Video Art: Accelerationism and the Reification of Desire

Akil Kirlew

2014

School of Art and Design

A thesis submitted to
Auckland University of Technology
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Akil Kirlew

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

Akil Kirlew

Introduction

This research project explores the creative links between the production and circulation of video-based artworks and the dominance of capitalist-based forms of subjectivity. More specifically, I seek to determine whether digital video can be used in a manner that avoids complicity in the reification of desire. My use the word "desire" is borrowed from Gilles Deleuze for whom desire is a productive force that exists within and between various entities. By "reification of desire" I mean the method by which the cultural industries isolate and decontextualize elements of human social relations in an attempt to develop products that ostensibly satisfy the yearnings of the public. My research attempts to determine if this reification and commodification of desire can be resisted via aesthetic tactics such as allegory, masochism, and parody. I argue that these tactics may be viewed as components of an overarching strategy of accelerationism (Noys, Shaviro). In Chapter 1 (Video Economics), I explore video art's position within the broader framework of the cultural industries. In Chapter 2 (Body Doubles), I formulate my methodological approach via an examination of masochism, allegory, and accelerationism. In my third and final chapter (Andrea Fraser's *Untitled*), I bring the subjects of the first two chapters into relation via a discussion of Andrea Fraser's artwork *Untitled*. While this is a written thesis, I also have an artistic practice that makes use of performance, creative writing, and video. Consequently, I briefly discuss my own creative work (in chapter 2) as a means of clarifying my intentions.

Digital video has lowered the cost entry for emerging filmmakers, and its flexibility as a medium has resulted in the creation of new and varied works. This development has happened to coincide with the growth of video sharing websites and a renewed interest in the moving image on the part of visual arts spaces. The convergence of these factors has led to new methods of presentation and new modes of production that together constitute a new and greatly expanded cinematic space, the implications of which, I would argue, have not been adequately examined.

If the medium is the message, as Marshall McLuhan suggests, then it is my premise that we are on the brink of a changing of the guard that will see (and, in some cases, has already seen) the rise of alternative media forms. Cinema (in both its mainstream and experimental incarnations), traditional journalism, and the video game may be on the verge of being displaced—their cultural authority usurped—by the computer virus, the public relations campaign, the illicitly recorded sex-tape, and even recorded acts of terrorism. This may have been what the British artist Damien Hirst meant when he referred to the attack on the World Trade Center by Al-Qaeda as "an artwork in its own right. It was wicked, but it was devised in this way for this kind of impact. It was devised visually" (http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/sep/11/arts.september11).

In his essay, "Welcome to the Desert of the Real", Slavoj Zizek places the attack on the World Trade Center into a similar context:

> Was it not something of the similar order that took place in
> New York on September 11? Its citizens were introduced to
> the "desert of the real" – to us, corrupted by Hollywood, the
> landscape and the shots we saw of the collapsing towers could
> not but remind us of the most breathtaking scenes in the catastrophe
> big productions" (386).

Zizek continues in this vein: "Not only were the media bombarding us all the time with the talk about the terrorist threat; this threat was also obviously libidinally invested—just recall the series of movies from *Escape New York* to *Independence Day*. The unthinkable that happened was thus the object of fantasy: in a way, America got what it fantasized about, and this was the great surprise" (387). For Zizek, the "ultimate truth of the capitalist utilitarian despritualized universe is the dematerialization of the 'real life' itself, its reversal into a spectral show" (386).

Of course, the proliferation of media of this type is indicative of a very real cultural deficit; the blank stare of the latest starlet caught having sex on camera quickly morphs into the terrified expression of an Iraqi prisoner tortured at a military prison in a montage of images that leaves one neither aroused nor disgusted, just extremely

bored. In his essay, "Realer than Real: The Simulacrum According to Deleuze and Guattari", Brian Massumi contends that contemporary culture has an "invisible paradigmatic dimension that creates those minimally differentiated signs in order for them to blur together in a pleasure-less orgy of exchange and circulation" (1). Massumi is not alone in his analysis. In his essay, "We are all Transsexuals Now," Jean Baudrillard notes that the West has witnessed a "flourishing of erotic simulacra of all kinds and transsexual kitsch in all its glory. Postmodern pornography, so to speak, in which sexuality gets lost in the theatrical excess of its ambiguity and indifference" (10-11). For Baudrillard, this development has broader social implications: "This is how we subtly become transsexuals, just as we secretly become transpolitical—that is to say, politically indifferent and undifferentiated beings"(13). Aesthetic sensibilities are often linked to the expression of power, as Walter Benjamin has observed, "the logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life" (46).

It is this understanding of fascism that has informed my understanding of the new forms of media that are emerging, for this is an art that mistakes the desire to terrorize for the need to seduce. Yet is not just a matter of historical fascism, that is to say, the movements of Hitler and Mussolini, for as Michel Foucault notes in his writing on Deleuze and Guattari the real enemy is "the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us" (Foucault, Preface to *Anti-Oedipus* xiii).

When the protagonist of David Cronenberg's *Videodrome*, Max Renn, says that he's "looking for something that will break through", he is not just talking about increased television ratings. I would argue that he is actually seeking programming that will somehow break through the limitations of the purely audiovisual into something akin to Laura U. Marks's concept of haptic visuality. Eventually, he gets his wish in the form of Videodrome: the scene in which his lover, Nikki Brand, appears on his television screen— causing both the screen and its encasing to bulge and swell as Max caresses it— would appear to illustrate the tactile dimensions of the Videodrome

signal. *Videodrome* is clearly a product of the 1980s, a decade in which the pornographic film industry was able to seize upon video production techniques and the proliferation of VCRs to bring their products to more and more homes. This development allowed for the creation of a sexual supply-chain that cast sexuality itself as a reified and purely audiovisual phenomenon easily inserted into a visual culture aligned with the world of commerce. Can the yearning expressed by Max Renn at the beginning of *Videodrome* be satisfied by video alone? One could argue that Max would have been better served had he attended Carolee Schneeman's 1964 performance, *Meat Joy,* in which Schneeman plunges the visual arts headfirst into an erotic ode to the tactile, the olfactory, and the gustatory—the three senses that continue to be the bane of the media industry (and, to some extent, the media arts).

It would appear that live performance provides one possible means of avoiding the reification of desire made possible by digital video. However, in his book, *Digital Performance*, Steve Dixon argues for a mode of representation that can operate effectively across a broad range of media, declaring that to place too much emphasis on live performance risks fetishizing "ephemeral forms of expression" (132). Thus one of the central questions for me as an artist is whether digital video can itself be used in a manner that avoids complicity in the reification of desire, or failing that, can digital video make use of this reification in a manner that combats oppressive structures within our visual culture as presently constituted?

A Deleuzian form of desire may be what is needed: an approach to digital video that recognizes desire as a productive force that exists in and as a relationship between entities of various types. One possible solution may be found in the previously mentioned forms of "aberrant" media that attempt to break out of the prison-house of reification through enacting various forms of violence and terror. However, I would suggest that these forms of media represent a dead-end. Traditional psychoanalytic film theory and its understanding of spectatorship as sadism has found its true discursive object in these new media forms. A more productive strategy may be to align digital video with a cinema that eschews sadism and opts for masochism.

In her essay, "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of Cinema", Gaylyn Studlar attempts to provide an "alternative model" to a discourse promulgated by traditional film theory that emphasizes "voyeurism aligned with sadism" and the "male controlling gaze as the only position of spectatorial pleasure" (268). For Studlar, the "formal structures of the masochistic aesthetic—fantasy, disavowal, fetishism, and suspense—overlap with the primary structures that enable classic narrative cinema to produce visual pleasure" (268). In his essay, *Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and its Vicissitudes*, Todd McGowan echoes Studlar, noting that cinema is capable of staging "the utter failure of the spectator's assumed mastery. The crucial point here is that not only is this failure of mastery possible in cinema, but it is what spectators desire when they go to the movies" (29).

In this view, masochism becomes much more than simply a sexual scenario. It is a potential model for a new approach towards spectatorship in the age of digital video. Yet as was previously mentioned, aesthetic strategies are often linked to political strategies and, in this sense, masochism is no different. In its submission to the spectacle, masochism rehearses a form of passive resistance to the demands of transnational capital in a manner that is strikingly similar to the postmodern strategy of accelerationism. In his essay, "Notes on the Inorganic, Part 2: Terminal Velocity", Gean Moreno contends that the aim of accelerationism is to "rev up crisis and render it unsustainable" and to "intensify sensorial overload and subjective dispersal in order to drive masochistically toward an incompatibility between capitalism and forms of excess it can't accommodate" (1). Yet it is advisable to be cautious in making claims about the potential of masochism and accelerationism to operate in the political arena. In his book, *Post-Cinematic Affect*, Steven Shavirio notes, "aesthetics does not translate easily or obviously into politics. It takes a lot of work to make them even slightly commensurable. This difficulty of translation is precisely why an accelerationist aesthetics makes sense, even if an accelerationist politics does not" (139). Shaviro's call for an "accelerationist aesthetics" is a response to the "emergence of a new media regime, and indeed of a different mode of production,

than those which dominated the twentieth century" (Shaviro 2). Many of the works arising out of this new media regime "give voice to a kind of ambient, free-floating sensibility that permeates our society today, although it cannot be attributed to any subject in particular" (Shaviro 2). This ambiguity may be seen as a symptom of their twin genealogy: "Digital technologies, together with neoliberal economic relations, have given birth to radically new ways of manufacturing and articulating lived experience" (Shaviro 2).

This discussion is, at its heart, chiefly concerned with cultural production; more specifically, the ways in which cultural production has been altered by its attempts to engage with digital video and digitalization more broadly. The ability to convert video, images, text, and audio into binary code allows for much greater flexibility (and lower costs) for the production and distribution of cultural texts such as cinema. In his book, *The Cultural Industries*, David Hesmondhalgh notes that this is an "extremely important change because it makes communication more transportable and manipulable than before" and "makes different media potentially interconnectable" (261). Hesmondhalgh goes on to say that the "Internet and Web have, to a limited extent, altered existing social relations of production and consumption. They have produced huge amounts of small scale cultural activity" (261). However, Hesmondhalgh qualifies this assessment by noting that this "disturbance of existing relations of cultural production and consumption has happened mainly within a very specific section of the world's population" (261). In Hesmondhalgh's view the "radical potential of the Internet has been largely, but by no means entirely, contained by its partial incorporation into a large, profit-orientated set of cultural industries" (261).

It should be noted that Hesmondhalgh's work focuses on what he refers to as the "core cultural industries" which are primarily concerned with "the industrial production and circulation of texts" (12). To put it simply, Hesmondhalgh is chiefly concerned with cultural production that has been commissioned and/or distributed by large— often multinational—corporations: the music, film, television, radio,

book and magazine publishing, news-gathering, advertising, and gaming industries in all their iterations (print-based, online, DVD, etc.). In contrast to this category is what Hesmondhalgh refers to as the "peripheral cultural industries" (13). Hesmondhalgh offers theatre and visual art as examples of this category, noting that they use "semi-industrial or non-industrial methods. Theatre, for example, has only recently begun to take on what might be called industrial forms of production and reproduction" (13). He goes on to say of visual art that the "making, exhibition and sale of works of art (paintings, installations, sculptures) generate enormous amounts of money and commentary each year, but reproduction is limited, where it exists at all" (13).

At first glance, Hesmondhalgh's assessment of visual art may not appear to be entirely accurate. In his book, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, Craig Owens notes, "serialized production is both the definitive mode of late-capitalist consumer society and, since Warhol at least, the dominant model for art" (118). Isabelle Graw concurs, in her essay, "When Life Goes to Work: Andy Warhol", she observes, "the quasi-automatic production process of Warhol's silkscreen prints, a procedure that surrendered to the logic of the mass-manufactured product, has been legitimately associated with the Taylorist assembly line in Fordism" (101). The use of industrial production techniques by Warhol for his silkscreen paintings and by many of contemporary visual art's most prominent sculptors (Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst, for example) should also be noted.

For Hesmondhalgh, however, production is not always the most pivotal stage for the cultural industries. He argues that in an effort to "control the risks associated with managing creativity, senior managers exert much tighter control over reproduction, distribution and marketing—what I call circulation—than they do over production" (24). In the preceding quotation, Hesmondhalgh is speaking specifically about the core cultural industries, but he does note that the "art prints

industry [a peripheral cultural industry] limits reproduction artificially and uses laborious methods in order to add value to prints" (13). Thus it may be said that, at least in some cases, the distinction in the practices of the core and the periphery is not as great as first imagined. Pierre Bourdieu makes a similar point in his book, *The Rules of Art*:

> One could ask whether the division into two markets
> characteristic of the fields of cultural production since the
> middle of the nineteenth century, with on one side the narrow
> field of producers for producers, and on the other side the field
> of mass production and 'industrial literature', is not now
> threatened to disappear, since the logic of commercial production
> tends more and more to assert itself over avant-garde production (345)

However, Hesmondhalgh is somewhat critical of Bourdieu's work in *The Rules of Art*. In his essay, "Bourdieu, the Media and Cultural Production", Hesmondhalgh says: "It is simply astonishing how little Bourdieu has to say about large-scale, 'heterenomous' commercial production, given not only its enormous social and cultural importance in the contemporary world, but also its significance in determining conditions in the sub-field in which he is clearly much more interested, restricted production" (217). Yet in choosing not to discuss the peripheral cultural industries in any detail, is it not possible that Hesmondhalgh is in danger of making a mistake that mirrors what he perceives to be a flaw in Bourdieu's work? Developments in the field of avant-garde or peripheral cultural production often have major effects on the development of the core cultural industries, causing the latter to periodically reassess their approach to both form and content. In his book, *The Reality Effect*, Joel Black makes a similar point: "Left unexamined are art and documentary films and their influence on commercial movies. Terry Gilliam's Twelve Monkeys (1995), for example, was based on Chris Marker's 1962 experimental film La Jetée" (5). Taking up Black's argument, I would like to suggest the possibility that Hesmondhalgh's lack of engagement with the peripheral cultural industries hints at a gap in theoretical understandings of cultural production. I hope to address this gap via an analysis of the production and circulation of video art and experimental film.

For Owens, issues pertaining to the distribution and circulation of artistic texts are central: "Where do exchanges between readers take place? Who is free to define, manipulate and, ultimately, to benefit from the codes and conventions of cultural production?" (126). He goes on to say that these "questions shift attention away from the work and its producer onto its frame—the first by focusing on the location in which the work of art is encountered; the second, by insisting on the social nature of artistic production and reception" (126). As Owens notes, "sometimes the postmodernist work" goes so far as to insist upon the "impossibility of framing, of ever rigorously distinguishing a text from its con-text" (126). More often than not, however, "the 'frame' is treated as that network of institutional practices (Foucault would have called them 'discourses') that define, circumscribe and contain both artistic production and reception" (126).

Much like Owens, issues pertaining to the reproduction and circulation of moving image art are of particular importance for my project as distribution strategies can often affect the type of work that is actually produced. It is precisely this need to attend to the circulation of artistic texts that makes accelerationist aesthetics so useful at this moment in time, for as Moreno observes "accelerationist aesthetics is cartographic at the expense of the mimetic. It's tasked with helping us trace the slippery contours of the warped and warping world we traverse daily" (http://www.e-flux.com/journal/notes-on-the-inorganic-part-ii-terminal-velocity/). Seen in this light, accelerationist aesthetics can help us more fully understand the complex interplay between production and circulation in this new post-cinematic space. On a purely practical level, having the ability to access a potential audience can play an enormous role in budget considerations for film and video producers and those budget considerations, in turn, can affect how filmmakers and video artists choose to realize their projects. Even the decision to use video as opposed to film is often primarily a financial consideration for many artists and choices made about casting and locations are often determined by costs. In her essay, "DVD, Video and Reaching Audiences: Experiments in Moving Image Distribution", Julia Knight asserts, "distribution has

always been the least visible part of our film industry and culture, and it has been and remains the most under-researched" (24). One of the goals of my research is to help address this deficit.

Beyond these purely practical concerns, however, is the work of media artists who react creatively to the pressures of circulation to create work that moves beyond conventional notions of moving image art into a post-cinematic space, where traditional notions of spectatorship are overturned. Shaviro contends that post-cinematic media works do not merely "represent social processes, so much as they participate actively in these processes and help constitute them" (2). Shaviro elaborates:

> They lie at the very heart of social production, circulation, and distribution. They generate subjectivity, and they play a crucial role in the valorization of capital. Just as the old Hollywood continuity editing system was an integral part of the Fordist mode of production, so the editing methods and formal devices of digital video and film belong directly to the computing-and-information-technology infrastructure of contemporary neoliberal finance (3).

The creative links between the production and circulation of video-based artworks and the dominance of capitalist-based forms of subjectivity is my major area of inquiry. More specifically, this research project explores video art's unique placement within the cultural industries—a position that is, paradoxically, based upon imitation, parody, rivalry, and collaboration.

Akil Kirlew

Chapter 1: Video Economics

In this chapter, I will discuss video art's peculiar position within the cultural industries. More specifically, I will examine video art as a means of deconstructing Hesmondhalgh's understanding of the core and peripheral cultural industries. This will be accomplished by examining work by two artists: Andy Warhol and Matthew Barney. The moving image work of both artists stems from— and expands upon— their work in traditional fine arts media (painting for Warhol, sculpture for Barney). Consequently, there is some discussion of media other than video and film in this chapter. I have chosen to focus on these two artists, because I feel their work illustrates the ways in which different types of desire are represented and, perhaps even brought into being, by the medium of video. The work of these two artists also raises broader questions about the possibility of moving image art to combat the reification and commodification of desire that takes place in contemporary visual culture. The ambiguity surrounding the role video art can play in society more broadly is, I would argue, often less about the content of specific video works and more about the strategies employed by artists to fund and distribute their work. It should be noted that this chapter begins with a discussion of Warhol's use of analogue video, which Knight argues provides an early model for digital video in many ways.

In August 1965, Andy Warhol completed the production of a film called *Outer and Inner Space*. Shot on 16mm film, *Outer and Inner Space* marks Warhol's first use of the double-screen format, and the film depicts two streams of moving images of Edie Sedgwick interacting with a prerecorded video image of herself on a nearby monitor. The film was first exhibited in January 1966 at the Filmmakers Cinematheque in New York City and on only a few other occasions in the 1960s. After this initial series of screenings, *Outer and Inner Space* was not seen for over 30 years, when a restored version had its premiere at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City in 1998 (http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html).

In a speech given on the occasion of the premiere of *Outer and Inner Space* at the Hermitage State Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia in 2000, Callie Angell—the curator of the Andy Warhol Film Project at the Whitney Museum—noted "*Outer and Inner Space* does indeed seem to be the very first documented use of videotape by an artist" (http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html). As was previously mentioned *Outer and Inner Space* was shot and is generally presented on 16mm film. However, the image on the monitor with which Sedgwick interacts was shot on an early prototype of the video medium developed by the Norelco Company. Angell goes on to situate *Outer and Inner Space* within the history of video art in more detail:

> By the mid-sixties, some artists were working with television as an art object, especially, of course, Nam June Paik, who had his first exhibition of electronically and sculpturally altered television sets in 1963, but—as I said—affordable video equipment became available only in the summer of 1965, and Warhol actually used it before Paik did. Nam June Paik's first videotape was shot with portable Sony equipment on October 4, 1965 and exhibited the same day at the Café-au-Go-Go, in an exhibition called "Electronic Video Recorder". *Outer and Inner Space* predates that moment, since it was shot in August, and in the film you see Warhol deliberately experimenting with some of the techniques specific to the video medium, which other artists would explore more fully in the 1970s (http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html).

I will return to Angell's point about the connection between the techniques used by Warhol in the 1960s and video artists in the 1970s later in this section, but for now I would like to explore the circumstances surrounding the production of *Outer and Inner Space* in more detail. According to Angell, Norelco delivered the video equipment to Warhol's studio, the Factory, on July 30, 1965 "as a kind of promotional gimmick". She explains:

> That is Warhol was quite well-known as an underground filmmaker at the time, as well as an artist, and the idea was that Warhol would experiment with the new video medium, see what he could do with it, and then report on his experiences in a published interview and more or less give his endorsement to the new medium and specifically to Norelco's product (http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html).

