2-1-2016


Annie Dell'Aria

Graduate Center, City University of New York

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Follow this and additional works at: http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds

Part of the Contemporary Art Commons, Other Film and Media Studies Commons, and the Other History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons

Recommended Citation

http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/707

This Dissertation is brought to you by CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects (2014-Present) by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact AcademicWorks@gc.cuny.edu.
THE MOVING IMAGE IN PUBLIC ART:

by

ANNIE DELL’ARIA

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

2016
THE MOVING IMAGE IN PUBLIC ART:

by

ANNIE DELL’ARIA

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. Harriet F. Senie

__________________________  __________________________
Date  Chair of Examining Committee

Dr. Rachel Kousser

__________________________
Date  Executive Officer

Dr. Amy Herzog
Dr. Mona Hadler
Dr. Margot Bouman
Supervisory Committee
Abstract


by

Annie Dell’Aria

Adviser: Harriet F. Senie

This dissertation examines the work of artists who use moving images in contemporary public art. Specifically, these works are understood through their intersection with practices of media consumption and public interaction passersby negotiate when they encounter a work of moving image-based public art. To this end, I argue, through an analysis of public art, that screen spectatorship is an inherently situated experience.

The project of this dissertation is two-fold. First, I outline a typology of moving image-based public art by dividing significant practices into three categories—the enchanting spectacle, the ludic interface, and the illumination of place. These distinctions illustrate how moving images in public space attract the spectator’s eye, generate new social spaces, and interact with existing discourses of place. Second, this dissertation examines these particular screen situations in relationship to broader practices in media spectatorship in public space, considering screens not only as transmitters of images, but also as potentially site-specific objects and part of a larger web of monetized urban spaces. Public art becomes a lens through which I examine broader changes in screen culture and public space.

Furthermore, by considering works of public art as situations embedded within larger practices of media distribution and consumption, this dissertation charts a path between art and commerce to illustrate potentially positive encounters with visual spectacle in public space—that artists can and do succeed in creating productive moments of play and engagement through moving images. The contributions of this dissertation are not only close analyses of significant
and often under-studied works of art, but also the groundwork for future study of contemporary public art and perhaps even a redirection of film and media theory toward an understanding of broader screen spectatorship as enchanting encounters between viewer, screen, and context.
Acknowledgements

I have been very fortunate to have had the cheerleading of my family and friends through the entire process of my graduate studies. My parents Mary and Steve, my sister Maddie, and my NYC softball and Sunnyside friends, were incredibly supportive in their own ways.

My friends from the Graduate Center community were additionally helpful through stimulating conversation and help reviewing drafts, especially Morgan Ridler, Sarah Mills, Margaret Herman, Cara Jordan, Mary Brown, and Nicole Fennimore. The support and input of my interdisciplinary committee members, Amy Herzog, Mona Hadler, and Margot Bouman was also invaluable.

Throughout this research, a number of artists and arts professionals were generous enough to speak to me about their work and process. I would especially like to thank Bill Brand, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Kerry Brougher, Anita Bhalla, Chris Nriapia, Kevin Heathorn, and Mike Gibbons for their time. Their insights were instrumental to this project. The opportunity to blend my research with pedagogy through my course Screens and Screenings at Parsons was also incredibly helpful to developing this dissertation and refining my ideas.

I am very grateful to my institution for this project as well. I was lucky to have received financial support for this research from the Graduate Center through the Doctoral Students’ Research Grant, the Doctoral Students’ Council Dissertation Fellowship, and the PhD Program in Art History. This dissertation would also not have been possible without the opportunity to pursue a certificate in Film Studies alongside my doctorate in Art History at the Graduate Center.

Lastly, this dissertation is indebted to the continued intellectual and moral support of my adviser, Harriet Senie, who not only provided necessary criticism and input, but also encouraged me to push the disciplinary bounds of art history.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter One: Public Screens: Theory, History, Archeology ........................................... 14
  Introduction .................................................................................................................. 14
  Origins and Myths: the original embodied spectators............................................... 15
  Film Theory’s Three (Flat) Metaphors: the picture frame, the window, and the mirror .... 22
  The Spatial and Bodily Turns in Film Theory .............................................................. 30
  Precedents in Expanded Cinema and Gallery Practice ............................................... 34
  The Dematerialization/Cinematization of Public Art............................................... 46
    Art for Public Memory......................................................................................... 49
    Art for Public Spaces ......................................................................................... 54
  A Brief Genealogy of Public Screens ..................................................................... 59
  Transitional Artists: Robert Smithson and Dan Graham ....................................... 66

Chapter Two: Sight-Specific Art ................................................................................. 72
  Introduction .................................................................................................................. 72
  Public Media Screens: Spaces .................................................................................... 76
  Cinema-on-the-Move: Bill Brand’s *Masstransiscope* .......................................... 81
    Sight: Masstransiscope as film.............................................................................. 83
    Site: Masstransiscope as Permanent Public Art ................................................... 88
  Public Media Screens: Flow ...................................................................................... 99
  Video Art among Chaos: Programming for Public Spaces ....................................... 104
    Broadcasters in the City Center: The BBC Big Screens .................................... 104
    Advertisers Invite Art: Times Square .................................................................... 112
  Cinema-in-the-Round: Doug Aitken’s *SONG 1* ................................................. 116
    Hirshhorn: Cinematic Museum ............................................................................. 117
    Between Here and There: Spectatorship as Amorous Entrancement ................. 123
    Cinematic Gestalt ............................................................................................... 129

Chapter Three: The Ludic Interface ....................................................................... 135
  Introduction .................................................................................................................. 135
  Play Time: On the ludic in contemporary art and public space ............................ 138
  A Space to Play: Crown Fountain and Millennium Park .................................... 146
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fountain and Screens</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of play</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand from Above</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Control: Public Interfaces in the work of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory, Relational, Play: Terms for analysis</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two projects: Under Scan and Sandbox</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financing Interactivity</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Illuminating Place</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Screen as Site: Place-making Initiatives</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio and Mosaic Shopping Districts: Screens in Shifting Landscapes</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liveness: The BBC Big Screens and Event Programming</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screening Elsewheres: Connections between Places</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screens as Permanent Windows: Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s experimentation</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wormholes: Temporary Connectors</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumière: Nocturnal Illumination of Places</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Synthesis: Krzysztof Wodiczko</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Discursive Site: Articulating Memory through Transitional Objects</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montage in Space: Opening up the Monument to Plurality</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations

Figure 1. Print advertisement for Edison’s Vitascope. 1896
Figure 2. Drawing of Brunelleschi’s perspective device. c. 1420s.
Figure 3. Michael Snow, Two Sides to Every Story, 1974.
Figure 4. Stan Vanderbeek and his Moviedrome. Photo: 1965.
Figure 5. Anthony McCall, Line Describing a Cone, 1973.
Figure 6. Frank Gehry, Design for Eisenhower Memorial, 2008 (unrealized to date). Image via eisenhowermemorial.org.
Figure 7. Ad Council “It’s Time to Say Thank You” campaign featuring Tom Hanks, 1999.
Figure 8. Auguste Edouart, The Magic Lantern, 1826-61, cut paper and wash, image: 9 1/2 x 13 3/8 in. (24.2 x 33.9 cm) sheet: 10 1/4 x 13 1/2 in. (26 x 34.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.
Figure 9. John Sloan, Election Night, 1907, oil on canvas, 26 3/8 in. x 32 1/4 in., Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, NY.
Figure 10. Dan Graham, Cinema, 1980-81, artist’s conceptual model.
Figure 11. Charles and Ray Eames, installation of Glimpses of the USA, 1959. Moscow.
Figure 12. Bill Brand, Masstransiscope, 1980, conceptual drawing by artist.
Figure 14. BBC Big Screen installed in Bradford, England. Photo by Annie Dell’Aria, 2013.
Figure 15. David Klein, New York Fly TWA, 1956, photolithograph, 40x25in., Museum of Modern Art.
Figure 16. Andrew Sloat, 1st Amendment (excerpts), 2013, projected in Times Square for Midnight Moment. Photo by Annie Dell’Aria, 2013.
Figure 17. Doug Aitken, SONG1, 2012, projected onto the Hirshhorn Museum. Photo by Frederick Charles.
Figure 18. David Ireland, Study for Hirshhorn “Works” (Washington at Night), 1990. Pencil, crayon and colored pencil on paper. 24 x 19 1/6 in.
Figure 20. Edward Bennett, Buckingham Fountain, 1927, Grant Park, Chicago, IL. Photo by Annie Dell’Aria 2014.
Figure 22. Crown Fountain at night. Photo by Annie Dell’Aria, 2014
Figure 23. Robert Frank, Television Studio, Burbank, California, from The Americans, 1956, gelatin silver print, 11 x 13 15/16 in. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.
Figure 24. Conceptual drawing for Dan Graham, Present Continuous Past(s), 1974.
Figure 25. Diego Velázquez, Las Meninas, 1656, oil on canvas, 125.2 x 108.7 in. Museo del Prado.
Figure 26. Photograph by author while standing between Pistoletto *Standing Man, Standing Woman with Hat* (1980) and Joe Overstreet, *Power Flight* (1971) at the Brooklyn Museum. Photo by Annie Dell’Aria.

Figure 27. Selfie of author and friend inside Yayoi Kusama, *Infinity Mirrored Room—The Souls of Millions of Light Years Away*, 2013, installed at David Zwirner, New York. Photo by Annie Dell’Aria, 2013.


Figure 30. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, *Re:Positioning Fear, Relational Architecture 3*, 1997, Graz, Austria. Photo by Joerg Muhr.

Figure 31. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, *Under Scan*, 2006, Brayford University Campus, Lincoln, United Kingdom. Photo by Antimodular Research.

Figure 32. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, *Sandbox, Relational Architecture 17*, 2010, Santa Monica, California. Photo by: Antimodular Research.


Figure 35. Dara Birnbaum, *Rio Videowall*, 1989, Rio Shopping Complex, Atlanta, Georgia.

Figure 36. Movies in the Park on the screen on the façade of the Angelika Film Center at the Mosaic District. Fairfax, Virginia. Image via mosaicdistric.com.

Figure 37. Live broadcast of *Tosca* at the Plymouth BBC Big Screen, 2013, Plymouth, England. Photo by Annie Dell’Aria.


Figure 39. Diller + Scofidio, *Facsimile*, Moscone Convention Center, San Francisco, California. Image via dsrny.com

Figure 40. James Gerrard, *Solar Reserve (Tonopah, Nevada)*, 2014, installed at Lincoln Center, New York. Photo by Annie Dell’Aria.


Figure 43. Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Bunker Hill Monument Projection*, 1998, Charlestown, Massachusetts.


Figure 45. Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Veteran Vehicle Projection*, 2008, Denver, Colorado.
Figure 46. Illuminator protest at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014. Image via theilluminator.org.
Introduction

Contemporary urban spaces are filled with screens. From the mobile screens we carry with us to the massive animated billboards of city centers, the city is a decidedly mediatized space. As a result, spectatorship is increasingly mobile and distracted. On the one hand, we could view the contemporary mediated city as the realization of what Guy Debord discussed as the all-compassing, debilitating “society of the spectacle.”¹ On the other hand, some laud the arrival of new technologies for their ability to connect people across vast spaces, generating what Marshall McLuhan predicted would be the “global village.”² Now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, neither the dystopian world of Debord nor the utopian vision of McLuhan has come to fruition. Nevertheless, media screens both large and small have redefined the very definitions of public and private space and significantly alter our daily lives. Our experience of public spaces today is defined nearly as much by screens and moving images as it is by architecture and urban planning. Our movements are directed, distracted, and even tracked through an ever more complex web of screen technologies.

In step with the increasing presence of screens in urban space, contemporary public art has also become more cinematic and mediatized. While there are certainly negative connotations with private capital’s increasing presence in public life (in the form of the proliferation of mediated advertising screens), there are also positive uses of visual spectacle and enchantment through screens in public space via public art projects. Major permanent works such as Jaume Plensa’s *Crown Fountain* (2005) in Chicago and spectacular temporary projections like Doug

---

Aitken’s *SONG I* (2012) have the potential to generate as much appeal and visual interest as a traditional public sculpture or mural—perhaps even more, given the inherent attraction of the moving image. However, these projects and others are not merely riding the wave of contemporary trends in media art or urban planning, nor are they merely generating fleeting spectacles in urban spaces. Instead, they constitute a significant branch of contemporary public art and offer unique forms of engagement for diverse audiences. Viewers engage with screens in public space by negotiating a matrix of popular, cultural, and technological experiences and expectations with screens and with public space where encounters with art are more often the result of passing-by than coming-to. I argue that the work of artists such as Doug Aitken, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, and Krzysztof Wodiczko are renegotiations of the public potential of cinematic address; that they generate new relationships between spectators, moving images, and the spaces they occupy.

This incidental, distracted mode of viewing, so distinct from the cinema in the theater, is situated in-between competing stimuli and signification in public space, part of a network that includes publicity and surveillance. The new spectatorship navigates current and constructs new codes of media viewing and exists outside the rarified halls of museums and galleries. The notion of being “in-between” structures my understanding of spectatorship of moving images in public spaces—how we navigate the complex economy of moving image screens that surround us every day. Artists who use screens in public spaces generate a space in between bodies, in between spaces, in between here and there, and in between then and now. Margaret Morse, writing in 1990 when moving images began to dominate gallery and museum spaces, defined video installation art’s distinction from the proscenium arts by elaborating on its temporal and embodied presence, what she calls “the ‘space-in-between,’ or the actual construction of a
passage for bodies or figures in space and time.” Moving images in public spaces invite a multitude of “in-between” encounters and are contingent in their fluctuating urban context. What arises when the moving images are encountered in public spaces are specific situations.

Considering moving image screens as situated underscores the extra-textual elements that, together with the image itself, generate meaning and construct spectatorship. The context, content, and structure of the work, in addition to the specificity of the spectator, construct each situation, and the meaning of the work of public art is embedded within that particular configuration of space, place, image, sound, and spectator. This dissertation is an exploration of public art practices as a means to understand urban screen spectatorship more broadly as inherently situated. This term draws in many ways from concepts of the interventionist practices of the Situationist International (S.I.), particularly their consideration of “the perpetual interaction” of “the material setting of life and the behaviors that it incites and that overturn it.” However, as outlined above, moving images in public art can articulate a relationship to spectacle quite distinct from the debilitating situation Debord and others outlined, and though the concept of moving images being embedded within “situations” is a recurring theme of my study, the politics of the S.I. are not.

Rather, I forge a path between the seemingly disparate spheres of art and commerce with an interdisciplinary consideration of moving image-based public works as simultaneously media art, public art, and evocations of broader trends in media consumption and urban planning. I seek to chart similar ground to that of Rosalind Krauss in her 1979 essay “Sculpture in the Expanded

---

Field,” written in response to emerging art practices in land art and public space that straddled the categories of landscape and architecture. Cameron Cartiere expanded upon Krauss’s formation with the “further-expanded field” of public art, extending the original diagrammatic understanding of emerging practices in minimalism and land art to include installation art and projects engaged with place- and site-specificity. This dissertation is inspired by these inclusive strides in art criticism and theory, but not bound by the limitations of strict structuralist categories. Cartiere also acknowledges such a graphing of contemporary art to be “not exhaustive…but rather…a critical art historical platform…to develop an understanding of the genesis of contemporary public art practices from a more open-ended perspective.” My study similarly situates moving images encountered in public spaces as part of broader spatial and social practices.

I seek to frame public art in terms of its dialogue or exchange with spectators. Recent analyses of both gallery-based art and public art make this exchange central to understanding the structure and success of a given work. Kate Mondloch argues that the interface in video installation art “constitutes an essential component of the artwork (that various dealings between spectators and the screen are structural to the work)…because the body-screen interface is a phenomenal form in itself as well as a constitutive part of an embodied visual field.” Echoing Mondloch, Cher Knight also considers the quality of “exchanges” between a work of art and its

---

7 Ibid., 14.
8 Kate Mondloch, Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 4.
audience when analyzing the effectiveness of public art.9 My study is in many ways indebted to their insistence on the exchange between images, spaces, and spectators, particularly in parsing out a workable typology and considering strategies for understanding success.

Furthermore, I adopt Knight’s populism by reading public art counter to prevailing critical discourses that privilege social critique and phenomenology over all other forms of engagement in public or moving image art. Specifically, I adhere neither to critical models influenced by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s influential theory of the “culture industry” nor to the reworkings of modernism’s medium-specificity which privileges the negation of illusion or narrative. The synthesis of these two modes is seen most noticeably in the criticism from the journal October, and while many significant writings I reference stem from this publication (such as Krauss’s essay cited above), I find that with public art many of these models of criticism are inadequate.10 I must note, however, that just as my position runs counter to those adopted by followers of this particular line of criticism, that neither does my analysis simply applaud the popular or sit indecisively between these two poles. Instead, this dissertation argues for a position echoed by many recent film and media theorists—one that accounts for the agency and particular situated experiences of spectators. In some instances (especially in chapter two), this leads to a recuperation of spectacle, but only so far as in realizing the ways it offers opportunities for genuine engagement with art.

Given my study’s insistence on the actual experiences of spectators, I also argue that,

---

9 This concept informs her entire populist argument regarding public art, which will be analyzed further in later chapters. Cher Krause Knight, Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism, 1st ed. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

10 Of particular interest is a roundtable on the projected image in the gallery published in 2003 which largely reinforces both the critique of mass culture and medium-specificity’s insistence on the visibility of the apparatus. I explore this more in chapter one. Malcolm Turvey et al., “Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art,” October 104 (Spring 2003): 71–96.
whenever possible, the structure and quality of the exchanges prompted by a moving image-based work of public art are best understood through some level of empirical analysis.\footnote{Much of the below discussion on empirical methods as well as some later spectator observation on \textit{SONG 1, Crown Fountain}, and the BBC Big Screens appears in my forthcoming book chapter. Annie Dell’Aria, “Spectatorship in Public Space: The Moving Image in Public Art,” in \textit{Making Sense of Cinema: Empirical Studies into Film Spectators and Spectatorship}, ed. CarrieLynn D. Reinhard and Christopher Olson (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 17–36.} Given the fleeting nature of moving images in public space, empirical research of a purely scientific kind would either be near impossible or liable to manipulation of data. Anyone who responds at all to a stranger’s approach in public space is somewhat self-selecting in terms of being comfortable sharing thoughts on art. Furthermore, given the few measurable metrics of physical engagement (“eyeballs,” footfall count, seconds stopped in front of a screen, etc.), a quantitative empirical study would necessarily relegate such a study to the overly simplistic “success” or “failure” parameters that guide advertising. While the methods of advertising and its attraction of attention are surely no stranger to artists working to make an impact on the public realm, to use such metrics as a measure of art criticism would be to misunderstand how different types of public art can extend opportunities for meaningful exchanges. Similarly, spectator interviews have a tendency to fall into the same traps of success and failure, and public art itself has often been the fodder for over-hyped and often misinterpreted conflict between the “art world” and “the public.”\footnote{For analyses of two highly publicized public art controversies in New York, both of which ended with the work of art being removed (and in a sense destroyed) see Harriet F. Senie, \textit{Tilted Arc Controversy: Dangerous Precedent?} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Jane Kramer, \textit{Whose Art Is It?}, 1st edition. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).}

Nevertheless, the incredible reach of moving image-based public art and the impact it can have on communities should compel serious scholarly engagement, something that has been
lacking overall in the field. Furthermore, given the radically different parameters in which public art is received by its audiences, a consideration of real spectators and audience responses should guide or at least inform any scholarly study of public art rather than relying on an implied spectator. I employed questionnaires, interviews, and on-site observation to explore spectatorship, which I see as an essential component to understanding public art’s significance and function within its broader context. My means of studying spectatorship stems from an understanding of the structure of the work in question, its situation. In order to comprehend this, I first situate myself as a spectator, a fellow passerby. By engaging with the work on its own terms, I can then evaluate the engagement of others in the shared space around me. In some instances, conversations can spark wonderful contributions, in others (as where sound is important or space is cramped), interviewing fellow spectators is both less feasible, and actually affects the responses, as the interviewer feels like an intruder. There are certain questions I ask across works of art, such as whether or not the visitor is encountering a work for the first time and how she came across it, and others that are guided by the specific nature of the piece. In the end, the approach I employ is clearly qualitative, but more specifically ethnographic—embedding myself in the situation then interviewing subjects not to evaluate data against a control set, but rather sparking conversation in order to understand how people engage with art on their own terms. With this observational data I provide potential film and art critical scaffolds for analysis.

Relying too heavily on first-person, ground-level data also poses potential issues, namely the selection of works analyzed. Many public projects that engage with moving images are

---

temporary, and the ability of the researcher to attend or even know about them before they are over is often out of her hands (as was the case with my visit to the Big Screens in 2013).

Furthermore, relying too heavily on on-site spectator response marginalizes historical projects that should also be analyzed in terms of their particular screen situations. What follows in the proceeding chapters is a balanced approach that makes use of empirical research whenever possible and factors in knowledge and findings from studies of similar projects, seeks out archival documentation and accounts, and is attentive to an understanding of moving image spectatorship that is both spatial and embodied. The case studies analyzed are not merely chosen for their convenience, but rather for their significance within contemporary public art.

By analyzing screen situations across public art practices of the last thirty years, three modes of engagement emerge: visual attraction, playful interaction, and place articulation. In the first, moving images arrest or enchant the viewer, activating codes of spectatorship from across the history of film and television. In the second, screens and moving images generate new playful spaces apart from the urban street, fostering new opportunities for social interaction. In the third mode, artists generate or critique the specifics of the site of a work of art, using the ephemerality of the moving image to layer upon the rootedness of place. These three categories cross boundaries of particular moving image media and look rather to the mode of exchange and the nature of each screen situation. The titles of chapters two, three, and four (“Sight-Specific Public Art,” “The Ludic Interface,” and “Illuminating Place”) echo these modes of engagement and chart a typology for significant developments in recent public art. This dissertation is the first study to consider moving image-based public art as its own genre and to articulate its screen situations theoretically, building upon existing scholarship on individual artists, media art, and
public screen environments.14

The sequence of chapters mirrors my methodology, first laying the groundwork for an interdisciplinary study, then radiating out from the eye to the body in space to (finally) the physical site of the screen. Chapter one is in many ways an elucidation of terminology and precedents. I outline significant historical moments and theoretical turns in the history and theory of film and art that lay the groundwork for much of the analysis in later chapters, making this study legible to readers from both film and media studies as well as art history. The subsequent chapters feature selected case studies within each of the three categories woven within an analysis of broader art and media practices. Each chapter concludes with an in-depth consideration of a project or selection of projects by three major artists: Doug Aitken, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, and Krzysztof Wodiczko. These culminating sections illustrate works that I find the most successful within each category, but also connect back to the lesser-known projects discussed in earlier sections of each chapter.

Chapter two considers public art that engages with visual enchantment. The works analyzed most closely are Bill Brand’s *Masstransiscope* (1980), a proto-cinematic animation installed in a Brooklyn subway tunnel; the broadcast practices of the BBC Big Screens network in the U.K. and New York’s Times Square; and Doug Aitken’s *SONG 1* (2012). These case studies are interspersed with an analysis of televisual flow and the out-of-home advertising industry, vernacular instances of visual enchantment in everyday life.

Chapter three examines the concept of play in relationship to screen interfaces in public

---

14 Catrien Schreuder’s book *Pixels and Places: Video Art in Public Space* is a significant precursor to this study, though it acts more as a catalogue (citing dozens of projects rather than analyzing a sample set) and remains too closely tied to a rather narrow definition of “video art.” I discuss her work further and situate my contribution in relationship to it in chapter one. Catrien Schreuder, *Pixels and Places: Video Art in Public Space* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2010).
spaces. Specific case studies include Jaume Plensa’s *Crown Fountain*, Chris O’Shea’s *Hand from Above* (2009), and selected projects by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. Discussion of these works is woven within analyses of play and interactivity in contemporary art, interactive screen technologies in everyday life, and contemporary theories of interface. This chapter concludes by examining the financial systems funding technologically sophisticated interactive public projects and structuring the so-called “Creative Economy.”

Chapter four begins by outlining the major shifts in the concept of place in relationship to the moving image and discussing contemporary discourses of place and place-making. Permanent screen projects in place-making urban and suburban shopping districts (Rio in Atlanta, Georgia; Mosaic in Fairfax, Virginia; and the BBC Big Screens in the UK) are analyzed historically and contextually. Artworks by Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz articulate how screens can bridge places. Chapter four concludes with discussion of the disruptive and critical practices of Krzysztof Wodiczko, with a particularly close reading of *Abraham Lincoln: War Veterans’ Projection* (2012) in New York. This chapter considers both permanent and temporary moving image-based works that continue the broader rearticulation of place in contemporary public art.

My study of moving image-based public art is not an exhaustive catalogue of hundreds of works, but rather a typology of significant artistic practices in public space that articulate changing visual, spatial, and social conceptions of moving image spectatorship and the public sphere. In an effort to make these connections to other public art practices, I am limiting my analysis of public moving images to the realm of what we can classify as “public art.” The inclusion of spectacular media screens on the surface of architectural facades, though a significant trend in increasingly mediated contemporary cities, is omitted, primarily because
there are important distinctions between architectural facades and public art. Art and architecture have always been closely connected. Indeed the emergence of the term “public art” in the 1960s coincided with the popularity of “percent for art” programs in the 1960s, which explicitly linked public sculpture to buildings. The categories are similarly blurred in the artistic practices of minimalism, installation art, and land art outlined by Krauss. However, there are still important distinctions to be made. Whereas spectacular facades use animations and movement to enhance the structure of a building, artists like Aitken or Wodiczko inject images into existing structures. The differences in funding and design constraints are even more pronounced. Working under the rubric of “public art,” the artists and projects examined here generate screen situations in public spaces rather than defining architectural spaces with screens. Though, as I emphasize throughout, screens are always situated—and architecture is part of each specific screen situation—projects that can be classified as architectural (or what Catrien Schreuder calls the contemporary iteration of “gesamtkunstwerk”)15 are omitted in favor of a focus on public art.

The selection of case studies in public art focuses on the contemporary period, starting in the 1980s and centering largely on the 2000s. This time frame parallels the “dematerialization” of public art and postdates the emergence of phenomenological film and video-based gallery art in the late 1960s and 1970s, charting both a move of artistic practices out of the gallery and into public space and a redefining of art’s relationship to public space.16 Geographically, the works of art in this study are limited to the United States and United Kingdom. Both countries have a shared history in public art after World War II, due to “unique developments in policy and

---

15 For Schreuder, this is distinct from the “museum variant” (where gallery video is placed in a new context) and the agit-prop street art variant of video public art. Ibid., 9.
funding,” creating a coherent set of institutional supports for and barriers to realization for the examined sites of exhibition.\textsuperscript{17} Many countries in continental Europe have a wealth of exciting moving image-based public art, but exist within contexts of sustained and generous public funding. In East Asian cities like Tokyo or Shanghai, public screens also dominate public space, though they are overwhelmingly related to commerce. Public media artists in the U.S. and U.K., on the other hand, have to negotiate a frequently changing terrain between public arts funding and commercial interests, making them interesting case studies to compare.\textsuperscript{18} The U.K. examples function largely as institutional foils or parallels, however, as much of this study is rooted in the history of American public art.

Discourses of cinema, television, and screen technologies necessarily inform my study, as they similarly inform both the producers and receivers of works of art—something implied by Kate Mondloch’s term “screen subjects.”\textsuperscript{19} I prefer term “moving image-based” to discuss the public art projects of this study over Mondloch’s term “screen-reliant” or Schreuder’s term “video art”, in order to reach across categories defined by technologies of film or video. Some

\textsuperscript{17} Cartiere, “Coming in from the Cold: A Public Art History,” 21; See also Cameron Cartiere, Rosemary Shirley, and Shelly Willis, “A Timeline for the History of Public Art: The United Kingdom and the United States of America, 1900-2005,” in \textit{The Practice of Public Art}, ed. Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis (New York: Routledge, 2008), 231–46. This geographic parameter pertains to the spaces more than studied artists, as Plensa, Lozano-Hemmer, and Wodiczko hail from Spain, Mexico, and Poland, respectively, and have done significant work outside the U.S. and U.K. I am rather using this geographic region to explore issues of realization, commissioning, and funding.

\textsuperscript{18} Mike Gibbons, former screen manager from the BBC Big Screens project similarly drew this distinction in urban screen practices in different parts of the world, suggesting that the United States and United Kingdom are between the two poles exemplified by continental Europe and East Asia. Similarly, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer has remarked how producing interactive media projects in public spaces in the United States is considerably more difficult to do without the intrusion of private interests than in Europe or Latin America. Mike Gibbons, Skype interview by author, January 29, 2014; Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Interview by author, March 27, 2015.

\textsuperscript{19} Mondloch, \textit{Screens}. 
works, such as Brand’s *Masstransiscope* or Wodiczko’s projections onto three-dimensional surfaces, would even have a hard time being understood in the context of “screens.” As such, I link seemingly disparate media via their essence—movement. Movement in the visual field activates the attention and bodies of viewers on an instinctual level, and it is the nature of this encounter with the enchanting movement of images in space that I analyze here.
Chapter One: Public | Screens: Theory, History, Archeology

The moving image always transforms the space it occupies. Chrissie Iles

The affective life of cinema has a vast range of effects and, in general, its representations and cultural itineraries are productive outside the film theater. Giuliana Bruno

We are all part of moving-image culture, and we live cinematic and electronic lives...none of us can escape daily encounters – both direct and indirect – with the objective phenomena of photographic, cinematic, televisual, and computer technologies and the networks of communication and texts they produce. Vivian Sobchack

Introduction

The word screen can be used as a verb or a noun. We can look at a screen, touch a screen, screen a body for viruses, use a screen to partition space, and screen a film for an audience. Our relationship to the word screen is multidimensional, incorporating both notions of space and time. Physical moving image screens, be they passive receivers of projected light or active light-emitting objects, have a similarly complex relationship with space and time. They are both here and not here, both now and in some other time. Moving images are so normalized in our everyday lives that they have become seamlessly integrated into our daily movements and routines. When we encounter moving image screens in public spaces, we negotiate a variety of cultural and physical spaces and modes of vision in ways we may not even notice at first. To this end, viewing moving image art in public spaces is an essentially situated experience, though one engaged with a longer history of moving image practices.

As the opening quotes to this chapter illustrate, the radiation of cinematic culture and experience beyond the theater is a defining characteristic of contemporary culture, altering every aspect of daily life and modifying our conceptions of space. This chapter outlines how both film and public art have defined themselves in the twentieth century with a particular focus on their iterations of space and the body. In the sections that follow I locate both fruitful moments and
telling gaps in the existing literature in order to both develop a typology of moving image-based public art and historicize the interconnectedness of the cinema and conceptions of public space. The method this chapter employs is both theoretical and historiographical, emphasizing the multi-pronged approach the succeeding chapters use when interpreting artworks. I chart developments in film theory, gallery art, public art, and popular media to illustrate the ways in which moving image screens in public space activate multiple culturally defined modes of interaction and spectatorial engagement. In this brief genealogy of the polyvalent ways the cinema and media screens have structured and defined our notions of public space, I set the cultural and contextual precedents for the moving image-based public art explored in this study.

**Origins and Myths: the original embodied spectators**

Since film’s beginning in the late nineteenth century, theorists have attempted to understand the nature of our experience with the cinema and what makes this experience so different from that of other visual or performing arts. A dynamic, physical relationship to the visual image drives the legend of early spectators reacting to the Lumiére Brothers’ *Arrival of a Train at the Station* (1895), one of the most famous and notorious episodes in film history. As the story goes, spectators, having their first encounter with moving image projection, screamed and ran from a single shot of an approaching train on screen, confusing cinematic and actual space.¹ For years film historians and theorists, all similarly wanting to testify to the medium’s power, viewed these original spectators as completely naïve, as “savages in their primal encounter with the advanced technology.”² In 1989 film theorist and historian Tom Gunning

---

¹ Martin Loiperdinger cites the urban legend around this film as “the founding myth of the medium, testifying to the power of film over its spectators,” while also noting the dearth of actual primary evidence from the 1890s. Martin Loiperdinger and Bernd Elzer, “Lumiere’s Arrival of the Train: Cinema’s Founding Myth,” *The Moving Image* 4, no. 1 (2004): 92.

debunked these apocryphal tales with a thorough historical analysis of the role of “the thrill” in turn-of-the-century entertainment in varying media, such as amusement parks, trompe l’oeil and panorama painting, and vaudeville, thus re-imbuing film’s earliest spectators with agency and historicizing specific forms of film spectatorship.\(^3\) Gunning argues that this “primal scene” was merely a displacement of the credulousness of the much later Hollywood narrative cinema spectator and an extension of containment theories that critiqued mainstream cinema’s reification of hegemonic structures of power through visual pleasure. There is still something to be gleaned from this primal scene other than the correspondence to a particular strand of psychoanalytic film theory. As Martin Loiperdinger points out the problem with theories of manipulation and containment is that “only the inventor of this theory and his/her enlightened readership are immune to this ostensibly irresistible emotional mechanism and see through it.”\(^4\)

The terrified spectators of Lumiére’s film are not merely foundational myth or duped allegory for later narrative film audiences, but a meditation of the radically altered sense of physical, psychic, and fictive space ushered in by new technologies of vision in the late nineteenth century. Photography radically altered visual culture in the preceding half century; domestic devices like the zoetrope and stereoscope made animated and three-dimensional images commodities for personal consumption; and x-ray photography challenged the very concept of what comprised the body. The stupefied, unsophisticated media consumer alluded to in the urban legends surrounding the Lumiére brothers was the star of Edison’s film *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (1902). In this short film, the title character (a recurring bumpkin in

---

\(^3\) Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator (1989).”

\(^4\) Loiperdinger and Elzer, “Lumiére’s Arrival of the Train.”
comedies from Edison’s Biograph film company) tries to woo a dancer on screen, leaps away from an oncoming train, and, in the final gag, tears down the screen in an effort to stop the lovemaking of two characters, one of whom he mistakes for his daughter. After thus destroying the illusion and violently confronting the cognitive error in which he was stuck, a fracas with the projector operator ensues and the two-minute film ends. This film not only uses slapstick to ridicule audiences uninitiated in the mechanics of film spectatorship, but also illustrates (to exaggeratedly comical ends) both the vaudevillian, multimedia environment of early film projection and how film forces the body of any cinema spectator to navigate multiple spaces of meaning. While Uncle Josh posits a comical, unrealistic inability to navigate the two realms, both he and the fabled original Lumière spectators illustrate how the spectator of film becomes implicated in two physical, durational, psychic, and (sometimes) sonic worlds. This duality created through screens is an essential component not only to moving image-based public art, but much of contemporary art’s use of new media as well.  

In film studies terms, the narrative universe of the film is often referred to as the “diegesis,” coming from the Greek word for narrative and used in literary and theatrical terms in contrast to “mimesis,” defining first person narration as fundamentally apart from descriptive, mimetic prose. To consider an element of a film diegetic is to say that it lives and originates within the universe of the film rather than being non-diegetic or outside the universe of the film. This is most commonly used for discussions of film sound. For example, when Sam plays “As Time Goes By” at the piano at Rick’s Café in Casablanca (1943), that music is diegetic, but when this theme plays with full orchestra over Rick’s iconic goodbye to his former lover at the airport (“here’s looking at you, kid”), this music is non-diegetic. Though certainly the score does not come from our space (the theater), it is very much outside the physical universe of the film (since there is no orchestra at the air field) and we comprehend it as such. Thus even when watching a classical Hollywood film like Casablanca, which is designed to be as seamless as possible, we are constantly negotiating and renegotiating space outside of and within the narrative as well as outside of and within the space of the screen.  

Contemporary sound artist Janet Cardiff’s choreographed and interactive “walks” are a great example of this phenomenon outside the use of screens. The walks incorporate a site-specific audio recording where the viewer/participant moves through space at the direction of the narrator, periodically hearing sounds recorded in the area and looking at photographs included with the portable audio player, thus overlaying multiple layers of meaning and multiple moments
or Lumière’s mythical spectators is a clear exaggeration, the immersive quality of the cinema’s
diegesis is nevertheless very seductive. In screenings of action or horror films, it is common to
observe audiences wincing, ducking, or otherwise moving their bodies in relationship to what is
on the screen. Experiencing film happens not merely through the ocular or auditory senses, but
also through the entire body and its spatial position in relationship to the site of projection as
well as the diegetic universe of the film. The moving image uniquely alters space, and in turn,
the body has to navigate this new space accordingly. Though historically false, the shocked and
terrified spectators of urban legend allude to the power of the moving image to rearrange modern
spatial relationships—the cinematic image’s illusory diegesis, television’s spatial and temporal
collapse, and mobile media’s simultaneous fracturing and suturing of everyday lived
environments.7

In his oft-cited essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Walter
Benjamin compares the cinematographer’s ability to penetrate and analyze space to that of a
surgeon, whereas the painter’s skills are likened to a magician. He writes, “…for contemporary
man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the
painter since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with
mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment.”8 To Benjamin,

7 For example, consider the smart phone’s relationship to space. On the one hand, it connects the
user to data streams that are part of a network. On another hand, it presents the potential to
transport the user to another fictive space (watching a video with headphones). And finally, it has
the ability to locate the body through GPS positioning. The relationship to space, then, is both
embodied and disembodied, diegetic and actual.
8 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in Illuminations:
cinema’s capacity for potentially radical realism is configured as its ability to penetrate and segment space in the same manner by which surgery has demystified (and potentially cured) the body. The relationship between the cinematic image and reality marks some of the significant works of classical film theory, such as Andre Bazin’s focus on the long shot and the close-up, as well as the basis for the later psychoanalytic critique by Jean-Louis Baudry and Laura Mulvey.9 Benjamin illuminates, however, just how connected the cinematic arts are to a notion of space—something vitally important for developing a theory of the moving image in public art. In his often misunderstood critique of the preciousness or aura of the unique work of art (often configured as panel painting), Benjamin lauds not only the cinema’s surgical capacity for realism, but also the how it is absorbed and comprehended collectively—a notion he very deliberately ties to architectural spaces we move through. In dissecting the critical dyad of contemplation/distraction in the individual’s relationship to painting and the mass’s relationship to film (respectively), Benjamin finds a middle ground through architecture:

> Buildings have been man’s companion since primeval times…[they] are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception – or rather, by touch and by sight…tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit…occur[ring] much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion.10

Space, in both film and architecture, is apprehended not merely visually, but also through movement (either of the camera or of the viewer’s body) and a haptic sense of touch.

> When the moving image is placed in public space, the negotiation between diegetic

---


(narrative, cinematic) space and real space becomes even more apparent with a distracted, mobile spectator. However, a traditional movie theater is by no means a neutral space within which we absorb film’s images and narratives. All experiences of the moving image are inherently situated (as are all our experiences) in both space and time. Much as how we no longer think of the white cube as a neutral space for viewing art, so too the cinematic screen and its surrounding environs should be read as a distinctly coded space. The movie theater is a space that attempts to dissolve its material reality in favor of the image, but also one that structures certain social codes, body positioning, class dynamics, and cultural expectations as well. To this effect, film theorist Giuliana Bruno writes “one never sees the same film twice.”

The image and sound remain the same, the projector runs on its own, but our perception is unique to each screening, ephemeral and situated despite its reproducibility. Understanding film is less about understanding the celluloid itself, and more an exploration of the durational situation between viewer and screen. This contingency in our experience of film—the individual, pseudo-private encounter with images that cannot look back at us—has always been part of the medium’s power, but only recently have theorists attempted to articulate this contingent relationship to both the body and space.

Movement instinctually reorders our field of vision, triggering our otherwise filtered peripheral vision and directing our attention to potential threats. In short, movement prompts our bodies to have a new relationship to the space that surrounds us. We rearrange our intellectual and physical selves once we negotiate this new space, and cinema has the ability to

---

simultaneously disorient and re-orient us in relationship to lived and narrative spaces (in a way, we perform the shock and recovery of Uncle Josh daily). Vivian Sobchack argues that our very experience of the world is shaped by screens: “cinematic and electronic screens differently solicit and shape our presence to the world, our representation in it, and our sensibilities and responsibilities about it.”

Sobchack’s investigation of how we experience media explores how the body itself is reorganized and re-inscribed in the process, that we are co-present with (not merely in front of) the image.

The scholarship of theorists like Giuliana Bruno, Jonathan Crary, Tom Gunning, and Vivian Sobchack considers the spatial and embodied nature of film viewing in response to what is known as “classical film theory” (roughly film theory written before the 1960s) as well as the psychoanalytic “apparatus theory” of the 1970s. I will discuss their more recent investigation of bodies and spaces in relationship to screens further below, but first I outline how film theory has defined the medium’s position amongst the other arts, its own nature, and its primary metaphors. Sobchack, before outlining her existential phenomenological theory of viewing film in *Address of the Eye*, discusses the three primary metaphors used in film theory: the picture frame, the window, and the mirror. While these three objects have distinctly different relationships to the space around them, they are all decidedly flat, rectangular forms, and refer to film as a “static viewed object.”

---


own, a window onto reality, or a reflection of ourselves is useful when considering how film enters the public realm.

**Film Theory’s Three (Flat) Metaphors: the picture frame, the window, and the mirror**

Though we normally associate film viewing with a large flat screen, many early moving image devices operated on a much smaller scale than the cinema theater. The zoetrope, a cylinder with regularly spaced slits for viewing the rotation of a repeated animated motion, and the thaumatrope, a dual-sided object that produces a simultaneous image when spun fast, were handheld parlor devices of the mid-nineteenth century that created an illusion of movement or superimposition by exploiting the principle of the persistence of vision. Like the stereoscope, these objects produced optical illusions for individual enjoyment and were part of both the nineteenth century’s interest in “the thrill” and a continuation of eighteenth century studies in the phenomenology of vision.¹⁵ Following the motion studies of Edweard Muybridge and Thomas Eakins, these principles were applied to photographic images as well as animations. One of the earliest usages of the illusion of movement in a photographic image was not through the projected image, but rather individual viewing machines such as the kinetoscope and the mutascope operated for pennies in urban arcades. Much like the later pornographic peep arcades, these objects generated an intimate relationship between viewer and image. Despite an individual viewing experience with the moving image, the body’s position as viewer is exposed in the

---

Realizing the increased monetary potential of multiple viewers, Thomas Edison and others began to market projecting kinetoscopes and eventually launched the Vitascope. An advertisement for this latest invention from 1896 is particularly relevant to our current discussion. (Fig. 1) Linguistically the new attraction is marketed using its connection to both reality and illusion; *vita*, which is Latin for “life” and *scope* from the Greek *skopos* meaning “to watch, look at.” There is an intimate connection, therefore, to the relationship between the image and a new vitality, and a notion that to watch a film is indeed to look at life. The audience sits captivated in a large theater reminiscent of vaudeville. A conductor pops up from the orchestra below, and above, on the stage, is the screen. On the screen, a woman dances in a small town in vivid color (though color film technology was not developed yet, many early films were tinted by hand). There is a curious break with actual vaudevillian practices at the time: a picture frame around the screen. This frame not only presents the image as a rarefied object (imbuing it with an aura, a life), but also suggests that viewers of Vitascope films enter into another, vibrant, colorful space. The advertisement’s image synthesizes the socio-spatial practices of theatrical spectatorship and the solitary visual ideal of absorption in viewing painting. In short, this advertisement suggests that early discourses around film oscillated between reveling in its technological verisimilitude and attempting to situate it within existing visual arts and theatrical practices.

To refer to film as a “picture frame” not only connotes a flat, precious object, but also

---

refers to the medium as a legitimate art form, one with its own language and methods. The early decades of film, much like the early decades of photography, were marked by a pronounced anxiety over the new medium’s relationship to the more established arts as well as its relationship to technology. While filmed theater held a certain place within film production, many filmmakers and theorists were intentionally trying to distance themselves from the theater by utilizing the specific strengths of film. Mastering and theorizing the language of film was a central concern for Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) and his theory of montage. For Eisenstein, as well as fellow Soviet avant-garde filmmaker Dziga Vertov (1896-1954), film is at its weakest when it nears the realm of theater or literature, and instead should speak through its medium-specific qualities related to film’s linear duration—specifically the cut. Montage, or the juxtaposition of differing shots to create a new meaning (what Eisenstein wrote about in relationship to Marxist dialectics), was a central concern for Eisenstein and Vertov, both of whom wanted to move past the experimentation in emotionally manipulative use of montage made famous by the experiments of Lev Kuleshov (1899-1970) and towards a more intellectual avant-garde cinema for the proletarian revolution.\textsuperscript{18} The Soviet avant-garde understood filmmaking in terms of conflict—between sound and image, between shots, and within the shot between graphic elements. In contrast to the use of editing to produce logical narrative or space, Eisenstein argues, “montage is not an idea composed of successive shots stuck together but an

\textsuperscript{18} The “Kuleshov Effect” refers to an experiment which juxtaposed the same shot of Tsarist actor Ivan Mosjoukine with shots of a plate of soup, a girl in a coffin, and a young woman on a sofa. Reportedly, audiences believed the actor’s facial expression and emotion was different each time depending on what he was “looking at,” though the image was, in fact, the same shot, thus demonstrating the emotive potential of editing. Montage is discussed further in relationship to the projection work of Krzysztof Wodiczko in chapter four.
idea that DERIVES from the collision between two shots that are independent of one another."  

I will analyze Eisenstein’s notion of montage further in chapter four in relationship to the public projections of Krzysztof Wodiczko, where the collision happens not at the cut but on the screen itself. For the present discussion, Eisenstein offers an example of how film can be articulated in relationship to its material properties and political potential.

The second, opposing metaphor is the window. Long the preferred metaphor for panel painting since the revolutionary breakthroughs of Italian one-point linear perspective in the fifteenth century, the window implies a threshold into a seamless, spatially coherent reality rather than a material, precious (flat) object. Furthermore, the metaphor of the window in representational arts refers to linear perspective’s creation of the singular viewing subject—the monocular locus of vision before which the world (of which the subject is at a remove) unfolds logically. Indeed Filippo Brunelleschi’s original apparatus for linear perspective insisted on this monocular, disembodied, mathematical form of vision, as the drawing of its use awkwardly suggests. (Fig. 2) The historical linkages between paintings and windows are far reaching (from illusionistic Roman frescoes to Rene Magritte’s *The Human Condition* of 1933), suggesting these two metaphors are not as opposed to each other in broader visual culture as they appear in classical film theory.

