Extending the Instantaneous: Pose, Performance, Duration, and the Construction of the Photographic Image from Muybridge to the Present Day

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ABSTRACT

Extending the Instantaneous: Pose, Performance, Duration, and the Construction of the Photographic Image from Muybridge to the Present Day

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This thesis reports the results of my research from 2005-2012 into the roots of photography—more specifically, the pose, performance, and duration in relation to both still and moving photographic images. Through a series of intertwined case studies, readings, observations, and explorations I show how historical works of art are reactivated through interactions with viewers as well as reinterpretations by artists. I have also made a body of artworks exploring the issues discussed in this thesis, and explore in this written component the connections between my academic research and my artistic practice.

By looking at the roots of photography, the instantaneous photography movement that followed, and the chronophotography of Englishman Eadweard J. Muybridge and the Frenchman Étienne-Jules Marey, I construct a theoretical framework within which I can discuss the uses of photography and the photographic in my own work and by artists such as Walker Evans, Yves Klein, Joseph Beuys, Dan Graham, and Gillian Wearing. I also look at contemporary practices by artists today who use new technologies to explore the history of image capture —from silver salts and zoopraxiscopes to digital cameras and online videos.

Using theorists who investigate the subject using interdisciplinary frameworks, I show overlapping points of agreement towards an understanding of the *photographic* as a medium-independent state. By bringing thinkers as diverse as Mieke Bal, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Geoffrey Batchen, Rosalind Krauss, and Penelope Curtis into dialogue I am able to delve deeply into the meaning of photography and the pose from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present time.

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Many thesis introductions are full of endless acknowledgements, but I feel that I mostly have four incredible women to thank. I will start by thanking all three of my supervisors: Johanne Sloan, Lynn Hughes, and Monika Kin Gagnon. Lynn Hughes is the person I should thank for getting me in all of this trouble in the first place by telling me about the Humanities PhD Programme. She then helped me immensely as I applied for and received grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and Fonds de recherche sur la société et la culture, and put together my team of supervisors. Her support, advice, and relaxed (in only the good ways) demeanor have been a tremendous help ever since I started to work with her in 2003 as a research assistant while completing my MFA. Johanne Sloan, whom Lynn suggested as a supervisor, has been instrumental in guiding my writing and my thinking as I slowly put together the critical positions expressed in this thesis. I think Johanne quickly saw my strengths and weaknesses and helped craft a program of scholarship that has kept me engaged and interested over the years. Monika Kin Gagnon, my third supervisor, helped me reach out into new territory with her suggestions for my reading list for the comprehensive examinations. I feel so fortunate that my supervisors were all so helpful and supportive with just the right amount of sternness to keep me pushing through.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Linda Lee, for all her support. Almost five years ago she gave birth to our son, Toro, and has been doing the lion's share of the endless work associated with raising a sweet and loving little boy, and for the last year and a half,

our vibrant little girl, Sadie, as well. I can also thank her for the final push to get it finished. When we found out we would be having a second child I decided that this would be a good time for me to finish my thesis, to close one chapter and open another. And so I do that now, closing my acknowledgements with gratitude to you, my readers, for taking the time to read this thesis.

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Introduction

As this doctoral dissertation was written alongside, and in dialogue with my art practice, I invite readers to visit my website at www.adadhannah.com to become acquainted with my artwork.

The inception of this doctoral research dates back to 2004, when as part of my *Museum Stills* (2002–) project, I shot video footage of Auguste Rodin's *Age of Bronze* (1875-1876), a surprisingly realistic life-sized bronze of a naked young man with his arm held up, in the National Gallery of Canada. I discovered that this work, which was more realistic than many of Rodin's other works, resulted in him being accused of casting from life rather than sculpting the form by hand, as he had indeed done. This struck me as both humorous and poignant since he was essentially being accused of producing a *photographic* sculpture (if such a thing could exist) in the sense that he had captured a single instance in the life of a human body—this sculpture lacks the movement and use of allusion in his looser, less realistic, works. Some months later, in Seoul, South Korea, I happened to enter the Samsung-owned Rodin Gallery, which houses the most recent casts of *The Burghers of Calais* (12/12) and *The Gates of Hell* (7/8). This led to an artist's residency in the city, during which I set out to produce a new work in relation to Rodin's six burghers frozen in various states of turmoil. I eventually produced *The Burghers of Seoul* (2006), a work that serves as a fitting entry to this thesis.

The Burghers of Seoul is shown on a six-foot-by-eight-foot screen suspended from the ceiling using two thin steel cables. The bottom of the screen is about eighteen-inches off the floor. One side of the screen shows Rodin's bronze *les Bourgeois de Calais* (1895), the camera slowly rotating counter-clockwise around the sculpture until it makes a complete circle (in about two-and-a-half-minutes). The other side of the screen shows the camera circling six South Korean motorcycle couriers posing in the same position as Rodin's *Burghers*. The men replicate the poses as best they can, trying to remain motionless and statuesque as the camera moves slowly around them, while their dark clothes and boots bear the patina of dust and smog accumulated on the bustling streets of a metropolitan area inhabited by more than 20-million people, akin to the patina developed by public sculptures over time. The viewer then in turn circles the work, moving around the suspended screen in a movement very similar to the movement of the camera in the videos.

The Burghers of Seoul came after *Cuba Still (Remake)* (2005) and continued my interest in re-staging and transposing scenarios, whether from photo to video or sculpture to video. This focus on Rodin's sculptures allowed me to expand my interest in temporality and the photographic, to include sculpture, performativity, and film.

The Burghers of Seoul also represented an important shift in the way I used the video camera. While the models remained as still as they could as in previous projects, the camera was not locked down, but instead rotated slowly around a circular track as it circumnavigated the sculpture and the tableau vivant in a deliberately clumsy

approximation of how an embodied, moving viewer looks at sculpture. In this work, the track is always visible on the floor across from the camera, and the means of production is always visible as the camera slowly makes its way around the sculpture and the couriers. The pace is slow enough that a viewer can wander around the image, taking in the variegated surface of the bronze sculpture, the anguish of the burghers, as well as the more ambiguous affect of the couriers.

This work's use of a circular track, movement, and mirroring references early optical devices such as the zoetrope, praxinoscope, and zoopraxiscope. It also incorporates recently emerged digital video equipment with slightly sloppy hand-manipulated camera movement; this is not the polished and placeless "bullet time" of *The Matrix* and other high-budget movies, but rather human bodies are recorded, with all their involuntary moving and shifting.

Just as I had discovered with my first *Museum Stills* in 2002, and then my work *Age of Bronze*, when people stand still in relation to figurative paintings and sculptures the static figures in those works are more likely to come alive. Indeed as the couriers assume the role of heroes, the immobility of the sculpture appears to break down, as the mind starts to create motion where there is none and a kind of temporal breathing room around the works of art is activated.

These experiences with two of Rodin's sculptures were significant to my art practice and led to a line of inquiry and research that forms an integral part of my thesis. My art

practice led me to contemplate the physical presence of figurative sculpture in a particular room, while I then began considering the theoretical position of this work within the art-historical narrative that takes one from the romantic to the modern, from a sculpture that lived inside a stone waiting to be released by the artist's hand to a bronze cast produced using the full power of industrial technology at the turn of the century. It dawned on me that the way Rodin broke down movement and the body in *The Burghers of Calais* (1895), and even more so in *The Gates of Hell* (commissioned in 1880 and still uncompleted when Rodin died in 1917), was still relevant in relation to contemporary lens-based art practices. This resonated with me on both a theoretical level and on a practical level with respect to my own art making; my method of inquiry thus needed to blend the creation of artwork with more traditional methods of academic research in order to push further those ideas I had begun to explore during my graduate studies.

This written component of my PhD thesis is an interrogation into ways of looking and documenting using the mediums of photography, video, and sculpture—particularly when they are used in relation to one another. The chapters of this thesis explore ideas and concepts around temporality, photography, and the pose, which have been the driving force behind my studies and my art making for the last seven years. Some of these concepts have been tested through writing, others through the creation of artworks, and many were approached from both angles at the same time. I have benefitted greatly from the exposure to different thinkers gained from being in an interdisciplinary program, from Mikhail Bakhtin's writing on the novel, to Roland Barthes' poetic explorations of the unique and contradictory properties of photography. Rosalind Krauss' writings on Rodin

and sculpture, as well as texts by Kenneth Gross and Penelope Curtis have expanded my understanding of sculpture. Stephen Kern and Geoffrey Batchen look at cultural phenomena in ways that are historically grounded and recognize the potential for cross-pollination in the ongoing dialogue between culture and technology. The theoretical framework I have constructed based on these texts informs, reinforces, and supports the interdisciplinary nature of my project. As a result, the conclusions I have come to are not prescriptive or definitive; rather, I have tried to consider multiple perspectives to gain some insight into the relationships between temporality, photography, sculpture, and the moving image.

Inspired by Batchen's approach to the history of photography I have chosen to assume a cultural view rather than a technological one, whenever possible. This is the view that any artwork resides in the (cultural) interactions between people and ideas. Batchen demonstrates that, even when considering the achievements of skilled technicians like Eadweard J. Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey, it is possible to look beyond the purely technological implications of their work and instead concentrate on the cultural ripples of their respective inventions. Kern's *The Culture of Time and Space* reinforces this view by examining the effects of scientific progress through the lens of culture. My methodology was further inspired by Bakhtin's dialogical method, Nicholas Bourriaud's focus on interpersonal interaction and social context in contemporary art, as well as Mieke Bal's emphasis on the generation and nurturing of concepts through interpersonal negotiation.

The bulk of the artistic projects I have produced during my PhD studies are based on video-recorded tableaux vivants, inspired by the origins of photography, and historical and contemporary cultural practices around photographic images. Many of these projects venture to blur the lines between sculpture and photography, another arena that has been fruitful both in my research and in my art production as I test ways to capture sculpture photographically and create sculptures made of video. Each of the five chapters in this thesis therefore explores an angle onto the generative interplay of photography, performance, sculpture, and video, in my own work and in the creative practices of other artists.

Chapter 1 is devoted to Muybridge and Marey, whose individual output of inventions is as impressive as their output of images. When looking at the evocative works of these visual imaging pioneers it is important to keep in mind that the images are the product of research into the visual representation of time and motion. While both men were certainly aware of the aesthetics of their work, they were most concerned with rendering the invisible visible.

Looking to Batchen's *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* as a guiding text I examine the "birth" of photography, and the ways in which these early practitioners explored the possibilities of this medium. More specifically, I look at Muybridge and Marey's output of images and their utility to other artists—both their contemporaries and subsequent generations—who have used their production as a point of departure. Historical photographic practices are fascinating to contemporary artists and theoreticians

for several reasons. For one, almost every photographic movement, from early chronophotography to digital video has its roots in this period of rapid exploration during the last sixty years of the nineteenth century. Perhaps more importantly, Marey and Muybridge gave us new ways of recording and looking at time, motion, and instantaneity through the medium of photography; indeed, in many instances—including in my own work—time itself becomes the subject of photography, and of its offshoots, film and video. Currently compounding Muybridge and Marey's developments in high-speed photography is the ascendance of digital and web-based imagery I discuss in Chapter 4, which has re-invigorated debates around the photograph and instantaneity.

Rodin, who was a subscriber to Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion*, and would also have been aware of Marey, incorporated the results of chronophotography into his sculptures, which increasingly depicted bodies caught in progressive stages of movement. In Chapter 2, I analyze Rodin's work through the lens of photography in order to think about how photography frames sculpture and how sculpture's best defense in the face of photography's all-capturing eye is its unreadability: one can make interesting photographs of a sculpture but the experience of a sculpture can never be wholly captured via a photograph. Rodin divined this and used photography as a tool and a creative endeavour rather than as a replacement for the face-to-face experience with a sculpture.

In this chapter, I also look at the specific history around Rodin's commission for what was the soon-to-be amalgamated French city of Calais in 1885, and how this struggle and ultimate triumph can be expanded into a picture of an emerging modernity. *The Burghers*

of Calais commission is interesting on several other levels as well, including Rodin's evolving stature as an artist during the production period, the way it challenged established notions of the placement and scale of commemorative sculpture, the discussion around the final location of the sculpture within the public realm, and the sculpture's proliferation over the next hundred years as casts were sold and distributed throughout the developed world.

An important focus in this chapter is on the photographic viewing of sculpture from its early uses in Rodin's studio as a way to work through ideas and disseminate images—as well as its use as a tool of self-defense in his altercation with salon judges who assumed his work was cast from life. I also examine the use of photography to study sculptural works in art history books, eventually coming to the conclusion that the photographic experience of sculpture, while noteworthy in and of itself, is distinctive from the visceral experience (albeit with its own limitations) of sharing a room with a sculpture and creating one's own image and meaning through the generative act of interpretation through negotiation.

The fact that *The Burghers of Calais* has become a network of sculptures around the world allows us to consider this piece on both a universal level as a series of nodes making up a whole, and simultaneously to look at them as local attractions, with specific local significance. By looking at sculpture phenomenologically as well as through Krauss' diagrammatic approach from "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" I show that our relationships with artworks, no matter how old they are or how stable their materials, are

always open to personal interactions with engaged individuals. This brings me to a discussion of one of my own works *The Burghers of Seoul* (2006), which was directly inspired by Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais*. I conclude Chapter 2 by looking at the inception and production of this piece, attempting to demonstrate how the ideas discussed in the chapter have driven my creative process.

In Chapter 3 I shift from looking at how sculptures perform in space to analyzing how human beings perform for photography. I explore the performance of and for photography that is discussed in Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (and is at the root of many of my own videos). The inevitability of the pose, the failure to present oneself as one would hope to, and the failings of the photographic image to represent a living, breathing person are all elements of Barthes' analysis that I explore. I focus on the performance of the pose in photographic works by Walker Evans, Yves Klein, Joseph Beuys and Gillian Wearing. By using case studies spread over a seventy-year period we are able to see a trajectory between "pure" documentary, as exemplified by Evans, and the utterly self-conscious works of Wearing. Photography and the performed pose it inevitably engenders are drawn out and focused upon in order to see where photography and performance meet and how they interact. I argue that this path of photographic practice and performance should not come as any surprise as it almost perfectly mirrors societal, philosophical, and technological changes that have taken place over the same period of time.

Adopting Bakhtin's dialogic approach, I look at the photographer and the subject as active agents in the production of photographic images. Beginning with a discussion of

documentary photography and the self-portrait, I analyze a series of Evans photographs to show that all photographs can be viewed as self-portraiture, the photographer showing much more of herself or himself than is often assumed.

Through the work of Klein, I examine a shift towards the construction of images as the artist builds an image—*Leap Into the Void* (1960)—that is a document of a performance that never really took place. This built-for-publicity image (indeed Klein imagined it as a newspaper image) leads into the next case study, that of Beuys' ongoing performance, a presentation of the self for photography, which is not staged for a single moment as Klein's was, but which continues for extended periods ensuring that any photographs of them will represent the image they would like to project.

Finally I look at Wearing's *Album* (2003–ongoing) project, in which she poses as members of her family taken from her collection of family photos. Using latex masks and carefully constructed sets the artist reconstructs, in painstaking detail, the exact moment in the past when an image was made, assuming the pose of the model and thereby becoming—in a photographic sense—the other members of her family. Wearing's performances for the camera deliberately undermine the genre of documentary photography to call into question issues of authenticity, pose, and performance.

The somewhat more fleeting pose I examine in Chapter 3 gives way to an extended pose as digital cameras, with their ability to record still and moving images, create fascinating changes in how we image ourselves and others. Chapter 4 is a personal reflection on

digital photography and how it affects and is affected by the changing nature of the pose. I address the massive cultural significance of the wholesale and rapid shift to digital means of image production, while maintaining a focus on the pose in order to hone in on the state of hyper-performance that defines our stance in relation to lens-based media at this current historical moment.

Starting with a focus on the digital revolution within photography I move on to look at how new technologies change our relationship to the pose and how we "see" ourselves and others. Dan Graham's oeuvre is a perfect case study for looking at these changes and also at how artists produce work in relation to technology. Many of Graham's works create situations for looking at oneself and others that, while not so different from how we might do this at a metro station or a hotel lobby, are somehow able to isolate the discourse around concepts of reflection, projection, performance, sight, and recording that are central to my thesis.

I end this chapter by presenting my *Stills* videos alongside a discussion of the theoretical arguments put forth by Bal and Bakhtin in order to discuss the framework of ideas that inform my artworks. I seek to demonstrate that by placing an emphasis on the pose and performance before the camera, my work finds itself situated *between* performance, photography, video, and the historical practice of tableau vivant. This conceptual thrust in my work has ultimately become a focal point of my PhD: contemplating the way my work and the work of other artists challenge established notions about these artistic mediums has provided me with fruitful insights in the development of my thesis.

Chapter 5, which concludes this thesis, delves further into my own art practice: beginning with a detailed discussion of *Cuba Still (Remake)* (2005) (a six-channel SD video installation with custom built projector housings), which I consider to be a seminal work in my oeuvre that links to many of my subsequent artistic endeavours in addition to containing the seeds of concepts and theories developed in this, the written part of my thesis. I also discuss other important projects completed as part of my research, up to and including *The Russians* (2011) and *Safari* (2011). While some works, such as those created in relation to Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais*, read as seamless extensions of my written work, almost all of my artistic projects from 2005-2012 demonstrate a strong conceptual connection with the academic work presented in this thesis. This cross-pollination has been invaluable, as it has provided me with subject matter for my artworks that, in turn, provided real-world tests and illustrations of concepts and theories I was exploring in the written work.

In fact, the conceptual dimension of my work—the working through ideas that are constantly in flux and lacking tidy conclusions—has led me to frequently foreground the process of art making and image creation within my artwork. In *Performer/Audience/Remake* (2008) my recreation of a videotaping of Graham's seminal *Performer/Audience/Remake* (1975), I remade Graham's work as a way of understanding his original work—taking it apart and putting it back together in a way somewhat similar to *Cuba Still (Remake)*'s reconstruction of a publicity photo. In many of my works the production process itself becomes part of the work, and has increasingly found its way

into exhibitions, most commonly as staged remnants of the shoot—lights and a camera in *All Is Vanity (Mirrorless Version)* (2009), the sets the videos for *Two Views* (2011) were shot in, or the seating unit and decorative lamps used in *Safari* (2011).

A look at two recent projects, *The Russians* and *Safari*, both from 2011, concludes this final chapter and this thesis. These works provide a clear example of how my artwork has evolved and changed over the course of my PhD research. *The Russians* is reminiscent of my first *Stills* videos, a stripped-down production and minimal (or at least spontaneous) intervention. Produced in and around Saint Petersburg, the videos in this project resemble my early *Family Stills* videos from (2002) and others like *Band Practice* (2002), with their documentary-style framing and quickly rearranged sets. On the other hand, *Safari* (2011)—produced in collaboration with celebrated filmmaker Denys Arcand—represents the coming together of many newer aspects of my work: a step towards narrative, a preserved set exhibited with the videos, production within a museum, the inclusion of museum workers as models, the displaying of multiple screens showing multiple angles, and a much larger production.

Over the last decade I have seen my video work go from being primarily programmed as video art to now being predominantly viewed within the framework of photography and installation. This is the result of a shift in thinking about artistic categories and a move towards more interdisciplinary approaches to making and thinking about art.[1] My own work has increasingly consisted of still photographs alongside video-recorded tableaux

[1] An example of this is the shift in post-secondary fine arts education away from discipline-based programmes towards interdisciplinary "Studio Arts" programs.

vivants and sculptural elements in works such as *Cuba Still (Remake)* (2005), *Les Bourgeois de Calais: Crated and Displaced* (2010), and *Two Views* (2011). Often my work is made in relation to historical works of art, but rarely as a straightforward remake. I am more interested in creating a work that falls apart in interesting ways and shows its inability to become that which it is trying to be than I am in faithful reproductions.

I am not the first artist to re-interpret historical works—indeed contemporary artists from many fields (and here I am thinking of contemporary as an evolving location) have continually reached into the past as a source of inspiration, or at least a solid mass to push off against as one dives into the unknown. When a historical work of art is referenced in a new or seemingly incongruous way it disrupts the ossifying effects of the museum and its norms, allowing the works to potentially perform in new ways. By observing, recording, or thinking about works of art, we the viewers, artists, and theorists of the expanding domain of art are historical agents, bringing different contexts into contact with each other. The trend towards interdisciplinarity is a productive one, perhaps returning us—at least in our ability to think between fields—to Muybridge, Marey, and Rodin's time, when scientists were often artists and artists scientists.

Chapter 1

The Interrelated Practices of Muybridge and Marey and Their Influence on Artists

Eadweard J. Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey's images were influential for artists at the end of the nineteenth century and have been sought out by artists, ever since, as a rich archive to sample, imitate, and restage. An examination of their enduring influence lays the foundation for this thesis, threading its way through discussions around photography, sculpture, movement, stillness, and performativity.

In this chapter, I look at cultural trends during and shortly after the period Muybridge and Marey were active and consider how their interrelated practices shaped the way the general public and artists, especially, viewed the world around them. In fact, their attempts to break down, record, and illustrate time and motion, left a legacy of images and practices that continue to influence artists today. I conclude my discussion by outlining some modern and contemporary practices that relate to the chronophotography of Muybridge and Marey.

Historical Views on Photography

To begin this discussion, let us once again ask *what is photography?* One answer is that it is an arrow—an arrow that both points and travels. But this arrow, which in the Newtonian scheme still popular in the 1840's (when the basic technologies of photography were being worked out), flies in a perfectly straight line (matched only by

its steady progression through time), behaves differently now. In the curved time (and space—as any position has four coordinates with the addition of time) of Albert Einstein's relativity, the arrow of a photograph can point in more than one direction simultaneously, and can even change where it is pointing over time. Like all objects in our universe a photograph maintains a constantly stretching and bending connection with the precise time/space of its creation, but a photograph also has the power to point to other places and other times, to fictions and even to truths (which are of course always contingent).[1] It can point to a past we cannot recapture when photographic images were a rare exception, and it will pierce a future that has not yet occurred. It can refract and reflect, but perhaps most importantly, as it moves along a graceful arc of time it can bend its lithe body like a contortionist and point squarely at itself, at the thin surface where photography resides. As Roland Barthes wrote, "When we define the Photograph as a motionless image, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not emerge, do not leave: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies" (57).

So how will I tackle the sensitive question of photography? Not as a technical one detailing the mechanics and history of photo making, nor by the reverse-engineering of the desire Geoffrey Batchen identifies through the empirical examination of photography's paper orphans (deserted by the specific time/space they reference). Batchen's exploration of the power of desire in the creation of a new technology is instructive across many fields, but most useful in studying roots and origins rather than

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[1] "…Photography is pure contingency" (Barthes 28).

uses and meanings. Of course each photographic print is a double index, the obvious imprint of a location in space-time that is necessarily in the past, from which the image is constantly moving away, and the present, where the photographic print shows its age in every scratch, greasy fingerprint and bent corner, forever forging into the future until it eventually turns to dust. The meaning of each image changes over time, as does its uses—always relative—to the people and the culture around it (see chapters 2 and 3 for a more in depth discussion). Unlike a painting or a drawing, which might be dated to a year or grouped with other works from a certain period, each photograph is linked to one specific instance.[2] From the split-second of exposure there is a constant separation, as endless and predictable as the steady sweep of a second hand. Photographs, like Alexandre Gardner's 1865 portrait of would-be assassin Lewis Payne (mentioned in Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*), bring to the viewer a single moment from a single angle of a particular time and place in a receding history.

Another perspective on photography is that it is the manifestation of a cultural desire for the photographic. In *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* Geoffrey Batchen's central question is whether photography is the creator or the product of the desire to *make*[3] photographs. Batchen considers the possibility that photography was the response to a desire for the photographic, rather than a technological breakthrough that

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[2] We must here make a distinction between digital and non-digital processes for with a digital workflow it is indeed possible to create "photographic" works that do not have real world, real time-space, referents.

[3] As I wrote this I saw the semantic trap of choosing between *take* and *make*. I chose *make* for several reasons. Photography's first steps were very mechanical, and the image was more *built* or *put together* than the simple way a Polaroid might *take* a photo. Also, a photograph is a concrete mold of light which, while I will argue it affects the performance of the subject, does not remove any particles or apply any physical pressure as might a physical sample or a rubbing.

came to be appropriated by artists, scientists, and entrepreneurs. Batchen writes: "It should also be clear that the desire to photograph was a product of Western culture rather than of some isolated individual genius. This in turn raises questions about the natures of this desire, about both its production and its expression" (52-53). Although the concept of desire bringing an invention into being may seem at first a fanciful proposition, it is equally hard to picture a world in which the desire had not been met and where we had never entered Walter Benjamin's "Age of Mechanical Reproduction".[4] I believe a more persuasive explanation lies in the grey area between human desire and technological determinism. The fact that many of the "proto-photographers" (those Batchen singles out as having "claimed for themselves a precocious onset of the desire to photograph") such as Hippolyte Bayard, Louis Daguerre, Samuel Morse, Henry Talbot, and Tom Wedgwood were artists as well as scientists[5] is certainly not pure coincidence (50).

In the 1840s the world was exposed to cameras that could fix an image on a prepared plate. Artists would have been used to seeing an image on a camera obscura's ground glass plate, and according to Batchen, the wish to render this view permanent was a widespread phenomenon:[6]

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[4] Or perhaps even stranger if the technology had existed but people found no use for it!

[5] Phillip Prodger notes that in this period "art and science appeared to flirt with each other before finalizing what seemed like an ultimate divorce…" (Prodger and Gunning 226).

[6] The flat rectangular image was already a staple of Western imagery. As a lens (or even a pinhole camera) as well as the human eye produce round images which fade out at the edges, the choice to have the camera obscura's ground glass be a sharp rectangle seems to mirror the shape of paintings and drawings. I would venture to guess that the proliferation of flat rectangles in Western art was technologically (and bureaucratically) determined in order to reduce waste during manufacturing and to facilitate storage and categorization—both established centuries (if not millennia) ago.

> Photography was, for Talbot, the desire for an impossible conjunction of transience and fixity. More than that, it was an emblematic something/sometime, a "space of a single minute" in which space *becomes* time, and time space.… Photography's peculiar temporal characteristics, in particular its ability to bring past and present together in one visual experience, were also noticed by contemporary journalists. A number used the term *necromancy* (communication with the dead) to describe both Daguerre's and Talbot's processes. (91-92)

Talbot's struggle against the widely accepted assumption of his day that time and space could be independent of each other anticipated imminent scientific developments. The notion of a time estranged from space, while central to Newtonian concepts that dominated the nineteenth century, would become untenable once Einstein, seizing on the failure of Albert Michelson and Edward Morley's famous experiments from the 1880s, drained the universe of ether and attached time to space in order to complete the (modern) matrix within which everything (for the moment at least) resides.

The apparent contradiction between indexicality and poetics present in photography should not be considered as such. True, each photograph, free from manipulation other than burning and dodging, is a more-or-less truthful record of light reflected off the subject-matter and focused through the camera's lens onto film, but it is also the result of framing and positioning, the twin engines of fiction and narrative within a photograph.

Nicéphore Niépce, who has been widely credited with the first photograph, wanted to copy "views from nature" or "a faithful image of nature," Daguerre wanted a "spontaneous reproduction of the images of nature received in the camera obscura," Florence dreamed of "drawings made by nature," and Talbot saw himself producing "Photogenic Drawing or Nature Painted by Herself" (Batchen 62-63). All of these desires fancifully imagine nature actively imprinting its own image through the lens onto a prepared plate, glossing over what was already known of the camera obscura (and probably the very reason why artists were so fond of it)—namely that it viewed the world from a particular time, place, and angle, all determined not by nature but by the artist, *poetically* pointing the lens.[7] Batchen states that by "around 1800 landscape was no longer directly preordained by God but was recognized as a specifically human construction" (78). Photography enabled the capturing and freezing of landscape, constructed through angle and location, and recorded on the silver salts at the back of the bellows.

Sojourner Truth, photograph, 1864, Gladstone Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[7] This was not always a poetic endeavor, indeed it was often a strategic one, motivated by scientific or commercial interests.

Muybridge, Marey, and the Emergence of Chronophotography

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century the basic technologies of photography had been largely worked out: the intense focus on the chemical processes and appropriate substrates to achieve the desired fixing of images had achieved huge technological advances, and photography of bodies in motion (of both animals and people), rather than exclusively stationary subjects, was now possible. Photography was suddenly a powerful tool without many creative applications,[8] an ability searching for a use.[9] Seizing on this opportunity, two inventors, the Englishman Eadweard J. Muybridge and the Frenchman Étienne-Jules Marey[10], using plates and film developed largely by others, were able to experiment with the mechanics of very quick exposures as well as multiple exposures in new and visually exciting ways. Muybridge tended to use an array of cameras (a sequence of different lenses and different pieces of film), whereas Marey would often use a single negative with overlapping images produced by opening and closing the same shutter several times. Their results—while achieved in quite different ways—are photographs that allow an examination of the time/space matrix in a way previous images had not. The maverick chronophotographers (literally, *time-photographers*) Muybridge and Marey put the camera's ability to capture increasingly shorter periods of time (faster

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[8] It is true that cartes-de-visite were immensely popular and widely collected, but these were largely about the thrill of photography rather than creative applications of photography. Of course there are exceptions such as Sojourner Truth's fundraising carte-de-visite, wittily proclaiming, "I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance" in text below a portrait of the women's rights activist and abolitionist. From the Library of Congress (USA) Digital ID: lprbscsm scsm0880 http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/lprbscsm.scsm0880

[9] I find it more productive to grapple with questions of uses and outcomes, rather than the chicken-or-the-egg argument of *creator of desire vs. product of desire* that accompanies the introduction of most new technologies.

