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Reperformance: Re-creating and Reinterpreting Performance Art's History

A Dissertation Presented

by

Harry J. Weil

to

The Graduate School

in Partial Fulfillment of the

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Reperformance: Re-creating and Reinterpreting Performance Art's History

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This dissertation analyzes the history and theory of *reperformance*, arguing it as a mode of reproduction for the dissemination and institutionalization of performance art practices. In four chapters, I draw together sources in art history, performance studies, sociology, and anthropology to frame how performances of the past are re-created and reinterpreted, specifically within the context of museums and the art historical canon. While reperformance has been integral to the development of performance art since its inception in the early decades of the 20th century, my focus will turn to how post-World War II practices have been engaged with in recent exhibitions and retrospectives, specifically in the work of Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, and Marina Abramovic,

In loving memory of my father, Martin Weil.

YOUR voice, my friend,
wanders in my heart,
like the muffled sound of the sea
among these listening pines

- Rabindranath Tagore

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Introduction

"Is there repetition or is there insistence. I am inclined to believe there is no such thing as repetition. And really how can there be."¹

Gertrude Stein

This dissertation analyzes the history and theory of *reperformance*, arguing it as a mode of reproduction for the dissemination and institutionalization of performance art practices. Reperformance has been conceptualized by scholars in both art history and performance studies, among them Rebecca Schneider, Amelia Jones, and Philip Auslander, as opening performance to a profusion of actualities through live reenactment. This is in opposition to theories and conceptions, popularized by Peggy Phelan, which hold a performance to a singular moment in time. I investigate, through a variety of perspectives, how reperformance encourages the formation of new memories and new understandings of the past within and through museums, archives, and the art historical canon.² I will do so by exploring the work of Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, and Marina Abramovic.^{3 4}

¹ Gertrude Stein, "Portraits and Repetition", *Lectures in America*, pp. 166–169. I am thankful to Inke Arns, who used Stein in his discussion of reperformance: Inke Arns, "History Will Repeat Itself: Strategies of Re-enactment in Contemporary (Media) Art and Performance," *KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin* (2007), accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.agora8.org/reader/Arns_History_Will_Repeat.html.

² Or as Robert Blackson explains: "The myriad ways the past can be maneuvered to create the possibility for new experiences and histories to emerge also carry the potential to inspire as-yet-unthought--of reenactments of these new histories" See Robert Blackson, "Once More . . . With Feeling: Reenactment in Contemporary Art and Culture," *Art Journal* 66.1 (Spring, 2007), accessed August 15, 2013, <http://atc.berkeley.edu/201/readings/Blackson.pdf>.

³ My discussion and interest in this topic was first realized in my essay "Reduce, Reuse, Re-perform," *The Art Section* (2010), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://zoolander52.tripod.com/theartsection4.4/id1.html>. "Why are we so afraid of ghosts? Is it because, like the characters in a Charles Dickens novel, we are scared by them under the cover of night? Do they remind us someone who was once living or remind us of our own mortality? Ultimately this primal fear of ghosts is a fear of not being able to understand what once

I use reperformance as an umbrella term to conceptualize the re-creations and reinterpretations of a given performance, whether it is a live reenactment or, as Schneider and Auslander theorize, a viewer's engagement with documentary material – be it photographs, films, ephemera, or oral testimonies. Within this encompassing definition, it is important to consider the tangled, and sometimes contentious, relationship of reperformance and documentation. While the viewing of documentary material is different from being present at or participating in a live performance, Jones argues that neither provides “privileged access” nor “privileged relationship to the historical truth of the performance.”⁵ In a reperformance there is the experience of the tactile body, whereas

was. We are afraid of having the past elude us only to come back and haunt us. While it may seem like a stretch, the image of a haunting ghost is an apt metaphor for performance art. Conventional theories of performance dictate that unlike paintings or sculptures, performances die, relegated to a singular moment in time, then made to collect dust in the form of films and photo-documentation in the mausoleum of the museum archive. Each static black and white photograph – whether of Chris Burden nailed to a Volkswagen or Gina Pane breaking a mirror with her bare hands – depicts only a split second of the actual performance and attempts to confirm the who, what, where, when and how of early performance. This documentation can never evoke the corporeal and tactile nature of the original live performance. However, some recent scholarship has salvaged performance documentation from its limiting qualities and champions its role in reactivating the experience of the performance for new audiences. Documentation is not merely a stand-in but itself constitutes the work of performance, thereby allowing the performances of the past to be actively engaging as they were in the present. Internet file sharing sites have further legitimated this new experiencing of performances through mediation, where sites like You Tube allow video recordings of performances to be limitlessly accessed, watched and turned off. This discussion of documentation goes beyond the limits of this essay which focuses on another phenomenon that has received a lot of attention recently: re-performance.”

⁴ I would like to cite my reading of Paul Clarke's presentation for Inside Movement Knowledge Conference on October 31, 2009, in his paper “Performing the Archive: The Future of the Past,” he explains the juncture between traditional theories of performance art, and those that are gaining new ground in analyzing how performing bodies are archived: “Whereas traditional scholarship appraises archives in relation to art-historical narratives and reads documents as *evidence* of past events, I'm interested in models for the future use of documents in practice and the relationship of the archive to the future of professional performance-making. Art-historical collections as palettes or resources of material for creative reuse and reinvention, inspiring future moves in the performance scene.” See Paul Clarke, “Performing the Archive: The Future of the Past,” Inside the Movement Knowledge Conference (October 31, 2009), accessed August 3, 2013, insidemovementknowledge.net/wp.../03/clarke_imk_talk_31oct09.doc.

⁵ Amelia Jones's article “Presence in Absentia” is her first major investigation into the relationship of the performative moment and its documentation, which has inspired much of my conversation in this dissertation. Amelia Jones, “Presence in Absentia: Performance Art and the Rhetoric of Presence,” *Art Journal* (1997), 11-18. For a discussion of Jones' work, see Leire Vergara, “Memory, Sight and

in documentation there is an enduring record of proof (historical hindsight) for study and analysis.⁶ Auslander explains that documentation “brings the object to us and reactivates it for us to experience in our time and place, our own particular situation.”⁷ It is not that we are transported back to the space of the original performance when looking at the photograph, but rather: “[it is as if they] were performing the piece for me, in my study, as I imaginatively recreate the performance from its documentation. The performance I thus experience unfolds in my present (even as I remain aware of its historical status).”⁸

It is not my intention to argue for the superiority of one form of mediation over another, but rather to engage the diverse ways that performances are experienced in museums and the art historical canon. To that end, it will be important to consider how the artists I have chosen for my case studies - Kaprow, Knowles, and Abramovic – used performance as an active gesture of opposition to established art markets and institutions.⁹ Of particular interest is the active participation of viewers, which, as Judith

Love,” published in *DiscotecaFlaming Star* (Madrid: Centro de Arte dos de Mayo, 2008), accessed July 11, 2013, <http://www.discotecaflamingstar.com/index.php?id=text13.htm&popup>.

⁶ For a fuller discussion of truth and its relation to “archivism” see Robert Morgan, “Thoughts on Re-Performance, Experience, and Archivism,” *PAJ* 96 (2010).

⁷ Phillip Auslander, “Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance Art Documentation,” *Kunsten A Falle: Lessons in the Art of Falling*, ed. Jonas Ekeborg (Horten: Preus Museum, 2009). 94.

⁸ Auslander, “Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance Art Documentation,” 94.

⁹ See Claire Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents,” *Artforum* (February, 2006): 179-185. “Firstly, they work against dominant market imperatives by diffusing single authorship into collaborative activities that transcend ‘the snares of negation and self interest’. Secondly, they reject object-based art as elitist and consumerist; art should channel its symbolic capital towards constructive social change. Given these commitments, it is tempting to argue that socially collaborative art forms the contemporary avant-garde: artists use social situations to produce dematerialized, antimarket, politically engaged projects carrying on the historic avant-garde blur art and life. But the urgency of this social task has led to a situation in which socially collaborative practices are all perceived to be equally important artistic gestures of resistance: there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art, because all are equally essential to the task of strengthening the social bond.”

Rodenbeck describes, was integral to questioning the “nature of authorship and the notion of art as object.”¹⁰ This is echoed by Johanna Drucker, who asserts that performances from this period should be understood as “a refusal of product-oriented materialism, a rejection of the signature terms of mastery, originality, and authorship, and an overall subversion of the commodity- and object-oriented structure of visual art.”¹¹

Reperformance, I contend, supports institutionalization as well as critiquing investment in commoditized art objects. That is, in allowing a performance to exist in reproducibility, it can be called into presence at will by museums, archives, and individual – this denies that value of singularity (and originality) that has prevailed (and pervaded) throughout much of art historical discourse. This duplicitous position marks “a shift in how we as viewers, historians, makers, writers, curators, subjects, and citizens relate to history.”¹² The access to the past provided by reperformance, as art historian Inke Arns explains, eliminates the safe distance “between then and now, between the others and oneself,” allowing “personal experience of abstract history possible.”¹³ Rather

¹⁰ Judith Rodenbeck, “Madness and Method: Before Theatricality,” *Grey Room* 3 (2003), 58. This notion of renegade status, as performance developed alongside avant-garde art movements in the early decades of the 20th century is perpetuated by RoseLee Goldberg’s text *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, third edition (London: Thames and Hudson, 2011). Also see Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics Spectatorship*, New York: Verso, 2012.

¹¹ As quoted in Rodenbeck, see Johanna Drucker, “Collaboration without Object(s) in the Early Happenings,” *Art Journal* 52.4 (1993), 51.

¹² Megan Hoetger, “Re-performance: History as an Experience to Be Had,” *X-tra* Vol. 15, No. 1 (Fall 2012), accessed July 25, 2013, <http://x-traonline.org/issues/volume-15/number-1/re-performance-history-as-an-experience-to-be-had/>.

¹³ Arns, “History Will Repeat Itself.” Arns further explains this: “Artworks that utilize strategies of re-enactments attempt to (re-)create a connection with history, which is increasingly based on media images. The short-circuiting of the present with the past makes it possible to experience the past in the present – actually, an impossible view of history. This is an attempt to feel sympathy for the subjects of bygone events by imagining oneself in their position. By eliminating the safe distance between abstract knowledge

than making history real, “history is actually experienced by the audience as deferred and displaced, but through the apparently immediate and direct lens of live performance.”¹⁴

When taken together, documentation and reperformance, as art historian Jessica Santone explains, “decides the terms on which something could be faithful.”¹⁵ My study here is also focused on addressing such access, and its implication on the way performances of the past are read and archived in institutions that give prominence to the art historical canon, which “demands new consideration of the status of the documents we use to gain access to an art form that seems to disappear with the bodies of the artists and the places of the situations they created.”¹⁶ I believe that by studying the larger implications of reperformance, specifically its relation to institutional structures and the art historical canon, we can better situate our experiencing of the past in the present, and for the future.

Methodology and Survey of Literature

My methodology is greatly informed by Victor Turner, the British cultural anthropologist and ethnographer, who came to prominence in the 1960s with his

and personal experience, between then and now, between the others and oneself, re-enactments make personal experience of abstract history possible.”

¹⁴ Rod Dickinson quoted Arns, “History Will Repeat Itself.” To that end, reperformances, Arns further suggests, are best understood as artistic interrogations: “Re-enactments are artistic interrogations of media images, which insist on the reality of the images but at the same time draw attention to how much the collective memory relies on media.”

¹⁵ Jessica Santone, “Circulating the Event: the Social Life of Performance Documentation, 1965-1975” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2010), 50.

¹⁶ Santone, “Circulating the Event,” 1.

theorizing of *liminality*.¹⁷ Through a close study of rituals in tribal cultures, namely the Ndembu village in Zambia, he argued that liminal states were a limbo between “a past state and a coming one, a period of personal ambiguity, of non-status, and of unanchored identity.”¹⁸ An individual’s sense of self dissolves as the established order (in the form of religious, social, and/or cultural authorities) dictate participation in ritual act, from changes in seasons to labor to ceremonial rites of passage into adulthood: “Liminality is the realm of primitive hypothesis, where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence.”¹⁹ That is, a temporary state of being in-between: “neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere [. . .] ‘betwixt and between’ all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification.”²⁰

In the modern industrial world, however, where religious structures have given way to secular societies, the desire for ritual is still prevalent, led Turner to theorize the *liminoid*, or ritual-like activity. Participation in liminoid activity is optional, and, as many

¹⁷ I have used a variety of sources to help structure my understanding of Turner: Carl Starkloff, “Church as Structure and Communitas: Victor Turner and Ecclesiology,” *Theology Studies* 58 (1999), 643-668; R. Christopher Feldman, “Testing Victor Turner’s Ritual Process in Contemporary Ritual Behavior,” accessed August 3, 2013, http://www.academia.edu/387885/Testing_Victor_Turners_Ritual_Process_in_Contemporary_Ritual_Behaviors; and Donald Weber, “From Limen to Border: A Meditation on the Legacy of Victor Turner for American Cultural Studies,” *American Quarterly* 47.3 (1995) 525-536, accessed August 3, 2013, <http://teoriaespacioyfronteras.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/from-limen-to-border-a-meditation-on-the-legacy-of-victor-turner-for-american-cultural-studies.pdf>.

¹⁸ Victor Turner as discussed by John W. Schouten, “Personal Rites of Passage and the Reconstruction of Self,” in *NA - Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 18, eds. Rebecca H. Holman and Michael R. Solomon, Provo, UT : Association for Consumer Research (1991): 49-51. Also see Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine Transaction, 1995).

¹⁹ Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: Liminal Period” in *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 106. See Allison Wright, “liminal,” *The Chicago School of Media Theory* (n/a), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/liminal/>.

²⁰ Turner, “Betwixt and Between,” 96-97.

other anthropologists and sociologists have noted, and is usually associated with leisure genres, i.e. ball games, county fairs, viewing art in museums, or watching the Academy Awards. The liminoid is closely linked to popular culture, but it can also occur on the margins as a challenge established social norms.²¹ Regardless of its intentions, Ian Maxwell explains that the liminoid is structured on camaraderie, allowing individuals to “constitute a sense of belonging: to community, to others, to a place, an idea, a cause.”²² Similarly, Graham St. John, discusses how Turner, through the liminoid, “strove to grasp how society” is actually “lived by its members, how symbolic units, social fields and aesthetic genres condense, evoke, and channel meaning and emotion.”²³

St. John explores this when describing that society is continuously in-composition. That is, society’s production and reproduction “is dependent upon the periodic appearance, in the history of societies and in the lives of individuals, of organized moments of categorical disarray and intense reflexive potential.”²⁴ It is this “appearance” and re-appearance (a re-creation and/or reinterpretation of certain performative gestures or activities) that is useful in considering how reperformances are agents for the active engagement of the physical and mental facilities of both artists and

²¹ See Mathieu Deflem, “Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion: A Discussion of Victor Turner’s Processual Symbolic Analysis,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30.1 (1991), accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.anthrobase.com/Links/cache/Ritual%20Anti-Structure%20Religion%20-%20Victor%20Turner%20symbolic%20analysis.htm>.

²² Ian Maxwell, “The ritualization of performance (studies),” in *Victor Turner and contemporary cultural performance*, ed. Graham St John (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 66.

²³ Graham St. John, “Introduction,” in *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance*, ed. Graham St John (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 3.

²⁴ St. John, “Introduction,” 4.

their audiences.²⁵ The liminoid, as such, marks a space for “a plurality of alternative models for living,” so much so that such activity is “capable of influencing the behavior of those in mainstream social and political roles.”²⁶ For my own purposes, I am interested in how St. John compares these alternatives to a revolving door that enables individuals the possibility of more than one exit, where the abandonment of fixed forms and ludic sensibility gives way to multiple states of being.²⁷ These sites are alluring, he explains, and offer for me a fertile ground for discussing how artists imagined art’s liberation from the constructs of museums and the art market, allowing participants in performances to demonstrate the “reliance of culture upon frameworks of meaningful action.”²⁸

Through the liminoid, individuals find solidarity in values and social bonds, where they can “re-live, re-create, retell and reconstruct their culture.”²⁹ Turner, and scholars who reference him, continually emphasize that rituals, and the performances derived from rituals, are integral, if not necessary, for establishing links to the past through experiences in the present. Reperformance, in this regard, reflects on how institutional structures archive, exhibit, and collect “non-traditional media,” or, as St. John explains by way of Turner, “the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing

²⁵ St. John, “Introduction,” 5.

²⁶ Turner quoted in St. John, “Introduction,” 5.

²⁷ St. John, “Introduction,” 5.

²⁸ St. John, “Introduction,” 5.

²⁹ St. John, “Introduction,” 5.

board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting ‘designs for living.’”³⁰

J. Lowell Lewis similarly asserts that the liminoid is the interplay “between replication and adaptation.”³¹ Performance art of the past, as such, becomes increasingly visible as “historical eventualities” that go on to trigger further episodes of their actuality.³² That is, any reenactment of an activity “is always partly a re-creation as well as a reproduction, whether in the realm of daily life or during special events.”³³ Lewis concludes that many performative gestures adhere “somewhat to the normative constraints of the past while also creatively reconstituting them to account for present circumstances as well as conceptual ideals.”³⁴ I am interested in further exploring this concept, especially in how reperformances are much more concerned with their present situation than they are with the past, often reflecting on their current political or social situation.

In regard to reperformance, various scholars, critics, and artists have theorized the re-creation and reinterpretation of performance works from the 60s and 70s, which I will analyze at length in this dissertation; however, they do not offer an agreed upon

³⁰ Turner quoted in St. John, “Introduction,” 7. He also explains that “such performances, where individual subjects may become the object of their own awareness, action is evaluative of social systems, and through “collective reflexology” society is imminent. Performances may then themselves be active agencies of change.”

³¹ J. Lowell Lewis, “Toward a Unified Theory of Cultural Performance: A Reconstructive Introduction to Victor Turner,” in *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance*, ed. Graham St John (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 42.

³² St. John, “Introduction,” 8.

³³ Lewis, “Toward a Unified Theory of Cultural Performance,” 42.

³⁴ Lewis, “Toward a Unified Theory of Cultural Performance,” 42.

characterization of it as a phenomenon in art historical scholarship. There is a multitude of voices with varying opinions and assessments. Similarly, I do not intend to narrow my sights by defining reperformance to a particular trend or sensibility in this study, but rather to conceptualize and engage it in conversation with this existing literature. Peggy Phelan's text, *Unmarked: the Politics of Performance*, first published in 1993, is the best place to begin any such exploration.³⁵ In it, she argued that performance's "oppositional edge" was its lack of reproducibility in documentary media (such as photographs or films, media that has a sense of permanence), insisting that once it takes part in any process of reproduction, it becomes, "something other than performance."³⁶ It is the temporal and ephemeral nature (what could be understood as non-reproducible or non-circulating) that allows a performance to "[become] itself though disappearance."³⁷ "Representation follows two laws," she explains, "it always conveys more than it intends and it is never totalizing. The excess meaning conveyed by representation creates a supplement that makes multiple and resistant readings possible."³⁸ Documentation, she writes, can only produce "ruptures and gaps, it fails to reproduce the real exactly."³⁹

³⁵ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked the Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993).

³⁶ Phelan, *Unmarked*, 146.

³⁷ Phelan, *Unmarked*, 146.

³⁸ Phelan, *Unmarked*, 2. Also see Jones 's engagement with Phelan, in regards to documentation and experience, in "Performance in Absentia."

³⁹ Phelan, *Unmarked*, 2. My reading of Phelan is influenced by Philip Auslander, "Ontology vs. History: Making Distinctions Between the Live and the Mediatized" *The 1997 Performance Studies Conference* (1997), accessed July 16, 2013, <http://webcast.gatech.edu/papers/arch/Auslander.html>. Also see Helena Barrett, "Reinterpreting Re-performance," *In Theory* (2011), accessed July 11, 2013, <http://helenabarrett1987.wordpress.com/january-2011-study/>.

Much of my research is informed by literature that engages with Phelan's construct of liveness. In particular, I am indebted to Rebecca Schneider's book *Performing Remains*, which, through a close study of Civil War reenactments, describes any re-creation of the past as both a literal and metaphorical "battle concerning the future of the past."⁴⁰ Re-enactors ("faith-keepers") bring about the "messy" and "disruptive" remains of the past in complicated, and often conflicting ways, that being: (1) reading the present as fleeting and "entirely" identical to the past; (2) holding that the "movement from the present to the future is never by way of the past;" or (3) believing firmly in "absolute disappearance and loss of the past as well as the impossibility of its recurrence."⁴¹ In regards to the later, Schneider, echoes the far-reaching influence of Phelan's text in establishing a rhetoric where any approach to liveness is complicated, especially in arguing that anything live cannot be held to a material remain.⁴²

Schneider disputes much of Phelan's logic, suggesting that the relationship of the past to its re-created forms in the present is neither fluid nor finite. She claims that history is "full of holes or gaps," where memory and remembering cross "in and out of the spaces

⁴⁰ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 4. For a fuller discussion of this book, see the following reviews: Lara Nielsen, "Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment by Rebecca Schneider," *Hemispheric Institute* (2011), accessed July 11, 2013, <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-81/nielsen>; Cecilia Aldarondo, "Rebecca Schneider's 'Archives Performance Remains,'" (2011), accessed July 11, 2013, <http://josharmstrong.eu/rebecca-schneider%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Carchives-performance-remains%E2%80%9D/>; and See Sara Brady, "Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 26.2 (2012), 223-225.

⁴¹ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 6.

⁴² Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 92. The relationship of performance to the archive is also relevant to Paul Clarke who discusses the archive as: "As rumours, hearsay and spectators' stories; oral histories of performances continue to remain live in culture as they circulate from one generation to another and from place to place. They are filtered, condensed and distorted, through time and through the (creative) agency of those who pass them on. [. . .] Live experiences take place between these enactments and the audience present, which are as immediate and as mediated as those produced by the "originals", which were also referential." See Clarke, "Performing the Archive: The Future of the Past."

between live iterations.”⁴³ While using the words “knotty” and “porous” to describe the relationship of performers and viewers of reenactments to history, Schneider does so to highlight the fear, quoting Walter Benjamin, “that every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.”⁴⁴ To that end, she contests long-held Enlightenment claims that time and history should be read as chronological (forward-driven), as such an ideology is nothing more than “an attitude toward death as necessarily irrecoverable loss;” one that limits the past to the past, and the present to the present.⁴⁵ Reenactments, in contrast, are “vehicle[s] for recurrence,” vehicles that call into question the accuracy, factualness and truth of an archive.⁴⁶

I find that the crux of Schneider’s discussion is in her conceptualizing of reenactment as revealing the uncertainty with which Western culture has sanctified its relationship to history. Again, highlighting Phelan, she explains that it is easy (even comforting and reassuring) to explain performance art as that which disappears, because it is “well suited to the concerns of art history and the curatorial pressure to understand performance in the museal [museum] context where performance appeared to challenge object status and seemed to refuse the archive its privileged savable original.”⁴⁷ Schneider instead proposes that performances remain differently in each of their subsequent forms,

⁴³ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 6.

⁴⁴ William Benjamin quoted in Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 37.

⁴⁵ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 29.

⁴⁶ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 29.

⁴⁷ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 98.

whether those forms are textual, testimonial, oral, photographic, filmic, archives (ephemera), or live re-creations.⁴⁸ However, she does warn against the habit of approaching performance remains “as a metaphysic of presence that fetishizes a singular present moment,” but rather a need to recognize multiple forms of encountering and experiencing a performance.⁴⁹

In discussing this ability for performance to “remain differently,” Schneider explains reenactment as a form of “ritual repetition,” where historical records are not just singular monolithic entities, but rather numerous and varying:

Because oral history and its performance practices are always decidedly repeated, oral historical practices are always reconstructive, always incomplete . . . never in thrall to the singular or self-same origin that buttresses archontic lineage. In performance as memory, the pristine sameness of an “original”, so valued by the archive, is rendered impossible—or, if you will, mythic.⁵⁰

And with the downplaying of originality, traditional conceptions of the archive do not have a leg to stand on. Instead, archives here can be defined as neither shut nor closed off, but rather, similarity to Turner’s conception of the liminoid, resonates in the present through the periodic reappearance of the past by both individuals and communities.

⁴⁸ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 101-103.

⁴⁹ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 102. She further writes: “As theories of trauma and repetition might instruct us, it is not presence that appears in the syncopated time of citational performance but precisely (again) the missed encounter – the reverberations, of the overlooked, the missed, the repressed, the seemingly forgotten. Performance does not disappear when approached from this perspective, though it remains are the immaterial of live, embodies acts. Rather, performance plays the sedimented acts and spectral meanings that haunt material in constant interactions, in constellation, in transmutation.”

⁵⁰ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 102. This can also be explained as reperformance carving out a space for a performance of the past to remember and remain, in such a way that “the pristine self-sameness of an original, an artifact so valued by the archive, is rendered impossible – or, if you will, mythic.” And in this equation of performance’s history to mythology, Schneider points to a trend among scholars who discuss performative acts as for of ritual repetition whether it is through documentation in an archive, oral history, or reperformances that “refigure history onto bodies, the affective transmissions of showing and telling.”

Within Schneider's logic, artists and institutions are able to keep the history of a performance alive, reading it in a continual state of repetition. She is not the only scholar, however, to undertake a study of performance's living and archival states in the wake of Phelan. Performance theorist Philip Auslander, whose book, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, has become canonical in performance studies, and, similar to Schneider, proposes that documentary media, especially in the form of film and video, offers viewers a phenomenological encounter that is active and engaging.⁵¹ Much of his text is informed by Benjamin's essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility," which suggests that technical and industrial reproduction have redefined traditional forms of expression and creativity, such as painting and sculpture.⁵² By way of radio, television, film, video and the Internet, works of art are not able to meet the beholder halfway: "The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room."⁵³ Auslander similarly explains this situation as a desire for audiences "to bring things closer," as everyday "the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction."^{54 55}

⁵¹ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 40.

⁵² Meredith Malone explains that movements like Dada, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Nouveau Réalisme, Fluxus, amongst others, "can be traversed in an effort to critically compare and contrast a variety of chance-based strategies and objectives as they were deployed, received, revised, and redeployed across diverse historical and cultural contexts." See Meredith Malone, ed. *Chance Aesthetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 4.

⁵³ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 221.

⁵⁴ Auslander, *Liveness*, 40. The idea of the expanding of aura was pointed out to me by Hannah Higgins during the editing of this dissertation. However this urge as Donald Kuspit warns, should not be taken lightly, especially as reproductive technologies have the ability to create cults of personality: "Benjamin's theory was brought into critical question by Theodor Adorno's theory of the culture industry -- a deliberate

Within this logic, however, I argue, by way of Jones, that neither reperformance nor documentation offer better (or greater) access, but rather that both are necessary for cultural acceptance of a performance.⁵⁶ In a litany of texts, similar to Auslander and Schneider, Jones asserts the necessity of both documentation and reperformance to gain access to knowledge of the performing body. Along with Adrian Heathfield, she edited *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, the first volume dedicated to addressing the conundrum of performance being written into history.⁵⁷ Opening with Antonin Artaud's suggestion that both live and ephemeral events can "never be made the same way twice," they cull together essays, interviews, and observations that complicate an easy reading of liveness, and the rough terrain in navigating any sort of definition. The overlying premise is that postmodern culture is in a rut, where, despite the blossoming of information exchange afforded by digital and virtual technologies, as Jones explains, "we have begun to understand that we understand very little about ourselves, about other parts

response to Benjamin grounded in the realities of capitalist Hollywood and mass culture. For Adorno, art is the victim of mechanical reproduction, and with that a mode of deception -- like all reproduction." See Donald Kuspit, "Secrets of Success: Paradoxes and Problems of the Reproduction and Commodification of Art in the Age of the Capitalist Spectacle," *artnet* (2011), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/kuspit/art-and-capitalist-spectacle2-8-11.asp>.

⁵⁵ I am also intrigued by Auslander's citing of cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard, who explored the concept of mediatization as a characterization of mass media's affect on dominant modes of cultural production. Baudrillard argued that television and film can be socially isolating: "[I]t is that certainty that people are no longer speaking to each other, that they are definitively isolated in the face of a speech without response." Jean Baudrillard quoted in Auslander, *Liveness*, 5.

⁵⁶ Todd Gitlin, "Postmodernism: Roots and Politics," in *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, ed. Ian Angus and Sut Jhally (London: Routledge, 1989), 355. Todd Gitlin, like Baudrillard, argues that audiences have now become fully immersed in late capitalism's monopoly on sensorial experiences. Postmodern culture is best defined in terms of economic continuity by those born after World War II, who "cannot remember a time before television, suburbs, shopping malls. They are accustomed therefore to rapid cuts, discontinuities, breaches of attention, culture to be indulged and disdained at the same time."

⁵⁷ Antonin Artaud quoted in Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield eds., *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History* (Toronto: Intellect Books, 2012), 11.

of the world, or about the past.”⁵⁸ And in this not knowing, we – and by we I mean those in the study of art historical discourse – turn to reperformance so as to know the achievements as well as the mistakes of the past. This turn is marked with a premise of hope and openness, whereby such works “point to the way in which cultural value is ascribed” and determined by the marketplace.⁵⁹ Without ever explicitly referring to Benjamin, he feels very close here, especially as Jones goes on to suggest that there is “no singular, authentic original event we can refer to in order to confirm the true meaning of an event, an act, a performance, or a body.”⁶⁰

It is also important for me to acknowledge the work of emerging scholars, especially as performance’s art history has become a widely received area of research in conferences, exhibitions, and seminar courses across America and Europe. I am particularly drawn to Santone’s dissertation, *Circulating the Event: the Social Life of Performance Documentation 1965-1975*, which extends Jones’s conclusions to include a discussion of fidelity, as theorized by Alain Badiou’s text, *Being and Event*.⁶¹ To be faithful to an event is to follow it, Santone explains; it is to take its intervention to heart and execute something new in the manner of or according to the terms of the event: “to abandon oneself, rigorously, to the unfolding of its consequences.”⁶² Reperformances may wander astray as a faithful reenactment is not possible, yet, as she asserts, fidelity

⁵⁸ Jones, *Perform, Repeat, Record*, 15.

⁵⁹ Jones, *Perform, Repeat, Record*, 16.

⁶⁰ Jones, *Perform, Repeat, Record*, 18.

⁶¹ See Santone, “Circulating the Event.”

⁶² Peter Hallward as quoted by Santone, See Peter Hallward, *Badiou: a Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 32.

assures they always arrive at a home-like destination. The development of a performance through time will change and alter form but maintain context. As I will further highlight, faithfulness to the original is not a measure or degree of quality, as each encounter with a performance should produce its own unique experience.

What Santone is getting at is that a performance is not located exclusively in either the documentation or the singular act of live performance, but through engagement with both the live and the recorded. “By studying the temporalities of these performances and documents together,” she assures, “we can discover that the singular, instantaneous act *and* its delayed appearance in the document both contribute to creating an event of performance. It is precisely everyday gestures that require a documentary intervention to bring them to light.”⁶³ I am most interested in exploring this concept, especially in extending this assessment that neither the act of documenting nor the production of alternative media (texts, photographs, books, mailed card) was a singular intention of these artists, “because these events are comprised equally of performance act and document they have received less attention from art historians who discuss performance art in this period.”⁶⁴ However, I intend to insert this idea into the larger conversation of how museums reveal the past as a particular narrative and genealogy responsible for the “fabrication and maintenance” of all art historical discourse.⁶⁵

To that end, much of my understanding of museums is in how they recompose

⁶³ Santone, “Circulating the Event,” 7.

⁶⁴ Santone, “Circulating the Event,” 6.

⁶⁵ Donald Preziosi, “Modernity Again: the Museum As Trompe L’oeil,” in *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts*, ed. Peter Brunette and David Wills (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 141. It includes contributions by Carol Duncan, Judith Butler and Craig Owens

art's "displaced and dismembered relics as clients via genealogy of and for the present," as argued by Donald Preziosi in his edited volume, *The Art of Art History*.⁶⁶ In the introduction and an essay of the same name, Preziosi conceptualizes art history and museology as selective enterprises: "Common to the practices of museography and museology was a concern with spectacle, stagecraft, and dramaturgy; with the locating of what could be framed as distinctive and exemplary objects such that their relations amongst themselves and to their original circumstances of production and reception could be vividly imagined and materially envisioned in a cogent and useful manner."⁶⁷ Within this method the traditional collecting, archiving, and exhibiting of objects only serves to construct a particular history, one that provides select objects with safe and well illuminated "access routes into and through" the art historical canon.^{68 69}

The massive "archival labor" of museums, Preziosi writes, justifies "the construction of historical novels of social, cultural, national, racial, or ethnic origins,

⁶⁶ Donald Preziosi ed., *The Art of Art History: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 501. Also see Kimberly Frances Keith, "From Civilization to Participation: The Convergence of Policy, Practice and Difference in the Art Museum," Goldsmiths, University of London, 2010. She discusses at length the position of museums as places of power and authority: "Art museums, the specific type of museum under scrutiny in this current research, are the purveyors of two distinct aspects of culture: 'high' culture, defined as the appreciation and understanding of literature, arts and music; and culture as it pertains to the customs and civilizations of particular peoples and groups. The art museum, from its position as an authority on culture, has influenced how Western society has developed its appreciation and understanding of culture and cultures."

