blithely smiles and gazes toward the images projected beyond the frame. The central text reads, "Relax! The spill proof tray shows 80 slides … automatically!" Below, a smaller text reiterates the ease with which one operates the projector. "Here's the most carefree, automatic, and trouble-free way you've ever seen to show color slides." In both instances, the new technology is presented as non-invasive and non-threatening. The spill proof tray ensures a crisp, clean domestic environment, free from messes and clean up. Families can be assured that the "carefree, automatic, and trouble-free" device won't be a nuisance or a burden. Here, the slide projector will be easy to use and fit right into the home. In fact, the ad indicates it is already part of it. At the bottom of the ad, slides are compared to more familiar cultural objects: "Changes like a phonograph record!" "Trays store like books!" Similar to the way early televisions were presented as pieces of furniture, Kodak introduces the domestic slide projector as

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operationally and tangibly similar to other established quotidian consumer products. New technology isn't invading the home; it is already part of it.

Paradoxically, Kodak and *SlideShow* both presented slides as simultaneously familiar and new. However, one occurred in the moment of technological innovation while the other doubled over in the time of obsolescence. For Kodak, new slide technology eased into the home like familiar forms of media, promising not to interrupt the comforts of everyday domestic life. In *SlideShow*, Bolger identified the ease of digital imaging as supplanting the increasingly unfamiliar (yet still remembered) slide projector. These narratives create a divide between the material object of technology and its immaterial projected images. While the projector sits front and center for the viewer of the advertisement, the couples stare off into the distance, absorbed in the unseen slide image. Meanwhile, for Bolger, digital *photography* takes over the slide images, so artists turn to the operative characteristics of the physical technology. As both an innovative and obsolescent technology – amidst moments of transition – the slide projector offers something beyond itself, something unknown, unseen, and uncertain. It extends beyond the confines of the home, the classroom, or the art museum into a once familiar, increasingly distant past and onto an uncertain, immaterial future.

This chapter investigates three artists – James Coleman, Augusta Wood, and Luther Price – who embrace the paradoxical multiplicity of the slide projector as a form of nostalgic media. Adopting the slide projector during particular moments of cultural and contextual transition, I argue their work intimately reflects upon the device as an essentially plural technological support. The introduction of the Carousel revolutionized slides, particularly increasing their popularity as a tool for domestic, amateur

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photography. However, as I have noted, the projector had a long history in other contexts, most notably in our case as an academic tool in the art history classroom.

I consider the ways in which the artistic return to the slide projector highlights cultural and contextual changes that the device underwent over the course of time. Each artist approaches the projector from a different vantage point and utilizes various forms and combinations of artistic media, particularly theater, photography, and cinema. At the same time, their works point to several common conventions and paradoxes as they adopt the slide projector as an artistic device, including tensions between stasis and motion, spectral presence and material absence, lived memories and perceptual experiences. Rather than viewing the slide projector as a singular, timeless entity, their work illustrates the dynamic multiplicity of the technological support. They reconstruct contemporary possibilities for the device by looking back to their own histories and memories of the slide projector.

I argue these artists approach nostalgia as a spatio-temporal process. As such, nostalgia requires something to be outmoded or distant or defamiliarized *in individual memory* thanks to the passage of time and the transference of space. Understood in this way, obsolescence is not simply a fact of historical record. Instead, it is a question of interpersonal memory, of imagining a technology in a particular way and observing (and re-imagining) personal and cultural distance from specific memories.[3] Like nostalgia itself, the condition of obsolescence can be seen as dynamic, contextual, and subjective, while simultaneously being a matter of historical record. Nostalgic media thus combine

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[3] I want to thank Greg Niemeyer for comments on a draft of this chapter given as a conference presentation at the Berkeley Center for New Media in October 2015. I borrow this formulation from him.

the history and memory of a necessarily outmoded domestic technology in the present moment. Nostalgia is always updating, always being made anew. As I will show throughout this project, nostalgic media such as the slide projector reveal nostalgia as a moving image, an ongoing process of memory formation and interpretation accumulating over the course of time.

Nostalgia for the Medium: James Coleman and the Slide Projector

In a 1994 essay, art critic and philosopher Arthur Danto pondered the curious case of the slide projector as a tool for artistic production. He remarked, "It has often seemed rather odd that *the slide*, which after all mediates, for most of us, the greatest proportion of our experience with works of art, should have languished as an artistic medium in its own right."[4] For Danto, artist James Coleman stood as the singular representative of artistic appropriation of slides and the slide projector.[5] And Danto is not alone. A substantial amount of critical literature positioned Coleman as the sole figure whom elevated slides from a mere apparatus or technological support into an artistic medium.[6] However, these accounts reveal something slightly at odds with Danto's observation. As Rosalind Krauss famously argues, Coleman reinvented the notion of the medium through his use of *the slide projector*, which she claimed had "no aesthetic lineage and…is so singular as a support that to adopt it as a medium is immediately to put a kind of patent

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[4] Arthur Danto, *Madonna of the Future: Essays in a Pluralistic Art World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 79.
[5] Ibid.
[6] See George Baker, ed., *James Coleman* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

on it."[7] Within Coleman's work, Danto and Krauss indicate an unspoken set of tensions: between the slide as image and slide projector as an object of technology; between the slide's context as an art historical tool and the slide projector's lack of aesthetic lineage; between the singularity of the support and its adoption as an artistic medium; between the familiarity of the device and its contemporaneous, recalibrated patenting.

These conflicting assessments shed light on the series of multiple, contradictory roles that the slide projector simultaneously occupies not only in Coleman's artistic appropriation of the device but also in the broader socio-cultural sphere. Approaching the slide projector through these paradoxical positions, this section cycles through two parts: first, a historiographic consideration of Krauss's account of the artistic emergence of the slide projector in Coleman's practice, and, then, a brief reading of Coleman's work as emblematic of nostalgic media. Here, I will bracket out larger conversations concerning Coleman's practice and sidestep the substantial critical literature regarding his artistic innovations. Instead, I focus more precisely on Krauss's narrative to explore the potentialities of obsolescence and how the condition highlights what she calls the technological support's "genetic markers."[8] Importantly, I illustrate that Coleman's appropriation of the device occurred not in a moment of obsolescence, but rather at the moment of its mass popularization and domestication, that is, at a time of transition when the projector was rotating between the academic classroom and the living room. How and

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[7] Rosalind Krauss, "…And Then Turn Away?: An Essay on James Coleman," *October* 81 (Summer 1997): 8.   It is clear here that what is at stake for Krauss is the medium as a form of aesthetic production, not the slide projector as a particular technology. In other words, her claim should be taken literally. Her hope is to reinvent *the medium*, not elevate the slide projector. As I go on to show, however, a consideration of the slide projector's particular history opens up Krauss's writing in a number of ways.
[8] Ibid.

why does Krauss see the slide projector seen as obsolescent? What is left in the dark when the technology is seen in this way? What can this darkness bring into focus? I argue that Krauss's misplacement of the slide projector's obsolescence offers a means of rethinking obsolescence alongside cultural memory and personal history. I contend that her reinvention of the medium through the "obsolescent" slide projector indicates the processes of nostalgia: far from being a static, sentimental snapshot of a timeless, idealistic vision of the past, nostalgia operates as a constantly moving image that longs for the past not yet experienced.

In her writing on Coleman, Krauss finds an opportunity to redeem (rather than simply restore) the notion of an artistic medium through the condition of obsolescence. Drawing on essays by Walter Benjamin, she identifies three simultaneously outmoded forms that run through Coleman work: the notion of the modernist artistic medium, the specificity of photography, and the technological support of the slide projector.[9] I will cycle back to the first two in a few moments, but, for now, I want to focus on the slide projector. Although slides have a long history, the Kodak Carousel projector revolutionized their usage and popularity in the early 1960s. Introduced in 1961 – just over a decade before Coleman's initial appropriation of device in *Slide Piece* (1972) – the Carousel granted new possibilities for the academic, artistic, corporate, and domestic use of slides. Far from obsolescent, slide projectors expanded in popularity throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s, simultaneously reaching into the worlds of amateur photography, advertising, and academic presentations, including, very significantly, the art history classroom. According to Paige Sarlin, the Carousel became the most

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[9] Ibid.

successful piece of hardware ever released by Eastman Kodak. By 1979, the slide show had become "the most ubiquitous medium for corporate and educational communications…"[10] With steady sales throughout '70s and '80s, slide projectors were at the height of their popularity and expanding their discourse during the initial period of Coleman's artistic adoption of the support.

Krauss's account of the slide projector's obsolescence leaves this history out of view, and, in so doing, provocatively reverses the fortunes of so-called obsolescence, transforming it into a concept not dictated by the one-way street of technological and cultural progress. Instead, nostalgia reframes obsolescence as an impactful encounter with something once familiar that has lost a sense of currency. The presence of the slide projector signifies a sense of loss – thus made obsolescent – as it moves towards artistic production and becomes distant from the art history classroom. Strangely, whereas photography falls into obsolescence when it was replaced as a mass social practice, the slide projector fades into obsolescence at the moment it becomes a mass social practice. The device's commercialization, amateurization, and domestication shift it away from its professional use. Triggered by a *perceived* sense of loss, Krauss explains, the projector's "degraded" status allows Coleman to uncover "an imaginative capacity stored within this technological support" that connects the device's contemporary manifestation to its multiple "genetic markers," such as the magic lantern, cinema, theater, and the photo-novel.[11]

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[10] Paige Sarlin, "The Work of Ending: Eastman Kodak's Carousel Slide Projector," *PhotoResearcher* 24 (2015): 14.
[11] See Rosalind Krauss, "Reinventing the Medium," *Critical Inquiry* 25.2 (Winter 1999): 289–305.

What remains absent in this pluralized account is the slide projector as a particular device. The projector's "obsolescence" allows Krauss to cycle backward to the device's aesthetic precursors, reinventing modernist notions of medium specificity in a plural form and keeping its present technological conditions, à la its commercial popularity – hidden from view. In other words, it obscures the very condition to which it is most directly responding. I argue that the slide projector's non-obsolescent obsolescence opens the possibility for understanding obsolescence not as the loss of importance for a once privileged entity but rather a perceived loss triggered by the transformed presence of that entity in a differential form.

Understood in this way, nostalgia can no longer be taken as a romantic longing for an ideal past, but should be seen instead as a precarious recalibration of the remembered past within the conditions of the present. Krauss's nostalgia for the medium, for artistic modernism, attempts to reconcile the transformed presence of medium-specific principles in the slide projector's pluralized form within Coleman's practice. Nostalgia does not simply push backward towards an ideal or forward toward a dissembled future; instead, the nostalgic look is exotropic, necessarily leading in two directions, having two points of focus, at the same time. As in the Kodak advertisement, Krauss's double-look transforms the slide projector into a newly defined, plural artistic medium, yet overlooks what is sitting front and center: the slide projector as a piece of

technological equipment. However, just like equipment, her look also does exactly what the modern technological apparatus asks the viewer to do: not notice it.[12]

Turning our attention to the unseen projector, I argue there is a second, parallel narrative running underneath Krauss's account that remains unspoken. What has the projector lost? Where has it been lost? What allows Krauss to approach it as obsolescent? How does it become an object of nostalgia? Just as the slide projector's immediate context remains hidden from view as Krauss returns to recalibrated modernist principles, a crucial historical and contextual dynamic remains unspoken in her rewriting of the device's would-be obsolescence: the slide projector's transition from the art history classroom to the domestic living room, from professionalization to amateurization. This contextual shift not only underscores the three outmoded conditions Krauss identifies in Coleman's work, but also enhances the potentialities of his complex moving-image practice.

In order to better understand the importance of this unspoken change respectively within Krauss's account as well Coleman's practice, it is worth recounting the precise nature of the slide projector in the art history classroom prior to its domestication. In his essay "The Slide Lecture, or the Work of Art History," Robert Nelson traces the history of the slide lecture and identifies three characteristics representative of how the slide image, the slide projector, and the slide lecture function as a unified whole. First, the structure of the slide lecture creates "a performative triangle consisting of speaker,

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[12] This classic formulation of this observation can be found in Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper, 2013), 15–86.

audience, and image…"[13] Second, the speaker uses rhetoric that insists upon the physical,

material presence of the slide for the viewing audience.[14] And, finally, the slide itself

serves as a simulacrum of the art object in the mode of a movie rather than an indexical

photograph.[15]

Without relating these characteristics to the practice of the slide lecture,

Coleman's critics invariably note each of these features as a significant theme and major

innovation within his projected image installations. Thus, taking account of the slide

projector's particular history and context, I argue that Coleman's artistic appropriation of

the device needs to be understood as a nostalgic return to the projector, not a reinvention

of it. Coleman returns the slide projector to its art historical past as the device itself

moves into the home. His projected images push slide images to the expanded scale of

blockbuster filmmaking, providing sharp contrast with the intimate, amateurization of the

domestic slide projector.[16] At the same time, as in *Slide Piece*, Coleman embraces the

amateur, banal qualities of post-Conceptual photography while also heightening and

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[13] Robert Nelson, "The Slide Lecture, or the Work of Art History," *Critical Inquiry* 26.3 (Spring 2000): 415.

[14] Ibid., 420. He relates this idea to what Aristotle called the *tekmerion*, or a necessary sign, and suggests that slides must be necessarily accepted as paintings for arguments based on the slides to be persuasive.

[15] Ibid., 418. The slide "relates not the 'perception of having been there,' Roland Barthes's notion of the ontology of a photograph, but a reality that *is* there, Christian Metz's description of a movie. The projected image is thus less a sign and more a simulacrum of the art object, an entity that in some way is that object itself, or, rather, a thing in itself, a past made present, even as it is understood to be past…"[15]

[16] Chapter Three will discuss the transfer of cinema into the home via the technology of home video. I use the phrase blockbuster filmmaking to emphasize the size, scale, and spectacle of cinema as a reference point for Coleman. This underscores the "theatrical" mode, defined by Michael Fried, within which many art historians configure Coleman's projected image practice. See Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

expanding their theatrical affect.[17] Thus, the slide projector's popularization and domestication threatened the device's status within the art history classroom at the same time that, as Krauss illustrates, photography made obsolescent the very idea of the modern artistic medium.

Taken in isolation, these dueling narratives appear contradictory. However, as I have suggested, this double-sided condition is an essential feature of nostalgia and nostalgic media. If slides and the slide projector emerge from the history of photography, Coleman's appropriation points to their status as material objects at the same time that they function as the form (photography) that eliminated material specificity from the history of art. The slide projector simultaneously reinstates and eradicates material specificity, falls into obsolescence and gains new popularity, functions as a private and public device, operates as image and object. These unresolved tensions emerge from what goes unseen and unspoken in Krauss's account and Coleman's practice. They respectively present the challenge of nostalgia, asking how historians and artists approach the distant past as something material – something that tangibly was and is – while acknowledging temporal distance, the re-shaping of the past by memory, and the impossibility of perfect assimilation with the present. In this way, obsolescence serves as a function of open-ended, accumulating personal memory rather than something dictated by deterministic ideas of progress, innovation, or development.[18]

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[17] See Krauss "Reinventing the Medium."

[18] Without framing the ideas in terms of nostalgia and obsolescence, similar notions can be found in analysis of Coleman's practice. For instance, analyzing Coleman's *Slide Piece*, Anne Rorimer writes, "While concerning itself with a static image, *Slide Piece* takes place in time…The text brings the photograph to life, so to speak, and – functioning on the basis of accumulation– gives

The open-ended work shows the temporal process of nostalgia. Krauss and

Coleman look back to slides in a way that shows a transformative longing in which the

past accumulates in memory and transforms within the shifting, living conditions of the

present. In the remainder of this chapter, I explore the work of two artists who engage the

slide projector in radically different ways, yet both as a form of nostalgic media.

Particularly attuned to the projector's accumulation of disparate contexts – from the art

history classroom to the living room, from the home to the gallery to the cinema – these

artists encounter the projector as a device that makes the past present in modified forms,

allowing the audience to bear witness to a longing for the past not yet experienced.

Living Memories in Augusta Wood's Sliding Photographs

The title of the photograph is *Kitchen Birds (1989, 1998, 2003, 2008)* (2010) (Fig.

2). This is a curious title. The first set of dates spread chronologically over a period of

over twenty-one years, representing three different decades. Then, there is another date,

the final listed year, 2010, which is isolated from the rest. It sits alone in its parenthesis, a

singularity that puts an end to the string of numbers. This is the year of the photograph,

Kitchen Birds, which singularly encompasses the string of multiple years that form a unit

within a parenthesis yet divide individually thanks to a series of commas. *Kitchen Birds*

is thus singular and plural. It is not a photographic slide of an individual image, but rather

a sliding photograph of multiple images from multiple times. It showcases photography

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the work it open-ended quality." Anne Rorimer, "James Coleman 1970-1985," in *James Coleman*, ed. George Baker (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 4.

as a moving image, nostalgically searing long-past moments into the immediacy of a reconfigured, dissolving present.

Consider the image itself. While the title delineates several specific dates, *Kitchen Birds* refutes any sense of temporal clarity. The photograph asks the viewer to look for times in the image. Where do the times go? What emerges when you look back to this photograph? When you look at time? When you witness time's passage? When you experience the dissolution of time? What happens when passing times congeal into an instant? In this scene, times implant within a particular place, in this case, a bare kitchen. An old woman hovers in the scene. She looks out toward the viewer. What has happened to her? A set of slightly cracked window blinds split her face into a series of thin strips, fractured pieces of what was once a whole. A string plunges from the middle of her forehead down across her right eye. The rest of her body bleeds into the background, dissolving into immaterial light and shadow across the windows, counter, sink, and drawers below. Above her right shoulder, there is an outline of a yellow-green bird, but this, too, has no material weight. The bird is an immaterial shaft of light, spectrally floating on top of the divisive window blinds and extending onto the cupboard above.

Look closer. Look longer. Stranger details emerge: a caged bird appears within the shadow of the woman's body. The bird stands in a cage that has dissolved into a marble wall, behind the counter, just below a set of closed windows. The cracked window blinds reveal the grassy green exterior, beaming with light. The bare kitchen, on the other hand, is cast in darkness. A lone cup sits at the end of an L-shaped counter. An upturned pot rests precariously on the sink. A four-pronged fork appears wedged between the sink and the end of the counter. The kitchen looks onto the outside world, but is set

off from it. The caged birds await the chance to escape their cages, to leave the abandoned kitchen, to go outside. The old woman is already gone. Her portrait remains in an ethereal form, but her body, her material presence, has already vacated the home. Her absence from the empty kitchen is made clear by the evaporating form of her immaterial presence. She is a memory seared into this place, but the memory, like the birds, is on its way out.

Kitchen Birds is a *sliding photograph* taken by Augusta Wood, a part of her first solo exhibition *I have only what I remember*. The image is a photograph comprised of multiple photographs – photographic slides – from Woods's family slide collection. Inherited by Wood in 2008, the slides were arranged and projected in the home of Wood's grandparents in Binghamton, New York during her final stay after the death of her grandfather in 2005. She took photographs at various locations throughout the home, each comprised of two to five projected slides onto the vacant space. Her pictures never show the slide projector itself, but, like the old woman – Wood's grandmother – who appears and disappears in *Kitchen Birds*, the device nonetheless retains an ethereal presence in spite of its absence. It haunts the titles of each work. The multiple dates indicate the year from which the utilized slides originate. The plural years, united in a parenthesis, echo the ways in which disparate slides rotate together in a single slide tray, offering a sense of individuality yet overlapping temporal displacement. In Wood's photographs, time congeals and transforms into embodied, lived memories. Individual slides blur together, although the titles hint at the possibility of a multi-temporal investigation. The slides beam times together, marking the empty house with the experience of living in time, inhabiting a location, developing in a place, and, ultimately,

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losing potency and leaving something behind. Wood's experience of leaving the home runs parallel to the slide projector's own loss of status for individuals after the moment in which its production has ended. The slide projector and the home are now relics of a faintly remembered past.

Wood's sliding photographs thus unite subjective, lived experience with technological development. The slide projector's obsolescence – in particular its loss of relevance in the home – plays in tune with Wood's memories of space, place, and family. As I will show, the device's specificity becomes an integral part of her nostalgic memory. Her photographs use the absence of the slide projector as a means of reflecting upon its status as a domestic device that contains personal images and memories from the increasingly distant personal history. At the same time, her adoption of the slide projector as predominantly photographic extends onto the support's role in the art historical classroom. While less invested in the slide lecture than was Coleman, Wood nonetheless acknowledges this condition as well as the projection of art works via photographic slides. Indeed, she shows how the slide projector's presence in the home alters the reception of art works by bringing them into daily life. Her sliding photographs reflect a complex investigation of the ways in which slides and the slide projector absorb and accumulate memories and histories of space, place, and identity. She incorporates the slide projector to analyze still photography's durational capacity as a moving image, reflecting, in the words of Kaja Silverman, that "Photography develops, rather, with us, and in response to us."[19]

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[19] Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy: or The History of Photography, Part 1* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2014), 12.

As I have already made clear, Wood's photographs comprising *I have only what I remember* incorporate slide images as personal memories in a domestic context. The empty house is the primary backdrop in all the photographs. Like an ongoing slide show, the experience of the house accumulates as the viewer looks at more pictures. *Safari Room (1993, 2002, 2008)* (2009) (Fig. 3) is one of the simpler photographs, yet it clearly demonstrates Wood's overall approach to documenting the house with slide images. Using only three slides, *Safari Room* shows the corner of a room in which two model giraffes, perhaps souvenirs from travel, and the upback of a bergere chair flank a small rounded table overloaded with miniature family photographs.[20] The color pictures surround a lamp whose swirling golden base emanates from the table's center. The chair, the table, and the giraffes all hover in the air. Their legs do not touch the ground. The bottom edge of the slide projection cuts the image off. They are incompletely present. Below the projected images, you see the empty corner, the bare floor, and a lone electrical socket with nothing plugged in. Above the chair, a large window reveals a glowing blue exterior that shows the edge of the house next door and a set of tall trees. *Safari Room* recreates what once embodied this small corner room. The distinct variations in color refuse to assimilate this snapshot into an isolated moment. Instead, the particular objects retain their distinctiveness, even as they combine in one contemporaneous moment, a present moment of interpretation brimming with the lived experience and memory of the past.

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[20] For a consideration of nostalgia alongside questions of tourism, ethnography, and photography, see John Frow, "Tourism and the Semiotics of Nostalgia," *October* 57 (Summer 1991): 123–151. He suggests "It is tourism itself that destroys (in the very process by which it constructs) the authenticity of the tourist object…" In certain ways, this approach extends the consideration of object and image in Wood's nostalgic reconstruction of abandoned domestic space.

Wood locates similarly detailed, yet shifting spaces across the house. The multiplicity of space reflects upon the slide projector's clicking carousel, its ability to document various periods of time and store them all in its singular, circular tray. *To The River (2002, 2006, 2008)* (2009) (Fig. 4) recedes in space toward a deck full of chairs that opens onto a yard. In the foreground, a strange series of shadows appear. It is unclear what objects are casting these oblong shapes. A few scattered leaves spread across the floor and stick to the wall, clearly defining the space's background. However, to the right, a darker image reveals an exterior with more leaves that recede deeper into space. It becomes difficult to decipher the precise depth of the room, as it shape-shifts across the image.

Daybed (1980, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2008) (2010) (Fig. 5) presents a more complex picture with far fewer delineated lines and a multitude of overlapping elements. The photograph shows a creme-colored daybed set next to a rickety, multi-tiered shelf and a set of tall windows. It is unclear at first if the windows are present in the room or merely a part of the reconstructed image of the space. At the bottom of the bed, a man sits in an upright position and looks toward the camera. He is veiled by a series of strips of color – soft reds, oranges, and blues – that drop from the ceiling like immaterial curtains. On the left, the borders of each slide projection are more clearly identifiable, while, on the right, they blend together, making it difficult to tell where one projection ends and the next begins. Read left to right, there is a sense of discovery, as these slides, projected onto a back wall, evince the malleability of this open space through multiple time periods.

In this series, Wood's aim was not merely to document the abandoned home, but rather to observe, remember, and reconstruct the experience of living with the house. The

photographs work together as a rotating series that fills each room with living memories of one-time inhabitants. At the same time, as we have seen, the photographs appear on the verge of slipping away or falling apart. They capture an undeniable instability. Composed in a unified field of fleeting moments, Wood's sliding photographs record memories as they flash up and provocatively align, even if it is just for a single moment. However, they cannot completely fill the space. Wood recognizes that these figures have passed, that these composite images are exactly that. Still, the images show the slide projector's capacity as a memory machine that changes over the course of time. Slides offer a moving image of the house, an experience of the house living through time rather than frozen in a timeless past. This suggests not only changes in the arrangement of space, but also technological and photographic changes, indicating the slide projector's ability to maintain continuity while transforming into alternate forms. Providing an account of the house's distinct rooms and their multiple manifestations across media and time, indicated further by the dates in the titles, the photographs transform into spaces of deferred, living memory.

As I have demonstrated, Wood's nostalgia is not simply for the home, but is also closely tied to the fate of the slide projector. Her final visit to her grandparent's house parallels the device's exit from the mass market.[21] This moment signifies the precarious future of the domestic technology. If the Carousel projector transformed the relationship between individuals and slide technology, the end of production determines that the device will soon lose its material presence in the home, if it hasn't already. Like the

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[21] See Sarlin, "The Work of Ending," for a consideration of the relationship between obsolescence and the end of production.

images it contains, the slide projector will exist as a fading memory. As I have already shown, Wood's sliding photographs vividly and precariously reflect the consequences of this transformation in her return to the home. Just as Coleman returned to the slide lecture in a period when the device lost its privileged status in the academic sphere, Wood looks back to the slide projector's most immediate context as a domestic device in a moment when it is no longer considered relevant within that context.

Similarly, just as Coleman's nostalgia merged the slide projector's multiple pasts, Wood's return to the slide projector coalesces the domesticated device with its prior usage in the art history classroom. In Wood's case, the emphasis is not on the slide lecture, but on the display of photographic slides of canonical art works, particularly paintings. Separating the photographic slide from the slide lecture, Wood adopts slides as photographic objects and thus returns to the generalizing condition of photography. However, I contend that her sliding photographs highlight the heterogeneity of slides and the slide projector. In contrast to what Douglas Crimp calls the "hypostatizing" condition in which photography flattens specific objects into "a single perfect similitude," Wood's work reveals the overlapping, fading, yet still distinctive memories of the slide projector as domestic, private, and interpersonal as well as academic, public, and art historical.[22]

While a number of Wood's photographs feature prominent works of art, *Bacon (1985, 1992, 1992, 2008)* (2009) (Fig. 6) most fully shows the dialogue between the slide projector, art history, and personal history. In *Bacon*, a young girl sits at a piano directly below Francis Bacon's *Portrait of George Dyer Talking* (1966). The piano appears twice.

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[22] See Douglas Crimp, "On the Museum's Ruins," *October* 13 (Summer 1980): 41–57. Crimp declares the art historian's slide lecture and the art student's slide comparison as complicit in photography's flattening of specific objects into a homogenized notion of artistic style.

Strangely unfixed, it floats across the scene. The second piano, pushed back and above the first, takes the form of a mirage, decidedly less solid, barely visible amidst a ghostly white light. There is an uneasy sense of displacement. The girl appears only once. Her eyes focus on her hands, softly resting on the piano keys, as she plays the second piano, the spectral piano. She sits on a bench that lingers in the air, slightly above another bench set behind the first piano, empty, awaiting someone to take a seat.

The large Bacon painting looms over the girl. The distorted figure of George Dyer sits on a stool in a rounded room. His contorted body spins in place. His face faces both left and right, in and out. At the bottom of the painting, he drops a number of papers that extend beyond the edge of the canvas and spill out onto the girl. The white light of overlapping slide projections smooth this transition, softening the edges of the painting as it blurs into domestic space. The painting's frame is present, blocking it from the outside world, but its space is nonetheless invaded by another unidentified painting. Overlaid on top of the Bacon, it juts into Dyer's room and rests on the slanted ground next to the stool on which the isolated figure sits. Unlike the scattered papers that spill into the girl's space, the second painting flatly implants a violet Rorschach test onto the crimson floor of Dyer's room.

Bacon thus proposes two interconnected dialogues brought about by the photographic slide and the slide projector apparatus: the first, between the object and image, and, the second, between stasis and motion. For Gilles Deleuze, Bacon's *Portrait of George Dyer Talking* examines the arrangement of a Figure in a place. Utilizing what he calls an operative field, Deleuze argues that Bacon "does not consign the Figure to immobility but, on the contrary, render[s] sensible a kind of progression, an exploration

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of the Figure within the place, or upon itself...Thus isolated, the Figure becomes an Image, an Icon."[23] Wood extends Bacon's sense of progression from the place of the painting to the space of her photographs. She embraces the painting as an object that unfolds into and onto the outside world as an image. Slide photography does not delimit the status of the painting. Rather, it allows the painting to stand as object and image simultaneously, the same condition Nelson identified as crucial to the slide lecture. The slide, like the slide projector, is a unique object. Similarly, the painting retains a solidity and fixity that is not obscured but in fact is made more clear by multiple slide projections in Wood's sliding photograph. Returning to slide images of art works, then, Wood relays the dialectical status of painting within the slide lecture (as seen in Coleman's work) and its photographic mobility as a moving image, an ongoing memory.

Further, in *Bacon*, Wood doubles up on Bacon's investigation of figural mobility, extending the ideas not just to the space of the picture plane but the autobiographical place of her grandparent's home. She turns the immobile place into an embodied space of living memory, brimming with a plurality of experience, nostalgic experience, spilling out of multiple moments of time and into a singular place. Like George Dyer, the young girl is an isolated figure, sitting in one place that eerily reconfigures around her. Fading into an immaterial white light, she, too, becomes an object and an image, a material presence and a memory, transitioning from a solid figure anchored in place to a spectral image hovering in space. Referencing Bacon's *Portrait of George Dyer and Lucian Freud* (1967), Deleuze proposes Bacon's approach as "the motor hypothesis" in which

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[23] Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 2.

"The levels of sensation would be like arrests or snapshot of motion, which would recompose the movement synthetically in all its continuity, speed, and violence…"[24] Wood finds this sense of continuity across time and duration, the multiple slide projections bearing witness to the violent movement of time, the fading of memory in the face of death and obsolescence.

For Wood, the slide projector moves through the lives of its users and its past life in art history. Each element remains distinctive, evoked in different lights, but they nonetheless intimately imbricate in the experience of home. The academic spills into the domestic, as the domestic past aligns with its technologies. The domestic technology of the slide projector holds and withholds the memories of its user and contexts. In Wood's case, the device combines its academic, art historical past with lessons and living memories of the ever-changing present. The absent slide projector establishes a paradoxical sense of stability in a chaotic, ever transitioning spaces of lived experience. Quelling the need for artistic reinvention, Wood's use of the slide projector reveals its plurality and fundamental open-endedness as a personal, technological device.

Luther Price's Blurry Ghosts

A slide projector sits alone in the center of a room. It rests on an elevated stand, beaming a strange 35mm slide onto a white wall (Fig. 7). The image appears for only eight seconds, hardly enough time to observe each detail. Still, some impressions emerge: this must be a reconstructed family photograph. There is a woman on the left side of the

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[24] Ibid., 40.

frame. She glances toward the camera with a tender smile. Her eyes are hidden beneath a sunglasses – no, a smudge from a brown marker. A series of vertical scratches stretch upward from her waist. A series of sprocket holes cross horizontally along the top edge of the frame: three sprockets at the top left and another two at the top right. In the center, a strip rips vertically down the frame, violently separating the left and right sections. However, there are two more sprocket holes at the bottom center of the frame. The central portion has been cut from the unified picture frame, flipped upside down, and pasted back together. These material markings emphasize the physicality of both the slide and the slide projector. The projector's heft in the center of the room balances the slide's remarkable density. In tandem, the slide and slide projector resemble pieces of rubble, fragments from an uncertain time. With the mechanistic click of the slide projector's shuffling carousel and the soft whir of its rotating fan, the fractured image vanishes and another appears.

However, the disappearing slide is not gone forever. Some ten minutes later, the same slide beams from the projector once more. When the slide reappears, other elements stand out: the abstract, blinding white light filling the entire right side of the frame; the emanating light shining from the two top-right sprocket holes, bleeding into image below, and resembling the shape of an upturned figure; slight slivers of light bridging the slide's three sections; the deep blue and fading turquoise of the woman's clothes are so similar to her surrounding environment. If the marks and scratches emphasize the slide's materiality, they do so by showing the physical destruction of the slide itself. The nostalgic return to the familiar family photograph takes on a haunted quality. This surely cannot be the past as it was. The figure within the image, the physical slide, and the slide

projector apparatus each confront their precarious condition. The histories, memories, and figures begin to fade away through infinite reappearance.