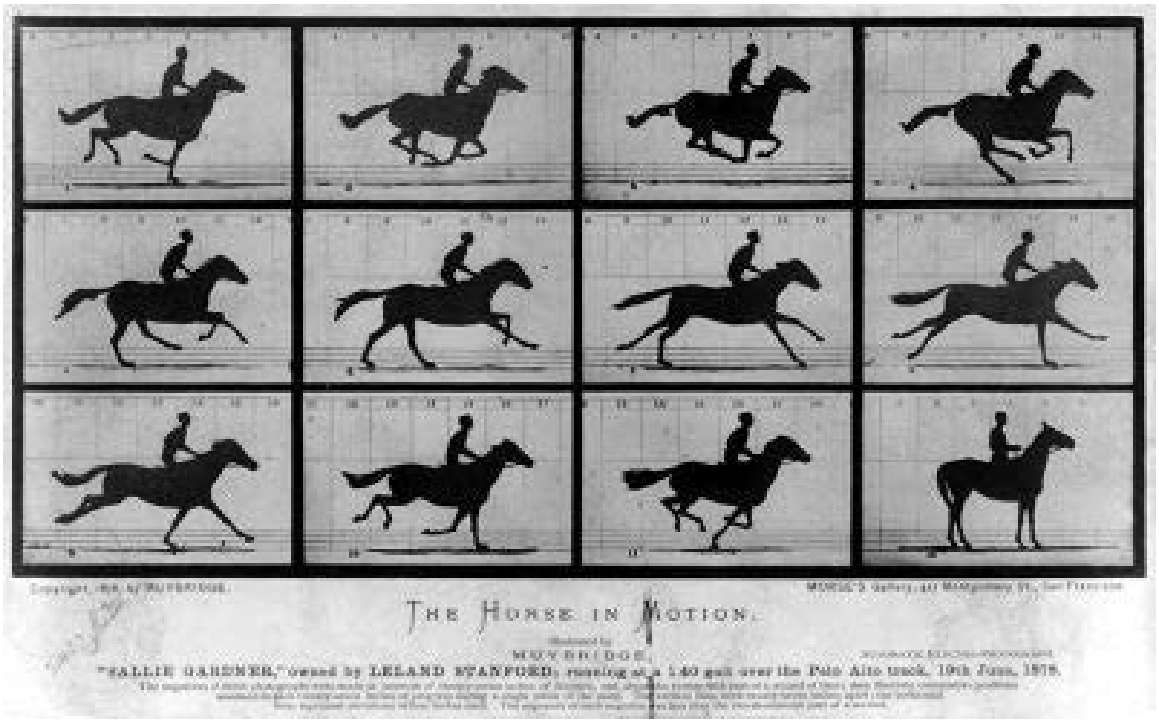
[10] Interestingly, Marta Braun notes in her book *Picturing Time* that they both have the same initials (EJM) and both were born and died within weeks of each other (43).

exposures) to use in the examination, documentation, and manipulation of motion over time—specifically in animal and human specimens.

While drawings, engravings, and paintings could depict a specific event or moment, they lacked the direct indexical link so obviously present in this new chronophotography. While one could argue that one of Jackson Pollock's drips or a Cy Twombly pencil line is also an index of the particular angle and motion of the artist's arm at a specific point in time/space, in a photograph the indexed subject is much more evident. We can more definitively identify (even if we are factually wrong) what was happening in front of the lens than what was going on in front of a canvas. Even when that canvas shows a convincing illusion of instantaneity as created by an artist like Vermeer, the means of production—paint versus photographic chemicals—lacks the indexical qualities of photography.

The book *Time Stands Still: Muybridge and the Instantaneous Photography Movement* by Phillip Prodger and Tom Gunning was published in 2003 to coincide with an exhibition outlining Muybridge and his contemporaries' fascination with what they saw as *instantaneous photography*. *Instantaneous photography* refers to images made a little over a hundred years ago when motion occurring too rapidly to be seen by the human eye was first captured and made available for viewing. *Instantaneous* is, of course, a relative term in photography, and the first *instantaneous photographs* were of subjects asked to

hold a pose—acting as if they were in motion—long enough to make an exposure.[11] In a humorous anecdote illustrating the limitations of early instantaneous photography, Prodger offers the example of Frank Haas who photographed animals in the London Zoo in the 1860s. The creative photographer had to tire the animals out before he could photograph them, and even focused on shooting slow moving animals (Prodger 107). In a development that put an end to the *instantaneous* photography of sloths and turtles, technological advances enabled a shutter speed fast enough to freeze action, isolating[12] and exposing details of movement which had never before been visible.



Eadweard Muybridge, *The Horse in Motion: "Sally Gardner"*, photograph, 1878, Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University.

[11] Jean-Baptiste Dumas (1800-1844) stated, "A photograph may be considered 'nearly instantaneous,' he wrote, if it is made with a "twelve to fifteen-minute exposure" (Prodger and Gunning 34-35).

[12] The aesthetic qualities of Muybridge's work are also isolating, the close-cropped photos showing each instance of a figure contained in a small box.

Instantaneous photography showed what the human eye could not see, separate stages in the stride of a horse in motion, the trajectory of a bouncing ball, or the legs of a jumping man. This divergence between what the eye saw and what the camera saw, as brought about by instantaneous photography, is a seminal moment that affected the way humans see the world and themselves within it. These *instantaneous* photos, with their apparent freezing of time and space, are the direct precursor to the snapshot,[13] which is arguably the most common type of image produced and consumed today. (Of course, now we have moved into a sort of post-snapshot period brought about by the proliferation of inexpensive and digital cameras, but I will address that further in Chapter 4.) Early instantaneous photographs were very important to figurative painters and sculptors who, before Muybridge and Marey's studies, could use live models for certain purposes but would have had to rely on educated guesses at the position of a galloping horse's legs or a man's arms while running. As explored more in Chapter 2, the sculptor Auguste Rodin used a blend of photography, cut-and-paste limbs, and incisive observations in order to present the human body in motion and flux using the most static of materials.

Eadweard Muybridge, *Athletes Posturing*, photograph, 1879, Stanford University Libraries.

[13] Sir John Hershel (1792-1872) coined the term "snap-shots" and also anticipated the development of roll film thirty years before it arrived (Prodger and Gunning 36).

A significant turning point came in 1872 when Muybridge entered the instantaneous photography fray by joining Leland Stanford in a project to examine the gait of horses. In what is often misrepresented as the settling of a bet, Stanford (who owned racehorses) funded Muybridge's research in order to understand the way in which a horse galloped, and specifically to see if all of its feet ever left the ground at the same time (Prodger 11). The question was finally answered in June of 1878, and the images and interest it created resulted in Stanford's continued funding of Muybridge's work until their acrimonious split in 1882.[14] Muybridge's most famous work *Animal Locomotion* (1887) was a compendium of his photographic production and contained 781 plates including thousands of individual exposures. *Animal Locomotion* proved to be wildly popular among the general public and artists alike, and its popularity in Europe and North America allowed Muybridge to build a thriving career giving lectures on his work. *Animal Locomotion* became an important reference for artists concerned with the human body, from the sculptor Auguste Rodin to the twentieth century conceptual and performance artist Dan Graham—both of whom I discuss in more depth in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, respectively.

In Marta Braun's book *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne Jules Marey*, she explores the great chronophotographer's work in detail, from his first experiments with visually recording the human heartbeat over time[15] (presented to Napoleon III) to his many

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[14] For details please see Prodger and Gunning 11-15, 127, 188, 241-42.

[15] The Graphic Method, which allowed for the viewing of graphic representations of the body's functions was an important milestone in medicine. We now take for granted machines that make visible the

inventions which are still in use today. Marey, while perhaps less of a showman than Muybridge, is responsible for some of the earliest discoveries leading to flight/airplanes, as well as to motion picture projectors, and several medical devices.

Both Muybridge and Marey made use of the "persistence of vision" phenomenon, whereby a stream of still images shown quickly enough, the last one melting imperceptibly into the next, gives the illusion of motion. This is the sensory process on which cinema is based. When shown twenty-four frames (or more) per second, the viewer no longer sees a series of still images, but sees fluid motion without any pauses. Muybridge and Marey's inventions eventually gave way to motion pictures, although neither of the men ever took these inventions further, the way Thomas Edison or the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière did. During his lectures Muybridge would often use a zoopraxiscope[16] (which he had invented) in order to project a series of his images—stopping and starting the device to show that these still images were truly captured from motion, and at the same time illustrating how motion could now be broken down into static moments. However, both Marey and Muybridge discounted what would come to be known as *movies* as they failed to see any value in creating motion pictures that once again rendered invisible the components of animal and human motion they were painstakingly elucidating.[17] Neither Muybridge nor Marey was interested in mimicking nature; rather, "[i]t was to capturing the invisible rather than reconstituting the visible that

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workings of internal bodily functions, such as a moving graph showing one's heartbeat while in hospital, but in Marey's time these were revolutionary.

[16] The Zoopraxiscope was a device used by Muybridge to project a series of images drawn or printed onto a glass circle onto a screen. The result of this fast succession of images was the illusion of motion.

[17] Indeed the conflict between still and moving images must have been fascinating for early moviegoers as public screenings often started with a still image that then began moving.

[Marey] had dedicated his life" (Braun 195). With this in mind it is ironic to see the number of websites[18] that feature animations of Marey and Muybridge's work as if movement was the ultimate, unachieved ambition of these two men.

Braun derides as deceptive Muybridge's habit of re-ordering/re-numbering, cropping, and omitting in order to achieve the effect of sequence, when in fact they are often partial constructions edited and reconfigured in order to achieve a stronger narrative. But it is for this reason that they are so celebrated: Muybridge had constructed comic-strip animations, fictions based on fact and fantasy with which one could imagine and re-imagine movement through space and time. Marey's images may show us more clearly how we actually move through space/time, but they are not nearly as evocative. Braun attacks the lack of serious "scientific purpose" in images such as *Woman chasing another with a broom* (1885-87), but seems to miss the point that Muybridge is being creative with a medium and playing with the idea of humans frozen in time—a completely new concept in the late nineteenth century—rather than strictly creating useful tools for scientific study.

Eadweard Muybridge, *Woman chasing another with a broom*, photograph, 1885-87, Boston Public Library.

[18] Here are three samples: http://cefn.com/blog/muybridge.html, http://www.understandingduchamp.com/author/marey/marey_02.html, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muybridge which has three animations on the page.

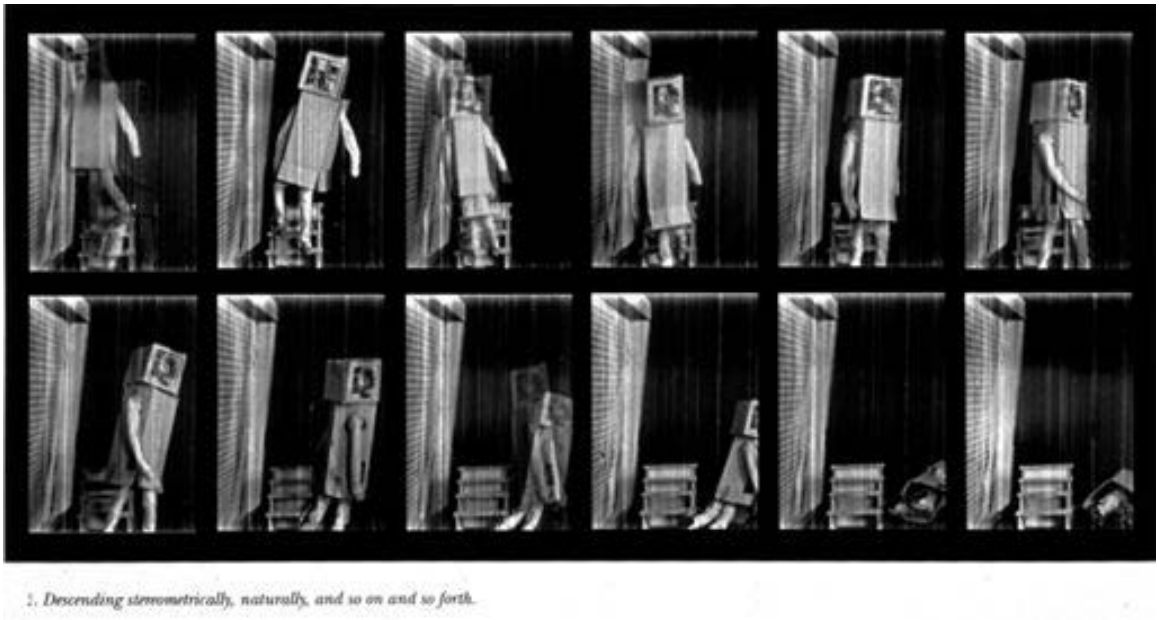
Braun derides Muybridge's oeuvre as "a compendium of social history and erotic fantasy" (249). But this is really Muybridge's triumph, for while his photos of horses and other animals are interesting, it is his photos of people in various stages of undress and his willingness to blur the lines between science and art that earned him—and especially his images—an influential role in art history, from the time they were first published until the present day.[19] Marey's images are, of course, fascinating studies as well, speaking eloquently about time, movement, and spontaneity—the blurry repetition of lines adeptly representing time's flux and flow. They are likely also quite useful to those interested in the minutiae of physiognomy, but for the majority of artists Muybridge's easy to read (and easy to copy/sample) photographs have probably proved more fruitful.

Étienne-Jules Marey, *Leap over an Obstacle*, chronophotograph, 1886.

[19] It is interesting to consider that Marey's works look aesthetically more like *art*, with their flowing lines and painterly blurring, and are therefore less appealing to artists to use as source material. On the other hand Muybridge's works, while admittedly less scientific, look less like art, thereby allowing artists to believe they were sampling motifs from science.

Muybridge and Marey's Influence on Artists and the Changing Face of Time

Muybridge and Marey have been important influences on artists since the last years of the nineteenth century. Artists such as Edgar Degas, Auguste Rodin, Anton Giulio Bragaglia, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and many others were greatly influenced by them. Rodin, whom I will address in more detail in Chapter 2, is quoted as saying "It is the artist who is truthful and it is photography which lies" (Braun 254); but I believe this was mostly poetic bravado, as Rodin used photography extensively and saw its use early on as a tool in the production of sculptures and as a self-sufficient medium. Rodin was, in fact, an early subscriber to Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion* (Benedek 25).



Denton Fredrickson, *Descending stereometrically, naturally, and so on and so forth*, photograph, 2002, sent to me by Fredrickson via Facebook.

The discreet frames of Muybridge's series, or the overlapping frames of Marey's may imply movement but cannot actually be seen as moving. Viewers of the images must

actively[20] decode which actions were performed and in which order. The multiple cameras, and the changing angles mean "any sense of movement must be constructed by the viewer from these gestures, frame by frame" (Braun 237). Rodin, who was likely influenced by Muybridge's serialization of movement, used this same strategy in his sculptures, depicting bodies in various phases of motion.[21] Rodin's 1895 sculpture *The Burghers of Calais* (1895), which I will discuss in depth in Chapter 2, does exactly this, showing six different figures, but also showing one person's trajectory through a cycle of emotions or attitudes. *Balzac* (1898), another sculpture by Rodin, is also a pivotal work: its sketched contours and boxy shapes can be seen as a precursor to the multiple perspectives of Cubism.[22] Marcel Duchamp's *Nude descending a Staircase #2* (1912) and the earlier Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones' painting *The Golden Stairs* (1880) are also central works showing the influence of chronophotography.[23]

By the end of the twentieth century's first decade, Cubism was in full swing, with Picasso and Braque its most famous practitioners. By joining different viewpoints of the same subject within a single artwork, Cubists were able to image/imagine a representation of an immobile "real-world" object that was not in a particular time/space, but was instead viewable from various attitudes. Ironically, showing the object from different angles

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[20] As opposed to the passive way in which a stream of still images each shown for a fraction of a second is seen as movement in a film.

[21] Rodin would also graft different body parts together, joining one model's arm to another model's torso, or using the same hand on several figures in the same sculpture. In *The Burghers of Calais* Rodin has even used the same face twice, once on Jean d'Aire, and again on Andrieu d'Andres (Elsen et al. 121).

[22] The hulking bronze has some strong similarities to Picasso's *Gertrude Stein* portrait from 1906.

[23] Interestingly, the Burne-Jones painting *The Golden Stairs* (1880) of a stream of women descending a staircase actually predates, and may have even influenced Muybridge's photographs of a woman descending stairs and Duchamp's *Nude descending a Staircase #2*.

actually seems to reinforce its spatial permanence while freeing up its temporal fixity. Braun notes that "[s]ince the advent of linear perspective in the Renaissance, the frame of an image has, with rare exceptions, been understood to enclose a temporal and spatial unity" (66). It is this unity that the Cubists and the Futurists, each in their own way, wanted to shatter. The imagery of Muybridge and Marey was a useful tool in this dismantling.

While Muybridge's work was perhaps more influential for the Cubists, the Futurists sampled Marey's overlapped and motion-blurred imagery to address flux and change. The Italian Futurist Bragaglia (1890-1960) saw the possibility of joining Marey's blurred images with his own desire to express the dynamism of the human body as it interacts with tools and technology.

> "…Bragaglia proposed a technique he called photodynamism, which involved leaving the shutter open long enough to record the blurred image of an object in motion. This, he believed, offered the only true art of motion in contrast to both chronophotography and cinematography, which broke up the action and missed its '*intermovemental* fractions'".[24] (Kern 21)

Bragaglia proclaimed that, "With photodynamism we have freed photography from the indecency of its brutal realism, and from the craziness of instantaneity, which, considered

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[24] It is fascinating that Bragaglia's images created as artworks, and Marey's produced during scientific research could end up looking so strikingly similar.

to be a scientific fact only because it was a mechanical product, was accepted as absolutely correct" (qtd. in Braun 299). He goes on to explain how "…documentation of objects in motion was the means by which the artist could move beyond the visible. Because it dematerialized objects and exposed the 'interior essence of things'…," "in the traces left would be found the dynamic sensation of life, the pulsing rhythm of the blood, the unceasing breath, the vibrant energy of gestures, for actions[,]" "…movement effectively destroys bodies…" (qtd. in Braun 299).

Bragaglia's blurred photographs, or Giacomo Balla's painted *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* (1912) are the beginning of a long history of works which struggle with and against photography, making use of its powers of observation while struggling against its tendency to clearly define an object as a static form. Bragaglia, Balla, Boccioni, Duchamp, Burne-Jones, and many others created compelling paintings and photographs that attempt to capture movement through time and space, to break through the static and the solid. It can be argued, though, that none of these early attempts are as successful as a number of Francis Bacon paintings in which those qualities sought by the Futurist Bragaglia are perhaps more clearly readable.

Left: Francis Bacon, *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, painting, 1953, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, Iowa. Right: Anton Giulio Bragaglia, *The Slap*, photograph, 1912.

Both Braun and Prodger reference Stephen Kern's *The Culture of Time and Space*, *1880-1918*, and Kern, himself attentive to visual culture, notes that "[s]cientific management, the motion studies of Muybridge and Marey, early cinematography, Cubism, and Futurism reflect aspects of each other across the cultural spectrum like images in a house of mirrors" (Kern 117). [25] Kern's book examines, through a series of fascinating examples, how science, philosophy, and culture intersected at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century to create a fertile space for the development and consideration of such important events as the first universal system of timekeeping, terrestrial radio transmissions, and Einstein's theory of relativity.

Kern's examination of historical notions of time and space around the turn of the twentieth century, demonstrates that time (or at least clock time), while currently coordinated very accurately throughout the world, used to be much more fluid. The necessities of exchanges of information and people (for example the necessity to coordinate schedules for trains traveling between cities) led to more rigid expressions of time. These mostly technological innovations resulted in time itself—or rather a sense of destabilized time—playing an important role within the collective consciousness during

[25] This refers to the use of technology in order to study and improve efficiency in the workplace. An example would be to film a post office worker sorting mail in order to suggest ways to do the same task quicker while expending less energy. For more on photographic techniques of scientific management, especially the images created in its pursuit, see the work of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth.

this period. As time became seen as a flux rather than a straight line of discreet units it opened up new modes of thinking such as stream of consciousness.[26]

Kern outlines the Zeno's arrow paradox—if an arrow in flight passes through various points, it must be at rest when at these points and therefore cannot move. Henri Bergson countered that the mistake was in assuming that the arrow can be at a point. "The arrow never is in any point of its course. The most we can say is that it might be there, that it passes there and might stop there" (Kern 26). The most useful and the most difficult aspect of these challenging ideas is that they erase spatio-temporal boundaries, creating flow and contingency. Kern notes, "In the concluding paragraph of *Creative Evolution* Bergson outlined the proper aim of the philosopher who dispenses with all fixed symbols. 'He will see the material world melt back into a single flux, a continuity of flowing, a becoming'" (Kern 26). According to Bergson the body never stops in any place, it is simply in flux on its way to another position, which is never fixed (Braun 280-81).

Photos always show a moment (or at best a few moments blurred together or laid on top of one another), leaving the viewer to imagine what came before and what followed. Marey and Muybridge, each in their own way, tried to address this problem, which has always been at the root of photography. By respectively serializing and stacking these moments, Muybridge and Marey both deny privilege to a single moment in time, instead attempting to record a short stretch of the fourth dimension. But the documentation of

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[26] In 1890, William James wrote "Consciousness does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly…It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness" (qtd. in Kern 24).

flux mostly eluded them, since any photograph or sequence of photographs, even when strung together into a movie, has a last frame—the point where the documentation stops trying to keep up with time, where the capturing of the present becomes the preservation of the past.

According to Kern, it was not until July 1, 1913, when a radio signal from the Eiffel Tower sent the first around-the-world time signal, that the concept of simultaneity hit home within Western society (14). The Eiffel Tower's frequent presence in the Futurists' oeuvre is due more to its notoriety as the origin of invisible and (practically) instantaneous radio waves than its spectacular architectural form.[27] Several years earlier, in 1905, Einstein had shown how time was relative to one's speed and position within a time/space matrix, a discovery that was to profoundly change the way people, and especially artists, thought about time.[28] Another key factor in changing the public's understanding of time was Einstein's theory of special relativity. As Einstein's equation was explained and disseminated through popular magazines and newspapers of the day, it transformed the way people thought about time, space, and their place in this newly elastic universe, even though they could not have possibly experienced any measurable effects.[29]

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[27] See artist Robert Delauney's "simultaneism" and his frequent inclusion of the Eiffel Tower in paintings.

[28] While this was a huge philosophical shift, I believe our personal day-to-day experience still remains very Newtonian in nature.

[29] This was a period of unprecedented technological gains, and it is important to keep in mind other developments of the day such as the first widespread use of the electric light in 1882, the development of the gas engine, self-powered flight, etc. Eminent historian Rayner Banham has called electrification "the greatest environmental revolution in human history since the domestication of fire"(qtd. in Kern 29).

No doubt inspired by new ways of thinking about time, Giorgio De Chirico used clocks in his work, as did Salvador Dali, to point to the importance of this new universal symbol of synchronized time. Clocks were no longer just ways to tell the local time, they were reminders of the simultaneity of actions in different places, and within a work of art they functioned to accentuate the work's struggle between action and inaction as the hands on a painted clock do not move, yet the painting still moves relentlessly through time (I am reminded of my grandfather's well-worn saying "A stopped clock is still correct twice a day"). Kern also observes that the impressionist painter Claude Monet used a sequence of paintings of Rouen Cathedral (1892) to show the same scene at different times of day, explaining, "One does not paint a landscape, a seascape, a figure. One paints an impression of an hour of the day" (qtd. in Kern 21). Stephen Kern's study is important because he links the question of photography to a bigger set of issues including technology, changing understandings of time, and most importantly the rapid transition into the modern period.

Referring to Kern, Braun speaks of the "culture of time" as emerging in the late 19th and early 20th century, when notions of a fleeting "now" (see Walter Benjamin's *Jetztzeit* as a key aspect of Modernism [Benjamin 261]) became an "expanded present full of multiple events perceived simultaneously" (Braun XIX). While Muybridge's images appeared to break down movement more clearly than Marey's, they did not have specific time/space referents,[30] and therefore were somewhat free-floating and could not (according to Braun)

[30] This is due to the non-standard increments and positions Muybridge captured with his tripwires and multiple lenses. Also the position of a body that is not in relation to any other object becomes hard to identify, the changing shapes of his images (cropped to show only the body and little of the background)

be used to draw concrete conclusions. Marey's on the other hand were shot from a single lens, and exposed on the same piece of film at standardized intervals, a distinction which Braun uses to differentiate the scientist from the *charlatan*.

Braun scoffs at Muybridge's "781 plates…often thought of as scientific studies, there is much about them that cannot be reconciled with any notion of disinterested scientific inquiry" (237). She sees Marey as representing "…everything that Muybridge is not…disinterested, accurate, analytic, and systematic"; he "…sought not to represent nature but to discover the laws that governed it" (Braun 254). Her claim that Marey works against the "Renaissance canon of a single frame-single time/space continuum" may be true, but here Braun clearly illustrates that she does not understand why Muybridge's works are so evocative (254). Phillip Prodger, on the other hand seems to defend Muybridge against the charges of being unrigorous, stating that "Muybridge was more honest than might at first be apparent" (Prodger and Gunning 210).

I am more in agreement with Tom Gunning who sees Muybridge as "a crazy uncle, the site of many intersections between photography, science, art, and new forms of mass entertainment" (Prodger and Gunning 223-24). It was Muybridge's showmanship, mixed with his willingness to take artistic license that places him in this interesting position. Muybridge's *Animal Locomotion* used the language of realism to create short stories or actions, each with plenty of creative space in which to imagine possible outcomes and

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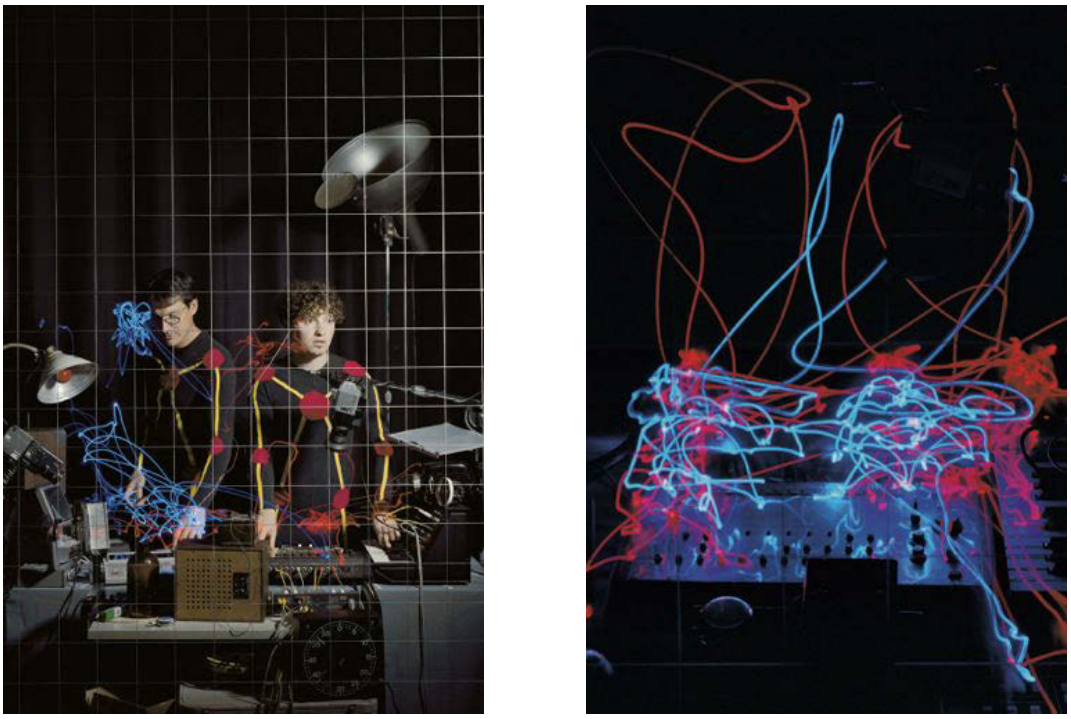
again undermine their scientific rigour. Prodger notes that in Philadelphia Muybridge switched to timers rather than tripwires. This meant that "[t]ime, suddenly, was the absolute currency of a Muybridge picture" (Prodger and Gunning 189).

preambles. It is their very looseness, their *interested unscientificness* that has made and continues to make them so useful to artists. Muybridge's caged subjects, held in place by the white grids of the background[31] and the black edges of the frame are evocative emblems of movement and flux without the fuzziness of more *realistic* representations. Muybridge's use of the grid abstracts the human form even as it contains it, leaving it floating in a space without referents.



Alexandre Castonguay and Adad Hannah, *Untitled images inspired by Frank and Lillian Gilbreth*, photographs, 2003-2004, commissioned by the now defunct Musée d'art urbain, Montreal.

By asserting this, I do not intend to undercut Marey's influence, for his layered, blurry, and abstract images do indeed show another way of representing movement over time, which was important to many artists, particularly the Futurists. But I do take issue with Braun's apparent desire to have it both ways: she wants Marey to be a pure disinterested scientist, but also wants him to be an important figure in Art History. This can be seen

[31] What Tom Gunning sees as "the modern space of calculation" (Prodger and Gunning 225).

clearly when she states, "[a]lthough it formed no part of his intentions, Marey's work in chronophotography had a seminal influence on early twentieth-century abstract art" (Braun 277). It is as if Braun feels that an affinity with art, such as that shown by Muybridge, would discredit the hero of her book.

Muybridge elucidated what Walter Benjamin would later term 'the optical unconscious', showing that, "much of everyday life takes place beneath the threshold of our conscious awareness" (Prodger and Gunning 224). As Walter Benjamin says in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction":

> Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is a familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. (Benjamin 237)

Just as knowledge of Muybridge's work affects the way certain paintings look, the opposite is also true—works produced after Muybridge affect the way we see his work (Prodger and Gunning 233). The context of a particular work of art as it moves through

time and space cannot be ignored. Meaning, whether attached to an Alberto Giacometti sculpture or one of Andy Warhol's signed soup cans, changes with context, and the unending flux of time and space ensure that the context itself is also ever changing. This does not remove meaning from objects or photographs; it just suggests that the meaning is unfixed and negotiable (as it always has been). In fact photographs are specifically well suited for this type of renegotiation as they can potentially hold a great deal of information and are quite portable (they can be physically moved from place to place, and they can also remain quite inert while the rest of the world around them changes).