⁶⁷ Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 500.

⁶⁸ Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 501.

⁶⁹ There an interesting conversation on how museums should function forward in the future, through a series of questions: "One of the key questions here is should we stop hoarding and start concentrating on the better use of the already existing collections? Should museums have easier access to those parts of each others' collections that are being underused? Should museums start thinking differently? Digital platforms can easily help museums to create ways to look for and find objects that the collection is desperately lacking. It is simply a matter of wanting to open those doors." See Susanna Pettersson, Monika Hagedorn-Saupe, Teijamari Jyrkkiö, and Astrid Weij, eds. *Encouraging Collections Mobility: A Way Forward for Museums in Europe*, Finish National Gallery (2000), accessed August 3, 2013, http://www.lending-for-europe.eu/fileadmin/CM/public/handbook/Encouraging_Collections_Mobility_A4.pdf.

identity, and development.”⁷⁰ From this “sequential juxtaposition of objects in museum space to the formatting of photo or slide collections (material or virtual) to the curricular composition of university departments,” scholars, critics, and curators are motivated by a desire to “construe the significance of works as a function of their relative position.”⁷¹ Preziosi, like Schneider, traces this organization, one based in rationality and order, “as a component of the Enlightenment project of commensurability,” where “art became the universal standard or measure against which the products (and by extension the people) of all times and places might be envisioned together on the same hierarchical scale or table of aesthetic progress and ethical and cognitive advancement.”⁷² This is closely aligned with scientific methodologies since the late 18th century, which fix-in-place “individual objects within the ideal horizons of a potentially universal history of artistic forms.”⁷³ In this regard, Preziosi explains that curator fabricate an elaborate order of specimens, which they link together “by multiple chains of causality and influence over time and space and across the kaleidoscope of cultures.”⁷⁴ Within this understanding, we can see how performance art is aided by documentary media, especially as it scripts and

⁷⁰ Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 501.

⁷¹ Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 10.

⁷² Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 493.

⁷³ Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 9. He further explains this by writing: “[An] immense labour on the part of generations of historians, critics, and connoisseurs was in the service of assigning to objects a distinct place and moment in the historical ‘evolution’ of what thereby became validated as the pan-human phenomenon of art as a natural and legitimate subject in its own right; as cultural matter of deep significance because of what it arguably revealed about individuals, nations, or races.” This is closely linked when Schneider explains that: “The demand for a visible remain, at first a mnemonic mode of mapping for monument, would eventually become the architecture of a particular social power over memory,” That is, memory is no longer a subconscious action, but rather can be controlled by governing bodies. See Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 99.

⁷⁴ Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 10.

gives voice to the archive, where objects sustain a “willed fiction” that they somehow “constitute a coherent representational universe, as signs or surrogates of their (individual, national, racial, gendered) authors.”⁷⁵

Peter Jones further explains this when explaining “museums necessarily decontextualize and then recontextualize their contents, thereby radically altering the matrices through which meanings may be projected, discerned, constructed.”⁷⁶ If he is correct, it is important to turn to museums because they will come to play an integral role in chronicling performance art’s history and linking it with other objects in the art historical canon.⁷⁷ Rodenbeck also suggests this when explaining that “recovering a history, whether motivated by theory or chronology, presents in essence a forensic exercise: the establishment of historical facts” by using loosely constructed evidence and inference, all in an effort to form a “credible narrative.”⁷⁸ A good example of such a methodology is seen in the exhibition *100 Years (version #2, ps1, Nov. 2009)*, at MoMA PS1. The organizers, Klaus Biensebach and Roselee Goldberg, conceived of *100 years* as a “living exhibition” with material that would, according to the press release, “continue to

⁷⁵ Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 500. Also see his essay “Performing Modernity: The Art of Art History” in Amelia Jones and Andrews Stephenson, eds. *Performing the Body/ Performing the Text* (London: Routledge, 1999). He further explains: “Essential to the articulation and justification of art history as a systematic and universal human science in the nineteenth century was the construction of an indefinitely extendable archive, potentially coterminous (as it has since in practice become) with the material or so-called ‘visual culture’ of all human groups everywhere and at all times. Within this vast imaginary museographical artifact or edifice (of which all museums are fragments or part-objects) every possible object of attention might then find its fixed and proper place and address relative to all the rest. Every item might thereby be sited (so as to be susceptible to citation) as referencing or indexing another or others on multiple horizons (metonymic, metaphoric, or anaphoric) of useful association.”

⁷⁶ Peter Jones, “Museums and the meanings of their contents,” *New Literary History*, 23.4. (1992), 911.

⁷⁷ Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 500. Ultimately he concludes: “The academic discourse of art history thereby served as a powerful modern concordance for systematically linking together aesthetics, ethics, and social history, providing essential validating instruments for the modern heritage industry and associated modes of the public consumption of objects and images.”

⁷⁸ Rodenbeck, *Radical Prototypes*, 27.

grow without limit into the future” and showcase the “extraordinary variety of ‘live’ performance that shaped the history of 20th century art.”⁷⁹

This style of performance art display parallels the chronology of conventional art historical wisdom, which sees performance art as developing in the early decades of the twentieth century. The first room greeted viewers with a call to arms to “sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and rashness,” a quote from Filippo Marinetti’s Futurist Manifesto, which, coincidentally, enjoyed its hundredth anniversary in 2009. The exhibition also coincided with the third installment of Goldberg’s *Performa* biennial, which celebrated the founding of Futurism. In this entry room, the origins of performance art are imagined as spawning from the socio-political discontent of a small avant-garde group within the established order, and reads as a condensed version of Goldberg’s landmark tome *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (first published in 1974). The book, like the exhibition is an uncomplicated reading of performance art history that flows neatly from one early twentieth century art movement to the next, from Cubism to the Bauhaus to Dada to Russian Constructivism.⁸⁰

To guide visitors through this unfolding chronology in *100 years*, a three-inch-thick, straight blue line ran the length the exhibition, intermittently pierced by dates written in large block letters. Themes that have continually surfaced in performance art’s history, including feminism, political strife, and body politics, are sidelined in favor of a

⁷⁹ Roselee Goldberg, “Roselee Goldberg on extraordinary 100 years exhibition at PS1,” *performa.org*, accessed July 20, 2013, <http://performa-arts.org/blog/roselee-goldberg-on-extraordinary-100-years-exhibition/>.

⁸⁰ This description of the first room of the exhibition is taken from my review in *PAJ*. See Harry Weil, “Exhibiting Performance Art’s History,” *PAJ* 98 (2011) 65-71.

tidily-told lineage. Goldberg emphasizes that the exhibition is merely an introduction that intends only to begin the conversation on performance art's history:

Groundbreaking performances from this extraordinary history are represented by films, videos, photographs, documents, and audio works, providing an educational opportunity for art historians, critics and students. . . . Given the anticipated explosion of performance art in galleries and museums that will dominate New York City in the coming year, there is no better introduction to understanding this remarkable material than *100 Years at P.S. 1*.⁸¹

The blue line, as such, supports Preziosi's insistence that art historical scholarship is meant to legitimize works of art by fitting them into a history that is continually unfolding and evolving. In the most general sense, the museology of art has been devoted to the judicious assemblage of objects deemed "particularly evocative of time, place, personality, mentality, and the artisanry or genius of individuals, groups, races, and nations."⁸² Performance art can partake in this dramaturgical composition, especially as reperformances and documentation can be carefully choreographed to fulfill institutional needs.

The blue path mimics the simple red and black lines of Alfred H. Barr's chart on the development of modern art. Barr, former director of the MoMA (1929-1943), created a simple scientific chart for the exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1935) that streamlined the genealogy of modern art with no explanatory text, reducing it to a chronological succession of avant-garde movements. Art that pushed toward non-

⁸¹ Roselee Goldberg quoted in "Roselee Goldberg on extraordinary 100 YEARS exhibition now at PS1," *artoffice.org* (February 9, 2010), accessed July 25, 2013, <http://artoffice.org/2010/02/09/roselee-goldberg-on-extraordinary-100-years-exhibition-now-at-ps1/>.

⁸² Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 43.

objectivity was difficult for American audiences to digest.⁸³ The egalitarian nature of Barr's exhibition and chart, Susan Noyes Platt argues, aligns his belief that museums should be laboratories: "in its experiments the public is invited to participate."⁸⁴ His organization was grounded in the notion that while some works and artists appear "important today might seem so in the not too distant future."⁸⁵ *100 years*, like *Cubism and Abstract Art*, attempted to situate sophisticated arguments contained in both "the rational and irrational strains of a burgeoning genre through rigorous studies of form, history, and their interrelations."⁸⁶

The ordering exemplified in *100 Years* illustrates that canonization is part of a formulaic assimilation by museums to expand "the ground of the existing canons and orthodoxies rather than offering substantive alternatives to the status quo."⁸⁷ Art historian Sven Lutticken suggests that throughout modern history, the past has continually gained relevance in the present by acclaims of ownership: "[A] continuity was suggested that made the modern bourgeois legitimate heir of his own people's past, but also of other

⁸³ Susan Noyes Platt provides an extensive discussion of Barr's exhibition and chart, putting it into context with the larger social and political implications of abstract art in the early decades of the twentieth century. See Susan Noyes Platt, "Modernism, Formalism, and Politics: The "Cubism and Abstract Art" Exhibition of 1936 at the Museum of Modern Art," *Art Journal* 47.4 (1988), 284-295.

⁸⁴ Alfred H. Barr Jr., *Art in Our Time* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1939), 15. Further discussion of its egalitarian nature can be found in Platt, "Modernism, Formalism, and Politics."

⁸⁵ Eric Wolf, "On the 70th Anniversary of Cubism and Abstract Art: Alfred H. Barr, Jr's Legacy," *Art & Education* (2006), accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/on-the-70th-anniversary-of-cubism-and-abstract-art-alfred-h-barr-jr-'s-legacy/>. Wolf further explains: "His catalogs and exhibitions were truly educational, designed to explain and, to some extent, decode the very complex ideas underlying the artistic movements of the early twentieth century. For this reason he has been labeled an "evangelist" for modern art."

⁸⁶ Wolf, "On the 70th Anniversary of Cubism and Abstract Art."

⁸⁷ Preziosi, *The Art of Art History*, 489.

cultures.”⁸⁸ Lutticken warns that if artists are always “re-enacting roles partially scripted by others,” they could us reenactment “against itself by recreating historical events.”⁸⁹ Reperformance, in this context, can salvage and resurrect the past for the purposes of re-scripting. But this would mean taking into account, as Robert Morgan explains, what we really want to do with reperformance, and what we hope to achieve.⁹⁰

Outline of Chapters

In Chapter One, “Origins of Reperformance: Marcel Duchamp’s Reproduced Readymades,” I trace reperformance’s conceptual origins to Marcel Duchamp’s reproduced *readymades* from the early decades of the twentieth century. All of his readymades were intentionally lost or discarded after initial exhibition. Years later, however, he made reproductions of them when commissioned by museums and private collectors. I will examine specific aspects of the relationship between reproduction of Duchamp’s readymades and reperformance: (1) their association to the reproducibility of photographic and filmic technologies; (2) their challenge to the art establishment by redirecting the “viewer’s gaze from the art object to the conventions that govern” the artistic process.⁹¹ This chapter is not intended as an encyclopedic reading of readymades, but rather to emphasize how as a reactionary idiom against painting and sculpture in the

⁸⁸ Sven Lutticken, ed. *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art* (Rotterdam: Witte de Witte Center for Contemporary Art, 2005), 19.

⁸⁹ Lutticken, *Life, Once More*, 19.

⁹⁰ Robert Morgan, “Thoughts on Re-Performance, Experience, and Archivism,” *PAJ* 96 (2010).

⁹¹ Dalia Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 125.

early twentieth century, they directly contributed to reperformance's engagement with singularity and originality.⁹²

The reproduction of readymades was a way of getting art out of systems of exchangeability, as Duchamp explains, as “in art, and only in art, the original work is sold, and it acquires a sort of aura that way.”⁹³ “A replica will do just as well,” as its essential characteristic is its lack of uniqueness.⁹⁴ This disregard for originality counters the modernist art practices, since mechanical reproduction subverts both artisanal and authorial intervention.⁹⁵ And in a post-modern context, as art historian and gallerist Francis Naumann explains, “the distinction between an original and its reproduction becomes manifest to the extent that modes of artistic production can be conceived as a function of reproduction.”⁹⁶ As such, this chapter, along with this dissertation as a whole, will explore the avant-garde's ever evolving definition of originality and how it operates in the institutionalization of performance art practices. This discussion will be especially important for Kaprow and Knowles, the focus of chapters two and three respectively, who were acquaintances of Duchamp. It is my contention that much of their work, like readymades, functions as a guideline that even if a performance has not been

⁹² Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 7.

⁹³ Duchamp quoted in: Francis Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999), 293.

⁹⁴ Duchamp quoted in Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 239.

⁹⁵ Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 239.

⁹⁶ Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 239. Naumann goes on to further explain that for Duchamp, art became a “a form of production which like other forms of social and economic production involves reassembling and redeploying already given elements and rules.” As well, “Duchamp's discovery through the ready-made is that art, language and institutions are readymades: They are systems of references whose meaning, like chess, is constituted by a set of predetermined rules.”

reperformed, epistemologically it can be and the presence of the original is of no consequence.⁹⁷

Duchamp gave each production run of his readymades creditability as “the replica of the readymade delivering the same message” in its reproduced form.⁹⁸ For, in entering the category of art, as art historian John Roberts explains, the readymades entered the intentional space of authorship and therefore entered the space of signification, insofar as the act and presentation is bound by nominal conditions of authorship.⁹⁹ I will consider the reproduced readymades in relation to Benjamin’s dictum that in modern industrial age the value of cultural objects is defined according to their proximity to and intimacy with viewers. By extension, reperformances exist as a desire to have access and experience the past in the present.¹⁰⁰

Chapter Two, “Allan Kaprow: Reperforming Happenings and Environments,” will introduce the first of three case studies that assess how artists in the post--World War II period built into their performances an understanding that they would one day be recreated. I begin with Kaprow, who abandoned painting and anything that smacked of “the procedure and conventions of object-based art.”¹⁰¹ He conceived of two new

⁹⁷ Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 239.

⁹⁸ Martha Buskirk, “Thoroughly Modern Marvel,” *October* 70 (1997), 121.

⁹⁹ John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade* (New York: Verso, 249), 51.

¹⁰⁰ Hannah Higgins, at the time of editing this dissertation, pointed out the opposite – why not the desire to insert the present into our reading of the past by way of nostalgic longing.

¹⁰¹ Alex Potts, “Writing the Happenings: The Aesthetics of Nonart,” *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life*, eds. Andrew Perc Allan and Eva Meyer-Hermann (Los Angeles: Getty Research Center, 2008), 2.

performance genres, Happenings and Environments, both of which shattered all the rules and expectations of art and theater.¹⁰² They shunned rational discourse by calling into question the nature of the viewer's relationship to the canvas and stage.¹⁰³ The performances were intended to be, as Kaprow explained, strange, spontaneous and unrehearsed.¹⁰⁴

Happenings and Environments blurred the boundaries between art and life, as, by way of Kaprow's reading of John Dewey, they emphasized the continuity between art and experience.¹⁰⁵ They were a "moral act" as Kaprow argued, "a human stand of great urgency, whose professional status quo art is less a criterion than their certainty as an ultimate existential commitment."¹⁰⁶ And despite the humor that is rampant through these performances, they were not intended to be entertaining, but rather a means, as scholars and critics have noted, to explore counter-capitalist relationships in real time. At the heart of this chapter is a discussion of Kaprow's dismissal of photographic documentation of performances. Documentation, he argued, is intimately tied to

¹⁰² See Arnold Aronson, *American Avant-Garde Theatre: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 68. This definition is derived from Aronson explanation of Happenings: "Unlike the absurdist dramas, which remained within the framework of Western drama and thus pushed gradually at its confines, Happenings, at one stroke, shattered all rules and expectations. Happenings framed the materials of the everyday world and emphasized their everydayness."

¹⁰³ See Susan Sontag, "Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition," accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.text-revue.net/revue/heft-7/happenings-an-art-of-radical-juxtaposition/text>.

¹⁰⁴ This element of being unrehearsed was emphasized by Kaprow in his essay *The Happenings are Dear, Long Live the Happenings*: "HAPPENINGS SHOULD BE UNREHEARSED, AND PERFORMED BY NONPROFESSIONALS, ONCE ONLY."

¹⁰⁵ Johanna Goose, "From Art to Experience: The Porous Philosophy of Ray Johnson," *Black Mountain Studies Journal* 2.3 (2011), accessed July 25, 2013, http://www.blackmountainstudiesjournal.org/wp/?page_id=137.

¹⁰⁶ Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 21.

institutionalization, as over time it becomes more and more subjective. Thus, in overturning the commodity fetish of art, was an effort to supplant it with a reification of “ordinary language, behavior and action.”¹⁰⁷ Kaprow’s anxieties originate in his reading of Dewey’s *Art as Experience*, which expunged the value of art to restore the “continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience.”¹⁰⁸

This chapter will assess three retrospective treatments of Kaprow’s work: (1) “Happenings: New York, 1958 – 1963,” at the Pace Gallery in New York; (2) a traveling exhibition, “Allan Kaprow—Art as Life,” which toured venues in Europe and North America; and (3) a series of commissioned reperformances of the Environment *Yard* for the exhibition *Allan Kaprow YARD*, at the Hauser and Wirth gallery in New York. These examples illustrate that only when audiences are at enough of a historical distance from a performance, as Pamela Lee notes, “might the processes of historiography reconstruction be set into motion.”¹⁰⁹ Only then, and with difficulty, she further explains, “might the contours of a ‘completed past’ be rendered historically legible.”¹¹⁰

Chapter three, “Alison Knowles: Reperforming Fluxus,” will extend my assessment of performance’s oppositional impulse by considering Fluxus and its relationship to the institutionalization of performance practices. While Fluxus has been written on by a number of scholars in various disciplines, a more nuanced discussion of

¹⁰⁷ Judith Rodenbeck, “Madness and Method: Before Theatricality,” *Grey Room* 3 (2003), 59.

¹⁰⁸ Republished: John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 27.

¹⁰⁹ Pamela Lee paraphrasing the sociologist George Kubler in “‘Ultramoderne’: Or, How George Kubler Stole the Time in Sixties Art,” *Grey Room* 2 (2001), 56.

¹¹⁰ Pamela Lee paraphrasing George Kubler in “‘Ultramoderne,’” 56.

its recreation and reinterpretation in museums today has been largely ignored.¹¹¹ I will begin with a conceptual overview of Fluxus practices, addressing how artists associated with this group sought to de-center artistic authorship from a work's initial producer or composer.¹¹² Much of the work of this collective valued the innovativeness and variations that result from being shared among a community of active and engaged participants.¹¹³

I will assess these matters by discussing three Fluxus reperformance projects by the artist Alison Knowles – *Identical Lunch*; *Fluxus with Tools*; and *Thing/Thought: Fluxus Editions* – considering how each are “the function of thought in the ways in which the body interacts with things.”¹¹⁴ Fluxus's hesitations toward the art market and museums are similar to that of Kaprow, and I am interested in fitting it into my conception of reperformance, as the sensibility of this collective subverted traditional artistic expressions and valued reinterpretations and re-creations of their performances.¹¹⁵ I will address how Fluxus scores and objects work within the framework of museums by posing the following questions: How are museums meeting the challenges of exhibiting Fluxus sensibilities? Can they be sustained when it becomes an object of artistic and archival value? What is at risk when museums and galleries deny the ability of Fluxus to

¹¹¹ I am indebted to a number of scholars whose work is listed in the bibliography, including Owen Smith, Kristine Stiles, Hannah Higgins, and Julia Robinson.

¹¹² Much has been written about the relationship of event scores to musical scores, and their musicality. See Hannah Higgins' "Fluxus Experience" for a fuller account of this relationship. As well, this definition of Fluxus is indebted to Jessica Santone's dissertation "Circulating the event: the social life of performance documentation, 1965-1975."

¹¹³ See Santone, "Circulating the Event."

¹¹⁴ Kristine Stiles, "Between Water and Stone – Fluxus Performance: A Metaphysics of Acts," *The Artist Body*, ed. Amelia Jones (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2001), 211.

¹¹⁵ Santone, "Circulating the Event," 146.

“go anywhere” and impose authorship and copyright, and, perhaps most damaging of all, ownership of the intended performances?¹¹⁶

In the final chapter, Chapter Four, “Marina Abramovic: Reperforming Body Art,” I will address Marina Abramovic’s reperformance project, *Seven Easy Pieces*, and how it questioned the way memories and documentation of performances are engaged within museums and the art historical canon.¹¹⁷ The project, which took place between November 9 and 15, 2005, at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, was premised on the fact that little documentation exists from this critical early period from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s, and one often has to rely upon testimonies from witnesses or photographs that show only portions of any given performance.¹¹⁸ I will consider *Seven Easy Pieces* in relation to Body Art practices, which scholars and critics have used in association with Abramovic’s work to date. The body served as both subject and medium for Abramovic’s performance, and explored the physical and mental limitations of being, through pain, exhaustion, and danger.¹¹⁹

Art historian Kathy O’Dell explains that these performances reflect artists that were disillusioned by modernism’s “transcendence-seeking, Cartesian/Kantian ego

¹¹⁶ Liz Kotz has described Fluxus events scores as allowing Fluxus performative gestures to “go anywhere.” See Liz Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the ‘Event’ Score,” *October* 95 (2001).

¹¹⁷ My discussion of *Seven Easy Pieces* here is largely based on my Masters Thesis: “The Possibilities of Reperformance: Marina Abramovic’s Seven Easy Pieces” (Masters Thesis, Stony Brook University, 2008).

¹¹⁸ The full press release for *Seven Easy Pieces* can be found: <http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/abramovic/>, accessed June 3, 2013.

¹¹⁹ This is the language Marina Abramovic has chosen to market her performance art projects, in this case the press release for the film *The Artist is Present*, accessed July 25, 2013, <http://marinafilm.com/about-marina-abramovic>.

typical of capitalism and bolstered by patriarchal social and political structures.”¹²⁰ Body Art, in turn, to focus art on a performing body as both subject and object. As well, I will turn my attention here to the ways that Abramovic reactivates the viewing experience of past performances through her active and engaged body in such a way that it is not simply re-creating, but rather in “preserving and making accessible the full range of experiences a performance offers in its afterlife, they can better continue the living memory of the performance.”¹²¹ This is what Schneider has explained as that which remains differently, where the past “performed and more explicit as live performance can function as the kind of bodily transmissions conventional archivists dread, a counter-memory.”¹²²

Finally, in the conclusion, I argue that reperformance is central to the discourse on how digital and virtual technologies are being experienced and used by museums visitors. In the ever-increasing move toward dematerialized forms, borrowing Lucy Lippard’s term for conception of conceptual art practices, understanding new media technologies is critical for constructing any further conversations on liveness and permanence. I will briefly look at Eva and Franco Mattes’ *Synthetic Performances*, a reperformance project of performances from the 1960s and 1970s using the virtual program *Second Life*. The works they reperformed included Marina Abramovic’s and Ulay’s *Imponderabilia*,

¹²⁰ Kathy O’Dell, *Contract With the Skin: Performance Art, and the 1970s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998),15.

¹²¹ Christina Manzella and Alex Watkins, “Performance Anxiety: Performance Art in Twenty-First Century Catalogs and Archives.” *Art Documentation* 30.1 (2011), 32. This is also suggested by Josephine Machon, “(Syn)aesthetics and Disturbance: tracing a transgressive style in contemporary performance practice,” PhD dissertation, Brunel University, 2003.

¹²² Schneider, *Performance Remains*, 105.

Gilbert and George's *The Singing Sculpture*, Vito Acconci's *Seedbed*, Chris Burden's *Shoot*, Valie Export's *Tapp und Tastkino* and Joseph Beuys' *7000 Oaks*. In Second Life, users can create avatars, called residents, who interact, socialize, form communities, and create and trade virtual property and services. They carry out mundane activities such as eating, watching movies and having sex. Avatars can take any form users choose, allowing them the choice to mimic their real-life appearance or conceive of a resident who is any combination of human, animal, or vegetable.¹²³ Art critic and curator Domenico Quaranta suggests an intimate relationship between participants and their avatars in Second Life, where representation and existence is one and the same thing.¹²⁴ Over time, he explains, operators of avatars cannot help but acknowledge that the world of Second Life is indeed a world, with its own complex society, rules to obey, and trends to follow.¹²⁵ *Synthetic Performance* helps define the virtual destiny of performance art in an age where life itself can be easily reproduced on the Internet.¹²⁶

In the age of the Internet (in what has been called the Facebook Generation by some, or Generation 2.0 by others) we are able to narrowcast our lives in what John McKenzie explains as the “digital limen.” where “the citationality of discourses and practices is passing across an electronic threshold.”¹²⁷ “Words and gesture, statements

¹²³ A much more extended definition of Second Life can be found on Wikipedia, accessed July 25, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Life.

¹²⁴ Domenico Quaranta, “Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG: Reenactment of Marina Abramovic and Ulay's Imponderabilia,” *RE:akt! Reconstruction, Re-enactment, Re-reporting*, accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.reakt.org/index.html>.

¹²⁵ Quaranta, “Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG”

¹²⁶ Quaranta, “Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG” My discussion and interest in this topic began with my essay “Reduce, Reuse, Re-perform.”

¹²⁷ John McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001), 94.

and behaviors, symbolic systems and living bodies are being recorded, archives are being recombined through multimedia communication networks,” as McKenzie further describes, liminoid genres “are becoming cyberspatial.”¹²⁸ That is, the liminoid is now being created for the purposes of being mediated and disseminated, intended to exist in perpetuity and reach as wide an audience as possible, a desire to see and be seen. Ultimately, I conclude, by way of Gertrude Stein, that reperformance is not so much a form of repetition, but rather an insistence on performance’s presence.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ McKenzie, *Perform or Else*, 94.

¹²⁹ Or as Arns writes: “*History Will Repeat Itself*: The exhibition’s title should not be understood in any way as a pessimistic statement (because history obviously won’t repeat itself), but as an exhortation to look at history more than once. As Gertrude Stein remarked in 1934 in the quotation that introduces this chapter: Even repetition is not about repetition per se, but about insistence.”

Chapter One

Origins of Reperformance: Marcel Duchamp's Reproduced Readymades

“The readymade is a kind of rendezvous. It is born of the encounter of an object and an author. Object and author are nothing but the conditions of their encounter, nothing further being supposed about them . . . The object is a given, it exists somewhere, no matter where, available mentally. It doesn't even have to be in the artist's reach, since once decided on, the readymade can later be looked for.”¹³⁰

Marcel Duchamp

In this chapter, I trace the historical development of reperformance to Marcel Duchamp's *readymades*, which are similarly predicated on their ability to be continuously reproduced. I analyze how the readymades were a challenge to the valuing of singularity, by way of their ability to “exist somewhere, no matter where.”¹³¹ Readymades were mundane objects taken out of their everyday context, in order to critique and parody the structures of the art market. He described his actions as a rendezvous, where object and author are “nothing but the conditions of their encounter, nothing further being supposed about them.”¹³² Within this context, I will address the scholarship that explains how photographic documentation and reproduced forms of the

¹³⁰ Duchamp quoted in Thierry de Duve, “Echoes of the Readymade: Critique of Pure Modernism,” *October* 70 (1994), 71.

¹³¹ De Duve, “Echoes of the Readymade,” 64. And Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 123.

¹³² De Duve, “Echoes of the Readymade,” 71.

readymades allowed for their necessary circulation and renewed knowledge, and argue how this preempted the conception of reperformance later in the twentieth century.

Duchamp's interest in readymades began in 1914, when he selected, and sometimes modified, mass-produced objects, including a bottle rack, snow shovel, and a urinal, among others.¹³³ He conceptualized them as a "provocative act," one without concern for aesthetic taste, "governed not by the beauty of the object, but by his indifference towards it."¹³⁴ "The object is a given, it exists somewhere, no matter where, it is available mentally," as Duchamp explained, "it doesn't even have to be in the artist's reach, since once decided on, the readymade can later be looked for."¹³⁵ The public's first encounter with them, however, was un-momentous. In April 1916, the Bourgeois Gallery in New York City listed two readymades in a catalog of exhibited works, but neither visitors nor the press took notice.¹³⁶ The lack of recognition fulfilled Duchamp's decree that the readymades do not demand attention, contemplation or reverence the same way a painting or sculpture does: "It doesn't need to be deeply studied. It's simply there."¹³⁷ In

¹³³ Simply, but best explained, in Matthew Gale, "Ready-made," *Grove Art Online* (Oxford University Press, 2009), http://www.moma.org/collection/theme.php?theme_id=10468, accessed June 5, 2013.

¹³⁴ Gale, "Ready-made."

¹³⁵ De Duve, "Echoes of the Readymade," 64.

¹³⁶ As discussed by Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*.

¹³⁷ Marcel Duchamp quoted in *Marcel Duchamp parle des ready-mades à Philippe Collin* (Paris: L'Échoppe, 1998), 14. This was brought to my attention in reading Séverine Gossart, 'Marcel Duchamp / Ready-mades', translated from the French text, published in the catalogue *Dada* (Editions du Centre Pompidou : Paris 2005) 378-382, accessed August 14, 2013, <http://www.dada-companion.com/duchamp/readymades.php>. Gossart also explains that the term readymades "first appeared explicitly on January 15, 1916, in a letter to his sister Suzanne: "Here in New York, I've bought some things in the same taste and I treat them as 'ready-mades' – you know enough English to understand the meaning of 'already made' that I'm giving these objects. I sign them and give them an inscription in English." This is also quoted in Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk (eds.), *Affectionately, Marcel. The selected correspondence of Marcel Duchamp* (Ghent: Ludlon Press, 2000).

a similar regard, he begged his sister Suzanne not to bother attempting to interpret or understand the readymades or their titles: “Don’t try too hard to understand it in the Romantic or Impressionist or Cubist sense – that does not have any connection with it.”¹³⁸

Readymades were, and arguably still are, a way of getting out of the rhetoric of traditional art historical discourse. “If Manet inaugurates modernism by the fact that he paints for the museum,” Thierry De Duve explains, “then Duchamp ends it because he understands that the real museum comes second in relation to the museum-without-walls, for which it is nothing any longer but the referent, the way the gold lying in the vaults of central banks is nothing but the symbolic guarantee for the money in circulation.”¹³⁹

After they were first exhibited in the 1910s, they were intentionally lost or destroyed by the artist. It was only after interest in Duchamp’s work picked up in late 1940s that they emerged as widely visible works – though not as the originals, but as authorized copies that were both hand-crafted and mass-produced.¹⁴⁰ Their engagement with and critique of the art market would influence a generation of artists, namely those associated with Neo-Dada, Pop Art, Fluxus, and Conceptual Art, as it spoke to a young generation of

¹³⁸ Marcel Duchamp quoted in Molly Nesbit “Concept of Nothing: New Notes by Marcel Duchamp and Walter Arensberg,” in *The Duchamp Effect*, eds. Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 149.

¹³⁹ Duve, “Echoes of the Readymade,” 68. This was also made evident by Grist in discussing that Robert Motherwell in his anthology *The Dada Painters and Poets* (1951), which he characterized *Bottle Rack*, the first readymade, as at once a “sculpture” and an “anti-art and consequently dada gesture,” concluding, “it is evident, thirty-five years later, that the bottle rack he chose has a more beautiful form than almost anything made, in 1914, as sculpture.” See Grist, “(Ab)Using Marcel Duchamp.”