For theorists such as Andre Bazin (1981-1956), the cinema’s ability to capture and translate reality for the viewer was unparalleled by any other art form or photographic medium. In a statement that echoes Benjamin, the basic urge behind the plastic arts was to embalm, to

---

preserve life in the face of assured death. This need to capture and preserve life is both met and surpassed by the moving image; the rectangular frame is not the limit of the film but rather always implies off-screen space, and thus is “centrifugal.” He writes:

The outer edges of the screen are not, as the technical jargon would seem to imply, the frame of the film image. They are the edges of a piece of masking that shows only a portion of reality. The picture frame polarizes space inwards. On the contrary, what the screen shows us seems to be part of something prolonged indefinitely in the universe. A frame is centripetal, the screen centrifugal.²⁰

The “masking” is less a delimiting of the image’s space than a selection from broader reality, much like a director’s hand gesture as she ponders a shot’s composition on set. What is on-screen is constantly, in Bazin’s formation, referring to and defining a more expansive off-screen (or we could even say a public) space. In this way, watching a film is to enter into a separate space. The body’s immobility in the theater is a necessary condition for this illusion of movement through space (as well as the surgical, dynamic reality of film’s movement implied by Benjamin), but this immobility is not analyzed in any significant theoretical models until the more psychoanalytically inspired writers of the following generation of film theorists, proponents of “apparatus theory.”

Lastly, the shift towards the “mirror” as the preferred metaphor in film theory connects to the psychoanalytic turn in film theory in the late 1960s and 1970s. Theorists like Jean-Louis Baudry and Laura Mulvey used Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis to discuss the means by which Hollywood narrative cinema taps into regressive fantasies in the viewer and reinforces a dominant capitalist or patriarchal ideology via the seamlessness of the apparatus. In her revolutionary 1975 essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” British theorist Laura Mulvey shifts feminist theory towards the psychoanalytic in an effort to “[examine] patriarchy with the

tools it provides.” Interestingly, she largely accomplishes this in terms of how camera placement aligns with male viewer identification within the diegetic space. For Mulvey, two drives of pleasure—the scopophilic and the narcissistic—align with narrative cinema’s treatment of the male as “bearer of the look,” driving both the camera placement and narrative action; and the woman as passive and “to-be-looked-at,” in both exhibitionist and voyeuristic terms. The camera lingers on the female form just as the male character looks on, we as spectators then assume the male position within the diegesis—in other words, cinema is patriarchal in the way that it manipulates our body’s presumed position within the space of the film (though Mulvey and other apparatus theorists presume the actual body of the spectator to be static, passive, and firmly entrenched in the theater seat).

Jean-Louis Baudry, a French film theorist who also used Lacanian psychoanalytic terms in his critique of the cinematographic apparatus, presumes a spectator so inert he even goes so far as to make an analogy to the prisoners of Plato’s allegory cave. In this classical allegory, “prisoners” have been chained since childhood in a cave looking only at shadows produced by a candle behind them, mistaking its flickering projections on the wall for “reality.” For Baudry, the projecting apparatus renders both the labor and the material conditions of the film invisible, “preserving at any cost the synthetic unity of the locus where meaning originates [the subject].” The central subject Baudry refers to is defined as the monocular position of observation created and reinforced by Renaissance perspective. In this way, we see a parallel between the mirror and window metaphors—though clearly Baudry’s branch of theory is deconstructing classical

---

22 Ibid., 715.
23 Baudry and Williams, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” 44.
Hollywood’s creation of the subject as a means of ideological reification. “The paradoxical nature of the cinematic mirror-screen is without doubt that it reflects images not “reality.” These images are not actually the self, but rather the ideal self that one experiences in Lacan’s “mirror stage” of development—a point where one recognizes the difference between self and surroundings, but misrecognizes that self in relationship to an exterior ideal body. The narcissistic regression Mulvey and Baudry locate in the cinema allows both the narrative and image to reinforce dominant structures. While the space of the diegesis is understood in terms of its effacement of differences and its constructed unity for the subject in a state of misrecognition, the spectator’s actual body remains immobile in the dark. “No doubt the darkened room and the screen bordered with black like a letter of condolences already present privileged conditions of effectiveness – no exchange, no circulation, no communication with any outside.” The work of the so-called “apparatus” film theorists, much like Debord’s critique of spectacle and Adorno’s critique of mass culture, presumed a duped spectator and an all-encompassing containment (from which the theorist is strangely at a distance). As alluded to in the introduction, my reading of moving image-based public art counters this limited understanding of a spectatorship without agency. My shift away from containment theories is paralleled in the artistic and scholarly precedents outlined below.

In many ways, Baudry’s critique of the enclosed nature of the cinematic experience paralleled many conceptual and installation practices of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Michael Snow’s Two Sides to Every Story (1974). (Fig. 3) In this work the Canadian artist liberates the

---

24 Ibid., 45.
26 Baudry and Williams, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” 44. Italics in original.
screen from the wall and projects two 16-mm films on either side. The two films were shot by camera men on opposite sides of a woman making a series of movements in relationship to the transparent screen, thus the spectator’s position in relationship to the screen in the gallery is only one angle of the pro-filmic event, with the other being spatially accessible through movement, but inaccessible from the single vantage point of theatrical cinema. This work deconstructs all three metaphors by activating the spectator’s body within the space of the gallery. The level of institutional and ideological critique many artists felt compelled to address in their works shifts remarkably in the more spectacular and immersive installations of the late 1990s and 2000s, and contemporary public art projects must be considered as negotiating a complex matrix of moving image practices from both the traditional cinema and the gallery. As I will later argue, artistic practice and theoretical models are inherently related; as more artists are versed in the major theorists of the day, similar concerns emerge.

The three metaphors of classical film theory offer both limitations against which more contemporary theorists and artists work against and significant insight into how we register moving images in space. All three metaphors are flat, limited, rectangular objects, what Anne Friedberg considers a “framing” of virtuality.27 The aspect ratio of the frame is locked, presuming a viewer on one specific side, not in motion, and with an eyeline perpendicular to the screen’s surface. In Baudry’s critique, he rightly places emphasis on the architectural situation of the theater (though it is only to critique the manner by which that architecture attempts to make itself invisible), and in Snow’s piece, the situation is inverted and upended. Though the cinema’s image may be recorded in two-dimensional form, the cinema is a decidedly three-dimensional

and durational experience.

**The Spatial and Bodily Turns in Film Theory**

The containment implied with apparatus theory is rather limiting in its view of spectator experience. If we were to take Baudry and Mulvey at their word, then all politically sympathetic viewers should boycott all cinema that does not meet the avant-garde standards for a Brechtian sense of awareness in the spectator. Furthermore, by denying any specificity to either each spectator or each screening, this theory blankets over reception completely in favor of the text. In the late 1980s and 1990s, there were two concurrent “turns” in contemporary film theory—the spatial and the bodily. Both of these essentially de-privilege the screen-as-metaphor and instead consider the screen as an actor or catalyst for a more complex situated and embodied event. Reception studies such as the work of Janet Staiger attempt to specify and analyze what apparatus theory saw as a universal, ahistorical spectator by adopting a “contextual and materialist approach”; and a new historical focus on modes of exhibition and spectatorship in the work of Miriam Hansen similarly brought focus away from the image/text and back onto the specific construction of the entire cinematic experience. By considering the contextual specificity of both the spectator’s body and the site of the screen, the new model of theory emerges at a time when film itself is continually viewed through the portable and domestic domains of VHS, DVD, and digital programming. Similarly, in gallery work of this time, artists

---


like Tony Oursler (b.1957) are less concerned with deconstructing the cinematic or televisual apparatus and more interested in using projection in a sculptural way, highlighting concepts of playfulness, strangeness, and wonder over criticality.

Returning briefly to the Vitascope advertisement, the text calls the new invention a “thrilling show,” connecting to a broader nineteenth century culture of thrills, illusions, and attractions discussed in Tom Gunning’s landmark study. In this early “cinema of attractions,” “the spectator does not get lost in a fictional world and its drama, but remains aware of the act of looking, the excitement of its curiosity and its fulfillment.”30 The duality of the spectator’s attention (both to the image and to the construction of the image) parallels the viewer of gallery and public art installations who is removed from the spatially hypnotic confines of the movie theater. Gunning, however, also draws a clear connection to content with the “cinema of attractions,” calling to mind the exhibitionist and exploitative nature of the performances and shots of early non-narrative film which “rush forward to meet their viewers…emphasizing the act of display.”31 This “cinema of attractions” offers purely visual pleasures rather than seductive immersion—it comes out of the screen rather than drawing the spectator into it.

Giuliana Bruno’s writings on the relationship between the cinema and movement are particularly useful for considering moving images in the public realm. In Atlas of Emotion she seeks to reclaim a form of spectatorial pleasure for the female viewer by replacing Mulvey’s notion of the voyeur with that of the voyager. By considering cinematic movement as something that is potentially liberating, Bruno connects our experience at the cinema to earlier forms of movement and memory, which she further connects to the architectural experience of both the

31. Ibid.
museum and contemporary installation art.

She who wanders through an art installation acts precisely like a film spectator absorbing and connecting visual spaces. The installation makes manifest the imaginative paths comprising the language of filmic montage and the course of the spectatorial journey. If, in the movie theater, the filmic-architectural promenade is a kinesthetic process, in the art gallery one literally walks into the space of the art of memory and into its architecturally produced narrative.\(^\text{32}\)

By linking the viewers’ affective and physical movements, we come to understand how a notion of “the cinematic” is not merely a description of one’s interaction with a specific form of projected light, but rather a modality of perceptive experience within the world. Our movements through space involve a similar affective suturing of fractured visual images and sonic impressions. To think of montage in spatial as well as durational terms, one can see a clear link between the multi-screen installation work of an artist like Doug Aitken (b.1968) and traditional cinema. How these spatial installations create a new sense of durational agency for the viewer (who now can generate her own collisions and interactions of images through movement rather than the film’s editing) is discussed further in chapter two.

For Bruno, the “haptic” is defined in terms of how we feel or wear space: “a haptic bond links sheltering to clothing the body…to occupy a space is to wear it.”\(^\text{33}\) For Laura Marks, “haptic visuality” and “haptic cinema” is more related to the notion of touch, conceived of in terms of Alois Riegl’s opposition between the haptic and the optic.\(^\text{34}\) Marks is particularly interested in looking at artists’ film and video exploring culturally marginalized or liminal


\(^{33}\) Ibid., 32.

\(^{34}\) Riegl, who spent many years studying Egyptian textiles, charted a distinction between the tactile or haptic arts (those whose emphasis is on the surface) and the optical arts (those concerned with illusion). For a thorough review of these two terms across Riegl’s writing, the chapter on Riegl in Moshe Barasch, Theories of Art: 3. From Impressionism to Kandinsky (Routledge, 2013).
positions, though her insistence on the physicality of film is relevant to understanding the
development of the bodily turn in film theory. What she calls “haptic cinema” crosses the
medium-specific borders of film and video and “discourages the viewer from distinguishing
objects and encourages a relationship to the screen as a whole.”

She notes to how the image’s depth and the screen’s flatness come into jarring collisions, how hapticity has been conceived of
through art history, and understands haptic visuality as a modality of seeing and feeling activated
frequently by artists of intercultural cinema. Marks’s and Bruno’s notions of the haptic serve as
linkages between the spatial and bodily turns, connecting the body and the space of projection
via the tactile surface of the screen.

How our bodies see and experience film phenomenologically is a key concern for the
bodily turn in film theory. Vivian Sobchack’s existentialist reading of how we view film and
interpret media is an example of the shift towards an embodied notion of film spectatorship. For
her, the experience of attention in the theater is inherently active, countering passive theories of
how cinema affects the viewer. What she calls the “viewing view” is always “engaged in the
activity of constituting sensible images of a world…the diacritical activity of choice-making, of
circumscribing, and inscribing the horizons of significance and a field of signification.”

Thus the cinema’s address is not conceived of as monologic, but rather both dialectical and dialogic,
and both the film and the viewer are thus embodied. Furthermore, the deceptive movement of the
apparatus (“the automatic movement of the film”) is “overwritten and transformed by the
autonomous movement of what is autonomously perceived as a visual intentionality.”

35 Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*,
36 Vivian Sobchack, “The Active Eye: A Phenomenology of Cinematic Vision,” *Quarterly
Review of Film & Video* 12, no. 3 (October 1990): 24.
attention within the film is therefore given a sense of embodied agency denied in the readings of Baudry or Mulvey, relating our attentiveness to screen images to our broader attention in lived experience.\(^{38}\) Thus, returning to the Edison advertisement the \textit{vita} in Vitascope is foregrounded, as the cinema relates specifically to a living (i.e. embodied) view. Particularly when considering a spectator in motion, this notion of autonomous movement perceived by the perpetually distracted viewer becomes more essential to understanding the operation of gazes between screen and spectator and the directed attention screens demand within the spaces they occupy, be they theaters, galleries, or urban streets.

\textbf{Precedents in Expanded Cinema and Gallery Practice}

The last two decades have seen a resurgence in scholarly and curatorial interest in the history of the moving image in the visual arts. With large, ground-breaking shows such as \textit{Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977} (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2001), \textit{The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality and the Moving Image} (Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., 2008), and \textit{Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance} (Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2010), and also major publications by Tate Modern and others, the continued presence of film and video installations in the gallery now has critical and historical legitimacy.\(^{39}\) The presence of cinema in the museum, however, contrasts strongly with the more rarified objects typically viewed and preserved in museum spaces. Though the literature on moving image-based public art is relatively nascent, studies on museum and gallery trends offer potential models for thinking about how screens

\(^{38}\) “Our relation to our own lived bodies is precisely similar: that is, our automatic physiological operations are constantly overwritten and transformed by our autonomous and intentional actions unless these operations are foregrounded because, in a particular instance, they trouble us and we specifically attend to them.” Ibid., 147, n.26.

function in public space.

Much of the literature on film outside the gallery focuses on what has been called “expanded cinema,” explored by Gene Youngblood in his seminal 1970 text of the same name. This broad-ranging genre of artistic practice refers to the use of cinematic and televsual media in immersive, multiscreen, and non-traditional environments in the 1950s and 1960s, quite often within a utopian discourse of media convergence. In Youngblood’s words expanded cinema seeks “to expand further man’s communicative powers and thus his awareness.”40 He writes further, “We are tragically in need of a new vision: expanded cinema is the beginning of that vision. We shall be released. We will bring down the wall. We’ll be reunited with our reflection.”41 One artist most explicitly connected to expanded cinema is Stan VanDerBeek (1927-1984), especially his Movie-Drome (1963). (Fig. 4) This hemispherical theater was inspired by Buckminster Fuller’s geodesic domes and exhibited multiple images at once in a completely immersive environment. Realized initially in Stony Point, New York, the Movie-Drome was meant to be a prototype for a new, public means of communication. VanDerBeek lays out the goal of the Movie-Drome in his manifesto, “Culture: Intercom.”

In a spherical dome, simultaneous images of all sorts would be projected on the entire dome-screen…the audience lies down at the outer edge of the dome with their feet towards the center, thus almost the complete field of view is the dome-screen. Thousands of images would be projected on this screen…this image flow could be compared to the “collage” form of the newspaper, or the three ring circus…(both of which suffice [sic] the audience with an [sic] collision of facts and data)…the audience takes what it can or wants from the presentations…and makes its own conclusions.42

VanDerBeek’s utopian goals are not unlike those Eisenstein suggested earlier, but the

---

41 Ibid., 73.
42 Stan VanDerBeek, “Culture: Intercom,” *Film Culture* 40 (1966): 82.
transformative power moves away from the film itself and to the mode of exhibition.\textsuperscript{43} When re-created for the 2012 exhibition “Ghosts in the Machine” at the New Museum in New York, the space was historicized as a precursor to the information flows of the internet and digital media.\textsuperscript{44}

The public address of these Movie-Dromes as well as their openness to multiple, contingent readings parallels many of the concerns and aims of public art, suggesting there are more connections between the realms of experimental and expanded cinema and public art than are immediately apparent. Furthermore, VanDerBeek, shared many interests with contemporaries in the visual arts, such as Allan Kaprow (1927-2006), Carolee Schneemann (b. 1939), and Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008). The ephemeral, multimedia environments, performances, and expanded cinema works produced by these figures break with preconceived divisions between film and art, popular and avant-garde, public and private spheres.\textsuperscript{45}

In the late 1960s, following both expanded cinema’s utopian rhetoric and minimalism’s emergence in the gallery in the first half of the decade, artists began to deconstruct the cinema’s traditional form and re-orient the body’s relationship to light and screens through installation work. Minimalism was arguably the most significant challenge to the gallery space of the twentieth century. In Michael Fried’s critique of what he calls “literalist art” he draws parallels between the work of Robert Morris (b. 1931) and Donald Judd (1928-1994) and theater, which

\textsuperscript{43} Indeed VanDerBeek even envisioned rotating artists in residence at each site, orchestrating material for the moment and place. Ibid., 18.


\textsuperscript{45} Kaprow’s happenings incorporated the audience and investigated types of play; Schneemann’s Snows (1967) blends performance and film with projections of her 1965 film Viet-Flakes circling improvisational performers; and Rauschenberg’s work with E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology) in the mid-1960s merged new media technologies and performance in works such as Open Score (1966). In Open Score, infrared television cameras, microscopic FM transmitters, flashlights, and television monitors transformed a tennis match between Frank Stella and Mimi Kanarek into a mixture of avant-garde dance and mediatized performance art.
he sees as “the negation of art.” It is precisely the works’ anthropomorphic scale within the gallery space that is problematic, turning the viewer into the subject and rendering the art merely an object, which for Fried makes the entire experience durational (and thus theatrical). Fried attacks any slippages between artistic mediums as well as any acknowledgement of the presence of the spectator.

Oddly, Fried, in passing, mentions how the movies escape theatricality due to the projection’s indifference to the presence of the spectator, though due to its automatic “refuge” cinema can never reach the level of modernist art. In his medium-specific orthodoxy, Fried sidesteps the debates between picture frame, window, and mirror to instead position “the movies” outside of the more serious issues of quality and value, which are limited within the individual plastic arts. Fried’s critique of minimalism was absorbed into Morris’s phenomenological investigation of the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gestalt theory, particularly that objects are apprehended in their entirety despite being experienced partially. Minimalism’s activation of the spectator’s body in space and duration, as well as the critique of the conditions of art viewing became central concerns for some of the early investigations of the moving image in the gallery space.

Three major artists who broke down the cinema’s main components to create sculptural installations of images, sensations, and light are Paul Sharits (1943-1993), Michael Snow

---

47 Ibid., 843.
48 “...one need not move around the object for the sense of the whole, the gestalt, to occur. One sees and immediately ‘believes’ that the pattern with one’s mind corresponds to the existential fact of the object.” Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture 1-3,” in *Art in Theory 1900 - 2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul J. Wood, 2nd ed. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 829.
(b.1929), and Anthony McCall (b.1940). Their contributions to the migration of film from the theater to the gallery has played a large part in the resurgence of scholarly interest in expanded cinema, perhaps as a means of historicizing the current domination of moving image-based works in contemporary museum and gallery installations.\(^49\) Paul Sharits, an important figure of the structuralist film movement, made the body central even in his more traditionally projected work. *Ray Gun Virus* (1966), the artist’s first entry in his “project of deconstructing cinema,” for example, uses hand colored film run through a projector to create pulsating, jarring “flickers,” which are experienced violently and may even cause seizures.\(^50\) Like many of his flicker films, Sharits does away with the camera in favor of hand-manipulated film and incorporates sound by amplifying the very noise of the film projector. Another branch of Sharits’s practice was his “locational” films – fully designed installations that, like the flickers, emphasized the phenomenological perception of the viewer’s body and deconstructed the illusionism of the cinema’s primary apparatuses. Sharits lays out four guidelines for “locational film” in a manifesto written in 1974 and published in the artist’s issue of *Film Culture* in 1978:

1. they must exist “in an open, free, public location;”
2. the form of presentation must not “prescribe a definite duration of respondent’s observation (i.e. the respondent may enter and leave at any time);”
3. the very structure of the composition must be “non-developmental” and offer “an immediately apprehensible system of elements;” and, finally,
4. the content of the work must “not disguise itself but rather make…a specimen of itself.”\(^51\)

\(^{49}\) Although Youngblood’s text spends much time discussing video and computer technology, in the historical literature of recent years, the focus has instead been on the somewhat “de-skilled” installation works of artists like McCall and Sharits. Some excellent examples of recent scholarship in this field are Rees et al., *Expanded Cinema*; Jonathan Walley, “The Material of Film and the Idea of Cinema: Contrasting Practices in Sixties and Seventies Avant-Garde Film,” *October* 103 (January 1, 2003): 15–30.

\(^{50}\) A theme Sharits explicitly explored in *Epileptic Seizure Comparison* (1976).

\(^{51}\) Mondloch, *Screens*, 6 with quotes from Paul Sharits “Statement regarding Multiple Screen/Sound ‘Locational’ Film Environments-Installations” from 1978.
Sharits’s manifesto attacks the seductiveness of narrative cinema’s image as well as its status as commodity experience, particularly in its last insistence to not “disguise” its content, but rather make a specimen of it—something apparatus theorists would no doubt view as directly opposing narrative cinema’s seductive ways. These points, especially the first two, could also be used as guidelines for public artworks, suggesting some potential linkages between locational cinema and other forms of sited artworks as well as a type of cinematic address that explicitly considers a spectator in motion.

In Sharits’s *Soundstrip/Filmstrip* (1971-72), one of the “locational” works, four projectors are placed in a line in the center of the gallery space facing one wall with a corresponding line of speakers placed seventeen feet (the same distance between projector and image) behind the projectors. The handmade, structuralist films that pass through each projector produce a series of flickers on the wall and a corresponding illusion of movement between the frames while fractured recordings of the artist’s voice project from each speaker to come together to vaguely sound the word “miscellaneous” as one passes through the space. Sharits creates the same necessity for movement in the spectator as Michael Snow does with *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974). There is no preferred viewing spot and the moving image itself becomes part of a sculptural experience, one that is quite similar to minimalism’s activation of the phenomenology of the viewer’s body. Indeed one cannot even fully comprehend works like Sharits’s and Snow’s without moving through the exhibition space, and the looped projection makes it of an “exploratory” duration established by the viewer rather than a set, linear one.52

The work of Anthony McCall even further de-emphasizes the film in favor of the experiential in a work like *Line Describing a Cone* (1973), (fig. 5) one of his “solid light films”

---

52 Ibid., 10.
and part of a larger experimental move away from the physical medium of film and toward the
cinema’s basic elements of light and time, what Jonathan Walley refers to as “paracinema.”
The two-dimensional image of the 30-minute film is merely a black screen with a slowly
eerging circle in a white line, but its experience is three-dimensional, as the space between the
projector and screen becomes an atmospheric cone using smoke machines or simply ambient
particles in the air to create a sculptural experience out of the traditionally ignored space between
projecting apparatus and screen. In an artist’s statement from 1974, McCall said:

Line Describing a Cone deals with one of the irreducible, necessary conditions of
film: projected light. It deals with this phenomenon directly, independently of any
other consideration. It is the first film to exist in real, three-dimensional space.
This film exists only in the present: the moment of projection. It refers to nothing
beyond this real time. It contains no illusion. It is a primary experience, not
secondary: i.e. the space is real, not referential; the time is real, not referential.
...The viewer therefore has a participatory role in apprehending the event: he or she
can, indeed needs, to move around relative to the slowly emerging light form.

In his insistence on the “real” and the “primary,” McCall emphasizes the unique, ephemeral
nature of cinematic projection while undercutting the medium’s status within mechanical
reproduction and dismantling (like Sharits) the illusionary status of the apparatus critiqued by
Baudry. Furthermore, the participation necessary to comprehend the work goes beyond
minimalism’s phenomenological activation of the viewer’s body in space and transforms the
gallery into an exploratory, discursive space.

Although the work has always been screened in gallery spaces, the artist’s original intent
was for it to be experienced somewhat “theatrically,” meaning the audience watched the film
from start to finish, entering the space at the “beginning” and experiencing the work together

---
54 Cited in Anthony McCall, “‘Line Describing a Cone’ and Related Films,” October 103
(January 1, 2003): 42. Indentations in original.
until the “end.” The 2001 Whitney Museum exhibition *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977* was the first time the piece was shown in the looped, continuous format familiar to most contemporary audiences of moving image-based installation art. For McCall, this took away the “plastic” dimension of duration in the initial screenings, making the work more “ambient,” but afforded a greater degree of public access throughout the duration of the exhibition.\(^{55}\) McCall’s comments following the Whitney exhibition are a reminder of the very different viewing practices surrounding artists’ and experimental cinema over the past few decades. This distinction is particularly evident with the roundly criticized contemporary exhibition of the films of Andy Warhol, such as the 2010 Museum of Modern Art installation of his *Screen Tests* along the walls of the central gallery (at roughly the same size and height of Abstract Expressionist paintings), projected in digital format. Warhol’s 16mm films were originally screened in the theater, thus generating an entirely different durational and haptic experience for the viewer.\(^{56}\)

The looped presentation of works that viewers can explore and discover on their own terms has become the norm for video and film installation work since the 1990s, a trend video artist Kota Ezawa (b. 1969) refers to as the “return to vaudeville,” commenting upon the resurgence of the phrase “this is where I came in” with looped works in galleries and museums.\(^{57}\) This looped presentation of durational works coupled with the self-reflexive use of real-time

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 45. The choice of the term “ambient” by McCall is significant, as another one of his works, *Long Film for Ambient Light* (1975), does away with the linear movement of film through a projector all together and uses light through colored panes.


video in the installations of Bruce Nauman (b. 1941) and Dan Graham (b. 1942) challenged established boundaries of public and private space in the 1960s and 70s, and reoriented viewer expectations and implications within screen architectures. Nauman forced viewers to endure watching long single takes of monotonous tasks in his studio in works such as *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square* (1967-68) and Graham radically reoriented the viewer’s sense of time and place with delayed feedback monitors and mirrors in *Present Continuous Pasts* (1974).

Scholarly and critical attention to moving image gallery practices straddles the domains of art criticism and theory and film criticism and theory, though many trends fall too much into the tendencies of the former at the expense of understanding the filmic dimensions of major gallery works. A 2003 published roundtable in *October* featuring artists/filmmakers Matthew Buckingham and Anthony McCall, film scholar Malcom Turvey, art historians George Baker and Hal Foster, and curator Chrissie Iles illustrates some of these tensions and tendencies. In particular, the participants seem fixated on the historical distinctions within moving image gallery work that Iles charted earlier in her essay “Video and Film Space,”: the phenomenological/psychological, the sculptural, and the cinematic. The first and third share an interest in activating the gallery space, but operate on very different registers in terms of critique and the viewer’s supposed self-awareness. To Foster and McCall, the distinction between the phenomenological and the newer cinematic mode of gallery engagement in the moving image is total. To Foster, the newer projects verge on “pictorialism” or even “rampant virtualism.” He

---

59 An example of this distinction would be to compare the multiscreen work of Doug Aitken to that of Paul Sharits. Aitken’s work is cinematic and seductive whereas Sharits’s is disruptive and intentionally calling attention to the apparatus.
argues, “the pictorialism of projected images today often doesn’t seem to care much about the actual space…this is beyond disembodiment: it’s habituating us to a kind of condition of post-subjectivity.”

McCall responds by critiquing how contemporary projections arrest the viewer, prompting the viewer to leave her body and enter the elsewhere of the screen. Foster similarly critiques some of Bill Viola’s work as “bewitching” and forms a dyad between the “immaculate experience” of contemporary installations that do not foreground the apparatus or space and those which underscore and open up those elements of the work.

While some of the other participants try to carve out a space for the contemporary work via an activation of past cinematic modes or utopian concerns, the conversation continually returns to the binary established by Foster and McCall, one that echoes both modernist medium-specificity and apparatus film theory. As discussed above, film theory has moved away from such narrow forms of critique and incorporated both the bodily and spatial functions of cinema (even within those cinematic situations Foster would critique as “beyond disembodiment”). As alluded to in the introduction, my analysis of contemporary moving image-based public art similarly shifts away from the limitations of apparatus theory and medium-specificity to consider the many enchanting, playful, and reflective encounters spectators can have with moving images in public spaces.

Kate Mondloch’s book Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art is a significant recent study not only because it charts the ways gallery installations expand the practices of minimalism and conceptualism, but also because she considers how they relate to our broader cultural relationship with screens. She uses the term “screen-reliant installation art” in order to

---

60 Turvey et al., “Round Table,” 75.
61 Ibid., 80–81.
encompass works in the separate mediums of film, video, and projected light from the 1960s to the present. Her study connects the phenomenological and psychological works of the 1960 and 70s such as Nauman and Graham to the more “cinematic” multi-screen installation work of the 1990s such as Doug Aitken (b. 1968) and Douglas Gordon (b. 1966). Mondloch’s study looks at the connections and exchanges between the two poles of Chrissie Iles’s three forms of installation (phenomenological and cinematic) with an eye towards how artists and viewers work within existing disciplines of screen spectatorship to either provide moments of rupture, self-awareness, or concurrence with late capitalist media spectatorship. Though restricting the discussed works to the confines of the gallery, Mondloch’s study makes important strides in connecting video and installation art practices to those of broader media culture from the perspective of the spectator and her embeddedness within screen cultures in all aspects of daily life. Whereas Mondloch’s study charts new ground in the discussion of screen spectatorship in media installation art, her analysis tends to generalize about audience response with little empirical analysis from observation of actual viewers interacting with screens. My methodology, though certainly not a sociological or scientific study, seeks to amend this gap by building on the important steps created by Mondloch with ground-level analysis of screens in public spaces.

The relationship between contemporary artists’ film and video installation work and specific concepts of public place are the subject of Maeve Connolly’s study *The Place of Artists’ Cinema: Space, Site and Screen*. Connolly looks both to changes in the art market and commissioning agencies since the 1990s as well as the increased role of publicly-funded art museums and galleries in the distribution and exhibition of artists’ cinema as articulating

---

62 Mondloch, *Screens*. 
contemporary notions of place within both the art world and the broader culture. This study examines recent works in relationship to both major literature on public art curation and film theory, forming an important methodological precedent to looking at the moving image-based public art.

A recent publication most pertinent to my study is the work of Dutch art historian Catrien Schreuder in *Pixels and Places: Video Art in Public Space* (2010). This book breaks new ground by considering video art shown in public spaces into three types: the museum variant that re-presents video work from galleries on public screens; critical reflection through culture jamming and critique of commercial society, and the *gesamtkunstwerk*, which “works in collaboration with other visually determining factors in public space.” Schreuder discusses a very large sample of works, providing a preliminary catalog of sorts for understanding moving image-based public art, but with only a few moments of deeper analysis. The study begins and ends with an evocation of Allan Kaprow’s hesitation towards the avant-garde potential of video art as a medium in 1974, and much of the book maintains a similar wariness of popular media culture. Her restriction to the realm of “video art,” further limits the book’s ability to address how public screens interact with a broader history of the moving image and also pigeon-holes any understanding of spectatorship into what I believe is a somewhat outdated battle between critical awareness and brainwashed cultural consumption. I address some of the same works as

---

65 In my opinion this is one of the greatest pitfalls of this book, as due to the reliance on conjectures made from the use of too many online sources, there are a number of problematic factual errors, most notably when she claims that the BBC Big Screens were “part of a predominantly commercial programming,” when, in fact, this was never the case and no advertisements was a direct stipulation of the city councils to even allow the BBC to erect the screens in the first place. Ibid., 24.
Schreuder in my study and will call upon her observations, but my study more comprehensively integrates film history and film theory into the narrative, engages with spectator response, and is more immersed in the dialogues surrounding public screen cultures and the multiple definitions of public art in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

**The Dematerialization/Cinematization of Public Art**

Just as film theory and film and video gallery installation have continually reworked their relationship to space, so too has public art re-articulated public space in the second half of the twentieth century. In many ways the phenomenological shift of minimalism’s gallery installations, the utopian rhetoric of early expanded cinema, and the preoccupations with “publicness” in contemporary gallery work align with shifts in this oft-neglected field of artistic practice. This dissertation re-situates public art not only within its specific physical context, but also within broader discourses in art and media culture. Often an artist’s public work has been marginalized in her general practice, with critics and historians favoring work more readily absorbed into the art world’s culture of collecting. However, considering public art, which I am defining as works that are accessible in public space to a broader audience, as a distinct category is vitally important to any study that explores how meaning is generated by viewers.

Although one could look to the increase in the exhibition and collection of contemporary art within publicly funded institutions (rather than private collections) as a shift towards broader public access to art, when art is presented in public space (meaning a space not coded

---

66 Here I am alluding to the large shift towards participation and the rhetoric of inclusion in contemporary art. This trend and its historical antecedents are outlined in depth in Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012).

67 Indeed as Erica Balsom has noted, even artist’s work in film and video was quick to become absorbed into the culture of art collecting. Erika Balsom, “Original Copies: How Film and Video Became Art Objects,” *Cinema Journal* 53, no. 1 (2013): 97–118.
specifically for art viewing), there are vastly different issues in scale, audience response, and syllogistic associations with ambient and adjacent visual attractions, objects, and distractions than within the museum. This is to say that to define art as “public” merely by the nature of the institution that funds it is to overlook an important distinction between art that is indoors and art that is outdoors. Cher Krause Knight discusses how museums’ increased public function in programming and outreach brings museums into the discussion of public art, suggesting that the mere public placement of a work of art (outside a space charging admission) mistakenly “privileges physical over intellectual and emotional accessibility.”\(^6\) While this nuance is important to her discussion of populism in understanding public art (an important concept to which much of my study subscribes), I argue that the physical placement of a work is still a vital distinction. The majority of works discussed in later chapters are not only outdoors, but immediately accessible to a viewer not anticipating an art experience—that is, a passerby.

The extent to which public art both exists within the discourses and disciplines of public space and actively participates in the creation of those discourses are key means of understanding public art’s unique position in the urban landscape. Though the interactions between public art museums as institutions and public art agencies and artists informs much of the content and programming of public art, it is first necessary to consider art in public (non-art-specific) spaces as a distinct category of spectatorship, though one with connections and shared concerns with a variety of other art and media exhibition strategies.

Traditionally, the function of monuments and memorials in public spaces was linked to official constructions of public memory within established regimes of power. Even in traditional permanent, monumental forms, however, public art’s meaning hinges upon context. For

\(^6\) Knight, *Public Art*, 51.
example, obelisks erected at Egyptian cult temples had a different valence in their original setting than when they were transported to Rome in the days of empire, and still a different meaning when Sixtus V (pope 1585-1590) rearranged them at nodal points in the redesigned city for Christian pilgrims during the Counter Reformation. Nevertheless, public art’s meaning was traditionally understood as predominantly disseminated throughout space in a top-down manner, representing the official social values of the church or state.

In the United States, many of the older European customs persisted, though not without philosophical debates about what it means to erect a monument in a democracy. In the years following World War II, however, public art changed tremendously due to two main factors: 1) the nearly world-wide reconsideration of the traditional forms of memorialization in the face of unprecedented genocide and mass destruction of the war (especially the Holocaust and atomic bomb); and 2) the rise in publicly and privately funded public art conceptualized as for the public or civic good and not explicitly tied to memorialization or traditional monuments. In recent decades scholars have been sure to distinguish between memorials and other forms of public art

---

69 This clash of values came to a head especially when trying to memorialize the first president, George Washington. In figuration, two artists went on particularly divergent paths to represent the beloved figure: Horatio Greenough’s portrayal of Washington as Zeus was laughed at almost immediately when it was unveiled in the Capital Rotunda in 1832; French sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741-1828) found a way to combine the American penchant for naturalism with Neoclassical reference in his full-length marble portrait of Washington for the Virginia State Capitol, unveiled in 1796. The clash between old world hagiographic representations of political leaders and the new world’s leanings toward democracy came most strongly to a head, however, in the debates around the Washington Monument, outlined in detail in Kirk Savage, “The Self-Made Monument: George Washington and the Fight to Erect a National Memorial,” in Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy, ed. Harriet Senie and Sally Webster, 1st ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1998), 5–32.

in their studies, as in many ways the very term “public art” only really emerged with the non-
memorial types of art in public space.\(^{71}\) While the use of public art as a public good also
informed earlier progressive ideals of the City Beautiful movement or the initiatives of the New
Deal’s federally funded mural projects,\(^{72}\) the forms of these earlier decades most often took the
form of allegorical figures and memorials in the case of City Beautiful-era projects or the
Regionalist-inspired construction of local and social history in the case of the New Deal. The
sections below present a brief overview of the recent history of public memorials and public art
in order to illustrate both some important connections to contemporary screen culture and the
climate into which contemporary moving image-based public art emerged.

*Art for Public Memory*

Contemporary debates and changes in public monuments and memorialization cannot be
read apart from screen cultures. In the formal aspects of completed projects, the sites of memory
public monuments tap into, and the arenas in which controversies are played out, film, television,
and new media loom large in the contemporary memorial landscape. Both the turn away from
figuration and traditional monuments in the aftermath of World War II and the rise of “counter-
monuments” that privilege ephemerality over monolithic voices challenged the authority of the
monument in the twentieth century.\(^{73}\) Even earlier, Lewis Mumford proclaimed the “death of the

---

\(^{71}\) Senie, *Contemporary Public Sculpture*.

\(^{72}\) Michelle Bogart refers to the allegorical and memorial public sculpture of the City Beautiful
movement specifically in these terms with her use of the phrase “civic sculpture.” Michele
Helene Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (Washington,

\(^{73}\) In the United States, traditional monuments seemed inadequate to deal with the scale of loss
after WWII, and “living memorials” in the form of useful public buildings were dedicated to
veterans who served or lost their lives overseas. Andrew M. Shanken, “Planning Memory:
Living Memorials in the United States during World War II,” *The Art Bulletin* 84, no. 1 (March
1, 2002): 130–47. Internationally, the controversy over Reg Butler’s winning abstract maquette
for the *Monument to the Unknown Political Prisoner* in the early 1950s highlighted the anxieties
over representation mid-century. The term “counter-memorial” refers to James E Young’s study
monument” in his 1938 book The Culture of Cities. He saw the monument as an extension of man’s desire to “wall out life” via a “process of architectural mummification.” He proclaimed further, “the notion of a modern monument is veritably a contradiction in terms: if it is a monument it is not modern, and if it is modern, it cannot be a monument.” Understood as such, we could therefore read the contemporary resurgence of traditional figurative and triumphant monuments in the United States, such as those to World War II (Friedrich St. Florian, 2004) and Martin Luther King (Lei Yixin, 2011) on the National Mall, as decidedly postmodern.

Mumford’s critique of the monument’s unwelcome presence in the modern, living city is followed by a discussion of the museum, one that, as Bruno points out, mentions the new power of film in relationship to memory:

the art museum has in the course of its development gradually discovered its special function: that of selectively preserving the memorials of culture. Here at last is a genuine means of escaping the monument. What cannot be kept in existence in material form, we may now measure, photograph in still and moving pictures, record in sound, and summarize in books and papers.

Mumford sees film as a means of surpassing man’s anti-modern desire to “mummify,” quite similarly to how Bazin saw film as both meeting and surpassing the unconscious drive to “embalm” in the plastic arts. To Mumford, cinema and moving image technology have therefore eclipsed the monument and made it seemingly irrelevant in the modern age.

of the work of artists like the Gerz’s in critiquing “memory places” and forcing the memorial “to disperse—not gather—memory…to recognize that time and memory are interdependent, in dialectical flux.” James Edward Young, “The German Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today,” in Art and the Public Sphere, ed. W. J. Thomas Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 76.

75 Ibid., 438.
76 Erika Doss analyzes this explosion of memorials in terms of its affective modes of address to a public obsessed with memory in Erika Doss, Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).
77 Mumford, The Culture of Cities, 446.
The apex of the re-configuration of the monument’s memorial function in the second half of the twentieth century was Maya Lin’s *Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial* (1982), a work whose stated purpose was “to heal.”78 This work, though decidedly permanent, was counter-monumental in its color, its descent into the ground, its reflective and interactive nature, and its anti-heroicism. Causing much controversy at the time of its commission, this work later became a model for future memorials to tragic and potentially divisive events (such as Michael Arad’s design for the 9/11 Memorial, 2004). Also in the 1980s, another radical re-thinking of the memorial was *The AIDS Memorial Quilt*, an on-going, participatory project conceived of in 1985 by San Francisco gay rights activist Cleve Jones and part of the larger NAMES Project Foundation. The memorial is an aggregate of individual, coffin-sized quilts made by thousands of contributors including mourning loved ones and anyone else touched by an AIDS death. *The AIDS Memorial Quilt* belongs to centuries-old folk traditions of mourning and a contemporary notion of art-making as therapy. Furthermore, it also created visibility for a suppressed epidemic when displayed in its entirety on the National Mall first in 1987, then again (in successively larger forms) in 1988, 1989, 1992, and finally in 1996. Though now only displayed piecemeal, the aggregate of thousands of individual quilts is a large part of the work’s presence both in photographs and in film and on television. Dispersion and accumulation reinforce the expansiveness of grief in the wake of the AIDS crisis. Like the overwhelming list of names on Maya Lin’s wall, the quilt uses scale to generate its affective power.

It is possible to read both “the wall” and “the quilt” as projective screens—one a reflective mirror experienced through a series of fluid movements through linear space where

78 For a thorough critique of the rhetoric of healing in the years following the Vietnam War, see Patrick Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2009).
names pass our eyes like credits rolling on a screen, the other a montage of disparate “shots” of pain and loss that prompt a transformative experience within the viewer. The nearby memorials to Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Lawerene Halprin and others, 1997) and the Korean War (Cooper-Lecky Architects and others, 1995) on the National Mall also have decidedly cinematic qualities. The Roosevelt memorial is designed more as a park, where walls complete with relevant text direct viewer movement through a series of “scenes” to generate a narrative. The Korean War Veterans’ Memorial uses a reflective granite similar to Lin’s Vietnam memorial, but with sandblasted photographic images rather than names. The life-sized bronze sculptures of soldiers create a sense of immersion as the viewer walks through the narrative space as if in a movie. The current (and hotly contested) design by Frank Gehry for the Eisenhower Memorial makes the connection between memory and projective screen even more apparent as the space near L’Enfant Plaza is framed and intersected by large stainless steel tapestries with black and white images evocative of the late president’s accomplishments. (Fig. 6) These screens, made of openwork “woven” steel so as to allow in light and air, are highly criticized for blocking the view of the Capitol.\footnote{These tapestries, along with many other design elements, have been incredibly controversial, and the future of this memorial is very uncertain both due to strong resistance to elements of the design by members of the Eisenhower family and Washington elite and a lack of federal funds allocated for its realization.} In the conceptual renderings available, they very much resemble outdoor movie screens, like those at a drive-in theater. This park space is supplemented by an “augmented reality” (AR) mobile smartphone app or “e-memorial” where visitors can unlock historical footage, images, and speeches relating to where they point their device.\footnote{“Eisenhower Memorial,” accessed April 30, 2013, http://eisenhowermemorial.gov/#ememorial?p=1.} The reliance upon and multiplication of projective and interactive screens and a cinematic sense of duration in
contemporary memorials is further evidence of the interconnectedness between film and art in public spaces.

The shifts in memorialization in recent decades cannot, as Mumford predicted, be read apart from the proliferation of screen cultures in public space. Indeed the generative moment in which Jan Scruggs wished to start is campaign for a memorial to Vietnam veterans was affected by the film *The Deer Hunter* (Michael Cimino, 1978). Even in the Friedrich St. Florian’s seemingly backward looking, widely panned, conservative design of *World War II Memorial*, there are intersections with the emotive power of film. Though the commission started in 1993, the fundraising campaign brought the memorial to national attention just on the heels of the publication of television anchor Tom Brokaw’s book *The Greatest Generation* (1998) and the commercial and critical success of Steven Spielberg’s film *Saving Private Ryan* (1998).

Less than one year after the film’s release, star Tom Hanks became the national spokesman for the memorial with promotional advertisements sponsored by The Advertising Council (itself an outgrowth of WWII-era public service announcements) in wide circulation magazines, airing on televisions, and screening in theaters throughout the United States. (Fig. 7) Both Hanks and Brokaw spoke at the dedication ceremony in 2004, further solidifying their connection with the memorial through their presence in television and film culture. Hanks and director Stephen Spielberg were also called upon to honor veterans of the Pacific theater at the memorial in 2012, an event which featured some branding from the Hollywood pair’s recent

---

83 “Ryan Star Helps Memorial Campaign,” *National WWII Memorial: A Newsletter of the World War II Memorial Society* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 3. The narrative of this memorial’s realization and its relationship to Hanks’s involvement are discussed in Doss, *Memorial Mania*. 

53
HBO miniseries *The Pacific* (2010). Hanks also joined the Eisenhower Memorial’s Advisory Committee in 2015. Senator Bob Dole remarked, “His dedication to The Greatest Generation is long-standing and heartfelt, and his films have created a strong level of awareness of the horrors of war.”84 With this quote, Dole seemingly articulates the simulacra of contemporary memorialization by normalizing Brokaw’s phrase and drawing parallels with an actor’s on-screen and off-screen presence, between actual war and filmic narrative.

In considering the convergences between film and televisual culture and the reconceptualization of the memorial in post-WWII United States, we can see the historical as well as theoretical linkages between public art and moving image culture. W.J.T. Mitchell wrote of some of the “shared horizons of resistance” between public art and film in his 1990 essay “The Violence of Public Art,” an essay that analyzes the struggle over representation in public spaces within the narrative of Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing* (1989) in relationship to counter-memorials and contemporary public art controversies.85 He writes, “much of the world’s public art–memorials, monuments, triumphal arches, obelisks, columns, and statues–has a rather direct reference to violence in the form of war or conquest” as well as subsequent violence in the form of iconoclasm and graffiti.86 For Mitchell, the erasure of boundaries between public and private images necessitates his turn from the utopian, permanent conception of “public art” to film, a medium which in many ways can be considered the art form shared by the widest possible public.