This image is just one of Luther Price's 35mm slides. Trained in sculpture, active in performance, and known primarily for his remarkable work as an experimental filmmaker working in 8mm and 16mm film, Price has turned his focus to the slide photographs over the last several years, crafting a prolific body of work that refines and extends his filmmaking concerns into the realm of moving image photography.[25] In the isolated instance above, Price's complex interplay between the still image and the moving projector, the image taken and the image remembered, is already apparent. Explaining his work's relationship to his personal history, Price explains:

> film has always been about stepping three steps back ,…and revisiting my past ………….pealing back the layers and face it all ,like a fly on the wall………only……i'm the fly …….i guess , then my work is the maggot……….through this process ………, i can take five steps forward…………."
> if you never even try to resolve your own past …………it just lingers and festers ……….. like some thing left dead to rot in a closet …………….if anything else ,……i'd like to move on …………..a clean………..slate…………a fresh start…………i say , get rid of the mold…………those spores will kill you……….[26]

In this section, I illustrate the ways Price's contemporaneous return to the outmoded slide projector refocuses our attention on the device as domestic tool for displaying family photographs. Unlike Wood's sliding photographs, however, Price

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[25] For more on Price's career as a filmmaker, see Lia Gangitano, *Luther Price: Imitation of Life* (New York: Thread Waxing Space, 1999); Gary Morris, "Home Movies from Hell: The Films of Luther Price," *Bright Lights Film Journal*, July 1, 2000, accessed March 16, 2017, http://brightlightsfilm.com/home-movies-hell-films-luther-price/#.WMs1lxIrKRs.; Ed Halter, "Body of Work," *Mousse* 36 (December 2012): 130–137; Bradford Nordeen, ed., *Tom Rhoads: Three Films* (New York: Dirty Looks NYC, 2013); Bradford Nordeen et al., *Dirty Looks at MoMA: Mining the Collection* (New York: Dirty Looks NYC and MoMA, 2013); James Hansen, "The Fall of Days: Luther Price's Nine Biscuits," *Millennium Film Journal* 58 (Fall 2013): 124–129.
[26] Luther Price, "I'd Like To Say That Things Are Good: Selected Emails to Ed Halter," in *Future Perfect*, ed. Andrew Durbin (New York: Bureau of General Services – Queer Division, 2014): 140.

makes the physical presence of the slide projector a critical part of the nostalgic experience. The projector's material presence as a projection apparatus highlights its mechanical automation, calling further attention to the circular slide tray, the slides status as an object, the cyclical temporality of slide projection, and the small-scale display. Thus, as in Coleman and Wood, Price's return to slide projector apparatus recognizes its fundamental plurality and its important negotiation of object and image, stasis and motion, old and new.

Since Price is primarily known as an experimental filmmaker whose sometimes frightening films often take place in a domestic context, Price's turn to the domestic nature of slides corresponds with his artistic engagement with cinema and the moving image. At the same time, however, they represent Price's celebrated move into art gallery's white cube.[27] As such, Price explicitly triangulates the slide projector as a domestic, cinematic, and artistic tool that simultaneously reaches across the black box, the white cube, and the living room. His embrace of slides provides an intimate consideration of the nostalgic process within which the histories and memories of the interpersonal and technological congeal over the course of time.

The passage of time plays a crucial factor in Price's slides, both in terms of the slide images and the durational experience of the viewer. As already mentioned, each

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[27] See Roberta Smith, "A Survey of a Different Color: The 2012 Whitney Biennial," *The New York Times*, March 1, 2012, accessed March 16, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/02/arts/design/2012-whitney-biennial.html.; David Duncan, "Luther Price, Callicoon," *Art in America*, Nov. 23, 2012, accessed March 16, 2017, http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/luther-price/.; Genevieve Yue, "Slide Slide Slide," *Art Agenda*, Sep. 29, 2014, accessed March 16, 2017, http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/%E2%80%9Cslide-slide-slide%E2%80%9D/.; "Goings on About Town: Luther Price," *The New Yorker*, Oct. 27, 2015, accessed March 16, 2017, http://www.newyorker.com/goings-on-about-town/art/luther-price-3.

slide appears for only eight seconds before the projector clicks and clacks its way to the next image (Fig. 8). There is a dark shadowy house in the distance, covered by a dark purple filter in the foreground and a burnt orange-brown filter blazing across the horizon line. Film sprocket holes rip down the center of the image. Next to the sprocket holes, the edges of the purple and orange markers split in a slight left-to-right diagonal down the entire image. A muddied white with specks of turquoise and mauve bends into strange shapes further to the left. Suddenly the slide switches (Fig. 9). Five film strips are arranged side-by-side. Figures appear in each. A man turns his head back to look at the camera as he splays his hands left-to-right against the wall. Another figure wears a large, poofy black wig. They flash an arresting smile. Then another slide.

This can lead to a rather frustrating experience for viewers if they wish to carefully observe the meticulous details within each image. Many of his earliest slides emphasize displaced figures – often from family photographs or frames from his 8mm and 16mm film work – who appear trapped underneath layers of physical debris, marks, and scratches. Given the overall density of the pictures, it becomes near impossible to grasp them completely before they slide away. For this reason I resist the urge here to give closer readings of individual slides. As Genevieve Yue writes, "Like the saturated hues of nostalgia, the effect is one of *impression*. Price's images, seemingly ravaged by time, momentarily appear as though culled from a dusty vault. Yet unlike memory, we're not given time to linger."[28] Although, of course, we can wait for their return. (I have included numerous slide images in Appendix A. See Fig. 10 – 17).

The slides flash onto the wall and quickly vanish. Individual slides are not given

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[28] Yue, "Slide Slide Slide."

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titles. No one slide should be privileged above the others. Unlike Coleman's *Slide Piece*, there is no audio-track to offer specific context. Absent narration – that essential quality of the slide lecture and the amateur domestic slide show – the only sounds that accompany the images are the click-clack-whirr of the slide projector, its perpetually rotating slide tray, and, perhaps, the murmur of people in the gallery. Sitting in the center of the room, the domestic support gives the images a material context, balancing them with a certain heft and weight, an almost sculptural quality. However, the content of the slides themselves achieve potency by temporal accumulation in the minds and memories of each individual viewer. Their content is not insignificant. However, the accumulation of memory of the images over time, the experience of looking and remembering (or not remembering), the desire to look more and look longer and being refused the time one wants are all essential features of Price's slide shows.

Through Price's accumulating temporality and materialisms, not to mention his background as a cinema artist, I argue Price's slide shows should be approached as durational experiences, offering a temporal unfolding of nostalgic memory.[29] Price's slides initiate an active sense of endless repetition, of eternal return, of perpetual appearance and disappearance, of life and death mechanically clicking by, one slide at a time. The appearance of each slide is already a looking back, triggering a sense of longing in the image even when experienced by the viewer for the first time. Even if the slides are static and unchanging, they nonetheless appear differently each time they gain presence. However, viewers have likely not stuck around for a second appearance. A full

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[29] From my own time spent with the slides, I can safely say that the large majority of viewers have not approached the work in this manner.

rotation of the slide tray's 80 images takes nearly 10 minutes. By the time an image

repeats, it has been long forgotten, lost in the shuffle. The slide projector's insistent

circular motion refuses to privilege any one image, any singular flash of memory.

However, I would suggest that they do extend, one to the next, accumulating over the

course of time until their undeniable, albeit delayed return. The projector's circular,

rotating presence in the room makes clear that each appearance is re-appearance, that

each presence has a past, that what is new is indelibly marked by the passage of time.

As one views Price's slides, their precarious materiality becomes just as critical as

the content of the images themselves.[30] As in Coleman and Wood, Price underlines a

divide between the slides-as-objects and the projected image. The technological support

and the slides themselves are undeniably material objects; however, arranged in a room,

the images are still projections, represented by immaterial shafts of light that beam from

the device. In most installations, the slide projectors are set in the middle of the room,

leaving plenty of the space for spectators to wander in front of the image, for the slides to

project onto the bodies of the viewer and thus temporarily interrupt the close viewing of a

particular art object (Fig. 18). The first solo exhibition of Price's slides was in a small

gallery with glass windows, and, in others, they are displayed in well-lit gallery space

rather than in darkened rooms (Fig. 19). Both cases made it quite difficult to observe the

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[30] Price's film work similarly revolves around questions of materiality, memory, and the body. Price's autobiography and informs the films to a significant degree. In 1985, Price was accidentally shot while in Nicaragua. He lingered in between life and death for several days, floating in and out of consciousness during various surgeries. The material nature of the body and the loss of the body became important features of Price's work. Notably, his early work also arises during the AIDS crisis in which issues concerning the body, particularly the queer body, were of the utmost importance. While critics have suggested Price's more recent films and his slides have moved away from the autobiographical impulse, I contend questions of autobiography remains very much of a part of his work.

slides' rich details and textures. But again, rather than see these elements as an inconvenience of the projection format, I contend this set up enhances the importance of time, memory, and precarious materialism in Price's work, and further addresses the fundamental plurality of the slide projector as a triangulation between the white cube, the black box, and the living room.

As should be clear, Price's work does not isolate these contexts from one another. Rather, he utilizes each context to inform the other, bringing out differentiating features of slide projection that can only be observed in alternative contexts. In this way, Price's nostalgia for the slide projector reveals its ongoing reconfiguration of the disappearing past in the present. While he began his slide work with old family photographs and leftover fragments from his filmmaking, more recently, Price has transitioned from representational slides into more abstract images with his Light Fracture series.[31] In these slides, Price's uses a reductive process, uncovering colors and textures that lie dormant in the image itself. Unlike in his re-photographed films, in which photographs are seen under water, or his 16mm Inkblot series, in which he paints directly onto found footage, his "additions" to the slides do not cover up what is there, but reduce the slides to their barest elements. Using a combination of Pho with bleach, salt, lime and lemon juice, he reconstructs the slides into an array of abstract patterns. The bodies and figures seen in his earlier slides are reconfigured as swirls of nearly blinding color. The fixed moment in

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[31] In certain ways, this follows the path of Price's filmmaking career. While his early 8mm films focused on domestic life, much of his more recent 16mm work utilizes found footage in abstract forms. Further, he has begun working in various series rather than creating isolated, individual works. Perhaps most reminiscent of his abstract slides is his Inkblot series in which he paints over 16mm found footage, smothering the past image and extraordinary swirls of light and color. When projected, the films produce a battle between the painted surface and the smothered film footage below. However, Price continues to work with representational found footage at the same time. Suggesting a complete turn to abstraction in his body of work would be an overstatement.

time captured by the photographic slide transforms into a series of indecipherable movements, as if the photographic shutter had never closed, recording instead the perpetual motion of bodies and spaces inhabiting time.

At the 2013 New York Film Festival, Price premiered a double-projection of Light Fractures. The slides were projected in a darkened theater onto a cinema screen as part of a retrospective program of his early filmmaking career. Here, the slide projector took over the traditional role of the 16mm film projector. Projected on a massive scale, the slide projections took their place as properties of the cinematic experience, overtaking the domestic intimacy so apparent in their small-scale gallery installations. At the same time, the side-by-side slide comparison recreated an art historian's slide show gone wrong.[32] The abstract slides cycled through each projector at a different rate of speed. What began as slide comparison turned into a rapid transformation of moving images. Whereas lighting and the presence of viewers potentially obscured image details in a white cube context, here, as something cinematic, the slides were nearly impossible to grasp for different reasons. The projector rapidly beamed images one after another, on the left and the right, out of synch, sling-shotting the viewer's gaze chaotically across the cinema screen. Just as Price's filmmaking has become somewhat notorious for transforming domestic found footage into something aggressive and nightmarish, his slides upend the comfort and ease of the domestic slide show into something spectral, otherworldly, and constantly spinning out-of-control. Conflating the domestic setting

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[32] While the side-by-side projection in a cinema also recalls two-channel videos and double-projection films in experimental cinema, I suggest the use of the slide projector ties this experience back into art historical experience, as indicated in earlier discussions of Coleman and Wood.

with the cinema and positioning the slides within the framework of an art historian's slide

exam, Price's Light Fractures double-projection left a sense of temporal, spatial, and

contextual chaos made manifest and stabilized by the quaint, familiar, outmoded slide

projector.

Georges Didi-Huberman writes:

> If you want to photograph a moving object…you can and even must make a choice:
> you can shoot a single moment, even a series of moments, or you can leave the
> shutter open through the whole movement. In once case you will obtain crisply
> defined images of the object and a skeleton of the movement (a form absolutely
> empty and disembodied, an abstraction); in the other you will obtain a tangible curve
> of the movement but a blurry ghost of the object (in its turn "abstract").[33]

In this chapter, Coleman, Wood, and Price have instigated this durational motion

through accumulating histories and memories of the slide projector. Their works afford

the viewer a past not yet experienced by offering visions of what it means to live with the

shutter open. Rather than reinvent technologies or approach their past as static, timeless

entities, they reveal nostalgia as a process, a moving image, within which artists and

mediums, individuals and technologies, develop in time alongside one another. The

clicking carousel of the slide projector enables not only moving images, but a moving

technology – sliding across time, gathering dust, slowly falling apart, all the while

uncovering the distorted traces of its various formulations and opening onto a continually

deferred outside alongside its multiple selves. Witnessing the negotiation of the domestic

slide projector between the cinema, the gallery, the classroom, and the home, their work

shows that Didi-Huberman's "blurry ghost of the object" is the moving object of

technology merging with the moving image of lived experience, the nostalgic experience

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[33] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning The Ends of a Certain History of Art* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2005), 32.

of memory made anew, for the first time, again, and again.

Chapter 2: The Intimate Illusions of Pixelvision

> Can't you see, the two separate worlds – one always includes a camera
> somewhere, the other always includes a gun, one is make-believe, one is real?
> What if this is some branch point in your life, where you'll have to choose
> between worlds?
>
> –Thomas Pynchon, *Vineland*

Introduced by Fisher Price at the 1987 American International Toy Fair, the

PXL2000, better known as Pixelvision, was a black-and-white toy camcorder conceived

as an amateur camera for children. The plastic cameras recorded low-resolution images

onto an audiocassette, which could then be played back through the camera or on a

monitor that came with the purchase. Their extraordinarily light weight, small size,

infinity-focus lens, and rapid zoom created a limited depth of field and offered a sense of

closeness and intimacy not found in professional video cameras. While engineers

questioned the market for a grainy, cheap, black-and-white camera, inventor James

Wickstead loved the camera's aesthetic, going so far as to stop Sanyo, the Japanese

manufacturing company, from correcting a flaw in prototypes that caused light sensors to

intermittently flicker between various shades of gray. Despite his stated desire for the

technology to remain a child's toy, he positively compared the effect to the stark quality

of Ingmar Bergman films.[1] Ultimately, though, Pixelvision failed. It lasted only a year on the market before being unceremoniously discontinued.

Although Pixelvision was short-lived as a commercial product, it gained significant attention in the late 1980s and early 1990s as an alternative medium within the art world, particularly via the videos of Sadie Benning. Benning received the Pixelvision camera as a Christmas present from her father at the age of fifteen. She recalls her frustration upon receiving a kid's toy rather than a professional camcorder.[2] Soon, though, she began using the camera in an autobiographical, diaristic mode. Shooting mostly from within the confines of her bedroom, her early videos show her as an isolated teenager, contending with pressures from the outside world as well as her coming out as a lesbian. The tiny camera stood in as an almost therapeutic device to which she confessed her feelings, frustrations, and desires. She quickly became something of a sensation within and beyond the art world, receiving a profile in the "Style" section of the *Washington Post* as a nineteen-year-old in 1992.[3]

In a profile of her early work, Bill Horrigan identifies a dialectic between the privacy of domestic space and the outside world of popular culture. These features would go on to define the artistic appropriation of Pixelvision. He explains:

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[1] For a brief history of the PXL-2000, see Andrew C. Revkin, "As Simple as Black and White; Children's Toy Is Reborn as an Avant-Garde Filmmaking Tool," *New York Times*, Jan. 22, 2000, accessed February 3, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/2000/01/22/nyregion/simple-black-white-children-s-toy-reborn-avant-garde-filmmaking-tool.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm.

[2] Megan Heuer, "A Shimmering Analog Memory: Artists' films in Pixelvision," *Rhizome*, April, 23, 2013, accessed January 22, 2017, http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/apr/23/shimmering-analog-memory-artists-films-pixelvision/.

[3] Kim Masters, "Auteur of Adolescence," *Washington Post*, October 17, 1992, accessed February 3, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1992/10/17/auteur-of-adolescence/bad908d9-02b0-4a56-a336-8d0cd1b78b31/?utm_term=.b8ff053f2632.

As Benning would go on to produce more and more ambitious Pixelvision works, the sensation of the bedroom as the only haven from a malevolent social-sector world never quite recedes, an effect enforced in part by the extraordinary intimacy of the camera's technological limitations…the bedroom becomes designated the privileged site, cast not as a romantic chamber but as the teenage girl's unbreachable safe zone, with the real admitted only as it takes the form of television images and written texts.[4]

Utilizing the camera shortly after its release and continuing after its expiration from the market, Benning uses Pixelvision to link autobiography and the domestic environment. For Benning, Pixelvision offers an intimate refuge from exterior threats that gradually encroached upon the innocence of adolescence and the safe space of the home.[5]

Expanding upon these lessons and implications of Benning's well-known work, in this chapter, I show how a number of video artists extend the world of Pixelvision by adapting its particular aesthetic and technological amateurism into considerations of personal identity, worldly confinement, and political engagement. First, I assess Joe Gibbons's *The Stepfather* (2002) and Michael Almereyda's *The Rocking Horse Winner* (1997). These works utilize Pixelvision in order to dramatize a negotiation between the experiences of children and adults, a world of make believe and a world of reality. Then, I analyze Peggy Ahwesh and Margie Strosser's *Strange Weather* (1993), which extends the dynamics of Gibbons and Almereyda into a portrayal of a suspended, transitional time on the brink of immense change. Hovering between fantasy and reality, adolescence and adulthood, the inside and outside world, these Pixelvision works reflect the uncertainty and impossibility of assimilating multiple worlds into a singular experience. In so doing,

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[4] Bill Horrigan, "Sadie Benning or the Secret Annex," *Art Journal* (Winter 1995): 25–26.
[5] Emphasizing the artist's body and her intimate relationship with the camera, Benning's early videos continue many traditions of 1970s video art. See Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism," *October* 1 (Spring 1976): 50–64

they point toward the moral and ethical quandaries facing Pixelvision (and amateur image-making more broadly) as a transitional object of nostalgic media.

Arrested Development: Joe Gibbons's The Stepfather (2002) and Michael Almereyda's The Rocking Horse Winner (1997)

Beginning in the early 1990s, Joe Gibbons created a series of Pixelvision videos centered on the artist playing different characters who, for one reason or another, interrogate Barbie dolls. As the handsome rival of Ken in *Pretty Boy* (1994), a sleazy, exploitative film director in *Barbie's Audition* (1995), a psychoanalyst confronting Barbie's multiple personalities in *Multiple Barbie* (1998), and as Barbie's skeptical stepfather questioning her prospective suitor in *The Stepfather* (2002), Gibbons's face fills the right half of the frame as he spews assaultive monologues toward the dolls held in front of him. The one-sided verbal confrontations typically climax with a physical altercation, such as Gibbons spanking Ken with a mini-brush or the dolls teaming up to attack the artist.

Gibbons' aggressive performances in the lo-fi, black-and-white medium echo prominent features of 1970s video art, but, in this case, the artist avoids directly addressing the viewer, as in the work of Vito Acconci and others.[6] Instead, he uses the

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[6] For a dueling consideration of early video art and the work of Vito Acconci, see Krauss, "Video and the Aesthetics of Narcissism," and Anne Wagner, "Performance, Video, and the Rhetoric of Presence," *October* 91 (Winter 2000): 59–80. While I argue Gibbons takes a cinematic approach in his Pixelvision works, the videos clearly reference the ideas and aesthetics of early video technology and video art more broadly. In this way, Gibbons could be seen invoking a dialectical nostalgia between technology and aesthetics.

video frame as an enclosed theatrical space for the mass-produced dolls. *The Stepfather* is a representative example of his approach to Pixelvision. In *The Stepfather*, Gibbons begins by thanking Ken for his "honorable and respectful" decision to visit him. Ken's face moves toward the camera, filling one side of the frame, as Gibbons's face fills the other. Ken peers directly into the camera, drawing his face closer and closer to the lens. At times, he completely obscures Gibbons who speaks in the background. As Ken's face expands into a blur, stretching across the entire frame, Gibbons, with phony charm and a wry smile, asks, "What are you looking in there for? That's just a mirror. There's no hidden camera back there. There's no hidden camera. I was on the police force, but I wasn't into that kind of surveillance work."

As the video goes on, Gibbons's interrogation turns into a psychiatric evaluation. Ultimately, he pleads with Ken to return to California and forget about Barbie. During the conversation, Ken intermittently turns his back to the camera in order to face Gibbons, but, soon after, turns back around and stares into the "mirror" (Fig. 20). Clearly concerned with the watchful eye of the toy camera, Ken's gaze into the apparatus breaks the fourth wall, acknowledging the world and the viewer beyond the frame. In contrast to earlier video practice, then, it is the look of the toy dolls, not the look of the artist, which reaches out from the Pixelvision frame into the outside world. As I will show, this distinction carries important implications. While Gibbons asserts the frame's confinement in a traditionally cinematic mode, the doll's glance into the toy camera points back to early histories of television, video art, and postmodernism, wherein there is a direct connection between viewer and viewed.

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Though there is a clear dialogue concerning filmic and video-based recording practices in *The Stepfather*, I will temporarily sidestep those technological and medium specific concerns and return to them in Chapter 3. For now, I want to focus on the formal and narratival divisions raised by Gibbons's work. As I have just suggested, *The Stepfather* injects a conflicted exchange between the flat, grainy, artificial space within the Pixelvision frame and the viewer's space in the outside world. The dolls look directly into the camera, while Gibbons denies its presence. In so doing, the dolls address the individual viewer, while Gibbons rejects her existence. In effect, Gibbons articulates a desire to shut the viewer out of the Pixelvision video space and assert the frame's cinematic independence. However, the doll's gaze into the toy camera undermines the artist's demands by simultaneously acknowledging the presence of the toy camera and the viewer.

This is where Pixelvision technology reveals itself as crucially important to Gibbons's overall strategies. By juxtaposing his denial of the toy camera's presence with the doll's recognition of it, Gibbons aligns the perspective of the amateur device with the toy dolls. In short, he grants the mass produced objects a world unto themselves. For this reason, Gibbons highlights his character's material, adult presence as fundamentally out of synch with the amateur technology of Pixelvision and products of the culture industry. An adult male does not belong in the artificial world of children's toys. The end of *The Stepfather* makes this clear. After intially speaking to Ken, the video cross fades into a later conversation between Gibbons and Barbie. While Gibbons expresses his dissatisfaction with Ken as a suitor, Ken suddenly reemerges from the right side of the frame. Baffled, Gibbons asks what he is doing here. Together, the dolls glance toward the

camera, turn back toward each other, and begin pummeling Gibbons in the face. Gibbons

cries out in mock pain as the dolls deliver blow after blow. Having vanquished their foe,

Ken and Barbie peer back into the camera for a final time (Fig. 21). The video fades to

black, as Gibbons continues to moan.

In *The Stepfather*, their final look into the camera comes to be a claiming of their

territory. The dolls scourge Gibbons for his intrusion into an artificial world in which he

no longer plays a role. Gibbons has misidentified himself. He is the stepfather, not the

father; he is an adult, not a child; he is a human, not a toy. Aligned with Pixelvision, the

dolls shut Gibbons out from their make-believe, artificial world. He belongs to reality.[7]

When Ken and Barbie stare into the Pixelvision lens, they gaze into their compatriot toy,

that amateur camera for kids, that sequesters them into a place that can be seen and

remembered but never entered: the space of the past, the time of childhood, the world of

nostalgia.[8]

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[7] Though I suggest here an alignment between Pixelvision and the dolls that rejects Gibbons and the outside world, there is most certainly a paradox in play, hinted at above through Gibbons's series of misrecognitions. Utilizing a non-industrial, amateur toy camera and employing mass-produced Barbie dolls as his would-be actors, Gibbons showcases the absorption of non-commercial ideals (play, innocence, childhood) into capitalist ideologies, an element he has explored with various moving-image technologies throughout his career. Thus, his emphasis on Pixelvision as an apparatus has far reaching implications beyond the scope of this chapter. For a classic example of apparatus theory, see Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 690–707. While film theory has largely moved away from apparatus theory, there have been calls for renewed investigations of the apparatus given rapid changes in the media landscape. See Tom Gunning, "Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality," *differences* 18.1 (2007): 29–52.
[8] Pixelvision's tightly enclosed frame in some ways mimics the contained, compressed, miniature boxes of later digital video files played back on computers, particularly Quicktime files. For an historical and theoretical exploration of this format and its nostalgic impact, see Vivian Sobchack, "Nostalgia for a Digital Object: Regrets on the Quickening of QuickTime," in *Memory Bytes: History, Technology, and Digital Culture*, ed. Lauren Rabinovitz and Abraham Geil (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 305–29.

Like Gibbons, Michael Almereyda has utilized Pixelvision throughout his

filmmaking career. The most famous instance is likely in his media-saturated adaptation

of *Hamlet* (2000). Almereyda's *Hamlet* finds the prince (played by Ethan Hawke)

working for a global corporation while also turning to the Pixelvision camera as his

artistic medium of choice. Hamlet is an experimental filmmaker who navigates the early

21st century world of popular video stores, expansive screen culture, and global

capitalism.[9] I will discuss concerns such as the media landscape, the history of cinema,

and convergence culture in Chapters Three and Four.

Here, I will focus on Almereyda's earlier short film *The Rocking Horse Winner* as

it offers striking narrative and thematic parallels to the Gibbons's Pixelvision videos.

Further, as an independent film made outside the Hollywood studio system and first

shown in experimental film festivals, *The Rocking Horse Winner* more fully exemplifies

the alternative, ultimately non-commercial nature of Pixelvision.[10] Whereas *Hamlet*

incorporates Pixelvision and experimental video as a narrative device, *The Rocking Horse*

Winner is shot entirely on Pixelvision, which becomes an unspoken component of the

narrative. Further, the film highlights other toys that assume a similar role to that of

Pixelvision when understood as a child's *transitional object*.[11] I show how Almereyda

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[9] For an in depth consideration of Almereyda's incorporation of the Pixelvision format as an artistic device in his *Hamlet* adaptation, see Peter S. Donaldson, "Hamlet among the Pixelvisionaries: Video Art, Authenticity, and 'Wisdom' in Almereyda's *Hamlet*," in *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*, ed. Diana E. Henderson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 216–37.

[10] Interestingly, Almereyda output the Pixelvision video to 16mm film for its festival premiere.

[11] I utilize the concept of transitional objects from the writings of psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott. Winnicott. See D.W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena – A Study of the First Not-Me Possession," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 34 (1953): 89–97. See also D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971). The study of

exploits the prototypical traits of Pixelvision to symbolically reflect the isolated existence and perceptual experience of its central character, a young autistic boy named Jesse. An implicit reversal of Gibbons's videos, Jesse turns to his rocking horse in order to carry the weight of his mother's financial and emotional burdens. *The Rocking Horse Winner* thus contrasts the nostalgic time of childhood innocence with the material and economic realities of adulthood. Showing Jesse impossibly caught between childhood and adulthood, Almereyda incorporates Pixelvision to display the devastating consequences of Jesse's escape into a world of magical illusionism.

I will briefly recount the short story's narrative here before moving on to Almereyda's adaptation. Written by D.H. Lawrence in 1926, *The Rocking Horse Winner* tells the story of a roughly thirteen-year-old boy named Paul (changed to Jesse in the film). The boy's mother cannot love him. He seeks to earn her love by showing that he is lucky. His "luck" comes in the form of obtaining wealth for the family that his father cannot. Consumed by the desire to obtain material possessions, the entire family hears the phrase, "There must be more money!" booming from the walls of their home. One Christmas, the boy receives a rocking horse. He realizes that riding it gives him the magical ability to receive the winning name of a horse from upcoming races. After learning about his gift, the boy's uncle and the family gardener bring him into the world of gambling. They begin winning more and more money. Nonetheless, his mother does not love him and the house continues incessantly crying, "There must be more money!" Shortly before the Epsom Derby, a big race that should yield huge winnings, the mother

transitional objects is taken up in multiple ways throughout Jan Abram, ed., *Donald Winnicott Today* (London: Routledge, 2012).

comes upon the boy riding the horse in a frenzy. He cries out the name "Malabar" and collapses to the floor. He lies unconscious and in a stupor for several days. Malabar wins the Derby. Afterwards, the gardener visits his bedside to tell him that they have won over eighty thousand pounds. The boy declares his luck to his mother, hoping this will finally make him lovable. He dies in the night. The story ends with the mother standing before her son and hearing the voice of her brother saying, "You're eighty-odd thousand to the good, and a poor devil of a son to the bad. But, poor devil, poor devil, he's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner."[12]

The story's conflict between Jesse and the adults emerges in Almereyda's adaptation through contrasting formal styles. Jesse's perceptual experience as an isolated, unloved child aligns with the amateur aesthetics of Pixelvision, while scenes involving his mother, uncle, and the family gardener rely on techniques associated with commercial filmmaking. This approach initiates an underlying dialogue between amateur and professional artistic practice, yet also importantly allows Jesse's childlike worldview to dictate shifts in style, mood, and tone. Almereyda highlights these divergent styles and perspectives in the film's opening sequence.

Since the narrative primarily focuses on Jesse's attempts to receive love from his mother, the opening shots establish an evolving dynamic between the two. The shots are elliptically edited together to indicate Jesse's growth alongside an initial connection with,

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[12] Lawrence's writing has been read through a psychoanalytic framework by a number of critics. Importantly, though, James Cowan moves away from strictly Freudian interpretations and towards an understanding of Lawrence through Winnicott's object relations. As my analysis makes clear, Almereyda's adaptation brings these concepts to the forefront of the narrative. Winnicott's theories also inform this chapter and this project more broadly. See James C. Cowan, *D.H. Lawrence: Self and Sexuality* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2003).

followed by an unwanted separation from, his mother. The opening shot shows a mother intimately holding a small child in her arms (Fig. 22). They sit together at a table looking at papers or perhaps photographs. She leans in, whispers in the boy's ear, and kisses him on the cheek. The camera is static. There is no diegetic sound. Strangely, the shot appears to be in very slight slow motion. Suddenly, the film cuts to a wild, rapidly moving shot. The boy, slightly grown, raises his hands over his head and spins in tight circles. He bellows the sound of buzzing airplanes as he whizzes by the camera. From a very low angle, the handheld camera weaves around him at very close proximity (Fig. 23). He rapidly whirls across the screen, in and out of the frame. The closeness of the camera turns the domestic room into an extraordinarily tight, claustrophobic space. Then, the boy, perhaps slightly older, looks down toward his hands at the rotating pages of a flip book. Immediately, like those twirling pages, he is again in chaotic motion. His shadowy body flails across the frame. He briefly faces and then moves past the camera. Characteristic of the stark qualities of Pixelvision, his body is cast in darkness. A blinding white light shimmers behind him, glistening across the textured surface of an indecipherable grey-and-white striped background.

After this brief, perceptual encounter with Jesse and the Pixelvision aesthetic, the narrative begins to emerge. However, Almereyda's abstracted narrative relies on feeling, form, and tone, rather than a deliberately plotted story structure. A static camera observes the boy, again slightly older, rapidly bouncing up and down as he rides the squeaky rocking horse. Unlike in Lawrence's story, there is no Christmas morning and no larger context for when, where, or how the Jesse received this gift. His body again emanates in shadow. The burning white windows bleach out details in the foreground. The creaky

sounds of the galloping horse bridge to the appearance of a young girl, presumably his younger sister. She sits at a desk and looks toward him out of the frame, commenting, "He's always riding that. I wish he would stop." The unmoving camera and standardized editing patterns contrast greatly with Jesse's wild motion on the horse as well as the film's opening sequence. There are others in the room. Jesse's mother enters with a perturbed look on her face. In a static close up, she watches him ride from a distance and announces the arrival of his uncle Joe. The passionate connection seen between mother and son in the opening shot has evaporated. Jesse bounces up and down, making guttural sounds that modulate with the intensity of his gallop (Fig. 24). The camera zooms and tracks tightly in. He is alone.

Thus, as I suggested, Almereyda offers two contrasting styles that indicate Jesse's internal experience and his relationship to the outside world. The opening shot of Jesse with his mother provides a sense of stability. There is a clear, loving connection between the two. The following shots feature Jesse in isolation, spinning like a top through an indecipherable space. This indicates his childlike freedom in a space of play as well as his chaotic, affective experience of the world. Exemplified by the intense movement of the handheld camera, the instability of Jesse's experience stabilizes with the shots of his sister and mother. This also initiates Almereyda's use of typical continuity editing patterns. In this case, though, the shot-reverse shot between Jesse on the horse and his mother's disgruntled face illustrates the splitting of the mother from the child. Their intimate connection from the dreamy opening shot breaks apart. In their second appearance in a common space, they are literally separated into different shots. Though not literally stated in Almereyda's adaptation, a feeling emerges that corresponds with

what Lawrence's narrator describes in the short story's opening paragraph: the mother's feeling that her children have been thrust upon her and that she cannot feel love for anybody, despite what other people may see or think.

Almereyda's stylistic shift underscores the division between mother and son, adults and children, professionals and amateurs. The formless aesthetics of the handheld Pixelvision camera clash with the professionalized polish of the stable camera and continuity editing techniques. This formal conflict doubles over onto the film's narrative. Throughout the remainder of the film, Almereyda maintains a relatively static camera and utilizes conventional editing patterns whenever adults interact with Jesse. From the initial arrival of his mother and sister to ongoing conversations with his uncle and the family gardener about the winning horses, Jesse's worldview (and the film's diegetic space) levels off from the topsy-turvy perspective of the Pixelvision camera when he is alone or on his rocking horse.