¹⁴⁰ William Camfield notes that the readymades had no public exposure for thirty years after they were first conceived, becoming object widely known without being widely seen. William Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain* (Houston: Menil Collection, 1989), 7.

artists, especially performance artists, who were emerging from the shadow of Abstract Expressionism.¹⁴¹

The first object that Duchamp declared to be a readymade in 1914 was an iron bottle drying rack, first termed an "already made" sculpture, and adequately titled *Bottlerack*. By the time of his death in 1968, it had been re-created nearly half a dozen times.¹⁴² In 1916, after devising the term *readymade* for this new vein of art making, Duchamp contemplated further extending the limits of defining creativity. He wrote in a letter to his sister Suzanne, who was in Paris, that she should create a “ ‘readymade’ from a distance.”¹⁴³ Giving her specific instructions on how to create his readymade, he wrote: “You take for yourself this bottle rack. I will make it a ‘readymade’ from a distance. You will have to write at the base and on the inside of the bottom ring in small letters painted

¹⁴¹ It should be noted that John Cage, a mentor and collaborator for many of the artists discussed in this dissertation, reiterated/emphasized much of Duchamp’s approach to art while teaching at Black Mountain College and the New School for Social Research (1957-1959). This was in direct conflict with Clement Greenberg, one of the preeminent art critics of the time, and a major proponent of Abstract Expressionism. The readymades, as de Duve explains, undermined Greenberg’s rhetoric of aesthetic judgment. He acknowledged the popularity of readymades, stating, “by dint of evading the reach of taste while yet remaining in the context of art, certain kinds of contrivances will achieve unique existence and value. So far, this hope has proved illusory.” De Duve writes that while Greenberg’s work is written much later than *Fountain*’s creation, Duchamp preempted Greenberg’s fanatical discussion on the boundaries between high and low art by contradicting them – and even suggesting their absurdity. Also, for fuller discussion of Greenberg and Duchamp, see Grist, where he writes: “With the advent of “Assemblage, Pop, Environment, Op, Kinetic, Erotic, and all the other varieties of Novelty Art,” all movements that were more or less indebted to Duchamp, “Greenberg bemoaned not only the passing of Abstract Expressionism but of ‘authentic art values.’” These movements were fulfillments of “Duchamp’s dream of going ‘beyond’ the issue of artistic quality.” The “real failure of Pop art,” on top of its “easiness,” was its “vulnerability to qualitative comparisons,” something Duchamp had supposedly initiated in his “‘transcending’ the difference between good and bad in general.” References to this can be found here: Donald Kuspit, “A Critical History of 20th Century Art,” *artnet* (March, 2006), accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/kuspit/kuspit3-24-06.asp>; De Duve, “Echoes of the Readymade,” and Thomas Grist, “(Ab)Using Marcel Duchamp: The Concept of the Readymade in Post-War and Contemporary American Art,” *tout-fait 2.5* (2003), accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.toutfait.com/issues/volume2/issue_5/articles/girst2/girst1.html#_edn29.

¹⁴² Buskirk, “Thoroughly Modern Marcel,” 123.

¹⁴³ Duchamp quoted in Francis Naumann, “Affectueusement, Marcel: Ten Letters from Marcel Duchamp to Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti,” *Archives of American Art Journal* 22.4 (1982), 5.

with an oil-painting brush, in silver white color, the inscription that I will give you after this, and you will sign it in the same hand as follows: [after] Marcel Duchamp.”¹⁴⁴ Unfortunately, for Duchamp, this experiment of long-distance creation was not successful. By the time she had received the letter, his sister had already cleaned out the contents of his studio. Most likely, as the artist later recalled, his sister had “thought it was one of my crazy ideas and they didn’t have to keep it at all so they probably threw it [in]to the garbage.”¹⁴⁵

According to Duchamp, the act of creating a readymade, unlike a painting or sculpture, could be done despite geographical distance and still bear the mark of the creator via his signature. The artist historian and gallerist Francis Naumann suggests that by prefixing “after” to his signature, Duchamp meant to qualify and emphasize “that his work had come from him (as in from his intellect), rather than indicate that it had been made by him (as in the case of a traditional sculpture created by hand).”¹⁴⁶ As I will discuss in Chapter Three, the instructional nature of the letter (and one sent nine months later by Duchamp, again detailing what his sister had needed to inscribe the ill-fated bottle rack) is a precursor to Fluxus event scores in the 1960s, which are similarly predicated on their instructional nature.

For *Art in the Found Object*, an exhibition of European and American artists using everyday materials in art, at the Time Life Building in New York in 1959, Duchamp and curator Roy Moyer requested Man Ray, Duchamp’s close friend and

¹⁴⁴ Naumann, “Affectueusement, Marcel,” 5.

¹⁴⁵ A fuller discussion can be found in Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 65.

¹⁴⁶ Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 62.

sometimes collaborator, who was living in Paris, to find a bottle rack similar to the one from 1914, as such objects could not be found in America.¹⁴⁷ Six examples were sent over. Alongside *Bottle Rack*, two readymades, *In Advance of a Broken Arm*, and *Bicycle Wheel*, were displayed and intended to be discarded after the exhibition, as explained by Moyer in the catalogue: “Readymades may have been unique as a concept, but they were not necessarily unique examples. For instance, Duchamp’s original bottle rack was lost and replaced by another that may be seen here.”¹⁴⁸ Moyer’s simple, yet poignant, remark best summarized Duchamp’s approach to reproducing readymades in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, which was not only plausible but also encouraged.¹⁴⁹

Robert Rauschenberg, who also had several works in the *Art in the Found Object* exhibition, paid three dollars for *Bottlerack*, which was left unsigned by Duchamp. He explains that he was apprehensive about asking for a signature: “I had pondered over philosophical, aesthetic, or ethical reasons why, how or if I could ask Duchamp to sign the *Bottle Rack*.”¹⁵⁰ Fortunately, Alexia, Duchamp’s wife, replied to Rauschenberg’s request: “Marcel will sign anything.”¹⁵¹ When Duchamp eventually signed the readymade, he added the phrase, “Impossible for me to recall the original phrase.”¹⁵² His

¹⁴⁷ This story is told by Naumann in *Marcel Duchamp*, 195.

¹⁴⁸ Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 195. Naumann discusses that despite replicas of *In Advance of a Broken Arm* (in the collection of Katherine Drier and made in 1945) and *Bicycle Wheel* (made by Sidney Janis and approved by Duchamp in 195), no evidence in their respective archives suggests that they were request to be borrowed for the length of the exhibition.

¹⁴⁹ Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 195.

¹⁵⁰ Rauschenberg quoted in Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 210.

¹⁵¹ Alexia Duchamp quoted in Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 210.

¹⁵² Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 210.

signature on the first reproduction of *Bottle Rack* to be signed, acknowledged the work as his conceptual product and, to an extent, codified the mass-produced object as a work of art. It marked the artist's approval of the replica as an "original," Naumann explains, by the very sentence revealing the existence of a previous original.¹⁵³ And while the reproduced readymades lack a fixed identity as a single object, their status remains, even when unsigned.¹⁵⁴

It is important to note that Duchamp's signature on the reproduction of *Bottle Rack* was not intended to confer value, since value is not inherent to the object but defined through social exchange. Value for Duchamp, as art historian Dalia Judovitz argues, "is created through exchange, through the display, circulation, and consumption of the work, in a game where worth has no meaning in and of itself."¹⁵⁵ That is, the signature does not connote originality or artistic genius, but rather artistic production that is essentially a "deferral or postponement that opens up authorship to future re-appropriations, whether they involve the posterity of the spectator or the posterity of other artists."¹⁵⁶ According to Judovitz, Duchamp's signature does not stand as a marker of originality or authenticity, but rather as a marker of appropriation – as is also seen in the letter asking his sister to sign his name to a readymade.

¹⁵³ Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 210. In January 1961 for the exhibition *Work of Dada* at the Rhode Island School of Design Duchamp used one of the six bottle racks sent from Paris by Man Ray for inclusion in *Art in Found Objects* exhibition. The signature, which read "Marcel Duchamp 1914 (replique 1961)," acknowledged the lack of uniqueness of the mass produced objects but testifies to the unique construction of the concept of this bottle rack as *Bottle Rack*.

¹⁵⁴ Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 3.

¹⁵⁵ Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 163.

¹⁵⁶ Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 238

Despite the contentious nature of the readymades, Duchamp suggested minimal difference between paintings and his readymades in 1961, when he declared that all painting since the inception of tube paints were readymades: “Since the tubes of paint used by an artist are manufactured and ready made products we must conclude that all the paintings in the world are ‘readymades aided’ and also works of assemblage.”¹⁵⁷ As such, we can read the readymades as a challenge to existing notions of what constituted a work of art. Judovitz explains, “that they do not represent a negation or rejection of artistic traditions. Rather, they represent his speculative exploration of the conceptual potential of art as a medium whose meaning hinges on the manipulation of appearance.”¹⁵⁸ In doing so, he redefined the artist as a figure whose role is to “restage both the terms and the conventions defining the artistic process.”¹⁵⁹

Duchamp, as Judovitz assesses, challenges the revolutionary potential of modernism within the concept of readymades by opening up modernism itself to a set of inquiries to elaborate, appropriate and parody. “The notion of originality begins to be eroded in the modernist context,” she writes, “since mechanical reproduction subverts both artisanal and authorial intervention.”¹⁶⁰ So revolutionary his gestures, that in the postmodern context, they cannot be read as anything distinct from the process of

¹⁵⁷ Duchamp quoted in Hans Richter, *Dada art and anti art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 89. He wanted to distance himself from traditional modes of painting in an effort to emphasize the conceptual value of a work of art, “seducing the viewer through irony and verbal witticisms rather than relying on technical or aesthetic appeal.” See Nan Rosenthal, “Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968),” *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/duch/hd_duch.htm.

¹⁵⁸ Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 159.

¹⁵⁹ Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 124.

¹⁶⁰ Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 240.

commoditization: “The distinction between an original and its reproduction becomes manifest to the extent that modes of artistic production can be conceived as a function of reproduction.”¹⁶¹ However, the reproduction of readymades cannot be considered as “reincarnations of lost and destroyed objects,” as the critic Max Kozloff describes, but rather as instances mimicking the processes of industrial production.¹⁶² “The supposed originality of the work of art is subverted by inscribing the work into a relay that corresponds to a set of delays,” whereby artistic value is read as function of reproducibility, which “postpones the value of the work by inscribing it into the temporality of the future perfect.”¹⁶³ This will be of especial importance when considering the Fluxus event scores in Chapter Three, and how they also readdressed the means by which art is made, sold, and how it appears in the space of the museum. Duchamp emphasized, as Fluxus artists would half a century later, the notion of mechanical reproduction in order to subvert the “primacy of mimesis as an artistic origin,” an act that fundamentally alters the definition of the artist’s “creative function.”¹⁶⁴

To that end, the reproducibility of readymades are best conceptualized according to the reproducibility of photography, which Duchamp was interested in because it lacked an original and could be continually made and remade at the will of the artist. Walter

¹⁶¹ Judovtiz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 240.

¹⁶² Max Kozloff quoted in Judovtiz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 128. Kozloff further explains: “His activities here fall into two categories: reconciling of lost or destroyed objects which are in no sense difficult from their originals [. . .] and facsimiles and photographs of his whole production. Such as in “Box in a Suitcase” [. . .] All this makes possible on a burst of brilliant parodies, coexistence of allusion to concepts and literal quotation of objects.”

¹⁶³ Judovtiz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 130.

¹⁶⁴ Judovtiz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 153.

Benjamin, Duchamp's acquaintance, explained in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, that reproductive technologies were responsible for bringing modern artistic forms into being. In his essay Benjamin coined the new famous term *aura*, defining it as representing the originality and authenticity of a work of art that has not been reproduced.¹⁶⁵ Simply put: a painting has aura because there can only be one and access to it is limited (an original exists), while a photograph does not have aura because it is reproducible and can exist in multiple locations (where no original exists). Accordingly, Benjamin further explained that "to ask for the 'authentic' [photographic] print makes no sense," as a negative can make any seemingly endless number of prints. So, too, Duchamp established the precedent that to ask for an authentic or original work of art was impossible, as a re-creation of *Bottle Rack*, or any other readymade, would have the same artistic value.

Duchamp expressed his discontent for aura, as readymades were intended to "wipe out the idea of the original, which exists neither in music, nor in poetry: plenty of manuscripts are sold, but they are unimportant."¹⁶⁶ "Even in sculpture," he explained, "the artist only contributes the final millimeter; the casts and the rest of the work are done by his assistants. In painting, we still have the cult of the original."¹⁶⁷ This de-contextualization that "takes place through the reproduction of a work of art," Judovitz

¹⁶⁵ This is explained in great detail by Naumann, who has directed my attention to the ways that Benjamin was influential on Duchamp's conception of readymades. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, Ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968): 223. Marta Braun explains that artists who were drawn to photography in the early decades of the 20th century were drawn to the "decomposition of time, space and motion used them to create a different reality, the reality of the imagination."

¹⁶⁶ Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 18.

¹⁶⁷ Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 17.

writes, is merely an extension of the de-contextualization “that the museum performs on works of art as it makes them readily accessible for viewing by a mass public.”¹⁶⁸

Fountain, the Reproduced Readymade

I want to turn my attention to *Fountain*, Duchamp’s most widely theorized and reproduced readymade, a consumer grade (industrially made) urinal, laid on its back and signed “R. Mutt 1917.” While William Camfield’s biography of *Fountain* serves as the most complete record of the readymade, I will briefly mention key moments in its early existence that are important to this study.¹⁶⁹ My main objective is to explore how mechanically and technologically reproduced works of art, that being the readymades, generate, according to Judovitz, multiple “originals” that challenge the notion of originality of creative objects.¹⁷⁰

Duchamp, accompanied by friends Joseph Stella and Walter Arnesberg, purchased a standard Bedfordshire model urinal from the *J. L. Mott Iron Works* showroom on 118 Fifth Avenue in New York, which he would eventually reorient 90 degrees and sign “R. Mutt 1917.” It was then submitted for an exhibition hosted by the Society of Independent Artists, which was displaying upwards of twenty-five hundred works by twelve-hundred artists. Despite the Society’s advertisement that no judges would be involved in their submission process, Duchamp’s readymade was denied entry. George Bellows, president of the Society, argued that it was not decent to be displayed as

¹⁶⁸ Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 142.

¹⁶⁹ Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp*, 1989.

¹⁷⁰ Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 122.

a work of art. It was subsequently placed behind a partition in the Society's exhibition space and discovered a few days later by a friend of Duchamp's, who returned it to him. A week later, *Fountain* was available for view at Alfred Stieglitz's 291 Gallery; the artist was also requested by Duchamp to photograph it for an editorial in the second issue of the Dadaist journal, *The Blind Man*. The photograph appeared in the journal, but the urinal itself disappeared shortly thereafter. In 1938, Duchamp began to issue new versions of *Fountain*.¹⁷¹

Fountain would not be seen again as a urinal until the autumn of 1950, when the gallerist Sidney Janis commissioned Duchamp to re-create the readymade for the exhibition *Challenge and Defy*, at his gallery in New York. Unable to find a suitable replacement, Duchamp asked Janis to look for a urinal that closely resembled the original, which Janis subsequently found at a flea market in the outskirts of Paris.¹⁷² When comparing photographic documentation of this version of *Fountain* with the one photographed by Stieglitz, the differences become glaringly apparent, as Camfield notes: "The design of the drain holes is different; the signature is less bold; details of the putty connection and flushing rim are not crisply defined; the entire surface is irregular, imparting almost a handmade quality in contrast to the flawless perfection of the J. L. Mott urinal."¹⁷³ Since *Fountain* had been denied entry by the Society of Independent Artists, there was no precedent on how it should be installed for Janis. Duchamp rotated the urinal to sign and date it, thus, when we see it at a 90-degree angle, as Stieglitz

¹⁷¹ This brief history of *Fountain* is taken from Camfield in *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain*.

¹⁷² An account of this provided by Camfield in *Marcel Duchamp*.

¹⁷³ Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp*, 78.

photographed it, the signature is legible. At Janis's 1950 exhibition, *Fountain* was reverted from being a readymade to its original function as a urinal and placed in the corner and low to the ground – about two feet from the floor. This upright position was mounted low on the wall, and Duchamp remarked, “little boys could use it.”¹⁷⁴

In 1953, at another exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery (*Dada 1916-1923*), *Fountain* was hung above a doorframe, echoing two 1917 photographs of Duchamp's studio. The date of the photographs has not been determined, but scholars suggest that they are from March and early April, weeks before their submission to the Society of Independent Artists exhibition. The photographs reveal *Fountain* dangling precariously on its side from a doorframe leading to a room where *In Advance of a Broken Arm* and *Hat Rack* were also suspended from the ceiling.¹⁷⁵ In both this 1917 studio and 1953, the urinal, if used for its original purpose would rain down water and urine on visitors.¹⁷⁶

While Benjamin stresses that historical testimony has traditionally rested in the authority of the object, each photograph and installation of *Fountain* constitutes a new authentic experience. “The image produced by Stieglitz and Duchamp in 1917 embodies aesthetic and anthropomorphic qualities which were no longer of central importance in the 1950s,” Camfield explains. “In that respect the original image was special, linked to the artist and culture in ways which could not be repeated.”¹⁷⁷ That is, each encounter

¹⁷⁴ Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp*, 78.

¹⁷⁵ Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp*, 79.

¹⁷⁶ Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp*, 79. There is further humorous intent in this installation as mistletoe was hung from one of the pipe holes; encouraging visitors to be kiss while metaphorically being doused in urine.

¹⁷⁷ Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp*, 79.

with the readymade is unique to the time and space in which it is encountered. *Fountain* can exist as a projection in an art history classroom just as much as it could exist on a base at the Tate Modern under protective glass. To the casual observer, what we see today are mere reproductions, but to Duchamp each incarnation of *Fountain* was a work of art in its own right, giving tangible form to a limitless concept.¹⁷⁸

Duchamp's friend and sometimes collaborator, Man Ray, was also keen to authorize reproductions of his readymades with the increased recognition of Dada after World War II.¹⁷⁹ The most noted of these, *Object to be Destroyed*, was constructed from a metronome (that was mass produced) with a photograph of an eye attached to the pendulum with a paper-clip. In "demeaning the value of original[ity]," the titled changed with various re-creations over time, including *Last Object*, *Lost Object*, and *Perpetual*

¹⁷⁸ This idea is taken from Buskirk in "Thoroughly Modern Marcel." She further explains that Duchamp anticipated "a shift toward an approach that allows authorship to be retained as a category even as fabrication becomes cultural phenomenon." Also important to note, as discussed by Camfield, that in early 1916, when Duchamp toyed with the idea of creating a readymade from a distance with his sister Suzanne, it did not go so well; but he tried again in the early 1960s. Without having seen any originals, and working from reproductions and published dimensions, sculptor Per Olof Ultvedt created a series of replica readymades for a 1960 exhibition in Stockholm, including *Bicycle Wheel* and *Fresh Window*. In 1963, Ultvedt wanted to create more replicas for another exhibition, and wrote Duchamp for his permission. The artist responded: "I agree thoroughly with your idea to have every readymade shown in exact replicas." The resulting version of *Fountain* was found in a men's room of a restaurant in Stockholm, "purchased, removed, thoroughly scrubbed, and placed on exhibit." However, the differences from the first *Fountain* are noticeable when comparing the drain holes, detailing, and, most notably, the block letters of the signature. Regardless, Duchamp approved of the urinal when he saw it in a 1964 exhibition at the Galleria Schwarz in Milan and, in a gesture similar to Rauschenberg's *Bottle Rack*, had the block lettering removed and signed, "R. Mutt 1917."

¹⁷⁹ This is explained by Camfield in *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain: Man Ray's Gift*, a household iron with nails attached to the flat ironing side, was made iconic in his photograph that draws upon aesthetic parallels with Stieglitz's documentation of *Fountain* – in lighting style and placed at eye level. Man Ray was approached by Robert Motherwell for a photograph of *Gift* (1921) for inclusion in the edited volume *Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology* in 1949, however it was not the hands of the artists and the readymades had long been lost. In the original we look up at the towering iron whose nails threateningly protrude. The form, as Camfield suggests, is that of a missile or instrument of torture much akin to a post-World War I realization that technologies have proven to destroy societies. In the 1949 recreation the photograph is altered to an overhead view of "a silly iron with nails glued it." The model of hand held iron has changed to one that is softer and squatter. If not for the nails, as he further notes, it has more in common with an advertisement in *Ladies Home Journal* than photograph from the avant-garde. While we have the same photographer, same title, same readymade, Camfield argues, but a different context that alters its reception.

Motif.¹⁸⁰ For the second incarnation, titled, *Object of Destruction*, Man Ray created a “do-it-yourself readymade.”¹⁸¹ In Andre Breton’s journal, *This Quarter* (1932), a simple ink drawing of the readymade was accompanied by the following text:

Cut out the eye from a photograph of one who has been loved but is seen no more. Attach the eye to the pendulum of a metronome and regulate the weight to suit the tempo desired. Keep going to the limit of endurance. With a hammer well-aimed, try to destroy the whole at a single blow.¹⁸²

Readers were implicated in the creative process, instructed to construct, mediate on, and eventually destroy the readymade.¹⁸³ According to art historian Janine Mileaf, the readymade became the aggressor, “a thing to be destroyed, to accept punishment,” as Man Ray relinquished control of the readymade to the viewer to experience to the “limit of endurance.”¹⁸⁴ The actions of the viewer are not just indeterminable and open to interpretation, but also continuous reproduction, for there is no limit to engagement.

The continuous reproduction of readymades by the artists, or by others through instructions, I believe, allowed the readymades to prevail during beyond Duchamp’s and Man Ray’s life time, through to today. The survival and continued posterity of the readymades is suggested by Duchamp in his discussion of painting: “I think painting dies

¹⁸⁰ Explanation provided the Smithsonian Museum of American Art: <http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=33672>.

¹⁸¹ This discussion of Man Ray’s often overlooked readymade, *Object to be Destroyed*, is greatly indebted to Janine Mileaf, “Between You and Me: Man Ray’s *Object to be Destroyed*,” *Art Journal* 63.1 (2004), 5.

¹⁸² Mileaf, “Between You and Me,” 5.

¹⁸³ Mileaf, “Between You and Me,” 5.

¹⁸⁴ Mileaf, “Between You and Me,” 5.

[. . .] After forty or fifty years a picture dies because its freshness disappears. Sculpture also dies [. . .] Afterwards it's called the history of art."¹⁸⁵ For *Fountain* to operate as a readymade, de Duve argues, they needed to disappear and exist in the guise of the referent, being photographic documentation. Stieglitz's photograph, as seen in *The Blind Man*, declared: "This (the urinal) is art" and, more so, "this (the photo) is proof."¹⁸⁶ The urinal physically disappeared, yet it can be called to presence via its referent, the photograph, which plays, as does every photograph, the role of reality's index. When *Fountain* enters the museum and the cultural realm via its referent it makes the bold statement: "This (the work reproduced by means of its reproduction by Stieglitz) is art."¹⁸⁷ Such logic counters Benjamin's argument, de Duve explains, that a reproduction of art does nothing beyond declaring the existence, as art, of the work that is its referent.

Duchamp gave each production run of *Fountain* after Stieglitz's photograph creditability as "the replica of the readymade" – be it in photographic documentation or in physical reproduction – delivering the same message.¹⁸⁸ Authorship remained intact, especially as Duchamp anticipated the "shift toward an approach that allows authorship to be retained as a category even as fabrication becomes cultural phenomenon."¹⁸⁹ For, in entering the category of art, the readymade entered the intentional space of authorship and signification, "in so far as the act and presentation is bound by nominal conditions of

¹⁸⁵ Marcel Duchamp as quoted in Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 150.

¹⁸⁶ De Duve, "Echoes of the Readymade," 88.

¹⁸⁷ De Duve, "Echoes of the Readymade," 89.

¹⁸⁸ Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp*, 65.

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Masheck, *Duchamp in Perspective* (New York: De Capo Press, 2002), 22.

authorship.”¹⁹⁰ And the parallel between photographs of readymades and their eventual reproduced forms is, as Rosalind Krauss describes, “the physical transportation of an art object from the continuum of reality into the fixed condition of an art-image by a moment of isolation, or selection.”¹⁹¹ We can read this by way of Robert Melville, curator for a Tate Gallery exhibition on Duchamp in 1966, when he described the 1917 *Fountain* in Stieglitz’s photograph as a “beautiful object,” a “phantom which has influenced me all my life,” whereas “this other thing in the exhibition [the Schwarz replica] seems to me to be another thing.”¹⁹² His comment eludes to an interesting phenomenon that arises with the reproduction of *Fountain*, that a viewer’s experience of one incarnation of readymade influences their experience of another. Each incarnation, however, carries the same message, as mentioned in the introduction as Philip Auslander explains, looking at photographs of performances from the past: “[the documentation] brings the object to us and reactivates it for us to experience in our time and place, our own particular situation.”¹⁹³ It is not that we are transported back to the studio of Stieglitz when looking at the photograph, rather, as Auslander further elaborates, “[it is as if they] were performing the piece for me, in my study, as I imaginatively recreate the performance

¹⁹⁰ Masheck, *Duchamp in Perspective*, 22. Knowledge of *Fountain*, in fact its very existence, was solely regulated to Stieglitz’s photograph. It secured the readymade’s posterity, as Camfield suggests, because it records in “memorable form a sculpture that did indeed vanish not long afterwards and confirming not only *Fountain*’s existence but also anthropomorphic associations for its shape.”

¹⁹¹ Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 129.

¹⁹² Robert Melville quoted in Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp*, 269.

¹⁹³ Philip Auslander, “Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance Art Documentation,” *Kunsten A Falle: Lessons in Art of Falling*, ed. Jonas Ekeborg (Norway: Preus Museum, 2009), 94.

from its documentation. The performance I thus experience unfolds in my present (even as I remain aware of its historical status).”¹⁹⁴

It is important to consider here that Roland Barthes conceptualized photography as an object that eludes history, continuously connecting the present to something that has already existed.¹⁹⁵ Barthes explains that, in early societies, memory was a substitute for life, where by memory is eternal because the monument to the past is upheld. However, in the industrial world, photography became a witness of “what has been,” so much so that modern society has “renounced the monument.”¹⁹⁶

But history is a memory fabricated according to positive formulas, a pure intellectual discourse which abolishes mythic Time; and the photograph is a certain but fugitive testimony; so that everything, today, prepares our race for this impotence; to be no longer able to conceive of duration, effectively and symbolically; the age of the photograph is also the age of revolutions, contestations, assassinations, explosions, in short, of everything which denies ripening¹⁹⁷

Meir Wigoder interprets Barthes’s stance as a complex relationship between photography and death, as looking for life in a photograph “can bring the content of the photograph “to life in the mind of the viewer.”¹⁹⁸ This is why Barthes wrote that “photography has something to do with resurrection,” and photographers are described as “the agents of

¹⁹⁴ Auslander, “Toward a Hermeneutics,” 94.

¹⁹⁵ I am grateful to Meir Wigoder’s discussion of Barthes’s conception of photography, and its relation to history, the home, and death. Meir Wigoder, “History Begins at Home: Photography and Memory in the Writings of Siegfried Kracauer and Roland Barthes,” *History and Memory* 13.1 (2001).

¹⁹⁶ Barthes quoted in Wigoder, “History Beings at Home,” 30.

¹⁹⁷ Barthes quoted in Wigoder, “History Beings at Home,” 32.

¹⁹⁸ Wigoder, “History Beings at Home,” 30.

death.”¹⁹⁹ Photographs of a person, of an event, whose existence proceeded our own constitutes the “very tension of history.”²⁰⁰

Within this I want to stress that the presence of an original readymade is of no consequence, as Duchamp himself suggests in an interview with Calvin Tomkins: “In art, and only in art, the original work is sold, and it acquires a sort of aura that way. But with my readymades a replica will do just as well.”²⁰¹ This conception of the reproducibility of readymades is applicable to reperformances, whereby they are able to overcome “the uniqueness of every reality” by proposing the acceptance of its reproduction, re-creation, and/or reinterpretation²⁰² A hundred years after the appearance of the first readymades, cultural and entertainment events thrive in their abilities to be reproduced through digital technologies. Live concerts can be sold as DVDs, CDs and digital downloads, and labeled and branded as “live.” Mediatized forms have merged as part of the reproductive inclinations of a globalizing consumer culture, which Auslander has termed the contemporary state of liveness.²⁰³ Whether at ball games that incorporate instant-replay screens, rock concerts that re-create the images of music videos, live stage versions of television shows and movies, or witnessing dance and performance art’s incorporation of video, “evidence of the incursion of mediatization into the live event is available across

¹⁹⁹ Barthes quoted in Wigoder, “History Beings at Home,” 32.

²⁰⁰ Barthes quoted in Wigoder, “History Beings at Home,” 30. When put into the context of *Fountain*, the fear of forgetting the first incarnation of *Fountain* allows us to recognize an existence that preceded our own. The photographic documentation of *Fountain* allows history to open up and reveals itself.

²⁰¹ Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Owl Books, 1998), 186.

²⁰² Tancock, “The Influence of Marcel Duchamp,” 174.

²⁰³ See Auslander, *Liveness*.

the entire spectrum of performance genres.”²⁰⁴ Auslander continues, explaining that television is responsible for disseminating this message of proximity and intimacy as being close to godliness: “The incursion of mediatization into live events can be understood as a means of making those events respond to the need for televisual intimacy, thus fulfilling desires and expectations shaped by mediatized representations.”²⁰⁵

Jean Baudrillard considers that when the original (in his case the live performance) is lost or unreachable, “nostalgia” ensues and ultimately proliferations of myths begin to obscure the existence of the original and in the mists of this nostalgia is a “panic-stricken reproduction of the real and the referential.”²⁰⁶ To that end, Auslander correctly suggests that there exists a question “whether performances produced on the basis of archival documentation might lose some of the vitality of the performance, assuming the vitality was there in the first place.”²⁰⁷ Assuming it was there, the question might arise as to what future artists would want to do it, as Robert Morgan writes: “Would they appear like a performance clone functioning as a replica of the original?” And while the term reperformance is recent, he argues that it is a phenomenon very much part of twentieth-century modernism, especially from a European perspective, “there is little doubt that the Futurist, Constructivist, Dadaist, and Bauhaus artists were all

²⁰⁴ Auslander, *Liveness*, 7.

²⁰⁵ Auslander, *Liveness*, 111. I would also apply Auslander’s reading of mediatized culture through television to the reproduced readymades and reperformances, in that the authentic presupposes that of reproduction, whereby the concept of an authentic work of art can only exist within an economy of reproduction.

²⁰⁶ Jean Baudrillard as quoted and explained in Auslander, *Liveness*, 109.

²⁰⁷ Auslander as referenced in Morgan, “Thoughts on Re-Performance, Experience, and Archivism,” 5.

concerned with sustaining their work, that is, making it appear ‘contemporary’ well into the future, and therefore becoming part of art history.”²⁰⁸ I would, however, argue, that the reproduced readymades are where we can pinpoint a tangible historical link to reperformance. The reproduced readymades are not an end to a means, but the beginning of a tradition that challenged how art objects are collected, archived and exhibited in the institutions where we give value to the art historical canon.

²⁰⁸ Morgan, “Thoughts on Re-Performance, Experience, and Archivism,” 1.

Chapter Two

Allan Kaprow: Reperforming Happenings and Environments

This chapter is one of three case studies that will assess how artists in the post-World War II period built into their performances an understanding of reperformance. I begin with Allan Kaprow, who conceived of two new performative genres: (1) *Happenings*, which he explained as an “assemblage of events performed or perceived in more than one time and place. Its material environments may be constructed, taken over directly from what is available, or altered slightly; just as its activities may be invented or commonplace”; and (2) *Environments*, which were similarly predicted on the improvisational qualities, and best described as indoor spaces constructed for viewers to engage with.²⁰⁹ Kaprow explained that viewers’ participation in these performance could never be exactly re-created, which is why he preferred to use the word *reinvention* to describe any reperformance of his work.²¹⁰ This is because reinvention does not have a “historical flavor,” and he intended his performances to retain elements of chance and indeterminacy in their reproduced forms.²¹¹ A such, reinventions were a way to create a tension between “his memory of the performance and the collective memory preserved

²⁰⁹ Allan Kaprow, *Some Recent Happenings*, (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), 5. A digital version of Kaprow’s original publication was made available in 2004, accessed May 20, 2013: http://www.kim-cohen.com/artmusictheoryassets/artmusictheorytexts/kaprow_recent.pdf.

²¹⁰ Potts, “Writing the Happenings: The Aesthetics of Nonart,” 6.

²¹¹ Potts, “Writing the Happenings: The Aesthetics of Nonart,” 6.

by archival material,” so much so that Happenings and Environments would be “incapable of easy standardization.”²¹²

Each iteration and/or encounter with a Happening of Environment would provide a different experience for participants, as art historian Jeff Kelley observed:

Much of the poignancy of Kaprow’s reworkings lies in their capacity to mark the passage of time as well as to suggest the gap between the archival seriousness of art history (as it documents original works of art) and the permissive playfulness of an artist who starts with memory but makes things up, reinventing, as it were, his past.²¹³

There is a similarity here with Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*, as the lull in time between the initial incarnations of Happenings and Environments and their reperformances allowed them to gain a level of notoriety and art historical legitimacy; we only know of the readymades, and Happenings and Environments, in their reproduced forms.²¹⁴

I will explore Kaprow’s dismissal of photographic documentation and its relationship to retrospective treatment of his work, namely by way of reperformances. I will do this by addressing his dictum: “If a work is of value it will stimulate the creation of related works later on, thus the tradition will stay alive this way.”²¹⁵ Documentation of performances, Kaprow argued, isolates the historical moment and locks memories and

²¹² Potts, “Writing the Happenings: The Aesthetics of Nonart,” 6.