It may be argued that Warhol's relationship with Norelco serves as an early prototype for marketing initiatives in the digital era. In his essay, "Digital Cinema: A False Revolution", John Belton argues that the "digital revolution was and is all about

economics—all about marketing new digital consumer products to a new generation of consumers—all about the home electronics industry using the cinema to establish a product line with identifiable brand names for home entertainment systems" (100-101).

Unfortunately for Norelco (and, as we shall see, for Warhol scholars) their technology did not become popular. Price may have been a factor, as Angell points out the Norelco video equipment lent to Warhol was "a rather high-end system costing about $10,000"; however, during the 1960s a "number of different companies, including Sony and Matsushida, were developing their own home video recording systems and beginning to market them at prices ranging from $500 to $1,000 each" (http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html). In addition, Norelco used a video format known as "slant scan video". The technology developed by Sony and other video companies made use of a format known as "helical scan". The convergence of these factors created a situation in which Norelco's technology "quickly became obsolete" (http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html). Warhol had access to Norelco's video equipment for approximately one month and was quite prolific in his use of it (Angell notes that 11 half-hour Norelco tapes were found in the Warhol Video Collection). However, there are "now no working slant scan tape players anywhere in the world" meaning that these 11 videotapes which "Warhol shot in 1965 cannot be played back, and the only accessible footage from these early videos exists in this film [*Outer and Inner Space*], which Warhol, in effect, preserved by reshooting them in 16mm" (http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html).

Again, Warhol's use of Norelco's analogue video equipment (and the ensuing difficulties caused by that use) sets a precedent for digital video and serves as a cautionary tale. Belton observes, "digital data has been stored, for the most part, on magnetic tape or disc—a format that has an effective media life of five to ten years and an estimated time until obsolescence of only five years. Studios would be crazy to use digital formats for archiving their holdings" (114). He goes on to cite and laud the same practice that saved *Outer and Inner Space*: "Films made digitally could be

stored in that format, but they would have to be converted to a new format every five years. It would make more sense for them to be transferred to celluloid and stored as films" (Belton 114). Belton goes on to note that given "the rapid obsolescence of various past digital formats, it is not clear that digital information can be retrieved in the future" (114). Thus it may be said that *Outer and Inner Space* predicts many of the features of the digital era, providing a preview of the negative and positive potential of digital video.

The relationship between Warhol and Norelco provides an intriguing model for the tensions between art and commerce explored by Warhol in his broader art practice. While Norelco may have hoped to use Warhol as marketing tool, he was already conversant and deeply engaged in a parallel strategy at the time. Owens notes "Warhol's open acknowledgment of the marketability of an alluring avant-garde pose —a pose created, moreover, through affiliation with a variety of deviant and delinquent subcultural types" (265). In her essay, "Wonder Waif Meets Super Neuter", Catherine Lord notes that while he had achieved considerable success—with shows at the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim in New York City and at Ileana Sonnabend Gallery in Paris—by 1968 Warhol had still "not quite dug himself out of the underground. In fact, his reputation and his sales were based on his history in and his ties to subcultures of the avant-garde" (138). How then do Warhol's films fit in to the schema that emerges from Owens's and Lord's analyses? If one accepts their premise that his involvement with various subcultures drove, in large part, the sales of his income-generating work (paintings and silkscreen prints), then Warhol's films, which act as "individualistic records of the world in which he played, made art and helped construct his own slippery, elusive identity" may be seen as a type of marketing ploy, commercials for deviance that generated gallery traffic and sales for his paintings and silkscreen prints.

However, this view of Warhol's practice may be simplistic. As Graw notes, "few artists have reacted to the "pressures exerted by the 'new spirit of capitalism' in a more complex fashion than Warhol" (101). In her view, "Warhol's practice simultaneously conforms to *and* resists these pressures" (102). Benjamin D. Buchloch

concurs asserting, "no filmic practices have been able to cure us of Hollywood's corporate powers and the cultural-industrial complex the way Warhol's early films did" (3). Buchloch goes on to say that the "filmic legacies of Andy Warhol …emerge perhaps as an even greater contribution to rethinking industrial culture and the culture industry than his paintings had always already suggested" (4). It should also be noted that the representation of sexuality in Warhol's films was quite radical for the time. In her article, "Unblinking Eye, Visual Diary: Warhol's Films", Manohla Dargis notes that in his films from the early 1960s "Warhol presents gay desire as something perfectly ordinary, which in and of itself was extraordinary" (http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/21/movies/21darg.html?pagewanted=print&_r=0).

Yet Warhol did play a rather coy game with his public and frequently proclaimed his adoration for the worlds of money, fashion, and celebrity. Discussing his decision to do commissioned portraits for wealthy clients, Warhol said of himself: "After I did the thing called 'art' or whatever it's called, I went in to business art … being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art" (Lord 154). This was not as radical of a break as one might imagine, particularly when one considers the fact that before Warhol became an artist associated with the avant-garde he had had "previous success as a commercial artist, exemplified by his award-winning illustrations for the shoe company I. Miller" (Dargis). To borrow Bourdieu's schema, Warhol moved from commercial production (in which the artist consciously subordinates his or her interests to a client and/or the public more generally) to avant-garde production ('art for art's sake' often produced mainly for other artists, critics, and theorists) and finally to bourgeois art (in this case, commissioned portraits for the wealthy elite). Of this last category Bourdieu says, "The representatives of 'bourgeois art', who are for the most part writers for theatre, are tightly and directly linked to the dominant class, as much by their origins as by their lifestyle and value system" (71). This would appear to be an apt description of Warhol, who was not above "socializing with politically dubious and extremely conservative members of the international jet set in the 70s (from Imelda Marcos via Sao Schlumberger to the Empress of Iran)" (Graw 109).

Somewhat surprisingly, Graw feels Warhol's relationships with "politically dubious and extremely conservative members of the international jet set" was subversive, contending that Warhol "provoked and challenged a consensus that was still fairly intact in the New York art world of the 1960s and 70s, where most artists identified with an egalitarian ideal" (109). Yet this view of Warhol is not universally shared, and the ambivalence that he continues to arouse still permeates readings of his work. In his book, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Frederic Jameson engages in an analysis of Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* that cannily summarizes one of the main points of contention surrounding Warhol's practice:

> Andy Warhol's work in fact turns centrally around commodification, and the great billboard images of the Coca-Cola bottle or the Campbell's soup-can, which explicitly foreground the commodity fetishism of a transition to late capital, *ought* to be powerful and critical political statements. If they are not that, then one would surely want to know why, and one would want to begin to wonder a little more seriously about the possibilities of political or critical art in the late postmodern period of late capital (9).

Graw appears to agree, arguing that Warhol's work is borne out of an ambiguous (and perhaps ambivalent) relationship to capitalism: "Warhol's factory of the 60s and its amphetatamine-driven activities look like a post-Fordist dream put on the stage of biopolitical theater" (101). According to Graw, Warhol's studio, the Factory, "produced life, exemplifying what Maurizio Lazzarato has termed the 'capitalist command over subjectivity'" (101).

But what type of subject did Warhol's Factory command (and possibly produce)? In his essay, "Test Subjects", Hal Foster considers Warhol's photo-booth pictures (a series of projects ranging mainly from 1963 to 1966) and asserts that with them "Warhol reveals the photo-booth to be a site not only of self-staging but also of subject-testing—in effect, a 'drill' that in the Benjaminian sense of these terms, is not conducive to an 'experience' that lives on as a memory, but is often corrosive of this old building-block of the traditional self" (35). Foster is chiefly concerned with Benjamin's understanding of the way in which the technologies of the 20th century

have trained the human senses, creating new conditions and constraints to which the modern subject must adapt to the best of his or her ability (35). For Foster, the relationship between Warhol's photo-booth pictures and the *Screen Tests (*a series of short films made by Warhol) is a matter of degree: "And when the exposure to the camera is prolonged, as it is in the 472 *Screen Tests* produced between 1964 and 1967, the 'drill' is deepened, to the further detriment of such experience, memory, and identity" (35).

As Foster notes, the *Screen Tests* are actually "pure tests of the capacity of the filmed subject to confront a camera, hold a pose, present an image, and sustain the performance for the duration of the shooting" (39). The *Screen Tests* and life more generally at the Factory may be seen as metonymically linked. The former served as the cost-of-admission to the latter, but the relationship between the two is deeper. Foster observes of the *Screen Tests*: "the apparatus triumphs over the sitter far more often than the reverse, and there is no humanist redemption in front of the camera" (41). The triumph of the filmic apparatus housed at the Factory echoes the broader ethos of the space; Graw describes conditions at the Factory:

> What the Factory exercises control over is the life-time
> of the people who hang out there. Their lives go to work
> when the evening festivities begin—parties are the central
> occasion for the construction of identities. It is here that
> their lives are put on stage. So we must consider the Factory
> as a kind of biopolitical theater that cannibalized people's lives (107).

As Graw notes "alongside the equally exploitative and enabling production of its members subjectivities that is typical of the post-Fordist condition, the Factory also delivered products in a manner that communicated with Fordism" (101). To summarize, the Factory provided a platform for outrageous behavior that generated material for Warhol's films and burnished his credentials as a member of an avant-garde subculture, while also serving as the primary production facility for his income-generating work (while most of his actors went unpaid). Buchloch says of Warhol: "The transition from the magus of highly subversive subculture to the corporate executive of a media empire that left dozens of psychological wrecks in its wake is

more than just one variety of the coming-of-age epos of that generation. It has become the epos of the age itself" (4).

Buchloch's use of the term "psychological wrecks" strikes me as significant. In that it suggests that Warhol's true medium may not have been a physical material (paint on canvas, film, etc.), but rather, the psychological states of his subjects. Foster says of Warhol: "This is the primary concern of his films; in fact, both the psychological vicissitudes of self-imaging and the technological training of the modern subject are most evident there" (38) and, as Graw notes, when Warhol announced in 1965 that he would no longer paint he attributed it to his greater fascination with "people" (101).

The idea that a psychological state can serve as an artistic medium—as opposed to a subject rendered via a literary, auditory, or visual construct—is, perhaps, not such a foreign concept for practitioners of the performing arts, but in the context of the visual arts this idea may seem somewhat strange. In her essay, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism", Rosalind Krauss says of Vito Acconci's video, *Centers*, "in that image of self-regard is configured a narcissism so endemic to works of video that I find myself wanting to generalize it as the condition of the entire genre" (51). Krauss appears momentarily uncertain how to proceed: "Yet what would it mean to say, 'The medium of video is narcissism?'" (51). Krauss, anticipating possible objections to her line of inquiry, outlines the basic point of contention:

> For one thing, that remark tends to open up a rift between
> the nature of video and that of the other visual arts. Because
> that statement describes a psychological rather than a physical
> condition; and while we are accustomed to thinking of
> psychological states as the possible subject of works of art,
> we do not think of psychology as constituting their medium.
> Rather, the medium of painting, sculpture or film has much
> more to do with the objective, material factors specific to a particular
> form: pigment-bearing surfaces; matter extended through space;
> light projected through a moving strip of celluloid. That is, the
> notion of a medium contains the concept of an object-state,
> separate from the artist's own being, through which his intentions
> must pass (51-52).

Krauss's conception may be of assistance in understanding Warhol's film practice, particularly *Outer and Inner Space*, which, as was previously mentioned, functions as a sort of film/video hybrid. In the film the viewer is confronted with four images of Edie Sedgwick, who is herself interacting with not just her own video image on the nearby monitor, but also Warhol (who is just off screen above the camera, but who occasionally gives her directions) and a third person (also off screen) with whom she is having a conversation. Sedgwick is talking to a third person in the prerecorded video as well. As was previously mentioned, the film is shown as a double projection and the camera zooms in and out in both streams. It should also be noted that both reels have sound, making it impossible to understand either of the conversations being had by Sedgwick. Angell notes that what the viewer sees "are four heads, alternating video/film, video/film and sometimes all four heads are talking at once". She goes on to say, "the effect of this setup is that it sometimes creates the rather strange illusion that we are watching Edie in conversation with her own image" (Angell).

This idea of being in communion with one's own image is at the heart of Krauss's understanding of video art:

> … the mirror-reflection of absolute feedback is a process of bracketing out the object. This is why it seems inappropriate to speak of a physical medium in relation to video. For the object (the electronic equipment and its capabilities) has become an appurtenance. And instead, video's real medium is a psychological situation, the very terms of which are to withdraw attention from an external object—an Other—and invest it in the Self.

Krauss goes on to say: "Therefore, it is not just any psychological condition one is speaking of. Rather it is the condition of someone who has, in Freud's words, 'abandoned the investment of objects with libido and transformed object-libido into ego-libido.' And that is the specific condition of narcissism" (57).

It should be noted that Krauss places great emphasis on the ability of video to allow simultaneous recording, transmission, and playback, which has the effect of "producing instant feedback. The body is therefore as it were centered between two machines that are the opening and closing of a parenthesis. The first of these is the camera; the second is the monitor, which re-projects the performer's image with the

immediacy of a mirror" (52). While this is not the exact situation documented in *Outer and Inner Space* (Sedgwick's video image has been prerecorded), Krauss's use of narcissism to describe video art does seem highly relevant to a discussion of *Outer and Inner Space*. It also indicates a relationship between this film and the video art of the 1970s.

In her video, *Now* (1973*)*, the artist Lynda Benglis interacts with two video images of herself, which are a being recorded and transmitted to an enormous monitor. One of the background images of Benglis is live while the other is on a slight delay. The size of the monitor is such that it comprises the entire backdrop for the 'real', 'live' Benglis. Thus Benglis is not only the star of the video, she (or at least her image) also serves as the mise-en-scéne for the video. She alternates between issuing commands such as "Now!" and "Start recording!" and asking questions (also in a commanding tone of voice) such as "Is it now?" or "Do you wish to record me?" In Krauss's view, "Benglis is using the word 'now' to underline the ambiguity of temporal reference: we realize that we do not know whether the sound of the voice is coming from the live or taped source, and if from the latter, which level of taping" (55). Krauss goes on to say that the viewer quickly realizes that "because of the activity of replaying the past generations, all layers of 'now' are equally present"(55). In *Outer and Inner Space*, Sedgwick's image has been prerecorded and "she must occupy both the same space and the same moment of time with it, listening to her own voice whispering into her ear like a ghost from the past" (http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html). Both works are emblematic of Krauss's assertion that "self-encapsulation—the body or psyche as its own surround—is everywhere to be found in the corpus of video art" (53).

The similarities between *Outer and Inner Space* and *Now* are uncanny. Yet this does not appear to be a case of homage or pastiche on the part of Benglis, for it is highly unlikely that she ever even saw *Outer and Inner Space*. Thus it can be said that the relationship between the two works illustrates the difficulty of positioning *Outer and Inner Space* in an art historical context. Angell is well aware of this issue, she says at one point that *Outer and Inner Space* "creates this classic background for video art that it didn't know it had" (Hoberman). However, she later qualifies this assessment:

I'm a little puzzled by what this discovery means. How can
we think about this film today in relation to the history of video art?
Outer and Inner Space was made at a time when there actually
was no such thing as video art; the film was shown only a few times
in the 1960s, so it really had no contemporary impact in that context
at all, and was probably not seen by anyone who was then identified
as or likely to become a video artist. So I'm not convinced that
the discovery of this film will—or should—rewrite the history of
video art retroactively
(http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html).

The proper position of *Outer and Inner Space* within the history of video art is difficult to determine and I am inclined to agree with Angell's position on the matter. I would, however, like to consider another feature of the relationship between *Outer and Inner Space* and *Now;* specifically, the performances of the two women featured and their relationships to the two works in which they appear. Angell says of Sedgwick: "She was a very beautiful, intelligent and yet rather unstable woman who was absolutely stunning on film" (http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html). J. Hoberman, writing for the *New York Times*, feels that *Outer and Inner Space* is "ultimately the poignant spectacle of watching a beautiful wraith react to her past (scarcely six years later, Sedgwick would be dead of a drug overdose)" (http://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/22/movies/film-a-pioneering-dialogue-between-actress-and-image.html). Sedgwick has a girlish charm and fragile nature that permeates the film despite the fact that the viewer can barely hear what she is saying. Benglis, on the other hand, is strong and authoritative, her commands and demands for answers are clearly audible. There is also the matter of who initiated the two projects. Sedgwick was cast by Warhol in *Outer and Inner Space*. Benglis not only appears in *Now*; it was she who conceived of and initiated the project. In his essay, "Appropriating Appropriation", Douglas Crimp claims that with her *Untitled Film Stills* series, Cindy Sherman "implicitly attack[s] auteurism by equating the known artifice of the actress in front of the camera with the supposed authenticity of the director behind it" (162). Crimp's assessment can, I think, also be applied to Benglis's work in *Now*.

The difference in bearing between Sedgwick in *Outer and Inner Space* and Benglis in *Now* almost seems to symbolize the difference in their relationships to the two

projects in which they appear (although I am inclined to view it as a mere coincidence). It also relates to the previous discussion of narcissism as the true medium of video art. It occurs to me that my use of Krauss's model in my analysis of *Outer and Inner Space* hinges upon a schema that excludes Warhol as the film's creator. However, while he is not on screen, Sedgwick is depicted reacting to Warhol and taking direction from him. This process—and the process of film/video production more generally—is a component and, perhaps, the true subject of the film. This view is given further credence by the fact that Warhol's film assistants are occasionally seen on screen working on the production and there is no attempt to obscure their presence. The narcissism model, when applied to *Outer and Inner Space,* is also problematic because Sedgwick is more engaged with the third person off screen with whom she is conversing than she is with her own image. When she does engage with her prerecorded video self it is generally at Warhol's behest. Thus any construction of a psychological model of *Outer and Inner Space* should probably begin with Warhol not with Sedgwick.

Warhol's energies and attention are definitely focused outward towards the real Sedgwick in front of him and her image on the monitor not inwardly focused on himself, so narcissism does not appear to be the condition at work. However, Foster observes that Warhol "possessed a weird ability, early on, to attract quasi-doubles like Edie Sedgwick" and goes on to say that Warhol "could pass as his own simulacrum—even when he was present, Warhol appeared absent or otherwise alien, a paradoxical quality for a celebrity" (31). According to Foster, Warhol was initially "vexed by his own image", but was, in time, able to craft a solution of a sorts: "Eventually, of course, Warhol did produce a public image, but he did so largely through his "baffles" of wigs and glasses and his doubles like Edie and Nico" (32). Angell adds a further dimension to the relationship between Warhol and Sedgwick: "Warhol was "fascinated by Marilyn Monroe and produced many portraits of her, and it is my sense that in Edie Sedgwick he felt he had discovered his own Marilyn Monroe—someone who was as beautiful, as vulnerable, as otherworldly, and as doomed as Marilyn Monroe was"(Angell). She goes on to say, "Edie represented, I think, some of his

greatest hopes for his own filmmaking: not only did Edie look like Marilyn, but I think he hoped she also might prove to be as big a film star" (Angell). A cynic might be tempted to view *Outer and Inner Space* as a something akin to the documentation of the dimensions of a particularly valuable possession for insurance purposes (Warhol was a prodigious, almost manic collector). However, Warhol's relationship with Sedgwick was clearly extremely complex and his use of her in *Outer and Inner Space* must be seen through the prism of his emotional investment in Sedgwick, who had become both a mirror reflection for him and an emblem of his work as a filmmaker. In much the same way Hitchcock makes use of the 'Hitchcock blonde' or Josef von Sternberg uses Marlene Dietrich, Warhol mobilizes the image of Sedgwick as an embodiment of his sensibility.

Of course, if one subscribes to the view of Sedgwick as merely a double for Warhol, then *Outer and Inner Space* becomes a form of self-portrait, which allows for the reemergence of narcissism as the psychological model of the film. In this view, Sedgwick serves as a surrogate— although perhaps prosthesis is a more accurate term — for Warhol in the filmed field. Either way, the relationship between artist and model informs and punctuates the interplay between the model and her own image in *Outer and Inner Space*.

Angell feels that *Outer and Inner Space* is of great importance to Warhol's wider art practice. She recounts an experience of receiving a letter from Bill Horrigan, the film curator at the Wexner Center for the Arts: "[he] wrote me to say that he thought *Outer and Inner Space* contained virtually all of the themes of Warhol's work in one place, that if all of Warhol's artworks and films were somehow suddenly lost, it might, he thought, be metaphorically possible to reconstruct it all by extracting some of *Outer and Inner Space's* DNA"(www.mfj-online.org). She notes that in the film "some of the most important themes from Warhol's paintings such as celebrity, repetition, seriality, and the multiplication of images, are literally interwoven through the manipulation of media technology with the major themes of Warhol's cinema" (Angell). Crimp agrees and feels that *Outer and Inner Space* is "a work of

vividly animated portraiture, a unique experiment in complicating and extending—spatially, temporally, sonically—the early silkscreen paintings of Marilyn, Liz, Elvis, and Jackie and the nearly five-hundred Screen Test film portraits that Warhol made between 1964 and 1966" (13).