However, Jesse's singular perspective never entirely disappears from view. Underwritten by a moody soundtrack that repeatedly detaches from its images, the pixelated illusionism becomes increasingly ethereal as the film progresses. Jesse wins nearly $50,000 and ultimately gives all of the winnings to his mother. Suddenly, the family is seen swimming in a pool, perhaps a new addition in their lavish lifestyle. Jesse wades through the water, which appears as an almost mystical space (Fig. 25). Again in a moment of isolation, film's look changes dramatically. His uncle reports that his mother spent twice the amount of money she was given. Jesse struggles to find answers on his rocking horse. He gallops harder and harder, determined to win more money and prove his ongoing luck. He insistently shakes a Magic 8 ball, which answers "CANNOT

PREDICT NOW." We see images of horse races as if they were on an old, analog television (Fig. 26). The horses slow down to a crawl and the blurry scan lines of the television obscure the representation imagery. The entire world starts to dissolve into increasingly abstract textures of grey. Jesse looks toward a blank sky, yet hears the whirring sounds of airplanes, getting louder and louder.

Thus, Almereyda reveals a double-edged conflict in *The Rocking Horse Winner* that is rooted within the film's narrative and extended onto its formal production. As I have shown, Almreyda underscores the clear divide between Jesse and his mother with an aesthetic distinction between the messy amateurism of Pixelvision and the clean professionalism of continuity editing. I suggest this separation mimics another division of which Almereyda is unquestionably aware: that of experimental and popular cinema. It may seem at first glance that Almereyda embraces the poetic, experimental style of Stan Brakhage while also transferring those principles into the construction of an abstract narrative adaptation. Using the unique, childlike "camera eye" of Pixelvision, *The Rocking Horse Winner* provides a vision of Jesse's perceptual encounter with his surrounding environment.[13] Further, as an amateur device, Pixelvision aligns with Jesse's purity and innocence against his mother's insatiable desire for material possessions, wealth, and financial success. In this sense, Pixelvision (and *The Rocking Horse Winner*'s narrative) analogizes the non-commercial, "amateur" nature of experimental practice as

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[13] There are certain commanilities in this approach to Brakhage's book *Metaphors on Vision*, which opens by asking the reader to "Imagine an eye unruled by manmade laws of perspective, an eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure in perception." See Stan Brakhage, *Metaphors on Vision* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1976).

an escape from the capitalist ideology of industrial, "professional" Hollywood film production.[14]

At the same time, though, Jesse's final ride during which he receives the name "Malabar" leads to his sudden death. With the purest of intentions, his greatest financial success and the culmination of his so-called luck ends with his demise. Jesse embodies romantic idealism turning into fatalism. Jesse's pure desire of earning his mother's love will go forever unfulfilled in the same manner that his mother's materialist desire for wealth and worldly possessions will never be satiated. In a black-and-white world, Almereyda suggests absolutism as a form of doomed idiocy. At the same time, there is undeniably more empathy for the child in that he assumes a responsibility that should not be his to bear. His uncle and the gardener employ his magical luck for their own means. Jesse assumes a role that is not his to play. Like Gibbons, Jesse misidentifies his role as the adult in the family. Almereyda indicates the impossibility of maintaining the irretrievably split subjectivity between childhood innocence and adult responsibility, artistic purity and commercial success. Jesse places himself in an unbridgeable gap between dependence and independence, adolescence and adulthood. An overdetermined nostalgia in one direction or another is a calamity.

I will end here by suggesting that the experiential gaps and divisions highlighted in *The Rocking Horse Winner* emerge from within what D.W. Winnicott calls "transitional phenomena." I will briefly lay out the concepts here, as they speak to what I have discussed in *The Rocking Horse Winner* and inform the remainder of this chapter. Winnicott describes transitional phenomena as operating in "an intermediate area

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[14] As I indicated earlier, Almereyda explicitly takes up this concept in his adaptation of *Hamlet*.

between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived."[15] He locates transitional

phenomena as emerging during a period of time when the child is weaned from their

mother. The loving mother provides the child with "transitional objects" to assist in the

separation of their union. Winnicott argues this opens a "potential space" between the

child and mother, the individual and the environment. During this time, the child comes

to understand the difference in objective reality that cannot be controlled and subjective

experience through objects of play. By providing objects that separate the child from the

mother, Winnicott suggests the mother's main task is creating an illusion of magical

control followed by the disillusionment of that belief through a weaning process.[16] For

Winnicott, this process is the root of later cultural experience, and, crucially, is

determined by a temporal dimension. The acceptance of separation and disillusionment

takes hold *over a certain period of time.* Thus, the potential space opened by transitional

objects is marked by duration. It is in this time period during which nostalgia first

develops.[17]

Following these threads, I contend that Almereyda's turn toward object relations

in *The Rocking Horse Winner* situates Jesse's chaotic perceptual experience as symbolic

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[15] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 3.

[16] Ibid., 13.

[17] In his untranslated seminar on object relations, Lacan criticizes Winnicott for not taking seriously enough this passage of time, durational time. Interestingly, it is in this period of transitional phenomenon and within potential space that Lacan argues children develop "nostalgia for the mother's breast." In other words, for Lacan, Winnicott's "potential space" indicates the *period of time* when the Oedipus complex develops. That this crucial Lacanian/Freudian development parallels the first manifestations of nostalgia offers the opportunity for a rather remarkable reading of psychoanalysis through nostalgic temporality. At the same time, Winnicott makes it clear that his writings on early childhood development, a period of time often overlooked by Freud, seeks to create a distance from the top-down model of the Oedipus complex demarcated in Lacan's writings on Freud and psychoanalysis more broadly. See Jacques Lacan, *Seminaire IV: La Relation d'objet et les structures freudiennes* (Paris: Editions due Seuil, 1984).

of nostalgic time. Separated from his unloving mother, Jesse's riding of the rocking horse symbolizes a simultaneous moving back and forward. His existence lingers in a sentimental and destructive period during which individuals, objects, and memories are, in one sense, destroyed, while, in another sense, constantly reconfigured. In *The Rocking Horse Winner*, the symptomatic lesson of Jesse's nostalgia becomes that of an impossible longing for satisfaction with dissatisfaction.

Nostalgic Responsibility in Peggy Ahwesh and Margie Strosser's Strange Weather (1993)

Whereas Gibbons and Almereyda utilize Pixelvision to narrativize the impossible "potential space" between children and adults, Peggy Ahwesh and Margie Strosser's *Strange Weather* (1993) highlights the distinctive temporality of the transitional experience. In this case, though, the focus is not on adults and children, but rather drug addicts who exist on the border between make believe and reality. Similar to Gibbons and Almereyda, Ahwesh and Strosser turn to the Pixelvision camera as a means of revealing the intimate and troubling perceptual experience of the film's four central characters. Embracing the formless home movie qualities of Pixelvision, *Strange Weather* takes on the distinctive feel of a cinema verité documentary. However, as in *The Rocking Horse Winner*, Ahwesh and Strosser gradually undermine the film's purported authenticity through a series of formal strategies. Ultimately, they situate the viewer in a transitional space between intimately facing the world on screen as a form of social reality and distantly approaching the illusionistic space as a fabricated image, a work of pure fiction. *Strange Weather* demands the viewer confront her own historical, aesthetic, and

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interpersonal distance from moral and ethical responsibility. In this way, Ahwesh and Strosser uncover the political imperative of nostalgia as a moving image.

Strange Weather focuses on the quotidian lives of four crack addicts. Perpetually waiting their next fix, they bumble around their home and remain unconcerned (or unaware) of a massive hurricane about to crash onto the nearby shores. Like *The Rocking Horse Winner*, *Strange Weather* begins by counterbalancing contrasting environments: sunny, spacious beaches and a cramped domestic interior. Exploiting Pixelvision's high-contrast black-and-white, the opening shot shows a palm tree battered by strong winds. The pixelated tree takes on a rather amorphous shape, which leaves the viewer uncertain as to what exactly she is seeing (Fig. 27).[18] A radio broadcast plays beach music. The handheld camera pans across the sky. It peers at a series of low hanging grey clouds, which are outlined by sunbeams that pulsate and shimmer as a flickering white light. In tight close up, the camera slowly scans down a schematic picture map of the state of Florida. The unexpectedly long take indicates a confusion of scale. The Pixelvision camera transforms the tiny child's map into a massive stream of pictures, places, and names. Finally, there is a long shot of ocean waves crashing on the shoreline. This is undoubtedly the deepest spatial recession in the entire film, although, even here, the camera's limited depth of field is readily apparent.

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[18] Ahwesh points to an inability to immediately decipher the object, scale, or location as a key reason for choosing this as an opening shot. See Scott MacDonald, "Peggy Ahwesh Interview," *Millennium Film Journal* 39-40 (Winter 2003), accessed February 15, 2017, http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ39/macdonaldpage.html.

After these opening beach shots, the camera moves inside. Another radio broadcast announces the impending arrival of a major hurricane.[19] The camera observes a long strip of window blinds that enclose the domestic space from the outside world. Below the blinds, a number of seashells appear on the floor. Or is that a desk? The constantly waving handheld camera paired with the swirling grey pixels make detail and texture difficult to decipher. What is clear, though, is that the domestic interior has all the furnishings of the exterior Floridian wonderland. No need to go outside! A scruffy male figure lounges on a couch. He restlessly rocks his right leg back and forth. In close up, a blonde woman fans herself with a newspaper. The camera shimmies to the left of the man. Another dark-haired woman stretches her head awkwardly across the back of the couch. She suddenly swings forward and topples down onto the man, kissing his neck. The extreme close ups coupled with constant handheld camera movement give the film an undeniable intimacy. However, as described above, the techniques also obscure a clear sense of space, time, or location.

Aside from intermittent television and radio broadcasts updating the status of the hurricane, *Strange Weather* offers little information for the viewer to construct a narrative. Instead, the film unfolds as if it were an unedited home movie. Indeed, the film was presumably so authentic that several prominent film critics mistakenly identified the film as a documentary when it was first released.[20] I contend that this misidentification is absolutely crucial to uncovering *Strange Weather*'s critical implications. Robin Blaetz

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[19] In an interview, Ahwesh indicates the storm is meant to be the disastrous 1992 Hurricane Andrew. See ibid.

[20] See MacDonald, "Peggy Ahwesh Interview" and Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Strange Weather," *The Chicago Reader*, February 18, 1994, accessed February 18, 2017, http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.net/1994/02/strange-weather/.

identifies the home movie aesthetic as a common feature across Ahwesh's career. For

Blaetz, Ahwesh's home movie strategies are indicative of a longer tradition within

feminist experimental filmmaking, particularly in the work of artists such as Marie

Menken and Marjorie Keller. Blaetz argues that these artists rewrite the conventions of

the home movie through both aesthetic and narrative aspirations. In contrast to

conventional understandings of the home movie as a "film shot to record family activities

in the home or in leisure time, which document important events and ritual gatherings,"

Blaetz suggests feminist filmmakers instill a "more literal and more complex" home

movie trope.[21] In these films, she explains, filmmakers "appear to turn on the camera in

the midst of everyday life and to film what surrounds them with no attention paid to

either production values or to any deliberate content in the image, and no concern for

quantity of footage in relation to subject matter."[22]

   Throughout the first half of the film, *Strange Weather* closely resembles these

anti-compositional methods. Cowering inside, the blonde woman, Jen, gets increasingly

paranoid. She occasionally peaks out the window, convinced that cops have staked out

the house. The man, Centipede, assures her no one is there. She begs him to flush their

drugs. He squats on the toilet tank cover and closes the seat with his feet. After she

manages to flush the drugs, he furiously digs through the water. The camera catches their

hands and legs rapidly shaking, their eyes constantly darting around the room. There are

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[21] See Robin Blaetz, "Home Movies: Thoughts of Framing the Domestic Sphere in Experimental Cinema," in *Visual Cultures – Transatlantic Perspectives Vol. 14*, eds., Volker Depkat and Meike Zwingenberger (Heidelberg: Universitatsverlag WINTER Heidelberg, 2012), 251–60.
[22] Ibid. For an analysis Ahwesh's film work in relation to the home movie trope and modernism, see William C. Wees, "Peggy's Playhouse: Contesting the Modernist Paradigm," in *Women's Experimental Cinema: Critical Frameworks*, ed. Robin Blaetz (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 290–311.

mini-conflicts, but nothing substantial ever develops. They cook ramen noodles, smoke

cigarettes, clean pipes, and smoke crack. Centipede crawls on the floor and picks through

a cat's litter box looking for drugs. A disgusted Jen pleads with him to stop. The cat,

meanwhile, wanders through the yard outside the house. They call their friends and ask

them to come over. They call their parents to bum rent money, invariably used to buy

drugs. They throw a dance party.

The camera echoes the minute-by-minute quality with glances toward quotidian

markers of time's passage. A cigarette slowly burns in an ashtray. Rays of light beam

through an oscillating fan. A miniature surfer teeter-totters in a snow globe. Here, there is

yet another reference to the inversion of the Floridian landscape into a confined interior.

The tiny bits of snow pop around the grainy, pixelated frame. Somewhat reminiscent of

Benning's autobiographical use of Pixelvision, the characters occasionally face the

camera as a video confessional. They tell stories about dangerous occurrences when they

bought crack or times they spent in jail.[23] Through all of these happenings, Ahwesh and

Strosser avoid temporal and spatial markers. The characters seem suspended in an

undeterminable space and time. They are in a process of perpetual waiting. Separated

from drugs, they speak to their disillusionment and detachment from families, friends,

and the outside world. They revel in each moment. This allows them to avoid confronting

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[23] While there is no indication that the would-be documentary subjects were ever using the Pixelvision camera as such, Carolyn Kane discusses some early uses of video and cybernetic tenets as a form of psychotherapy, particularly to help curb substance abuse and addiction. See Carolyn L. Kane, "The Tragedy of Radical Subjectivity: From *Radical Software* to Proprietary Subjects," *Leonardo* 47.5 (2014): 480–87, particularly 483–84. The video confessional mode and thematic content of *Strange Weather* perhaps provides interesting resonance with this history.

their own circumstances as drug addicts and as potential victims of a violent hurricane.[24]

They are caught in the eye of a storm. Do they not realize it, or do they just not care?

Undoubtedly, *Strange Weather*'s formless, home movie aesthetics contribute greatly to the initial presumption of authenticity. While this may be attributable to the rawness of the handheld toy camera, Ahwesh and Strosser also structure the film in such a way that it seems to have no structure. It simply unfolds. As I have suggested already, though, they also chip away at the film's documentary status. Particularly in the film's second half, the viewer gradually comes to question the fact or fiction of the world presented on screen. As in *The Rocking Horse Winner*, Ahwesh and Strosser initiate this inquisition through the film's construction.[25] I contend these formal strategies open onto the film's implication of the distanced, cinematic viewer.

Although there are other subtle instances, I suggest there is one key scene that breaks the film's flow and unsettles its home movie naturalism (Fig. 28 – 31).[26] Jen and Patty hang out inside and listen to loud music on the radio. While Jen eats a popsicle, Patty tosses a toy gun back and forth in her hands. Jen complains that the music is too loud. She shuffles past Patty who turns toward the radio. Patty turns back around with the gun raised in her hands. She points it directly at Jen's face. Suddenly, the film cuts to a

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[24] Ahwesh speaks to the ways in which Pixelvision's small scale mutes the film's dramatic effect. See MacDonald, "Peggy Ahwesh Interview."

[25] It is important to note that the initial idea for the film came from Strosser's sister, a former crack addict in South Florida who wrote up stories from her life after leaving drugs behind. While Strosser initially aimed for a drug expose with fictional elements, Ahwesh explains how working with her sister's story along with casting actors and using the Pixelvision camera ultimately shaped the finished film. Hence, the gradual shift from documentary to pseudo-documentary to the creation of an alternative, fictional space was a fundamental part of the project's development. See Ibid.

[26] This is not to say there are not other moments in the film that also undermine the credibility of its realism. Performances, montage, and the complex sound editing all point towards fiction at various points throughout the film as well.

close up from Jen's perspective. Patty points the barrel of the gun directly at the camera. Then, it cuts back to Jen. She bites her popsicle and stares out of the frame towards Patty. Finally, there is another cut back to Patty holding the gun at the camera lens, shouting "BAM! BAM! BAM! You're a loser, Jen."

This sudden burst of deliberate shot-reverse shot fundamentally disrupts the film's prior, formless construction. I suggest this sequence pushes in two paradoxical directions at one and the same time. First, it undermines the logic of continuity editing. Put in place to create a seamless flow from one shot to the next and suture the audience into the film's diegetic world, continuity editing emerges here as chaotic and unsettling. It disrupts *Strange Weather*'s carefully crafted realism, established so successfully in the first half hour. Rather than suck the viewer in, it throws her out. Reversing the conventional understanding of montage principles, continuity editing shatters the documentary illusionism of *Strange Weather* by revealing its constructedness. In other words, continuity editing shatters the film's continuity. The shot-reverse shot exposes the false amateurism through an assertion of composed professionalism.

Thus, Ahwesh and Strosser upend audience expectations. By utilizing a typically illusionistic cinematic technique to disillusion the audience from the idea that what they are seeing is authentic, they drop the viewers, like their characters, into a potential space within which they distance themselves from their prior experience. This confusing temporal and narratival development raises a series of important questions regarding not only claims of truth and fiction, but also how individuals confront realities that are not immediately present. What happens when a presumed reality becomes a mere representation of reality? Does fiction let viewers off the hook and allow them to ignore

the real problems reflected on screen? Do they treat the images as an illusionistic world

to which they bear no responsibility? Or do they face the material conditions of the

represented world?[27]

     Strange Weather places the viewer (and, ultimately, their characters) in this

uncomfortable and untenable period of time when such choices emerge but remain

undetermined. I contend this perplexing position reflects the potential space where

nostalgia develops. The Pixelvision paradox of *Strange Weather* is that it shows nostalgia

accumulates and takes form during a time when being nostalgic is impossible. Pointing

back to Jameson's postmodern critique of nostalgia, *Strange Weather* asks for a way

forward by embodying the interpersonal and moral difficulties of nostalgia's transitional

time. Rather than accept a vision of nostalgia as a hypostatized, stylistic stereotyping of

the past, Ahwesh and Strosser use Pixelvision in a cinematic mode to reveal nostalgia as

a moving image that is increasingly distant yet intimately near. *Strange Weather* pleads

for social responsibility from the nostalgic carriers of material history.

     In conclusion, I turn to Maurice Blanchot who analyzes the intimate relationship

between viewers and images in his essay "Two Versions of the Imaginary." Describing

the connection between reality and images, he writes:

> To experience an event as an image is not to free oneself of that event, to dissociate
> oneself from it…it is to let oneself be taken by it, to go from the region of the real,
> where we hold ourselves at a distance from things to better use them, to that other
> region where distance holds us, this distance which is now unliving… The image is
> intimate, because it makes our intimacy an exterior power that we passively submit

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[27] In an interview with Michael Israel, Jacques Derrida poses the sociological status of the drug
addict in conjunction with the experience of truth and fiction. Ahwesh highlights this interview as
a jumping off point for *Strange Weather.* See Michael Israel, "The Rhetoric of Drugs: An
Interview," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 5.1 (Spring 1993): 1–25.

to: outside of us, in the backward motion of the world that the image provokes, the depth of our passion trails along, astray and brilliant."[28]

Throughout this chapter, I have shown how Gibbons, Almereyda, and Ahwesh and Strosser provide the viewer with an opportunity to confront their distance from images and from reality. These ideas culminate in *Strange Weather*, which poses a challenge to viewers: do they dissociate from the reality of what they have seen or do Pixelvision images open onto an exterior power? Of course, the artists cannot determine this for each individual viewer. However, I understand the power of intimately distant images described by Blanchot as the power of nostalgia and the demand of nostalgic responsibility. In a region where distance holds us, Pixelvision takes Gibbons, Almereyda, Ahwesh, and Strosser in a backward motion that confronts the precarious gap between unbridgeable divisions. Caught between childhood and adulthood, amateurism and professionalism, fantasy and reality, these artists show nostalgia materially reconfiguring as a disruptive, progressive force. The intimate illusions of Pixelvision do not passively allow an escape into fabrication, but instead provoke a depth of passion that nurtures contact between separate worlds.

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[28] Maurice Blanchot, "Two Versions of the Imaginary," in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, ed. P. Adams Sitney, trans. Lydia Davis (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1981), 87.

Chapter 3: Home Video's Nostalgic Time Shifting

Nostalgia is not an emotion that is entertained; it is sustained.
                                                                    –Hollis Frampton

The landmark 1979 Supreme Court case *Sony vs. Universal* identifies "time

shifting" as a primary property of early home video technology. Initially defined as "the

practice of recording a program to view it once at a later time, and thereafter erasing it,"

time shifting became an increasingly complicated concept with advancements in home

video.[1] While *Sony v. Universal* was primarily concerned with the *Betamax* format and

the ability to record live television for subsequent playback, it was not long before the

home video market – particularly with advent of VHS tape and VCRs – allowed for the

purchase of individual copies of films which could be shared among any users with

access to the domestic technological device. Far from the notion that tapes would be

played once and then erased, home video quickly extended the time shifting potential

from a one-time-only viewing experience into a perpetually deferred mode of televisual

and cinematic playback. Essentially eliminating the demands of television's liveness and

cinema's "only in theaters" mantra, home video transferred the *immediacy* of cinema and

television into a *delayed playback* system that offered an infinite return to live broadcasts

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[1] Sony Corp v. Universal City Studios, Inc., 464 U.S. 417 (1984).

and cinematic feature films. Whether through VHS, DVD, or online file sharing, home video's time shifting extended the time of popular moving-image media through their ongoing playback in the privacy of the home.

These changes had a significant impact not only on the home video market, but also on the amateur and artistic appropriation of home video. In this chapter, I explore the work of three cinema artists – Omer Fast, Christian Marclay, and Michael Robinson – who engage with home video as a delayed playback system that alters texts as they circulate over the course of time. These artists show how home video technologies embody the underlying principle of time shifting and showcase nostalgic temporality. Through time shifting, home video allows popular media of the past to be re-experienced in the present moment. However, in these cases, home video reconfigures the present experience of cinematic and televisual content in a way that magnifies the material, cultural, and historical changes that have altered the texts to varying degrees since their initial premiere.

Approaching home video through what Lucas Hilderbrand calls an "aesthetics of access," I show how the work of these artists materially and narratively embody their dissipating connection to and perpetual detachment from the contexts in which they emerged alongside their contemporaneous reconfiguration.[2] In this sense, as in previous chapters, there is a double nostalgia at play: nostalgia for the cinematic past and nostalgia

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[2] See Lucas Hilderbrand, *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 3–26. Hilderbrand primarily analyzes home video practice through the concept of bootlegging in which the circulation of texts is most apparently in aesthetic and material terms. While Fast, Marclay, and Robinson operate at a remove from the specificity of bootlegging as Hilderbrand sees it, they nonetheless underscore his interest in the material aesthetics of aging home video.

for particular technologies. I illustrate how their nostalgic return to the home video

format as well as its content displays the fraught negotiation between cinema, television,

and the home identified in the *Sony v. Universal* ruling. If home video's playback system

comes with an expectation of eventual erasure, Fast, Marclay, and Robinson reveal time

shifting's eradication of a seemingly fixed past as an ongoing, paradoxical, nostalgic

process relying on the combination of lived experience, the formation of memory, and a

contemporary moment of interpretation.[3] With its time shifting capabilities, home video

offers a means of thinking nostalgia not simply as a longing for a disappearing past (or a

dissolving tape) but a perpetual recalibration of past memories and contexts in the

present.

First, I will discuss two early works by Omer Fast – *T3–AEON* (2001) and *CNN*

Concatenated (2002) – that shed light on the ways aging home video reveals alternative

narratives within previously recorded material. In these videos, Fast utilizes two different

modes of home video appropriation: the analog home videotape of a Hollywood film and

the digital video recording of live television. I consider how Fast's work addresses home

video's delayed playback alongside the violent spectacles of Hollywood cinema and the

present-tense direct address of television. Emphasizing the critical context of the

domestic sphere, Fast reveals an implicit violence underlying an invasion of public

images into the intimate, private spaces of individuals. As his videos signify a longing for

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[3] Sarah Kofman analyzes these moments of time in conjunction with Freud's theory of screen
memories. See Sarah Kofman, *The Childhood of Art*, trans. Winifred Woodhill (New York:
Columbia Univeristy Press, 1988), 54–103. Similar ideas emerge in Thomas Elsaesser, "Freud
and the Technical Media: The Enduring Magic of the Wunderblock," in *Media Archaeology:
Approaches, Applications, Implications*, ed. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (Berkeley:
University of California Press, 2011), 95–118. See also Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical
Unconscious* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 65–68.

the certainty and comfort of the past, his nostalgia manifests as its inverse, highlighting the insistent instability of "home" in the present moment. Then, I will analyze Christian Marclay's renowned 24-hour video installation *The Clock* (2010). Examining the video's formal construction and its installation context, I show how Marclay uses the history of cinema on home video as a means of creating a cinematic catastrophe for the digital age. In particular, I focus not on what *The Clock* remembers but rather what it forgets. Finally, I turn to Michael Robinson's 2007 video *Light Is Waiting*, an essential, underexplored work of 21st century appropriation. Utilizing a temporality of immediacy and delay, Robinson shows the distortion of memory and home video as it maintains a withering connection to dated source material. Through its formal construction and narrative potentialities, *Light Is Waiting* reveals nostalgia as a virtual process of cultural and interpersonal breakdown.

Playback and Feedback in Two Works by Omer Fast

Omer Fast's *T3–AEON* (2000) showcases a direct connection to analog home video as it was popularized in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, that is, through home video rentals. Conceived as a public art project, in *T3–AEON*, Fast recorded four short interviews with family members who discussed childhood incidents when they were physically disciplined by a parent. Fast dubbed these interviews into VHS rental copies of James Cameron's 1984 film *The Terminator*. The interviews replaced the soundtrack at four disparate, increasingly violent scenes throughout the film. The images remained undisturbed and the tape itself functioned properly, allowing viewers to continue

watching the film after each disturbance. The rental copies were distributed unbeknownst

to Blockbuster Video stores in New York City. Fast hoped viewers would appreciate the

interviews and return tapes without complaint, but admitted there was no way to find

out.[4] In August 2001, Fast relocated to Berlin and no longer checked on each tape's

circulation. The following year, New York City Blockbuster stores replaced the majority

of their VHS inventory with DVDs. The current status of *T3–AEON*'s physical copies is

unknown.

In this section, I analyze Fast's particular interventions in *T3–AEON* and then

consider the selection of *The Terminator* as his source material. Both instances highlight

the critical importance of home video's time shifting playback and the viewer's

interpersonal memory. Each of the four stories used in *T3–AEON* unfolds in a domestic

space. The interviewees recount in vivid detail the precise location of their confrontations

with authoritative violence. The first interviewee explains how she rushed home after

being struck with a stone while playing a children's game only to be met at the door by a

male figure (presumably her father) who strikes her in the face. The second interviewee,

after being slapped on the hand by his mother and returning the blow in a fit of

indignation, recalls where he stood in the house's second story as his father stormed up

the stairs, out of control, with veins popping out of his side and saliva dripping from his

mouth. The third interviewee details how he accidentally scratched his brother's eye with

a card and the subsequent spanking he received from his father.

> He chased me out of the kitchen and into what would be the living room and out of
> the living room and into what would be the dining room and we never made it

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[4] Mark Godfrey, "Playing the System," *Tate Etc.* 14, Autumn 2008, accessed July 25, 2016,
http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/playing-system.

upstairs or downstairs. I don't remember it being a particularly painful beating. It wasn't as painful as it was kind of thrilling and humiliating at the same time. When I play this back in my mind it almost has this cartoonish aspect. I mean, I knew he had been hit with a belt, so I kind of realized 'My God! This is now happening to me? I finally graduated to the belt!?

The final interviewee vividly describes a little stick made of bamboo that his father kept in a small closet, a kitchen pantry, with other brooms, brushes, and cleaning supplies. "If we were up for a beating," he says, "we would be taken to his study. And that's where the stick was used."

The personal stories of each interviewee underscore the intense violence of *The Terminator*. The film comes to echo the potentially traumatic histories. While Fast suggests the film's violence is over-the-top to the point of being cartoonish, the individual tales intimately counterbalance the film's spectacular excess. Fast inserts his audio interventions to fit the film's formal construction. The stories flow into the editing patterns, accentuating the close relationship between image and sound, even though the sound comes from an alternative source. By altering portions of the soundtrack, Fast proposes a dichotomy between the past-ness, the fixity, of the image, and the present-ness, the immediacy, of sound and speech. Though the stories tell of a past, they have not been encountered before in this context, on these images. The sounds and the stories are entirely new, present, and unexpected for the viewer of *T3-AEON*. For Fast, the words in each interview function as discrete elements that are able to be manipulated, broken apart, and placed back together in a fractured, yet unified diegetic field.

This image illustrates how Fast fuses the interviews with the film's diegesis, essentially leaving the film's narrative uninterrupted despite the audio interventions (Fig.

32).[5] The film's diegetic soundtrack carries over through the sequence. Car doors open

and shut. Dogs bark in a suburban neighborhood. The brief dialogue between characters

remains. The tape plays on. The film moves forward. The voice-over intervention

superficially matches the events on screen, although, initially, the gender dynamics

reverse. The voice of a woman begins "I came home one day" over the image of Arnold

Schwarzennegger stepping out of a semi-truck. Fast arranges the first-person narration so

that the details (I ran away, I ran immediately home, I rang the doorbell, he opened the

door) synch with the actions on screen. However, after an exchange of dialogue, the

narration continues, "And when he saw me…" which effectively reverses the first and

third person of the previous exchange. The words "He couldn't handle the stress" and

"Anything that would happen to me would drive him crazy" appear over the image of a

disgruntled Schwarzenegger, raising his gun, and firing away. The narrator brings the

viewer into the violent moment, justifying the man's actions as she pleads with the

listener, "You have to understand…" Fast's juxtaposition of sound-and-image initiates a

role reversal and a shifting sense of identification across the scene for both the characters

and the viewing audience. The film may continue uninterrupted, but the narration

implicates the viewer in the narratives, that is, simultaneously, in *The Terminator* and the

disparate voice-over, the cinematic and the domestic, the public and the private.

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[5] In interviews, Fast maintains that the film's narrative goes on uninterrupted and expresses a desire that the viewer continue watching the film as if nothing had happened, a suggestion that is easy to dispute. Of course, it would depend on the individual viewer as to how much these interruptions interrupt the film. See Ibid.

In this way, Fast expands upon what Barbara Klinger calls an "aesthetic of integration," which turns the purely technological into something interpersonal.[6] That this takes place with the nostalgic media of home video is of the utmost significance. Klinger shows how home theater systems seek to disguise the material presence of technology in the home, thereby fusing new technologies with the undisturbed tranquility of an elite domestic space. Like the Terminator himself, a fastidious outer appearance camouflages the looming threat of futuristic machinic interference.

Fast inverts this "aesthetic of integration" in technological and personal ways that paradoxically overlap. First, he disguises *T3–AEON* as *The Terminator*, hiding his artistic intervention within a home video rental. While this approach mimics earlier artistic interventions into distribution networks and circuits of commerce and exchange, the selection of a rented VHS tape as the material source demands careful consideration.[7] *T3-AEON* is a decidedly analog home video project at precisely the moment when digital technology eclipsed earlier forms. Unlike Klinger's model in which individuals presumably desire the latest hardware in order to replicate cinematic spectacle in the home, Fast relies on an older form of home video associated with the smaller scale of television. The rented tape thus momentarily brings cinema into the home – both in terms of the film itself and the one-time one-night-only viewing (the rental receipt basically serves as a ticket stub) – but does so in a decidedly "uncinematic" way.[8] Instead, it

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[6] Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 31.
[7] See Godfrey, "Playing the System."
[8] Klinger gives little attention to video rentals, instead focusing on "the media industries' pursuit of high-end collectors – typically, white males intent on building a film archive within an upscale entertainment environment." See Klinger, 63. In other words, her description of an "aesthetics of

transfers the theatrical display of cinematic spectacle into the domestic viewing of

something more ephemeral, personal, and private, despite the imagery of the appropriated

movie going unchanged. Fast materially transforms the physical tape and portions of its

content without altering its mode of distribution, its playback capabilities, or its

aesthetics, something that would be impossible in digital form. *T3–AEON* undercuts the

expectations of what the content of the tape is or was for the unsuspecting renters. By not

adjusting the image, Fast allows *The Terminator* to retain its visual and aesthetic

specificity, asserting in some sense the primacy of viewing in cinematic memory. What

Fast changes is that which is not seen, that which is invisible to the eye, to the viewer, to

the renter. Fast's nostalgia for the VHS tape in a looming digital age reveals the

seemingly fixed past intimately transforming objects and memories which nevertheless

maintain a semblance of their prior appearance. The physical tape conceals its potential

reconfiguration.