²¹³ Jeff Kelley, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 42.

²¹⁴ Kelley, *Childsplay*, 45.

²¹⁵ Allan Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollack,” *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life: Expanded Edition* (Berkeley: University California Press, 2003), 20.

experience of a performance into an objective moment in time.²¹⁶ Anna Dezeuze explains that participants would behave differently the minute photographers appeared on the scene, as they would be “compelled to copy what they see in the photographs or films,” rather than form their own authentic experience.²¹⁷ Similarly, Judith Rodenbeck argues that spectacle of documentation would inhibit viewers, as they could neither “see the event” nor “see themselves except as mediated by the camera.”²¹⁸ When reperformed, the performance’s subsequent audiences may want to merely mimic previous experiences that they have seen, which endanger any reinvention of his work to being nothing more than a re-creation of an earlier iteration.²¹⁹ My intention is to conceptualize Happenings and Environments in both their live and documented forms, and the relationships they might have to accessing and archiving a performance.

Happenings and Environments: Experience, Experience, Experience

The rhetoric of everyday experience that was central to Happenings and Environments, was common among Kaprow’s colleagues, including Claes Oldenberg, Robert Rauschenberg, Jim Dine, and Red Grooms. These artists were compelled, as Kaprow explained, to make “the line between art and life as fluid and indistinct as

²¹⁶ Anna Dezeuze, “Transfiguration of the Commonplace,” *Variant* 22 (2008), accessed May 17, 2013, <http://www.variant.org.uk/22texts/Dezeuze.html>.

²¹⁷ Anna Dezeuze, “Blurring the Boundaries Between Art and Life,” *Tate Papers* (2007), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7345>.

²¹⁸ Judith Rodenbeck, *Radical Prototypes: Allan Kaprow and the Invention of Happenings* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2011), 230.

²¹⁹ This idea is an overlap I have found in both Dezeuze’s and Rodenbeck’s discussions of Kaprow’s work.

possible.”²²⁰ He further emphasized this when proclaiming that the composition of “all materials, actions, images, and their times and spaces should be undertaken in an artless and, again, practical way as possible.”²²¹ Oldenburg’s treatise on the creative process similarly proclaimed that art and life were synonymous: “I am for an art that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum. I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is art at all, an art given the chance of having a starting point of zero. . . . I am for an art that takes its form from the lines of life that twists and extends impossible accumulates and drips and spots, and is sweet and stupid as life itself.”²²²

Central to the conception of Happenings and Environments was communal experiences, specifically the active participation of audience members, which is best understood through what Victor Turner termed as *communitas*.²²³ These groups of individuals spring in industrial societies, and are usually structured on utopian social models in opposition to existing institutional framework. *Communitas*, as Turner theorized, are the product of the dialectical relationship between structure and anti-structure, where anti-structure can generate and store “a plurality of alternative models of living” that are capable of “influencing the behavior of those in mainstream society . . . in the direction of radical change.”²²⁴ Turner asserts that individuals in *communitas* can

²²⁰ Allan Kaprow, “Untitled Guidelines for Happenings” originally 1965, reprinted in abridged form in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, eds. Kristine Stiles/Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 709.

²²¹ Kaprow, “Untitled Guidelines for Happenings.”

²²² Claes Oldenburg, “I am for an art from,” *Store Days, Documents from the Store (1961) and Ray Gun Theater (1962)*, eds. Claes Oldenburg and Emmett Williams (New York: Something Else Press, 1967), 3.

²²³ See Victor Turner, *Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine Transaction Press, 1995).

²²⁴ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 23.

undergo a profound transformation.²²⁵ The notion of “community” where often references emotional sentiments of connectedness, egalitarianism, and unity, as Lee Gilmore explains In her discussion of Burning Man festivals, I find similarity to what is at work in Happenings and Environments: “A feeling of connection to others (or to an “other” realm) was referenced by numerous participants who reported experiences of social, emotional, and cognitive liberation within this event, and the collective desire for this sense of “oneness” tends to peak during rites such as the Burn.” Many of the standard roles individuals play in their everyday lives, (or what Gilmore calls “default culture”) fall away by means of the shared experiences all must undergo when taking part in a Happening or an Environment.²²⁶

Turner references “happenings” when describing the similarity of those he observed in Africa with the counter cultures of America and Europe. “The kind of *communitas* desired by tribesmen in their rites and by hippies in their ‘happenings,’ is not the pleasurable effortless comradeship that can arise between friends, coworkers, or professional colleagues any day. What they seek is a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person’s being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared.”²²⁷ According to Turner, as Donald Waldron explains, “the heightened sense

²²⁵ Gilmore, “Reflexive Ritualizing at the Burning Man Festival,” 217.

²²⁶ It is important here to note that Turner was well aware of the social and cultural climate of the Western world. In *Ritual Process* he makes explicit reference to hippies as being part of liminoid cultural phenomena. St. John’s rightfully explains: “It has been recognized that the vibe of the American 1960s – the romanticism and millenarianism of the expectant counterculture – had facilitated the conceptual birthing of *communitas*.” Others scholars of Turner have followed suit, Vincent Crapanzano observed that the term *communitas* has a “hippy ring to it,” and Stuart Hall described it as the “existential now,” on “the continuous present tense-‘grooving’ . . . ‘tripping.’” I am interested in discovering how much of the reperformances of Happenings and Environments are about a ritualized return to performance’s hippy grooving past. Found in Weber, “From Limen to Border.”

²²⁷ Turner, *Ritual Process*, 24.

of joy and authenticity in relationships experienced by people in this state is one of the major sources for utopian ideals expressed by counter cultural movements such as the Hippy movement of the 60's."²²⁸ This dropping out and forming of alternative communities was "an expression the participants desire to live in a permanent state of *communitas*."²²⁹ We can see this at work in Kaprow's performance *Fluids* (1967), which was first realized in Los Angeles in conjunction with the Pasadena Art Museum. Kaprow's organized groups of acquaintances with the following instructions: "During three days, about twenty rectangular enclosures of ice blocks (measuring about 30 feet long, 10 wide and 8 high), are built throughout the city. Their walls are unbroken. They are left to melt."²³⁰ In performing *Fluids*, participants experienced art well, beyond the physical limitations (structures/boundaries) of the museum (or gallery, or any other institution).

Turner stressed the importance of groups of citizens in modern societies having interactivity outside "the establishment," as it would break "through barriers that divide human beings, which are impermeable in ordinary association."²³¹ Dezeuze describes a similar concept when explaining that Kaprow's use of everyday and found materials, was "a tool to foster interactivity through physical proximity and sensory engagement."²³²

²²⁸ Donald Waldron uploaded a valuable study guide for understanding Turner's work on his web space, hosted by the University of Ballarat, where he is a professor in the School of Education and Arts, accessed August 3, 2013, [velorum.ballarat.edu.au/~dwardron/documents/lectures/lecture8.doc](http://www.velorum.ballarat.edu.au/~dwardron/documents/lectures/lecture8.doc).

²²⁹ See Waldron.

²³⁰ In the 60's Kaprow succeeded in producing thirteen of the twenty sites envisioned. Kaprow as quoted on the website for Armory Center for the Arts: <http://www.armoryarts.org/exhibitions/exhibitions-2008/allan-kaprow-s-fluids-recreated-in-pasadena-once-again/>.

²³¹ Turner, *Ritual Process*, 24.

²³² Anna Dezeuze, "Transfiguration of the Commonplace," *Variant* No. 22 (2005), 17.

This level of engagement took a variety of sensorial forms in Kaprow's repertoire, which including licking jam off the hood of car and handling apples. However, such activities, as Turner suggests, are a dialectical process: structure (the museum establishment and the art market) and anti-structure (Happenings and Environments) are opposite sides of the same coin.²³³

Turner explains that communities in industrial society can be applied to the "beat generation" and "hippies," whom he described as individuals who "opt out" of the "status bound social order and acquire the stigmata of the lowly, dressing like 'bums.'"²³⁴ In many ways they resemble the image I have constructed of Kaprow, who also opted to take his art out of capital driven systems. *Communitas* provides participants with the ability to "defy the social order by inverting, or even perverting, its structural demands."²³⁵ *Fluids*, within this reading, assembled a community where strenuous physical working-class labor was, as art historian Robert Haywood describes, unproductive in any capitalist terms.²³⁶ The stacking of ice blocks stripped labor of its "profit-driven rational," especially as the construction was productive only in the name of

²³³ This discussion of structure and anti-structure in *communitas* is based on my reading of Charles Whitehead, *Religious Experience and the Theory of Anti-Structure* (2004), accessed August 3, 2013, http://www.socialmirrors.org/cms/images/downloads/RE_and_antistructure.pdf; and Robert Esposito, *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), accessed August 3, 2013, http://criticallatinoamericana.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Roberto_Esposito_Communitas_The_Origin_and_Destiny_of_Community_Cultural_Memory_in_the_Present__2009-1.pdf.

²³⁴ Turner, *Ritual Process*, 159.

²³⁵ Deflem, "Ritual, Anti-Structure, and Religion."

²³⁶ Robert Haywood, "Critique of Instrumental Labor: Meyer Schapiro's and Allan Kaprow's Theory of Avant-Garde Art," *Experiments in the Everyday: Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts - Events, Objects, Documents*, eds. Benjamin Buchloh and Judith Rodenbeck (New York: Wallach Art Gallery at Columbia University, 1999), 35.

art.²³⁷ The performance was subversive because “it enacted, in the public spaces of Pasadena and Los Angeles, the very strategy that sustains high productivity in capitalist America – planned obsolescence.”²³⁸ *Fluids*’ cultural critique was tainted by “cold war anxieties.”²³⁹ Rodenbeck explains that when Kaprow spoke of “garbage cans, police files, hotel lobbies,” and “dreams and horrible accidents,” and painted an image of everyday urban existence in his performances, “it was little else than a series of sites intended for social instability.”²⁴⁰ Dezeuze explained that this junkyard aesthetic, which was rampant among Kaprow’s colleagues, was an oscillation “between an embrace of the newly discovered real on the one hand, and, on the other, an implicit critique of planned obsolescence and the omnipresent hold of the commodity.”²⁴¹ As such, under a veneer of playfulness and sociability, which is accounted for in surviving photographic documentation, *Fluids* was a critique of the art market, as well as America’s commodity culture on a larger social and cultural level.²⁴²

Rodenbeck and Dezeuze explain that Kaprow was hesitant toward documenting his work because he feared that the institutions he critiqued would use such material. He viewed documentation of his performances as an “inadequate substitute for the actual experience of do-it-yourself art works,” as “the passive absorption of images churned out

²³⁷ Haywood, “Critique of Instrumental Labor,” 35.

²³⁸ Haywood, “Critique of Instrumental Labor,” 35.

²³⁹ Judtih Rodenbeck, “Foil: Allan Kaprow Before Photography,” *Experiments in the Everyday: Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts: Events, Objects, Documents*. Benjamin Buchloh and Judith Rodenbeck, eds. (New York: Miriam and Ira D. Wallach ArtGallery, Columbia University): 51.

²⁴⁰ Rodenbeck, “Foil,” 51.

²⁴¹ Anna Dezeuze, “‘Neo-Dada’, ‘Junk Aesthetic’ and Spectator Participation,” in *Neo Avant-Garde Critical Studies*, David Hopkin, ed. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 51.

²⁴² Dezeuze, “‘Neo-Dada’, ‘Junk Aesthetic’ and Spectator Participation.”

by an increasingly powerful ‘society of the spectacle.’”²⁴³ Kaprow interpreted documentation as intimately tied to institutionalization and the art market. His interest in overturning the commodity fetish of art was an effort to supplant it with a reification of “ordinary language, behavior and action.”²⁴⁴ However, for example, performances like *Fluids*, were not fully appreciated in their first incarnations, as Martha Buskirk explains, and it was only through the reproduction of photographic documentation that they achieved any recognition.²⁴⁵ Such documentation locked it into place, as art historian Martha Buskirk writes, in a “now inaccessible moment.”²⁴⁶

Historically, the aim of performance documentation, as art historian Barbara Clausen writes, was to grasp the atmosphere between the performance and the audience, “capturing the mental images that an audience would likely remember later, regardless of whether they were present at the time or not.”²⁴⁷ She uses the example of Trisha Brown’s dance performance, *Roof Piece* (1973), for which few people were present to watch. The performance, where fourteen dancers spread out on roofs across Lower Manhattan, from SoHo to Wall Street, has only been remembered and able to enter into the art historical record by way of a series of now iconic images taken by the well-known photographer Babette Mangolte. Clausen suggests, “despite the fact that hardly anyone saw the

²⁴³ Deuze, “Blurring the Boundaries between Art and Life.”

²⁴⁴ Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 23.

²⁴⁵ Martha Buskirk, “Allan Kaprow YARD,” *Artforum International* (December, 2009), 120.

²⁴⁶ Buskirk, “Allan Kaprow YARD.”

²⁴⁷ Barbara Clausen, “Performing Histories: Why the Point is Not Make a Point,” *Afterall* 23 (2010), accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.23/performing.historiesswhy.the.point.is.not.to.make.a.point.barbara.clausen>.

performance,” Brown was well aware that ephemeral and site specific art “found its expression not just in live action, but also in text, video, photography and film.”²⁴⁸

The need to document performances was, and arguably still is, a social and economic need, as Clausen writes: “Whether documented or staged for the camera performance becomes the material of its own documentation, the product that brings the event of the performance, independent of its witnesses, into circulation.”²⁴⁹ That is, “neither performance art nor its documentation” are separated from each other, but rather taken together “as equal elements” necessary for the reading and understanding of a performance’s life and history. In a performance’s journey from “the street to the walls of the museum,” documentation helps to ensure “the symbolic status of the genre as an ephemeral art form” within the art historical canon.”²⁵⁰

Performance historian Carrie Lambert-Beatty also describes documentation’s relationship to the past in her reading of avant-garde performances in the 1960s, arguing that documentation fills in the details of what is lost during a live performance. Since photographs of a performance are not seen until it has ended, she writes, the photographs imply “a delayed temporality, instantly shuttling consciousness to the time when the performance moment would be, not lived, but recalled.”²⁵¹ Photography, as such, consciously creates a memory, as it realizes the ephemeral nature of the live performance

²⁴⁸ Clausen, “Performing Histories.”

²⁴⁹ Clausen, “Performing Histories.”

²⁵⁰ Clausen, “Performing Histories.”

²⁵¹ Carrie Lambert, *Yvonne Rainer’s Media Performance and the Image, 1961-73*, PhD diss., Stanford University, 2002. She also discusses this subsequently, in her book: *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008).

and that it may one day need to be remembered or recognized.²⁵² In a similar regard, Brian O’Doherty testifies to two specific audiences of any performance art project, “one which was there and one—the rest of us—which wasn’t.”²⁵³ This “original audience,” he explains, “is often restless and bored by its forced tenancy of a moment it cannot fully perceive,” and without hindsight, their experience of the event is relegated to memory that by nature, is faulty and often consciously retold through conditions that dictate their form.²⁵⁴

Kaprow’s anxieties toward documentation can be traced to his reading of John Dewey’s *Art as Experience*, particularly what Dewey described as the primary aim of art as restoring the “continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience.”²⁵⁵ We can hear echoes of Kaprow’s concept of Happenings and Environments when Dewey explained that the material forms of art can come from anywhere or anything: “form marks a way of envisaging, of feeling, and of presenting experienced matter so that it most readily and effectively becomes material for the construction of adequate experience on the part of those less gifted than the original creator.”²⁵⁶

²⁵² Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 23.

²⁵³ O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 52.

²⁵⁴ O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 53.

²⁵⁵ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 27.

²⁵⁶ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 28.

Dewey's theories, as scholars have been discussing for over half a century, center on the continuity between art and experience, where art is understood as an "active and alert commerce with the world – complete *interpenetration* of self and the world of objects and events."²⁵⁷ Elaine Lailas explores this when writing that Dewey is "all inclusive" in his theories, incorporating art and aesthetics as primary in the "remaking of the experience of the community in the direction of greater order and unity."²⁵⁸ To reach its full potential, however, Dewey explains, art had to be free of any restricting conditions.²⁵⁹ Kaprow interpreted this as liberation from institutional structures, which he emphasized in a recorded dialogue with Robert Smithson around the question, "what is a museum?"²⁶⁰ Their conversation, as art historian Branden Joseph writes, illustrated the "divide that separated them as representatives of two distinct strands of postwar neo-avant-garde."²⁶¹

Smithson advocated for dialectical engagement with museums, as no legitimate alternative to them was possible, "no exit, no road to utopia."²⁶² Art's escape from museums was not plausible, he suggested, as they share an indissoluble relationship.

²⁵⁷ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 137.

²⁵⁸ Elaine Lailas, "John Dewey's Theory of Citizenship and Community in the Developing American Democracy as seen through the Philosophy of Pragmatism as a Public Administration Model for the Citizen's Role in Public Governance," PhD diss. Virginia Tech (1998).

²⁵⁹ My reading here is influenced by a great discussion of Dewey and his impact on those associated with Happenings, and performative practices from the late 1950s: Johanna Gosse, "From Art to Experience: The Porous Philosophy of Ray Johnson," *Black Mountain Studies Journal* 2.3 (2011), accessed August 3, 2013, http://www.blackmountainstudiesjournal.org/wp/?page_id=137.

²⁶⁰ "What Is a Museum?" in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

²⁶¹ Branden Joseph, "Robert Morris and John Cage: Reconstructing a Dialogue," *October* 81 (Summer, 1997), 59.

²⁶² Smithson quoted in Joseph, "Robert Morris and John Cage," 60.

Instead of moving beyond the museum, what had to be done, as Joseph explains, was an interrogation of the exact nature of these restrictions. Smithson's friend and contemporary, Robert Morris, who is the focus of Joseph's article, was similarly interested in the experience between objects, viewers, and the spaces they mutually occupy. In the essay "Anti Form," Morris wrote that his sculpture's were largely based on their relationship to the space of the gallery "The engagement of the work becomes focused on the particularization of these general forms by means of varying scale, material, proportion, placement."²⁶³ This is what Joseph describes as providing audiences with the experience of actual space and time, a co-presence of sorts between object and viewer, and the reflexive experience of the viewer's the space.²⁶⁴ This presence was premised on countering the static nature of paintings and sculptures, which did not require viewer's engagement with the space of the museum (or gallery).

Kaprow criticized Morris's sculptures as "circumscribed by their relationship to the surrounding rectangular space of the gallery."²⁶⁵ Kaprow opposed museums, because art could not exist within such a cultural context without suffering "the transformation

²⁶³ Robert Morris, "Anti Form," in *The Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993)255-259. This essay originally appeared in *Artforum* in April 1968. In some ways I find a parallel here with Turner's discussion of structure and anti-structure – how they inform one another, so much so that they need each other. Morris describes: In recent object-type art the invention of new forms is not an issue. A morphology of geometric, predominantly rectangular forms has been accepted as a given premise. The engagement of the work becomes focused on the particularization of these general forms by means of varying scale, material, proportion, placement. Because of the flexibility as well as the passive, unemphasized nature of object-type shape it is a useful means. The use of the rectangular has a long history. The right angle has been in use since the first post and lintel constructions. Its efficiency is unparalleled in building with rigid materials, stretching a piece of canvas, etc. This generalized usefulness has moved the rectangle through architecture, painting, sculpture, objects. But only in the case of object-type art have the forms of the cubic and the rectangular been brought so far forward into the final definition of the work. That is, it stands as a self-sufficient whole shape rather than as a relational element. To achieve a cubic or rectangular form is to build in the simplest, most reasonable way, but it is also to build well."

²⁶⁴ Joseph, "Robert Morris and John Cage," 63.

²⁶⁵ Joseph, "Robert Morris and John Cage," 63.

into an illusory representation of itself.”²⁶⁶ In museums, art served to accumulate cultural and monetary values. The only way for art to escape this capitalist enterprise was for artists to “get free of the rectangle,” by abandoning museums, the art market, and any other institutional structure.²⁶⁷ It should be noted, however, that in Kaprow’s own time, institutions found it problematic to include an artist who wrote freely of this discontent for museums. In one early instance, as Rodenbeck describes, Kaprow solicited a place in “The Art of Assemblage” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1961. He explained to the curator, William Seitz, the relationship of Happenings to assemblages and asked to include a project that would not occur in the architectural frame of the museums. Seitz’s reply was unsympathetic, concluding: “I am not going to put in a museum something a man tells me isn’t designed for a museum. I’m not going to put a false frame on a work that isn’t designed for a frame. I could be in total disagreement with him, but I feel I would traduce his work to hang it in these geometric and silent halls.”²⁶⁸

Kaprow’s sentiment toward museums was in large part, as scholars have continually referenced, to his interest in seeing the boundaries between art and life merge. Museums, unfortunately, had no place in this equation: “Museums tend to make increasing concessions to the idea of art and life being related. . . . What’s wrong with their version of this is that they provide canned life, an aestheticized illustration of life. ‘Life’ in the museum is like making love in a cemetery.”²⁶⁹ There is a double meaning

²⁶⁶ Kaprow quoted in Joseph, “Robert Morris and John Cage,” 63.

²⁶⁷ Joseph, “Robert Morris and John Cage,” 63.

²⁶⁸ Quoted in Rodenbeck *Radical Prototypes*, 255.

²⁶⁹ Luis Jacob, “Groundless in the Museum: Anarchism and the Living Work of Art,” *Anarchist*

here, as Luis Jacob describes: museums “exclude any kind of life-forcing position” in the sense that, as mausoleums, they forbid anything having to do with life-forces – life here being any activity, frolicking in a pile of tires or constructed a space of blocks of ice. Put in a different way, he explains, perhaps “‘life’ is that very thing that cannot be forced.”²⁷⁰

Kaprow challenged retrospective treatment of his work. He dismissed museums as sites for Happenings or Environments, because he believed his work did not exist in a singular continuous state:

Even an account such as the foregoing is nothing like a magazine reproduction of a painting or an LP, stamped out by the thousands. The framework of the event is written out but there is still a wide margin of mystery about what it actually felt like to be there. Not more than red can be described to a blind man can that experience be conveyed, not even filmed, accurately. For the time being, the Happening seems incapable of easy standardization.²⁷¹

Museums – and by extension galleries and cultural institutions – demand silence and contemplation. O’Doherty discusses this, explaining that when viewers negotiate such spaces, they do so as “an invisible barrier between themselves and what is presented as sacred and untouchable.”²⁷² This sterility insists that “the outside world must not come in [. . .] walls are painted white, the ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor

Developments in Cultural Studies 2 (2011), 89, accessed August 14, 2013, <http://www.anarchist-developments.org/index.php/adcs/article/view/52/68>.

²⁷⁰ Jacob, “Groundless in the Museum.”

²⁷¹ Rosenthal and Meyer-Hermann, *Allan Kaprow*, 63.

²⁷² Brian O’Doherty, “Notes on the Gallery Space,” 15.

is polished so you click along clinically, or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly.”²⁷³

Happenings and Environments invite such distractions inside, so much so that the performances are predicated on such distractions.

Kaprow, however, was mindful that his performances would disappear, as Stephanie Rosenthal and Eva Meyer-Hermann explain, and well aware that he would have no say in their future presentations after his death. To that end, this is why he favored reinventions because they could guide his work “in a direction that could be sustained in his absence.”²⁷⁴ There are several exhibitions I would like to highlight to further this discussion of Kaprow’s relationship to institutional structures, the first of which is the most recent to have taken place. In 2012, the Pace Gallery in New York put together the exhibition and catalog “Happenings: New York, 1958 -1963,” which was intended to interrogate how the many artists associated with Happenings experimented with this new genre of art. In early October 1959, as the author and curator Mildred L. Glimcher recalls, Kaprow presented *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (year), and “change[d] the course of art history.” While scholars and critics normally shied away from such grandiose statements, her observation is important in understanding his lasting influence on varying performative traditions, including relational aesthetics, dance, theater and music.²⁷⁵

²⁷³ O’Doherty, “Notes on the Gallery Space,” 15. Rodenbeck further explores this when writing that O’Doherty: “He has suggested that theatrical conventions die in the gallery, and yet the happenings, which took place in galleries but also in ‘indeterminate, nontheatrical spaces – warehouses, deserted factories, old stores.” See Rodenbeck, *Radical Prototypes*, 139.

²⁷⁴ Rosenthal and Meyer-Hermann, *Allan Kaprow*, 63.

²⁷⁵ This discussion of Glimcher’s text and exhibition is taken from my own review: Harry Weil, “Happenings: New York, 1958–1963,” *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, 81.3 (2012), 177-181.

In her curation, Glimcher endeavored to “document the origins and historical development of the transient, yet pivotal” collective by emphasizing the interplay between the live performances and photographic documentation. Her discussion steered away from focusing on Kaprow, as the literature until now has done, and included artists, who are normally footnoted in their relation to Happenings, like Carolee Schneeman, Claes Oldenberg, Jim Dine and Simone Forti. As well, it was made clear that those associated with Happenings came together to produce performances that did not have any necessarily similar or cohesive principles.²⁷⁶ Glimcher’s text is filled with anecdotes that offer insights into the lives and experiences of those who were involved with Happenings. We learn of the car accident that inspired Jim Dine’s *Car Crash* at the Rebuen Gallery in 1959, where he unrolled paper towels with the word “help” written again and again. And how the dashing Greek-immigrant Lucas Samaras, who wanted to make it big as a professional actor, hoped his participation in Happenings might have led to being seen by a theatrical talent scout. Oldenberg described him affectionately: “Lucas was the perfect performer actually for these things. Whatever he did he did very slowly, obsessively, calculatedly . . . When I started doing these performances I wasn’t too clear about what I wanted them to be. Lucas sort of defined them for me.”²⁷⁷

Robert R. McElroy’s numerous photographs of Happenings illuminate these numerous stories, and make up the bulk of the exhibition and catalog. He was a college acquaintance of Dine’s who hung out with the artist and attended many of the

²⁷⁶ Mildred Glimcher, *Happenings: New York, 1958-1963* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2012).

²⁷⁷ Glimcher, *Happenings*, 213. Thank you to Rachel Wolff for putting Lucas Samaras’s contributions to Happenings into clearer focus, see Rachel Wolff, “How Happenings Happened,” *New York Magazine* (February 5, 2012), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://nymag.com/arts/art/features/happenings-lucas-samaras-2012-2>.

performances. The artists rarely pose for the camera, and when they do, they are relaxed, comfortable with the photographer's presence. The photographs show an extended community (family) of performers in settings that we are not accustomed to seeing, one that lacks the frills and pretensions of the art market.²⁷⁸ McElroy created memories by which we know of Happenings, as if "packaging time," and ensuring that knowledge of the performances for future generations to comment, archive and theorize.

Happenings and Environments Live On (Retrospectives and Reperformances)

The other two exhibitions I am interested in exploring take a much more narrow focus, Kaprow's contribution as a ring-leader for Happenings and Environments – which was never a formally organized collective under a manifesto as was Futurism or Surrealism. Rosenthal and Meyer-Hermann organized "Allan Kaprow – Art as Life," the first major retrospective of the artist's career for the Haus der Kunst in Munich in 2006, which subsequently traveled to Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Los Angeles, throughout 2007 and 2008. The curators divided the exhibition, as noted in the catalog, into two distinct parts: (1) "Agency for Action," which entailed a series of reperformances; and (2) "Museum as Mediation," an exhibition composed of various archival material and interactive performance projects. This dual format, as noted by critics and scholars, made it possible for viewers to trace the history Kaprow's

²⁷⁸ This idea of a family portrait is related to Kathy O'Dell discussion in *Contrast with the Skin* of how documentation from the 60s and 70s often takes on a grainy quality, making them appear much more candid and familial, as opposed to staged with high-production quality.

performances, allowing it to be “experienced by a new generation, as well as making provisions for his works to live on.”²⁷⁹

At Kunsthalle in Bern, the smallest of the European venues for *Allan Kaprow – Art as Life*, director Philippe Pirotte intended the retrospective to shed the taboos “living around the idea of reinvention.”²⁸⁰ That is, he was interested in re-creating Kaprow’s performance so that they would have some relevance to today’s audiences, and not reflect on ideals from the time of their creation. It is important, Pirotte further explains, to exploit the differences as after all these reperformances, “the real problem now is dealing with the idea of co-authorship, and what will come out of it.”²⁸¹ His retrospective treatment of Kaprow’s work was much more concerned with the present, intending to keep the performances grounded in the moment, the now.

The press release for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles’s incarnation of the exhibition, similarly explained that Kaprow was not interested in the institutional display or preservation of his work. In 1967 he predicted, “eventually . . . the modern museum may gradually lose that cloying association of holiness that it presently inherits from another age. Hopefully, it will become an educational institute, a

²⁷⁹ Rosenthal and Meyer-Hermann, *Allan Kaprow*, 5. Jori Finkel’s review of the exhibition when on view at LA MoCA was quite valuable in allowing me frame my conversation on the retrospective treatment of Kaprow’s work. See Jori Finkel, “Happenings Are Happening Again,” *The New York Times* (April 13, 2008), accessed July 16, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/arts/design/13fink.html?pagewanted=all>.

²⁸⁰ Philippe Pirotte, “Philippe Pirotte on Allan Kaprow,” *bo-ring* (2006), accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.bo-ring.net/?page_id=359.

²⁸¹ Pirotte, “Philippe Pirotte on Allan Kaprow.”

computerized bank of cultural history, and an agency for action.”²⁸² The transition of Happenings and Environments to museums is not easy, however viewer interactivity was repeatedly undermined, as highlighted by art critic Olivier Debroise. She noted that in Los Angeles participation was at times restricted by the museum’s attempt to establish a sense of orderliness.²⁸³ One examples was artist Allen Ruppberg’s reimagining of Kaprow’s *Words* (1962), which was originally an Environment made of words painted on cardboard signs that viewers were invited to move and rearrange. Ruppberg titled his reperformance at MoCA *Circles*, and it consisted of typewriters placed around the exhibition space that welcomes anyone to write with using paper provided by the museum. However, as Debroise notes, visitors were “gently reminded not to get too carried away, and to keep typewriter ‘fun’ to a designated amount of time.”²⁸⁴ Another installation, which she describes as “a quasi sitting room with a selection of videocassettes enclosed in a chain link fence,” thwarted any attempt to watch a film of the visitor’s choosing. And while two catalog texts attempted to justify this curatorial approach, as Debroise wrote, “the cleanliness of it all and the overt anachronisms (the series of early 21st century candy-colored iMacs or automatic paper shredders in Apple Shrine) are visually distracting, more than any deliberately provocative displays of the 1960s.”²⁸⁵

²⁸² Kaprow as quoted in the press release for LA MoCA iteration of the exhibition: http://www.moca.org/kaprow/GalleryGuide_Kaprow.pdf.

²⁸³ Olivier Debroise, “Allan Kaprow,” *Frieze Online* (2008), accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/allan_kaprow/.

²⁸⁴ Debroise, “Allan Kaprow.”

²⁸⁵ Debroise, “Allan Kaprow.” In these limitations discussed by Debroise, I am inclined to agree with performance artist Suzanne Lacy, one of the participants in the MOCA reperformance program, who

The archival segment of the exhibition, however, while on view at MoCA, took a hands-on approach. Acetate copies of photographs of Kaprow's performances were available to visitors to place for viewing on overhead projectors.²⁸⁶ The archival material was not limited to the past, as documentation of earlier iterations of Happenings and Environments were shown alongside documentation of reperformances that took place during the run of the exhibition. This was echoed on MoCA's website, where photographic and filmic documentation of the reperformances were immediately made available for viewing. This, what could be best described as a living archive, was a valuable tool for those, like me, who were unable to see the exhibition. In the comfort of my home in New York City, I was able to see the reperformances almost immediately after they took place thousands of miles away in Los Angeles. Such a level of access denies the pilgrimage approach to art, where viewers must travel to see the great works in the flesh. Instead, I can see this material wherever and whenever, allowing Happenings and Environments to be a malleable experience beyond the confines of the museum.

Art historian Reesa Greenberg this approach to the archive as "multi-modal forms of remembering," where the Internet is a "visual equivalent for the malleability of memory" and "the many means viewers use to shape it."²⁸⁷ The fluidity in marking the past and present, she explains, is clearly seen in retrospective's desire to "construct a living legacy" that unfolds in our own space by way of digital and virtual technology. For

explained "to capture the past of Allan's work that was the most significant to him and the most ephemeral. And that is the experience of his work as it becomes part of, and lives on in, someone else's memory."

