les essais

POINT & SHOOT

PERFORMANCE AND PHOTOGRAPHY

TO REFLECT ON PHOTOGRAPHY AND ITS MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Chantal Pontbriand
FOREWORD

Diana Nemiroff
Rebecca Schneider
Karen Henry
Doyon / Demers
Jan Peacock

EDITED BY FRANCE CHOINIÈRE AND MICHÈLE THÉRIAULT

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Introduction

France Choinière   Michèle Thériault

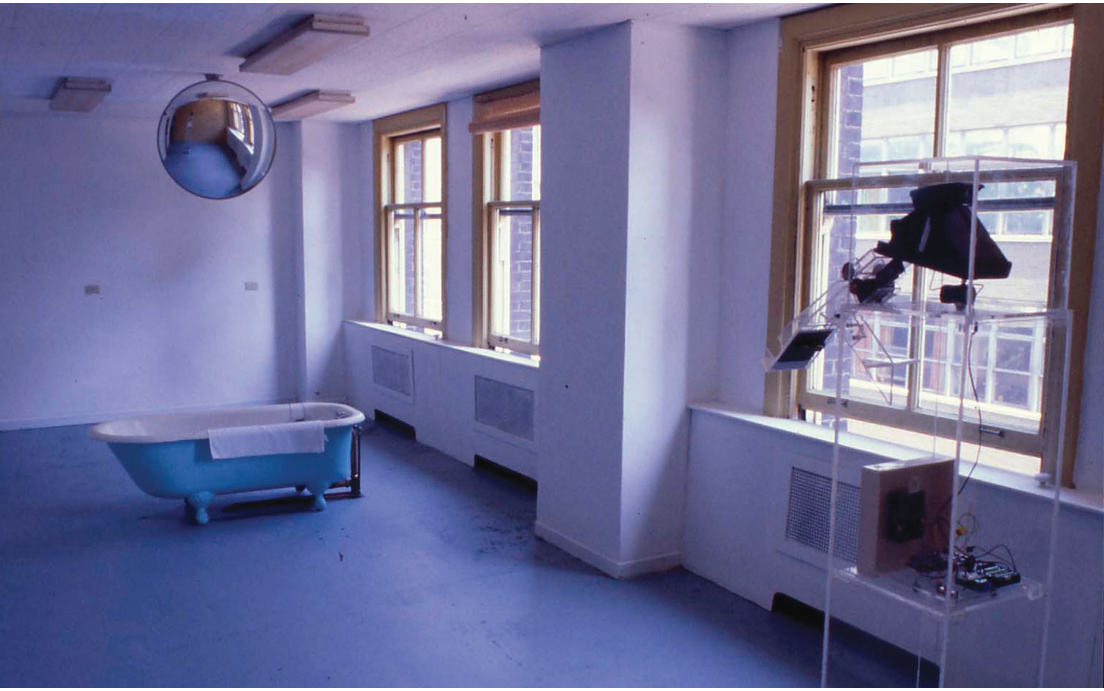
Some people would say that photography has contained an element of performance since its birth. We might think here of Nadar's expeditions, of the long poses during which the individual, held in place by a battery of hardware, had to remain motionless under a burning sun, or of the theatrical stagings of the earliest studio portraits.

Clearly, however, in the 1960s performance established itself as an innovative and experimental practice, bringing in its wake a wide-ranging enquiry into and around the frontiers of the photographic. *POINT & SHOOT*, a two-part exhibition rounded out by a day of performance, presented works which, with some degree of continuity, offered various ways of uniting photography and performance. The exhibition was situated just beyond the most obvious link between them, that of the role of photography and the recorded image in documenting ephemeral practices.

The first part of this exhibition, without resorting to a historical approach, brought together the work of internationally renowned artists, precursors who have left their mark on this relationship between the performative act and photography. Performance, which often flowed out of photography—or of any recorded image—quickly began to explore the slippages between the two disciplines, one might even say to explore the mutation of the documentary function of the image. Paul Wong's *In Ten Sity* (1978), for example, was a disturbing and provocative performance which viewers could watch only by means of television screens. This performance was mediatized right from the outset, for the recorded image was necessary both to the survival of the work and to its internal logic. Max Dean's *Pass It On* (1981) functioned

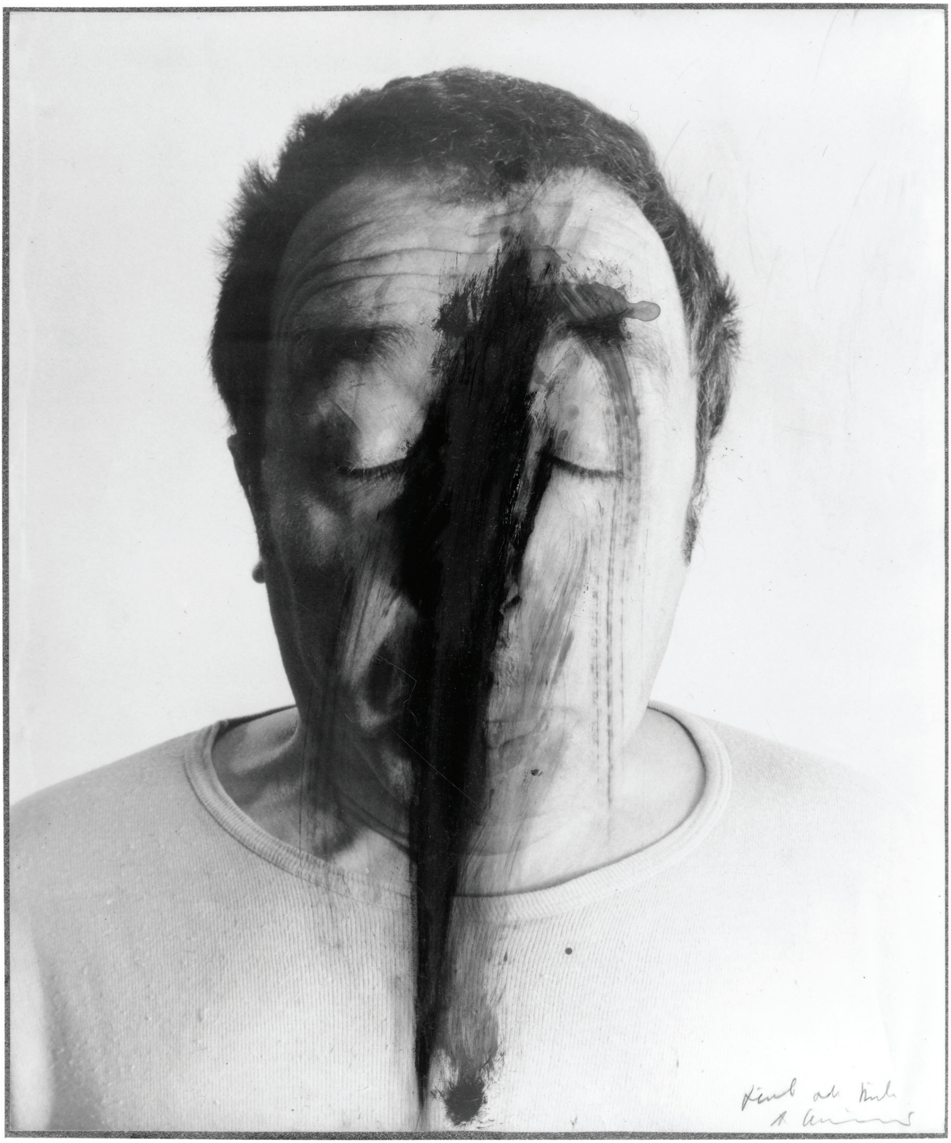
© Paul Wong, *In Ten Sity* (1978).

in a similar manner: its participants, invited to take a bath in a room furnished with a bathtub and a clock containing a Polaroid camera, were able upon leaving the room to collect pictures of themselves, pictures which functioned as both works of art and documents. In the 1970s, Vito Acconci created a remarkable body of conceptual films and videos around performances, in which an intense dialogue was engaged between artist and viewer, the body and the ego, public and private, subject and object, and, above all, between these media themselves. Acconci's performances, such as *Three Frame Studies* (1969), *Kiss Off* (1971), and *Visions of*



Max Dean, *Pass It On* (1981), courtesy of Susan Hobbs Gallery.

© Vito Acconci, still from *Three Frames Studies* (1969), courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix, New York.



© Arnulf Rainer, *Untitled (Face Farce)* (1971).
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a Disappearance (1973), exist only by means of the recorded image and have no meaning apart from it, its parameters, its unfolding, etc.

The trio of artists known as General Idea made themselves the centre of a media empire they constructed and literally performed. *Manipulating the Self* (1973) was a mail art project in which people were invited to photograph themselves according to these precise instructions: "… wrap your arm over your head, lodging your elbow behind and grabbing your chin with your hand… Held, you are holding." The snapshots obtained were then assembled onto a poster whose design brought to mind the "jet set" pages of certain magazines.

Self-representation is another way in which performance and photography spontaneously overlap. In *Face Farce* (1968–72), Arnulf Rainer performed for the camera and became the aggressed subject of a photograph that was rubbed out, overpainted, and scratched. Combining drawing, surface alterations, and photography, Rainer explored the use of body language as a form of artistic expression, as much in posing for the photograph as in the subsequent violence done to it. Suzy Lake, for her part, was one of the first artists to use performance, video, and photography to explore the politics of sexual roles. Her earliest work, produced in the 1960s and 70s, already had recourse to methods such as inventing characters and directly influenced artists such as Cindy Sherman, Lisa Steele, and Barbara Kruger. Beyond her significant contribution to the

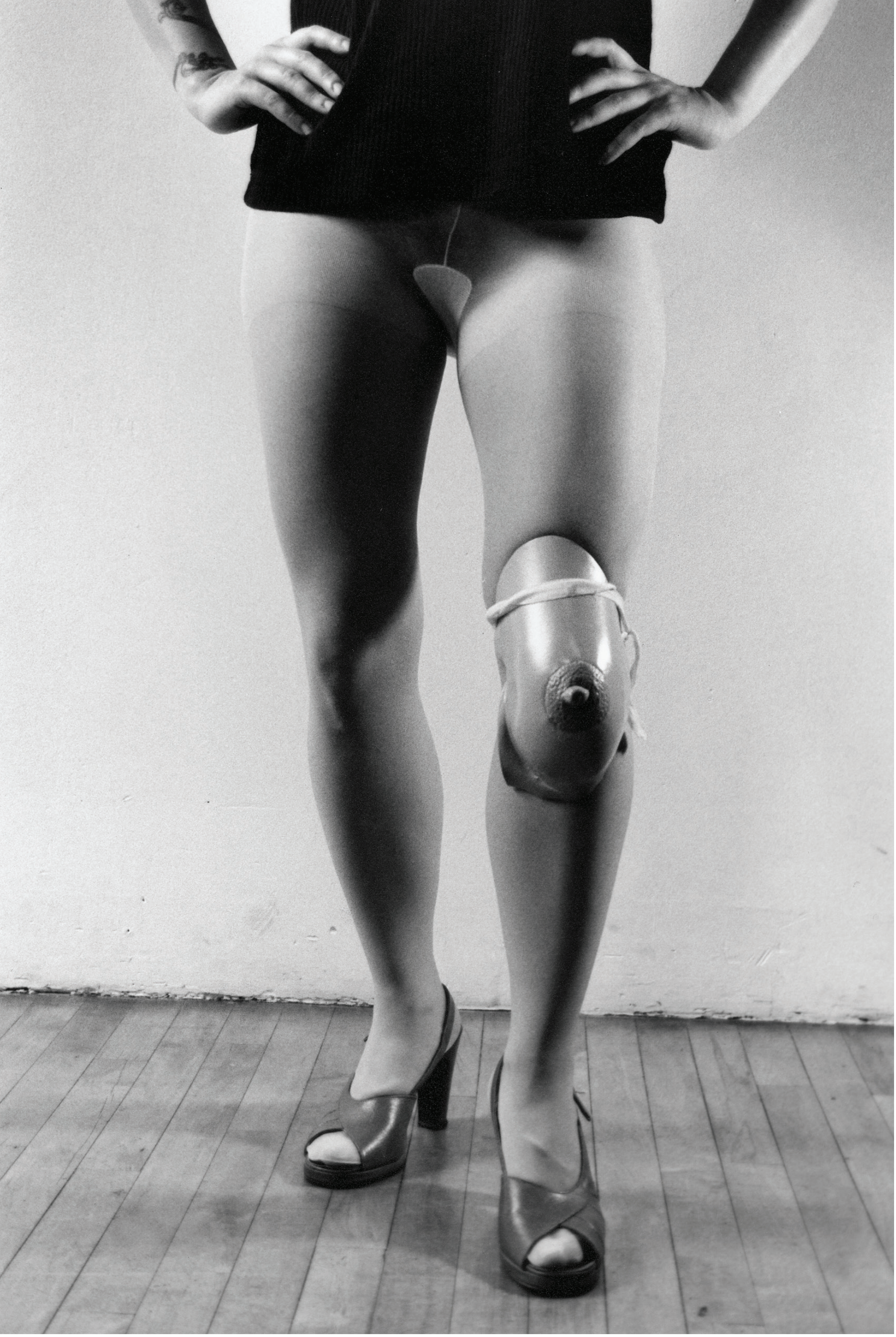
© Suzy Lake, *Co Ed Magazine #2* (1973), courtesy of Paul Petro Contemporary Art.

development of feminist and politically engaged art, using both self-representation and the embodiment of various personalities or clichés, her series *Co-Ed Magazine* (1973) is an example of this important current in recent photographic practice in which the artist performs for the camera.

The works included in the first part of this exhibition are the products of a period in which photographic practice and all artistic practices involving the recorded image developed in a particularly fertile manner, one not without numerous enquiries into the medium itself. The products of a period in which performance was one of the most innovative art forms, the works exhibited here "pointed" towards issues which continue to be addressed by artists who explore the connections between photography and performance.

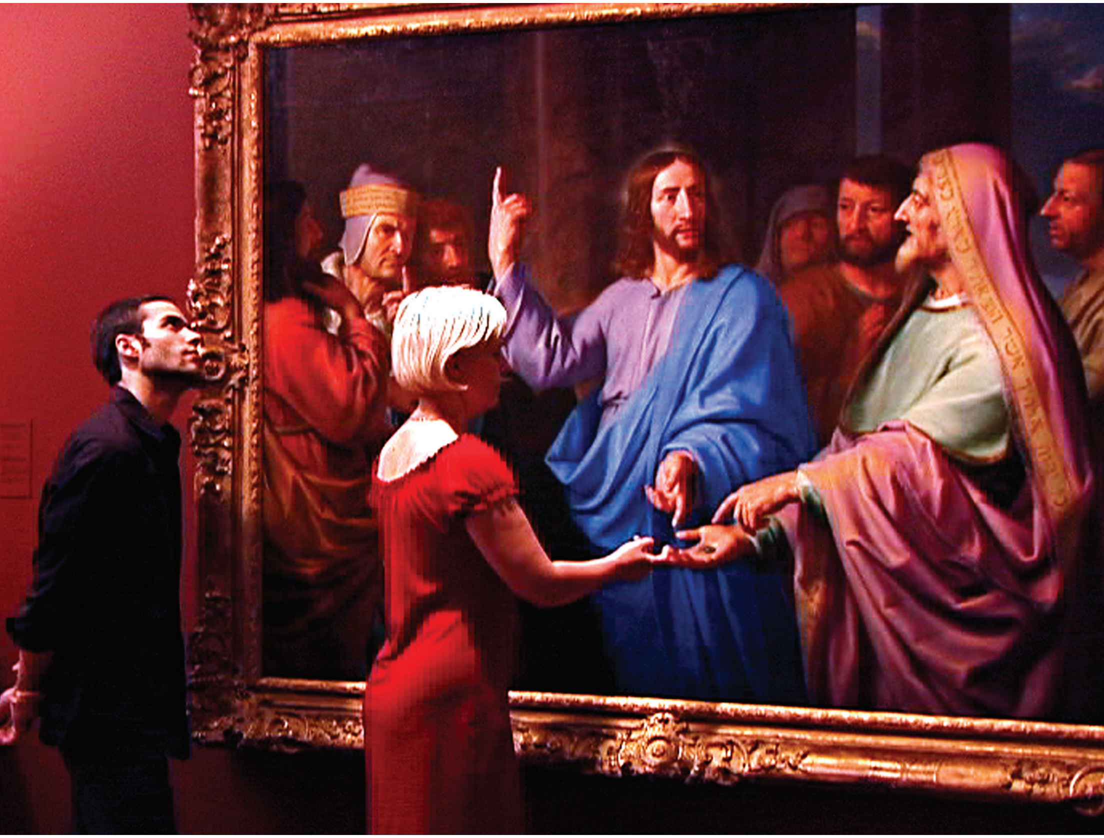
The works included in the second part of *POINT & SHOOT* address photography as both the subject and object of performance, photography as accessory to performance or as the result of an otherwise ephemeral or intangible activity. By integrating the strategies and issues at work in both performance and photography, these hybrid works are situated at the crossroads of the two disciplines.

In *Documents for Performance* (1998), Judy Radul uses aspects of performance for photographic ends. In *Theatrical*, for example, she climbed, completely naked, into the trunk of a car and was driven from her home in Vancouver to the area around the Fraser River in the suburb of Richmond. In this unusual photographic journey, a camera flash was her only source of light. Adad Hannah's *Stills* (2002) consists of tableau vivants which also occupy a peculiar space between recorded image and performance. Without the use of editing or slow-motion photography, these silent videos offer up immobility in real time, substituting duration for endurance. In the series of twelve triptychs entitled *This Land is Mime Land* (1992), Shelley Niro plays various well-known characters—Santa Claus, Elvis, Marilyn Monroe, etc.—which she juxtaposes with her "real" identity. She also examines how certain cultural symbols can influence the composition of feminine identity and modern aboriginal identity. Here, performance has come to exist only for the image.

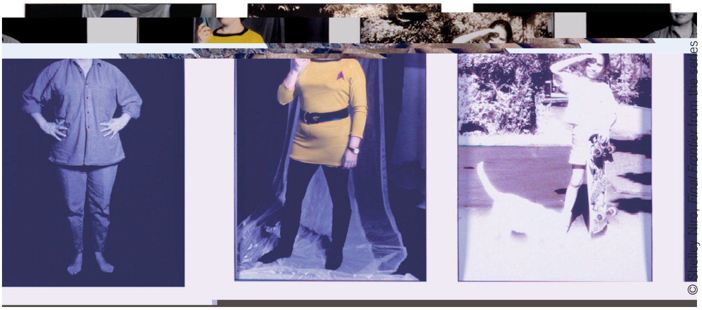


© Judy Radul, *Nice to Meet You* (1998).

COSTUME FOR MASS PRODUCTION
MOTHER'S DAY, 1998



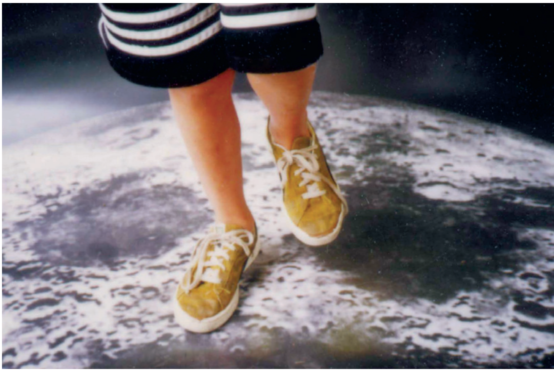
© Adad Hannah, *Tribute* from the series *Stills* (2002).



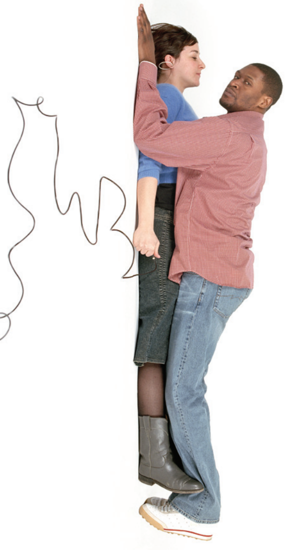
© Shelley Niro, *Final Frontier* from the series *This Land is Mime Land* (1992).

© André Lemke, *potato* from *I Am Very Disappointed* (2004).

I Am Very Disappointed (2004), a PowerPoint presentation by André Lemke, tells the story of objects he has mistaken for others; for example, the shoe he initially mistook for a dismembered hand, and the fabulous pearl necklace which, upon closer examination, turned out to be only an old chain. In the presentation, Lemke describes his discoveries and rapid disappointment. For him, the photograph is both a witness to the long hours he spends wandering about the city, which he considers a performative act in itself, and an accessory to subsequent performances, in which he describes his many disappointments. John Marriott also uses photography as a lever to performance. *In Picture Yourself on the Moon* (1997), he invited passers-by to be photographed on the surface of the moon, or more precisely, to tread on a photograph of the moon. Participants later received a photograph of their "visit" to the moon through the mail. Using different means, Ana Rewakowicz also incorporates the viewer in her work. In *To Scale* (2004), after having created a latex mould of a room in her apartment, she invites people to hold the object while stepping onto a bathroom scale, an act she photographs and which becomes the work.



© John Marriott, *Picture yourself on the moon* (1997).



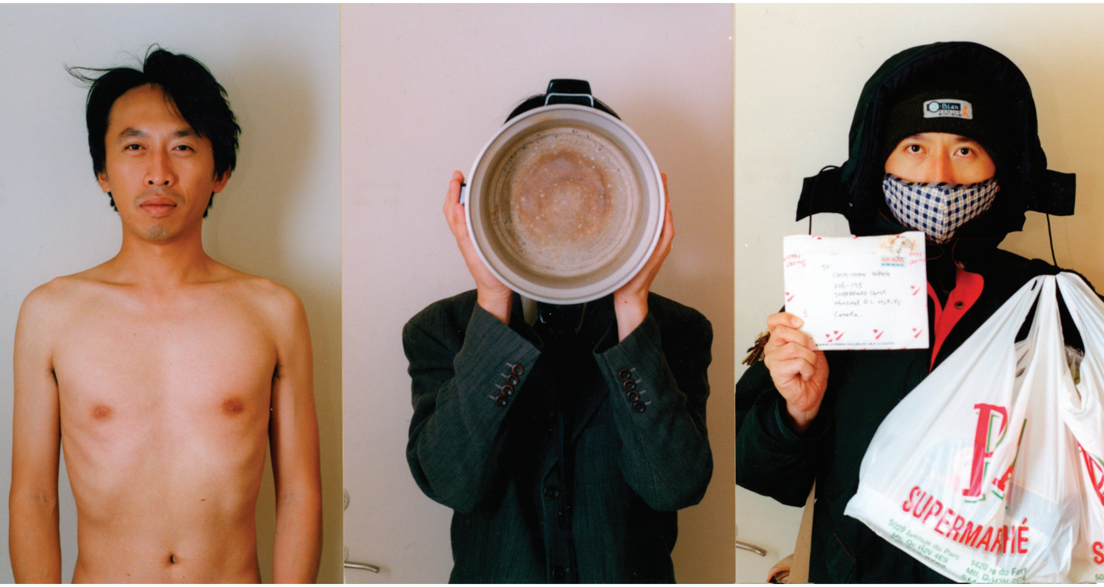
© Alana Riley, *Kally* from the series *Support System* (2004).