Of the film's title, Angell says: "I think this spatial distortion, this sense of penetration into and then withdrawal from the complex visual depths of these images, may be what the title of the film, *Outer and Inner Space*, refers to" (Angell). However, Angell does make note of a second possible meaning: "Of course, the title also makes reference to Edie's psyche, the exteriority of her image versus the interiority of her subjective experience" (Angell). In his essay, "Spacious", Douglas Crimp suggests a third meaning: "The film's title might also describe the camera's view of the space of the set and of its two subjects—Edie's video image and Edie herself" (12).

For Crimp, the concept of space is central to understanding Warhol's films. He notes that Warhol's work in various media has traditionally been viewed in terms of the concept of surface; a view that has been influenced by Warhol's own statements: "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and my films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it" (6). Crimp feels that "scanning the surface of Warhol's early films is a sensible response to his [Warhol's] camera's immobility. But when we look around the screen, what we see is, in fact, space—sometimes shallow, sometimes deep" (7).

The space carved out by Warhol in *Outer and Inner Space* is, I would suggest, very much a result of the double-screen projection, an example of what Manovich refers to as "montage within a shot" in which "separate realities form contingent parts of a single image" (148). Warhol's use of double screen projection may be seen as an attempt to draw a distinction between his moving image work and traditional conceptions of cinema. In his essay, "What is Digital Cinema?" Lev Manovich notes that the sequential mode of cinematic montage that has become dominant in mainstream cinema is based upon narratives that unfold in time, with distinct phases

of before and after (12). However, as Manovich observes, "sequential narrative turned out to be particularly incompatible with a spatialized narrative which played a prominent role in European visual culture for centuries" (12). He elaborates: "From Giotto's fresco cycle at capella degli Scrovegni in Padua to Corubet's A Burial at Ornans, artists presented a multitude of separate events (which were sometimes even separated by time) within a single compositon. In contrast to cinema's narrative, here all "shots were accessible to a viewer at once" (12). Manovich goes on to say that cinema has "elaborated complex techniques of montage between different images replacing each other in time; but the possibility of what can be called 'spatial montage' between simultaneously co-exiting images was not explored" (12). With *Outer and Inner Space*, Warhol engages with the concept of 'spatial montage' and the "logic of replacement, characteristic of cinema, gives way to the logic of addition and coexistence" (Manovich).

Yet it should be noted that Manovich's view of temporal montage is, to some degree, indebted to Fordism, which—as was previously discussed—greatly influenced Warhol's approach to his painting: "Ford's assembly line relied on the separation of the production process into a set of repetitive, sequential, and simple activities … Cinema followed this principle as well: it replaced all other modes of narration with a sequential narrative, an assembly line of shots which appear on the screen one at a time" (12). Perhaps, then, it is possible to argue that Warhol's use of double-screen projection places his films at the intersection of the traditional fine arts and traditional conceptions of cinema, serving as an early prototype for the development of a form of expanded cinema that has been accelerated by the advent of digitalization.

Warhol's prior practice as a painter may have made him particularly sensitive to the potential of 'spatial montage' or 'montage within a shot' to reconcile the contradictory trends in Western visual culture represented by the spatialized narrative of much European painting on one hand and the sequential narrative of mainstream cinema on the other. *Outer and Inner Space* may be viewed as an attempt to bridge this gap. Again, regardless of where *Outer and Inner Space* sits in the history of video art, it

demonstrates the manner in which the "medium of video provides Warhol with a link back to his own practice as a painter, and his practice as a painter then suggests ways to further expand his filmmaking into new formats of double- and multi-screen projection, which will dominate so much of his later film work" (Angell). It is this ability to function as a conceptual link in the larger Gesamkunstwerk of Warhol's art practice that is, perhaps, the true legacy of *Outer and Inner Space*. This process would reach its apogee for Warhol when he collaborated with the Velvet Underground on the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, a touring multi-media light and sound event, during which many of his films were projected as backdrops for the band's live show.

Warhol's use of the moving image as a crucial component in a larger interdisciplinary project in the 1960s will eventually be refined by Matthew Barney in the 1990s with *The Cremaster Cycle* (1994-2003). In a review of the Guggenheim's 2003 exhibition of the project, Daniel Baird writing for *The Brooklyn Rail* observes, "the weight of *The Cremaster Cycle* at the Guggenheim, then, is to show that the films, photographs, sculptures, installations, and drawings, taken as a whole, constitute a compelling, multifaceted work of visual art." In their essay, "Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-Avant-Garde Blockbuster", Alexandra Keller and Frazer Ward "investigate Barney's *Cremaster Cycle* in relation to a double genealogy: performance art of the 1970s and its documentation and the Hollywood blockbuster" (3). They elaborate:

> On one hand, *Cremaster* opts for a relatively "marginal" heritage:
> the work of performance artists including Marina Abramovic,
> Vito Acconci, and Chris Burden, whose ephemeral "pieces" remain
> only as relics and documents in the form of film, video, photographs,
> and artifacts. On the other hand, *Cremaster's* lush aesthetic is shot
> through not just with references to but nostalgia for the film styles
> of a number of Hollywood moments (3).

However, Keller and Ward are highly critical of Barney's *Cremaster Cycle*, arguing that the "series' investment in the blockbuster serves to spectacularize performance in ways that undermine its historical relations to protest culture" (3). More specifically, they observe that much of the performance art of the 1960s and 1970s invites the "viewer to consider the relations between the body and the ways in which it is mediated" (7). They argue that this "more subtle status of the body is replaced in the

31

Cremaster series by something more akin to the iconic status of the movie star's onscreen body" (7). While the *Cremaster Cycle* engages in a "relentless reconfiguration of Barney's body into guises other than that of a normative heterosexual male", the "nonnormative is, over the course of the series, recuperated into something familiar from the action films of the 1980s" (Keller and Ward 10). The seminal figures in this genre are Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone, Mel Gibson, and Bruce Willis and the genre as a whole is "significantly defined by what the white, heteromasculine heroic body can endure" (Keller and Ward 10). For Keller and Ward these films form the cultural backdrop for Ronald Regan's presidency, but are equally indebted to some of the more radical performance art practices of the 1970s (Chris Burden's endurance pieces, for instance):

> This endurance—a for-profit spectacularized (and utterly unaware)
> version of that found in Burden et.al.'s work—lasts through any
> narrative in which the various protagonists are not only bloodied and
> bruised at the end of the film, but also triumphant, after having
> restored patriarchy, U.S. capitalist hegemony: the status quo"(10-11).

The 'hardbody' of Regan-era action films is, in Keller and Ward's view, central to the *Cremaster Cycle*: "In *Cremaster 3*, he (Barney) specifically recreates 1980s blockbuster action film tropes—most obviously in the way his movements through the Chrysler Building echo those in *Die Hard*" (11). Barney's engagement with the 'hardbody' archetype of 1980s action films should, perhaps, be seen in the broader context of his investigation of masculinity. As was previously mentioned, several of his earlier pieces situate the props of athleticism (gym equipment, jockstraps, etc.) in settings drawn from the world of art (the studio and the gallery itself). In Barney's practice the construction of masculinity in popular culture is brought into dialogue with the construction of the artist in the realm of high culture. Put another way, his work narrates the very process of his own formation as a subject, with his earlier experience of 'becoming a man' feeding into his experience of becoming an artist capable of realizing his aims. Barney discusses this notion:

> **Interviewer:** I wouldn't be the first to suggest that you as an artist are in some ways
> trying to overcome your own predetermined condition, at least to the extent that we,
> in our often narrow-minded view of the world, have a certain preconceptions
> concerning the predetermined condition of a kid from Idaho who grows up playing
> football, goes to college on a football scholarship and then pursues a career as a male
> model. Which is to say that you, in many ways, defy our stereotypical notions of who
> an artist is and where he comes from.

> **Barney:** I think that *The Cremaster Cycle* definitely belongs to the tradition of self-portraiture. It begins in Idaho on the field where I grew up playing, and as it moves eastward, it carries an autobiographical thread that I think, at a certain point, trades places with a mythological thread. And it ends in Houdini's birthplace. Like a snowball, it starts to gather myth as it moves on, but I think the core of it is still my own story (Indiewire).

If Barney's earlier work (*Blind Perineum*, *Transexualis*, etc.) explores his early development as a man and as an artist, then *Cremaster 3* (which was actually the last film released) continues that exploration, but with an additional level of mythological symbolism overlain. In the sequence, *The Order*, which forms the last half-hour of *Cremaster 3*, Barney plays a character called the Entered Apprentice. This character scales the various levels of the Guggenheim and on each level he encounters a potentially lethal challenge. His ultimate goal is to kill Hiram Abiff (played by the sculptor Richard Serra). It is of some significance, I think, that *The Order* has a title design meant to mimic the interface of a computer game; it allows Barney to overlay the activity taking place in the museum (which is, of course, one of the privileged sites of high culture) with the technologically mediated action of a popular culture medium that is still largely associated with adolescent males.

The Entered Apprentice does eventually kill Hiram Abiff, but before this he encounters a nurse archetype character, played by Aimee Mullins, who transforms into a cat woman determined to kill the Entered Apprentice. Eventually Barney's character kills the cat woman and by the end of the film Mullins's character has been restored to a fully human form, although she is immobilized, wounded, blindfolded, and put on display as a living piece of sculpture. At this stage, Mullins's character is dressed completely in white and resembles representations of Lady Justice. The struggle between Barney as the Entered Apprentice and Mullins's nurse/cat woman may be read as depiction of the need to conquer the monstrous feminine. Conquer, but not kill, for much like Perseus in the Medusa myth, Barney must find a way of containing the 'monster woman' in all her duplicitous duality, so that he can use her as totem that may be brandished as means of augmenting his own power. Additionally, the casting of Serra should be noted; in *Cremaster 3's The Order* sequence, Serra

plays a sculptor on the top level of the Guggenheim, who is working with molten Vaseline—a conflation of Serra's own lead splatter pieces with Barney's previously mentioned interest in Vaseline. Keller and Ward are, again, highly critical:

> Despite the hermeticism of Barney's fabulous imagery—and the claims for some undifferentiated state of pure pregendered creative potentiality—the trajectory of the films is a familiar one: in the quest for masculine identity, there are obstacles to be overcome, which requires coming to terms with a series of role models and father figures, so that the Oedipal, generational, symbolic order may be restored.

However, Barney's intentions may be more complex than Keller and Ward are willing to acknowledge. Owens speaks of Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* as being caught within the "unavoidable necessity of participating in the very activity that is being denounced precisely in order to denounce it" (85). In Owens's view, Sherman's chief aim is the "deconstruction of the supposed innocence of the images of women projected by the media, and this Sherman accomplishes by reconstructing those images so painstakingly, and identifying herself with them so thoroughly" (84). One wonders if Barney is not, perhaps, engaged in a similar strategy.

It should also be noted that while *Cremaster 3* was the last film released by Barney, it is *Cremaster 5* that represents the true culmination of the series. In the end of that film Barney is seen in a triumphant stance with his mutated genitals (which cannot be classified as male or female, or even remotely mammalian) being borne aloft and suspended by ribbons attached to a flock of pigeons. If *Cremaster 5* represents the denouement of the entire series, then the other films must be seen as stages in a process. Thus the Oedipal (and rather misogynistic) drama of *Cremaster 3* may be seen as a representation of a juvenile (but still quite necessary) initial attempt to engage with issues of art and gender. This initial foray—a metaphor, perhaps, for the explorations of adolescence and young adulthood—eventually allows Barney's Entered Apprentice character to progress to a point where he can achieve some measure of self-actualization by going beyond traditional conceptions of gender and visual art.

However, Keller and Ward's argument is not confined purely to the content of the *Cremaster Cycle*; it also encompasses a critique of the production and distribution of the project. *Cremaster 3* is rumored to have cost approximately US $8 million (an extremely large sum for an avant-garde film) and for Ward and Keller this serves as an illustration of their assertion that "*Cremaster's* aesthetic is inextricably bound up in expenditure and luxury" (9). They go on to say, "Barney seems to suggest that outlay is an integral part of the aesthetics and meaning of his films, in much the way that the thrill of an action movie is not just car chases and explosions but the massive capital expended to create them" (10). Keller and Ward continue in this vein and proceed to explicitly situate the *Cremaster* series in relation to the Hollywood blockbuster:

> In *Titanic* (1997), James Cameron produced what entertainment
> market analysts call "the holy grail" that appeals to all quadrants
> of any potential audience. But in producing the most expensive
> and most profitable film of all time, whose audience, both lay
> and expert, attended as much to the film's numbers as to
> its story, Cameron also produced a portrait of pure capital.
> Barney has done the same in *Cremaster* (9).

Simply put, Keller and Ward feel that Barney is, to some extent, dishonest or at the very least confused: "As much as they may claim to take from minimalist sculpture and performance art, Barney's films owe as much to—because they are just as much —blockbuster films" (9).

With their critique of the production values of *The Cremaster Cycle* Keller and Ward discover another avenue back towards a critique of the content of the series. They identify the *Star Wars* series as the true model for the *Cremaster* series: "That *Star Wars*, with its familiar mythological syntax, but its apparently original semantic organization of characters—whose names and appearances are as much exoticized as science fictionized (sic)—might be a cultural template for Barney's *Cremaster* series is apt" (11). In addition, Barmey's decision to release the *Cremaster* films out of order —with *Cremaster 4* being the first to have its premiere—almost seems to pay homage to George Lucas's decision to produce and release the final three chapters of the *Star Wars* saga decades before the production and release of the first three chapters; a decision that Lucas also made at the inception of his project.

However, as was previously mentioned, Barney's references to popular culture appear to be a central component of his work. In *Cremaster 5*, Ursula Andress—the very first 'Bond Girl' in the first James Bond film, *Dr. No*—plays Barney's lover. Andress's character is a queen, who sings an aria in Hungarian at the State Opera House in Budapest. This choice of casting would seem to suggest that bringing popular culture into dialogue with high culture is a crucial component of Barney's project.

Keller and Ward feel that "Barney's elaborate and expensive productions can hardly be seen to participate in the critique of the commodity, but rather its celebration" (9). They go on to give an example of an alternative model:

> Interestingly, a much more sustained, successful, and cost-effective investigation into identity, sexual difference, and the relationship of these things to the codes of popular culture is to be found in Mandy Morrison's 4 1/2-minute *Desperado*, a video work made the same year as *Cremaster 5* (in which Ursula Andress [as the Queen of Chain] keeps Jacobin pigeons and makes out with Harry Houdini [played by Norman Mailer] and *Titanic* (12).

I have not seen Morrison's video, so I would rather not comment on it. However, Keller and Ward's decision to cite cost-effectiveness as one of its chief virtues in relation to Barney's films strikes me as being a rather specious argument and suggests that they are in danger of adopting the exact inverse of the mindset they accuse Barney of possessing. If "*Cremaster's* aesthetic is inextricably bound up in expenditure and luxury" and if "Barney seems to suggest that outlay is an integral part of the aesthetics and meaning of his films" (10), then Keller and Ward seem to be suggesting that—at least in the case of experimental film and video art—low-budget productions are, by definition, superior to films with higher budgets.

It should be noted that "high-budget" and "low-budget" are relative terms and Keller and Ward's argument may lead one to ask if it is possible to determine how much is too much to spend on the production of art. Assuming that *Cremaster 3* did indeed cost US $8 million to make, is that truly too large a sum? In 2002, the year in which

Cremaster 3 was released, Spike Jonze's film, *Adaptation,* also had its premiere and that film is rumored to have had a budget of US $19 million (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/06/magazine/06jonze-t.html?pagewanted=all). Also released in 2002 was Stephen Daldry's *The Hours*, which had a rumored budget of US $25 million (http://www.boxofficemojo.com/oscar/movies/?id=hours.htm). It is, perhaps, more useful to compare *Cremaster 3's* budget to the budgets of these films, because the films of *The Cremaster Cycle* appear to operate along the border between video art and experimental film on one hand and 'arthouse cinema' on the other. When asked about his decision to allow the films to go on tour and be presented at traditional movie theaters, such as Film Forum in New York (the films had previously been restricted to presentations in museums and galleries), Barney says: "But what was interesting was —maybe not so much with [Cremaster] 4, but with the next piece—[Cremaster] 1 and then [Cremaster] 5, this other audience started coming in and seeing them. I got pretty excited about that. And I think it started affecting how numbers 2 and 3 were made" (Indiewire). Barney goes on to say:

> So, it's pretty organic the way that happens, which is also true
> of my use of video in the first place. When I started using video,
> it was really just a hand-held video camera held by a friend,
> who would videotape me doing something in my studio. It
> was just a straightforward document and slowly those actions
> became a little more character-driven, a little more narrative, and
> I started editing them, then slowly they became more filmic … but
> slowly (Indiewire).

While *Cremaster 3* may have cost US $8 million to make, as of 2003 it had only grossed US $515,000 in its theatrical tour. Keller and Ward are initially intrigued by this: "By eschewing the last step of the blockbuster formula—in which it makes tons of money at the box office—Barney has structurally provided an institutional critique of blockbuster culture" (11). However, they soon change their view: "Just as *Batman* and *The Matrix* exist as much to sell themed Happy meals, action figures, Halloween costumes, and Heineken as to entertain at the multiplex, so the *Cremaster* franchise— and it is a franchise—exists at some level to produce the objects necessary to the films' articulation" (11). Keller and Ward are referring to Barney's sculpture, much of which plays a crucial role in his video work. Barney feels that his use of "the moving

image has created a family of objects" and for him that "is the success of the project. That's what it set out to do in the first place, and I think that was quite consistent—its ability to generate sculpture" (Indiewire).

However, Keller and Ward suggest that this relationship between Barney's filmic and sculptural practices effectively turns Barney's "films into workshops for expensive commodity goods" (8). Thus one could argue that Barney has refined the production and promotional methods of Warhol yet again, for even if the *Cremaster* films lose money as independent works screened in the manner of traditional cinema, they can still contribute to Barney's enterprise by operating as avant-garde commercials for Barney's income-generating work (his sculpture).

Keller and Ward's view of the relationship between Barney's practice as a sculptor, a performance artist, and video artist/filmmaker is, to some extent, dependent upon situating Barney in relation to Minimalist and Post-minimalist sculpture and performance. They note, "since the late 1960s, performance art has developed out of and in relation to sculptural practices—principally minimalism—leading to the destabilization of sculpture as an object both physical and discursive" (4). They quote Chris Burden (who may be seen as a Post-minimalist) discussing his earlier practice as a sculptor: "The only problem with this body of works was that the apparatus was often mistaken for the traditional object sculpture … I realized I could dispose of the apparatus and simply have the actual physical activity as the sculpture" (5). To put it simply, the final product (the actual physical sculpture) is not the artwork; it is the very process of making sculpture that is the true work of art. In sculptural practices of this type process becomes performance and the actual physical object of sculpture can be fully removed from the equation; however, the specter of product does occasionally reemerge:

> For instance, the commodities that were generated by performance
> art tended—if not exclusively—to be very straightforward, black-
> and-white photographs, single-channel videotapes, or other
> somewhat abject leftovers. Think of the pieces of glass that
> Burden crawled over in *Through the Night Softly* (1973) or
> the nails hammered through his hands into the roof of a VW bug in
> *Trans-fixed* (1974). "Relics", Burden called them, which maintain
> their status as evidence, but that are not to be seen as valuable in and

of themselves (Keller and Ward 8).

The *Cremaster Cycle* does not fit neatly into this tradition. Firstly, the films do not document the process of Barney creating his sculpture, rather the sculptures appear as fully realized objects that contribute to the action and mise-en-scéne of the films. In that sense, they may be said to function as props. Secondly, the aesthetic of the *Cremaster* films (an aesthetic very different from Burden's) is very much present in the *Cremaster* sculptures; they are simultaneously beautiful, strange, surreal, and luxurious. Keller and Ward are, again, highly critical:

> Even Barney's version of the everyday object has had its use-value stripped away by the attention he puts on two things: luxury (which is to say the utter and ostentatious waste of surplus capital) and the ebullient addition of something to the object that literally stops it in its tracks. Two particularly effective (which is to say ineffective) prop-relics will do as examples: the pink spare tire from *Cremaster 4*, which cannot turn because there is a scrotal attachment, and the stiletto heels from *Cremaster 1*, which cannot be used for walking because one of them has a spout where dancing grapes come out (9).