²⁸⁶ Debroise, "Allan Kaprow."

²⁸⁷ Reesa Greenberg, "Remembering Exhibitions: From Point to Line to Web," *Tate Papers* (2009), accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/remembering-exhibitions-point-line-web>.

example, the museum's web site provides logistical information regarding the ten venues where *Fluids* was reperformed, including details regarding sponsoring organizations, as well date, time, and place. This information allowed viewers to follow the many sites of construction and eventual disintegration. On the website -

<http://www.lacma.org/art/exhibition/fluids-happening-allan-kaprow> - there is a link to a slideshow – using flicker.com as a platform – with hundreds of images. These photographs were uploaded after being solicited from professional and amateur photographers who attended the various reperformances of *Fluids*, and calls to mind those of McElroy, as a sense of casualness pervades. We see groups of people, of diverse ages and races, exhausted by the building process and carrying large blocks of ice. Some, however, manage to smile gleefully into the camera. One particular image caught my attention, where two young girls wildly and excitedly, throw chunks of ice into the air. As they flail their arms, the smile on their faces conveys an experience of *Fluids* as one of delight, one that I was not able to experience first-hand, but rather through the mediation provided on the Internet.

Videos of the *Fluids* reperformances were also posted on YouTube. Such a web presence affirms the museum's interest in making the retrospective widely accessible, offering “opportunities to record aspects of exhibitions that,” as Greenberg explains, “until now, have remained invisible or under-visualized.”²⁸⁸ She further suggests that YouTube provides an accessible platform for the documentation not found in traditional print catalogs, as the web is better able to circulate information about exhibitions because

²⁸⁸Greenberg, “Remembering Exhibitions.”

it can exist before a catalog is ever printed, or well after it is out of print.²⁸⁹ This contributes to what Greenberg asserts as a dire need for museums and cultural institutions as whole to move toward the future of viewer experience:

When institutions and individuals do not mobilise the potential of the web as a remembering vehicle and space, the pattern of removing the history of exhibitions from active public memory and as a feature of everyday life is re-inscribed and archaic models for reprising exhibition history perpetuated.²⁹⁰

Such digital and virtual platforms allowed Kaprow's work to go well beyond the physical audience in Los Angeles, as MoCA chose to have an expansive and inclusive viewing experience. Such documentation, while not a substitute for partaking in the actual reperformances, as Kaprow would certainly agree, nevertheless provides an archival experience by way of digital and virtual technology, one that can be experienced anytime in the comfort of one's home, at one's own leisure.

This relationship of Kaprow's work to the present, and the need to commemorate his legacy, was also at the center of Hauser and Wirth Gallery's retrospective, "Allan Kaprow YARD," of the Environment *Yard*. The exhibition combined reinventions and archival material in an attempt to be "sensitive to the complicated issues involved" in

²⁸⁹ It should be noted, as Hannah Higgins at the time of editing this dissertation, that software goes out of date, and, as a result, viewing, access, and archiving material on the web presents its own issues of accessibility in the future.

²⁹⁰ Greenberg, "Remembering Exhibitions." She further explains this need for museums to place their exhibitions on websites: "The problems with using the web to reprise exhibitions – the risk of feeding the exhibition as spectacle syndrome, the lack of any information about the artworks in individual videos and postings, the imbalance in what gets recorded and how for example – do not, to my mind, outweigh the many advantages, including the greater possibility of colour images, the quantity of available documentation and, for the first time, the sounds of various moments in an exhibition's history. Typographic media restrict this kind of information."

exhibiting Kaprow's legacy.²⁹¹ Addressing the ephemeral nature of his work, the exhibition, as curator Helen Molesworth described, was a response to the artist's assertion that "if a work is of value it will stimulate the creation of related works later on, thus the tradition will stay alive this way."²⁹² Summarizing her approach, Molesworth further explained:

Allan Kaprow's legacy is enormous and is seen across the territory of art making today, from the predominance of installation art and performance, to the idea that the artist is a person who is given the permission to be questioning and playful. And that essential part of art's role in the world to extend those qualities of playfulness, questioning, and curiosity into the larger social fabric of our daily lives — was Kaprow's discovery and achievement.²⁹³

She goes on to refer to Kaprow as a "benevolent grandfather" of contemporary art, responsible for inspiring a multitude of conceptual art practices.²⁹⁴

Yard premiered in 1961 at the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York City, and was subsequently reperformed by Kaprow multiple times across America and Europe until his death in 2006. The first incarnation was outdoors, and made of a pile of standard car tires that visitors were encouraged interact with and climb. Mariellen Sanford explains it as looking like a dump.²⁹⁵ "The physical crudeness and roughness" of *Yard* was an

²⁹¹ Press Release for *Allan Kaprow YARD* at Hauser and Wirth Gallery in New York, September 23 – October 31, 2009, assessed November 2, 2012, http://www.hauserwirth.com/docs/HWNY_Press_Release.pdf.

²⁹² Kaprow, *Some Recent Happenings*, 13.

²⁹³ Press Release for *Allan Kaprow YARD*.

²⁹⁴ Press Release for *Allan Kaprow YARD*. My discussion of this exhibition first appeared in a review, see Harry Weil, "Allan Kaprow," *artUS* (2009).

²⁹⁵ Mariellen Sanford, *Happenings and Other Acts* (London: Routledge, 1995), 3.

“uncomfortable borderline between the genuinely primitive and the merely amateurish.”²⁹⁶ Michael Kirby explained this sensation as partly intentional, due to the relationship these performances had with action paintings and junk sculptures, and “partly the inevitable result of extremely limited finances.”²⁹⁷

On the second floor of Hauser and Wirth, two galleries displayed five decades of documentation relating to the many incarnations of *Yard*. The material was photocopied from the Kaprow archive, housed primarily at the Getty Institute in Los Angeles, and included a variety of ephemera, including photographs, sketches, and personal correspondence. Similar to “Allan Kaprow – Art as Life,” this material was hung in a makeshift manner on the wall with thumbtacks, which was in keeping with Kaprow’s own found-object aesthetic. Art critic Michael Wilson explains that this installation emphasizes how *Yard* as a single work with many multitudes, how a work of art could be never the same, “yet always recognizable;” formally flexible, “yet tethered to a specific type of object; a touchstone of sorts, yet innately hard to pin down.”²⁹⁸

What does display of this material achieve? On a utilitarian level, it helps us to index the “shifting appearance of the work, the collection also reveals how its contextualization has changed in accordance with prevailing theoretical tastes.”²⁹⁹ And

²⁹⁶ Sanford, *Happenings and Other Acts*, 3.

²⁹⁷ Michael Kirby as quoted in Sanford, *Happenings and Other Acts*, 3.

²⁹⁸ Michael Wilson, “Allan Kaprow, Yard” *TimeOut* (October 14, 2009), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://www.timeout.com/newyork/art/allan-kaprow-yard>.

²⁹⁹ Wilson, “Allan Kaprow, Yard.” He explains the second floor gallery in greater detail: “In an upstairs gallery, a display of related documentation helps bring these and other issues into sharper focus. A fascinating archive of photographs and sketches, statements and letters, press releases and other printed ephemera follows *Yard* from New York to Pasadena, California, to Cologne, Germany, and—with several extended breaks—on and on from venue to venue until its eventual return home. [. . .] And, while its

without much explanatory text (didactic labels), the assembled material speak for themselves, and viewers are encouraged to study for themselves the nuances of the photographic documentation, or to decipher Kaprow's handwriting in sketches and journal entries. An interesting item, as Wilson notes, is a journal entry that questions the need for and effectiveness of performance art practices: "Where is the art? What is one doing by participating? What is one doing by not participating? What is gained, either way? Whom is it for? Should you remember this when you get a flat tire?"³⁰⁰

The centerpiece of "Allan Kaprow YARD," however, was the three reperformances of *Yard*. Molesworth explains her desire to commission artists for the reperformance, "who would be sensitive to the complicated issues involved in reinventing another artist's work."³⁰¹ The three artists that were chosen, included William Pope.L, Josiah McElheny, and Sharon Hayes. They were instructed to follow Kaprow's directions: "Look at the documentation. Reinvent the pieces."³⁰² I was only fortunate enough to see Pope.L's reperformance, which was the most widely received of the three. He transformed *Yard* into a cramped (and dark) dungeon (what other critics described as

historical significance is conscientiously emphasized at every turn, the work itself repeatedly—and blessedly—slips the bounds of museumification to remain endlessly contemporary."

³⁰⁰ Kaprow quoted in Wilson, "Allan Kaprow, Yard."

³⁰¹ Press Release for *Allan Kaprow YARD*.

³⁰² Press Release for *Allan Kaprow YARD*. "Sharon Hayes's Yard (Sign) involved littering a grassy patch of Queens' historic New York Marble Cemetery with yard signs. Telling spectators, but not as peremptorily as Pope.L, that "If I catch you dumping you are dead," Hayes attempted to summon the ghost of Kaprow without at the same time giving him free run of the yard. At Queens Museum of Art, Josiah McElheny's Yard (Junkyard) projection showed a 90-by-30-foot aerial photograph of the "Iron Triangle," a nearby, seven-block-long area of wrecking and tire yards currently slated for redevelopment. As with the rest of this reperformance, visitor interaction was limited since the wall projection occurred in a room containing the museum's famous Panorama of the City of New York, the world's largest architectural model (commissioned for the 1964 World's Fair). The juxtaposition was conceptually inspired, but again tried too hard to stay alive in the moment, rendering it a mere shadow of the past." See Weil, "Allan Kaprow."

a cave) of flickering red and white lights.³⁰³ Like in Kaprow's 1961 version, tires were scattered throughout the entire first-floor of the gallery, whose dimensions were amplified by wall-to-wall mirrors. The space was also plagued with a loud (if not deafening) soundtrack of Pope.L barking (dictating) instructions to rearrange the tires, which was continually interrupted by foghorns and train whistles. This multi-sensory reperformance highlighted the inability to have a singular incarnation (or reincarnation) of *Yard*, as the performance is open to such far-flung interpretation. Yes, the tires were there, but the overall installation was unique to Pope.L, who explained that his approach was (much like Kaprow) whimsical: "[Kaprow's] insistence on the play could be mistaken for lack of rigor, radicality or seriousness of purpose but, at the same time, play was a very human means to avoid the dark. And as a true American black man, fully born into the cultural vise, I am all for the dark."³⁰⁴

Pope.L's reperformance, more importantly, taps into current political and social issues. "The black rubber," he explains, "and its industrial legacy, its smell, its density, its effect upon the eco-system, and the associations these things provoke, all resonate in the world we know today. I'm interested in what materials call up from life."³⁰⁵ A certain degree of license is expected in reperformance – even encouraged by Kaprow – and Pope.L's reperformance was far more revealing about his situation than the originator

³⁰³ See Weil, "Allan Kaprow."

³⁰⁴ Mary Barone, "William Pope L., Yard by Yard" *Art in America Magazine Online* (2009), accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-opinion/conversations/2009-10-06/william-pope-l-allan-kaprow/>.

³⁰⁵ Press Release for *Allan Kaprow YARD*. My reading of Pope.L's reperformance here is greatly influenced and indebted to Martha Buskirk, who was very generous in sharing an early draft of her book with me. I appreciate her generosity, as well as her clear insight into the many incarnations of *Yard*. See, *Creative Enterprise: Contemporary Art Between Museum and the Marketplace*. New York, Continuum Press, 2012.

himself. The further the point of origin recedes into the past, the cultural theorist George Kubler argues, the more art audiences and museums demand accessibility and desire to understand what came before, to reign in control of it.³⁰⁶ Art historians, curators and critics alike should neither “throw up” their hands and declare performance art inaccessible to art historical investigation “because it is ephemeral,” nor should they pretend that documentation is “anything other than a series of traces, shaped and serially reshaped by the interests, desires and way of seeing of everyone from the artist to the photographer who documented the events to the historian.”³⁰⁷

Pope.L’s *Yard* testifies to a larger public who desires access to *Yard*. “The retention of old things has always been a central ritual in human societies,” writes Kubler, and its contemporary expressions are meant to “keep present some record of the power and knowledge of vanished [cultures, objects and art].”³⁰⁸ Art historians, to that end, are like astronomers, concerned with appearances noted in the present but occurring in the past: “When an important work of art has utterly disappeared by demolition and dispersal, we still can detect its perturbations upon other bodies in the field of influence. . . . Both astronomers and historians collect ancient signals into compelling theories about distance and composition.”³⁰⁹ By inserting himself into the history of *Yard*, Pope.L illustrates that history is not closed off, but open to continuous additions, alterations, and reconsiderations – or as Schneider explains, gaps and hole. By reinvesting in the tactility

³⁰⁶ George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962) 21.

³⁰⁷ Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched*, 16.

³⁰⁸ Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, 82.

³⁰⁹ Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, 20.

of the viewer experience, *Yard* from 1961 and *Yard* from 2009, and all the *Yards* in-between, is part and parcel of the same archive, the same history, the same performance.³¹⁰

³¹⁰ “Yard, whether from 1961 or 2009, may well be different entities, but they are bound together in name alone. So we should take solace from the death of these later performances too, now doomed to spend eternity in Hauser & Wirth’s archive.” See Weil, “Allan Kaprow.”

Chapter Three

Alison Knowles: Reperforming Fluxus

In the previous chapter, I investigated Allan Kaprow's disavowal of the culture and politics that govern the collecting, archiving, and displaying of performance art. He was not alone; many of his contemporaries also grew restless with the established art market, and in this chapter I extend my assessment of this oppositional impulse by considering Fluxus and its relationship to the institutionalization of performance practices in re-created and reinterpreted forms. While Fluxus has been written on by a number of scholars in various disciplines, a more nuanced discussion of its association with museums has been largely ignored. I will begin this chapter with a conceptual overview of Fluxus practices and then shift my attention to how the Museum of Modern Art in New York, now the largest repository for Fluxus material, has responded to this institutionalization.

Like Kaprow's Happenings and Environments, the activities of artists associated with Fluxus revolved around performative gestures culled together from everyday experience, like making a salad or dripping water. Art historian Liz Kotz explains that Fluxus provided a "frame that directs attention to preexisting phenomena," from which it developed two mainstays: (1) *event scores*, or what is better described as short scripts for performative actions, and (2) various interactive objects made of cheap industrial materials.³¹¹ The distribution of this material took a variety of forms, as Fluxus artist and

³¹¹ Liz Kotz, *Words to be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 190.

writer Ken Friedman explains, which included: (1) boxed collections where individual scores were written or printed on cards, (2) book or pamphlet collections of scores, often representing work by a single artists, and (3) large-format collections that often carried the work of many artists.³¹² These various formats allowed Fluxus performances to make the transition “across any number of ephemeral realizations that may be performed by others.”³¹³ More important, as art historian Thomas Crow, in *The Rise of the Sixties* explains, Fluxus performances “need never take place for the piece to exist,” but rather it is “crucial that its enactment in time and space be realizable and repeatable.”³¹⁴

Fluxus’s desire for reproduction and circulation via scores and objects were in tandem with what has been described as a rejection of authorship, as artists allowed their work to be performed by others without being bound by consent, copyright, or restriction.³¹⁵ However, this is not to suggest that Fluxus banished authorship, as Santone notes, but rather what we find in this circulation of materials are original concepts being credited to their respective authors. That is, even though engaged and active participation was open to interpretation, it had a point of origin.³¹⁶ Art historian Sally Banes describes this in relation to Fluxus’s desire for a community, foregrounded in “ordinary experience,” much the same way that Santone does: “The rhetoric of community – the

³¹² Ken Friedman, Owen Smith and Lauren Sawchyn eds., *Fluxus Performance Workbook*, accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.deluxe.com/beat/fluxusworkbook.pdf>.

³¹³ Kotz, *Words to be Looked At*, 190.

³¹⁴ Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 131.

³¹⁵ See Santone’s extensive discussion of this in her dissertation “Circulating the Event,” where she addresses Alison Knowles’ *The Identical Lunch* at great length, while also framing Fluxus activity into a wider discussion of circulation and community.

³¹⁶ Santone, *Circulating the Event*, 145.

desire for community – is everywhere evident in the artworks and institutions of the Sixties avant-garde. . . . their resolutions were often subversive, proposing new social roles and institutions.”³¹⁷ Ultimately, the many people and personalities that made up Fluxus, which included critics, collectors, and friends and family, allowed for a level of accessibility to the art object – be it an event score or object – that was not plausible with traditional media like painting or sculpture.³¹⁸

George Maciunas, the self-appointed leader of Fluxus, often called the “Chairman of Fluxus,” assembled and designed a vast number of Fluxus editions solicited from his colleagues. An example is Ay-O’s *Finger Boxes*, where a large box opens to reveal a number of identical smaller boxes containing various items, including sponges, nails, and hair. Each box has a small opening at the top, large enough for a finger to reach in and manipulate the materials. The experience of touch, as well as curiosity to touch is fundamental here.³¹⁹ The most well known of the many objects he created was a series of *Fluxkits*, in this case, a retrofitted attaché cases packed with multiples, objects, and scores by various artists intended to illicit engagement from viewers through instruction or manipulation. Maciunas proposed an “anti-art” form, where, despite the many differences of political and social opinion, as well as geographical boundaries (as they

³¹⁷ I am grateful to Santone for bringing the work of Banes to my attention, it is valuable in conceptualizing this utopic vision of society was localized in downtown New York City. See Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 36.

³¹⁸ Santone, “Circulating the Event,” 145.

³¹⁹ This discussion of experience is largely based on Higgins’s *Fluxus Experience*.

were spread throughout America, Japan, and Europe) those associated with Fluxus were able to express a general interest in art that could be easily produced, sold, and bought.³²⁰

Hannah Higgins, an art historian and daughter of Fluxus artists Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles, argues that such art “must be given, in the sense that experience is shared: it cannot be placed in the marketplace . . . The spirit was: you’ve seen it, now – very well, it’s yours. Now you are free to make your own variation on it if you like, and the piece and the world will be a little richer for all that.”³²¹ The viewers themselves become active and engaged performers by reading and responding to the scores, as the score is a call to activity. In the case of scores, whether they appear on a note card, reproduced in a journal, or on the white wall of a museum, they do not exist in a fixed state, but continuously oscillate between textual and performative forms. On the surface they may resemble a musical score or a script, but as Kotz writes, the scores do not belong to a “definable genre, they could go anywhere.”³²²

I am interested in assessing the ability of Fluxus to go “anywhere” through consideration of a variety of scholars and critics who have assessed an artistic practice grounded in what historian Kristine Stiles describes as “the function of thought in the

³²⁰ Friedman discusses how it is possible to address its work as centered on participation and communal activity as prompted by the material it sold, rather than in terms of “sharing specific aesthetic or social ideals.” He writes that it is difficult to frame “Fluxus people:” “Compressing the larger laboratory into that frame means that a great deal about Fluxus has been missed. What Fluxus was and perhaps remains is the most productive laboratory of ideas in the history of art, an invisible college whose field of study encompasses the essential questions of life.” He further suggests that curatorial analysis overall has tended to dismiss Fluxus experiments as a failure or ineffective. When, in fact, the openness, accessibility, and risk taking of Fluxus performances meant that they would be difficult to institutionalize. See Friedman, “Fluxus: A Laboratory of Idea,” 40. Santone spends much time considering the relationship of communal bonds to Fluxus activity, which is emphasized her in discussion of “the tension between act and texts intersects with another tension, that between individual and group, which in turn helped establish chance and diversity as core values in the group.” See Santone, *Circulating the Event*, 114.

³²¹ Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 42.

³²² Liz Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics and the “Event” Score,” *October* 95 (2001).

ways in which the body interacts with things.”³²³ Using the body as a performative object, Fluxus circulated and developed a variety of materials that lent itself to what Santone describes as “an ethics of shared authorship,” which centered on a community “arising through a continual negotiation between published and live means of sharing everyday life.”³²⁴ Central to my discussion is an investigation into whether it is necessarily true, as Stiles has ardently argued, that once Fluxus enters a museum, it is stripped of its “paradigmatic value” and “are being returned to culture aestheticized for use [within museums].”³²⁵ Ultimately, throughout my research, and reading of various scholars, critics, and curators, I have found that Fluxus art practices can exist within institutions, but such existence is dependent on new experimental exhibition, programming, and education models.

Scores and Objects of the Everyday

Hannah Higgins, in her book *Fluxus Experience*, asserts that “primary experience is paramount in Fluxus,” as it counters any “move to assign specific and permanent meanings to a the work.”³²⁶ To highlight this, she discusses how a multitude of Fluxus performances/actions which resemble their musical nature, which intended to foster an intimately bound up community with “its everyday aspect, its directness, its experimental quality, its provisionality, its availability to multiple realizations, and its rigorous

³²³ Kristine Stiles, “Between Water and Stone – Fluxus Performance: A Metaphysics of Acts,” *The Artist Body*, ed. Amelia Jones (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2001), 211.

³²⁴ Santone, *Circulating the Event*, 142.

³²⁵ Stiles, “Between Water and Stone,” 211.

³²⁶ Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 59.

placement in time.”³²⁷ However, it is important to emphasize, as she does, that the experience for the handler or the participant “is” the sensation contained in the object or the actions derived from the score, which like a music composition is intended to be continuous and repetitive.³²⁸ For example, as she describes, Larry Miller’s *Orifice Flux Plugs* (1974), is a small, clear plastic container with compartments containing various industrially made objects intended to be inserted by the user into their, or perhaps someone else’s, orifices – be it, mouth, ear, or anus. The objects included a baby’s pacifier, a wine cork, an earplug, and a condom, among other things. The musicality, or musical element, of Miller’s piece is evident in the variety of approaches that individuals bring to the objects: perhaps the condom will go in my ear and the cork in my mouth, or maybe the other way around.³²⁹

This “do it yourself” sensibility builds into a work of art a need to be reperformed. George Brecht, who pioneered the development of event scores, advocated for the democratization of art and saw that event scores would usher in an era of accessibility and availability to the creative process. “Shouldn’t scores be simply published in the newspaper,” he queried, “or available on printed cards or sheets of paper, to be sent to anyone?”³³⁰ Kotz stresses that when event scores are read, they are tools for

³²⁷ Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 55.

³²⁸ Higgins further explains: “The musicality inherent in the Event, then, while critiquing mainstream Western epistemology, also deconstructs the “reification, totalization, and reductionism” of structured secondary knowledge formations. The musicality of the Event enables a certain “openness to Being” (Heidegger’s term), a characteristic strong in the compositions of [John] Cage. The process of deconstruction thus occurs only when the artists and audience members seek out a multiplicity of exploratory constructive, and destructive experiences.” See Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 85.

³²⁹ I have never handled this item, however I am grateful for Higgins’ discussion of it in *Fluxus Experience*. See Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 33-36.

³³⁰ Brecht quoted in Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics,” 24.

something else: “scripts for a performance or project or musical pieces which is the “real” art.”³³¹ The score presupposes the reader, and, as such, the reader becomes a participant, as the choice not to perform constitutes a performative action, just as much as the choice to perform does.³³² The scores incorporate experience in order to make “experience a kind of medium,” as a mode of artistic creativity.³³³ Brecht, as Dezeuze explains, incorporated into his work “questioning of symbolic processes,” where “an active participation on the part of the viewer” was not just welcome, but strongly encouraged.³³⁴

When discussing the larger social and political implications of Fluxus, Maciunas suggested that artists should “purge the world of bourgeois sickness, intellectual, professional and commercialized culture . . . dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art.”³³⁵ Instead, artists should “promote a revolutionary flood and tide in art, promote living art, . . . non art reality to be grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.”³³⁶ This purging of established cultural norms is clearly

³³¹ Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics,” 24.

³³² Kotz, “Post-Cagean Aesthetics,” 24.

³³³ Julia Robinson, “The Sculpture of Indeterminacy: Alison Knowles’s Beans and Variations,” *Art Journal* 63.4 (2004): 97-115. In context: “The brevity and openness of Knowles’s textual “proposition” allows for great freedom in the realization of the piece, and it includes the audience from the outset. Although it was Marcel Duchamp who first argued that the spectator completes the work, it was the sphere of performance and the radical scoring practices developed by John Cage that provided the impetus for Knowles and her peers to incorporate duration and experience into the very conception of the works they created. Disavowing convention and sacrificing structure, they made experience a kind of medium, as important as any other.”

³³⁴ Anna Dezeuze, “Unpacking Cornell: Consumption and Play in the Work of Rauschenberg, Warhol and George Brecht,” *Papers on Surrealism* 1 (2004), accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal2/acrobat_files/dezeuze_article.pdf.

³³⁵ George Maciunas, *Fluxus Manifesto* (1963), accessed August 3, 2013 http://georgemaciunas.com/?page_id=42.

³³⁶ Maciunas, *Fluxus Manifesto*.

illustrated in Yoko Ono's *Painting to be Stepped on* (1960), which instructs the reader to: "Leave a piece of canvas or finished painting on the floor or in the street." Museumgoers have become all too acclimated to keep their distance from art objects, as Sophie Cavoulacos explains, especially as security guards, stanchions, and "Please Do Not Touch" signs are common fixtures.³³⁷ That is, as I have argued elsewhere, in overthrowing this long-held prohibition, Ono's invitation to step or not step on the painting requires a conscious performative choice on the part of the viewer, as the artist herself explains: "[The instructions give her and viewers] the freedom to do all sorts of things that you can't do in the material world. For instance, to mix three paintings in your head: you can't do that successfully in reality."³³⁸

Painting to be stepped on, when placed in the museum, succeeds in reaffirming that performance art is grounded in engaging living bodies, or, as Michele Cone explains, it challenges "those who dare not trample over the painted canvas to reflect on why a canvas on the floor induces a different reaction from a carpet or a mat."³³⁹ These bodies, turn art into a mode of questioning.³⁴⁰ If the viewer chooses to enact Ono's score, he or she breaks out of what Cone calls the "habitual patterns of being and undergoes a change

³³⁷ Sophie Cavoulacos's blog entry for the exhibition "Off the Wall" at the Whitney Museum: "Off the Wall, On the Floor," accessed August 22, 2013, <http://whitney.org/Education/EducationBlog/OffTheWallOnTheFloor>.

³³⁸ Yoko Ono quoted on Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/yokoonopage/posts/165083540293032>, accessed June 7, 2013. Also see my review "Pause for Performance" published in *Afterimage* (November 2010), and available online: <http://www.readperiodicals.com/201011/2244811391.html>.

³³⁹ Michele Cone, "Fluxus at 50," *artnet* (2011), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/cone/fluxus-7-29-11.asp>. Cone makes explicit reference in terms of questions to Jacob Proctor, "George Maciunas's Politics of Aesthetics," in *Fluxus and the Essential Questions of Life*, Jacquelynn Baas, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 20.

³⁴⁰ Cone, "Fluxus at 50."

in consciousness.”³⁴¹ That is, Fluxus questions in an attempt to address the “disillusionment with the value of life,” and larger social structures and institutions, attempting to be agents of change.”³⁴²

Dezeuze, like Cone, argues that when scholars try to construct relations among the many iterations of a score, they find that “there is no unifying picture plane, no painterly trace, no artistic subjectivity to guide [them].”³⁴³ Each score is not a singular occurrence, but rather part of a long series (or chain) of occurrences that have no set formal principles or guidelines: “The symbolic associations carried by the objects can only be attributed to individual’s enactment of the score without any framing whatsoever – audience, institution, location, or other formalization.”³⁴⁴ Within this imperative, the circulation of scores, as well as other Fluxus material, as Santone describes, promotes both heterogeneity among collected individuals and an important strategy of “shared authorship.”³⁴⁵

³⁴¹ Cone, “Fluxus at 50.”

³⁴² Cone, “Fluxus at 50.”

³⁴³ Dezeuze, “Unpacking Cornell.”

³⁴⁴ Dezeuze, “Unpacking Cornell.”

³⁴⁵ Santone, “Circulating the Event,” 141-142. As each enactment of a score is unique, sometimes the textual form of the score is not a constant. Santone offers the example of Brecht’s *Drip Music*. When first composed in 1959, the score read: “For single or multiple performance. A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.” Another version in 1962 added further specifications, as discussed by Friedman in *Fluxus Workbook*: “First performer on a tall ladder pours water from a pitcher very slowly down into the bell of a French horn or tuba held in the playing position by a second performer at floor level.” In each of these textual forms, the core attribute of *Drip Music*, being dripping, was recognizable, “while also having unique attributes at each instance,” especially considering that the instructions of the text were open to interpretation. Santone further traces the recorded instances of *Drip Music*: The score was performed at the first Fluxus festival in Wiesbaden, Germany (September 1962); at the Nikolai Church in Copenhagen, Denmark by Dick Higgins (November 1962); at Festum Fluxorum in Dusseldorf, Germany (February 1963); in Amsterdam, Netherlands by George Maciunas (June 1963); and at 12 New York Fluxus Concerts (April 1964).

Aside from Maciunas, Dick Higgins was also instrumental in the distribution of Fluxus material. In 1962, he established the *Something Else Press*, a publishing house dedicated to producing “source materials in a format which could encourage their distribution through traditional channels, however untraditional their contents or implications,” and “to introduce European materials and always to have a balance between European/American, famous, infamous and unfamous, past and present.”³⁴⁶ Items from the press included publication of manifestos, essays, scores, and poetry by a variety of artists who have now been associated with the advent of performance art in America; this included Allan Kaprow, Claes Oldenberg, and John Cage. *By Alison Knowles* (1965), for example, (part of *Great Bear Pamphlets* series – an imprint of the press), contains nearly two-dozen event scores performed by the artists at various Fluxus concerts (Fluxconcerts) across America and Europe. Knowles explained that the intention of publishing her scores was to combat “the work of art” hung on a wall.

As scores circulated, and were accessible to those associated with Fluxus – be it artists, collectors, friends, colleagues – it is important to turn back to Victor Turner’s discussion of liminoid cultural phenomena. The liminoid stresses that individuality and its presence is often experimental and exploratory, developing along the margins of social orders. The liminoid can function as social critique and may even act as a subversion of the status quo, mainly because it has a luxury to do so because of the division between work and leisure in industrial societies.³⁴⁷ Graham St. John, in his reading of Turner, writes that liminoid phenomena stresses the individual’s experience and “they are seen to

³⁴⁶ Dicks Higgins quoted in Steve Clay, "Dick Higgins and Something Else Press: Exploring the Ways and Means of Communication," *ubuWeb*, accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.ubu.com/historical/gb/index.html>.

³⁴⁷ St. John, “Introduction,” 9.

occur within leisure settings apart from work. [. . .] [Participation is] voluntary, plural, and fragmentary with liminoidality associated with marginality, conditions fomenting social critique, subversive behavior and radical experimentation.”³⁴⁸

In carving out a space for such experimentation, liminoid phenomena have is very similar to the critique of the art establishment posed by Fluxus event scores and objects. However, it is imperative for me to emphasize that this critique was not seen to replace the art establishment as defined by museums, but to serve as an alternative space for audiences to experience art. Religious rituals perish and give birth to “ritualized progeny” and the pre-modern (or primitive) can be observed through a miasmatic ensemble of “magnifying distorting lenses such as film and sports events.”³⁴⁹ This sense of ritual, of coming to experience the past, is manifested in many ways now that Fluxus had found its way into the museums today.

Fluxus Scores and Objects in the Museum

In an effort to retain the creative encounter and experience of Fluxus, Alison Knowles and Hannah Higgins conceived of *Fluxus with Tools (or Bon Appetit)*, after they both had been repeatedly asked to appear at the same conferences and art openings. The performance was conceived as an intervention, and performed at universities, galleries, and museums across North America and Europe. I saw this piece at the Emily Harvey Foundation in New York City in 2010. The performance took place at two long tables joined together. On one end Higgins controls a PowerPoint presentation, while at the

³⁴⁸ St. John, “Introduction,” 8.

³⁴⁹ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 111.

other end there is a projection of a live video feed of Knowles's hands engaging with various materials. Throughout the performance, they lectured on Fluxus' engagement with food, and went about performing nine event scores, including Bengt af Klintberg's *Orange Event*, Brecht's *Dripping*, Dick Higgins's *Danger Music #15*, Larry Miller's *Chewed Drawing*, Knowles's *Proposition: Make a Salad*, Ben Vautier's *Mystery Food*, Eric Andersen's *Opus 9*, and Emmett Williams and Robert Filliou's *Spaghetti Sandwich*. Each of these scores require "tools," as Higgins describes in her monologue, and their use is intended to elicit "non-destructive knowing." These tools asserts Fluxus's central tenant of exchange between artists and viewers and engages an "expansive" and "open ended" art practice.³⁵⁰

The performance began with Hannah Higgins discussing tools as being at the "center of the Events and objects associated with Fluxus." Her use of the term "tool" here applies to the food, which "functions as a thing used in a pursuit, in this case a performance. In another sense, a person functions as an instrument of another."³⁵¹ The focus on scores with food is especially important because eating and drinking, while often a communal experience, is ultimately an individual experience. The way a spaghetti sandwich, for example, is handled, tasted, and digested is unique for each person consuming it. Higgins asserts that the ability to assess and analyze any performance involving food is difficult, if not "effectively marginalized," because such performances

³⁵⁰ The script/text for *Fluxus with Tools* was kindly provided, via email, by Hannah Higgins.