For her part, Alana Riley performs in her work by photographing herself in the company of strangers she invites up to her studio and whom she asks to lie down on top of her. Once in position, she clicks the remote shutter. Entitled *Support*

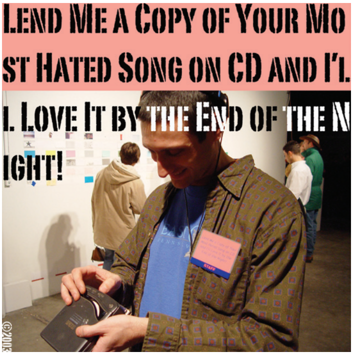
© Ana Rewakowicz, *To Scale* (2004).

System (2004), Riley's series reveals a relationship to the other that is not without social or sexual connotations and continues the quest for risk so often sought out by performance.

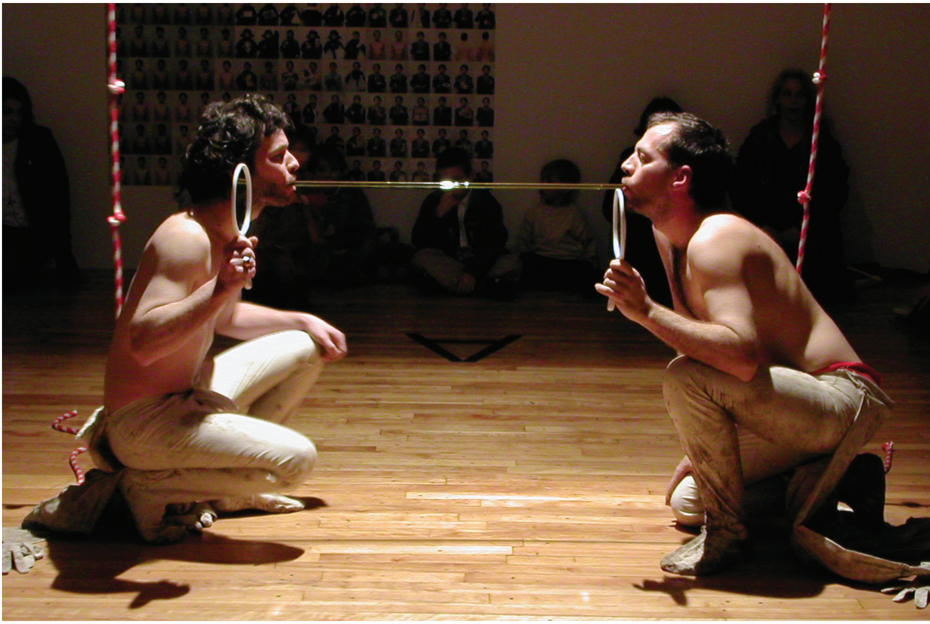
All performances are ephemeral, but some pass unnoticed. Chih-Chien Wang's collection of self-portraits—4" × 6" snapshots developed at his corner drugstore—ritualize the everyday. In *Counting* (2004), he photographed himself three times per day at the same hour over a very long period of time, turning the act of photographing himself into a performance. Taking on the look of CD liner notes, Chris Wildrick's posters both announce and document performances which also do not take place in public. For *Lend Me a Copy of Your Most Hated Song on CD and I'll Love*



© Chih-Chien Wang, *Counting* (2004), detail.


LEND ME A COPY OF YOUR MOST HATED SONG ON CD AND I'LL LOVE IT BY THE END OF THE NIGHT!
©2003

© Chris Wildrick, *Lend Me a Copy of Your Most Hated Song on CD and I'll Love It By the End of the Night* (2003).



© Carl Bouchard and Martin Dufrasne, performance: *L'amour propre – instrument de test #6* (April 17, 2004).
Photo credit: Marie-Orphée Duval.

It by the End of the Night (2003), Wildrick placed an ad inviting people to bring him a recording of the song they liked the least. He then tirelessly listened to all these songs over and over until he had absorbed them and was able to like them.

La lumière comme surmoi, an afternoon of performance organized in collaboration with Sylvie Cotton, was the third part of *POINT & SHOOT* and was in a sense the living segment of the project. The event brought together artists who use photography, not for the usual reasons, but as a way of absorbing the process itself through the impression of light, playing with the idea of the print and of reproduction or using the photographic object as an accessory.

The duo Carl Bouchard and Martin Dufrasne presented a new performance at this event as part of their cycle *L'amour propre — instrument de test #6*, which they began in 2001. These performances, based upon the concepts of rivalry, honour and the need for each other, are designed like tests to be executed symmetrically, as mirror images. The work presented examined the

© Rachel Echenberg, *sans titre* (2004).
Photo credit: Marie-Orphée Duval.

© Karen Spencer, performance: *facing the lost* (April 17, 2004).
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© Sylvie Cotton, performance: *Bobos et bonbons* (April 17, 2004).
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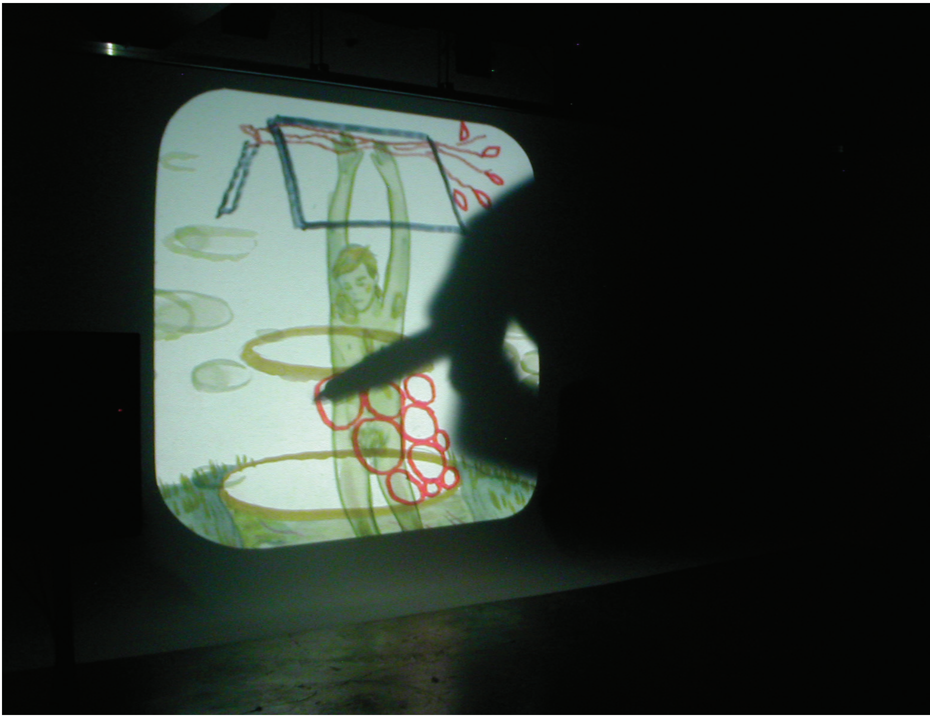
idea of the negative, both on the photographic level and on a more existential level. For her part, Rachel Echenberg invited viewers, by means of a sculptural piece, to lend themselves to an unusual photographic experience defined more by the concept of time and the sensation of light than by the image itself. The experience was pleasant for some and threatening for others. With *facing the lost*, Karen Spencer invited passers-by to superimpose on the site of the performance the mental images brought to mind by the stories she told. Slowly, as the audio track unfolded, the images took shape, they "developed," were recorded, were imprinted on the visitor's mind. Sylvie Cotton also works with the idea of inscription, although on a different level. In her recent series *MON CORPS MON ATELIER*, she used various instruments, from pencils to needles, to reproduce on the "web" of her body beauty marks, birthmarks, or tattoos belonging to others. Here, Cotton used candles to simulate the exposure of a photosensitive surface to light. Daniel Barrow, meanwhile, animates, manipulates and narrates his drawings inspired by comic strips in order to project them live and in large format using an overhead projector. Candidly recounting the stories and disappointments, at times tragic and at others loony, of the passage to adult life, Barrow created performances which cannot help call to mind the very origins of cinema in magic lantern shows.

Translated by Colette Tougas



© Daniel Barrow, performance: *Looking for Love in the Hall of Mirrors* (April 17, 2004).
Photo credit: Marie-Orphée Duval.

Chantal Pontbriand

Foreword: Performance and Photography

The destinies of performance and photography are tied, even if their histories do not necessarily follow the same chronology. The history of performance begins in the 1960s, or at least that is when it intensified. Ever since then, it has had a close connection to photography; we can even state, without hesitation, that performance has transformed photography. This is perhaps most evident when we think of that current in photography which requires a kind of staging prior to taking the photograph itself. Think of the work of Jeff Wall, Geneviève Cadieux, Sharon Lockhardt, or Douglas Gordon: these artists, and many others, use the body in particular as the basis of the act of photographing.

The body, photography, and the performative act constitute a kind of triad of concepts which interact with one another. This triad has been at work since the beginning of photography and has produced, for example, the magnificent series of *Pierrot* portraits by Félix Nadar (and his brother and associate, Adrien Tournachon).

Nadar produced his famous series of portraits in 1854–55, soon after photography made its first appearance. Unlike other work created with the new medium, his series was completely staged. Its objective was not to document someone's natural appearance as they posed for posterity. Nadar was also the author of a series of portraits of artists, for example, and this was an important theme throughout his career. But for his *Pierrot* portraits, he chose a theme (his idea was to use the work to advertise his photography studio), that of Pierrot, and proceeded to produce, not a single portrait, but a series of portraits. He used the same "actor" for the whole series, the same decor in the background (the sheet used as the studio's backdrop), and the same costume (one emblematic of Pierrot, a character in French pantomime). What changed from one portrait to the next was the character's posture and gestures. Sometimes, a prop was used to set the scene. They were full-figure portraits, with the mime acting out the gesture named by the portrait in question. And thus Nadar produced in succession, for example, *Pierrot surpris* (*Pierrot surprised*), *Pierrot le photographe* (*Pierrot the photographer*), *Pierrot courant* (*Pierrot running*), *Pierrot suppliant* (*Pierrot imploring*), *Pierrot avec des fruits* (*Pierrot with fruit*), *Pierrot riant* (*Pierrot laughing*), *Pierrot écoutant* (*Pierrot listening*), *Pierrot souffrant* (*Pierrot ill*), *Pierrot avec un médicament* (*Pierrot with medicine*), *Pierrot le voleur* (*Pierrot the thief*), and *Pierrot avec une enveloppe* (*Pierrot with an envelope*). Nadar knew how to capture the essence of the gesture, which the costume amplified and, when necessary, the prop prompted.

In choosing the figure of Pierrot, played by the mime Charles Deburau, the son of Baptiste Deburau, who introduced pantomime to France, Nadar identified with this performer and character, who represented the average man (originally, Pierrot came from the *commedia dell'arte* and embodied the soul of the peasantry). There is a connection to be made between these photographer brothers who wanted to promote their studio and advertise their art to the public, and the mime who addresses this same public through a figure stripped of all artifice, acting out everyday gestures. Pierrot became Nadar's double. Pierrot is always suspended in mid-act, or in the midst of the situation in which he finds himself. We, the viewers, see neither what came before nor what came after this moment of history. Nadar/Pierrot stage nothingness, a moment of nothingness, simply a frame and an action cut off from time.

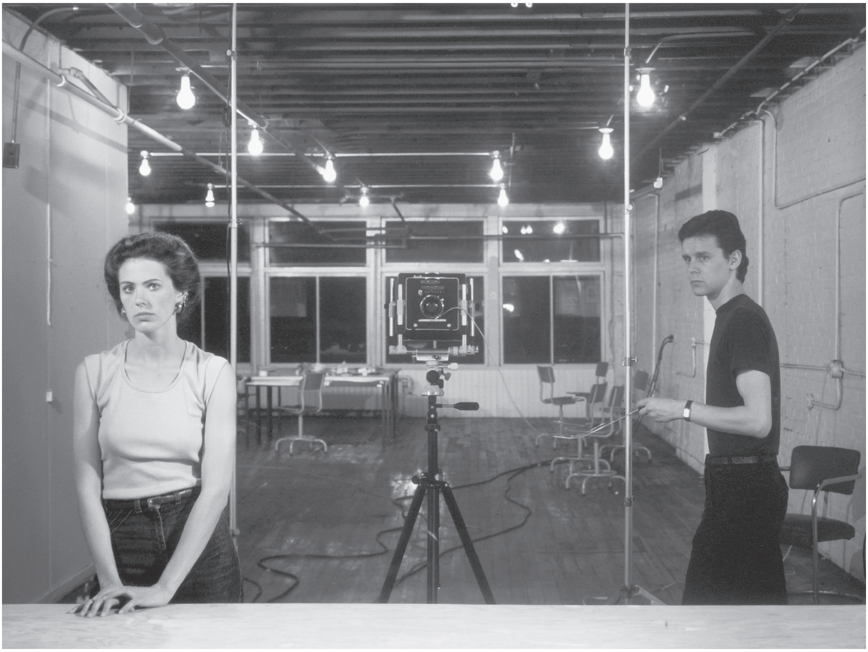
This relationship to time is what both links and separates photography and performance, as it is understood today—an artistic action which unfolds in a precise time and place and which is carried out through the presence and participation of the artists themselves. The act of taking a photograph isolates its subject in both time and space. A photograph is essentially a caesura in time and space. It breaks with the real world; the fruit, or rather the product, of an imaginary world, or the fictive world if you will.

A photograph *of* performance is the product of a break carried out by the photographic apparatus in the very action of the performance. The moment of taking the photograph is recorded in a format that will confer upon it a new fixity. The photograph freezes the performative act in time, quite apart from the fact that it transforms an act taking place in a three-dimensional time-space into a two-dimensional image. Already, in Nadar's use of black and white film, lighting effects, and flat background decor, photography is anticipating the photographic effect, is radicalising it in a sense by integrating the product of photography (the flattening of the scene) with the staging that preceded its creation. Photography, when it is linked to a performative act, say in a basic sense, in the case of a body performing some sort of action, presents us a moment isolated in time, a micro-moment that the human eye is physically incapable of isolating. This moment is a moment of stasis; it is the equivalent of the photographic pose, the moment when the photographic apparatus is set in motion, when the photograph captures an action in time. In stasis, the subject is stationary. It is linked to the time and place in a highly precise way. It is captured in a state that can no longer change, that will remain the same forever, a subject beyond change. This subject beyond change is a being of nothingness, a being without past or future. Such a being is a being of minor condition, a being with reduced potential.

On the other hand, this moment of stasis is also a moment of waiting, an in-between time that transforms nothingness into something else, into a posture that points elsewhere, that opens the door to the imaginary and restores the situation's potential. Photography shows us a situation, a state of being that calls for transformation, for change, that awakens its potential. This potential is enacted in the viewer's gaze, this *other* gaze that surveys the image from above. In *Pierrot le photographe*, Pierrot is seen frontally, as in the other pictures in the series, and the camera is positioned on a tripod beside him. It's as if Pierrot was about to take the photo, and not Nadar the photographer, and that this time the subject will be Nadar himself, or even the viewer of the scene: the viewer who, one day, in an undefined time and place, will gaze at this photograph, that of a man photographing. Here, the viewer is looking at him- or herself. The performer and the viewer find themselves in the same position, that of stasis, of waiting, of anticipation. This state is the state of life itself, of life which never ends, of flowing time, the cyclical time of life and death.

In *Pierrot le photographe*, the gaze of the character about to take a photograph (his hand is about to press the camera's shutter) is not cast in the direction of its subject, who could be the photographer Nadar or the viewer. His gaze is turned inwards, his eyes half-closed. Pierrot is completely absorbed in his gesture. Suddenly, the entire scene becomes reflexive. It becomes a *mise en abyme* of the photographer photographing watching himself in the act of photographing. This gaze is an interiorized gaze, a pensive gaze. It recalls the stasis that results from the photographic act to which I referred above. Here, Nadar is photographing a consciousness of being, or consciousness itself, which is, in short, unphotographable: he is photographing what makes us conscious, as human beings, of our own existence. Existence is manifested by a consciousness of time and space, vectors that photography makes it possible to grasp through its very materiality.

The fascination exerted by the idea of posing for a photograph, the idea that time can come to a stop and cease to flow, and possibly escape the infernal cycle of life and death, is inherent in the history of the medium. More specifically, it was put to the test by the phenomenon of performance. Undeniably, this phenomenon is tied to the acceleration of time in post-industrial society, to communications, cybernetics and our quicker and more intense movements. Time that is a break in time, which is the nature of the photographic apparatus, is part of a desire to make meaning, while it evacuates the photographic act from its very meaning. This hiatus of meaning makes sense only because the photographic act participates in giving. The performative act which unfolds in front of and often for the camera is a gift; the act of taking a photograph is a counter-gift which restores the act somewhere in time, to time, to time's continuum and duration. This duration, this extension of meaning, functions according to the concepts of sharing and of the

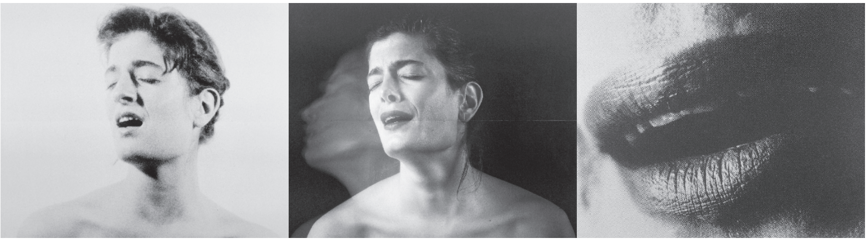


© Jeff Wall, *Picture for Women* (1979),
courtesy of the artist.

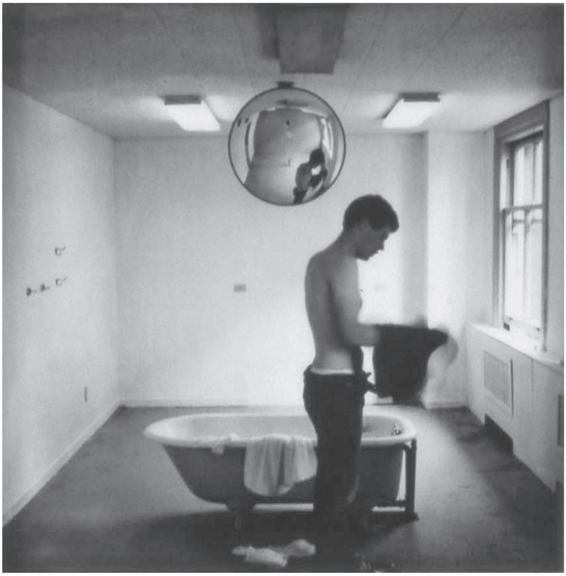
circulation of gazes unfolding between the photographed body, the body of the photographer, and, afterwards, the body of the viewer.

Some recent work, created under the impact of the encounter between photography and performance, enacts this circulation of the gaze. The viewer's active gaze enables the photograph to come into its own and create meaning. Jeff Wall's *Picture for Women* (1979), inspired by Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergères* (1981–82), shows a woman standing, her hands on a table and looking straight ahead. To her right, we see the photographer, Jeff Wall himself as it turns out, in the act of photographing her. The effect of the photographer's presence in the scene he is photographing is obtained through the use of a mirror placed in front of the woman. The studio where the scene is shot is visible, as is the camera which, on its tripod, occupies the centre of the image. The woman seems to be gazing at the viewer, and the photographer too, an effect created by the (invisible) mirror. In fact, the woman is probably looking at the attentive photographer, and vice versa. The fluidity of gazes opens the scene up to the other, even as it reveals the artifice of the photographic apparatus, the very process that locks things, any action of some sort, in place, and introduces us as viewers into the latent drama. We remain hanging in the face of this micro-moment before us, this time of stoppage, of posing, this breach that allows consciousness to manifest itself and circulate.

A similar circulation is at work in Geneviève Cadieux's triptych *Hear Me with Your Eyes* (1989). The two photographs on the left show a young woman, her eyes half-closed and her mouth half-open in an expression of pain. The first photograph is black and white, the second in colour. The third, also in black and white, shows a close-up of a mouth. Our gaze drifts from one photograph to the next, trying to recompose in our consciousness the meaning of the images, the intensity at work in them, the different variations of this intensity. The close-up of the mouth indicates the organ of speech, the place of thought, where consciousness is expressed. Expressing pain is one of the most difficult tasks for speech and constitutes a space where the limits of being can be explored. Between the spoken and the unspoken exists the density of the affects which indicate the weight of a life, and the weight of our consciousness of life, or thought itself.



© Geneviève Cadieux, *Hear Me with Your Eyes* (1989), courtesy of Galerie René Blouin.
Photo credit: Louis Lussier.



© Max Dean, *Pass it on* (1981), detail,
courtesy of Susan Hobbs Gallery.

Max Dean's *Pass it on* (1981) was a photographic performance carried out in a doctor's office. Viewers waited their turn in the waiting room before entering the "office," where a bathtub, towels, and soap were waiting. A bull's eye mirror was placed above the bathtub, facing a Polaroid camera. Viewers could move about freely in the space, or take a bath, while the camera took pictures at regular intervals as soon as someone entered the room. The arrangement created a *mise en abyme* out of the very gesture of taking the photograph, the photographer being absent from the scene, except virtually, by proxy, through the presence of the camera and the arrangement created. In this third example, we can see that the gaze can also circulate, creating a real interchangeability of roles and positions. This interchangeability creates a "contractual" tie between the artist and the author of the work, between production and reception. Here the photographic act, somewhat like that in the piece by Jeff Wall, turns in upon itself.

In these three examples, we can see that the photographic act is performed. This is tied to the fact that the artist, in each case, has created a *mise en scène* prior to the taking of the photograph. Over the past few years, other artists have also worked on performance situations which are not thought of as such. I'm thinking here of Beat Streuli, who has photographed children in schoolyards, captured unawares in their gestures and mimicry. Or Philip-Lorca diCorcia and his street photographs, where unplanned moments of the human condition crystallise, pictures taken on the run and blown up into large-format photographs. The autobiographical current in photography, in the work of Michael Snow or Raymonde Avril, for example, is also a component of performed photography. Photography played an important role in various projects of General Idea, in their media critiques and their work on the society of the spectacle. What more can be said about performances whose meaning derives from the photographic act itself, of which Douglas Gordon has provided us numerous examples, alongside Michael Snow, one of the most important figures in this self-referential vein. Becoming conscious of oneself and a being's limits are also strong currents in the recent history of photography, with Marina Abramovic, Urs Luthi, Vito Acconci, or even Suzy Lake.