Barney's use of stiletto heels strikes me as being a particularly interesting example and seems to suggest that Barney may, in fact, be engaged in a subtle critique of the commodity. Stiletto heels, and high-heeled women's shoes more generally, are amongst the most ineffective type of footwear available and they are often quite expensive. Stilettos make walking difficult (at least until one has had sufficient practice in their use). Yet designer brands generate millions of dollars a year selling the most high-end footwear available and stiletto-heeled shoes are among their most prominent and popular offerings. Barney's sculpture pushes the stiletto to absurd extremes; in short, it is a satire.

However, Barney's satire of the stiletto results in a sculpture that will sell for thousands of dollars and, in this sense, his practice may be caught in a peculiar bind: the critique of the luxury commodity begets more luxury commodities. Jameson's aforementioned concern about "the possibilities of political or critical art in the late postmodern period of late capital" is clearly relevant in this regard (9). As is Owens's previously mentioned assertion that contemporary art (as exemplified by Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills)* is caught within the "unavoidable necessity of

participating in the very activity that is being denounced precisely in order to denounce it" (85).

I am inclined to take a cautiously optimistic view of contemporary visual art's ability to interrogate notions of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality. However, a truly penetrating analysis into issues pertaining to class and capitalism may be beyond its reach. The world of contemporary visual art is highly dependent upon wealthy collectors, many of whom participate in and profit from the very same exploitative business practices that many artists criticize. If one were to scan the stock portfolios of many of the collectors at the Venice Biennale, for instance, one might discover just how enmeshed the finances of the art world are with the consumerism (or even outright exploitation) of the masses. To put it simply, visual artists who claim to be engaging in a penetrating critique of capitalism while generating income from a system based on artificial scarcity that is driven by collectors whose wealth may be drawn from ethically (and, in some cases, legally) dubious sources are in danger of appearing somewhat hypocritical.

While the political implications of the art world's dependence on a privileged elite may not be a concern for all artists, it should be noted that politics forms the backdrop for Keller and Ward's critique of Barney, they explain their thinking:

> An early version of this article was delivered as a talk at the
> Guggenheim on the eve of the inevitable second Gulf War.
> Outside, antiwar protestors were being corralled in "free-speech zones."
> If Barney's work is one of the important—because it is high profile
> —sites in which the legacy of the performance art of the 1960s
> and 1970s is currently being worked out, then it may be perfectly
> symptomatic for a contemporary moment in which how we imagine
> the status and effect of protest is an open and pressing question (13).

Keller and Ward's argument illustrates the conflict between what is known as 'social art' and 'art for art's sake' (also known as 'pure art'). Bourdieu summarizes the position of proponents of social art: "They condemn the 'egotistical' art of supporters of 'art for art's sake' and demand that literature fulfill a social or political function" (73). In his essay, "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Walter Benjamin describes the impetus from which the discourse of 'art for art's sake' stems:

> With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of
> reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of
> socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis which has become
> evident a century later. At the time, art reacted with the doctrine
> of l'art pour l'art, that is, with a theology of art. This gave rise
> to what might be called a negative theology in the form of
> the idea of 'pure' art, which not only denied any social function of
> art, but also any categorizing by subject matter (30).

For Bourdieu, 'pure art' involves the "breaking of links between art and morality [which] requires a posture of impassivity, indifference, and detachment" (110). This allows artists to embrace a formalist exploration of their particular medium without regard to potential ethical implications, but their "cult of form and impersonal neutrality makes them appear as defenders of an 'immoral' definition of art" (Bourdieu 75). Bourdieu goes on to say, "aestheticism taken to its limits tends towards a sort of moral neutralism, which is not far from an ethical nihilism" (110).

For Keller and Ward this is unacceptable: "Given that we are served—and as a nation swallow—pictures, moving and otherwise, of the president [George W. Bush] landing on an aircraft carrier to announce the end of major hostilities, this is the wrong time to let images wash over us, as critics have suggested was the upside to not understanding the complex symbolism in *Cremaster*" (13). Keller and Ward continue in this vein: "Rather than reading *Cremaster*, we are encouraged to consume it as high-end eye candy, whose symbolic system is available to us, but hardly necessary to our pleasure" (13). This notion is taken up by Baird, who—while generally well-disposed to Barney's work—is somewhat critical of the *Cremaster Cycle* exhibition at the Guggenheim: "For all its multimedia effects, the *Cremaster Cycle* fails to push beyond a spectacle that the viewer consumes." Keller and Ward concur: "*Cremaster* places us in a framework of mutually assured consumption, consuming us as we consume it" (13).

However, the *Cremaster* films are not consumed in a manner with which most filmgoers would be familiar. The aforementioned 30-minute excerpt from *Cremaster 3*, *The Order*, is available as a DVD that can be purchased by the general public; however, the five full-length *Cremaster* films are "sold as limited editions of ten, as

part—if certainly the central part—of a vitrine/sculpture that includes an elaborate case for special silk-screened DVDs" (Keller and Ward 10). Barney is quite forthright about the rationale underlying this method of distribution:

> Part of it had to do with finding a way to fund it. Looking to the thing we knew best, which was how to edition and distribute artwork, that's what we did. We made an edition of 10 out of the [first] film, divided the budget by 10 and sold it for that. So at least the film would break even and the work that was generated out of it could start to fund the following film (Indiewire).

This creation of an artificial scarcity may be seen as antithetical to the very nature of digital video, a medium that allows for the reproduction and dissemination of texts at a very low cost. Barney's options, however, are quite limited. As was previously discussed, the production costs of the *Cremaster* films were extremely high (by the standards of experimental film and video art), and Barney's experience in looking for ways to fund his films illustrates one of chief challenges for moving image artists working in the cultural industries; Hesmondhalgh observes: "Most cultural commodities have high fixed costs and low variable costs: a record can cost a lot to make because of all the time and effort that has to go into composition, recording, mixing, and editing to get the right sound for its makers and their intended audience, but, once 'the first copy' is made, all subsequent copies are relatively cheap to reproduce" (21).

Barney's dilemma is not unique. In his essay, "Viewing Copies: On the Mobility of Moving Images", Sven Lütticken notes that in "contemporary art, even pieces produced in media that allow for infinite mass reproduction are executed only in small editions. In the age of YouTube and file-sharing this economy of the rarified object becomes ever more exceptional." While Lütticken is speaking specifically about the world of contemporary art (a peripheral cultural industry, in Hesmondhalgh's view), this control over the circulation of cultural commodities is very much in line with trends in the cultural industries more broadly; Hesmondhalgh observes: "What is more, the means of industrial reproduction of cultural goods are relatively low in cost. This means that firms have to achieve the scarcity that gives value to goods by limiting access to cultural goods and services by artificial means" (21). Large media

corporations achieve this through the use of several different stratagems: vertical integration, which allows them to control the production *and* distribution of cultural works; copyright, which "prevents people from freely copying texts"; generating revenue from advertising or sponsorships, which reduces the need to generate revenue from the actual sale of cultural works; and attempting to "limit access to the means of reproduction, so that copying is not easy" (Hesmondhalgh 23).

Thus the difference between the core and the peripheral cultural industries in regards to digital media is, perhaps, more a matter of tactics; the basic strategic aim is the same.   They are simply responding to the differences in the structure of their respective markets. Put another way, the world of contemporary art benefits from a relatively small group of potential buyers with the financial means and the desire to pay relatively large sums for a cultural commodity that only a few others will possess, while the world of mass media benefits from a relatively large group of potential buyers not willing to pay very much (or, in many cases, anything at all) for cultural commodities that can potentially be possessed by millions.

In the case of video art and experimental film, however, this tight control over circulation via the issuing of limited editions is seen by many as a ridiculous ploy that reveals the debasement of contemporary art by market forces; Lütticken provides a summary of this view: "That such works are usually still presented as exclusive limited editions could be seen as a predictable outcome of a reactionary aesthetical/ political economy that uses artificial scarcity as a means of producing value." He proposes a hybrid system based on the "coexistence of 'exhibition copies' intended for installation/projection and viewing copies meant for computer or TV screen." While viewing copies currently circulate in the art world (primarily amongst curators), they are generally not officially sanctioned for view by the general public (for reasons that I will discuss in the next chapter). What Lütticken is calling for is a system of "official viewing copies editions" that are available to everyone. He feels that such a development might have a "real impact on the ways in which film and video art are seen and made" and he provides an example: "A model here can be

Michael Snow's reworking of his seminal 1967 film *Wavelength* into the DVD *WVLNT*, or *Wavelength for those who don't have the time* (2003), which consists of three superimposed 15-minute segments from the original 45-minute film."

The previously mentioned DVD release of *The Order* may be seen as an attempt by Barney to move towards something akin to the model proposed by Lütticken. Barney's decision to have the *Cremaster* films go on tour and screen at movie theaters also suggests a desire on his part to find a means of distribution that goes beyond the limited edition. However, as was previously mentioned, the tour did not recoup the costs of the films' production, so if Barney had relied upon theatrical presentations alone his ability to continue making his films would have been severely compromised. Barney's experience seems to suggest that film and video artists need to embrace multiple means of distribution (and perhaps production) if they hope to fund their work and have it seen.

The strategy employed by Barney and Snow with *The Order* and *WVLNT,* respectively, conflates distribution and production in a radical manner that reveals the extent to which the two processes have always been mutually constitutive. In her essay, "DVD, Video and Reaching Audiences: Experiments in Moving Image Distribution", Julia Knight notes that the "present day the use of the DVD to distribute 'alternative moving image work' is evident in initiatives that have been launched (or are being contemplated) by BFI Publishing, Peripheral Produce, and the Journal of Short Film" (Knight 22). As Knight notes, "these initiatives do break through or by-pass conventional distribution models and deliver films to audiences that would otherwise struggle to get seen via more traditional channels"(22). However, Knight feels it is important that the distribution of moving image art via DVD be placed in its full historical context:

> … it is equally important for such research to maintain an
> awareness of media history, and this is the second reason for
> my concern with DVD technology. Rather than facilitating
> entirely 'new distribution models', it is possible to argue that
> the kinds of initiatives outlined and referenced earlier are instead,
> to a large extent, simply repeating the developments that followed

the advent of video technology, in particular the VHS cassette (22).

Knight proceeds to provide a survey of VHS distribution schemes (primarily from the 1980s and 1990s) that predate—and may be seen as providing a template for—the current use of DVD technology to distribute video art and experimental film. The key players in the United Kingdom were the London Filmmakers Co-op, London Video Access, The Other Cinema, Circles, Cinema of Women, and Albany Video Distribution. As Knight notes, "most of the existing 'alternative' distributors had evolved from film-based practices, but as early as 1982 virtually all of them (the London Filmmakers Co-op being a notable exception) had started doing video hires, soon followed by VHS sales"(26). These organizations benefited from the dissemination of video technology into the consumer market: "With their users conditioned by the domestic video boom, these distributors reported substantial increases in trade within a couple of years and by the mid-1980s most were considering lowering their sale prices to further develop their video markets" (26).

Lütticken traces an alternative and slightly earlier history of video distribution in continental Europe with Videogalerie Schum in the early 1970s serving as a prototype for the British initiatives cited by Knight. He also cites Jean-Luc Godard's "protracted attempts to finance his Histoire(s) du Cinéma" noting that "at one point (when the project was still called Histoire(s) du Cinéma et de la Télévision) Godard proposed to release the film as a series of one-hour long video cassettes that would … sell for [US] $250 and [US] $500 per tape—thus clearly aiming at institutions rather than individual consumers" (Lütticken). Videogalerie Schum faced a similar dilemma; its high prices "even for unlimited editions, effectively … limited the tapes' availability to institutions and 'serious' collectors" (Lütticken). In addition, Videogalerie Schum was at something of a disadvantage as video technology in the 1970s had not penetrated the consumer market to the degree it had by the 1980s, but it (along with Godard) provided an important template for "less canonical initiatives such as the 1990s Amsterdam-based Zapp Magazine—a magazine on VHS tape that included artists' videos as well as reportage" (Lütticken). Lütticken goes on to cite Electronic

Arts Intermix and e-flux video rental as important recent developments in the distribution of moving image art.

While Knight takes a positive view of the activities of these organizations, she feels that "utilizing a particular technology—whether that's VHS, DVD, or the internet—to make the work available to a wider audience is only the first stage of the process. Irrespective of the appeal or capabilities of the technological delivery platform, potential audiences still have to know that the work exists" (34). She feels that theatrical releases may still be an important tool in this regard as they "generate a public discourse around the released film via newspaper, magazine and web reviews and articles, together with radio and television coverage" (34). She notes that this "gets both the film and its director 'known' and in turn generates a far higher level of subsequent DVD sales than would otherwise be the case" (34). Arranging "screenings at arts centers, film festivals and other 'alternative' screening venues" is also an important promotional activity, as is paid advertising, sending out copies for review, and "direct mail marketing of publicity material" (35). It should be noted though that Knight qualifies her support for these strategies:

> However, all these strategies have resource implications—as do all the promotional activities—and in most of the VHS initiatives discussed in this article the cost of the resources required to distribute and promote the work was not covered by the resulting volume of sales. Hence distributing the work needed some form of subsidy—via either grant-aid, low pay, volunteer labor, payment in kind, cross-subsidy from more commercial products, or some combination thereof. And this remains the case for many DVD initiatives (37).

Knight is well aware of the difficulties faced by experimental filmmakers and video artists seeking opportunities to distribute their work and notes that "conventional film distributors have largely been uninterested in taking on such work on the grounds that the low level of financial return makes it unviable" (20). Yet she also observes that for "artists' moving image work, placing it in a gallery in the context of an exhibition with accompanying events and documentation has also helped develop a wider arts audience for the work" (37). This suggests that for certain types of film and video work a visual arts context might be appropriate. However, the creation of artificial

scarcity that the limited edition imposes on moving image work may be too high a price to pay for many artists (even if affords them an opportunity to make a decent living from their work). The rise of the limited edition demonstrates the importance of distribution models for moving image work. Regardless of how radical a particular video work may be, its impact will be somewhat limited if it can only be viewed by the wealthy or individuals fortunate enough to live or travel regularly to major art/ economic enters such as New York, London, or Tokyo.

Perhaps, then, the dual-track model proposed by Lütticken is a viable alternative that should be explored. The opportunity to take full advantage of the distribution and screening possibilities made possible by digital video, while also entering into a constructive engagement with the world of contemporary art may be of use to many artists. Lütticken's proposal may provide a degree of flexibility that will allow artists to engage in a critique of the commodity from a position that is somewhat less compromised by the cult of artificial scarcity and the limited edition that currently dominates the highest profile and most profitable spheres of contemporary art.

What I have attempted to do in this chapter is survey the pressures placed upon artists working with the moving image and examine the ways in which those pressures can be navigated and, perhaps, creatively utilized to formulate new approaches to experimental film and video art in terms of both form and content. Warhol's relationship with the Norelco and his embrace of "business art" or art as business represents one approach, Barney's tentative steps towards distribution channels outside of the gallery system is yet another approach. In both cases, I have tried to give the complete context for their experiments in video by discussing their work in other media (painting for Warhol, sculpture for Barney). The chief issue for me is whether moving image work can be comfortably accommodated by the world of contemporary art. I ultimately come to the conclusion that Lütticken's dual-track model of distribution is a worthwhile proposal that can potentially assist artists seeking to balance the demands for artificial scarcity that emanate from the world of contemporary art with their desire to reach the maximum possible audience through

the use of DVD and internet-based distribution channels enabled by digital video and

digitalization.

Still images from Andy Warhol's *Outer and Inner Space* (1965)

Still image from Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 3* (2002)

Still image from Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 3* (2002)

Akil Kirlew

Chapter 2: Body Doubles

This chapter is chiefly concerned with masochism as an aesthetic, which I discuss first in relation to allegory and later in relation to accelerationism. I begin with a discussion of my own recent performance-based work before continuing on to a examination of Naomi Uman's experimental film, *Removed* (1999). I then proceed to trace the masochistic aesthetic back to its origins via a reading of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*. This chapter outlines the methodological approach I will use in my third and final chapter.

Formulating this research initiative has led me down a path that has enabled me to redefine my work as a writer, actor, and director. This process initially began via a series of collaborations with two artists Juliet Carpenter and Evangeline Riddiford-Graham. They cast me as the lead actor in two of their video pieces, *Luma Turf* (http://vimeo.com/70919827) and *Shy Genius* (http://vimeo.com/67717608). They then asked me to perform a live work for an exhibition at Gloria Knight, a local Auckland gallery; the show was called "Dusty". I will discuss my participation in these three works chronologically. My first experience working with Carpenter and Graham was *Luma Turf*. For that piece, I contributed a voiceover. I was recorded reading a text written by Graham. The text was a stream of consciousness monologue that accompanied video footage of luxurious lighting fixtures such as chandeliers. I was recorded giving four different interpretations of the text. All four were used for the final video and played in a sequence that served to challenge the viewer's ability to affix a particular set of motivations to my character. As an actor, I immediately gravitated to this project, because the text of the monologue made it clear to me that Carpenter and Graham wanted to explore contemporary notions of luxury, commodity culture, and design within the context of video art:

> But there they were – the sea was choked
> with chandeliers, chained up in softness,
> illuminate-less, clear prickling orbs clung
> together in strands and when I was waist up
> I was awash with somebody's babies
> Swarovski or Sarkozy, genetics got me lost …

My character in *Luma Turf* is an ambiguous figure whose sexuality and very biology are intimately connected and ultimately articulated through the lens of luxury commodities. The confusion (or conflation) of "Swarovski" and "Sarkozy" struck me as being a clever way of demonstrating the manner in which the political realm and social life more broadly have been colonized by consumer culture.

Barney's aforementioned exploration of this relationship in the *Cremaster* series certainly occurred to me when I initially read the text for *Luma Turf*. I was also reminded of the work of the South African artist, Steven Cohen. Specifically, his *Chandelier Project* (2001- 2002), in which he fashioned a wrought iron chandelier into a tutu. I would like to discuss this piece in more detail, because I believe it demonstrates tendencies that are also present in the work of Carpenter and Graham.

Cohen wore the chandelier with his buttocks exposed, along with heavy make-up, and a pair of high heels into a squatter camp in Johannesburg. Municipal authorities were in the process of demolishing the camp when Cohen arrived and the resulting video serves as a disturbing document of poverty and privilege in modern South Africa. In an interview on the subject of the *Chandelier Project*, Cohen says of the squatter camp residents:

> … so it's incredible that people who have nothing
> retain the ability to be open and receptive to art.
> It's a lot to ask of people who are in the moment of
> losing the little they have to accept my intervention
> as an artist (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkwJ29fUQyk).

Of the process of creating the work, Cohen states:

> I don't give a shit about the business end of it and
> [the chandelier tutu] was made with no money.
> The chandelier was from a junk shop. I fixed it
> and I made it into a costume. It cost nothing.
> The expensive thing was the lights, at 20 euro
> each it took me 6 months to find the money and I
> was making visual art to sell to buy the batteries.
> (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkwJ29fUQyk).

Cohen made these statements during an interview and this discussion immediately led to the following exchange:

<div align="center">Interviewer</div>
But I would say that that object [the chandelier tutu] can be now [sic] in a museum by itself.

<div align="center">Cohen</div>
A museum wants to buy it. I want to sell it, so that I can stop doing the work. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkwJ29fUQyk)

In fairness to Cohen, when watching the interview one clearly gets the sense that he is being somewhat facetious, although this cynical joke about the possible sale of the chandelier tutu to a museum as a souvenir of his intervention in the squatter camp would seem to be indicative of what Benjamin refers to as a "metamorphosis of the political struggle from a drive to make a political commitment into an object of contemplative pleasure, from a means of production into an article of consumption" ("The Author as Producer" 4).