³⁵¹ The tools include: salad bowl, salad tossers, a few small salad bowls and metal forks, assortment of large and small cutting knives, meat cleaver, whisk, spreading knife, carrot peeler, jar with lid, salt, pepper, scissors, two clear glasses, large water pitcher and water, paper towels for spills, two cloth dish towels, as well as a variety of perishables for cooking. The instructions for the performance notes that the "kitchen supplies are most attractive when they come from someone's kitchen (i.e. feel used and domestic). Wood where possible."

fail to conform to “a visual model of artistic practice and because few practical texts exist on which to base an analysis.”³⁵² It is this inability to be easily defined that may be why many Fluxus artists used food, often centered on “the ritual of eating, associations between food and nonfood,” and the obsessive measuring and counting of food “characteristic of a society preoccupied with personal hygiene and self-control.”³⁵³

Using philosopher Martin Heidegger’s notion of *tool-being*, Higgins explains in the performance that using tools is a way to get at the true nature of things through their use. She has previously referenced Heidegger in her book *Fluxus Experience*, quoting him to explain how Fluxus scores and objects set up the potential for non-destructive knowing: “When we handle a thing, for example, our hand must fit itself to the thing . . . use itself is the summons which determines that a thing be admitted to its own essence and nature, and that the use keep to it. To use something is to let it enter into its essential nature, to keep it safe in its essence.” There is no mediation here in *Fluxus with Tools*. That is, referring to Higgins’s earlier assertion, Fluxus is not about sensations or experience, but rather is a sensation, or is an experience in itself.

Tools, in Heidegger’s sense, are “not just a things and activities,” but are also a mode of truth or a “field within which things and activities may appear as they do.”³⁵⁴ Experiences in Fluxus, to that end, are events as “temporal objects,” just as the essence of music is temporal, “event scores express the musicality (or temporality) of their everyday

³⁵² Hannah Higgins, “Food: The Raw and the Fluxed,” in *Fluxus and the Essential Questions of Life*, Jacquelynn Baas, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 20.

³⁵³ Higgins, “Food: The Raw and the Fluxed,” 20.

³⁵⁴ Don Ihde, *Heidegger’s Technologies: Postphenomenological Perspectives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 32.

materials.”³⁵⁵ Taken together, Heidegger and Higgins find the truth, which is not a universal, but rather an individual, is only revealed through engagement. This is similar to what Stiles describes as the crux of food in performance: “the ‘body that eats’ through the motions of mastication, drinking, and swallowing and the sounds of chewing, crunching, nibbling, gnawing, gulping, champing, and sipping.”³⁵⁶ It is these indeterminable bodily functions that vary from person to person, and cannot be replicated in finite detail. For example, eating Williams’s and Filliou’s *Spaghetti Sandwich* will always change as the ingredients in the sauce, the texture of the spaghetti, or even the type of bread is not specified. Cecelia Novero, in her book “Antidiets of the Avant-Garde: from Futurist Cooking to Eat Art,” explains that *Spaghetti Sandwich* is an action of multiple collaborations, where everyday ingredients come together in an unorthodox fashion – since both the artists were poor and hungry, and needed to make the less-expensive but filling food. Novero argues that what emerged from this dark period in their lives, emerged in the joy of “taken in the unexpected production and consumption of this poor but excessive food.”³⁵⁷

The variations of eating and digesting *Spaghetti Sandwich*, as Stiles writes, “the impossibility” of a participant eating, tasting, and digesting in the same way.³⁵⁸ In regards to of *Fluxus with Tools*, as Higgins and Knowles explore, the role of food in

³⁵⁵ Higgins, “Food: The Raw and the Fluxed,” 15.

³⁵⁶ Kristine Stiles, “Tuna and Other fishy Thoughts on Fluxus Events” in *Alison Knowles* (Saarbrücken: Stadt Galerie Saarbrücken, 1994), 26.

³⁵⁷ Cecelia Novero, *Antidiets of the Avant-Garde: from Futurist Cooking to Eat Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 136.

³⁵⁸ Stiles, “Tuna and Other fishy Thoughts on Fluxus Events,” 27.

Fluxus performance was, and still is, a tool for reinventing life by subverting norms of taste and domesticity, and by extension the art object. Higgins uses John Dewey to explain how relatively insignificant ways hold our attention, and the experience with food is based, as Dewey writes: “A pieces of work is finished in such a way that it is satisfactory . . . carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation.”³⁵⁹ And so in their performance a salad is tossed, oranges are handed, and spaghetti is nestled between two layers of bread, whereby such experiences “occur continuously, because the interaction of the live creature and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living.”³⁶⁰

The repetition of event scores in *Fluxus With Tools* is centered on accumulating participation, as Santone argues, a sense of duration, or sustained contact. The history of a performance’s circulation up to the new performance “must be taken into consideration, and the necessarily changed relation to its new audiences brought to bear if we are to see how these new events, despite connecting to the past, aim to produce something very new.”³⁶¹ If experience is key to the enactment of event scores, Knowles and Higgins highlight the differences perceived over each repetition of a score. This coincides with Stiles’s suggestion that Fluxus is the “the act of doing something.”³⁶²

³⁵⁹ Dewey quoted in Higgins , “Food: The Raw and the Fluxed,” 15.

³⁶⁰ Higgins, “Food: The Raw and the Fluxed,” 15.

³⁶¹ Santone, *Circulating the Event*, 217.

³⁶² Stiles, “*Tuna and Other fishy Thoughts on Fluxus Events*,” 27.

Stiles, however, laments that interest in Fluxus by institutions erode and threaten its “performative” legacy. “[C]are must be taken that Fluxus is not transformed historically,” she writes, “from a radical process and presentational art into a traditional static and representational art.” If Fluxus is intended “to go anywhere,” using Kotz’s phrase, what happens when it enters into a museum for purposes of exhibiting or archiving? Stiles questions the legitimacy of event scores and Fluxus objects to be experienced when viewer interaction is prohibited, especially when they are considered as objects of fine art and “reinvested with the materialist conditions of power.”³⁶³ Her stance is also common among other scholars who have historically situated Fluxus’s position in museums as “botched into monstrous twisted functionalism now languish, utterly abject and drained of energy, wallpapering a mausoleum and demonstrating the art gallery’s institutionally murderous commodification of creativity.”³⁶⁴

In 2009, the Museum of Modern Art in New York acquired the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, the most extensive trove of Fluxus objects to enter an American museum. According to the press release, it includes approximately three thousand items, including multiples, drawings, and sculptural objects, as well as over four thousand pieces of archival material, such as artists’ correspondence, notebooks, scrapbooks, documents, and photographs. “With this extraordinary gift, The Museum of Modern Art becomes a major center for scholarship on Fluxus art,” said Glenn Lowry, the museum’s director, “[T]hese works bring a new depth to our collection and archives, and will allow curators, artists, and academics, along with our general public, to more

³⁶³ Stiles, “*Tuna and Other fishy Thoughts on Fluxus Events*,” 27.

³⁶⁴ Stiles, “*Tuna and Other fishy Thoughts on Fluxus Events*,” 27.

fully understand the progression of avant-garde art as it relates to both the 20th century and to today.”³⁶⁵

The handling of Fluxus material is not possible in museums, not just MoMA, namely because in entering a collection it garners economic and historic value. Museums are responsible for preserving works of art from the past, ensuring that they will be made available in the indefinite future. At the time of writing this dissertation, only a small amount of the Silverman collection has been made available to research for scholars and viewing for the general public, as cataloging the collection’s vast contents has proven to be a lengthy process. To compensate for this lack of access, MoMA staff developed a series of exhibitions and performances, as well as a blog to bridge the gap between the Fluxus’s original intentions and its own archival impulse. The blog, titled “Inside/Out,” features contributions from various MoMA staff persons on issues relating to the museum’s vast collection of materials. At the time of writing this chapter, Fall 2012, only thirteen posts were related to the cataloging and exhibiting of Fluxus objects from Silverman Collection. The intention was to convey for readers a first-hand experience of handling Fluxus material, as Gretchen Wagner, then the Assistant Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books explains:

[T]his blog post initiates a series of entries that will highlight our encounters with these Fluxus artworks as they emerge from the crates, bins, and bubble wrap in which they arrived. By giving visibility to this exciting—albeit at times messy—process, we hope to provide a unique point of access to the collection that might not otherwise be available, either in the polished domain of the exhibition space or in the finely

³⁶⁵ Press release from the acquisition of the Silverman Collection, accessed August 3, 2013, http://press.moma.org/wp-content/press-archives/PRESS_RELEASE_ARCHIVE/FluxusFinalRelease.pdf.

edited catalogue. Moreover, we intend to draw attention to the irreverently revelatory accomplishments of the Fluxus artists and to their profound influence on art today.³⁶⁶

This calls to mind Amelia Jones's assertion that those wishing to access performances of the past should not feel hindered by having only experienced them through mediation, and not live. "While the experience of viewing a photograph and reading a text is clearly different from that of sitting in a small room watching an artist perform," she explains, "neither has a privileged relationship to the historical 'truth' of the performance."³⁶⁷

The MoMA blog then, if we take Jones's summation of mediation into account, is a catalyst for engagement with Fluxus material that would otherwise not be permissible to the general public. Reesa Greenberg explains that the web allows museums to create tools to foster interwoven historical perspectives, whereby it can register and transfer information about exhibitions and museums collections more efficiently than publications or educational programming.³⁶⁸ This profusion of archival materials is made available in a way that is much less formal than if they are encountered in the museum – be it in its white walls or its archival collection. As a virtual community platform, museums are continuously present, "while geographically distant exhibitions become proximate and available for scrutiny."³⁶⁹ The personalized responses found on the blog add a dynamic new dimension to how the experience of Fluxus objects is proliferated. The staff members who record their experiences with object the general public do not have access

³⁶⁶ Gretchen Wagner, "Unpacking Fluxus," *INSIDE/OUT* (June 14, 2010), accessed August 3, 2013, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/06/14/unpacking-fluxus.

³⁶⁷ See Jones, "Presence in Absentia."

³⁶⁸ Greenberg, "Remembering Exhibitions."

³⁶⁹ Greenberg, "Remembering Exhibitions."

to, are producing and disseminating knowledge are working within contemporary culture's desire for accessibility to the art object.

Gillian Young, a temporary cataloger, emphasized the ambition of blogging in recording her reactions to an object she came across shrouded in tissue and quarantined within three Ziploc bags. It was tagged with the initials "JR," belonging to James Riddle, who allegedly exhibited bottles of his urine in the Perpetual Fluxfest exhibition in 1965. "Though it should have served as a warning," she writes, her curiosity was piqued: "Did Riddle successfully sell his urine on an August day back in 1965? And did Gilbert and Lila Silverman – whose recently gifted Fluxus collection is currently the subject of an installation at MoMA – really keep it around for forty-five years?"³⁷⁰ Young did open the bag, and much to her chagrin, as she further records, "the revolting odor that escaped when I opened the first bag was proof enough that there was indeed human waste inside, and it prevented me from investigating further. I swiftly re-sealed the Ziploc."³⁷¹

Young's reaction, while comical, provides the only tangible link for MoMA visitors to experience Riddle's work. Her confirmation of a noxious odor is akin to Jones's assessment that the desire for immediacy with a work of art is "a modernist (if in this case also clearly avant-garde) dream."³⁷² In the current age of the digital and virtual reproducibility, she further explains, "such a dream must be viewed as historically

³⁷⁰ Gillian Young, "Unpacking Fluxus: An Artist's Release," *INSIDE/OUT* (2010), accessed August 3, 2013, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/06/30/unpacking-fluxus-an-artists-release.

³⁷¹ Young, "Unpacking Fluxus: An Artist's Release."

³⁷² Jones, "Presence in Abstentia."

specific rather than epistemologically secure.”³⁷³ Similarly, historian Hilde Hein suggests that the new virtual spaces of museums can act as an “avenue to information exchange unformatted by the authoritative voice of the museum.”³⁷⁴ “Virtual visitors,” she explains, “can freely rearrange their downloaded treasure and shape it into ‘collections’ of their own devising, however and in the company of whomever they like.”³⁷⁵ Within this scheme is the opportunity to strengthen the connections new audiences who may be obverse to traditional museum models, as John Gates writes that “twenty- and thirty-somethings who were getting much of their news and cultural information on-line. In the long term, these young people would eventually become sixty and seventy-year-olds with cultural capital, time, money, and even art collections.”³⁷⁶ Accordingly, blogs, as such, have the potential to build museum communities outside their physical spaces. However, this is not just about disseminating information, as Gates explains, but rather encourage active and engaged dialogue whereby viewers can comment and share entries on the blog, and feel part of a dialogue with museums and their employees.

By mid 2010, MoMA began including Fluxus objects in the galleries dedicated to painting and sculpture after World War II. Event scores and Fluxus objects were situated in chronologically proximity to Robert Rauschenberg’s assemblages and Andy Warhol’s silkscreens. Peter Reed, the museum’s senior deputy director for curatorial affairs, explains, the criticality of Fluxus’s inclusion to interpreting the development of

³⁷³ Jones, “Presence in Abstentia.”

³⁷⁴ Hilde Heine, *Public Art: Thinking Museums Differently* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 117.

³⁷⁵ Heine, *Public Art*, 117.

³⁷⁶ John Gates, “Case Study: New World Blogging within a Traditional Museum Setting,” *Museums and the Web World*, eds. J. Trant and D. Bearman (2007), accessed July 20, 2013, <http://outtacontext.com/articles/case-study-new-world-blogging-within-a-traditional-museum-setting/>.

twentieth-century art: “It is a whole sector of the 1960s and early ’70s that has not been a part of our narrative in the way American Pop Art and Minimalism has.”³⁷⁷ In one installment of the permanent collection, *Contemporary Art from the Collection*, which featured work since the late 1960s, Yoko Ono was invited to scrawl affirmations and commands throughout the exhibition. Part of her *Whisper Piece* series, the text took a poetic sensibility, from “Breathe heavily” and “Smell the summer” to “You are beautiful.”³⁷⁸ As evidenced by their poetic tone, Ono allows viewers to act on them either at the museum or at their own leisure (home, work, otherwise).

MoMA featured Fluxus material in *Thing/Thought: Fluxus Editions, 1962-1978* (on view in 2011), an exhibition of objects in the museum’s permanent collection that focused on Maciunas’s publishing and marketing programs. Reflecting the Fluxus spirit, many of the editions on display reflected mainstays of the collective, as the press release stated, “including instruction scores, film loops, audio recordings, games, puzzles, and documentation from the group’s extensive program of performance concerts.” However, well aware that the general public could not physically engage with any of these

³⁷⁷ Carol Vogel, “Fluxus art Bolster’s MoMA’s Collection,” *The New York Times* (February 13, 2009), accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/13/arts/design/13voge.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

³⁷⁸ As discussed by Jason Persee on MoMA’s blog, accessed August 22, 2013, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/07/14/from-a-whisper-to-a-scream-following-yoko-onos-instructions/. “Next up was *Whisper Piece*, a series of sixteen instructions (like “Breathe heavily,” or “Smell the summer”) and affirmations (“You are beautiful,” for example) that Ono scrawled on the walls—and, in one case, the floor—of the second-floor Contemporary Galleries. (At one point a little girl asked me what I was doing squinting into a corner of the gallery, so I told her she had to find and follow the instructions, too. You can imagine my relief when I reached the exit without encountering instructions to steal a painting.) Following what few explicit instructions there were was no problem, and being told repeatedly that I was beautiful and loved did wonders for my self-esteem. The hard part was locating all sixteen tiny whispers.”

materials, MoMA invited six artists to unpack and rearrange two Fluxkits on display in the exhibition; this included Alison Knowles, Dora Maurer, Anna Ostoya, Cory Archangel, Mieko Shiomi and William Pope.L. Their engagement with the Fluxkits was the museum's attempt at restoring the interactive and experiential nature of Fluxus material from a variety of perspectives.³⁷⁹

Shiomi, a composer and visual artist currently living in Japan, overcame her physical and geographic limitations by mailing to curators a scroll with detailed instructions for engagement with certain objects from the Fluxkit. Allison Temper, a museum staff member, wrote on that blog that, though interpreting “the lyrical arrangement of the kit’s contents appears non-hierarchical,” Shiomi’s discerning hand “adds to our understanding of the works before us.”³⁸⁰ She notes, however, that in carrying out Shiomi’s instructions, meaning “does not pop out blatantly before our eyes,” and both the viewers and staff persons “may need to linger, look, and listen a little differently. We may even need to follow the artist’s lead.”³⁸¹

Temper also recorded on the blog Polish artist Anna Ostoya’s engagement, who, “instead of unpacking the kit to create an arrangement in the display case provided in the gallery,” let loose and made a mess of the contents of the Fluxkit.³⁸² Her intention was to

³⁷⁹ Allison Temper, “Case Study: Mieko Shiomi Interprets Fluxkit,” *INSIDE/OUT* (June 14, 2010), accessed August 3, 2013, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2011/10/21/case-study-mieko-shiomi-interprets-the-fluxkit.

³⁸⁰ Temper, “Case Study: Mieko Shiomi Interprets Fluxkit.”

³⁸¹ Temper, “Case Study: Mieko Shiomi Interprets Fluxkit.”

³⁸² Allison Temper, “Case Study: Ana Ostoya Interprets Fluxkit,” *INSIDE/OUT* (June 14, 2010), accessed August 3, 2013, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2011/12/09/case-study-anna-ostoya-interprets-fluxkit

“explore the material within the broader space of the museum.”³⁸³ The blog noted that in the wake of her exploration, she left various elements on surfaces throughout the museum, including the bathroom, windowsills, and pedestals throughout the permanent collection galleries. At one point she threw dozens of event scores, replicas of Shiomi’s *Events and Games*, from the museum’s second floor atrium. Temper credits Ostoya’s actions as in line with Fluxus’s longstanding criticism of art world inhibitions, as illustrated earlier by Ono’s *Painting to be stepped on*, and contemporary political unrest, as an “evasion of the elite – and with a nod to the recent activity surrounding Zuccotti Park.”³⁸⁴ If we are to read Occupy Wall Street as a point of influence, as Temper does, then Ostoya’s actions revive and re-envision Fluxus’s anti-capitalist rhetoric to make it more relevant to the present. But more important, this reading also demonstrates how Fluxus performances, as previously noted by Higgins and Santone, are open to a profusion of interpretations, be they social, cultural, and/or political. Such interpretations - which are similar to Pope.L’s reperformance of *YARD* - are always conditioned on the their particular moment (and how they are relevant to their particular time and situation). What we see at work here is a museum requiring special programming to ensure that the performances in their collection (and performative objects/material/ephemera) are active and engaging.

³⁸³ Temper, “Case Study: Ana Ostoya Interprets Fluxkit.”

³⁸⁴ Temper, “Case Study: Ana Ostoya Interprets Fluxkit.”

Identical Lunch

“Only the sharp-eyed might have noticed something amiss at the lunch table of twelve,” art critic Randy Kennedy noted in the second-floor cafeteria of MoMA, when Alison Knowles was commissioned to reperform *Identical Lunch*.³⁸⁵ She first began eating the Identical Lunch in 1969, but did not conceive of it as a performance until her friend Philip Corner pointed out she was eating the same lunch at about the same time each day. Soon she invited friends to eat the same lunch and record their experiences. Their accounts were compiled into the *Journal of the Identical Lunch* (1971), explaining that such participation “was about having an excuse to get to talk to people, to notice everything that happened, to pay attention.”³⁸⁶ If the goal of Fluxus was to knock down fences between making art and living life, Kennedy states, “then the lunch did a pretty good job.”³⁸⁷

I took part in *Identical Lunch* on a Thursday afternoon in the MoMA’s second floor cafeteria. I sat along with the other participants at a long table with seven seats on each side – fourteen in total. The table was a misty green color with silvery specks meant to resemble a Formica countertop from the 1950s. The cafeteria was crowded, and many

³⁸⁵ Randy Kennedy, “Art at MoMA: Tuna on Wheat (Hold the Mayo)” *The New York Times* (February 2, 2011), accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/03/arts/design/03lunch.html>.

³⁸⁶ Knowles as quoted in Kennedy, “Art at MoMA.” Also See Tejal Rao, “Lunch as Performance: The Artistic Side of Tunafish,” *The Atlantic* (January 28, 2011), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2011/01/lunch-as-performance-the-artistic-side-of-tunafish/70374/>.

³⁸⁷ Kennedy, “Art at MoMA.” Kennedy also explains that “Knowles considered *Identical Lunch* a performance, whether she was doing it with friends at Riss Diner, at a museum, or all by herself on a trip in some other country.” Santone notes that *The Identical Lunch* performance had no formal conclusion: “Alison Knowles had moved on to other projects by 1973. During the project, she produced one book, several silkscreen prints, a hologram (missing) and a video (currently in an unreadable format in the Jan Herman’s personal collection). Herman described this as: “I used an Akai video camera and portable reel-to-reel recorder. It used ¼” black & white videotape.””

of the other visitors not participating in the lunch were curious as what made our dining so different. Despite a warning that the performance would begin promptly at 12:30pm, Knowles strolled in with her assistant a couple minutes late and got right down to business with show-and-tell. She pulled out of a clear plastic folder and produced a copy of her *Journal of the Identical Lunch* and a similar journal published by Philip Corner. With a big grin, from ear to ear, she showed off *The New York Times* article by Randy Kennedy on the *Identical Lunch*.³⁸⁸

Knowles made small talk with everyone, thanking them for joining. As a very gracious hostess, she wanted to know about each of her guests and why they were there with genuine curiosity. She abruptly proclaimed: “We should get started.” A young man in a suit quickly came over to take lunch orders. Everyone followed in line with Knowles: “Tuna whole wheat toast, butter, no mayo, lettuce and tomato.” The soup that day was carrot, but I opted for the buttermilk, which I have never had before. Knowles informed me that there is a cheese monger at the Essex Street market that makes it fresh. When tuna sandwiches arrived, she informed everyone that this is probably the best tuna she has ever had. It was not from a can, rather made by the chef from fresh tuna that is processed and mixed with capers and olives.

After the plates were cleared, Knowles expressed a hope that everyone still had their appetites, because there was a course of homemade cookies and treats to come. She explained that everyone brings something different to the lunch, as no enacting of the identical lunch is ever identical. While the basic ingredients remain the same, how they

³⁸⁸ My account of participating in *The Identical Lunch* was first published on *on-verge*: <http://www.on-verge.org/essays/identical-lunch-at-the-museum-of-modern-art/>.

are prepared always varies. But before dessert could be served, Knowles went behind the food counter to where the chefs were hurriedly preparing meals for the entire cafeteria. With everyone watching she put a tuna sandwich in a blender with some buttermilk, this was how Maciunas ate the sandwich. After a few minutes the mixture was poured into paper cups. She made sure everyone got one, much to some participant's chagrin

In relation to Turner's liminoid cultural phenomena, *The Identical Lunch* "privileged the unregistered space of daily experience" and "those colonized by institutional control."³⁸⁹ Eating the tuna sandwich does not offer spiritual transcendence, but rather it promises to be nothing more than a tuna sandwich. This is evident as the performances focuses on the eating and digesting of an otherwise ordinary meal, so much so that Stiles locates the crux of the performance in the "body that eats," through the motions of mastication, drinking, and swallowing and the sounds of chewing, crunching, nibbling, gnawing, gulping, champing, and sipping.³⁹⁰ Hannah Higgins also stresses this point when describing that "this identical lunch is not identical at all" as it varies by time, locale, and taste. The lunch is wholly new in each enactment.³⁹¹

The sensorial experience of the performance is not limited but opened to a field of indeterminable possibilities, which Julia Robinson highlights in her extensive survey of Knowles's work. She considers these conditions of indeterminacy and highlights several of her other scores where chance is a condition of the performance. In *Shoes of Your Choice*, Knowles asks audience members to use their shoes as a catalyst for conversation

³⁸⁹ Robinson, "The Sculpture of Indeterminacy," 106.

³⁹⁰ Stiles, "Tuna and Other fishy Thoughts on Fluxus Events," 26.

³⁹¹ Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 139.

on shoes and life: “Unlike the consumer items that appear as painting or sculpture in Pop art, for example, the shoes Knowles represents do not parrot reified object relations. They are neither the simulacra of the show window (echoed in art) nor the unilateral view of an object from the mind of the artist.”³⁹² The shoes are, according to Robinson, defined and redefined according to the peculiarities of each successive account and, as such, it is these personal accounts that structure the performative time and space. She describes *Shoes of Your Choice* is an “indeterminate composition” as it involves an everyday object/action, but the exact form and duration “can never be known until each performance is complete.”³⁹³ By having audience members tell their stories, and constructing a space for such stories to exist, the shoes take shape in unfolding time, as they are being performed into being, as Robinson explains, and continually experienced and re-experienced in each successive performing of the score.³⁹⁴

In applying Robinson discussion of performing mundane occurrences and things into being, it is important to look at *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, first published in 1971.³⁹⁵ The small book is a compilation of Knowles’s experiences eating the lunch, as well as accounts of her friends and colleagues. This “interpersonal and variable experience” as Higgins describes, brings “the performer into contact with mass imagery and (paradoxically) with the private ritual of eating the relatively unchanging lunch.”³⁹⁶

³⁹² Robinson, “The Sculpture of Indeterminacy,” 99.

³⁹³ Robinson, “The Sculpture of Indeterminacy,” 99.

³⁹⁴ Robinson, “The Sculpture of Indeterminacy.”

³⁹⁵ Alison Knowles, *Journal of the Identical Lunch* (San Francisco: Nova Broadcast Press, 1971).

³⁹⁶ Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 46.

The journal humorously opens with a quote from Corner's Aunt Gertie: "What's there to write about, it's just a lousy tuna fish sandwich." Her candid commentary sets the tone for playful way others would treat their eating of the lunch. Lynn Lonidier, in a short submission, records being marred with casual observations of the restaurant and not so much on the taste of the lunch: "I'm aware of the wrinkled flesh puckering from the waitress's arms there doesn't seem to be any hair on them." This interest in other things than the lunch is evidenced by Jim Maya: "The identical food demands little or no thought: The surrounding activities take all your thought." What Lonidier and Maya suggest is that the eating of the lunch should not be taken out of its everyday context.³⁹⁷

On the facing page to Lonidier's contribution is Ken Werner's account, which is noted only by his receipt from Riss Foods (a diner). His order is not written out, but rather alluded to by the price of \$0.75 scrawled across the right hand side, confirming the lunch by a record of payment. Dick Higgins, Knowles's husband at the time, on the hand, goes on at length to record his eating of the lunch, as almost in scientific detail – just the facts. He details the sensorial experience with accuracy: "[the tuna] had been pulped and mashed into something viscous, like melted ice cream." Further referring to himself in the third person he humorously details the digesting of the sandwich: "Suspect appeared neither to enjoy nor not to enjoy his coffee. This appeared to be used as a means of downing the tuna."³⁹⁸

³⁹⁷ I find that this most evident in Knowles's account, dated "June 25," three days before the Stonewall Riots, which would change the course of gay and lesbian history: "Post headlines read, 'Garland Funeral Here.'"

³⁹⁸ A group outing of nine friends and acquaintances of Knowles who went to Riss Foods together to eat an identical lunch compliments these individual experiences. Giving each of them an opportunity to experience the lunch as a collective she describes their activity in a matter-of-fact fashion, and describes the

Knowles's own account in the journal, nineteen pages in total, reads as a play. The first page is a cast of characters – those whom she encountered while eating at Riss. For example, she refers to herself as “N”; “P” is for Pauline, the head waitress; “C” refers to an anonymous counter person she sees regularly; and “L” is for the Greek counterman turned cook. The first entry models the structure of the proceeding notations:

Apr. 2—N nods, P, ‘Same?’, N nods.—.80+tip

Apr. 3—N nods, P smiles, nods.—.80+tip

Each of her entries illustrate how unfeasible it is to have the lunch in exactly the same way twice (even if eating it at the same location at about the same time each day) – sometimes the mayo was runny, or there was no buttermilk, or the tuna tasted too fishy. An entry of particular interest is the description of how she is disturbed that there is no lettuce on her sandwich: “She so enjoys the way the butter, which is always placed on the side with the lettuce, near the tuna side, melts into the lettuce, forming a warm, crisp and buttery unit against the tangy.”³⁹⁹

end of the lunch plainly: “This lunch is finished. On motorcycles, subways and on foot, in couples and walking singly, these lunches separate after 2 p.m.”

³⁹⁹ A fuller discussion of this can be found in Santone's “Circulating the Event,” 92-136. There is no accounting for this third person commentary. Santone argues that the third-person voice gives us the sense that “Knowles is studying her performance with a scientific objectivity, while managing the intrusion of feelings and private thoughts to some extent.” Santone, “Circulating the Event,” 99. We can find some continuity in this disconnect between herself and her performing self with Philip Corner's own *Journal of the Identical Lunch*, as Stiles writes: “He recalls the conditions that “Mrs. Higgins” established for his performance, notes his deviation from her instructions (he substituted rye toast for whole wheat), and promises that “When I eat with Miss Knowles, I will revert to the whole wheat.” Corner is preoccupied with identifying the artist by her married name and her maiden name, and so establishes the gender and social relations implicit in his “identical lunch”: it assumes that intonation of a sexual encounter since it is “Mrs Higgins” who gives the instructions but “Miss Knowles” with whom Corner will “eat.” Stiles, “Tuna and Other fishy Thoughts on Fluxus Events,” 28. The observations in Corner's journal are much more meticulous than that of Knowles. He records not just what he ate for both breakfast and lunch, how it was served, tasted, and digest, but also the events that lead up to and preceded the meals.

The documentary quality of Knowles's journal entries is complimented by a series of photographic prints, first produced in 1973, which are silkscreened on orange canvases. Hannah Higgins refers to the photographs as graphics, as they are not straight images and include the name of the participant and the logo of Star-Kist canned tuna fish.⁴⁰⁰ The photographs were taken at a Fluxus New Year's celebration organized by George Maciunas:

I did my Identical Lunch. I put up shower curtains that would fit just one person sitting and me with a toaster and the ingredients. [. . .] and I would make a lunch for them, standing there while they ate it. No one outside of the curtains could watch them. I don't know what I had in mind, but I guess I wanted to isolate them while they were eating and we talked. After, I took Polaroids and made silkscreens of them.^{401 402}

Just like the accounts in the journal, the photographs reveal something of each of the eaters. I saw several of these on view at MoMA after eating *The Identical Lunch*, which included that of Shigeko Kubota, Ay-0, and George Maciunas (the three I have seen in person). Kubota turns her body away from the table to lovingly gaze at the camera, smiling innocently as she appears delighted by the lunch. The photograph of artist Ay-0 is closely cropped with no indication of a lunch, but a small smirk indicates his pleasure. The most notable of these photographs depicts a well-dressed Maciunas in a button down shirt, cufflinks, and vest. Photographed mid-bite, he is fully engrossed in eating the

⁴⁰⁰ Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 138.

⁴⁰¹ From my interview with Knowles, it was published: "Sandwiches, Silkscreens, Swatches, and Scores: A Conversation with Alison Knowles," *Afterimage* 38.5 (May 2011): <http://www.readperiodicals.com/201103/2442068881.html>.

⁴⁰² Santone explains this as a diner like setting: "The makeshift diner atmosphere Knowles created for this performance crucially focused on conversation, providing an occasion for participants to "talk to me about whatever." See Santone, "Circulating the Event," 102.

sandwich. These photographs testify that the identical lunch varies by place, time and, perhaps most importantly, person.⁴⁰³

I asked Knowles about these images, and the relationship between the many states of *The Identical Lunch*. She explained that she wants participants to take lunch and do it in many ways: “It looks different when you see the prints, but that is only one take on it. I am delighted when I get a letter from someone who is doing the lunch somewhere and I’m given an account. That is my greatest pleasure: when someone takes the piece and does it in their own context. I loved doing the silkscreens.”⁴⁰⁴ The photographs are betwixt and between an existence as documentation and as a work of art. On a fundamental level these photographs are like all photographs as they are icons “which bears an indexical relationship to its object.”⁴⁰⁵

It is important to note briefly that addition of the Starkist tuna logo on the silkscreen prints as other scholars have, including Hannah Higgins and Santone. Knowles explains that corporate sponsorship of the project was withdrawn when it was determined she might be a spy for their competitor, Bumblebee.^{406 407} With the inclusion of this logo,

⁴⁰³ Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 139. This idea of never being the same is emphasized throughout the work of many scholars, including Higgins, Robinson, Stiles, and Santone.