Time as Subject

Once we have seen Muybridge or Marey's photographic studies of motion (or any other present-day derivatives) we can no longer see movement as flow or as a whole; we are taught that everything is capable of being dismantled photographically into ever-smaller parts. This dismantling is often equated with truth, as instant photographs were (and still largely are) seen to be more objective. The perception that instantaneity equaled objectivity, is perhaps the reason Muybridge came under fire for heavily editing, retouching, and cropping his work in a way that more scientific practitioners such as Marey did not. Tom Gunning, however, in an observation I endorse, sees this as distinguishing Muybridge as an artist rather than just a scientist (Prodger and Gunning 224-26).

The photographs of Muybridge and Marey, whether manipulated slightly or not, are more-or-less direct records of short excerpts of time and space. They showed what

transpired in front of a particular window (the camera's lens) at a specific moment in a way that people had never seen before. They broke down fluid events into discreet phases. It is hard to imagine now, but before Muybridge's examination of animal locomotion, concepts of how animals and humans moved were obfuscated by the limitations of human vision.

Rather than get bogged down in questions of scientific accuracy/usefulness, I find it productive to view both Muybridge and Marey as artists who employed (and created)[32] new tools in order to creatively examine motion and time. Although their quite different practices are often conflated, their collective contributions towards modern and contemporary art cannot be overestimated. Their research led directly to such media as motion pictures, cell animation, and comic books. In the long run, their individual production—intended as tools with which to understand motion—were appreciated by artists as a way to visualize and manipulate time, an ability equally suited to the desires of artists.

As Prodger observes, "Whether an exposure is long or short, a photograph records the elements of a scene as they appear in a particular period of time. This is one of the basic characteristics of photography, and what separates it from other visual media" (Prodger

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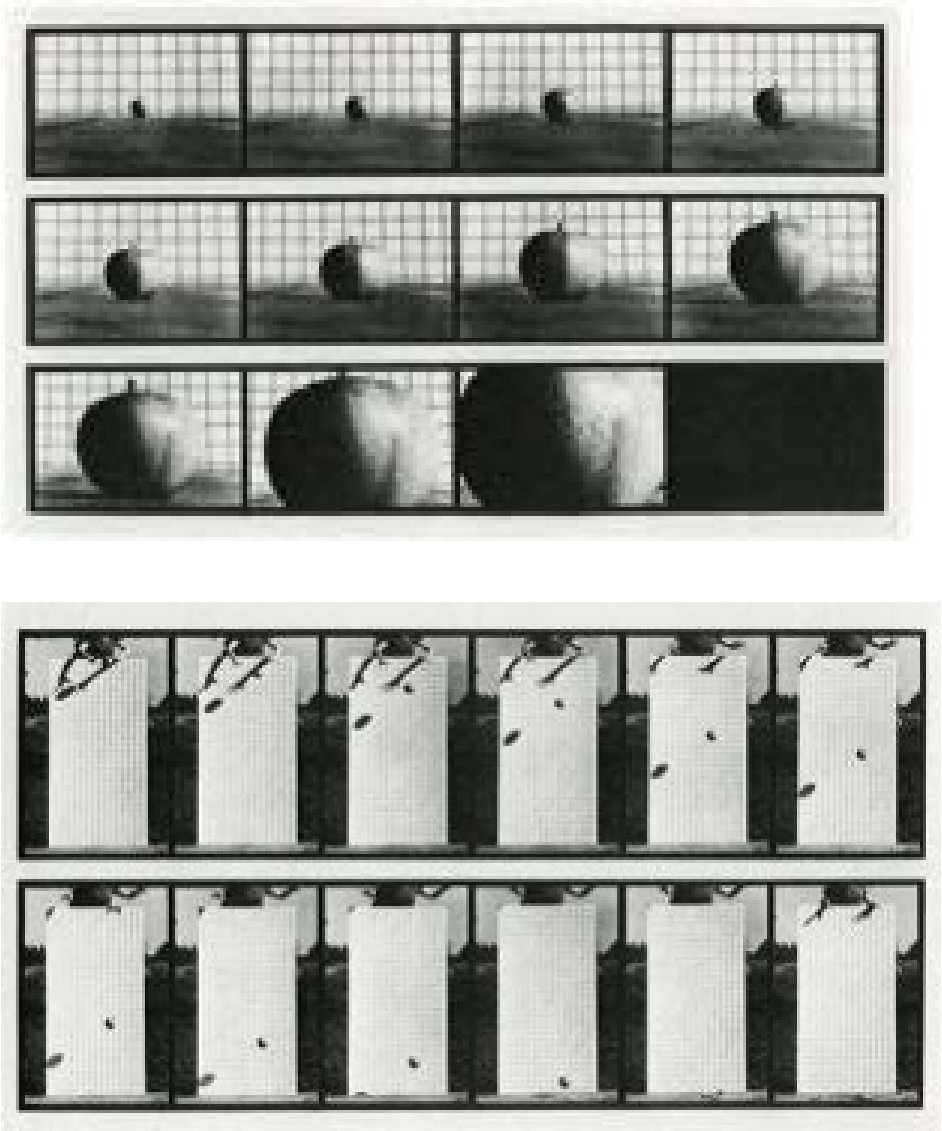
[32] The tools they created were mostly engineered devices used to trigger a series of photographs (Muybridge) or expose a single piece of film several times in a short period of time (Marey). I am differentiating here between the invention of photography as a chemical process and the engineering of devices to make photographs in new ways. Muybridge later on invented the Zoopraxiscope, which is why he has been called the father of motion pictures. Muybridge used the Zoopraxiscope to show that his instantaneous photos were real and were in fact part of the cycle of motion. During presentations he would pause the Zoopraxiscope often in order to go from moving to still. While Muybridge and Marey developed several technologies that would later be used in movies, they were both much more interested in the distilling of motion into stillness than they were in the reconstitution of the living.

and Gunning 32). This is not to say that the camera sees what the eye sees, a common misconception that does not work for several reasons, not least of which is that human vision is a tool of interpretation since images are finally constructed in the brain and not the eye.



Hollis Frampton, *Apple Advancing* and *Watermelon Falling (New Hampshire Midget Variation)*, both from *Sixteen Studies from Vegetable Locomotion*, 1975.

Hollis Frampton says that Muybridge "fastened upon time as his grand subject" (qtd. in Prodger and Gunning 267). Frampton seems especially suited to make a comment like

this as he began his career as a photographer and ended up as a filmmaker. While both Muybridge and Marey are credited with being the fathers of cinema,[33] Muybridge's rows of slightly differentiated frames approximate our current understanding of the workings of cinema more closely than Marey's amalgamations of motion captured on a single frame. Braun, writing about Muybridge, declares that "any sense of movement must be constructed by the viewer from these gestures, frame by frame" (237). Braun further states that "We have always assumed that Muybridge was photographing movement in time…[but] he was telling stories in space…" (251). He was of course also a researcher and a scientist, but storytelling was his main strength. He constructed photographic stories that readers could easily decode into a narrative about movement and interaction within a space so devoid of location (almost always shot against a formless grid) that the action could be transposed to any location the reader wished—a foreshadowing of blue-screen (and now, in the digital age, green-screen) technology. This imaginative space in Muybridge's work is what made it so appealing (and useful) to artists from the turn of the century to the present.

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[33] Muybridge for his Zoopraxiscope and Marey for his use of roll film and the development of a film transport system which stopped unexposed film over the lens for long enough to be exposed.

Chapter 2

Rodin and his Burghers—Movement, Surface, Sculpture, and Photography

Once we have seen Eadweard Muybridge or Etienne-Jules Marey's photographic studies of motion (or any other present day derivatives) we can no longer see movement as a whole—we are taught that every gesture or action is capable of being dismantled. In this case the disassembly is visual, but it is part of a larger epistemological attitude taking shape at the end of the nineteenth century. From this new perspective everything can be broken down—photographically, but also scientifically, mechanically, and technologically—into ever-smaller parts. This chapter considers the sculptural work of Auguste Rodin as an important contribution to the representation of moving human bodies, and the relationship between photography and sculpture is analyzed through this case study.

It was fascinating to read in Prodger's book that Muybridge had met Rodin, and my surprise at the unlikely overlap in their interests was compounded by my discovery that both Stanford University and the University of Pennsylvania had large collections built around the work of Rodin and Muybridge (Prodger and Gunning 228). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Rodin was one of the first subscribers to *Animal Locomotion* (Benedek 25). This shows that sculpture, as practiced by Rodin, has an important relationship with the chronophotographers—a shared interest in capturing movement, and

a keen awareness of surface and of photography's inability to penetrate this thin barrier.[1] The movement in Rodin's work does not come from the careful modeling of a single moment of motion, as captured by Thomas Eakins or Muybridge in a single exposure; rather, it is created by the interplay of various limbs (and their absence in some instances), of light and shadow, and of the conflict between material and representation.

Rodin created work that functioned in a new way, positioned precariously between the neoclassical figurative sculptures, such as those created by Bertel Thorwaldsen (*The Three Graces*) or François Rude (*La Marseillaise*), and the expressionism that would flourish in the first half of the twentieth century. The end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century were turbulent times and Rodin rolled with them, working for other artists in order to make ends meet while his own works were maligned in the Paris Salons. Finally, after many misadventures, including accusations of casting from life in relation to his 1877 sculpture *Age of Bronze*, Rodin was accepted and then touted as a genius who, at the turn of the century was one of the first artists to achieve such widespread recognition through a newly international press and the power of photography.

In this chapter I will be focusing on Rodin's 1895 bronze sculpture, *The Burghers of Calais*. It has been a source of inspiration in my work not only for the important place it holds within art history and the fact that it is so aesthetically compelling, but also because it offers ample opportunities for creating new meanings from a contemporary vantage

[1] Of course with the works of certain photographers such as Walker Evans, one can sometimes feel an empathy that would suggest something more than surface, but I would argue (without being too cynical) that this is almost pure projection.

point. There are a total of twelve bronze casts of the sculpture which trace a variegated path through time and space from the first 1895 cast currently located in front of the French city of Calais' city hall, to the final cast located in the Samsung-owned Rodin Gallery in downtown Seoul.[2] The standing of cast sculptures is interesting as one cannot quite say that the original is in Calais and the others are copies, as all are cast copies of a fragile plaster original. By investigating the conditions of the commissioning of Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais*, its eventual installation in 1895, the historical narrative the sculpture represents, and its current roles in twelve locations around the world, it is possible to examine evolving discourses of art, specifically sculpture and photography, and how they shape a contemporary appreciation of this celebrated sculpture.

[2] The 12 casts are located in the following locations: outside city hall of Calais, France; Ny Carlsberg Glyptoteket in Copenhagen; Royal Museum in Mariemont, Belgium; Victoria Tower Gardens, London; Rodin Museum in Philadelphia; Rodin Museum, Paris; Kunstmuseum in Basel, Switzerland; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington; National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo; Norton Museum, Pasadena; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and The Rodin Gallery (currently called PLATEAU), Seoul.

Auguste Rodin, *The Burghers of Calais*, cast bronze, 1895, Collection of Samsung, Seoul, South Korea.

The Burghers of Calais: *An Origin Story*

Before analyzing current ways of looking at Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais,* it is important to survey the roots of this canonic sculpture, from the turbulent events around its commissioning to its installation more than a decade later in 1895. The meaning of this sculpture is always caught between the details and specificity of its history vis-à-vis the original commission for Calais, and the global promotion and commercialization of the sculpture and its maker over the last hundred years. The history of this sculpture is significant because it illustrates the ability of an art object created within particular artistic and cultural parameters to function as more than just an historical artifact. In a museum, over a century later, this sculpture—perhaps surprisingly—speaks to the human condition while maintaining its cultural capital and artistic aura as an "original" Rodin.

First let us establish the historical narrative that this sculpture takes as its inspiration. In 1347, English troops under King Edward III invaded France at the start of what is now known as the Hundred Years' War. The British surrounded Calais for almost a year, and the Calaisians, suffering from starvation, eventually surrendered. Frustrated by the long delay in getting the city to surrender King Edward III transgressed the rules of war, and rather than accepting a ransom (as was the norm), the British king demanded that Calais send six of its wealthy citizens—undressed, nooses around their necks, and with the keys to their city—for the king to do with as he pleased. The six men, led by Eustache de Saint Pierre, volunteered to surrender and left Calais on their way to be hung by the British monarch. In the end, the British queen, Philippa of Hainault, believing that murdering the burghers would bring bad luck to her unborn child, convinced the king to have mercy, thereby saving the six men's lives.

In 1884 Omer Dewavrin (1839-1904), the last mayor of Calais as an autonomous principality, sought to commission a modern monument that would extol the virtues of patriotism and middle-class sacrifice exemplified over five hundred years before by Eustache de Saint Pierre (Elsen 66).[3] Calais was set to merge with its neighbour and sought a tribute to itself before this joining took place. It was under these circumstances that Dewavrin, having been advised by some friends who were also friendly with Rodin, chose to give the commission to the Parisian artist based on his rising reputation—in 1880 he had been awarded the prestigious commission for *The Gates of Hell.*[4] There was

[3] Earlier that year the French government had created a new law allowing cities to commission public monuments.

[4] Elsen suggests that if the commissioners had known Rodin's history of failure with other commissions they may not have been so hasty to award it to him (67). Rodin would work on the *Gates of*

no formal competition, a fact that angered many Calaisian artists who felt overlooked. It was under these conditions, and with an initial budget of 10,000 francs, that Rodin began to work on a piece that would break many accepted sculptural norms, and ultimately help define a modern sculptural aesthetic (Elsen 66-67). While the trials and tribulations around this commission are fascinating (as they are around *The Gates of Hell* as well) this chapter focuses only on those historical events related to ideas discussed herein.[5]

Challenging the Monument

Rodin wanted to show his subject-matter in a format which, at the end of the nineteenth century, represented a new sculptural aesthetic; it is hard to imagine today, but when Rodin proposed six near life-sized figures in a non-hierarchical configuration it was a revolutionary act (Elsen 75). Before this, commemorative Western sculpture had always focused on oversized singular heroes, generals on horses, great thinkers, et cetera, each flanked by smaller, less significant figures in an almost uniformly top-down approach. Although originally conceived of as a monument to Eustache de Saint Pierre alone, Rodin proposed a group of individuals each with differing emotions rather than a single isolated hero. He represents the six burghers as equals, similar in height and size, ultimately creating a more moving portrait of the group's sacrifice. His work thus breaks from the French academic mold in several ways. Firstly, Rodin represents the six as non-heroic equals in direct opposition to the triangular monument structure favoured at the time.

Hell until his death in 1917. Commissioned as the door for a new Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris, the commission gave Rodin a great government owned studio and functioned as his sculptural sketchbook where he could work out ideas for other projects. It is somewhat ironic that his *Gates*, which had changed constantly while he was alive should after his death be set in bronze.

[5] For a fascinating blow-by-blow account of the commissioning of the *Burghers* see Elsen 66-67.

Caspar Clemens Zumbusch, *Beethoven Memorial*, 1880, on the Denkmal, Vienna.

For a good example of a commemorative sculpture produced around the same time, see the 1880 Beethoven monument by Caspar Zumbusch (1830-1915) in Vienna. It features an oversize central figure on a raised architectural base surrounded by smaller allegorical figures. It clearly illustrates the neo-classical frontal pyramid. Also see Ettore Ferrarri's Monument to Giuseppe Mazzini (Curtis 45). Rather than showing heroes as being full of bravado Rodin shows the burghers dejected and sullen as they head towards their deaths.[6] Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais* was in many ways an affront to Academic sculpture that adhered to a strict set of conventions and to the salons that exhibited and rewarded such sculpture.

[6] At the stage of the narrative that Rodin represents the six men believe they are heading to their deaths at the hands of the British king.

Although the commissioners in Calais had hoped to show Rodin's models in the Paris Salons starting in 1885 as a way to raise awareness of and funds for the project, it soon became clear that his work would not fit the mold of a conventional monument (Elsen 66). The surprisingly forward thinking commissioners would have certainly felt the force of this normalizing pressure that dictated the acceptable forms of expression in nineteenth century France (as well as other countries that looked to France for artistic guidance), and it is to their credit that in most matters they stood behind Rodin.

Rodin chose to level his subjects even further by reducing the base on which the bronze would stand, allowing the *Burghers* to exist closer to the viewer than any monument before it. As Rosalind Krauss has pointed out, the emergence of modern sculpture is linked to this removal of the incorporated plinth. The removal of a formal base can be seen as a pre-requisite for the new relations to site and place, landscape and architecture, as outlined in Krauss' "Sculpture in the Expanded Field". By eschewing the often ornate architectural plinth favoured for public works, Rodin aimed to have his tragic yet subtly heroic men occupy a space within the city that was not set apart by a rationalizing base. Originally opting for a slightly raised base, Rodin decided that he wanted the work to sit directly on the stones in front of the Place des Armes, rather than be lifted above and separated from the citizens of Calais by an alienating plinth (Elsen 88). Rodin didn't bring this up with the commissioners until closer to completion when he was much more established (probably feeling more confident at that time to request such an unconventional display). When he first proposed that his sculpture be placed on the stones of the square his commissioners objected, after which Rodin suggested that they

put the sculpture at the top of a plain two-story structure some six meters in the air. This was also refused, and eventually they settled on a reduced base, but not the street-level installation Rodin had desired. Rodin's exact wishes surrounding the installation are not part of the historical record, reducing scholars such as Elsen to hypothesizing about Rodin's *true* intentions by looking at photographs of small models on a shelf in Rodin's studio (Elsen 75). One thing is certain though: there was a great deal of negotiation around the base of the sculpture, which underscores the revolutionary idea it represented at the time—that a sculpture could live at ground level, rubbing elbows with the citizens (Elsen 80). This ultimately paved the way for sculptors such as Robert Morris and Richard Serra, whose sculptures compete with us for public space rather than being set apart by an isolating pedestal.

Monument-making has always been an art of compromise; when Rodin's sculpture was finally dedicated on June 3, 1895, it was next to the public washrooms at Place Richelieu on a pedestal of one-and-a-half meters, surrounded by a fence—certainly not what Rodin had wished for (Elsen 88). This first cast was moved several times due to war and repairs, and currently sits in front of Calais' city hall on a lower base and without a fence—much closer to how Rodin wished the work to be displayed (Beausse, Haudiquet, and Hofer et 13).

The *Burghers* during the production of *The Burghers of Seoul*, 2006, to show the scale of the sculpture.

It is interesting to note that much of the literature about Rodin's *Burghers* refers to the figures as life-size. However, I believe that rather than being actual life-size, Rodin created that impression. The height of the sculpture is well over two meters, and even if one subtracts the base we are still left with figures that tower over the average viewer. On top of that their heads, hands and feet are all disproportionately sized; if their bodies are only 1.2x life-sized, their extremities are closer to 1.5x or more.[7] In my opinion this misconception comes from a perceptual trick; Rodin's figures are designed to appear life-sized and un-idealized while maintaining a slight heroic air, a feat Rodin achieves by realizing them at a size slightly larger than life, yet much smaller than something as grandiose as François Rude's *La Marseillaise* (1833-36) monument, for example. If it were actually life-size the work would not have the same presence, and from normal viewing distances the figures might read as smaller than life-sized.

[7] These figures are based on my extensive experience with casts in Seoul, New York, Calais, London, Canberra, and Montreal, as well as analysis of photographs in Elsen's book, and online.

Left to Right: *The Etymology of Morphology*, glass, 1996, for this work Quinn cast parts of his body in silvered glass, *Triaxial Planck Density* lead, 2000, a collapsed lead cast of the artist's body, *Self*, frozen blood, 2001, in which Quinn cast his own head in frozen blood (originally done in 1991 and then remade every five years).

For a contemporary example of this phenomenon see Marc Quinn's sculptures of himself in blood, glass, or lead: though almost exactly life-size they seem meek and fragile. Even Rodin's own *Age of Bronze* suffers from this perceptual deceit. It is life-size, yet comes across as diminutive and delicate.

Also, as *The Burghers of Calais*—like most of Rodin's figurative work, with the exception of *Age of Bronze*—was up-scaled from a clay model using a three dimensional pantograph, it is possible that he tried it at something closer to life-size and was not satisfied with the result. Whatever the reasons for the *Burghers*' final size, it is misleading to call it "life-size". What is important, though, is that it is rendered at a scale that one can relate to; the empathy evoked in the viewer when looking up into the sunken eyes of Eustache de Sainte-Pierre would not be possible with the original one-third scale model or a cast twice as large.

Auguste Rodin's *Age of Bronze* (1877) as seen in my video of the same title, SD video, 2004.

Rethinking Sculpture

> For many reasons *The Burghers of Calais* stands at the beginning of modern public sculpture, bridging traditional and modern public monuments.… Rodin wanted to bring the modern monument down to earth, to unite the past and present, the dead with the living. (Elsen 85)

As Rodin's career matured there were important shifts in the tectonics of sculpture as the "classical figure" gave way to the "modernist object" (Potts 5). In *The Sculptural Imagination* by Alex Potts, a book that considers the enduring impact of the figural tradition in sculpture, Rodin is a pivotal figure. This is not so surprising, however, once one observes that Rodin operated at a juncture between neo-classicism and modernism. Modernist objects, brought down from their pedestals and no longer satisfied with trying to look like something they were not, began to occupy *our* space, to exist beside, behind, over and under us in awkward ways that forced a rethinking of sculpture's evocative possibilities. Potts explores the development of sculpture from figurative art—where it was when Rodin began his career—to Modernism and on through Minimalism.

Minimalism, while not obviously relevant to Rodin's oeuvre, is vital to the contemporary viewing of his sculptures.

When Rodin was working on *The Burghers of Calais*, sculpture was still often considered painting's poor uncle, a crude art of representation, lacking the emotional subtlety of oil on canvas. It was Rodin's attempt to make sculptures that were faithful to their figurative subjects, while also becoming self-referential objects that placed him at the forefront of modernizing tendencies in sculpture. While Rodin was still making figurative work, he was also clearly interested in materiality—in the weight, mass, surface, and solidity that eventually led artists to largely abandon explicitly figurative work for much of the twentieth century. While figuration would of course return to art discourse, it could be argued that in some sense it never fully disappeared. Indeed, even the most minimal of sculptures often exists in such obvious relation to the human body that it must be considered in some way figurative (this can be seen as analogous to the way photographs can, in a way, always be viewed as self-portraits, as I argue in Chapter 3). For instance, Constantin Brancusi's WWI memorial *The Table of Silence* (1938), a stone table surrounded by stone stools, creates such a vivid sense of the people who could be there discussing or thinking about past wars that it cannot be read as simply pieces of stone (Causey 24).[8] Piero Manzoni's *Magic Base* (1961), Robert Morris' *Two Columns* (1961),

[8] Interestingly, the historical photograph in Causey's book (25) shows the stools as being rather close to the table, perhaps 45cm away, while an online search shows that they are currently more like 120cm away, a change that removes the sense of a close conversation and in doing so removes much of the reference to the body—what is left has a much colder feeling.

and Bruce Nauman's *Neon Templates of the Left Half of My Body Taken at Ten-Inch Intervals* (1966) all take their strength from a clear relationship to an inferred body.[9]

Robert Morris, *Two Columns*, plywood and acrylic, 1961.

Penelope Curtis' *Sculpture 1900-1945* takes Rodin's influential "Pavillon de l'Alma" as its starting point. Rodin's "Pavillon", paid for by his supporters, was a bold move, a self-organized retrospective held at the same time as the 1900 Universal Exhibition (Curtis 1).[10] It was this exhibition, and the international attention it drew, that cemented Rodin's place as one of France's top artists. Of course it is difficult to bestow historical turning points on the shoulders of individual artists, but what Penelope Curtis refers to as Rodin's "dominant position" in her preface is a perfect point of departure for transitions in modern sculpture (x).

[9] Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1969-70) had never fully come alive for me until the summer of 2009 when I saw his *Spiral Jetty* film from 1970 at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid. In the film we see a figure that I assumed to be the artist running around the shell-shaped jetty as he is filmed from a closely-following helicopter.

[10] Although not unprecedented. Courbet made a similar move outside the 1855 Exposition Universelle with his self-styled "Pavillon de Réalisme".

While many sculptors were seeking out a perceived purity in the polished curves of neoclassical works in marble or stone, others began to see the limitations of an aesthetic that mimicked both historical sculpture and the human body itself without talking about *being* human. Sculptures like Canova's carefully rendered *Cupid and Psyche,* which led Gustave Flaubert to affectionately kiss the cold carved stone, were able to show the human body as a smooth image of perfection, while others, including Rodin who had carved out his fair share of smooth marble beauties, began to evoke life through roughly hewn forms and oddly juxtaposed limbs (Gross 70).

> I looked at nothing else in the gallery. I returned to it several times and at last I kissed the armpit of the swooning woman who stretches her long marble arms towards Love. And the foot! The head! The profile! May I be forgiven. It was my first sensual kiss in a long while. It was also something more; I kissed beauty itself. It was to genius that I dedicated my ardent enthusiasm. (Flaubert qtd. in Gross 215)

While Flaubert's signs of affection are humorous, his appreciation of the figurative representation would have been distasteful to those who subscribed to the emerging aesthetic attitude Potts identifies around the turn of the century, where, "the autonomy of a sculpture was compromised if it projected the semblance of being what it itself patently was not. A sculptural object could only devalue its integrity by masquerading as a living human subjectivity" (17). So while allegorical sculptures by Canova or Thorwaldsen can amaze—and even arouse, in Flaubert's case—with their ability to render flesh in stone,

they remain illustrations, and ultimately the more *realistic* bodies reveal themselves to be lifelike yet lifeless. In contrast, the fractured and often limbless sculptures of Rodin, which one would never mistake for a living person can often engender a surprising empathy.

Rodin personally lived the transition from an anonymous carver of civic works to an artist more famous than his subject matter. It was not just the perceived beauty of the work, but also the *genius* of its creator, that gave a sculpture its *aura* (Curtis 5).[11] Rodin was an important figure in the transition from sculpture as monument to sculpture as autonomous work of art. Even before his death some of Rodin's "monumental designs [were] erected in ways which defied the conventional norms…so that major local commissions like *The Burghers of Calais* could be erected well away from the original site," to serve as artworks in places which had no connection with the initial commission (Curtis 66).[12] "Even monuments which had 'failed' were resuscitated and erected" (Curtis 66). The difference was that this time they were erected as works of collectable sculptural art rather than as memorial monuments, and in this sense they were a great success.[13]

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[11] When Rodin's *Balzac* was erected as a monument to "A. Balzac and A. Rodin" it was a significant junction in the relationship between artist and model and artist and public. The double dedication highlights the shift from "monument representing its subject" to "representing its maker" (Curtis 67).

[12] The sculptures were always preceded by publicity. This portable critical framework for Rodin's works paved the way for the current distribution of his works worldwide (or at least in the Northern Hemisphere).

[13] Curtis notes, "'monuments' in the second half of the century have chiefly been about their artists and not about commemoration at all" (67). Of course Maya Lin's *Vietnam War Memorial* (1982) is one sculpture that is still obviously commemorative, and indeed seen as a parallel to Rodin's *Burghers* by Elsen.

Some other sculptors saw the advanced casting techniques and the legion of assistants employed by Rodin to cast and finish his sculptures as a symptom of industrialization and called for a return to pre-industrial working methods. Artists such as Eric Gill, André Derain, and Constantin Brancusi (who himself moved from modeling to direct carving between 1907 and 1909) represent this return to earlier working methods (Curtis 73,78). Carving in stone or wood was considered more "honest", as the endless reworking possible with clay and casting is not possible (Curtis 77). This argument for unmediated work is similar to the debate that pits traditional chemical-based photography against digital photography where every pixel can be manipulated endlessly.[14]

After showing how sculpture was able to escape its restrictive history by erasing its borders and engaging viewers as active participants in the work, Potts laments that the "freeing up of the boundaries between different media, and the supposedly critically aware liberation from traditional norms this produces, has effectively become just one further wonder of the triumph of late capitalism" (4). Potts seems to think that sculpture has been subsumed by popular culture and consumerism to the point that it is no longer allowed or able to possess its own awkward objecthood—to be *troublesome* within a space as he thinks it once could be. He may be right; the current climate of late capitalism's fractured post-modernism (a movement that threatens to slowly push on rather than recede and be replaced by something else) makes it difficult for a singular sculptural object to capture our attention the way it once may have. Installation art, on the other hand, can scatter our attention and create rambling (though sometimes quite

[14] That debate has been rendered obsolete by the dwindling production of almost all analog film supplies. We may never know whether demand reduced supply or the other way around.

engaging and successful) experiences, such as those created by Christoph Büchel or Thomas Hirschhorn.[15] Though often interesting to wander around or inside of, installations can lack the intense focus of a heightened sculptural experience.

Photography, Sculpture, and Viewing: Images, Angles, and Problems

Born in 1840, Rodin grew up alongside photography, and by the 1880's was regularly using photography to document and re-imagine his work—Rodin regularly drew with ink on photographs of his work in order to see what changes he would like before they were executed. Rodin also had his assistants cast his sculptures whenever changes were made. These two techniques combine to become a mechanical workflow analogous to computer aided design (CAD) or Photoshop with its capacity to undo—to step backwards in a process—in order to get back to a previous state which you realize after making a change is actually preferable. Although his main medium was sculpture, he appears to have understood photography well and enjoyed collecting it.[16] Rodin also used photographs in the production process as a way of communicating ideas to his commissioners in Calais and elsewhere. Photography was an effective way for him to present working models for it obfuscated the scale of an object, allowing the viewer (including the artist himself) to imagine how it might look full-size. While photography provided an excellent means with which to catch a pose and work from it long after the model has left, I have not yet read of Rodin using this practice. In fact, the photos that are often mistaken for

[15] See Buchel's *Simply Botiful*, 2006, Hauser & Wirth Coppermill, London, England, or his *Piccadilly Community Centre, 2011*, Hauser & Wirth Piccadilly, London, England. Also see Thomas Hirshhorn's *Universal Gym*, 2009, Gladstone Gallery, New York, or his *Das Auge (The Eye)*, 2008, shown at The Power Plant, Toronto, 2011.