The strong presence of performativity found in contemporary photography is a formidable exercise for exploring the ins and outs of human consciousness. Photography, whether performed in some way itself or as a document of performance, enables us the better to grasp the affects of the present day. In the case of active encounters between photography and performance, we might reverse the terms of the analytical philosopher J.L. Austin's proposition *How to do things with words*, and adopt the following formula in its place: *How to word things without words*. Keeping in mind also that acts can be utterances in themselves.

Translated by Timothy Barnard

Diana Nemiroff

Performances for the Camera: Montreal and Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s

Remarking on the difficulty of defining performance in an article published in 1979, Chantal Pontbriand wrote,

> … we may consider the notion of performance as a fundamental characteristic of post-modernism. For this, we must take it as a premise that post-modernism corresponds to the calling into question of languages, of established codes, to the breaking down of divisions between disciplines, to the explosion of hierarchical structures between institution-producer-product-receiver.[1]

She went on to distinguish between direct and deferred performance, noting that media such as photography, video, film, sound recording and installation are often the vehicle for works where the performance is deferred. "Clearly," she stated, "in these cases, it is not simply a matter of documentation but of genuine performances *in actu*."[2] This recognition that the idea of performance cannot be limited to the live event is entailed, of course, by the critical premises of post-modernism, which foster fusion between media. Historically, performance was a hybrid and perhaps transitory manifestation, arising out of issues generated in the fields of sculpture, theatre, dance and music. Underlying them all was a desire to break down boundaries between art and life. The problematic of communication and the relationship of the work to its audience was central; implicit in this in the visual arts was also a critique of the commodification of the art object and the channels of distribution. Thus, it is by no means accidental that the media to which the idea of performance is deferred should all be recording media in which the documentary function is inherent.

Live performances relied on photographic or film documents to preserve a record of the ephemeral event, but such documents were widely viewed as fragmentary and incomplete. They could not properly represent the overall situation created by the performance: its duration, spatial coordinates, and the audience dynamic, among other variables. Moreover, performance was seen as an art of presence, one that "confronts us with the thing itself and not with its representation," as Chantal Pontbriand wrote in the same article.[3] Thus, the document was at best an aid to memory, its archival value dependent on the supplementary accounts of eyewitnesses.

However, as critics and eyewitnesses to performances were seeking to understand and define the importance of actions in which "the artist's body becomes both the subject and object of the work,"[4] in such terms as an extension of sculptural materials and tools, an anti-formalist critique mirroring the chaos of society, or as self-reflexive narcissism,[5] another discourse was growing up around photography and the media, which helped to recast their relationship to performance. This discourse, growing out of media theory and French structuralism, suggested that photography, and other media such as television and advertising, had become the new environment, a mythology that shaped reality. They could be viewed as languages, possessing their own codes, which could be analyzed and parodied. At the same time, conceptual art—downplaying the fine-art aesthetic and emphasizing reportage—encouraged artists to use the camera as a tool that could give them rapid feedback about their environment and actions. "The camera is the extension of the eye," wrote Les Levine in the early 1970s in an article showing the influence of McLuhan on his ideas. "The context for Camera Art … is the brain itself."[6]

By 1974 when Levine first published his manifesto-like remarks on camera art, much of the photographic and video work being done in Montreal and Toronto

© Colin Campbell, still from *True/False* (1972),
courtesy of Vtape.

clearly showed the impact of performance. An aesthetic of self-exposure can be observed in the early videos of Lisa Steele or Colin Campbell, working in Toronto. Placing themselves before the camera, they raise issues of personal identity that are framed by the media they are using. For example, in his tape *True/False* (1972) Campbell makes a series of confessional statements about himself that he first affirms, then denies. The camera work, which consists of a continuous take showing the artist in close-up, first in profile, then full-face, evokes the police mug shot and the history of official photography.[7] Truth is on trial here. Campbell's use of contradiction and his deadpan delivery make it impossible to resolve the question of which, if any, of these revelations is true and which is false. The on-camera realm is demonstrably one where the line between fact and fiction is unclear, and thus lends itself as much to self-creation and concealment as to the baring of an authentic self.

Unlike Campbell, who makes us aware of the voluntary masking of identity in these works, Lisa Steele is concerned with an authentic representation of the self in her video performance *Birthday Suit—Scars and Defects* (1974). She concentrates our attention on its involuntary aspects: the formation of identity over time through the interaction of conscious purpose and unconscious predisposition within an environment that provides unexpected obstacles. Steele's self-exposure is purposeful; striding naked towards the camera, she declares the occasion and intent: "September 22, 1947 to September 22, 1974. In honour of my birthday I am going to show you my birthday suit, with scars and defects." It is a stocktaking, and we are its witnesses. In a sign of the value Steele places on tangible fact, pain, joy and disappointment—the stuff of growing up—are set aside for a personal history that takes the form of a calmly articulated inventory of past events that have left visible traces on her body. Although artists, especially women, who use their bodies in performances have often been accused of narcissism, it is important to note that the systematic way Steele reveals her body here is a form of memory work, a means of getting at the secrets it holds. Her emphasis on personal meaning is implicitly critical in a spectacle-bound society where images of women's bodies are reductively associated with beauty and sexuality, or their opposites.

© Lisa Steele, still from
Birthday Suit-Scars and Defects (1974),
courtesy of Vtape.
Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada /
Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography.

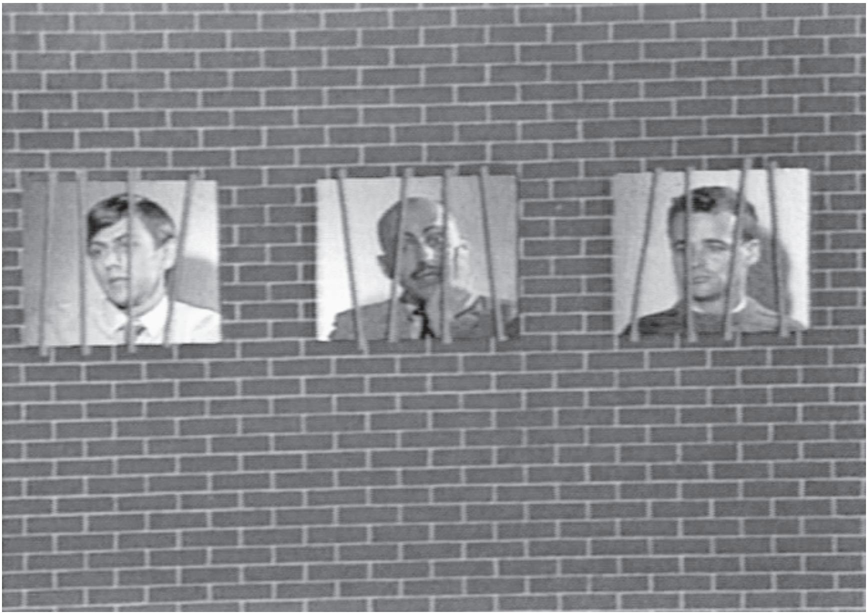
The representation of the self is but one half of the equation in performance. The traditional separation of the private creative act from the public presentation of the art object is short-circuited in live performance. The resultant gain in intensity, immediacy or authenticity is a product of the confrontation of the artist and the audience. When the performance is deferred through photography or video, the camera acts in lieu of the audience.[8] Here the documentary function is paramount, even when the result is intended to be an autonomous work. In video the artist can follow his or her actions on camera, which becomes a kind of mirror offering instant feedback. This one-on-one intimacy is transmitted to the audience in the tapes described above by continuous, unedited takes and camera angles that bring us close to the performer, as well as by the conventions of television viewing, which are themselves intimate. Like video, still photography benefits from its ability to record reality. The action can be structured for the camera, and duration represented through linear or rhythmic sequencing. Movement can be simulated by soft focus or blurring of gestures. However, the most provocative performances for the camera are those that engage the spectator on a conceptual level to participate either physically or psychologically in the action. On these occasions, the communicative exchange at the heart of all performance is set in motion, and the social implications of the performance are understood.

Two pieces that were particularly effective in this sense are Suzy Lake's *Are You Talking to Me?* (1979) and Max Dean's *Pass It On* (1981). Lake called several of her live and photographic performances immediately preceding this work "choreographies," alluding to her struggle for control in circumstances in which physical restraints made her extremely vulnerable. In *Are You Talking to Me?* she discarded her props, using facial expression to mime a conversation with an unseen interlocutor. The distressful nature of the situation is evident from a glance at the emotions playing themselves out on Lake's expressive face.[9] The artist took pains to heighten the emotional signals of the images through the use of various expressive devices, such as hand-colouring certain images and stretching the negatives before printing so as to exaggerate the distortion of her features. More importantly, she installed the photographs in a continuous line around the walls of the gallery (as opposed to the grid arrangement of an earlier work, *A One Hour (Zero) Conversation with Allan B.* [1973]) so that looking at the images put the spectator in the position of the interlocutor. Lake's anxious expressions evoke reciprocal feelings of unease on the part of the spectator, who is solicited both by the staging and by the use of "you" in the title to respond. The conversation in question is thus located in the here and now, in the performative context of the installation. The artist's exaggerated expressions, her unheard pleas, are directed towards us. We are the unseen interlocutors with whom she struggles to communicate. The drama of the work lies in the difficulty of this fundamental exchange between artist and audience or, more generally, between self and other.

Whereas the spectator's participation is psychological in *Are You Talking to Me?* it is much more direct in Max Dean's *Pass It On*. Exploiting the photograph's primary documentary function, Dean turned the camera on the audience rather than himself in this performance, which took place in a modified office suite in the Drummond Medical Building in Montreal. The artist's detailed description of the setting for this work has appeared elsewhere;[10] suffice it to say here that the elements consisted of a convex security mirror, a functioning bathtub with soap and clean towels, and an SX-70 Polaroid camera programmed to take pictures at regular intervals after the spectator entered the room. In the spirit of Dean's previous performances, the viewer is invited to take action (a bath, in this case) in his or her own private performance for the camera (see documentation on page 32). By the artist's estimate fewer than 25% did so, an index, perhaps, of the difficulty of establishing trust in a situation that, like art itself, does not fit a habitual pattern (and, moreover, involves self-exposure). The photographs were the spectator's to take away, the evidence of an essentially private experience that was intended to generate discussion. In this sense they functioned as links in a chain of exchanges that reached from the participants into the community, an illustration of what Philip Fry called, "Dean's …displacement of emphasis from the work of art considered as an open finished product…to the intersubjective transactions involved in the proposition…"[11] In the artist's words, "the piece does hover between this private and individual experience and the potentially public aspect of the photo as document."

By the late 1970s a change was noticeable in performance-oriented work made for the camera. The organization of numerous large-scale performance events both in Montreal and Toronto suggests that the questions raised by performance in relation to the institution of art and its audience had reached a level of critical importance by this point, and that the effect of this questioning on other media was by then clearly visible. Although issues of self-presentation and the participation of the audience remained critical, the focus shifted from presence to the mediating effects of representation, opening the way for an analysis of the media themselves. Two avenues offered themselves for exploration by artists in both cities: one was the widening presence of the media in contemporary society, which embraced and connected high art and popular culture, while the other was the historical trajectory linking photography in particular with technological advances in communication in the 19th century as well as with traditional fine arts media.

In Toronto at this time, General Idea and David Buchan were drawing from the codes and clichés of popular culture, Buchan from fashion and advertising, and General Idea from the world of mass entertainment such as the beauty pageant, the television variety show, and the ‘soft’ news special. In General Idea’s words (echoing Roland Barthes’s *Mythologies*), these were “culture’s forgotten shells,” “available forms” that could be reanimated with new meanings. Responding to the flatness of the Canadian cultural landscape at the time, the General Idea trio (universally known by their assumed names, AA Bronson, Felix Partz and Jorge Zontal) created an elaborate parody of an art scene through publications such as their *Life* magazine look-alike *File Megazine*, as well as numerous performances based on the variety show format, all of which were recorded on video. In these early performances, the artists assumed stock roles such as master of ceremonies, colour commentator, and performer (the talent), but the focus was really on the audience. Its role was to act, but in a very determined way; General Idea’s performances depend on its complicity and presumed ability to read the codes being manipulated. Thus the importance of the scenes in several of their videotapes, including *Blocking* (1974), *Going thru the Motions* (1975), and *Hot Property* (1977), in which an audience is rehearsed by a master of ceremonies in the appropriate sequence of stock responses. In these performances the audience



© General Idea, *talking heads*,
still from *Test Tube* (1979).

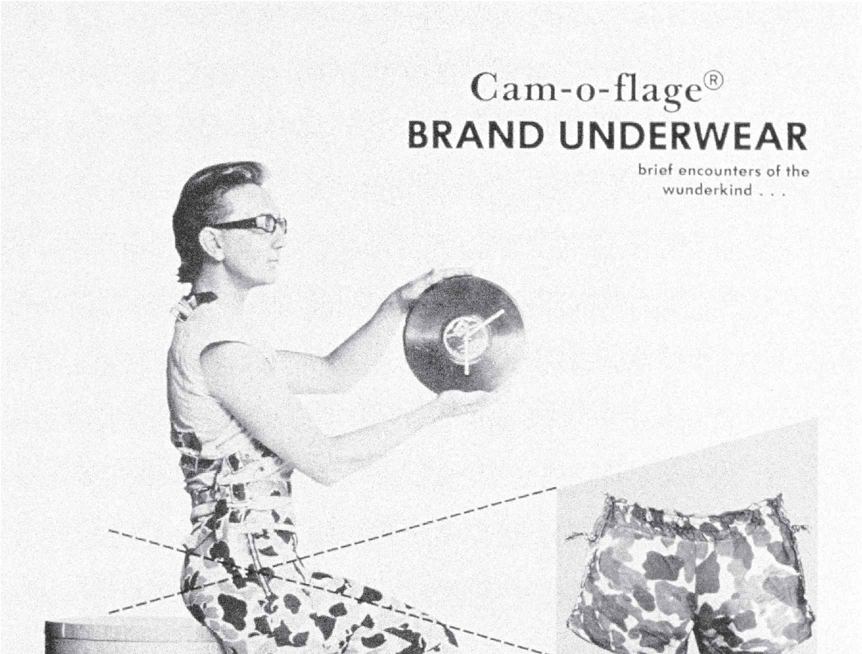
became the primary subject matter: "Their desires as audiences in performance situations and how they go about fulfilling those desires are issues for us," AA Bronson has stated, "… We want audiences to sit on the edge of their seats, becoming both extras and viewers, active and passive at once."[12]

This effect — of acting and being acted upon by the media formats they adopted—is critical to the narrative of the artist and the art system elaborated by General Idea. In the videotapes that followed, *Pilot* (1977) and *Test Tube* (1979), both of which were made for broadcast, they shifted their attention away from the "studio" audience and addressed their own roles as artists in relation to television in particular. *Test Tube*, which was also shown as part of the exhibition *Canada Video* at the Venice Biennale in 1980, is an ironic blend of soap opera, commercials, and media analysis, set in the mythical Colour Bar Lounge. The notion of inhabitation or critical doubling, which had always informed their media borrowings, is still operative, although it has become subtle enough for Jorge to ask at one point, "Is this television parody, or are we still making art?" Playing themselves (pointedly dressed in neutral greys), the artists assume the clever banter of talk show pundits to dissect the impact of the media on the romantic image of the artist and dismiss earnest ideas that the artist might revolutionize television. The correct response to the domination of the marketplace and the media, they concur, is not to try to work outside the system—which has permeated reality in any case—but to undermine its rigidity from within, by "occupying contexts and emptying them of meaning, then filling them right back up again with new sensibilities… pushing the fringes of our society back into the centre and creating a continuous cultural flux."[13]

Whereas by the late 1970s General Idea's performances had found their most effective format in made-for-television commentary, David Buchan—a self-described "wardrobe artist"—chose photography as the vehicle for self-portraits in which he enacted a diverse array of personas. In *Modern Fashions* (1979) using black and white photographs that could move off the magazine page and into the gallery, he transformed his fashion-show commentary into witty texts full of sexual innuendo in which he parodied the style of advertising copy as well as that of art writing. In the seductive imagery and language of fashion advertising, Buchan found a contemporary cultural enactment of (heterosexual) masculinity that, with a little tweaking, could lend itself to the expression of other (homosexual) desires. Such ironic inhabitation is an important theme in *Modern Fashions*, but so is the contradictory idea of multiple, selective identities represented as so many choices of clothing. Buchan alludes to his strategy in the text accompanying an "ad" in the series for Cam-o-flage® Brand Underwear which states, "… Blending into one's surroundings and chameleon-like behaviour are prerequisites for living in the modern world."[14]

The language of camouflage is suggestive in relation to the gay community that Buchan was part of, which is accustomed to living a blend of "in" and "out" in relation to socially prescribed sexual roles. Clothing and gesture (which Buchan mimed with sensitive exactness) are key elements in the performance of gender for those able to read the signs. It is in this sense that the fictions of advertising align themselves in his work with the fiction of sexual identity, which, according to theorist Judith Butler, has no internal core or substance. Rather, she argues, it is a "performatively enacted signification… that, released from its naturalized interiority… can occasion the parodic proliferation and subversive play of gendered meanings."[15] Thus, Buchan performs the stereotypical masculinity of the old *Esquire* advertisements (available, as General Idea recognized in regard to the beauty pageant, precisely because they were outmoded) on which *Modern Fashions* was based, while diverting their message of seduction to an audience wholly unintended by the originals.

The direct communication between artist and audience was an important element of live performance, and this communicative exchange remained central in many earlier performances made for the camera. However, one of the structural aspects of the shift from presence to representation in the late 1970s, both literally and figuratively, was the substitution of reading for talking. Moreover, as can be seen in the work of General Idea and David Buchan, the textual elements, whether visual or verbal, are most often doubled so that one text is read through another or in juxtaposition to another. Thus, material borrowed from or patterned on popular culture sources is given a new, or supplementary, meaning in the context of their art. Craig Owens identified this tendency as an allegorical impulse, and theorized



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BRAND UNDERWEAR

brief encounters of the
wunderkind . . .

Now you see it, now you don't.
When you're looking for
something that's hard to find, that
looks like it isn't there, look
again.
Blending into one's surroundings
and chameleon-like behaviour are
prerequisites for living in the
modern world. Being able to
change one's colours or spots
allows for controlled visibility.
Destroy that fine line between the
inside and the outside to achieve
maximum homogeneity.

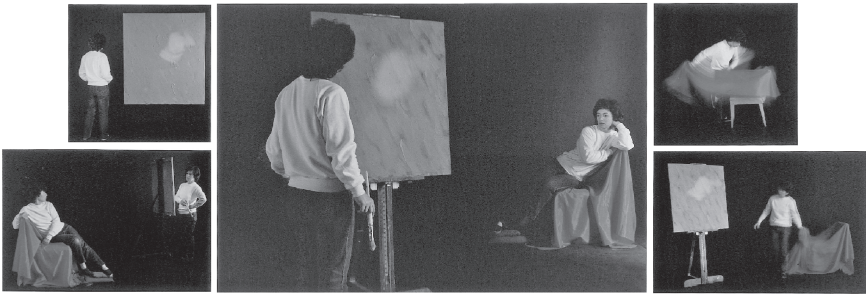
Cam-o-flage®
Understatements you'll
understand.

© David Buchan, *Cam-o-flage® Brand Underwear*
from the series *Modern Fashions* (1976),
courtesy of the estate of David Buchan.
Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada /
Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography.

it as a key aspect of postmodernism.[16] He associated allegory with such strategies as appropriation, site-specificity, impermanence, accumulation, discursivity and hybridization, which characterized much art at the beginning of the 1980s and distinguished it from its modernist predecessors. Furthermore, he emphasized the allegorical potential of photography (so often used to document impermanent works), which "represent[s] our desire to fix the transitory, the ephemeral, in a stable and stabilizing image."[17]

However, the allegorical potential of photography, at least in relation to performance, has less to do with its primary documentary function than it does with photography's capacity for repetition. Owens tacitly acknowledges this when he observes that allegory concerns itself with structure as sequence. The result, he notes, "is not dynamic, but static, ritualistic, repetitive. It is thus the epitome of counter-narrative, for it arrests narrative in place."[18] This ritualistic and repetitive aspect of photography is particularly evident in Sorel Cohen's series, entitled *An Extended and Continuous Metaphor* (1982–1986). Each of the individual works in the group is a polyptych, organized hierarchically (a large central panel with smaller side panels), a break with Cohen's previous practice in which photographs were arranged sequentially or in a grid in order to convey movement. Clearly, the new arrangement was chosen precisely for its painterly connotations. The source alluded to, the Flemish altarpiece, employed the polyptych format for its narrative potential, to represent events in the Holy story. Through this archaic device (which also alludes to the descriptive function of photography, for Flemish art is also known among art historians for its descriptive realism), Cohen introduces her ostensible theme—the painter in the studio, a subject that, historically, invited the inquiring spectator to view a staged representation of the artistic process—while breaking apart the traditional narrative of painter, model/muse and spectator into a ritualistic succession of acts of looking.

Through her title, Cohen declares her intention, for "an extended and continuous metaphor" is one of the definitions of allegory. She speaks figuratively of performance through the language of painting, to make visible a transformation in the relationship of artist, object, and audience that has occurred in performance (the artist becomes both subject and object of the work), but she also speaks of



© Sorel Cohen, *An Extended and Continuous Metaphor #8* (1983), SODART (Montreal) 2005.

painting through the language of performance to describe the transformations in her own art practice as a woman artist. Her photographic performances can be read as a critique of painting, outmoded because its descriptive function has been supplanted by photography, and as rhetorical expressions of a feminist discourse challenging the conventional positioning of woman in patriarchal society through the institution of painting. However, a third reading, less obvious and more difficult to tease out, has to do with the re-working of the self-portrait/performance through specifically photographic means (double and triple exposures). Cohen's repeated figure, always identically and neutrally dressed, exposes her narrative as a fiction, and in so doing draws our attention away from the literal subject (the artist/model) and onto the formal and symbolic structure, constituted by the interlocking network of gazes. In place of the traditional gaze of the painter in the self-portrait, which met and mirrored that of the spectator, the circuit of looking in the photographs is framed and contained by an explicitly theatrical, black space, which abstracts and distances the subject. The work has become a system of signs, a text, and the authority of the author recedes before that of the reader.