*Art for Public Spaces*

86 Ibid., 35.
The violence Mitchell refers to in public art is not merely political violence, but also formal in reference to what Eleanor Heartney (drawing on Lucy Lippard’s term for certain strands of postminimalist work) called “the dematerialization of public art” in the 1980s and 90s. This shift, the culmination of the second trend after WWII identified above (the rise in publicly and privately funded public art conceptualized as for the public good or part of urban renewal and not explicitly tied to memorialization or traditional monuments), came on the heels of popular controversy over the use of public funds for art as well as the overall critique of the formal attributes of many modernist public sculptures. Following a lull in federal funding for public arts in the 1950s, the public arts philosophies generated by the Hecksher report in the Kennedy administration brought a renewed interest in federal funding for the arts in the form of grants and percent-for-art policies and the creation of professional panels of experts to assuage concerns over governmental censorship. These shifts eventually led to the creation of the hugely important National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Art in Public Places initiative in 1967 and the General Service Administration (GSA) Art-in-Architecture program of 1973. These federal projects and other similar municipal and privately funded initiatives generated a sharp increase in permanent public art largely situated in urban plazas, such as two characteristic “stabiles” by Alexander Calder: the La Grande Vitesse (1969) in Grand Rapids, Michigan (the first of the NEA’s Art in Public Places program) and Flamingo (1974) in Chicago (the GSA’s first Art-in-Architecture realization). These federally funded works and the local initiative behind


the “Chicago Picasso” (1967) are early examples of the large redesign of modernist urban plazas with the abstract work of blue chip internationally recognized artists.89

Many of these sculptures seemingly had little to do with their site and were seen as a cosmetic attempt to fill the agoraphobic, unfriendly void-like plazas created by zoning laws and International Style architecture.90 James Wines coined the terms “plop art” and “turd in the plaza” in an essay in *Art in America* in 1968, where he argued for a shift towards a “‘situational’ way of looking at outdoor installations…the interpretation of public art as environment, rather than an object sitting in the environment.”91 Wine’s critique and shift from the sculptural to the environmental is of course paralleled by what was going on in gallery installation practices regarding in the moving image, the ephemerality inherent in the rise of performance art in the late 1960s and 70s, and the work of artists like Robert Smithson (1938-1973), who sought to expand beyond the confines of the gallery and into the environment. Furthermore, audiences have their own ways of constructing meaning and appropriating images into communal space

---

89 The complete narrative of the rise in public sculpture from the late 1960s to present including analysis of funding trends and popular controversies is outlined in Senie, *Contemporary Public Sculpture*.

90 The 1916 Zoning Resolution in New York City stipulated that the highest point of a building must be a certain distance from the sidewalk, increasing the higher the building got. Passed in order to stop skyscrapers from blocking light an air to the street below, the response in the 1920s and 30s was to use a system of setbacks similar to the Empire State Building (1929-1931). With the increase of Bauhaus-associated and International Style architects in the United States following the Second World War, setbacks fell out of style architecturally, as they were more reminiscent of Art Deco than the sleek forms of the Bauhaus. The solution to both the preferred architectural style and the zoning restrictions in New York (and by this time, other cities as well) was to create skyscrapers with no set-backs but with a large plaza opening up to the street. One of the first of these buildings was Mies Van Der Rohe’s and Phillip Johnson’s Seagram Building (1958). The resultant plazas are both public (in that they are open spaces accessible to anyone) and private (in that they are privately owned and operated).

quite apart from artists’ intentions, but no less valid in terms of local identity.\textsuperscript{92}

This wholesale reconfiguring of site in relationship to artistic practice reached its apogee in the public art world following the\textit{Tilted Arc} controversy of the 1980s. Using a phenomenological notion of site-specificity, Richard Serra’s GSA-funded commission for the Foley Federal Plaza in front of the Jacob Javits Federal Building in lower Manhattan sought to critique the same inhospitable spaces and un-environmentally specific art Wines critiqued in the 1960s. The work prompted controversy following its installation, however, and the debate was constantly framed through the media as “us versus them,” with far-reaching and uninformed conclusions of both public and art world response.\textsuperscript{93} In the criticisms,\textit{Tilted Arc} was seen as dangerous, a magnet for graffiti, and a latrine for the homeless—in effect, a projective screen upon which the effects of urban blight were projected by the popular imagination and the apparatus of the media.

The controversy surrounding\textit{Tilted Arc} and the subsequent removal of the work led to a larger re-thinking of who and what constitutes “the public” in public art and who among members of the community should have a say in the selection and commissioning of permanent public art. Furthermore, the shift towards temporary work, such as the socially-engaged participatory projects of Suzanne Lacy, further “dematerialized” public art, suggesting that sometimes events can be public art as much as a large-scale permanent sculpture. Patricia Phillips praised this turn towards temporality in a critique of permanence that echoes Lewis Mumford. She understands public art as “a forum for investigation, articulation, and constructive

\textsuperscript{93}Senie,\textit{Tilted Arc Controversy: Dangerous Precedent?}, 37.
reappraisal” rather than the monologic address of permanent, “official” culture.94 The notion of public art as a “laboratory” and the sustained support by institutions dedicated to temporary public art exhibitions (such as Creative Time and Public Art Fund in New York and Artangel in the U.K.) marks a sea-change in the relationship between public art and permanence. The notions of community building and social justice in exhibitions such as curator Mary Jane Jacob’s *Culture in Action* in 1993 in Chicago and in what Lacy called “New Genre Public Art” signal a reconfiguration of the notion of “site” in public art. James Meyer discussed the transition from the *literal* site to the *functional* site in the contemporary projects of artists such as Renee Green (b.1959), Mark Dion (b.1961), and Andrea Fraser (b.1965), where site is constructed (in the rhetoric of globalization) as “a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist’s above all).”95 Miwon Kwon critiques these notions of constructed identity as well as the relative sited-ness or un-sited-ness of the artist in *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*.96 New Genre Public Art, socially engaged art, relational aesthetics, and the definitions of site proffered by Meyer and Kwon are dissected further in chapter four’s discussion of place, but perhaps one of the more constructive readings of the publicness of public art that transcends boundaries defined by medium or permanence is that offered by Cher Krause Knight.

In *Public Art: Theory, Practice and Populism*, Knight outlines a populist understanding

---

of public art that cuts through debates about permanence and temporality and the moral/ethical debates about artist intention discussed by Kwon. Instead Knight analyzes “the interrelationship between content and audience.” Her call for a populist evaluation of art does not result in a “dumbing down” or a glossed-over lack of critical engagement, but rather makes an earnest attempt to appreciate the multiple ways in which art and audiences interrelate in public spaces. She writes, “…art’s publicness rests in the quality and impact of its exchanges with audiences. These do not hinge on wide acceptance, but on the art’s ability to extend reasonable and fair opportunities for members of the public to understand and negotiate their own relationships with it.” By using this populist framework, Knight sidesteps the dyads that too often dominate critical and evaluative discussions of public or socially engaged work. Such readings would either assume something that is legible is inherently “good” and obtuse as “bad” or, on the other extreme, that which is critical of hegemony or social norms to be “good” and all that could be read as complicit in those discourses as “bad.” Instead she considers the polyvalent ways people engage with the positive and negative, playful and tragic, transformative and banal aspects of public life every day through public art and public places. There is also a clear connection between her insistence on audience response and the methods and arguments of reception studies in film and media studies. Furthermore, Knight’s breadth of considered works, those publicly and privately funded, permanent and ephemeral, and spaces that are incidental and those that are art-specific, as well as her attention to the role institutions such as museums and corporate funding play, inform and inspire my methodology in this project.

**A Brief Genealogy of Public Screens**

---

98 Ibid., xi.
In addition to looking at the context of public art, installation art, and cinematic exhibition to understand how the moving image operates in public art, I turn to a genealogy of public projections and screens, drawing on non-theatrical, alternative exhibition sites, pre-cinematic devices, and tapping largely into the methods and literature of the emerging field of “media archaeology.” This term refers to the interdisciplinary work of scholars such as Erkki Huhtamo and Giuliana Bruno in historicizing the development of new media by analyzing connecting threads to earlier discourses and material cultures as influenced by Michel Foucault’s *Archeology of Knowledge* (1969) and New Historicism, among other concurrent interdisciplinary trends. This rough overview introduces the broader presence of public screens within modern culture as yet another point of connection to be explored in analysis of contemporary works in later chapters. By contextualizing artists’ screen practices within broader screen cultures one can better ascertain how viewers generate meaning as “screen subjects.”

While the history of the moving image traditionally begins with the late nineteenth century experiments in animation, media archeology seeks to find longer connections between historical media. Indeed the study of “new media” is not a discreet category, but rather something that is historically contingent. Understood this way, one can consider the *longue durée* of animation and projection as something that possibly extends all the way back to the

---


100 This term is developed throughout Mondloch, *Screen*.

101 To look at one era’s “new media” is to understand its relationship to both the media that came before it and how it became old media for future generations. Artists and designers using Gutenberg’s printing press in the late fifteenth century, for example, engage with new media, though the layout and design may very well be defined by certain old media, such as woodblock printing or illuminated manuscripts.
dawn of art—Paleolithic cave paintings. According to recent analysis of cave paintings such as those in Chauvet, France, certain animal groupings could have conveyed a sense of narrative unfolding as one moves vertically along the walls. Furthermore, the overlapping lines delineating the bodies of animals, when seen in the flickering light of animal fat lamps, produce an illusion of movement. This effect is most easily grasped in Werner Herzog’s 3-D documentary film on the Chauvet Caves, *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2011). Perhaps most telling of a prehistoric desire for illusion is the discovery of two-sided painted bone discs that archeological researchers Marc Azema and Florent Rivere believe were used as thaumatropes, proto-cinematic devices that merge images on opposite sides of an object into one when put in a rapid oscillating movement. These theories suggest the illusion of movement, though eons away from being realized in photographic terms, has been present since the very origins of the plastic arts. Ancient wall frescoes and carvings as well as the spiraling scene ascending Trajan’s Column in Rome are ancient precursors to cinematic storytelling, with figures unfolding in a linear narrative much like a strip of film. Similarly the Romanesque Bayeaux Tapestry or East Asian hand scrolls gradually unravel to direct the viewer through a dramatic progression of events.

Shadow play had ancient origins in the Far East before spreading to the west and eventually becoming popularized in Europe in the eighteenth century around the same time as the increased popularity of the magic lantern, one of the most important precursors to modern cinema. Magic lanterns, introduced first in the seventeenth century, grew in popularity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century with the rise of Romanticism and interest in the

---

fantastic. The darkened room necessary for these projections is a clear precedent for the traditional cinema, as is the inclusion of illusions of movement (produced both by mechanical slides and wheeled projectors) and the rhetoric of magic and wonder. For example, in August Edouart’s nineteenth-century cut-paper and wash work on paper (a precursor to the contemporary installations of Kara Walker), people of all ages marvel at the dramatic scene illuminated by the lantern. (Fig. 8) Edouart makes the images (which really are shadows) come alive while the bodies before the screen become silhouettes, perhaps mimicking the immersive and even self-effacing effects of projected images, and prefiguring the interactive use of shadow play in the work of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer.

These parlor projections were part of the visual culture of entertainment in Europe and North America in the eighteenth century along with the development of the pleasure garden. Giuliana Bruno connects these pleasure gardens to broader, modern constructions of an “image-space”: “A product of imaging and sequentially assembled, the picturesque garden was thus deployed for viewing as an actual spatiovisual apparatus. Looking at picturesque space in this way, we can begin to see how a relation to the cinematic apparatus can be built on the “grounds” of this space-viewing activity.”

The peripatetic viewer of visual scenes in the pleasure garden bears a genealogical relationship to the urban flâneur and cinema-goer. Furthermore, the nighttime spectacles in these public spaces were full of spectacular light shows and even a series of protocinematic screens called “transparencies,” which have been recorded as being part of

---

pleasure gardens in both London and the United States. The transparencies were also frequently animated by mechanical devices or shadow play, an early, proto-cinematic version of movies in the park.

Large scale panoramas, which first rose to popularity in the late eighteenth century, by the nineteenth became what could arguably be called “the first large mass media of the nineteenth century.” Though the panoramic views of cityscapes were staples of histories and other representations of cities throughout the early modern period, the large scale immersive, architectural spaces popular in the nineteenth century, especially in Britain and America, had the effect of transporting the viewer in space. 360-degree paintings of cities both local and exotic, historical battles (such as Gettysburg), and natural scenery predominated these spectacles where viewers could lose themselves in the image, painted to scale. The goal of the panorama was complete immersion—an aim the cinema shared in the birth of increasingly expansive screens in widescreen, Cinemascope, and later IMAX. Also popular in the 1820s and afterwards were moving panoramas which unspooled their scrolled canvas horizontally across a proscenium

---

105 Naomi Stubb's, “Pleasure Gardens of America,” in The Pleasure Garden, from Vauxhall to Coney Island, ed. Jonathan Conlin (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 132. Though little visual documentation of the transparencies seems to exist, they are persistently mentioned in the archival record, specifically in newspaper announcements and descriptions of events. An advertisement for the Fourth of July at New York Vauxhall Gardens in the New-York Gazette and General Advertiser from 1798 promises fireworks and a “grand transparency” with four “fronts”: Christopher Columbus and the discovery of America, allegorical depictions of Justice, Fortitude, and Wisdom at the date July 4, 1776, the evacuation of New York during the revolutionary war, and the signing of the Bill of Rights. “Fourth of July Vauxhall Garden,” New-York Gazette and General Advertiser, June 28, 1796. This example and others suggests that the pleasure garden transparencies were not merely a proto-cinematic cinema of attractions or spectacle, but also part of the cultivation of national identity. Cinematic constructions of national identity in public spaces, then, stretch over two hundred years, from the garden transparencies of 1798 to the synthesis of the popularity of Saving Private Ryan in 1998 and the realization of one of the National Mall’s most ostentatious war monuments, discussed above.

rather than engulfing the viewer. With titles such as *London to Hong Kong in Two Hours*, these moving panoramas relied on their ability to collapse space and time in an analogue precursor to television (indeed this panorama’s proscenium would not have been much larger than a 24” television screen).

As public, large-scale panoramas proliferated in the public sphere, handheld visual amusements such as stereoscopes and zootropes dominated the domestic sphere. Erkki Huhtamo has called this phenomenon “the Gulliverisation of media” operating “at the divide between the public and the private.” The opposing poles of scale also applied to mass media and advertising as bill postings got larger and larger and chromolithography made reproductions of miniscule images possible. We can see this process in today’s media innovations too, oscillating between the building-sized high-definition screens in Times Square and the retina display on hand-held iPhones. Huhtamo further unpacks the development of dynamic media displays in the early twentieth century with the electrification of large urban centers, including the development of powerful “advertising stereopticons” for outdoor projection by magic lantern manufacturers. One such projection is depicted in the background of John Sloan’s painting *Election Night* (1907) (fig. 9). Here political cartoons and live updates of election results (relayed to the projectionist via telegraph or telephone) were projected in public spaces where crowds would gather to watch the returns. This practice still happens today; large public screens become sights of collective viewing, where audiences have, at times, risen together to take collective

---

109 Ibid., 22–24.
action or even descended into mob-like chaos. The crowds that would gather for live broadcasts of the London Olympics were a key factor in the proliferation of sites in the BBC Big Screens program, which I address in later chapters.

While large scale public screens offer unique forms of collective spectatorship, many more public screens operate in the background of everyday life. Anna McCarthy considers how televisions function outside the home in public space in her book *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space*. She looks not only at the historical placement of televisions in pubs, shops, restaurants, and airports, but also performs her own photographic and ethnographic study of these sites—a method I employ in later chapters as a means to understand how screens operate in physical urban contexts. By thinking of television, a medium most often cited for its ability to collapse space, as a site-specific object, McCarthy is able to chart how screens articulate the boundaries of public and private space as well as structure viewing practices and audiences. Learning from her study, my analysis of moving image-based public art seeks to understand how spectators create meaning by looking not only at the work itself, but at its physical and historical screen context. Two nearly extinct forms of public screens, the drive-in theater and pornographic peep show arcade, similarly lived in the interstices between these tenuous boundaries, and in

---

110 The presence of public viewing screens was cited as a catalyst for the 1994 Vancouver riots following the Stanley Cup, a work documented through accumulated archival news footage in Canadian artist Roy Arden’s video *Supernatural* (2005). Conversely the presence of social media screens has been discussed in relationship to the city’s more recent hockey riot in 2011. Christopher J. Schneider and Dan Trottier, “The 2011 Vancouver Riot and the Role of Facebook in Crowd-Sourced Policing,” *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly* 0, no. 175 (July 26, 2012): 57–72.

certain instances, moving image-based public art appropriates or rewrites their viewing codes.\textsuperscript{112}

As evinced through a genealogy of screens in public spaces, moving image spectatorship has never been entirely restricted to the confines of the theater. Though the prevalence of moving images under the rubric of “public art” emerged during and after the 1980s, artists like Robert Smithson and Dan Graham were at least contemplating what a reimagining of the space of the cinema could mean to an expanded field of installation completely outside of the gallery. Two artist writings draw clear parallels between the film theoretical work in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the gallery’s phenomenological breakdown of the cinematic apparatus, public art’s dematerialization, and the longer media archeology of moving images in public places.

**Transitional Artists: Robert Smithson and Dan Graham**

Earthworks pioneer Robert Smithson and conceptualist Dan Graham, both strongly entrenched within the theoretical and critical discourses of late 1960s and 1970s, made ample use of language and theory in contemporary publications. Two artist writings, one an essay ending in a proposed earthwork, the other a plan and diagram for an unrealized architectural space, “A Cinematic Atopia” (Smithson, 1971) and *Cinema* (Graham, 1981), articulate conceptual dismantlings of the theoretical paradigms outlined in this introduction, as well as mark shifts in artistic practice from the gallery and into actual public spaces. Furthermore, both unrealized projection spaces deconstruct the screen as a metaphor and reconfigure it as something permeable, contingent, and (above all) situated within a certain spatial and temporal location.

In a special issue of *Artforum* in 1971 dedicated to film and edited by Annette Michelson, Robert Smithson published “A Cinematic Atopia,” a two page essay accompanied by stills from

the artist’s film *Spiral Jetty* and an installation shot of *400 Seattle Snapshots* (destroyed, 1969). The issue also included essays by Paul Sharits, Michael Snow, and Richard Serra, among others, and had a decidedly anti-Hollywood, pro-structuralist theme. Smithson’s essay, at first a Baudry-esque critique of the immobility and passivity of the cinema spectator continues to criticize even the alternative aims of expanded cinema and structuralist film, culminating in a potential cinematic earthwork that both recreates and dismantles Plato’s allegory of the cave.,

Smithson in particular discusses cinema’s spatial ambiguity as creating a potential “limbo” for a perpetual, constant viewer. He writes:

> The sites in film are not to be located or trusted. All is out of proportion. Scale inflates or deflates into uneasy dimensions. We wander between the towering and the bottomless… The longer we look through a camera or watch a projected image the remoter the world becomes, yet we begin to understand this remoteness more… “A camera filming itself in a mirror would be the ultimate movie,” says Jean-Luc Godard.  

Smithson both critiques the nature of the cinematic apparatus in this passage and also betrays his own positions as a viewer, being conversant with the ideas of French New Wave director Jean-Luc Godard. He reads the camera through the opposite relationship to “the world” as Walter Benjamin’s surgeon, making cinema not the ultimate window onto the world but rather the potential “vast reservoir of pure perception.”  

Though placeless, the experience of film is uniquely embodied in this essay. Smithson’s “ultimate film goer” becomes a vegetable following a constant, unfettered, passive reception of the primordial ooze of the cinema, “a vast mud field of images forever motionless.”

Smithson’s proposed project to counter this “vast mud field” of space-less images is a

---

114 Ibid., 53.  
115 Ibid.  
116 Ibid., 55.
literal, site-specific version of Plato’s cave:

What I would like to do is build a cinema in a cave or an abandoned mine, and film the process of its construction. That film would be the only film shown in the cave. The projection booth would be made out of crude timbers, the screen carved out of a rock wall and painted white, the seats could be boulders. It would be a truly “underground cinema.”

Here the screen, the image, and the apparatus collapse onto the physical site in which the hypothetical viewers and filmmakers were and are present. This work, a clear connection to the broader art-world critique of the same issues Baudry raised in relationship to the cinema (illusion and immobility), also (perhaps) slyly puns movements by fellow artists and structuralist filmmakers by calling this cave true “underground cinema.” The artist’s critique of movie-viewing seems self-contradictory considering how invested he was in directing films, including *Spiral Jetty* (1970), which used aerial shots of his most well-known earthwork to better understand its presence on the landscape; *Rundown* (1969), a documentation of one of his asphalt rundowns in Vancouver; and *Swamp* (1969, in collaboration with Nancy Holt), a handheld documentation of a walk through New Jersey swampland. However, if we think of these films’ unique connectedness to *site*, then Smithson’s ideal theater seems in keeping with his broader sculptural and cinematic output.

Conceptual artist Dan Graham’s proposed but never realized piece, *Cinema* (1981), also seeks to create the opposite situation to Baudry’s oblivious prisoners, but not one that obsessively reinforces the physicality of its literal site. Rather, Graham’s project communicates with and appeals to the world outside the darkened theater and simultaneously presents a glimmering cinematic image. (Fig. 10) A curved screen made of two-way mirrored glass would be positioned at the corner of a modern office building, making projections and reflections

---

117 Ibid.
visible from either side. On the street walls a two-way mirror allows passersby to see spectators when the house lights are up, thus illuminating the social aspects of cinematic viewing for both those on the outside looking in and those inside the space who would see their multiple reflections along the mirrored walls. When the lights are down and the film is projected, viewers on the street see the film at the corner and a mirrored surface along the streets, whereas the seated spectator sees, to either side of the film, dim glimpses of the spaces beyond. Graham’s *Cinema* allows for the collision of two realities in a way that critically addresses the nature of the apparatus.118

The artist’s inspiration for the piece was Johannes Duiker’s *Hanselsblad Cineac*, a theater built in Amsterdam in 1934 that made the projection booth visible from the street. This building “clearly corresponds to Baudry’s ideal apparatus, undertaking its own demystification by displaying its technological means.”119 For Baudry, this operation occurs in Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) when the image stops and the mechanism is revealed; “both specular tranquility and the assurance of one’s own identity collapse simultaneously with the revealing of the mechanism that is of the inscription of film work.”120 In Graham’s piece this operation occurs *in space* (indeed the image and projector seem secondary, as, unlike Smithson, there is no discussion in Graham’s writing on what kind of film would be screened).121 The roles of spectator and voyeur cross fluid boundaries in an architectural space built for temporal illusion that suddenly allows the intrusion of place and presentness. Not only do the sidewalls create

---

119 Ibid.
120 Baudry and Williams, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus,” 46.
“exchange, circulation, and communication,” but also the screen itself denies the opacity of the illusions of Plato’s cave and allows viewers glimpses of both themselves and of spectators on the other side.

Graham’s concept articulates the possibilities of rethinking the practice of cinematic exhibition to create a collision between the sights of cinema and the site of its physical screen, and furthermore incorporates the incidental passersby on the urban street. The two-way mirror denies the opacity of earlier metaphors and also dematerializes the role of the wall in public space (and simultaneously obfuscates the role of the glass window in commercial space). For Graham, this new type of screen becomes “an optical ‘skin,’ both reflective and transparent…Dialectically it is seen in the outside environment as well as in the normal cinema context as a point of transfer for the gazes of the inner and outer spectators, in relation to each other and the film image.”122 Through “intersubjective” looks, the voyeuristic systems of traditional cinema are dismantled at the site of the screen and the “skin of the film” addresses the bodies and eyes of spectators newly aware of their own presence in social space.

Graham’s insistence on dual presence within both the screen and the spectator is a key concern when considering how moving images operate in public space. While never realized, his Cinema in many ways ushers in a shift towards the activation of public space by artists using the cinema as one of their conceptual and installation mediums. In the following three chapters, I will outline the ways in which moving image-based public art addresses the spectator in terms of three typological categories: visual enchantment, ludic interface, and the illumination of place. Though these are by no means static categories and many works operate within and across them, they are useful tools for comprehending the various ways in which contemporary artists working

122 Ibid., 95.
in the public realm are conceiving of the embodied and site-specific nature of public art in relationship to the transformative and transporting qualities of moving images and screens.
Chapter Two: Sight-Specific Art

Introduction

Screens can function much like architecture, which is to say as delineators of space, as liminal surfaces between the actual world and the world of the image. In the gallery, the spatial usage of screens derives from expanded cinema and minimalism, as discussed in chapter one. In public space, the most appropriate comparison is to advertising. From the early twentieth century, advertisers saw the potential in electrification for creating large, public billboards that would attract attention at night and turn commercial and entertainment districts into destinations. In contemporary advertising parlance, large screens occupying entire sides of buildings (such as those seen frequently in places like Times Square) are tellingly called “spectaculars.” Specifically, “spectaculars” are defined as “larger than 14’ x 48’” and “positioned at a prime location in a market.”¹ The emphasis on “spectacle” is both a factor of the screen’s size and its ability to attract viewers. In other words, its physical attributes are perhaps more important than its content.

The “spectacle” has more loaded connotations in its Debordian implication in an overarching culture of commodity desire designed to suppress individual thought; in Debord’s words “a concrete inversion of life…the autonomous movement of non-life.”² For Debord, the society of the spectacle is a closed system of accumulation of capital—a regime of the image—from which there can be no real political action outside of disturbances such as the Situationist practices of the dérive and détournement. Can visually spectacular moments not also potentially

² Debord, The Society of the Spectacle, 12.
offer us moments of art? Or perhaps nuance or even divert the totalizing effects of advertising on the urban mediascape? The artist Olafur Eliasson believes in the potential of spectacular installation to overwhelm us and alter our sense of perception of the world, and it is in this potentially positive use of spectacular light and imagery that public art employs screens and projection.³

In this chapter, I discuss works of art that engage primarily with visuality and the ocular senses to create moments of spectator enchantment. In the Oxford English Dictionary, enchantment has two definitions: “feeling of great pleasure; delight” and “a state of being under a spell; magic.” This term, unpacked further by Chris Berry in his analysis of screen cultures in Shanghai, establishes a connection between the history of the “cinema of attractions” and spectators’ responses to contemporary public screens outside of a Debordian sense of visual oppression.⁴ Visual enchantment can offer moments for viewers to engage with art in public space, often by using the language or spectacle of commercial media to attract viewers. Working often within the framework of advertising, early cinema, or television broadcasting, the projects examined here use moving images primarily as objects or events to be looked at rather than spaces to be entered into for extended periods of time (as in the case of traditional movie theaters).

These works can be of vastly different scales and duration and make use of filmic, video, and proto-filmic methods. In order to stand out from (or stand out within) a contemporary urban


space filled with multiple screen architectures for information and advertising, the public art discussed in this chapter hinges on temporal differentiation from the rest of mediated urban space and an attractive quality of enchantment. Bill Brand’s *Masstransiscope* (1980), a permanent linear installation of a zoetrope under the New York subway, lasts only as long as the train passes by its image, disappearing nearly at the moment of the apparatus’s comprehension. The BBC’s Big Screens (2003-2013) used a unique programming wheel to rotate a variety of content on screens located in city centers throughout the UK. The screenings in Times Square Alliance’s revolving installation *Midnight Moments* last no longer than two minutes, attempting to interrupt the continuous flow of advertising from screens in Times Square. Doug Aitken’s *SONG I* (2012) was a special event, running only for sixty days in the spring of 2012. All of these examples invite the viewer to pause, look, and enjoy the visual pleasure of the illusion of animation or the seductiveness of large-scale moving images.

To distinguish public art from advertising requires some manner of differentiation easily apprehended by the viewer, lest it be lost in a sea of commerce. The degree to which this differentiation is realized arguably forms a potential measure of a work’s success—whether or not it extends Knight’s opportunities for the public to negotiate relationships with art. However, I argue we must also consider a work’s relationship to its environs and the audience’s broader experience with screens in public space that vie for viewer attention. As gleaned from the intellectual ground work of New Historicism, texts circulate in a matrix of cultural material and cannot be analyzed simply within the realm of literature but rather alongside the broader cultural trends of the moment⁵—the same goes for understanding how art operates in relationship to material and visual cultures. What David Joselit calls “media ecologies” and Arjun Appadurai

---

calls “mediascapes” are essential to any understanding of the public constitution of meaning in public art. To consider screens dedicated to art without a thorough understanding of how screens function in everyday life is to misunderstand how they operate. Similarly, to always read art as oppositional to all commercial “non-art” is to misunderstand the languages used to reach audiences saturated within larger media cultures and to apply an out-dated concept of the avant-garde to contemporary art. My analysis of visual stimulation in public screens in this chapter, therefore, oscillates between everyday screen cultures and public art.

These examples of public moving image art—Masstransiscope, selections from BBC Big Screens and Midnight Moments, and SONG 1—are exemplary of what I am calling “sight-specific public art.” These core examples, along with others, use the visual attraction of the moving image in permanent works, rotating programming, and special events to create moments of joy, wonder, and spectator enchantment in everyday experience. This chapter looks at each of the three works through various lenses, first creating a context within a broader mediascape. In each reading, I look to how the works function in relationship to established paradigms of media consumption as well as their status as public art within commissioning agencies, commercial and civic city centers, or institutionalized museum settings. The plurality of distribution and installation methods (permanent, revolving, and special event) parallels the multiple ways screen cultures infiltrate and construct public spaces and daily patterns of movement outside of public

---


7 Indeed one of the basic principles of postmodernism (which arguably precedes the current period of “the contemporary”) is that the utopian goals of modernism are false and unattainable. While such an argument is beyond the purview of this dissertation, I do believe that falling too easily into the critical dichotomy of art/commerce is problematic when discussing art in public spaces, as I will be analyzing and discussing throughout the next three chapters.
art. Whenever possible, in addition to my interviews with curators, artists, or facilitators, I also employ direct observation as a means to ground my readings in empirical evidence. My use of observation is comparable to ethnographic fieldwork and is qualitative rather than quantitative. Through experience of sites, observation of and interaction with spectators, and photographic documentation, empirical evidence informs the direction my readings take—theory comes out of observation.

**Public Media Screens: Spaces**

While the expanded cinema movement discussed briefly in the preceding chapter is often cited as the historical precedent for contemporary screen-reliant art, Beatriz Colomina has pointed out that architecture began investigating new, spatial uses for screens at an even earlier moment. In particular, she looks to the work of Charles and Ray Eames in the late 1950s and 1960s. She writes, “architects were involved much earlier [in multi-screen and multi-media installations] and in very different contexts, such as military operations and governmental propaganda campaigns.” The 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow is an especially important moment, where not only did Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev engage in the famously staged “kitchen debates,” but the Eameses unveiled their revolutionary multi-screen film *Glimpses of the USA* inside a massive geodesic dome (250 feet in diameter) designed by Buckminster Fuller. This twelve-minute film was projected onto seven 20 by 30 foot screens containing over two thousand still and moving images depicting an “average” work and weekend days of an American. (Fig. 11)

---


9 Colomina, “Multi-Screen Architecture,” 42.
In many ways, Glimpses of the USA was a re-envisioning of the city symphony film, a genre artists and filmmakers have explored since the silent era. The city symphony films used editing, camera placement, and a loose narrative structure to document the life of a particular or ideal city. Most notable among the early city films are Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand’s Manhatta (1921), Walter Ruttman’s Berlin, Symphony of a City (1927), and Dziga Vertov’s Man with a Movie Camera (1929). Each of these three films explore the city in relationship to dynamism, using cinema to document everyday movement of people, objects, and machinery. Especially in the case of Berlin and Man with a Movie Camera, movement of the camera and movement of trains are paralleled to “transport” the viewer through the city. In Ruttman’s film, we enter the city visually as if riding on the train. This clip draws its inspiration from the earlier Hale’s Tours from the beginning of the twentieth century. The Hale’s Tours were small theaters built inside a train car with a projected image simulating travel. Part amusement park ride, part proto-expanded cinema, the Hale’s Tours connected the turn-of-the-century interest in “the thrill” with the moving image’s power of emotional and physical transportation. In Vertov’s Man with a Movie Camera, in true Russian Constructivist fashion, the manufactured nature of these traveling shots is laid bare as the film cuts between shots of camera man Mikhail Kaufman in death-defying pursuit of the shot, and the images his ‘camera-eye’ (kino-glaz) sees. As Ruttman and Vertov understand the city in terms of movement and use cinema as a means of transport through it, the Eames’ Glimpses of the USA realizes a more dispersive model of (sub)urban daily life.

The Eames’ film comes from a postwar moment where movement and the city are more associated with the automobile and suburban dispersion than trains and a bustling city center. In

this way, the multi-screen architecture of *Glimpses* seems a more appropriate exhibition format in relationship to content—distributing cinematic movement across a variety of similar, yet separate screens rather than focusing movement within a single image. Furthermore, the Eames’ work also reflected the spatial, non-linear logic of mass media. Colomina writes, “the space of a newspaper or illustrated magazine is a grid in which information is arranged and rearranged as it comes in: a space the reader navigates in their own way, at a glance, or by fully entering a particular story.”  

Though multi-screen architecture presents a situation of information overload and abundance, viewers are already equipped with the ability to navigate such information flows from their experience with other media.  

Screens in public space form multiple layers of visual information that viewers navigate through a varied balance of focused attention and casual glances. As Francesco Casetti outlines in his “billboard” metaphor for contemporary screen culture, “we have ceased to look at things via their representation, we look instead at a set of directives aimed at us.”  

In his essay “What is a Screen Nowadays?” Casetti replaces film theory’s foundational three metaphors (picture frame, window, and mirror) with three new metaphors for contemporary screen culture: monitor, bulletin board, and scrapbook/mailbox. Fundamental to this reconceptualization of the screen is an understanding of media not as portals to other spaces but as “lightning rods” for “interception.” Furthermore, understanding media as “lightning rods” also situates media screens in space, therefore presuming a mobile, distracted spectator navigating multiple points of information at once. Paralleled also in Casetti’s discussion is the movement of the function of

---

11 Colomina, “Multi-Screen Architecture,” 54.  
13 Ibid., 17.
screens to that of “display,” presuming a spectator that is no longer in a stationary state of absorption. “The display shows, but only in the sense that it places at our disposition or makes accessible. It exhibits, but does not uncover. It offers, but does not commit.” The screen understood as a display, then, is within a spatial situation of distraction and competing visual stimuli, much like the contemporary mediated city and the dispersive model of moving image consumption explored by the Eameses. We take from screens what we need and block out what we don’t or what we wish to ignore.

The ethnographic study of London commuters by Zlatan Krajina discusses this everyday negotiation of screens as a way of “domesticating” an ever-changing mediascape. In this way, screens and advertising images are no longer understood as mere visual distractions, but rather become part of the everyday urban experience of commuters, as much a part of movement through space as the architectural elements encountered en route to one’s destination. The commuters Krajina interviewed speak about their use of advertising and screens in a variety of ways: to access information, to keep up to date on events and culture, to avoid eye contact with other travelers, to momentarily daydream or escape to another place, or to consciously avoid many screens and advertising. Using screens to avoid eye contact parallels how viewers produce zones of privacy in public space with mobile media. Especially in situations such as transit, passengers often deflect any unwanted interaction with strangers by focusing intently on individual content on tablets, smartphones, e-readers, or videogame systems.

14 Ibid., 28.
16 For his sources, Krajina used interviews and audio diaries of nine participants. Krajina, “Domesticating the Screen-Scenography: Situational Uses of Screen Images and Technologies in the London Underground.”
In many ways, contemporary urban subjects use mobile media as a means of “sensory refiltering” in order to cope with the constant distractions of urban space and reassert a unique sense of self.\(^{17}\) Though blasted in popular press as potentially taking us out of “real life,” mobile media here is used to reclaim a personal, private space as a coping mechanism in the face of an increasingly hyper-mediated urban spectacle. Mobile media and the domestication of public media must therefore be read as strategies against a homogenized public media space in the manner of what Michel de Certeau called “tactics.” Tactics are a means of reclaiming agency on the part of the consumer/individual in the face of the “strategies” of potentially homogenizing places of power.\(^{18}\) However, despite the everyday practices of domestication of public media or absorption into mobile devices, public screens most certainly still register—on some level—in the visual experience of urban movement and, furthermore, I argue that they are not always dehumanizing and homogeneous.

As established last chapter, the moving image fundamentally alters the space it occupies, be it a gallery, theater, or urban street. Chris Berry, in his analysis of the practices of screen cultures in Shanghai, calls the visual encounter between spectators and screens in public spaces “secular enchantment.”\(^{19}\) According to sociologist Max Weber, modernity is often understood in terms of “disenchantment,” following science and reason’s destruction of the “enchantment” of 


\(^{19}\) Berry, “Shanghai’s Public Screen Culture: Local and Coeval” This essay also looks to specifically local practices of screens cultures in a manner similar to Anna McCarthy’s study, but that also looks to the use of earlier media forms in new media screens.
religiously or mythologically dominated eras of the past. “Secular enchantment,” then, happens during moments of wonder that are part of the modern, mediated experience, such as the strong response of early spectators of films such as Lumière’s *Arrival of a Train*. “Enchantment” can also be a way that we understand how moving image-based public art distinguishes its presence in the urban mediascape. Especially with the first branch of ocular-centric or “sight-specific” public art visual enchantment is a factor. Given the visual understanding of enchantment, we can draw a parallel to Tom Gunning’s notion of the “cinema of attractions” in the early days of moving image entertainment. Bill Brand’s public work in the tunnels of New York’s subway generates this type of enchantment by resurrecting one of the most well-known precursors of cinema, the zoetrope.

**Cinema-on-the-Move: Bill Brand’s Masstransiscope**

A New Yorker enters her daily commute armed with an arsenal of sensory stimuli. Contemporary straphangers, with headphones in place, focus attention on iPods or Kindles; some still cling to more analog visual stimuli, including books, work documents, or the classic thrice-folded, non-obtrusive newspaper. This assertion of private space amongst a claustrophobic crowd of strangers is then visually assaulted by an array of advertisements plastered along the train’s walls, which riders may then “domesticate” for their own everyday purposes. For riders on the Manhattan-bound B/Q train, however, a separate attraction lies beyond the train’s windows: the *Masstransiscope*, a life-sized zoetrope installed in an abandoned station by the experimental filmmaker Bill Brand in 1980 and restored in 2008. (Fig. 12) Only when in motion

20 Ibid.
22 Krajina, “Domesticating the Screen-Scenography: Situational Uses of Screen Images and Technologies in the London Underground.”
does the spectator/commuter experience the filmic nature of *Masstransiscope*—the work operates on the principles of a nineteenth-century protocinematic device, the zoetrope. Traditionally, the successive images would be placed on the inside of a slotted cylinder that would rotate on its axis as the stationary observer looked through the slits to see the illusion of a repeating moving image on the inside of the device—an analog version of the contemporary, repeating Graphics Interchange Format, abbreviated and known by its file extension “.GIF.”

Many artists have explored the languages, images, and apparatuses of proto-cinema in recent years. Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder’s temporary installation in Madison Square Park, New York, *Topsy Turvy* (2013) recreates a camera obscura that projects an inverted image of the Flatiron Building across the square is an example in the public realm.²³ In a sculptural context, Gary Barsamian’s kinetic sculpture *Feral Font* (1996) uses strobe lights and three dimensional objects rather than horizontal slits and two dimensional images to create a zoetropic effect.²⁴

Brand’s piece, however, is a permanent installation that not only re-presents the proto-cinematic apparatus, but also inverts the relationship between movement and stasis by flattening out the cyclic nature of the zoetrope to create a linear film that parallels the trajectory of a commuter entering Manhattan. The relationship of the commuter/spectator to the moving image clashes with much of classical film theory, but to discuss *Masstransiscope* solely in the context of the history of art or the history of public art would be to deny one of its essential components—the time-based cinematic experience. Conversely, the work’s history necessarily

---

²³ This work was realized by the Madison Square Park Conservancy’s public art initiative, which also produced an installation by filmmaker Ernie Gehr in 2010 (*Surveillance*) and media artist Leo Villareal in 2012 (*BUCKYBALL*).  
²⁴ Both the strobe lights and the slits create the regular, intermittent moments of darkness necessary for the eye to create an after image, which is a necessary precondition for the illusion of animation. When one looks inside the cylinder of a zoetrope above the slits, or when Barsamian’s sculpture receives constant illumination, all that is seen is a blur.
must include the context of its commission and renovation in relationship to its physical site. Therefore, I have divided my discussion of this piece into considerations of the work’s filmic sights and physical site. To this end I analyze both the aesthetic and material significance of the work’s liminal position between ephemerality and permanence and between stations to investigate why the work continues to garner viewer engagement and resurrect from the shadows over its three decades of existence.

**Sight: Masstransiscope as film**

*Masstransiscope* illuminates the subway tunnel on the B and Q subway lines between the DeKalb Avenue stop in Brooklyn and the train’s passage over the Manhattan Bridge. Seen only briefly, the colorful animations last under a minute. Outlined colorful shapes and images merge and disintegrate against a varying, but often white background, creating a high contrast formally analogous to many of the works of Keith Haring. (Fig. 13) The film starts with a bounding red ball, which quickly attracts a set of noodle-like strands that twist and squeeze the ball until it morphs into an amoeba-like burst of color. This image undulates until eventually mutating into geometrical shapes of orange and blue that transform into an abstraction of the human form. During this last transition, the train very often slows or stops, due to the track changes before the bridge. Even if the train runs straight through, there is still a break in the image due to a stairwell from the abandoned station. Once the figure forms, the pieces swiftly break apart once more and the initial string and ball return, only this time to morph into a blue rocket ship. After the ship takes off, the ball bounces on various backgrounds until forming the head of the human figure once more in the final frames. The film ends abruptly, followed by further darkness in the tunnel before emerging onto the bridge, complete with its own set of spectacular views of the river and Manhattan.

In *Masstransiscope*, the very apparatus of the work’s illusion reveals itself to the viewer
in motion, who, though perhaps unfamiliar with the zoetrope, certainly understands how the illusion operates as the train stops and starts along the track. Furthermore, Brand’s non-narrative and abstract forms depart as much from the visual culture of advertising that dominates the subway for the contemporary viewer as they do from the graffiti that covered trains in 1980.25 Furthermore, unlike advertising and graffiti, Masstransiscope is outside the train car—it appears to move, though it is, in fact, static. The kinetic motion necessary for the zoetrope (and all cinematic projection) is therefore not necessarily bound within the apparatus but rather operates as a register of difference between viewer and image. Either one can move, as long as the other does not. As Giuliana Bruno discusses, the word ‘cinema’ comes from a Greek word that connotes both motion and emotion, thus cinema can be understood as a form of transport. She writes that considering “film as a means of transport thus understands transport in the full range of its meaning, including the sort of carrying which is a carrying away by emotion.”26 The spectator/voyeur becomes the voyager—a theoretical step literalized a decade earlier than Bruno’s writing in the spatial nature of Masstransiscope’s moving image. Much as Graham’s Cinema and Smithson’s Cinematic Atopia critiqued Baudry’s cave of illusions, here art redefines the interactions between image and space in the cinema concurrently, and even before theorists.

Gunning’s “cinema of attractions” is another important parallel to the Masstransiscope’s enticing animation. Much like the notion of enchantment, attraction implies a shift in visual attention where the viewer becomes aware of the animation or illusion of movement itself. Commuters looking up from their phones, much like the spectators of the cinema of attractions,

---

25 Brand is particularly adamant about how he sees his practice as not involved in advertising, and has made the artistic choice not to seek consulting work in advertising projects which use this technology. Bill Brand, Interview by author, May 3, 2010.
do “not get lost in a fictional world and its drama, but remains aware of the act of looking, the excitement of curiosity and its fulfillment.”\textsuperscript{27} In \textit{Masstransiscope}, the “attraction” to the short film extends to the apparatus that creates its illusion and the body’s relationship to movement and vision. Art historian and theorist Jonathan Crary, in \textit{Techniques of the Observer}, historicizes the radical changes in the conceptualization of vision in the early nineteenth century away from an objective model of the camera obscura and towards an acknowledgement of the subjective embodiment of optical experience.\textsuperscript{28} He writes: “what begins in the 1820s and 1830s is a repositioning of the observer…into an undemarcated terrain on which the distinction between internal sensation and external signs is irrevocably blurred.”\textsuperscript{29} Discourses forming soon after the embodiment of vision disciplined how a subject experiences vision and directs attention. By considering the observer first as a physical body whose thicket of internal stimuli and organs have as much to do with vision as the external world, we understand the illusion of \textit{Masstransiscope} to be a phenomenological one.

Crary in \textit{Techniques of the Observer}, which is primarily an intellectual history, also discusses a number of entertainment inventions from the early nineteenth century made possible by this “freeing up of vision.”\textsuperscript{30} The phenakistoscope and the zoetrope are of particular interest; mechanical objects, “based on the incorporation of an \textit{immobile} observer into a mechanical apparatus and a subjection to a predesigned temporal unfolding of optical experience.”\textsuperscript{31} With \textit{Masstransiscope}’s 228 hand-painted panels placed behind a wall lined with regular intervals of

\textsuperscript{27} Gunning, “An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)credible Spectator (1989),” 743.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 112–113.
slits and fluorescent lighting, the “wheels” of these nineteenth century forms are flattened out, made linear along the course of urban movement (or as Giuliana Bruno would have it, of transport from one place to another). Anyone who has ever ridden New York subways, however, anticipates that the rate of movement is not always constant, thus allowing for moments in which the illusion is broken and the system of its logic laid bare. The artist anticipated and intended this effect and even included variable rates of speed in early models of the piece.32

Brand came up with the concept in the 1970s from years of riding subway trains and noticing that when they pass each other the regular intervals of windows passing by resembles a movie. Crary cites a similar “accidental observation” in the early nineteenth century, when, in 1825, English mathematician Peter Mark Roget “published an account of his observations of railway train wheels seen through the vertical bars of a fence,” suggesting “how the location of an observer in relation to an intervening screen could exploit the durational properties of retinal afterimages to create various effects of motion.”33 As discussed in chapter one with The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat (Lumière Brothers, 1895) and above with the Hale’s Tours, the linkage between trains and motion pictures dates back to the early days of cinema in a way that enhances the blurring of reality and illusion. This connection becomes literalized in Brand’s piece, where the train’s own system of sight is not only the inspiration for the film’s creation, but also effectively acts as the projector—or more aptly, the register of difference—moving the spectator’s exposure to the frames at such a rate as to create an illusion of movement.