⁴⁰⁴ Weil, “Sandwiches, Silkscreens, Swatches, and Scores.”

⁴⁰⁵ Rosalind Krauss “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America” *October* Vol. 3 (Spring 1977), 75.

⁴⁰⁶ Knowles in interview with author.

⁴⁰⁷ Art historically, by this time in the early 1970s, the use of corporate labels in art had been popularized by Andy Warhol’s silk-screening of various consumer brands, including Campbell’s, Brillo, Coca Cola, and Heinz. An even earlier precedent was Claes Oldenburg’s “The Store,” (1961), where he sold objects modeled on common pieces of everyday items - kitchen utensils, food, clothing – constructed in plaster and wire and messily painted in a style akin to Pollock. See Steven Stern, “Taking Stock,” *Frieze Online* (2013), accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/taking_stock/. They were sold at reasonable prices; a big sandwich went for only \$149.98 “ You could buy a relief of a rumpled girdle for

Santone has identified *The Identical Lunch* as a “Pop performance,” since Knowles’s “attention to material consumption and its economic value as for her use of the iconography of American Pop in the 1960s.” While it is true that the performance and the silkscreens produced from them are based on an everyday thing, in this case a tuna fish sandwich, however conflating such work with Pop Art from the period undermines the overall intentions of Fluxus production. When parodying consumer culture, as Benjamin Buchloh explains, Pop Art suggested a universal experience, whereas Fluxus, through repetition and “mechanistic forms,” intended to contain, resuscitate, and articulate “the individual subject’s limited capacity to recognize the collectively prevailing conditions of ‘experience.’”⁴⁰⁸ As in the case of *The Identical Lunch*, as Buchloh further emphasizes: “Fluxus artists gave a dialectical answer to Pop Art’s inherent traditionalism and its implicit aestheticization of reification by dissolving both the artistic genre’s and the readymade object’s centrality.”⁴⁰⁹ That is, in engaging with the capitalist systems that control and proliferate everyday consumer life, Fluxus, especially as they centered their

\$249.95, a Big Sandwich (1961) for \$149.98; the 9.99 (1961) hanging in the front window went for \$399.95.”

⁴⁰⁸ Benjamin H. D. Buchloh’s discussion here was brought to my attention by Robinson: Buchloh, “1962” (Fluxus chapter), in Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin Buchloh, *Art Since 1900*, Vol. 2 (New York and London, Thames & Hudson, 2004) 499. Robinson also discusses this dichotomy: “If Pop Art turned commodity culture into “art” – “representing” it as painting or sculpture – Maciunas used impressive and exuberant design to generate “anti-commodities.” He continued calling for ideas, games and scores from the Fluxus artists, which he then “packaged” and “marketed” under the collectivist authorship of “Fluxus.” She also quotes Jonas Mekas in this discussion: “Jonas Mekas makes a connection between Fluxus and Pop Art, stating that: “Pop art took a look at the daily banality too – but it seemed to embrace it – Fluxus brought it into critical awareness – in that sense Fluxus is political art.”” Thank you to Robinson for directing my attention to this conversation. . The references to Buchloh here are indebted to Robinson, see Julia Robinson’s untitled essay for Stendhal Gallery (2007), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://stendhalgallery.com/?p=2011>.

⁴⁰⁹ Buchloh, “1962,” 499. Buchloh further explains that the public acts prompted by Fluxus scores and objects were intended to reintegrate the object of art within the “flow of consciously performed everyday activities[. . .] Insisting on the universal accessibility of artistic objects across geopolitical and class boundaries.”

scores and objects on bodily experiences, was much more interested in the gestures, feelings, and emotions of individuals when taking part in these capitalist systems.

Knowles also explains that the difference between her printmaking process and that of artists like Warhol, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, was that theirs circulated easily and freely in galleries and the art market. In discussing the works of Rauschenberg: “[He] would go to a studio and point out what he wanted in a very hands-off approach. That is fine too. I had no access to an art world that would fund or promote me. I didn't have a gallery. I was out there alone.”⁴¹⁰ When she speaks of accesses here it one of monetary rewards fostered by gallery representation, collectors, and museums that provide opportunity to create at will without financial worry. However, when interviewing her, there was no sense of chagrin or jealousy, but rather a matter-of-fact approach to the subtle, yet enormously opposing discrepancies between Pop Art and Fluxus practices. Knowles now delights in the acceptance of Fluxus in museums, which is evidenced when discussing *The Identical Lunch* and what institutionalization of it might mean: “You would never see performances at MoMA ten years ago. Now they have a good, functioning library and performances there with three or four curators for each performance. It is huge. I need to have an electric blender for *The Identical Lunch*, and I have a choice of who I can call to get one!”⁴¹¹

The documentation of *The Identical Lunch*, in both photographs and journal accounts, serve to emphasize that such experiences are only possible when eating the lunch. They are a call to arms, as scholars I referenced here have suggested, for viewers

⁴¹⁰ Knowles quoted in interview “Sandwiches, silkscreens, swatches, and scores.”

⁴¹¹ Knowles quoted in interview “Sandwiches, silkscreens, swatches, and scores.”

to eat the lunch for themselves, in our own space and in our own time. When discussing *Shoes of Your Choice*, Knowles wrote: “As we know, time spent on shoes is never wasted.”⁴¹² In using shoes and a tuna sandwich – as well as a salad, beans, and soup - she emphasizes that time and the experience with everyday items and occurrences should not be taken for granted. And so we may find eating a tuna fish sandwich on wheat toast with lettuce and butter, no mayo, and a glass of buttermilk, or a cup of soup, as oddly familiar, but yet, after careful observation, discover it to be something completely new, completely different.

⁴¹² Knowles as quoted in Robinson, “The Sculpture of Indeterminacy.”

Chapter Four

Marina Abramovic: Reperforming Body Art⁴¹³

In the previous two chapters, I highlighted how reperformance provides the necessary historical hindsight to assess and experience performances of the past, and way such hindsight is encountered in museums and the art historical canon. In this chapter, my third and last case study, I will consider Marina Abramovic's *Seven Easy Pieces*. For seven hours on seven consecutive days, she reperformed six performances that are now considered seminal in the art historical canon: Bruce Nauman's *Body Pressure* (1974); Vito Acconci's *Seedbed*, (1972); Valie Export's *Action Pants: Genital Panic*, (1969); Gina Pane's *The Conditioning, First Action of Self-Portrait(s)*, (1973); Joseph Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, (1965); Marina Abramovic's *Lips of Thomas*, (1975); and on the seventh day performed a new piece, *Entering the Other Side*. The project touted itself, in its press release and various other announcements, as one of the first institutionally sponsored reperformance programs by a major museum, premised on examining the possibilities of documenting, exhibiting, and archiving an art form "that is, by nature, ephemeral."⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³ A portion of this chapter, namely where I address the material found in the Guggenheim's archives in relation to reperforming Export and Beuys, is derived from my Masters Thesis. While I have added a good deal of information to address the larger context of reperformance, especially its relationship to museums, it is important to note my earlier work within this topic.

⁴¹⁴ Press release for *Seven Easy Pieces*, <http://pastexhibitions.guggenheim.org/abramovic/>, accessed June 6, 2013. The trouble with the reperformances proposed by Abramovic, however, as Schneider rightfully explains, "is that viewers could easily believe that what they are witnessing in the present is not by way of the past, that it is wholly new without being part of a larger lineage of a performance that is being actively recreated or reinterpreted."

Abramović stressed that in order to grant dignity to the reperformances the original artist must give permission, and establish a model for others to follow.⁴¹⁵ In a 2005 proposal, she explains the necessity of such a rubric:

I want to repeat these pieces with dignity, with official permission from the artists. I want to pay the artists for their permission. I want to show the original materials, and I want to make my own version. I also want to have a round-table discussion with the younger generation of performance artists. . . . I really believe the future of art is not with the object, but between the artist and the public.

In using the word “dignity,” *Seven Easy Pieces* becomes an ethical battle, where war is raged against artists who reperform the work of others without permission. Abramović insists that reperformance be morally guided: “[T]o me the idea is that performance has to live. If it doesn’t live, it dies. And then it has to have the conditions on how to live.”⁴¹⁶ James Westcott, Abramović’s biographer and former assistant, describes this her stance as “soldier-like,” especially as she feels a persistent desire to enshrine “performance art in the story of art in the twentieth century, where it rightly belonged.”⁴¹⁷ He records that, to her dismay, when the Museum of Modern Art in New York reopened in 2004, no videos, photographs, or ephemeral material of performance art were on display. The institutionalization of performance art, its longevity, faced two major problems at this time: (1) many performance artists from the 1960s and 1970s were no longer practicing performance, having long abandoned it in favor of other creative outlets (leading many to conceive of performance as “just a phase in their career”); (2) a choir of critics, scholars,

⁴¹⁵ From the Guggenheim’s archive: “(1) Ask the artists for permission (2) Pay the artists a fee (3) Perform a new interpretation of the original work (4) Exhibit the original material: photographs, video, relic, and etc. and (5) Exhibit materials documenting the new interpretation of the work.”

⁴¹⁶ Abramović quoted in Chris Thompson and Katarina Weslien, “Pure Raw: Performance, Pedagogy and (Re)presentation,” *Performance Art Journal* 28.1 (2005), 50.

⁴¹⁷ James Westcott, *When Marina Abramovic Dies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 87.

and artists have argued that reperformance threatens performance art's renegade status.⁴¹⁸

Art critic Randy Kennedy is one of them; he described reperformance as a complicated terrain that must be crossed in search of authenticity. "The idea of replaying pieces," he explains, "as if from an orchestral score has usually been seen, if at all, as heresy."⁴¹⁹ His evoking of heresy here conforms to traditional reading – a la Peggy Phelan – that performances are limited to a singular, ontological existence.

Art critic Roberta Smith, however, is more hopeful in her assessment of *Seven Easy Pieces*, discussing it as promoting accessibility of the past in the present: "While they [early performances] can never be completely recreated, they can be pulled into the present, stripped of some of their mysteries and returned to living art."⁴²⁰ Abramovic's own response, documented in various articles and interviews, is that reperformance is "the new concept, the new idea" critical to exhibition practices of conceptual art, otherwise, without it, performance "will be dead as an art form."⁴²¹ Also, it important to

⁴¹⁸ Westcott, *When Marina Abramovic Dies*, 287.

⁴¹⁹ Randy Kennedy, "Self-Mutilation is the Sincerest Form of Flattery," *The New York Times* (November 6, 2005), accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/06/arts/design/06kenn.html?_r=1&scp=5&sq=randy+kennedy+mutilation&st=nyt&oref=slogin.

⁴²⁰ Roberta Smith, "Turning Back the Clock to the Days of Crotchless Pants and a Deceased Rabbit," *The New York Times* (November 17, 2005), accessed July 20, 2013. <http://theater2.nytimes.com/2005/11/17/arts/design/17abra.html?scp=1&sq=roberta+smith+abramovic&st=nyt>.

⁴²¹ Artist Joan Jonas questioned such motivations: "There's never a way that you could repeat the original thing; it just can't be done, so you have to think, 'How am I going to deal with it if I'm going to show something of that moment?'" Abramovic, however, has dismissed such claims, as well as expressing a general frustration with how performances from the 1960s and 1970s are being reperfomed without permission or context. She described herself as being fed up with young critics who evaluate the performances of young artists as if they are the original, and not reperformances of someone else's work. See Carol Kino, "A Rebel Form Gains Favor. Fights Ensue.," *The New York Times* (March 10, 2010), accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/14/arts/design/14performance.html?pagewanted=1&_r=0&ref=marinaabramovic.

note, that Abramovic chose performances that she never attended; her knowledge of them came largely from testimonials and/or photographic and filmic documentation.⁴²² This lack of participation, however, does not mean an inability to engage with such work, as Amelia Jones explains in regards to her own relationship to performances from the past: “[T]he problems raised by my absence (my not having been there) are largely logistical rather than ethical or hermeneutic.”⁴²³ With this in mind, I will consider how reperformances are a form of ritual repetition that seek to resurrect the past in the present through my first hand viewing/experiencing of *Seven Easy Pieces*, and research in the Guggenheim’s archives. Ultimately, I conclude, as Jessica Santone does, that Abramovic created a “living archive,” one that served emphasis that performances never disappear (think of Phelan’s stance here), but rather can be continually called into presence (being or existence) and made available to form new memories or new experiences.⁴²⁴

Reperforming for and with the Archive

In the first incarnation of *Lips of Thomas*, Abramovic lay naked on a block of ice with a space heater positioned directly above her. Minutes before, she carved a pentagram

⁴²² As pointed out by Johanna Burton in “Repeat Performance” *Artforum International* (January, 2006), accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Repeat+performance%3A+Johanna+Burton+on+Marina+Abramovic's+Seven+Easy...-a0141095855>.

⁴²³ Jones, “Presence in Absentia,” 11.

⁴²⁴ Jessica Santone, “Marina Abramović’s Seven Easy Pieces: Critical Documentation Strategies for Preserving Art’s History,” *Leonardo* 41.2 (1 2008), 150. There is much affinity here with what Schneider describes as a need for the “stockpiling of recorded speech, image, gesture, the establishment of ‘oral archives,’ and the collection of ‘ethnotexts,’” and “the recuperation of lost histories.” Also Inke Arns explains as a contemporary confrontation of feeling insecure “about the meaning of images by using a paradoxical approach: through erasing distance to the images and at the same time distancing itself from the images. See Inke Arns, “History Will Repeat Itself.”

into her abdomen using a common household razor and whipped herself with a riding crop. It was reported that while lying on the block of ice, she began to freeze and became noticeably uncomfortable. After a half hour audience members were so concerned with her wellbeing that they quickly moved her, subsequently ending the performance.

Abramovic's, as Marla Carlson explains by way of Kathy O'Dell, requires the participation of others who are not always "performers" or "artists, so much so that she pushes "the relation between performer and spectator into the foreground."⁴²⁵

Body Art's success relies on its ability to be seen, or as Jones explains, it is an interrogation of "not only the politics of visibility, but also the inevitably eroticized exchange of interpretation."⁴²⁶ That is, the performing body is "never completely legible or fixed in its effects," but rather in a constant desire for visibility.⁴²⁷ It is the audience, whose voyeuristic inclination to see the artist's performing body, creates the liminal space that the artist's body inhibits.⁴²⁸ Abramovic discusses this concern for viewership:

I was never interested in shocking. What I was interested in was experiencing the physical and mental limits of the human body and mind. I wanted to experience those limits together with the public. I could never do this alone. I always need the public to look at me because [this] creates an energy dialogue. You can get an enormous amount of energy from the public to cross our physical and mental limits.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁵ O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin*, 2. See Marla Carlson, "Whipping up community. Reworking the Medieval passion play, from Ron Athey to Mel Gibson," *RENAISSANCE DU THÉÂTRE MÉDIÉVAL* (2009), accessed August 13, <http://sitm2007.vjf.cnrs.fr/pdf/s7-carlson.pdf>.

⁴²⁶ Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, 23.

⁴²⁷ Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, 34.

⁴²⁸ See Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*.

⁴²⁹ Marina Abramovic, *Marina Abramovic* (Stuttgart: Nationalgalerie Berlin, 1993), 29.

Without an audience, without someone to see (witness/experience/observe) Body Art performances cannot exist. A painting can go into storage and still exist, but a work of performance art requires viewership, a dialogue of sorts between the artist and the viewer. We could read such a desire for viewership as narcissistic, as psychologist Arnold M. Cooper explains that narcissists “depend on others to validate” their self-esteem, as they “cannot live without an admiring audience.”⁴³⁰ The individuality that the narcissist projects, he further suggests, through their freedom from social and cultural constraints, is merely a thin veneer that protects deep-seated insecurities. To keep this veneer intact narcissists must be able to see and experience their grandiose selves reflected in the attention of others, they want to be seen for what they can do, what they can achieve.

In this desire to be recognized, Abramovic reperformed *Lips of Thomas* on the sixth night of *Seven Easy Pieces*. She was well aware, as Milena Tomic explains, of the need to repeat her work in light of the democratizing pretensions of early performance. Tomic frames her analysis of this performance by way of ritual, one that is in “opposition to readings of performance art that privilege terms such as liminality, ritual, presence, and transformation, aligning key moments in the history of body art with analyses of how the re-performances function individually. While the reenactments in question are closer to reinterpretations, repetition will be defined in the Deleuzean sense, as difference outside of a concept or identity.” As many of Abramovic’s work were being reperformed by others for over four-decades, there was a growing need to control of her performances and reperform them for herself: “To sit and do nothing while her works were being

⁴³⁰ Arnold Cooper, *The Quiet Revolution in American Psychoanalysis: Selected Papers of Arnold M. Cooper* (Routledge: London, 2004), 125.

recuperated would have been intolerable, yet to forbid their reenactment would have been inconsistent with their ethos.”⁴³¹

For the reperformance of *Lips of Thomas*, Abramovic added several new elements, this included donning a series of partisan symbols and repeatedly played a recording of the Russian song *Slavic Souls*. This addition, Tomic describes, “adds a more nuanced biographic sketch,” which elicited connections from curators and critics to the artist’s upbringing in Communist Yugoslavia.⁴³² That is, in reperforming, she added to the performance’s social and cultural dimensions, so much so that its reading becomes dependent on the historical context of the items used, as well as the artist’s own experience. Benjamin Powell also tries to explain this inclusion, suggesting that “alongside the host of historical changes and alterations to her body, the history of the place where she was born also changed and altered from when she originally performed the piece.” That is, the artist (physically and mentally), her childhood home of Yugoslavia, and the performance itself (*Lips of Thomas*), are “constantly evolving over time.”⁴³³ On a sentimental level, Powell finds that Abramovic is demonstrating here the importance of “what you see in a performance,” “is what you don’t see but is there nonetheless.” Accordingly, I find that this supplement is deliberate attempt by Abramovic to deny viewers any sort of expectation of what they might see transpire – akin to Kaprow’s notion of reinvention. But, I am also inclined, as Powell is, to view this as part

⁴³¹ Milena Tomic, *Rituals and Repetitions: The Displacement of Context in Marina Abramovic’s Seven Easy Pieces*, Masters Thesis, The University of British Columbia (2008), accessed July 20, 2013, PIE https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/2489/ubc_2008_fall_tomic_milena.pdf?sequence=1.

⁴³² Tomic, *Rituals and Repetitions*, 34.

⁴³³ Benjamin Daniel Powell, “Processes and/of Performance: Difference, Memory and Experimentation,” PhD dissertation, Louisiana State University, 2008. 176.

of the artist's own experience of the performance, as she is now older and at enough of a historical hindsight to reassess its meaning for her personal and artistic needs. While audiences are still able to see her body as it wriggles in pain, just as they can in the photographic documentation of earlier incarnations, however, what they see now is a unique experience - one whose meaning is continually shifting (altering/changing/evolving).⁴³⁴

This altering of the performance is in keeping with the overall intention of *Seven Easy Pieces*, which, as Abramovic explained, was to advocate for the creation of new documentation to “fill the gaps and holes in memories and testimonies.”⁴³⁵ Notice the words that she uses here - gaps and holes – and how it is akin to Phelan who also used them to counter the logic of performance documentation. Instead, Abramovic, wants to fill the hole and gaps with documentation, and so she hired Babette Mangolte who became famous for documenting much of the downtown New York art scene in the late '60s and throughout the '70s, to film and photograph, alongside a team of other cinematographers, all of the performances for *Seven Easy Pieces*. However, this documentation was not an attempt to trump any surviving documentation from when the performances first appeared, but rather coexist in and expand a given performance's archive. This was further emphasized, as Wescott explains, that Abramovic drew up a

⁴³⁴ See Powell, “Processes and/of Performance.”

⁴³⁵ Press release for *Seven Easy Pieces*.

contract that stated that there would be no reproductions of images from her reperformances.⁴³⁶

In hiring Mangolte, Johanna Burton claims, Abramovic wanted to avoid “repeating the mistakes of the ’70s” in failing to attend to such details.⁴³⁷ But what, then, as Burton queries, “is to be made of performance based on images of that which has already disappeared, that which is in fact defined by its very disappearance?” As well as, “how do we consider the function of representation-based performance (an ostensible oxymoron) within the confines of one of the foremost cultural institutions in the world?”⁴³⁸ In her answer, she evokes Phelan: “It was as if she meant to test (even while reaffirming) Phelan's assertion that ‘performance cannot be saved.’” Abramovic dispels that is taking control, and providing such salvation. I think what Burton is trying to get at is the conditions on which such documentation will eventually enter into a museum’s archive, as well as the art historical canon, which is more a question of how documentation of subsequent reperformances factor into the archive of existing documentation.⁴³⁹ The answers are not simple, and are, using Schneider’s word, knotty. However, documentation, in all its forms, alongside reperformances, provides a site for performances to live on in, as well as material for which it can be cited. Granted, this

⁴³⁶ Westcott, *When Marina Abramovic Dies*, 292. The only exception would be in the subsequent catalogue, published in 2006, and a film.

⁴³⁷ Burton, “Repeat Performance.”

⁴³⁸ Burton, “Repeat Performance.” She furthers states that this question was on the lips of many during the run of *Seven Easy Pieces*, as it “points to the complicated--and here unanswered--question of how yesterday's "alternative" practices find themselves cast as today's main event.”

⁴³⁹ See Powell, “Processes and/of Performance,” who also tries to expand on Burton’s questions to consider the relationship of documentation to not just liveness, but reality, and access to that reality in archives and institutions.

citation may be complex the more a performance is reperformed, nevertheless, it adds necessary links in a long chain of experiences.⁴⁴⁰

Hal Foster, in his essay “An Archival Impulse,” describes the art derived from the archive “not only draws on informal archives but produces them as well, and does so in a way that underscores the nature of all archival materials as found yet constructed, factual yet fictive, public yet private.”⁴⁴¹ If we read documentation within this lens of an archival impulse, Mangolte’s involvement in *Seven Easy Pieces*, functions to reflect on the historical situation of performance art, knowing that Abramovic’s reperformances in 2005 will one day be as distant as those performed in the 60s and 70s. Consider that Mangolte’s films of the reperformances were available for viewing during and after the project’s completion on seven television screens in a corner of the Guggenheim’s rotunda. As the week of reperformances progressed, the previous night’s performance would be available for previewing during the museum’s hours of operation, and Abramovic’s reperformances. Viewers were simultaneously in the presence of a live reperformance while watching documentation of another reperformance. On the day the project was completed, all seven screens played a performance from each day of the project in continual loops.

The reliance here on immediate play-back is best understood in what Auslander describes as the inclusion of media-derived techniques into the context of live

⁴⁴⁰ Burton, “Repeat Performance.” There is reference here to Peggy Phelan, as Burton explains the filming of *Seven Easy Pieces*: “[It] was itself a performance, with Babette Mangolte deftly choreographing a fleet of cameras and crew. . . . It was as if she meant to test (even while reaffirming) Phelan’s assertion that ‘performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations.’”

⁴⁴¹ Hal Foster as quoted by Santone. See “An Archival Impulse,” *October* 110 (2004), 5.

performance: “Whereas film was once experienced as evanescence, it is now experienced as repetition.”⁴⁴² Films and television shows are now easily accessible and can be purchased, shared, downloaded or pirated via Internet-based media. By considering Auslander’s conception of liveness, the filmic documentation for *Seven Easy Pieces* can be seen as reflecting the inevitable pressures that institutionalization requires. The perceptual experience of the live performance attempts to align with that of the mediatized, and is what Schneider addresses as the rationalizing of capitalism’s appropriation of transgression and reproduction into fashionable chic culture.⁴⁴³

Abramović describes the tendencies of a new (and younger) generation of performance artists to use the rhetoric of performance from the 60s and 70s. “Now, fashion and the media take more elements from performance,” she explains; “if you look at MTV, it’s full of images from the ’70s performances. It’s amazing. It’s recycled and put in a different context.”⁴⁴⁴ Westcott describes a specific occasion where Abramović’s work was recreated without permission: “In 1998 fashion photographer Steven Meisel had re-created images from *Relation in Space* for the cover of *Vogue Italia*. . . . Marina was incensed that Meisel had so brazenly copied her and Ulay’s aesthetic without attribution, an indication of the original context, or even a thank-you.”⁴⁴⁵ In providing the example of *MTV* and *Vogue*, she asserts the nostalgia that Auslander theorizes as being integral to postmodern cultural markets. That is, as technologies become more accessible and

⁴⁴² Auslander, *Liveness*, 33.

⁴⁴³ Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, 3.

⁴⁴⁴ Abramović quoted in Janet Kaplan, “Deeper and Deeper: An interview with Marina Abramović,” *Art Journal* 58.2 (1999), 13.

⁴⁴⁵ James Westcott, *When Marina Abramović Dies* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 291.

dependable in fulfilling museums' desire for cultural value, photographic and filmic documentation have become institutionalized into the process of art making itself.

While *Seven Easy Pieces* attempted to make accessible a full range of experiences of a performance, art historian Richard Blackson describes the relationship between live art and its reperformance as “cannibalistic.”⁴⁴⁶ The loose translations of Abramović's reperformances, he explains, “raises important questions about the possibilities for and acceptance of reenactments that intentionally differ from their sources.”⁴⁴⁷ Rather than a “repetitive struggle of maintaining appearances,” as Blackson explains, where the present continually consumes the past in an effort to control and completely understand it, reperformance “is a creative act, and no definition of the genre should omit this element of artistic inspiration.”⁴⁴⁸ He is not entirely wrong in this assessment, especially as a reperformance that attempts re-creation in finite detail would find itself labeled as lacking feeling, emotions, or expression. In going through the archive of correspondence between Abramović and various individuals at the Guggenheim, the logistical differences in the reperformances from their sources became a major source of contention.

This contention is evident in the most documented reperformance from *Seven Easy Pieces* is Valie Export's *Action Pants*. Mechtild Widrich's essay, “Can Photographs Make It So? Repeated Outbreaks of Valie Export's Genital Panic since 1969,” questions how scholars and curators “link textual or verbal descriptions of the event, which often circulate in conflicting versions, with the few documentary images or films that

⁴⁴⁶ Blackson, “Once More with Feeling,” 38.

⁴⁴⁷ Blackson, “Once More with Feeling,” 38.

⁴⁴⁸ Blackson, “Once More with Feeling,” 38.

remain.”⁴⁴⁹ In the original performance, where details of what exactly happened are uncertain, Export records that she went to a pornographic movie theater in Munich carrying a gun and dressed in a sweater and pants with the crotch cut, exposing her genitalia.⁴⁵⁰ She asked the audience to “do anything they wanted to it.” However, in 1979, and 2007, as Widrich explains, Export later denied details of the performance, explaining that she neither went to a pornographic theater nor was carrying a gun.⁴⁵¹ Unfortunately, there is neither any surviving photographic nor filmic documentation of Export’s performance when it actually took place. It has only gained cultural legitimacy through a series of photographs taken a year after the performance for a poster series. These images, showing the artist with wildly teased hair holding a gun, are best described as *performative photographs*, as discussed by Auslander, whereby directly engage the camera: “[The] autonomous events [depicted in such photographs are] presented to audiences and thus, the space of the document becomes the only space in which the performance occurs.”⁴⁵² He asserts that many early performance artists

⁴⁴⁹ Metchild Widrich, “Can Photographs Make It So? Repeated Outbreaks of Valie Export’s Genital Panic since 1969,” *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, eds. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 92. An earlier version of this essay, which I have also used and consulted: “Can Photographs Make it So? Several Outbreaks of Valie Export’s *Genital Panic*,” in *Photography between Poetics and Politics*, ed. Hilde van Gelder and Helen Weestgeest (Leuven: University Press Leuven, 2008).

⁴⁵⁰ The full account of Export’s performance is told by her in a 2005 interview: “The performance took place in an art cinema in Munich, where I was invited with other filmmakers to show my films. I was dressed in a sweater and pants with the crotch completely cut away. I told the audience, ‘What you see now is reality; and it is not on the screen, and everybody sees you watching this now.’ I moved slowly up the aisle, walking towards the people; they had my exposed crotch in front of their faces. I had no idea what the audience would do. As I moved from row to row, people silently got up and left the theatre. Taken out of the film context, this was a totally different way for them to connect with a particular erotic symbol.” I think Powell for directing my attentions to this, see Powell, “Processes and/of Performance,” 160.

⁴⁵¹ Widrich, “Can Photographs Make It So?,” 96.

⁴⁵² Philip Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” *PAJ* 84 (2006), 84.

become conscious that they need to stage their work in front of the camera as much as they needed to stage it for audiences.

These performative photographs of *Action Pants* have entered into the art historical canon (and memory) as confirming the reality of the performance's existence and what took place. Powell contends that Abramovic is taking "the original version of Export's performance" and using it as material for relaunching "both performances into a future place of continued critique and construction simply and effectively."⁴⁵³ This is evidenced in an email exchange between Nancy Spector and Abramovic, where Spector asked Abramovic if the project would still require use of a gun, since it had not been actually used in Export's performance. Abramovic simply replied: "Yes. It should be like the one in the picture – a short machine gun (very Patty Hearst). We need to provide the gun. It can be locked, blocked, etc."⁴⁵⁴ This attitude is in keeping with the original intent of *Seven Easy Pieces* to not embody the original, but rather reinterpret the performance within the parameters of limited documentation – and so if the documentation suggests use of a gun, so then a gun should be used. The persistence of myth (legend/folklore) over reality in discussing the original performances is directly related to the limited visibility of the original. It is the disappearance of the original, and our continued investment in this limiting documentation that allows a performance to enter into the cultural realm through reperformance as a repetition of uncertainty.

It is here that we should look at O'Dell's conception of documentation by way of

⁴⁵³ Powell, "Processes and/of Performance," 161.

⁴⁵⁴ This email and all further references to email correspondence between amongst staff at the Guggenheim, with each other and Abramovic can be found in the Guggenheim's Archive. It is also important to note that Joan Young, a Guggenheim employee working on *Seven Easy Pieces*, settled on using a Replica M16 on loan from a weapons supply house specializing in film, television, and theater props.

Roland Barthes, especially as she emphasizes his apprehension that photographs offer a sort of protection, a this-is-how-it-was feeling, which provides us “a reality from which we are sheltered.”⁴⁵⁵ O’Dell, on the other hand, reads the click of the camera’s shutter to imply an imperative, “the chief record” of an otherwise ephemeral performance.⁴⁵⁶ The photograph allows for an ongoing experience on the part of the beholder: “Encountering the shared ontology of the body makes the viewers mindful of his or her own physical presence as witness to the pictured event.”⁴⁵⁷ And if we further apply O’Dell’s reading of performance documentation to readymades, as discussed in Chapter one, we can study photographs of *Fountain* as part of a chain of experiences that allow viewers to work their way back in time, in the present. These links, she suggests, re-create the bonds that viewers and artists share with art objects (or performances), whereby photographs give proof of the existence of an experience. Photography has the capacity to situate performances in the here and now, while “simultaneously prompting a return to the past.”⁴⁵⁸ This is reminiscent of Schneider’s theory that time is read not as a constant, fixed state of chronological order, but rather as filled with gaps (and hole) that allow art in its re-creates state to cross in and out, within and through.

O’Dell questions what photographs of performances really add up to, “when one considers that each photograph reveals [. . .] a second of the performed action?” How can knowledge of a performed work, as she further queries, “be gained through a document,

⁴⁵⁵ O’Dell, *Contract with the Skin*, 15.

⁴⁵⁶ O’Dell, *Contract with the Skin*, 15.

⁴⁵⁷ O’Dell, *Contract with the Skin*, 15.

⁴⁵⁸ O’Dell, *Contract with the Skin*, 18

which due to the technological limitations of the apparatus that produces it, so vastly delimits information?”⁴⁵⁹ Her answer is to theorize the reception of performance art by viewers as not inseparable from its documentation, as performers in the '60s and '70s widely circulated images of their performances for those who did not have “the luxury of attending.”⁴⁶⁰ The viewing and handling of these photographs are a particular form of experience, just as reperformance is particular form of live experience. In particular, the graininess of performance documentation from the 60s and 70s enhances their snapshot quality, a quality that adds a level of closeness and familiarity.