Cohen's desire to speak of one mode of representation through another and her quotations from 19th century portraiture link her to another Montreal artist, Rober Racine, and in particular to his performance-installation *Entendre la Castiglione* (1983). Here one also sees one of the most fundamental impulses of allegory at work, in the re-animation of a relic of the past and in the reciprocity Racine attempts to establish between the visual and the verbal. Owens's description of the disregard for aesthetic categories in allegory, in which "words are often treated as purely visual phenomena, while visual images are offered as scripts to be deciphered,"[19] finds a parallel in Racine's characterization, in an article on "La *biopictura*", of his hybrid creation as "the life of the image through writing, and also the *voice* of the image towards its writing *out*, that is, its life."[20] Later in the same article Racine identifies the impulse behind his visual art work in terms strikingly close to those of the allegorist: "All this is born of a desire, a need to translate, to recreate a reading by means of a rewriting of a text, a visual or sound image."[21]

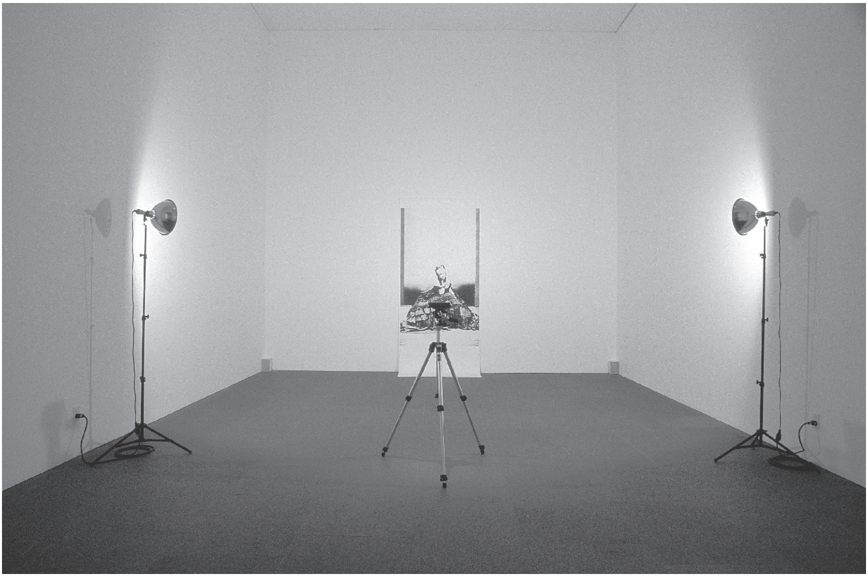
Entendre la Castiglione gives voice—the sound Racine aimed for was to be "grainy and blurred, rather like the quality of the earliest photographs"[22]—to a portrait of one of the most photographed persons of the 19th century, the Countess di Castiglione who, as the wife of an Italian diplomat and the mistress of the Emperor Napoleon III, briefly illuminated the French court with her beauty and her airs.[23] The performance takes the form of an imaginary photo session: an enlarged photograph stands in for the Countess herself, while a tripod in the middle of the room holds, instead of a camera, a tape recorder. When the tape recorder is activated in a movement analogous to the depression of the shutter button of a camera, we have before our ears an instantaneous "snap-shot" of the Countess's voice as it might have been, a trace of a trace. What Racine has called his visual essay, his *biopictura*, is an attempt to give space to the *bas de vignette* or caption that lends the photograph its documentary authority. For all its indeterminacy (the words spoken remain indecipherable, as does the image), Racine's performance-installation is an exercise *in fictivo* to represent the density of an encounter with History.

Whereas in *Entendre la Castiglione*, History is understood as a social and political constellation of events experienced by a briefly illustrious individual whose passage was subjectively embodied in elaborate self-representations, History in David Tomas's work takes on a larger and more impersonal significance. In a series of performed installations in which his body functioned as a "passive mechanized component,"[24] he addressed the transformations in Western vision that resulted from the invention of photography (and subsequent imaging systems from cinema and television to virtual reality). In opposition to this history, which emerged in the context of the Industrial Revolution, he proposed a counter-narrative, a negative history of photography that resisted the hegemony of subjects and images.

Crucial to this counter-narrative were two recurring elements in the installations: a stroboscope and a camera lucida. The stroboscope, directed towards the camera rather than illuminating a subject, filled the lens with light, producing a clear, imageless photograph that might be read as an iconic reduction of the photographic process to its essentials. The camera lucida, a pre-photographic drawing device, served as a technical interface that aided a draughtsman (Tomas), seated in the midst of the installation, to capture the blank photograph in a pencil drawing. This mimicry of the photographic process, which transforms the (positive) imageless photograph into a (negative) black square, constitutes an ironic commentary on William Henry Fox Talbot's description of the photograph as the "pencil of nature," while it also underlines the analogy between Tomas's gesture and Malevich's reduction of the history of representation in art to a painting of a black square in the early 20th century.

Tomas's recent description of his performed installations as three-dimensional commentaries modelled on the idea of a text[25] and the importance of the counternarrative to his work relate it to allegory on a number of levels. Allegorical strategies, including the displacement of significant historical references such as Harrison's globe lens or the Burlington Zephyr train (each an example of an important advance in the history of 19th century photographic and 20th century transportation technologies, respectively) into a new, ritualistic context, contribute to a meta-discourse on the transformations of Western vision in which the artist's body plays a key role. On the one hand, his body is embedded in the technological environment of the installation, its actions completely determined by a mechanical system of which it is but a component. On the other hand, through the camera lucida, an instrument that explicitly links hand and eye, it is part of an embodied economy of vision that contradicts the separation of body and consciousness figured by the imaging systems of modern Western society, from photography to virtual reality. It is this contradiction that allows us to read the product of Tomas's labour, the all-black drawing, as an erasure and gesture of resistance instead of a sign of futility and meaninglessness.

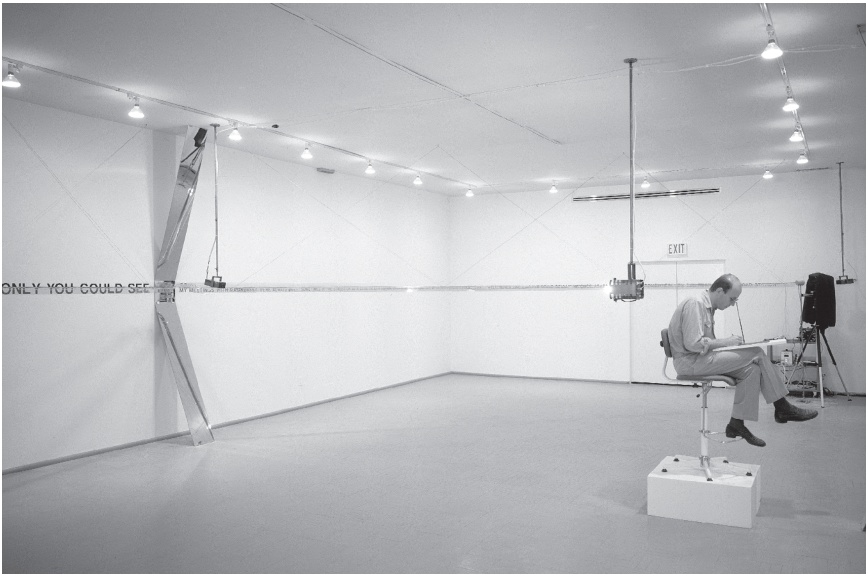
In writing about Tomas's installation *Behind the Eye Lies the Hand of William Henry Fox Talbot* (1984), Mark Lewis observed that it could be read in terms of a history of works that questioned the site of the museum, although he continued that this was the work's least interesting reading.[26] True, this might not be a primary meaning, but the installation represents an intersection of the histories of art, photography and anthropology that does mime the museum's own discourse, albeit critically. From this point of view, Tomas's and Racine's installations, because of their impermanent character, are the most opposed to



© Rober Racine, *Entendre la Castiglione* (1982–83).
Photo credit: National Gallery of Canada /
Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography.

the museum's history of objects, to which it endows not only a historical but also an iconic significance. However, when the array of practices briefly discussed in this article is considered, it is clear that their discursive and critical aspect is what links them; as Chantal Pontbriand wrote in 1983, "By … making question upon question constantly surface, performance is a critical intervention which destabilizes the art system while baffling it."[27] So many questions reveal the uncertainty of knowledge at a particular historical moment, the loss of authority of any single discipline or medium. Photography and video, because of their relatively short activity within the history of art and their inherently discursive character, which lends itself to extension in space or time, are natural vehicles for performance's act of interrogation.

This discussion of performance in relation to photography and video has focussed on artists from Montreal and Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s. Even within these limited parameters it is too incomplete to be a history; only a few artists have been mentioned, and there has been little space in which to consider either the context in which the work emerged or its development over time. Nevertheless, a few commonalities may be noted. Montreal and Toronto were major art centres in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s when serious art was defined as abstract painting. Only a handful of artists of an older generation had practices that pointed to the hybridity that was to be a feature of the new work, among them Françoise Sullivan and Charles Gagnon in Montreal, Michael Snow and Joyce Wieland in Toronto, and Les Levine, briefly, in both places. Performance art emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in both Montreal and Toronto in response to social changes as well as artistic ones: the rise of the counter culture and feminism, opposition to the war in Vietnam, French language rights, and questions of censorship come to mind. The establishment of artist-run spaces in both cities that were hospitable to work that was not object-based gave the new work an institutional base. Superficially a distinction can be traced, based on an apparent preference for video in Toronto and photography in Montreal, but given the questioning of the boundaries between disciplines and media this is hardly an issue. Indeed, what does seem constant throughout the work are the oppositions and contradictions each artist raises—between truth and falsehood or the public and the private,


ONLY YOU COULD SEE
MY MEETINGS WITH
EXIT

© David Tomas, *Behind the Eye Lies the Hand of William Henry Fox Talbot* (1984), courtesy of the artist.
Photo credit: Alex Neumann, Toronto.

between silence and speech, between the decision to act or to be passive, between nature or culture, television or art, painting or photography, between experience and representation, between the death of the machine and the life of the body. It is in throwing open these alternatives that the hybrid practices in both cities give shape to the unstable, borderline situation that is the essence of performance.

NOTES

1. Chantal Pontbriand, “Notion(s) of Performance,” in AA Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds., *Performance by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1979), p. 10. [« … on peut considérer que la notion de la performance est une caractéristique fondamentale du post-modernisme. Pour ce, il faut prendre comme prémisse que le post-modernisme correspond à la remise en question de langages, de codes établis, au décloisonnement des disciplines, à l’éclatement des structures hiérarchisantes entre l’institution — le producteur — le produit — le récepteur. »]
2. Ibid.
3. Pontbriand, p. 22. [« …elle nous confronte à la chose directement, et non pas à sa représentation. »]
4. Willoughby Sharp, “Body Works,” *Avalanche* 1 (Fall 1970), p. 14.
5. These characterizations of late 1960s and 1970s performance work are discussed in Willoughby Sharp, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–17; Cindy Nemser, “Subject-Object: Body Art,” *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 46 (Sept/Oct 1971), pp. 38–42; and Max Kozloff, “Pygmalion Reversed,” *Artforum*, Vol. 14 (Nov 1975), pp. 30–37.
6. Les Levine, “Camera Art,” *Studio International*, Vol. 190 (July 1975), p. 52. Levine’s article was originally published in 1974 in a catalogue for an exhibition organized by the artist-run gallery Optica in Montreal.
7. See Stuart Marshall, “Strategies of Dissemblance,” in Bruce Ferguson, *Colin Campbell: Media Works 1972–1990*, exh. cat. (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1991), p. 25–26, for a discussion of this history.
8. In principle, this gain is always present as an element of performance, but it is most obvious when the artist deliberately assumes the risk of losing control inherent in such a contingent context, as Suzy Lake and Max Dean did in their performances at a festival sponsored by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in 1978. See Peter Froelich, “Blurbs,” *Parachute* 12 (Autumn 1979), pp. 10–12 for a detailed description of these performances.
9. The expression of the emotions has long been of interest to artists who desired to heighten the veracity of their depictions and evoke feelings of sympathy in the viewer. In the 19th century scientists turned to photography as an objective tool with which they could understand the nature of movement of all kinds, including the fleeting emotions that pass over the face so quickly that they were difficult to seize in accurate detail. Charles Darwin, writing on the expression of “low spirits, anxiety, grief, dejection, despair” in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872) had recourse to the scientific photographs of Dr. G.-B. Duchenne, who found that by stimulating the muscles of the face with electrical impulses he could create the expressions that only the most skilled of actors could reproduce at will. It is interesting to note the close resemblance of the expression of grief and anxiety illustrated in this work by one of Duchenne’s photographs of a young actor to an expression that occurs several times in Suzy Lake’s *Are You Talking to Me?*
10. Max Dean, “Pass it on,” in Chantal Pontbriand, ed., *Performance Text(e)s & Documents*. Conference proceedings. (Montreal: Parachute, 1981), p. 191. Other comments by the artist via e-mail to the author, July 5, 2004.
11. Philip Fry, “Max Dean: Three Projects and the Theory of Open Art,” *Parachute* 14 (Spring 1979), p. 16.

12. General Idea, “Towards an Audience Vocabulary,” *Centerfold*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (December 1978), p. 14.
13. This and other quotes are from the unpublished script of General Idea’s *Test Tube*, General Idea Archive, manuscripts section, National Gallery of Canada Library.
14. David Buchan, *Modern Fashions or An Introduction to the Language of Partial Seduction*, exh. cat. (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1979), np.
15. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 33.
16. Craig Owens, “The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism,” in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (New York: The New Museum, with David R. Godine, Publisher, Inc., Boston, 1984), pp. 203–235. I am indebted to Robert Graham’s article, “Veiled Relations: The Fabric of Sorel Cohen’s Work,” in Gilles Godmer, *Sorel Cohen…et les ateliers de femmes (où se jouent les regards)*, exh. cat. (Montreal: Musée d’art contemporain, 1986) for drawing my attention to this reference.
17. Ibid., p. 207.
18. Ibid., p. 207–208.
19. Ibid., p. 208.
20. Rober Racine, “La biopictura” *Études françaises*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1985), p. 59. [« La *biopictura* est la vie de l’image par l’écriture. C’est également la *v*oix d’une image vers son *é*criture. »]
21. Ibid., p. 60. [« Tout cela naît d’un désir, d’un besoin de traduire, de recréer une lecture par le biais d’une réécriture d’un texte, d’une image sonore ou visuelle. »]
22. Rober Racine, “Entendre la Castiglione,” *OKanada*, original texts for German-language catalogue to the OKanada exhibition at Academie der Künste, Berlin (Ottawa: The Canada Council, 1982), p. 270.
23. One of the best sources of information on the enigmatic Countess, who left around 500 photographs of herself that can properly be described as precursors of the 20th-century performance for the camera, is Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “The Legs of the Countess,” *October*, No. 39 (Winter 1986), pp. 65–108.
24. David Tomas, “Art, Psychasthenic Assimilation, and the Cybernetic Automaton,” in Chris Hables Gray, ed. *The Cyborg Handbook* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), p. 255–256. The most fully realized installation was *Behind the Eye Lies the Hand of William Henry Fox Talbot*, performed over a three-week period in 1984 at the S.L. Simpson Gallery in Toronto. A less elaborate version, entitled *Photography: A Word*, had been presented a year earlier at the Yajima Gallery in Montreal.
25. Ibid., p. 256.
26. Mark Lewis, “Behind the Eye,” *Borderlines*, No. 2 (Spring 1985), p. 7.
27. Chantal Pontbriand, *Three in Performance: Sylvie Panet-Raymond and Michel Lemieux, Marshalore, Elizabeth Chitty*, exh. cat. (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 1983), p. 6.

Rebecca Schneider

Still Living: Performance, Photography, and *Tableaux Vivants*

Performance poses problems when thinking about photography. Photography poses problems to performance. We commonly parse the mediums (performance is not photography; photography is not performance) in line with notions of the "live." We are habituated to thinking of performance as live, composed in a linear temporality that moves from a past through a present to a future. We consider the live to be radically contingent, taking place only in present time, and passing away into the past (and the no longer live) at each moment. Performance supposedly disappears "as fast as it is made" and the record supposedly indicates: no longer live.[1] The live occurs as photography records: "a time that passes without return."[2] Photography and cinema seem to function, writes Mary Ann Doane, "first and foremost as a record," as they primarily deal, she argues, with a compulsion particular to modernity: "the problematic and contradictory task of archiving the present."[3]

We generally assume that material objects such as photographs or texts, or anything archive-able, remain and give evidence to the passing of acts and events in nonrecurring, linear time. Thus, we are habituated to think of performance as that which eludes capture because it is (re)composed in living time and so we are comfortable saying that a film or a photograph is a record of the live, but not itself the performance, nor itself live. While something of the performance is captured, the live aspect—its in-timeness—appears to elude arrest. We consider (perhaps shortsightedly) that a moment is past (no longer live) the moment an image appears to remain—appears, that is, to *still*.[4]

Despite ever increasing capabilities of manipulation, we persist in the notion that photography offers a record, a proof (however unstable) that "that was there" or "that took place" or "that was performed" (theatrical or otherwise). We approach the photograph forgetting its place in the live moment of our approach and remember it only as detritus of the live, its fossil—an indication of absence, though tangible and present—rather than a participant in the live scene of an image's (re)enactment. Photography, not live, appears to offer solid proof of performance's instant degeneracy, its "corruption," (Bazin) rather than an ongoing scene of the image in passing—a passing that is resolutely live. Often, in fact, theatre artists and historians are extremely wary of photography—as if the kindred medium were entirely threatening.[5]

If the live moves by, passing on or bypassing, we consider the camera a black box of capture. And yet, the logic is still theatrical—the camera affords a means to lift a moment into a frame, to afford a flash out of the stream of things, to hold a "beat"—an intake of breath in a still—before moving on, past one shot, one photo, to another and another, like turning pages in a book, or walking through a photo gallery. In this, the camera shares a considerable amount with theatre—despite our habit of considering theatre a medium of the (disappearing) live and photography a medium of remain. Their interconnection—their interanimation—is forgotten, especially when photography's history is considered to *begin* with modernity, or the 19th century coining of the word, and especially when performance is only approached as primarily ephemeral. Rather, both photography and theatre participate in the ambivalent gesture of the time lag (or time sway), a gesture that *shows itself*, by virtue of the still, *to be a gesture—to have posture, to enunciate*. That posture, that enunciation, does not solely happen in past time, nor singularly in present time, but steers a wobbly course through repetition and *reappearance*—a reappearance rife with all the tangled stuff of difference/sameness that anachronism, or syncopated time, can muster. This successful "error" of anachronism is the potential and promise *not* of archival stasis (the imperial myth *par excellence*) but of living in revision.

Though Homi Bhabha is not writing directly on photography or theatre in the following passage, his notion of the "time lag" is indebted to the writings of Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin on those media. In this passage, the ready linear logic that separates "dead" from "live" is undone in a hybrid, or ambivalent, take:

> It is the function of the lag to slow down the linear, progressive time of modernity to reveal its 'gesture', its tempi, 'the pauses and stresses of the whole performance.' This can only be achieved—as Walter Benjamin remarked of Brecht's epic theatre—by damming the stream of real life, by bringing the flow to a standstill in a reflux of astonishment. When the dialectic of modernity is brought to a standstill, then the temporal action of modernity—its progressive, future drive—is staged, revealing 'everything that is involved in the act of staging per se.' This slowing down, or lagging, impels the 'past', projects it, gives its 'dead' symbols the circulatory life of the 'sign' of the present, of passage, the quickening of the quotidian. Where these temporalities touch contingently, their spatial boundaries metonymically overlapping, at that moment their margins are lagged, sutured, by the indeterminate articulation of the 'disjunctive' present. *Time-lag keeps alive the making of the past.*[6]

In both Barthes and Benjamin, the relation between live performance and the posthumous shock of a photograph is figured more in apposition than opposition. Barthes famously penned that, "It is not by Painting (it seems to me) that Photography touches art, but by Theatre."[7] And certainly the 20th century trend toward theatricality, repetition, and the overt or "literal" pose of reenactment in the genderqueer works of Hoch, Molinier, Warhol, Mapplethorpe, Morimura, Sherman, Levine and many others, forge overt alliances and drive home the fact that photography is performative.[8]

Theatre's history winks behind the scenes of photography (and cinema).[9] Photography, in many ways, reenacts basic legacies of Western theatre—working from within the historical logic of Western theatre practice to an extraordinary degree[10]—a point to which I will return. But for Barthes, the "touch" between theatre and photography is not one that articulates the shared history, architectural legacy and recurring logic of the ancient Western *theatron* (place for viewing) in and through photography, but rather one that fetishizes a connection through loss. For Barthes it is Death the Leveller that conjoins theatre and photography, in that to him both forms accede that any live act is always already more shadow than substance. This Platonic investment in the shadow-work of mimesis is apparently a "given" that theatre enacts through the mask work of the double, and that photography underscores by exposing the evidentiary claim of "X is here before the camera" to be a winking clone of "X is dead." In this wink of ambivalence (Barthes's mother is both there and not there in his cherished photograph) lies photography's essential theatricality—it both is, and is not.

Of course it is interesting to question the degree to which the growth of photography fuelled the habit of considering performance to be essentially ephemeral—passing away. It is surely the case that, contrary to this assumption, performance and live arts in general can be and have been approached as a mode of remaining, in distinction to loss or disappearance—at least as persistent as any statue or canvas, script or celluloid print.[11] Indeed, contemporary artists blur performance with photography (and photography with performance) so volubly that Barthes's ennobled place of disappearance, loss and death arguably comes undone in an ebullient (or horrifying) emphasis on reenactment, recurrence and repetition. If this undoing sounds medieval, or rings of carnival—it should. I will argue here, quite briefly, that what photography and performance share is not (or not only) the model of Death-as-loss romanced by Barthes as the impossibility of return, but that they also share the rowdier processional or street theatre legacy of theatrical irruption—instability, repetition, the processional freeze, the by-pass—that undoes too easy archive-driven determinations of what disappears and what remains. This is the shared pre- and re-enactment of *tableaux* *vivants*, or living stills, that scholars have sometimes noted in that terrain called theatre history.