The illusion’s place within the commuter’s daily life, however, is contingent upon the spectator. Quite often, riders of the New York subway go out of their way not to look around or

32 Brand, Interview by author.
interact with any visual stimuli. As Krajina discusses, often commuters’ use of public media in spaces of transit are “domesticated.”\textsuperscript{34} In 2010 I conducted a series of interviews with both riders I approached on the train and a small set of email surveys of regular commuters along the line (to allow for some longer responses than I was able to obtain on a short ride). Though not a statistically significant sample (there were twenty-nine total responses), this process offers insight into audience response, evidence beyond personal anecdote and opens up an important tension between the work’s ephemeral image and its permanent physical form—a tension that not only generates the necessary register of difference for the work’s illusion, but also threatened its longevity.

Overall, riders’ response to the work was positive and all regular riders reported noticing the work many times—a big difference from the apparent invisibility of many static works of public art. Eight of the twenty-six respondents actually used the phrase “love it,” with many others citing words like “exciting,” “fun,” and “colorful.” Many also remarked how the work “brightens up” the commute, is refreshing and unexpected, or simply just far better than an abandoned subway station to look at. The only criticism about the work was the way the train frequently stops in the middle, disrupting the illusion. No one knew the artist was Brand, which is not surprising as his signature is only on one of the panels and illegible from the moving train. What did surprise me was that two riders guessed a graffiti artists created the work—an ironic notion given graffiti’s recurring threat to \textit{Masstransiscope}’s illusion discussed below. Furthermore the assumption that a “graffiti artist” might be responsible for such an expensive and elaborate installation suggests how tame (or even corporatized) the popular view of graffiti

\textsuperscript{34} Krajina, “Domesticating the Screen-Scenography: Situational Uses of Screen Images and Technologies in the London Underground.”
may have become by 2010.

Although the response to the *Masstransiscope*’s whimsical, playful nature and kinetic qualities were overwhelmingly positive, I was struck by how many were indifferent when asked “would you miss this work if it were gone?” This difference is especially pronounced compared to an earlier public art observation I conducted on a *The Prison Ship Martyrs’ Monument*, a Revolutionary war monument in Brooklyn designed by Stanford White and dedicated in 1908. The style of the monument is rather dated and its subject matter known by almost no one I spoke with, but virtually all respondents said they would miss it. Although seventeen of the twenty-six respondents for Brand’s piece did say they would miss the *Masstransiscope* (some even emphatically so), nine responded either with “no” or suggested they would be open to having another piece there. Unlike an urban landmark or park meeting place, the zoetropic nature of the work and the embodied sense of vision it activates perhaps make some viewers feel it is far less fixed in its place. Importantly, though, many of the indifferent responders did say they would like the animation to rotate (again, this points to a larger unawareness of the cost of an installation of this scale). My conversations with riders suggest that *Masstransiscope*’s status as both moving image and permanent work places it in a unique and liminal position in public art.

The physical realities of the work’s mechanism of ephemeral illusion pose unique threats to its ability to persist as a permanent installation. That *Masstransiscope* exists as a film at all today is thanks largely to the artist’s dual profession as both filmmaker and film archivist and hours of time spent restoring the work. The development of the abandoned subway station into a work of art and its subsequent physical life after realization offer a telling glimpse into the issues and challenges with making moving images permanent in public space.

**Site: Masstransiscope as Permanent Public Art**

The decline and resurgence of *Masstransiscope* raises important questions about issues of
publicity, permanence, and conservation in public art. Who should bear the responsibility of restoring pieces? What measures should be taken to prevent a work’s decline? And how should these issues factor into the initial commission of a work of art? This section recounts the narrative of the work’s realization, decline, and restoration using information gleaned from an interview with Brand and from archival material from New York public art commissioning agency Creative Time. The work’s resilience, in both its miraculous recovery from disrepair and its ability to succeed as public art across decades could provide either a model or outlier case for an analysis of art in mass transit.

As outlined above, *Masstransiscope* operates on the principle of the nineteenth-century zoetrope and riding subway trains that passed each other inspired Brand to create such a device in a similar manner as the inventor of the phenakistoscope. Once Brand came up with the idea, he approached Creative Time’s founder and first director Anita Contini (then O’Neill) around 1975 about realizing the piece. Creative Time had recently completed Red Groom’s installation *Ruckus Manhattan* (1975) downtown at 88 Pine Street and was a relatively new public art agency headquartered in O’Neill’s home. The organization’s mission was and has always been to bring artist-initiated work to a larger public; meaning the order of operations is often idea first, site second. It was only years later that the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) would form a modern means of commissioning and maintaining public art, though *Masstransiscope* would eventually became a part of the collection. MTA Arts for Transit (now called MTA Arts & Design), which started in 1985, allocates one percent of the construction or renovation budget of a station to art and puts out open calls for artists to propose works to a committee of people from the MTA as well as the community; site first, idea second. The permanence of the commission

---

35 Brand, Interview by author.
and the restrictions of the location dictate the parameters of the work of art, whereas Creative Time had no such limitations. This functional constraint is undoubtedly why there are not more zoetropic works in the MTA’s collection—the cost for maintenance is prohibitive.

Many of Creative Time’s early projects were directly linked to Lower Manhattan as part of an effort to reclaim neglected spaces for art. Brand’s piece, while located in the former Myrtle Avenue station in Brooklyn (abandoned since 1956 due to construction on other lines), comes just before the train crosses over the Manhattan Bridge with a dramatic view of downtown. Although “making art that was outside the world of commerce” was certainly something Brand felt genuinely invested in, his piece’s relationship to an architectural reclamation of space was not something he was overly conscious of.36 Perhaps, however, the work’s use of an abandoned space provided one more nudge for the Creative Time to take on the project—a perfect marriage of curatorial and artistic desires. It certainly would fit into the category of “art where you least expect it,” Creative Time’s former motto.37 As early as 1978, the proposed Masstransiscope was cited in Creative Time’s press releases as exemplary of what the new organization was trying to do in the city.38

With the help of a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) planning grant for Art in Public Places for Brand’s project, in 1980 the Masstransiscope became the first work funded by the NEA in a public transportation system.39 Aside from the NEA, Creative Time also received

36 Ibid.
38 CCFlash, the Cultural Council Foundation Newsletter, August 2, 1978.
39 Though MTA Arts for Transit wasn’t officially incorporated until 1985, the MTA did have an arts consultant who worked with Brand and Creative Time in getting the project realized. Though cooperative, the Transit Authority provided no funding for this project (as no official body or allocation for arts funding was yet established).
funds from the New York State Council for the Arts, which added to in-kind donations from 3M, Con Edison, and many others for various materials.\textsuperscript{40} Though the tipping point for the project came with federal money (the NEA), it is important to realize that non-profit, for-profit, local, and federal organizations made its realization possible. Increasingly, in the last three decades public art projects and major art exhibitions in the United States have had to rely on an amalgamation of sponsors. This is paralleled in some major public works in the UK, such as Jeremy Deller’s \textit{Battle of Orgreave} (2001), a large-scale reenactment of striking miners clashing with the police during the 1980s whose funding was only secured once Deller agreed to have Mike Figgis shoot a documentary film for Channel Four, and the BBC Big Screens project, whose expansion came from a three-part partnership between the London Olympics, the national BBC operation, and the local city councils.

\textit{Masstransiscope} debuted in September 1980 with significant press coverage, both in print and on television. Brand notes that this was not, however, overly designated as an “art world event” in 1980 because, after all, it was Brooklyn, not Manhattan, and not part of the art milieu at that point in time. By the time of the first major restoration in 2008 (and the second in 2013 following a new wave of vandalism during the weeklong subway closures during Superstorm Sandy), the demographics had drastically changed, and Brooklynnites took notice through social media.\textsuperscript{41} In 1980, one enthusiast remarked in a letter to Creative Time how

\textsuperscript{40} The full list of supporters from Creative Time’s 1984 brochure for \textit{Masstransiscope} follows. Contributors: National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, American Stock Exchange, Chase Manhattan bank, Con Edison, Exxon Corporation, Merrill Lynch Pierce Fener & Smith, Inc. In-kind supporters: Exxon Corporation (promotion), 3M Company (special paper and inks), Westinghouse Electric (lights), E E Tech (fixtures), Lighting Unlimited, Inc. (consultation), Paul Marants of Jules Fischer & Paul Marantz, Inc. (consultation).

\textsuperscript{41} Brand, Interview by author.
“elated” he was to even see “the work of the avant-garde in Brooklyn.” Despite Brooklyn’s then-marginal status in the art world, the unveiling was heavily promoted and included a special opening day viewing on a vintage train following a private breakfast at the famous Brooklyn restaurant Juniors for the artist, Creative Time staff, Brooklyn borough president Howard Golden, and other dignitaries.

The public art event—an important notion for temporary works such as Doug Aitken’s SONG I or relational works like those of Paul Ramirez Jonas or Suzanne Lacy—is here used for promotion of a (potentially) permanent work. Furthermore, the fanfare that surrounded the initial viewing has its cinematic parallel in “the premiere.” The New York Times ran two announcements about the piece in September 1980 and another longer article in January 1981; countless neighborhood papers and arts newsletters followed suit. All of the articles stress the novelty of the work’s animation; John Russell called it “an arresting experience, in which colored forms (some abstract, some not) are seen to change, transform themselves, collapse, explode, or blast off before our eyes in a matter of seconds.” Notably, each writer is sure to mention Creative Time, the NEA, and at least some of the many grant agencies and corporations that contributed to the project.

Television coverage of the work, on the other hand, dwelled less on funding and focused more on the riders’ responses and on the process of the piece (interviewing Brand in his studio or

43 These included artists including Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Jenny Dixon (director of Public Art Fund) among others, according to documents in the Creative Time archive. “Creative Time Archive, 1973-2006,” 1973, Series 1, Box 1, Folders 26 and 28.
in the *Masstransiscope’s* lightbox). A news segment for WPIX-11 in September 1980 begins with “Deep down in this dark abandoned Brooklyn subway station lays a Masstransiscope. No it is not some mythological monster from the deep, it is a creative work of art.”

Shots of the inside and outside of the work’s encasing come before the video of the animation, effectively exposing the nature of the apparatus of the moving image before displaying its illusion in the second half of the segment coupled with a soundtrack of commuters expressing their delight in the bright, colorful display. WNYC’s longer piece on the program *Brooklyn Magazine* looks at the artist’s working model for the piece in addition to some still images of nineteenth century zoetropes, a trip to the installation, and a ride on the train.

The subways in these news clips look completely different than they do today; most noticeably, they are covered in graffiti, evidence of the discrepancies between the experience of the work from subway cars in the early 1980s and after the renovation in the late 2000s. One handwritten letter to Anita O’Neill from musician Brian Gari in the Creative Time archives also speaks to this very different experience:

“Just a quick note in response to the wonderful art when looking out the window of the D train--I take this train often and needless to say it’s not the safest (or shortest ride) but I do believe even potential muggers get distracted by its unique beauty and fun. Keep it going and do more!”

This rather humorous example is just one of many congratulatory letters the agency received in 1980 and 1981, a time before the dawn of blogging and on-line discussion boards, mediums that played a large part in the resurgence of the work in 2008.

Graffiti, though certainly part of the milieu of New York City transit in the early 1980s,

---

46 “WPIX with Frank Casey,” television broadcast (WPIX-11, September 17, 1980).
47 “Brooklyn Magazine,” television broadcast (WNYC, April 9, 1982).
has a rather fraught relationship with *Masstransiscope*. As is visible in the two television segments, trains in the early 1980s were covered with graffiti tagging. A short story from the initial installation in *Soho News* introduced the piece on the front page with “Up from Graffiti: New subway visions.”

Brand has even mentioned how he included the possibility of commuters seeing his work through graffiti-scratched windows when he envisioned the bright color scheme. The project initially had a hard time getting approval because the Transit Authority feared that it would encourage graffiti, perhaps due to it graphic and abstract nature. Once Brand produced models and actually showed some images, however, these worries began to subside. Remarking on the work’s initial relationship to graffiti Brand said, “In no way did I feel that I was making graffiti, but there were ways in which I was very conscious of graffiti… it was part of the cultural, visual, historical environment in which I was investigating in order to make my work.”

Brand even interviewed some young people who were graffiti artists about terminology and issues pertinent to their work. The artist does not, however, identify the aesthetics or ethos of graffiti as an important part of his practice and certainly was understandably perturbed with others decided to paint over his work.

Initially, Brand would clean the panels himself, which were finished with a graffiti-resistant sealant. Eventually, vandals kept finding a way to break into the light box enclosure and destroyed the work’s ability to create a moving image. After four or five years of self-maintenance, understandably Brand wanted more time to concentrate on his artistic production, and with no structures for preservation intact, the lights were eventually turned off. A Creative Time brochure from 1994 dated the *Masstransiscope* as 1980-1986, with no indication that the

---

50 Brand, Interview by author.
end date was due to disrepair. But why did this happen? Clearly the piece prompted a positive response from the community of riders, was well reviewed, and had a strong backing from its sponsor agency. A 1980 Creative Time proposal for additional funding from Exxon states,

Creative Time and the MTA would like to see “Masstransiscope” remain on view for as long as is feasible, and the exhibition has been designed with possible permanency in mind. Creative Time’s contract with the MTA guarantees that “Masstransiscope” will remain on public view for a minimum period of one year with an annual review process.\(^{51}\)

Despite the initial hopes for permanence, the funding and institutional support was not in place to keep the piece up and running.

In the $60,000 estimated budget for the work, only $2,000 was projected for maintenance.\(^{52}\) Whether or not this money came through in the end is unclear, but what is certain is that too much of the burden of maintenance fell on the shoulders of the artist. Would the MTA Arts for Transit commission a work like this today? Most likely not, given their stated purpose to produce “permanent work,” which guides the types of projects they choose for certain bids given an extremely tight maintenance budget for art. Briefly in 1990, the MTA managed to clean the piece partially and get the lights back up, but this was short-lived. In 1996, one commuter wrote in a column in the *New York Times* wondering why the lights were still on when the piece was completely illegible, the response from Art for Transit was a lack of funds and restoration budget of $25,000\(^{53}\)—a number quite larger than Creative Time’s projected $2000, to say the least.

What happened between then and the re-emergence of the spectacle in 2008 was a combination of luck, volunteering, and the artist’s interdisciplinary lecturing.

\(^{51}\) Creative Time, “Proposal: Masstransiscope” February 1, 1980, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 26, Creative Time Archive, NYU Fales Collection.

\(^{52}\) Ibid.

In 2004, Bill Brand spoke on a panel at the Association of Moving Image Archivists conference in Minneapolis discussing the preservation of works considered “expanded cinema.” In a talk focused the issues posed in preserving Paul Sharits’s *Sound Strip/Film Strip* (1972), Brand concluded with a discussion of *Masstransiscope*.\(^{54}\)

Unfortunately there is no agency, organization or community to take responsibility for preservation [of *Masstransiscope*]. You might say I should take responsibility myself… But this would be a major project keeping me from [my work]…At this point, when I should be at the peak of my creative life, I am instead given the devil’s choice between being an artist or an archivist.\(^{55}\)

This talk generated interest from the Joseph and Anni Albers Foundation, whose grant gave the artist the incentive to actively pursue restoring the work.

MTA Arts for Transit agreed to acquire *Masstransiscope* into their permanent collection in 2008, provided Brand would organize and take care of the initial cleaning.\(^{56}\) After months of experimenting with different cleaning methods and collaboration with a colleague at the graffiti removal service MetroClean/ShelterExpress (a service that cleaned bus stations in the city) Brand discovered the winning combination of chemical solvents that would both remove layers of spray-paint and preserve the original paintings. The MTA had all the panels removed and shipped out to Long Island City where Brand and some volunteers worked for weeks. Brand

---

\(^{54}\) Brand intended this more as a provocation than anything else, thinking the crowd would think the work was outside their purview – a painting or work of public art, but not a film. Brand, Interview by author.


\(^{56}\) After a few stalled months trying to secure a meeting with the MTA, Amy Zimmer contacted Brand to write about the lost work of public art for an article in Metro NY in 2007. Zimmer also contacted Sandra Bloodworth, who was quoted in the article suggesting that if Brand came up with a certain amount of money, MTA Arts for Transit would take care of the rest. Brand, Interview by Author, New York, NY. Unfortunately I cannot find an archive of this daily free newspaper that goes past January 2010.
commented how “graffiti cleaners became art restorers” and vice versa.\textsuperscript{57} This parallel between art restoration and graffiti removal mirrors the role Arts for Transit had in the large-scale cleaning of the entire subway system in the mid-1980s. Permanent public art’s presence often comes on the heels of urban renewal and neighborhood regeneration.\textsuperscript{58} That \textit{Masstransiscope}’s presence is not only in an inaccessible but also a functionally “useless” space, to my thinking, refutes such politically polarizing views of permanent public art as at odds with local culture or underserved populations.

Since transit services were affected by the financial crisis of 2008, the MTA did not want to convey to the public that they were spending money on art while cutting service (despite the fact that they did not foot the bill for restoration), they did not put out a press release or even turn the lights on until early November (the restoration was complete in September); a drastically different opening than in 1980 that thankfully had little impact on visibility. Brand remarked:

Thirty years later, Brooklyn is the arts center of New York, whereas in 1980, even though \textit{Masstransiscope} received a lot of attention on national news and articles, I don’t think it was identified as an ‘art world event,’ because it was Brooklyn, not Manhattan. This time around immediately it got picked up without any publicity or effort to contact the press because the people who work in the institutions [that report on art] take that train.\textsuperscript{59}

One of the first articles was on the blog of Lincoln Center Film Society, which was soon followed by an article by Randy Kennedy in \textit{The New York Times}.\textsuperscript{60} “You can’t buy that kind of publicity!” the artist commented.\textsuperscript{61} Now that commuters could easily Google the work and even

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Brand, Interview by author.
\textsuperscript{60} Randy Kennedy, “Attention Passengers! To Your Right, This Trip Is About to Become Trippy,” \textit{The New York Times}, January 1, 2009, sec. Arts / Art & Design.
\textsuperscript{61} Brand, Interview by author.
view Brand’s video documentation on YouTube, some of the initial anonymity of the artist has subsided as all online content has Brand’s name attached. Additionally, widely read blogs and websites, such as Gothamist, picked up the relighting and posted a wealth of material (including some original news footage).  

Brand is very interested in the way the Internet has interacted with the re-emergence of the work, and how people’s new ability to make and post moving images has afforded an opportunity for people to re-watch this work. Unlike a flash in the dark that zips before your eyes, now the piece can be viewed over and over and at varying rates on computer and mobile screens. Indeed the interest generated and sustained for the piece online suggests the work garners a genuine sense of ownership among the community, underscored by the outcry on local blogs following the later tagging following the subway closings of Super Storm Sandy in 2012 (the work was quickly restored by the MTA in 2013). What Brand calls the “resilience” of the piece is what keeps it relevant today: it sits in an “in-between” space; it’s subway art, but not in a station; it’s underground, but it’s legal. The work appeals to “that aspect of public art which is neither monument nor an artwork in a museum…a lot of public art is to memorialize or monumentalize something else, and this is neither.”

*Masstransiscope* is both a short film of attractions designed to create an intervening private experience of joy and color for the commuter’s daily life and an exposition of the mechanism of the cinematic illusion. To experience the work is to notice—to look up from one’s iPod, newspaper, homework, or book and participate in the public space. It exists apart from the visual culture of advertising, but is also not an example of culture jamming or art in the public

---

63 Brand, Interview by author.
realm as means of critique. It is rather a commuter’s cinema of attraction, an enchanting and ephemeral moment of visual pleasure to break the commuter out of her daily ritual and return to public space. *Masstransiscope*’s resilience over the past three decades highlights some of the divergences between screen culture’s ephemeral nature and permanent public art.

**Public Media Screens: Flow**

Permanence is not something we usually associate with the presence of screens in daily life and public spaces. Moving images necessarily change and mutate, making viewing a screen a process that happens over a duration of time. As discussed in chapter one, spectatorial practices of viewership change dramatically when the screen leaves the theater and enters the gallery or comes into public space. How, then, are the practices of managers and creators of screen content different in screen space? Is there a way to discuss moving images in public space as a form of broadcasting? How content is managed and organized forms a vital determinant (though certainly not the only one) in how viewers construct meaning from screens. In McLuhan’s famous adage “the medium is the message,” content is less important than the means of conveyance. In *Understanding Media: Extensions of Man* (1963) he writes:

> In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means

---

64 Though the artists does consider the work to be somewhat “subversive,” I do not believe this is the main way the work functions in the public sphere.

65 Shelly Willis examines the public art commissioning process, critiquing the time and planning limitations placed on artists by municipal organizations and favoring the curatorial approach to public art: “…artists drive the development of art in the public realm…for art to continue serving the community, public art administration systems must evolve to make room for the possibilities.” This critique should be extended to included restoration, to make room for audiences to newly encounter and re-encounter important works. Is it more important to get as much work out in the public as possible or to maintain those pieces that trigger public response and alter their sites? Perhaps the “under the radar fun” of this restoration story could spark new non-profit preservation agencies to take on the important work of preserving art in public places. The conversation needs to begin on how to mitigate the issues posed by the current system and find a way to preserve works that fall outside the “monument” and are not only resilient works of art in themselves, but reminders of an important era in the development of public art in the United States.
of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. That is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.\textsuperscript{66}

Indeed much of McLuhan’s writing is a history of human thought and organization as understood through media. Following this notion, the specific languages and forms of each media form vital means of understanding their presence in broader culture.

For McLuhan, the medium’s technological immediacy defined its cultural impact. This is especially prescient for his concept of the “global village”—that with increased, immediate connectivity physical distances will be collapsed. This notion prophesized many of the significant cultural changes of the internet, though the somewhat optimistic tone of McLuhan elided the continually growing economic inequities in the globalized world. McLuhan’s distinction between “hot” and “cold” media, looks specifically at the role of the spectator in completing the process. The immersive “hot” media he defines as being “high definition” or “well filled with data,” whereas cold media requires more active involvement by the spectator.\textsuperscript{67}

While McLuhan’s distinctions are highly permeable and even reversible (for instance he defined television as a “cold medium” since the viewer has to complete the pixelated image—a notion not in keeping with today’s “high definition” monitors), they are an important means of understanding the relationship between the viewer and media.

Writing a decade after McLuhan’s study, Raymond Williams’s \textit{Television: Technology and Cultural Form} (1974) is a study as important as McLuhan’s writings on television. While Williams makes more of a case than McLuhan for the role of institutions (be they state or

\textsuperscript{66} McLuhan, \textit{Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man}, 7.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 22.
commercial) in television’s function within society, he still locates meaning in the analysis of programming and the specific formal and temporal qualities of the medium. One of the most important aspects of television Williams located was “flow.” Televisual flow keeps viewers on the couch by erasing or blurring interruptions or breaks between programming blocks. He describes this experience quite presciently as a viewer:

Most of us say, in describing the experience, that we have been ‘watching television,’ rather than that we have watched ‘the news’ or ‘a play’ or ‘the football’ ‘on television’…it is a widely and often ruefully admitted experience that many of us find television very difficult to switch off; that again and again, even when we have switched on for a particular ‘programme’’, we find ourselves watching the one after it and the one after that…we can be ‘into’ something else before we have summoned the energy to get out of the chair, and many programmes are made with this situation in mind.68

This phenomenon is caused not merely by the laziness of the television watcher (who is often referred to, for this reason, as a “couch potato”), but due to specific elements of television programming. Trailers for the following programs, teasers for future segments, and credits that bleed into the next show all keep the viewer on the same channel. Television, in its broadcast form, is (according to Williams) less a selection of content for the viewer to consume than a continuously transmitting medium. In contemporary media consumption, with the rise of online on-demand services like Netflix and Hulu, this concept seems outdated. However, both of those services have “autoplay” features that start either the next episode in a series or a related program chosen for each user based on collected user data.69 Flow, then, in its various manifestations can be referred to as that aspect of a broadcast that keeps the viewer’s eyes on the screen.

How might flow be an applicable term for understanding screens in public space?

69 This interactive component of contemporary media consumption is explored more in chapter three.
Certainly no advertiser or cultural programmer would actually anticipate a significant duration of engagement with a screen along a transit line or in a busy intersection. As Berry and Krajina outlined, public screens are encountered in varied spaces and serve multiple functions for viewers. For a public screen, what is perhaps more important than duration of viewership is the ability to catch someone’s eye long enough for the viewer simply to comprehend what is on screen. The advertising world uses specific terms like awareness, impressions, dwell time, message duration, and likelihood-to-see to measure how many people view a selected advertisement, how frequently, and for how long. The Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA), a non-profit trade organization for the Out of Home (OOH) advertising industry, has long argued for the viability of large-scale billboards, bulletins, and electrified signs in the urban landscape, dating even back to the early days of film and electrified city streets. Organized in 1891, the OAAA responded to industry worries over increased zoning and regulatory restrictions on signage outdoors by anti-billboard activists by establishing a self-regulatory body. This early history of public mediascapes mirrors many of the current anxieties and controversies over screens in public space, suggesting that our present condition might be less determined by the new technologies themselves, but rather part of a longer cultural debate.

---

70 The definitions provided by the Outdoor Advertising Association of America are as follows: “awareness: the recalled recognition of an OOH [out of home] advertising message by an individual or audience”; “impressions: the average number of persons who are likely to notice an ad on an OOH display” (these are divided into gross and in-market); “dwell time: the interval of time when a consumer is in close proximity to an OOH ad”; “message duration: the interval of time when a digital OOH advertising message is viewed”; “likelihood to see: the portion of the OTS (opportunity to see) audience who are likely to see an ad…can also be referred to as commercial audiences.” “Outdoor Advertising Association of America, Inc. > Out of Home Advertising > OOH Glossary of Terms.”

71 For a full history of the controversies and battles over outdoor advertising and its relationship to the art, with a particular eye to the context of New York City, see Michele Helene Bogart, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 79–124.
over the role and place of spectacle and commerce in the public sphere.

The OAAA not only fought for self-regulation (much like the movie industry’s development of the Production Code in response to fears of censorship in the 1930s), but also for the viability of many of their outdoor installations as a form of public art. As written in the OAAA’s 1928 promotional book:

Posters, [painted] Bulletins, and flashing electric signs were not primarily devised to purvey “free art” to the people; nevertheless, one feels that this aspect cannot be overlooked. We have our beautiful museums, and Art Galleries, but the people will not go to them – at least, not in great numbers…most of the “80%” who read little and derive their amusement and recreation from the radio and “movies” obtain more genuine joy and satisfaction from a first rate Poster than they would from an old masterpiece.\textsuperscript{72}

As Michelle Bogart analyzes this passage, advertisers were clearly “capitalizing on the rhetoric of democracy” in their official statements, though among colleagues they frequently held biases against these very same “masses” and often felt the need to reach the “lowest common denominator.”\textsuperscript{73} Similarly, a common defense of the environmental effects of early electrified signage in the first decades of the twentieth century was its ability to deter crime and promote beautification, an argument still used in some contemporary installations of illuminated screens in response to worries about light pollution or intrusions into public space.\textsuperscript{74} This was a selling point to City Councils in the early stages of the development of the BBC Big Screen network—revitalization of city centers for businesses and public use by deterring crime and promoting community initiatives through the creation of a new event space around the screen.

There is something else intriguing in this passage, however, and that is the evocation of “joy and satisfaction” in defense of a visual imposition on the urban landscape. While these

\textsuperscript{72} Quoted in ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 330, n.32.
experiences need not always be packaged with advertising’s pressures to consume and assimilate, they harken back to the visual pleasures of the cinema of attractions and are positive possibilities for public art. While I am not arguing, as the OAAA once did, for the viability of advertising as public art, it is possible to see how public arts agencies and artists can effectively use the language of two media defined most often by commercialism—television and outdoor advertising—to produce moments of “joy and satisfaction” in public space.\footnote{Billboards have been the site of significant critical public art, as illustrated in MassMoCA’s 1999 exhibition “Billboard: Art on the Road.” They have also been a site of collaboration between major museums and outdoor advertising groups, as in “Art Everywhere,” which ran in the UK in 2013 and 2014 and in the US in 2014.}

**Video Art among Chaos: Programming for Public Spaces**

Two examples of rotating programming that used or currently use the flow of television or the impressionability of spectacular billboard-sized screens are the BBC Big Screens and Times Square’s public arts initiatives through the Public Art Fund, Creative Time, and the Times Square Alliance. These initiatives, often partnerships between some of amalgam local, national, commercial, and non-profit entities, use public screens as a distribution platform for a variety of rotating media. Unlike the permanent animations of *Masstransiscope* or the singular event of *SONG 1*, the initiatives studied in this section are meant to be both a rotating site for screen-based art, attractions, and events, as well as a permanent (or at least long-standing) cultural fixture in a public space. Catrien Schreuder calls this the “museum variant” of public video art, where public space acts as a new platform for autonomous video art projects.\footnote{Schreuder, *Pixels and Places*, 9.} However, as articulated below, there are multiple strategies for selecting content and broadcasting it within public spaces, and each platform is particularly situated within an existing urban framework.

**Broadcasters in the City Center: The BBC Big Screens**

From 2003-2013, twenty-two city centers across the UK underwent a major experiment
in non-commercial broadcasting in public space. The BBC Big Screens, a project fueled by the build-up to the London 2012 Olympics, challenged skeptical presumptions of screens in public space and attempted to and at times succeeded at producing a new civic space through media. Unlike screens in London’s Picadilly Circus or New York’s Times Square, the Big Screens were never conceived of as vehicles for advertising. Each LED screen was approximately thirty-three feet large diagonally, raised at least one story above the ground, and equipped with Bluetooth uploading capabilities, a remote-controlled surveillance camera (used often for interactive games or events), and a networked laptop. (Fig. 14) Their functional and ancillary objects allude to Huhtamo’s “gulliverization of media” and the interconnectedness of surveillance and spectacle in contemporary society discussed in chapters one and three. 77

The funding and support for the network came from a three-part cooperation between the London Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG), the BBC, and local city councils. LOCOG provided the initial capital for purchasing the screens, the BBC provided programming and personnel, and the city councils provided security and upkeep. The series of twenty screens, erected in city centers throughout the UK, aired a variety of local and national content ranging from news to sports to art to special events. The entire network was run by a centralized BBC office in Birmingham and selected screen managers at each city. I analyze the delicate balance between local and national control and financing in a few selected projects in chapters three and four. For the present discussion though, I discuss how the Big Screens’ use of fluctuating programming suggests how broadcasters and agencies have to rethink traditional broadcasting flow for the mobile spectator.

Building the Big Screens: Project Origins and Timeline

77 Indeed the Big Screens can be an object study for many aspects of contemporary urban media culture beyond public art.
The first screen debuted in Manchester’s Exchange Square under the name Public Space Broadcasting (PSB) with the partnership of Manchester’s City Council, the BBC, and Philips. A screen was erected in the city center for the Commonwealth Games in 2002; after the games ended, screen manager Mike Gibbons began experimenting with local arts content in the evenings. It is important to note here that sports, and specifically events around watching sports, sparked the initial placement of the screen. Athletic competitions (and the crowds they bring) drive some of the major innovations in large-scale public screens and are inextricable from the history of the BBC Big Screens project. Conceived as an experimental site, Manchester’s screen operators brought arts content and interactive events to the city center in addition to managing BBC-provided programming content. Working in partnership with local arts organizations and universities, Manchester’s screen used air time for cutting-edge video art installations, starting a precedent followed by the remaining four original PSB screens: Liverpool, Hull, Birmingham, and Leeds.

Importantly, at all stages of the project, part of the agreement with city councils was that the screens be used for public service and not advertising. These early experimental stages were, according the Leeds screen manager Chris Nriapia, very exciting and more conducive to interactions with creative people and artists: “we could do anything we wanted…as long as it was within the BBC editorial guidelines.” Though the BBC still provided a lot of content to fill the day, this meant that artists could specify when and how their films would be screened. Program scheduling at this stage was completely under the control of the local screen manager,

---

78 Some of the most well-known public screens debuted in sports arenas, and the proliferation of a network of twenty-two screens across the UK would not have been possible were it not for partnership with the London Olympics. Sony’s Jumbotron gained widespread adoption in sports arenas following its debut, for example.
79 Chris Nriapia, Interview by author, July 20, 2013.
in consultation with the city council, arts agencies, universities, and other collaborators. In these early years, content flow was controlled by local tastes and often involved creative collaborations with local arts initiatives.

Kate Taylor, curator for The Bigger Picture (2005-2008), a collaboration between the Manchester Big Screen, Cornerhouse (a contemporary art and independent film organization and venue), and Greater Manchester Contemporary Arts Centre, discusses the unique challenges in programming media and time-based art for public spaces in a special issue of the online journal *First Monday*. For Taylor, the distinctiveness between television as a medium and the public screen lay in its quest for “perfect moments” of engagement that punctuate everyday encounters with media. Taylor discusses how art on the screens has to take the mobile spectator into account in terms of its scheduling and duration, which have to grab a mobile viewer rather than hold a seated one. Narrative films over five minutes often would not work, as they require an unfolding over time that is hard to attain in a public space. However, longer works that explore duration as a medium are apprehensible to a spectator entering at any point of the film (such as abstract works, time-lapse video, or something like Andy Warhol’s eight-hour film *Empire* (1964)).

Taylor cites two works commissioned by the Bigger Picture that explicitly engaged with the average time it takes to cross the square, forty-five seconds. One of them, *Hopes, Fears, 20 Years* by Kartoon Kings featured text gleaned from fifty interviews with Mancunians asking what their biggest fear and biggest hope was in the previous twenty years. The release of text was timed so that a passerby would see one hope and one fear during a 45-second pass of the square. In terms of content, Taylor found films that “resonate with the audience’s experience in

---

the square, either through direct exploration of the urban condition or through works that contrast and highlight the fragmentation of that condition” to be the most engaging. The Bigger Picture made fruitful connections with local artists, the North West Film Archive, and universities for content and provided a platform for local artists to screen work and experiment with the new medium, but the freeform programming of the Bigger Picture shifted as the BBC’s network expanded.

Following the success of the initial five screens, BBC rolled out an additional three in the north and midlands of England by 2007. At this point, following the selection of London for the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in 2005, the screens were part of a network to generate enthusiasm for the upcoming games and create connections between the London area and the rest of the UK leading up to and during the Olympic Games. An additional eight screens were launched on August 8, 2008, just in time for the Beijing Games, with the remaining screens deployed between 2008 and 2012. As the screens originated in the north of England, they were already bridging a cultural divide with London and the south of England when the larger network came to fruition. This impetus eventually expanded from England to the entire UK when additional screens were added in Belfast, Cardiff, Derry, Edinburgh, and Swansea. Originally, the BBC slated for a linked network of around sixty screens of various sizes throughout the UK in the build-up to 2012. However, following the economic collapse of 2008 and the loss of funds from sponsors and city councils, this number eventually dwindled down to twenty-two. Each screen, situated within newly remodeled or existing city centers, acted both as a focal point for local events and a connector to national content, provided by the BBC.

*From Flow to Flux: AudienceTV and Programming for the Big Screens*

81 Ibid.
While some sites are more conducive to large gatherings than others, from the start the location of the screens were in city squares, sites that were coded, as Anita Bhalla, former Head of Public Space Broadcasting for the BBC, said as community spaces and not commercial spaces.\(^{82}\) The screens were, from the start, treated as something other than an extension of the mediated advertising landscapes analyzed by Krajina and others. In a reception study funded by the BBC and later published in the reader *Social Interactive Television: Immersive Shared Experiences and Perspectives*, Kenton O’Hara and Maxine Glancy identified three modes of engagement with screens: everyday, event-based, and interactive.\(^{83}\) These three categories have varying modes of spectator engagement as well as different types of audiences. Spectators of a special event, for example, may or may not pass through the square regularly, and may even travel from some distance specifically to view content at that time.\(^{84}\) Pedestrians just passing through a square on other business, however, may encounter any of the three categories (though most often the “everyday” variant) without explicitly intending to do so, paralleling Krajina’s everyday “domesticators” of public media. While I will return to a discussion of specific examples of both events and interactive content in later chapters, for the present discussion, the content the “passing by” spectator is most likely to encounter—ambient or everyday TV—connects most directly to a new definition of flow in public space.

The newly networked screens were controlled remotely from a central office in

---

\(^{82}\) Anita Bhalla, Interview by author, July 23, 2013, digital recording, Birmingham, UK.


\(^{84}\) One woman I spoke with at the Plymouth screen during the July 18 broadcast of Tosca from the Royal Opera in London in 2013 told me she drove from over twenty miles away to come to the square. I discuss this experience more in chapter four when I discuss public screens in relationship to place.
Birmingham, which rotated content that was both national and specific to each location. For special events, a local screen could “opt out” of Birmingham’s programming, but this had to be approved by central office. Live feed of screen content at all locations was controlled with software called AudienceTV, designed by the Canadian technology firm Capital Networks. The program divided each half hour into chunks: news bulletins, sports bulletins, weather, LOCOG and sponsorship material pertaining to the Olympics, segments for local content (such as short films, sourced by the screen manager in collaboration with local universities and arts organizations), and a “best of the best” segment providing a national platform for the best locally-sourced content—yet another connector between the national and local partnerships necessary for the entire Big Screens operation. At any given time, there were multiple clips for each block of time, creating a broadcast platform for moving, distracted spectators. The content wheel knew which category to play, but the exact content would rotate and vary, meaning a spectator would likely see something different each time even if regularly passing by at the same time of day or multiple times throughout a single day. Rather than a repeating advertisement on a public screen, which after once “impressed upon” the viewer is often avoided by urban blinders, the dynamic content wheel created a situation with constantly shifting content, where the viewer would be more likely to look up and take notice.

The Audience program’s format reimagines the concept of flow in public space. In domestic broadcast television, flow’s function was to weave one program into the next to produce a static viewer. Audience’s function is to constantly switch between different content segments to momentarily arrest a mobile spectator in motion. The overall goal, however, is similar – holding the viewer’s attention amongst competing channels or stimuli. Whether it is for an additional hour after watching one’s favorite program or 45 seconds looking up at a screen
while crossing a square, sophisticated broadcast programming enhances the likelihood of content reaching its intended audience. It might be more instructive to refer to Audience’s system, then, not as “flow,” but rather as “flux.” “Flow” has connotations of seamlessness and fluidity, often being associated with rivers flowing out from a single source. “Flux,” on the other hand, suggests more of a state of change, which can be erratic and multi-directional. With flux, the screen becomes a site more analogous to Casetti’s metaphors—operating in many directions in space—than the model of the traditional televisual receiver in flow.

While this dynamic form of programing keeps the screen interesting for its ambient audience, for local artists this can be a problem as neither they nor the audience will know exactly when a particular film or video will screen. As screen managers discussed with me, oftentimes artists would be hesitant to submit material with no ability to publicize when it would screen. Content, then was often produced in a manner more situated to a traditional broadcast or exhibition paradigm, not the new medium of “flux.” The public function of art in this medium, though, is very dynamic and, I believe, underestimated in the reception studies. Passersby begin to notice the screen precisely due to its sense of flux—after a few passes, they recognize that the screen proffers useful information, such as weather reports, sports updates, and local news.

Given what we can very tentatively call a “captive” audience (if we can define 45 seconds as a significant duration of attention), artists now have an opportunity to reach viewers in a new way, to extend Knight’s “reasonable and fair expectations” to have an experience with a work of art. However, this rather esoteric function of the screens is less measurable than crowds at an event or playful interaction with an interactive piece. For this reason, I believe, the full potential of the Big Screens as a distribution channel for art and film was unfortunately under-realized and not

---

85 Nriapia, Interview by author; Kevin Heathorn, Interview by author, July 17, 2013.
fully exploited compared to their successful use as sites of community building and interactive engagement.\textsuperscript{86}

\textit{Advertisers Invite Art: Times Square}

New York’s Times Square has been utilizing urban screens as a means of generating a sense of place for over a century. Electrified signage generated a possible sense of nocturnal safety, as analyzed earlier, and helped define the area as a space for entertainment and leisure. Times Square’s history is in many ways defined by visual spectacles from the white lights of Broadway to the seedy pornographic peep show arcades to the contemporary dominance of the OOH industry’s “spectaculars” along the iconic “Bow Tie” (the blocks surrounding the diagonal intersection of Broadway and Seventh Avenue). David Klein’s 1956 poster for TWA presents an abstracted vision of Times Square filled with floating, weightless screens. (Fig. 15) Here the tall skyscrapers are covered in a lively mosaic of rectangular planes of color of varying sizes and overlapping forms. The human presence is reduced to the blur of automobiles and the space is defined by an overwhelming and somewhat chaotic (yet still enticingly beautiful) spectacle.

This image is starkly different from the cacophony of images realized on the massive advertising spectaculars half a century later, but seems to prefigure photographs from some of the recent projects by the Times Square Alliance’s initiative \textit{Midnight Moment} (2012-present). (Fig. 16) This series features nightly projection of video content across twenty large-scale advertising screens in Times Square’s Bow Tie at 11:57pm and running only approximately three minutes to midnight. The content rotates monthly and features work that leverages the scale of contemporary “spectaculars” and works across multiple screens. The result is a moment when

\textsuperscript{86} I discuss both of these functions in later chapters, as well as further analyze the economics of the Big Screens.
passersby are invited to look up and notice, prompting a wealth of social media documentation. By overtaking multiple screens at once, the projects in *Midnight Moment* garner attention more forcefully than an earlier perhaps more well-known initiative in Times Square, *The 59th Minute* (2000-2006).

In 2000, Creative Time secured use of the Panasonic Astrovision screen at 1 Times Square, the famous intersection where the ball drops on New Year’s Eve, on the last minute of every hour. During this minute Creative Time would screen a one-minute work of video art, rotating approximately every month. While the stated function of this work was to “[offer] millions of passersby opportunities to pause and see their surroundings anew through the eyes of artists,” these short videos were soon dwarfed in scale and their content muddled by association with competing billboards and moving image screens in near proximity, lacking the power of Public Art Fund’s famous 1986 Times Square exhibition of Jenny Holzer’s *Truisms* (1977-79). This earlier project, part of Public Art Fund’s longer project *Messages to the Public* (1982-1990), placed Holzer’s provocative statements on the Spectacolor billboard at One Times Square, which was then the largest billboard in the area. Ten years later, *The 59th Minute* had considerably more competition for “eyeballs” and any kind of genuine engagement with passersby. Would not a Thomas Struth video portrait not simply seem like a peculiar advertisement amidst the plethora of screens in Times Square?

Nevertheless, *The 59th Minute* is the initiative most often cited in the existing literature,

---

87 Since *Midnight Moment* is a platform for the delivery of projects (much like BBC Big Screens) rather than a discrete work of art, I did not conduct an empirical study of audience response, as I did with *Masstransiscope* or *SONG 1* in this chapter. I was able to experience it a few times, however.

and seen by many to be an example of the “turf war...for the last sliver of human attention” between “the monolith of corporate advertisers” and “the erratic forces of artists.”

Indeed, both Messages to the Public and The 59th Minute had an implicit critique of the advertising world embedded in much of the content of the art selected as well as in the institutional mission statements. Both operated by regularly interjecting a brief artist-generated single-channel work into a regular advertising screen—the former using thirty seconds every twenty minutes and the latter using one minute every hour. While conceptually this intervention is quite interesting, its impact on a casual passerby was presumably relatively minor. While total comprehension of the work of art is, as discussed earlier, not necessarily a criterion for success, an actual chance for engagement is. Beyond the incidental impression these billboards would make to a viewer unfamiliar with the project, the work of art would seemingly become lost amidst the other visual attractions and stimuli. Even though the message is anti-advertising, the passerby would sublimate the screen in The 59th Minute into the larger corporate spectacle. Though Midnight Moment happens only once a day, potentially reaching a smaller audience, its impact is felt much more strongly through scale, suggesting that the quality of opportunities for engagement with art are, perhaps, more genuine than in Creative Time’s intervention.

---


90 In The 59th Minute, Pipilotti Rist’s Open My Glade (2000) featured the artist seemingly “trapped” in the screen, and can be read as a critique of advertising’s treatment of women, but this friction with advertising is much more apparent in the earlier Messages to the Public. This project included statements like “Housing is a Human Right” from Martha Rosler (1989) and “Protect Me from What I Want” from Jenny Holzer (1986), creating what Cher Knight called “unexpected and sometimes uncomfortable commentary on the friction between consumption and art.” Knight, Public Art, 139.
The website for *Midnight Moment* called the project “the largest coordinated effort in history by the sign operators in Times Square to display synchronized, cutting-edge creative content at the same time every day.”91 That taking three out of a day’s 1,440 minutes for a reprieve from the continual onslaught of advertisements elicits such aggrandizing language from its organizers stresses how this project is seen less as an intervention (as the earlier initiatives by Public Art Fund and Creative Time) and more as a collaboration between art and commerce. However, similar to how the Big Screens generated a sense of “flux” to generate meaningful exchanges with passersby, *Midnight Moment’s* multi-screen scale employs an effective strategy that takes its particular screen situation and mobile spectator into account, especially when compared to Creative Time’s *The 59th Minute*. By considering the particular screen situation (one that is over-saturated with moving images), *Midnight Moment* uses multiscreen synchronization to distance itself from the chaos of conflicting moving images, unlike *The 59th Minute*’s interventionist strategy, which (arguably) merely adds to the confusion.