[16] "Rodin collected over 7000 photographs of his own work and the work of others" (Pinet qtd. in Johnson 68).

preparatory studies for his *Age of Bronze* (1877) showing Auguste Neyt, a muscular twenty-two year old Belgian soldier, standing naked on a small cart were actually produced after the sculpture—Neyt having obligingly assumed the exact same pose as the plaster sculpture that was modeled upon him earlier. These photographs were made as part of Rodin's defense when, in 1877, he was scandalized by accusations that he had not modeled *Age of Bronze*, but had instead cast it from a real body. A furious and humiliated Rodin quickly put together a commission to prove his innocence. The scandal, although painful for Rodin, ultimately helped establish his career (Elsen 40-45, Rilke 80).

Gaudenzio Marconi's photograph of Auguste Neyt, the model for Rodin's *Age of Bronze*. Collection of Musée Rodin, Paris.

In art and art history classes we are shown photographs telling us which sculptures are important, and more subtly, which viewing angles we should take up should we ever find ourselves in front of the actual works. Geraldine A. Johnson points out that in art history books we see "how the photograph itself acts to construct the meaning or meanings attributed to the objects under consideration" (8). Indeed we learn ways of seeing, and once learned they are hard to forget.

Rodin also used photography as another way of disseminating his art, and worked closely with many photographers including Jacques-Ernst Bulloz, Eugène Druet, Jean-François Limet, Karl-Henri (Charles) Bodmer, and Edward Steichen. Some of the photographs taken by these men were signed by Rodin, presumably to show that they were approved representations of his three-dimensional works.[17]

A sculpture, unlike a painting (or photograph), can often be circumambulated to reveal completely new visual information from one vantage-point to another. These multiple views suggest that a sculpture can be viewed from any angle, and while this may be physically possible, I would suggest that artists work with particular views in mind. This is a subtle, but important difference.[18] Rodin thought his large bronzes were "best seen from five or six points of view," and he directed the photographers he worked with "in such matters as viewing angle, distance, and composition" (Elsen 82). This is to be expected as when making a sculpture; particular viewpoints are always more prevalent than others, resulting in, while perhaps not fixed viewpoints, at least preferred ones. This effect is not a one-way street though, as during "the past century and a half, photographs of sculpture also have had a significant, but usually unacknowledged, impact on the design of sculpture…and on the reception, interpretation, and display of sculpture, both old and new" (Johnson 1). It is probably not so much a case of artists ensuring that their sculptures will translate well to photography, as it is a way of looking that artists (and the

[17] Rodin also benefited from the marriage of an international press and photography, becoming, as Elsen claims, the "first artist in history to experience genuine worldwide fame" (13).

[18] This is what I had in mind when I made *The Burghers of Seoul* (2006). By putting a round track around *The Burghers of Calais* I wanted to illustrate the inability to record the sculptural experience on video.

rest of the public) have acquired through our relationships with lens-based images.[19] Elsen praises the photographs taken by Limet "under Rodin's direction, that show us exactly which angles the sculptor thought were most successful for viewing the final monument" (85). But I would argue that the implied pre-eminence of a particular viewing angle can have a detrimental effect on viewers' experiences before a real object if they abandon their own subjective viewpoint in favour of a prescribed one.

Potts writes about Boccioni's "foiled dynamism caught up in a heavy, awkward yet exuberant disarray" below an image of the Italian Futurists' *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913) and this leads me to ask a question (107). The image credit says that this bronze is 114cm x 84cm x 37cm. However, having seen this piece, and even walked around it, I remember it being much larger. How is this possible? Perhaps I created an image in my mind from photographs I saw in numerous art history books and slideshows, so that, when I saw it in real life at only 114 centimeters tall, it failed to correct a memory I had already created through the brains' ability to extrapolate and render a three-dimensional memory from a photographic reproduction? If this is possible, it creates a strange paradox in which the imprint in my memory of a sculpture seen previously in a photograph can be stronger than the imprint of the actual three-dimensional work. Perhaps this is due to the singular (and therefore stronger) viewpoint provided by photography.

[19] Works such as Boccioni's *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* and Giacomo Balla's *Dynamism of a Dog* (1912) are obviously informed by advances in photography.

According to Adolf Hildebrand, we shape our worldview from two-dimensional images that are then interpolated and extrapolated in our mind, resulting in a three-dimensional experience whose reference is two-dimensional (Hildebrand qtd. in Potts 125). The same is true of artworks we have learned about from books, slides, and now online sources. One problem with this theory is that it completely ignores material, at least in terms of any density or mass, reducing objects to a kind of purely visual form that robs them of many attributes. Yet most museums do not allow visitors to touch the work, and the lighting is often the uniform *photographic* light that denies shadows and renders objects as floating forms. In an interaction of this kind that discounts such attributes as weight, temperature, hardness, and other senses not functioning through the ocular nerve, perhaps a two-dimensional photographic view is almost as good.

Kenneth Gross' *The Dream of the Moving Statue* presents selected case studies of the ubiquitous fantasy of a sculpture that comes alive or is given life by viewers in order to examine the motivations behind this phenomenon. From ancient myths such as the Pygmalion, to the movies of Charlie Chaplin, or the recent toppling of a monumental sculpture of Saddam Hussein, the desire of humans to see sculptures move can in fact engender such movement. Statues (and the photographs that often represent them) appear to present bodies frozen in time, "arresting time itself"; indeed Gross notes how this is similar to the way Roland Barthes sees photography (Gross 15). But figurative statues are rarely indexical in the same way photographs are—they are not direct impressions captured on a prepared surface. Instead they are imagined others, human stand-ins created

by artists, and incapable of any action, utterance, or reaction, save that which is imagined by a living viewer.

In his writing about sculptures (although his comments are arguably also pertinent to photographs) Gross states, "we recognize in the statue an image of the fate of bodies, a fate elected out of a desire to deny our vulnerable, penetrable, wasting, and dying physical persons, to provide ourselves with idealized stone mirrors" (17). Gross goes on to itemize the differences between humans and statues, from the latter's inability to absorb "food, bullets, air, sounds, or signs" to their reluctance to release anything either ("words, blood, excrement, children") (32).[20] So how then can these inert lumps become so visceral, so human? Is it in the way they compete with us for space, unlike paintings that are willing to hang on the periphery awaiting our gaze, or photographs, which only come to life when we hold them close to our faces and touch the familiar old paper? Perhaps figurative sculpture—often hollow, commonly made out of materials that can withstand the elements—is the perfect foil for our desires; a surface shell below which we can imagine into being whatever it is we desire or fear.

In relation to documentary photography Martha Rosler argues "against the possibility of a nonideological aesthetic; any response to an image is inevitably rooted in social knowledge—specifically, in social understanding of cultural products" (268). Artists such as Diane Arbus, Walker Evans, and Dorothea Lange, who purported to be making

[20] "Statues are comfortably without hidden insides; they void the human body's scandalous interior life, its hidden spasms, desires, reflexes, motions, and noises…" (Gross 32). Photography does this too. My videos do it as well, though they then begin to break down, revealing some of the *scandalous* workings of the human body.

documentary photographs from an objective standpoint—often as evidence or proof, exemplify the documentary photography Rosler criticizes. Rosler wants these artists to admit their "passionate judgements", to put forward specific arguments rather than generalizations about the human condition (269). Can the same be said of the images of sculpture found in art history books? Documentary photographs of sculpture in books are of course trying to replicate firsthand experience of the sculpture for readers, yet just like the images Rosler is challenging they each carry ideological messages about how we should view sculptures. While Rosler makes a strong case, face-to-face experiences with sculpture are often mediated as well, whether by the design or premise of the museum as a whole, as in Seoul's Rodin Gallery (discussed later in this chapter), or the decisions related to exhibition of the work such as lighting, placement, frame, etc.

René-Jacques, *The Three Shades*, photograph of Rodin's sculpture, 1946.

When we go to a museum to experience the *real* object we are still only allowed to apprehend it visually, our other senses blocked by institutional and preservational concerns.[21] Often, having been familiar with a photographic image of the sculpture, we will be let down by the original; while much of the writing about the play of light and

[21] Maybe another message we receive from photos of sculpture is that we do not need to see the actual pieces, that through the photograph we have seen enough—we have seen the correct view.

shadows in Rodin's work may have been true in the studio at Muedon or in the photographs by Steichen or René-Jacques, you will likely never get to experience *The Three Shades* like this, as hard lighting of the type seen in René-Jacques photograph is (perhaps regretfully) extremely rare in Museums.[22]

Certainly photography would be the medium best suited for a reading of sculpture if one were not able to see it in the flesh, as it translates the surfaces somewhat accurately.[23] But photographs deny the scale and the face-to-face nature of sculpture, they force us to create the object in our mind through interpolation and then try to create meaning in dialog with that imagined object. This essentially means that we are creating the meaning of the work while missing much of the important dialectical encounter that only a real meeting can produce. We become a ventriloquist playing both roles in the conversation, and creating the meaning of the work through a feedback loop with ourselves. "[D]espite the availability of increasingly sophisticated technologies, the use of any two-dimensional medium to document three-dimensional works of art will always leave something to be desired since a crucial physical and psychological distance is inevitably maintained between object and viewer" (Johnson 15). The physical and psychological experience of being face-to-face for hours with the dark patina of *The Burghers of Calais* in Seoul, or the strong desire to drag strangers over to show them the virtues of the sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, or the exhilaration of being under

[22] Potts reminds the reader that before the middle of the nineteenth century indoor sculpture was often designed for viewing by candlelight and torchlight (42).

[23] *The Burghers of Seoul*—my first work based on Rodin's Les Bourgeois de Calais—uses a camera rotating on a track around the original sculpture to draw attention to the failure of video to accurately represent a sculptural experience.

the same dark cloud as *The Burghers of Calais* in London's Victoria Gardens ultimately could not be conveyed through a photograph.

Nevertheless, while a photograph can never replicate the firsthand experience of sculpture, the photography of sculpture does have value unto itself. Photographs of sculpture such as those of Rodin's work by Edward Steichen, Stephen Haweis and Henry Coles are unquestionably works of art, while not conveying the same information as the original sculptures they represent. One must concede that it is valuable to be able to have some form of experience of a sculptural object via photography or other media, as most people are simply not able to travel the world looking at sculpture while they can certainly develop a point of view through the mediation of photography. It is the non-visual that photography has trouble capturing, since the full apprehension of sculpture requires physical presence—one looks at photographs, but one must share space with sculptures.

What You Experience Is What You Get: Phenomenology and the Generation of Meaning

> There can be no purely visual looking. We are always apprehending things in space in a way that encompasses both seeing and coming into contact with them. (Potts 126)

Potts' book also explores phenomenology as it relates to sculpture and the new prominence of the object in discussions around three-dimensional art in the 1960s.

Writings by Michael Fried, Robert Morris, Edmund Husserl, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty all explore how one's perception activates the objects (including, of course, art objects) around us. Suddenly viewing was no longer thought of as something the eye did in isolation (disembodied) but was imagined as "embedded" in the body and inextricably "bound up with the broader situation of the body within the physical environment" (Potts 208). This also meant that viewing was not only the domain of the eyes, even though a large part of the other senses' experience of a sculpture is made through extrapolation based on data received through the optic nerve. For instance the heaviness of a Richard Serra sculpture seen in a gallery might be felt in our bodies, but it is created by our own psyche based on information that entered through our eyes (since most of us have never taken a hammer to a Richard Serra piece to hear the thick rumble of steel) so for all we know they could be made of painted Styrofoam.[24]

Perception, however, is not just reception, and our gaze is always a creative one. The viewer creates the object of their gaze through an interaction. Therefore, as Merleau-Ponty states, "We never attain a purely objective view, it is always open to the passage of time and new views/ways of seeing. So an object, no matter how closely studied, is never fully set, is always open to a re-negotiation" (qtd. in Potts 219). While experiences of sculptural objects were always partly phenomenological, the more recent acknowledgement that viewers were involved in the creation of meaning in relation to a particular work began to be considered by artists who increasingly designed their work

[24] What do we sacrifice in experience for the sake of preservation? This raises the question do artists create works knowing that they will not be touched, and if so how does this affect the work they make?

for just such an interaction. Even if a sculpture like *The Burghers of Calais* was not designed with this explicitly in mind, it becomes subject to these new considerations by virtue of it remaining an art object today.

Merleau-Ponty, in advocating a phenomenological framework, "wanted to get away from any implication that the viewing subject and the viewed object exist as discreet entities" (Potts 222).[25] That is to say that the interaction is not just a conduit between the art object and the viewer, but is a third entity, a whorl of generated meanings living between the subjectivity of the viewer and the objectivity of the sculpture. This space of negotiation and meaning generation is addressed in more detail in Chapter 3. Referring to Merleau-Ponty, Potts states, "If there is one thing that interesting visual art consistently does, particularly sculpture, it is to plant one in a region where one can no longer maintain a categorical distinction between mind and matter, between the representational flexibility of language and the stuff of the material world" (229). Potts references Herder's 1778 essay "Sculpture: Some observations of form and shape from Pygmalion's creative dream," in order to suggest that a close reading of sculpture "makes us aware of our basic physical engagement with things in the world in ways that the viewing of painting does not" (29).

[25] This could be seen to relate to Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of *Relational Aesthetics.* Within Bourriaud's framework, art lives and meaning is created in the encounters between art, audience, and artist in a fluid back and forth. The most important element of this is the direct relationships between people, where the art object is a catalyst for these interpersonal relationships. The clearest difference is that Merleau-Ponty and Potts are still talking about relationships between people and objects, while Bourriaud is more concerned with interpersonal relationships that happen to be created via objects, actions, or even contexts. In both these frameworks, the work of art (whether a tangible object or even a series of instructions) must be thought of as somehow steering the interaction.

Phenomenologically, how does viewing a painting or a photograph differ from viewing a sculpture? Is there a difference in the implication of our body in each type of viewing? This is in some ways a trick question as one does not just view a sculpture; we feel its weight, bulk, temperature, et cetera, and in ways we do not with a two-dimensional image.[26] Also, our angle of viewing as we wander (or are led) alters our experience of sculpture greatly, which is not as true of our experience of images; an interaction with a sculpture is inherently more visceral than an experience with a painting. When looking at a painting or a photograph one of course hopes to view it from straight on, but if for any reason—say another gallery visitor is standing in front of you—you have to alter your angle of incidence, your brain easily corrects the experience in your head and you are able to *read* the work no differently than if you were two steps to the left.[27]

One of the most liberating aspects of a phenomenological approach is that it can free one from the burden of history. This is not to say that one can ever have a "purely" phenomenological point of view, because we are always historical subjects—writing as we read, and reading as we write—in our small corners of a constantly expanding history. And yet we might strive to experience artworks not from a position of a viewer receiving information, but as an active historical agent, aware of the importance of the past, but free to generate new meanings based on personal experience. In fact I think that historical knowledge can allow us the freedom to give weight to that which is sometimes hardest to trust—a highly subjective personal reading of a work of art. That is not to say that the

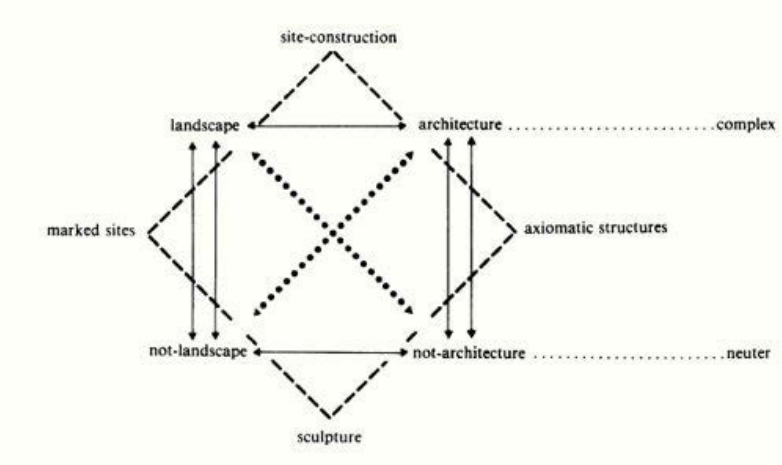
[26] Again, even if we do not actually touch these objects, we can still have the ersatz experience of touching through seeing in a way that is much more difficult with a painting.

[27] Other examples of this are watching a movie from the seats at the side of the theatre, or watching TV while lying on a couch.

viewer should not endeavor to know more about a work, but by placing value on the meaning, we create ourselves in conversation with a work of art, we remove some of the mediation and ultimately allow a stronger relationship to develop between the viewer and the work. This new relationship can certainly begin with a guidebook, a didactic panel, or a sign with an arrow that says *Nineteenth Century French Sculpture*, but by fostering one's own perception in relation to history, a stronger bond can be formed between a viewer and an historical work of art such as *The Burghers of Calais*.

The Burghers of Calais *Today: Sculpture After the Expanded Field*

In "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", Rosalind Krauss creates a diagram to express the relationships and the sites of creativity between *landscape*, *architecture*, *not-landscape*, and *not-architecture*. Though somewhat difficult to understand (and even harder to describe in words) it does allow for a dividing up of territories. Sculpture occupies the bottom corner of a diamond shape, with *not-landscape* and *not-architecture* as its two bounding factors. The other corners of the diamond are *marked sites*, *site-construction*, *and axiomatic structures* (Krauss, *Sculpture* 284).



Rosalind Krauss' diagram from "Sculpture in the Expanded Field."

Krauss details how, after sculpture made its break from the architectural structures it had occupied until the late nineteenth century, it finally achieved its own objecthood with modernism and the accompanying sitelessness, "functionally placeless and largely self-referential" (*Sculpture* 280). After World War II, perhaps looking for some sort of stability after the upheavals of war, sculpture went *back to the land*, becoming inseparable from terra firma in such site-specific works as Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1969-70) and Robert Morris' *Observatory* (1970). No matter how you read Krauss' diagrams one thing is very clear: sculpture is defined by its relationship to landscape and architecture. The opposition between these coordinates and their polar opposites (*not-landscape* and *not-architecture*) only reinforces the concept that sculpture must relate to its environment; it must take root. Within this framework the *Burghers* can easily be seen as aimless refugees (from a time and a place far, far, away) as thoroughly out of context in Seoul as it is in Pasadena, the flat base of the sculpture a clear symbol of its rootlessness.[28]

I want to suggest an alternate model for this far-flung series, however. What if the twelve bronze casts are considered as a strong global network, the nodes of which are protected in museums around the world; not relying on delicate software, or subject to the decay of other types of networks, they are forever linked to one another and through their

[28] Rodin's idea to mount *The Burghers of Calais* without a plinth was radical in that is attempted to allow the object to join its surroundings rather than be set apart from them. However in practice while the *Burghers* may be literally in the same space as the viewer, the sculpture tends to float over the floor due to the integrated base, denying them the same *thereness* as say Richard Serra's *Circuit* (1972) or Tony Smith's *Die* (1962). While many of the bases on which the various casts sat on have been replaced by shorter ones over the years, only the Seoul cast sits directly on the tiled floor without a base of any kind. About seven of the casts are very close to ground level: set on concrete slabs surrounded by grass or on grey wooden bases designed to keep viewers slightly back.

similarity as objects they can draw attention to their very different contexts. It should be possible in a fast-paced globalized arena where people and culture flow freely (at least in the developed world—which, by no coincidence, houses all twelve casts)—to have a network of objects be strongly connected to one another without a reliance on place. This is to say that the sculptures could constitute a network of objects, and the objects could act as nodes for meaning (and for photography) in relation to a public audience without maintaining a strong relationship to their physical location. Indeed the interiors of museums, for all their architectural experimentation and ornamentation, tend to look rather homogenous wherever they may be; they are designed for the most part to let the artworks float in a way that facilitates what I am proposing.

Krauss states that the "logic of sculpture is inseparable from the logic of monument" (*Sculpture* 279). So what are *The Burghers of Calais* currently a monument to? A cynical response would be that the twelve casts (or at least the ten outside France) are monuments to power and wealth, a clear symbol that a particular city has become cultured enough not just to appreciate a masterpiece, but to own one.[29] But a monument, if it is also a sculpture, can have more than one meaning, and even if it is a marker for Samsung's or even South Korea's (Asia's third tiger) rising fortunes, I would argue that it can still take part, with individual viewers, in the building of meaningful relationships. Unlike a person, who can sustain only a finite number of relationships, sculptures,

[29] Late in the nineteenth century we witnessed the fading of the logic of the monument.…Rodin's *Gates of Hell* and his statue of *Balzac* were both conceived as monuments…The failure of these two works as monuments is signaled not only by the fact that multiple versions can be found in a variety of museums in various countries, while no version exists on the original sites-both commissions having eventually collapsed. Their failure is also encoded onto the very surfaces of these works: the doors having been gouged away and anti-structurally encrusted to the point where they bear their inoperative condition on their face; the *Balzac* executed with such a degree of subjectivity that not even Rodin believed (as letters by him attest) that the work would ever be accepted. (Krauss, *Sculpture* 33-34).

whether carved from stone, cast in bronze, or assembled from found (or bought) objects are capable of sustaining an almost endless number of creative relationships with human interlocutors.

Burghers in Situ

Where do Rodin's *Burgher*'s stand today? They are simultaneously present in Calais, Paris, New York, Pasadena, Washington, Philadelphia, Basel, London, Mariemont (Belgium), Copenhagen, Tokyo, and Seoul. This simple answer is worth looking at more closely, though, as it shows the specific contexts that help to shape the sculptures' evolving meaning. I also believe that one could draw interesting conclusions from analyzing the economic conditions both internally within the countries that purchased a cast of this work, and between the Musée Rodin and the collectors and institutions within these countries—but that is beyond the scope of this thesis. [30] Today the sculpture sits in these twelve cities—most in the protective environment of a public museum— their hulking bronze forms used to illustrate Rodin's importance as an artist who restored sculpture to a place of artistic relevance and carried the practice into the twentieth century and towards modernity. But if we believe that new meanings can be created between sculptures (however old) and people (however cosmopolitan), and that a photograph cannot wholly capture the essence of a sculpture, then these twelve bronze shapes, which are presumably identical (give or take the patineurs' skill or the effects of acid rain), become twelve fluid subjects always at the ready for a new conversation. It is the contrast between the sculptures' matching forms and disparate contexts that I find interesting and

[30] Rodin left the bulk of his work, and the reproduction rights as well, to the French Government who set up the Musée Rodin to manage the exhibition, casting, and sale of his work.

which allows for the creation of new artworks in relation to this historical one. Having the cast bronze shape as the constant in the equation allows for an exploration of the very subjective life of this sculpture in the twelve locations it currently inhabits.

My Own Work With The Burghers of Calais

In 2004, I was in Seoul, South Korea for three months, while my wife shot a documentary about her family. One day while wandering around the crowded downtown core I stumbled upon a somewhat modest glass-clad structure with the words *Rodin Gallery* written on the side. I entered the space to find an oasis of calm in the middle of this bustling megalopolis.[31] Designed by architecture firm Kohn Pedersen Fox to allow for as much natural light as possible the walls are frosted glass and the space is wide open with curved walls derived from the negative space created by Rodin's *The Cathedral*, a sculpture of two hands.[32] The gallery's website states that it is "a place designed to promote culture and induce relaxation. It is a space where visitors can find personal renewal as well as appreciate the monumental sculptures of Auguste Rodin."[33]

On entering the gallery it was clear to me how this space might *induce relaxation*, but the *culture* part of this statement was more elusive. Having a spacious building in the shadow of one of Samsung's towering office buildings devoted to two works of a French sculptor who died in 1917 led me to think about what role these sculptures could play in a Korean

[31] Seoul has a population of 10,000,000 under a single mayor in Seoul proper, and well over 20,000,000 including the suburbs.

[32] From the *About the Gallery* section of http://www.rodin.co.kr/ Retrieved in 2010.

[33] From the *About the Gallery* section of http://www.rodin.co.kr/ Retrieved in 2010.

context.[34] *The Gates of Hell* seemed like an easier question to answer; it lacks any coherent attempt at narrative and acts as a comprehensive illustrated catalogue of Rodin's career. Within the *Gates* one can find figures from many of his best-known works; *The Three Shades*, *The Thinker*, *The Kiss*, *Ugolino and his Children*, *The Old Courtesan*, and many others, incorporated into the sculpture's great bronze face. I imagine that through this work gallery visitors might learn about French sculpture as practiced by Rodin around the turn of the century—how he worked and reworked figures, how he was not averse to using the same body parts more than once in the same work, and how he never wasted his time trying to build the illusion of depth. *The Burghers of Calais,* on the other hand, was more elusive.

It was with the intention to initiate new conversations that I returned to South Korea in January 2006 to begin a project around *The Burghers of Calais*. I spent the first two months researching the history of the sculpture, both as an 1884-95 sculpture by Rodin and as a bronze object brought to Seoul in the 1990s by Samsung, one of the largest *chaebol*[35] in South Korea. I initially concluded that the sculpture had no strong ties to the community, and that my project would critique this object as a symbol of artistic trophy-hunting and the outdated Eurocentric views that discounted Korean artists in favour of the Western canon. At first it appeared to me as a hollow bronze shell, a dull reflective surface with no depth bent into the rough shapes of people, but without any real emotion—a cast of something that may have been romantic at some distant point in the

[34] The gallery houses the last cast (12/12) of *The Burghers of Calais* and 7/8 of *The Gates of Hell*. Koo Kyunghwa, the curator of the gallery, told me that due to the poor condition of the original plaster this might be the last cast of the *Gates*.

[35] *Chaebol* is the Korean word for a large multinational conglomerate.

past, but which meant little to me, and I assumed less to the citizens of Seoul. Then I spent some time with the work. The gallery was never very busy, and I was able to spend about twenty or thirty hours with the work: staring at it, at times taking it in from a distance, at others examining it at close range, walking around it, taking photographs, shooting video. Slowly but surely the sculpture came alive for me, not as burghers from the fourteenth century, bringing with them a lesson of middle-class sacrifice for the greater good, nor even as nineteenth century emissaries, but as a hulking meteorite of potential meaning.

I began to see the *Burghers*' form as the outline of something that I didn't need to penetrate into; I came to realize that meaning was not inside the sculpture, but was created between the impenetrable surface and the psyche of the viewer—in this case, me. Krauss states that "the surface of the body, that boundary between what we think of as internal and private, and what we acknowledge as external and public, is the locus of meaning for Rodin's sculpture" (*Passages* 28). I agree, but I would add a relational or inter-subjective aspect, an acknowledgement that meaning does not reside on the patina surface, but is negotiated anew at each reading.

In my lengthy visits with the *Burghers* I spent hours circling the sculpture, becoming more and more familiar with its variegated surface, getting lost in the folds of bronze that circle above their oversize feet, guessing how much it might weigh, imagining the sound it would make if I rapped it with my knuckles. Gradually I developed a strong relationship with and respect for the large dark form, which led me to a very different

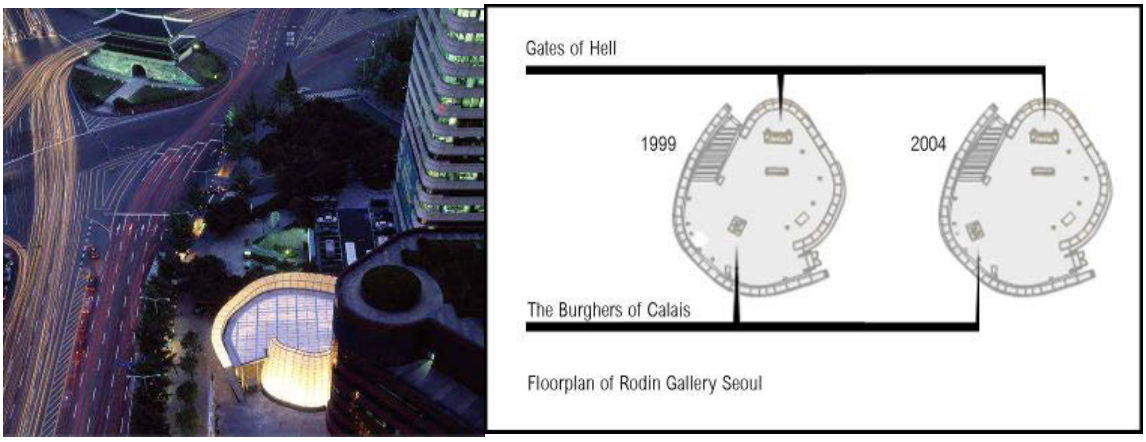
vantage point in relation to my project. I decided that rather than try to prove that the relationship between *The Burghers of Calais* and the city of Seoul was a tenuous one borne out of a trophy-hunting ethos, I would try to facilitate the creation of new meanings in relation to this old sculpture.

Rosalind Krauss says that the only viewpoint to understand Rodin's sculpture is:

> Not exactly a place…rather, a condition. This condition might be called a belief in the manifest intelligibility of *surfaces*, and that entails relinquishing certain notions of cause as it relates to meaning, or accepting the possibility of meaning without the proof or verification of cause. It would mean accepting effects themselves as self-explanatory—as significant even in the absence of what one might think of as the logical background from which they emerge. (*Passages* 26)

To trust oneself to perform a phenomenological reading without looking for a cause, and then accepting the outcome as important is a tall order, but ultimately empowering to the viewer as it gives them license to create new meaning not in a vacuum or out of thin air, but through their own unique experience in relation to a specific sculpture/object. By mixing the phenomenological with a whole series of displacements (temporal, geographic, social, cultural, racial, et cetera) I attempt to create the conditions for direct interactions between viewers and artworks—often, as in this case, in relation to existing works such as Rodin's bronze sculptures.

A large bronze cast with six figures in various states of turmoil, *The Burghers of Calais* illustrates a scene from the Late Middle Ages and was commissioned by a small French city over a hundred years ago to commemorate a local hero. Apparently I wasn't the only one questioning this sculpture's relevance; in the time between the gallery's inauguration in 1999 and my visit in 2004 the sculpture had been pushed towards a wall (albeit a glass wall). Originally placed in a more central location in the rounded room, *The Burghers of Calais* had ironically been marginalized in a building specifically built to house it.



Left: Seoul's Rodin Gallery in context. Right: Repositioning of *The Burghers of Calais* in Seoul's Rodin Gallery, composite image by Adad Hannah using 1999 floorplan. Both from http://www.rodin.co.kr. Both retrieved in 2010.