Most historical accounts of photography focus on technology — citing Renaissance and ignoring ancient camera obscura, followed by an account of 19th century chemicals of capture. It is compelling, perhaps, to herald technological innovation ("new media") as radical, and to claim for photographic technology, as Jonathan Crary does, a "transformation in the nature of visuality probably more profound than the break that separates medieval imagery from Renaissance perspective."[12] Of course, the "break" between medieval imagery and Renaissance perspective can be narrated as far from clean—as George Kernodle narrates in a much under-appreciated book *From Art to Theatre*, and as Hubert Damisch carefully explores (occasionally drawing on Kernodle) in his tomic *The Origin of Perspective*. While I do not want to argue against rupture or thwart the privilege to mark historical discontinuity, I would advocate an increase in analysis less enamoured of technology's supposed originality. I suspect that the "still" in theatrical reenactment—especially in the heritage of *tableaux vivants*—offers an invitation (beyond the scope of this essay) to constitute the historical tale differently. Troubling the habitual line of binary opposition between "the live" and the "archival remain" might provoke us, even if momentarily, to look differently at the photos we pass by everyday—whether hung in museums, plastered on billboards, scrunched in frames on our desk, on magnets on our fridge, glossed on the covers of magazines, packed away in drawers, embedded in archives, or lolling about like sirens waiting for surfers on the Web. This is an invitation, in other words, to go in search of "photographs" in the live space of temporal lag—in the processionals of the Middle Ages, for example[13]—and instead of looking for shrouds (the Photography-equals-Death school of thought), to listen for photography's kin in living practices.

A Small History of *Tableaux Vivants*

It is common to refer, at least cursorily, to theatre's influence on photography. Barthes reminds his readers that when Daguerre took over from Niepce he was running a panorama theatre at the Place du Chateau. But the echoes are far more substantial than Daguerre's day job. We hear, more often, that the camera obscura evolved from the arts of the Western Stage, specifically the structure of the Greek theatre with its architectural screen. The screen and *theatron* were appropriated by the Roman Empire, the Hellenistic inheritance dutifully articulated and developed by Vitruvius in 20 B.C. Vitruvius's writings were lost, rediscovered, and then "developed" by Alberti in the mid 15th century to become perspective. This is the point at which "perspective" forgot one alignment to adopt another—Painting—despite the fact that the (re)introduction of the architectural screen occurred in "imitation of the Greek theatre."[14]

George Kernodle, in his 1944 tracing of the influence of the Greek theatre on visual art and then the influence of painting and sculpture on the Renaissance stage, writes (citing Margarete Bieber) that the "remains of the theatres at Ostia, Palmyra, Ephesus, and Aspendos indicate that immediately above the central doorway of the stage was a niche for paying special honor to a statue."[15] Placement of statuary within niches in the architectural screen, or theatre background (*scenae frons*), in Rome was a citation of the Greek practice of placing statuary in the theatre. Now, let me remind my reader I am not interested here in mapping for patrimony or arguing "who did what first."[16] Rather, I am interested in undoing the distinction between live arts and photography that relies on an (historically faulty) absolutist distinction between live arts and remains. The niche for statuary reminds us quite fulsomely how the "live" occurred not as distinct from but in direct relation to the place of the frozen, or stilled, yet quite observant watching statues. Animate and inanimate, flesh and stone, moving and stilled, are not in this sense diametrically opposed as much as part and parcel, historically, of a mimetic exchange, an inter(in)animation. The back and forth between statuary and audience and actor is one with a long and recurrent history worth further analysis as a back-story to the (ritual) place of the "still" in Western visual culture.

Kernodle argues that the medieval *tableaux vivants* kept certain habits of ancient theatre in practice—specifically the flat screen and scene—even when permanent theatres did not exist. Frozen scenes of living participants, *tableaux vivants* were often designed for the view of the sovereign, and as such were precursors of the development of perspective in the Renaissance. But living tableaux had also appeared as biblical stories carried in Corpus Christi processions, not primarily for the sovereign, but for each parishioner or participant in view of the passage.[17] As such, many living tableaux were encountered *in passing*, in that either the performance remained still and the viewer passed by (such as a King upon entrance to a city), or the viewer might remain still as live actors, as surrogate statues, passed by on wagons. Interestingly, as much as any photograph, living stills often blurred the space between art and life (perhaps because that space was not as distinct as it would become with modernity). An "actor" standing in a role in medieval tableaux might very well "play" that same part in life. That is, the actor cast to hammer the nails into Christ's hands might well be an actual nailwright. So the picture of the biblical labourer is a picture of the contemporary labourer—and in this way, surrogacy is coupled with actuality.[18] This is precisely the logic of the photograph, by which Barthes could say, "This, here, is my mother"; and at the same time say, "My mother is not here."

At Ghent in 1458 a series of *tableaux vivants* were presented for Philip of Burgundy's entrance to the city. The star attraction was a still-live scene of the painting of the Cathedral of St. Bavon. Kernodle offers the following description: "On a stage fifty feet long and thirty-eight feet high, built in three stories and covered by a white curtain, was a reproduction of a living tableau of the 'Adoration of the Lamb,' painted a few decades before by the brothers van Eyck."[19] What's interesting about considering the living tableau of the van Eyck painting is that one cannot claim that the living tableau is any more reenactment than pre-enactment—nor the painting any more pre-enactment than reenactment.[20] The difficulty of "which came first" becomes apparent when one considers the symbolism of the painting, and the figure of the Lamb at its heart. The central figure of the Lamb stands not only for Christ's sacrifice on the cross in a temporal past, but the Lamb also symbolizes the reenactment of that sacrifice in the Mass, and the viewer of the painting is given to see the Lamb's life-blood pouring into a chalice (the site of reenactment being the church). At the centre of the piece then, is a figure for reenactment/preenactment, or ritual remaining. To *reenact* the painting live is to follow the painting as a script, or pre-enactment, but a preenactment that situates reenactment as its very topic. Live or not-live here becomes an absurd distinction, whereas repetition and *remains by means of performance* takes on increased valency. In this case, live performance is indeed the still that articulates not a distinction between remaining and disappearing, or life and death, but an inter(in)animation of registers that is *ongoing by still passing*.

NOTES

1. In 1985 Richard Schechner, building on Herbert Blau among others, wrote that "performance originals disappear as fast as they are made." He made a call: "One of the chief jobs challenging performance scholars is the making of a vocabulary and methodology that deal with performance in its immediacy and evanescence." [Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 50.] Following Schechner's lead, Peggy Phelan claimed in 1993 that performance "becomes itself through disappearance," and her subsequent influential work has been involved in establishing the called for "vocabulary and methodology" of Performance Studies. [Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 146.] In 2004 Phelan declared that " it is impossible, even now, to discuss live performance without also talking about death." [For a brief history of the ephemeralization of performance see Rebecca Schneider, "Performance Remains." *Performance Research* 6, no. 2, 2001.]

2. Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

3. Doane also reminds her readers of the frequent thanatical means for expressing photography's relationship to time. André Bazin writes that photographic technology "embalms time, rescuing it simply from its proper corruption" while Thierry de Duve uses the word "petrified" [in Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 3, 209]. We can recall as well Walter Benjamin's reference to photography's "posthumous shock" [Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs I Baudelaire," *Illustrations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 175] and Jean Cocteau's comment that the camera films "death at work" [in Victor Burgin, *In/Different Places: Place and Memory in Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 85.]

4. Myriad performance artists over the 20th century have troubled this proposition by creating "durational" events that explore a kind of ongoing quality to performance, unsettling easy distinctions between that which is live and passing and that which remains. We can consider work of Linda Montano, Marina Abramovics and other life-art practitioners in this regard. [For important thoughts on the still (over time) see Henry Sayre, *The Object of Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) and "In the Space of Duration." In *Live: Art and Performance*, ed. Adrian Heathfield (London: Tate Modern, 2004).]

5. Consider the following from Barbara Hodgdon: The theatrical still is "the visible remains of what is no longer visible, a fragment that steals theater, stills it—and dis-stills it. Considered as performance in pieces, the theater photograph undertakes a visual conversation with performance: silent, impoverished, partial, it seizes appearances, violently severs them from their original context; inseparable from and traversed by the lived experience of theater, it requires anecdote, narrative, to supplement it." [Barbara Hodgdon, "Photography, Theater, Mnemonics; or, Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Still." In *Theorizing Practice: Redefining Theatre History*, eds. W.B. Worthen and Peter Holland (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2003), p. 89.]

6. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 254. Emphasis mine.

7. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 31.

8. On photography as performative see the compelling essay "Death Masks" by Carol-Anne Tyler. ["Death Masks." In *Rrose is a Rrose is a Rrose: Gender Performance in Photograph*, ed. Jennifer Blessing (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1997). I use the word "literal" here to ring with Michael Fried's disparaging use of that term as linked to degenerate theatricality in 1967. [Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" *Artforum* 5 (June). Rpt. in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)]. Interestingly, for this essay, in "What is an "Image", W.J.T. Mitchell reminds us of Wittgenstein's use of tableaux vivants as an instance of "literal" sense-making. [W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 21.]

9. Photography's theatrical lineage is often disparaged. Due to photography and cinema's bids for high art status, the kinship with theatre has often been down-played, if not outright denied. With alarming consistency over time, theatre is considered, in the words of Hans Richter, a "contaminating art." [Richter cited in Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 4–14)]. On antitheatricality historically see Jonas Barish, *Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). For a contemporary example, see the work of Michael Fried generally. The seeming threat of theatre is fascinating, and may be linked to the unruly (unsanitary and feminized) status of the fleshed body, as well as to the figure of indiscrete duplication. See Rebecca Schneider, "Hello Dolly Well Hello Dolly: The Double and Its Theatre" in *Performance and Psychoanalysis*, eds. Adrian Kear and Patrick Campbell (New York: Routledge, 2001).

10. I dwell here on Western theatrical roots, not to suggest that photography can only be read in relation to Western practices, but because the after-effect of the Greek *theatron* as continually replayed root mode for Western "symbolic form" in modernity's "visual culture" has been enormous. [See Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher S.Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1991)]. The replay of Hellenic architecture in Vitruvius's Roman *De architectura*, and the long life of the "screen" and "scene" are what interest me here. However, it is imperative to remember that Western theatre history, with its "mainstage" privileging of bicameral vision, is not a universal theatrical form, and not a singular heritage even within the West. [On the "mainstage" aspect of Western theatre history see Susan Bennett, "Decomposing History," in *Theorizing Practice: Redefining Theatre History*, eds. W.B. Worthen and Peter Holland (London: Palgrave McMillan, 2003)]. In this way Western theatre history generally produces a different, more ocularcentric narrative than theatre history in global perspective, or historics of "performance" arts. Think only of the ancient Indian theatre's emphasis on *rasa* (taste, smell). Think as well of the nonbicameral playing modalities of Africa, the emphasis on rhythm and sounding and syncopated time [see Margaret Thompson Drewal, *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989)]. I say "Western" too, to avoid universal and transhistorical claims about the science of perspective. The desire to universalize perspective to human vision and to place it outside of history rings with the following passage by Indra Kagis McEwen, scholar of Vitruvius. McEwen writes: "The transhistorical voice that many English-speaking historians continue to hear in Vitruvius may sound universal precisely because it is Roman. Which is precisely what apologists for the imperial Roman order, Vitruvius among them, intended." [McEwen, *Vitruvius: Writing the Body of Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p. 5.]

11. Rebecca Schneider, “Performance Remains.” *Performance Research* 6, no. 2, 2001.

12. Jonathan Crary, *Technologies of the Viewer* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 1.

13. Carolyn Dinshaw’s work has been suggestive to me, encouraging me in the perhaps odd project of listening for medieval photography, in part by the way Dinshaw listens to Roland Barthes [Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).]

14. George Kernodle, *From Art to Theatre* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1944), p. 13.

15. Ibid. p. 29, see also pp. 36, 39. I am grateful to Don Wilmeth for discussions on Kernodle and *tableaux vivants*.

16. Kernodle said it well: “We must not cry paternity where there is only cousinship.” (*From Art to Theatre*), p. 4. Cousinship is a more generative cry in any case.

17. Kernodle is concerned mainly with stationary pictures employing architectural facades such as those composed by the Chambers of Rhetoric. It is primarily the architectural facades that he links backward to classical Greek theatre and forward to perspectival painting and the Renaissance stage. Kernodle considers *“tableaux vivants”* in distinction to processional forms of medieval religious drama (*From Art to Theatre*), p. 17. I am, here, interested in considering processional tableaux as well as the stationary pictures. In fact it is the processional aspect—the still in passage—that I find most compelling.

18. Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theatre of Cruelty* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 189.

19. George Kernodle, *From Art to Theatre* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1944), p. 65.

20. On ‘preenactment’ and *tableaux vivants* see Kernodle, *From Art to Theatre,* pp. 39, 56.

Karen Henry

The Photograph as Performance

Performance recognizes itself as a progeny of theatre, developing as it did in the early twentieth century out of a reaction to the bourgeois form of theatre as entertainment. At the core of performance is a dialogue about authenticity, both as expression based in the body and a unique set of circumstances, and as a non-reproducable, non-marketable art form. Performance has been characterized as "real" in relation to the photograph as document. At the same time, performance is dependent on photography or video as evidence and historical record. The conditions of its existence and the visual economies in which it resides have predetermined this relationship. On closer inspection, the photographic image has played a varied and integral part in the exploration of authenticity and art through performance.

This text identifies examples of the oppositional and symbiotic relationships between performance art, theatricality and photography in two eras: the late 1960s and the late 1990s. As a brief exploration, the text does not presume to be comprehensive in characterizing either the times or the artists' work but does discuss particular artworks that show how theatricality frames the view in both eras.

Real Life: The Photograph as Experience

Representation without Illusion

In the mid 20th century, modern painting and sculpture, as a unified aesthetic and highly individualistic field of art production, were being challenged by minimalist sculpture, conceptual practices, pop art and the rise of photographic media which, by nature, fragmented time. In an effort to articulate an argument for the purity of modern art forms, critic Michael Fried, a disciple of Clement Greenberg, wrote the essay “Art and Objecthood” (June, 1967, *Artforum*) defending the aesthetic coherence of the contemplative, self-sufficient art object, one that was instantaneously perceived and “wholly manifest” to the viewer, aloof from the specificity of place and time.[1] His essay criticized minimal art for its self-conscious affirmation of objecthood and the use of forms in series that brought in a notion of time. These attributes, Fried felt, served to make the object “theatrical” in that it was contingent on the relationships to the viewer and time (through repetition and series) as duration. The effort to maintain a space for the authenticity of the timeless integrated object failed in the context of the runaway influence of global media and the saturation of imagery to come. The text was seminal, however, in helping to define the terms to which much of the new art could react and in identifying anti-theatricality as a general attitude of the times and the measure of authenticity. The debate developed around this dialectic of the purity of absorption (Fried’s term) on the one hand, and theatricality on the other.[2] Though theatricality took many forms, it generally came to mean without artifice, the search for the pure, authentic creative act, unfettered by the art market or the artist’s own ego. The artists involved in performance activities (and photography), however, sought legitimacy in the very things that Fried criticized—they questioned the separation of art and life and the role of the artist, and affirmed the nature of time as fragmented and situated in individual experience.

Allan Kaprow’s early work in performance predates Fried’s article but operates within this same aesthetic milieu. Kaprow’s influential teachers were Meyer Schapiro and John Cage, both of whom were outside the formal modernist canon. Schapiro’s critique of capitalism and industrial culture influenced Kaprow’s effort to reengage a critical social practice in art through performance. He sought an aesthetic that moved away from a system "designed for passive, detached, individuals"[3] and promoting the artist's ego, to one that was democratized, based in a process in which viewers were actively involved and the artwork was a conduit.[4] Through Cage, Kaprow incorporated the elements of chance and time. Thus the creative process and the desired effect, while initially scripted by the artist, was part of a more intuitive, shared, conscious, and ultimately infinite, process of possibilities related to life. Kaprow was probably also influenced in the 1960s by the growing interest in Zen Buddhism that the Fluxus artists of the time were involved in.

For Kaprow, non-theatricality was defined through the association with banal activities ("life-like" as opposed to "art-like") and by an art experience based in action and real time. "An artist choosing to make non-art performances simply has to know what theatrical performances are and avoid doing them, quite consciously."[5] Authenticity in art was outside the rarified object or image and within the unique shared experience of the artwork. Ironically it involved an idea of absorption in the everyday that echoed Fried's identification of the painting of figures absorbed in banal activities in French genre painting as the precursor of modernism:[6] it was this goal of absorption within itself, and thereby the achievement of non-theatricality, that defined the successful work of performance as well as the successful modern object. Both, in fact, sought a universally accessed and complete art experience while defining the experience in oppositional terms.

Kaprow became adamantly opposed to the objectification of photographs as documentation of his performance events. He distrusted the growing popularity of the early Happenings and their promotion as spectacle through television and documentary photographs. Firstly, the photograph could in no way capture the multi-layered experience of a Happening. More problematically, the presence of a photographer represented an outside view and affected the participants so that they were acting rather than experiencing. In response to these concerns, he began doing actions or Activities involving only the participants, though often in a public place. Photographs, however, still played a role. Sometimes they were part of a script for the event itself (though ironically parts of the event had to have been performed already in order for the photographs to be taken). He saw the photos as a "neutral language" in which to convey instructions, like musical notes. In other instances, photographs were taken of each other by the participants themselves and were intended to add a dimension of self-awareness to the experience, in the same way that mirrors were used.[7] Photographs became an extension of the performance, a way of indexing vision. In the case of these "non-art" performances, when the viewer is in the performance and the actions may be associated with everyday activities, the photograph is part of what separates this activity from other non-aesthetic kinds of actions, "doing life, consciously" as Kaprow described it.[8] The photographs in these instances were not seen as documents, but as fragments, artifacts that were a partial record of the event.

In the late 60s, as Kaprow's performance actions became more conceptual and less group productions, photographs became a more prominent part of the event, most symbolically in *Record II for Roger Shattuck* (1968), the text of which reads:

> breaking big rocks
> photographing them
>
> silvering big rocks
> photographing them
>
> scattering the photos
> with no explanation[9]

In this script, it could be said that art becomes photography through performance. Silvering the rocks (Kaprow used aluminum foil) is associated with the "silvering" process of making the photograph, the classic silver halide print. The "record" of the title seems to privilege the photograph, implying the breaking up of form (including the material relations of this change and the breaking up of time by the photographs) and replacement of this with the image, an artifact of vision arrested in time, requiring "no explanation," and scattered, like the fragments they are. In an inversion of value, the photographs survive over form. The photographs and the script become the performance.[10] Kaprow continued to use photography as a means of engagement with everyday life, as an authentic, though not object-based, index of vision.

Concurrently photographers were exploring this role of the photograph as an extension of vision. One prominent example is Jeff Wall's *Landscape Manual* (1970), a photographic document of the urban environment. The photographs, taken at random from a moving car, were a means of indexing the "defeatured" sameness of the late 20th century urban environment.[11] As opposed to consciously framed and aestheticized images, these pictures participated in the idea of an endless and ongoing sight index. Randomness was a strategy that sought freedom from the architecture of language and aesthetic value and some authenticity in relation to vision.

These artists operated within a critique of the art system and the larger relations of industrial modernism, along with influences of popular democracy and Zen Buddhism prominent during this time. (The 1960s were the apex of post-war idealism.) They sought a legitimate creative process through separating themselves from the reification of the artist and the marketplace of objects. The photographic was literally performative in that it represented a fragment of a larger context of research and seeing, an extension of the body as the legitimate site of experience and knowledge. As such, the photograph shared the same non-object space as performance and was non-theatrical in that it was without artifice and absorbed in the everyday. At the same time these works were tangential to Fried's idea of theatricality in that their very essence was in relational time and duration.

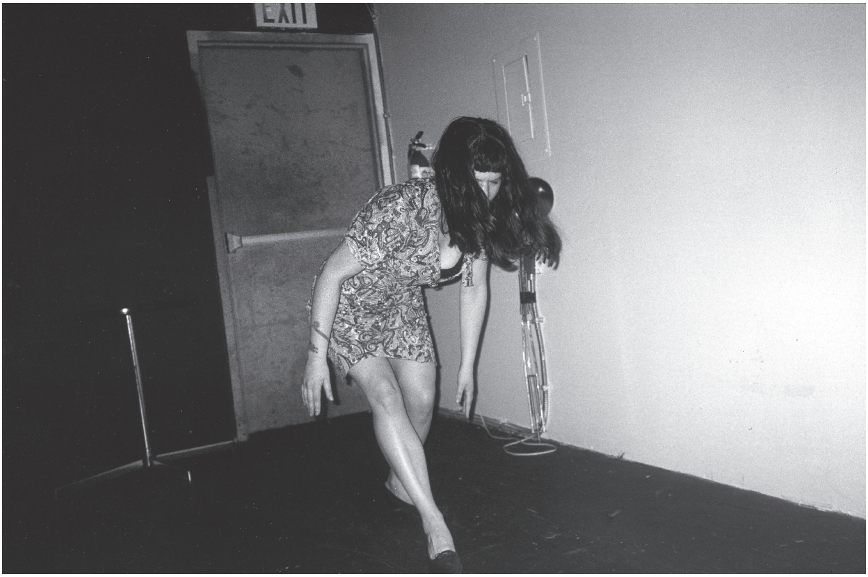
Real Life: The Performance as Photograph

Illusion as representation

Fast forward to the beginning of the 21st century. Performance practices have become more and more "mediatized," moving away from the physical body of the performer(s) as the site of legitimacy to a gestalt of projections and presence. This trend participates in the general disintegration of any substantial definition of authenticity or stability brought about by the increasing fragmentation of information inherent in digital technologies, offering opportunities for transient and invented identities and seamless combinations of images. As well, the pervasiveness of security cameras everywhere, in banks, stores, streets and homes, has encouraged the feeling of acting in everyday life. The slippage between real and representation is, in fact, the "real" circumstance of contemporary times, encouraging the embrace of theatricality as a condition of life, as represented in popular media by reality TV. Philip Auslander argues that media has colonized the idea of live to the extent that it has become "naturalized" and exists in an "ontology of liveness," with characteristics of immediacy and intimacy associated with live events. So much so that in fact the "real" is modelled on the media.[12] The photographs of Cindy Sherman in the late 1970s and early 1980s were seminal to this idea of identity defined through re-enacting the roles of cinema. Photography in art has evolved to embrace the cinematic.

As performance and the photograph have both lost their credible referents, they have become part of the fictions that artists create in order to work with the underlying illusions of representation. Artist Judy Radul has taken this as a license to play with the boundaries and definitions that have defined performance art, photography, and theatre and their various means of address. As she states, "My struggle is to create a continuous relationship between the event and the photograph. To do this I choose to play with some of the fictional aspects of both performance and photography."[13] In this arena, the strategy of play suspends judgement of theatricality in art and affirms the ability of artwork to keep the viewer in a state of flux, suspended between curiosity and doubt. The artwork becomes a proposition, a term that has an interesting relationship to seduction as well as intellectual activity. The work is an invitation to engage with a process of imagining performance and sorting out this history of gestures and meaning, particularly in relation to the photograph as art object.

In Radul's *Documents for Performance* (1998), twelve black and white, 30" × 40" photographs are each accompanied by a descriptive text panel. The use of b/w is associated with both documents and photographs as artifacts of an earlier era of performance. The photographs appear to be documentation of



Twenty-five Entrances and Exits

Entrance number thirteen: enter and fall (slowly but without hesitation).