While I would not describe the objectives of Carpenter and Graham in quite the same terms as Cohen's, on a purely formal level I would suggest that the interplay of video, object, viewer, and performer is central to the work of all three. The second time I worked as an actor for Carpenter and Graham was for the video *Shy Genius,* which was a component of the multimedia exhibition, "Dusty", at the gallery Gloria Knight. Again, Graham wrote the text I recited. However, this time I was also included in the visual component of the work, which was directed by Carpenter. Carpenter filmed me behind a pane of translucent glass that obscured my image, so that the viewer could only make out a blurry outline of my form. This footage was juxtaposed (and occasionally superimposed) with images of detritus of various types: paperclips, an iPhone, drug caspules, a condom, old receipts, locks, bolts, and a knife blade. The overall effect was of an ambiguous figure interacting with the flotsam of someone's life (perhaps his own, perhaps not). Another artist, Alexander Laurie, took some of these objects and encased them in a glass bench that was placed in the gallery space, directly across from the video projection. The final piece of the show was my live performance of Graham's text on the night of the opening, which overlapped and

competed with the version I had previously recorded in a manner that was reminiscent of Edie Sedgwick's performance in *Outer and Inner Space*. In his review of the "Dusty" exhibition, John Hurrell notes the complex relationship between the various elements of this collaborative work:

> All this helps form a kind of matrix of logic
> that sets up a gridded conceptual structure connecting
> the film imagery with that of the seating. The parallels
> between the content of the seat and the content of the
> screen generate a form of wit where eyeball and
> seated anus become interchangeable in function, as if in
> some story by the French philosopher George Bataille
> (http://eyecontactsite.com/2013/07/true-grit).

In Hurrell's view, Graham's "story revolves around a sexual transaction involving the spoken-to viewer and a confident verbalising hustler, their interaction dismantling different types of masculinity" (http://eyecontactsite.com/2013/07/true-grit).   Of my interpretation of Graham's text, Hurrell contends the "speaker is a cowboy queen, a fairy stud … commonplace conventions are flipped over and sadistic /masochistic relationships slyly alluded to" (http://eyecontactsite.com/2013/07/true-grit).

At this point, I think it is important to stress that my role in these works was purely as an actor. Graham, Carpenter, and Laurie were the initiators of these projects. Of course, as an actor I did have my own conceptions of how the characters should be played. Graham directed the live performance, and I saw my chief task as providing her with as many options to choose from as possible. Ultimately, she opted to leave decisions concerning my physical blocking and wardrobe to me. As an actor, it was a wonderful experience in that Graham provided a unique combination of structure and freedom, a balance that can be difficult for many directors to achieve.

In thinking about my live performance during the opening night of "Dusty" and how it made manifest our collective intentions, I would like to focus on the distinctions between the live performance and the prerecorded performance of the same text for the film, *Shy Genius*. In the latter, my performance was subdued as Graham sought a subtly seductive evocation of the hold luxury goods (from art objects, to handbags) have on potential consumers. My live performance of the same text, on the other

hand, was wild and uninhibited as I moved through and interacted with the audience at the opening in an aggressive, some might even say threatening manner. This discrepancy between the live and prerecorded versions of the same text overturned the typical power dynamics of aesthetic contemplation in that viewers at the opening were confronted with an aggressive art object that could not be easily contained on a purely visual/discursive level. The relationship between viewer and object became charged and vital with a mutual desire that was difficult to define and not easily reified.

Graham's text was divided into three parts (a prologue, body, and epilogue). As I said previously, Graham left the wardrobe and blocking to me. I decided to make a clear distinction between the three sections by putting on a pair of large sunglasses between the prologue and body and taking them back off between the body and epilogue. At a certain point during the body of the live piece I choose to move in front of the video projection of *Shy Genius*, interrupting the viewer's ability to have an unobstructed view of the film. This action, when combined with the sunglasses I wore, emphasized my vision of the audience at the opening as opposed to their vision of both my live and prerecorded selves.

In his essay, *Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and its Vicissitudes*, Todd McGowan notes that in "Lacan's later work, the gaze becomes something that the subject encounters in the object; it becomes an objective, rather than a subjective, gaze" (28). McGowan elaborates on this period in Lacan's thinking: "The gaze is not the look of the subject at the object, but the point at which the object looks back. The gaze thus involves the spectator in the image, disrupting her/his ability to remain all-perceiving and unperceived in the cinema" (28-29). It is precisely this dynamic that that the makers of "Dusty" hoped to achieve by juxtaposing my live and prerecorded performances.

In McGowan's conception, the gaze is "a blank spot in the subject's look that threatens the subject's sense of mastery in looking because the subject cannot see the spot directly. The subject looks for the gaze—it is the *objet petit a* of the visual drive —and yet it cannot be integrated into the image" (33). McGowan quotes Lacan,

noting that the *objet petit a* "is what is lacking, is nonspecular, is not graspable in the image" (33). During the opening night of "Dusty", the interference of the two levels (live and recorded) reached a crescendo at the point at which I stepped in front of the video projection of my own image obscured by glass, with my own live gaze obscured by large sunglasses. This schema clearly aligns "Dusty" with McGowan's understanding of the *objet petit a*; he notes that even "when the subject sees a 'complete' image, something remains obscure; the subject cannot see the Other at the point at which it sees the subject. The gaze of the object gazes back at the subject, but this gaze is not present in the field of the visible" (33).

Previously I suggested that resisting the reification of desire might be best achieved via an embrace of cinema based upon a masochistic aesthetic. In her essay, "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of Cinema", Gaylyn Studlar attempts to provide an "alternative model" to a discourse promulgated by thinkers such as Laura Mulvey and Christian Metz that emphasizes "voyeurism aligned with sadism" and the "male controlling gaze as the only position of spectatorial pleasure" (268). For Studlar, the "formal structures of the masochistic aesthetic—fantasy, disavowal, fetishism, and suspense—overlap with the primary structures that enable classic narrative cinema to produce visual pleasure"(268). McGowan echoes Studlar, noting that cinema is capable of staging "the utter failure of the spectator's assumed mastery. The crucial point here is that not only is this failure of mastery possible in cinema, but it is what spectators desire when they go to the movies" (29).

 As McGowan notes it is possible to construct a visual schema (whether in painting or film) in which there is a "blank spot in the image, the point at which the spectator loses his/her distance" and becomes "involved in a scene from which she/he seems excluded"(29). McGowan cites Steven Spielberg's first feature, *Duel* (1970) as an instance of a film constructed along these lines. The protagonist of *Duel*, David Mann, is driving from Los Angeles to Northern California when he encounters a mentally unstable truck driver, who "torments and eventually tries to kill" Mann (33). The face of the truck driver is never seen, and while the film ends with Mann

defeating and killing his opponent, no reason is ever given for the truck driver's targeting of Mann. For McGowan, the truck driver in *Duel* is an example of the previously mentioned "blank spot" that "involves the spectator in the image, disrupting her/his ability to remain all-perceiving and unperceived in the cinema" (29). As McGowan notes, *Duel* "continually brings the spectator to the point of encountering the gaze and then makes the viewer retreat from it. Each time Mann seems on the verge of discerning the identity of the truck driver, something thwarts his efforts" (34). McGowan puts the plot of *Duel* into a Lacanian context:

> This is precisely the way that Lacan sees desire as
> functioning. The *objet petit a*—the gaze in the case of the
> visual drive—motivates the subject's desire, but this desire
> is not a desire to encounter this object. On the contrary, desire
> wants to sustain itself as desire. As Bruce Fink notes,
> "Desire is an end in itself: it seeks only more desire" (35).

It is possible to argue that Spielberg's first feature acts as an opening gambit in an ongoing project to circumvent the reification of desire, a project that mainstream commercial cinema has periodically embraced in a quest for new sensations and effects with which to shock its increasingly jaded audience. Of Spielberg, McGowan states:

> After *Sugarland Express* (1974), Spielberg's films begin
> to provide fantasmatic resolution that domesticates the
> desire of the Other as manifested in the gaze. Spielberg
> transitioned from being a filmmaker of desire to being a
> filmmaker of desire's fantasmatic resolution. In this way,
> he joined Hollywood as such. This blending of desire and
> fantasy—presenting spectators with the gaze and then domesticating
> it, the characteristic operation of Spielberg's later films—is
> the fundamental ideological program of Hollywood cinema (37).

Is it possible to sustain the impulse revealed in Spielberg's first feature film, integrating it into a cinematic practice that goes even further in its efforts to liberate desire? One possible example of such a practice may be found in Naomi Uman's film, *Removed* (1999). In this project, Uman takes segments from a pornographic film from the 1970s and obscures all of the images of the female performers' bodies with nail polish remover and household bleach. The effect is startling. While the viewer does occasionally get quick glimpses of the barest outline of an illuminated female form,

the women's bodies are transformed into what can best be described as quivering globules of light. The men in the film (whose bodies remain visible) appear to be copulating with spheres of energy.   With *Removed*, Uman appears to make literal McGowan's previously mentioned concept of the "blank spot in the image" (29).

Uman's source material is also cannily chosen in terms of narrative. Divided into three relatively short scenes that follow the sexual exploits of a woman named Yvonne, the first scene focuses on Yvonne's attempts to get an already nude man, who is never named, to join her on a bed covered in money. He declines. Undeterred, Yvonne begins to masturbate vigorously while the unnamed man watches her. After Yvonne is done, she again attempts to convince the unnamed man to join her in bed. He expresses his regrets and makes reference to plot points from the original source material that *Removed* has removed:

<div style="text-align:center">

Yvonne
Come here.

Man
I tried very hard that time too … but the good doctor's
minions were more attractive. It's too bad, Yvonne.
The train's pulled out of the station.

Yvonne
Will you stay on the platform and wave to me?

Man
No.

</div>

Yvonne leaves.

<div style="text-align:center">

Man
Have a good trip.

</div>

Throughout this scene, Yvonne's body is obscured by Uman's interventions. Yvonne's voice is clearly audible, but her body is absent. The objectification of the performer's body upon which pornography is predicated is disrupted on the visual level by the removal of Yvonne's body. This is echoed on the narrative level, as Yvonne and the unnamed man never have sex.

In the second and longest scene of the film, Yvonne and a new man named Walter spy on another couple (also a man and a woman) through a two-way mirror.   We never learn the names of the couple that is spied upon. Like Yvonne, the body of the

<div style="text-align:center">59</div>

unnamed woman has been removed, while her male partner's body is clearly visible. Yvonne lies across Walter's lap— presumably with her eyes closed, again, the viewer cannot clearly see her body. Walter relates the activities of the couple on the other side of the mirror to Yvonne. The couple being spied on are arguing while undressing for bed. Walter describes the woman's body in detail (e.g., her hair colour, the size and shape of her breasts) while stroking Yvonne's body and, at one point, lifting a cigarette to her what we can only presume are Yvonne's lips. As this sequence progresses, Yvonne becomes more and more excited. Again, the viewer can make this determination based only her voice: she moans, her statements and questions become more rushed and urgent, her breathing becomes more audible. Walter informs Yvonne that the couple are now both on the bed. It appears that they are about to have sex. Yvonne appears (or rather, sounds as if she is in a state of ecstasy), but suddenly, the mirror through which Walter is observing the couple goes dark. Yvonne is startled and asks Walter why he has stopped. Before Walter can answer, the film, which appears to be damaged and missing the end of the scene (although this could quite possibly be another intervention on the part of Uman) cuts to another scene.

The third scene depicts Yvonne, her body still obscured, and the man from the first scene in bed. The man appears to be trying to get excited about having sex with Yvonne, but his facial expression makes it clear that he is not aroused. Several bottles of liquor and wine can be seen in the first shot of the scene. The man, clearly bored, gets up; Yvonne reaches out to him. There is a cut to a slow medium shot of him as he slowly turns back towards Yvonne. The scene ends and so does the film. The credits roll to the sounds of Yvonne moaning in the background over the film's musical score. It should be noted that this third and final scene appears to actually be the first part of the very first scene. Uman's intervention is temporal as well as spatial.

In thinking about *Removed* one may be reminded of McGowan's assertion that "desire wants to sustain itself as desire" (35). In this film, Yvonne's attempts to fulfil her sexual desires are continuously frustrated: she never is able to achieve orgasm. This sense of frustration may be mirrored by the viewer. If one attempts to view the film

primarily as a pornographic work, the obscuring of Yvonne's body is certainly something of a nuisance. Thus certain viewers may share in Yvonne's rising sense of sexual excitement and ultimate lack of sexual release. This lack of sexual release is enhanced by the lack of narrative closure and lack of traditional temporal structure. None of the three scenes answer any of the questions that the viewer may have about the over-arching plot of the film, although to be fair it is unlikely that fans of the source film would have been overly concerned with narrative development.

Yet in discussing *Removed* with friends and colleagues many people did feel that the film maintains an erotic charge due primarily to the vocal quality of the actress playing Yvonne. This highlights the fact that Uman's project is actually the second intervention that has been performed on and with the original film. The film that Uman uses as source material for *Removed* has clearly been dubbed into English. The marketing and distribution strategies of the European pornographic film industry in the 1970s is not exactly within the purview of this project, but suffice it to say that the international marketplace did not (and still does not) have a large appetite for pornographic films with subtitles. Consequently, pornographic film producers seeking markets outside of their particular linguistic spheres usually have their films dubbed. In many markets this requires hiring skilled voiceover artists. Thus *Removed* is, in fact, already one level removed from the original text, which was probably shot in a language other than English. There are actually three texts at work here: Uman's film, Uman's English language source material with dubbed voices, and the original film shot in its original language.

The voices used in the second level of this text are unlikely to have been recorded by the actors whose bodies appear in the film. This disjuncture is, I would argue, a crucial component of Uman's film. It is Yvonne's voice we hear primarily in the film and the original film's producers clearly sought to create a gestalt figure comprised of one woman's body and another woman's voice, with the body being the privileged partner (this is a pornographic film after all). However, Uman's intervention reverses this privileging of body over voice by removing the body and leaving the viewer with

just the voice. The erotic, ontological, and teleological implications of this are difficult to determine. By highlighting this first intervention (the vocal dubbing) and leaving it unmoored from the spectacle of the female performer's body, Uman creates an erotic field of play whose true source and ultimate destination are uncertain.

This gestalt figure is a virtual woman comprised of two different actresses and while the erotic and philosophical questions that may emerge from Uman's intervention are of importance, the economic element should not be overlooked. What the producers of Uman's source material have tried to create is not only an erotic figure. She is in many ways a handmaiden of transnational capital: a composite created to ease the penetration of pornographic film exports into international markets via the creation of a woman who does not really exist. This desire is given a thorough explication in Joel Black's book, *The Reality Principle*, by way of an analysis of Brian De Palma's 1984 film, *Body Double*.

The protagonist of *Body Double*, Jake, is an out-of-work actor who suffers from a severe form of claustrophobia. He is invited to house-sit for a friend, Sam. Before leaving for his trip, Sam shows Jake a telescope that can be used to view into the homes of many of his neighbours. One neighbour, a beautiful and wealthy socialite, Gloria, is of particular interest as she performs a nightly erotic dance in which she masturbates while wearing nothing but lingerie and what appear to be extremely expensive jewels. Needless to say, Jake becomes obsessed with her, especially once he realizes that she is also being watched and followed by a criminal who steals her handbag and eventually kills her with a power drill. However, it soon becomes clear that Gloria was not exactly what she seemed. While the real Gloria has been murdered, the person who performed the nightly dance was an entirely different woman—an adult film actress named Holly Body. Apparently, Holly had been hired to impersonate Gloria and perform this dance on a nightly basis for someone's benefit.

In attempting to distinguish the aims of *Body Double* from Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (an important task as De Palma has often been criticized for slavishly imitating Hitchcock), Black observes:

> De Palma, in contrast, presents the problematic of
> a woman's literal *doubleness* and its conflict with
> her *existential unity*: a man becomes obsessed with
> a mysterious woman who is not an individual with
> a single self-consistent identity but two separate,
> *equally real* beings—the body he watches through
> the telescope and the woman he pursues right up
> to her death, all the while thinking of her as the
> image in the scope (94).

For Black, this schema serves as the model for cinema's construction of the viewer's sexuality: "The erotic ideal is not only illusory and elusive, it is composite and artificial—a permanently missing original (re)produced through the interplay of substitute body images" (95). The quest for an erotic ideal is what draws consumers to the pornographic film industry, but it is, ultimately, a mirage similar to Jake's attraction to the composite Gloria/Holly character, the nature of which Black understands well:

> The unlikely and unreal spectacle of watching a beautiful
> (and supposedly respectable) woman perform an erotic dance
> in her home and masturbate in her jewels—something
> the real Gloria would be unlikely to do—is too much for
> Jake, who finds this decoy Gloria irresistible. On the other
> hand, had Jake first seen the porn star Holly in one of her
> widely available films rather than in the persona of Gloria
> (as well as in the intimate and sumptuous setting of her
> bedroom), it's unlikely he would have taken more than
> a passing interest in *her* (97).

It is precisely this paradigm that Uman so skillfully deconstructs with *Removed*. By obscuring the bodies of the female performers in this work, Uman reveals the manner in which the pornographic film industry (and the international cultural industries more broadly) strive to create artificial figures of desire and identification in the sexual arena, which is conceived of not as a personal and intimate space, but rather, as a global and highly public marketplace full of ersatz brides of Frankenstein. It is not just the female body that is reified and ultimately commodified by the pornographic film industry, but sexuality itself. And it is sexuality itself that Uman ultimately seeks to liberate with *Removed*. Uman's primary tool in this delicate operation is allegory.

In his essay, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage", Benjamin H. D. Buchloch contends that the "allegorical mind sides with the object and protests against its devaluation to the status of a commodity by devaluating it a second time in

allegorical practice" (44). He goes on to say that the "allegorist subjects the sign to the same division of functions that the object has undergone in its transformation into a commodity" (Buchloch 44). In the case of Uman's source material, the three primary objects transformed into commodities would be the female body, the female voice, and sexuality. By removing the female bodies, she objectifies the female voice a second time. Uman quite literal reifies the female voice in that she isolates an element that was never intended to exist outside of its relationship to the visual spectacle of the female body and presents it as the primary element of the film. In *Removed,* Yvonne's voice becomes an allegorical representation of female sexuality more generally.

It is also possible to argue that the removal of the female bodies in *Removed* registers less as an absence and more as a new and even more spectacular presence. The globules of light seen by the viewer may not be perceived as sexual, but they do create a surreal effect that is certainly sensuous. The effect is in many ways comparable to Dara Birnbaum's relentless focus (via repetition) on the special effects used to obscure Diana Prince's transformation into Wonder Woman in *Technology/ Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978-1979). However, in thinking about links between the work of Uman and Birnbaum, the importance of sound reemerges. In the second part of *Technology//Transformation: Wonder Woman*, Birnbaum uses a disco song called *Wonder Woman*, but in addition to actually playing the song, she has transcribed the lyrics and places the text of the song onscreen as a visual accompaniment to the song itself. Buchloch contends this "graphic, scriptural representation of female sighs and of lyrics that we are normally supposed to hear, but not to read, inverts the split of the phonetic and graphic elements of language" (Buchloch 56). He goes on to say:

> … in the scriptural allegorization of the disco song,
> we become aware that even the most minute and discrete
> phonetic elements of such popular music (sighs, moans, etc.)
> are as soaked in sexist and reactionary political ideology as
> the larger syntactic and semantic structures of the lyrics (Buchloch 56).

The female voice in a state of sexual excitement is central to both *Removed* and *Technology//Transformation: Wonder Woman*. Yet in both instances, the "restoration

of sound to a separate discourse which runs parallel to the visual text makes the viewer aware of the hidden functions that sound normally fulfills" (Buchloch 56).

In the case of the source material upon which *Removed* is based, this hidden function is the creation of a composite figure, the aforementioned artificial erotic ideal that is, in fact, a product composed of disparate elements that have been isolated from individual performers (one actress's body, another's voice). This process of reification, combination, and ultimately commodification is motivated by a desire for increased sales in the international marketplace. In attempting to offer an alternative to this practice, Uman engages in another level of reification (and ultimately objectification) by severing the relationship between voice and body out of which the characters in her source material were constituted. Yet Uman's goals are rather (although perhaps not entirely) different than those of the pornographic film industry, in that Uman's "repetition of the original act of depletion and the new attribution of meaning redeems the object" (Buchloch 44). Thus the purpose of *Removed* is not to censor or deny representations of sexuality, but rather, to take a tentative first step towards a new means of representing the erotic that is not contingent upon reification, commodification, and exploitation.