Second, Fast transfigures personal memories onto a familiar Hollywood film. As

we have seen, he constructs *T3–AEON* in such a way that the individual stories integrate

with the film's narrative. The interviews underscore the film while it goes on

aesthetically undisturbed. The narrative of *The Terminator* and *T3–AEON* draw attention

to domestic space as a looming place of potential violence. The front door. The second

story landing on Merit Lane. The race from the kitchen to the dining room to the living

room and back to the dining room. The small pantry in which a household object

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integration" relies on the literal transformation of the upper class home into a cinematic theater.
My turn toward home video through nostalgia, then, refutes this professionalized elitism by
integrating the personal with the technological outside of class-based, anti-nostalgic narratives of
technological and historical progress. Instead, nostalgia allows for a more intimate connection
with material history, personal memory, cinematic experience, and individual development.

becomes a stick and signifies being taken to the study. The film's violence manifests in

the personal stories, which the voice over places in the viewer's domestic space. Home

video's time shifting gives Fast the opportunity to locate an unnerving intimacy beneath

the blockbuster's bombastic spectacle of violence. Through both technological history

and personal memory, it is not cinema that reconfigures the home, but the home that

reconfigures cinema. In 2008, Fast discussed his selection of *The Terminator*, explaining:

> *The Terminator* by James Cameron was released in 1984. It was one of the first films I saw after moving to the States. The film is about a psychopath from the future who takes steroids, runs around killing people, cuts his own eye out, marries a Kennedy and then runs for office as governor of the world's eight largest economy. It made a huge impact on me. After seeing the movie, I made my father buy a huge exercise machine at the mall, which we drove home in piece in our new Oldsmobile station wagon.[9]

For Fast, then, *The Terminator* stands as an important piece of personal history –

one of the first films Fast saw after relocating to the US – and absorbs the political,

cultural, and technological changes that have occurred since its release. The choice of

Cameron's film thus serves a number of important purposes. In the year 2000, *The*

Terminator was not a new release. Viewers would presumably rent the by-then iconic

film with a certain set of expectations. Even if younger viewers rented the film to see it

for the first time, they would likely begin with foreknowledge as to what the film is, or, at

the very least, with an idea of what the film is supposed to be. Renters rent *The*

Terminator to return to a well-known entity, a proverbial classic. *T3-AEON* can only alter

The Terminator for viewers who rent it years after was first released and play it back on

an increasingly outdated format. In this sense, Fast relies on the viewer's nostalgia, their

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[9] Godfrey, "Playing the System."

desire for playback, in order to undermine the famed source and discover it in an alternative state.

Perhaps ironically, in choosing *The Terminator*, Fast embraces home video as nostalgic media. While he leaves the film's images unaltered, he also realizes the images have changed. The film cannot be played back for individuals in the same form it had before. Instead, home video playback necessarily updates past memories to present conditions. Rather than sentimentally longing for the past as it was, Fast shows how nostalgic longing tracks cultural and contextual changes over the course of time. Despite his comments suggesting *The Terminator*'s narrative remains intact, his own description of the film indicates that the life of Arnold Schwarzenegger has become an integral part of the way an audience sees *The Terminator* today. Provocatively channeling the film's narrative, Fast's return to *The Terminator* as a home videotape reveals a journey into the supposedly static past that recalibrates alongside knowledge of what will occur in the future. The slippage of how past events effect the present viewing of a film that is even older than those past events proposes a form of interpretation in which the past and present proactively rearrange each other.

Fast's *CNN Concatenated* (2002) similarly investigates the role of moving images in the domestic sphere and their intimate connection with viewers. However, in this case, the source is live television and the 24-hour news cycle rather than home video rentals. In this section, I explore how Fast negotiates the principles of home video and broadcast media via a nostalgic investigation of television. First, I consider *CNN Concatenated*'s formal construction in order to show how Fast roots his critique of mass media between particular delivery systems, notably home video playback and televisual feedback. Then,

I explore the video's installation environments to question the ways in which viewers engage with television across private and public spaces.

To construct *CNN Concatenated*, Fast taped hundreds of hours of live CNN news coverage broadcast during 2001 and 2002. Hooking a television up to a mini-DV deck that ran directly to his computer, Fast created a linked chain from live television to home video recording to digitized computer files. After taping multiple one-hour long segments, Fast examined the footage and broke it apart into discrete files and folders identified by individual words. From this digital database of ten thousand words, he meticulously reassembled the footage into a series of scripted monologues delivered one-word at a time by a multitude of CNN anchors.[10]

The video begins with a return. Welcoming the viewer back from a commercial break, CNN's familiar tune chimes as the resonant voice of James Earl Jones declares, "This is CNN." The CNN logo emerges front and center of the screen amid three spinning globes. After a brief fade to black, the first anchor emerges, speaking the word "between" before Fast's assertive audio-visual montage begins. ("Between. Early. Prime. And. After. Noon. Between. The morning. Belt. And. The. Latest. Boom.) Rapid edits unfix the imagery from its recorded content and context. Fast typically isolates each word or short phrase into separate shots. Fast softens each edit in the opening segment with slight dissolves, precariously weaving together disjointed fragments of sound and speech. Nonetheless, CNN's 24-hour news cycle loses its eternal flow. The endless cycle of TV time breaks apart into fractured bits. As the opening monologue defines CNN as

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[10] Omer Fast, e-mail message to author, September 11, 2015. Thanks to Erica Levin for her help in this regard.

operating "between" seemingly everything imaginable, Fast situates *CNN Concatenated*, like the network itself, between multiple systems of circulation, including playback and feedback, delay and immediacy, analog and digital, past and present.

The comforting role of the anchor dissipates as the figures constantly and abruptly shuffle from one to the next, one shot to the next, one microsecond to the next. Though the shots occasionally land on the same anchor twice in a row, the video displays a constantly rotating slot machine of faces and voices. Fast does little to smooth over disjunctions in the soundtrack, often leaving slight digital audio clicks caused by the abrupt edits. Aside from the opening sequence, each shot straight cuts to the next without any smoothing dissolves or fades. The CNN logo, emblazed in the bottom right corner, toggles up and down depending on the time of day and whether or not a news ticker scrolls across the bottom of the screen. Various news stories ("The Chandra Levy Case"; "The Hunt For Bin Laden"; "Target: Terrorism") flash up and disappear. The images and soundtrack are insistently unsettled.

The final six monologues purport to be a personal conversation between the shuffling anchors and the viewer rather than a typical news broadcast. However, the speakers display hysterical demands for attention. The second monologue begins, "Listen. To. Me. … I. Want. To. Tell. You. Something. … Come. Closer. … Don't. Be. Upset. And. Don't. Get. Emotional. … Just. Get. Near. Me. And. Pay. Attention. Please."[11] Each word attacks the viewer, spewing out of the screen like a projectile, a

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[11] Critical literature on *CNN Concatenated* has tended to quote the video's monologues as connected lines or stanzas of poetry, perhaps with dashes signifying each edit. See, for example, Erica Levin, "Toward a Social Cinema Revisited," *Millennium Film Journal* 58 (Fall 2013): 22–33. However, I want to insist further on the fractured quality of each word's delivery. For this

single shard of glass lodged underneath a rapidly blinking eye. The anchors beg for attention, reflect upon their own authority, lash out at the listener, and plead for forgiveness, albeit without accepting responsibility. As Karen Archey suggests, the monologues create an "eery, uncanny feeling" in which the newscaster "confess[es] his wrongdoings and wax[es] philosophical on the nature of the ego post-9/11."[12]

In this way, Fast highlights the stages of grief for the spectacular post-9/11 media environment, but offers no resolution for the news media or the viewer. Instead, he lays bare the latent messages of digital culture's 24-hour news cycle as they feed into the home and shape the private lives of individuals. The anchors project fear-based narratives and determine what the viewers should and should not do, how they should and should not act, and how they should relate to the world around them. In particular, they demand the viewer live exclusively in the present moment, avoiding the weight of history, the passage of time. ("You. Re. Cycle. Anything. Older. Than. A. Day. … Anything. That. Carries. A. History. Is. Dangerous. … You. Want. To. Erode. The Grip. Of. The. Past. … Anything. Beyond. Your. Control. Is. A. Threat.")

As *CNN Concatenated* unfolds, however, its accumulating narrative highlights televisual address as a uni-directional system. The anchors' voices project into the home, but they seem increasingly cut off from the lives of their viewers who apparently refuse to respond. ("Don't. Talk. … Don't Move. … Don't. Even. React. … Actually. Don't. Do. Anything. At. All. … Just. Get. Near. Me. Already. You. Hypo. Critical. Opportunist.

reason, I have written the dialogue out in this manner. Extra elipses […] indicate the inclusion of a pause, or a shot in which nothing is spoken.
[12] Karen Archey. "Between Early, Prime and Afternoon: Omer Fast at the Wexner Center," *Rhizome*, July 19, 2012, accessed July 25, 2016, http://rhizome.org/editorial/2012/jul/19/omer-fast/.

Fake. Phony. Con Artist. Sell. Out. Lip. Serving. Limou. Sine. Liberal. White. Chicken.

Shit. Mother. Fucker.") The following monologue starts with an apology ("I'm. So.

Sorry. This. Happened. … Sometimes. I. Get. Carried. Away. And. Speak. Without.

Thinking. … Will. You. Forgive. Me?") but quickly pushes away responsibility. The

video ends with the anchors reflecting on their intimate, yet strained relationship with the

viewer. ("We. Cannot. Handle. The. Quiet. … The. Horrible. Normal. … The. Shared.

Non. Eventful. Ness. That. Would. Give. Our. Relationship. The. Stability. It. So.

Desperately. Lacks. … I'm. Exhausted. From. Trying. … I. Love. You. … I. Miss. You.

Even. Though. We Hardly. Spend. Any. Time. Away. From. Each. Other. … But. Still. I.

Cannot. Give. Up. … It's. Funny. To. Say. This. But. I. Feel. More. Alone. In. Your.

Company. Now. Than. Ever. Before.") While the video begins with the anchors dictating

how the viewer should live, these final moments suggest a reversal of fortune. As their

relationship dissolves, it is not viewers than need TV, but TV that needs viewers,

desperate viewers, who want TV as a comforting presence rather than the broadcaster of

frightening, never-ending events. Television collapses into a cacophony of sameness,

making it difficult to listen and easy to tune out, or turn off.

Even if the viewers have stopped hearing the message – or, perhaps, it has

become so engrained in their lives that they no longer need to respond – the gallery

installations of *CNN Concatenated* make clear the importance of the anchors' projection

of their narrative into the viewer's physical space. The video negotiates not only

television and the home, but also moving images and the gallery. It does not just play on

a standard monitor or screen, but installs it within a particular environment. Here, I will

analyze two distinct installation environments and tease out the critical implications for

the video. For Fast, the video is not a static entity, isolated within the context in which it was constructed. In a 2012 interview, he suggests the video's gallery installation allows for "a mobility and freedom that does not exist, for example, in the cinema."[13] While this quotation echoes ideas about how the gallery provides a more mobile and open-ended viewing experience, I contend the differing environments reveal an underlying mobility within the single-channel video itself.

At the 2009 exhibition *Omer Fast* at Lund Kunsthalle (Fig. 33) and the 2011 exhibition *2001/2011* at the Wexner Center for the Arts (Fig. 34), *CNN Concatenated* played on a boxy, 4:3 television set within a domestic setting. In Lund, the television was affixed to the back wall, placed high above a refrigerator in a kitchen. At the Wexner, the video played in a typical living room, broadcasting from a television between two book shelves in a space filled with Ikea furniture. The domestic environments provided a sense of familiarity for viewers, mimicking the quotidian comfort one feels in front of television. Unlike any other piece of furniture, however, the television screen feeds the outside world into private domestic space. The television does not innocuously fold into the background, but instead becomes a loud, choppy, interruptive force. Word by word, the multitude of anchors call out to the viewer, expressing their desire for connectivity and intimacy in a dangerous world. The television feeds a sense of impending danger, a cacophonous invasion of shifting voices who insistently blare a unified message of interpersonal and social breakdown into the privacy of the home.

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[13] Kris Paulsen, "Omer Fast and Kris Paulsen: A Conversation," *Wexner Center for the Arts Blog*, July 10, 2012, accessed July 25, 2016, http://wexarts.org/blog/omer-fast-and-kris-paulsen-conversation.

These installations establish a resolute tension between television, the video, and the viewer's space. The domestic settings propose a return to a pre-digital connection with television, one in which groups of viewers, likely families, watch TV programs together as they have dinner or relax at the end of the day. In this case, television programs retain authoritative power in the home, bespeaking of worldly danger beyond the front door. Television seeks to trap the viewers in the moment and infinitely implant them on the couch or in the chair. Thus, on the one hand, Fast can praise the openness, comfort, and mobility of the gallery environment, and, on the other, bluntly state that "The prime imperative [of the installation] is to try to capture people and keep them there."[14] The environment conveys a sense of comfort and freedom. The video uses an assertive direct address that demands absorption, undercutting the familiar playback of the environment into the perpetual immediacy of the 24-hour news cycle. Far from an innocuous piece of furniture, television is a technology of intimacy, power, and control.

Through this conflicted negotiation of domestic technology, broadcast content, and the surrounding environment, the Lund and Wexner exhibitions of *CNN Concatenated* underline what Mary Ann Doane refers to as "televisual catastrophe."[15] The catastrophe is an event that can provide viewers with a sense of the real. It operates in a temporality of the instant, unfolding in live, real-time. The broadcasting of catastrophe establishes the possibility of a "personal" relationship between viewer and televisual anchor. Doane explains, "Catastrophe produces the illusion that the spectator is in direct contact with the anchorperson, who interrupts the regular programming to

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Mary Anne Doane, "Information, Crisis, Catastrophe," in *Logics of Television: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 238.

demonstrate that it can indeed be done when the referent is at stake. Television's greatest

technological prowess is its ability to be there – both on the scene and in your living

room."[16]

With *CNN Concatenated*, Fast explores the catastrophe's disruption of playback

and distance in favor of the instant and intimacy. As I have already suggested, the video's

direct address asserts the power of the instant and places the viewer in direct connection

with the ever-shifting anchors. However, as the video progresses, it shows the withering

relationship between the two. Contact comes to be understood as an illusion as

preprogrammed as the anchors' words. If the televisual catastrophe shows television's

liveness and real-time encroachment into the lives of spectators, *CNN Concatenated*

reverses the dynamic by operating at a post-dated, pre-recorded remove from the instant

of catastrophe, producing an immediate distance from the instant. Fast achieves this

formally through his databasing formalism, the already mentioned concatenated transfer

from live television to home (digital) video recording to digitized video files to a database

of words.[17] Each step builds a further distance from the instant of recording, the liveness

of television, the moment of catastrophe. In *CNN Concatenated*, the televisual

catastrophe of 9/11 lingers as a specter over all future broadcasts, over every instant.

Utilizing home video playback to recreate the catastrophic instant, Fast shows the

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[16] Ibid.

[17] For an extensive overview of these methods and strategies, see Victoria Vesna, ed., *Database Aesthetics: Art in the Age of Information Overflow* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

televisual prowess is no longer just its ability to be on the scene and in the living room, but for the spectral past to reconstruct the immediacy of the present.[18]

For Fast, the video's intervention reflects nostalgia for television as it once was, as it was in the Lund and Wexner exhibitions, in the domestic sphere. In the years since 9/11, however, television's role has radically changed. In the previously cited 2012 interview, Fast reflects on these changes and how they shape *CNN Concatenated* in the present. Arguing that television has lost some importance due to its current state of fragmentation, Fast says, "[*CNN Concatenated*] presents a much more nostalgic, almost romantic notion of television – of the artist responding to the medium as it were, and doing so very deliberately, very transparently."[19] Here, television's authority comes under pressure. The idea of responding to television as an isolated, singular, specific medium comes to be seen as nostalgic or romantic. While Fast seems critical of the video's nostalgic intervention, in giving more credence to the video's installation environments, I have shown how Fast's nostalgia for television immediately distances itself from the supposed stasis of a romanticized nostalgia. Instead, as emblematic of nostalgic media, the video takes on a critical examination of changes that have occurred in, on, and around television, particularly in the domestic sphere and its subsequent relationship with individual viewers. Once again, nostalgia operates as a moving image.

A 2015 installation of the video responded further to changes that have occurred around television since the video's premiere in 2002. At Jeu de Paume in Paris, the

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[18] This dialogue between "now" and "then" could be seen in the context of what Laura Mulvey calls "a cinema of delay." See Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness the Moving Image* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
[19] Paulsen, "Omer Fast and Kris Paulsen: A Conversation."

installation removed the video from the private domestic sphere and placed it in the public space reminiscent of an airport terminal (Fig. 35). Without altering the content of the video, the environment compounded its investigation of playback systems and the instantaneity of the televisual catastrophe. Implicitly responding to Doane's comments on television's presence in the living room and Fast's televisual nostalgia, the Jeu de Paume installation placed the video in a site without specificity, one literally designed for mobility and located in between locations. There's no *there* there. The space of the airport signifies a lack of place, embodying the instantaneous flow of television's 24-hour news cycle, something always on the move. If the domestic installations revealed a tension between television, the video, and the environment, here, the technology and the environment align with one another. The airport and digital television become perfect partners, operating in tandem. To rephrase Doane's assertion, television greatest technological prowess is now its ability to be between anywhere and nowhere, to say everything and nothing, at the same time.

However, there is still the video. Realizing television vacated its authority with its evaporation into a non-place, the formal construction of *CNN Concatenated* gains updated significance. I have shown how Fast's playback strategies create an immediate distance from the monologue's present-tense direct address, its absorption in the real-time instant of catastrophe. In this case, the video's concatenated chain of recording and translating begins to underscore television's own transformation across the private space of the home and the public non-place of the airport, and, further, its technological history moving from analog tape to digital data. As I explained at the beginning of this section, Fast recorded live television footage onto mini-DV tape that was then digitized onto a

computer. Fast's recording process passes the live footage through a hybrid analog-digital system before it ultimately flattens into digital code.

More than simply a requirement of the technological times, Fast reveals the process of an intimate distancing, a private recording taped for later broadcasting that ultimately plays back in an altered, updated form, a past not yet experienced. As nostalgic media, home video recording delays the instant of the television broadcast and distances the source from its playback content. Recalling the history of home video tape that began this chapter, *CNN Concatenated* shows time shifting lose its sense of time just as its 2015 installation shows space lose its sense of place. Following Jonathan Crary's suggestion, the updated installation of *CNN Concatenated* shows that 24/7 television is now less about mass-deception (as Adorno and other suggested) but rather a strategy of power that aims at creating a state of neutralization and inactivation that dispossesses one of time.[20] *CNN Concatenated* reveals the fractured connection between users and their technologies, the distance between the moment of catastrophe and its timeless, spectral aftershocks.

Forgetting The Clock (2010)

Keeping in mind Fast's exploration of home video time shifting in VHS rentals and the 24-hour news cycle, I turn in this section to Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010), the wildly successful 24-hour video installation hailed by author Zadie Smith as

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[20] Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Last Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (New York: Verso, 2007), 88.

"perhaps the greatest film you have ever seen."[21] A surprisingly logical outgrowth of

Fast's home video interventions, Marclay created *The Clock* by editing together

thousands of clips from film and television that unfold across each and every minute of

the 24-hour day. The time on-screen synchronizes with the clock time of the spectator.

Constructed using the principles of continuity editing, the video functions in the manner

and the scale of a Hollywood blockbuster, although, composed of isolated fragments

from throughout the history of cinema and television, it resists the plotting and

storytelling of a popular narrative feature. Instead, time propels *The Clock* forward and

demands the viewer keep moving forward with it, no looking back. There is a decisive

split in the video itself between retrospection and anticipation, a return to popular films of

the past and their rapid disappearance as another film takes their place in the unfolding

present. The clips end without resolution, constantly thwarting their dramatic tension.

Instantaneous time floats in a process of perpetual waiting without end.

While many critics have discussed *The Clock* in terms of cinema and memory, in

this section, I consider what and how *The Clock* forgets. My own experiences watching

The Clock spawn this turn to forgetfulness. Over the course of almost a year and in two

separate installations (first at Lincoln Center in New York and then at the Wexner Center

for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio), I spent about 18 hours watching *The Clock*. Each time I

left the ongoing screening, two things happened: first, I had an unexpected desire to

check my watch, and, second, I almost immediately forgot everything I had just seen.

How do the video's formal strategies contribute to this situation? Would note-taking and

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[21] Zadie Smith, "Killing Orson Welles at Midnight," *New York Review of Books*, April 28, 2011, accessed July 25, 2016, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2011/04/28/killing-orson-welles-midnight/.

creating a list of films I recognize and the times they appear reveal something about the

video? Would that be useful after the fact? If I don't recognize anything, should I leave?

What does *The Clock* ask of time? What does *The Clock* ask of its viewers? As a digital

video installation, what does *The Clock* say about its greatest source of inspiration: 20th

century cinema?

I explore these questions by, first, briefly considering some precursors to *The*

Clock's emergence. Within a gallery context, the most notable forerunner to *The Clock*,

as many scholars have suggested, is Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* (1993). While

both videos unfold over a 24-hour running time and rely on appropriated footage as

source material, they display radically different viewing experiences, underscored by

both their formal construction and installation contexts. I show how Gordon's video

attends to the passage of time, extended cinematic duration, and a popular Hollywood

film transforming into a material object of history. Anthony McCall has suggested that,

"With Douglas Gordon's work, there is a strong element of nostalgia for a particular

period of Hollywood, a classical period that never actually existed."[22] However, I argue

that Gordon's nostalgia reveals precisely this non-existence and instead longs for a

collective embrace of the singular film as a living entity, an object of history, across

multiple contexts. Then, in contrast, I consider how *The Clock*'s central conceit – the

unfolding of screen time in direct alignment with the clock time of the viewer – embraces

24-hour digital television. Returning to my forgetfulness, Mary Ann Doane writes,

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[22] Malcolm Turvey et al., "Round Table: The Projected Image in Art," *October* 104 (Spring 2003): 86. In a follow-up comment, George Baker intimates that Gordon's nostalgia is for "the last moment of the auteur" and resurrecting a moment of transition between silent and sound cinema.

"Television thrives on its own forgettability."[23] Viewers have the chance to briefly recollect the films that appear, but the video moves on, forcing the viewer to move in step with it, constantly changing from one film, one era, one time to the next. Viewers cling to memory, but *The Clock*'s insistent motion leaves them little time to reflect on any one particular moment, any one particular film. And yet, like the conjoined monologue of disparate voices in *CNN Concatenated*, the perpetually unfolding 24-hour clock holds *The Clock* together, trapping its images and its viewers in a state of perpetual unrest. In this way, returning to the writings of Doane, I contend that *The Clock* functions as a cinematic catastrophe for the digital age.

Though Fast's early work informs Marclay's monumental video, Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* stands as the most important precursor to *The Clock*, particularly due to its negotiation of gallery installation, cinema, television, and home video. As such, it stands separate from and yet helps clarify the specific nature of Marclay's cinematic catastrophe. In *24 Hour Psycho*, Gordon used as his source a VHS copy of Alfred Hitchcock's canonical film *Psycho* (1960) that was taped from a television broadcast. He slowed the footage down so that the film plays back across 24 hours rather than unspooling over 109 minutes. He also removed the audio soundtrack and installed the projected image in the center of a gallery so that spectators can move in front, behind, and around the screen, all the while watching the images painstakingly crawl from one frame to the next at roughly two frames per second. The narrative drive of Hitchcock's film evaporates. The images sputter forward, hesitating as long as they possibly can. The film's suspense and shock transfers onto the anxiety-riddled audience

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[23] Doane, "Information, Crisis, Catastrophe," 226.

who are pushed out of the film's plotted narrative diegesis and are forced to confront

prolonged durational time. *24 Hour Psycho* affords an experience of time's passage.

Gordon's slowing down of *Psycho* into an interminable series of unmoving moments

leads to a reflection on the length and weight of time as its lumbers forward.

For some of these reasons, critics have variously written about *24 Hour Psycho* as

celebration of mobility (rejecting the supposed stasis of the cinematic spectator), a denial

of pleasure, or a work of anti-illusionism.[24] However, more recently, Erika Balsom

reframes *24 Hour Psycho* in a way that opens onto my consideration of home video

appropriation throughout this chapter. She argues that *24 Hour Psycho* investigates the

relationship between cinema and the spectator after the introduction of domestic

technologies, particularly home videotape and the remote control. Highlighting the

video's formal qualities amid shifting formats and contexts, she writes:

> The use of VHS format causes a significant degradation of the image when compared
> to a 35mm print, made especially evident by the large-scale projection of the image, a
> scale for which VHS is by no means suited. *24 Hour Psycho* is not merely *Psycho*
> slowed to an approximate duration of twenty-four hours; it is also an unabashedly
> *video*-based copy of *Psycho* slowed to an approximated duration of twenty-hour
> hours… It makes monstrous a VHS copy of *Psycho* and shifts formats again, this
> time to a gallery installation. Such activities are inextricably linked to ways in which
> the spectators' relation to cinema changed after domestic use of home videotape.[25]

Similar to what I uncovered in the home video work of Omer Fast, Balsom shows

how Gordon's 24-hour hour cinematic appropriation addresses the mutability of a

singular canonical film thanks to domestic technologies. Moving from cinema to the

home to television to videotape and to the gallery, the pristine cinematic image changes

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[24] See, for example, Andy Birtwistle, "Douglas Gordon and Cinematic Audovisuality in the Age
of Television: Experiencing the Experience of Cinema," *Visual Culturw in Britain* 13.1 (March
2012): 101–113.
[25] Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University
Press, 2014), 141.

in quality. The sharpness of Hitchcock's imagery turns into something she calls "monstrous." Losing its soundtrack and stretching to an absurd length, the film transforms into an alien form. Though Gordon anticipates a familiarity with *Psycho*, *24 Hour Psycho* refuses a retrospective glance backward onto to the cinematic text as it was, and instead recalibrates it into a modified, strange, and uncertain present.

Nonetheless, it lurks in the title: *Psycho*. The past source remains a known entity, a reference point, a common experience, an object of history to which the current video responds. For Gordon, there is no separating *Psycho*, the film, from *Psycho*, screened on home video. They operate alongside and in conjunction with one another, just as *24 Hour Psycho* works with its ur-text, that is, by examining the conditions under which it reshapes its own past. Certainly, *24 Hour Psycho* alters *Psycho* in some way, but only after *Psycho* has fundamentally changed. With *24 Hour Psycho*, Gordon returns to *Psycho* as never before because *Psycho* reveals itself in as a particular work of home video.

Released the same year as *The Clock*, Don DeLillo's novel *Point Omega* opens with a reflection on *24 Hour Psycho*. The passage underscores *24 Hour Psycho* as a work of home video and foretells many issues that Marclay grapples with in the construction and presentation of his video. As before, these concerns relate to the video's formal qualities, its installation context, as well as the spectator's viewing experience and their presumed familiarity with appropriated material. After describing his character's personal offense toward non-serious patrons who all too quickly leave the installation, DeLillo's omniscient narrator reflects on the *24 Hour Psycho*'s viewing conditions.

Twenty-four hours. The museum closed at five-thirty most days. What he wanted was a situation in which the museum closed but the gallery did not. He wanted to see the film screened start to finish over twenty-four consecutive hours. No one allowed to enter once the screening begins. This was history he was watching in a way, a movie known to people everywhere. He played with the idea that the gallery was like a preserved site, a dead poet's cottage or hushed tomb, a medieval chapel. Here it is, the Bates Motel. But people don't see this. They see fractured motion, film stills on the border of benumbed life. He understands what they see. They see one brain-dead room in six gleaming floors of crowded art. The original movie is what matters to them, a common experience relived on TV screens, at home, with dishes in the sink.[26]

There are several important elements here that further clarify the innovations of *24 Hour Psycho* and the situation within which *The Clock* emerges. First and foremost, of course, there is the matter of the 24-hour hour running time. It is likely impossible to view the video in full. While it is worth wondering why anyone would want to do so in the first place, especially in the case of *24 Hour Psycho*, DeLillo's character approaches the video from a distinctly cinematic point of view. He wants to see the film from start to finish; he wants a clear starting time and ending time; he wants the ability to view the film from beginning to end without interruption. Displayed in a public space, however, the museum's galleries are only open during regular viewing hours, that is, seven or eight hours a day, making the fulfillment of these desires impossible. Further, for *24 Hour Psycho*, the video does not start or stop at the same point each day and the museums do not set starting times. There is no way for viewers to determine which portion of the film they will see. There is an expectation that viewers will enter and exit at different times. The frustrations of DeLillo's character come from his bringing the demands of cinema into the "preserved site" of the gallery. The loss of cinematic characteristics turns the video into fractured motion in an empty, "brain-dead room." He remembers cinema in an attempt to forget *Psycho* as a common experience, seen on TV, merely modified in this

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[26] Don DeLillo, *Point Omega* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 5.

installation. He demands viewers forget *Psycho* as a movie so they can see *24 Hour Psycho* as a memorial.

Here, the spectator's knowledge of the canonical film thwarts the desires of DeLillo's character. The final sentence of DeLillo's passage suggests a similar realization to that brought forward by Balsom: *Psycho* is known not because it is a classic work of cinema, but because it is a product of home video, a form of memory, of playback. The "original movie" becomes a common experience "relived" in the clutter of domestic space and in the context of daily life. Viewers do not remember the movie just as a movie, but rather as perfectly quotidian, its dramatic imagery fitting in alongside a sink of dirty dishes. And, just like Fast's choice of *The Terminator*, even if you haven't seen *Psycho*, you have seen *Psycho*. Viewers can enter the screening, encounter the images, and attempt to put them into a context based on their past viewing experience. Is the focus on Marion Cane? Or Anthony Bates? Perhaps because of its innovative structure and abandonment of its initial narrative, a decisive deathly event marks the viewing of *Psycho*. Is it before or after the middle? That is, before or after The Shower Scene? Viewers organize what they encounter because the canonical film is now something abundantly familiar, a part of the domestic environment, something intimate, personal, and private.

I argue *24 Hour Psycho* embodies both the technological and environmental adaptation of cinema into the home. As Balsom suggests, the video reflects the transfer from film to television to home videotape to the gallery, and also addresses the movement from the black box to the cluttered rectangle to the white cube. Gordon relies on the film's particular past not so much in the cinema, but rather on home videotape and

literally in the home, the space returned to throughout the 24-hour day. In tracking *Psycho*'s passage in time from cinema to the home to the gallery, Gordon reveals in *24 Hour Psycho* an investment in *Psycho* an a living entity, an object of history, that absorbs contextual changes over a prolonged passage of time.

The Clock, on the other hand, offers a profoundly different viewing experience both in terms of the video's installation and its appearance. For many, *The Clock* represents the art world's embrace of increasingly popular large-scale, projected video installations that utilize the language of cinema. As Balsom notes elsewhere, since the 1990s, advancements in video projection technologies "pulled video art away from television and towards the scale, spectacle, and capacity for illusionism proper to the cinema. This mode of display heralded a changed relationship between the video image and the space of the gallery: video would no longer be confined to the small, domestic scale of the monitor, but was able to envelop large spaces, often to spectacular effect."[27] What began with *24 Hour Psycho*, then, perhaps ends with *The Clock*. Gordon's insistence on an analog video-based appropriation falls away as Marclay moves toward something decidedly more cinematic, spectacular, and insistently digital.

The Clock's cinematic qualities seem clear. As DeLillo's character asked of *24 Hour Psycho*, museums stay open for a full 24-hours at some point during *The Clock*'s installation, per Marclay's demands. Theoretically, then, the audience can view the video in full, from whatever "beginning" or "end" they choose. The installation environment takes on the qualities of a theatrical cinema. In a darkened room, the video projects onto a large screen, providing cinematic scale and reconnecting the home-video source material

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[27] Erika Balsom, "Around *The Clock*: Museum and Market," *Framework* 54.2 (Fall 2013): 179.

to its theatricality.[28] There are Ikea couches in the galleries for viewers to settle in and comfortably watch rather than independently move around the space. For Catherine Russell, the viewing conditions cut the video off from a domestic context and reassert the importance of the theatrical environment.[29] Unlike a film screening, however, viewers determine the length of the screening. There is no right or wrong time to enter, just as there is no predetermined beginning or end. Aligning more closely to the conditions of moving-image art in galleries, the video is displayed as a 24-hour loop, not a 24-hour movie.

Nonetheless, *The Clock* assumes the formal appearance of a singular, contemporary Hollywood blockbuster. Marclay uses precise continuity editing, seamlessly weaving together a multitude of clips. He meticulously crafts the audio soundtrack, incorporating elements from the appropriated footage, but also, in some cases, creating an entirely new soundtrack so that each edit smoothly bridges to the next in both audio and visual quality. To ensure this, he also modifies the images, digitizing the footage, outputting the files into the same aspect ratio, and saturating the image quality (when needed) to avoid excessive formal disjunction. Unlike Gordon, he avoids calling attention to the specific home video technologies, and goes further by uniting disparate film styles, countries of origin, and time periods into one unified video. Each selection blends into (or, at least, refuses to interrupt) the next, making uniform disparate

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[28] Ibid.,182. Due to its use of large-scale projection, Erika Balsom identifies *The Clock*'s "marshaling of cinematic display" as central to an institutional paradigm shift within the museum in which artists utilize (and galleries embrace) the language and format of cinema.
[29] Catherine Russell, "Archival Cinephilia in *The Clock*," *Framework* 54.2 (Fall 2013): 243–258, esp. 247–51. "We need to note the omnipresence of the white Ikea sofas and the impossibility of transferring the worked to a convenient format like the DVD that one could watch at home. The return to the theater, or its simulacrum in the gallery, is integral to the work."

cinematic histories. Given the running time and the sheer number of sources, time doesn't stretch out in *The Clock* as it does in *24 Hour Psycho*, but rather blurs together, even as the footage calls attention to ever-changing synchronized time on and off screen. Without a particular narrative drive, it becomes increasingly difficult to recall who, what, how, or when any particular scenes or moments appear. The footage unfolds in a timely order, but content of the footage gets lost in time. Operating in a temporality of the instant, *The Clock* obscures the playback function of home-video and instead uses time shifting to situate historical moving-images as a history of the perpetual present in the mode of digital television.