The architects had presumably understood Rodin's radical intention of creating a sculpture that does not have a clear viewing angle, placing the sculpture so that it could be easily walked around, while whomever moved *The Burghers of Calais* considered the back of the sculpture less important than the front—thus allowing it to be shifted to a new home much closer to one of the walls. While one can still circumnavigate the sculpture, walking behind it is awkward enough that I am sure many people just wander from left to right across the front of the bronze. This is not without benefit, as with the sculpture in its

new place a wider central area was opened up for the display of contemporary (and mostly Korean) art, which is a compromise I would ultimately support.

The video project I created during my 2006 residency in Seoul, *The Burghers of Seoul* (2006), was both a continuation of and a departure from previous works. While the models remain still—or cast in bronze as is the case of the sculpture—the camera moves. This is the first time since 2001 that I had made use of a moving camera. For *The Burghers of Seoul* I put a circular track around the Rodin Gallery's cast of *The Burghers of Calais* sculpture and then slowly rolled a camera around the track on a dolly. Each circle took almost three minutes. I then repeated this process using a group of South Korean motorcycle couriers posing as the sculpture in a parking lot in another part of town. I chose the couriers because of their physical likeness to the bronze burghers, and also because as poorly paid motorcycle couriers in one of the world's largest cities they are marginalized yet could also be seen as unsung heroes, sacrificing their health and earning low wages in order to keep the city running. This project was the first in a series of video works I did around Rodin's seminal sculpture, and was followed by projects produced in Calais, London, and Montreal.

In the catalogue for *le Mois de la Photo*, curator Marie Fraser wrote that in *The Burghers of Seoul*, "Rodin's sculpture thereby became the point of departure for a narrative and temporal exploration that extended its potential for interpretation" (Fraser 34). While the Rodin-based video works I have created maintain the use of video as a way to think about photography (I will discuss this further in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5), they complicate the

situation further by introducing sculpture as object and sculpture as quasi-subject. The sculptural object is clearly visible in every frame of the video, while the sculptural subject is dealt with using multiple angles with the intention to prove a hypothesis that sculpture cannot be represented in photography and video in any way that conveys the experience of sharing space with a sculpture. But this is not to completely discount the photography (or videography) of sculpture. Movement and surface can certainly be addressed in interesting ways through photography, something of which Rodin himself must have been keenly aware as he used photographs (and photographers!) in ways that gave him certain insights into his own oeuvre. Rodin seems to have understood implicitly that photography can provide thought-provoking means of looking at sculpture while never quite representing it.

Chapter 3

Photographic Documentation and the Performances it Engenders

Early photography, with its exposure times measured in minutes, also necessitated the compliance of the subject—who really had to hold the pose. In *Camera Lucida*, referring to the metal braces and headrests used to keep bodies from moving in photography's early days, Roland Barthes speaks of "a kind of prosthesis invisible to the lens, which supported and maintained the body in its passage to immobility: this headrest was the pedestal of the statue I would become, the corset of my imaginary essence" (13).

In this chapter it is my goal to investigate how the practice of documentation frequently compels its subjects to perform in order to become objects for photography. I also intend to draw on selected scholarship about the status of the photograph in order to discuss works by four artists spread over a seventy-year period from 1931 to 2003. My case studies include a documentary photograph by Walker Evans, a photomontage by Yves Klein, a photograph by Caroline Tisdall of a performance by Joseph Beuys, and a recent project by Gillian Wearing. I have chosen these artworks because each of them, in a distinctive way, sheds light on the question of how documentation is inevitably linked to performance.

The previous chapter addressed sculpture, embodiment, photography, and how these discourses relate to my own work. The current chapter picks up on that trajectory by

looking at four works spread across seven decades yet all clearly engaged—some more self-consciously than others—with the issue of representation as it relates to the self, the act of producing a photograph, and the *self-portrait* inherent in most photographs.[1]

Influenced by the writing of the Russian linguistic theorist and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, I will attempt to examine documentary uses of photography using his generative theory of dialogue as it relates to context and history, where all texts[2] are subject to negotiations (and renegotiations) with their ever-changing surroundings. Bakhtin values the binary, but places greater importance on the negotiated meaning between the poles. In this way I will ask *what is photographic documentation?*, *how does photography alter the performance of self?*, and *how are photographic images negotiated?*, not to realize some concrete definition of its identity, boundaries or limits but to map out some discursive possibilities of performativity and photography. This dialogic approach allows for a discussion between historical practices and contemporary ones that not only changes how we might see current photographic practices, but also how the history of photography might change as new contexts are realized. Using a Bakhtinian approach also helps undo any objectivity the photographer may lay claim to as they negotiate meaning with the subject and also necessitates a constant role-reversal between viewer and viewed, photographer and subject.

The *problem* of photography thus becomes two-fold. First there is the idea of the camera

[1] I would put photographs such as mugshots and passport photos in another category, but one could probably argue that these photos, brought together, are a rather accurate self-portrait of the institutions that produce and make use of these images.

[2] Not just written texts, but anything that can be *read*, including photographs and other images.

as an active agent—which can be seen as a critique of documentary, but perhaps more accurately affects all lens-based imagery. Then there is the view that conceives of an actively performing subject, critiquing the idea that photographed subjects are merely passive objects of the gaze.

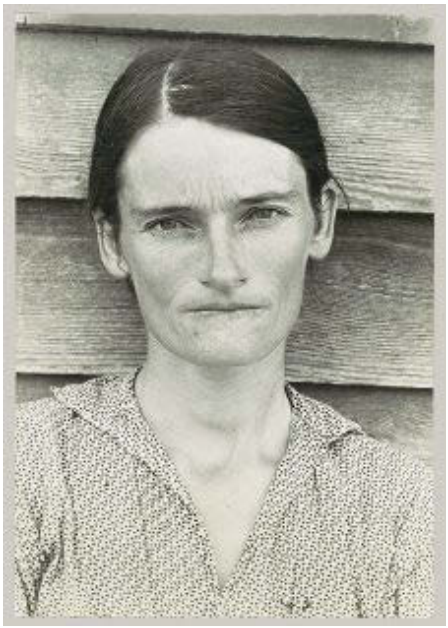
Photography has been humankind's most trusted form of documentation for more than a hundred years, which in our age of rapid technological change is quite a feat. It is more trusted than anybody's personal testimony, be he or she a close friend or an expert witness, and still has a reputation (if slightly tarnished) as an objective observer. "All I do," the camera seems to tell us, "is record whatever vista is before me when my shutter is triggered." This exculpated posture seems fair at first blush; after all, the camera is simply an inanimate object manipulated by a photographer. However, things are not always as they appear. As theorists Susan Sontag and Goeffrey Batchen have observed, the camera is an active agent—from the sharp edge of its frame to its privileging of the visual over aural, tactile, or olfactory senses, photography has had an important influence on the documentation of artistic practices and on the artistic practices themselves. As Sontag states in *On Photography*, "Photography as knowledge is succeeded by photography as—photography" (117). *Photography as art* is the product of this shift, and a questioning of the medium itself has always been central to art photography. As Sontag observes, "the anti-intellectual declarations of photographers, commonplaces of modernist thinking in the arts, have prepared the way for the gradual tilt of serious photography toward a skeptical investigation of its own powers, a commonplace of modernist practice in the arts" (117).

I am interested, therefore, in discovering whether documentation forces people to *perform* differently than when they are not in front of a camera. It is the model's self-transforming performance, taking them from subject to object that is most evocative for this discussion. Barthes expresses this succinctly in *Camera Lucida*: "Now, once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of 'posing,' I instantaneously make myself another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image" (10). Actively performing subjects, who, while perhaps activated by the camera, cannot be said to be controlled by it, instead struggling to become objects towards the making of an image. These objects—humans for the purposes of this argument—refuse to be passive objects of the gaze, and they attempt to gather themselves in preparation for being recorded, registered, and captured, but their pulsating subjectivity guarantees that a single moment plucked from the flux of their existence will not satisfactorily replicate their being. This is certainly not something to lament, as the inability to bottle and then release the actions of a spontaneous human presence—one of photography's glaring inabilities—is one of the principle attributes of higher consciousness, a state of which the artists from the case studies I have included all seem to be aware.

The case studies I have selected for this chapter, perhaps with the exception of the photos by Evans, who was on the cusp of this new sensibility—and, one could conjecture, possibly less skeptical in his image-making—were all products of investigations into photography as performed for the camera. I chose to examine these specific works, as

they are useful when investigating the powers and effects of photography and how artists use these unique powers. More specifically, I am looking at the photographic documentation of individual people (rather than landscapes or still lifes), and how these photos record their subjects' conscious and subconscious performances.

All of these case studies are to some extent self-portraits, and if we agree with Minor White's dictate that, "All photographs are self-portraits" then the degree to which they are becomes less important (qtd. in Lingwood 1412). If we look at Evans' images (see below) we can see, first of all, the self-portraits are not discernable from the portraits, and secondly, that the same exploration of angles and pose that a photographer and a subject would perform is enacted even when photographer and subject are one and the same. This became clear to me when I saw the film strip: the variations in angle, lighting, and attitude do not hold any clues that would make it clear these were made using a timer or cable release.



Left: Walker Evans, *Film Strip of Self Portraits*, photograph, 1936-41. Right: *Alabama Tenant Farmer Wife*, photograph, 1936, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Over the five shots I can almost hear a photographer instructing, “Please look directly at the camera (frame 1), look to your right (frame 2), a bit less (frame 3), relax your shoulders (frame 4), stay where you are I’ll just move over here to get the city in the background (frame 5)” such as I might tell a model. In this case, though, the photographer is giving himself the directions, internalizing the conversation between the photographer and the subject. Is there any difference between the first frame of the strip and the iconic *Alabama Tenant Farmer Wife* (1936) photo?

Left: Walker Evans, *Self Portrait Seated on Floor Holding Cigarette*, photograph, 1930-32. Right: *Floyd and Lucille Burroughs, Hale County Alabama*, photograph, 1936, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

In *Self Portrait Seated on Floor Holding Cigarette* (1930-32) we see the same downward-angle as in Evans’ *Tenant Farmer Child (Laura Minnie Lee Tingle)* (1936) and *Floyd and Lucille Burroughs, Hale County Alabama* (1936), the photographer effortlessly switching to the role of the observed. In the four *Self Portrait in New York*

Hospital Bed photographs from 1928 we again see the incredible double calculation of the photographer's shifting angles and the simultaneously changing attitudes of the model—this is made even humorous if one imagines that he must have gotten out of bed several times, rearranged the camera, gotten back into bed and rearranged the sheets before exposing the next frame. There is also the other force, that of the framing and calculating, projection and manipulation that perhaps do make all images a reflection of their creator. So while the self-portrait may indeed be an unavoidable act embedded in all genres, the genre of self-portrait is no more staged or natural than any other genre of photography.

Walker Evans, *Self Portraits in New York Hospital Bed*, photographs, 1928, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Documentation, or the "accumulation, classification, and dissemination of information"[3] exploded in the twentieth century. As the project of modernity burgeoned, documentation became the fuel and the product of ever expanding bureaucracies, or as Allan Sekula states in *The Body and the Archive*, "photography is modernity run riot" (4). For bureaucratic structures—both benign and malignant— photography was the perfect tool; it claimed to show exactly what was there—nothing more, nothing less—and lacked the

[3] From www.oed.com

obvious (and therefore vulnerable) subjectivity of a drawing or painting. It aided in the scientific appearance of documentation and allowed bureaucrats to make decisions they could claim (however hollowly) were based on classifications and measurements. For examples of this one can look at mug shots. Mugshots seem to have a lot of use-value, and are also highly performative, their subjects often seeming unsure of what pose to assume—the smiling face for a photograph or the sullen grimace of a criminal. Sekula refers to this as "a double system: a system of representation capable of functioning both *honorifically* and *repressively*" (6).[4] For a stunning series of images that was apparently created to show the blight visited upon child laborers at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Lewis Hine's series of composite photographs of cotton mill children in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Lewis Hine, *Cotton Children*, composite photographs, 1913, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Of course documentation did not start with the advent of photography in the 1840s. As long as there have been organized communities there has been the need for documentation for keeping record of crops, laws, family lineages, medicinal recipes, et

[4] Indeed the meeting of photography and phrenology as outlined by Sekula clearly shows the quick adoption for better or worse of an index of photographic images rather than the lists and drawings previously used for recording and classifying.

cetera. However, previous methods of documentation, from fragile papyrus scrolls and bulky Mesopotamian administrative tablets[5] to woodcuts and painstakingly handwritten deeds, were not amenable to a world of increasing mobility and rapid communication. The twentieth century also saw the rise of images (at least within Western societies), and photography proved to be the most economical way to duplicate and distribute images; the thin, flat, easily duplicated rectangle of a photograph fit neatly into the information systems of an increasingly connected series of highly organized states trying to manage an ever more mobile constituency. Although it seems hard to believe, in *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880 -1918* Stephen Kern outlines how passports were unnecessary and even seen as an affront before the First World War (194). Whereas less than a hundred years ago passports were not necessary for most travel, it would be unusual nowadays to travel even outside one's home without a few small flat rectangular pieces of identification bearing photographic likenesses. The changing status of the individual during this period also necessitated new ways of identifying individuals within society for people were no longer as clearly defined as they had been within the hierarchical structures of family and class.

Photographs of New York by Jacob Riis from the end of the nineteenth century, and Walker Evans from the first half of the twentieth century begin the voyage from documentation to documentary, a subtle shift that insinuates an artistic impulse—the person behind the camera transforms from a technician "taking" photographs to an artist "making" photographs (Ansel Adams qtd. in Sontag 123). When Swiss photographer Robert Frank (*The Americans* [1958]) says, "There is one thing the photograph must

[5] Such as the bulky ones at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

contain, the humanity of the moment," he is confessing to the construction of the image, for while he was shooting what was in front of him, he must have always been on the lookout, trying to ensure that enough "humanity" made it into the frame. Ironically, it is the camera's ability to capture, without exception, exactly what is in front of it that necessitates creative uses of the medium. My project *The Russians* (2011), which can be found in the Appendix, was named after Frank's opus.

Debates over authenticity in art discourses around photography betrayed a faith in the indexicality and veracity of a photographic image. Photography has historically been set apart from other mediums for its powerful role as index and its perceived objectivity—a result of its scientific processes. But this neutral position is continually undermined, as even "when photographers are most concerned with mirroring reality, they are still haunted by tacit imperatives of taste and conscience" (Sontag 6). Any debate that would arise about whether or not an image is a *real* photograph—such as the discussion of Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void* (1960) later in this chapter—betrays a lingering belief in photography's value as irrefutable evidence of a particular time and place.

Batchen's assertion that a desire for the photographic produced the technology needed to make photographs, rather than vice-versa, urges us to separate the desire for a way to fix what is seen (in the photographic sense) from the mechanical and chemical processes that eventually produced this effect. From these self-conscious beginnings photography moved rapidly as artists adopted its means and scientists improved its methods. In the seventy-two years spanned by my case studies, photography has moved from slow self-

conscious poses to faster seemingly candid ones, and back again. Batchen's *Burning with Desire* looks at what he calls proto-photographers in order to focus on a time and place close to what would commonly be called the birth of photography while looking closely at the construction (and—in a Bakhtinian turn—deconstruction) of landscape and the pictorial. But Batchen is not concerned with whether the desire or the technology came first; rather, he is more concerned with the cultural implications of photography as it emerged as a medium for rendering images.

Wedgewood's first 'unstoppable photographs'[6] "hovered briefly between life and death before succumbing to their own will to develop," as, "the very light needed to make and see them proved fatal to their continued visibility" (Batchen 120). Conversely one could see these not as ruined, but as the only complete photographs, as to fix (in photography the *fix bath* comes directly after the *stop bath* and halts all chemical reactions) the image on the paper is to deny consummation, to render light powerless and forcibly sterilize the photograph. Fixing a photo, and also closing the camera's shutter after the short exposure, might be seen as closing one's eyes, refusing to look any more. Contemporary photographic products have a new set of problematics, as a photographic image can be created on a computer and printed on photo paper without ever having allowed light to make an impression—light's only role is to allow the finished image to be viewed. I am proposing that it is more productive to focus on the aesthetic and cultural practices related to the photographic rather than trying to clearly define the boundaries of what is or is not

[6] I'm inventing this phrase in relation to the *stop bath*, which is the chemical bath utilized to neutralize the developing chemicals used to create tonal changes in an exposed photographic print. The chemical mixture present in the stop bath is often just called *stop*.

a photograph. While it is certainly true that digital photography has changed the images captured and the discourse around photography, it is more productive to discuss how these new images behave than how they are technically produced. I emphasize this point particularly in relation to my second case study, Yves Klein's composited image *Leap into the Void*, which a purist could argue is not even a photograph. According to the 1998 edition of The Canadian Oxford Dictionary a photograph is defined as "a picture formed by means of the chemical action of light or other radiation on sensitive film";[7] but, to disqualify Klein's contribution to photography based on its 'deviant' method of production would be to deny a significant aspect of photographic practice.

The works I examine by Evans, Klein, Beuys and Wearing dating from the 1930's to the early 2000's, demonstrate interesting shifts in how artists have chosen to represent and be represented in "documentary" photographs. Roll film was introduced in 1898, and portable cameras became relatively cheap and portable by 1900 when the Kodak Brownie was introduced. The basic Brownie cost one dollar and film was fifteen-cents per roll, putting photography well within reach of most Americans.[8] The photography craze spread to all but the most isolated regions of the world, and people began to document themselves and the people around them with small portable cameras. The American photographer Walker Evans took pictures with a small 35mm camera and a larger dry-plate view camera, often using the small one to help his subject relax before taking out the view camera that required his subjects to stand very still but produced a more detailed image. He began his photographic career in the 1920s, when portability and faster

[7] Barber, Katherine ed. The Canadian Oxford Dictionary. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
[8] http://www.kodak.com/ek/US/en/Our_Company/History_of_Kodak/Milestones_-_chronology/1878-1929.htm

exposure times began to allow artists to document 'natural behavior'. His work exemplifies the impulse towards 'authentic' documentation of human subjects within photographic practice.

Walker Evans, *Portraits, New York City*, photographs, 1931, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Evans' *Portraits, New York City* (1931),[9] serves to help illustrate my thesis of a movement over time of subjects' awareness of their own performance for recording by a camera. *Portraits, New York City* is a photo of two men standing outside a small establishment where food is served, specifically sandwiches with egg or ham. One is wearing a cook's garb and the other is leaning on a geometric wooden hand railing; the dark shirt rolled up past his elbows makes him look like a working class patron. They are both holding cigarettes, the cook is holding his casually in his right hand, while the

[9] The work I am focusing on was produced before Evans started to work for the Farm Security Administration in 1935, when he produced his better-known works such as his *Allie May Burroughs* portrait of 1936.

customer's cigarette is reversed so that it sits in the hollow of his curved hand—he is probably trying to hide it from the camera, either self-consciously or subconsciously. Both of them are focused intently on the camera's lens, which produces the illusion that they are looking right at you, the viewer. The cook seems more aware of his pose than the customer, casually yet somewhat awkwardly draping his ringed hand over the shoulder of the patron who looks slightly uncomfortable. The cook's other hand sits on his cocked hip; his white paper cook's hat matches the angle of his torso while his head stays perfectly straight. I imagine that after they finish smoking and talking they will enter the darkened doorway on the left, the cook will take his place at the grill, and the man in the dark cap will finish his 15¢ Ham & Egg Sandwich and head back to work.[10] Upon finishing their performance for the camera, the cook and the patron presumably return to the *performances* of their ongoing social roles.

In *Body Art,* Amelia Jones, while talking about theatre and performativity, makes an observation that strikes at the heart of photography in a way with which Mikhail Bakhtin would certainly agree:

> As Artaud realized in 1938, the radicalization of cultural expression would most dramatically take place in this century through a direct theatrical enactment of subjects in relation to one another, such that the hierarchy between actor and spectator would be dissolved and social relations would be profoundly politicized. (1)

This *intersubjectivity* (as Amelia Jones terms it) can be thought of in regards to

[10] Of course I was not there, and this description is a fiction I have written by reading the clues I see in the photographs and matching it to my very limited knowledge of America in the 1930's. Every reader negotiates a different story.

photography where the photographer begins to find it harder and harder to hide behind the camera, but also to Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of *relational aesthetics* and to the negotiation of meaning as outlined by Mieke Bal. Amelia Jones posits that "the most powerful effect of recent body-oriented practices…," is the soliciting of "viewers to *make us responsible* for the effects of our own perceptions and interpretive judgements" (Jones 17).

Similarly, while Judith Butler's book *Undoing Gender* is largely about the performance of gender, it can also be seen as addressing the performance of self as exercised for photography. Butler's thesis is interesting in relation to photography, as photography presents both the ability to record and thereby legitimize one's *self*, but also presents a flattened *self*, unable to represent the *whole* person and presenting only a visual representation made at a single moment in time. Butler stresses that conventional roles of males and females are a performance, no less and no more *real* or *natural* than the performances of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual or any other point along the spectrum of sexuality. Photography reinforces conventional roles in many ways, but also holds the potential to undermine normative structures in order to make room for other performers to come in from the wings and take their place on the stage of life without (or at least with reduced) fear of violence—here violence can be seen as a threat to one's autonomy as well as the real physical harm suggested by the word "violence."[11] Butler asks if all "performatively invoked" attempts at change should be encouraged (224). Her position is encapsulated succinctly when she states that, "to live is to live a life politically, in

[11] For examples of photography that might subvert normative structures see the works of Robert Mapplethorpe, Diane Arbus, Nikki S. Lee, and Andres Serrano among others.

relation to power, in relation to others, in the act of assuming responsibility for a collective future" (Butler 226). But these relationships and, in Butler's view, even life itself, are contingent on the recognition of the other. Without being acknowledged— and at the same time constituted—we arguably cease to exist. So we are stuck, we must allow ourselves to be represented photographically in order to remain in view—to not dis-appear—but we are also then victimized by photography's static image that allows for easy classification within bureaucratic structures while denying the need for change. I would suggest that the solution to this problem can be found through the creation of meaning through negotiation, a notion to which many of the authors I have cited subscribe. In this way, the seemingly static representation visible in a photograph has a shifting meaning that breathes life (however imagined) into the inanimate body seen therein.

Case Study: Walker Evans

In an essay on Walker Evans, Lloyd Fonvielle describes him as having "a poet's vision and a prizefighter's appetite for contact" that resulted in images of an extraordinarily wide range of subjects examined closely with a rawness not seen before (Evans and Fonvielle 6). The intimacy that Evans shared with his subjects (in many ways similar to that of Diane Arbus some years later) often brings the viewer uncomfortably close to these people, who appear to look into our eyes as curiously as we look into theirs. By using "framing [that] was tighter and surer than that of his nineteenth-century predecessors," Evans could focus on subtler elements as he pieced together a portrait of a young America using a "storyteller's gift for narrative rhythm and suggestive detail"

(Evans and Fonvielle 7, 5). Although the book's inside sleeve claims Evans is "America's finest documentary photographer of this century," Fonvielle's comments in his essay make it clear that poetics and construction are integral to Evans' work.

Perhaps "documentary" when used to describe photography means something closer to narrative, the photographer creating a story using the objects and people he or she comes across. Sontag contends that "most of the contradictory declarations of photographers converge on pious avowals of respect for things-as-they-are" (119). But a capture of this type is not possible since there is no neutral photography or "nonideological aesthetic" (Rosler 268). Photography is a creative medium guided by biases and proclivities.

Lincoln Kirstein expresses his impression that inanimate objects objectify themselves before being recorded when he says, "In Evans's world, even the inanimate things, bureau drawers, pots, tires, bricks, signs, seem waiting in their own patient dignity, posing for their pictures" (Evans and Fonvielle back cover) I would argue that what is really happening is that the cameraperson moves and changes their angle until they see through the lens a scene they recognize for its likeness to other scenes; life is granted to the real if it resembles a staged scene. Evans' photographs are highly theatrical, and it is from this that they gain their credibility.

In *Portraits, New York City* we read a moment—two people assuming a position for the camera. We know that it is documentation of a very short time and a specific space, somewhere in the past. We read the image through whatever our current context is: the

10¢ Hamburger Sandwich cannot mean the same to me as it did to the man in the dark cap or the cook in the wrinkled apron, and it may very well mean something else to me once my context or my education changes. Yet I feel confident that Evans did not stage this photograph beyond choosing angles and asking his models to stay still, and I believe that it is capable of telling me something about the United States between the First and Second World Wars, and about how people behaved in 1931 when a 27-year-old man pointed a camera at them.

Yves Klein, *Leap into the Void*, photo-montage, 1960, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Case Study: Yves Klein

Evans' models may be posing, but they are not (at least to my eye) very aware of the image they are creating. In contrast to this apparent naïveté, the next photograph I have chosen to examine is highly constructed, and the model is a willing participant (and, in fact, the director) of this piece of optical deception. Klein's piece, and much of his oeuvre, is part of a transformation within twentieth-century art, whereby the artist's body,

and performance itself, becomes part of the art practice. From his paintings made using models dipped in his trademark blue paint, to his performance paintings made with fire, or his works with gold leaf, the artists body as well as the bodies of his assistants, is clearly part of the work as well as the production. *Leap into the Void* (1960) expresses this transformation succinctly, with the artist's own body at once brush, actor, subject, image, and sculpture—or perhaps, more simply, the artist has *become* the work of art.

Leap into the Void is a photomontage, produced by fusing the top half of a photograph of Yves Klein jumping into a tarp held by his friends, and the bottom half of a photo of the same scene without Klein's body. The finished image is thus a photograph of two other photographs. The image was produced by Harry Shunk (1924-2006), a photographer who would go on to make photographs of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's projects as well as those of many other artists. Klein used the photograph in a fake broadsheet that was misrepresented as having been distributed as a newspaper, but was in fact "only placed on a few news stands for photographic purposes" (Hopkins 83). This image, arguably his best known, is both a cynical manipulation and a celebratory gesture. This project shows that Klein "recogniz[ed] the crucial role played by photography in the way a time-bound performance comes to be 'constructed' for posterity" (Hopkins 83). It is certainly not the first case of an artist manipulating media as a publicity tool, but what is remarkable here is the totality and subsequent hollowness of the gesture—Klein printing his own fake newspaper in which to include his fabricated image. The story he has constructed does not even seem to have been meant for his contemporaries, but created as a hermetic package destined for delivery to an image-based art history somewhere slightly in the

future. Klein was keenly aware of the power of the image, and exploited it in much of his work, most famously in his paintings created using naked models and his patented International Klein Blue. But, in *Leap into the Void,* Klein has created an image that is as earnest as it is constructed, reversing the cognitive process and fabricating a photographic image that the viewer naturally sees as a moment between other moments, a captured instant in a series of chronological events. But it isn't, and the doctored (cut up and operated upon) image of Klein hangs suspended. As the viewer reads the didactic panel and discovers that it is a manipulated photograph—his body left out to dry—the imagined landing (or continued ascension) is pulled away to reveal a suspended body with no hope of escape.

Klein produced this work in 1960, two years before his death at the age of thirty-four. Like his untimely death, the image of Klein in the air with his arms spread like wings confounds our sense of what is *natural*. It does not fit into our conception of time and is therefore just an image. Free to float without the anchor of an origin with coordinates in time and space, this image sits in purgatory, viewable as his escape from the confines of the photographable (or recordable) world, as well as a cynical resignation to the impossibility of transcendence. Klein's pathetic Icarus lacks the *proof* of such photos as the one of Chris Burden with a small trickle of blood leaving the hole left by a .22 shell fired at his arm by a friend.[12] Burden shows the proof but not the performance, whereas Klein focuses on the performance of a single moment, rather than the outcome of movement. A relationist view of time says that time is "the measure of one physical

[12] This happened during Chris Burden's performance *Shoot* on November 19, 1971 at F Space in Santa Ana, California. http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/shoot/

process against another"; the theory then continues on to say that if there is no change then there is no time (Callendar 22-23). Klein's performance does not really take place—there is no change, and therefore it does not exist in time. It looks like a documentary photograph, and may even be passed off as one, but it is not attached to any particular event, and therefore cannot be a document of anything but the stitching together of two photos.

Case Study: Joseph Beuys

Caroline Tisdall's photographs of Joseph Beuy's performance titled *Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974) constitute my third example of a type of documentary photography. I chose this work because it represents the product of a documentation-conscious operator—not the photographer Tisdall, but the subject Beuys. This is as empowering as it is possibly cynical. Whereas Klein realized that invented moments could be staged and then photographed in order to enter history as true representations of the past, Beuys turned his entire life into a photogenic performance, not by temporarily turning himself into an object to be photographed (as Barthes theorizes all subjects do), but by permanently becoming that object. For his exhibition at the René Block Gallery, in New York City, Beuys conceived of a performance that would begin when his plane landed at JFK Airport, and end when his plane left JFK again for Düsseldorf.

Coyote: I Like America and America Likes Me began with Beuys (who was supposedly wrapped in felt by the time his plane landed) being taken via stretcher to a waiting

ambulance and driven to the gallery where he was unloaded into a fenced off area. He shared this gallery space for seven days with a coyote before being wrapped in felt once more, loaded into the same stretcher and taken back to the airport by ambulance. New copies of the *Wall Street Journal* would be brought in daily, which the coyote, as if on cue, would urinate on. Beuys' days were spent talking and presenting objects to the coyote, for him a symbol of America's past (and continuing) mistreatment of American Indians. Beuys saw similarities to his native Germany in America's unwillingness to face its past. For Beuys the performing appears to be constant, an unending performance of an objectified self perpetually ready for documentation.[13] Beuys did not need to pose for photographs during this weeklong performance, as the whole action was photogenic—that is, designed with documentation in mind.

Caroline Tisdall, photograph of Joseph Beuys at his exhibition *I Like America and America Likes Me*, 1974.