Seen in this light, it is of some significance that *Removed* does not circulate as a commodity. I first encountered it at a free screening, where it was projected as a film and presented in a traditional theatrical setting as part of a larger program of Uman's films. I later viewed it on the internet (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEkMKdf_9Fs), where it is available for free. In this sense Uman's film may be said to represent a form of subjectivity not unlike Deleuze's body without organs. In her article, "Masochism: A Queer Subjectivity", Amber Musser contends that the "body without organs is the total dismantlement of organization including capitalism in favour of flows of desire and sociality" (2). If one accepts *Removed* as an instance of cinematic masochism, then it is possible to argue that the subjectivities represented in the film (and that are perhaps formed through viewing the film) partake in the "masochist/ dominant's embodied destabilization of these [psychoanalytic] principles" thereby marking the "masochist/dominant as a sort of queer subject characterized by

deterritorialized desire, that is to say desire that is not organized by capitalism" (Musser 2). Yet the opposition between capitalism and masochism is not so clearly delineated, for capitalism is also a force of deterritorialization. In his book, *The Persistence of the Negative*, Benjamin Noys observes: "for Deleuze and Guattari the problem of capitalism is not that it deterritorializes, but that it does not deterritorialize enough" (5). An examination of the origins of the masochistic aesthetic may assist in determining if Musser's proposition of a "deterritorialized desire" is a truly viable option.

In his novel, *Venus in Furs*, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (from whose name the term masochism is derived) has his protagonist, Severin, enter into a masochistic relationship with a dominant woman named Wanda. Severin hopes that Wanda will eventually consent to marry him. Wanda is uncertain, as she has misgivings about Severin's masochistic tendencies. She eventually agrees to a trial relationship—a sort of long engagement—during which she will indulge his sexual fantasies by playing the role of a dominatrix. While initially reluctant, Wanda eventually begins to find some enjoyment in the arrangement. She commands Severin to travel to Italy with her as her servant:

> "I will not have any familiarity," she snapped.
> "What is more, you will have no right to visit me
> unless I call or ring for you, and you will not speak
> to me unless I address you first. From now on your
> name is no longer Severin, but Gregor"(205).

Severin describes his feelings about Wanda's demands: "I was trembling with rage, but I cannot deny that I also felt a thrill of pleasure" (205). Once they find a suitable abode just outside of Florence, their relationship is formalized with a contract, an extract from which is below:

> Mrs. von Dunajew [Wanda] may not only chastise
> her slave [Severin] for the slightest negligence or
> misdemeanor as and when she wishes, but she will
> also have the right to maltreat him according to her
> humor or even simply to amuse herself; she is also
> entitled to kill him if she so wishes; in short; he
> becomes her absolute property (220).

In his book, *Coldness and Cruelty*, Gilles Deleuze contends that the "sadist is in need

of institutions, the masochist of contractual relations" (20). It should be noted that in Deleuze's view sadism and masochism are distinct psychological phenomena. The dominant figure in a masochistic coupling is not a sadist, nor is the passive figure in a sadistic coupling a masochist: "… sadism and masochism do not together constitute a single entity; they are not respectively made up of partial impulses, but each is complete in itself" (Deleuze 67). While the complete separation of the two concepts is not universally accepted, it should be noted that the 'sadistic institution' and the 'masochistic contract' are rooted in distinctly different conceptions of economic and social relations.

In his essay, "The Accursed Share", Georges Bataille provides an outline of economic relations in Europe during the medieval period: "the clergy, the military/aristocracy, and labor formed a unified body in which the component parts of the third term were subservient to the other two"; in other words, the bulk of society was forced to devote its labor power to the "needs of the nobles and the priests" (Bataille 117). Bataille continues: "The idea of an economic world independent of the service of the clerics and the nobles, having its autonomy and its own laws as a part of nature, is alien to the thought of the Middle Ages" (117). As Bataille notes, the advent of capitalism—while not truly liberating the masses—does provide a new framework for economic activity: "religion and economy were delivered in one and the same movement from that which indebted them to one another: the former from profane calculation, the latter from limits given from the outside" (129). For capitalism to displace feudalism, the bulk of economic activity had to be removed from the domain of institutions such as the Church, the monarchy, and the aristocracy. In order to do this a new regulatory system governed by the contract had to be put in place. The difference between the 'institution' and the 'contract' as concepts is summarized by Deleuze:

> The juridical distinction between the contract and the institution
> is well known: the contract presupposes in principle the free
> consent of the contracting parties and determines between them
> a system of reciprocal rights and duties; it cannot [directly] affect
> a third party and is valid for a limited period. Institutions, by contrast,
> determine a long-term state of affairs which is both involuntary
> and inalienable (77).

The reliance on the institution that marks feudal societies imposes a rigid grid-like pattern on economic activity; labor and profit can only flow up the social hierarchy in a highly predetermined fashion: from the serfs to nobles, for instance. In theory, the capitalist contract—with some qualifying conditions—allows individuals to circumvent institutions (in part) and freely enter into economic relationships with other individuals regardless of their position within a particular social hierarchy. Thus under the regime of the capitalist contract, economic activity theoretically becomes a field of play in which labor and profit can move in a potentially limitless series of directions. The extent to which this actually occurs is, of course, highly debatable.

As was previously mentioned, Deleuze sees this opposition between the institution and the contract as having a parallel in the opposition between sadism and masochism: "Sade's secret societies, his societies of libertines are institutional societies; in a word, Sade thinks in terms of institutions, Masoch in terms of the contract" (77). In the passage from Sade's sadism to Masoch's masochism, we can see a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of the European economy, from the aristocratic feudalism of the 1700s (the time during which Sade wrote) to the bourgeois capitalism of the 1800s (the time during which Masoch wrote). Seen in this light, Wanda and Severin's contract becomes a parody of labor relations under capitalism. Ostensibly an agreement between consenting adults, this contract actually serves as a guise and justification for slavery:

> "But, madam," I said anxiously, "surely you know my
> situation – I am financially dependent on my father and I
> am afraid that the large sum I shall require for such a journey …"
>
> "That means that you have no money, Gregor [Severin],"
> remarked Wanda delightedly. "So much the better; you
> will thus be completely dependent on me, and you will really
> be my slave" (Masoch 205).

To emphasize Severin's dependence, once he has signed the contract, Wanda takes his passport and remaining money (Masoch 222). In his essay, "The Use Value of D.A.F de Sade", Bataille acknowledges this confusion between the status of the worker and the slave:

> In the final analysis it is clear that a worker works in order

> to obtain the violent pleasure of coitus (in other words,
> he accumulates in order to spend). On the other hand,
> the conception according to which the worker must have
> coitus in order to provide for the future necessities of work
> is linked to the unconscious identification of the worker with
> the slave (7).

Deleuze notes that Sade's understanding of the role of the institution as opposed to that of the contract is "ironic through and through because it is sexual and sexualized" as a deliberate challenge to those who "think of politics in legalistic or contractual terms" (79). However, while Masoch's novels are *far* less graphic in their depictions of sexuality than are Sade's, Masoch does ground his exploration of contractual relations in sexual terms. Thus it may be said that Sade and Masoch use *somewhat* similar strategies in the pursuit of diametrically opposed aims, forcing Deleuze to acknowledge a common thread between the two writers: "As a result, fundamental problems of rights begin to emerge in their true light even as they become perverted in the work of Sade and Masoch and turned into literary elements in a parody of the philosophy of history" (Deleuze 80).

It should be noted that there is a period of negotiation before the contract is signed by Wanda and Severin. During this period, Severin attempts to have a clause added: "First of all I would like the two following points to be included in our contract: that you should never separate yourself from me completely, and that you should never abandon me to the mercy of your admirers" (Masoch 196). By "admirers", Severin means Wanda's other lovers; they conduct an open relationship, or, to be more accurate, Wanda has other lovers while Severin is expected to remain faithful to her. Upon hearing Severin's conditions, Wanda professes to be shocked that he would think her capable of not only leaving him, but allowing one of her other lovers to physically abuse and brutalize him. She promises to add Severin's conditions; however, he soon changes his mind:

> "I want to place myself entirely in your hands, Wanda,"
> I exclaimed suddenly, in a storm of passion that deprived
> me of all reason, "without conditions, with no limitations
> on your power over me. I want to be at the mercy of your
> every whim" (197).

When the final draft of the contract is finally presented to Severin for his signature,

neither of his conditions is included. He signs it anyway. Unfortunately for Severin, Wanda does eventually leave him, but not before tricking him into being whipped mercilessly by Alexis Papadopolis, one of her lovers. This incident is foreshadowed during a conversation between Severin and Wanda shortly after their first sight of Alexis:

> "I can understand the impression he [Alexis] made on you,"
> I answered. "I, too, was swept off my feet. In fact, I
> formed the wild fantasy that …"
> "That this man was my lover and that he whipped you,
> to your great delight!" she said, bursting into laughter (247).

Severin is clearly sexually attracted to Alexis: "I cannot remain indifferent to his erotic power and my heart is filled with admiration for Socrates, who had the strength to resist the seductive Alcibiades" (247). Given his sexual attraction to both Wanda and Alexis, it would seem that Severin is bisexual, which would appear to place him in a position not unlike Musser's "queer subject". However, Musser's project is, to some extent, predicated on the refusal of fixed sexual identities within the masochist sphere: "Both the dominant and submissive anticipate the reaction and action of the other, altering their performances and identities accordingly" (4). Musser believes that the masochistic scenario operates on an "ambiguous terrain between reality and fantasy" in which "the self is figured as a potential, not an identity because identity relies on interaction from others (the audience and the other performers) in the performative exchange" (4). As opposed to an identity politics based on sexual preference (i.e., homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual), Musser cites the transgendered experience as being more complementary to masochism. In her view the masochist and the transgendered subject both attempt a "marriage of self, flesh, and desire" to create a fluid sense of identity that—in the case of masochism—is "equally dependent on relations with others and regulatory norms" (4, 5).

Masoch predicts this alliance between the transgendered and masochistic spheres. When Severin first sees Alexis, he is astounded by the latter's beauty, noting that if Alexis's "hips were less slender, he could be taken for a woman in disguise" (246). Some time later, shortly after his first actual meeting with Alexis, Severin has a somewhat baroque fantasy about the other man:

> The footmen are talking about him now. Like a woman,
> he knows he is beautiful and behaves accordingly.
> Always elegant, he changes his costume four or even five
> times a day like a courtesan. He has been seen in Paris dressed
> as a woman, and men showered him with love letters. An Italian
> singer famous for his talent and for his passionate temperament
> forced his way into his [Alexis's] house and threatened to kill
> himself if our hero did not yield to him. "I regret," the Greek
> replied with a smile, "I should have granted you my favors
> with pleasure, but alas, I can only sign your death warrant, for
> I am a man" (250).

At this point, the specter of repressed homosexual desire reemerges. It would seem that even in the midst of his own fantasies, Severin cannot bear to contemplate the consummation of a sexual act between two men. It should be noted, however, that in Masoch's novels the interruption of sexual acts—both heterosexual and homosexual—before they can actually be concluded (or even properly begun in some cases) is a constant occurrence. As Gayln Studlar observes: "Masoch's heroes are forever swooning into a faint before the blissful moment of consummation" (275). Such an incident occurs in *Venus in Furs*:

> I tore off the ermine jacket and the lace and felt her
> naked bosom heaving against mine. Then I lost
> consciousness. The first [next] thing I remember is when I saw
> blood dripping from my hand, and asked her in a flat voice:
> "Did you scratch me?" "No, I believe I bit you"[Wanda replied] (189).

This is the closest that *Venus in Furs* comes to delivering a fully realized sex scene in the traditional sense of the term. The precise nature of Severin's sexual desires are mysterious and function like the previously mentioned *objet petit a*, in that from the reader's perspective Severin's sexuality is a blank spot in the image or text. Much like the female characters in Uman's *Removed*, the precise nature and trajectory of Severin's sexuality is never fully depicted for the reader. As Studlar notes, this ambiguity is a key point of difference between the realms of sadism and masochism: "Sadian discourse -- denotative, scientific, unblinkingly direct in its obscene imperatives and descriptions—creates a fantastically cruel heterocosm based exclusively on the rule of reason" (268). In contrast, the "formal structures of the masochistic aesthetic" are based in "fantasy, disavowal, fetishism [and] suspense" with the chief focus being the "idealizing, mystical exaltation of love for the punishing woman" (Studlar 268). However, it must be noted that despite Severin's

fainting spell, his relationship with Wanda is solidified after this incident, and they eventually make their fateful trip to Italy. Thus while the reader is never given a clear view on the exact details of their sex life, whatever occurred during Severin's 'blackout' was clearly pleasurable enough for Severin and Wanda to continue their affair.

While their relationship does not proceed in a traditional manner, it does appear to be moving in a somewhat satisfactory direction until they meet Alexis. As was previously mentioned, Severin confides his sexual fantasies about Alexis to Wanda. Yet when Wanda orchestrates Severin's dreamed-of thrashing at the hands of Alexis, Severin is not pleased: "The sensation of being whipped before the eyes of a woman one adores by a successful rival is quite indescribable; I was dying of shame and despair" (268). Yet even in the throes of this ordeal, Severin is forced to acknowledge the barest glimmer of desire: "What was most humiliating was that I felt a wild and supersensual pleasure in my pitiful situation, lashed by Apollo's whip and mocked by the cruel laughter of my Venus" (268). That Severin is capable of deriving pleasure from an experience that he finds both humiliating and physically painful is, of course, the archetypal masochistic experience and would seem to confirm Studlar's view that "orgasm is not the goal of the masochist who is bound to the regime of pregential sexuality" (275). However, any pleasure Severin feels soon proves fleeting: "But Apollo whipped all poetry from me, as one blow followed the next, until finally, clenching my teeth in impotent rage, I cursed myself, my voluptuous imagination, and above all woman and love" (269).

Why is it that Severin is not able to fully enjoy the realization of his fantasy? Deleuze provides two potential frameworks for understanding Severin's displeasure. Firstly, he contends that in Masoch's novels "any potential obscenity is disavowed or suspended, by displacing the descriptions either from the object itself to the fetish, or from one part of the object to another part, or again from one aspect of the subject to another" (Deleuze 34). Seen in this light, Severin's "supersensual pleasure" is rooted in fantasy, but the harsh reality of actually being whipped by Alexis is simply too

much to bear. Taking this idea further, it may be that the displacement of descriptions that occurs is rooted in fetishism. In this case, it is possible to argue that Severin is actually raped by Alexis with the whip being a fetishistic allusion to the latter man's penis. This would, perhaps, explain the disjuncture between Severin's fantasy and the reality of what occurs with Alexis.

The second framework Deleuze provides relates to the precise relationship between pain and pleasure in the masochistic scenario: "The masochist must undergo punishment before experiencing pleasure. It would be a mistake to confuse this temporal succession with logical causality: suffering is not the cause of pleasure itself but the necessary precondition for achieving it" (89). To fully appreciate how this schema relates to what occurs between Severin and Alexis, we must remember that Wanda has tricked Severin. While he eagerly consents to being bound for the purposes of being whipped, he believes that it is Wanda who will beat him. When Alexis emerges from behind the curtains of Wanda's bed, Severin is shocked. Shortly before all of this occurs, Wanda had finally agreed to marry Severin (after a violent confrontation). Thus Alexis's appearance in this context is cruelly ironic: while a fantasy that Severin has longed for is about to come to pass, he is astute enough to realize that Wanda's duplicity means that she has probably chosen Alexis over him. Consequently, any pleasure that Severin may derive from being whipped by Alexis is tempered by the knowledge that once this particular masochistic scenario is over it is most likely Alexis and not he who will marry Wanda:

> My blood was flowing under the whip; I curled up
> like a worm being crushed, but still he continued to whip
> me without mercy and she to laugh, and all the while
> to fasten her cases and slip into her traveling furs.
> She was still laughing as they went downstairs arm in
> arm and got into the carriage (269).

Wanda leaves with Alexis; Severin never sees her again. Several years later, he receives a letter from her in which she explains her actions: "I hope that my whip has cured you, that the treatment, cruel though it was, has proved effective" (270). Essentially, Wanda's aim was to force Severin to become her idea of a normal man by pushing his own masochistic fantasies to such an extreme that he is forced to

renounce them. Again Deleuze provides a useful framework through which we may begin to understand Wanda's motivations and strategy:

> In the contractual relation the woman typically figures as
> an object in the patriarchal system. The contract in masochism
> reverses this state of affairs by making the woman into the
> party with whom the contract is entered into. Its paradoxical
> intention extends even further in that it involves a
> master-slave relationship, and one furthermore in which the woman
> is the master and torturer. The contractual basis is thereby
> implicitly challenged, by an excess of zeal, a humorous acceleration
> of the clauses and a complete reversal of the respective contractual
> status of man and woman (92).

The key element of Wanda's 'cure' is the "humorous acceleration of the clauses" of her contract with Severin—a contract, which, as we have seen, is itself a parody of labor relations under capitalism. In this sense, Wanda's scheme forms a template for the postmodern strategy of accelerationism. In his essay, "Notes on the Inorganic, Part 2: Terminal Velocity", Gean Moreno contends that the aim of accelerationism is to "rev up crisis and render it unsustainable" and to "intensify sensorial overload and subjective dispersal in order to drive masochistically toward an incompatibility between capitalism and forms of excess it can't accommodate" (1). As was previously discussed, labor relations under capitalism form part of the subtext of Wanda and Severin's relationship. In the immediate aftermath of his beating at the hands of Alexis, Severin does indeed feel the need to distance himself from the comforts of the bourgeois lifestyle: "The first thing I felt after this, the most cruel disaster of my life, was the desire to live rough and experience danger and privation"(269). However, fate intervenes:

> I wanted to become a soldier and go to Asia or Algeria,
> But my father was old and sick and wanted me to stay
> near him. So I simply returned home for two years
> shared his worries, administered our estate, and also
> learned something which was quite new to me and
> which now refreshed me like a draft of clear water:
> to work and fulfill my duties (Masoch 269).

Severin's life continues in this manner: "Then my father died and quite naturally and, without altering my way of life, I became the master of the house. I donned my father's boots of Spanish leather and continued to lead a well-ordered life, as though he were still standing behind me, watching me over my shoulder with his great wise

eyes" (270).

At first glance, this would not seem to be an altogether bad turn of events. Severin has found financial security and what would appear to be a degree of emotional stability. However, it soon becomes clear that there is a dark undercurrent to Severin's new role. He threatens his female servants with violence for minor infractions, for instance (150). The reader is given to understand that this is not an uncommon occurrence; when asked about his views on whipping his female servants, this new Severin responds, "Oh, they are used to it. But think of the effect it would have on our refined ladies with their nerves and hysterics" (271). Severin's experiences with Wanda have left him with an extremely cynical view on the role of women: "Goethe's words, 'Be the anvil or the hammer' are never more true than when applied to the relations between man and woman" (150). It should be noted that after Wanda, Severin is never again seen to have a romantic relationship. The only interaction the reader sees between Severin and women is with his female servants, whom he treats in a vicious manner. Severin's views on women must be seen in the context of not only his previous affair with Wanda, but also in his new role as a wealthy patriarch. As was previously mentioned, the link between father and son forms the explicit backdrop for Severin's new life. Not only has Severin inherited his father's estate—even going so far as to wear the deceased man's leather boots—he also continues to feel his father's presence even after his father has died: "…as if he were still standing behind me, watching me over my shoulder with his great wise eyes" (270). Seen in this light, Severin's relationship with his dead father and his current treatment of women suggest that he has become the embodiment of patriarchy—cold, cruel, unromantic, and misogynistic. He comes to forgive Wanda and credits her with his transformation: "The treatment was cruel, but radical, and the main thing is that I am cured" (271). It should be noted that Severin's forgiving attitude towards Wanda is made possible by her physical absence. If she were actually a presence in is life, his new attitude towards women would likely result in a highly unequal relationship marked by cruelty and degradation for one or both of them.