Thus, despite its cinematic proclamations, I argue *The Clock* is emblematic of a cinematic catastrophe for the digital age. If *24 Hour Psycho* is an unabashedly (home) video-based reflection on film becoming a common experience, *The Clock* represents an unabashedly digital video-based predilection on cinema becoming an isolated blip in the instantaneous screen culture of 24-hour digital television. Critics have thus far obscured *The Clock*'s connection to television, resolutely insisting on cinematic metaphors. Taking the synchronization of time as its central conceit and innovation, a number of observers – Rosalind Krauss, Julie Levinson, Catherine Fowler, and others – emphasize, in their words, "the synchronizing of real time and reel time."[30] It is worth taking this quip seriously. This cinematization of *The Clock* obviates what the video is, how it works, and what it says about time and the history of cinema. Clearly, the use of "reel time"

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[30] See Rosalind Krauss, "Clock Time," *October* 136 (Spring 2011): 213–17; Catherine Fowler, "*The Clock*: Gesture and Cinematic Replaying," *Framework* 54.2 (Fall 2013): 226–42; Julie Levinson, "Time and Time Again: Temporality, Narrativity, and Spectatorship in Christian Marclay's *The Clock*," *Cinema Journal* 54.3 (Spring 2015): 88–109.

emphasizes a relationship to 20th century cinema, and, in particular, 35mm film, known

as the Academy format. While it is true that the majority of the films seen in *The Clock*

were shot on 35mm, Marclay's formal strategies rely upon cinema as a digital database,

that is, of transcoding cinema into discrete, independent files. In other words, from the

outset, *The Clock* approaches cinema as digital media, not as theatrically projected

celluloid film. Critical references to "reel time" or "real time" confuse *The Clock*'s digital

nature.

      The Clock's digitality reflects what Nicholas Bourriaud identifies as the logic of

sampling, a fitting contention for Marclay given his background in music. For Bourriaud,

artistic sampling challenges the notion of the artist as Author and instead positions artists

as figures aligned with programmers and DJs. For these figures, Bourriaud writes, "the

sample no longer represents anything more than a salient point in a shifting cartography.

It is caught in a chain, and its meaning depends in part on its position in this chain…The

contemporary work of art does not position itself as the termination point of the 'creative

process' (a 'finished product' to be contemplated) but as a site of navigation, a portal, a

generator of activities."[31] In this case, then, the sample – that is, the appropriated material

– loses its autonomy in a necessarily fluid temporality. Each sample operates as an

isolated point *caught* in a chain, an unfolding instant.

      As an unfinished, unfolding product that continues to generate activity, the work

of art, *The Clock*, refutes durational time and refuses the affixed finality of "reel time" in

which a series of photographic images, printed on film, placed in a reel, projected at 24

frames per second, necessarily correspond to the images that were shown immediately

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[31] Nicholas Bourriaud, *Postproduction* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2007), 19.

prior. In *The Clock*, the synchronized digital instant cannot be seen as an innovation; it is the foundational principle of Marclay's entire project.[32] As evidenced by these misplaced cinematic metaphors, Marclay effectively disguises *The Clock*'s unfailing instantaneity, its transformation of cinema history into a catastrophe.

Displaying the catastrophic temporality of the instant, *The Clock* avoids confronting time's passage. Far from offering what Julie Levinson describes as "a temporal whiplash in which we are hurtled back and forth across the decades, centuries, and millennia of the films' collective settings,"[33] I suggest *The Clock*'s sampling most closely resembles channel surfing: flipping from one channel, one film, to the next, for a moment or two, never really concerned with narrative, or how the image looks, or when it was made. There can be no whiplash because there are no expectations, no particular choices to be made, nothing that needs to be remembered. Instead, viewers click around, seeing what comes next, in the next minute, at the top of the hour. The appearance of a clock marks each flip of the channel. The screen perpetually cycles through until *the viewer* decides to stop, to get up, to turn it off, to walk out.

In this case, though, Marclay, the sampler-artist, takes control of the remote, deciding what will be seen, how it will be played back, and for how long. While Bourriaud suggests the programmer-DJ operates at a remove from the traditional artistic author, he also describes the sample as being *caught* in a chain, almost as if the sample is cornered, trapped, unable to get free. Interestingly, he quotes Douglas Gordon who says

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[32] This argument underscores Homay King's contention that *The Clock* represents "a digital clock masquerading as an analog clock." See Homay King, *Virtual Memory: Time-Based Art and the Dream of Digitality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 59.
[33] Levinson, "Time and Time Again," 94.

he's "happy to remain in the background of a piece like *24 Hour Psycho* where Hitchcock is the dominant figure."[34] As the invisible hand flipping the remote control, is Marclay similarly in the background of *The Clock*? Who, or what, is the dominant figure for Marclay? Who, or what, is the dominant figure for the viewer?

These questions reveal in *The Clock* a delayed feedback loop between the appropriation artist and the audience. Marclay longs for the viewer's open-ended nostalgia to generate a response to his catastrophe; entering the screening, the viewer puts their trust in Marclay's nostalgia, his return to the past not yet experienced. Both the artist and the viewers long for the other to take control, to make their own choices, to select what matters. Marclay wants the viewer to be the dominant figure, but the viewer cannot help but see Marclay as the one who captures the footage, who asserts control, who changes the channel. Reconstructing the history of cinema as a digital catastrophe, Marclay shows his longing to forget cinema and cinematic time, to forget movies as finished products, to forget the author, to forget duration. He implicates the viewer's romanticization of cinema – its completeness, its stars, its historicity – amidst the fragmentary, yet orderly instantaneity of a 24-hour digital environment.

Explaining the catastrophe as a discontinuity in a continuous system, Doane writes, "If Nick Browne is correct in suggesting that, through its alignment of its own schedule with the work day and the work week, television 'helps produce and render 'natural' logic and rhythm of the social order,' then catastrophe would represent that which cannot be contained within such an ordering of temporality."[35] With *The Clock*,

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[34] Douglas Gordon, "A New Generation of Readymades," *Art Press* 255 (March 2000): 27–32.
[35] Doane, "Information, Crisis, Catstrophe," 232–33.

Marclay shows the temporality of the instant as discontinuous with the viewer's nostalgia for cinema, a form of nostalgia enlivened by the ongoing separation of individual cinematic memories from their particular past. Marclay uses the history of cinema to reconstruct the "logic and rhythm of the social order," but, in so doing, the viewer comes to recognize the catastrophic uncontainability of cinema within a temporality of the instant. Marclay incorporates cinema in order to forget it. However, for the viewer, cinema continues as an object of history, as memory's nostalgic material.

Viewing *The Clock*, then, one thing seems very clear: the spectator can only identify or misidentify what they already know, what they have already seen, or what they think they may have seen. There are significant consequences when the viewer, or Marclay, turns *The Clock* into a cinematic game of hide-and-seek. As Homay King explains, viewing *The Clock* in this manner turns the work into "a static archive that *we* match up with names and dates from *our* memory files (or from our smartphones)."[36] This approach effectively isolates the footage and the viewer. Each disparate clip separates from the next, retaining its autonomy while also losing its particularity both within Marclay's constructed chain and the films' own narrative. Viewers carry their own "memory files" to the screening. Memory becomes a kind of televisual channel surfing. The shared experience of watching a singular film dissipates into a fractured experience of remembering (or not remembering) Marclay's digital database of collected films.

If this is the case, Marclay cultivates the film experience as an isolated rather than collective enterprise. Even though the installation returns to the conditions of theatrical cinema, approaching *The Clock* as a static archive, to rephrase King, only lets *me* recall

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[36] King, *Virtual Memory*, 61.

footage from *my* memory files.[37] Bringing Doane's theory of catastrophe into the digital moment, Marclay indicates not, as Doane suggests, "just how *nationalistic* the apprehension of catastrophe is," but rather how *individualistic* a catastrophe (and nostalgia) becomes in the temporality of the digital instant.[38] This is not to say that Marclay's selections are too obscure or not a part of canonical film history and thereby cut off from collective memory or national identity. To be sure, many popular films employed in *The Clock* are likely to be recognized by a large portion of viewers, including works from a number of (largely Western) countries. Further, many critics could (and have) provided convincing readings of specific choices made by Marclay and analyzed how he uses intervals in time for both comedic and tragic effect.[39] At the same time, I propose that Marclay's strategies leads to a counterintuitive result indicative of the era in which and the means by which he constructs *The Clock*: the digitization and fragmentation of cinema history into televisual form points to a nostalgic forgetting of shared, historical, public film culture and a move toward the isolated instantaneity of a private, smartphone-driven screen culture. Just as many museum's utilized social media and special applications to announce wait times for entering *The Clock*, the video would fit right in as a cell phone screen saver, perpetually showing the time with a time-based film clip.

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[37] Of course, individual viewers always encounter films in their own way. What I mean here is that Marclay deemphasizes the sense of a public, collective film experience that was central to 20th century filmmaking.

[38] Doane, "Information, Crisis, Catastrophe," 232.

[39] See King, *Virtual Memory*, Chapter Two; Genevieve Yue, "Clocks for Seeing: Christian Marclay's *The Clock*," *Film Comment*, July, 19 2012, accessed July 31, 2016, https://www.filmcomment.com/blog/clocks-for-seeing-christian-marclays-the-clock/.

For this reason, the critical drive toward note-taking and documentation of what appears in *The Clock* seems antithetical to the video itself. Just as important as what is remembered is what is forgotten, or, at the very least, acknowledging that something is always being forgotten. What catastrophe is being ignored? What narrative is being eluded? The propensity for documentation comes in part by the video's exclusivity, its gallery setting, and the long lines that accompanied its installation in places like London, New York, and Los Angeles.[40] Audiences bring a preemptive sense of nostalgia to the screening, knowing that their chances to see the work are very limited. Desperate to record what took place so it won't be forgotten, an index of their perhaps one-time-only experience, critics largely approach the work as if they were archaeologists, collecting the fragmented history of cinema as constructed by the invisible hand of Marclay. They want to remember *The Clock* as an event.

In line with its own aims, then, I suggest forgetting *The Clock*. Rather than remembering the history of cinema or going on an individualistic transhistorical recovery mission, I argue that what *The Clock* forgets – and what it wants the viewer to forget – is cinema and cinematic time. Marclay's formal strategies obscure the passage of time in the video, locating the history of cinema in the televisual catastrophe's temporality of the instant. As a cinematic catastrophe, *The Clock* displays a selective history of moving-images that purport to be there with the viewer, in time, operating at the same time, while they also implode, displaying both the material footage and the individual spectator's retreat away from a shared cultural history into digitized isolationism.

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[40] This was notably not the case when *The Clock* was installed at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, Ohio.

As in Doane's theory of catastrophe, Marclay puts the viewer in direct contact

with the unfolding video, a temporality of the instant that simultaneously vacates the

passage of time. Conceived as a *memento mori*, the video's comforting illusionism eases

the viewer into a situation where they sit suspended in time awaiting an ending that they

know is coming but they don't know when, a moment that they would rather defer, that

they can only experience alone, that only happens once, a moment of passage that ends

time, the instant of their death. How do you leave? How do you get out? How do you turn

The Clock off? How do you forget *The Clock*? How do you forget the clock? In *The*

Clock, Marclay embraces the cinematic catastrophe to highlight a longing for timeless

illusionism, the memory of a cinematic system that denies time's passage and death's

finality. It turns time off and tunes death out even as it plays back day after day.

Extending home video's time shifting to infinity, Marclay shows the history of cinema

breaking down into perpetual catastrophe. As Doane writes, "Catastrophe, conjoining

death with the failure of technology, presents us with a scenario of limits – the limits of

technology, the limits of signification."[41] As a cinematic catastrophe for the digital age,

The Clock hovers in the purgatory of instantaneous time so as to forget cinema and

allows the audience to forget what comes next.

Nostalgic Virtuality: Michael Robinson's Light is Waiting (2007)

From Marclay's cinematic catastrophe, I turn in the final part of this chapter to

Light Is Waiting, a 2007 video by Michael Robinson. Best known in the context of

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[41] Doane, "Information, Crisis, Catastrophe," 233.

experimental cinema, Robinson examines the emotional and affectual undercurrents of pop cultural materials (syndicated television, home movies, music videos, pop music ballads, etc.) from the 1980s and 1990s, around the time of his childhood. His work, in the words of critic Mashinka Firunts, "appear[s] to enact the efforts of an extraterrestrial interpreter, for whom our cultural imagery would hold indeterminate meanings and could be coded into new systems of signification."[42] While Marclay situated the history of cinema in the digital instant of catastrophe, moving toward a kind of isolationism, Robinson retains an interest in cinema as a collective experience and pop materials as forms of dissipating cultural memory. He pushes home video technology and its imagery to its limits in order to discover contemporaneous, distorted potentialities. As with Fast and Marclay, he highlights the shifting nature of cultural texts over the passage of time in terms of aesthetics, narrative, and viewing contexts. However, his appropriation strategies move away from the logic of sampling in which the sample detaches from its referent. Instead, he incorporates appropriated materials as physical artifacts that carry specific memories from their past, which the viewing audience (and the artist) calibrate into a reconstructed present. In contrast to Bourriaud's logic of sampling, I propose that Robinson intimately embraces appropriation as a form of nostalgic karaoke. In this mode, the artist, the viewing audience, and the cultural text perpetually perform and encounter the past not yet experienced.

In this section, I explore these ideas through a close reading of *Light Is Waiting*, an essential work of 21st century appropriation art that has yet to receive significant

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[42] Mashinka Firunts, "Michael Robinson," *Art in America*, March 23, 2016, accessed July 31, 2016, http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/reviews/michael-robinson/.

scholarly attention. Utilizing footage from two episodes of ABC's TGIF sitcom *Full House*, Robinson explores the movement of home video's time shifting across analog and digital platforms. He challenges the viewer's perceptual memory of a familiar source that audiences once let into their homes every Friday night at 8 PM. In other words, he creates a situation in which viewer's confront their collective nostalgia in an encounter with a particular syndicated television program. At the same time, he dissects the life of video images, narratives, and ideologies through an array of formal strategies that underscore the current of change lurking beneath the surface. As domestic technologies open the home onto the world of mass culture, *Light Is Waiting* shows a threatening presence devour the quaint memories of the family sitcom. Viewers watch their sentimentality come to the surface and their nostalgia shatter the illusions it had created.

Ultimately, I show that, for Robinson, nostalgia operates as a virtual process that is simultaneously immediate and delayed. Situated in a precarious gap between private and public, analog and digital, between the remembered past and the ever-transforming present, *Light Is Waiting* utilizes the languages of analog home video, experimental film, and digital television in order to open the source material onto its particular past and allow the viewing audience to confront nostalgia's radical, transformative intimacy, its potential as personal karaoke. Through a system of home video playback, the televisual material begins to "speak for itself," cinematically, and point "beyond" itself toward the nostalgic nightmares of what Robinson calls "a culture lost at sea."[43]

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[43] Michael Robinson, *Light Is Waiting* Film notes, accessed July 31 2016, http://www.poisonberries.net/films.html.

Light Is Waiting begins with two teenage girls, DJ and Kimmy, sitting on a blue-and-white checkered couch and looking toward a television. White notepads rest on their legs as they vaguely scribble notes. The aloof Kimmy grabs the remote and changes the channel. DJ turns to her and says, "Kimmy, we have to watch the news for our homework." Kimmy perkily responds, "The news will be old tomorrow, but the top ten video countdown is good for a week." An unseen audience pleasantly chuckles. DJ sternly replies, "But Kimmy, our grades will stay on our record forever." The audience laughs again. Kimmy refuses to be denied. She stands up and moves toward the television. "New plan: why don't we bring this TV upstairs? Then we can watch two TVs at once." Slightly baffled, DJ replies, "Kimmy! That's...not a bad idea." The two girls proceed to push the TV stand across the room of the modestly decorated suburban home and toward a staircase. Here, the girls realize a duality will fix their problem. If they have two televisions side-by-side, they can work on homework, the immediate preoccupation, and simultaneously avoid it, turning instead to a week-long pleasure. This dual system allows them to do both at once: they can simultaneously work and not work.

Suddenly, DJ's younger sister, Stefanie, opens the front door and comes into the room. She drops her pink backpack as DJ and Kimmy lift the television. Confused, Stefanie skeptically asks, "What arrrrre you doing?" Now carrying the television up the stairs, Kimmy explains, "We're taking this TV upstairs so we can watch the music videos and the news at the same time. Pretty smart idea I had, huh?" Following them up the stairs, Stefanie ponders, "If you're so smart, why don't you just bring the little TV downstairs?" As Kimmy and DJ rest the television on a thin brown banister, DJ reconsiders, "Yeah Kimmy, why didn't you bring the little TV downstairs?" Trying to

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justify her nonsensical plan, Kimmy answers, "Because...we needed the exercise."

Having realized the error of her ways, she decides to act. "But now that we're pumped,

I'll go get the little TV." Kimmy turns to leave, but realizes her jacket is caught under the

television. She violently tugs it free and turns away. DJ screams, "Kimmy!" The

television stumbles forward and plummets downward off the railing. As the television

hits the ground, the screen – our screen – explodes into a rapidly shifting flicker of red,

white, and blue. The soundtrack morphs into loud, distorted staccatos, punctuating each

flicker with equally sharp resonance. The pleasant, illusionistic machine shatters; what

once beamed information into the faces of nascent adolescents who innocently stared for

hours on end into its refractive, mediating eye now reveals, through its destruction, its

maniacal center and berserk impulse to retard its viewers by ritualizing its own

veneration through its trance-inducing light camouflaged as a pleasurable,

representational system glimmering from a flat surface.

In this opening segment, Robinson utilizes the show's narrative and the episode's

inciting incident to outline a set of concerns about nostalgia, time, and the contemporary

act of viewing. The video begins with the girls referencing their immediate concerns:

watching the news and completing their homework. Kimmy rejects the demands of the

present, embracing instead something that lasts longer, a week-long video countdown.

She isn't interested in something that will get old, something that will quickly be

forgotten. At the same time, her choice merely delays the inevitable. The video

countdown is still only good for a week. And, as the studious DJ notes, recorded history

lasts forever. Confronting these issues head on, the girls refer to the "little tv" and "big

tv," a duality, as I suggested, that allows them to simultaneously work and not work. This

technological dialectic underscores the thematic concerns of immediacy and delay, the new and the old. The girls acknowledge the changing dynamics of domestic technology both in terms of size and scale, as well as what each of those forms offer. Kimmy sees the news as almost too ephemeral, something immediately outdated. DJ's academic concerns control her path to the undetermined future. The unasked question in their conversation is which program do they watch on which TV. My guess is they would have different answers. Their upstairs-downstairs confusion over which TV to take where (and what decisions leads to the easiest path of success) signals not only the odd-couple dichotomy between DJ And Kimmy, but, as we will see, how contemporary viewers orient themselves toward their interpersonal pasts and futures, as well as the pasts and futures of particular technologies, new and old, little and big.

Using the episode as his own cold-open framing device, Robinson transposes the episode's thematic concerns into the formal construction of the video. Eventually, they double back onto the dueling narratives of Robinson's video and the episode itself. The girls drop their TV and watch it crash to the ground. When it hits the floor, it shatters our screen. The diegetic world vanishes. The old, syndicated, home-video version of *Full House* transforms the quaint creature into a monster. The screen explodes outward, attacking the viewer's sensory perception with a rapid flicker. Robinson utilizes flicker effects to announce a breaking point with the source narrative, although, as we will see, he returns to both flicker and the episode itself at the end of *Light Is Waiting*.

The video's aggressive flicker underscores the connections between home video playback and the moment of contemporary appropriation, as well as the distinctions between cinema and television, as we saw in the work of Fast and Marclay. However, in

this case, Robinson also establishes a paradoxical connection between histories of experimental film and video art. Appropriating source material from television and beginning the video with a reflection on the act of viewing television that shatters upon the arrival of flicker effects, Robinson slyly reveals a transference of experimental film traditions – namely, the structural film or the flicker film – toward televisual discourse of present-tense immediacy, the temporality of catastrophe.[44] Importantly, Robinson creates the flicker effects digitally, inserting individual frames of pure color within or on top of the video footage. He thus utilizes digital techniques to recreate a materialist film effect within a played-back home video, simultaneously situating *Light Is Waiting* within the context video art, experimental film, and television.

However, *Light Is Waiting* does not flatten time into the pure presence of the instant, but rather slingshots back and forth between immediacy and delay, presence and absence. The video aligns with the viewer's perceptual presence through the digital flicker that eliminates the episode's narrative and voids it representational content. Towards the end of the video, though, the flicker returns alongside and on top of the show's footage. In both cases, the flicker gives the video an immediate presence that the syndicated, outdated episode otherwise lacks. Given the use of televisual content, *Light Is Waiting* addresses the prevailing present tense of television, an element Bruce Kurz

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[44] Flicker films have a long history in avant-garde cinema. See Regina Cornwell, "Some Formalist Tendencies in the Current American Avant-garde Film," *Kansas Quarterly* 4.2 (1972): 60–70; Malcolm Le Grice, *Abstract Film and Beyond* (London: Studio Vista, 1977); Nicky Hamlyn, *Film Art Phenomena* (London: British Film Institute, 2003); Federico Windhausen, "Paul Sharits and the Active Spectator," in *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Afterall Books/Tate Publishing, 2008), 122–39.

argues as essential to both live and pre-recorded television programs.[45] At the same time, Robinson resists aligning the viewer with the pure presence of television, as in Marclay's catastrophe, but rather uses the flicker to make viewers more aware of their separation from the aged, unfolding content. The flicker's immediacy, then, does not reveal synchronization, but instead a delayed internalization and reflection on the immediate viewing process. Describing the viewer's relationship to flicker effects, artist Paul Sharits writes, "The viewer's consciousness is freed to turn inward upon itself" and discover "the immediate reality of experiencing the film."[46] Thus, flicker marks a distinction between the perceptual viewing experience and the viewer's absorption into particular narratives. This also positions the viewer as an individual, as well as part of a collective. As we will see, Robinson returns to these paradoxical connections at the end of *Light Is Waiting* when an alternating color-flicker conjoins with the episode's distorted imagery.

Light Is Waiting comes back to earth after the initial burst of flicker. Cutting to an entirely different episode of *Full House*, Robinson returns to the show, already in progress, in a scrambled, distorted form. The image appears split down the center of the frame, each side mirroring the other. As a man leaps in the distance from the top of a waterfall, he not only falls down, but plummets toward himself in the middle of the frame (Fig. 36). This mirroring persists through the remainder of the video. A family strolls across a deserted beach and slowly treks into the woods. As they sit around a campfire, a group of tribal figures lunges toward them. Crashing into the middle of the screen, the

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[45] Bruce Kurtz, "The Present Tense," in *Video Art: An Anthology*, eds., Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 234–43.
[46] Paul Sharits, "Notes on Films/1966-68," *Film Culture* 65-66 (1978): 14. Quoted in Windhausen, "Paul Sharits and the Active Spectator."

tribe captures the family. Soon, a group of worshippers gather around the family as they dance, sing, and strut on a stage (Fig. 37 – 38). Appeased by the event, they throw their hands to the sky in praise. The technological breakdown causes the program and its characters to become refracted versions of themselves. The soundtrack also modifies throughout the last half of the video, continually dragging. An audio counterpart to the pulsing flicker, voices speak in p-p-p-p-p-p-punctuated staccatos. For the most part, sound and image separate. The choppy voices speak over the images, but the sound rarely comes from particular characters on screen. Through both audio and visual content, Robinson shows both the device and its content crackle when its framework falls apart, that is, in a moment of obsolescent breakdown.

Robinson enhances the sense of modification and distortion through formal processes. As I have suggested, *Light Is Waiting* hinges upon the moment when the immediacy of televisual content becomes delayed through the process of syndication and the home video market. Similar to the transferred processes of *24 Hour Psycho*, Robinson approaches *Full House*'s appropriated content not just as a digital image file but rather as a physical artifact, made so by the moment television becomes home video, when the content technologically shifts from feedback to playback, from immediacy to delay. His approach works in contrast to media historians who have argued that video, unlike the plastic arts, contains no material artifact.[47] Robinson achieves the mirrored, shattered, decayed effects of the footage through both digital image manipulation as well as through an encounter with the video as physical media. In *Light Is Waiting*, he appropriates the

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[47] See Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future Is a Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Autumn 2008): 148–171.

images from a DVD, transfers them back to VHS – the popular mode of home video at the time of *Full House*'s broadcast – and re-records the VHS tape digitally as he modulates the VCR's tracking. The images transfer from a new system to an older one and then modify further to suggest age and decay. For Robinson, nostalgic time shifting occurs not only within the recorded content but also across technological development, challenging theories of deterministic progress in the process.

In the video's final scene, Robinson brings these forces together, conjoining digital flicker with transfigured representational content. Sound and image return to one another, yet remain at a sputtering impasse. An overwhelming flicker of red, blue, and white light pervades the screen and tints the images. The flickering colors burst onto the audience. Underneath the nearly blinding flicker, which changes its color every frame, the well-known *Full House* character Uncle Jesse, played by John Stamos, stands before a microphone (Fig. 39). An aspiring musician, Jesse is at the peak of his powers through a complete and utter disunity. He sings a wailing, distorted rendition of Elvis Presley's "Rock-A-Hula Baby." His voice warbles and strains as he picks up his brother's young daughter Michelle (Fig. 40). The character was notably played by twins Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen in order to get around child labor laws in the state of California. Thanks to the mirrored image, as curator Chris Stults notes, *Light Is Waiting* reveals Michelle as an individual composed of a pair of twins, split in two, collapsing into one another and beginning to fuse as a single unit, a united, doubled system of their own.[48] A stupefied audience raises their hands in a kind of ritualistic rapture as Jesse raises them to the sky.

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[48] Chris Stults, "Light Is Waiting," Wexner Center for the Arts Exhibition Notes, accessed July 31, 2016, http://cstults.net/index.php?/project/light-is-waiting-michael-robinson-2007/.

Robinson's playback of the images reveals the mutating nature of both content and context through a technological breakdown occurring over a period of time. *Full House* is no longer the family oriented sitcom, but an American nightmare of a cannibalistic, capitalistic society which feeds on its memories, its heroes, its media as a means of escapism and wish fulfillment. Propelled by Stamos, the twins expand into a three-headed monster, a 21st century Cerberus devouring the screen until the credits roll and the flickering colors burn from red and blue into a pure white light. Robinson returns to the flicker to make the viewer aware of the act of viewing and also responsive to their own virtual nostalgia. Analyzing Deleuze's theory of the time-image, Jeffrey Skoller argues that a virtual image "creates the possibility for an allegorical reading that not only constructs the past in terms of the needs of the present but also allows the use of what was potential – that which remains unrealized in one moment – to coexist in relation to what is actual in another moment."[49] Relying on transhistorical coexistence both in terms of its formal construction and its appropriated narratives, *Light Is Waiting* relies on a mutual co-existence of actuality and potentiality. Viewers confront the pre-recorded past on home video and witness its transformation across time into distorted forms. However, this distortion does not signal a mournful sense of loss. Rather, it shows how nostalgia operates as a process, taking a remembered past and watching it take shape through alternative forms in the present. Robinson's incorporation of *Full House* indicates his virtual nostalgia remaining connected to yet immediately distanced from its source.

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[49] Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 15.

In this way, as I have been arguing throughout this project, nostalgia operates as a moving image, not a static entity. As Cary Wolfe explains, "In a sense, then, the logic of the virtual is the logic of sampling itself, a sampling that is always *leaving* its source by the time it reaches us, always in the process of vanishing."[50] As we saw in *Light Is Waiting*, virtual nostalgia underscores a precarious separation of analog and digital, representation and abstraction, history and contemporary context, film and television. However, because it is always in the *process* of vanishing, the source is never completely absent. Unlike in Bourriaud, the sample is not trapped in a new generative chain, but functions as old and new, past and present, here and there, then and now, at the same time. Signaled by Stamos's uprooting of Elvis, Robinson's virtual nostalgia reveals sampling as a form of karaoke, a radically intimate personal refrain that brings a collective memory from the past to life and perhaps destroys it at the same time.

In conclusion, I want to return to the very beginning of *Light Is Waiting*. As I have already mentioned, the video ends with a rapid flicker of red and blue burning into a pure white light before finally cutting to black. It is this same black in which the video begins. For a few seconds before the title card appears, there is only black, like a dormant television screen waiting to be turned on. In this lifeless moment, the screen trembles. As the title card "light is waiting" appears, three small, fuzzy blue crackles of light flash around the screen (Fig. 41 – 42). Almost imperceptible, these flashes of analog video noise peer out for a brief instant. Light waits in, on, *beyond* the screen, awaiting a future eruption of the past not yet experienced. In her book *The Future of Nostalgia,* Svetlana Boym writes, "A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition

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[50] Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 296.

of two images – of home and abroad, of past and present, of dream and everyday life. The moment we try to force it into a single image, it breaks the frame or burns the surface."[51] In this chapter, I have shown how home video opens its content onto nostalgic virtuality, transforming the image, cracking the screen, and invading the lives of the viewer. Fast, Marclay, and Robinson reveal the ongoing mutation of home video playback. Like the past, it waits for presence. It waits to be unleashed. It waits to be made anew, again and again. Through home video, these artists reflect what Akira Mizuta Lippit describes in Hollis Frampton's *Nostalgia* (1971): "a type of nostalgia in advance, the memory of that which is yet to come."[52]

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[51] Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents," *The Hedgehog Review* 9.2 (Summer 2007): 7.
[52] Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Ex-Cinema: From a Theory of Experimental Film and Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 50.

Chapter 4: Video Games After Obsolescence

> It is these cultural experiences that provide the continuity in the human race that transcends personal existence. I am assuming that cultural experiences are in direct continuity with play, the play of those who have not yet heard of games.
>
> –D.W. Winnicott

In 1966, Ralph Baer sat in a bus terminal jotting down notes about how an ordinary television set could be used to play games. Over the next five years and the production of seven prototypes, Baer, with the help of engineers Bill Harrison and Bill Rusch, developed his "Brown Box," the first home video game console system, released in 1972 as the Magnavox Odyssey. Capable of displaying three square dots on the screen, the Odyssey offered players plastic overlays to place on top of the television screen to create a sense of environment for the ping-pong based games. Despite these graphic limitations, the Odyssey granted domestic players something they had never had before, something that only games allowed – control over certain objects on their television screen. This crucial innovation of gaming technology has gone unchanged since the release of Baer's console system.

While video game's images appear on screen technologies, such as television or computers, Alexander Galloway argues that video games function in a wholly different way than representational and textual systems of film, literature, and television. He

explains that video games represent "a whole new medium…whose foundation is not in looking and reading but in the instigation of material change through action."[1] In other words, according to Galloway, video games recalibrate the relationship between viewer and viewed by demanding a necessarily symbiotic model of operators and actions, both human and machinic. A game player takes action by moving a certain player or figure on the screen, while the machine (in conjunction with the game's algorithmic code) dictates the action of other figures and the surrounding environment. The game responds to the player, and the player responds to the game. Each operates independently yet necessarily depends on the other's actions.

In this chapter, I explore the relationship between game players, games, and the outside world through the work of three cinema artists – Harun Farocki, Cory Arcangel, and Phil Solomon – who appropriate game footage into their work, a style commonly referred to as machinima or game art.[2] While these three case studies offer a limited scope into the rather extensive use of video games in recent artistic practice, they highlight the emergence of video games in the history of art and aesthetics, their integration into artistic practice, commonly after their sources have become outdated, and, finally, the intimate connection between mortal individuals and programmed obsolescence of games and gaming technology. In other words, this chapter attempts to trace a shared mortality between humans and their media.

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[1] Alexander Galloway, *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 4.

[2] Galloway refers to these as artist-made game mods. These stand in contrast to artist's game in which viewers play actual games created by artists. For consideration of artist's games, see Ibid., 107–126; see also John Sharp, *Works of Game: On the Aesthetics of Game and Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 77–104.

First, I will first address Harun Farocki's *Parallel* series (2012-14), which situates video games in the history of artistic representation and confronts the ideological consequences of accepting the real world's transformation into a virtual one. More analytic than nostalgic, Farocki's series establishes the framework from which other critical issues concerning video game appropriation and nostalgia emerge. Further, it provides a way of thinking about and encountering virtual game spaces, theories of play, and the entangling of video games and artistic practice, issues that underwrite the remainder of this chapter. Second, I consider the work of Cory Arcangel who gained notoriety for bringing the world of popular video games into major art institutions. I show how Arcangel's work reconfigures the relationship between viewing, playing, and notions of interactivity. Finally, I assess Phil Solomon's *In Memoriam (Mark LaPore)* series (2005-09) in order to explore how intimate personal histories entangle with the development and advancements of technological and cinematic media. A mournful meditation on loss and transformation, *In Memoriam (Mark LaPore)* reveals a grieving Solomon uncover the past constantly reshaping itself, remaining indefinitely active, over the passage of time. Linking spaces of production and play with cultural and interpersonal memories of games, these cinema artists expand the action-based, symbiotic relationship between players and machines into the space of work and the time of play, bearing witness to their lives after obsolescence.

Harun Farocki and the Renaissance of Video Games

In contrast to Galloway's claim that video games represent a whole new medium, Harun Farocki's *Parallel* series situates the history of video game technology into a longer history of representational art. Though not machinima in the strictest sense, *Parallel* operates as a series of cinematic essays that utilize documentary footage of game designers at work and gameplay footage as textual sources. In this way, Farocki situates the video game production within an art historical framework and subsequently outlines the political and ethical implications of gaming's representational schemas. Carefully tracing the development of gaming style from abstract 8-bit console games to the immersive, ultra-realistic world of 21st century computer games, Farocki uncovers a historiography of game design that effectively mimics major period innovations in art and cinema, namely Medieval flatness to Renaissance perspective and photographic stillness to cinematic motion. Utilizing various split screen techniques, the series highlights dialectical tensions between these supposed stylistic advancements, while voice-over narration explores the philosophical, ontological, and ideological consequences of such developments.