Beuys' materials have a simplicity that renders them iconic and, through their direct link

[13] For a more recent example of this, Marina Abromovic's entire 2010 MoMA exhibition is perfect. She is obviously hyper-aware of her own performance and constantly ready to be recorded in one medium or another.

to a particular part of his self-image, lose much of their ability to engender meaning as negotiated between artwork and viewer. His fat, felt, dead hares, and sleighs all have a strictly codified referentiality relating to events contained in the life of which Beuys made a public document. In a deft conceptual maneuver, certainly suggested by Marcel Duchamp, Yves Klein, and Piero Manzoni, Beuys became the art object. Of course this hypostatized life, like any constructed for public consumption did not correlate directly to the truth, a matter that undermined his practice as questions were raised about his past.

Photographs of Beuys' performances are not like Evans' photos, as they do not show an artist making pictures and telling stories by their selection of one angle over another, or the inclusion of certain suggestive items within the frame; the photographer cannot manipulate Beuys the same way Evans can manipulate his subjects. They are also different from Klein's self-aggrandizing through the creation of a photograph that shows him to be more powerful/fearless/foolish than he was. Yves Klein, the man, did not intersect with the figure we see in the photograph suspended in midair. Whereas Klein performed knowingly for the camera, perhaps jumping into the safety net several times in order to get the right shot, Beuys' entire life was a performance, and while he was constantly assuming the constructed persona, he was not posing for the camera—he did not have to as his image was already fixed. Indeed, although I do not at all wish to belittle Caroline Tisdall's skill as a photographer, it is apparent from looking at other photographers' images of Joseph Beuys that she could not have made them any differently. Every photograph of him shows the same facial expression (though sometimes older or younger), his trademark felt fedora with the dark band from Lockes

of St James,[14] and his zippered fisherman's vest. Images of Beuys serve not as a particular reading of a situation, or a means of relating to a particular event or place; rather, they show the visual appearance of a constructed persona interacting with placeless (and even timeless) props such as felt, dead hares, blackboards, et cetera. While it is true that the materials Beuys used had allegorical meaning related to specific (often fictionalized) moments in his life, their tone, texture, mass and density created a visual sculpture ready for photography. These images are similar to photographs of famous sculptures one might see in an art history textbook, the only difference being that the sculpture is the clothed body of an artist.

Case Study: Gillian Wearing

British artist Gillian Wearing often explores ideas surrounding documentation and representation, and two of her works are especially relevant to the discussion in this chapter. The first is a seemingly straightforward sight gag titled *Self-Portrait* (2000) in which the artist is wearing a translucent mask (and perhaps a wig?). But as we look at the photograph we cannot help but ask several questions related to the questions *what does photography do?* and *how does it do it?* Donning a mask should make it impossible for the camera to capture the learned behaviour of posing for a photograph; covering one's face makes it difficult to create the living image of a deceased moment that Barthes writes about. But Wearing's mask is partly see-through and almost perfectly matches her real face, barely discernable under the plastic one. The face she normally puts forward for the camera is partly obscured by a plastic face she has also put forward. The involuntary

[14] Tisdall, Caroline. Tate Modern Lecture.
Source: http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/apm/social_sculpture/tisdall/TateModernLecture.htm!

pose of subjectivity is mirrored, doubled, underscored and undermined by the mask, which is not a performance at all, but a piece of plastic shaped and coloured to appear the same as Wearing's face.

Gillian Wearing, *Self-Portrait*, photograph, 2000, Collection of Anthony T. Podesta, Washington, DC.

Camera Lucida, a highly personal yet transposable exploration of photography, is one of the best-known books in the realm of photo-theory. In a slender 119 pages, Roland Barthes explores what a photograph does to us, both when it fixes our image on film and when we look at these images many years after they were made. Barthes uses the search for the proper photograph to represent his deceased mother as the foil for a discussion about how photography behaves, what it means, and how it distinguishes itself from other methods of visual representation. Dissatisfied with sociology, semiology and psychoanalysis, Barthes attempts to use a few of his own photographs in order to maintain "a desperate resistance to any reductive system" (8). Barthes sees death in every photograph of a living human subject. In a photograph of a still living person he sees someone who is going to die, and in an image of the deceased he sees a double fatality—the subject both already dead and headed towards death. This is not so morbid, as each photo (especially if we take on Bakhtin's strategy of a Rabelais-style inversion) is also

proof of a birth, as well as a medium of communication between generations who possibly were never alive at the same time, like a child looking at a photograph of a great-great-grandparent.

A camera lucida, the object Barthes uses as the title of this book, is a device that, through the use of a silvered glass, allows an artist to see their subject superimposed on their drawing to aid in the creation of a faithful representation. Gillian Wearing's *Self-Portrait* is just that, a double image, showing the represented and the representation within a single image. Barthes talks about being observed by the lens and how everything changes. He feels himself posing and "making another body for himself," he transforms himself "in advance into an image" (Barthes 10). Barthes laments his lack of control over the image of himself that will be created by a camera, and expresses a desire to "come out" as noble as if he were painted by Titian. Klein's collaboration with Shunk seemed to solve this problem as the artist completely controlled the image of himself, but ultimately this idealized image eclipses his real *self*. Barthes notes that his *self* never coincides with his image, as images are "heavy, motionless, and stubborn" while one's *self* is "light, divided, dispersed"; Barthes' "'Self' does not stay still, it is like a bottle imp" (12). Here Barthes is hinting at perhaps the greatest contradiction of photography, what might be called the *index-induced illusion of truth*. By this I refer to the aura of truth conferred on photography due to its photochemical mechanics.[15] In drawing or painting, the subjectivity of the author, the will of the painter, is taken for granted. But with photography the action of light is often seen as an unmediated force, ignoring the power

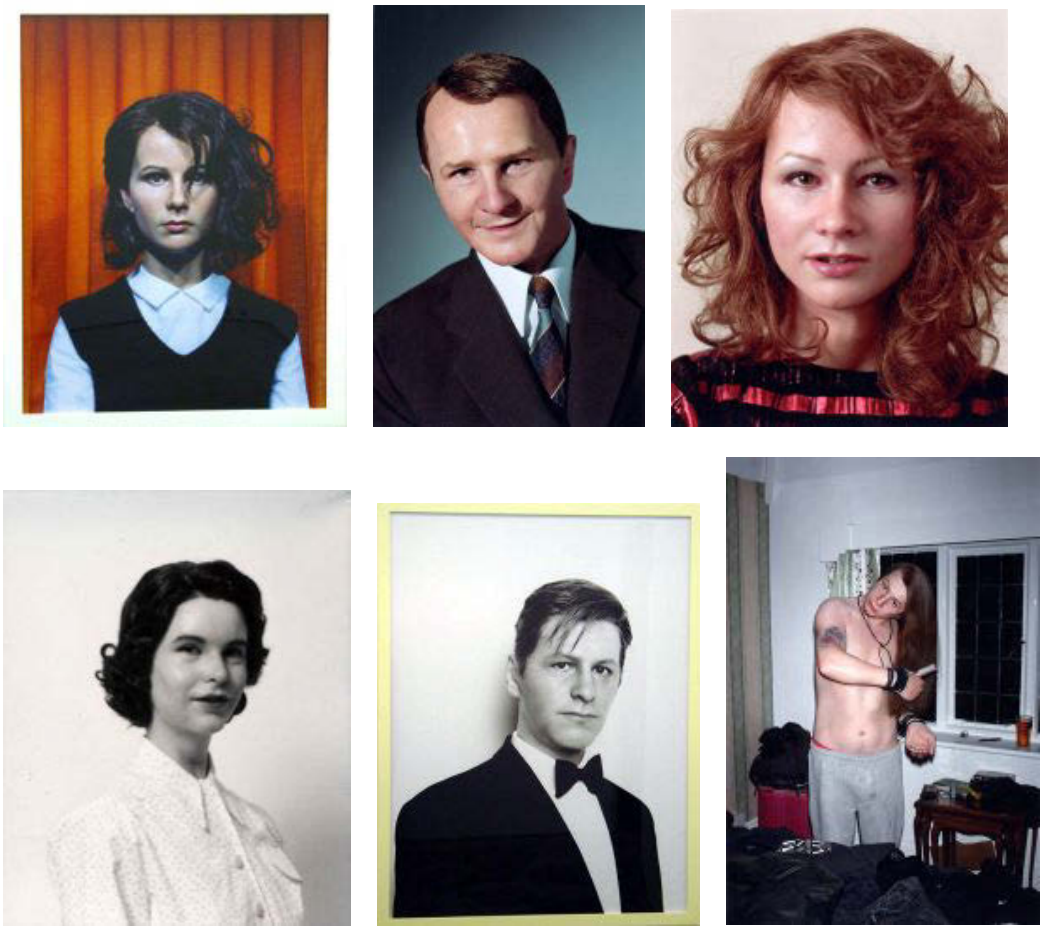
[15] Surprisingly, with the switch to digital processes (as discussed in Chapter 4), which are much more easily manipulated, this *truth* has not been undermined nearly as much as one might assume.

of a photographer over angle, exposure, and most importantly framing (the decision of what will and what won't be represented). "In any case, a painted portrait, however close the resemblance (this is what I am trying to prove) is not a photograph," and is therefore seldom mistaken for an objective truth (Barthes 12). I agree with Barthes that it is not the exact likeness of an image to its referent that makes it a photograph, but its method of production, the recording of reflected light on a sensitized material; however, where does this leave Wearing's *Self-Portrait*? Unlike Klein's darkroom engineering, it is not possible to accuse it of being dissembling, yet it is not as straightforward as Evans' or Tisdall's photographs either. Wearing could be seen as illustrating Barthes' insight that "the Photograph is the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity" (12). What makes this statement true is not the ability to see oneself, but the ability to see the other we create of ourselves for recording by photography, which is very different from the person we see in the mirror. By using a translucent mask of her face in a *neutral expression* (an obvious oxymoron), the artist denies the camera's desire to create a coherent condensation of the human psyche.

As he did not take photographs, Barthes "possessed only two experiences: that of the observed subject and that of the subject observing…" (10). Therefore he could hypothesize, but it was difficult for him to test his ideas except through the work of others. This quote relates to both the Evans and the Klein photographs. In Evans' we see how the invisible support mentioned on the first page of this chapter exists even after exposure times have been reduced—the metal braces holding their head and neck may be absent, but the effect is still there, supported by a model's unavoidable impetus to pose.

In Klein's *Leap* it is even more obvious, as the immovable statue Klein has become appears almost ridiculous when posed in a position meant to suggest flight. Barthes is concerned, as am I, with the transition from subject to object that photography brings about, as it means documentation is only possible through representation, and that we can never see the original event except through a sculptural exhibition of its representational forms. In this world of fossilized subjectivities, Barthes identifies two phenomena that address the commonality of photographic images while making room for personal relationships between a photograph and its viewer.

It is quite easy to see *Self-Portrait* as illustrating Barthes' postulate that "however 'lifelike' we strive to make it (and this frenzy to be lifelike can only be our mythic denial of an apprehension of death), Photography is a kind of primitive theater, a kind of *Tableau Vivant*, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead" (31-32). And yet, again through a binary reversal reminiscent of Bakhtin and his writing on Rabelais, when one can honestly show death, not in mummification such as Klein's, but in a revelation such as Wearing's, the viewing of death can conjure life. Through her camera lucida-like layering of a translucent mask of representation over the opaque mask of a human being posing for the camera, she has underlined and made visible the "*flat death*" of photography (Barthes 92).



Gillian Wearing, *Album*, series of six photographs, 2003, Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Buffalo, New York.

Wearing's *Album* (2003) is based on a set of six photographs representing her parents, brother Richard, sister Jane, her uncle Bryan, and even Wearing herself, each pictured by themselves in several different idioms, from photo booth snapshots with their keyed up colour to black-and-white traditional portraits. Using these photographs as blueprints Wearing has made silicone masks of each of her family members (including herself) and painstakingly recreated the photographs. The finished suite of photographs is as haunting as it is amusing. If, as Barthes claims, and Wearing testifies to with *Self-Portrait*, we are all wearing masks of ourselves—certainly when we get our picture taken, but arguably at almost all points of our life—could we not assume a different mask and become a

different person? If all another person can read us by are our actions and our appearance then by changing these attributes wouldn't we become someone else in the eyes of the other?[16] My hunch is that in real inter-human life this would not work, but in photography it seems like the perfect crime. If you can precisely look like, dress like, and assume the body language of someone else, then there should not be any difference between a real photograph of him or her and one of you *performing* him or her. The aspect of performance is important, and indeed almost all of Wearing's work, whether resulting in photographs, video, or text, is grounded in performance. There are, of course, similarities between Wearing's *Album* and Cindy Sherman's ongoing *Untitled Film Stills* project:

> It is not by accident that Sherman 'made her point' within the genre of the (self-)portrait, because it is exactly the relation between subjectivity and representation which is scrutinized in her work. The standard relation between subject and representation is now reversed. We don't see a transparent representation of a 'full' subjectivity, instead we see a photograph of a subject which is constructed in the image of representation. The traditional portrait, or rather the standard view of the traditional portrait, is turned inside out. (Woodall, 244)

One interesting difference between Cindy Sherman's series and Wearing's *Album* is that Sherman is assuming stereotypical characters from a cinematic parallel universe, while Wearing takes on the form of her own family members, a group of people she knows

[16] A great illustration of this is the work of Nikki S. Lee in which she assumes the dress and behavioral codes of a subculture in order to document herself in a milieu in which she would otherwise perhaps not be welcome.

intimately and who are, through their shared DNA, in a way already part (or even prints!) of each other.

Wearing's *Album* photographs are documents of a performance in the same way that Evans' portraits are. In fact, these performances were of very similar lengths, the portion of a second used to expose the film, and the becoming and unbecoming on either side. The fact that Evans' models assumed a pose we take to be the image of themselves they would like to portray for a camera, and Wearing poses as someone besides her *self* should not make a difference; both are posing as a static other, a flat shell incapable of action and therefore perfect for the brutal flattening photography will perform on them. Humans are usually perceived as having interior and exterior lives, but any interior life visible in a photograph is a creation of the viewer, a fiction constructed from the reading of an expression or from other non-body elements within the photograph.[17] If Wearing can assume the exact position her uncle did when getting his photograph taken perhaps some twenty years ago, then this image should be considered as honest a portrayal as the one of a cook and a worker posing as *themselves*. Realizing that the human psyche is partially a construction and understanding our own role in this construction is part of the major project of psychoanalysis from the turn of the century, but the idea of assuming another person's place is a newer idea engendered by video game avatars, the more or less real prospect of time travel, and cinema's disguise and acting. All of the samples I have used employ photography's ability to fix an image of a transient event on a flat piece of paper. Whether documenting a way of life rapidly undergoing transition, as found in Evans'

[17] I have experienced this firsthand in relation to my own work where viewers feel they are seeing the *real* person behind the pose, but I believe a large part of this is based on projection extrapolated from the few clues given in other parts of the image.

work, the cynical gaiety of Klein's *Leap*, the photo-conscious life-as-art performance of Beuys, or the fleeting performances of and for photography Wearing produces, photography itself should not be seen as a benign mechanical slave. Through its voracious appetite, sharp edges, and singular viewpoint, photography asserts itself.

Chapter 4

Standing Still After Celluloid: Digital Photography and the Changing Nature of the Pose

Writing as I am now in the beginning of the twenty-first century, I have lived the transition from traditional chemical-based photography to digital photography. I would like to investigate what I see as its causes and effects, both on a personal level and on visual culture as a (perhaps fractured) whole.

Starting from the age of fifteen I shot at least a roll of film a week. Most of the photographs could be broken down into five categories: parties, friends and family, nature, travel, and art. Although I took a photography class in high school and knew the basics of SLR (single-lens reflex) photography, I shot most of my pictures with a point-and-shoot camera—specifically an Olympus Infinity Stylus and then a Yashica T4 when the former was stolen. I also bought a Nikon FM2 in art school, but this manual SLR camera was larger and heavier and was used a lot less than the more portable point-and-shoot cameras.

On average, I took a roll of thirty-six photos a week for a period of about eight years, filling dozens of photo albums and chronicling many parties, get-togethers, art show openings, and travels. This period of time would represent the cheapest that analog photography would ever be. The cameras were inexpensive and the film and processing

were practically given away at the grocery store where I had all but the most important rolls developed.[1] I ended up paying between twenty-five and fifty cents per photo depending on the quality of the film, processing, and printing. Although thirty-six photographs a week is not an unusually large number, I always had multiple shots from events, and the photo albums consistently had pages full of similar photographs—it was easier for me to put in more photos than to take the time to edit some out. This removal of the impetus to edit was a clear sign that I was ready for a digital camera. Today, like many individuals in the industrialized world, I have a personal archive of several thousand digital photos.

This chapter deals with cultural changes brought about by technological ones—with the way progressions in image capture and processing ultimately alter the way we *image* (record, capture, manipulate, replay) the world around us, with an obvious tilt towards that which falls under the rubric Art. The relationship between inventors and artists (here we could even add casual photographers under the *artists* title) is a constant back and forth. The technology supplied by the inventors is used in creative ways that were not originally intended, which in turn lead to new technologies. Rodin used Muybridge's photographs to help him create bronze sculptures that twist and turn as their subjects appear to move. While the "new" technologies of the nineteenth century influenced each other and the artists and public who used them, these days the back and forth is much faster, with new systems of image production introduced, integrated, re-purposed, and

[1]Grocery and drug stores offered (and continue to offer) digital prints at a sharp discount because it brings customers back. There is no profit on ten-cent digital prints. To understand this simply think about the last time you had to wait twenty minutes for your prints at the drugstore – did you end up buying something you saw while waiting?

abandoned in a much quicker cycle of invention and desire. From Nan Goldin's candid photographs of New York nightlife to Dan Graham's visual feedback loops, as discussed in this chapter, the artworks produced with available technology have profound effects on the next generation of image-making technologies and the users who push the boundaries of what can be done.

Photography's Digital Revolution

The first digital cameras were low-resolution and could not compete with 35mm film in terms of dynamic range, low-light performance, and enlargements, but for my uses at the time it was perfect. By the early 2000's it was clear that digital cameras were here to stay, and research and development resources had clearly shifted away from analog technologies towards digital ones. Film became harder and harder to find, and processing and developing became more difficult and often more costly.[2] With the quickly shrinking cost of storage, as hard drive sizes expanded, and the costs of DVD-Rom media went from eight dollars each in 2002 to about twenty-five cents a piece by 2010, the price of taking photos sped towards free.[3]

While the cameras were still relatively expensive at around five hundred dollars each, the cost per image after this initial investment was negligible compared to the costs of analog

[2] There was the introduction of the APS film format in the mid 1990's, an "advanced" cartridge system which had a transparent magnetic layer on the film allowing for the recording of exposure, time, and format (panoramic, 3:2, or 4:3). But APS was introduced too late, and the negatives were half the size of 35mm film meaning that it had no traction with professionals. It was discontinued in the middle of the last decade and is currently expensive and unpopular.

[3] While I choose to store my digital photographs locally at a cost of less than one-tenth of a penny a shot, there are plenty of free online services for people with smaller collections who don't intend to make large prints.

photography. The truth is that the total cost of ownership of an analog point-and-shoot system, as used by the average individual who took a couple of photos at Christmas and during an annual vacation, was probably no more than a digital point-and-shoot system is today due to the relentless pace of upgrades, add-ons, batteries, memory cards, and accessories. However, the difference is that once the initial purchase is made (most likely every one to three years in the developed world), the cost per shot is negligible. This seemingly small change from even twenty-five cents per shot to an amount so low that it could never add up has profoundly changed the way images are made, distributed, and consumed.[4]

I remember seeing an advertisement for a FujiFilm digital camera in a magazine around 2005. The ad featured 15 or so small rectangular images purportedly taken with the camera they were trying to sell. There were no people in any of the images; instead the photos were a detail of a linoleum floor, fabric textures, a close up of a well-kept lawn, and various other abstractions from what one might come across in almost any city. The text said something about the quality of the lens and sensor, but the subtext I read was that now everything is worthy of being photographed, that we can find things worth recording in the unassuming details of everyday life.

While the chemical processes of photography came into being around 1840, dry plates, roll film, and handheld cameras became widely available around the turn of the twentieth

[4] One should of course also add a portion of the computer and monthly ISP costs to the cost of ownership as these are both used for the storage and dissemination of digital photographs. Indeed one can hardly own a digital camera without a computer.

century. During this period, concepts of instantaneity and simultaneity, both central to discussions on photography, were entering popular discourse.[5] Changes in communication technology and an increase in mobility during the early years of the twentieth century (both felt more forcefully in the developed world) led to a significant rethinking of time and space among the general public during the same period. Perhaps the most important factor towards this realignment of the public imagination is Albert Einstein's *Annus Mirabilis*, the publication and subsequent popularization through serialization in newspapers of four of Albert Einstein's essays in the year 1905, the final essay containing the equation he is best known for, $E=mc^2$ (I believe Marina Abramovic and Ulay borrowed the title for their work *Rest Energy* (1980) from Einstein's special theory of relativity.

Marina Abraovic and Ulay*, Rest Energy*, video still, 1980.

[5] Stephen Kern's The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918 outlines many of these developments.

For well over a hundred years, the vast majority of snapshot photographs were posed photographs of human beings (and the occasional family pet): family photos, group portraits, school portraits, identification, party photos. Digital photography has changed the parameters of quotidian photography, with amateurs suddenly allowing themselves to be creative in ways they hadn't before. The reduction in cost, the instant feedback via small screens on the backs of cameras, the ability to review and erase without the need (or the prying eyes—real or imagined) of a photo lab, have all made photography less intimidating and more accessible. The ease with which images can be applied and removed from screens on computers and mobile phones or emailed and posted via the Internet has also affected the way we produce photographs. The consumption of images has of course also become greater, and we all feel the pressure to provide images for family and friends (the latter in the grotesquely expanded sense) spread around the globe. The *Upload Photos* button has become a common attribute on many websites, as has the push to *tag* one's photos—to make them more easily searchable by known and unknown potential viewers by attaching keywords. One of the newest incarnations comes from smartphone cameras and memory cards with built-in wifi functionality that create a *photostream* of your images online without any editing—every photograph you take is instantly published online!

I believe all of this has affected the performance for photography that Barthes identifies in *Camera Lucida*. While he correctly identified the awkward pressure to perform that begins as soon as the camera is brought out, I believe that this performance has changed

dramatically in the last decade. Cameras still apply the same pressures, but in a world of constant CCTV monitoring, where everybody has a digital camera in their hand, tucked in a pocket, or attached to their mobile phone, that pressure has become ubiquitous. I am proposing that perhaps this ubiquitous threat of photography creates a hyper-performative state where one is always ready to be (or at least not surprised by being) photographed. Video has also changed the performance. Whereas once we would pose until we heard the shutter click, with video now integrated into the vast majority of digital cameras we are now often not sure if we are being photographed or videoed—if our performance will be for a fraction of a second or several seconds. I wonder if at some point this hyper-performative state might become the norm (and thereby less anxiety-inducing) as the shifting baseline of performance merges with the more relaxed non-performative state.

These contemporary developments were eloquently alluded to in the body of video installations using live cameras, mirrors, and tape-delays produced by artist Dan Graham during the 1970s.[6] Indeed Graham's fascination with the visual markers of suburbia, surveillance, and corporate America can be seen as prescient, a prelude to the culture of photographic hyper-awareness and surveillance so prevalent today.

[6] See works such as *Two Viewing Rooms* (1975), *Time Delay Rooms No. 6* (1974), *Yesterday/Today* (1975), and *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (1975 and other years).

Dan Graham, *Video Projection Outside Home*, 1978. Temporary installation, 1996, in private home, 1347 Santa Rose Avenue, Santa Barbara, California.

Playing in the disputed interstices between institutional structures and personal agency, Graham has used the material language of surveillance and corporate architecture in surprisingly modest yet poignant ways in his videos and sculptural works since the early 1970s. By creating feedback loops and time-delays in works such as *Two Adjacent Rooms* (1975) and *Video Piece for Two Glass Buildings* (1976) Graham allows people the voyeuristic pleasure of seeing themselves reflected or as they were a few seconds ago (using a physical tape delay), an experience denied by corporate surveillance which rarely lets you see yourself as seen. In his outdoor sculptures, which mostly take the form of pavilions such as his Constantin Brancusi inspired *Double Cylinder* (1994) on the roof of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, he uses the mirrored glass and chrome of an office building to create relatively intimate spaces. Graham sees his work as creating locations for social exchange, or in the artist's singular manner of speaking, "My work is for children and parents on weekends. Some would call it Lacanian, but I don't know that much about Lacan" (qtd. in Pelzer et al. 24). The Slovenian thinker Slavoj Žižek speaks about the Lacanian gaze as that of the *big Other*, a gaze that is more a figment of our

collective imagination than a real force (256). Indeed in Graham's work we can feel the authoritative gaze of the corporate structures Graham mimics, but really they are not present. Graham's pavilions are quite free for interlopers to interact with in the manner of their own choosing—free from the dictates of the normative structures their materials (anodized aluminum, mirrored glass, metal mesh) suggest.

Graham's pavilions seem simple enough: small glass and chrome structures that look like miniaturizations of a corporate lobby. But the works are only activated by visitors who use their agency as creators of meaning in order to interface with Graham's reflective and transparent surfaces. Beyond their potential interactions these pavilions serve no purpose, they lack the utility of a corporate space. The same could be said of Rodin's *Burghers*—their utility only realized when activated by the gaze of an interlocutor with enough time to spare to lose themselves, even very briefly, in the curves, materials, and emotions suggested by the bronze form. Meaning in these works is achieved relationally between the viewer and the built structure, and inter-relationally between the different visitors—even factors such as the time of day and the position of the sun can have radical implications for one's experience of the work. The privileged single viewing location, which has ruled since the invention of Renaissance perspective, and which pits one viewer against another as they vie for a moment to commune with the work from the appropriate spot, gives way to a relational aesthetic where the work of art is simply a conduit to the fostering of inter-personal relationships between viewers. Viewers are then able to share in the somewhat utopian act of creating meaning through an encounter with an interested stranger. Or could this be a "micro-utopia", as theorized by Bourriaud (70).

Bourriaud's micro-utopias are the smaller inter-personal spaces created through the exchange of ideas (often around artworks).[7]

Graham clearly enjoys documenting viewers in relation to his work, and photographs he has made of his own work frequently feature a reflection of the artist holding the camera that is taking the photograph. As was discussed in the last chapter in regards to performance and documentation, Graham's pavilions also act as framing devices—in much the same way as a camera obscura—thus harkening back to the early nineteenth century when framing devices were used to mark off particularly pleasing landscapes for reproduction. This framing of an image for reproduction is one of the factors that Geoffrey Batchen singles out as being a precursor to photography. Graham's small enclosures such as *Two Adjacent Pavilions* (1978-82) and *Two-way Mirror Triangle One Side Curved* (1996) encourage the self-conscious viewing of the outdoors beyond the glass. In sometimes-simple gestures such as the photographs *Family in New Highway Restaurant, Jersey City, NJ* (1967) and *View Interior, New Highway Restaurant*, *Jersey City, NJ* (1967) the artist employs the outward view through a window to show the framing mechanism of architecture as exerted through the use of "picture" windows. Graham's work is decidedly low-tech, yet his often-simple interventions deftly interrogate the area where photography, performance, and video intersect. This confluence of visual modes is where our contemporary visual culture is now situated, whether we are recording images with a camera that moves between photography and

[7] Graham's works, to their credit, are less-controlled than many flagship artworks of "relational aesthetics" and are not accompanied by the protective structures of the museum in the same way as a stack of Felix Gonzalez-Torres posters or a Rirkrit Tiravanija *free space*.

video with the touch of a button, *Skyping* with family, or standing on the remotely monitored metro platform wondering from which angles we are being observed. Similarly to Muybridge and Marey, Graham often uses technology to make visible that which is not easily seen, such as seeing oneself as recorded seconds before in his works utilizing analog tape-delay, or by making a normally private domestic activity (television-viewing) glaringly public in *Video Projection outside Home* (1978). Just as Muybridge broke down the motion of a galloping horse using chronophotography to make visible that which could not be perceived by the naked eye, Graham breaks down our experience of space and time through the use of mirrored glass, reflection and tape-delay.

Changing Poses: Performances for the Camera in a Digital Age

While visitors to one of Dan Graham's works might not even flinch if they were told they were being recorded (especially since we assume all museum spaces to be under constant security surveillance), one can imagine that in the 1930s Walker Evans' models could never have imagined that their images would be preserved and reproduced so many years later, viewed by a huge audience of people who were not even alive when the photographs were shot.[8] Having one's photograph taken used to feel flattering; then it became threatening, and now we are mostly resigned to it. The majority of photographs (except Polaroids) were not instantly accessible; the images—captured but hidden—needed some minor alchemy to be realized. This extra step protected one from the cruel trick of digital photography in which the camera is instantly flipped around to show us

[8] About a thousand high-resolution scans of FSA-commissioned photographs are available from the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

what was just captured—our inability to assume the *correct pose* blatantly visible. And so we have to pose again, to repeat the process ad nauseam until we settle on something that is *good enough*. Earlier I mentioned that the Korean company Samsung was the owner of the Seoul cast of Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais*, and so it is somewhat ironic that Samsung was the first to have two screens on a digital camera, one at the back of the camera, and a smaller one in the front to the side of the lens so the subjects could see themselves posing in real-time.[9]

Samsung Dual-View TL210 digital camera, front view, 2012.

This has lent itself to a trend that has matured in the ten years from 2002 to 2012. From the first VGA cameras (640 x 480 pixels or 0.3 Megapixels) to today's smartphones with 12 megapixel cameras, flash units, and photo *sweetening* apps like Instagram and Camera+, a popular movement that may have surprised Roland Barthes and even Susan Sontag has prevailed: the proliferation of the self-portrait. Although, I think *self-photography* is perhaps a better term in this instance than *self-portrait*, as it is the

[9] The Samsung DualView cameras were the first to have two screens, and also featured a technology that took a photo when a smile was detected without the shutter having to be pressed. Retrieved from: http://gadgetwise.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/13/samsung-two-screens-on-a-camera-are-better-than-one/

impossibility of a candid recording of oneself (discussed in relation to Walker Evans in the previous chapter) rather than a portrait that is attempted millions of times a day around the world. The holding out of an arm with a camera turned back upon oneself is a shot that was rarely attempted before the instant repetition and review now possible with digital cameras. Popular digital self-portrait genres include mobile-phone splash screen shots taken from above and to the side, taking one's own photo in front of a particular place or event to prove that one has been there, photos taken using the bathroom mirror to reflect the provocatively posed photographer, and endless others. Self-portrait videos are also very popular online with such bizarre sub-genres as *haul videos*, where (mostly young and female) shoppers empty their bags as they talk about their recent purchases to audiences that can number in the millions. This proliferation of views, the constantly mobile sequence of shots can be read as a fluid extension of Rodin's *Burghers* as they flex with the torsion of their changing emotions or, similarly, as an analog to Muybridge's voyeuristic (and often titillating) photo strips.