Many *Midnight Moment* projects screen in conjunction with exhibitions and events around the city, suggesting that these instances of public art in Times Square could be read as advertisement for arts institutions, sparking curiosity in a heavily trafficked tourist destination in hopes that these incidental passersby might journey further in the city, fostering Knight’s opportunities for the public to generate their own relationships with art. When analyzing the large public art projection *Sleepwalkers* (Doug Aitken, 2007), Erica Balsom critiques the slippage between institutional advertising and large-scale media projections and installations as packaging “museum-going experience as exhilarating, fun, and devoid of antagonism,” drawing

a negative parallel between Aitken’s massive projection on the exterior of the Museum of Modern Art to the hyper-commercial screens nearby in Times Square.\textsuperscript{92} Such a reading, however, ignores the specificities of spectatorship generated by initiatives both inside and outside of the advertising world and also subtly suggests museum-going should be framed only as challenging and uninviting. Turning to another project by Doug Aitken, \textit{SONG 1} (2012), the visual enchantment generated by a large scale both parallels institutional aims and fosters meaningful experiences with art and unique negotiations of spectatorship practices in public space on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{93}

\textbf{Cinema-in-the-Round: Doug Aitken’s \textit{SONG 1}}

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, a large concrete cylinder designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and completed in 1974, stands out among its surroundings on the National Mall. Its concrete façade lacks the ornament and color of the neighboring Smithsonian Institution Building (designed by James Renwick, Jr. in 1849 and known affectionately as “the castle”) and its curvilinear form departs from the cube-like glass and steel massing of the Smithsonian’s Air and Space Museum across 7th Street. In the spring of 2012 eleven projectors transformed this modernist cylinder into a nocturnal cinematic spectacle: Doug Aitken’s \textit{SONG 1}, a 360-degree cinematic homage to the great pop standard “I Only Have Eyes for You.” Every evening for two months spectators stopped to inquire as they passed by, glanced up from driving, or came to experience the entire cycle.

As they looked up, the iconic song played alternately in doowop, country, acapella,

\textsuperscript{92} Erika Balsom, \textit{Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art} (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 55.

ragtime, new age and various other styles. The song accompanied a series of images that oscillated between abstractions akin to early modernist experiments in visual music, images of singers performing in spectral recording studios, classic reel–to–reel tape decks and occasionally a famous face, such as that of Tilda Swindon or Devendra Banhart. (Fig. 17) There were also vignettes that evoked the isolation of subjects yearning for contact in the spaces of contemporary American cities: characters sang along to the soundtrack in a factory, in a sleepy late–night diner, alone in cars and in parking lots. In terms of content, the work was non-narrative, circular, lacking a clear beginning or end, and aesthetically similar to a well-produced music video—not too far of a departure from the cinematic gallery installation work of Aitken and others since the 1990s. SONG 1’s scale engulfed the modern and contemporary art building, a feat made possible by deliberately placing the eleven projectors around the surrounding walls to avoid obstruction by existing public works, such as Kenneth Snelson’s Needle Tower (1968) and Roy Lichtenstein’s monumental Brushstroke (1996). In many ways, the physical installation is as much a part of the work’s meaning as the images and sounds projected. As I will argue below, to experience SONG 1 was to be entranced and seduced by its scale, soundscape, and high value production and exhibition. I argue that SONG 1 operates on a variety of levels between its status as film, public art, and major museum event. The work primarily functions in the realm of visual cinematic seduction underscored by its nature as projection only visible at night. The effect is between the spectacular and the haunting, suggestive of a positive potential for large-scale visual cinematic spectacle in public space.

**Hirshhorn: Cinematic Museum**

Bunshaft’s design for the museum suggests a number of connections to the cinema. First, the façade offers a smooth surface for projecting images and films, having no historicist detailing and only one break in the concrete surface—the panoramic window and balcony of the Abram
Lerner Room. While, as I discuss below, the curved surface of the building presents a number of challenges to projection, the potential of the façade for exhibiting projected works of art had only been explored once previously in a projected image by Krzysztof Wodiczko in 1988.\textsuperscript{94} The second cinematic element of the building is its interior progression of spaces. The galleries follow Bundshaft’s cylindrical form, one opening to the next in a type of cinematic narrative.\textsuperscript{95}

When a visitor enters a gallery, rather than having an option of which way to go next, the architecture guides you to the next place, creating a cinematic montage in three dimensional space and organizing the art-viewing experience along a narrative path. Giuliana Bruno discusses this connection between museological peripatetic movement and cinema in \textit{Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts}. She writes, “film descends not only historically but also formally from a specific architectural promenade: the geovisual exploration of the curiosity cabinet and the ‘-oramic’ traversal of an architecture of display.”\textsuperscript{96} Though clearly Hirshhorn’s structure comes much later than the development of film, we can still understand its visual promenade (an attribute so prized by the modernist Le Corbusier) in relationship to a cinematic manner of viewing in motion.\textsuperscript{97}

In the last three decades, the Hirshhorn has also held a number of exhibitions and long-standing projects dedicated to both the moving image and site-specific public art, placing \textit{SONG}

\textsuperscript{94} This projection was part of the site-specific “Works” series and is discussed below.

\textsuperscript{95} This idea stems from my conversation with curator Kerry Brougher. Kerry Brougher, Interview by author, November 26, 2013.


\textsuperscript{97} This term surfaces in Le Corbusier’s discussion of the design of Villa Savoye in Poissy, France in 1928. The movement from one space to the next offers the mobile viewer changing, but interconnected views. This concept, is drawn in part from his study of Arab architecture, which he contrasts to the rigid fixity of Baroque planning (Curtis 1996:.281). For more on the relationship between Le Corbusier’s modernist design and film, see Beatriz Cololina’s \textit{Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media} (1996).
Within a trajectory of institutional interests, *Black Box*, a dedicated space for moving image artwork, began at the Hirshhorn in 2005. Defined as a “quick-response venue” by associate curator Kelly Gordon, this space establishes a continuing presence for video art, film, and screen-reliant installation work in both the museum setting and the implied discourses of modern and contemporary art. Furthermore, in a major two part exhibition, *The Cinema Effect* (2008), the museum investigated the prevalence of moving images in both contemporary art and visual culture. Divided into two parts, “Dreams” and “Realities,” *The Cinema Effect* exhibited pivotal works by artists such as Steve McQueen, Tacita Dean, Andy Warhol, Jeremy Deller, Stan Douglas, Kerry Tribe, Pierre Huyghe, and others. Moving images, defined by the exhibition’s two part structure as both visually seductive dreamscapes and reflections on lived experience, form a body of work of equal importance to painting and sculpture.

An earlier series *WORKS* ran from 1987 to 1993 and invited artists to the museum to create fourteen temporary site-specific works at an artist-chosen site within the museum and garden grounds.98 Krzysztof Wodiczko, an important projection artist discussed in chapter four, had an installation along with artists such as Alfredo Jaar and David Ireland. The works with the closest connection to *SONG 1* (which, unlike the ephemeral pieces in *WORKS* is part of the museum’s permanent collection) are Wodiczko’s projection and a David Ireland’s masking of the panoramic views in the Abram Lerner Room. A conceptual drawing of Ireland’s initial idea is even more related to Aitken’s piece two decades later. (Fig. 18) Here, the Hirshhorn is

---

98 Each project lasted around three months and had its own brochure with a curatorial introduction and artist interview. The full list of artists or artist combinations (in chronological order) is as follows: Sol LeWitt, Kate Ericsson/Mel Ziegler, Vernon Fisher, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Daniel Buren, Buster Simpson, Houstin Conwill, Matt Mullican, Dennis Adams, David Ireland, Lawrence Weiner, Ann Hamilton/Kathryn Clark, Alfredo Jaar, and Joseph Kosuth.
illuminated at night by either a ring of fire circling the roof or jutting out from the observational deck of the Lerner Room—the one break in Bunshaft’s solid exterior. At one point in *SONG 1* a ring of lit matches circles the building, echoing Ireland’s concept. Jaar called the Lerner Room’s panoramic windows “the only break in the exterior surface of this imposing bunker structure, the only crack in the skin of this defiant, self-contained, monolithic monument.”99 For Ireland, however, the site was a point of “inside-outside communication” and a chance to turn the sweeping view into site-specific art, using framing as a means to “bring to a viewer’s attention a variety of specific and interesting sites.”100 For *SONG 1*, this room’s balcony is the only break in the screen’s surface, an inconsistency in the illusion rather than an exploited rupture. Interestingly, Aitken’s decision to initiate the project that eventually became *SONG 1* has a similar response to site as the artists in *WORKS*.

The Hirshhorn’s curatorial team had always envisioned the potential of Bunshaft’s façade for cinematic projection, and Aitken was an obvious choice for the short list of potential artists to be involved.101 In 2010, Aitken was invited to visit the Hirshhorn to participate in the redesign of the book store, which was being moved from the ground floor to the basement level. Upon arriving at the site, Aitken remarked on the potential for the façade to be used as a screen for a large-scale projection (as curator Kerry Brougher had hoped would happen).102 Soon after, the artist approached Brougher about producing a cinematic work, and the two projects briefly developed simultaneously until Aitken’s design for the book store proved too logistically

101 Brougher, Interview by author.
102 Ibid.
difficult (the final design was a rather ironic installation by Barbara Kruger replete with quotes decrying the commercialization of art). As the project progressed, the main creative challenge was conceptualizing how to create work for a 360-degree projection, a completely new medium. Aitken and his team in Los Angeles kept the museum in the loop during the early stages, which was necessary given the technological difficulties in realizing this work.  

SONG 1 was not merely part of the museum’s continued dedication to moving image-based work or artist involvement with the building’s architecture, however, but linked to a broader push beyond the limits of the gallery. In the director’s statement to the catalog for SONG 1, director Richard Koshalek discussed the work as “challenging museums to move beyond their walls and into their public areas, to invert their galleries into exterior spaces, to become vital well beyond traditional hours of operation and to expand their audiences to include even the most incidental of passersby.” Koshalek, then-chief curator Kerry Brougher, and Aitken have emphasized the expanded spectatorship a work like this can capture, but this impetus for public outreach on the part of museums is also nothing new. In the wake of the culture wars of the 1980s and 90s and the dematerialization of public art discussed in chapter one, museum and arts funding has been in danger and directors have had to consider serious questions about their relationship with the public. The rise in major blockbuster shows, large scale public initiatives, and crowd-pleasing ephemeral or relational public art events can all be seen as an extension of the shifting relationship between arts agencies and museums and their publics.

Two New York projects by Creative Time: David Byrne’s installation Playing the Building (2008) and Paul Ramirez Jonas’s Key to the City (2010) are two examples of recent

---

103 Ibid.
trends towards large-scale interactivity and participation. *Playing the Building* turned the unused Battery Maritime Building into an interactive instrument by connecting a used organ purchased on eBay to various pipes, poles and other surfaces in the building, thus allowing visitors to generate a new soundscape for the space by playing on the keyboard. Jonas’s *Key to the City* (2010) a democratized ceremonial access to the city, where anyone could present and receive a ceremonial ‘key to the city’ that unlocked unique spaces, sites normally below the average person’s radar. Both these projects, like *SONG 1*, were heavily publicized through local television and print news outlets and gave rise to a regular queue of visitors throughout the run. *SONG 1*, however, was not explicitly interactive or participatory.

The scale and seductiveness of *SONG 1* also perhaps connects to the contemporary push for “museum level” contemporary art exhibitions like Carsten Holler’s multi-story slide in *Experience* (2011) at the New Museum or Tino Sehgal’s Guggenheim-emptying exhibition of 2010. In both of these shows, the artists altered the function of the museum space to something that is relational and (for the most part) not interested in the contemplation of individual objects or installations. In this regard, *SONG 1* is not merely a formal reversal of the immersive spaces of the cinema (being a convex surface that functionally denies the complete image, rather than wrapping the viewer inside it) and of the traditional function of museums (to enclose and protect objects), but also potentially related to the immersive cinema boom of the 1950s in its spectacular, last-gasp effort to attract a disinterested audience leaving the communal spaces of the cinema for more individualized, domestic and mobile media of entertainment and

---

consumption.\textsuperscript{106}

\textit{Between Here and There: Spectatorship as Amorous Entrancement}

Tony Oursler’s \textit{Sony Movie Block} from 1994 seems a small-scale, gallery-based inversion of Aitken's \textit{SONG 1}. In this work, two projectors intersect upon a minimalist cube on the gallery floor. The images are taken from the exit of a commercial cinema in the East Village, thus inverting projected image's relationship to architecture and calling attention to the transitory in-between space Roland Barthes wrote about in 1975 in his essay "Leaving the Movie Theater."\textsuperscript{107} In Oursler’s piece, the “black box” of the cinema quite literally becomes a “white cube,” but both of the normative understandings of these two cubical metaphors are inverted and foreclosed by the presence of the box/cube as sculptural and un-enterable object. This sculptural foreclosure parallels the image’s presentation of a state of leaving the cinema—a sudden sensory overload in sharp contrast to the theater’s darkness.

In “Leaving the Movie Theater,” Barthes imagines a new means for an alternative mode of film spectatorship and ruminates on the dreamy haze of leaving the darkened theater as if coming out of hypnosis—an in-between state of being both there and here. He argues that within the cinema’s seductive potential lies a positive means of viewing, one that can both escape the trap of the Lacanian mirror and revel in its wonder—a liminal state analogous to the fog one experiences emerging from the darkened theater. He writes:

\begin{quote}
How to come unglued from the mirror? I’ll risk a pun to answer: by \textit{taking off} (in the aeronautical and narcotic sense of the term).….Many things can help us “come out of” (imaginary and/or ideological) hypnosis: the very methods of an epic art, the spectator’s culture or his ideological vigilance; contrary to classical hysteria, the
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{107} Kerry Brougher discusses the formal connection between widescreen initiatives in film history to \textit{SONG 1}’s wrap-around images, but the institutional connection is my own.

image-repertoire vanishes once one observes that it exists. But there is another way of going to the movies (besides being armed by the discourse of counter-ideology); by letting oneself be fascinated twice over, by the image and by its surroundings – as if I had two bodies at the same time: a narcissistic body which gazes, lost, into the engulfing mirror, and a perverse body, ready to fetishize not the image but precisely what exceeds it: the texture of the sound, the hall, the darkness, the obscure mass of the other bodies, the rays of light, entering the theater, leaving the hall; in short, in order to distance, in order to “take off,” I complicate a “relation” by a “situation.”

There are a number of things rather striking about this quote beyond the rather polemic dismissal of counter-ideology in favor of a recuperation of cinema’s “image-repertoire.” First, the body becomes schizophrenic not only in its duality but also in its sense of being “lost” in the mirror (which is quite distinct from Lacanian méconnaissance, which locates the image in relationship to the space in front of it). Second, the image recedes in importance to the “situation,” which locates the cinema as an embodied, spatial experience that exceeds the image. The distance from the filmic text required to “take off” (to be “moved” in Bruno’s terms) is not a critical, Brechtian one, but an “amorous” one, paralleling the dual pleasures Gunning discusses in early cinema’s spectators in search of the thrill.

Having experienced SONG 1 over two spring evenings in 2012, I can attest for the “amorous” and dreamy atmosphere of the work and the seductive nature of its exhibition space. Interestingly, many of the spectators I observed during my visits to the piece appropriated established codes for viewing narrative cinema in public spaces: they brought chairs, blankets, and (in general) kept their voices low or did not speak. These types of viewers were mostly located inside the northwest corner of the block held by Bunshaft’s building—sealed off from the street and enclosed in the sculpture plaza, this spot recreated (somewhat) the theatrical experience. A larger, slightly chattier group of viewers, however, were just across the narrow,

108 Ibid., 349.
quiet Jefferson Drive, a spot where one can better apprehend the sculptural span of the cylindrical work as well as take in the widescreen experience. Another handful of viewers gathered across busier 7th Street, where the sound could still be heard, and more were peppered around the entire building (though primarily on the west side, presumably to avoid the obstructing trees on the east).

Of the dozen or so spectators I spoke with, all seemed to react positively to the project and especially the song, calling it “a marvelous distraction,” “a little gem,” and “an awesome video installation.” One person referred to the ballad as the perfect American song, and many of the viewers remarked they also loved the glimpses they caught as they drove by (though clearly they also felt compelled to view the piece on foot). Though some claimed they “didn’t get it,” most found that the project was worthwhile and that the museum should offer more projections. Nearly all of the people I spoke with had heard about the project through major news outlets and did not describe themselves as regular visitors to the Hirshhorn. This anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that the museum’s goals for a broader audience were (at least somewhat) met, and that the primary spatial function of Aitken’s work was to visually attract spectators to stop in their tracks, find a preferred viewing spot, and become (at least partially) transported via the screen—similar to movies in the park or drive-ins, but without their reliance on narrative forms.

Spectatorship is neither captive as in Jean-Louis Baudry’s delineation of narrative cinema’s Plato’s cave nor domesticated and “cool” as with television and pre-recorded video, but rather a situation in which screens enter the fundamentally haptic, distracted, and polyvalent interstices of public space. As Kerry Brougher writes, “With SONG 1, the artist turns the cinematic world inside out and transforms the internal screen of the movie palaces and movie-dromes into a convex Circarama that both symbolically and literally envelopes and implicates the
architecture of the Hirshhorn and the world around it." Aitken has always been interested in dismantling narrative cinema’s mode of experience through installation work. He claimed “film and video structure our experience in a linear way simply because they’re moving images on a strip of emulsion or tape…the question for me is, how can I break through this idea…how can I make time somehow collapse or expand so it no longer unfolds in this narrow form?” Aitken’s installation art has dealt with this spatial treatment of time and duration since his first major success *electric earth*, which debuted at the 1999 Venice Biennale. This multi-channel installation charts one man’s movements through a ghost-town version of Los Angeles repeating the refrain “that’s the only now I get” amongst a symphony of electronic and ambient sounds. Sound works in conjunction with both installation and image to create a complete experience.

Chrissie Iles sees installations in the 1990s by artists like Aitken and Douglas Gordon as part of a cinematic trend in moving image-based installation art, one that moves past the earlier phenomenological and sculptural investigations of the late 1960s-to-80s to a more fluid engagement with cinema’s histories and immersive powers. To call recent work “cinematic” is to evoke a state of emotional and psychic transport, one that presumes at least a partial sense of absorption and is (quite often) amplified by the creation of a corresponding soundscape. This need not be the Lacanian mirror of Baudry and Mulvey, however, but rather can be a site of pleasure and even transformative experience. Maria Walsh calls this state “entrancement,” which is “neither self-reflexive (the mode conventionally attributed to viewing avant-garde film), nor bound by narrative identification (as when viewing mainstream cinema), but is instead...
immersive and affective.”

Walsh opens her article with a discussion of *Lasso* (2000), a single-channel video work by Finnish artist Salla Tykkä of similarly high production values as Doug Aitken’s work and Illes’s “cinematic” variant of moving image installation. *Lasso* features a moment of female desire as an adolescent girl voyeuristically views a young man lassoing an empty room, then being moved to tears. The final shot fades from the surrounding wintry landscape to video “snow,” breaking with the diegetic space, but not on “occasion for taking up a critical position towards the seductive illusions of the image,” but rather to pull us further in.

By looking also at the trance films of avant-garde pioneer Maya Deren, Walsh argues for entrancement not as passive reception but as, potentially, its own productive form of viewing. Similarly to the abstract space of the video snow in Tykka’s film, *SONG 1* is interspersed with abstract patterns and color between the vignettes of singer, breaking any continuous narrative space developed during one of the iterations of the song. What ties the two visual realms (the abstract and the narrative) together in both works, and what Walsh mentions as “hypnotic” though elides in her main argument, is sound. The Ennio Morricone soundtrack to *Lasso* is not only instantly recognizable as part of a certain genre of film, but also complete with its own emotional and affective highs and lows, which is how “I Only Have Eyes for You” functions in *SONG 1*.

For Aitken, the aural soundscape is just as important as the image. Music has long been an interest of his, as well as the creation of “happenings” on a large scale. The many

---


113 Ibid.

114 Some recent examples are *Black Mirror* (2011), a video installation and live performance starring Chloe Sevigny installed in two locations in Athens and Hydra, Greece: Slaughterhouse, a cavernous exhibition space, and a barge at sea; and *Station–to–Station* (2013), a cross–country
interpretations of the pop standard in *SONG 1* reinforce the lyrics’ content, which themselves call added attention to the ocular senses and their capacity for Walsh’s entrancement or Barthes’s amorous infatuation:

My love must be a kind of blind love\ I can’t see anyone but you.\ Are the stars out tonight? \ I don’t know if it’s cloudy or bright \ I only have eyes for you, dear.\ The moon may be high \ but I can’t see a thing in the sky \ ’cause I only have eyes for you.\ I don’t know if we’re in a garden, \ or on a crowded avenue. \ You are here.\ So am I.\ Maybe millions of people go by, \ but they all disappear from view. \ And I only have eyes for you.

These lyrics suggest a simultaneous awareness of an exterior world from the site of interest (in the original case, a lover; in our case, a cinematic projection) and a compulsory shutting out of that world—a form of selective vision and active transportation into the site of one’s obsession. The sculpture garden, surrounding streets, and even other people disappear as the spectator is willingly entranced by the cinematic image, similar to the relationship between image and situation articulated in Barthes’s writing.

Interestingly, the appropriated lyrics and the repeated circular motifs within the film (echoing Bunshaft’s cylinder) are the *only* formal elements of the work that have anything to do with the place of projection, as the film, like many of Aitken’s major projects, seems to have been clearly shot in California, not Washington, D.C. The song, made most famous in its Motown iteration in 1959 by The Flamingos was actually written for the screen and performed by Dick Powell in the 1934 Warner Brothers film *Dames*.

The first time the number appears is a fairly naturalistic scene aboard the Staten Island Ferry: two lovers ride together while Powell serenades his love, played by Ruby Keeler. The next time we hear the song, Powell’s sweet nothings on the subway morph into a romantic, hallucinatory re-reading of the surrounding train and ‘nomadic happening’ that featured scores of artists, musicians, designers, and thinkers performing and producing site–specific works along the way.
advertising space before entering into the frenetic, fantastic space of Bugsby Berkeley, complete
with mechanized, circular formations of dancers filmed from bird’s eye perspective and the
destabilized diegetic spaces made famous by Classical Hollywood’s most revered choreographic
director. The imaginary location brought on by Powell sitting next to his real true love—a means
of “domesticating” advertising images in public space—forms a fictional parallel to what
happens to the spectator gazing up at the Hirshhorn.

Indeed the faces and voices projected in the nocturnal cityscape in SONG 1 are seemingly
singing to the work of art itself, or at least to the magical, visually immersive experience of
cinematic projection and the momentary, intentional daydreams we elect to enter when we
encounter its image. In SONG 1’s film, nearly all of the actors and singers are alone (and if not,
they are at least not connecting in the same amorous way as Powell and Keeler on the Staten
Island Ferry). For this reason, the work can also be understood as rather dark—engaging with
themes of loneliness, isolation, and alienation in a generic and dispersed non-specific city.115 The
only connection between them is the shared text of the song, itself a commercial product linked
to the commercial circulation and dissemination of the movie and recording industries. The
“amorous” encounter understood this way, then, can refer to an unrequited love, or even a
melancholic love dwarfed by the image’s immensity and overcome in the song’s affective and
mnemonic resonance.

Cinematic Gestalt

Mary Ann Doane has discussed the proliferation of large, horizontally expansive screens
in relationship to the notion of Immanuel Kant’s boundless sublime. She writes, “…widescreen

115 In my discussion with Kerry Brougher, he suggests that in many ways the piece perhaps has
not been entirely understood. This dark, emotive quality is often left out for discussions of scale
and technology. Brougher, Interview by author.
processes allowed the accentuation of the fullness and presence of the images and the denial of its ‘outside,’ of the alterity of off-screen space...they invoked the idea of an infinity of horizontal space, reinforcing the promise of infinite depth of the vanishing point.”

For Doane, then, the image’s expansive immersion serves to reassert the Cartesian subject posited by Renaissance perspective (rather than sublimating it as a finite form). Cinemascope, projected on a curved concave screen, became popular around the same moment in cinematic exhibition as the proliferation of widescreen, widespread use of 3D, and explosion in popularity of color. These immersive spectacles of scale attempted to seduce audiences back into the theater’s seats by differentiating their product from television. The rhetoric behind CinemaScope and Cinerama are paralleled in today’s use of the IMAX—one of immersion where the boundary between screen and space. In one advertisement, the tagline “IMAX Is Believing” is superseded by the words “See a UFO or get sucked into one.” Immersion with the image is therefore made analogous to immersion within the narrative diegesis. IMAX found some of its earliest adopters in the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) and the Air and Space Museum—neighbors to the Hirshhorn on the National Mall and fellow members of the Smithsonian group of institutions. As Alison Griffiths has discussed, these screens were part of a continued interest in immersive spectatorship in museums charting back to panoramas and 19th century museological spaces.

As I have alluded to, SONG 1 perhaps has an institutional aim parallel to commercial IMAX and Cinerama—using large-scale spectacle to reintegrate the museum into the life of the city and make the institution more attractive in the wake of the proliferation of other forms of entertainment.

---


media. The mechanics of spectatorship in SONG 1 are fundamentally different than those offered by the large screens at the NMNH or Air and Space—one more of public invitation than immersive voyage. The alterity denied in Doane’s reading of widescreen is reinforced and made instantly apparent by the screen’s wrap-around image, forcing the viewer to notice the limitations between her eye’s point of vision and the infinite tangents on the screen’s surface. In this way, one can never “see” the entire film (though based on my personal experience, observations, and conversations with viewers, this was not a deterrent).

Editing an image that wraps around a surface proved quite a challenge for Aitken and his team. First, they needed to digitally manipulate and warp the image using projection mapping technology so that when it was projected from eleven irregularly-placed projectors it would appear seamless. Kerry Brougher noted that this project could not have been done even five years prior to its execution due to this reliance on very new technology. Second, the artist and editors are left wondering how to make the film work for the viewer and in the round. At some moments, a continuous image wraps around the entire building, such as the ring of matches lit at the opening of the doowop rendition of the song, the round of female singers, or various abstractions that envelop the surface (during moments analogous to Walsh’s “entranced”

118 This aim drove the museum’s abandoned “Inflatable” – a seasonal temporary structure commissioned by Diller Scofidio and Renfro that was meant “to activate the Museum’s public spaces…and infuse them with a new vitality and purpose demonstrating the larger public role museums can play in society today.” “Inflatable - Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden | Smithsonian,” Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden | Smithsonian, accessed February 20, 2013, http://www.hirshhorn.si.edu/collection/inflatable/ This concept was scrapped in 2013 citing lack of funding and full support by the museum’s board. The dissolution of this project led to the resignation of Richard Koshalek as director (who was succeeded by chief curator Kerry Brougher as Interim Director). ; “Hirshhorn Museum Scraps Idea to Cover Courtyard with Bubble,” ArtsBeat, accessed February 21, 2014, http://artsbeatblogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/05/hirshhorn-museum-scraps-idea-to-cover-courtyard-with-bubble/.
encounter with video snow in Tykka’s work). To Kerry Brougher, these moments’ rarity within the entire piece produced a certain “wow factor” that reinforced the architectural surface and the wrap-around image’s scale.\textsuperscript{119} For most of the piece, the screen’s continuous image breaks into seven separate “screens:” rectangular shapes end to end that together wrap the entire building. While each “screen” at any moment does not contain the exact same shot, the content is similar (different angles on a singer, two characters singing in a car and facing the same direction, for example). These “screens” also shift in scale and move along the surface of the architectural facade. In this manner, the “screens” are totally digitally created and have no relationship to the projectors, breaking with the traditional cinematic notion where a singular projector creates one (square) image. These screens pan the horizontal expanse of the Hirshhorn in a manner that parallels a moving car window, a cinematic framing of movement through landscape. Daniel Birnbaum has noted how central “the sensation of driving a car” is to Aitken’s work, and no doubt gives his films the Californian feel they exude.\textsuperscript{120}

In this way, the apparatus performs an inversion of its normative form: rather than reifying Renaissance perspective’s creation of the singular subject it advances Minimalism’s phenomenological affirmation of the object. Though the complete image cannot be fully apprehended from any one vantage point (forming a cinematic equivalent to the Minimalist object), viewers, rather than relentlessly circling the screen’s surface and remaining mobile, are content to let duration, not movement, serve as access to the “whole.” Indeed the film’s image is made to create this type of viewing. The immensity of the Hirshhorn’s screen proffers a mobile

\begin{footnotes}
\item[119] Brougher, Interview by author.
\end{footnotes}
spectatorship, but compared to the human scale of *electric earth*’s installation, does not make this manner of postmodern museological *flanerie* a necessary component to its comprehension. It is a cinema-in-the-round rather than a cinema-path.

Though the relationship between scale and immersive vision is shifted in the film’s image, scale remains a significant aspect in the way *SONG 1* addresses its spectators. Covering the enter surface of the building, *SONG 1*’s image completely dwarfs its sculptural neighbors, as indicated in the view from Independence Avenue where one of Alexander Calder’s *Stabiles* (*Two Discs*, 1965), long a symbol of iconic public art, is rendered inert, inconsequential, and merely decorative underneath the moving spectacle of Aitken’s projection; on the other side, Aitken’s widescreen pop song dwarfs Pop master Roy Lichstenstein’s *Brushstroke* (1996). Seemingly the projection screen has conquered the museum—both inside and out. The scale of the screen in relationship to the body is a key element of the work’s power. However in *SONG 1* the screen does not expand laterally into one’s peripheral vision, but rather folds in on itself, suggesting a complete image grasped by the viewer but unknowable to the eye at any one instant—a gestalt form in cinematic terms.

Scholars such as Rosalind Krauss and Dominique Paini have critiqued contemporary cinematic installation art’s fragmentation of duration and the projected images (as in *electric earth*) as potentially reinforcing consumer capitalism’s insistent illusion of individual experience and freedom of choice—a consumerist 21st century *flanerie* masquerading as liberated spectatorship.121 Arguably most moving image-based public art will have a problematic relationship with consumerism’s hold on the urban mediascape both formally and practically; it’s expensive to produce, requires the use of costly technology and revenue-generating advertising

---

121 Mondloch, *Screens*, 57.
space, and needs a lot of upkeep. However, as high resolution projection, 3D mapping and projection, and high-definition LED screens become more affordable and pervasive in urban spaces, public art forms an important reminder to look, play, and take notice of where and who we are. As Giuliana Bruno discusses in *Public Intimacy*, museum architecture has come into direct contact with screen cultures, transporting visitors in a space of motion and emotion. *SONG* 1 extends this museological contact to the physical limits of the museum and beyond, projecting its emotive and seductive power onto the broader urban landscape, inviting us to, in Barthes’ words, achieve distance not through an overt criticality, but rather through a dual seduction with both the image and the environment, allowing us to “take off” and re-join our public urban spaces.
Chapter Three: The Ludic Interface

Introduction

Screens in public spaces are comprised of a number of technologies and employ a myriad of screen-viewing codes. As discussed in chapter two, these can range from momentary enchantment to cinematic immersion. In order to completely understand the multiplicity of ways artists engage with viewers through moving image-based public art, it is not only important to consider a work’s visual properties (which often parallel advertising or film and television) but also the more interactive functions of contemporary screens, namely computers and touch screens. The images and movements we encounter on computer screens are responsive to the movement of our own bodies. Interactive screens respond to our gestures and prompt us to touch or move in relationship to the screen, suggesting that as media, touchscreens and computer interfaces are not merely visual, but also haptic. When artists such as Rafael Lozano-Hemmer produce works that use video and surveillance technology to interact with the viewer’s body, they engage not only with a longer history of participation in contemporary art but also with the interactive nature of contemporary public screens. Similarly, when Jaume Plensa uses large LED screens in *Crown Fountain* (2005) (fig. 19) to create a playful space between them, he breaks with the mode of enchantment discussed in chapter two and instead generates a ludic space in front of the screens. Aside from a technologically deterministic view of public art (one where each new technology used would generate a new category), how might we best articulate a reading of screens that allows for physical interaction with the spectator? I argue that it can be done by understanding a mode of spectatorship that is fundamentally playful.

In works such as Lozano-Hemmer’s *Under Scan* (2005) or Plensa’s *Crown Fountain* the image and screen act as a generative forces to transport the body not to another diegetic space, but rather towards the social and playful relationships that can be forged with others in front of
the screen. Even though Plensa uses technology that is not explicitly interactive (the images are prerecorded and do not respond to viewer input) the work still generates a sense of interaction and elicits the creation of spontaneous micro-communities at the site of the moving image. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer makes use of explicitly interactive technologies to produce a similar social, ludic space within urban public squares, suggesting that the playful interaction engendered by screens in public art rests not on the technology used, but on its mode of address. This modality—one that generates a space for play and an awareness of the body—uses similar means of attraction to glean the attention of passersby as the works covered in chapter two, but rather than transporting its ambient audience to revel in the pleasures of standing at the threshold of another diegetic universe, the ludic interface facilitates a heightened awareness of the phenomenological body of the viewer through play, activating the in-between spaces among bodies in space.

In this chapter, I analyze works in the second modality of public art, which I will call “the ludic interface.” Both terms, ludic and interface, are contextualized in historical, theoretical, and practical terms, and representative works of art are analyzed in relationship to how interactivity functions in the larger public sphere. In comparison to the enchanting visual spectacle, the ludic interface operates less on the principles of entrancement or visual transportation to another, fictive space, and instead becomes a generative force in altering and transforming the space immediately in front of the screen and viewers’ relationships to it and each other. Much like the works discussed in chapter two, those analyzed in this chapter are part of a larger continuum of state, private, and corporate sponsorship in public space, including advertising, datamining, and surveillance. Made clear by the title of Crown Fountain and its surrounding areas (the fountain is named for the donors, major financiers in Chicago industry and defense technology), the
relationship between public art and private money can often become more problematic the more costly and technologically advanced a work becomes. In keeping with Knight’s understanding of public art’s populist efficacy, I argue that there are ways in which this relationship can still offer productive encounters with art, public participation, and even reflection for audiences. I conclude this chapter with a consideration of the intertwining of development funds and economic growth with spectacular interactive public art.

I argue that artists can and do succeed in creating transformative spaces for play in their installations, however these exist very much within contemporary reworkings of spectacular capitalism. Whether these ludic spaces have the opportunity and openness to allow the public to, in Knight’s words “generate their own relationships” with art is a matter of degree to which the space the screens engender is, in the words of Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga, “free and open” for participants to play within.¹ This chapter contextualizes interactive playful screens in public art projects as part of the legacy of interactivity and play in contemporary art; the longer trajectory in the visual arts of incorporating the viewer’s space into the space of the image; as well as a present-day continuum of interactivity in screen culture that extends to mobile media, advertising, data-mining, and surveillance. I discuss the ways viewer interaction is invited, implicated, and allowed to roam free in a select sample of public works, including Plensa’s Crown Fountain, Chris O’Shea’s Hand from Above (2009), and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s Under Scan (2005) and Sandbox (2010). These range from permanent to temporary and use LED screens, surveillance technology, shadow play, and projection—spanning a variety of old and “new” media, but all generating a space for play, using technology to bring the ludic sphere to the public square.

¹ I analyze and discuss Huizinga’s formation of the “ludic” in the following section.
Play Time: On the ludic in contemporary art and public space

Since the Happenings of the 1950s and 60s participation has been a key concern for many artists looking to go beyond the traditional art object. John Cage, Allan Kaprow, and artists associated with Fluxus continually tried to blur the boundaries between art and life through open-ended projects that incorporated the audience. In Kaprow’s “rules-of-thumb” for his Happenings, he suggests that the audience should be completely eliminated in the pursuit of keeping the line between art and life “as fluid, and perhaps, indistinct, as possible.” As Jeff Kelley has noted, this exploratory dimension of Kaprow’s practice was closely linked to the notion of childsplay. What Kaprow saw as an outgrowth of Abstract Expressionism’s gesture and a movement away from the art object into the realm of life influenced many artists in the following decades who created conceptual art, feminist art, and works based on more contemporary concepts of relational aesthetics and social engagement. Visual artists working in film and video similarly engaged the social space between viewers or the open-ended exploratory function of play. For example, Dan Graham’s Cinema uses mirrors to accentuate the social space in front of the screen and Anthony McCall’s installations (such as Line Describing a Cone) invite a mobile, exploratory viewer who is, according to Hal Foster “social and interactive…in counterpoint to the stunned or arrested subject of spectacle.”

Despite its significant position within the last half century of art, the aesthetics of participation has only recently received sustained critical and aesthetic scholarly inquiry. In Artificial Hells, Claire Bishop outlines the ways in which the “ethical” supplanted the “aesthetic”

---
in the critical literature around participatory art. She writes, “the aspiration [of increasingly socially engaged projects] is always to move beyond art, but never to the point of comparison with comparable projects in the social domain.” In other words, to evaluate a work merely in terms of the “good” it poses to do is limiting, and further relegates actual social projects to the realm of the ideal. Bishop’s argument potentially challenges Cher Knight’s populist understanding of public art’s efficacy that I am structuring much of my argument around, but I think there is still an important insistence on the actual exchange between public art and audience in Knight that agrees with Bishop’s more critical stance. Furthermore, I very much believe in analyzing the particular aesthetic and material properties of each cinematic situation in order to chart its relationship to broader elements of contemporary screen culture. Bishop’s argument makes a similar claim for understanding a work’s particular aesthetics of participation, and this issue Bishop critiques in relationship to earlier criticism of participatory artworks is present in what little empirical literature explores the use of interactive technologies in public projects.

In many studies researchers attempt to quantify interaction and thus evaluate a work’s worthiness by its ability to attract direct engagement (a metric used by advertisers as well). The BBC Big Screens study by Glancy and O’Hara discussed briefly in chapter two not only outlined three modes of viewer awareness with screens—ambient, interactive, and events—but also decidedly favored the latter two categories, applying the same principle as the Nielson television ratings (how long someone stays on a “channel”) to a completely different screen situation and

5 Bishop, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship, 19.
6 Bishop makes a distinction between participation and interactivity that privileges the former over the latter. In my study, I do not adhere to the same distinction, as I find that works that are interactive (where the user/viewer’s engagement is somewhat predetermined by the work) still have potential for positive engagement in public spaces.
ignoring the potential for interesting works of public art in the ambient mode. Another study by Harry Brignull and Yvonne Rogers looks specifically at interactive public art, again delineating three modes of participation: peripheral awareness, focal awareness, and direct interaction, the end-goal being to encourage viewers to overcome “social embarrassment” to increase the incidence of the third category. This means of study ignores the possibilities of micro-communities generated through interaction (with varying levels of engagement) and instead prefers the same user-interface direct interaction that prompts people to lose their connection to their surroundings via mobile and personal media. This shortcoming in the literature on interactive and screen-based projects in public space parallels what Bishop calls “the inadequacy of a positivist sociological approach to participatory art (as proposed, for example, by cultural policy think-thank studies that focus on demonstrable outcomes).”

Both this approach and that proposed by market research groups maintain a rather narrow view of potential viewer interactions. Artists who use moving images to generate a ludic interface in public spaces can do so effectively with varying degrees of individual authorship, open-endedness, or viewer participation, provided they generate a free space for play. In other words, the quantitative methods used by the studies mentioned above and the “demonstrable outcomes” critiqued by Bishop do not do justice to understanding a work’s significance. A comprehensive ethnographic study layered with an institutional and theoretical analysis of the work’s particular situation, rather, may effectively discern the opportunities for genuine public

---

9 Bishop, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship, 7.
engagement with art.

Play, which arguably crosses over and beyond the already porous categories of participation and interactivity, can be open-ended or occur within a system of rules. History illustrates, however, that play is an essential function of the cultural and developmental life of humans and animals. It connotes a lack of seriousness and a free association of meaning quite apart from daily life (as in, “I’m only playing around,” “let’s play with some of these ideas,” or “don’t play with me”). Play, however, also connotes a safe way to explore and may be understood as a vital part of human life. Analyzed extensively by Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga in his landmark 1938 study *Homo Ludens: The Play Element in Culture*, play is a “significant form” of culture. For Huizinga play is generative and the origin of all major elements of civilization from the arts and poetry to war and law, as opposed to the Western bias against play as frivolous and the opposite of the productive work ethic. The freedom to play is an essential component of a free society—that we can let go (within certain parameters) of life’s weightier expectations and obligations and take on and experiment with a new role. In his study Huizinga defines play as the following:

A free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious”, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.

Some key elements of this excerpt are the “free” nature of play and its separation from “ordinary” time and space. Play’s non-seriousness is precisely what makes it play—that it is

---

11 Ibid., 13.
distinct from real world stresses and that players can “switch back” when the game is over. Seemingly such a situation of clear boundaries would be nearly untenable in public spaces, considering the many intersections and interruptions that infiltrate spaces continually, but as Huizinga points out, “the play-mood is labile” and under constant threat of the extrinsic or intrinsic interruptions of “ordinary life.” Its liminality in relationship to the real world is part of its existence. Public art can and does facilitate spaces for play where ephemeral micro-communities can form on their own terms. For Huizinga, the boundaries of the separate temporal and spatial sphere of play—what he calls “the magic circle”—is very porous (and indeed “ordinary” life can interject itself and destroy the magic circle at times). Understood in Huizinga’s terms, play’s significant function in culture lies in its connection to ritual and competition—in playing for or against something or someone. He looks, therefore, primarily at competitive play in games and sport, something other writers have critiqued as limiting or even “machismo.”

Most significant in the literature responding to Huizinga was French sociologist Roger Caillois. In Man, Play, and Games (1958), Caillois critiques Huizinga’s limited focus on agonistic or competitive play and examines the relationship between play and chance. Caillois critiques Huizinga’s insistence on play being completely divorced from material interest, which broadens his understanding of play to include gambling. Rather than suggesting free and open-ended play as less developed than agonistic play, Caillois diagrams types of play along a trajectory of paidia and ludus. The former defined as “improvisation and joy” and “spontaneous

---

12 Ibid., 21.
manifestations of the play instinct,” and the latter as “the taste for gratuitous difficulty” and rules.\textsuperscript{15} Along a perpendicular axis, Caillois distinguishes four types of play (which can have their paidiac and ludic manifestations): \textit{agon} (competition), \textit{alea} (chance), \textit{mimicry} (simulation), and \textit{ilinx} (vertigo or transport). Examples of paidiac manifestations of these four are wrestling, heads or tails, children’s games, and singing, respectively; examples of the ludic are boxing, roulette, theater, and skiing.\textsuperscript{16} In all instances, there is something of a “thrill” we can see in play—whether it be the titillation of organized violence (boxing), the thrill of potentially winning from gambling, the pleasure of transporting into a narrative world in the theater, or the exhilaration of barreling down a mountain. Play, as discussed in this chapter, then, connects directly to the thrill identified in Gunning’s cinema of attractions and the broader notion of “enchantment” discussed in chapter two.

The instances of play generated by artists’ interventions discussed in this chapter is located across the spectrum of Caillois continuum of \textit{paidia} and \textit{ludus} and can include elements of all four categories. For this reason, I employ Huizinga’s more primordial and universal understanding of the “ludic” sphere for understanding the strategies of many contemporary public artists and the use of interactive technologies and games in contemporary culture. I also find Huizinga’s concept of the “magic circle” particularly useful when discussing playful engagement with media. In contemporary media studies Huizinga’s concept has been used largely to analyze video games. Edward Castronova, for example, discusses what he calls the “synthetic worlds” of online gaming, via the magic circle.\textsuperscript{17} Castronova’s study is limited to the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 27–28.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 36.
\textsuperscript{17} Castronova’s study is focused largely on how the market and politics enter into or disrupt the “magic circle” of MMORPGs (massive multiplayer online role-playing games), thus illustrating how commerce and other elements of “ordinary” life tend to infiltrate this porous virtual space of
virtual realm, where the player is given an avatar that navigates a diegetic universe contained within the game’s screen rather than explicitly engaging our own social bodies in real space. In works like Crown Fountain or Hand from Above, however, the play generated by the screens activates and indeed alters the physical and social space around the screen. It creates a magic circle not in the virtual space within the screen, but in a physical public space defined by the particular screen situation where participants can move and play together in a manner that would normally appear quite strange. The recent “flash mob” phenomenon has a quite similar effect: participants dance, sing, act, or play in public space much to the surprise and (often) bafflement of those around them. Their temporary community and shared performance creates a safe space (or “magic circle”) for behaviors and movements that would otherwise be considered odd in public space were an individual or just a few people to do it.¹⁸ Unlike the flash mob, however, the ludic screen spaces I analyze in the works below do not involve advanced knowledge or planning by participants. Rather they invite onlookers to become participants, which in turn generates interactions between strangers, prompting spontaneous paidia to disrupt the continuous movement of the street. The “magic circle” becomes real and physical, activated by the moving image and fundamentally altering the space it occupies.¹⁹

---

¹⁸ A perfect example of this is the annual “No Pants Subway Ride” organized by Improv Everywhere, whose title says it all.

¹⁹ My language here is deliberately echoing the Chrissie Iles quote that opened chapter one. Iles, “Video and Film Space,” 252. Furthermore, the spatial element of Huizinga’s magic circle and the spontaneity of Caillois’s paidia make these two authors most useful for my study’s consideration of play in art situated in outdoor, public space and understood through Knight’s criteria for successful spectator engagement. Play and chance are also significant elements of more subversive art movements, such as Surrealism and the Situationist International, as well as more contemporary critical game design. See Mary Flanagan, Critical Play: Radical Game Design (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009).
As mentioned above, play and interactivity are significant functions in contemporary art, and this is particularly true with works that attempt to prompt or engage some formation of community or the public at large. Play connotes openness and pliability, as well as safety and sociability. As discussed in chapter one, contemporary public art has undergone a “dematerialization” in recent decades, and pliability, transience, and openness are often lauded as ways of understanding art’s function in public space as more dialogic. In many instances the notion of play becomes a part of this desire to foster genuine interaction and participation among members of the public. The invitation to play is explicitly an invitation to collaborate or to interact with a work of art and potentially fellow citizens, generating new interactions through the “magic circle” generated by play. The success of a project like British artist Luke Jerram’s *Play Me, I’m Yours* (2008—on-going) is evidence how receptive contemporary cities and public arts agencies are to the notion of play. In *Play Me, I’m Yours*, the artist (in collaboration with local “host” organizations in various cities) installs brightly painted pianos in public space with the title of the project painted on them, inviting anyone to play. As of 2015 the project has been installed in 46 cities around the world and made use of over 1,300 pianos. In much of the press coverage of this piece, the work’s ability to generate new interactions among members of the public by fostering “community togetherness” or even “uniting people all over the globe” is lauded as a strength. The music heard by passersby in *Play Me, I’m Yours* generates a sense of

connectedness in public spaces not necessarily through the actual notes people hear, but through the project’s pliability and openness to play and interaction.