This piece involves the basics of performance: getting on and off the stage. The only way you can get up is when they no longer have power over you or convince them you are not a threat. Knock, say, “Do you need clean towels?” To appear, you come from somewhere — its not TV. When you leave, leave. But we know you’re not going. Cut. Again. Come i-n. A preoccupation with trying to create a presence, if only to create an absence when the performer’s gone. An interest in everyday drama — changing the composition of a room by entering and exiting.

January 1998.

© Judy Radul,
Twenty-five Entrances and Exits (1998),
courtesy of the artist.
Photo credit: Fiona Bowie.

performance work but some of these “performances” exist only to be photographed. The documents are “for” performance—in a way that echoes Kaprow’s use of staged photographs as scripts for his Actions. However, Radul’s images are not necessarily meant to be performed and may never have been. Rather, as a body of work, they stand in for performance. They have conceptual rather than experiential referents, “staged” specifically for the viewers of the photograph.[14] What makes these different from earlier conceptual performance is the intent that the photograph is “fundamentally theatrical,” to be understood as a self-conscious pose. The picture exists in an ambiguous ontology as document and cinema, real and illusion, echoing the porous boundaries between the two. The photograph is constructed as performative in relation to the audience: questioning authenticity, or whether, indeed, it matters. Radul’s images stage performance itself and its documentation as a particular history as well as the photograph as a construction. The viewer is posited as active in physical and intellectual relationship to artworks as representations in an exhibition.

The scale of these photographs and their nature as a pose situates them squarely within Fried’s definition of objecthood as theatricality. Auslander defines Fried’s characterizations of objecthood as art that “asserts its own presence, and that it depends for its completion and fulfillment as an aesthetic object on the presence of a spectator—it is not self-sufficient and self-referential in the way Fried believes modernist art to be.”[15] Radul’s images affirm their posturing and the opportunity to engage with the viewer that this offers. They are wholly of another, “unreal,” time than Fried’s essay but, in their self-conscious use of artifice, they hold out the hope of engagement at a more meaningful, as well as more playful, level.

Theatre and performance are text and subtext in Radul’s images. The posturing of the artist does not privilege the representation of “real life” or the authenticity of performance. Rather, she toys with and embraces theatricality along with this history. As in any good fiction, there is a skilful isolating of gesture that evokes social associations with the work and mythologies of theatre, art and performance. The *Documents* themselves suggest a disjointed narrative as the artist’s image recurs within various settings. Like their earlier conceptual counterparts, the texts use minimal language to position the action.

In a recent video work called *And so departed (Again)* Radul uses a single actress working with five different directors over the course of a twelve-hour day to portray a death scene, dying and dying over again. In describing this piece, the artist discusses "the problem of the body." In classic theatre, there is the dilemma of how it get "the body" off the stage and some break in the action is usually required to dispense with it before the play can resume. The body is also central to the tradition of performance art, though in a context dominated by media, Radul finds its contemporary role is suspect, marked by "… the inability of the body to match the abbreviation of experience technology provides … Live, the body almost always fails (to transcend)—to change its form… [the artists'] texts, their voices, their poses and gestures are rarely seamless; they implicate the likewise unqualified body of the viewer."[16] A real person cannot compete with a media image. Photographic representation is conveniently based in the absence of the body, so it is no longer a problem.

Radul uses the idea of the document to re-imagine performance in relation to photography and the audience, to implicate these histories of authenticity, theatricality, and the search for legitimate art expression. In a world immersed in performance, these artworks stage self-conscious dynamics between artwork and viewer. Unlike the mid 20th century modern search for purity in the artwork through immersion, the 21st century artwork uses impurity and theatricality to "act" on the audience; in cinematic terms, to project the legitimate body in performance back onto the viewer.

NOTES

1. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (E.P. Dutton: New York, 1968), p. 145.
2. Philip Auslander, *Presence* and *theatricality* in the discourse of performance and the visual arts, *From Acting to Performance: Essays in Modernism and Postmodernism* (London/NY: Routledge, 1997).
3. Robert E. Haywood, "Critique of Instrumental Labor: Meyer Schapiro's and Allan Kaprow's Theory of Avant-Garde Art," *Experiments in the Everyday*, A. Kaprow & R. Watts, eds. (NY: Columbia University, 1999), p. 30.
4. Ibid., pp. 27–30.
5. Allan Kaprow, "Non-Theatrical Performance," 1976, in Geoffrey Hendricks, ed., *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia and Rutgers University 1958–1972* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p. 175.
6. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and the Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
7. Judith Rodenbeck, "Foil: Allan Kaprow Before Photography," *Experiments in the Everyday*, A. Kaprow & R. Watts, eds. (NY: Columbia University, 1999), pp. 56–58.
8. Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings* (NY: H.N. Abrams, 1966), p. X.
9. Rodenbeck, p. 59.
10. Ibid., pp. 59–63.
11. Jeff Wall, *Landscape Manual* (Vancouver: UBC Fine Arts Gallery, 1969/70), p. 1.
12. Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Perfomance in a Mediatized Culture* (London/NY: Routledge, 1999), pp. 24–55.
13. Judy Radul, artist's statement, 1998.
14. Ibid.
15. Auslander, *From Acting to Performance*, p. 50.
16. Judy Radul, "What Remains—What Reminds," *Whispered Art History* (Vancouver: Western Front/Arsenal Pulp Press, 1993), p. 213.

Doyon/Demers

Coefficient of Reality

"Smile," says the photographer while taking your picture, whether for a solo or group portrait. Clearly, this social prescription enjoins us to put on a sustained expression of joy or happiness. Note, however, that smiles are no longer permitted on Canadian passport photos. "The face must be square to the camera with a neutral expression and with the mouth closed." Otherwise, the subject's identity could be falsified. Smiles, of course, convey a sense of well-being, but they usually involve a projection of the self sustained by the representation of a having-to-be or a desire-to-be. So smiles contribute, therefore, to a certain distortion of the real; which leads us to think that a photograph is, so to speak, worth a thousand words and conceals just as many.

The idea that a photograph cannot truly convey an action, intervention, performance or manœuvre in its entirety is an indisputable fact.[1] No single photograph or even assembly of photographs—such as, for example, Gina Pane's inter-iconic *Azione Sentimentale* (1973)—can ever inform anyone in an irrefutable way about the smells, sounds, duration or atmosphere of the event it captures. And this is true even if the photographer or editor, whatever the case may be, seeks the one image that will best hold viewers' attention and that will, in and of itself, convey the crux of the matter in a photogenic manner.[2] Thus the photographic illustration of performances falls within an approach not so different from that of Cartier-Bresson and his followers in their quest for the "decisive moment," and does so precisely by virtue of the fact that a photograph is merely fragmentary evidence of what "has been." This said, the photograph possesses a subjective character that, by isolating and framing this or that part of what is happening, holds a certain interest as a spur to rumours and speculation with respect to evolving or, indeed, ephemeral works. For Allan Kaprow,[3] moreover, the interest of this type of photograph resides undeniably in its "aura of something breathing just beyond our immediate grasp [instead of in] a documentary record to be judged."[4]

Although photographs of living art may invite comparisons with journalistic photography,[5] performers continue to depend in practice on the photogenic's potential for manipulation, as well as on staging (improvised or planned) and photomontage. This is the case, for example, with Yves Klein's 1960 montage *Leap into the Void* (made from photographs by Harry Shunk), and with Viennese Aktionismus artist Rudolf Schwarzkogler's *3rd Action* (1965). The latter piece suggests the intense pain produced by self-mutilation of the penis, an amputation that some have attributed to the artist whereas the event was actually a staged scene with Heinz Cibulka standing in for the artist. Whatever the case may be, these two examples at least demonstrate that the impression of reality emanating from a photograph may not convey the sincerity of an actual lived experience. And, again on this score, it will readily be conceded that a lived experience does not need to be mediated, photographically or otherwise, to convey a sense of insincerity. This observation is in keeping, moreover, with a statement we made earlier with respect to augmented reality, not the one that applies to technological advances intended to improve on the capacity of our senses, but the one that interposes itself within our interhuman relationships. Fundamentally, this augmented reality goes back to the intuitive awareness of self, to that vague, embodied knowledge of one's own identity that emerges within the heterogeneity of daily life, and that is, to a significant extent, fluctuating—if only with regard to the fact that one, in relationships with others, superimposes the expression of what one is over the expression of what one could, or would like to, be. At this point we are dealing with an anthropological augmented reality.

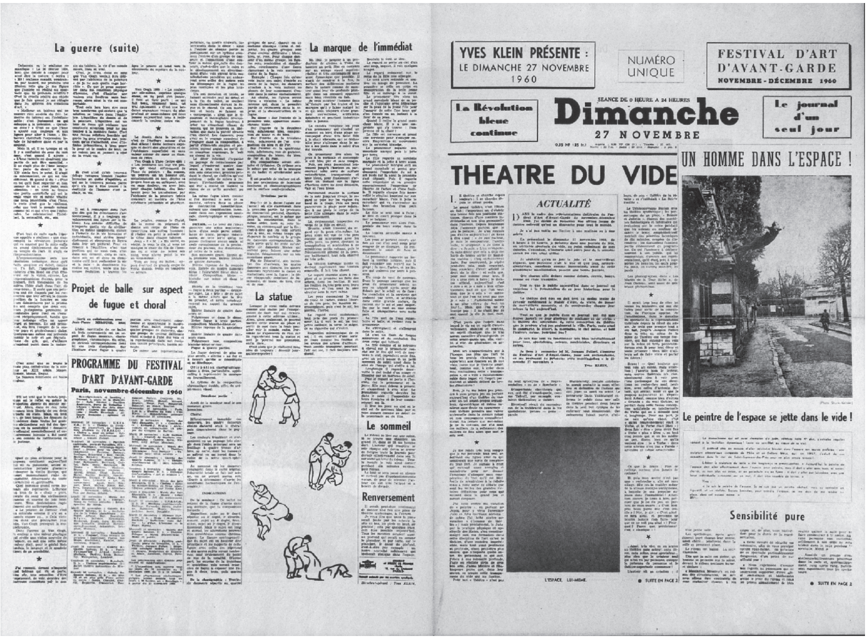
But the fact remains that, in the age of mechanical and technological reproduction of the work of art, we see everyday instrumental reproducibility carve out a place for itself through a heterogeneous mixing of photographs, graphic design and moving images. This profusion of composite media images has been developed for the benefit of the marketing empire, which uses them to sell us ways and styles of living that we can subscribe to for a while, depending on the drift of our desires and our need for new aestheticizations of ourselves. What we are dealing with here is, undoubtedly, a reiteration of the (eminently modern) imperative toward self-development. This imperative finds concrete expression in the construction of realities and truths within a host of individual identifications that are, when all is said and done, calibrated to modes of life that implode in the aestheticization of daily life, even if we simultaneously associate with a culture and its counterculture.

In this context of cultural democracy, we see the idea of integrating art into life gradually become more widespread, favouring, on the one hand, the participation of the greatest possible number of individuals in artistic or cultural activities[6] and, on the other hand, artists' creative involvement in urban or rural space or, at best, with a given community. For many artists in tune with this view of things, this phenomenon radically transforms the traditional approach to art; for them, the relationship of art to life develops through situations in which processes of art creation, production and diffusion form a whole that takes into account the indeterminacy contained in the actions of viewers. Long restricted to a contemplative role, viewers become extras, users, participants, agents, etc.

We will recall, among the precursors of this attitude, Kaprow calling for a "likelife art," Filliou announcing that "art is what makes life more interesting than art" (as his principle of permanent creation) and Beuys affirming, for his part, that "every man is an artist." These positions obviously came close on the heels of the revolutionary fervour of the 1960s, which saw a veritable trend toward de-institutionalization of the work of art: Happenings, Land art and other practices with names as varied as performance, Attitude art, mass media art and Space art all unfolded in places that were not protected for art. However, from this standpoint, which has been deemed utopic for presupposing the union of art and life, we will confine ourselves here not so much to the correlation of Land art with nature and photographic documentation, but to the transformation—outside the institution and outside the walls—of an active consciousness aimed at bringing art closer to people, and of the resulting action into photographic documents. This form of acculturation signals, however, the reification of experiences understood as art into institutionalized and marketable photographic values.

However things may be, photography is approached here from a non-disciplinary perspective, in other words, in terms of its usefulness on the palette of stratagems and procedures for infiltrating various areas of production. Thus, in art projects that rely on interference with pre-existing life structures photographs serve to support corporate and professional identities in the guise of scientific, journalistic, financial or other types of specializations. But more specifically, the dynamics of the photographic document's contribution to the construction of social identities leads us to a place where it is particularly lively, namely, in Web art. For on the Web we have, among other things, art projects that intrude upon e-commerce and, to varying degrees, go beyond one of the specific principles of the Internet as a creative medium: that of distancing itself from the portfolio.[7]

On Sunday, November 27, 1960, Yves Klein distributed a sheet of paper folded in four and mimicking the newspaper *France Soir* to Parisian news stands. Page 1 of this *Journal d'un seul jour*[8] carried the henceforth famous photograph of his *Leap into the Void*, already mentioned above. In the space to the left of the photograph, a text entitled "Theatre of the Void" encouraged people to celebrate and experience the spectacle of the void on this weekly Sunday holiday. Made up of three photographs and 18 articles, this newspaper served as a creative space in which the artist could articulate and disseminate his interests and theories. But above all, Klein made it the founding artifact of a mythography whose deconstruction still continues to this very day. Moving from one media support to another, one would be hard pressed not to detect certain similarities between Klein's "one-day newspaper" and those artist's projects to be found on the Internet, where they appropriate the habits and usages of e-commerce. By proposing entities that resemble, but are not identical to, their models and that resonate in ways that are not only artistic, these artists favour a form of art that is more like life than art—a position that is, in many respects, on a par with that of Kaprow. But let us not forget that, in the meantime, we have seen restaurants, museums and other



La guerre (suite)

Projet de balle sur aspect de fugue et choral

PROGRAMME DU FESTIVAL D'ART D'AVANT-GARDE

Paris, novembre-décembre 1960

La marque de l'immédiat

La statue

Le sommeil

Renversement

YVES KLEIN PRÉSENTE :
LE DIMANCHE 27 NOVEMBRE
1960

NUMÉRO
UNIQUE

FESTIVAL D'ART
D'AVANT-GARDE
NOVEMBRE - DÉCEMBRE 1960

La Révolution
bleue
continue

SEANCE DE 0 HEURE A 24 HEURES

Dimanche

27 NOVEMBRE

Le journal
d'un
seul jour

0,35 NF (35 fr.)

THEATRE DU VIDE

ACTUALITÉ

Yves KLEIN.

L'ESPACE, LUI-MÊME.

SUITE EN PAGE 2

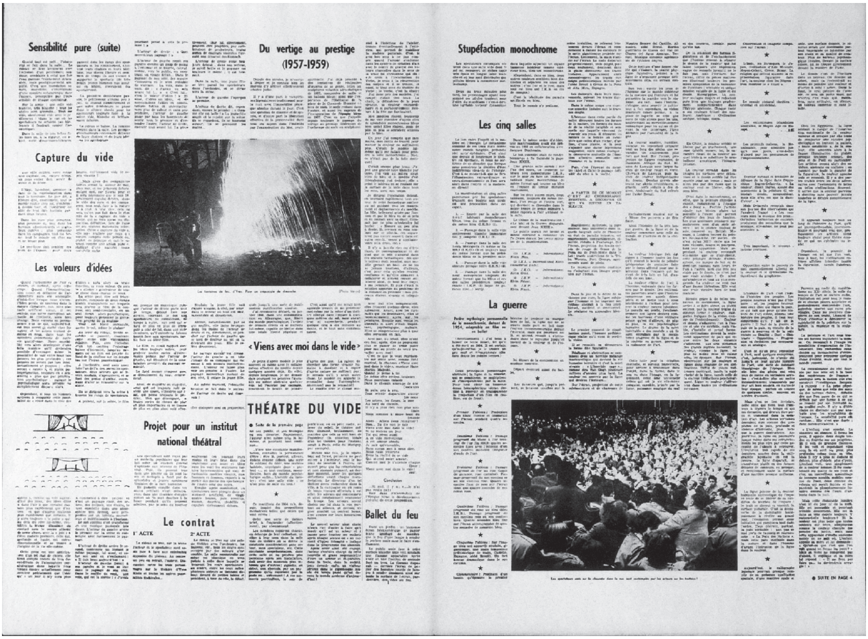
UN HOMME DANS L'ESPACE !

Le peintre de l'espace se jette dans le vide !

Sensibilité pure

SUITE EN PAGE 2

© Yves Klein, *Dimanche 27 novembre* (1960), courtesy of Cabinet des estampes, Genève. Photo credit: Nicolas Spuhler.



Sensibilité pure (suite)

Capture du vide

Les voleurs d'idées

Du vertige au prestige (1957-1959)

« Viens avec moi dans le vide »

Projet pour un institut national théâtral

Le contrat

THÉATRE DU VIDE

Ballet du feu

Stupéfaction monochrome

Les cinq salles

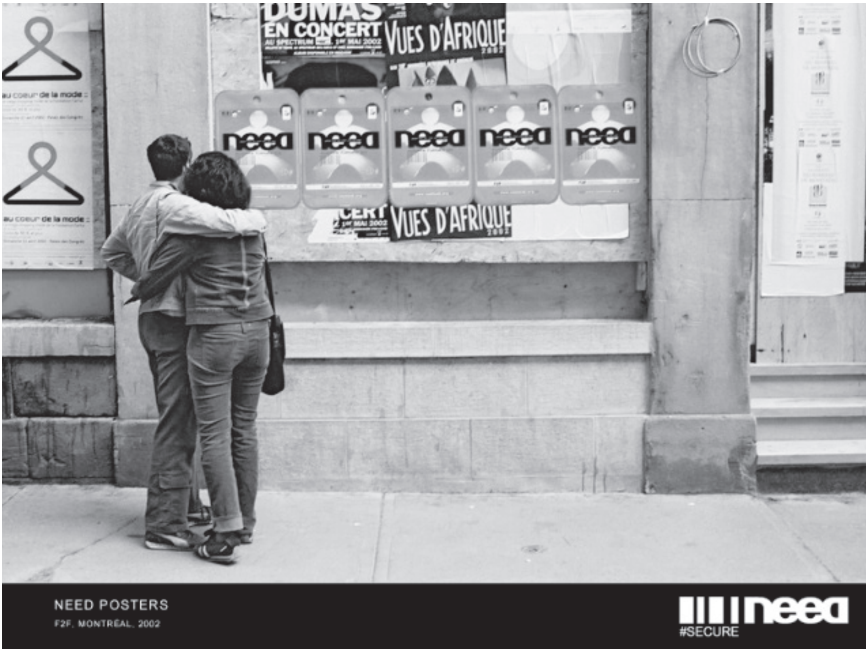
La guerre

SUITE EN PAGE 4

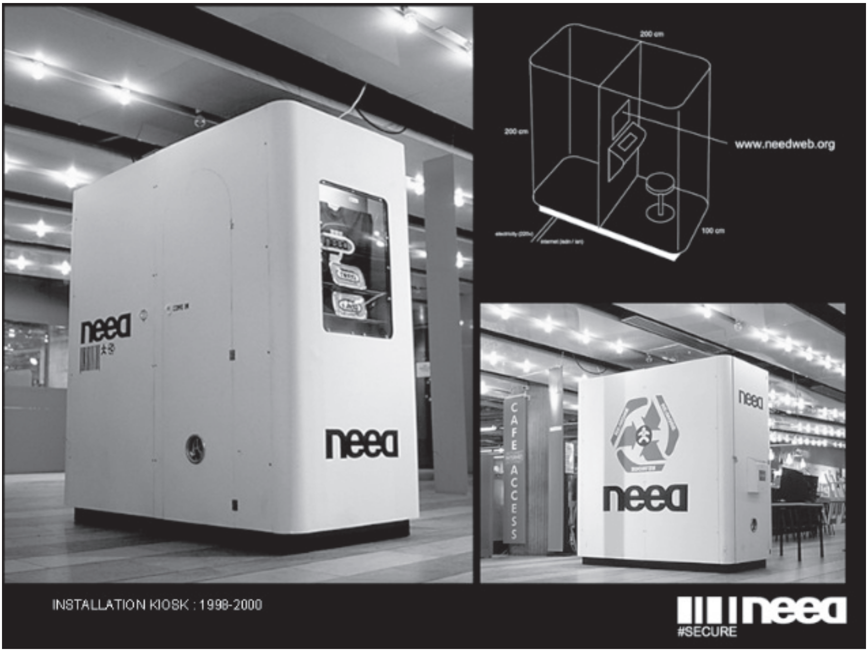
© Yves Klein, *Dimanche 27 novembre* (1960),
courtesy of Cabinet des estampes, Genève.
Photo credit: Nicolas Spuhler.

types of more or less fictional artists' companies proliferate. Consider, for example, the restaurants of Daniel Spoerri, Les Levine and Gordon Matta-Clark,[9] or again, the *Museum of Mott Art (MMA)* which the same Les Levine set up in 1971.[10] From his address at 181 Mott Street in New York's Greenwich Village, Levine offered individualized information and consultation services to his fellow artists and other art professionals in his community. As he explained in the *MMA Catalogue of Services* (1972), for a fee of $180 US, one could obtain an interview on the subject of the *un-artist*.[11] While Levine's mimetic/critical activities took on their meaning outside the institution yet in a constant dialogue with the art world, Iain & Ingrid Baxter, on the other hand, showed their N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. (1966–1978) within the walls of the National Gallery of Canada in 1969. They would, however, pursue their interest in infiltrating to the point where they set up an exhibition booth at the Data Processing Association Conference and Business Exposition in Seattle in 1970, and made their company a member of the Vancouver Chamber of Commerce the following year—as a consulting firm specializing in… anything at all! By creating a social identity for themselves, the Baxters depersonalized their actions and, by becoming other than themselves, facilitated their insertion into "real life."

Let us return, however, to where we were with the Internet, this network space that is public by virtue of its accessibility and that allows art projects to make incursions into e-commerce. To a certain extent, the creation of identities within this given frame throws into relief the role-playing required by social contexts, more particularly (in this case) the world of business. Playing on the conventions of e-commerce and the art market, Web artists convert actions, happenings and manœuvres stemming from outside the Net into photographic documents on it. These same artists also thereby contribute to the archives of autonomous organisms created and managed by artists as Web art. And a defining feature of these archives is that they convert portfolios into photographic documentation of products and services, such as we usually see on business Web sites. All this, in short, in order to construct social identities on the Net so that these same identities—be it a *Buy-sellf* style of sales catalogue (1999), a biotechnology


DUMAS
EN CONCERT
AU SPECTRUM
1er MAI 2002
VUES D'AFRIQUE
2002
need
au coeur de la mode :
NEED POSTERS
F2F, MONTRÉAL, 2002
need
#SECURE

© Tuomo Tammenpää,
Need Posters Montreal (2002)
from *Need Project* (1997–2002),
courtesy of the artist.