While later videos in the *Parallel* series address particular questions related to the game characters, narrative choices, gender, and violence, in this section, I will limit my analysis to *Parallel I*, which focuses primarily on the birth of video games as a representation system. *Parallel I* traces the digital construction of video games' virtual worlds, their stylistic development, and their mimetic aspirations. The two-channel video begins with gameplay imagery from the early computer game *Mystery House* (1980) on one side of the screen. The house's exterior appears as a schematic, black-and-white, three-dimensional outline. A rickety tree stands next to it (Fig. 43). Below the house, a

displayed text provides context, poses a question, and awaits the command of the gameplayer. "You are in the front of a large abandoned Victorian house. Stone steps lead up to a wide porch. ------ Enter Command?" An emotionless female voiceover explains that *Mystery House* was one of the first computer games with graphics. A man's voice is heard as he types a command into the game. "Open door." The graphics fade out and back in, revealing a new image of the opened door. The picture vanishes as the prior image of the house's exterior pops up on the other channel, this time without the accompanying text. A wipe edit absorbs the house in darkness and isolates the tree, a tall rectangle topped by some lopsided triangles, in the far right corner. The voiceover explains, "The house can be entered. The tree next to it has no game function." The video cuts to black, removing the schematic tree on the right screen, while another suddenly appears on the left, this time in varying shades of green. A forest green blob expands across the top of two long brown rectangles that sprout from the bottom up to the middle of the frame (Fig. 44). The voiceover dryly states, "The historical representation of the tree in the history of computer games," as a small figure runs to the center of the frame, jumps in the air between the two trees, and the descends off the screen below with a thud. A text on the right-screen indicates the images are from *Pitfall* (1982). The video then cycles through various representations of foliage, ranging from *King's Quest* (1984) to *Anno 1701* (2006), with gameplay images appearing on the left and text attributions of each game on the right.

Throughout the remainder of *Parallel I*, Farocki focuses on natural elements which must be individually designed and made responsive to the conditions of the game but which serve no purpose in the game itself. Extraneous to game function, trees, grass,

fire, water, and clouds become emblematic of a pictorial lineage reaching from painting to photography/film to computer images. For Farocki, the ongoing reconstruction of purposeless nature in increasingly realistic virtual spaces highlights parallel advancements in art and technology. Over the image of a three-dimensional rendering of flowing waves followed by a digital image of a thin, wallpaper-like strip of ocean slowly unfolding across the frame (Fig. 45 – 46), the narrator states, "The creators of computer imagery didn't have to wait thousands of years for the Renaissance. Right from the start, their imagery was closely associated with the work of technicians and scientists. These images also show the development from a symbolic form to filmic realism. From abstraction to concretism."

In this sense, *Parallel I* operates at a distance from action-based processes of gameplay and player control (features which are explored in later parts of the series). Instead, Farocki asserts gaming's dependence and independence from aesthetic traditions of art history and cinema. Neither reflecting what Galloway called "artist game mods" nor creating a gameplay experience for the viewer, *Parallel I* illustrates Farocki's investment in particular moving image traditions and identifies Farocki as a cinema artist. For Farocki, the rapid development of graphic interfaces used by game designers to construct mimetic representations of nature within a system of three-point linear perspective represents gaming's artistic Renaissance. Operating at a remove from gameplay, Farocki sacrifices an acknowledgement of gaming technology's operative innovations in order to contextualize game imagery within histories of representation, particularly by emphasizing ancillary details from the reconstructed natural world and situating them in the context of cinema and photography.

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At the same time, however, Farocki complements video game imagery with documentary footage of game designers constructing various images on their computers. Once again moving away from gameplay, he establishes a unique and understated dialectic between work and play. A particularly striking example occurs in the final sequence of *Parallel I* during which a series of clouds are modeled onto a flat blue expanse. The right channel remains blank, while, on the left, sixteen clouds appear in a diamond-shaped area outlined by a soft maroon line (Fig. 47). Accompanied by sounds of rapid typing and entering of commands on a keyboard, the clouds appear and disappear. A cursor implants three-dimensional geometric shapes around the screen. These empty spaces fill with clouds after a mechanistic click-click-enter command on a keyboard. Eventually, the right channel shows a young man sitting at a desk in front of a computer (Fig. 48). He looks intently toward a screen just out of the frame, entering commands into a keyboard with his left hand while rapidly clicking a mouse with his right. The left channel shows the out-of-frame screen where his work being done, the placement of clouds of various shapes and sizes across an expansive sky. Both screens suddenly cut. The left displays rolling ocean waves crashing onto a sandy beach with a very familiar cloudy sky above. The right shows adjustments being made in a computer editing software program. The right channel cuts out once more, leaving only the left, where, in silence, the clouds float across the sky.

Then, suddenly, the left channel cuts to another cloud, a solitary cloud in a flat blue sky with the text WORLD 1-1 emblazoned in the top right corner. This is the familiar world of *Super Mario Bros.* (1986) (Fig. 49). The game's iconic tune plays as the cloud moves across the screen and out of the frame. As one cloud exits, another arrives.

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And then another. On the right channel, a different world appears, one with a subjective point-of-view: a first-person look out from the windshield of a car as it drives down a long desert road as a group of clouds float in the sky above. This world has more depth than the world on the left, but it is still decidedly animated and non-realistic. The left and right channels continue to cycle through varying representations of clouds with gradually increasing naturalism. The voiceover narration returns, describing the Greek legend of Zeuxis who made drawings of fruit so realistic that birds would come by to peck at them. *Parallel I* ends with a digital computer image of stormy clouds rolling through the sky on the left channel and a filmic image of clouds on the right channel (Fig. 50). The narrator postulates, "Maybe the computer images will assume functions that were previously held by film. Maybe that will liberate film for other things. The computer images try to achieve the effect of film images. They want to surpass them. Leave them far behind. The creators of computer imagery do not want to attract flocks of Greek birds. Their heavens should be populated by creatures of their own design."[3]

These remarkable final moments of *Parallel I* simultaneously imbricate a series of aesthetic and technological concerns. First, and perhaps most clearly, it begins to

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[3] Interestingly, Farocki does not make clear the particular effect of which video games surpass cinema. However, the final suggestion – that the artists' heavens be populated by creatures of their own design – infers a usurping of the natural world by cybernetics. I contend Farocki's criticisms reach onto cultural materialism, cyborgs, posthumanism, and system theory. See, for instance, Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Invention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–181; Katherine Hayles, *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Niklas Luhmann, "System as Difference," *Organization* 13.1 (January 2006): 37–57; David Wills, *Dorsality: Thinking Back through Technology and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

consider the implications of game designers assuming the role of artists, particularly in

their underwriting of the belief that technology and culture have effectively usurped

nature.[4] Second, in a similar fashion to the respective writings of Walter Benjamin, Andre

Bazin, and Yves-Alain Bois, it addresses technological obsolescence and how an old

medium can gain new potentialities when it is surpassed by something new.[5] And, third,

it links contemporary labor with remembered spaces and representations of freedom and

play, namely, the natural, outside world and the virtual spaces of video games played in

the confines of domestic space.

For the moment, I will sidestep the first two concerns, as they have been analyzed

at great length elsewhere.[6] However, the third concern, which counterintuitively unifies

spaces of labor, memory, and play, deserves greater attention. It further enhances what I

have been describing as nostalgic media practice throughout this dissertation. As I have

already suggested, *Parallel I* comments on the relationship between game designers and

their virtual reconstructions of nature, particularly in terms of aesthetics and style,

thereby leaving behind the innovations of action-based gameplay and player control.

However, by explicating issues of environment, the final moments undermine the divide

between the action-based game and the inactive image, as well as material and immaterial

worlds. Instead, as I discussed in Chapter Two, it locates both features in what D.W.

Winnicott ascribes to transitional spaces of play, or intermediate zones between psychic

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[4] See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

[5] See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducability [First Version," *Grey Room* 39 (Spring 2010): 11–37; Andre Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: Caboose, 2009); Yves-Alain Bois, "Painting: The Task of Mourning," in *Painting as Model* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 229–244.

[6] The immediately prior footnotes address some of this critical literature.

reality and magical control.[7] Uncovering human creation, development, and memory precariously maneuvering within this intermediate zone, Farocki reveals something potentially freeing but also possibly dangerous: the distancing of the world into a mere, static image.

As described above, *Parallel I* shows game designers at work. They sit at computers reconstructing natural elements within virtual environments. The dual channel video makes explicit connections between contemporary human labor and immaterial spaces, or, at the very least, allows the viewer to witness a side-by-side correspondence between the action in the material world and the creation of virtual environments. This treatment is quite different than when gameplay footage is used. What is missing from *Parallel* is footage of gameplayers actually playing games. There is footage of gameplay, but, unlike the documentary footage of designers at work, there is no footage of players at play, or designers at play. When the games are played, they operate as autonomously moving images, unfolding separately from human players or actions.

I do not think this is because Farocki wants to ignore innovations of action-based gameplay or simply reiterate a history of game style within textual and representational histories of art and cinema. Rather, the absence of players and the playing environment suggests the symbiotic relationship between human and machinic operators effectively transposes from the gameplayer to the designer-artist. Work and play become actions. As the designer crafts a new world, his own memories of play rush back in the form of clouds, the clouds of Mario's world that glide by with accompanying music, the clouds of the natural world that serve no purpose in this world. The natural soundtrack of the

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[7] D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Tavistock, 1981), 86–110.

contemporary world is not birds chirping in the sky, or ocean waves crashing onto a shoreline, but rather the click-click-enter of typed computer commands. Calling back to *Parallel*'s opening moments when commands must be entered to open the door to *Mystery House*, the click-click-enter becomes the sound of manufacturing a new world that is modeled after the old one, where the domestic, adolescent space of play transfers into an institutional, adult place of work. Similar to the increased mimesis of virtual spaces, institutional space models itself after the privacy (and freedom) of domestic space. *Parallel I* does not show a playing environment because representing a distinctive, creative space for play has become impossible. It has become subsumed by the 24/7 ideological reality of 21st century capitalism, something that blurs public and private space, as well as personal and cultural memory, as I showed to a different extent in Chapter Three.[8]

Here, though, Farocki also showcases the distinctiveness of work and play congealing under the umbrella of predetermined action, an upturning of gaming's innovation against itself.[9] By witnessing the creation of digital images and exposing the limitations of their world, *Parallel I* indicates a false narrative lurking behind assumptions of virtual boundlessness and freedom of choice. Gaming's algorthimic system reveals the promise of individual action, subjective actors, perfect mimetic representation, and a playful symbiosis between human and machine as red herrings that

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[8] For a polemical take on the ideological unification of gamespace and everyday life, see McKenzie Wark, *Gamer Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[9] In a certain sense, the flattening of work and play into action corresponds with other frequently cited transformations in the digital era, namely the shift from hardware to software, archives to databases, industry to information. See, for example, Alexander Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (Oxford: Polity, 2012); Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011); Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001); Mark B.N. Hansen, *New Language for New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).

cover up the erosion of human and technological possibilities. For Farocki, games serve as texts, as what he calls "operative images," because they enact memories of freedom and play in response to their designed system of control. They serve, as Nora Alter explains of Farocki's work more broadly, "to comment on the context in which [re-functioned images and clips] initially circulated."[10] Assuming an ideology of confinement and limitation under the auspices of boundless freedom and infinite potentiality, Farocki shows gaming's Renaissance as an embrace of a commodified system, which, in its desire for complete mimesis with nature, curbs the expanded possibilities of the medium and instead reinscribes the power of the individual creator.

As play becomes work, the designers' nostalgia for their own childhood games is the only thing that brings to life a way of thinking about games that reaches beyond their drive toward simulacra and their rigid systems of control. *Parallel I* does not simply reject the new in favor of the old, but rather shows the dangers of uncritically embracing development. It suggests a nostalgic turn to the past opens up possibilities for the old and the new that have been eclipsed in narratives of progress.

Viewing and Playing the Work of Cory Arcangel

I turn now to the art of Cory Arcangel whose early work ironically repurposes old video games as a means of exploring gaming aesthetics and reexamining the relationship between outdated games and their aging players. While his work echoes Farocki's

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[10] Nora Alter, "Two or Three Things I Know about Harun Farocki," *October* 151 (Winter 2015): 154.

concern with style and virtual representation, Arcangel removes the distance from gameplay by working closely with specific games and gaming technologies. He utilizes broader media culture to observe the transformation from players to designers and artists. For Arcangel, the possibility of such a transfiguration occurs when outdated games transition from their original, typically domestic formats into alternative forms on the internet and within artistic institutions. I first discuss Arcangel's multi-screen installation *Various Self Playing Bowling Games* (2011) before moving into an analysis of his most well known work, *Super Mario Clouds* (2002). I argue that Arcangel's work with video games highlights memories of gameplay and their transfer from an active presence to an ostensibly inactive distance. As in Farocki, there is a dichotomy between work and play, designers and players, adults and children, control and freedom, presence and absence. However, I show how Arcangel reconfigures these relationships through the activation of nostalgic temporality in which past materials operate as living, moving images that stay active through time thanks to an intimate relationship formed between player and game, human and machine, actual and virtual environments.

As the title implies, Arcangel's *Various Self Playing Bowling Games* features a wide range of bowling games from a number of different, outmoded video game console systems. Installed in a gallery setting, the consoles sit snugly side-by-side on a table at a fair distance from the walls where live gameplay images project at a near life-size scale (Fig. 51). Controllers rest in front of each machine, as if visitors might pick them up and play. However, a large microchip featuring the artist's signature is connected to each controller, announcing a form of intervention. In this case, the games "play" without human players. Arcangel hot-wired the controllers so the games would be played in real

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time by a mini-computer. The games thus retained their live playability despite losing the human player in this human-machine interaction.[11] At the same time, though, Arcangel cuts against the "practice makes perfect" logic of both sports and gaming, as well as the posthumanist idea that technology will eclipse human knowledge and capability. The mini-computers are not good bowlers. They do not improve their skills over time. Instead, they roll game after game of gutter balls on generation after generation of console systems.

In a similar fashion to the way Farocki isolates trees, waves, or clouds in *Parallel I*, Arcangel selects multiple games of the same sport in order to showcase the historical development of gaming style. However, this is not his primary concern. Rather, he outlines a reconfiguration of human and machinic object relations within styles of (game)play. *Various Self Playing Bowling Games* identifies the expectation of a symbiotic relationship between human and machine, and uncovers levels of dependency on both sides of the equation. As gaming style increasingly supplants nature, as in *Parllael I*, *Various Self Playing Bowling Games* highlights human ideas of play being usurped technological systems. The games play without human players. Only the machines are necessary. Ironically, though, machinic control does not indicate a post-human singularity. The programmed machines fail. Arcangel thus turns narratives of power and control away from progressive mastery or dominance. Instead, he turns them toward amateurism, breakdown, and perpetual failure. His hack dooms the machines to

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[11] See Cory Arcangel, "Various Self Playing Bowling Games," accessed March 15, 2017, http://www.coryarcangel.com/things-i-made/2011-009-various-self-playing-bowling-games.

never hit a single pin, and also zaps the ludic joy from human players whose role as machine operator has been cut out of the process.

In this way, Arcangel reconfigures the relationship between player and machine by replacing the player with the hacker-artist. For Arcangel, it is more liberating (and "playful") to hack the game than to play it as designed. This move asserts the power of the individual user within a commodified system of control. While John Sharp argues that Arcangel's hacking "shows a denial of the gameness of the game," I suggest Arcangel's concern is less with denying anything about the game itself than recalibrating what it means to "play" a console game in the first place.[12] By turning the game into a "self playing" machine, Arcangel redefines play as the work of the hacker-artist.[13] The console system, the controllers, and the individual game cartridges are approached as readymade material objects that the hacker-artist plays as games in and of themselves.

Arcangel, then, is not so much concerned with bowling than with embracing mass-produced popular culture objects as games – games that, in the words of Ian Bogost, "aren't the opposite of work, but experiences that set aside the ordinary purpose of things."[14] *Various Self Playing Bowling Games* sets aside the purpose of bowling games in order to celebrate the hacker-artist's replacement of the traditional player by undercutting the game's programming. At the same time, though, the overall effect does not necessarily transfer to the viewer. The installation erodes the symbiotic relationship between human and machine that Galloway argues is central to gaming by granting

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[12] Sharp, *Works of Game*, 37–38.
[13] For an art historical consideration of changing appropriation strategies, particularly with regard to media and software, see Mark Tribe and Reena Jana, "Are in the age of digital distribution," in *New Media Art*, ed. Uta Groesnick (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2006), 6–25.
[14] Ian Bogost, *Play Anything* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 6.

complete control to one side of the relationship through the literal rigging of the controller. The hacker-artist replaces the casual player who no longer has any role in the action. Players become viewers. Machines become games. The hacker splits human from machine, revealing their relationship as unreliable. Even if the game remains functional, players can move on, age, and forget how to play. Even if the consoles aren't hacked, the machines can breakdown. Situating the hacker-artist as the lone operator, Arcangel uses *Various Self Playing Bowling Games* to highlight the precarious object relations between human and machine. It isn't just humans that depend on machines, but machines that depend on humans, particularly as they become outmoded. In an ironic twist of fate, Arcangel's celebration of the hacker-artist asserts the games becoming cinema. In overtaking the role of machine and player, Arcangel asserts himself as a cinema artist.

As one of his earliest hacks, Arcangel's *Super Mario Clouds* (2002) brought the hacker-artist to prominence and remains perhaps his best-known work. A more obviously cinematic work, it unveils similar concerns to *Various Self Playing Bowling Games* in subtle and nuanced ways. As in the later work, Arcangel reorients notions of play by approaching the object of *Super Mario Bros.* Nintendo cartridges as games to be played. Far removed from its familiar gameplay, he leaves room for viewers to project their memories of the game onto an abstracted version of the classic. Thus, while *Super Mario Clouds* is Arcangel's earliest innovative recalibration of the hacker-artist using cartridges-as-objects, I will focus on how *Super Mario Clouds* showcases a shifting role of viewership and interactivity, illustrating Arcangel's role as a cinema artist. Utilizing an iconic and outmoded game, *Super Mario Clouds* positions viewers as former players walking into a game world that they remember, but realizing that both they and the game

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have fundamentally changed. The moving-image installation asks the viewer to reevaluate the ever-changing relationship between aging humans and the relative fixity of their particular machines and popular consumer products in an era of planned obsolescence and rapid technological development.

In *Super Mario Clouds*, Arcangel "modded" a Nintendo cartridge of the original *Super Mario Bros.* game in order to remove everything on screen except for the clouds.[15] Literally cracked open, the game cartridge remains completely functional, yet reveals a bugged microchip covered by a piece of masking tape that is signed by the artist (Fig. 52). The title *Super Mario Clouds* appears handwritten on another large piece of semi-transparent tape that cuts across the original title. Still operational, the cartridge can be regularly booted in the Nintendo console. However, when the game loads, there is no Mario character, no identification of the world level, no coin counter, no timer, no music, no sound.[16] There are only images of the clouds scrolling slowly from right to left across the flat, blue sky (Fig. 53). Although there are single-channel video versions, *Super Mario Clouds* was designed as a gallery installation in which the modded game imagery projects at a cinematic scale across multiple gallery walls (Fig. 54). Meanwhile, snuggled safely inside the sculptural NES console system that rests on the gallery floor, the hacked game cartridge cannot be seen.

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[15] "Modding" refers to hacking into the game system in order to make alteration or modifications to its programmed software.

[16] In this sense, Arcangel carries over traditions of cinema and photography into video game technology. As Francesco Cassetti explains, "There is always something we do not see *precisely because* we are seeing something…The image hides something within its own folds. Thus, it is a question of invisibility that penetrates the visible, more than circumscribing to it." See Francesco Cassetti, *Eye of the Century: Film, Experience, Modernity*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, 47.

Whether looking at the console system or the game images, projected larger than life onto the walls of the gallery, Arcangel's transformative intervention is abundantly clear. The console system, on the other hand, conceals the hacked cartridge. It is the same familiar machine that once occupied private domestic spaces. The transition from the private home to the public gallery pushes both the game and the viewer through a series of transitions: the game is simultaneously defamiliarized and refamiliarized. As in Farocki, Arcangel isolates a feature from the natural world in a large-scale virtual landscape. Made in 2002, the 8-bit flatness of *Super Mario Bros.* lacks mimetic perfection and appears obviously outdated. Arcangel deliberately uses an iconic, obsolescent game and game system in order direct the viewers' memories to an earlier moment in gaming technology. The classic game's cinematic reappearance indicates a time more concerned with the innocent joys of gameplay instead of gaming's drive toward representational perfection, single-point perspective, and first-person control.[17] At the same time, the game's landscape has fundamentally changed. Without music or characters, *Super Mario Clouds* displays a sense of desolation. As Tina Kukielski notes, "For many who grew up playing the game, there is a hint of melancholy in Arcangel's alteration of the familiar landscape, rendered abandoned and vacant. Too feeble to change its display, we are instead left to relish its now obsolete readymade beauty."[18] Bringing

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[17] For many in the gaming world, the stylistic shift toward first person control and the subjective camera mirrors the male-dominated industry embracing aggressively violent games.
[18] Tina Kukielski, "Doing Assembly: The Art of Cory Arcangel," in *Mass Effect: Art and the Internet in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Lauren Cornell and Ed Halter (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015), 31.

this unreachable past into a modified present moment, *Super Mario Clouds* puts viewers

face-to-face with their own nostalgia.[19]

Accepting the position of a viewer and former player, Kukielski suggests the

relationship between the viewer and game has severed to a point where the outmoded

game can only be "relished" aesthetically. The game can no longer played. The viewer is

inactive and left out of the picture. However, this is only one option. As I have shown

throughout this dissertation, the nostalgic process does not inevitably result in resignation

and inactivity. Rather, Arcangel shows nostalgia's fundamental capacity of adaptation, its

entangling of the remembered past with seemingly contradictory conditions in the

present. By posting do-it-yourself instructions and tutorials online, Arcangel expands the

modded game world back into the domestic space of the viewer. Viewers have the power

to make their own *Super Mario Clouds* at home. In this way, he opens the potential for

each viewer to become a hacker-artist in the era of so-called postproduction and

sampling, which I discussed in Chapter Three.[20]

At the same time, though, the *Super Mario Clouds* installation neither includes

these instructions on the installation wall text nor designs any "active" spectatorial

engagement with the projected footage. Participation may be an extended result of the

installation, but it remains adjacent to it. Viewers get to decide whether they create *Super*

Mario Clouds at home or leave it as an aesthetic experience in the gallery. By utilizing

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[19] For a larger consideration of Arcangel's reworking of nostalgia, see Molly Shea, "Hacking Nostalgia: *Super Mario Clouds*," *Gnovis: A Journal of Communication, Culture, and Technology*, (May 2009), accessed March 15, 2017, http://www.gnovisjournal.org/2009/05/13/hacking-nostalgia-super-mario-clouds/.

[20] Kukielsi dubs these "artist-participants." See Kukielski, 30–35. Similar to the critique I presented in Chapter Three, Kukielski differentiates this mode of participation and postproduction from the relational model offered by Nicholas Bourriaud. See Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Art* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002).

participation as a choice without imbricating it into the structure of the gallery experience, *Super Mario Clouds* disrupts what Kate Mondloch calls media installations' "architecture of spectatorship," in which the screen apparatus manages the interactions between mobile viewing subjects and media objects.[21] Instead, Arcangel shows how a changing environment awakens the intimate, personal relationship between outdated media objects and cultural consumers of those same objects. The screens may reflect a series of changes in size and scale, but how the media object is consumed and remembered greatly relies upon the viewer.

In this sense, I argue that *Super Mario Clouds* reveals the playful and personal process by which media objects transition into nostalgic objects for individual viewers. As the Nintendo Entertainment System and *Super Mario Bros.* glide constantly into the increasingly distant past, they remain active in the minds and fading memories of former players and participants who are forcefully weaned from their familiarity by constant updates, new generations of games and consoles, advanced graphic interfaces that hope to achieve a perfect imitation of the outside world. The 8-bit clouds of Mario's world tick-tick-tick by on each progressive scan line, turning the rapidly scrolling landscape of gameplay into a vision of measurable strain, of being forcefully removed from something that cannot be seen but remains very much there, alive, dragging across the mutable screen that tries to wipe it away. Arcangel suspends Mario's world in an undetermined space of play in which memory, control, and interactivity are variable choices, not predetermined schemas. *Super Mario Clouds* asks the viewer to consider the temporal,

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[21] Kate Mondloch, *Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 23.

environmental, and interpersonal separation of the viewer-player from the hacker-artist, from childhood to adulthood. Within these connected yet distinctive roles, styles of play are remembered, forgotten, and transformed. For Arcangel, play becomes a system that, in the words of Kukielsi, "finds meaning through its *activation* – through aggregation, participation, and circulation."[22] Thus, while *Super Mario Clouds* operates at a cinematic distance from gameplay, Arcangel subtly entangles humans and their cultural media through processes of play and action alongside memory and distance, revealing nostalgia as an ongoing form of play with something or someone who retains an active presence despite being left behind.

Phil Solomon, Mark LaPore, and the Afterlives of Nostalgic Media

In this final section, I assess the ways Phil Solomon's *In Memoriam (Mark LaPore)* series (2005-09) utilizes video gameplay footage to further intertwine personal, cultural, and technological histories in an explicit process of memorialization. Whereas Farocki observes the usurping of the natural world by virtual environments and Arcangel highlights the ways viewers actively reconfigure their relationship with once popular media forms as they plunge into obsolescence, Solomon illustrates the deeply personal undercurrent of these transitions through an exploration of their limitations. I will first address the series' conception before moving into close analyses of the individual works. I show how *In Memoriam (Mark LaPore)* effectively narrativizes familiar objects becoming nostalgic objects and further considers how nostalgic objects remain active

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[22] Kukielsi, 45.

even, or perhaps especially, after their death, their so-called obsolescence. Echoing

Jeffrey Skoller's contention that "avant-garde cinema's approach to history is through

evocation rather than *representation* in the ways it opens onto the virtual coexistence of

past, present, and future through duration," I argue, in an era of planned obsolescence,

Solomon confronts the notion of loss and reveals the possibilities of personal and cultural

afterlives.[23]

     In Memoriam (Mark LaPore) consists of four videos – *Crossroad* (2005),

Rehearsals for Retirement (2007), *Last Day in a Lonely Place* (2008), and *Still Raining,*

Still Dreaming (2008-9) – as well as *"EMPIRE"* (2008/2012), a video installation that

serves as a coda.[24] Solomon used gameplay footage from the enormously popular *Grand*

Theft Auto III: San Andreas (2001) (hereafter *GTA III*) for the first three videos and

Grand Theft Auto IV: Liberty City (2008) (hereafter *GTA IV*) for the latter two. At the

time of their premiere, Solomon was known primarily as an experimental filmmaker

deeply committed to the photochemical materiality of 16mm film. His sudden embrace of

both digital technology and violent video games came as a shock to many.[25] But personal

details make clear his investment in the game and the console system. Solomon

purchased a Playstation 2 and *GTA III* for a course he was teaching on postmodernism.

When LaPore, an ethnographic filmmaker and longtime friend of Solomon, visited

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[23] Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film*
(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 178.
[24] At the time, *Crossroad* was untitled and was later given the title *untitled (for David Gatten)* for
its premiere at the Views from the Avant-Garde sidebar at the New York Film Festival in October
2005.
[25] See John P. Powers, "Darkness on the Edge of Town: Film Meets Digital in Phil Solomon's *In*
Memorial (Mark LaPore)," *October* 137 (Summer 2011): 84–106; Michael Sicinski, "Phil
Solomon Visits San Andreas and Escapes, Not Unscathed," *Cinema Scope* 30 (Spring 2007),
accessed March 15, 2017, http://academichack.net/solomon.htm.

Solomon in the summer of 2005, they played the game together. Solomon recalls how they went from simply playing the game to making what would become *Crossroad*. I quote at length because, although extratextual, this history is critical to understanding the direction and innovations of the series.

> We weren't interested in actually playing the game; we would use built-in codes (called 'cheats' by gamers) in order to bypass the narrative and its cumbersome missions with their hierarchical levels. We mostly just wanted to drive around and look at the landscape…After some time, Mark actually started directing me as if I were a performer and a cameraman…as the night wore on, it got more and more serious, and Mark became intent that we could make something with this, and that we should finish it that evening. We started to conceive the film as a private work for our friend and colleague David Gatten. All three of is had recently battled serious illnesses. As it turned out, this night was to be my last visit with Mark, the last time I saw him before his unexpected death three weeks later. Now, the film that we had completed seemed to be both his gift to me and an oddly prophetic memorial…What had originally been intended as a get-well card for all three of us now had terrible reverberant overtones.[26]

There are several important elements in Solomon's retelling of the *Crossroad*'s background that inform the subsequent works. First, Solomon and LaPore rejected the game's violent narrative, once again eliding what John Sharp referred to in Arcangel as "the gameness of the game," thereby playing the game by ignoring its rules and exploring its virtual landscape.[27] Second, their collective play lead to the creation of a private work about the shared experience of LaPore, Solomon, and Gatten battling serious illness. The game offered a site for the three to come together during an uncertain time. Finally, and most importantly, the game as an object, the shared experience of play, and *Crossroad* all underwent a fundamental transformation between the time of the video's production and its premiere. On the fourth anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks – three weeks after his

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[26] Sue Zemka, "Interview with Philip Solomon," *English Language Notes* 46.1 (Spring/Summer 2008): 202.
[27] See Sharp, *Works of Game*.

visit with Solomon and three weeks before its presentation in a David Gatten program at the New York Film Festival – LaPore committed suicide. As Solomon recounts, *Crossroad*, initially presented as *untitled (for David Gatten)*, transformed from a get-well card for a sick friend into a memorial for a departed one. *Crossroad* and *GTA III* became the marked site of Solomon and LaPore's final earthly encounter, the final space for their collaborative play, their last game. As Genevieve Yue explains, "*GTA*'s landscapes still suggest for [Solomon] an intimate proximity to, coupled with a profound longing for, what is no longer there: in other words, the person that Solomon mourns in the series title the film-maker Mark LaPore."[28]

The intermediate space between life and death, presence and absence, proximity and distance, commemoration and memorialization reflects the formative time of nostalgia. In the case of Solomon, I locate three nostalgic objects whose afterlives the *In Memoriam (Mark LaPore)* series addresses: LaPore, gaming technologies, and cinema itself. The series progresses in such a fashion so as to show the complex, interpersonal intertwining of each of these ephemeral, nostalgic objects – their material histories becoming spectral memories, living embodiments of shared pasts that continue to take on new forms. I largely sidestep discussions of the series in terms of the transition from film to digital technologies, as those issues have been extensively addressed elsewhere.[29] And, though Yue convincingly treats the "memorializing imperative" of the series as culminating in the *"EMPIRE"* installation, I take a slightly longer view in order to contemplate Solomon's deliberate structuring of the series. I show how each work builds

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[28] Genevieve Yue, "Cinema immemorial: "*"EMPIRE"* and the experimental machinima of Phil Solomon," *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* 3.1 (2014): 12.
[29] See Ibid.; Powers, "Darkness on the Edge of Town."

upon the last in order to highlight an abstracted narrative that illustrates the symbiotic

relationship between individuals and objects who share time and place.[30] Focusing on

issues of limitation, mortality, and perpetual transformation, I contend that *In Memoriam*

(Mark LaPore) paradoxically mourns that which has been lost while also finding the lost

object actively developing in alternative forms, thereby maintaining presence and

appearing irretrievably absent at the same time. In this sense, I argue that Solomon

reveals nostalgia as an active, moving force that sees the past reshaping itself into the

present and future.

As I have already mentioned, *Crossroad* begins the series. A six-minute video

composed of only four shots, it is in some senses the simplest work. However, it lays out

a number of provocative aesthetic and narratival challenges that develop throughout the

series. Following its transformation from a get-well card into a eulogy, its multiple titles

indicate a precarious malleability at the heart of the series, a recognition that death and

mourning cannot be confined into a single instance, that obsolescence is transformative.

The opening shot shows the main character, CJ, wearing a white tank top.[31] He stands in

bare field next to a house on a dark and stormy night. Gusts of wind and rain blow across

the landscape. Tree branches slightly sway. CJ stays still in the middle of the frame. In

the right foreground, a large bouquet of flowers rotates in mid-air, spinning constantly in

circles throughout the shot. Although *GTA III* was heralded for its mimetic innovations,

things in the scene don't quite add up. Although they rotate and float, the flowers have

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[30] Utilizing a fragmentary, abstract narrative, *In Memoriam* follows an impulse Tom Gunning
identifies in his theorization of "minor cinema," which notably included Solomon's 16mm film
work. See Tom Gunning, "Towards a Minor Cinema," *Motion Picture* 3 (1989-1990): 2–5.
[31] The character is never identified with a name in the series. However, Solomon and the existing
critical literature all refer to the character by name. I have done the same here.

little depth. They are too flat, too large, abstracted, paper-thin, and they move independently. Solomon achieves a number of these special aesthetic effects through the use of "cheat codes," creating a number of repetitive glitches, lighting and weather effects, and spectacular "shots" throughout the series. Here, as Kim Cascone argues, glitch becomes an autonomously generated material element within the scene.[32] Their eerie immateriality is abundantly clear. In emphasizing the surface structure of the image, Solomon displays what John Powers calls a "sensual tactility," leading the viewer to meditate on this virtual world that is a world, but is not our own.[33]

Suddenly, the camera tracks CJ from behind as he breathlessly runs through dense foliage. Dark green-blue plants whip in front of the camera, at times completely concealing CJ, yet they quickly vanish. He runs in circles without a destination in sight. Next, he stands in an empty, dusty road. The tree and the house from the opening moments are momentarily visible in the background. The camera pans slightly to the right, shuffling from side-to-side around CJ's body. With this very gradual rotation of the camera, the bouquet of flowers unexpectedly pops into the foreground (Fig. 55). It creates an abstract blur of line and color that spins across the frame. The final shot, lasting nearly three minutes, shows CJ again standing on the road (Fig. 56). The bouquet floats in space next to him, once again rotating constantly throughout the shot's long duration. CJ shuffles his feet, slumps his shoulders, stretches his arm, and arches his back. He gazes forward toward the rapidly shifting, stormy clouds. A small plane flies overhead. Later, a

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[32] Kim Cascone, "The Aesthetics of Failure: 'Post-Digital' Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music," in *Computer Music Journal* 24.4 (Winter 2000): 12–13.
[33] See Powers, "Dakness on the Edge of Town," 93–94.

dove. Then, another plane. All the while, CJ stands in the middle of a downpour,

watching and waiting for some thing or someone to join him in this funereal world.