Elizabeth Biggs’s study of sound-based public art charts important ground in connecting Huizinga’s concept of play in the public works of artists like David Byrne and Janet Cardiff. Writing from the discipline of music, she’s particularly interested in how artists create spaces for play in the public realm using sound. Biggs similarly cites Huizinga’s focus on agonistic play as limiting, but considers his notion of how play generates its own boundaries of time and space to be particularly relevant when studying playful works of public art, “by playing within a particular space, we consecrate it as place.” This delineation between space and place refers to the work of Yi-Fu Tuan, who charts a difference between space, which connotes freedom and openness, and place, which connotes safety and fixity. I analyze this concept further in chapter four where I discuss moving images that function particularly in relationship to place. Here it is worth noting how playful interaction in space can redefine or even create a place. And even, in the case of permanent installations such as Crown Fountain, be a part of civic place-making.

A Space to Play: Crown Fountain and Millennium Park

Chicago is a town that is in many ways “crazy about public art.” It was central to the public art revival of the late 1960s and features one of the most publically and financially successful contemporary public art parks, Millennium Park (dedicated in 2004). It is possible to locate major trends in contemporary public art with key commissions or exhibitions in Chicago. For example, the “Chicago Picasso,” a 1967 untitled piece by the world’s most famous artist

24 Ibid., 69.
25 Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience, 5th or later Edition edition (Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Press, 2001).
living at the time, initiated the explosion of public sculpture in modernist plazas. Many interpreted it as a baboon or an alien, not what the artist intended, which was a portrait of his Afghan hound. Nevertheless, the work soon became a popular icon of the city despite its seemingly private and inaccessible content. Just as Chicago was on the forefront of the public sculpture revival in the 1960s, so too was it at the forefront of the community mural movement in the 1970s. Similarly, in 1993 the city hosted Culture in Action, a show curated by Mary Jane Jacobs that highlighted community engagement in art. This show featured works that were defined by Suzanne Lacy as “new genre public art” and forms a large part of Miwon Kwon’s seminal study on the shifting notions of site-specificity and social engagement in contemporary public art. In the opening of the twenty-first century, we then have a prime example of corporate sponsored, spectacular public art—Millennium Park.

Crown Fountain anchors the southwest corner of Millennium Park. Adjacent to Anish Kapoor’s now-iconic Cloud Gate (2004), locally known as “the Bean,” Jaume Plensa’s work is the most technologically sophisticated in the park. The park itself is an incredibly popular, highly interactive space that merges private and public interests. The park was funded largely by corporate sponsors whose names adorn every feature of the park. Kapoor’s iconic work, for example, is the feature piece of AT&T Plaza, which borders Chase Promenade and McCormick Tribune Plaza and Ice Rink. Boeing, Wrigley, Exelon, British Petroleum, and even McDonalds all have named parts of the park, with the remaining “rooms” dedicated to philanthropists who endowed them, including Crown Fountain, named for the family that paid for it and were integral

---

26 Senie, “Baboons, Pet Rocks, and Bomb Threats.”
28 Suzanne Lacy, Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art (Seattle: Bay Press, 1994); Kwon, One Place after Another.
to the design approval process. $200 million of the park’s staggering $470 million budget came from private donations. The additional funds were raised by the city, primarily by monetizing the subterranean space beneath the lot into a parking garage. Despite design controversies, claims of cronyism, and budget overruns and late realization (Mayor Daley’s original budget was $150 million and the park was meant to open, for obvious reasons, in 2000), Millennium Park is still widely considered a success in its ability to promote tourism to Chicago, generate new landmarks, and engage passersby with interactive and approachable works of art.

Despite the park’s dependence on private corporate interests, it can still be understood as an effective public space—one that promotes genuine interaction with art and other members of the public. Cher Knight finds Millennium Park to be highly successful in its ability to generate “lively, resonant art experiences amid daily life activities for large and varied audiences…without sacrificing the artists’ aesthetics or theoretical interests.” The entire park is broken up into separate “rooms,” each with its own “enhancement” or feature…and a corresponding named private sponsor. With all the clear corporate and private interests, Millennium Park would seemingly be an example of the impossibility of truly public space in late-capitalism or the encroachment of private interests into the public sphere. As writers like Rosalyn Deutsche and Setha Low have argued, the increase of private ownership of ostensibly public spaces can lead to eviction of marginalized people, a decrease in civil liberties, and

---

30 Knight, Public Art, 156.
31 For a complete retelling of the story behind Millennium Park, as well as analyses of each of its “rooms,” see Timothy J. Gilfoyle, Millennium Park: Creating a Chicago Landmark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
sterilized spaces intended only for the use of tourists.\textsuperscript{32} Such a blanket reading, however, would not be applicable to Millennium Park considering the positive and polyvalent interactions with engaging works of art prompted within the park’s spaces.

In many ways, the scale and technological sophistication of many spaces and works in the park would not be possible were it not for the collaboration with private interests. Such bombastic and top dollar projects as Crown Fountain and Cloud Gate could be seen as mere “spectacle” and not serious art. However, as I analyzed in chapter two, spectacle may have a positive side—modes of enchantment that spark interest in the viewer and encourage her to engage with art. Knight similarly defends spectacle in her discussion of themed environments and their ability to generate moving experiences that are widely understood by their audiences. She writes: “…some members of the art community still look at the public at large as a problem to solve, or too simple-minded to really understand art. Conversely entrepreneurs [of themed environments like Disney World] often give audiences more credit, assuming we perceive this and ‘get’ that.\textsuperscript{33} She goes on to argue that within spectacle’s holistic sensory and experiential qualities lies the possibility to reach audiences and produce engaged and even critical interactions with viewers.

While I would not go so far as to defend a site like Disney World, Knight does have some important points about the ability of large-scale environments to engage viewers. Installations like Olafur Eliasson’s The Weather Project (2003) at the Tate Modern realized the potential of immersive spectacle within the museum’s public spaces. In Eliasson’s work, the museum’s


\textsuperscript{33} Knight, \textit{Public Art}, 103–104.
massive Turbine Hall was flooded with mist and artificial light from a half circle of yellow lamps while its ceiling was lined with an enormous mirror. The project, one of the museum’s most memorable commissions for that space, prompted viewers to lie on the ground and look up at themselves and the social spaces of the cavernous hall. While Millennium Park is hardly a themed environment like Disney World, it uses spectacle in decidedly participatory ways: in the reflective surface of Cloud Gate, the meandering walkways of the Lurie Gardens, and by explicitly engaging with the connective elements of water and the moving image in Crown Fountain.

**Fountain and Screens**

Fountains have long acted as focal points for public plazas and parks. For the Romans, fountains were sites of public bathing and social interaction—serving both public health and public culture. In spaces like medieval cloisters and Chinese scholars’ gardens, water generated a restorative, tranquil environment for reflection. In the Baroque period, fountains were sites of significant public sculpture, and many contemporary cities are similarly marked with large public fountains. Some of the most well-known gathering spaces in the United States are around fountains or public water features, such as the reflecting pool on the Washington Mall, Central Park’s Bethesda Fountain, or Chicago’s mammoth-sized Buckingham Fountain. Fountains operate not only as public spaces in which to congregate and take a break, but often also as markers and icons of local identity and place.

Beyond its position within an established Chicago tradition in public sculpture and public art exhibitions, Crown Fountain is also situated within an existing local history of public fountains. In the twentieth century Chicago’s most iconic manmade water feature was Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park—a short walk from Millennium Park. (Fig. 20) Completed in 1927 and designed by Edward Bennet, Buckingham Fountain was lauded as an achievement in
American Beaux-Arts design and a feat of engineering, with water reaching heights upwards of 150-feet during shows, not only defying gravity by jutting into the air, but also cascading down a tiered fountain structure with scores of putti reveling in the water’s dynamism. The fountain’s grandeur draws from both its relationship to Lake Michigan next to it and the Latona Fountain at the Palace of Versailles, a direct influence on the architect and a symbol of affluence and abundance. Long a tourist attraction in Chicago, *Buckingham Fountain* is not only an icon of the city (featured memorably in the opening credits of the long-running Fox sitcom *Married…with Children*, 1987-1997), but an important photo opportunity. Visitors cannot get too close, however, as the elaborate massive structure is surrounded by a waist-high metal guard rail. *Buckingham Fountain* is the antithesis of interactive public art—it is set apart from the viewer and prohibits physical proximity. Intriguingly the rail, whose sole purpose is to prevent a tactile engagement with the fountain, has a visible patina on its top (see fig. 20), betraying the desire of visitors to get closer and perhaps even reach the water. This patina suggests a desire to not only get closer to the fountain, closer to the civic icon, but also to be *in* it. Eventually with *Crown Fountain*, a project of similarly sophisticated engineering and architecture, tourists’ and spectators’ wishes were granted.

*Crown Fountain* not only allows and even encourages members of the public to enter the fountain, but also signifies a collective urban identity through moving image media. Like the mirrored surface of Kapoor’s bean, *Crown Fountain* both reflects the population of Chicago and invites interaction. (Fig. 21) Two fifty-foot monoliths face each other across a long, shallow pool of water, not even one inch deep. The façade of each tower features an LED screen which displays a face that serenely looks directly outward, occasionally smiling and blinking. Every five minutes, pursing lips unleash a cooling stream of water, the face smiles once more, then
fades out and transitions to a new one. In the production of each video, Plensa and his collaborators at the school of the Art Institute of Chicago asked the 1000 participants, selected from open calls sent to 180 community groups, to “blow a kiss.” This action is itself a gesture which mimics tactile contact and proximity across a distance, effectively collapsing a space (much like media screens). The video portraits are slowed down to make them even more uncanny and their subtle movements more monumental, similar to Andy Warhol’s *Screen Tests*, which, like many of his silent films, were shot in sound speed (twenty-four frames per second) but specified to be projected at silent speed (sixteen frames per second). The expanse between the screens, however, is not an insurmountable distance traversable only by a kiss blown in the air, but rather an active space for play.

The videos reflect the residents of Chicago and are intended to be re-edited to reflect the changing demographics every twenty years—mirroring the bureaucratic timetable of the United States Census Bureau. This impetus to reflect local residents relates to a much larger trend in contemporary public art, as commissioning bodies and artists seek to avoid seeming out of touch with local communities. Iñigo Manglano Ovalle’s piece *Portrait of a Young Reader* (2006) in the Bronx Library Center in New York is a representative example of this trend. Regularly placed but irregularly colored round cylinders cover the large wall at the library’s entrance. Appearing to be abstract decoration, the colors are actually a visualization the DNA of an anonymous local student.34 In this project, as in Plensa’s, a small sample stands in for the collective. Both the faces in *Crown Fountain* and the DNA sequences in *Portrait of a Young Reader* are entirely unique but also mundane and interchangeable to the casual viewer. Their presentation, however,

34 Samples were taken via cheek swabs from a small group of participants, and one was selected at random, so neither the participant nor artist knows precisely whose DNA informs the pattern.
renders them monumental or even abstract—reflecting the population of city without over-
essentializing it.

As single channel works, the videos would be perfect examples of “slow cinema,” a term

used to describe a branch of art-house film that languishes in long takes and minimal movement
and lacks narrative cinema’s editing and pacing. In a theatrical setting, slow cinema is

understood as challenging its viewers, but in a public space or gallery the choice to view or not
to view is open and fluid; the image becomes background. For James Elkins, the monumental
scale and uncanny slowness of the monolithic screens is “more enervating than absorbtive.” I
find, however, that there is a tension between a distracted, even peripheral viewership and an
engaged sense of expectation similar to cinematic suspense (be it draining or absorbing). I
discuss this below in my observations of the work in situ across two days and one evening. In my
analysis, I argue that the primary function of Crown Fountain’s two screens is not to screen
content, but rather to generate a new space between the screens for play—a mediated magic
circle in public space.

Observations of play

The Crown Fountain is decidedly more interactive and more effective as public art in the
summer than the winter. Though the design statements claim that the videos are just as engaging
in the winter, the site is comparatively absent of people and the space between the screens
becomes covered with slush and snow. I am, therefore, basing my analysis on interactions I
observed during the summer of 2014, as I believe this to be when the work is most effective.

During warm months, one of the most striking elements of Crown Fountain when viewed in

35 Jonathan Romney, “In Search of Lost Time,” Part of a Special Section: Cinema of the 21st
Century: 30 Key Films of the Last Decade 20, no. 2 (February 2010): 43–44.
person is the space of play between the screens. The pool of water becomes a playing field bookended by monolithic goal posts in the form of screens. The physical setup generates the “magic circle” discussed by Huizinga by seemingly closing the space of the fountain off from the surrounding city. Unlike the forbidding barrier at Buckingham Fountain, the permeable membrane of Crown Fountain’s magic circle creates a safe space for play and interaction—between water and viewer, between screen and viewer, and between viewers.

In both the daytime and nighttime visits I conducted, I noticed the viewers were overwhelmingly children, mostly around ages ten and younger. As the kids played in the water—some splashing each other, laying down to mimic swimming, or anxiously awaiting the gargoyle’s spit—parents sat along the ample seating lining the work’s periphery. Seating here is not directed at screens, but rather at the space between screens, where the action really happens. This is especially true during the day when the video images are less striking than in the evening (the screen in direct sunlight is barely visible from some angles). The screens, rather than transporting the viewer to an elsewhere, generate a ludic space for social and physical play in the here and now.

The children's attention is marked alternately by its absence and its intensity. In many instances the children are running and playing—interacting with each other and the water more than the screen. In others, however, play is facilitated by an intense engagement with the screen itself. The periodic spit of the gargoyles every five minutes is bracketed by long slow-motion shots of individual faces. As the monumental faces blink, move their mouths, or slightly smile the children physically and vocally express their anticipation. One child I observed even shouted “come on!” at the screen when he was tricked into thinking a tiny facial tick was an oncoming spout of water. When the faces begin to spurt, children signal each other, yell, and run towards
the refreshing stream of water—a cathartic release following cinematic tension.

During a warm day one of the most striking things about experiencing the fountain in person are the non-visual elements, especially the smells and the sounds. Were you to close your eyes on a warm day, you would think you were at a public pool or water park. The smell of chlorinated water and the sounds of children rambunctiously playing are overwhelming, despite the fountain’s proximity to noisy Michigan Avenue. When you open your eyes, there are many visual elements that reinforce this pool-like setting: orange safety cones at the edges of the pool of water, signs cautioning against running, adults lining the surrounding seating armed with towels and sunscreen, and many children clad in swimsuits and pool shoes. Public pools have long had a connection to public social life in the United States; they were an integral part of the public initiatives funded by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. Furthermore, municipal pools have been important sites for the construction and contestation of communal identity along lines of class, gender, and race. In his proposal Plensa argued that his concept would relate to historical uses of water as a connector for communities and the function of fountains as a site of civic identity. However, upon visiting Crown Fountain, the atmosphere is decidedly more playful—rambunctious even—like a public pool.

In my discussions with people on site (approximately forty individuals across fifteen groups) that far fewer comments were made about the videos during the daytime than the evening. A handful even suggested being open to having the video rotate or change, although they all answered with strong affirmation to the question “would you miss it if it were gone,” a

---

finding that echoes my audience response studies of the permanent work in chapter two, *Masstransiscope*. In the evening children similarly make up the majority of active participants in the ludic space created between the two screens, but there are also a number of teenage and adult viewers entering the water or its periphery to take pictures. The work’s visually seductive video and lighting elements are more striking in the evening, when both screens are more visible, the black pool of water reflects the light, and the alternating colored lighting from inside the glass monoliths illuminates of each tower’s other three sides. (Fig. 22) Nighttime viewing also enhances the interactivity between viewer and screen as people frequently stand even closer to the monolithic screens to cast silhouettes against them. Since the illuminated screens made much more of a visual impact at night, more of the comments made by viewers in the evening were about the videos.

Although around a quarter of the commenters (both in the daytime and night) suggested they did not quite “get” the video (a common thread with popular responses to works of contemporary art and echoed in my studies of *SONG 1* and *Masstransiscope*), they all suggested they liked it. Over half the commenters specifically mentioned the diversity of the faces as a reason for liking the work, citing it as a great reflection of America, Chicago, and the diversity of people who enjoy the fountain. Interestingly, when commenters discussed things they would like to change about the work, all of their comments were directed at the content of the videos and never the structure or layout of the fountain.

Two commenters, who both loved the work’s interactive properties, suggested there could be a more interactive component to the production of videos: one discussed an on-site studio where people could sit and instantly see their faces on the screen, another suggested a hashtag or mobile uploading platform to place “selfies” from participants near and far up on the
screens. Digital interaction was actually part of the initial concept for the piece, as Plensa had envisioned a website where participants could change the colors of the lights illuminating the structures by popular vote online. This component of the project was eventually dropped for logistical reasons.\textsuperscript{39} Another commenter suggested that the images could be supplemented with scenes from around the city, saying “not everyone can get around.” In this way, commenters were thinking very seriously about this work as part of the identity of the city of Chicago. Nearly all commenters, whether they were tourists or natives, suggested the fountain, the nearby “Bean,” and Millennium Park in general were landmark sites for the city, with many remarking particularly about interactivity and access as hallmarks of a city respondents defined as being “crazy about art,” “interactive,” and architecturally significant. Quite tellingly, respondents reacted predictably to the media-based and permanent architectural aspects of the work, suggesting audiences anticipate and expect change in screen content, but appropriate architecture and sculpture into their environment and perhaps see them as more unchanging.

One of the most notable ways I observed older visitors interacting with \textit{Crown Fountain}, especially at night, was to photograph themselves or each other within its spaces. The sense of interactivity, then extends beyond the magic circle generated by the pool of water and space between screens and into the virtual realms of social media and digital photography. Unlike some tourist destinations like \textit{Buckingham Fountain}, however, the photographs at \textit{Crown Fountain} and \textit{Cloud Gate} are most often of the viewer within the work of art. The impetus to pose and create an image where one can see her own image inside the work of public art is certainly not unique to \textit{Crown Fountain} or even to Millennium Park—upon visiting Kapoor’s “Bean” one cannot help but notice numerous visitors photographing their warped reflection in

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
the sculpture’s surface. The mobile screens of visitors to Crown Fountain add yet another interface (or another level of interfaciality, in media theorist Anna Munster’s words), one where we can see ourselves instantaneously. Though this would seem a product of new technologies, seeing ourselves in an image as we interact with it has a much longer history in both artists’ engagement with media and visual culture at large.

*Mise-en-screen: Reflections, Interactivity, and Seeing Ourselves in Art and Screens*

One of the properties that distinguished television from film was the instantaneousness of the image. In *Television Studio, Burbank California* included in Robert Frank’s photography book *The Americans* (1955-56), this out-of-body experience of simultaneously being an image on a screen and a body in space is documented in the early days of the televisual medium. (Fig. 23) Frank’s photograph deconstructs the artifice of the television studio and documents this uncanny experience. A few decades later, in the late 1960s and early 1970s following the commercial availability of video technology, the instantaneous reflexivity of interactive screen technology informed some of the earliest video art installations in the gallery. Artists from this era were interested in the same uncanny effects produced when one is placed on a screen in real time as Frank recorded with his camera—a state that is integral to many interactive and playful works of moving image-based public art.

The title of this section deliberately evokes the terms *mise-en-abyme* and *mise-en-scène*. The former, translated “placing in abyss,” is used in art to refer to an image within an image, the sensation of standing between two mirrors, or an infinite recursivity; the latter, translated “placing on stage,” is a key term used in film criticism and analysis to examine the composition of all the elements within an image. With “mise-en-screen” I mean to evoke the tradition of both of these terms in my discussion of the interrelation of reflexivity and spatiality in selected
moments in art history and contemporary screen culture as a precursor to the way Chris O’Shea’s *Hand from Above*, an interactive work for the BBC Big Screens, operates in public space. I analyze the urge to see ourselves in works of art or screens as not simply narcissistic, but rather renegotiations of social space.

Dan Graham’s *Present Continuous Past(s)* (1974) uses the double reflection of a delayed feedback and mirrored room to create a complex installation where the gallery visitor becomes disconnected from her own body. (Fig. 24) The room has two walls covered with mirrors meeting at a right angle. The third wall is installed with a video camera and monitor and the fourth wall is white (according to Graham’s original plan; there have been other installations of this piece where this wall is open). The camera, pointed at both the visitor and the mirror on the wall behind, relays footage to the monitor below with an eight second delay. Since the camera both records what is in the room and the reflection of what is on screen, the result is an infinite regress—one simultaneously sees oneself in the mirror in the present, in the monitor eight seconds earlier, in the monitor within the monitor sixteen seconds earlier…and so on. This work and much of Graham’s similar installations and proposed projects from the 1970s implicitly critique the apparatus of broadcast television, “rigorously interrupting the sync between broadcast content and the viewer’s experience, while simultaneously dramatizing the line between witnessing a spectacle…and becoming a spectacle,” as David Joselit argues. This is a complicated folding whereby the apparatus consumes the viewer but also thwarts its own normal modalities of consumption. For Kate Mondloch, the work’s use of reflections and feedback loops to create such a discontinuous experience “allows viewers a greater reflexivity regarding the

---


relationship of their physical persons to the media screen apparatus.” In many ways the critical and historical writing around interactive video art installations of the 1960s and 70s discussed in chapter one is explicitly engaged in this type of critique of mass culture broadcasting and viewing paradigms, in a manner similar to how expanded cinema and installation art often critiqued the apparatus of cinema.

Following Minimalism’s phenomenological activation of the viewer’s body within the gallery space, Graham’s piece performs a similar function in relationship to screen images. Particularly, one where art historians argue there is a sense of critical awareness opened up for the viewer, although not one where the viewer is completely a participant, but one where the apparatus is at least made apparent or even undone by her presence. Claire Bishop rightly points to the parallel interest in mirrors by artists like Dan Graham and Robert Smithson in installation art with the translations of Jacques Lacan’s essay “The Mirror Stage”—a text which similarly informed the criticality of the apparatus theorists in the late 1960s and 70s and discussed in chapter one. In these early media installation precedents, the relationship between actual space and screen space is heightened and made explicit in a way that parallels the manner in which we encounter all screens in public space—simultaneously taken in by the moving image and always aware of the screen’s surroundings.

While installation and conceptual art’s engagement with reflection, as in Graham’s piece, aims to generate a sense of dislocation within the spectator, the inclusion of the space and bodies of spectators within the work of art has not always been so explicitly aimed at rupture, although

---

42 Mondloch, Screens, 39.
43 Claire Bishop, Installation Art: A Critical History (New York: Routledge, 2005), 90. Notably, contemporary engagements with mirrored surfaces, however, such as with Kapoor’s Cloud Gate or Olafur Eliasson’s The Weather Project (2003) are more visually seductive and immersive than Graham’s dislocations.
it has often engaged with the apparatus of image-making in use. In Diego Velázquez’s Spanish Baroque masterpiece, *Las Meninas* (1656), the space in front of the canvas becomes one as rich with signification as the illusionistic space painted by the artist. (Fig. 25) Within the image are a number of canvases pertaining to the status, skill, and training of the artist as well as the prestige of his patrons. The paintings hanging in the background, identified within royal inventories, are by artists such as Peter Paul Rubens, testifying to Velázquez’s knowledge of and status among international artists. The canvas in the extreme left foreground is denied to the viewer and faces the artist, who dons the cross of the Order of Santiago, a noble ranking he did not have access to in 1656. The princess in the center surrounded by attendants further serves to locate the artist as a master at the top of his trade within court culture. For our purposes, though, what makes this an interesting precedent to technological interfaces is the mirror in the background, which bears the reflection of the subject of the unviewable, in-process canvas—the king and queen sitting for their portrait.

Within the painting’s complex logic, the royal couple occupies the space of the viewer. The painting, then, becomes an extension of the viewer’s space not simply in the Renaissance sense of perspective expanding out from a single viewpoint, but also in a reflexive turn back towards the real, physical, “here and now” space in front of the canvas. However, this engagement with the viewer is duplicitous, as naturally the image cannot actually see us in return. W.J.T. Mitchell calls this an extreme presentation of the “primordial convention of pictures…[a] *tableau vivant* for sovereign beholders whose authority is subtly called into question even as it is complimented.”

The trope of the mirror was also used by Jan Van Eyck in

---

The Arnolfini Portrait (1434) where the convex mirror in the background reveals the artist painting the image we see—thus extending the fictive space of the canvas (the room) into our space, further locking the viewer out, yet generating a parallel artist-sitter spatial relationship as in the Velázquez. Both mirrors are logical extensions of the rooms depicted in the paintings, but Velázquez’s also relates to the future life of the painting—its position within the royal residence and the interaction with its owners. When the royal couple would contemplate the canvas in their private collection, they would participate in its space. Seeing ourselves within the image (or at least within its diegetic spaces), then, is an established paradigm in the visual arts, though one that is layered with more embodied notions of presentness in contemporary media art.45

This evocation of a Baroque painting relates to what theorist Anna Munster refers to as the decidedly Baroque nature of digital aesthetics. In Materializing New Media: Embodiment and Information Aesthetics, she argues for a reading of digital culture through embodiment, countering the Cartesian aesthetic that relegates the digital to the realm of the virtual. One of her main rhetorical devices is that of “the fold,” which engages with the ways “living with contemporary digital machines produces instead [of cyborg and posthuman theories where code and body assimilate] everyday encounters of doubling, splitting and reverberating as new aspects of our bodily experiences.”46 For Munster the multiplicity of experiences and the embodied nature of information aesthetics parallels Baroque notions of discontinuity and curiosity in aesthetics; the philosophy of Leibniz; and the multisensory, multimedia, interactive environment of the Wunderkammer. In this light Las Meninas’s multiple vectors of visual interest and its

enfolding of the space of the viewer parallel similar multisensory and self-reflexive spaces in contemporary media art.

Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto’s “mirror paintings” from the 1960s make this collapse of viewing space and pictorial space even more overt than the Baroque fold, as the reflection of the onlooker—and, more importantly, the position of the on-looker in relationship to the surface of the painting—becomes as much a part of the image as seen by the viewer as the artist’s painted images. Their presentness informs much of the critical debate around them, although our experience of them via photographs necessarily freezes them within a certain place and time.47 To see ourselves within the work of art and within the space in front of it—and implicated as both viewers and participants within that space—is to have a fundamentally opposite relationship to the image than the Cartesian subject of Renaissance perspective or Classical Hollywood cinema. Our position in relationship to the mirror painting’s surface alters the interactions between painted and reflected images. At times we see ourselves, at times we see others, and at other times we see other artworks. In the photograph I took of myself at the Brooklyn Museum, this complicated network is heightened. (Fig. 26) My image is self-reflexive, my gaze meets the camera in the reflection, and the image betrays the camera’s presence. Behind me is a work by Joe Overstreet, situating Pistoletto’s image within a broader institutional and social context. If I were to have taken this photograph from a different angle, there would be an entirely different relationship generated on the surface of Pistoletto’s work. His painting becomes

(in a way) an “open work,” to borrow a term from one of Pistoletto’s contemporary Italian thinkers, Umberto Eco.48

Eco’s concept of the open work not only understands art that is “in movement” where the author invites the viewer to “make the work together”—what we would today call “relational”—but also works that “though organically completed, are ‘open’ to a continuous generation of internal relations which the addressee must uncover.”49 Furthermore, Eco argues that “every work of art…is effectively open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings, each of which cause the work to acquire new vitality in terms of one particular taste, or perspective, or personal performance.”50 This concept of the open work is particularly appropriate to understanding moving images in public space in terms of their situational contingency. Eco also makes a connection between the open work and the Baroque that parallels Munster:

…it is precisely the static and unquestionable definitiveness of the classical Renaissance form which is denied [in the open work]…Baroque form is dynamic, it tends to an interdeterminacy of effect (in its play of solid and void, light and darkness, with its curvature, its broken surfaces, its widely diversified angles of inclination); it conveys the idea of space being progressively dilated. Its search for kinetic excitement and illusory effect leads to a situation where the plastic mass in the Baroque work of art never allows a privileged, definitive, frontal view; rather it induces the spectator to shift his position continuously in order to see the work in constantly new aspects, as if it were in a state of perpetual transformation.51

Indeterminacy, perpetual transformation, kinetic, illusory…these are all terms we could use to discuss the introduction of interactive technologies into both art and public space. Furthermore Eco’s evocation of the way a work “induces the spectator to shift his position continuously” is particularly a propos to media installation art in public spaces. Eco’s concept, so influential in

49 Ibid., 21.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 7.
literary and art theory, seems to connect also to the pliability and responsiveness of digital interfaces and the invitation to play with a work of art, to complete it through interaction.

That reflexive interactivity exists not only in the real-time video feedback of Dan Graham and others, but also in the paintings of Velázquez and Pistoletto suggests that this mode of viewing has a long history across mediums. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, in his essay published alongside a reader on *Under Scan*, a projection where passersby interact with video portraits I discuss in the last section of this chapter, cites work by artists like Velázquez as enhancing the “moment of complicity between the representation and reality” by collapsing the space of the painting with the presence of the viewer.\(^{52}\) This collapse offers a mode of spectatorship opposed to theories of absorption and passivity, though it does not necessarily disallow the fictive space. Indeed the moment of complicity would not be possible were it not for the illusionistic qualities of the image (otherwise the moment would be mere material existence). Certainly this Brechtian shock is true of *Under Scan* and other media installation precedents, but there is another mode by which this type of mirror image engages the viewer. Seeing ourselves in a work of art not only pulls our consciousness out of the represented space (and back to reality), but also pulls our body further into the space of the work of art. There’s something of a novelty of being included in a space other than one’s own that occurs with Pistoletto, Graham, and even Velázquez, and this novelty extends beyond the realm of art and into broader visual culture.

Seeing ourselves within the work of art is not only an established paradigm for structuring an image, but also part of a new phenomenon in mediated art viewing: digital photography through mobile phones. With very popular installation works such as Yayoi Kusama’s 2013 installation at David Zwirner Gallery in New York *I Who Have Arrived in*

---

\(^{52}\) Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, *Under Scan* (Montréal, Québec: emda & Antimodular, 2007), 14.
Heaven (fig. 27) or Kara Walker’s 2014 large-scale installation at Domino Sugar Factory in Brooklyn A Subtlety (fig. 28), the act of implicating viewers within the work of art becomes ritualized through social media. To see both works visitors often endured long lines to enter the free installations. With Kusama’s Mirrored Infinity Room, the highlight of her show at David Zwirner, lines began at least two hours before the gallery opened and were cut off three hours before closing. When I attended this work, I waited three and a half hours for a mere thirty seconds inside the installation. Walker’s installation, on the other hand, was in a far more spacious setting and its lines rarely topped an hour and were considerably more endurable in the early summer. In both instances, many reviewers remarked on the preponderance of digital photography, particularly selfies, at the events. In William Grimes’s New York Times piece on I Who Have Arrived in Heaven, the culture of the long line and its relationship to the photo-sharing social media site Instagram inform more of his reading than the work itself, something he links to the immersive work of artists such as Doug Wheeler and James Turrell.

In Walker’s installation the use of hashtags on Instagram and Twitter were overtly encouraged by the sponsoring agency Creative Time. Not only did one sign state “Please…Do not touch the artwork/ But do share pictures on social media with #karawalkerd Domino” but a sign

---

53 Walker’s piece in particular engages with viewer participation on a number of levels, often highlighting her work’s racial and sexual politics. The artist even commissioned a film crew to secretly record viewers at the Domino installation to create the 28-minute film An Audience (2014). For the present discussion, however, I am interested in how viewers record themselves within the work of art rather than Walker’s inversion of the gaze with her clandestine film.

54 The usual time for each visitor inside the room was forty-five seconds, but since I was in the back of the line, and it was after closing time at 6pm, the gallery attendants shortened the time to thirty seconds and had those of us who came in pairs double up.

at the entrance clearly warned “you may be photographed and filmed.” To enter into the art
installation/event, then, is to participate within broader networks of image circulation online. The
viewer is here part of the work’s image, even though the project is in no way aesthetically
relational, participatory, or interactive (beyond the basic ambulatory aspects of all installation art
and architecture). Critics remarked frequently over the racial politics of social media images
affiliated with this work, often hand-picking images of white visitors making offensive gestures
or innuendos against the nude sphinx that were particularly unsettling considering the
installation’s theme of the sexual and physical exploitation of slave labor by the sugar industry.⁵⁶
Most images recorded online, however, (based on skimming of those available) were not
offensive.

With these selfies the viewer is recorded within the physical place of the work of art
itself, which is to say that such an act participates in the work’s “aura.” Digital images enter into
the image economy as pictures unto themselves. Even further removed from the referent than the
processes discussed in Benjamin’s “mechanical reproduction,” digital images are mere
information. With mobile photography and social media, however, the immediacy and the
location of the apparatus creates a different context for viewing images. Though these images are
certainly subject to the same manner of manipulation as all digital photography, the nature of the
apparatus’s instantaneous relationship to social media suggests a type of physical, place-bound

⁵⁶ Alison Cherman, “Kara Walker Knew People Would Take Dumb Selfies With ‘A Subtlety,’
immediacy. Furthermore, when an image is uploaded onto digital media and “tagged” at a certain location using WiFi or GPS, the locational presentness in relationship to the image is further reinforced. The time and place of the image are embedded within the same code that makes up the image itself—the metadata.

A Facebook profile picture within Kusama’s *Infinity Room*, then, is not only a signifier of one’s cultural capital (and endurance in the face of long lines and cold weather), but also a re-inscription of the aura of the work of art through multiple layers of media. By this I am referring to Walter Benjamin’s insistence on the unique work of art’s “presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.” For Benjamin what happens with mechanical reproduction is the dispersion of the image, something that degrades the aura, but not something of which he is altogether critical (though many have misinterpreted this otherwise). While this dispersion accelerates with popular public and immersive projects like Walker’s or Kusama’s, the means of reproduction (mobile photography) has a more specific relationship to the work of art’s “unique existence” in time and space than, say, a postcard reproduction. The Instagram in front of Walker’s sphinx or the geotag at the Domino Sugar Factory reinforces the physical and temporal validity of the original precisely by its ever-expanding ability to multiply as an image across multiple screens. Paradoxically, the acceleration of reproducible images through digital channels reasserts the presence, uniqueness, and even autonomy of the original. It insists “I was there” to the world—it places the unique viewer-cum-photographer inside the work of art in a manner more democratic than but similar to how Van Eyck and Velázquez

---

57 The Instagram hashtag “#latergram,” which is used for images uploaded a significant amount of time after the user took them, is a perfect example of this phenomenon, as is the mere term “Instagram” and the application’s evocation of Polaroid photography’s immediacy and aesthetics.

incorporated the artist and viewer into their pictorial spaces. The craze to integrate social media in the consumption of a work of art’s aura has met with mixed reactions in the museum world. While the Instagram hashtag #MuseumSelfie is used by many institutions to promote attendance annually on January 21st, many museums have also had to outlaw the use of “selfie sticks” in museums due to the danger they pose to the objects on view.  

Seeing ourselves on screens extends beyond works of art and into the broader media ecology in ways that can either naturalize or unsettle the surveillance apparatus. The sports stadium is the site of some of the largest and most sophisticated screens in contemporary public space. The jumbotron, which debuted in the mid-1980s in Tokyo, has redefined how we experience the live sporting event and the scale of public media screens. The jumbotron is rarely used for live broadcast of the game (as it is in concerts), as this would distract spectators from viewing the actual players on the field. Other than its obvious use for advertising, the jumbotron is mostly used to enhance the experience, both of the game and of the social experience of attending the event. In the first instance the screens are used for statistics or replays, giving the fans a more in-depth look at the plays they just experienced or information for navigating the live event (parallel to Casetti’s “bulletin board” metaphor). In the second, the screen shows real-time images of the crowd. Most often these shots come in the form of dance breaks or the dreaded “Kiss Cam.” In the dance breaks the stadium plays a popular upbeat song,

---


60 Scott McQuire, “Mobility, Cosmopolitanism and Public Space in the Media City,” in Urban Screens Reader, ed. Scott McQuire, Meredith Martin, and Sabine Niederer, INC Readers 5 (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2009), 46.
and the text on the screen urges people to get up and dance as cameras pan the crowd to zoom in to attention-seeking sports fans. The kiss cam, used in baseball games during inning switches and during television breaks and timeouts in other sports, zooms in on unsuspecting couples until they acquiesce to the stadium’s demand and kiss, often leading to embarrassing moments, laughter, and an advertisement for a local florist company. During both the kiss cam and the dance breaks, unsuspecting people suddenly see themselves on screen, point to and look at it. This creates a strange image where the accidental performer is both aware of the camera’s presence and not looking at it. Most often people wave to the camera by waving to the screen (and thus their own self-image), appearing to be signaling something off-screen within the image. This is spatially far different than the acknowledgement of the camera in, say, the work of Vito Acconci where the artist looks directly into the camera, thus generating a reciprocity with the viewer. This is even the case in Centering (1971), a work where the artist engages real-time feedback on a monitor, a moment Rosalind Krauss cites as part of the “narcissistic” condition of the video medium. In the jumbotron the viewer/performer’s acknowledgement of the camera and of the screen blocks the viewer out rather than implicating her further.

I can testify to this uncanny feeling when I found myself on the jumbotron at Nationals Park in Washington D.C. during one of the dance segments. My sister and I, both ostensibly trying to get on the screen when the music was blaring, experienced a sudden shock when we saw ourselves on screen. Like most other people caught unawares, we pointed and looked at our own images on screen, so our images were looking away from the camera. Since stadiums often use zoom lenses for these segments (unlike the portable cameras with more pre-screened fan shorts), we had no idea where the camera was and couldn’t look into it if we wanted. In this way

---

the stadium jumbotron not only converges with a longer history of seeing ourselves in screens but also with systems of surveillance in public space. To see a major sporting event is essentially to agree to be filmed by multiple types of cameras—the in-stadium jumbotron programing, television broadcasting, and security surveillance cameras. The uncanny experience of seeing myself on the big screen was not only a means of reinforcing the liveness of the event, but also a subtle reminder of how public spaces are under constant surveillance. Interestingly my appearance on the jumbotron caused another screen interaction as well—a friend at the game who did not know I was also there sent me a text.

Public interactive artworks also engage with the concept of mise-en-screen by often using or inverting surveillance camera systems. The novelty of seeing ourselves in cinema harkens back to itinerant films. In itinerant cinema, directors such as Melton Barker would travel around producing low-budget films (often with the same script) using local, non-professional actors. The film would then be promoted as an event with tag lines such as “See your town—maybe yourself in the movies.” While to many this is merely a bit of trivia in the history of film, it also suggests that the novelty of seeing ourselves on screen is something filmmakers and artists have been exploiting for many years. Manchester curator Kate Taylor noted how the audience for the local BBC Big Screen were “narcissistic, and enjoy seeing themselves in their area, hearing their accent and having their history reflected on screen.” While this also pertains to the role of public screens in relationship to place (analyzed in chapter four), we can understand this self interest as connecting to interactive screens in which we see our own image. Indeed one of the

64 Taylor, “Programming Video Art for Urban Screens in Public Space.”
Big Screen project’s most successful syndicated works follows exactly this premise: Chris O’Shea’s *Hand from Above* (2009). (Fig. 29)

**Hand from Above**

British artist and designer Chris O’Shea’s work explores the role of play through technology. Making many works for children (including iPhone applications and installations in hospitals specifically designed for education or therapy) his 2009 foray into the public realm spoke to a much broader audience, yet retained some of the childlike tone of his larger work. In *Hand from Above*, O’Shea uses not only the screen’s real-time image but also its appending surveillance camera to create a playful piece in public spaces throughout the UK. As part of the programming wheel on the BBC Big Screens discussed in chapter two, *Hand from Above* entered city centers at different times throughout the day, encouraging passersby not only to look up, but also to play and become involved. The concept of “flux” discussed in chapter two takes on a new valence with interactive programming, as the shifting content wheel not only provides a continual visual interest for people throughout the day, but the space in front of the screen is another means of engaging the public. Passersby are not only inclined to take notice of the screen’s content, but now viewers themselves are part of the overall display.65

The work, which ran as a regular segment along with some other interactive games on the AudienceTV programming wheel, was part feedback video art (a la Dan Graham), part Monty Python, and part public surveillance screen. The screen featured a real-time image of the square

---

65 Anna McCarthy examines this relationship between viewer and performer with public screen by analyzing a display for a massaging chair at a Sharper Image store. The comfortable recliner invites shoppers to relax and watch a video advertisement for the chair; “when customers sit in the chair and test its feel, they become part of the display, demonstrating for others the attractiveness of this private viewing position.” McCarthy, *Ambient Television*, 139. In this example, the body in front of the screen is as much a part of the display as the screen itself. Similarly with *Hand from Above*, movement and play in front of the screen facilitates interaction as much as the screen’s image itself.
in front of it, with people in the square seen in miniature from above. The usually unnoticeable surveillance camera installed at the top of all the Big Screens was now not only apparent to those being filmed, but also incorporated into the screen’s image. The feedback made the space on the screen and the space in front of the screen “complicit,” in Lozano-Hemmer’s terms. Periodically an animated hand descended into the frame to interact with the images of spectator/participants. At times it would pluck an individual out of the square, then it might tickle a person, and then it might squash or flick the figure away. The hand seemingly “saw” the world below it and could manipulate it accordingly. The image and animation on screen not only generated a space where viewers would move and wave in order to see themselves within the mise-en-scene, but also interacted with a larger cultural topos of the “hand of God.”

In Erkki Huhtamo’s essay “Dismantling the Fairy Engine: Media Archaeology as Topos Study,” he explores the potential in German literary scholar Ernst Robert Curtius’s concept of “topos study” in an analysis of media. By topos he refers to those elements of culture that seem to resurface in various forms throughout cultural development. Huhtamo’s concept does not believe in the immutability or classical origins of all topoi (as Curtius did, having related his concept to Carl Jung’s notion of archetypes), but rather Huhtamo looks at how certain themes, motifs, or images cross historical and media boundaries, with continuities and ruptures along the way.66 One such topos he analyzes is the “hand of God,” which interferes with the lives of humans from above.67 This is clearly recognizable in ancient and medieval religious art and texts

---

67 Ibid., 35.
as well as contemporary images, often in relationship to new technology. The “hand of God” is also comically evoked in the otherworldly animations of British comedy troupe Monty Python, whose absurdist comedy often explicitly engages with medieval iconography and themes. O’Shea’s work clearly interacts with this cultural topos, both explicitly in its title and in the hand’s disembodied appearance and unnaturally large scale in comparison to the people below on screen. The artist’s statement on his website further engages with this topos:

Inspired by Land of the Giants and Goliath, we are reminded of mythical stories by mischievously unleashing a giant hand from the BBC Big Screen. Passers by [sic] will be playfully transformed. What if humans weren’t on top of the food chain? Unsuspecting pedestrians will be tickled, stretched, flicked or removed entirely in real-time by a giant deity.

Not only does O’Shea explicitly reference the cultural and popular material that engage with this topos, but also alludes to the “God-like” quality of the hand by referring to it as a “deity” and suggesting the work imagines humans as not on top of the food chain. The result, however, is not the terrifying and controlling presence of an all-powerful being, but rather, a playful (though possibly mischievous) interaction.

Another extension of the “hand of God” topos relates to the “God’s eye” camera angle of gameplay in video games such as The Sims, where “the metaphysical hand has now materialized as the player’s own interacting hand.” In these games the player hovers over the virtual world and is able to tap into multiple spaces and players. This is in sharp contrast to the “first-person shooter” genre of video games, where the diegetic space unfolds through the point of view of the main protagonist. In O’Shea’s piece the camera angle refers not to how the viewer/player sees

---

68 Huhtamo cites advertisements for products as diverse as the Model-T Ford and the Dirt Devil vacuum cleaner that make use of this topos, as well as films such as Roberto Rossellini’s La macchina ammazzacattivi (The Machine That Kills Bad People, 1952). Ibid., 35–36.
70 Huhtamo, “Dismantling the Fairy Engine: Media Archaeology as Topos Study,” 36.
and manipulates a virtual world, but rather how the surveilling apparatus sees her, and how she sees her own physical body within that apparatus. Unlike in games like *The Sims*, one cannot navigate the inner workings of the virtual screen world with the movements of one’s body, but can rather use movements to attract attention for the virtual “hand of God” to manipulate the real-time image of the physical space in front of the screen. Seeing ourselves on screen *from above* levels the space we are in to make us realize our own anonymity within public space, and also periodically plucks people out of anonymity and into the spotlight, much like the dance and kiss cameras on jumbotrons at sporting events.

This dramatic tension between being part of the crowd and singled out, between surveillance and celebrity, is imbedded in both the longer history of film and the particular screen situation. Tony Oursler’s *Sony Movie Block*, discussed in chapter two, as well as the itinerant films of Barker discussed above and even one of the earlier Lumière Brothers’ film, *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895) all depict the anonymous movements of people in urban spaces, and in the case of itinerant cinema, the tension between anonymity and familiarity is very pronounced. In terms of its particular screen situation, in its BBC Big Screen incarnations, *Hand from Above* not only engaged with the new concept of flux for programming in public spaces discussed earlier, but also the same spatial apparatus of a Big Screen. The Big Screens were a story off the ground, often acquiring the status of architecture through permanent armatures in city centers, and spanned thirty-three feet diagonally across. As Anna McCarthy has argued in relationship to ceiling mounted television, the overhead screen “acquires some of the status of institutional speech” through the inaccessibility of its controls as well as the uninterrupted sightlines it affords.\(^{71}\) She contrasts this placement of television to the single-

---

\(^{71}\) McCarthy, *Ambient Television*, 122.
viewer set-ups that carve out micro-zones of privacy in public spaces and have modifiable content. She writes:

Overhead placement is thus a physical positioning that addresses the viewer as an anonymous individual, physicalizing a modern conception of the subject in public space as a stranger—a subject whose motives are, to some extent, unpredictable and perhaps even counter to the collective ethos of the space through which he or she moves.72

Indeed it is not much of a conceptual leap to imagine science fiction images of bosses or “Big Brother” type images in the Big Screen’s physical format. In films as diverse as Modern Times (Charlie Chaplin, 1936), The Handmaid’s Tale (Volker Schlöndorff, 1990), and The Hunger Games (Gary Ross, 2012) large screens are used to reassert the power of authority either by assuming the role of the all-seeing boss (as in Chaplin’s films) or spectacularizing already large scale displays of public discipline and control (as in the public executions in The Handmaid’s Tale or the reapings in Hunger Games).