200 cm
200 cm
www.needweb.org
100 cm
electricity (220v)
internet (isdn / lan)
need
need
CAFE ACCESS
need
need
INSTALLATION KIOSK : 1998-2000
#SECURE
need

© Tuomo Tammenpää,
Installation Kiosk (1998–2000)
from *Need Project* (1997–2002),
courtesy of the artist.

research centre like Bioteknica (2000) or a brokerage firm like ®™ark (2000) in pursuit of “cultural, not financial, profit”[12]—can be perceived as such.

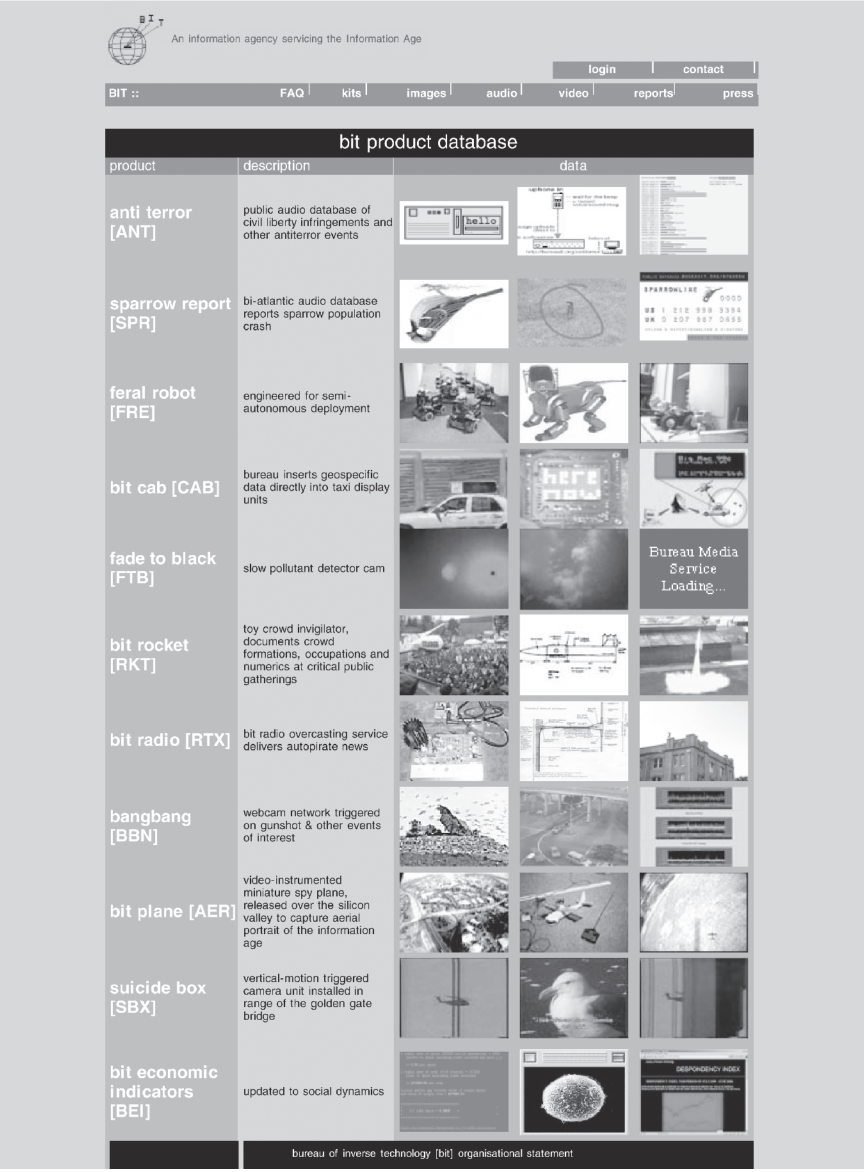
Consequently, the coefficient of reality of these sites is measured by the extent to which they mimic the architecture and styles generally attributed to e-economy Web sites. In such environments, photographic documents appear as the enabling tricks or procedures that turn art actions, objects and subjects into business products and services as well as into portfolios, not only of artists or groups of artists, but of the company itself. But the “real” purpose of these sites is still to rub shoulders with art. In fact, the conventional belief that artists’ portfolios are not Web art is readily defied.

Moreover, the contextual practice of these artists is frequently positioned critically in response to Neo-liberalism. Such is the case, for example, with Tuomo Tammenpää’s *Need Web* (1997).[13] Like the individualized marketing devices common on the Internet, the computergraphic and photographic components of *Need Web* are skilfully coordinated to encourage people to participate in some way, be it only by signing up. As members and consumers, surfers are thereby led to make choices in accordance with their needs and interests, which are then considered and interpreted by the company. Even if it is not actually selling anything, by promoting a whole range of plausible products the “Need” brandname places us in a consumer context envisioned as an art product available on the Web and occasionally outside of it—and does so by means of poster advertising campaigns in urban settings, or by presenting itself as an installation in galleries and embassies, or at trade fairs. Physical space and cyberspace come together, as it were, in a sort of transitiveness of realities.

Elsewhere, *Mejor Vida Corp* (1998)[14] provides the social face for the activist manœuvres of Minerva Cuevas. Like *Need Web, Mejor Vida Corp* manages operations both on and off the Web. The company specializes in the production of dissident “good deeds.” These include awareness-raising campaigns that can be found documented in photographs by clicking on the “products” and “services” tabs on the company’s Web site. Also, *Mejor Vida Corp* will issue, upon request, false student cards that, once accepted as valid, entitle holders to reduced public transportation fares and discounts on museum admission prices, magazine subscriptions, etc. To get your card, all you have to do is fill out the online form and send it along with an appropriate photograph. To be sure, the type of interactivity that *Mejor Vida Corp* offers goes beyond the conventional reactivity of action/reaction and urges us to take part in civil activism.

Like those of the companies named above, the photographs of events and objects found on the site of the Bureau of Inverse Technology, or BIT (1995),[15] also serve to construct the company's identity. While documenting BIT's art activities, these photographs also attest to its effective actions in interventions off the Net. They illustrate, for example, various types of social activism that have relied on experimental technologies to record and disseminate data on a human scale—data which, in the view of the Western mass media, are generally of no interest whatsoever to the public. In other words, this organism presents itself as an information agency at the service of the information age. In actual fact, it gives us information that would otherwise be kept from us. Thus, the confusion that reigns with respect to the group's mission, members and activities is intended to make BIT more difficult to distinguish from other companies providing information for commercial, military or other purposes—but certainly not for artistic or activist ones. The product page on BIT's Web site contains an inter-iconic montage, at the centre of which we see photographs of "feral dogs." These are small dog robots that have been modified in such a way that they can breathe the surrounding air and gather data on certain types of toxic substances and fumes that pollute schoolyards, parks, dumps or other places. There are also photographs showing students involved in on-site manœuvres. We also sense that these same students have, within the context of educational activities, taken part in setting up the montage and in improving on the software capacities and mechanics of BIT's pack of toys. In this way we gauge the extent of the site's links with sociological and relational art, as well as with art and life unified.

While it is one thing to consider concealing one's thoughts and intentions to gain some advantage or appear more credible, it is only against all likelihood that attempting to use photomontage[16] to alter the historical record and to contribute to the spread of misinformation happens to be in the order of things. But between the manipulation of the type of historical evidence found in photographs, and


BIT
An information agency servicing the Information Age
login
contact
BIT ::
FAQ
kits
images
audio
video
reports
press
hello
SPARROWLINE
here now
Bureau Media Service Loading...
DESPONDENCY INDEX
bureau of inverse technology [bit] organisational statement

bit product database

product	description	data
anti terror [ANT]	public audio database of civil liberty infringements and other antiterror events	
sparrow report [SPR]	bi-atlantic audio database reports sparrow population crash	
feral robot [FRE]	engineered for semi-autonomous deployment	
bit cab [CAB]	bureau inserts geospecific data directly into taxi display units	
fade to black [FTB]	slow pollutant detector cam	
bit rocket [RKT]	toy crowd invigilator, documents crowd formations, occupations and numerics at critical public gatherings	
bit radio [RTX]	bit radio overcasting service delivers autopirate news	
bangbang [BBN]	webcam network triggered on gunshot & other events of interest	
bit plane [AER]	video-instrumented miniature spy plane, released over the silicon valley to capture aerial portrait of the information age	
suicide box [SBX]	vertical-motion triggered camera unit installed in range of the golden gate bridge	
bit economic indicators [BEI]	updated to social dynamics	

© Bureau of Inverse Technology,
product database, courtesy of BIT.

advertising propaganda that relies shamelessly on the photographic lure to commodify the pleasure of living, is but a small step. Moreover, these same strategies serve to disseminate notions that are apparently intended to alert people to the benefits of personal development. They accomplish this by simulating spaces in which people can be creative and project their desires, but where self-expression is actually validated through consumption. Such enforced conformity proceeds by imposing standardized attitudes and environments on cultural regionalisms and other singularities arising out of specific ways of life. For some artists, living with one's era involves the pleasure of infiltrating, on and off the Net, the marketing empire that is consolidating, in an increasingly ineluctable manner, its monopoly over aesthetics in order to make our ways and styles of life ever more instrumental.

One of the most interesting facets of the use of certain Internet business customs and practices to create social identities consists in the pairing of fictional, unusual and even clearly outlandish information with photographs of situations that convey a sense of truthfulness. It is in this sense that the Web artist, like Kaprow and Levine's "un-artist," is equipped to create situations that enable him/her to invent identities and go out to meet the Other. Supporting each one of these identities is the unshakeable belief that so many people still have in photographs. But whether they are doctored, subjective or photogenic, or found both on and off the Net, they still depend on their contexts of dissemination and reception. For, presented in other ways, i.e. in a virtual gallery or on the artist's personal Web site, these same photographs of events, actions and manœuvres would be merely interesting components of the artist's file or portfolio.

To reconsider art and life in the context of our daily experience—which, we should point out, combines (in its own concrete manner) virtuality, aura and transcendence—is also to consider the role of artists, their behaviour and actions within a particular population or organization or profession. Might we not find them there busy disseminating structures, operations and manœuvres conducive to an aesthetics and meaningful sharing of lived experience? An attitude that is an integral part of an aesthetic implosion implicit in the everyday, and that gradually leads people, both alone and together, to create their own existential rooting and uprootings. And not without attenuating that mercenary form of modernity that continues to produce and manage our daily experience.

Translated by Donald McGrath

NOTES

1. In this connection, see the catalogue of the recent exhibition *Art, Lies and Videotapes: Exposing Performance*, which showed at the Tate Gallery from 2003 to 2004: Adrian George ed., *Art, Lies and Videotapes: Exposing Performance* (Liverpool: Tate Liverpool, 2003).
2. The photogenic is that quality attributed to films and photographs when the effect they produce appears superior to that produced by nature. In other words, the effect is augmented by comparison with reality.
3. Starting in 1957, Kaprow began to do environmental works involving viewers' participation in order to create an art form he envisioned as total (but not in the sense in which Wagnerian opera was meant to be). Then, in 1958, he used the term "happening" in an *ArtNews* article, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," that would eventually be deemed prophetic. But the first of his works to be clearly identified as a happening was *18 Happenings in 6 parts* (1959), presented at the Reuben Gallery in New York. This title did not reflect the meaning that the word "happening" would ultimately assume; for, in its initial phase, it designated a rigorously planned and often repeated heterogeneous work. In 1966, Kaprow set out seven "principles of action" for this practice in what is, for the most part, a large-format photo album devoted, as its title indicates, to assemblages, environments and happenings: Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1966).
4. Kaprow, "Happenings are dead, long live happenings," *Essays On The Blurrings Of Art And Life*, Jeff Kelley ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
5. It may be worthwhile at this point to recall the extent to which the development of photography in the visual arts (deemed *plasticienne* or, in its early phase, conceptual) sought to distance it from journalistic photography, precisely by freeing it from the famous "decisive moment." See Dominique Baqué, *La photographie plasticienne* (Paris: Regard, 1998), pp. 149-150.
6. According to statistics published in *La politique culturelle du Québec*, the practice of photography ranks as the most widespread cultural activity in Québec—41% of those 15 years of age and older stated that they devote time to it. See Ministère de la Culture et des Communications, *La politique culturelle du Québec: Notre culture, notre avenir* (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 1992).
7. The Internet as a creative medium: "Works created by, with and for the media/language constituted by the Internet and, more particularly, the World Wide Web." See Annick Bureaud (1998). *Pour une typologie de la création sur Internet:* <http://www.olats.org/livresetudes/etudes/typInternet.shtml>. Bureaud also highlights the exclusion of galleries, catalogues and portfolios from this classification while, by the same token and rightly so, stressing the developmental character of the medium and its creations.

8. *Dimanche 27 novembre/Journal d'un seul jour*, 1960; double sheet printed recto-verso in black ink; 556 × 758 cm unfolded.

9. Daniel Spoerri is known as the inventor of "eat art." After opening his *Grocery* (1961) at the Addi Köpcke Gallery and setting up his *Restaurant* (1963) at Galerie J in Paris, in 1968 he opened a restaurant located at 19 Burgplatz in Düsseldorf. It was there that he made his *Picture Traps*. These were referenced to photography and the "decisive moment," since they were typically made up of table tops holding, glued on, the remains of meals that Spoerri had called to a halt simply by setting the tables and their contents aside. In the process, Spoerri captured moments of existence, moments that also coincided with their own death. In 1969, *Levine's Restaurant—Irish, Jewish, Canadian Cuisine* opened its doors in New York. As for Gordon Matta-Clark, after frying photographs at the John Gibson Gallery (*Photo-fry*, 1969), he made a substantial contribution to the design and construction of the *Food Restaurant* in Soho (1971), as well as to the organization of the events that took place there.

10. See A.A. Bronson and Peggy Gale eds., "Les Levine: Museum of Mott Art," in *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole 1993), pp. 227–240.

11. We see the same concept of the "un-artist" operating in the work of Kaprow. See Allan Kaprow, "The Education of the Un-Artist," Part I (1971), Part II (1972), Part III (1974) in Jeff Kelley ed., *Essays on the Blurrings of Art and Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 97–126, 130–147.

12. Buy-sellf: http://www.buy-sellf.com
    Bioteknica: http://www.bioteknica.org
    ®™ark (founded off the Web in 1991): http://www.rtmark.com.

13. Need Web: http://www.needweb.org.

14. Mejor Vida Corp [Better Life Corporation]: http://irational.org/mvc/english.html.

15. Bureau of Inverse Technology (founded off the Web in 1991): http://www.bureauit.org.

16. Photographic manipulation is a common practice today. To take only one of the most significant examples from the historical record, consider G.P. Goldstein's photograph showing Lenin, on Moscow's Red Square on May 5, 1920, looking at the crowd in a direction opposite from that of his two comrades, Trotsky and Kamenev. As we know, the latter two disappeared from the photo after they were kicked out of the Party in 1927—to be replaced in 1933. History was, to say the least, erased on behalf of an edifying ideology of socialism.

Jan Peacock
Presence

for Peter

WHAT CAN BE SUSTAINED AND REPEATED WITHOUT EMPTYING OUT?
I am with Garcia Lorca in many things, especially when he says he does not believe in creation but in discovery, doesn't believe in the seated artist, but in the one who is walking the road. The imagination is a spiritual apparatus. Unable to invent the world, it does the next best thing, and that is to assemble it piecemeal, ugly and strange, bright and clear, and dumbly discovered.

FEAR OF REPEATING ONESELF, OF REPEATING ONESELF
may be the greatest bugaboo of late capitalist society. The fear has been marketed so effectively that a will to sustain attention on any one thing can be cancelled out easily in favour of the latest distraction. I am to serve this economy of perpetual replacement that cancels out consideration of a continuum of things and ideas and attentiveness which might constitute a thing in itself. Ursula Leguin speaks about "the form conferring power" of words, and I would extend this to all manner of attentiveness.

MATTER MATTERS LESS WITHOUT YOU.
An artist may sustain a body of work as an ecosystem, in which every part is used to every advantage, not consuming any part without regenerating it. This approach suggests a fictional level of attention and attentiveness, bordering (romantically)

on surrender. But, in purely practical terms, if you ever want evidence of what kind of artist you are, or even the kind of person, you need look no further than how you spend your time. The ecosystem of discovery/making/discovery hinges on one's attendance to unique experience, transposing behaviours and reactions and events into useful projections (objects, images). Naturally, patterns emerge through repetition, and repetition yields up a type of discovery that reveals everything about itself, especially its sorry limits.

BUT I MISS EVERYTHING.

Less than a month after my friend Peter had his ashes cast into the ocean near the Louisburg lighthouse on the southeast coast of Cape Breton, I heard a philosopher on the radio, saying that he would bury his beloved dog on the farm she so enjoyed, but would stop short of erecting a headstone on the burial spot. This would "sentimentalize" the relationship in a way that took dignity away from the dog. "Animals must be animals," he said, and this seemed a sentiment he could live with. And I wondered about how we are able to reflect on matterlessness and mattering, and about the associative values of affixing a monument of stone, making a private grave from earth alone, or burning and diffusing remains using wind and water. Stone, earth, and fire, wind and water, in these gestures, all produce an idea of ongoingness, if not permanence, joined as they are to the gesture and memory in a living body.

Peter had a large commercial print of a painting. A few days before he died, he had a friend bring it from his apartment to his room in palliative care. It hung on a wall at the foot of his bed. He loved this painting, of a shadowed room with windowed doors flung wide open to the sea and sky, curtains billowing inward, a glowing wood floor that dropped off into space below the water's horizon. I said, "That's really beautiful, Peter." He shrugged, pointed to the painted horizon, and said, "It's where I'm going."

Midnight Reader

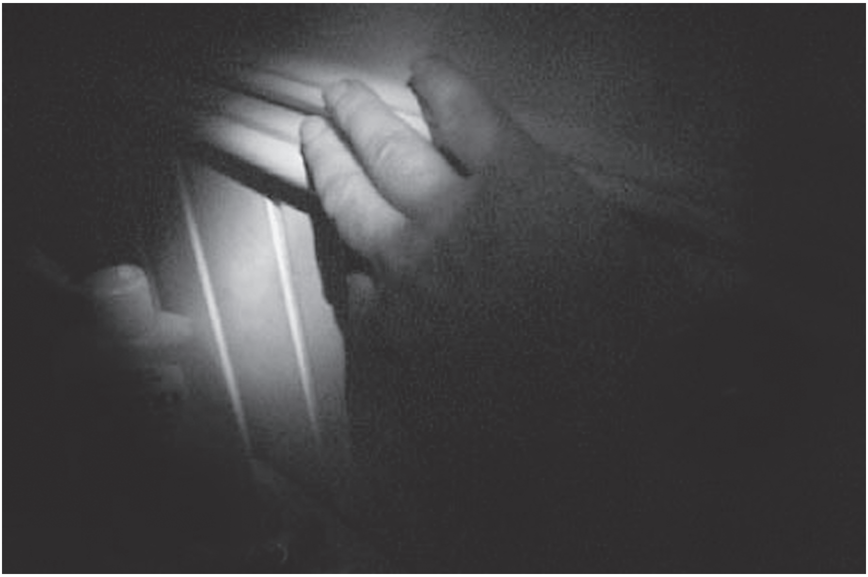
LAST YEAR I BEGAN A WORK ENTITLED MIDNIGHT READER,
to be executed in an edition of six. (The idea of editioning, of repeatability, is slippery here, as you will see; ongoingness is less of a problem.)

Midnight Reader is, at the end, a video nightlight: a tiny LCD screen embedded in a wall in the home of someone who speculates that they may want to live with it. Day and night, the small screen displays a DVD copy of a slow walk I took through the home in which the work is sited.

I walk, slowly, in the dark. My right hand is illuminated by the beam from a light mounted on top of my video camera. It feels its way, making a single, continuous line through the house, over the surfaces of walls, perhaps over drawings made by children, windows, books, tables, foodstuffs, clothing, beds, pictures, trophies, sinks, possibly a piano. The fingertip tracing, made while walking, ranges from eye level to thigh level. I don't crouch, I don't stretch. The line I make plays out my natural range of touch as I walk.

THE WORK IS TO BE LIVED WITH,
and, while the "real" time of the performed drawing is intrinsic to the video material, I believe that this "living time" is the time of the whole work.

There is no public venue ever. When I lecture on or write about or show *Midnight Reader* to potential collectors, I show an "artist's proof" of the video/performance/drawing —that is, evidence of a fingertip tracing which I performed in my own home, but which was never installed there. I make a curious separation here: I may show a slide view of the video nightlight as installed in someone's home, though I cannot (and would not) show its moving contents. (These are *too* moving—for the owners, certainly, and moving still in me.) In this pastiche representation I cobble together for the public—partly maquette, partly completed work, you and anyone else can only imagine, from far off, the real anticipation and participation



© Jan Peacock, still from *Midnight Reader* (2003), courtesy of the artist.

of those who might be living with their own *Midnight Reader*, even as I write, even as you read, even now. Even I cannot speculate as to what it is like to come upon the thing, in the middle of the night, while making one's way to the kitchen, barefoot. There the hand is, inching its way into the youngest child's bedroom ten years after s/he has left home, feeling a kitchen towel, sifting through long defunct material details, day after day, years from now.

Before making this work, I had only conceived of a formal way of making a continuous line drawing out of light and time. Starting inside the front door of a house, my hand on the doorknob, I would trace with my fingertips the interior surfaces of the house. The house would be cast in darkness, temporarily emptied of its inhabitants. My hand, what it touched, its singular path, would be illuminated by a narrow flashlight beam and recorded on video.

The light drawing would be both representative and invisible, I reasoned: a continuous trace always disappearing into darkness. I had thought that the force of the drawn line, whether seen or not—this commitment to continuity—would override our inattention and forgetfulness. I had thought that the visibility of the performed line would emerge beyond vision, able to be held (to be beheld) in the mind of the viewer. Objects requiring detailed exploration would create a pause in the walk, both a density and a hole in continuous time.

I HAD THOUGHT THAT THE WHOLE LINE COULD BE HELD IN THE MIND.
But I fear that video, like my selectively illuminated darkness, and like too much of my waking life, is a world of sporadic connection and dim memory, emerging from darkness and concealed again by darkness, an amnesia that is amplified by remembered details, as episodic as any narrative: once you have moved on, that is where you are.

AND I HAD CONCEIVED OF MY HAND AS THE SOLE WITNESS.