I do not pretend to know what will come next, but I do believe that we can currently see the same interplay of desire and technology that Geoffrey Batchen is concerned with around the birth of photography. Only in this sped-up environment there is little question that desire engenders new technology at the same rate that technology creates desire (I just watched a couple of videos online of snakes eating their own tails!). Desire can even bring technologies back from the grave, such as with the new breed of instant cameras that have sprung up now that Polaroid is no longer a going concern (Fuji is now the biggest player still producing instant film and the cameras that use it). An interesting

example of this is The Impossible Project, a group of young entrepreneurs and former Polaroid employees who are responding to a popular yearning and demand to keep instant film technology alive.[10] They actually took over control of the Polaroid factory and hired former employees who had been laid off in order to keep producing instant film. Predicting desire is a fool's game, and while it seems like analogue photography has finally left the building (literally, in many cases, as darkrooms in schools and universities are emptied out in favour of digital techniques), in our ever more transient lives it would not surprise me if the delicate and melancholy feeling of a real photograph, complete with the subtle smells of darkroom chemicals, made a stunning comeback.

So how do artists navigate this new visual landscape? In my experience, artists tend to stay away from the most popular techniques and technologies, preferring to work at either the cutting edge or the trailing one (or mixing the two). This seems apt as it allows artists to frame the spectrum, to push the limits of what technology can do on the cutting edge, and to preserve interesting elements of the soon-to-be-lost on the trailing one. Some examples of trailing edge use include Sadie Benning and Richard Linklater's use of the low-resolution PXL-2000 PixelVision camera (released in 1987) which records low-quality 120x90 pixel fifteen-frames-per-second greyscale moving images onto audio cassettes; Sally Mann's wet plate prints produced using hundred-year-old camera gear; or Toronto artist Sally Ayre's silk printed cyanotypes. Examples of the much faster moving cutting edge are perhaps harder to identify since what is state-of-the-art can quickly become mainstream. To draw an example from video art I would point to Steina and

[10] http://www.the-impossible-project.com

Woody Vasulka or Nam June Paik—their works now seem very dated but their techniques put them at the cutting edge of their respective periods with respect to technology. Other work that comes to mind are the jarringly self-conscious videos of Ryan Trecartin,[11] whose painfully funny videos push hyper-performativity almost to the breaking point.

Artists can also influence mainstream practices. For example, the works of Nan Goldin and Wolfgang Tillmans seem to influence the types of images the public produces even as these same artists are influenced by the flow of images in contemporary culture. Goldin's models appear to acknowledge their agreement to perform, they implicitly agree to go over the top in order to make compelling images. Tillmans' 2010 exhibition at London's Serpentine Gallery, with its mixture of framed and unframed works in various sizes, can be seen as both challenging traditional ways of viewing photography and mirroring the endless stream of images held together by loose affiliations available on sites such as Flickr and Facebook. The performance of a pose, once a self-conscious performance, has transformed into a well-planned projection of the self into public space—either at the hands of an artist or at one's own hands.

In my own work I am very interested in the hyper-performativity engendered by our image-based and intricately networked society (at least in the parts of North America, Europe, and Asia that I have produced the majority of my artworks). By creating works

[11] See Trecartin's *Sibling Topics (section a)* (2009), *Any Ever* (2011), or *Trill-ogy Comp* (2009). Many of his works can be viewed on Youtube or Vimeo.

that focus on the pose itself—on the awkward performance of stillness that I find so fascinating—I am striving to create situations for contemplation. The subject matter of my work has always been important to me, but it is really the inter-relational discoveries, the negotiation and renegotiation of meaning in relation to the work, that is most interesting for me.

Stills: Recording Poses

For the past decade I have been making what I call *Stills*, video-recorded tableaux vivants that run between three and ten minutes. My first impulse to make these works was to create a sort of long-exposure photograph recorded on video (I had been reading about early photography techniques, and wanted to run some tests). When I was looking at the footage from the tests, I noticed that even though I knew what was going on, it still felt like a photograph; the movement was startling even though I knew what I was looking at. This in-between image, caught between mediums, ended up being evocative of both historical photographic processes, and a simple counterpoint to the rapid technologies of contemporary society. By using complex new technologies in very simple ways I was able to draw attention to the means of production in order to create situations for contemplation, or locations for analysis within and in front of the image.

In the majority of these works, viewers see the real-time performance of a tableau vivant (a held pose), as performed for a video camera with the sound removed. The resulting pose can be studied in a manner similar to a photograph, however the image squirms and gently complicates analysis in a way that a photograph can't. The gaze of the model

becomes more powerful as well, the blinking and shifting eyes making the viewer self-conscious, complicating the usual mode of looking straight into the eyes of a photographic portrait. The nervous energy generated in a tableau vivant is also communicated in video in a way in which it never fully can via photography. During shooting there is normally enough anxiety that the tableau is at risk of breaking down into nervous laughter.

The result looks like a photograph, but once you have looked at it for ten or fifteen seconds it becomes clear that it is a real-time recording of a posed scene. Originally, tableaux vivants were always watched live in living rooms, parlours, and theatres. By recording the performance of a tableau vivant, a compression occurs that flattens the scene in a way that is impossible when watching a live performance. The result of recording a performed pose is unsettling because our mind is trying to fix the image at the same time it is decoding the motion. We are pushed back and forth between watching a movie and looking at a photograph. This resistance forces us to think about the act of posing, both in the pose we are witnessing and the pose we are assuming while looking at the artwork. By using a well-known photographic mode, such as the candid snapshot, and rendering it in video, I hope to confuse the reading of images in a productive manner. If we recognize our creative roles as viewers as well as our positions as historical agents, time becomes an important factor in the reading of all images, moving and still. Often I invoke different modes of photography, such as family snapshots or classic portraits, and then agitate assumptions about the naturalness of the image through the use of tableaux vivants and time-based recording.

While tableaux vivants are no longer performed with any regularity as they once were in theatres and parlours, I use this historical technique in my video works as a vehicle for the communication of complex concepts of performance and image. It is not difficult to see the performance of a model for Auguste Rodin or Walker Evans as similar to a tableau vivant, and the poses of Joseph Beuys and Yves Klein are also mannered enough to be clearly seen as staged events. Gillian Wearing, in the works I have written about in Chapter 3, begins to close the circle by performing tableaux for her own recordings via photography. In my own work I wanted to show the time-based experience of a tableau vivant that can only be hinted at in a photograph in order to draw out, through the use of video, the performativity inherent in every photograph.

Adad Hannah, *Abuji (Father)* and *Dinner in Florida*, videos from the series *Family Stills*, 2002-2004.

My body of work called *Family Stills* is based on the snapshots we all have in family albums, the very personal yet surprisingly homogenous constructs of family that tell us who we are and where we came from. They are among the first examples of my use of video to convey the time-based experience of the tableau vivant (a held pose). I started

the *Family Stills* series with works featuring my grandparents and my great aunts and uncles, as well as my wife's family. Works such as *Dinner in Florida* (2002), *Murray and Beverly* (2002), *Abuji (Father)* (2004), and *Cheezies* (2004) showed scenes reminiscent of any family album, the works having clearly been shot with a snapshot aesthetic.

The models in my *Family Stills* are indeed mostly members of my family, but the fact that they are performing the poses makes them sincere and suspect all at once. They are unquestionably there in the photographic space, but their insistent presence means they cannot be flattened into the photographic space either—they float between the *here* of a living presence and the *there* of a photograph. They reside ultimately in the creative space of contemplation between viewer and work, the arena of the creation of meaning as outlined by Mieke Bal. In her book *Traveling Concepts in the Humanities* Bal outlines her theory of concepts as small malleable building blocks that can facilitate the creation and negotiation of meaning in an interdisciplinary (vs multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary) discourse. The trick here is to keep the concepts flexible without allowing them to become nebulous or convoluted—to encourage the constant renegotiation of meaning without rendering things meaningless. Bal contends that the disinterested standpoint is almost untenable, arguing for the necessity of pushing and pulling a position while being open to that position changing shape. Bal also asserts that the meaning of a work is not identical to the artist's intention, stating that "the author's intentions, if accessible at all, do not offer direct access to meaning. In the light of what we know about the unconscious, even an alert, intellectual, and loquacious artist cannot

fully know her own intentions" (45). What she is arguing for here is not the dismissal of artistic intention, but rather that viewers trust themselves as historical agents, whose role in the creation of meaning around a work is as valid as anyone else's. This role also comes with the responsibility to *listen* to works of art and also to *listen* to oneself as a viewer—to develop meaning in the form of concepts in dialogue with the works of art and to avoid jumping to conclusions, whether our own or gleaned from a didactic panel. In maintaining this standpoint, Bal asks her students to "never just theorize but always allow the object 'to speak back'" (45). Bakhtin understands that while meaning is not a "material force" since it doesn't change the physical properties of the objects it comes into contact with, it is also true that "each word or a text is transformed in a new context" (*Speech Genres* 165). Through this dialogue and consideration of the Lacanian *gaze* "the analysis of non-canonical objects, such as snapshots […] allows the boundaries between elite and larger culture to be overcome" (Bal 36). As elaborated by Bal, I have endeavoured to effectuate this notion of dialogue between quotidian photography and art photography in my artwork. It has taken shape within an interdisciplinary practice, located in the gaps and overlaps of photography, video, and tableau vivant.

Chapter 5

From Cuba Still (Remake) to Safari: Exploring Video-Recorded Tableaux Vivants

The reading of my works is somewhat complicated by the inclusion, in so many of them, of "live" bodies. And this *aliveness*, which is always tricky to read, is perhaps made even more so by the fact that the bodies are not in the space of the gallery, having been recorded at some earlier moment, and it is only a recording of that earlier period of time that is now *present* in the gallery. Amelia Jones, speaking of Carolee Schneemann's work notes how hard it is to maintain a Kantian "disinterestedness" in front of a live body. Schneemann argues that the body "has a value that static depiction...representation won't carry"—she sees her work as "cutting through the idealized (mostly male) mythology of the 'abstracted self' or the 'invented self'" (qtd. in Jones 5). In my work, this is split by the mediation of video. The bodies may not "be there" the way they would be in a live performance, but neither are they invented nor objectified in the way they would be in a photograph or a narrative fiction.

Since 2004 I have produced a body of work which, taken as a whole, presents an artistic thesis strongly related to my academic work. While I had been making videos of people performing tableaux vivants since 2001, I did not fully develop the theoretical framework until a few years later. Starting with *Cuba Still (Remake)* (shot in 2004 and finished in 2005) I have built a body of work around my *Stills* videos consisting of a series of interrelated projects around the construction and experience of moving and still images in

relation to the human body. Whether a sculptural installation, an historical painting remade in video, an examination of Rodin's sculptures through video, or box sets of prints culled from an endless stream of snapshots, the works I have produced further develop and manifest ideas discussed in this thesis. The artwork I have produced has been inversely influenced by the artists and theorists I have focused on in my research and writing. (For a thorough listing of all artworks created as part of my PhD work please see the Appendix.)

Cuba Still (Remake): Production as Artwork

Cuba Still (Remake) (2005) was the first project I completed upon embarking on my PhD studies, and its echoes can be seen in many of the more that twenty projects I have completed as part of the art-practice component of this thesis. Influenced by my readings about the history of photography and Daguerre's dioramas, it contains the seeds of many of the projects I have produced since then. With its elements of pastiche, bricolage and performance *Cuba Still (Remake)* was the conceptual precursor to subsequent projects such as *All Is Vanity (Mirrorless Version)* (2009), *Two Views* (2011), and *The Diversions* (2012). *Cuba Still (Remake)* is a video remake of a photographic original, the convoluted process of deconstruction and reconstruction rendering the final product (the subtly moving video on the wall) almost unrecognizable as, yet conceptually tied to, the original publicity still purchased from a Cuban vendor. The first exhibition of *Cuba Still (Remake)* was at the artist-run gallery, B-312, as part of *Le Mois de la Photo*, Montreal's biennial photography festival. The way my work was received at *Le Mois de la Photo* by photography scholars and curators, such as Raymond Bellour, Martha Langford, and Lori

Pauli, altered the contexts in which I considered my work. While their comments were broad and supportive (I don't remember their exact words and Mr. Bellour's were made to someone else) I know that they helped me realize that the discussion between theory and practice within my work could be a fruitful one. The response to my work at *Le Mois de la Photo*, along with my PhD coursework, set me on a path of exploration and scholarship that has led to the writing of this thesis and the ongoing production and exhibition of artworks.[1]

While I had thought about how my single-channel video-recorded tableaux vivants operated in the context of video art and performance, up to this point I had underestimated their relevance vis-à-vis a photographic discourse. Finding my work being positioned more and more in relation to photography (such as Martha Langford's inclusion of my work in *Le Mois de la Photo* [2005] and Lori Pauli's inclusion of my work in her *Acting The Part: Photography as Theatre* exhibition [2006] at the National Gallery of Canada) furthered my interest in the history of the practice as well as the ways in which artists work with and against the power of the camera (as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4).

Cuba Still (Remake) asks: *What is photography? and How does photography function?* By breaking down the original photograph into its formative parts—pose, lighting, instantaneity, location—*Cuba Still (Remake)* uses visual and tactile means to ask many of the same questions asked by Mieke Bal, Roland Barthes, Geoffrey Batchen, Nicolas

[1] The exhibition *Museum Stills* (2002), curated by Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher (who, at the time, were sessional teachers at Concordia curating projects under the name *Display Cult*) at Ottawa's Saw Gallery was also an important part of this shift in my thinking about my own work.

Bourriaud, Penelope Curtis, and Susan Sontag, some of the theorists whose writing I have engaged with during my PhD research. Curtis and Sontag look at the mechanics of art, its effects and constraints; Batchen and Barthes focus on photography's history and properties; and Bourriaud and Bal consider interaction and the creation of meaning through viewers' relationships with art and each other. While *Cuba Still (Remake)* responds to the history of photography and cinematography, as well as the visual languages embodied in those practices, at the time of its creation, in 2005, putting this work into conversation with these discourses was more intuitive than intentional. While my work is undoubtedly a product of my thought processes, I have always resisted making work that is solely the projection of concepts.

The production and reception of *Cuba Still (Remake)* was a creative breakthrough for me because it introduced a new way of thinking about the production of art. While previously I had mostly discounted the production in favour of the final product, here I began to think of the whole process as the work—the conception, experimentation, execution, and exhibition all taking equal footing. The selection of the models and subsequent interactions with them suddenly became more significant, while at the same time the process of research and creation spilled out into the exhibition. This opening up of the process is something I had begun with my performance work from 1995 until 2001, but had not, until that point, thought about bringing into my video work.

An Aside

Prior to working with video I painted and did performance work. The first videos I produced were made to accompany performances, and later, upon relocating to Montreal in 2001, they were made instead of performances, as a way to capture a performance and replay it instead of a live event. This was partly the result of having moved across the country without the rest of the performance group I had been working with, and partly a reflection of my waning interest in performing live in front of an audience. The *Stills* videos were a natural successor to this earlier work, incorporating an obvious performative element and, like painting, concerned with structure and composition.

Cuba Still (Remake) started with a single photograph, a cracked and damaged eight-by-ten publicity photo I had bought for one dollar at a small store in Havana's Chinatown. I had purchased the photo along with maybe five or six others I found interesting as I was flipping through the piles of ephemera on the vendor's table. Once back in Montreal I found myself drawn to that particular photograph, its graphic sharpness resembling something produced in Photoshop. The characters in the photograph seemed so generic that I felt compelled to take it apart and breathe new life into the image. The small and enigmatic photograph suddenly became a roadmap for a creative process rooted in performance, photography, and video.

Inspired by the stark separateness and layering of the figures in this presumably un-retouched photograph, I decided to shoot each character separately, realizing a total of six tableaux vivants, each based on a single character from the eight-by-ten photo and shot in

Seoul, South Korea, using friends and family as models.[2] I posed each of the six figures separately in the exact same positions seen in the original photograph—each of the six channels of video has a single character alone in a video. As in the *Stills* videos I had produced before *Cuba Still (Remake)*, the production method was simple and straightforward: I asked the models to stand completely still holding a pose for a period of about five to eight minutes. During the shooting, with the camera locked down on a tripod, I was free to encourage and monitor the performance, offering words of encouragement and letting the models know how much longer they would have to hold the pose.

The final six shots show an old man leaning against a couch while sitting on the floor of an apartment, a woman standing motionless in front of a restaurant fridge, a man playing guitar in a park (his fingers as still as the rest of his body), a young man frozen in time as he dances with a mannequin torso in a deserted bar, a woman standing on a posing box at a photo studio, and a guy with a drum between his knees and a cigarette between his fingers sitting in the empty lobby of a repertory movie theatre.

Each of these locations was negotiated separately. For instance, the photo studio was a functioning family portrait studio in a small borough of Seoul—I walked in off the street, explained my project to the owner and asked him if I could shoot there the next afternoon. No money exchanged hands, and the brief and friendly negotiation made it clear to me that my creative and production processes were an integral part of the

[2] I was accompanying my wife on a trip to Korea while she shot interviews for a documentary she was making.

finished work.[3] While I don't think it should be necessary to know the back-story to a project in order to understand it, I do think that the narrative around the work can add to a multi-dimensional reading that looks beyond the sharp edges of the captured image—be it a photograph or a video. Spontaneous improvisation and negotiation become part of the creative process as I make a new work.

In fact, there was much more improvisation and spontaneity in *Cuba Still (Remake)* than I had anticipated at the outset, and this is a sensibility I have tried to maintain with subsequent projects. I always try to plan meticulously for a project while at the same time leaving open the possibility for improvisation—trying a shot I had not intended to try, or, as I did in Russia, wandering around with a desire to record images but no clear goal of which images to record.[4]

I have often taken the moment to pause during the shooting of a new work to look at the greater scene, stepping back from what is captured to include the capturers— the people and tools (assistants, cameras, lights, stands, etc.) producing the work. Sometimes I am even able to make images of this production, as I did while shooting at the Prado in front of Velazquez's *Las Meninas* (1656) in 2008 (*On Location*, 2008). This production

[3] I am not against paying my models, but it seems to me that if I give someone $50 to stand still for ten minutes I cannot know for sure if they want to do it or if they are doing it for the money, whereas if I tell someone about the project and they then choose to do it they are somehow more engaged and I feel better about their participation and the later exhibition of the project knowing that they chose to take part based on their understanding of the project rather than the compensation. I often offer to take either family or individual portraits for the models' private use, as a way to provide something in return for the generosity with their time.

[4] I think my penchant for planning comes from a mentorship with the video artist Ruby Truly in 1999. The biggest impression she made on me was how important it was to focus on getting things right going into a project in order to avoid being stuck "polishing turds" as she put it. I had also been the curator of a small gallery for a couple of years, and this helped me build my organizational skills.

narrative runs parallel to any internal narrative, but perhaps due to the lack of a strong narrative in the mostly static images, the story of the production often sits on near equal footing. This infiltration of the work by the production narrative can be seen taking place in *Raft of the Medusa (100 Mile House)* (2009) with the very active participation of the community as well as with *The Russians*, in which my wanderings through St. Petersburg and the Russian countryside, during which the work was produced, become part of the project.

All of these works mentioned above included the practice of tableau vivant,[5] but unlike the parlours of the nineteenth century, mine were performed for a camera rather than for an audience. This changed in 2007 when I was asked to do a live tableau vivant by the Vancouver Art Gallery. The resulting work *Internal Logic: Camping* (2007) was performed twice for a live audience on the evening of February 23, 2007 and showed me quite clearly how a live audience changed the dynamics of the interaction. I subsequently did live performances as part of *The Raft of the Medusa (100 Mile House)* as a series of six live performances for the small community of 100 Mile House, British Columbia. There is also an element of personal performance in my production, something I noted while standing as still as I could on a ladder in front of Calais' City Hall as I recorded footage of Rodin's sculpture for *Les Bourgeois de Calais: Crated and Displaced* (2010), and then a few days later as tourists strolled through London's Victoria Tower Gardens as I again stood self-consciously on a ladder recording the bronze Burghers' motionless faces.

[5] For a discussion of this art form see *'Living Pictures': Women and Tableaux Vivants in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* and *Culture and Counterposes: Re-Imagining Tableaux Vivants*.


In Calais and London shooting handheld footage of Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais*, 2010.

Remaking Dan Graham's Performance/Audience/Mirror

Having long been aware of the awkward performances enacted on both sides of the camera during the shooting of most of my projects, I was excited when the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina commissioned a remake of a 1975 documentary of Dan Graham's *Performer/Audience/Mirror* performance for an exhibition. Making *Performer/Audience/Remake* (2008) allowed me to further explore the phenomenological aspects of my work, in direct relation to the Dan Graham performance this piece is based on. In Graham's performance, the artist stands in front of a long mirror, similar to what one might find at a gym or dance studio, with the audience seated across from the mirror.

Dan Graham performing *Performer/Audience/Mirror*, 1977 at De Appel Arts Centre, Amsterdam.

He describes his own body, clothing, and movements in detail before shifting to the audience to describe their bodies, clothing, and movements, then repeating the process while looking into the mirror. The effects of this simple observational study are profound. The audience becomes part of the performance; their role as viewers is altered as they become willing or unwilling performers, their action or inaction described equally by Graham. It is also an interesting piece due to the real-time feedback—Graham is describing the current state of affairs in the very moment he and the audience find themselves. It was this aspect of his piece that inspired me to do a remake of sorts. My remake was silent and still, taking a 22-minute performance recording from 1975 and remaking it as a series of twelve *stills,* each about two minutes long (so that my piece ended up being the exact same length as the original). In this remake, I was striving to replicate his intention, as he explains in the quote to follow, of turning the viewers' attention upon themselves towards the goal of thinking about how we interact with artworks:

> I was interested in the just-past rather than the instantaneous; in frozen time, where the subjective, perceptual process would be part of the way the work functions.… But I was also contrasting American behaviorism and European phenomenology. When I made a description of the audience or myself, I would talk about myself or them behavioristically, somewhat like an American sports announcer. However, since the piece was also concerned with changing past time, I also used the kind of European phenomenological description that was becoming popular in the 1970s art

> world.… Putting a mirror at the back implicated the audience more, because I could describe the audience, where they would be seeing themselves in a kind of instantaneous time but my description would be phenomenological. It would also influence how they saw themselves. (Pelzer et al. 15-17)

By restaging Graham's *Performer/Audience/Mirror* as a series of 12 tableaux vivants I was in some way able to travel back in time, to move within the performance in a way that is different from watching the original 1975 black-and-white documentation of the original, next to which my piece was shown at the MacKenzie Art Gallery. In the same way that a photograph can build and nourish a memory, the sequences I shot are in colour and in higher-resolution than the original video from 1975; the effect is that one feels one is seeing a more *true* representation of the original even though this is patently untrue. The confusion inherent in any remake, therefore, becomes the catalyst for new meanings as it invokes the conversations related to the original while maintaining a more open framework within which to build out new or recombinant meanings.

The Production of Stills

For *Performer/Audience/Remake* and my other remakes, the process of production often becomes more of a preoccupation than in the original works. The settings for this process therefore become significant to the work. Until 2007, I did not have a studio, having given up my Vancouver studio in 2001 when I moved to Montreal. The minimal editing and preparation I had to do with my videos was done on a desk in my bedroom until

about 2008. Because of this, the construction of *Cuba Still (Remake)*—the reconstruction of the photograph—was done in the gallery (Galerie B-312, Montreal) where the work was to be shown. For a period of two months, the gallery became my studio and I worked many hours that summer on the project. The idea of building an exhibition inside a gallery rather than building it in a studio and moving it to the gallery has continued in one way or another with projects such as *Traces* (2007), *Mirroring the Musée* (2008), *All Is Vanity (Mirrorless Version)* (2009), *Reversing* (2010), *Two Views* (2011), and *Safari* (2011). Producing work where it will eventually be exhibited helps shift the focus from the artist and their studio to the process of exhibition-making itself, which by its very nature more clearly acknowledges the active roles of participants and viewers. Nowadays, I like to treat my studio as an office, and the places I exhibit as a studio. This also activates the spaces within museums and galleries, spaces that most commonly function as containers for art rather than locations for making art.

Video Approaches Sculpture

In tandem with an interest in the spaces of exhibition, I became interested in the way my work, which was mostly two-dimensional, could interact with sculpture. This is another point at which my art practice and my thesis project as a whole have converged. Influenced by the sculptural work of Rodin and the technical/scientific work of Muybridge and Marey I began to explore more sculptural and installation-based work, taking the very flat medium of video and putting it in dialogue with the form and volume expressed in three-dimensional works.[6] I did this by focusing on sculptures, specifically

[6] As soon as I wrote this I realized that the medium of video is also three-dimensional, containing the fourth dimension of time, but not the third dimension of depth.

Auguste Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais* (1895), and by making my installations more sculptural through the use of custom screens (*Burghers of Seoul*, 2007), sculptural viewing apparatuses (*Two Views*, 2011), and even replacing video with live performers (*Internal Logic: Camping*, 2007). Other artists who use video in a more sculptural way, and whose work relates in one way or another to my own, include Tony Oursler, Dan Graham, and Pipilotti Rist.

By focusing on Rodin's *The Burghers of Calais* I am able to draw attention to the thin bronze shell, as invoked by Krauss' writing on Rodin's masterpiece. By removing acting and speaking from my videos, I create in video the same impervious shell so present in photography and bronze sculpture; we can visualize an interior life if we choose (or perhaps this is unavoidable), but its depth and detail are a phantom brought into being by our imaginations.[7] By virtue of its impenetrability the sculpture pushes back against any viewer, forcing them to shift their focus to themselves and, in turn, to each other, creating the inter-viewer and inter-personal relationships that make relational aesthetics a compelling thesis.[8]

Cuba Still (Remake), in its completion, consisted of six wooden projector holders, each with a delicately cut wooden screen held a foot or two in front of it by thin wooden arms. There was a projector in each holder beaming out one of the six characters' videos—a living breathing representation of the flat motionless people seen in the aging photograph.

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[7] This should not be seen as negative, especially as the same could be said of our relationships with each other—how much of the inner workings of those we are close with is readable and how much is speculation? See Kenneth Gross' book *The Dream of the Moving Sculpture* for more on the sometimes complicated relationships between people and sculptures.

[8] It is peculiar that Nicolas Bourriaud outlines a project of decentralized inter-personal interactions and yet uses as examples several artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija who have created a cult of personality that fundamentally changes the structure of the interactions central to his thesis.

The screens in front of each video had been carefully worked on over the summer, and in their final arrangement achieved the uncanny effect of joining the six videos into a somewhat coherent representation of the original still photograph. This was achieved by masking off large portions of each video so that only some of each scene made it to the wall while the rest of the image was blocked. The remainder of the exhibition consisted of a series of grey-scale images showing the dismantling of the original photograph (this was needed in order to calculate the poses for the models), as well as a small set of full-colour production shots showing details of some of the shooting sites in Seoul. The production shots included close-ups of the heroine's feet, the drummer's hand holding a cigarette, band gear in the bar scene, et cetera.

The aesthetics of the wooden supports made of Baltic birch plywood for *Cuba Still (Remake)* can also be seen mirrored in *Embrace* (2007), *All Is Vanity (Mirrorless Version)* (2009), *Two Views* (2011), and *The Diversions* (2012). The showing of the power supplies, black cabling and video support seen in *Cuba Still (Remake)* also returns in *Les Bourgeois de Calais: Crated and Displaced* (2010), and *Two Views*. Of course, showing the means of production is a self-conscious postmodern act—can one ever really show the means of production any other way?—but I find it generates some points of entry that might not exist if the finish were smoother. It creates breathing space between the work and the viewer, hopefully opening up Bal and Bourriaud's arena of intersubjectivity where art "is a state of encounter" (Bourriaud 18), or as Bal puts it, "the argument of the speaker… yields maximally to the other position, to produce more knowledge" (Bal 284). This interplay between video and sculpture, both in content and

form, has been a fertile space for me to work through ideas related to Rodin and his oeuvre. In fact, the problematics that Rodin dealt with in regards to movement and materiality, representation and form, are also explored in my own practice.

My Work Around Rodin

The way Rodin straddled the classical and the modern, from kitsch works such as *The Eternal Idol* (1889) to such groundbreaking work as the *Monument to Balzac* (1891) with it's fractured surfaces and abstracted form, make him an ideal location for the exploration of ideas. Rodin's work is addressed in my practice through a focus on the human form (sometimes fractured, sometimes not) in works such as *Cuba Still (Remake)*(2005), *Internal Logic: Camping* (2007), several works involving sculptures or sculptural forms from the *Prado Project* (2008), and of course all four of the works that use images of Rodin's sculptures directly—*Age of Bronze* (2004), *The Burghers of Seoul* (2007), *Unwrapping Rodin* (2010), and *Les Bourgeois de Calais: Crated and Displaced* (2010). Rodin's oeuvre has always seemed to be the perfect foil for discussing surface, representation, and movement. *The Burghers of Seoul* (2007) and *Internal Logic: Camping* (2007) could both be seen as direct enquiries into the texts by Penelope Curtis, Kenneth Gross, and Rosalind Krauss on sculpture and photography (addressed in Chapter 2), in which they examine how one looks at sculpture and how figurative sculpture converses with the *real* bodies of viewers. Indeed I am often reminded of Krauss' discussion of the surface of Rodin's bronzes when I think about the ultimate unreadability of my models, whose lack of movement or speech leaves little more than

their surfaces to be read. If all that can be read is surface, then how different is this from the photographic experience?