The BBC Big Screens were certainly more than an extension of the surveillance state in the UK, and indeed I argue for their potential to bring art into public spaces in chapter two and their ability to generate genuine encounters with place in chapter four. However, there is an important engagement with (at the very least) the cultural “topos” of Big Brother and the surveillance state that is part of Hand from Above’s power. Like many overhead screens in public spaces, the Big Screens were each equipped with surveillance cameras. O’Shea makes the camera’s physical presence in the square apparent on screen while also revealing more technologically sophisticated means of surveillance beyond mere CCTV. The hand that manipulates people below is automated through a computer program that gathers input from tracking software. Not only does the surveillance apparatus record your image, but it can track your movements and

72 Ibid.
anticipate where you will move. This shift from disciplining surveillance architecture to controlling tracking systems is outlined in Gilles Deleuze’s essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” analyzed further in the next section.\(^{73}\) To participate in public space at all (be it the physical space of a public square or the virtual space of the internet) is most often to submit to being recorded and tracked. In some ways we elect to participate in this (through social media or cell phone usage), in others it passes by unnoticed in public spaces. With *Hand from Above* an interesting collapse between these poles—the predatory and the participatory—happens when looking at the interactions of viewers.

Though unable to see *Hand from Above* in action, I have viewed many video documentations that are available. In these videos passersby are noticeably amused and engaged—both visually and physically—by the work. They often point, wave, or move around in order to perform the same operation as the movement-tracking software—distinguishing the individual from the crowd. The self-reflexivity of the work generates a heightened awareness of one’s presence in public space. When the hand pays attention to someone on the screen, the immediate reaction is to locate where that person is in the square. Like *Crown Fountain* the screen creates a social space in front of it where attention is not merely directed at the moving image, but to shared physical space with others. It similarly generates a “magic circle” where people feel comfortable to perform and play. The work’s presence within the screen’s fluctuating daily programming and in the city center brings a sense of whimsy into people’s daily lives, a playfulness underscored not only by the social interactions it prompts, but also by the audio that accompanied the piece, which is reminiscent of cartoons and the sounds kids make when they tickle each other.

Many of the BBC screen managers I spoke with in 2013 specifically mentioned *Hand from Above* as an extremely successful project of Big Screen programming. This is very much in-keeping with impact studies commissioned by the BBC that privileged interactive content and events over ambient content. In contemporary public spaces, with so many competing stimuli not only from screens and attractions in public space but also through mobile technology, it is no small wonder that programmers and arts administrators value explicit engagement they can actually see in the square. People interacting with the screen in a work like *Hand from Above* clearly demonstrate that content is reaching an audience. Though footfall counts can measure how many “impressions” an ambient screen makes, there is no surety that passersby have taken notice. With interactive content, however, the impact is ascertainable by observation.

O’Shea’s concept for *Hand from Above*, much like Bill Brand’s adaptation of zoetropic animation for train travel discussed in chapter two, was later incorporated into out-of-home advertising. In Times Square the large “spectacular” (LED billboard) above the retail fashion store Forever 21 oscillated between ambient and interactive content, using the very same technology as *Hand from Above*. In the interactive component the screen showed a real-time video of the area of Times Square just in front of the screen. Periodically a young model would appear in front of the image, seeming to hover over the tiny people below much like the hand in the original work. Instead of manipulating and poking the people below, the model instead picks up people carrying yellow Forever 21 bags or snaps a picture that is reframed as a Polaroid. I have had the opportunity to experience this work a number of times and can attest that it certainly does engage its viewers. It also activates the new pedestrian spaces of Times Square,
streets that have been freed of automobile traffic in order to accommodate the swell of pedestrians and encourage visitors to linger and even sit down on folding chairs.\(^{74}\)

Since Times Square is populated largely by tourists taking in the overwhelming multimedia commercial spectacle, they are (for the most part) already looking up. Much as in the video documentation of *Hand from Above*, I noticed people waving, moving around, pointing, and snapping pictures on their phones (in fact, I did many of the same things). Also as in *Hand from Above*, the interactive element was not continuous. Whereas in O’Shea’s work the piece was part of the “flux” of the Big Screen’s programming wheel, with the Forever 21 Billboard standard televisual advertisements were interspersed between periods of interactivity. This led to some frustration among viewers at having to wait through commercials in order to play again, but it also reinforced the brand. The webpage for the digital advertising agency Space150, which was responsible for the billboard claimed:

> Participation and engagement was [sic] immediate and insane. Since the boards [sic] debut, we have been tasked several times by Forever 21 to update the content…We turned our audience into stars of their very own Times Square experience. Participation was so huge that the NYPD required us to change the angle of our camera so people would stop blocking traffic in the streets.\(^{75}\)

What this excerpt from the agency’s website tells us (aside from the lack of in-house copyeditors) is that sustained attention through participation is a selling point. That they take pride in obstructing foot traffic extends to their claim that the billboard generates a 29% increase in time spent looking at it. The sign not only is located in one of the most coveted spaces in the OOH industry for catching “eyeballs,” but it actually has the power to generate a bodily


engagement, and thus a sustained ocular attention. Furthermore, the transformation of “audience into stars” highlights the interconnectedness of celebrity culture and surveillance systems in the contemporary media economy. When the Forever 21 store first opened, bright lights would flash to welcome the shopper, mimicking the flashes of paparazzi cameras. Unfortunately Chris O’Shea did not reap any financial benefits or shared credit from this sign’s success, despite evidence that Space150 was aware of *Hand from Above* prior to pursuing the project.76

*Hand from Above*’s activation of surveillance and tracking technologies parallels the usage of these interfaces and programs in all elements of the public sphere—in art, advertising, state-sponsored surveillance, or corporate datamining. By making such an interface playful, the artist is, perhaps, asking us to think of how the new public sphere (both virtual and physical) can be reformulated to generate spontaneous communities and play. In the next section, I examine the rhetoric of the interface further, along with examining the ways the society of control interacts with how we make use of and are affected by screens. This look at popular media and

---

76 When first covered in an online article via the trade magazine *Fast Company*, there was no mention of O’Shea’s piece until the artist himself commented on it. This later sparked a “flame war” (heated debate in the comments section of a website) on Vimeo where both the artist and members of Space150 hashed out the issues of appropriation and recognition. This exchange and controversy is detailed in a second article from *Fast Company*. It would seem Space150 reached out to O’Shea with an incredibly nebulous offer to work on a project (with no mention of *Hand from Above*). After he declined, they proceeded with the project without crediting the artist’s work or remunerating him in any way. In the end Space150 has agreed to cite O’Shea’s work as an inspiration, but in an industry that prides itself on being innovators, this seems like it’s too little too late. As of February 2015, O’Shea’s name is still nowhere to be found on Space150’s official page for the project. Cliff Kuang, “Giant Model in Spy Tech-Powered Billboard Plucks, Chucks Times Square Visitors,” *Fast Company*, June 25, 2010, http://www.fastcompany.com/1663846/giant-model-spy-tech-powered-billboard-plucks-chucks-times-square-visitors-video. and Cliff Kuang, “Times Square Billboard Touches Off Controversy Over Artistic Credit-Sharing,” *Fast Company*, June 28, 2010, http://www.fastcompany.com/1664669/times-square-billboard-touches-controversy-over-artistic-credit-sharing.
current theory precedes an analysis of an artist whose use of surveillance technologies parallels *Hand from Above*, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer.

**Interface**

The notion of “interface” informs much of our current interaction with screens. The reciprocity of screen technologies today—they don’t merely deliver content, but also require input—creates a profoundly more bodily encounter with many types of media. Media scholar and curator Lutz Koepnik likens the interface to Kafka’s essay “The Street Window” (1913) and Caspar David Friedrich’s painting *Woman at the Window* (1822). The window in these two sources is not the Renaissance window which frames an exterior world, but rather “a surface where two different worlds—the world of the viewer and the world of the viewed—appear to touch each other.”

Interfaces bridge the gap between computer code and computer user, “between the abstract and the corporeal.” We need icons, text, keyboards, mice, or touchscreens even to be able to interact with the endless streams of binary code that drive computers. Despite the popularity of voice-activated computer systems such as Apple’s “Siri,” touch is still the main way we interact with screens today.

We control our computer by touching the keyboard or mouse, we switch channels on the television by handling and touching a remote control, and we interact with smartphones and tablets by touching the screen itself. Control is an important concept when considering interfaces

---


78 Ibid., 19.

79 When teaching Byzantine art, in order to illustrate the concept of “icon” I ask my students how many of them used an icon before coming to class. Bewildered, most shake their head, until they realize that they used many of them on their mobile devices. In this way an icon is an image that stands in for a much larger, abstract, almost unknowable concept (in the Byzantine world, this was God; with the cell phone, it is streams of binary code).
in the public and private realms, though it should not be confused with power. Caetlin Benson-Allott’s study of the history of the remote control reveals that the device that promises user agency actually does more to program our spaces and interactions with media than anything else.\textsuperscript{80} Anna McCarthy draws a direct connection between access to a monitor’s controls and the designation of the televisual object as private or public property.\textsuperscript{81} Our ability to manipulate media flows exists within established parameters of consumption. In liminal spaces, such as the backseat of New York taxicabs, the captive audiences have partial control over the screen. Taxicab screens, which if untouched will play a loop of local news content and advertising, allow the rider to mute or turn off content as well as navigate maps or make a credit card payment at the end of the ride. As the taxicab is a semi-private space, viewers are necessarily given control at least to turn off unwanted content and sound (often to the relief of the cab driver). Many more public interactive screens operate on an opposite pendulum between touch and content, where the screens need our touch in order to “wake up” rather than power off.

Suburban shopping malls are currently in a state of decline with the rise of mega online retailers like Amazon.com and the vogue for outdoor New Urbanist designed centers in affluent suburban areas. However, there are parts of the mall that still reflect changes in contemporary screen culture in much the same way Anne Friedberg observed that the mall’s sense of spatial and temporal dislocations and flanerie mirrored the radical changes to spectatorship happening with the VCR, cable television, and the multiplex in the 1980s and early 90s.\textsuperscript{82} The illuminated directory, a necessary orienting object found in any mall, allows shoppers to navigate multiple

\textsuperscript{81} McCarthy, \textit{Ambient Television}, 121.
\textsuperscript{82} Anne Friedberg, \textit{Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 109–156.
levels and shops. Increasingly, however, these are not static displays or posters, but rather high-resolution touch screens. If left untouched the directory reverts to advertisements—images designed for the “ambient” mode of spectatorship discussed in chapter two. The screen, lacking touch, knows no one is paying particular attention to it, so it reverts to another mode—one that’s meant to attract the incidental viewer. In order to access the directory’s content one must disrupt the flow of advertising physically and activate the screen’s primary function as directory. The same screen behavior occurs with domestic and personal media. Computer screens switch to “screensavers” when not used, and on-demand television interfaces ask “are you still watching?” after a few episodes of a television program have run via autoplay. In both these instances and in the public space of the mall directory, haptic contact verifies the presence of “eyeballs,” an important term for the advertising industry and a quantifiable metric for future marketing. Furthermore, the use of interactive technologies in public spaces redirects attention and orientation in those spaces, they become directional displays or “bulletin boards” as discussed by Francesco Casetti, or focal points that that draw users to them in space through illumination, like moths to a flame.

83 Watching television via an on-demand platform such as Netflix or Hulu oscillates between Raymond Williams’s concept of “flux” (discussed in chapter two) and the need for contemporary screens to be touched. When one is watching a series Netflix will minimize the credits of the episode just completed onto a smaller screen, show the synopses for the next episode along with a countdown for when new content is going to start. Just like “flow” in broadcast television, the autoplay feature is designed to keep the viewer from changing to different content (or even turning the screen off). Rather than enticing the viewer into a new program, on-demand autoplay promotes “binge watching” where viewers watch multiple episodes in one setting, breaking the traditional weeklong wait between points in a story in broadcast (and furthering the linguistic connection between consumption and television viewing, where “binging” is an out of control, gluttonous form of “consuming”). Netflix won’t play to an empty room for long, though, as after a few episodes it will stop the program with a screen that asks “are you still watching [insert program title here]?” In order to keep “binging” the program, the viewer must select “yes” via touchscreen, mouse, or remote control—she must use touch to confirm the presence of her gaze.
Indeed the control these interactive displays lend to the viewer may be only a ruse, a means to make data-collection more palatable. In 1992, just before the explosion of the world-wide-web, philosopher Gilles Deleuze discussed the shift in the later twentieth century from the societies of discipline to the societies of control. The former, theorized by Michel Foucault, were defined by “the organization of vast spaces of enclosure,” whereas the latter are characterized by modification and tracking. While the earlier regime was defined by the factory, in Deleuze’s argument the society of control is defined by the corporation, an entity that “is a spirit, a gas” in undergoing constant modulation. While Deleuze’s argument echoes much postmodern writing on the shift to “late capitalism” or “post-Fordism,” he also touches upon a particular way this shift in capitalism structures our movements through space. He concludes his essay with a reflection on how credit cards have created “electronic collars” that track our movements rather than constricting them (as in the older regime). Over three decades later, these words are even more prescient as not only has electronic tracking surveillance expanded exponentially in the digital and physical worlds, but its mechanisms have been folded into consumer society in the guise of “wearables,” devices such as FitBit activity trackers and the Apple watch.

Alexander Galloway, writing twenty years after Deleuze, takes a similarly totalizing view of how modern technology has changed everyday life in The Interface Effect. Analyzing a wide range of cultural material, Galloway argues that interfaces are not merely exchange points but “autonomous zones of activity.” Galloway ponders the new position of coherence and representation in the new regime and introduces a number of metaphors and terms for discussing...

84 Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” 3.
85 Ibid., 4.
86 Ibid., 7.
what he calls “infomatics” and the new aesthetic and political regime. One of the most instructive of these is the term “ludic capitalism” where “labor itself is now play.”

Echoing Deleuze, he writes, “With cybernetics, the notion of play adopts a special interest in homeostasis and systemic interaction. The world’s entities are no longer contained and contextless but are forever operating within ecosystems of interplay and correspondence.”

He observes that Huizinga’s text discussed at the opening of this chapter has been cited for causes of the left and right. To Galloway, then, the concept of play is linked to the society of control and the increasingly blurred line between life and labor brought on by datamining, social media, and global corporate capitalism. The concluding chapters’ discussion of how all of our lives are now defined by labor, including analyses of the television program 24 (Fox, 2001-2010, 2014) and the online multiplayer game World of Warcraft, is echoed in Jonathan Crary’s polemical book 24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep.

Crary defines 24/7 capitalism “not simply [as] a continuous or sequential capture of attention, but also a dense layer of time, in which multiple operations or attractions can be attended to in near-simultaneity, regardless of where one is or whatever else one might be doing.”

Crary accuses 24/7 capitalism of completely overhauling downtime, the ability to daydream, and even natural sleep patterns by both regimenting the entire day as the workday and illuminating the night. Meditating on Joseph Wright’s painting Arkwright’s Cotton Mills by Night (c.1782), he argues that the present state of 24/7 sleeplessness enabled by cable television,

---

88 Ibid., 29.
89 Ibid., 28.
90 Jonathan Crary, 24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep (London: Verso, 2014) Crary never cites Galloway but perhaps this is an example of two writers coming to the same idea at (almost) the same moment).
internet browsing, and global market capitalism actually began in the first industrial revolution. While some of his argument verges on a rather luddite and apocalyptic critique of technology, there are some important insights into the complexities of contemporary mediated experience and space. Furthermore, the concept of “sleep” in relationship to screens is far more complicated. As mentioned above, contemporary means of consuming media via screens quite often require tactile feedback in order to play “24/7,” suggesting it is the viewer who keeps the screen from sleeping, not the other way around. Interestingly, it is through nocturnal illumination that many moving image-based public artists find their most effective practices. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s public work makes use of the darkness of the night and the attraction we have to illuminated spaces within it to reverse the numbness Crary accuses technology of generating and instead to engender spontaneous, playful micro-communities in public space.

Out of Control: Public Interfaces in the work of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer

Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer has an international public art practice. Much like Jaume Plensa and Doug Aitken discussed earlier and Krzysztof Wodiczko discussed in the next chapter, Lozano-Hemmer’s projects have been actualized on multiple continents and in response to multiple sites, following a trend of “nomadism” Miwon Kwon has identified in contemporary artistic practice. However, the artist does not consider his works particularly “site-specific,” rather looking at them as opportunities to create temporary micro-communities through interactive and playful technologies—quite often the very same technologies that make the surveillance society discussed in Deleuze’s “society of control” possible in public and private spaces. The ludic spaces generated by Lozano-Hemmer’s work create moments of interaction and play that are not only potentially transgressive in the collision of public and private space.

---

92 Kwon, One Place after Another, 156.
but potentially critical in how they bring to mind larger, structural breaches of public and private space and information. By analyzing specific examples of Lozano-Hemmer’s work, with an especially close look at *Under Scan* (2005) and *Sandbox* (2010), I argue that his interventions generate moments of interaction that are both social and critical. By operating in the spaces in-between spectacle and reflexivity, he creates a space that can (purposefully) get “out of control.”

**Participatory, Relational, Play: Terms for analysis**

One of Lozano-Hemmer’s earliest artistic mentors was Dick Higgins of the international movement Fluxus. Higgins, a student of John Cage, advocated opening a work up to chance and participation. The participatory and open-ended nature of many Fluxus projects begs for the work of art itself to be understood as a type of interface—modifiable by the viewer/user but intended to communicate a concept, and in the end (to use a term from Galloway) inoperable in how the work of art itself is always prefaced. The openness to participation and interpretation (echoing Eco’s concept of the “open work”) is also particularly well suited for interactive technologies and the concept of play in art. Notably Higgins was one of the earliest artists to advocate using computers and even coined the term “intermedia”—a call to use new and multiple technologies to respond to an increasingly media-savvy public. Lozano-Hemmer, originally trained as a chemist, does not shy away from activating multiple and new technologies in his work, though he rejects the term “new media artist.”

Central to Lozano-Hemmer’s practice is the term “relational architecture,” a notion that predates the more commonly used “relational aesthetics.” Relational aesthetics, defined in 1998 by Nicolas Bourriaud understands the work of art as “as site that produces a specific sociability” and represents a “social interstice…a space in social relations which, although it fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, suggests possibilities for exchanges other than
those that prevail within the system.”93 This term has since been critiqued as somewhat defeatist in the face of hegemony and too celebratory of open-ended projects that do not engage critically with the systems of which they are a part.94 “Relational architecture,” a term the artist coined in 1994 and that titles an ongoing series of his public works, is defined as follows:

…the technological activation of buildings with alien memory. Here alien memory refers to something that does not belong, that is out of place, while technological actualization means the use of hyperlinks, aliasing, special effects, and telepresence…buildings are activated so that the input of the people in the street can provide narrative implications apart from those envisioned by the architects, developers, or dwellers.95

To Lozano-Hemmer contemporary architecture no longer represents the people, so rather than demanding it does or holding onto structures from the past (a tendency he refers to as “necrophilic”), he seeks rather to create “relationship-specific” works through the creation of new behaviors and interactions in public space.96 To do this he activates spectacle to gain the visual attention of passersby, much like the works discussed in chapter two, but generates a new situation that creates new relationships between bodies and spaces. As Brian Massumi explains, “the confines of the local open, without the local disappearing…[the site] features as a node in larger, global movements.”97 By using light and scale Lozano-Hemmer is able to arrest the viewer, to prompt her to remove her urban blinders and take notice of public space. The specifically playful and ludic interface of many of his projects generates a curiosity and desire to

---

96 Ibid., 55–57.
interact and participate, shifting the emphasis from visual images to the physical and social aspects of the temporary site. Unlike the sociological studies of interactive projects cited earlier, however, “peripheral awareness” and “focal awareness” are not considered signs of failure to achieve “direct interaction,” but rather all levels of participation and awareness are part of the social spaces the artist hopes to create.

The specifically ludic qualities of these works were not always an explicit part of their structure. Rather the open-ended and participatory play of Under Scan and Sandbox are the result of an earlier work going out of control. Commissioned for the 3rd Internationale Biennale Film +Architektur in Graz, Austria in 1997, Re:Positioning Fear, the third installment in the artist’s Relational Architecture series, used a “teleabsence interface” to animate the façade of the Landzeughaus military arsenal with contemporary “fears” posted live via a connected website. This text evoked the subject matter of a medieval painting inside the building (The Scourages of God) which depicted three main fears: locust plague, Black Death, and Turkish invaders. The contemporary text was rendered invisible by a second projector of bright, white light, only made legible when activated by shadows of passersby. The intent of this work was to make viewers contemplate the ways our fears are intertwined with both physical and virtual presence. In Mark Hansen’s reading the artist “directly correlates disembodiment with the informational transformation of the spatial environment…he literally creates a ‘body-in-code.’”98 Hansen then analyzes a later work, Body Movies (2001) that more explicitly “solicits collective participation and, through it, the emergence of unpredictable behaviors.”99 The inspiration for this more open-ended play in the later piece, however, came from what the artist called “a beautiful failure” in

99 Ibid., 102.
Re:Positioning Fear. Almost instantly, participants began to play with scale and interact with each other’s shadows in a manner that had nothing to do with the more critical and serious content of the piece. (Fig. 30) They would move closer or farther away from the projectors in order to appear as giants or Lilliputians to their friends. This unanticipated reaction, he discusses, inspired and informed much of his later uses of shadow play, as in Body Movies.  

By emphasizing the lack of control Lozano-Hemmer incorporates into his projects, I am critiquing Christine Ross’s analysis of his work as being towards the “passive” end of the spectrum of participation with media art, a critical evaluation that elides the value of play and spectacle to attract viewers in public spaces. Using the concept of Jean-Luc Nancy’s “inoperative community,” Ross argues that Lozano-Hemmer’s Pulse works (where viewers’ heartbeats are temporarily accumulated and transmitted to a series of lights) merely “correspond to an ephemeral gathering of individuals interacting within a preset environment.” By only considering participatory works in terms of their level of explicit critique or spectator agency in the formal qualities or outcome of a work, Ross ignores the value of using interactive technology precisely to highlight the ephemeral, incidental gatherings in public spaces we most often use technology to ignore. Furthermore, her rather brief look at the artist’s practice (with only the participatory works where the viewer speaks considered as examples of success) does little to examine the benefits of working within a “preset environment.” If we return to Huizinga’s concept of play, which emphasized both the magic circle and a set of fixed rules, the ephemeral

100 Lozano-Hemmer, Interview by author.
102 Ibid.
103 Here she is referring to Voz Alta (2008), a work in Mexico City where participants could speak over a loud speaker relayed both to strobing search lights and radio broadcast. Ibid., 196.
micro-communities of Lozano-Hemmer can offer a potentially transformative mode of participation through play. For the artist, participation in public projects involves not only play in the social context, but also playful manipulation of scale.

Much of the literature on Lozano-Hemmer’s work has concentrated on the simultaneous presence and absence of viewers (what the artist referred to in personal communication cryptically as “preabsence”). Anna Munster’s study mentioned earlier in this chapter, briefly touches upon *Re:Positioning Fear and Body Movies* to argue that digital aesthetics are embodied and to situate his work “at the very core of contemporary affect and experience.” Nathaniel Stern draws connections between the large public projects in *relational architecture* and the gallery practice series entitled *subsculpture*. He argues that the artist’s works “create potentialized contexts, semblances of situations, where embodiment and spatialization are intensified as relational mappings rather than pre-mapped and quantifiable configurations.”

Stern, like Munster, argues that interactive art, through its activation of the virtual, does not deny the bodily, but rather enfolds it into a more complex network of meaning. Mark Hansen’s phenomenological analysis similarly stresses the technologically facilitated tension between presence and disembodiment. He writes “what remains instrumental in the interface is the role of the shadow as a negation of the body’s positivity, as a disembodied anti-image of the body, which can achieve agency within the informationally energized space of the installation solely because and insofar as it disembodies the individuated body.” This not only reveals a rather

---

104 Lozano-Hemmer, Interview by author.
105 Munster, *Materializing New Media*, 148. Likely due to an error in editing, the artist is referred to as “Lorenzo-Hemmer” throughout the book.
obtuse manner of analysis, but also an indifference to the actual social space of the square in front of the projection screen. Hansen does agree, however, that Body Movies “solicits collective participation and, through it, the emergence of unpredictable behaviors.”

According to Jennifer Johung Lozano-Hemmer’s practice is informed by the terms autopoesis and “the network,” two concepts that analyze the horizontal interrelationships of biological or technological systems. She focuses more closely on the social interactions between passersby than previous writers, making hers an important study for my analysis. In her book Replacing Home: From Primordial Hut to Digital Network in Contemporary Art she argues that Lozano-Hemmer’s relational architecture can generate “accidental, temporary, repeated, and revised gatherings, across multiple dimensions of direct and remote interactions [that] can form potential communities and multiple yet momentary publics…that are elastic and constantly capable of being realigned.” She values the temporary and incidental nature of interaction as highlighting the microcommunities and interstices of social space that the artist creates. Her chapter on the artist analyzes Vectorial Elevation (1999), an event first performed in Mexico City that uses a web interface to control a set of high-powered searchlights to create democratized “light sculptures” that are the inverse of Albert Speer, and Under Scan, a more overtly moving image-based work which I will analyze below, incorporating some of her insights.

Surprisingly, Lozano-Hemmer’s work has rarely been discussed within the context of

---

108 Ibid., 102.
110 By using this term, she intentionally mobilizes Bourriaud’s terminology regarding relational aesthetics, illustrating that while the artist maintains a distinction in his practice, there are still many connections with the brand of participation in art that dominated European art of the 1990s. Ibid., 139–140.
video art. He has in the past rejected the term “new media artist,” resisting more the term “new” than “media.” Though the artist’s practice includes interactive sculptures and light projects (such as Pulse Park and Vectorial Elevation) that do not engage with moving image media, I will limit my analysis to examples that do, in order to situate him within the typology of moving image-based public art that has become increasingly prevalent in urban public spaces the world over. Many of the artists I examine in this study have similarly varied practices. As I conceive of spectatorship as physically situated, made up of material spaces and bodies, I turn to the nature of exchange and the manner of play initiated by these projects. I will examine (as much as I can as a secondary observer) to what extent two of Lozano-Hemmer’s public projects engendered opportunities for play and also analyze the particular aesthetic and social dimensions of each situation.

**Two projects: Under Scan and Sandbox**

*Under Scan* (2005) and *Sandbox* (2010) are among nine of the twenty works in the *relational architecture* series that are listed by the artist as “touring.” (Figs. 31 and 32) Although the latter has (at the time of this writing) only been performed in Santa Monica, California, *Under Scan* was installed originally in five cities in the East Midlands of England between 2005 and 2006 (Lincoln, Derby, Leicester, Northampton, and Nottingham); then presented at the Mexican Pavilion at the 2008 Venice Biennale, and performed again in 2008 in Trafalgar Square, London. This traveling quality underscores the elasticity of the “momentary publics” Johung analyzed in Lozano-Hemmer’s work, and also highlights the projects as events. However, as is central to my argument in other chapters as well as this one, the particularities of

---

111 Lozano-Hemmer, Interview by author.
each screen situation should also be considered in addition to the mechanics of the work itself. 

*Under Scan* was selected from an open call for proposals for temporary public projects solicited by the East Midlands Development Agency (*emda*) in England, for public squares in selected regional cities. Though I was unable to see either of these projects in person, as with *Hand from Above*, there is ample available video documentation, and with *Under Scan* there are even published audience responses (the interviews were compiled, analyzed, and summarized in a chapter in the work’s companion book by Nadja Mounajjed).  

I will refer to both of these primary sources for insight into spectator interaction.

Like *Body Movies*, *Under Scan* uses a “tele-absence” interface, one that requires the presence of a viewer (specifically her shadow) in order to be experienced completely. Unlike *Body Movies*, however, *Under Scan* utilizes video rather than still images. In this project a city square is illuminated by high-intensity white-light projectors. As people walk through the space, their movements are tracked via surveillance cameras that map their movement onto a grid. Reading this system, a second set of projectors aim pre-recorded video portraits of local participants from cities in the East Midlands right at the shadow of a passerby. As people passed through the square, the figures appeared on the ground and “began to surface as if coming up from water.”  

The portraits would interact with the viewer for as long as their shadow made it visible, making the viewer’s bodily presence necessary for the appearance of the apparition. Like the contemporary commercial screen interfaces discussed above, once the viewer’s physical presence is no longer felt, the image goes to “sleep”—the recorded performer rests or goes back to lying down before the image faces away.

---

113 Nadja Mounajjed, “Interviews with the Public,” in *Under Scan*, ed. Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and David Hill (Montréal, Québec: *emda* & Antimodular, 2007).
The uncanniness of the appearance of an image within one’s shadow was enhanced by the repetition of the movement and angle of the video portrait. In a manner similar to many of the digitally appropriated and manipulated video installations of South African artist Candice Brietz, the videos in Under Scan do not merely run from start to finish, but also in reverse, creating an unnaturalness to the performer’s movements as they repeat in a somewhat herky-jerky fashion. Each video was a full-length single shot filmed against a black background and recorded from above, placing the viewer in the same physical relationship replicated with the projectors (a di sotto in su in reverse). The images themselves were part of a database of 1000 video portraits taken at “universities, rock concerts, community centers, and other local gathering places” by local artists and filmmakers Similar to Jaume Plensa’s process in Crown Fountain, the participants were selected from an open call throughout the area, and in both works the artist’s intention is to modify or add to this database as time passes. Over 250 portraits were added upon the Tate’s presentation of Under Scan in Trafalgar Square in 2008, a site whose proximity to the National Portrait Gallery and National Gallery lends art historical validity to the open-ended and participatory portrait videos in Under Scan. Also similar to Plensa’s piece, participants were all recorded using the same shot and given a loose set of directions—in Crown Fountain it was to “blow a kiss;” here it was to make eye contact with the camera at some point. Unlike Plensa’s project, the looser set of directions made the video portraits far more varied than the monumental faces of Crown Fountain. The filmed participants were “mostly young people,

115 A specific example of this effect in Brietz’s practice is the use of isolated movements of the actress Meryl Streep in Her (1978-2008).
116 Lozano-Hemmer, Under Scan, 9.
‘chilling out,’ resting, dancing, making signs with their hands, some euphoric, others standoffish, always relational and complicit.” The variety of portraits not only paralleled the diversity of the local population (much like Crown Fountain), but also added an element of participation in the creation of the recorded content that is echoed in the installation’s actualization in public space.

Among Lozano-Hemmer’s interests are the writings of Charles Babbage, a nineteenth-century British computer pioneer who also theorized about the co-presence of past and present voices through molecules of air. Babbage wrote on the “permanent impression of our words and actions on the globe we inhabit” and argued that “the air we breathe is the never-failing historian of the sentiments we have uttered,” and that in the future it may be possible to engineer a computer to “play back” those voices. His texts, though misunderstanding physics, seem to predict the massive accumulation of data in public spaces today through social media and surveillance technology. This theory is echoed in another source found on Lozano-Hemmer’s rather comprehensive reading list, The Invention of Morel (1940), a science fiction novel by Argentinian author Adolfo Bioy Casares that features a futuristic photographic machine that is able to create realistic three-dimensional figures that move and speak. In many ways Under Scan actualizes these theoretical and literary fantasies—using a technological interface to make present the ghosts and past presences that already share the space around us. However, Lozano-Hemmer’s project does not merely make these images and bodies co-present in time and space, rather he makes their actualization a process of discovery, one that is particularly invested in

118 Lozano-Hemmer, Under Scan, 9.
119 Lozano-Hemmer, Interview by author.
promoting moments of playful interaction in public space.

Not only does Under Scan prompt viewers to engage with video portraits of nearby townspeople, but it also promotes a sense of interaction and play among viewers in the square. The high-intensity projectors on the ground create a “magic circle” that sets the site apart from the city around it and also acts as a spotlight illuminating spectators as they play with the interface. It momentarily alters the tone and function of this space (some projections were in the center of university campuses, others at the entrance to cultural buildings, and other locations in revitalized city centers). It also completely altered the spaces’ functions, from squares that you pass through to spaces of play that afford the comfort to let go and engage in playful and even silly behaviors and actions one would not typically adopt in public space. Many participants in Mounajjed’s interviews noted the particularly social aspects of the work, that it prompted interaction and conversation between people of different ages and ethnic groups as well as interaction with the video interface.121 City dwellers walking briskly through a square often look at the ground precisely to avoid eye contact with other individuals. This work spatially inverts that practice. By making the ground effectively look back, the work again removes our urban blinders to initiate a playful interaction with a surveillance interface.

The interface is periodically revealed, making the mechanisms of the magic circle readily apparent. “Every seven minutes the entire project would stop and reset, with the tracking mechanism revealed in a brief ‘interlude’ lighting sequence, which would project all of the calibration grids used by the computerized surveillance system.” 122 This interlude seemed to be one of the most stimulating and interactive parts of the project. As Mounajjed notes in her

121 Mounajjed, “Interviews with the Public,” 93.
122 Lozano-Hemmer, Under Scan, 10.
compiled interview results, the increased physical activity and excitement over the periods featuring the “grids” or “scanners” (viewers ran around, moved frantically, or danced) was a surprising result, as this was initially meant to be an “interlude” to the video portraits, thus participation within the revealed interface is another example of a work being allowed to get “out of control.” There was also a monitor on display that would constantly reveal the surveillance interface. Under Scan turns the invisible mechanisms of surveillance in public space inside out by turning them into visible sites of play, interaction, and self-representation. The intertwining of the society of control and an all-encompassing ludic capitalism discussed in the previous section is inverted, as the ludic space not only flips the machinations of surveillance but is also deliberately allowed to be “out of control.”

Many of the viewers commented that they actually expected to see their own images at some point, adding the recorded surveillance to the memory of images projected in public space. This finding echoes what I encountered at Crown Fountain, and suggests how integrated the participation of the viewer is in concepts of media art in public spaces. An interesting parallel to Under Scan that does utilize the passerby’s image within the video aggregate is Shadowing (2014) a work by Canadian Jonathan Chomko and British artist Matthew Rosier created for the Bristol Playable City conference in the U.K., an annual event that seeks to re-examine the concept of “Smart City” towards more socially-engaged aims. (Fig. 33) In this work streetlights doubled as projectors and the shadows of earlier passersby intersected with one’s own live shadows, effectively giving the streetlights memory and accumulating the experiences of passersby throughout the city to promote interaction and spontaneous performances. Both Shadowing and Under Scan are parts of larger initiatives to revitalize urban centers and promote

interaction and sociability in public spaces, and interestingly both of them do so by activating and animating the ground—the space where we turn our gaze when attempting to shut out the social and physical spaces around us.

The surveillance system in Lozano-Hemmer’s *Under Scan*, however, does not record the image of someone present, but rather uses knowledge of their position to produce a spectral presence by revealing the pre-recorded portrait in response to the specific movements of the viewer. That movement of one’s body places the viewer within the system of representation and makes this work a parallel to Peter Campus’s earlier gallery projection *Shadow Projection* (1974). In this work one was confronted both with a live image of oneself rear projected onto a screen, and a shadow projected from a light behind the viewer. As David Joselit points out, “the ‘work’…is to superimpose one image on the other to resolve their difference in size…the ‘play’…is to widen this disparity, in what might be a pleasurable experience of an attenuated or asymmetrical self.”

In Lozano-Hemmer’s use of shadowplay there is a similar separation of “work” necessary to activate the intuitive interface and the “play” that affords space for interaction to get “out of control” and acquire its own unique character. In a later project in Santa Monica, Lozano-Hemmer similarly inverts surveillance technologies to create new means of representation and spaces of play, only in this instance the images are live, collapsing two social spaces rather than two moments in time.

Lozano-Hemmer premiered *Sandbox* in the summer of 2010 at the second Glow Festival in Santa Monica. This festival, which as of 2015 has been held three times, is billed as “an all-night cultural experience featuring original commissions by artists that re-imagine Santa Monica Beach as a playground for thoughtful and participatory temporary artworks” and “part of a global

---

movement producing ‘white night’ or ‘nuit blanche’ events.”

Glow’s website emphasizes not only the prestige of the projects commissioned (their connection to international movements and artists as well as their originality) but also the concepts of play and participation. Unlike Under Scan, however, this was not an ongoing installation funded by economic development investments but rather a one-night projection that was part of a larger festival. Many of the works featured projected images, and Lozano-Hemmer’s project directly engaged not only with the materiality of its location (sand on a beach) but also the infrared surveillance systems that monitor people in public spaces such as beaches, malls, or nearby borders with Mexico.

The project connects two adjacent sites of viewer participation: a 27” x 36” sandbox and an 8,000 square-foot ground space on the beach illuminated by two high-power projectors hung from a boom lift. People on the beach are recorded with infrared sensors that relay their presence as small ant-sized dots projected onto the sandbox. Cameras on the sandbox relay real-time video footage to the high-powered projectors on the beach. The result is a play on three scales: the tiny scale of the sandbox, the actual scale of the human participants, and the gigantic scale of the beach projection. This last scale, perhaps the most uncanny, activates the same “hand of God” cultural topos as Chris O’Shea’s Hand from Above. In both O’Shea’s work and here, the mechanisms of public surveillance are not only inverted and made into interactive spaces, but manipulated in a way that makes them rather cartoonish, an element that both invites a ludic sense of enjoyment and also (potentially) undercuts the pervasive power of the society of control.

To experience these disparities of scale, particularly as beachgoers subject to the whim of those participants generating the “hand of god” is unsettling as much as it is playful. In the video documentation, the participants on the beach are frequently trying to escape from as much as

they are trying to engage the attention of the enlarged hands of sandbox participants. A sandbox player might place a lighter or soda can wherever a beachgoer walks as the latter frantically hops or runs away. In other instances a beachgoer attempted to engage or interact with a toy or object of a sandbox player; as one man who began breakdancing to parallel the movements of a spinning toy wheel. The work, which uses the same surveillance technologies used to track and capture illegal border crossers, makes painfully obvious the mechanisms of the society of control that pervade all contemporary public spaces (or in the artist’s words it makes “tangible the power asymmetry inherent in technologies of amplification”). It does so, however, in a way that is not overtly didactic and allowed to get “out of control.” Some Sandbox participants elected not to engage tactiley with the sand and their ant-sized neighbors and instead placed their faces, dogs, or Slinky toys under the camera in order to be projected at a larger scale. Like Under Scan, Sandbox features projectors on the ground, replicating the top-down vision of public space surveillance cameras and turning the very ground we navigate into an information interface and also a stage-setting for play and performance.

The live quality of the images and interaction in Sandbox removes the pre-recorded portraiture of Under Scan and makes the use of cameras and video projectors purely relational, generating one-time interactions and images that are only recorded by secondary cameras for the sake of documentation. Like the gallery installations of Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham, live-feed reorients the viewer in space, causing a disjunctive experience. In Sandbox, however, technology does not unravel a split subject in relationship to herself, but fosters a new and strange relationship between bodies present in nearby spaces. The sandbox is positioned just next

---

to the projection area on the sand and raised on a platform. In documentation sandbox players seem just as often to be looking at the beach to see their enlarged hands interacting with real people as they look down at the ant-like presences in the sandbox. In a way the interactions between those playing in the sandbox and those on the beach is a dramatization not only of the top-down, God-like view and control surveillance technologies but also a collapse between two interfaces and bodily interaction. The sandbox player’s glances back and forth simulate how bodies in public spaces are present both on screens and in reality. The work would be completely different had the sandbox been located in another part of the city; by placing it in proximity to its related performance space, there is a co-presence or a communion across disparities of scale rather than two translations through each interface.

In both *Under Scan* and *Sandbox* interactive moving image technologies generate new social spaces that collapse differences in time and space to generate a new participatory space through the co-presence of viewers. By using technologies in this way Lozano-Hemmer inverts functions of communication and surveillance to generate a sense of “communion.” This term, which the artist has used in multiple talks and interviews, removes the “command-and-control ethic of communications” and suggests instead a genuine sharing of space and ideas.127 The term was used earlier by theater director Robert Lepage in reference to the possibilities for technology in performance art, echoing Laurie Anderson’s evocation of technology as “gathering place” and “camp fire.”128 The concept of communion not only suggests a more holistic connection than communication but also has spiritual undertones that suggest technology can generate moments

of genuine connection. The cutting-edge technology is not merely a means to dazzle the viewer or communicate an artist’s ideas to the public, but rather it is conceived here as a vehicle for creating a new, temporary commons that can pop up anywhere.

When trying to sell his interactive installations to city planners wanting a work that can foster community and connection, Lozano-Hemmer often refers to public fountains. Much like Plensa, the artist reaches back to the historical form of fountains as a means to connect to the public and foster a sense of community, even though his public works are temporary events and some even non-site-specific, touring exhibitions. The fountain becomes a metaphor not for a specific place, but rather a ludic space where people can come together, where collective identities are forged. By generating spaces that can and do get “out of control,” Lozano-Hemmer not only inverts the mechanisms of the society of control but also uses them to engender a sense of communion through play.

Financing Interactivity
The international list of cities where Lozano-Hemmer’s projects have taken place are not only a product of Kwon’s nomadic tendency in contemporary art, but also a result of the availability of funds. The artist produces most of his public projects in Europe, Asia, and Latin America due to the funding structures in place for public art. Looking at his practice in the U.S. and U.K. (the framework of this study) is, therefore, potentially limiting. While I studied some projects outside the geographical scope of this dissertation to understand Lozano-Hemmer’s practice more fully, by staying within the U.S. and U.K. framework for the close

---

130 Lozano-Hemmer, Interview by author.
analyses, I am attempting to illuminate more than just the artist’s practices, but also the funding structures and apparatuses at play throughout the projects analyzed in my study, which have to operate in between the commercial and the public spheres, between private and public interests.

*Under Scan* was commissioned by both Arts Council England East Midlands and *emda*, the East Midlands Development Agency. In his foreword to the *Under Scan* publication, *emda* board member Ross Willmott makes explicit reference to Richard Florida’s’s book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) in explaining its commissioning of “a work of genuine international quality that would help communicate better what the East Midlands is really like—a flourishing region with a diverse and dynamic culture and a rich pool of talented people.” Willmott suggests that the mere presence of Lozano-Hemmer’s project in East Midlands cities affords a layer of cosmopolitan sophistication and potential for economic growth. Economist Richard Florida’s concept of the “Creative Class,” though largely critiqued since its publication in 2002, still holds sway with development groups and urban planners. Unlike its name suggests, the Creative Class does not consist of artists (in fact artists are arguably lowest on the economic register within the Creative Class). He writes:

> I define the core of the Creative Class to include people in science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music, and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or new creative content…the creative class also includes a broader group of creative professionals in business and finance, law, health care and related fields.

His book touches upon other larger cultural issues discussed in this section, such as the “experiential lifestyle” of the Creative Class, which draws from David Brooks’s’s argument in *Bobos in Paradise* and that relate to earlier concepts in this chapter—to the rise of selfie culture.

---

131 *Under Scan*, 6.
and to the “time warp” of Creative Worker’s 24-hour workday.\textsuperscript{133}

Most notably Florida uses his articulation of the new Creative Class to analyze the reemergence of cities. Unlike the postwar “company man” who fled to the suburbs and reveled in the stability of location and schedule, the Creative Class revolves around the “3T’s” of creative places: technology, talent, and tolerance.\textsuperscript{134} He argues for the revitalization of depressed Rust Belt cities by making these attributes a priority. Clearly, in the commissioning of Lozano-Hemmer’s project by \textit{emda}, the East Midlands cities were attempting to cultivate an environment conducive to attracting the Creative Class, and thus economic growth. This is a particularly early 2000s pre-recession sense of optimism; as the real estate market was especially hit hard following the recession of 2008 in the U.S., U.K., and other parts of the world.

Following parliamentary budgetary cuts in 2010 all Regional Development Agencies in the U.K., including \textit{emda}, were abolished in 2012. Much like the BBC Big Screens, \textit{emda} was a pre-recession, publically funded initiative that used media-based public art projects to promote the growth of city centers and foster regional economic development. However, in the post-2008 climate, public funding for such projects has become harder to come by, without the more permanent government structures for support for the arts in place in cities in continental Europe.\textsuperscript{135} As a result, corporate and private sponsorship is increasingly the only avenue for generating expensive moving image-based public projects in the U.S. and the U.K. As a result, Lozano-Hemmer has to become vigilant about not only writing budgets for his projects but also maintaining a level of autonomy to prevent what he calls the “logo creep” that could come with

\textsuperscript{134} Florida, \textit{The Rise Of The Creative Class}, 292.
\textsuperscript{135} This was a constant reference point for a shift in planning for the BBC Big Screens project from screen managers I interviewed.
corporate involvement. Limiting the presence of corporate names to sponsorship and maintaining distinction from advertising are key concerns for a number of artists working in public spaces, as they want very much to generate works that are reprieves from or cannot be easily coopted by advertising (though, as Chris O’Shea’s *Hand from Above* proves, cooptation—even plagiarism—may be inevitable). Artists want to generate unique moments for interaction and visual enjoyment, though I argue that in terms of their structure and the way we interact with them, they must be considered as existing along the same general continuum of visual practice, that we as viewers are both agents and pre-conditioned “screen subjects,” in Mondloch’s words.136

Contemporary public spaces in general are increasingly defined by corporate and private interests, as Millennium Park attests. The corporate “logo creep” in the park is not the only means by which companies assert their presence through named sections, but also the adjacent institutional context of the Art Institute of Chicago. Next to the renovated Marc Chagall windows (a symbol of the institution’s celebration of public art) lies a stairwell to the "Millennium Park Room." When I visited in 2013 I became curious and started to walk up the stairs. Halfway up the staircase I was asked by security to come down and then inquired what exactly the room was. It is a private space available for banquets, events, and so forth. This is quite telling. The actual public space just next to the institution has lent its name to an even more exclusive private space inside the museum (which already charges admission to enter). The privatization of the park's public spaces parallels the privileging of access of those who can enter the room overlooking it. It is, indeed, the best sited bedroom in the Minoan castle, the grand view of Louis XIV's bedroom—the view of ownership. In this instance the land is not owned outright by a king but rather a subtle indication that public spaces are the benevolent gifts of

136 Mondloch, *Screens.*
private capital, and their consumption via the all-embracing view is the possession of the wealthy. The funds that made the genuinely playful space on the ground in Crown Fountain also make possible the view from above that turns the entire social space into a visual spectacle of prestige.