Crossroads inspects the parameters of CJ's world, a world that only he inhabits

and that the viewer approaches from a distance. The camera is always positioned behind

CJ, never allowing for a view of his face. He is inaccessible. Of course, this view of the

"third-person shooter" is common in video games.[34] However, as Arcangel did in *Super

Mario Clouds*, Solomon not only ignores the game's narrative, but also strips it of its

interactivity. The viewer has no control over the imagery. The gameplay footage becomes

the source for a cinematic work.

At the same time, though, *Crossroad* and the series as a whole are less detached

from notions of gameplay and interactivity than it may initially seem. It is quite important

that the viewers recognize this moment as gameplay footage and acknowledge that

something is missing: a live player. In the final shot, CJ only moves when the game's

software makes him move. Solomon and LaPore have stepped away from the controller.

No one is playing the game. CJ's shuffling feet, rotating shoulders, and long stretches are

machinic actions. Alexander Galloway refers to these moments as "ambience acts" within

which, "The game is slowly walking in place, shifting from side to side and back again to

the center. It is running, *playing itself*, perhaps."[35] While videos such as Miltos Manetas's

Super Mario Sleeping (1997) highlight the aesthetics of the ambience act, *Crossroad*

narrativizes the moment by turning the absence of the player into a form of distress and

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[34] Galloway, *Gaming*, 39–69.
[35] Ibid., 10. To be clear, Solomon and LaPore utilized cheat codes to create weather effects and to have objects fly through the sky in the final shot. In this sense, they were involved in creating the overall aesthetic of the final shot. At the same time, the multiples planes and birds, as well as CJ's static motion, can only occur over a long duration when the controller has not been touched.

sorrow. Here, the lack of interactivity results in an uneasy dread pervading over the final shot. This mood is a central component of Solomon's evocative narrative. This spotlights the game's particular aesthetics, highlights the ability of the game's software to continue "playing" even without a player, and also places CJ in a state of precarious anticipation. He awaits the game operator to take action, to take control, to put him in motion. The game may play itself if there is no human operator, but CJ is stuck in place. The ambience act calls out to a player who may or may not be there.

The final shot of *Crossroad* indicates an unimpeachable absence in the outside world, the cracking of the symbiotic relationship between human and machine, and, finally, the unbridgeable divide between Solomon and his friend. As Galloway explains of the ambience act, "The world of the game exists as a purely aesthetic object…It can be looked at; it is detached from the world, a self-contained expression. But there is always a kind of 'charged expectation' in the ambience act. It is about possibility, a subtle solicitation for the operator to return."[36] In *Crossroad*, though, a return is not possible. Solomon, like CJ, awaits direction from his counterpart for what move to make next. *Crossroad* displays an indefinite, ongoing separation between those inhabiting the distant virtual world and those in the outside world, relaying what Vivian Sobchack terms "an aesthetic of absence" that privileges "the poetically and philosophically charged gap between a present artifact and the past experience of which is it only a fragment."[37]

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[36] Ibid., 11.
[37] Vivian Sobchack, "Nostalgia for a Digital Object: Regrets on the Quickening of QuickTime," in *Memory Bytes: History, Technology, and Digital Culture*, ed. Lauren Rabinovitz and Abraham Gell (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 325

Rehearsals for Retirement, the series' second film and the first made without

LaPore, deepens the strategies of aesthetic absence. Once again constructed from

gameplay footage of *GTA III*, *Rehearsals* heightens CJ's evocative quest. Here, though,

CJ's appearance has completely changed. He has become am adumbral figure, a dark

void of negative space lurking across the distressed environment (Fig. 57). The film

begins on a dark, misty night in an empty field. The camera slowly tracks backward as

gusts of wind and rain blow across the scene. A shadowy CJ stands a short distance from

an opening in a fence. Rain pours down. Lightning cracks behind clouds overhead. The

camera moves inside a strange tunnel. A set of train tracks extend diagonally into deep

space as rain and wind cut across the scene. CJ stands in a dark blue enclosure. The train

tracks are just visible over his left shoulder. The camera circles tightly around his body.

Rain drops fall on his shoulders, though, at times, they seem to emanate from his body

rather than fall on it. *Crossroad*'s harrowing feeling of absence and separation carries

over. A long black hearse stretches across the train tracks (Fig. 58). This deathly vehicle

will be one of the recurring images and objects used throughout *Rehearsals for*

Retirement.

The remainder of the film unveils the gradual collapse of CJ's virtual universe.

Presumably the view from the driver's seat of the hearse, stunning first-person point-of-

view shots flow methodically down empty roads and through fields of sharp grass that

somehow cut into the hearse's interior. (Fig. 59)[38] The vehicle barrels straight ahead

toward the fence where CJ once stood. However, rather than break through the fence, the

camera hits a virtual wall and juts up toward the smoky sky. Later, like a magic carpet,

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[38] Solomon used multiple vehicles in the game to achieve these effects.

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the hearse flies erratically through the air. It hovers over an abandoned city, and, ultimately, crashes into a vast ocean. Meanwhile, CJ watches as planes rise and fall in the sky. Exploding in mid-air, the images invoke the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, as well as the same day, four years later, that LaPore died. CJ hovers on a bicycle in the air as airplanes fly closely by. He remains resolutely still and occasionally holds the same bouquet of flowers from *Crossroad* (Fig. 60). The world burns around him: first, the train tracks, then, the tunnel, and, finally, the hearse. *Rehearsals for Retirement* ends with the hearse sailing through the sky and plunging into an ocean. The camera follows the hearse down into the water (Fig. 61). The vehicle slams into the water, releasing flashes of light and color as water particles glitter around it. It bobs up and down, starting to sink. In a deep blue space, CJ paddles his arms from side to side across the frame (Fig. 62). Though his head appears above water and his body remains in motion, he continues to sink. He stares at the hearse parked on the ocean floor in front of him as doves fly overhead.

Throughout *Rehearsals for Retirement*, Solomon uses CJ to explore the limits and boundaries of the game's virtual space until it falls apart. Enhanced by the employment of cheat codes found online, he composes striking images that highlight places where the game's software breaks down. These are the outer limits of game world dictated by *GTA III*'s designers.[39] Incorporating these formal parameters as both an aesthetic and

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[39] Though Solomon praises the game's limitations, he is enamored by the designers' attention to detail, particularly in incidental or excessive details in the game's "natural   world" (the sway of trees, rain drops hitting the drop, papers flying through the air) that are unnecessary to gameplay. See Zemka. This approach resonates with those taken by Farocki and Arcangel. At the same time, though, *GTA III* was highly praised for its expansive world and mimetic capabilities. See Nate Garrelts, "An Introduction to Grand Theft Auto Studies," in *The Meaning and Culture of Grand*

narratival device, Solomon reveals dizzying aesthetic moments that showcase an

exploration of worldly and virtual boundaries, the same process undertaken by CJ and

Solomon himself in his search through *GTA III* for traces of the absent LaPore.

And though it is impossible to avoid this bleak confrontation with mortality,

Solomon also expands the limits of "play" with virtual worlds and absent figures.

Ignoring the game's prescribed narrative, as in Farocki and Arcangel, he instead

investigates the game's constraints as a means of reconceiving possibilities for deeper

connection. Utilizing *GTA III*, a game known for its expansive, "limitless" world,

Solomon approaches the game as an object in which the object of the game is to uncover

its own limitations. Echoing the writing of Ian Bogost, Solomon discovers "Games aren't

appealing because they are fun, but because they are *limited*…The power of games lies

not in their capacity to deliver rewards or enjoyment, but on the structured constraint of

their design, which opens abundant possible spaces for play."[40]

Solomon's play uncovers the structure and constraints of the purportedly limitless

space of virtual worlds. Rather than follow a set of rules, play, for Solomon, is an

improvisational procedure that works against predetermination.[41] His nostalgic play of

GTA III perpetually unfolds. At the end of *Rehearsals for Retirement*, CJ's ghostly

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Theft Auto: Critical Essays, ed. Nate Garrelts (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006), 1–15; Laurie N. Taylor, "From Stompin' Mushrooms to Bustin' Heads: *Grand Theft Auto III* as Paradigm Shift," in Garrelts, *The Meaning and Culture of Grand Theft Auto*, 115–26.

[40] Bogost, *Play Anything*, x.

[41] As pointed out by Yue, Peter Krapp usefully refers to this process as *playing with* the game rather than simply playing the game. See Peter Krapp, *Noise Channels: Glitch and Error in Digital Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). For other explorations of glitch in art and theory, see Michael Betancourt, *Glitch Art in Theory and Practice: Critical Failures and Post-Digital Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Hugh S. Manon and Daniel Temkin, "Notes on Glitch," *World Picture Journal* 6 (Winter 2011), accessed March 18, 2017, http://www.worldpicturejournal.com/WP_6/Manon.html.

presence is trapped in a world he cannot escape. For Solomon, his simultaneous search for and separation from LaPore becomes the play of grief. For the viewer, it proposes a reconsideration of virtuality and mortality. Solomon uncovers the false claims of boundless progress offered by new technologies and theories of progress. At the same time, he reconceives an intimate connection with that which has become distant. In *Rehearsal for Retirement*, the end of existence is a perpetual calamity to which Solomon's nostalgia responds.

In Memoriam's final two films reflect a significant change in direction by turning away from an explicit tracking of CJ's journey. With CJ's quest firmly ensconced in the fabric of the series, *Last Days in a Lonely Place* and *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* combine Solomon and LaPore's personal history with a broader history of cinematic experience. In this way, the final two films, alongside the series' coda, entangle Solomon's nostalgic objects: LaPore, the game, and cinema. This multiplicity is made possible only after the passage of time, a period of mourning, the development of nostalgia. This is not to say that the films are any less sorrowful or contemplative. As Solomon observes, *Last Days in a Lonely Place* features "an overriding sense of cosmic apocalypse. The end of the world; the end of my world."[42] At the same time, LaPore's ongoing presence emerges in new ways from within the game world, as Solomon's venerable nostalgic memory reshapes his aesthetic of absence. Carrying over what Laura

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[42] Zemka, "Interview with Philip Solomon," 207.

Marks finds in Solomon's materialist filmmaking, the final two films "find a way to allow the figure to pass while embracing the tracks of its presence…"[43]

The title *Last Days in a Lonely Place* signals the intermixed plurality of references lurking beneath the film's surface. A cinematic history materializes. Solomon fuses two distinctive periods of time signified by two different films: Gus Van Sant's *Last Days* (2005) and Nicholas Ray's *In a Lonely Place* (1950). *Last Days* was a film LaPore emailed Solomon about in the days prior to his death. Ray, meanwhile, was their film teacher when they met at Harpur College in the 1970s. Further allusions to the history of cinema turn up at various points. *Last Days in a Lonely Place* begins with a slow tracking shot rising up the hill toward Griffith Observatory, the site of the tragic final scene in Ray's iconic film *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) (Fig. 63). Solomon appropriates audio from the film across the opening shot. The planetarium narrator observes, "For many days before the end of our earth, people will look into the night sky and see a star, increasingly bright and increasingly near." Visual motifs carry over from earlier in the series. Lightning crashes behind the observatory, lighting up the night sky. Later in the film, a hearse flies through the sky and crashes into a sea. And once again, the world burns, this time inside the lobby of an abandoned cinema. Trees fall. Wind and rain gust across abstract fields (Fig. 64). The whole world teeters on the brink of collapse.

Despite the recurring motifs, *Last Days in a Lonely Place* stands out from the rest of the series in a number of ways. Most notably, it is "shot" in stark black-and-white. Similar to the aesthetic of Pixelvision discussed in Chapter Two, the images look quite

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[43] Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 96.

distorted and almost grainy, particularly with the enhanced weather and atmospheric effects. Further, there is a complicated, densely layered soundtrack. While turning to Ray's films in voice-over dialogue, Solomon also incorporates portions of the ambient soundtrack from Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* (1986). The world also expands beyond the completely isolated character of CJ. Two female figures appear at various points. They wander in the forest, climb the hill to the observatory, and peer off rocks into what looks like the San Francisco Bay (Fig. 65 – 66).[44] Though the figures are not clearly identified, they nonetheless represent additional inhabitants of the strange spaces that pervade the series.

Due to the expansive associations and multiple points of reference, *Last Days in a Lonely Place* is perhaps the most complex of the series. Solomon himself has referred to it as such.[45] While I do not wish to the limit the significance of its narrative innovations, I want to avoid getting lost in its web of associations.[46] As such, I will limit my comments here to its cinematic appropriation, which I consider its primary contribution to the series. By returning to a black-and-white mise en scene, Solomon references the earlier cinematic aesthetic from his youth, which adds a mystical aura to the film as a whole.[47] Further, as I have suggested, *Last Days in a Lonely Place* represents Solomon's quest for LaPore's enduring presence expanding from the *GTA III*'s universe across the history of cinema. LaPore led back to the game, which ultimately led Solomon back to film.

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[44] Shots of the Golden Gate Bridge are at several points earlier in the film.

[45] Phil Solomon, personal conversation with the author, October 2011.

[46] For a further consideration of its narrative complexities and editing strategies, see Powers, particularly 101–6.

[47] While Solomon's primary points of reference are cinematic, the return to black-and-white could also be seen as returning to types of television available around the time of the films he explicitly references.

However, this in no way reflects a romantic search for origins. Instead, through this process, Solomon discovers how his nostalgic objects continue to reach out and remain active, forever alive, across time. Thus, while Solomon's formal construction seems to situate him as an interactive hacker-artist, he shows the resonant activity of nostalgic, cinematic memory through its resuscitation of absent figures into an ever-developing present moment. In a certain sense, cinema helps Solomon fuse the cracked symbiosis apparent in *Crossroad* and *Rehearsals*. Undoubtedly, though, there is a destructive, deathly influence in this activity. Something or someone is lost, and they will not return as they were before. Nonetheless, Solomon reveals a kind of tragic return through cinematic memory that spectrally transfigures the past into alternative forms.

The nature of memory and its transference onto new generations comes to a head in *Still Raining, Still Dreaming*. As jarring as the black-and-white cinematography and appropriated soundtrack were in *Last Days in a Lonely Place*, *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* offers a similarly stark juxtaposition from the earlier films. Most notably, the film is shot in widescreen and features vivid colors with vibrant and rich details. Between the production of the final two films, Sony released the Playstation 3 (PS3), which commercially and technologically eclipsed the PS2 that Solomon had been using. Alongside this innovation, Rockstar Games released *Grand Theft Auto IV* (*GTA IV*). Initially, Solomon explained that his connection to *GTA III* "was the strange poignancy I felt in the game's polygonal aspirations, its desires to be of the real world fell short in very interesting ways."[48] As I have shown, these shortcomings were made very apparent in the first three films. Why update the software then? Just because it is new? The release

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[48] Zemka, "Interview with Philip Solomon," 202.

of the PS3 would by no means obligate Solomon to use it. As in Farocki and Arcangel,

console systems continue to be used for long periods after they have been replaced on the

market. I want to seriously consider this generational shift and the implicit challenges it

represents for Solomon and the series as a whole. It is here when Solomon moves on

from LaPore in a sense, not by abandoning him but by integrating LaPore's life and

legacy into his own work. *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* shows Solomon seeing the world

anew through LaPore's camera eye. Beyond personal autobiography, however, *Still*

Raining, Still Dreaming displays nostalgia's temporal elongation and material

transformations across the passage of time, the loss of friends, the evolution of

generations.

Like *Last Days in a Lonely Place*, *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* appropriates its

audio from another source, in this case, Basil Wright and John Grierson's 1934

documentary *Song of Ceylan*, a film LaPore aspired to remake.[49] It should perhaps be no

surprise, then, that *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* is the work most clearly indebted to

LaPore's ethnographic artistic practice.[50] The film shows shadows slowly overtaking city

streets, window fronts, and apartment buildings (Fig. 67). A slow pan across shop

windows explicitly recalls LaPore's *The Sleepers* (1989).[51] In a dark room, a magician

raises his arm as a woman levitates. An aura of darkness encroaches upon the town.

Caught in a rainstorm, rain particles drip down the camera lens, another reference to

LaPore's film. The film ends with three-minute long take on another gray, rainy day at

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[49] Powers, "Darkness on the Edge of Town," 105.
[50] Solomon notes that the structure and spareness of *Crossroad* aligns more closely to the style of LaPore's films than his own. See Zemka, "Interview with Philip Solomon," 205.
[51] Ibid.

the entrance to a park monument. Smears of raindrops slide down the camera lens as a multitude of spectral figures wander across the misty space (Fig. 68).

With its emphasis on figures in landscapes and variations of light and texture, *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* certainly continues the overall mood and affect of the series as a whole. However, there is something paradoxical about Solomon's approach in this final film and its direct associations with LaPore. As I mentioned, it is the only film of the four made on the *PS3* and composed of images from *GTA IV*, a console system and a game that LaPore was not alive to see. And although there are figures in the film, it seems to have abandoned CJ, the would-be LaPore stand-in. In some ways, then, Solomon constructs the film at the furthest distance from his friend and from the game they played together. At the same time, *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* most closely resembles a LaPore film, and, as far as I can tell, is the only film in the series with explicit references to his work. This final film, then, is simultaneously the most close and the most far away from the figure who the series mourns.

Returning to Solomon and LaPore's initial conception for a video game-based work, I contend that *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* represents Solomon, in one sense, moving forward into a new phase with an undeniable recognition of his friend's perpetual absence. At the same time, he shows an imbrication of his own practice with LaPore's spirit, which propels the series forward. If *Crossroad* came about with LaPore as the director and Solomon as the player, *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* refigures the perspective of the entire series. CJ isn't just LaPore on a quest for new materiality in a virtual world. He is also Solomon, awaiting direction from his immaterial friend for how and where to move forward. *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* shows LaPore directing Solomon still, into a

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new era, the next generation that they continue to share, virtually. The film reflects

LaPore's world through Solomon's eyes. Symbiosis is restored.

At the same time, this virtual connection will always fall short of what has been.

In *In Memoriam (Mark LaPore)*, every image is an aesthetic of absence. Games only

have so much space. Representation can only go so far. Humans will always die. *In*

Memoriam (Mark LaPore) shows the notion of preplanned obsolescence is not simply

technological, but ontological. As Genevieve Yue writes of the series coda *"EMPIRE"*:

> …the game's insistent presence, in its material multiplicity and temporal
> expansiveness can never compensate for LaPore's undeniable absence. What it
> produces, however, is something of the order of Derrida's gift: not a substitute, but an
> image that points to an infinite elsewhere. The image, however impossible it may be
> to realize in actuality, assists in the work of mourning, offering…a fantastical kind of
> photograph, one in which we might imagine ourselves and our lost ones together, in a
> world of irreducible time.[52]

Though Yue emphasizes the impossibility of an "infinite elsewhere" of

irreducible time, Solomon shows the radical entanglement of the personal and

technological in nostalgic media. His mournful recognition of mortality leads to the

image of a reimagined future, the past not yet experienced. It does so by refusing to

hypostatize the past and letting it become a false memory, a glossy, stereotypical, static

image.

Marked by ongoing loss, Farocki, Arcangel, and Solomon all underscore how the

nostalgic return to the past is not a clutching to something as it once was but seeing how

that loss reconfigures the present moment. As I have argued throughout this project, the

progressive potential of nostalgia can be seen when it is understood as a moving image,

revealing the perpetual afterlives of objects left behind. In this sense, these cinema artists

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[52] Yue, "Cinema immemorial," 23.

sorrowfully respond to the vision of nostalgia described by Susan Stewart. She writes, "Nostalgia is sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not take part in lived experience."[53] In this chapter and throughout this dissertation, these cinema artists return nostalgia to particular objects of lived experience. Rather than reinsert an inauthentic version of the past into the present, nostalgic media artists approach obsolescence as a material condition that bridges the divide between humans, cultures, memories, and the intimate technologies that they live alongside. They hold on to the nostalgic object, looking down occasionally to see it witheringly blossom. Nostalgic media actively remembers the past as it could still be.

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[53] Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 23.

Après-coup: Politics and Nostalgia After Hope

> Every major social transformation leaves behind a fresh Eden that can
> serve as the object of somebody's nostalgia. And the reactionaries of our
> time have discovered that nostalgia can be a powerful political motivator,
> perhaps even more powerful than hope. Hopes can be disappointed.
> Nostalgia is irrefutable.
> -Mark Lilla, *The Shipwrecked Mind*

On February 20, 2017, a month after Donald Trump took the Oath of Office as

President of the United States, I received an email asking me to sign a Presidents' Day

card for former President Barack Obama. Below a large blue box filled with white text,

the message read, "It's President's Day, and we're getting a little nostalgic. The past

eight years with President Obama in the White House were SO. INCREDIBLE." On the

one hand, I certainly understood the feeling. After only a short time in office, President

Trump's global business scandals, assaults on minorities and numerous ethnic groups,

authoritarian attacks on the media, and willful ignorance of what used to be called facts

pushed me (along with others) into a state of benumbed exhaustion. Refusing to turn

away from the political process but gradually losing my grip on what would possibly

constitute relevance in a moment when deluge emerged as the White House's operative

political strategy, I, too, found myself not only disappointed and distressed by the present

moment, but also ready to go into a hysterical, full-throttle, all-caps BACKPEDAL into

the auratic twilight of the Obama years, the same period during which this project was

conceived and completed.

On the other hand, the fundraising citation of Obama nostalgia struck me in a

peculiar manner. In the aftermath of the shocking 2016 election results (and, indeed, prior

to the election), journalists and pundits time and again pointed to nostalgia as the driving

force behind Trump's populist campaign. Indicative of this was *The Washington Post*'s

election post-mortem, which was headlined, "How nostalgia for white Christian

American drove so many Americans to vote for Trump."[1] Whether through the desire of

"forgotten Americans" to bring back manufacturing jobs across a landscape of abandoned

factories, or, more derisively, the riptide of bigotry, racism, sexism, and white nationalist

isolationism, nostalgia became the pejorative buzz word for describing the aggressive,

potentially violent, and reactionary support of the Trump campaign.[2]

Is this the same nostalgia that drove the *New York Times*, a day *before* Obama left

office, to run an op-ed entitled "Missing Barack Obama Already?"[3] What does it say

about nostalgia that it can be conjured so easily to such drastically different effects, for

such different kinds of time? For if *The Washington Post*'s headline suggests nostalgia as

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[1] Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "How nostalgia for white Christian American drove so many Americans to vote for Trump," *The Washington Post*, January 5, 2017, accessed March 3, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/how-nostalgia-for-white-christian-america-drove-so-many-americans-to-vote-for-trump/2017/01/04/4ef6d686-b033-11e6-be1c-8cec35b1ad25_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main_mayberry-prebuild%3Ahomepage%2Fstory&utm_term=.165b2ae98cc8.

[2] Ta-Nehisi Coates has elsewhere identified these attributes as part of "segregationist nostalgia." See Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, June 2014, accessed March 3, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/.

[3] Nicholas Kristof, "Missing Barack Obama Already," *The New York Times*, Jan. 19, 2017, accessed March 3, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/19/opinion/missing-barack-obama-already.html?rref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Fnicholas-kristof&action=click&contentCollection=opinion&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=4&pgtype=collection&_r=0.

a *retrospective* post-script of a vanquished age, a fresh Eden to which Trump impossibly promises a triumphal return, doesn't *The New York Times* propose a form of nostalgia in advance, an *anticipation* of the loss of hope, a "missing already" of something that is still there, a nostalgia determined by its expected refutation?

It is this latter view that I have embraced throughout this project, an alternative view of nostalgia as a moving image, as a longing vision of the past not yet experienced. While it has remained below the surface of this project, my hope is that political ramifications of transforming nostalgia into a moving image have slowly developed, become visible. Nostalgia as a moving image precariously but definitively accepts the impossibility of implanting a past "golden age" into present conditions, recognizing it as both a reaction to social anxiety and a denial of material reality. Instead, nostalgia bears witness to the passage of time, revealing the pain, strain, and difficult necessity of constantly recalibrating histories and memories alongside lived reality, material bodies, not yet obsolescent technologies. It is often said that the nostalgic clings to the past, refusing to let go. Nostalgia as a moving image suggests this may still be true, but the impact of the process is not what we have assumed. Nostalgia does not leave a glossy, static image. It is not pristine, clean, or shimmering. Instead, in its historical refusal to let go of the past, nostalgia digs its fingernails into the image at the moment of its inscription and drags them, infinitely, across the image, across time, into the image, into time, perpetually refiguring the surface into new manifestations of its old self. Nostalgia, like hope, can always be disappointed because it perpetually refutes itself.

I didn't sign the card.

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Appendix A: Figures

Fig. 1 - Kodak Carousel Advertisement (1962)

Fig. 2 – Augusta Wood, *Kitchen Birds (1989, 1998, 2003, 2008)* (2010)

Fig. 3 – Augusta Wood, *Safari Room (1993, 2002, 2008)* (2009)

Fig. 4 – Augusta Wood, *To the River (2002, 2006, 2008)* (2009)
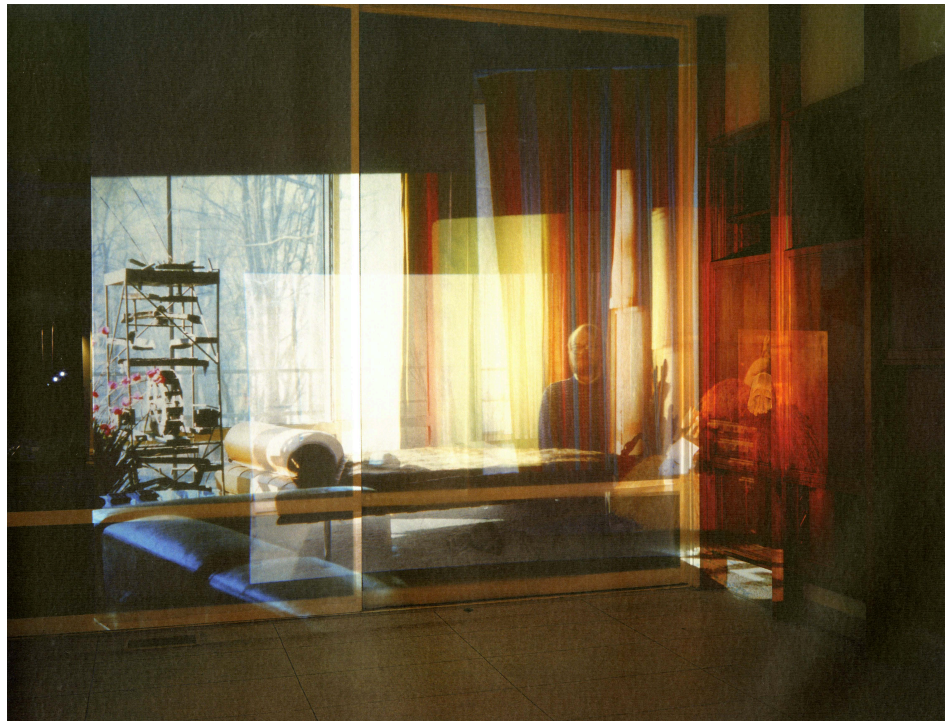
Fig. 5 – Augusta Wood, *Daybed (1980, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2008)* (2010)

Fig. 6 – Augusta Wood, *Bacon (1985, 1992, 1992, 2008)* (2009)

Fig. 7 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide

Fig. 8 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide

Fig. 9 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide

Fig. 10 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide

Fig. 11 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide
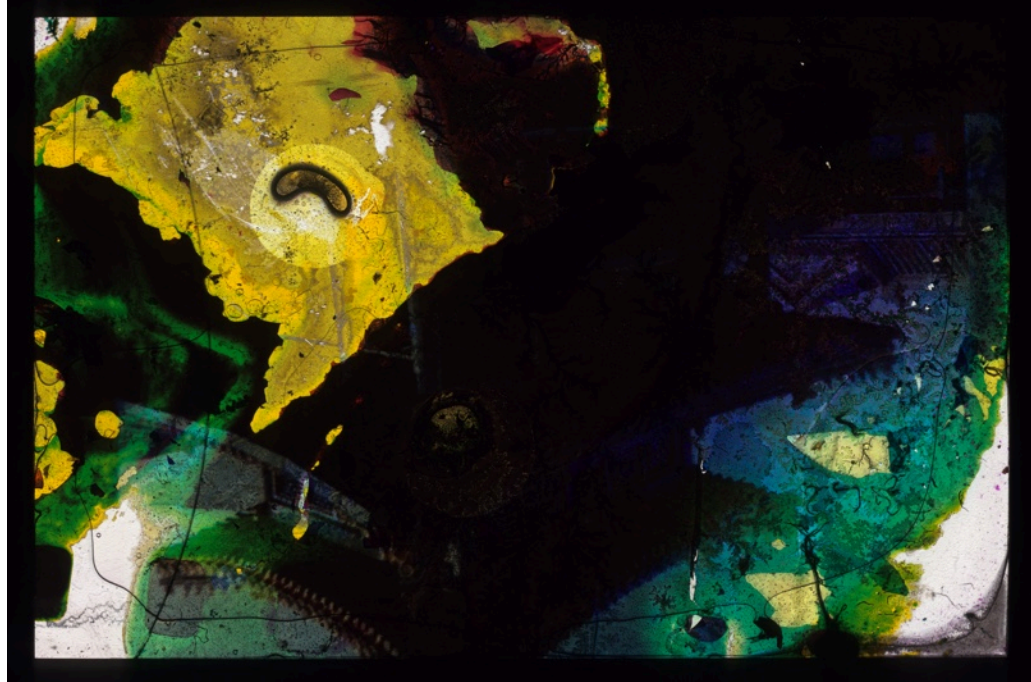
Fig. 12 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide
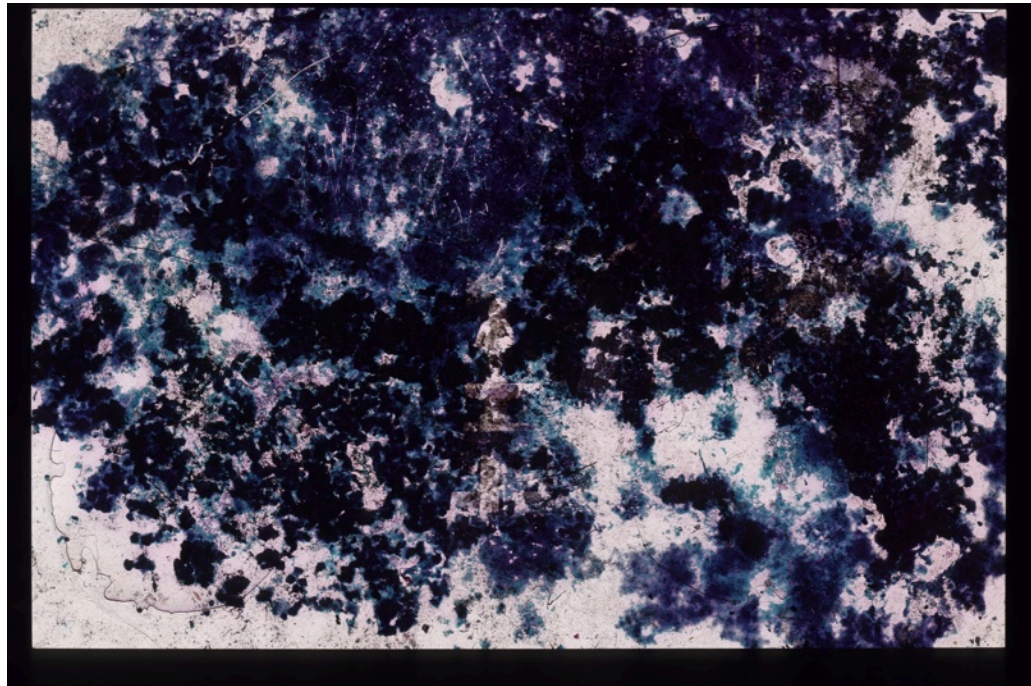
Fig. 13 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide

Fig. 14 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide

Fig. 15 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide

Fig. 16 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide
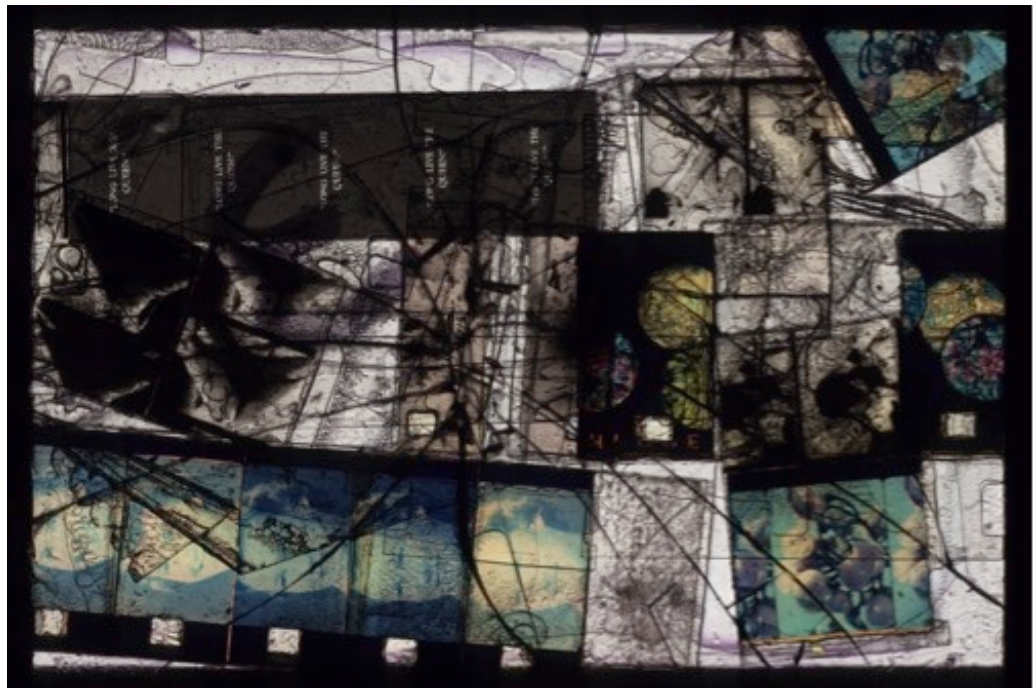
Fig. 17 – Luther Price, 35mm handmade slide

Fig. 18 – Installation view, "James and Audrey Foster Prize," Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2013).