In *Candida Hofer: Twelve*, a catalog which documents Hofer's photographs of all twelve casts of *The Burghers of Calais*, Pascal Beausse explains that "Rodin's relation to photography is famously ambiguous. In his interviews with Paul Gsell, he reproached it for being mendacious in comparison to painting and sculpture and saw it as the antithesis to art" (5). At first Rodin did not consider photography to be an autonomous art form, but he slowly began to change his opinion as he worked with Edward Steichen, Stephen Haweis, Henry Coles, and others. "At the turn of the twentieth century, Rodin opened up the path to modernity. His use of the fragment, of reproduction through the casting technique extended the fertile ties that had developed between sculpture and photography…" (Beausse 7).

Once again we see grand claims of the transition to modernity laid at Rodin's feet, this time in relation to photography. Inspired by Rodin, I am also interested in the representation of mass and form through lens-based practices. The relatively new possibilities available in video production at the beginning of the twenty-first century could, in fact, be seen to mirror photographic advances at the turn of the twentieth century. In a development fitting of the post-modern times we live in I would argue that at the current moment we tend to simultaneously believe and question our belief in the veracity of video and photographs—a situation that is perhaps less unsettling than one might imagine. This oscillation between suspended disbelief and grounded belief when

looking at the same image is an important element in my work—it is the viewer's attitude in front of the work that changes over time, more so than the work itself.

Influenced by Muybridge and Marey

As discussed in Chapter 1, Muybridge understood this duality well, creating images that dismantle motion while at the same time joining together to express action. In my work, Muybridge's influence can be seen in the grey-scale studies for *Cuba Still (Remake)* (2005) showing the dismantling of the original photograph, as well as the way each figure is trapped within the borders of a black rectangle, unable to escape the confines of the rectangle yet clearly linked to the cell directly before and after. *Unwrapping Rodin* (2010) reads very much like a Muybridge sequence, the still photographs getting stitched together in our minds to create movement. The home-built apparatus of *Cuba Still (Remake)*, *Embrace* (2007), and *All Is Vanity (Mirrorless Version)* (2009) also reflect Muybridge and Marey's self-made tools of production fashioned to perform a particular task. I feel that my videos without action in some way build on (or follow) the lack of interest Muybridge and Marey had in motion pictures (movies). Even though the photographic technologies they developed made cinema possible, they consciously worked against the desire to mimic movement, preferring stasis over reconstituted action. In two recent projects, *The Russians* (2011) and *Safari* (2011), this has started to change, with more movement and expression making its way into the final project. This introduction of movement comes from my inability to speak Russian (*The Russians*) and from collaborating with the filmmaker Denys Arcand *(Safari)*. Besides developing the technologies for the recording and viewing of movement, Muybridge and Marey's works

are also extremely evocative of movement. Being able to see movement in still images, and by the same token to see motion suspended, represented an important visual and theoretical breakthrough in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Cuba Still (Remake) is located at this crossroads of motion and stasis, and led to other projects where a still image was taken apart and reconstructed in video. By parsing out an image or action into smaller pieces (as Muybridge did) I am able to draw attention to the construction of the image itself. This is also true of the remakes, where the knowledge of the original work facilitates the fast dissolution of the image, allowing for an examination of the mechanics at play within the work rather than the representation itself. By transposing an artwork onto another medium, one is able to look more clearly at how images and ideas function within the creative space between art and viewer. *The Burghers of Seoul* (2007), *Performer/Audience/Remake* (2008), *All Is Vanity (Mirrorless Version)* (2009), *The Raft of the Medusa (100 Mile House)* (2009), *Les Bourgeois de Calais: Crated and Displaced* (2010), and *Unwrapping Rodin* (2010) are all remakes in one way or another of historical artworks. Art is never created in a vacuum, and the remakes I have made are a way of processing the art and theoretical discourses my work is part of in a very visual and public way. I could make work that referenced Rodin and my study of his work in an oblique way, or I could pack up my camera and head to Calais and London, as I did in the summer of 2010, to produce work in dialogue with two of the casts made during Rodin's lifetime. I would not like to privilege one way of working over another, but for the ideas I was processing at these particular times a more head-on approach made sense. In other very recent works such as *The Russians*, *Safari*, and *Dad and David Visiting* (2010), my influences are much more subtly expressed.

The Russians: Tableaux Vivants as Documentary Photography

The Russians represents three years of trying to mentally process a group of more than two thousand full-colour photographs made by Sergei Prokudin-Gorskii, the Russian pioneer of colour photography, culminating in a seventeen-day trip to Russia in the summer of 2010 to produce a body of work influenced by this pioneer of colour photography. While Prokudin-Gorskii traveled back and forth across large parts of Russia over several years, I made my work in St. Petersburg and the small towns surrounding it, in a very condensed production process. *The Russians* however is not a remake. While the body of work is inspired by Prokudin-Gorskii's images and his method of production, the final work does not resemble his work very much.

With this project I was trying to create documentary photography that is reflexively aware of all the treachery the genre entails. Just as my *Family Stills* can be seen to dismantle the family album, *The Russians* moves within the tropes of documentary photography in order to show a group of Russians in two ways at the same time. Through their pose they show what documentary photography can show: the attitude, surroundings, position, and expression that begs to be read (accurately or not) as information about a particular person in a particular time and place. However, the sheer exertion of maintaining their poses, evinced through their blinking and breathing allow these (deceptively) still images to be read differently, the moving image telling us about the pose over time as well as the pose within space. It defines a performance of photography that is simultaneously familiar and jarring, revealing and confounding.

While most of my previous projects were scheduled shoots with models, lights, costumes, and sets, in Russia I only had two small cameras and a couple of lenses, and my shoots were impromptu and improvised. The body of work I produced during this intense work period exists somewhere between the candid documentary snapshots of Robert Frank (*The Americans*, 1958), the highly staged images of Jeff Wall (*The Guitarist*, 1987 and *View from an Apartment*, 2004-05), and the mid-nineteenth century parlour pastime of tableaux vivants. Moving around by car, foot, and bicycle I roamed around Saint Petersburg and the surrounding countryside, shooting exclusively with existing light and using as models the people I encountered on my travels or people I was introduced to by acquaintances. These models came from all walks of life, some approaching me of their own accord when they had heard of my project and others warily agreeing to pose when approached. The models were asked to stay as still as they could while the photos and videos were shot, but due to the blazing temperatures (2010 was Russia's hottest summer on record) and my limited ability to communicate in Russian, the models' gazes often wandered, their faces and bodies betraying the difficulty of holding their poses.

When Prokudin-Gorskii documented a rapidly changing country a century ago he often focused on infrastructure and technology, the trains and factories of the early twentieth century as well as on the people he encountered. I, on the other hand, focused on the people I chanced upon in my travels, presenting fleeting but oddly intimate moments shared with strangers whose postures and subtle facial expressions can perhaps be seen to offer a unique look at Russia at the beginning of the twenty-first century. To me these videos represent a body of work that fuses the urge to make documentary work with a

working knowledge of the problematics inherent in the practice of documentary photography (Susan Sontag's discussion of Diane Arbus' work in *On Photography* offers an interesting view on the ethical implications arising from this practice of photography). By extending the timeframe of the photograph into the extended space/time of video, I am able to clearly draw attention to the acts of framing, cropping, inclusion, exclusion, directing, and the pose, which are easier to forget about when viewing a still image. This does not absolve me from the voyeuristic aspects of the work, but it does place the viewer in a more compromised position as they are confronted not with a static image they can explore, but a moving one in which people are breathing and blinking, manifesting the physical exertion required to hold a static pose for several minutes.

My Russian work oscillates back and forth between an observation that feels unmediated and the realization that one is watching a recording of a staged performance. This is true in most of my work, but becomes perhaps more poignant or pointed with this project. One visitor to a gallery exhibit of this project commented to me that over the five minutes of the video the subjects revealed so much more of themselves than they would have in a photograph. I agreed, but also countered that I was not so sure that the subjects revealed any more, that perhaps we just had more time to imagine, or perhaps project, what they were thinking or feeling. I believe the same is also true of Rodin's sculptures, whose surfaces are impenetrable yet act as such fertile ground for the growth of meaning through negotiation.

Performance has always been at the centre of the making of any photograph—the

photographer waiting for the performance to commence before pressing the shutter release—but while technology, in the form of faster exposure times, makes these performances less apparent, new technologies and the culture they engender encourage performance. After all, it is almost impossible to purchase a camera these days that can shoot photographs without also having the ability to record video; rather, it is assumed that the two go hand in hand. In fact, for the entire *Russians* project, eventually edited down to 15 videos and 9 photographs, I used a Canon 5D MKII that captures HD video and 22-megapixel photographs on the same sensor, something that was unheard of until around 2008.[9]

Indeed my work, which used to be predominantly video, is now often a hybrid, moving fluidly back and forth between video and photography. The critique of photography inherent in my first *Stills*, which questioned photography's privileging of a single moment of mummified action, has given way to an interdisciplinarity wherein photographs and videos question and support each other simultaneously.

In Russia I took on a different working process than I was used to, and the changes are visible in the work. The final images look like the photography one might see in National Geographic or works by documentary photographers such as Walker Evans or Robert Frank, except that these were made without any attempt to be *honest* – not due to a disrespect for the models or *truth*, but because in 2010 the notion of objectivity is a non-starter, a relic from a bygone era.

[9] Before that I had to always use a dedicated video camera for video and another camera for photographs.

Adad Hannah, *Cyclist Stopped on a Path* and *Russian Woman at Home*, HD videos, 2011.

The images, while not as set up as some of my other works, feature models that were directed and often had their clothing picked out for them, and small details in the images, such as the small *still life* next to the tree and the shoes on the log in *Guitarist in a Hammock* (2011). But the most important difference is the way these works capture and affect time. The video-recorded segments, each showing three to six minutes of the models trying to stay still, eventually aid in their own dismantling as the performance of the moment pushes past what is first perceived as a candid *photographic* moment. And yet, perhaps ironically, in many ways the work is candid. Yes, I changed the models' poses and removed or added objects from the scenes, but the parts of the image I cannot control—the twitching, blinking, breathing, and head turning—tell the viewer that the scene is every bit as real as it is staged. On top of this, the fact that I can't speak Russian adds to their looseness for once the camera was rolling I could give very little direction.

The viewer is therefore stuck between accepting and questioning the image, a situation that ultimately leads to a deeper questioning of the mechanics of the pose and of photography. *The Russians*' relationship to photography is similar to *Safari*'s relationship to filmed drama—both assist in the unraveling of the media they employ.

Safari: A Culmination of a Decade-Long Body of Work

Safari (2011) is a collaboration with Quebecois filmmaker Denys Arcand commissioned by Montreal's Musée des beaux arts. From the very beginning Arcand and I envisioned it as a complete collaboration, from initial conception through to the shooting and installation. The result is a work that confounds categorization.

The premise of *Big Bang*, the group exhibition in which this collaboration was featured, was to explore the museum's permanent collection through reinterpretation by contemporary artists.[10] Arcand and I decided to centre our work around pieces from the museum's extensive decorative arts collection. Archizoom's *Safari Seating Unit* (built by Poltronova in 1968) became the anchor for our collaboration.

[10] Other participants in the exhibition included artists, filmmakers, choreographers, authors, musicians, architects, fashion designers, and playwrights.

Archizoom Associati, Safari Seating Unit, 1968. Produced by Poltronova. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

The six-seat unit, with its shiny white and leopard-skin covered surfaces became the backdrop for a scene that is played out over six large plasma screens suspended from the ceiling and circling the *Safari Seating Unit*. Set in the back of an imaginary mid-1980's nightclub, the scene shows a stilted and condensed narrative: a woman smokes a cigarette, a couple has a serious talk after some bad news, a woman buys and snorts a line of cocaine, and a young couple grope each other while oblivious to the others in the scene. The actors—who were all employees of the museum with no acting training—perform an action for a few seconds and then freeze, resulting in a staccato performance in fits and starts. *Safari* never quite resembles photography; rather, it more closely resembles a movie that keeps pausing, the narrative freezing and dissolving as the actors in turn move and then remain motionless. Viewers can walk completely around the piece, taking in the work from the six angles it was shot from. A *whole* image is almost created, although it never quite gels, instead remaining more fractured than coherent. The circling of the work and its sculptural presentation are reminiscent of earlier works such as *Cuba*

Still (Remake) and *The Burghers of Seoul*—the installations approaching sculpture themselves while simultaneously underlining the impossibility of representing sculpture through lens-based work.

Adad Hannah and Denys Arcand, *Safari #10*, photograph, from the project *Safari*, 2011.

Safari is the perfect ending to my PhD work, combining so many different aspects of my practice and also opening a door to new ways of working. While *Safari* has many similar attributes to existing work, such as a built set, multiple screens, and video-recorded tableaux vivants, it is the inclusion of more developed narrative sequences that sets it apart. A simple scene was performed over and over during three days of shooting as the 6-minute 41-second performance was captured from six different angles. The transition from still to moving present in this work is (for me) quite shocking. Actions occur and then the performers freeze, just as frozen actors pop into action unexpectedly. The result is a stilted jumble of action and inaction that results in a scene that appears to be almost

simultaneously fluid and static. Built around the *Safari* seating unit, the shape of the work mirrors the six seats scalloped out of the *Safari*'s white fiberglass rectangle.

Adad Hannah and Denys Arcand, installation shots from the project *Safari*, 2011. Installed at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

The amateur actors from the museum rose to the occasion to deliver riveting and nuanced performances. Exceptionally, the museum allowed us to use the *Safari Seating Unit* as a prop, having people move around on it—talking, drinking, and even smoking on it. In this way, the finished video shows a museum object seemingly brought back to life: a couch that normally sits sequestered in temperature-controlled storage gets the opportunity to *act* as a couch in the VIP section of a 1980's nightclub. Safari also has a soundtrack, something I have only ever used for the 2007 project *Traces* (2007), produced for Toronto's *Nuit Blanche*. The soundtrack is synchronized with all six screens, creating an enveloping environment of image and sound.

Conclusion

In the introduction to her book *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography* Karen Beckman writes, "this book starts from the premise that our absence of a clear theoretical paradigm reflects the complexity of our present moment and challenges us to develop questions and structures for thinking that will enable us to engage this complexity as

productively as possible" (2). While one could lament the lack of a clear paradigm, this also means that it is currently being created—presumably through testing and retesting its boundaries and behaviors. It is within this partial vacuum, at the borders between several media that I have been producing art and conducting research towards my doctorate.

The works I have produced since 2001, from the *Family Stills* to *Cuba Still (Remake)* to *Safari*, represent my own explorations in these yet-undefined areas. Alongside readings that have focused on photography—by itself and in relation to other media —and how it affects the way we make and interpret images, whether they are other photographs, moving images, paintings or sculpture, I have been compelled to create works that investigate theoretical questions through visual experiences. It is through art making that I feel best positioned to productively "engage this complexity" and attempt to elucidate a few of the myriad possibilities that lie before us in our increasingly visually saturated cultures.

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Appendix I

Works Completed During My PhD

***Cuba Still (Remake)*, 2005**

Installation with six video projectors, six channels of SD video (5:54, 5:19, 4:34, 5:30, 3:41, 6:07), six custom made wooden stands, six cutout masks, six DVD players, black electrical cables, original black and white 8”-by-10” photograph, thirteen 30” x 23” colur photographs.

First exhibited in the solo exhibition *Cuba Still (Remake)* at Galerie B-312 in Montreal as part of the 2005 edition of *Le Mois de la Photo*. An Essay by Steve Reinke appeared in the catalogue *Image & Imagination*, edited by Martha Langford for Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, 2005 McGill-Queen's University Press.

In the permanent collection of the Musée d’art contemporain, Montreal.

***Burghers of Seoul*, 2006**

Installation with a double-sided screen suspended in the middle of a room. Two channels of SD video, 9:16.

First exhibited in 2007 at the solo show *Recast and Reshoot* at the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Montreal as part of the 2007 edition of Le Mois de la Photo curated by Marie Fraser. An Essay by Marie Fraser appeared in the catalogue *Replaying Narrative*, published by Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, 2007.

***Embrace*, 2007**

Installation with two channels of HD video, a cutout mask, three tripods, two video projectors, two HD-DVD players, black electrical cables.

First exhibited in 2007 as part of the solo show *Videos and Not Videos*, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.

***Internal Logic: Camping*, 2007**

Installation/Performance with five sets of identical twins, camping gear, video cameras, lighting gear.

Internal Logic: Camping was commissioned by the Vancouver Art Gallery for *FUSE* and was performed at the gallery on the evening of February 23, 2007. The ten-minute tableau vivant was performed twice.

***Traces*, 2007-2010**

Five photographs, 33” x 49.5” each, one photograph 8” x 40”. Four HD videos: *Dinner Date*, 7:41; *Two Musicians*, 7:20; *Ouija*, 6:07; *Four Hands* 8:03.

Taken from a larger installation commissioned by curator Michelle Jacques and exhibited as part of *Nuit Blanche* 2007, Toronto.

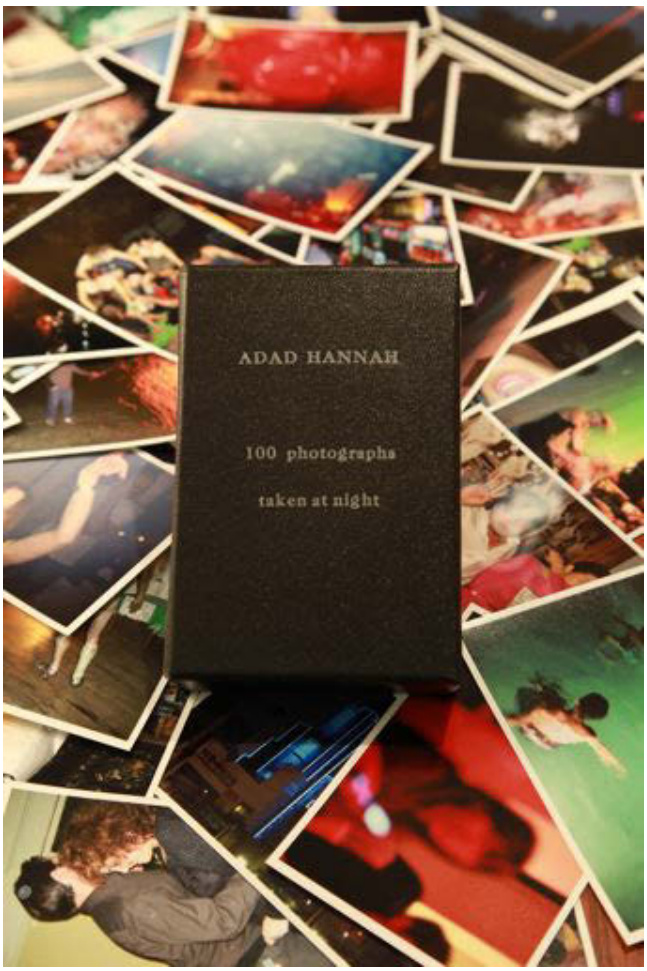
Photographs first exhibited at the *Toronto International Art Fair*, 2010.

***Prado Project*, 2008**

Four HD videos and six photographs shot in the Prado Museum, Madrid. All photographs 40" x 53" except for *The Dauphin's Treasure* which is 40" x 71". Videos are 7:05, 7:18, 4:33, 6:36.

First exhibited in the solo show *Reflections*, 2008 at Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal.

***100 photographs*, 2008**



5 sets of embossed archival boxes, each with one hundred 4" x 6" colour photographs. The five boxes are: *100 photographs of animals*, *100 photographs of food*, *100 photographs taken at night*, *100 photographs of sculpture*, *100 photographs with reflections*.

Commissioned by and first exhibited at the group show *Multiples* at the Ke Centre for Contemporary Art, Shanghai, 2008. Curated by Biljana Ciric.

***Performer/Audience/Remake*, 2008**

SD video, 22:00, colour photograph 28” x 32”.

Commissioned by and first exhibited at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina for the 2008 group exhibition *Let Me Be Your Mirror* curated by Timothy Long.

In the permanent collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery.

***Two Men Mirroring*, 2008**

Two HD videos (6:38 and 8:15) and two colour photographs 40” x 30”. Produced on location with the assistance of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec in Quebec City.

First exhibited in the group exhibition *Here Now or Nowhere*, Curated by Micah Lexier for The Prarie Art Gallery, 2009.

***Mirroring the Musée*, 2008**

Installation with two HD videos (4:42 and 6:05). Commissioned by the Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec in Quebec City for the exhibition *Intrus/Intruders*. Curated by Mélanie Boucher.

First exhibited in the group exhibition *Intrus/Intruders*, 2008. In the permanent collection of the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec.

***All Is Vanity (Mirrorless Version)*, 2009**

50" plasma screen with video (11:46), custom built mirrorless vanity, props, costumes, carpet, lighting equipment.

Commissioned by the BMO financial group and first exhibited at the BMO Project Room, Toronto. Curated by Dawn Cain.

In the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

***The Raft of the Medusa (100 Mile House)*, 2009**

Four HD videos (4:47, 7:46, 5:59, 5:08) and nine colour photographs approx.. 39.5” x 52.5” each.

First exhibited in 2009 as part of *The Raft of the Medusa* (100 Mile House) at Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal.

***Reversing*, 2010**

Six-channel HD video installation, 5:30.

Commissioned by the Samsung LEEUM Museum, Seoul, South Korea. Curator Kyunghwa Koo.

First exhibited in 2010 at Samsung LEEUM Museum. In the permanent collection of Samsung LEEUM Museum.

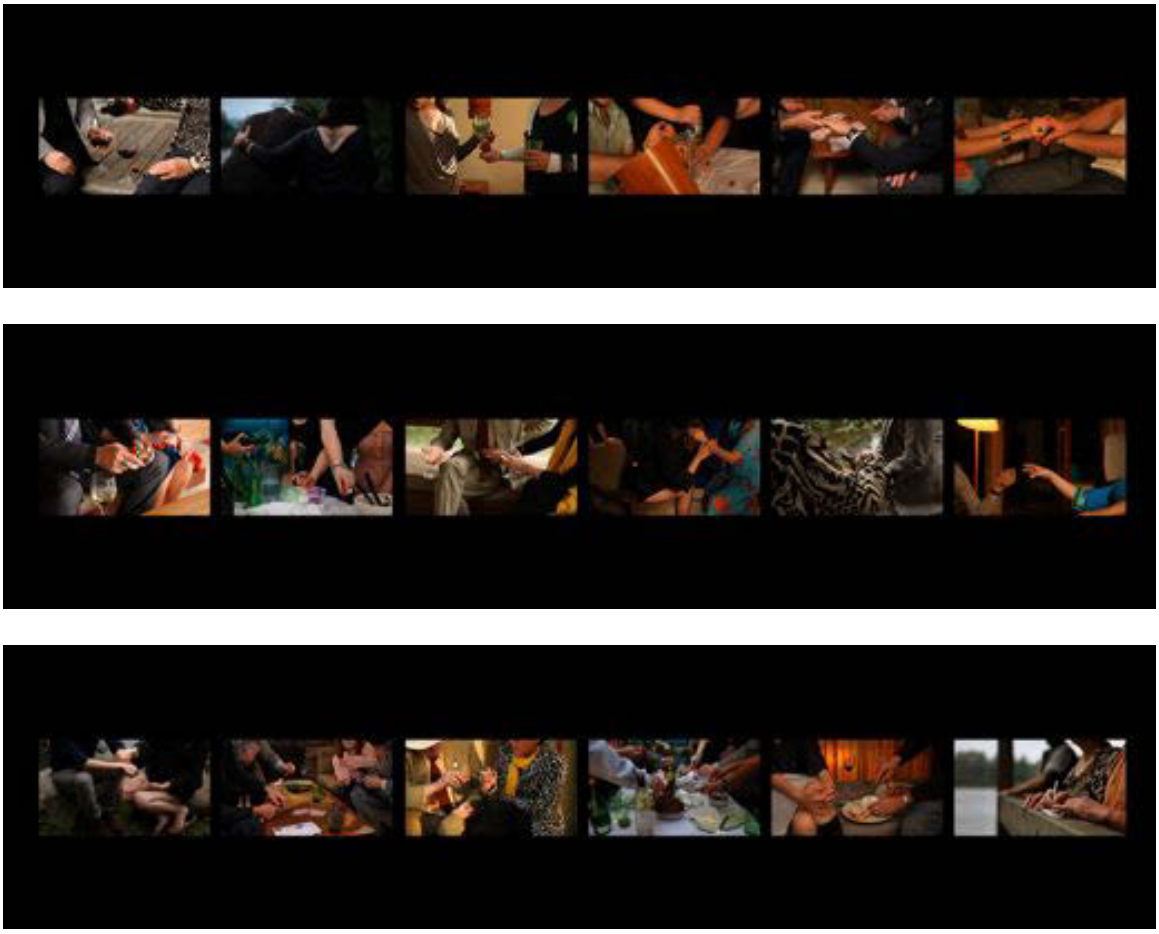
***Unwrapping Rodin*, 2010**

Eighteen colour photographs, 69” x 50” each.

Produced with the cooperation of Phyllis Lambert.

First exhibited at the Musée d’art contemporain, Montreal. Curated by Leslie Johnstone as part of the Sobey Art Award, 2010.

***18 Minutes*, 2010**



Six-channel HD video installation, 3:05.

Commissioned by the Samsung LEEUM Museum, Seoul, South Korea. Curator Kyunghwa Koo.

First exhibited in 2010 at Samsung LEEUM Museum. In the permanent collection of Samsung LEEUM Museum.

***Les Bourgeois de Calais: Crated and Displaced*, 2010**

Seven-channels of HD video, seven 42" plasma screens, seven crates, seven media players, sandbags, steel stands.

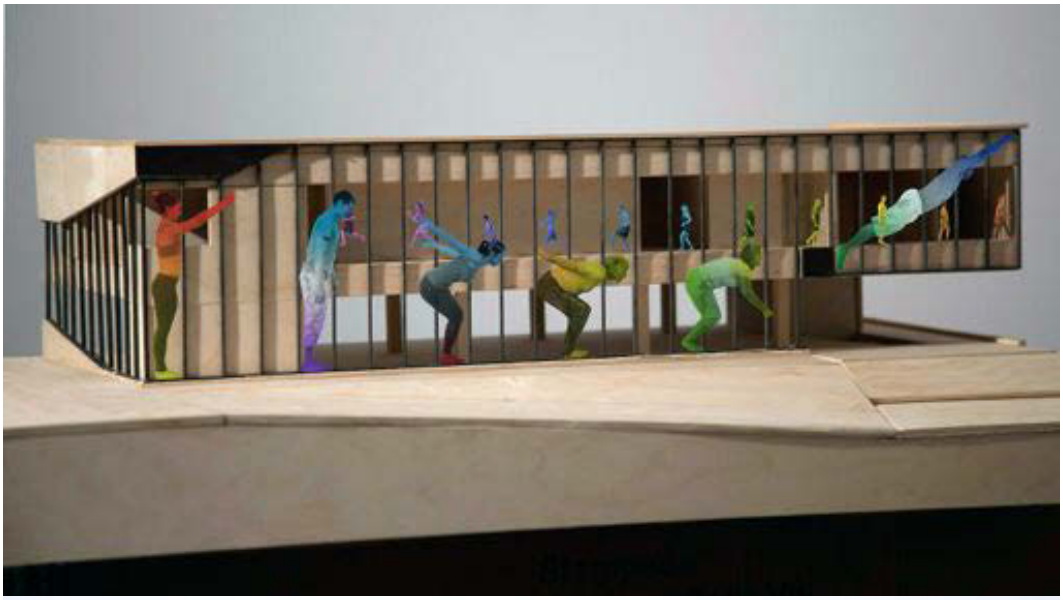
First exhibited at the Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal. Curated by Leslie Johnstone as part of the Sobey Art Award, 2010.

***Dad and David Visiting*, 2010**

HD video, 7:22.

First exhibited in 2010, as part of the group exhibition *FACE À FACE / LOOKING BACK*, Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal.

***LEAP*, 2010**



Printed and tempered glass, 30’ x 100’.

LEAP was produced for Concordia University’s Perform Centre building as part of the Province of Quebec’s 1% Programme. Permanent installation.

***A Vulgar Picture*, 2010**

HD video, 6:36 and colour photograph, 34” x 54”.

Commissioned by the ARTV television show *Mange ta Ville*, 2010.

First presented at the 2011 *Papier* art fair, Montreal.

***The Russians*, 2011**

Fifteen HD videos, nine colour photographs.

First exhibited in 2011, as part of the solo show *The Russians*, Pierre-François Ouellette art contemporain, Montreal.

***Two Views*, 2011**

Installation with two HD videos (5:45, 7:33), two 42” plasma screens, two stuffed birds, two wooden crates, two rings, two books, acrylic paint, and other materials.

Produced during a residency at DAÏMÕN in Gatineau, Quebec and exhibited for the first time at AXENEO7 in 2011 as part of *Objet Indirect Object* curated by Marie-Hélène Leblanc and Steve Loft.

Private Collection, Montreal.

***Safari*, 2011 (In collaboration with Denys Arcand)**

Installation with six channels of HD video, six plasma screens, soundtrack, various props and furniture. Eleven colour photographs are also part of the project though not always exhibited.

Commissioned and first exhibited by the Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 2011 as part of the group show *Big Bang*.

***Mirroring the Brodsky*, 2012**

Installation with two channels of HD video (6:07).

Commissioned and first exhibited as part of the ProArte foundation's *Contemporary Art in Traditional Museum* festival in the I. I. Brodsky memorial museum, St. Petersburg, Russia, 2012.

Daydreams of the Drunken Scholar, 2012

Five HD videos and six colour photographs.

Commissioned by the San Antonio Museum of Art and first exhibited at the solo exhibition *Intimate Encounters* curated by David S. Rubin, 2012.

The Diversions, 2012

Installation with eight HD videos.

Commissioned by The Judith & Norman ALIX Art Gallery, Sarnia, Ontario.

First exhibited at The Judith & Norman ALIX Art Gallery, 2012.

In the permanent collection of The Judith & Norman ALIX Art Gallery.