This valuing of documentation is countered by performance artists and theorists who, as O’Dell explains, perpetuate a “a mythic belief in performance art’s capacity to encourage unmediated proximity to the performer.”⁴⁶¹ Such sentiment, however, limits how a performance can be experience and re-experienced. Abramović’s use of the gun, as Burton explains, “heightened the complicated triangulation of the original event, its record, and its reprise.”⁴⁶² This goes some way toward explaining why reperformances cement themselves between the past and present, between fact and fiction:

Based largely on images, the artist’s performances were also quite consciously staged in order to become a representation, that is a quality Abramović emphasized each night by showing footage of the previous evenings’ proceedings on flat-screen monitors behind the stage.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁹O’Dell, *Contract with the Skin*, 13.

⁴⁶⁰ O’Dell, *Contract with the Skin*, 14.

⁴⁶¹ O’Dell, *Contract with the Skin*, 14.

⁴⁶² Burton, “Repeat Performance.”

⁴⁶³ Burton, “Repeat Performance”

I would agree with Burton that there is something quite strange when an image we know all too well from our history books “becomes live only to become another image.”⁴⁶⁴ In attempting to experience histories as they disappear, Abramović confronts liveness, (as it has been popularized by Peggy Phelan) and the way such liveness factors into a performance’s archive, as well as collective memory and historical recollections (evidence in the use of the gun in reperforming *Export*).

Powell similarly evokes both Burton and Phelan when explaining that ultimately, what we have is a reperformance that is a copy of a copy, “but based on the ways that Abramović experimented with the construction of each, they became reborn in their oddly familiar difference.”⁴⁶⁵ Widrich widens this conversation by advocating for a “need to differentiate discrete levels of mediation, without simply favoring one of them a priori.”⁴⁶⁶ However, the oscillations between different instances of the performative are “oscillations that in turn reveal the different audiences and the different meanings produced in each instance.”⁴⁶⁷ Documentation of a performance is a metaphorical version of an indexical sign, a sign, Widrich argues in regard to *Export*’s performance, “casually connected to its referent, not necessarily resembling it.”⁴⁶⁸ The same holds true for reperformance, as it indicates that this event has previously taken place, while also understanding that it belongs to a much broader context of historical references (that

⁴⁶⁴ Burton, “Repeat Performance”

⁴⁶⁵ Powell, “Processes and/of Performance,” 160.

⁴⁶⁶ Widrich, “Can Photographs Make It So?,” 89.

⁴⁶⁷ Widrich, “Can Photographs Make It So?”97.

⁴⁶⁸ Widrich, “Can Photographs Make It So?,” 98.

extend backward, as well as forward). The original will continue to work in viewers' conscious, Widrich surmises, and is always a part of any later performative utterance – each link a performance's historical chain is just that, linked. Essentially, I agree with her that any ephemeral art practice creates more than just one performative moment, and to pigeonhole performance into categories such as “live,” “mediated,” “performance for the camera,” or “digitized,” only does more to obscure “the complexity of the performative action that unfolds,” than to reveal that actual dynamics of that performance.⁴⁶⁹ That is, a performance should not be limited to a specific media or condition, but rather encompass a diversity of forms that might not always involve the actions and movements of living bodies, or what actually happened or transpired in that movie theater over fifty years ago.

Widrich also explores reperformance as a *performance monument*; a term that implies the material remains of a performance that allow it to continually unfold in the wake of the “so-called original.”⁴⁷⁰ Abramović's evoking of *Export*, as a performative monument, is a marker for thinking or remembering. It is a commemoration of the past to establish a new connection with it. This newness, as I have highlighted, and is argued by Widrich, is not restricted to an actual retelling; instead it evolves pending the needs and wants of those who are creating or evoking the performative monument. Reminiscent of Auslander, we can see that history and memory based on mediated experience are embodied “equally in the performer and the audience.”⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁹ Widrich, “Can Photographs Make It So?”, 90.

⁴⁷⁰ Widrich, “Can Photographs Make It So?”, 90.

⁴⁷¹ Widrich, “Can Photographs Make It So?”, 101.

Within this logic, Powell asserts that performances and, by extension reperformances, should be understood “as a process untethered to a strict logic of representation and identity.” That is, documentation and criticism of it, “shifts to engaging various means of representing through repetition and difference, rather than looking at different performances as representative of the success or failure of living up to an essential idea of performance.” In forgoing out conceptions of reality, we can arrive at a place best suited to read reperformances, well beyond mere connoisseurship.⁴⁷² It is also important to note that reperformance does not simply mean re-creating, as Morgan suggests, but rather that reperformances are only successful when they recognize that adjustments to a performance are necessary, especially as they need to be “made within the ongoing present.”⁴⁷³ As changes occur in a reperformance, be it in the materials used or the level of interactivity asked of viewers, there is a serious need for reevaluation from an archival point of view. Does performance art require an experience to exist within the history of art, or, as Morgan queries, “does it hold some other archival criterion?”⁴⁷⁴

In *Re-thinking History*, historiographer Keith Jenkins argues that the past is not history, maintaining that the past is a necessary “construction site” of facts on which the latter is built.⁴⁷⁵ History is not objective, but rather conditioned on available data, as well as on the desires and needs of those calling the past into presence. History, Jenkins explains,

⁴⁷² Powell, “Processes and/of Performance,” 146.

⁴⁷³ Morgan, “Thoughts on Re-Performance, Experience, and Archivism,” 2.

⁴⁷⁴ Morgan, “Thoughts on Re-Performance, Experience, and Archivism,” 2.

⁴⁷⁵ Keith Jenkins, *Rethinking History* (London: Routledge, 2003), 26. Blackson in “Once More with Feeling” brought the work of Jenkins to my attention.

[. . .] is a shifting, problematic discourse, ostensibly about an aspect of the world, the past, that is produced by a group of present-minded workers (overwhelmingly in our culture salaried historians) who go about their work in mutually recognizable ways that are epistemologically, methodologically, ideologically and practically positioned and whose products, once in circulation, are subject to a series of uses and abuses that are logically infinite but which in actuality generally correspond to a range of power bases that exist at any given moment and which structures and distributes the meanings of histories along a dominant-marginal spectrum.⁴⁷⁶

This separation of the past and history can be extended into this conversation of reperformance, as Blackson argues, where “creative practices might use the past to build and replay their own constructed histories.”⁴⁷⁷

As exemplified by the reperformance of *Action Pants*, Abramović returns vitality to a performance whose exact form, history, and experience is unknown. It does so by making necessary adjustments that may be in opposition to the original’s intentions.⁴⁷⁸ In conceding that reperforming someone else’s work would mean taking artistic liberties, *Seven Easy Pieces*, as Adair Rounthwaite explains, is “the connection between the unique affect of the performer’s body and the moral imperative of performance remains.”⁴⁷⁹ Abramović doesn't simply re-create what happened, but rather provides a new experience for “creating anew in her own body the affect of the original performance that allows an intervention into the way that performance documentation is understood

⁴⁷⁶ Jenkins, *Rethinking History*, 26.

⁴⁷⁷ Blackson, “Once More with Feeling.”

⁴⁷⁸ See Morgan, “Thoughts on Re-Performance, Experience, and Archivism.”

⁴⁷⁹ Adair Rounthwaite, “From This Body to Yours: Porn, Affect, and Performance Art Documentation,” *Camera Obscura* 26.3 (2011), 66.

today.”⁴⁸⁰ As such, reperformance reverses the pattern of performance consumption and dissemination by providing “a superior kind of access to the past,” where experience in the present generates new events that may be connected conceptually to existing documentation.⁴⁸¹

Reperforming Anew

None of the reperformances in Abramović’s *Seven Easy Pieces* directly mirrored their early incarnations. She took artistic liberties that would account for changes in time and location. In the reperformance of Joseph Beuys’s *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, she and organizers at the Guggenheim ran into a series of legal issues in securing the necessary props. In the original performance in Dusseldorf in 1965, Beuys covered his face with honey, and fifty dollars worth of gold leaf, and explained pictures to the carcass of a hare. Unfortunately, New York State Environmental Conservation Law prevents possession of the dead animals and their parts. In an e-mail dated October 24, 2005, Hannah Byers, an assistant on *Seven Easy Pieces*, suggested that a fake would not be plausible: “I scoured the [I]nternet for already stuffed creatures but they all look laughably absurd.”⁴⁸² In an earlier exchange of e-mails between curator Joan Young and Kamille Adamany, another assistant on the project, they reference Derek (whose relationship to *Seven Easy Pieces* is not explained) as suggesting a meat purveyor in New York City who might have a dead hare, possibly an “obscure Chinese butcher/vendor in Queens.” Adamany, however, warned that getting rid of a dead hare would also pose a

⁴⁸⁰ Rounthwaite, “From This Body to Yours,” 67.

⁴⁸¹ Rounthwaite, “From This Body to Yours,” 67.

⁴⁸² All emails referred to in this chapter were found in the archives of the Guggenheim Museum and also referenced in my Masters Thesis.

major problem, especially as there might be state ordinances prohibiting its disposal in a common trash receptacle. She humorously suggests that the museum could not handle a scandal over animal carcasses: “I don’t know what it is, but you would want to do some research on it so the Guggenheim doesn’t end up on Page 6 featuring Joan Young in a back alley discarding hare carcasses.”

The Guggenheim’s curators and personnel were frantic to find an alternative. Paul Bridge, in the museum’s Department of Art Services and Preparation, located a taxidermist who would rent the carcass of a jackrabbit to the museum. While not being a European hare, as the original performance required, the jackrabbit was the closest in shape and color – despite being, as Bridge noted, “25% lighter in color.” Scandal would be avoided, Frank J. Zitz (title and position unknown) assured, the taxidermist from whom they rented the jackrabbit said the animal was hit by a car, “these animals are very common,” he notes, “and unfortunately hit by cars on a regular basis.” In his note to Bridge, Zitz further explains the conditions of the rental: “The rabbit is on loan to the Guggenheim performance in early November. When the performance is completed the rabbit will be returned to me and used as a comparative study in skin in a private school Zoological collection as scheduled.” This situation makes clear that early performances cannot be precisely reperformed to the smallest detail. Artistic liberties are to be expected on the part of the artist and the institution when logistics matters imply a change.⁴⁸³

This change is part of *ritual repetition*, as Schneider explains, which carves out a space for a performance of the past to remember and remain. In this space “the pristine

⁴⁸³ Westcott explains that the moments when Abramovic “held the hare’s ears with her teeth and crawled slowly around the stage” was largely based on elements of the original performance that she became aware of when “Eva Beuys showed her ultrarare footage of Beuys’s performance.” Westcott, *When Marina Abramovic Dies*, 295.

self-sameness of an original, an artifact so valued by the archive, is rendered impossible – or, if you will, mythic.”⁴⁸⁴ And in this equation of performance’s history to mythology, Schneider points to a trend among scholars who discuss performative acts as that of ritual repetition, whether through documentation in an archive, oral history, or reperformances that “refigure history onto bodies, the affective transmissions of showing and telling.”⁴⁸⁵ This is not ritual in the sense that *Seven Easy Pieces* was part of an elaborate religious experience; as the biographer James Westcott writes: “The Guggenheim became a shrine demanding visitation at least once a day, and the public could carry the performance with them even when they weren’t there.”⁴⁸⁶ Rather, as Schneider explains, ritual repetition here is a level of attentiveness to a performance, whether this is shifting through archives in a library or in live reenactments in a “body-to-body transmission.”⁴⁸⁷

Ritual repetition can also be explained by way of Victor Turner’s description of the variant fields of performance from the tribal rituals to modern leisure, where the perennial reliance of culture depends “upon frameworks of meaningful action through which individuals . . . relive, recreate, retell and reconstruct their culture.”⁴⁸⁸ Interaction in rituals, Turner explains, “is characterized by personal honesty, openness, a lack of pretensions or pretentiousness.”⁴⁸⁹ As it applies to reperformance, viewers become the object of their own awareness, St John explains, as their participation is part of an

⁴⁸⁴ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 100.

⁴⁸⁵ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 100.

⁴⁸⁶ Westcott, *When Marina Abramovic Dies*, 292.

⁴⁸⁷ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 105.

⁴⁸⁸ St. John, “Introduction,” 8.

⁴⁸⁹ Turner, *Ritual Repetition*, 48.

evaluative process that is only possible in historical hindsight. Reperformance is an active agency of change, representing, as Turner argues: “the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting designs for living.”⁴⁹⁰ However, audiences who engage with reperformances that are sponsored by museums or cultural institutions should be mindful that Abramović’s reperformances are selective in this tracing of history. Ritual repetition, as such, involves remembering, a remembering condition by the person who is calling the past into a subjective presence. Preziosi describes this as the aim of all art historical study, which makes artworks more fully legible in and to a particular, narrowed present.⁴⁹¹

Abramovic welcomes viewers at the Guggenheim into a “syncopated temporal relationship,” where, as Schneider writes, “participants’ hope will touch the actual past, at least in a partial or incomplete or fragmented manner.”⁴⁹² This relationship is syncopated because the reperformances are an “interruption of the regular flow of time,” where reenactment poses a certain challenge to “our long-standing thrall, dueled by art-historical analyses of performance, to the notion that live performance disappears by insisting that, to the contrary, the live is a vehicle for recurrence.”⁴⁹³ Schneider explains, that the trouble between “history proper and its many counter-constituents” is the resilience of the seemingly forgotten, “the domain of error and unreliability known as

⁴⁹⁰ Turner, *Ritual Repetition*, 24.

⁴⁹¹ Preziosi, *Art of Art History*, 7.

⁴⁹² Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 9.

⁴⁹³ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 29.

flesh memory in the embodied repertoires of live art practices.”⁴⁹⁴ Within this logic, in allowing performances to live again and not die, Abramovic allows the past to become present, as well as inferring the coexistence of the past in the present.

This coexistence is predicated on the conscious engagement of both artist and audience in knowing that the reperformance taking place is one in a number of iterations. Reperformance, as such, does not challenge that the past is long gone, but rather, “being over is one of the ways a secular, linear, or progress-oriented Enlightenment model of time disciplines our orientation to events that appear to precede the present.”⁴⁹⁵ The liveness of reperformance, as seen in *Seven Easy Pieces*, desires to touch the past, it is “time engaged in time,” a matter of “crossing, or passing, or touching.”⁴⁹⁶ And while this crossing may be difficult, it is nevertheless a prompt for an experience in the here and now, not the then and long gone.⁴⁹⁷

Five years after *Seven Easy Pieces* took place at the Guggenheim, Westcott published the first biography on Abramović, “When Marina Abramović Dies.” In it he notes that Abramović wanted to ask an iconoclastic question of art history with *Seven Easy Pieces*: “Can performance be treated like a performing art – something to be repeated and reinterpreted by anyone with adequate experience, skill, and conviction, like the script of a play or a musical score?”⁴⁹⁸ He briefly answers in the affirmative,

⁴⁹⁴ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 6.

⁴⁹⁵ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 33.

⁴⁹⁶ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 37.

⁴⁹⁷ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 37.

⁴⁹⁸ Westcott, *When Marina Abramovic Dies*, 289.

“Abramović believed so.” In so doing, Westcott suggests, reperformance liberates the “personal, expressive, and transformative” acts of a performance from its author.⁴⁹⁹ His answer, to me, reads as a bit shallow when compared with the enormity of the question itself – as Burton, Blackson, and Morgan have already queried it. And while I have argued that performance art opens itself to reperformance, nevertheless, it is complicated (if not thwarted) by the traditional readings of singularity, which are so intimately tied to the art historical canon. At the heart of the issue here is a consideration of the longevity of the artist. In creating a shared space and experience with viewers, *Seven Easy Pieces* marks Abramović’s reperformances with an “overwhelming empathy,” and creates “a perfectly suspended present, one that might be grasped.”⁵⁰⁰ Ultimately, in working with duration, as Westcott explains, Abramovic “can seize the one thing she will always have, at least until she dies, time.”⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ Westcott, *When Marina Abramovic Dies*, 289.

⁵⁰⁰ Westcott, *When Marina Abramovic Dies*, 309.

⁵⁰¹ Westcott, *When Marina Abramovic Dies*, 309.

Conclusion

“Art can examine and try out – under laboratory conditions, as it were – forms of repetition that break open history and the historicist returns of past periods; it can investigate historical moments or eras as potentials waiting to be reactivated in forms that need not resemble anything.”⁵⁰²

Sven Lutticken

In the previous four chapters, I highlighted the many issues revolving around the institutionalization of reperformance, while continuously stressing its relationship to documentary material. Reperformance calls performance art of the past into presence, so that it can be made accessible to and be experienced by new audiences in a variety of contexts and forms. The artists I have discussed, Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, and Marina Abramovic, conceptualized the re-creation and reinterpretation of their work in diverse ways, but similarly in such a way that is, as Sven Lutticken explains, “without risk of the past disrupting the present.”⁵⁰³ If we are inclined to agree with him that “everything is open to appropriation,” and that historical moments, events, and performances are able to go beyond their temporal and geographic limits, then there is the potential for art to “create a space – a stage – for possible and as yet unthinkable performances.”⁵⁰⁴ That is, reperformance could take the past and place it into unintended

⁵⁰² Sven Lutticken, “An Arena in Which to Reenact,” *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art*, ed. Sven Lutticken (Rotterdam: Witte de Witte Center for Contemporary Art, 2005), 60.

⁵⁰³ Lutticken, “An Arena in Which to Reenact,” 19.

⁵⁰⁴ Lutticken, “An Arena in Which to Reenact,” 60.

circumstances, far beyond what could have been previously imagined. This is the case of digital and virtual technologies, which is now a (very) fertile ground for re-contextualizing performance practices from the post World War II period.

In this conclusion, I would like to briefly look at how new media structures - namely in computers and the Internet - are the starting point to an even larger conversation on the potentials for reperformance in the twenty-first century. Steve Dixon, in his book, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation*, considers the ever-expanding conversations on interactivity and liveness.⁵⁰⁵ He explains that liveness, as it has been traditionally defined, has more to do with time and now-ness, “than with the corporeality or circularity of subjected being observed [. . .] from a perceptual standpoint liveness in itself has nothing to do with the media form, but at core concerns temporality.”⁵⁰⁶ He investigates this by analyzing diverse performative genres, ranging from theater in Ancient Greece to Futurist stage productions, while continually referencing the theoretical and conceptual contexts of his predecessors (this includes, most prominently, Peggy Phelan, Phillip Auslander, Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, and Michael Fried, amongst others). In a related article, “Discourse and Documentation: Performance Research and Hypermedia,” published eight years previously, he acknowledges the limitations of performance, and that scholars, curators, and artists must also recognize that well-conceived “video recordings document live performances more reliably than written documentation which, however

⁵⁰⁵ Steven Dixon, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).

⁵⁰⁶ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 115.

detailed, can only ever provide a description.”⁵⁰⁷ This reading suggests that our conception of the real should be defined through the quality of the viewing experience itself, and not the “physical elements” of the performance (that is, limited to guarantee of corporeality).⁵⁰⁸

Dixon describes watching film, video, and digital media as a much more “voyeuristic experience” than watching live performances, “since in the literal sense of the word, the onlooker is looking from a position without fear of being seen by the watched.” He undermines his predecessors – specifically Phelan and Auslander – by arguing that absence is untenable in understanding presence and psychosis of audience reception.⁵⁰⁹ What he arrives at is an ideology supported by Michael Fried’s discussion of presence in minimalist art. “[Presence is], the special complicity that the work extorts from the beholder,” Fried explains, “[s]omething is said to have presence when it demands that the beholder take it into account, that he take it seriously – and when the fulfillment of that demand consists simply in being aware of it and, so to speak, in acting

⁵⁰⁷ Steven Dixon, “Discourse and Documentation: Performance Research and Hypermedia,” *TDR* 43.1 (1999), 156.

⁵⁰⁸ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 130.

⁵⁰⁹ Daniel Ploeger explains this dichotomy as such: “Whilst Auslander discusses the tension between the ‘live’ and the ‘mediated’ presence of performers, and argues how this opposition tends to contract in people’s perception in present day’s mediatized culture, Dixon suggests that, in digital performance, a simultaneously present ‘mediated’ performer may be considered as a ‘digital double’[. . .] Dixon’s considerations clearly engage with the conceptual substance of this phenomenon within specific performance contexts. However, considering the obvious parallel between Dixon’s digital double and Auslander’s mediated presence, the fact that all doubles discussed in Dixon’s examples are clearly identifiable as separate from the performer’s body is somewhat surprising. Taking his cue from Baudrillard, Auslander argues that the formerly distinct poles of the ‘live’ and the ‘mediated’ are contracting in a technologically mediatized culture so that a live performance may now at times function as a copy of a mediated spectacle.” See Daniel Ploeger, “Digital Parts/Modular Doubles: fragmenting the “digital double,” *BST Journal* (date unknown), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://people.brunel.ac.uk/bst/vol1001/home.htm>.

accordingly.”⁵¹⁰ Not too far away from this discussion is Roland Barthes, who explained that the photograph is “authentication itself . . . every photograph is a certificate of presence.”⁵¹¹ The physical substance of the photograph, is “always invisible” because it is the referent we see.

Photography’s ability to capture and preserve a performance is similar to what we see created, archived and exhibited on computers, he explains, because computers, “nowadays are designed first and foremost as a memory machine.”⁵¹² However, it is important to remember, that just as photographs are prone to deteriorate and loss, so too computers are prone to “system failures and memory losses.”⁵¹³ The images produced and dispersed through digital and virtual means provide a sense of intimacy, similarly to what O’Dell described of performance documentation from the 60s and 70s. Because of this, as Dixon explains, “the home computer and the Web” are places where memories become preserved, “supplanting family photo albums and oral histories with databases and webpages and crammed with recollections, photographs, and personal diaries.”⁵¹⁴ This collecting of items is what he describes, by way of George Steiner, as Western society’s ever increasing sense of the past as “intensely important to us, because we fear a

⁵¹⁰ Fried quoted in Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 134.

⁵¹¹ Barthes quotes in Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 134.

⁵¹² Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 547. Her further explains: “The Photograph never ‘calls up’ the past like a Proustian memory, but attests to the ‘live’ reality of a moment and presents it equally alive in a resurrection: ‘the loved body is immortalized by the mediation of a precious metal, silver . . . [which] life all the metals of Alchemy is alive.’”

⁵¹³ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 547.

⁵¹⁴ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 547.

new dark age and through a guilty feeling of having squandered a utopia.”⁵¹⁵ That is, we are not interest so much in the actual past itself and how it rules us, but rather how its images are imprinted on us, “almost in the manner of genetic information, on our sensibility.”⁵¹⁶

For those who fear that digital and virtual technologies, Dixon warns, will only further isolate the performative experience. Computers and the Internet offers are new forms of communication media, like photography, film, and television before it had, which open new possibilities for theorizing discourses and experiences: “For the performance researcher and academic, it constitutes an ideal medium for the documentation and analysis of performance, for the study of the interface between theory and practice, and for new ways to approach and present academic writing.”⁵¹⁷ I would further argue that reperformances, even when experienced on the computer, prompts how the past is experienced and archived in the present.

To this end, I am interested in exploring Eva and Franco Mattes’ *Synthetic Performances*, a reperformance project of performances from the 1960s and 1970s using the virtual program *Second Life*.⁵¹⁸ The works they reperformed included Marina

⁵¹⁵ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 539.

⁵¹⁶ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 539. Dixon further explains: “George Steiner has reflected that a sense of the past is intensely important to us, because we fear a new dark age and through a guilty feeling of having squandered a utopia, Behind today’s posture of doubt and self-castigation stands the presence, so pervasive as to pass largely unexamined, of a particular past, of a specific ‘golden time.’ . . . It is not the literal past that rules us, it is images of the past. Images and symbolic constructs of the past are imprinted, almost in the manner of genetic information, on our sensibility.”

⁵¹⁷ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 116.

⁵¹⁸ The following conversation on *Synthetic Performances* is taken from an essay I have previously published, see Weil, “Reduce, Reuse, Re-perform,” *The Art Section* (2010), accessed August 3, 2013, <http://zoolander52.tripod.com/theartsection4.4/id1.html>.

Abramovic's and Ulay's *Imponderabilia*, Gilbert and George's *The Singing Sculpture*, Vito Acconci's *Seedbed*, Chris Burden's *Shoot*, Valie Export's *Tapp und Tastkino* and Joseph Beuys' *7000 Oaks*.⁵¹⁹ In Second Life, users can create avatars, called residents, who interact, socialize, form communities, and create and trade virtual property and services. They carry out mundane activities such as eating, watching movies and having sex. Avatars can take any form users choose, allowing them the choice to mimic their real-life appearance or conceive of a resident who is any combination of human, animal, or vegetable.⁵²⁰ Cultural theorist Domenico Quaranta explains an intimate relationship between participants and their avatars: "I am my avatar, and the fact that my avatar is an artifact, a puppet made of polygons and textures, certainly doesn't stop me from identifying with it."⁵²¹ Second Life, he further suggests, is best described as a synthetic environment, where a virtual world is created so that representation and existence is one and the same thing – and over time, operators of avatars cannot help but acknowledge that the world of Second Life is indeed a world, with its own complex society, rules to obey, and trends to follow.⁵²²

While Second Life is not real life, *Synthetic Performance* proposes the possibility of this virtual space as a form of art intrinsically focused on life. For example, at the first iteration of *Imponderabilia*, Abramovic and Ulay stood naked at the entrance to a group

⁵¹⁹ For more information, see: <http://www.0100101110101101.org/home/performances/>.

⁵²⁰ An extended discussion of Second Life can be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Life, accessed June 6, 2013.

⁵²¹ Domenicao Quaranta, "Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG: Reenactment of Marina Abramovic and Ulay's *Imponderabilia*," *RE:akt! Reconstruction, Re-enactment, Re-reporting* (2008), accessed July 20, 2013, <http://www.reakt.org/index.html>.

⁵²² Quaranta, "Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG."

exhibition in Bologna. The blocking of the door required visitors to pass sideways through a narrow gap between the artists' naked bodies. In film documentation of the performance the reaction of visitors varied from comical to dismay, fulfilling the artists' intention to question the larger social constructions of physical interaction. While the original audience was susceptible to feeling the flesh of the performers, Quaranta records, audience members experience the online re-performance quite differently.⁵²³ Those at home, using avatars their avatars to interact with Eva and Franco Mattes who took on the roles of Abramovic and Ulay, had to either left click their computer mouse to cross the threshold facing Franco or right click to face Eva.

The physical element of contact between artist and viewer is replaced by physical contact of avatar to avatar. However, as Quaranta explains, because participants in Second Life closely identify with their avatars, the avatar pressing against another avatar is indeed, like a living body pressing against another living body.⁵²⁴ This online audience performed for a gallery audience who witnessed their actions through live-feed projections at Artist Space in New York. A good analogy would equate the avatars, who get to have all the fun, to football players, while the gallery audience are the fans watching the game on Jumbo-tron screens from the nose-bleed seats. Dixon, however, argues that the sanctifying of the superiority of "human corporeal presence could be seen to privilege one art form over another, and to fetishize ephemeral forms of expression."⁵²⁵

⁵²³ Quaranta, "Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG."

⁵²⁴ Quaranta, "Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG."

⁵²⁵ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 132.

To that end, he invalidates any claim that a performance presents “a convincing ontology of performance at all, but merely asserts her preferred medium of performance – live.”⁵²⁶

Dixon, much like Auslander, Schneider, and Jones before him, demystifies Phelan’s definition of performance, as he explains it as a “command of attention,” not limited to physical spaces or liveness: “Presence in relation to audience engagement and attention is dependent on the compulsion of the audiovisual activity, not on liveness or corporeal three-dimensionality.”⁵²⁷ This is further explained:

Phelan’s discourse is humanist, political, emotive and uplifting, and the incisiveness and performativity of her writing inspired like a call to the barricade of here-and-now ephemerality. It has been embraced by many on that particular side of the barricade within performance studies, since it is an appealing and seductive underdog position: the pure, humble, fearless David faces the corrupt Goliath might of mass media and technological capitalism. [. . .] But we should also recognize that the poor theater position sets up a peculiar, dialectic dynamic that celebrated the heroic radicalism of live performance’s resistance to hegemonic media, yet simultaneously retains a deep conservatism through its fierce resistance to change from its traditional theatrical, historical past.⁵²⁸

Within this logic, according to Quaranta, *Synthetic Performance* helps define the virtual destiny of performance art in an age where life itself can be easily technologically reproduced.⁵²⁹ That is, how reperformance can and will be experienced through virtual

⁵²⁶ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 132.

⁵²⁷ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 132. Dixon goes further to explain: Live performance can often be defined more by absence than presence. [. . .] Henry Sayre goes further to suggest that the deconstructive influence on performance has led to work characterized more by the aesthetics of absence than the aesthetics of presence.”

⁵²⁸ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 125.

⁵²⁹ Quaranta, “Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.ORG.”

technologies when the physical element of a performing body – its tactility - is replaced by a virtual one – one removed from traditional conceptions of reality. As we go forth as a society that relies more on email than handwritten letters and Netflix instead of the movie theater, the changes in social interaction will undoubtedly affect how we experience performance art.

In this discussion of liveness, it is also important to consider time, as Dixon does, and its implication on audience perception with digitally and virtually based performances.⁵³⁰ “Not only do audiences ‘accept’ the symbolic time-space of the stage,” Dixon explains, “but it has long been understood that a captive audience’s sense of time is profoundly affected and manipulated in relation to the pace, dynamics, and drama of the unfolding event.”⁵³¹ The “new digital mantra” of real time “semantically asserts the liveness of computational operation and rendering to the extent of privileging it over ordinary, common-or-garden ‘time.’”⁵³² Dixon references Walter Benjamin’s suggestion that “even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art” lacks one important thing: “its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.”⁵³³ “The mechanical dilution of presence and liveness in a reproduction work of art and its comparative lack of authenticity,” so as “to back up their arguments warning of the insidious and destructive power of technology.”⁵³⁴ Ultimately, Dixon concludes that

⁵³⁰ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 524.

⁵³¹ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 524. “Time’s pliability has always been fundamental to performance’s ontology, whether in traditional, avant-garde, or digital forms.”

⁵³² Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 537.

⁵³³ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 116.

⁵³⁴ Dixon, *Digital Performance*, 116.

digital and virtual technologies are social and cultural processes - ones that cannot be divided or separated from how we live our everyday lives, and are ultimately changing the way we remember and engage with the past.

The problem with such a question of engaging the past, as Jose van Dijck explains, is its “deceptive primacy of technology as a cause for change.”⁵³⁵ The function of memory never changes, but rather what does are the “tangible mediated objects that are increasingly made of bits and bytes are intricately interwoven with our ties of remembrance.”⁵³⁶ Van Dijck proposes emphasizes using the term “mediation” in relation to how performance work are recalled and retold, either in static documentation or live reoccurrences: “These technologies inform the embodies and mental functions of memory, as much as mind mechanisms inform our development and use of digital, networked media technologies.”⁵³⁷ In considering computer and virtual based works under the umbrella of mediation, *Synthetic Performances* highlights the diverse ways we create and re-create an archive (and thereby, a life) of a given performance. What is important to remember here, as van Dijck does, is that with the invention of every new technology, be it photography, film, video or the Internet, is affected by “our autobiographical remembrance.”⁵³⁸ These inventions dictate the way we “conceptualize memory and envision its role in our lives,” and will be important in how museums (in

⁵³⁵ Jose van Dijck, “Memory Matters in the Digital Art,” *Configurations* 12 (2004), 373.

⁵³⁶ Van Dijck, “Memory Matters in the Digital Art,” 373.

⁵³⁷ Van Dijck, “Memory Matters in the Digital Art,” 372.

⁵³⁸ Van Dijck, “Memory Matters in the Digital Art,” 372.

their archives and collecting practices) remember and re-remember the past when it is reperformed.⁵³⁹

Reperformance is an exciting new area of exploration, especially as a number of established and emerging scholars are dedicating their research to exploring how performance art is being actively historicized and archived in institutions across the globe. I am especially grateful to the work of Jessica Santone, whose dissertation I have referenced throughout the previous four chapters. I am drawn her consideration of how performances that are meant to be reperformend are circulated, and how “in the particularities that individuals bring to a repeated event as participants, and by the very introduction of an event to a new situation.”⁵⁴⁰ So too I find that reperformances are not an ends to a means, but rather a self-reflexive inquiry into how any given performance is collected and exhibited.⁵⁴¹ While the chorus of professionals – scholars, critics, curators, artists – may not have an agreed upon conceptualization of reperformance, I hope that my investigation here has shown that such a multitude of voices is critical, if not essential in insisting on performance art’s continued presence.

⁵³⁹ Van Dijck, “Memory Matters in the Digital Art,” 372.

⁵⁴⁰ Santone, “Circulating the Event,” 80.

⁵⁴¹ As suggested in Morgan, “Thoughts on Re-Performance, Experience, and Archivism.”

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