Needless to say, this is probably not an outcome that proponents of accelerationism would welcome. In his book, *Post-Cinema Affect*, Steven Shaviro notes the "obvious deficiencies of accelerationism as a political strategy" observing that its "virulent radicalism … is not matched by any suggestions as to how the convulsive death of capitalism might actually lead to liberation rather than barbarism, massive destruction, or some other form of universal catastrophe" (136). Barbarism would be an apt description for Severin's treatment of women in his new life, which it must be remembered is a direct result of Wanda's accelerationist strategy. Furthermore, while Severin's initial impulse is to escape the confines of capitalism as represented by the bourgeois lifestyle, he is ultimately unable to do this and, somewhat ironically, becomes the embodiment of cruelty under patriarchal capitalism. Despite all of this, Shaviro believes that accelerationism may still be a valuable tool; his "argument comes down to the assertion that accelerationism is a useful, productive, and even necessary aesthetic strategy today—for all that it is dubious as a political one" (137).

With this chapter, I have attempted to survey the forms and uses of the masochistic aesthetic. More specifically, I have focused on the *objet petit a* and the 'masochistic contract'. I have been particularly interested in the way these two concepts can be used to combat the commodification of desire that currently marks the cultural industries. Ultimately, I come to the conclusion that the masochistic aesthetic is most effective when used in conjunction with allegory. I also note that the masochistic aesthetic forms the template for accelerationism as an aesthetic strategy; the relationship between the two is explored more fully in my third and final chapter.
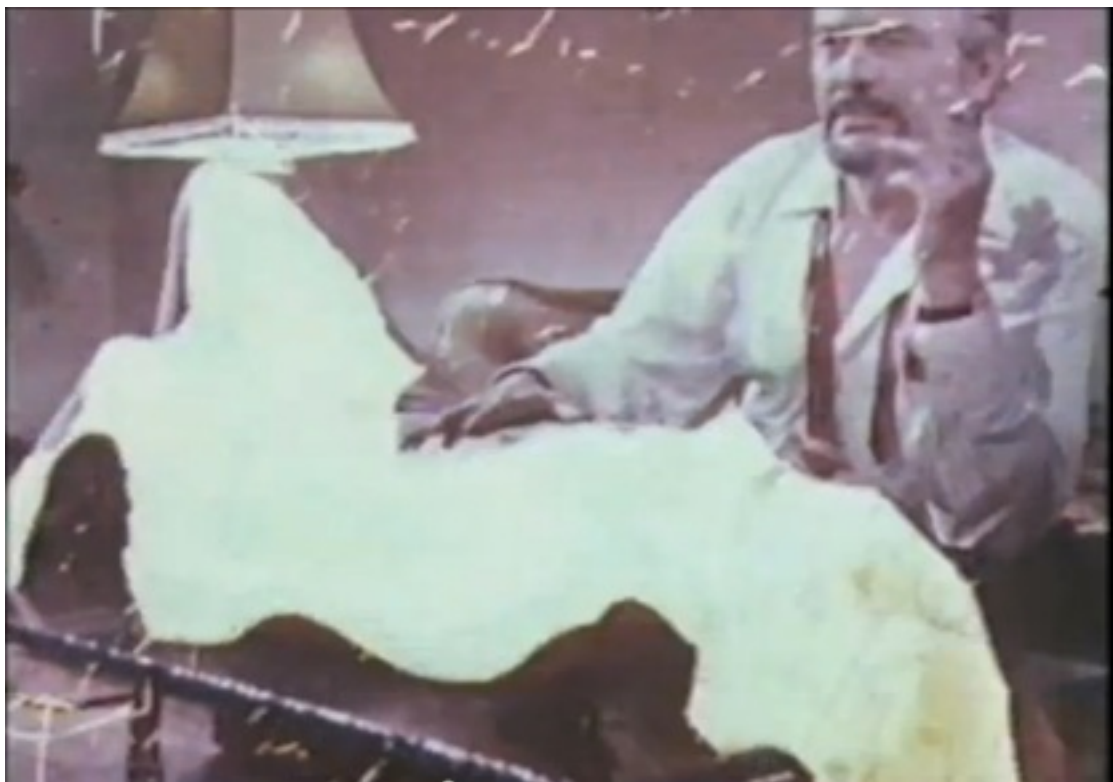
Still images from Steven Spielberg's *Duel* (1970)

Still images from Brian De Palma's *Body Double* (1984)

Still image from Naomi Uman's film *Removed* (1997)

Still image from Naomi Uman's film *Removed* (1997)

Still image from Steven Cohen's performance *Chandelier* (2001)
Photograph: John Hogg

Still image from Steven Cohen's performance *Chandelier* (2001)
Photograph: John Hogg

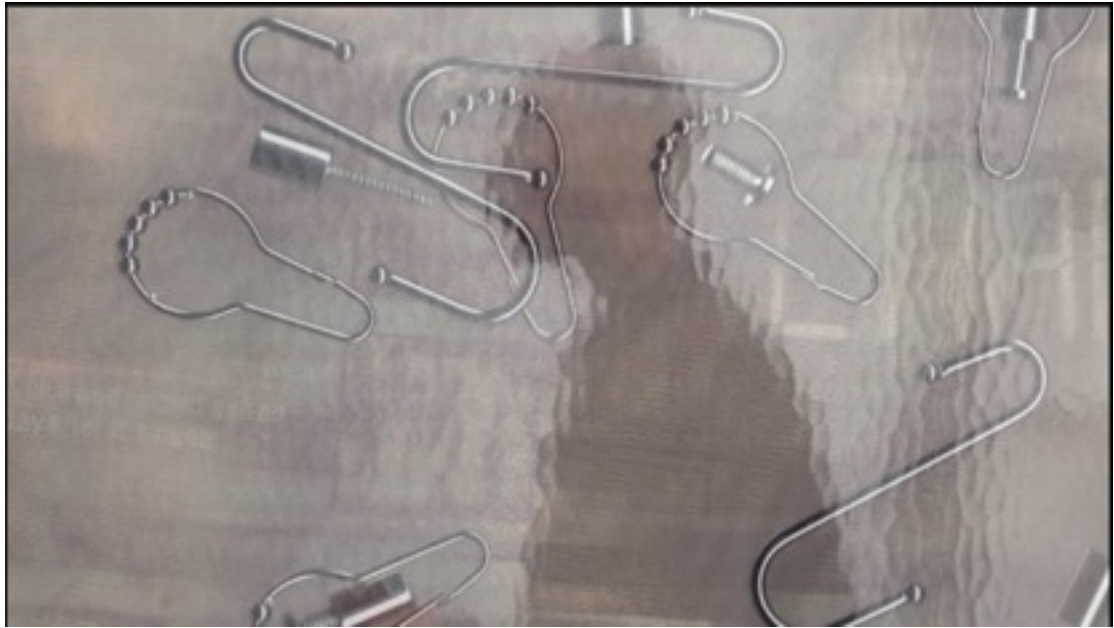Still image from Dara Birnbaum's *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978)

Still image from Dara Birnbaum's *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978)

Installation view of Juliet Carpenter's *Shy Genius* (2013)

Installation view of Juliet Carpenter's *Shy Genius* (2013)

Still image from Juliet Carpenter's *Shy Genius* (2014)

Akil Kirlew

Chapter 3: Andrea Fraser's *Untitled*

In the first chapter, I discussed the rarefied economy of video art in the gallery system specifically in relation to the limited edition. In the second chapter, I discussed masochism, allegory, and accelerationism as aesthetic strategies that may be of use in combating the reification and commodification of desire upon which the cultural industries thrives. In this third chapter, I attempt to bring the topics of the first two chapters into relation with one another through an analysis of Andrea Fraser's *Untitled* (2003), which I argue is an example of a work that is both post-cinematic and accelerationist. Along the way there is a brief discussion of the Damien Hirst auction "Beautiful Inside My Head Forever" (2008).

Accelerationist aesthetics attempts to map the new spaces and subjectivities engendered by transnational capitalism; this is "accomplished through the accelerationist strategy of plumbing the space of capital to its vertiginous depths, and tracking it into its furthest extremities and minutest effects" (Shaviro 138). The purpose of this activity is to provide models for new forms of resistance against the hegemony of multinational capitalism. A central front in this battle is digital video as it is closely aligned with post-cinematic art practices. As Shaviro observes the post-cinematic space has been built upon the displacement of the film and television industries by "computer-and-network-based, and digitally generated new media" (1). He goes on to note that film itself has "not disappeared, of course, but filmmaking has been transformed, over the past two decades, from an analog process to a heavily digitized one" (1). Shaviro has his own list of post-cinematic films and videos. I would like to propose Andrea Fraser's *Untitled* (2003) as another example of a work that is both post-cinematic and accelerationist in nature.

In 2002, Fraser and her then dealer, the Friedrich Petzel Gallery, approached a private collector to arrange the creation of an artwork. Envisaged as both a collaboration and commission the resulting work, *Untitled,* involved the recording on video of a sexual

encounter between Fraser and the unnamed collector. The parties agreed on terms—including a reported payment of US $20,000 by the collector— and the work was ultimately realized. The video of the sexual encounter was produced and sold in a limited edition of five with the participating collector receiving the first copy.

At first glance, it would appear that Fraser is an eager participant in the production of artificial scarcity upon which video art in the gallery system thrives (this issue was discussed in Chapter 1). Yet the videotape and the sexual encounter itself are merely components of this particular piece. In their curatorial statement for "Economy", a touring exhibition in which *Untitled* was included, Angela Dimitrakaki and Kristin Lloyd contend that *Untitled* is not an example of video art, but rather, "was realized as a social and economic relationship that involved three primary agents: a female artist (Andrea Fraser), her dealer at the time, and a male collector" (http://economyexhibition.stills.org/artists/andrea-fraser/). Fraser would appear to agree with this assessment. In an interview with *The Brooklyn Rail*, Fraser describes some of her motivations in creating this piece:

> One of the most important legacies of Minimalism and
> Conceptualism for me is the idea that what constitutes
> an art work is not just the thing, but all the conditions
> of the production and presentation and distribution of
> the thing. Because, to a large extent, that's where the
> meaning, the social meaning of an artwork is made.
> So even if *Untitled* is not a site-specific work, I still
> consider all those aspects a part of the piece. The conditions
> of production of *Untitled*, the relations of exchange, are obviously
> central to it
> (http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser).

Yet even if *Untitled* is not a work of video art in the traditional sense, in its reliance upon video to articulate at least part of its aims, the work still operates in a post-cinematic context. Shaviro contends that post-cinematic media works do not "represent social processes, so much as they participate actively in these processes and help constitute them" (2). Shaviro elaborates:

> They lie at the very heart of social production, circulation,
> and distribution. They generate subjectivity, and they play
> a crucial role in the valorization of capital. Just as the old
> Hollywood continuity editing system was an integral part of
> the Fordist mode of production, so the editing methods and

> formal devices of digital video and film belong directly to the
> computing-and-information-technology infrastructure of contemporary
> neoliberal finance (3).

For Shaviro post-cinematic media works are borne out of and ultimately replicate the economic conditions of neoliberal finance. However, this alliance between transnational capital and post-cinematic media may give some artists pause. In his essay, "The Author as Producer", Benjamin formulates a research agenda that is directly relevant to this discussion:

> Before I ask: how does a literary work stand in relation
> to the relationships of production of the period, I would
> like to ask: how does it stand *in* them? This question aims
> directly at the function that the work has within the literary
> relationships of production of a period. In other words, it
> aims directly at a work's technique (2).

In tracing this line of thought from Benjamin to Shaviro, one is confronted with the reality of the work of art's implication in the broader economic conditions of the day. It is precisely this terrain that Fraser traverses so skillfully. She provides more details on her thoughts about *Untitled*: "Well, yes, it's art, and the question I'm interested in posing is whether art is prostitution—in a metaphorical sense, of course. Is it any more prostitution because I happen to be having sex with a man than it would if I were selling him a piece" (www.brooklynrail.com). For Fraser, this question is essential; she elaborates: "The 'normal' sales situation that one has in the art world feels much more exploitative to me than any aspect of my relationship with, or exchange with the participating collector. That's where the speculation begins" (www.brooklyrail.com).

Fraser is referring to the art market practice of reselling the work of an artist after the original sale— a practice that can drastically inflate the price of an artwork with the profit from this resale going to the collector and not the artist. In his essay, "From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After the Death of the Author", Craig Owens briefly discusses the controversy surrounding the auction in 1973 of the "Robert Schull collection—which would prompt some angry words from Rauschenberg about the 'profiteering of dealers and collectors' ([Rauschenberg's] *Double Feature*, for which

Schull paid [US] $2,500, was auctioned for [US] $90,000)" (122). Owens quotes the artist Robert Smithson: "Whatever a painting goes for at Parke Bernet [a division of the Sotheby's auction house] is really somebody else's decision, not the artist's decision, so there's a division, on the broad social realm, the value is separated from the artist, the artist is estranged from his own production" (122).

The increased financial value of an artwork lies in its distribution and exchange, not in its initial production. In recognition of this fact, in September 2008, Damien Hirst "took the unprecedented step of bypassing gallery involvement and selling 244 new works in 223 lots at Sotheby's auction house, London" (http://www.damienhirst.com/exhibitions/solo/2008/beautiful-auction). The sale, "Beautiful Inside my Head Forever", raised £111 million over the course of two days ((http://www.economist.com/node/16990811). In an interview with Waldemar Januszczak originally conducted for *The Sunday Times*, Hirst details his thinking on the subject of the art market: "There's a hell of a lot of money in art, but the artists don't get it … what I find unfair is the Van Gogh thing. The artist doesn't make any money, but everyone else does" (http://www.waldemar.tv/2008/09/does-damien-hirsts-auction-at-sothebys-mean-the-end-of-the-gallery/). Hirst goes on to say, "The first time you sell something is when it should cost the most … I've definitely had the goal to make the primary market more expensive" (www.waldemar.tv). Hirst's antipathy towards the secondary market for art sales may be the result of a personal history with that market that is similar to Rauschenberg's:

> The artist [Hirst] was frustrated by the speculators who were
> buying from his galleries then quickly reselling his
> work at auction. Moreover, the acquisition of a package
> of 12 of his own works from Charles Saatchi for £6m in 2003,
> far more than what Mr Saatchi had originally paid, may
> have led to an Oedipal determination to overthrow all the
> high-rolling dealers and collectors who thought they might
> lord it over the little artist (http://www.economist.com/node/16990811).

However, it should be noted that accounts differ over the extent to which Hirst and his dealers were at odds over this auction: "According to Frank Dunphy, Mr Hirst's business manager at the time, the galleries that represent him were very unhappy" (http://www.economist.com/node/16990811). Dunphy provides more detail:

> Soon after breaking the news to Larry Gagosian, the world's
> leading dealer, Mr Dunphy recalled their conversation: "Larry said,
> 'It sounds like bad business to me. It'll be confusing to collectors.
> Why do you need to do this? We could continue in the old way'."
> Mr Dunphy went on: "We've had our shouting matches over the years.
> But there was no shouting that day" (http://www.economist.com/node/16990811).

However, the economist Donald Thompson provides a different view; it is his contention that while "Hirst's 2008 direct auction was called groundbreaking, prices were propped up by Gagosian and Jay Jopling, the White Cube gallery owner and Hirst's London dealer, who made bids or purchases worth almost half the auction's £70.5m first-day sales" (http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/jan/06/damien-hirst-larry-gagosian-art). Thompson goes on to say, "The überdealer – and Gagosian is the ultimate überdealer – implicitly promises their clients that the art they buy will not decline in value, which is why he tried to keep up Hirst's sales price in 2008" (http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/jan/06/damien-hirst-larry-gagosian-art). Any attempt to reconcile these two accounts would be pure speculation on my part. However, Miuccia Prada, the fashion designer and avid Hirst collector, provides her own assessment of the "Beautiful Inside my Head Forever" auction, reportedly saying, "I think it was an incredible conceptual gesture, not a sale" (http://www.economist.com/node/16990811). Yet if the "Beautiful Inside my Head Forever" auction was indeed a work of conceptual art, is it possible to determine its precise nature and effects? Somewhat ironically, *The Economist* provides an inadvertent clue:

> The goal of making the primary works more expensive
> may benefit Mr Hirst's personal income in the short-term,
> but it makes no sense from the perspective of his market.
> Part of the reason that art costs more than wallpaper is the
> expectation that it might appreciate in value. Flooding the
> market with new work is like debasing the coinage, a
> strategy used from Nero to the Weimar Republic with
> disastrous consequences. If Mr Hirst were managing
> a quoted company, he would be unable to enrich himself
> at the expense of his investors in quite the same way. But
> Mr Hirst is an artist and, in Western countries, artists
> are valued as rule-breaking rogues
> (http://www.economist.com/node/16990811).

Seen in this light, the "Beautiful Inside my Head Forever" auction is revealed to be an accelerationist work, one that is capable of using the art market's own nature against it by pushing the marketplace to the point of crisis. *The Economist* advises Hirst to move away from this strategy, concluding that while the "Beautiful Inside My Head Forever" auction "may have been an historic moment in artist empowerment" such performances "risk destroying the delicate ecology of living artists' markets. Mr Hirst should repair his relationship with his collectors and concentrate on his retrospective" (http://www.economist.com/node/16990811).

It would appear that *The Economist* was correct in its prediction. Shortly after the success of the "Beautiful Inside my Head Forever" auction, Hirst began to experience a reversal of fortune. In his 2012 article, "Damien Hirst: Jumping the Shark", Andrew Rice observes: "For all his celebrity, Hirst's stock in the art market has experienced a stunning deflation. According to data compiled by the firm Artnet, Hirst works acquired during his commercial peak, between 2005 and 2008, have since resold at an average loss of 30 percent" (http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-11-21/damien-hirst-jumping-the-shark). Rice goes on to note "a third of the more than 1,700 Hirst pieces offered at auctions since 2009 have failed to sell at all". He places Hirst's poor sales into the context of the wider art market: "Hirst's crash is all the more perplexing because it comes at a time when the contemporary art market has sharply rebounded, with auctions pulling in proceeds that rival the giddiest pre-recession highs".

At this point, Shaviro's warnings on the pitfalls of accelerationism would seem to apply to Hirst. His own sales (good or bad) are of little import. If the "Beautiful Inside my Head Forever" auction was conceived of as an accelerationist gesture, its success would have to be measured through its ability to promote systemic change in the market for contemporary art. However, this has not *yet* proved to be the case. Artists of various levels working within the gallery system have not been able to bypass dealers, and collectors continue to derive the bulk of the profits via the secondary market.

When seen against this backdrop, Fraser's *Untitled* is revealed to be a surprisingly subtle work. Also accelerationist in nature, *Untitled* pursues its strategic aims through the use of tactics that are entirely different from those of the "Beautiful Inside my Head Forever" auction. Where Hirst mounts a frontal charge on the dealer-driven gallery system through the co-opting of the auction house, Fraser works within the gallery system, using its established circuits and rhythms to reach into the collective hive-mind of the art world. Hirst seeks a violent revolution; Fraser prefers covert infection.

In her essay, "Regarding Andrea Fraser's *Untitled*", Susan E. Cahan says of Fraser: "Her artistic practice stresses use value (the creation of meaning) over the exchange value (the creation of profit), but does so by using the art world's institutions and systems of production, display, and distribution to transform their customary operations" (11). Fraser says of herself: "All of my work is about what we want from art, what collectors want, what artists want from collectors, what museum audiences want" (http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/13/magazine/13ENCOUNTER.html).   Towards that end, Fraser and the collector with whom she made *Untitled* developed an unusually intimate relationship: "I didn't have a contract with the collector, and that's also a very important aspect of the piece. It was about taking the economic exchange of buying and selling art and turning it into a very personal, human exchange. It had to be about trust" (http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser). She notes that this arrangement is potentially precarious: "A verbal agreement. No contract and no release. At any point I suppose he could decide that he doesn't want it shown and then we'd have to have a dialogue about that and I'm not sure what would happen" (http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser).

This intimacy between the Fraser and the collector is a direct challenge to capitalist constructions of human interaction: "According to Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, under capitalism relations among things replace relations among people. People become alienated from each other and from their own labor because the

relations of production assume a material form, which is independent of their control and individual action" (Cahan 9). In the case of the relationship between an artist and a collector, the "thing" that assumes a "material form" is embodied by the artwork that is sold. As Cahan notes, "*Untitled* attempts to defy this process. The relations between artist and collector have been stripped of material mediation. The social relation between Fraser and the collector is the work of art"(9). Dimitrakaki and Lloyd take up this argument: "*Untitled* marks contemporary art's departure from a politics of representation and its relocation into the circuits that determine the exchange value of life experience as such" (http://economyexhibition.stills.org). It is precisely this element of *Untitled* that marks it as an accelerationist work; as Moreno observes "accelerationist aesthetics is cartographic at the expense of the mimetic. It's tasked with helping us trace the slippery contours of the warped and warping world we traverse daily"(http://www.e-flux.com).