It turns out that this hand (like the video apparatus and like many other witnesses) understands exactly nothing; it dumbly records its touch only for those who supply instant recognition of what is touched, because they live there. As I walk and work to bear witness, it turns out that the only reliable witnesses are those who are not present, for whom these surfaces are the outer skin of memory. For them, I did not record only what I touched; what I touched were mere signs of life lived in the house. It is the difference between touching a light switch and touching a hot light bulb.

TO PAUSE ON THE MOMENTARY IS TO HOPE TO ELONGATE PRESENCE,
DELAY DYING.

Presence is momentary, contingent on what is actually unsustainable: a perpetual wakefulness. Representing presence pulls at the momentary but always leans into memory. No way around this, I'm afraid: "The moment I notice the camera on my left shoulder, my eyes are drained of use; the loss is sudden and frightening…"

Thinking about the moment is already the outer limit of "now," but this is so intangible, your hand goes right through it. If presence involves representation, it must certainly be larger than the momentary (the shutter's click or the almost instantaneous digitization of light), so that presence is made roomy enough for memory.

Here is what presence looks like when manifested as a performing, authoring body:

1. Drawing (direct notation, reportage "from the field," connecting from without, from adrift, from "not in the fold," from discomfort, but not disenchantment)
2. Diagramming (the most direct form of an idea, performed)
3. Editing (cutting details adrift, losing details in transit)
4. Reading (witnessing, as a marker of provisional or nominal presence)
5. Gathering (almost noiseless selectivity)
6. Passing through (inscribing time, death, not dying)

I go looking for these, as follows:

One Year of Mourning

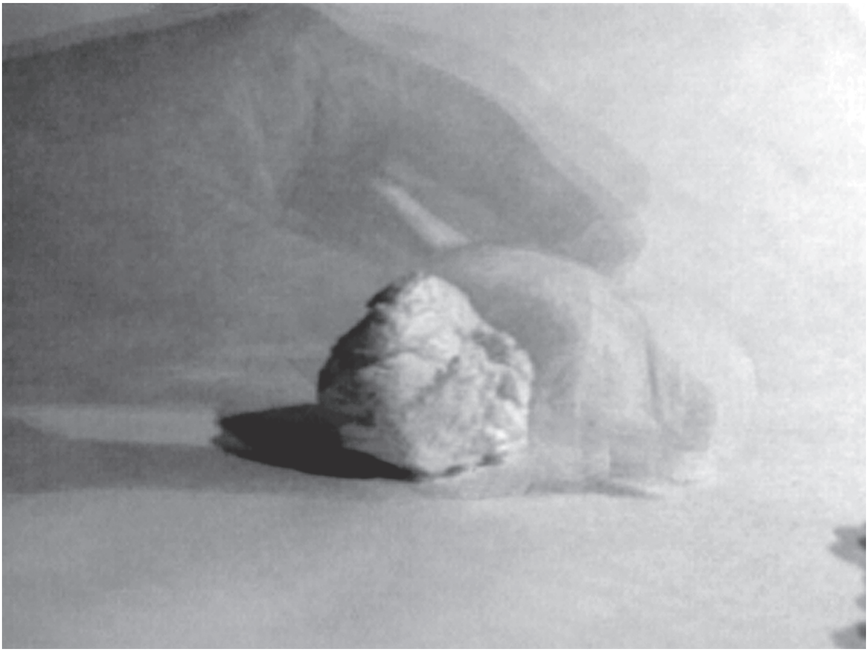
From October 15 1993 to October 15 1994, Paula Levine cried every day, a self-prescribed act of mourning for lost loved ones. There were simply too many lost in simply too short a time, so that grieving became a *state* of loss, rather than an articulated act.

A CONSTRUCT OF TIME IS AS SOLID AS A STONE.
The time of one year describes a period of mourning she was familiar with from Jewish tradition. When grief is shapeless and sprawling, the embrace of tradition and its known forms makes a construct of time as material as stone, earth, fire, wind and water.

THEY WERE THE FIRST THINGS SHE SAW EACH DAY.
At the beginning, she elected to keep the residue of her ritual, an excess that could not be discarded: each bundle of tissues she used, each day, bagged and dated. These small bodies came to fill the walls of her studio. They were the first things she saw each day when she came to mourn, so that the tissue-bodies themselves became things to be mourned. This diagrammatic act produces an inadequate database of loss, and measuring the immeasurable tends to multiply loss. The cumulative form of the memorial—normally one, fixed marker—became "two thousand, four hundred, fifty-two clusters of tissues, collected, dated and stored. Not to hold on to sorrow, but rather to mark the path through it." (Paula Levine)

In the end, (not the end of grief, but the end of mourning) *One Year of Mourning* assumes several forms—installation, photographs, writing, video. These forms seems eventual rather than final; their ephemeral qualities refute their finality as artefacts, documents, certainly as monuments, as an end to anything.

Her isolated and continuous acts of mourning are not represented in the video, though they are far from invisible.



© Paula Levine, still from
One Year of Mourning (1993–2004),
courtesy of the artist.

A LOOP AND A LINE ARE PERPETUAL BY NATURE.

The video “monument,” which incorporates liveness (her living hand) does not return us to a past moment, but forever re-enacts inescapable loss *in* the present, and the inescapable loss *of* the present. Her hand enters the frame, in silence, to place one of the wadded white tissues on a white ground. They are clouds, planets, birds, wreathes, smoke, stones—from moment to moment we must find out, again and again, what they are.

For all we know they are points in a process that has no end, except the nominal margin of one year. Perhaps (and more likely) the temporal bracket is a lifetime, however long or short that turns out to be. The video we watch could as easily be a loop as a line, perpetual by nature, each stop a point of return—both the eventual kind (acting as a site for the projection of our own mortality), and the instantaneous (small cues for the sharp pang of memory).

The Dark Horses

Alison Rossiter is taking apart the moment of the photograph. That moment is plainly indivisible—the shutter being an only nominal or arbitrary marker—and so she draws instead.

DRAWING TAKES PLACE IN A DELAY OF TIME

(before the image is an image, before it finishes and dies) and so suspends the unendurable—drawing, drawing out. What I mean is that, while the shutter closes upon the death of the image, drawing with light keeps it from *quite* dying.

A statue of a horse, drawn with light, lives in a twilight: a stone-cold monument of a hero’s horse—plainly of the past but pedestaled among the immortal—is made to move and breathe in a dying time that is most likely ours. They are incongruously modelled not on living, breathing horses, but on monumental statues of horses: massive iron and bronze and marble equestrian and equine figures, famous and obscure, pedestaled and fountained, codified in each aspect of lifted hoof, all over the parks you have walked in New York and Italy and beyond.

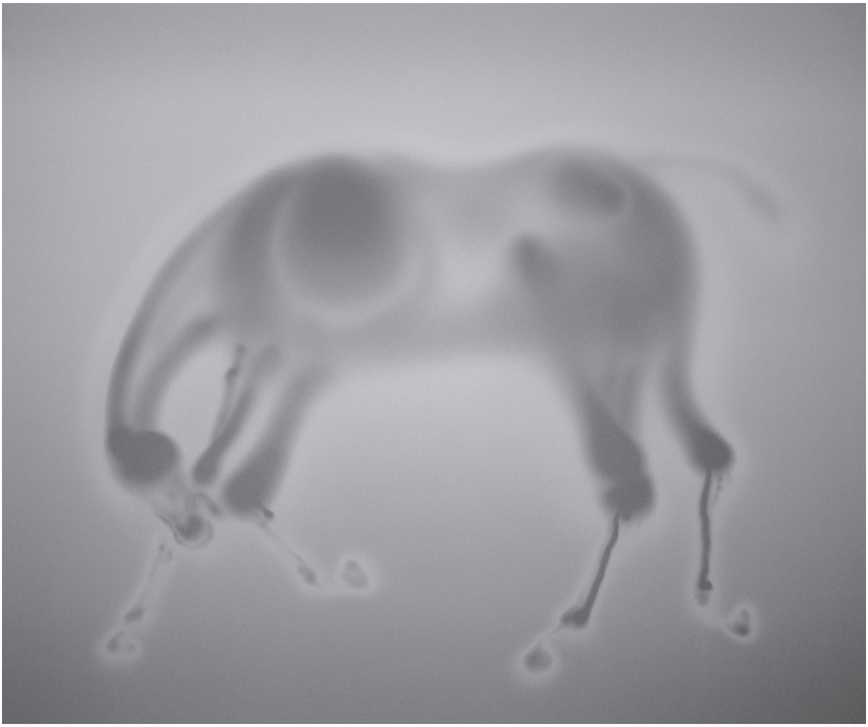
Alison Rossiter photographs them, or finds photographs of them in books. The origin of the photographs seems not to matter. They are references, notes, for her eyes and hand, to be consulted in the privacy of her darkroom, which she transforms into a drawing studio.

WHY DRAW IN THE DARK?

In the red-dark of the darkroom, she sets a photograph of an equestrian statue on an easel so as to watch it while drawing. The unexposed photographic paper emerges from a shallow bath of developer, animate, latent, clear. As she withdraws it from the bath and lays it down, it is all potential, pulled into line by her hand and a palette of penlights—some penlights make broad sweeps, others have been masked off to trace details with a tiny pinprick of light.

Here, the time of the shutter is replaced by the time of the hand and the breathing body. If there exists a moment of departure from this time, it is the moment that the light drawing enters the fixative bath. Otherwise, there are no partitions. A drawing might take fifteen minutes, with several returns to the developing bath, but it is also an imperfect memory of historical time, a weak shadow of the immortality that is conferred upon the stone monument. And there are many, many failures of the present, many *Dark Horses* that die from too much drawing, too much light, too much time.

The arcane study of equestrian statuary is both a bow to history (the codes of this form are portals into the authoritative histories of martyrs, heroes and victors) and a reminder of the death of language—the disappearance of such codes being not unlike the disappearance of the defeated ones from recorded histories. Though the monuments continue to exist in *public* space, it is not *social* space, insofar as the monument is composed of dead signifiers that transmit their embedded information only to those who have consulted the authoritative texts.



© Alison Rossiter, *Dark Horse* (2003), courtesy of the artist.

THOSE WHO ARE PICTURED WILL LIVE FOREVER, and it is perhaps this immutable fact (rather than any superstition) that gives rise to the fear that the soul can be stolen by a photograph. The *Dark Horse* light drawings, then, are the ghosts of souls stolen by and for history.

Living forever in the moment of the photograph does not ensure that one will be remembered. When Rossiter is not drawing in the dark, it is no coincidence that she can be found searching in junkshops, rescuing family photographs that have been cut loose, by death, from their families, from their recognizability, and from their significance. This is unacceptable loss, and what is especially poignant in this gathering pursuit is the fact that Rossiter has gathered a family in life in much the same way, in the face of unacceptable loss. Having lost her mother at age twelve, her brother (and only sibling) in her late twenties, and her father a few years later, she now gathers and remembers others.

Though Rossiter has been making photograms for twenty years, the direct ancestors of her shadowy, undying horses can be found in the work she did for Site Santa Fe in 1990. For one series of many in this elaborate photographic installation, she collected clam shells on the New Jersey shore. What is remarkable about the photograms she made of these shells is that they are individual death portraits. Each shell she collected and placed on a sheet of photographic paper has the distinguishing feature of a tiny hole, which becomes a pinhole lens, illuminating the body of the shell with a voluminous and ethereal glow. It is this light that brings the clamshell to life in the photogram, and it is a shattering irony that the same hole was produced by the entry of a parasitic worm which caused the clam's death.

Finally,

THE ARGUMENT ADVANCED BY A SCEPTIC IS MOST PERSUASIVE.

I sometimes sustain focus on a word and its associated meanings, and in this ruminative time, if I do not look away, nobody dies. Even where I find contradictions, nobody dies.

The word *trope* is commonly used to describe figurative language—that is, words used in other than their proper sense, in order to persuade. Oddly, in philosophy, *trope* describes an argument advanced by a sceptic.

The articulated presence of the artist may be just such a philosophical trope. Of all forms of evidence, that provided by the experience of touch may be most expressive of our latent scepticism, and yet the image of touch, the trope of touch is the most reassuring, the least arguable.

The place where the hand comes to rest announces, “Where I have been, you are now.”

And we are helpless to disagree.

Biographies of the artists

Vito Acconci is a New York-based artist whose influential, provocative and often radical art-making have earned him international recognition. In the 1970s, he produced a remarkable body of conceptual, performance-based film and video works, in which he engages in an intensive psychodramatic dialogue between artist and viewer, body and self, public and private, subject and object.

Daniel Barrow, a Winnipeg-based media artist, creates and adapts comic book narratives, transforming them into a “manual” form of animation by layering and manipulating his drawing on an overhead projector. Barrow has presented his works in Canada and internationally.

Carl Bouchard and **Martin Dufrasne** live and work in Chicoutimi. Their work as individual artists has been presented across Quebec, Canada and abroad. Together they have developed a body of work composed mainly of self-portraits built around various types of pairing (brothers, twins, Siamese twins, etc.) questioning human behaviour and the dynamics of relationships. Their projects involve installation, sculpture, photography, action and performance.

Sylvie Cotton is a Montreal-based interdisciplinary artist. Presented in Canada and abroad, her projects lead to the creation of situations in which relationships with others or infiltrations of their personal space take place. Her work is mainly performed *in situ* in private or public space.

Max Dean seeks to engage spectators by inviting them to participate in the workings of his pieces. In a number of his performances and artworks, Dean constructs situations in which the visitor is given the opportunity to make a choice to intervene. Dean lives and works in Toronto. His work has been shown across Canada and internationally.

Rachel Echenberg is a Montreal performance and multidisciplinary artist. Her interest in the insertion of private life into public space, especially in urban contexts, directly involves the individuals she meets. Since 1992, her work has been presented throughout Canada, in Europe and in Japan.

Adad Hannah lives in Montreal and has presented his work in museums, biennials, and media festivals around the world. His *Museum Stills* have been produced on site at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among others. Hannah's real-time, video-projected *tableaux vivants* occupy the peculiar space between photography, performance, and video.

General Idea was founded in 1969 by Jorge Zontal, Felix Partz and AA Bronson, who lived and worked together for 25 years. Internationally known by 1975, the trio had made themselves the centre of their own constructed and performed mock-media empire. Their work encompasses a broad range of formats: performance, video, installation, publications, photo-based works and edition-based projects.

Suzy Lake is a conceptual artist who lives and works in Toronto. She was among the first female artists to adopt performance, video and photographic work to explore the politics of gender. Lake's earliest work, produced in the 1960s and 1970s, already employed devices such as the invention of personas, directly inspiring artists such as Cindy Sherman, Lisa Steele and Barbara Kruger.

André Lemke, a young German performance artist, produced *I Am Very Disappointed*, a Powerpoint presentation that tells the stories of objects which he mistook for other objects, like the sock that he at first thought was a disembodied hand. The artist describes his first moment of discovery and his subsequent disappointment.

John Marriott, from Toronto, is a writer and multidisciplinary artist working in video, installation, urban interventions, performance, sculpture and photography. His critical writings and artworks have been seen in publications, screenings and exhibitions nationally and internationally. *Picture Yourself On the Moon* invited passers-by to be photographed on a moonscape.

Shelley Niro lives in Brantford, Ontario. Frequently utilizing strategies of masquerade and appropriation, with herself as model, Niro's work is significant for its subversion and its critical re-presentation of stereotypical images of First Nations people in general, and women in particular. In *This Land is Mime Land* (1992), she poses as different personalities and juxtaposes them with her "real" self.

Judy Radul is a Vancouver-based artist and writer known for her experiments with various forms of performance, including live actions, video, installation, photography and audio work. She has presented her work across Canada, the United States and Europe. *Documents for Performance* is a series of photographs depicting fictional performances.

Arnulf Rainer is an internationally renowned Austrian artist. In *Face Farce* (1968–1972), the artist performs for the camera and becomes the violent subject of a photograph which is then erased, lacerated and scratched. Combining painting and photography, Rainer demonstrates the use of body language as a form of artistic expression.

Ana Rewakowicz is a young interdisciplinary artist born in Poland, of Ukranian origin, now living in Montreal. She produces inflatables that often solicit the co-operation of the viewer, exploring, in the process, the relations between temporal, portable architecture; the body, and the environment.

Alana Riley is a young artist living in Montreal who produces performative-based photographs involving herself and people she does not know. In *Support System* (2002–2004), she invites strangers to lie on top of her. Once in position, she squeezes the release button.

Karen Spencer lives in Montreal where she is well known for her performance work. At the age of eighteen she collected all her childhood photographs and threw them in the garbage. They were nothing but lies she told herself. Now, much later, Karen Spencer is an artist, or in other words, an image maker, a maker of lies.

Chih-Chien Wang is a Taiwanese artist living in Montreal who snaps self-portraits three times a day, at the same time, same place, each day, rain or shine. This very structured ritual is punctuated by poetic details, the subject of which is usually food.

Chris Wildrick designs posters of performances that may or may not happen (or have happened). He also sometimes makes books of his very fleeting performances. Wildrick was born in Philadelphia but now lives in Murphysboro, Illinois, where he teaches.

Paul Wong lives and works in Vancouver and is an influential figure in the local and national art community. A self-taught multimedia artist, over the years Wong has investigated complex issues around identity in relation to sex, life and death. *In Ten Sity* (1978) is a disturbing, provocative, mediated performance which the audience can only access via television monitors.

Biographies of the authors

"Undisciplinary," that is, without any fixed discipline and undisciplined, Hélène Doyon and Jean-Pierre Demers have operated as **Doyon/Demers** since 1987. While making room for the construction of social identities and for intrusions into pre-existing life frameworks (without reproducing them), the pair has been responsible for numerous actions, manœuvres and events situated, for the most part, outside the protected spaces of art. Working towards doctorates in art studies and practices at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), they focused their research on the relationship between art and life within the context of cultural democracy and with respect to the concepts of connectedness/disconnectedness, anthropological augmented reality and heterotopia. Doyon is a professor at Université Laval, while Demers teaches at UQAM.

Karen Henry is a curator, writer and editor based in Vancouver, BC. She has worked with Video In, Western Front, Burnaby Art Gallery, Walter Phillips Gallery and Presentation House Gallery, and also with the Public Art Program in Vancouver and as a sessional instructor at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. She has produced catalogues and essays for *Video Guide*, *Vanguard*, *Parachute*, Time Based Arts (Amsterdam), the Banff Centre and others. In 2001 she edited the ECIAD 75th anniversary publication *Art Is All Over*. Recent exhibitions include *Imaginary Standard Distance* with Allyson Clay; *Private Invest-igations* with

Merry Alpern, Jennifer Bolande and Allyson Clay; *David Rockeby: Watch and Giver of Names*; and *Ene-Liis Semper: Four Works*. She received a curatorial fellowship at the Walter Phillips Gallery in 2000–2001 and recently produced a video on the life and work of Doris Shadbolt.

Curator of contemporary art at the National Gallery of Canada for sixteen years, **Diana Nemiroff** has also been the curator of modern art at the same institution from 2000 until very recently. She is now directing the Carleton University Art Gallery. She has numerous exhibitions to her credit including *Jana Sterbak: States of being* (1991); *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada* (1992); *Crossings* (1998); *Elusive Paradise: the Millenium Prize* (2001); *Rober Racine* (2001) and *3 × 3. Flavin Andre Judd* (2003), and has published extensively on various aspects of contemporary art. She has a particular interest in photography and installation, and has written articles and reviews on the work of Suzy Lake, Jana Sterbak, Sorel Cohen, David Tomas and General Idea, among others.

Since 1980 **Jan Peacock**'s work, both single-channel videotapes and video installations, has been shown extensively throughout North America and internationally. She received the 1997 Bell Canada Award for her achievements in the field of video art. Peacock's work is in numerous international museum collections including the National Gallery of Canada, the Museum of Modern Art (New York) and the Ludwig Museum (Cologne). In addition to her work as an artist, she has curated exhibitions for Canadian galleries and museums, including the critically praised *Corpus Loquendi: Body for Speaking* for the Dalhousie Art Gallery, which went on national tour. She lives in Halifax and is a professor in the Fine and Media Arts Department at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, where she has taught video and interdisciplinary art-making practices since 1982.

Chantal Pontbriand is an art critic and curator, and the editor of the Montreal-based contemporary art magazine *Parachute*, which she founded in 1975. She has curated some twenty exhibitions and fifteen international festivals, focusing on performance, dance, multimedia installation and photography. From 1982 to 2003, she was also the director of the Festival international de nouvelle danse in Montreal. At the same time she has consistently published essays in books, magazines and catalogues, including *Fragments critiques* (1998), published by Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, and *Communauté et gestes* (2000), by Parachute Publications. In addition she has organized fifteen or so symposiums, some of which were accompanied by books published by Parachute: *Performance* (1980); *Danse : langage propre et métissage culturel* (2001); *Sur ma manière de travailler : Art et psychanalyse* (2002). She is currently writing a monograph on Jeff Wall's work.

Rebecca Schneider is Head of the M.A. and Ph.D. programmes in Theatre and Performance Studies at Brown University, Providence, RI. She is the author of *The Explicit Body in Performance*, published by Routledge in 1997. She is co-editor of *Re:Direction*, also with Routledge, on 20th century directing theory and practice. She is the author of numerous essays on performance and visual culture including "Hello Dolly Well Hello Dolly: The Double and Its Theatre" in *Psychoanalysis and Performance* and "Solo Solo Solo" in *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance*. She has lectured in Australia, Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain and Switzerland, as well as across the United States. As a "performing theorist" she has occasionally collaborated with artists, most recently in an installation by Hannah Hurtzig and Heike Roms at the British Museum in London (UK) as part of the London International Festival of Theatre.

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F.C.   M.T.

France Choinière is the Director of Dazibao, centre de photographies actuelles. Michèle Thériault is the Director of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Gallery at Concordia University in Montréal.

Publication Coordinator
Marie-Orphée Duval

Translation
Donald McGrath
Timothy Barnard
Colette Tougas

Revision
Paddy O'Brien

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Fleury/Savard, design graphique

Cover and images booklet Graphic Design
Joanne Véronneau

Production design
Lorraine Lavigne infographiste

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fax: (514) 845-6482
dazibao@cam.org
www.dazibao-photo.org

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In the spring of 2004 Dazibao presented a three-part project entitled *Performance et Photographie: POINT & SHOOT*. The event brought together several artists for two exhibitions and one day of performances. This book is an extension of the project. Six writers have been invited to continue reflecting upon the connections between photography and performance, moving beyond what is apparently their most obvious relationship — the recorded image's function to document transient practices.

Dedicated to innovative or hybrid work in whose genesis photography is present, LES ÉDITIONS DAZIBAO endeavours to be a privileged site for thinking about photography and its singular ties to other disciplines, or for connecting literature and photography.

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