Fig. 19 – Installation view, "Luther Price,"
Callicoon Fine Arts, New York, NY (2012).

Fig. 20 – Joe Gibbons, *The Stepfather* (2002)
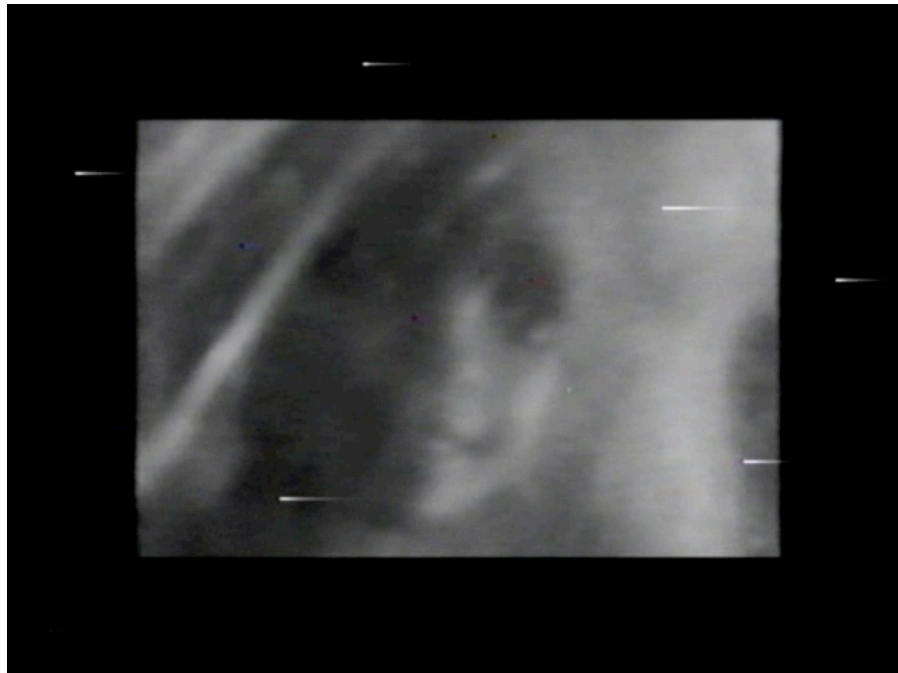
Fig. 21 – Joe Gibbons, *The Stepfather* (2002)

Fig. 22 – Michael Almereyda, *The Rocking Horse Winner* (1997)

Fig. 23 – Michael Almereyda, *The Rocking Horse Winner* (1997)

Fig. 24 – Michael Almereyda, *The Rocking Horse Winner* (1997)

Fig. 25 – Michael Almereyda, *The Rocking Horse Winner* (1997)

Fig. 26 – Michael Almereyda, *The Rocking Horse Winner* (1997)
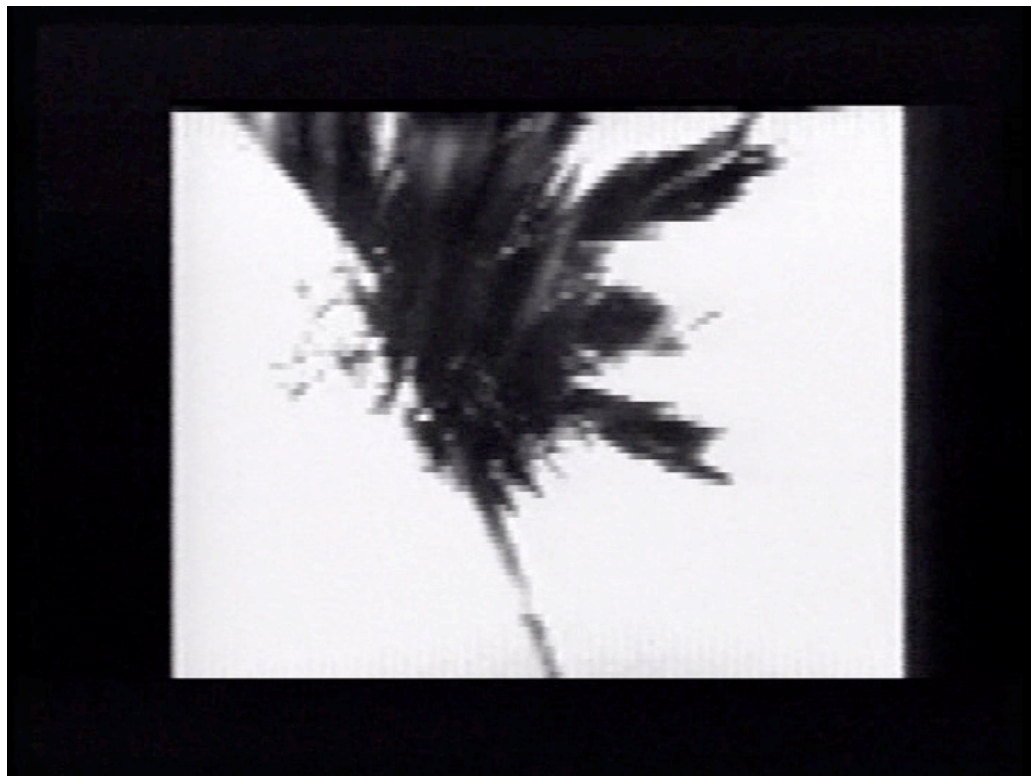
Fig. 27 – Peggy Ahwesh and Margie Strosser, *Strange Weather* (1993)

Fig. 28 – Peggy Ahwesh and Margie Strosser, *Strange Weather* (1993)

Fig. 29 – Peggy Ahwesh and Margie Strosser, *Strange Weather* (1993)

Fig. 30 – Peggy Ahwesh and Margie Strosser, *Strange Weather* (1993)

Fig. 31 – Peggy Ahwesh and Margie Strosser, *Strange Weather* (1993)

Fig. 32 – Omer Fast, *T3–AEON* (2000)
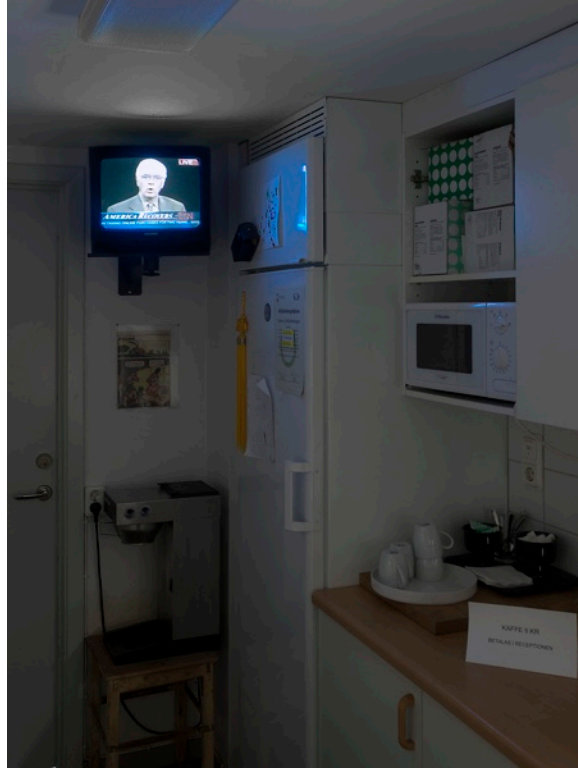
Fig. 33 – Installation view, "Omer Fast," Lund Kunsthalle, Lund, Sweden (2009)

Fig. 34 – Installation view, "2001/2011," Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH (2011)

Fig. 35 – Installation view, "Omer Fast," Jeu de Paume, Paris, France
(2015)
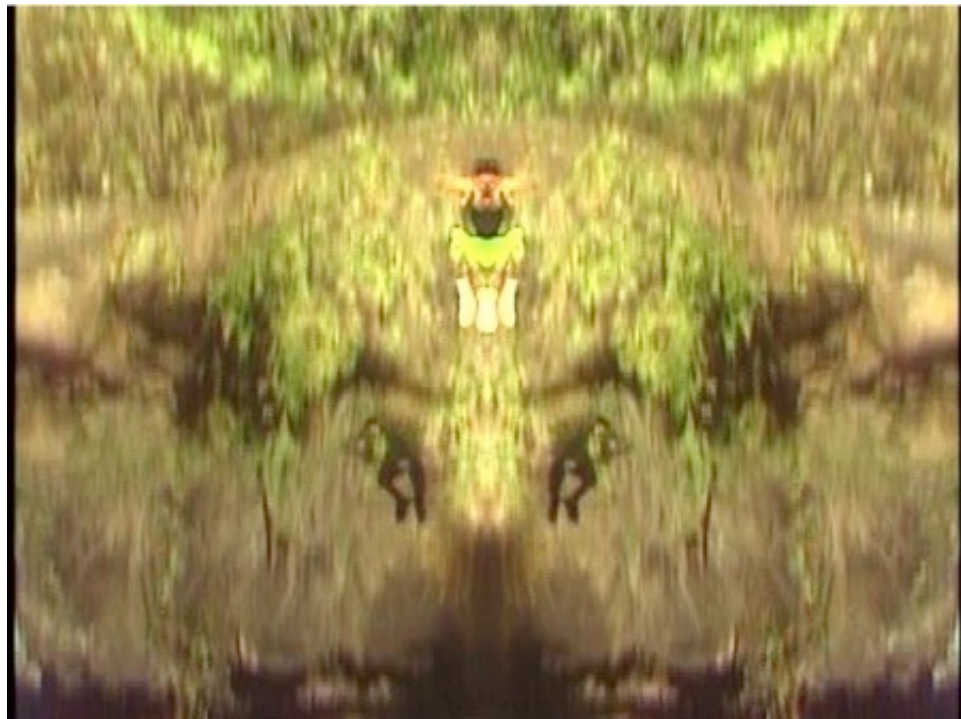
Fig. 36 – Michael Robinson, *Light Is Waiting* (2007)

Fig. 37 – Michael Robinson, *Light Is Waiting* (2007)

Fig. 38 – Michael Robinson, *Light Is Waiting* (2007)

Fig. 39 – Michael Robinson, *Light Is Waiting* (2007)

Fig. 40 – Michael Robinson, *Light Is Waiting* (2007)
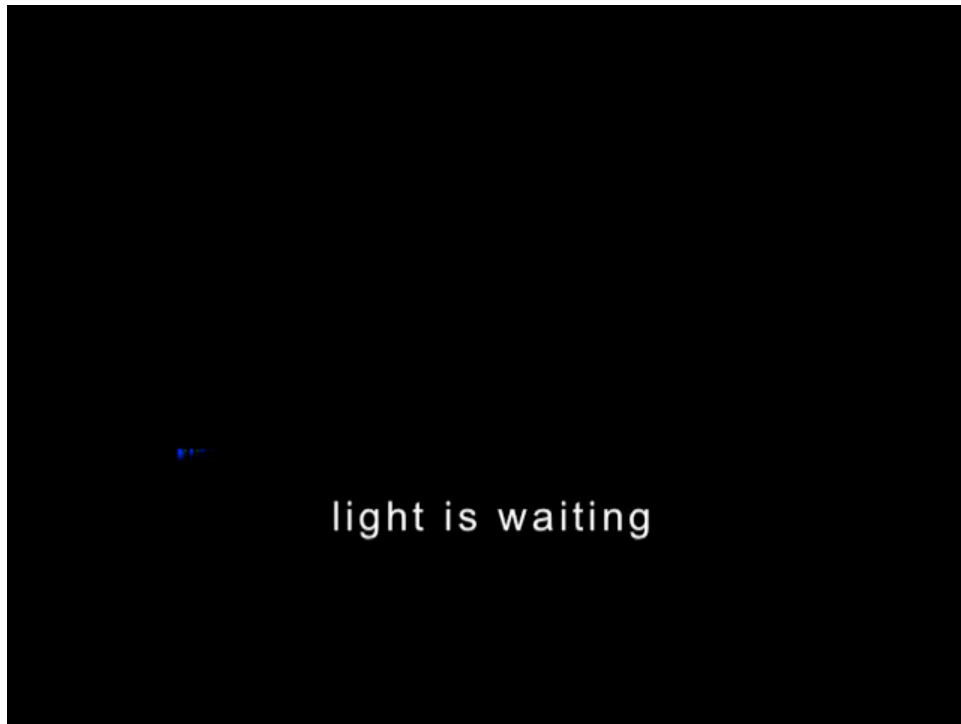
Fig. 41 – Michael Robinson, *Light Is Waiting* (2007)
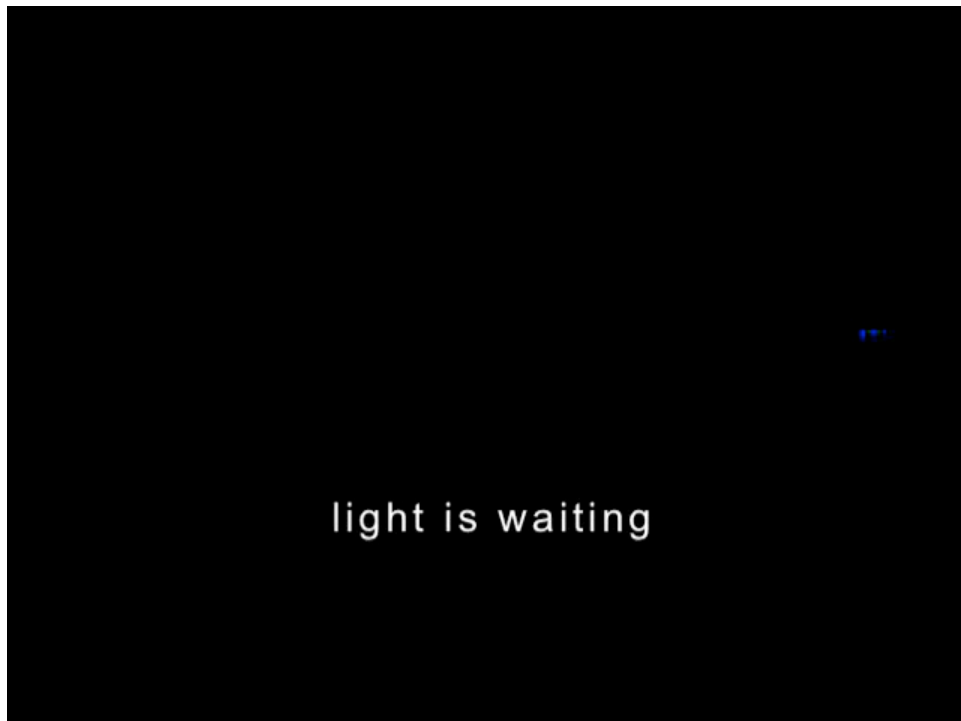
Fig. 42 – Michael Robinson, *Light Is Waiting* (2007)

Fig. 43 – Harun Farocki, *Parallel I* (2012)
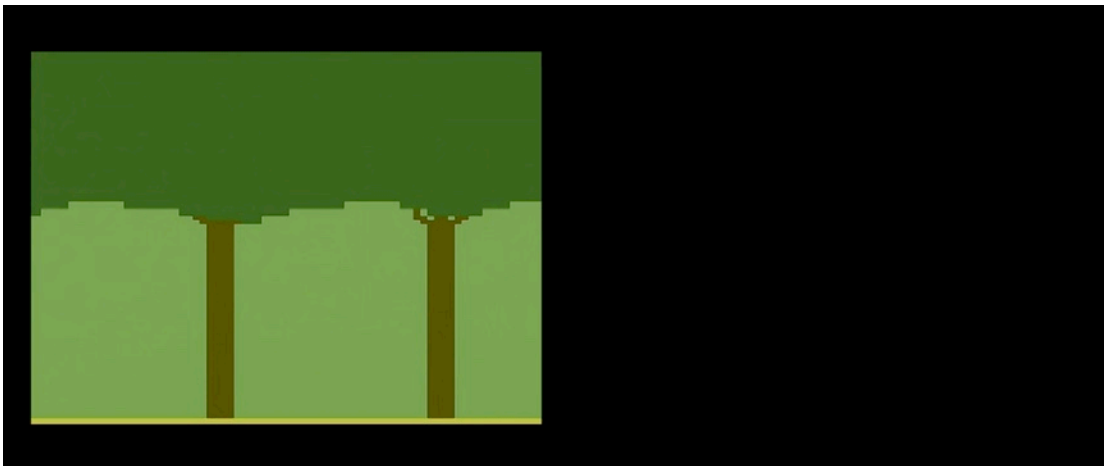
 Fig. 44 – Harun Farocki, *Parallel I* (2012)

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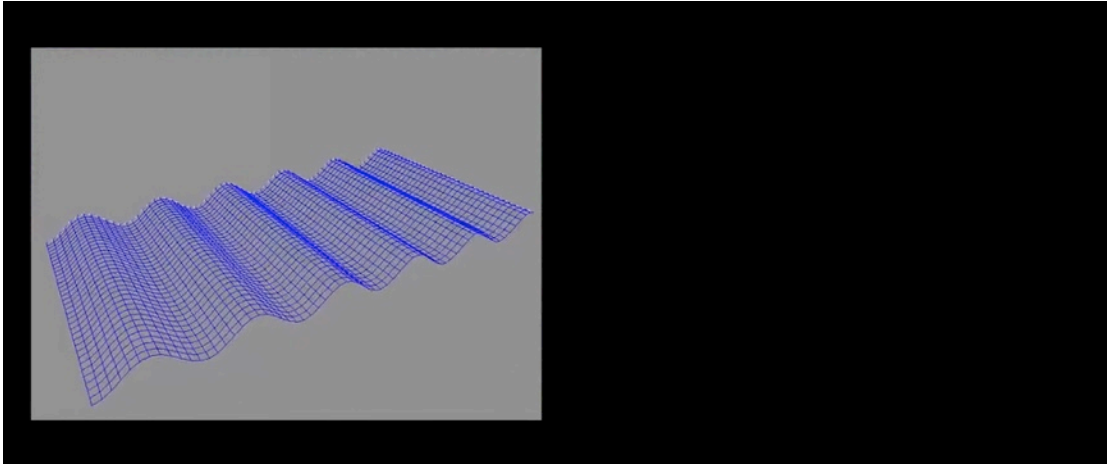
Fig. 45 – Harun Farocki, *Parallel I* (2012)
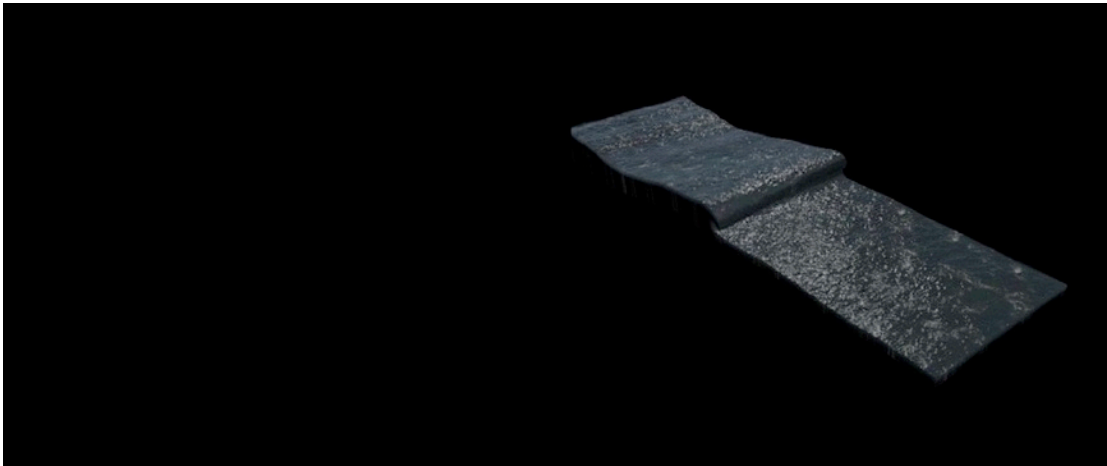
Fig. 46 – Harun Farocki, *Parallel I* (2012)

Fig. 47 – Harun Farocki, *Parallel I* (2012)

Fig. 48 – Harun Farocki, *Parallel I* (2012)
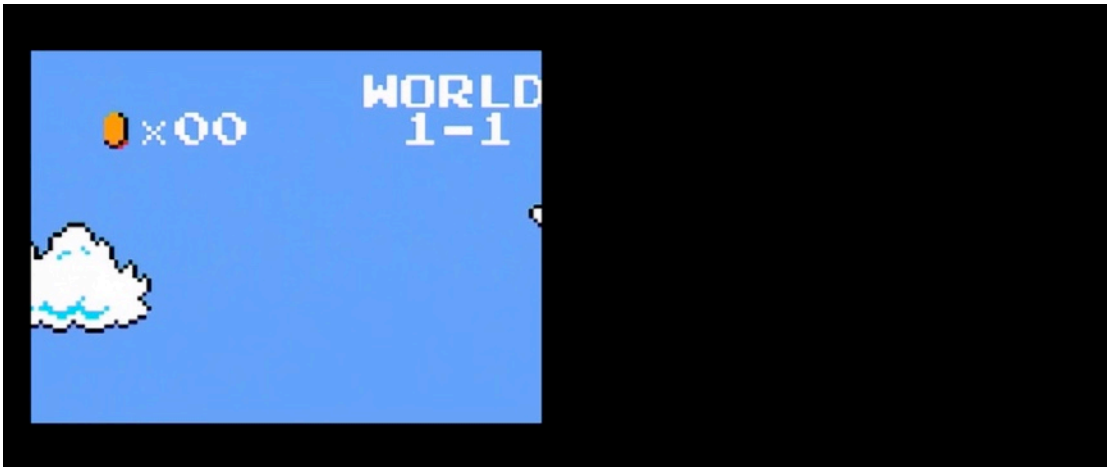
Fig. 49 – Harun Farocki, *Parallel I* (2012)
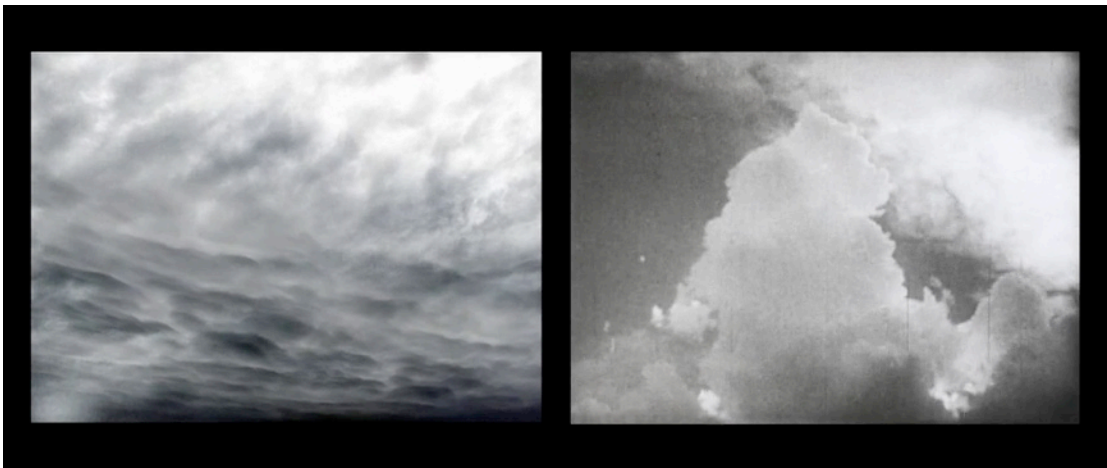
Fig. 50 – Harun Farocki, *Parallel I* (2012)

Fig. 51 – Installation View, "Pro Tools," Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2011)
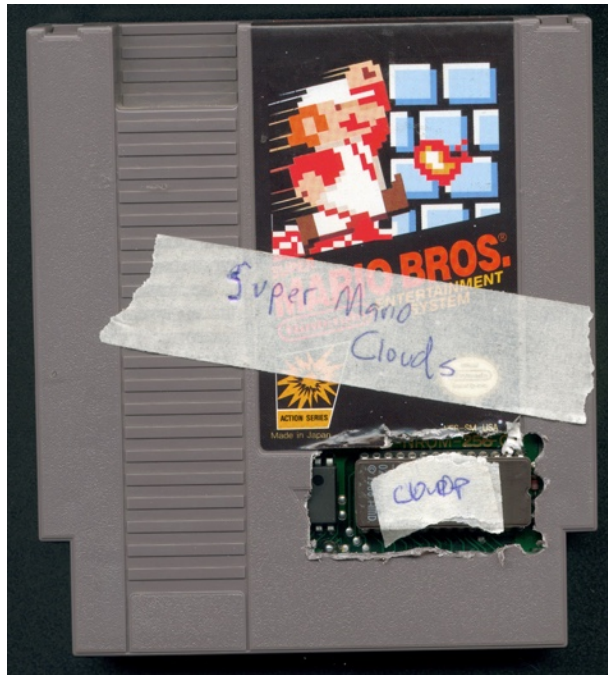
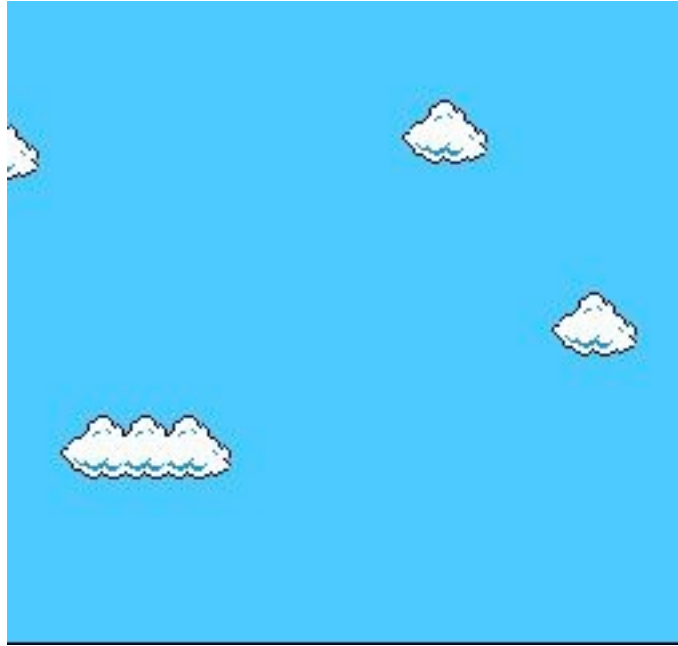Fig. 52 – Cory Arcangel, game cartridge of *Super Mario Clouds* (2002)

Fig. 53 – Cory Arcangel, *Super Mario Clouds*
(2002)

Fig. 54 – Installation View, "Super Mario Clouds," Whitney Museum of
American Art, New York, NY (2005)

Fig. 55 – Phil Solomon, *Crossroad* (2005)

Fig. 56 – Phil Solomon, *Crossroad* (2005)

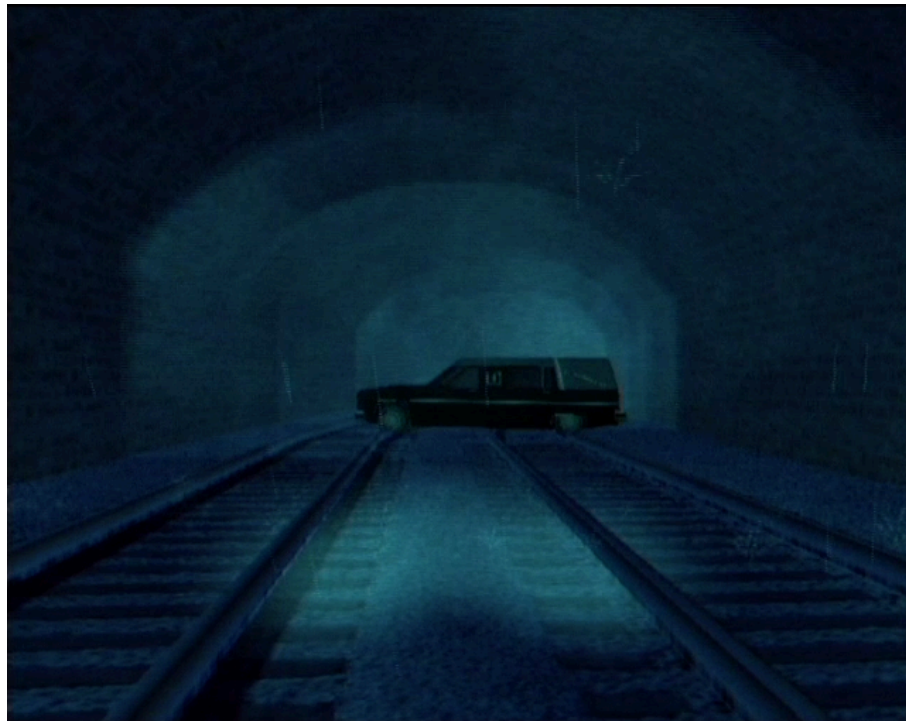Fig. 57 – Phil Solomon, *Rehearsals for Retirement* (2007)

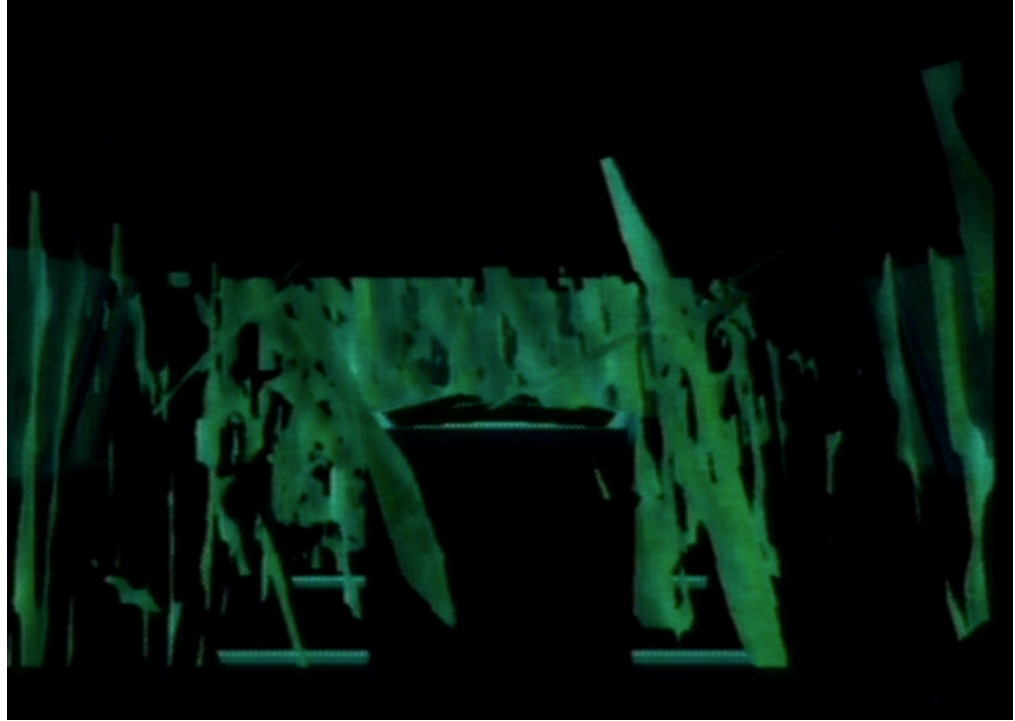Fig. 58 – Phil Solomon, *Rehearsals for Retirement* (2007)

Fig. 59 – Phil Solomon, *Rehearsals for Retirement* (2007)

Fig. 60 – Phil Solomon, *Rehearsals for Retirement* (2007)

Fig. 61 – Phil Solomon, *Rehearsals for Retirement* (2007)

Fig. 62 – Phil Solomon, *Rehearsals for Retirement* (2007)

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Fig. 63 – Phil Solomon, *Last Days in a Lonely Place* (2008)

Fig. 64 – Phil Solomon, *Last Days in a Lonely Place* (2008)

Fig. 65 – Phil Solomon, *Last Days in a Lonely Place* (2008)

Fig. 66 – Phil Solomon, *Last Days in a Lonely Place* (2008)

Fig. 67 – Phil Solomon, *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* (2008-09)

Fig. 68 – Phil Solomon, *Still Raining, Still Dreaming* (2008-09)