This "warped and warping world" to which Moreno refers is a direct result of the "very immensity and complexity of our global economic system" which "challenges the historically-constituted modes of perception we once used to find our way around the world" (Moreno http://www.e-flux.com). Moreno continues in this vein: "The immensity of things like multinational corporate networks beggar our representational tools. We must, therefore, find new ways to come to know the order of things and the mechanisms that institute this ordering" (http://www.e-flux.com).

The collapse of representation as a viable strategy for contemporary art in the age of transnational capitalism affects both artists and their patrons. In the case of *Untitled*, the "collector is implicated as a participant in the creation of the work as the resulting piece is both his and the artist's labor" (Cahan 9). Cahan goes on to assert that the "piece does more than merely use prostitution as a metaphor for the artist/collector relationship, it embodies a form of resistance to commodity fetishism and a reinvestment in the power of human interaction" (9).

While Fraser does not have a contract with the original collector, she does make use of a contract to exert control over all subsequent purchases of *Untitled. S*he details some of the conditions that govern the sale of *Untitled*:

> The DVD edition is actually sold with a lot of restrictions.
> The buyer does not have the right to make video stills or
> distribute any representations of it, the buyer does not have
> the right to make any excerpts, the buyer does not have
> the right to loan it. I have the right to review any publicity
> material that's generated about it, and I must be consulted
> before it's shown publicly
> (http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser).

In addition, the "work must be presented in accordance with her specifications on a monitor no larger than 30 inches in a room without seating, and under no circumstances may the work be projected" (Cahan 13). The terms of Fraser's contract "extend to all future owners of the piece in perpetuity" (Cahan 9). Fraser explains her rationale: "But the people who buy the DVD have to sign a contract, and they have responsibilities to me. All of these conditions are an important part of the piece" (http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser). Deleuze's understanding of the contract as a concept again becomes relevant: "In the contractual relation the woman typically figures as an object in the patriarchal system. The contract in masochism reverses this state of affairs by making the woman into the party with whom the contract is entered into" resulting in a "complete reversal of the respective contractual status of man and woman" (92). Yet attempting to understand Fraser's contract solely in terms of gender relations would be an oversimplification. As Cahan observes, the contract Fraser imposes on buyers of *Untitled* "reflects her [Fraser's] desire to exert rights usually associated with ownership, not labor. The artist not only retains copyright of *Untitled* and the images of the work, she fully controls all major aspects of its presentation" (13).

Fraser says of the DVD for *Untitled*: "So as a limited edition video, *Untitled*, is sold and is thus destined to circulate as a commodity. The fact that it's a commodity is important, because the piece is about the art commodity, you know, so it's got to be a commodity. But I can try to control that circulation contractually" (http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser). In his book, *The Cultural Industries*,

David Hesmondhalgh argues that in an effort to "control the risks associated with managing creativity, senior managers exert much tighter control over reproduction, distribution, and marketing—what I call circulation—than they do over production" (24). As was previously discussed, the major profits to be derived from an artwork are to be found in a cycle of circulation and exchange beyond the initial production and original sale: the secondary market is generally more profitable than the primary market. Realizing this fact, Hirst decided to stage his "Beautiful Inside My Head Forever" auction in an attempt to sabotage a system he finds exploitative (while also achieving greater financial rewards for himself). In the case of Andrea Fraser, however, the contract she imposes on buyers of *Untitled* may actually work against her immediate financial interests. The terms of the contract may be viewed as simply too restrictive by some potential buyers—although it should be noted that some collectors (particularly institutions) may actually appreciate the clarity provided by the contract as it provides guidelines for the piece's preservation (a somewhat vexing topic when one is installing or storing a work of conceptual art).

Either way, generating increased profits is not Fraser's primary concern. While she is well aware of the financial effects that the processes of distribution, circulation, and exchange have on an artwork, she also recognizes that what "constitutes an artwork is not just the thing, but all the conditions of the production and presentation and distribution of the thing. Because, to a large extent, that's where the meaning, the social meaning of an artwork is made" (http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser). Fraser engages with the standard model of the cultural industries not to generate increased exchange value in the form of financial profits; she does it to draw the art market into a system of her own creation—in what Baudrillard would have referred to as a "fatal strategy"— collectors of *Untitled* become constituent elements in the work's articulation and are forced to submit to *its* desires in perpetuity. Thus the contractual restrictions on the circulation of *Untitled* may be said to simultaneously adhere to, parody, and reverse the workings of the cultural industries under the regime of transnational capital. Again, Deleuze's understanding of masochism may be of use in an examination of Fraser's strategy: "The masochist is insolent in his

obsequiousness, rebellious in his submission: in short, he is a humorist, a logician of consequences" (89).

Cahan notes that with *Untitled* "the contract itself becomes a kind of fetish, a substituting for the artist's control of the work and compensating for absence of direct contact, as Fraser had with the primary collector" (13). *Untitled* is "designed to empower the artist as the owner and ultimate authority on uses of the work and redistribute power within the art economy"(Cahan 13). This is accomplished primarily through the contract that all buyers—with the exception of the original collector featured in the DVD—must sign. In contrast to this, Fraser's relationship with the original or primary collector is not a formal one; there is no written contract that explicitly stipulates their obligations to one another. As was previously mentioned, Fraser acknowledges that her relationship with the original collector might evolve in ways that impact the ability of *Untitled* to circulate as a video. Yet this potential evolution in the relationship between Fraser and the primary collector is also part of the piece. Thus it may be said that Fraser is also in thrall to *Untitled* and has allowed herself to be captured in a web of her own creation. It is for this reason that I argue that *Untitled* has become a quasi-independent entity with desires of its own (desires that may eventually come into conflict with those of its creator).

Fraser hints at this possibility: "… it exists as a commodity, but it also exists as a representation, and its even more difficult to control the circulation of representations than commodities" (http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser). She goes further:

> And that's also where, for me, the question of the sexual politics
> of the piece really emerges. Here I've produced something and have
> lent myself and my work to certain kinds of representations, including
> the kind of misogynistic representations that I think we've already seen
> in the press. What is my responsibility for that? That's the issue for me.
> How and to what extent can I, as an artist, or should I, as an artist, take
> responsibility for the representations that are made of me, as a woman,
> in doing a piece like this, even if those representations have little to
> do with my intentions in producing it and my actual experience of
> producing it and my actual position in producing it?
> (http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser)

As was previously mentioned, *Untitled* operates on multiple levels simultaneously, and Fraser feels it is her responsibility, at least in part, to manage the ongoing multimedia and performance-based aspects of the piece:

> And who I talk to about *Untitled* and how I talk about it is also
> part of the piece. Not talking to Fox News is part of the piece,
> and not going on MSNBC is part of the piece, and not doing
> an interview with, you know, Nerve.com is part of the piece—
> even though I like Nerve, but that's not the context of the piece.
> *Untitled* is about the art world, it's about the relations between
> artists and collectors, it's about what it means to be an artist and
> sell your work—sell what may be, what should be, a very intimate
> part of yourself, your desire, your fantasies, and to allow others to
> use you as a screen for their fantasies. It's not really about sex work,
> it's not really about prostitution, and it's not about getting my
> fifteen minutes. You know, and it's not about reality TV
> (http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser).

When seen in this light, Fraser's decision to make use of the limited edition for the DVD of *Untitled* takes on further resonance. Again, far from simply using artificial scarcity to generate financial returns, she sees the imposition of a restriction on the video's circulation as part of an overarching aesthetic strategy. One part of this strategy involves refusing to engage with the popular press, another part of this strategy involves not making the video widely available via the internet.

In his essay, "Viewing Copies: On the Mobility of Moving Images", Sven Lütticken notes that in "contemporary art, even pieces produced in media that allow for infinite mass reproduction are executed only in small editions. In the age of YouTube and file-sharing this economy of the rarified object becomes ever more exceptional" (http://www.e-flux.com/journal/viewing-copies-on-the-mobility-of-moving-images/). With *Untitled*, Fraser manages to both parody and justify this practice. In its conjoining of the celebrity sex-tape genre and video art, *Untitled* acts as a parody; however, its conceptual framework demands that it take the form of an art world commodity, which entails restrictions on its circulation.

At this point, it seems appropriate to introduce my own subject position in relation to *Untitled*: I have not seen the video, yet I still consider myself a viewer of the work. *Untitled* operates on so many levels, the video seems to become almost incidental (the idea of the post-cinematic being taken to a somewhat humorous extreme). Yet if we

see *Untitled* through the prism of the masochistic aesthetic, the video—along with the relations it displays, conceals, and supports— begins to function in a manner similar to the *objet petit a*. Much like the character of Yvonne in Uman's *Removed*, I find myself faced with a variety of questions: How do Fraser and the collector look without any clothes? Is the sex passionate? Finally, how has their relationship evolved since the making of *Untitled*? It is this last question that I am most eager to have answered. Yet watching the DVD edition of *Untitled* will clearly not satisfy my curiosity in that regard. It is in this sense that Fraser combats the reification and commodification of desire that drives the cultural industries. The video can only reveal a part of the story. The major element of *Untitled* as an art work—its peculiar constellation of human relations— remains out of reach of the marketplace, which can only grasp *Untitled* as a video-based commodity. Furthermore, much like Uman with *Removed*, Fraser makes use of an allegorical procedure. As was previously discussed, the relationship between an artist and a collector is already commodified in the art market, but Fraser commodifies it a second time. More specifically, she devalues this relationship a second time by equating it with prostitution. Yet the resulting artwork introduces structural changes to the art market (at least in this one instance). Firstly, the original sale in the primary market becomes paramount as it is this relationship between Fraser and the primary collector that forms the chief component of the work. Secondly, the secondary market is constrained in a variety of ways (via the contract), and all subsequent collectors become constituent elements in the artwork's articulation. It is these collectors who form the material basis for the art market. Thus Fraser may be said to have achieved a reversal in the hierarchy that sees the work of art captured by the art market: with *Untitled* she puts the art market up for sale.

Cahan contends that *Untitled* "emerges out of Fraser's ongoing struggle to resist the co-optation of her work as it is absorbed into the art market" (11). Fraser expands upon this view of her practice: "All of my work is about what we want from art, what collectors want, what artists want from collectors, what museum audiences want … by that, I mean what we want not only economically, but in more personal, psychological and affective terms" (http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/13/magazine/

[13ENCOUNTER.html](#)). As was previously discussed, much of Fraser's art practice may seen as accelerationist and cartographic in nature, having much in common with what Shaviro refers to as "affective maps, which do not just passively trace or represent, but actively construct and perform, the social relations, flows, and feelings they are ostensibly 'about'" (6). Fraser engages with the art market in order to trace the circuits of desire along which an artwork travels (a journey that connects the lives and careers of artists, collectors, curators, writers, and the general public). Yet, as has been demonstrated, Fraser's maps are "not static representations, but tools for negotiating, and intervening in, social space. A map does not just replicate the shape of a territory; rather, it actively inflects and works over that territory" (Shaviro 6). Seen in the light of Fraser's practice, elements of masochism (the *objet petit a*, the contract), allegory, and parody are revealed to be tactics in an overarching strategy of accelerationism. With *Untitled*, Fraser uses accelerationist aesthetics to introduce subtle quirks into the art market, the full effects of which have yet to be determined. As Cahan notes, "despite the unusually restrictive terms of the contract, their enforcement cannot be guaranteed. As with the 'conservation' of any artwork, *Untitled* could become subject to processes of deterioration; in this case, erosion of its conceptual framework" (13).

Another potential hazard lies in Fraser's engagement with the marketplace. As an accelerationist work that adopts the form of the commodity to critique the commodity, *Untitled* runs the "risk that the work will get lost within the spaces that it endeavors to survey, and that it will become yet another instance of the processes that it is trying to describe"(Shaviro 139). In *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Frederic Jameson discusses Andy Warhol's art practice:

> Andy Warhol's work in fact turns centrally around
> commodification, and the great billboard images of the
> Coca-Cola bottle or the Campbell's soup can, which explicitly
> foreground the commodity fetishism of a transition to late capital,
> *ought* to be powerful and critical political statements. If they
> are not that, then one would surely want to know why, and
> one would want to begin to wonder a little more seriously
> about the possibilities of political or critical art in the late
> postmodern period of late capital (9).

Fraser's critique of the art commodity in *Untitled* could potentially fall into the same trap outlined by Jameson. There is also the matter of Fraser's sexuality. By equating her artistic and intellectual labor with sexual labor (even as a form of a satire), *Untitled* may be viewed by some audiences as an affirmation of the dominant patriarchal discourse that sees the value of women in primarily sexual terms. Owens speaks of Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* as being caught within the "unavoidable necessity of participating in the very activity that is being denounced precisely in order to denounce it" (85). In Owens's view, Sherman's chief aim is the "deconstruction of the supposed innocence of the images of women projected by the media, and this Sherman accomplishes by reconstructing those images so painstakingly, and identifying herself with them so thoroughly" (84). It is fair to say, I think, that Fraser knowingly takes a similar gamble with *Untitled*. She acknowledges that when an artist produces a "piece that goes out into the world, it exists and circulates as a representation that may have very little to do with your experience of making it or your intentions. It becomes a screen for people to project things onto, or an opportunity to produce or reproduce stereotypes"(http://www.brooklynrail.org/2004/10/art/andrea-fraser).

It is this complex interplay of sexual, economic, media, and—more generally— human relations that are the true subject of *Untitled*. The risks Fraser takes with *Untitled* form a crucial component in the conceptual framework of the piece, for it is through risk that accelerationist aesthetics is capable of tracing the contours of all that is both forbidden and allowed in this postmodern stage of late capital.

Still images from Andrea Fraser's video *Untitled* (2003)

Damien Hirst at Sotheby's auction rooms for the "Beautiful Inside my Head Forever" auction. Photograph: Felix Clay

Akil Kirlew

Conclusion

This research initiative has attempted to determine the potential of accelerationism as an aesthetic strategy in this postmodern stage of late capitalism. More specifically, I have endeavored to explore the manner in which moving image artists navigate the new terrain opened up by the rise of digital video. To some extent, my research has been chiefly concerned with use of digital video in the creation of a post-cinematic space. This new phenomenon is—perhaps paradoxically—both antagonistic and beneficial to the market for contemporary art. On one hand, there is YouTube, where many artists make their work available for viewing at no cost. On the other hand, there is the artificial scarcity of the limited edition video work within the gallery system. However, as we have seen in the case of Andrea Fraser, limited edition videos can be used to parody, and ultimately contest, the primacy of the marketplace. A work such as Fraser's *Untitled* is perhaps best seen as an opening gambit, the full effects of which are difficult to foresee.

To varying degrees I have made common cause with all of the artists I have discussed. While this project is being assessed as a purely written thesis, I have briefly touched upon a series of collaborations I have embarked upon with a group of local artists. These collaborations have allowed me to engage and experiment with many of the ideas I discuss in the thesis particularly as regards the masochistic aesthetic, which I argue may be used as tactic within an overarching accelerationist strategy. In future, my primary method of research will most likely be practice-based, as I believe this will provide me with this best vantage point from which to explore and experiment with the post-cinematic space engendered by the rise of digital video.

Bibliography

Allison, Rebecca "9/11 wicked but a work of art, says Damien Hirst" <u>The Guardian</u> (2002): www.guardian.co.uk

Angell, Callie "Doubling the Screen: Andy Warhol's *Outer and Inner Space*" <u>Millennium Film Journal</u> (Spring 2002): www.mfj-online.org

Bajo, Delia; Cary, Brainard "In Conversation: Andrea Fraser" <u>The Brooklyn Rail</u> (October 1, 2004): www.brooklynrail.com

Bataille, Georges <u>The Accursed Share</u> New York (1991): Zone Books

Batty, David "Damien Hirst's Split from Larry Gagosian Turns Heads in Art World" The Guardian (January 6, 2013): www.guardian.co.uk

Baudrillard, Jean "We are all Transsexuals Now" <u>Screened Out</u> London (2002): Verso

Baudrillard, Jean <u>Fatal Strategies</u> New York (1990): Semiotext(e)

Belton, John "Digital Cinema: A False Revolution" October (Spring 2002): www.mitpressjournals.org

Benjamin, Walter <u>The Origin of German Tragic Drama</u> London (1977): NLB

Benjamin, Walter "The Author as Producer" New Left Review (July-August 1970)

Benjamin, Walter "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," <u>Video Culture: A Critical Investigation</u>, ed. John Hanhardt, Rochester (1986): Visual Studies Workshop Press

Black, Joel <u>The Reality Effect: Film Culture and the Graphic Imperative</u> New York (2002): Routledge

Bourdieu, Pierre <u>The Rules of Art</u> Stanford (1996): Stanford University Press

Buchloch, Benjamin "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art" <u>Artforum</u> (September1982)

Buchloch, Benjamin D. "Introduction", <u>October</u> (Spring 2010): www.mitpressjournals.org

Cahan, Susan E. "Regarding Andrea Fraser's *Untitled*" <u>Social Semiotics</u> (August 23, 2006): University of Missouri

Dargis, Manohla "Unblinking Eye, Visual Diary: Warhol's Films" <u>The New York Times</u> (2007): www.nytimes.com

De Man, Paul <u>Allegories of Reading</u> New Haven (1979): Yale University Press

Deleuze, Gilles; von Sacher-Masoch, Leopold <u>Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty & Venus in Furs</u> New York (1989): Zone Books

Dimitrakaki, Angela; Kristin Lloyd "Economy" CCA, Glasgow: January 2013 http://economyexhibition.stills.org

Dixon, Steve <u>Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theatre, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation</u> Cambridge, MA and London (2007): The MIT Press

Foster, Hal "Test Subjects", October (Spring 2010): www.mitpressjournals.org

Foucault, Michel "Preface" Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia written by Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Felix London (2004): Continuum Books

Graw, Isabelle "When Life Goes to Work: Andy Warhol", October (Spring 2010): www.mitpressjournals.org

Hesmondhalgh, David "Bourdieu, the Media and Cultural Production" Media Culture and Society (2006): SAGE

Hesmondhalgh, David The Cultural Industries Los Angeles (2007): SAGE

Hirst, Damien "Beautiful Inside my Head Forever Auction" London (September 15, 2008): www.damienhirst.com

Hurell, John "True Grit" EyeContact (July 2013): http://eyecontactsite.com

Jameson, Frederic Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism London (1992): Verso

Januszczak, Waldemar "Does Damien Hirst's auction at Sotheby's Mean the End of the Gallery?" (September 7, 2008): www.waldemar.tv

Keller, Alexandra; Ward, Frazer "Matthew Barney and the Paradox of the Neo-Avant-Garde Blockbuster" Cinema Journal (2006): University of Texas Press

Knight, Julia "DVD, Video and Reaching Audiences: Experiments in Moving Image Distribution" Convergence (February 2007): SAGE

Lord, Catherine "Wonder Waif Meets Super Neuter", October (Spring 2010): www.mitpress.org

Lütticken, Sven "Viewing Copies: On the Mobility of Moving Images" e-flux Journal #8 (September 2009): www.e-flux.com

McGowan, Todd "Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and Its Vicissitudes" Cinema Journal 42 (spring 2003): University of Texas Press

Moreno, Gean "Notes on the Inorganic, Part 2: Terminal Velocity" e-flux Journal #32 (February 2012): www.e-flux.com

Musser, Amber "Masochism: A Queer Subjectivity" Rhizomes (fall 2005/spring 2006): www.rhizomes.net

Noys, Benjamin The Persistence of the Negative Edinburgh (2010): Edinburgh University Press

Owens, Craig Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture Berkeley (1992): University of California Press

Rice, Andrew "Damien Hirst: Jumping the Shark" Businessweek (November 21, 2012): www.businessweek.com

Shaviro, Steven Post-Cinematic Affect Hants (2010): Zero Books

Studlar, Gaylyn "Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of Cinema" London (2009): Routledge

Trebay, Guy "Sex, Art, and Videotape" The New York Times (June 13, 2004): www.nytimes.com

Zizek, Slavoj "Welcome to the Desert of the Real" The South Atlantic Quarterly (spring 2002): Duke University Press

"Hands up for Hirst" The Economist (September 9, 2010): www.economist.com