For my final chapter, I turn to this notion of place—a concept that has lingered in the background of nearly every project analyzed thus far. It has lurked in the cylindrical and institutionally-determined screen of Doug Aitken’s SONG I, in the abandoned subway tunnels of Masstransiscope, in the multi-million dollar, destination-making funding behind Crown Fountain, in the city centers of the BBC Big Screens, and in the regenerating potential of interactive public art events of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. In the following chapter, however, place will be a central concern for artists and integral to their cinematic situation and mode of address. They use projection and moving images to animate, disrupt, or generate a sense of place at their specific public sites. Unlike the works discussed in this section, which are “relationship-specific” (or what Miwon Kwon and James Meyer might call “functional sites”) the works discussed in chapter four engage with the concept of place as defined not only by phenomenological and institutional site specificity, but also by social and historical narratives.
Chapter Four: Illuminating Place

Introduction

This chapter considers the concept of place in terms of the multiple layers of meaning collected at the site of a particular screen. An underlying argument of this entire dissertation is that screens in public spaces produce their own discrete situations that afford various viewing relationships or activate experiences with art in public space. The concept of place is therefore linked to all three categories identified and discussed in chapters two through four, as well as to a broader understanding of the function of screens in public places in general. This is a particularly important concept because film and television are historically linked to “elsewheres”—continuity editing consists of camera placements that deliberately generate a seamless fictional world analogous to Renaissance perspective and television claims a simultaneity that pipes the same broadcast content into millions of homes. However, screens are very much embedded within and can even transform the places they occupy, and artists and curators frequently engage with a complex notion of place in projects like those discussed in this chapter. What follows in this section is a brief overview of some of the shifting concepts of place as physically fixed or socially discursive; a consideration of the recent literature and gallery practices that re-examine moving image screens in relationship to place; and an introduction to the major themes and works examined in this chapter.

The term “place” connotes a greater sense of specificity than the more generic term “space.” Human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan makes a particular distinction between the two terms in his classic 1977 text Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience. Where space connotes freedom, place connotes security; “what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it and endow it with value…from the security and stability of place we are aware of
the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa.’”¹ Space implies an area in which to move that may crop up anywhere at any time (or similarly be removed just as quickly).² Place, on the other hand, is specific; it is somewhere one can belong (or conversely, be cast out of), an entity that has roots and a history. The specificity of place gives us comfort, not only of belonging, but also of combating the alienating effects of an increasingly mobile, disjointed, and globalized existence—“if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause.”³ In an increasingly globally connected world, the specificity of place is potentially cast into doubt by the rise of globalization and instantaneous electronic communication and thus making place an important theme for artists and cultural critics.

For French anthropologist Marc Augé, writing nearly twenty years after Tuan, space is defined as more abstract than place but has a similar relationship to movement. Drawing on the distinctions between space and place delineated by Michel de Certeau, Augé argues that our contemporary world, which he characterizes as “supermodernity” to set it apart from industrial modernity, consists of a widespread loss of place. He writes, “supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the state of ‘places of memory’, and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position.”⁴ For Augé places and non-places are not absolutes, but rather form a continuum where the former is never entirely erased and the latter is never fully constituted. Nevertheless, he argues, “non-places are the real measure of our time,” and that measure is frequently made

¹ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 6.
² Idiomatically, this makes sense too, such as in “give me some space!”
³ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 6.
possible through the use of screens and signs in public space (he mentions ATMs, transit stations, and highways frequently). Non-places are not gathering locales for the masses or crowds, but rather spaces through which contemporary individuals drift and move. The increasingly dispersed and transient experience of life lamented by Gilles Deleuze in the “society of control” discussed in the previous chapter is intertwined with the non-places of modernity, and Augé concludes his book accordingly: “the community of human destinies is experienced in the anonymity of non-place, and in solitude.” The threat of contemporary systems of labor, power, and communication to place, then, is also a threat to the very notion of community.

Artists have resisted the sterility of the non-places of the modernist art gallery. As Tom Finkelpearl notes, the history of art is really the history of public art, and it is only the modernist notion of the autonomy of the art object that has insisted on the separation of the work of art from its surroundings. Since the 1960s many artists have increasingly moved their practice out into the world, producing work that is explicitly site-specific, where the particular site of intervention is necessary for comprehension or even actualization of the work. From the site-bound practices of Robert Smithson or Richard Serra to the community-engaged work of Mark Dion, a range of contemporary artists consider the place of their artistic interventions (be it understood in a physical or a social sense) as intimately connected to a work’s meaning and its capacity to come to fruition, making place a recurring concern in the literature on contemporary art as well.

---

5 Ibid., 79.
6 Ibid., 120.
8 Very frequently a topic of debate or discussion with public art, place is also a theoretical consideration for major literature on contemporary art practices that break with traditional gallery objects. Miwon Kwon’s analysis of site-specificity, discussed below, is of particular importance here, as is the work of James Meyer regarding the “functional site” and Rosalind
In screen culture studies, place has only recently become a topic of interest in the literature. Lynn Spiegel analyzed the ways television reshaped the social and physical space of the home in *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, and Miriam Hansen in her study of spectatorship in early film considered the specific social spaces of film viewing.\(^9\) Very recent literature by UK-based scholars working in media and urban studies have noted how spectators interact with screens in particular public places of transit, and some of the literature discussed in chapter one engages with a broad concept of place.\(^10\)

Most significant for my study is Anna McCarthy’s analysis of television in public spaces in *Ambient Television* (2001). As she argues, “[T]he immediate place of the screen is a key factor in the meanings we attribute to television and the uses to which we put it…because all places…are distinctive *discursive*, as well as physical sites.”\(^11\) When a screen enters a particular place it “simultaneously enters the webs of signification and material practice that define each as an environment.”\(^12\) Public screens become part of the social and material worlds that surround them, but there are also ways that televisions can define and even generate places as much as be affected by them. The particular examples McCarthy cites are based on nearly obsolete technologies—tube televisions and laser disc players—and her focus is on decidedly more vernacular practices than I analyze (with the important exception of her final chapter that


\(^12\) Ibid.
includes Dara Birnbaum’s work that I examine in the next section). Nevertheless, her study significantly argues for understanding screens as physical objects that interact with the multiple ways we define place—physically, historically, and socially. Moving images can illuminate, add to, or even undercut the layers of meaning accumulated at a particular location, and artists and public arts administrators and curators engage directly with a concept of place.

Just as place has been a preoccupation with contemporary artists and a recent object of study for media scholars, so too has it become a significant theme in moving image installation work and artists’ cinema. Maeve Connolly analyzes how place informs a host of documentary and installation practices in contemporary art, as artists stage site-specific events for film production and museums respond to an institutional imperative to “stage publicness” through their installations.13 The British sisters Jane and Louise Wilson are particularly interested in investigating the layers of meaning that accumulate on a site through both production and multi-screen installations. In A Free and Anonymous Monument (2003) they cinematically recorded the abandoned post-industrial spaces of North East England, focusing especially on Victor Pasmore’s concrete, modernist monument to space exploration from 1955, the Apollo Pavilion. (Fig. 34)

Now a ruin, the architectural form of the pavilion is not only included in the thirteen-screen work, but also informs the ambulatory spaces and multi-screen platform of the installation itself. The work premiered at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, a converted flour mill in the artists’ hometown only twenty miles from the site of Pasmore’s ruin, a further connection to place. In Giuliana Bruno’s words, A Free and

---

13 Particular examples of this include Jeremy Deller’s The Battle of Orgreave (2001), discussed briefly in chapter two, and Jane and Louise Wilson’s work, one of which is analyzed below. Connolly, The Place of Artists’ Cinema, 112, 63.
Anonymous Monument “formally recasts the pavilion’s itinerant status as passageway while visually constructing its function as viewing platform.”¹⁴ Both the films and the installation are invested in the particular place of Pasmore’s monument—socially, historically, architecturally, and geographically—bringing together multiple conceptions of place in one work. The Wilsons’ work is a bridge between gallery practices and those in public spaces. While not explicitly site-specific (the work did tour after its initial exhibition at the BALTIC), it conveys a significant investigation in the physical and cultural concepts of place in cinematic installation.

In her landmark historical analysis of site-specific art, Miwon Kwon argues that site-specific practices shift between three definitions of site: the phenomenological, the institutional, and the discursive. The last category defines “site” not in terms of physical location, but rather in terms of social networks and interaction. McCarthy used two nearly identical terms (“physical” instead of “phenomenological”) in her earlier analysis discussed above, but found these categories to be intertwined, not distinct (though Kwon does allow for some fluidity between her categories). Kwon argues that for a site-specific work or intervention to be successful it must leave a real “mark” on its site, even if that mark is not (strictly speaking) permanent or physical, but a lasting social interaction. Her book’s title, One Place after Another, specifically evokes the nomadism of first world artists and echoes the transitory nature of Augé’s non-places. Although, “it seems historically inevitable that we will leave behind the nostalgic notion of a site and identity as essentially bound to the physical actualities of a place,” she argues, “the phantom of a site as an actual place remains.”¹⁵ This longing for rootedness is not merely a retroactive defense mechanism in the face of an increasingly globalized world, but perhaps something more vital to

---

¹⁵ Kwon, One Place after Another, 164–5.
our survival as human beings. Screens, so often linked to the very cultural forces that produce a sense of nomadism, “non-places,” or homogeneous urban spaces (computers, smart phones, television, Hollywood entertainment), are, I argue, employed in significant ways in contemporary initiatives to generate, rehabilitate, or otherwise engage the “nostalgic notion” of a physically bound place.

In this chapter, I analyze contemporary public screen practices in terms of three major relationships to place: as place-making objects and events; as connectors or bridges between disparate places; and as illuminations of historical layers upon a particular place. In the first section, I look to how public screens shape and are shaped by shifting demographic trends by comparing a local history of a suburban screen locale to intentional projects using screens as part of place-making initiatives, concluding with the final analysis of the BBC Big Screens project in the UK. The second section examines permanent and temporary projects that spark communication between disparate places, such as architectural facades by Diller Scofidio + Renfro and an early temporary intervention by Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz. The last category has the most overtly critical content of the three and focuses on the nocturnal projection work of international artist Krzysztof Wodiczko, who uses moving images to illuminate the tension between the lived experiences of the local community and the honorific monuments that demarcate a particular place.

As in the past two chapters, I argue for works that have the potential to, in Knight’s words, “generate reasonable and fair opportunities” for the public to negotiate relationships with art, be they critical or affirming of existing notions of place.\textsuperscript{16} Given the rootedness of a site and the relatively brief shelf life of moving image technologies and apparatuses (compared with the

\textsuperscript{16} Knight, \textit{Public Art}, ix.
permanent public art mediums of bronze or mosaic), many of the projects discussed in this chapter faced significant issues with permanence coupled with declining structural and financial support, an issue examined in chapter two in relationship to Bill Brand’s *Masstransiscope*. Ultimately, it seems the best way to “leave a mark,” as Kwon would like site-specific art to do, may be through an after-image, through the production of new meanings and the illumination of hidden histories through temporary interventions in particular places. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify positive potential in permanent initiatives and chart pathways towards potentially fruitful partnerships between commercial and art interests. The case studies that follow examine the complicated relationship between commercial development and public art by developing the observations that concluded chapter three with a particular focus on place.

**The Screen as Site: Place-making Initiatives**

Creating place (or at least a sense of place) has become a key concern in contemporary urban development through not only the revitalization of urban cities, but also the generation of new “town centers” in suburban developments. In the Creative Class concept articulated by Richard Florida and discussed at the end of the previous chapter, generating a sense of place through spectacle and public art is a means to attract desired capital. The new model for development is not to perpetuate the suburban sprawl of the post-WWII decades, but rather to reinvigorate urban centers or to generate new walkable communities and public spaces (complete with the affluent and upwardly mobile residents that are attracted to them). These demographic changes are apparent in screen culture as much as anywhere else, and certain sites illuminate changing concepts of moving image consumption that parallel the shifts in how a particular place is developed and populated. In Creative City principles, central to the generation of seemingly organic public spaces is the presence of public art.

Catrien Schreuder, echoing Rosalyn Deutsche’s position in *Evictions*, argues that
Florida’s urban planning concepts threaten to turn public art into a mere “plaything” for government and corporate interests, however she does maintain that the mere involvement of economic interests does not necessarily make this true. She argues that “the fact that interests other than artistic ones also play a role in public locations does not mean that art is at the mercy of economic forces by definition.” However, she also only seems to find value when the work “take[s] a critical position by directly reacting against the forces within which it operates.”

While I contend that an overtly critical position is not necessary to a work’s value as art, there are varying degrees of success in terms of a project’s ability to generate real and genuine opportunities for the public to encounter art. Similarly, there are institutional and environmental factors that affect a place-making screen’s lasting value in public space.

**Rio and Mosaic Shopping Districts: Screens in Shifting Landscapes**

One of the earliest public art projects in the United States to include the permanent installation of video screens, Dara Birnbaum’s *Rio Videowall* (1989) in Atlanta, Georgia, fell victim to the failing development in which it was installed, highlighting the dependence of a work of art on its placement. American artist Dara Birnbaum is one of the pioneers of using appropriation in video art in the late 1970s. Her tape *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978-79) is a staple of any history of American video art. In this work Birnbaum deconstructed media images of women by editing an episode of the titular television show into a nonsensical, repeating stream of noise and images, doing in video what Cindy Sherman was doing concurrently in photography in works such as *Untitled Film Stills* (1978). A decade later

---

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
the artist turned her attention to more architectural and sculptural video installations.\textsuperscript{20} In addition to some architectural gallery installations (such as the five-channel installation \textit{PM Magazine} (1982-84)), Birnbaum embarked on what is largely considered the first permanent public work of video art in the United States in 1986,\textsuperscript{21} when she won the competition for the Rio shopping center in Atlanta, Georgia, a work of postmodern architecture in an area developers were hoping to gentrify. The head developer, Charles Ackerman, envisioned a permanent video work early on in the project, and Birnbaum’s proposal was selected for its interactive and ever-changing content.\textsuperscript{22}

The project used twenty-five 27-inch monitors set in a five-foot x five-foot grid and surrounded by a metal framework. (Fig. 35) Two video feeds were broadcasted over the screens: live cable news from local juggernaut CNN and a pre-filmed, aestheticized video of the local landscape before development, forming a juxtaposition between the constant flux of contemporary events and an “electronic memory” of the site.\textsuperscript{23} By recalling the physical history of the site, Birnbaum attempted to illustrate the layers of meaning of a particular place and excavate its earlier histories, similar to Allan Sonfist’s land art project in New York, \textit{Time Landscape} (1968-present). The nature footage would screen unimpeded until passersby activated the news feed through their presence in front of surveillance cameras throughout the mall. Their silhouette was recorded via live-cameras, then relayed to the video wall as “keyholes” opening to the news footage. Much like Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s “tele-absence” interface in works such as

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman}, though now frequently exhibited in galleries, initially aired on public access cable in the same time slot as the actual television program.


\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 193.

\textsuperscript{23} Installation as described in final contract, cited in Ibid., 196.
Under Scan (discussed in chapter three), Rio Videowall incorporated the movement of bodies to reveal visual elements of the work. Unlike Lozano-Hemmer’s projects, however, the silhouetted bodies are not necessarily those of the viewers, who activate the screen via the space right in front of them. Instead Birnbaum’s work used video feed from other spaces of the mall, connecting disparate parts of the larger commercial site to the screen.

In the end Rio Videowall was an unexpectedly short-lived project that perished in the “gray area” between art and commerce and fell victim to its environment. In Birnbaum’s words, the project was “unable to receive the benefits afforded to a noncommercial art endeavor [due to sponsorship organizations backing out], while at the same time, unable to attract the kind of financing appropriate to most commercial undertakings.”

During contract negotiations Ackerman and Birnbaum disagreed on what constituted the “art,” suggesting the developer did not understand the concept of site-specificity, and that the loss of specific cultural backers left the artist to assume too many roles and unable to negotiate a fair contract. Whereas Birnbaum recognized the necessity of sponsorship in realizing technologically sophisticated public works, the situation of opposition between “art” and “commercial” interests was not as fruitful as a potential “marriage” between these two, one where ideally the creative and financial needs of the artist are kept in mind through the role of a strong producer.

These points, articulated by the artist in 1990 not long after the project’s completion, are not the only ways in which Rio Videowall was unsuccessful. There was also the broader failure of the shopping center that adversely affected the artwork. Anna McCarthy, who visited the site in 1993 and discusses it in the conclusion of her book Ambient Television, remarked that the

24 Ibid., 202.  
25 Ibid., 203–204.
screen was turned off and the site was almost entirely empty on a weekend and many of the stores were boarded up just three years after opening. Without the movement of shoppers throughout the mall, the work’s interface was not activated and the screen became mere “video wallpaper.” Furthermore, the video wall was frequently used for commercial broadcasts or sports. Even the more commercial operation of the video wall was short lived, however, as the apparatus was in a state of disrepair by the mid-1990s due to exposure to the elements. Facing a similar lack of maintenance funds as the *Masstransiscope* discussed in chapter two, the work was switched off more often than it was on.

The goal of the mall’s developers was to revitalize a part of the “midtown” area of Atlanta by using a plot of land that was vacant due to urban regeneration of the 1970s. Its subsequent failure as a gentrified haven (the mall was demolished in 2002) “indicates the strength of place and its material processes as forces that operate on the screen” in ways that Birnbaum’s site-specific use of footage and surveillance technology did not anticipate. While the artist attempted to activate a tension between the recent ecological history of the site and the continuous flux of televisual information and busy passersby, the socioeconomic forces at work around and upon the site further complicated the work’s ability to function as public art. Shifting environmental factors around a place can also have the opposite effect on a public screen, however.

There has been a cinematic exhibition venue on a site in Merrifield in Fairfax County, Virginia since the 1950s, but the form of exhibition has shifted with the density of the population, demonstrating the effects of place on an urban screen operating differently than the

---

26 McCarthy, *Ambient Television*, 244.
27 Ibid., 247.
environmental factors of Rio Videowall. The Lee Highway Drive-In was in operation from 1954 to 1984 and located on the outskirts of D.C. area suburbs. The drive-in boasted a 120-foot wide Cinemascope screen and a capacity of over 1300 cars, making it the largest drive-in theatre in the Washington area.\(^{28}\) As Mary Morley Cohen has argued, drive-in movie theaters, long thought to be only a marginal blip in film history, “participated in, reflected, and at times subverted” postwar societal reorganization following the expansion of suburbs and the explosion of car ownership.\(^{29}\) Drive-in theaters were situated on the threshold of suburban developments and more rural areas, and the location of the Lee Highway drive-in was just that in the 1950s. The population of Fairfax County nearly tripled during the hay-day of drive-ins from 98,577 in 1950 to 275,002 in 1960.\(^{30}\)

By the 1970s, however, the film industry moved away from large-scale theaters, including drive-ins, and focused on multiplexes and mall theaters, leaving drive-in theaters to screen mostly B-films before eventually dying out.\(^{31}\) This is precisely what happened in the 1980s when the Lee Highway drive-in became a large Multiplex Cinemas complex (complete with a large, sprawling parking lot conveniently in place from the previous occupant).\(^{32}\) By this time the Merrifield area was no longer on the outskirts, but in the thick of a densely populated suburbia. The county’s population continued to soar to 818,584 by 1990 when the area was made


\(^{32}\) It was at this multiplex, not two miles from my suburban childhood home, that I viewed hundreds of films and developed a respect and love of the cinema (and snuck into countless R-rated films as a teenager).
even more accessible by the nearby Dunn Loring station on the Washington Metro rapid transit system, completed in 1986. Following further increases in population density and affluence in the area during the first decade of the twenty-first century (Fairfax County’s current population tops one million), even the multi-screen complex seemed a waste of valuable real estate and its sizeable parking lot was ripe for New Urbanist development. The multiplex was raised to the ground in 2009 to make way for the Mosaic District, a 31-acre mixed-use residential, retail, and office development very much in keeping with the principles of Creative Class place-making.

Mosaic, complete with a Hyatt, urban-styled Target, parking garages and upscale dining and shopping, still has a movie theater. In the center of the development is the Angelika Film Center & Café, an upscale, boutique art-house cinema chain with locations in New York, Washington, D.C., Dallas and Plano, Texas, and San Diego, California. The arcade games that cluttered the sticky, popcorn-riddled, carpeted lobby of the multiplex were replaced by espresso machines and wine bars in a sleek decor. The theater is located within Mosaic near the available dining establishments and next to a small park. Overlooking this park is an oversized outdoor LED screen attached to the façade of the theater, erected with the explicit intent of creating a “gathering place for the surrounding community.” The screen is a site for outdoor movie screenings during the evenings, Saturday morning cartoons, and even live sports events, such as the 2014 World Cup. Its ambient programming features a series of selected inspirational shorts (selected from local submissions or from online sources, such as the PBS Makers

---

television series featuring important women in history), trailers for upcoming films at the Angelika theater, and a number of “informational videos” pertaining to the retailers in the Mosaic district, which Digital Marketing Manager Elizabeth Traynor is careful not to refer to as “ads.” These short videos present the background of local stores, cooking tutorials and profiles of locally produced food from the nearby eateries, or holiday-related tips. Although they certainly have a different production value than standard television advertisements, they could be considered loosely in the “informercial” genre of advertising. At the time of this writing, the Mosaic screen has yet to engage in partnership with local universities or arts organizations or make a commitment to screening video art or art films, but there is an important wariness with regards to advertising that was shared by the BBC Big Screens project and similar local screen initiatives. Terms “sponsorship” and “partners” occur frequently to distance any promotional content or branding from any association with the out-of-home advertising industry.

In the past sixty years, the Merrifield site’s relationship to outdoor screens has come full circle. The large drive-in screen, marker of the outskirts of a population center, parallels the large urban LED screen at the center of a new one. The use of public screens to generate a sense of place at Mosaic is linked not to urban revitalization, but rather to creating a sense of community in a newly populated area. However, this screen is layered with the place-specific history of cinema exhibition at Merrifield. The southern border of the development, which is the old border of the drive-in and multiplex parking lot, has even been named Merrifield Cinema Drive.

Mosaic’s screen is relatively new and its success or failure is yet to be determined,

35 Elizabeth Traynor, Email exchange with author, Email, July 29, 2015.
36 A far more arts-based initiative for a permanent urban screen currently under consideration in Indianapolis is making explicit its desire to divorce itself from the association between large urban public screen and advertising.
whereas Birnbaum’s work of public video art fell victim to its location’s lack of development. Nevertheless, there is great possibility for using moving images in public spaces to generate a sense of place, be they temporary projections or events, or permanent installations such as Jaume Plensa’s video monoliths in *Crown Fountain*, discussed in chapter three. The combination of institutional, environmental, and economic factors conducive to generating a sense of place through screens is often hard to achieve. Public screens used for art or events can generate crowds and a sense of community, but only if the people actually come and if the funding and infrastructure are in place to keep the screen non-commercial and up to date.

Though Birnbaum’s work is much more solidly within the realm of “public art” than the evolution of screens at Merrifield, some important parallels illuminate the ways in which urban developments, shopping, and demographic changes are intertwined with public screen sites and how *place* operates in relationship to the screen. More and more public screens are part of initiatives to renew urban spaces or generate new destinations. In some instances these screens are integrated into architecture, forming dynamic media facades. The Barclay’s Center in Brooklyn is a good example of this. The “oculus” screen designed by the technology firm Dektronics is an irregularly shaped high-definition LED display that encircles the opening above the stadium’s GEICO Atrium. Primarily used to screen sponsored advertising or event-specific content, this screen has also been used for public art projects. These included Open Ended Group’s videos *All Day* (2013), featuring scenes generated from over 14,000 photographs of Brooklyn exteriors and *Ghostcatching* (2013), an animated, semi-abstract work. The integration of the screen with the architecture makes this work emblematic of the dematerialized facades of
contemporary design. While these architectural screens are very much a part of the increased presence of moving images in public spaces, they occupy a very different conceptual space than the works in my study, which includes events and installations specifically conceived for moving image spectatorship. As noted in the introduction, the category Schreuder refers to as the modern form of *gesamtkunstwerk*, where the screen is architecturally embedded into the design, necessitates a separate study. Nevertheless, there are still place-making initiatives with permanent screens that fall outside of this architectural category, much like the Mosaic screen or the failed *Rio Videowall*. Given the understandable uneasiness with encroaching advertising in public spaces that goes back to the early days of Times Square, quite often arts programming is a viable part of divorcing such place-making screen initiatives from the public’s wariness over the loss of the public sphere to encroaching private interests.

**Liveness: The BBC Big Screens and Event Programming**

Aside from projects explicitly labeled “public art,” many other civic and public initiatives seek to bring experiences with art into the public realm through moving images, particularly the performing arts. In New York, both the NYC Ballet and the Metropolitan Opera have made public screens part of the iconic public plaza at Lincoln Center through both ambient installations and public screening events. David Michalek’s *ACTION/FIGURES 1: Slow Dancing* (2007) illuminated three hanging screens on the façade of the New York Ballet for the Lincoln Center Festival in July 2007. The artist returned to the plaza in 2011 for *Portraits in Dramatic Time*. The ultra-slow motion of these works is ideal for ambient programming, according to former Big Screens curator Kate Taylor, as it creates a dissonance from the bustle

---

37 The computer-generated, undulating facades of buildings by Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid are emblematic of this trend.
of the city and can be viewed on a loop. The Metropolitan Opera annually screens selected taped performances from its successful live movie theater broadcasts *Live in HD* on a temporary outdoor screen at Lincoln Center to end the summer and signal the new opera season in addition to simulcasting its opening night broadcasts there and at Times Square. The Met is not the only opera house to seek expanded audiences through public screens. London’s Royal Opera House began streaming live broadcasts of its performances to public screens in 2000 through sponsorship from British Petroleum (BP). Soon, they began using the networked BBC Big Screens to further this public initiative.

As discussed in chapter two, the Big Screens operated throughout the day using an innovative form of “flux” broadcasting to keep content interesting for a mobile viewer. However, their buildup for the Olympics relied on crowds that would come for dedicated blocks of time to view live events, and event programming was viewed as a desirable goal by the BBC. By the summer of 2013, just one year after the Olympic Games and months before the BBC formally left the partnership, the Big Screens program was already in a state of dismantling. Screens in Leeds and Birmingham were switched off for much of the day and those in Bradford and Plymouth were used primarily for static bulletins or live sports during the day. Some screen programming remained, however, and I was able to attend a special event at the Plymouth screen: a live broadcast from the Royal Opera House in London. (Fig. 37) This event highlighted the place-making potential of Plymouth’s screen and, as I analyze below, demonstrated the role a permanent public screen can play in generating community and fostering engagement with the arts in public space.

40 Taylor, “Programming Video Art for Urban Screens in Public Space.”
41 It was announced summer of 2015, however, that the opening night simulcast will no longer be screened at Lincoln Center, only in Times Square.
The broadcasts, which are quite noticeably sponsored by BP through thorough branding, link the entire network of screens through the “liveness” of simulcast—part of the screens’ original function in relationship to the Olympic Games. Before the show, during the intermission, and after the broadcast, there are “hosts” that provide both backstage access to the actors and coverage of the crowd at a temporary screen set-up in London’s Trafalgar Square. Also during these segments viewers across the country are invited to document their experiences using Twitter and Instagram hashtags to be put up on the national broadcast, using social media to connect local and national experiences. In a manner similar to the “Best of the Best” segment in the Audience programming wheel discussed in chapter two where selected local content would be broadcast across the network, here social media created an interactive experience to form a bridge between the local and the national, a key concept for a project linked to the Olympics.

The 2013 Plymouth event was very well attended with approximately 180-200 people there; nearly all of the seating was occupied (both individual chairs specially set up by the city council and permanent benches and picnic tables). The three-hour program spanned the early evening to night, so the square changed in appearance from late afternoon to dusk to night as the program continued. In addition to the powerful voices projecting from the sound-system, the sounds of teenage passersby, cars, the cappuccino machine at the snack bar, and the sea town’s many seagulls could also be heard during the program. This made me think of how audiences at other screens, seeing the same live broadcast, would experience the opera with differing background noises and distractions, perhaps a nearby train or bar instead of seagulls or a busy intersection instead of a mostly-closed shopping district. The situation of each screen brings the culture of London into the local, possibly generating a sense of local ownership of national
culture. Given that the opera had subtitles, it was possible to enjoy the music and understand the narrative despite these auditory distractions.

Attendees (mostly age fifty and up) watched the broadcast in rapt attention, and there was not nearly the amount of chatter and socializing that I’ve witnessed at New York City outdoor movie locations, such as Bryant or McCarren Park. Both the perceived cultural value of opera and the liveness of the broadcast likely prompted these viewing codes in combination with the arrangement of temporary furniture and obstacles placed in relationship to permanent structures. The screen, elevated off the ground with two posts, usually allows people to walk underneath but for the opera a temporary barricade was placed there, forcing passersby to go around. This created an empty space between the screen and the spectators. The chairs set up by the city council faced the screen directly and were a comfortable viewing distance away from it, further discouraging anyone from standing or walking directly in front of the screen. Passersby, most often teenagers and some cyclists, would frequently stop to view the screen momentarily (on average between 30 and 120 seconds) and a few remained for longer.

Wanting to understand how audiences responded to this broadcast beyond observing them, I interviewed people during the intermission. This was a rather limited amount of time, but it would not have been possible during or immediately after the performance when most scattered quickly home. Some even declined to speak during the intermission, indicating they wanted to devote full attention to the backstage content. I was, however, able to engage about five tables of people, around two dozen total respondents, all of whom had a very positive response to the opera broadcasts, noting especially that the event provided free access to culturally significant events. Many remarked that travel to London and the price of opera tickets were prohibitive for people in Plymouth, and they saw this as a valuable opportunity. About
three fourths of the people I spoke with lived nearby and frequented the screen either as a daily source for information or for events like sports, while others drove from other towns explicitly to catch the opera, one from over twenty miles away. In this way the screen forged its own community by both bringing people together, and temporarily bridging the spatial, economic, and cultural gap between Plymouth and London through free access to culture. Both the content and the permanent and temporary aspects of the physical screen situation attracted a devoted audience engaged in the opera’s story. Their only complaint was that some had missed previous events due to not knowing about them, highlighting the importance of publicity for public screenings and events.

Based on the event I attended, it seems that the Plymouth screen brought genuine value to the cultural life of the city center. However, the success of these place-making initiatives rests on a variety of local variables. The BBC Big Screens were a fragile collaboration of local and national bodies that was, in the end, untenable. The three-part operation among the local city councils, the BBC, and the London Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) began to unravel following the 2012 London Games. With the impact of ambient programming unrealized in studies and the crowds of the Olympic Games gone, the screens became less of a priority for the BBC. LOCOG’s bit in the partnership was the purchasing of the Phillips screens, with little-to-no budget for upkeep or updating the technologies. Maintenance of the apparatus and personnel for events fell to the city councils. Following the BBC’s annual report of 2012, which argued for a reduction in overhead costs as well as greater transparency and efficiency of

---

42 By the permanent aspects I am referring to the screen’s location in the city center as a known destination for events like this, and by temporary aspects I mean the particular arrangement of chairs and barricades for this specific screening.

43 See discussion of the limitation of these studies in chapter two.
spending, the decision was made to back out of the Big Screens partnership, effective September 2013, despite the widespread success of the screens during the Olympic Games. Following the redundancy of the local screen managers, the network ran on a skeleton staff in Birmingham for six months before handing over complete control of the screens to the city councils. All professionals I spoke with saw this as a mistake, suggesting that the potential of this new form of broadcasting was not fully appreciated or even understood, and the cost of running the Big Screens was a very small part of the BBC’s budget. Without the personnel and management in place to keep the operation afloat, some screens in the network have either been switched off (Birmingham) or been dismantled (Derby, Hull, Edinburgh, and even Liverpool, one of the original screens).

Some screens have continued, including an informal network in southern England. By cross checking the list of sites for the BP Big Screens in 2015 with the list of the 23 original BP Big Screens, it appears that eleven of the original screens are still in use, six of which are in the south of England and only three of which are in the north. This is rather surprising given the northern focus of the original screens (Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Hull, and Birmingham, the southernmost location). What is lost with the departure of BBC from the project, however, is the connection between locations. The sense of place within the city centers was complemented by a national sense of place desirable for the Olympic Games—itself a rather contested identity as the UK team consists of athletes from England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, who all compete separately in other international sports competitions (such as the World Cup).

Screening Elsewheres: Connections between Places

The remaining sites include Bradford, Leeds, and Middlesbrough in the north, and Bristol, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Swindon, Waltham Forest (London), and Woolwich (London) in the south, with Belfast and Swansea being the additional screens in Northern Ireland and Wales, respectively.
The metaphor of the “window” for film—that it is a seamless portal to another world—discussed in chapter one is not only an essential component of classical film theory but also an architectural metaphor. Though this metaphor (as well as the picture frame and mirror) are inadequate in light of the proliferation of public and mobile screen media, there are works of public art that make specific use of the ability of video and film to connect places, calling specific attention not only to the places depicted through images, but also to the physical place of the screen. In this section, I analyze two sets of works—one permanent and one temporary—to highlight the ways in which moving image-based public art can negotiate new relationships between spaces or redefine the experience of an architectural place through connections between interior and exterior.

**Screens as Permanent Windows: Diller Scofidio + Renfro’s experimentation**
Architectural firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro have incorporated video screens into many of their architectural projects, most often as a connector between different spaces within the structure or different moments in time. Video and media art actually date back to the very beginning of Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio’s collaboration in the late 1980s. One of their earliest public video projects was *Jump Cuts* (1996), an installation outside of a movie theater in San Jose, California. (Fig. 38) Twelve LCD screens would relay real-time, live, surveillance images taken from bird’s eye and elevation-level perspectives of the theater’s escalators. This footage was intercut with trailers for upcoming films. This work was meant to both turn the building inside out and recall the “grand social ante-spaces” of historical theaters such as Charles Garnier’s Paris Opera.45 The work highlighted the social aspects of movie viewing and called attention to the architectural site behind the walls—something echoed in the building’s glass

façade designed by Kenneth Rodrigues and Partners and Robert Poeschl Architecture. The design team and Diller + Scofidio wanted to set the marquee apart from the rest of the façade through the use of technology, though doing so presented a number challenges, particularly with upkeep, analyzed below.  

Nearly a decade after *Jump Cuts*, Diller + Scofidio again incorporated a permanent video element onto the façade of a new building to produce *Facsimile* (2004) for the Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco. (Fig. 39) This technologically sophisticated project featured a mobile screen that scanned the surface of the building’s façade via a traveling armature. As the screen travelled across the façade, video shot with a dolly travelling at the same speed relayed on screen so that the image appears to be a window into the building—a facsimile of the interior on the exterior. Sometimes this is the case but at other times it is a false correspondence. On the reverse of the screen is a camera that can record the interior, as well as another panning camera set up to record the lower convention floor. Live footage is intercut with prerecorded vignettes taking place in fictional hotel rooms and office spaces. Scofidio, project leader Matthew Johnson, and cinematographer Dan Gillham became “de facto independent film producers” to realize the elaborate shoot of over sixty vignettes. The adjacent rooms were built on a sound stage in New Jersey, each with a width that corresponds to the distance between mullions on the Moscone façade. The camera’s movement across the set paralleled the screen’s movement across the façade. The site and movement of the screen mirrored the camera’s across a set. In a decidedly postmodern vein, *Facsimile* realized Le Corbusier’s concept of the building as a camera—only the interior and exterior are reversed.

---

Unfortunately, both projects were beset with technical problems. *Jump Cuts* had to be retrofitted from laser disc to DVD technology and by 2010 was only functioning as a display for movie trailers.\(^{48}\) *Facsimile* was plagued by technical problems almost from its moment of conception. In a 2003 piece in *Public Art Review*, Steve Dietz referred to the work as “a border on the map of public art terra incognita between the siren call of new technologies that promise to upgrade the very notion of site-specific public art, and the pragmatic realities of attempting to do so.”\(^{49}\) The LED screen quickly had to be replaced and the armature made too much noise turning the corner and frequently got stuck. Other technical issues meant the project was only functional for a few weeks at a time. In early 2015 the San Francisco Arts Commission removed the work from the Moscone Convention Center following a public debate and vote at its September’s meeting.

The later life of these projects illustrate the conservation issues with permanent media art in public space, much like Birnbaum’s *Rio Videowall*, Brand’s *Masstransiscope*, and the BBC Big Screens, funding for upkeep and technological upgrades were both necessary for survival and scarce to come by. Perhaps what is needed is “a redefinition of ‘permanent’…that [perhaps] the function remains the same for twenty years, but the means of delivery changes every ten years, while the content quality (e.g. level of digitization) changes every five years, and the content itself changes every other year,” as Dietz suggests.\(^{50}\) Especially with software and code, preservation is a key concern for collectors, administrators, and artists alike. In his acquired gallery pieces, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer specifies what elements of his works may or may not

\(^{48}\) This observation is based on a personal account by Dimendberg in Ibid., 93. A streetview of the site from Google Maps in July 2015 shows the screens still installed, however no programming is visible.


\(^{50}\) Ibid., 29.
change when they are acquired. For instance his pulse pieces can only be exhibited using incandescent bulbs (meaning museums may need to stockpile them) whereas a projector-based work can use upgraded projectors as time passes.\textsuperscript{51} In a public context, longevity and upkeep requires a consistent source of funding, perhaps most optimally granted through the ideal marriage of art and commercial interests discussed by Birnbaum.

In a far less technologically complicated evocation of a cinema in public space, Diller Scofidio + Renfro incorporated cinematic principles in their framing of vistas and experience for the High Line, an urban park on Manhattan’s west side that repurposed an abandoned elevated railway. The experience of the park is decidedly linear; visitors walk the path along buildings and views of the Hudson River mirroring a cinematic unfolding of time. To make this connection to cinema even more apparent, the designers even included an amphitheater sunk down from the path that frames a view of the street below, offering a halt in the viewer’s progression and “a frame for watching the endless flux of the city.”\textsuperscript{52} While not explicitly a moving image, the allusion to film spectatorship in the High Line illustrates how cinematic principles inform urban design in general and in the work of Diller Scofidio + Renfro in particular. The High Line concept, which did not involve costly or quickly outdated technologies, may prove a very successful means of generating connections between places and views in the city through permanent architectural structures.

\textit{Wormholes: Temporary Connectors}

The spontaneous connections between places made possible through temporary projects, however, do not face the same hurdles as the projects by Diller Scofidio + Renfro. These act as

\textsuperscript{51} Lozano-Hemmer, Interview by author.
temporary interventions that not only generate a connection across a distance, but reconfigure how we encounter a space. An important precedent for this type of work is Dan Graham, who not only proposed ways to generate disjunctive experiences of the body (discussed in chapter three), but also disrupted established experiences of public spaces. In *Video View of Suburbia in an Urban Atrium* (1979), Graham inverted the viewing relationship between urban and suburban spaces. The work consisted of previously recorded content on a video monitor installed in Manhattan’s Citicorp Building’s interior public atrium. Graham describes the work as follows: “Instead of viewers in their private home interiors seeing a view of public life in the city (which is safely ensconced within their homes), a public viewer in the center of the city sees a television image of the exterior of a suburban house.” By inverting the public and private viewing situations through both the placement and content of the video monitor, Graham underscores the falseness of the “urban fantasy of the picturesque brought to the city center” conveyed by the design of the mall-like atrium in contrast to “the actual suburban edge of the city.” Much like two-way mirrors in the never-realized concept for a theater in his work *Cinema* (discussed in chapter one), Graham subverts normal viewing practices not to call attention merely to the act of viewing itself, but also to create a connection (or inversion) between places. The site of the screen becomes specific in how it is meant to connect with the spaces depicted within the screen. The audience reads the atrium differently when confronted with the view of the actual suburban house, possibly reflecting on the similarly artificial and mass-produced sense of conformity and safety.

German artist Wolfgang Staehl’s early work with live webcam imagery has also appeared

---

54 Ibid.
in public spaces. *Midtown* (2004-2005) featured a live image of Manhattan refreshed every eight seconds and projected live. The Lumen festival in Leeds, England featured the work in 2004 as a large-scale, high-definition projection on the façade of the Henry Moore Institute, located a short walk from Millennium Square, the future home of Leeds’s BBC Big Screen. Kate Taylor remarked that “the real-time immediacy, vast difference in time zones and the still nature of the framing formed a compelling installation.”

Much as internet communication collapses space in the virtual world, Staehl’s projection collapsed two cityscapes in real-time.

Irish artist James Gerrard also made use of slow-moving imagery in his installation at Lincoln Center, *Solar Reserve (Tonopah, Nevada)* (2014). (Fig. 40) Rather than a nocturnal projection, the work is comprised of a 28’x24’ frameless LED wall that was placed in the middle of Lincoln Center Plaza, in front of the well-known fountain. The work featured a highly sophisticated computer simulation of an actual solar plant, synchronized to the exact time of day and the movements of the sun and moon. As the mirrors in the plant shifted, the point of view cycled from ground-level to satellite every sixty minutes, so a viewer at any time of day would never see the same image. While not featuring an actual live image, Gerrard’s project made connections to far off places where light and space interplay far differently than in an urban setting. The work is both live and fabricated, creating a strange sense of specificity and placelessness juxtaposed with the specific location of Lincoln Center. Since the screen was at ground-level, viewers would frequently approach the LED wall to create silhouettes. Lincoln Center and the sponsoring organization Public Art Fund prompted viewers to share their images via social media hashtags. Similar to the interactions with the Kusama and Walker exhibits

---

55 Taylor, “Programming Video Art for Urban Screens in Public Space.”
discussed in chapter three, many of these featured viewers posing within the work.\textsuperscript{56}

The sense of interactivity generated by selfies at Gerrard’s project was integral to other media projects in public spaces that connected disparate spaces, even some which predate digital technologies. Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz’s \textit{Hole in Space} (1980), also installed at Lincoln Center, is an early example. (Fig. 41) In \textit{Hole in Space} the artists connected Lincoln Center in New York to the Century Center shopping complex in Los Angeles via satellite feed. The work was projected over three nights and featured larger than life-sized screens with instant feedback. On the first night it was completely unannounced, and crowds continued to grow via word of mouth for the second night; a mass media announcement on the local news caused crowds in both cities to increase even more the third and final night. Kit Galloway recalled that the project was meant to be a response to top-down media culture, using satellite communication to generate a “new kind of community commons” to break away from “broadcast tyranny.”\textsuperscript{57}

Margot Bouman posits that the work replaced the dominant model of “distraction” in television with interruption, shifting to the codes of “other urban social spaces such as a club or a festival,” where attention and interaction reign.\textsuperscript{58} In the video documentation of the work (produced with funding from the American Film Institute and the NEA, the latter also being a primary funder of the project), there is a genuine sense of exuberance and joy on the part of the participants. They play charades, flirt, sing songs, and respond in surprise when they learn they are speaking with

\textsuperscript{56} A collection of images uploaded using the hashtag #solarnyc can be found at \url{http://iconosquare.com/tag/solarnyc}.

\textsuperscript{57} Kit Galloway, \textit{On Hole in Space, by Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz} (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2008), \url{http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/audio/aop_tour_413}.

\textsuperscript{58} Margot Bouman, “Move along Folks, Just Move Along, There’s Nothing to See: Transience, Televisuality and the Paradox of Anamorphosis,” in \textit{After the Break: Television Theory Today}, ed. Marijke de Valck and Jan Teurlings (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 172.
people at the opposite end of the continent. As word spread, family members met up to say hello; some had not seen each other in over a decade. One woman remarked that her brother had never seen her young son, and commented on how special the event was for them. Billed as “a public communication sculpture,” the work was deliberately open-ended (or, in Lozano-Hemmer’s terms, allowed to get “out of control”). The artists wanted to explore the aesthetics of a communication infrastructure, and in 1980 the public response was decidedly ecstatic and enthralled. In a published conversation from 1987, Rabinowitz explained that the artistic duo “always approached the image as place…the magic is this ability to carry a living event and then interconnect with satellites to connect places over vast differences.”\(^{59}\) This concept of “image as place” suggests that the technology produces its own site—one defined as much by its proximity and embeddedness within the screen’s location as its distance from the origin of the feed it is receiving. The image becomes, in a sense, a discursive site of its own.

In the three decades following \textit{Hole in Space} the novelty of instantaneous satellite communication has been replaced by the ubiquity of even clearer and cheaper internet communication (Galloway and Rabinowitz’s work required in-kind support from Western Union for the costly satellite feed). In the age of Skype and FaceChat a public project like \textit{Hole in Space} would seemingly lack public interest. However, in 2008, British artist Paul St George created a similar public communication project in the highly popular \textit{Telectroscope}. (Fig. 42) Produced by Artichoke, a UK-based public art fund that aims to “create extraordinary, large-scale events that appeal to the widest possible audience,” \textit{Telectroscope} connected Manhattan to London via video screens linked by a broadband connection. The work claimed, nevertheless, to

be the completion of a nineteenth-century trans-Atlantic tunnel outfitted with mirrors, the brainchild of the artist’s fictional great-great grandfather. The installation appeared to be a telescope pointing down to the ground, outfitted with a brass exterior, gears, and valves—all elements of the popular “Steampunk” science fiction genre. Visitors had to peer down the “scope” to view the video feed, accentuating the distance between its two sites more than Hole in Space had done. The earlier work used life-sized screens to attempt to make persons on the other side of the country appear to be as close as those on the street corner. St George’s piece did not feature sound, but participants were given a white board on which to communicate and some even spoke to friends and family over the phone as they peered in, underscores how the physical distance was already a non-issue for contemporary communication technologies.

Unlike Hole in Space, where the technology was not foregrounded and the work was unannounced, Telectroscope featured an elaborate pseudo-scientific apparatus and dramatic arrival. On May 20 and May 21, the “drill” appeared to break through the ground at the site of the telectroscope’s installation. The following day, the installation was functional. Rather than a spontaneous, pop-up event, Telectroscope was orchestrated and spectacular, in keeping with the aims of Artichoke. The company had previously funded The Sultan’s Elephant (2006) by French theater troupe Royal de Luxe, a London street theater performance featuring gargantuan marionettes of a girl and elephant marching through city streets. Like Telectroscope, The Sultan’s Elephant featured an otherworldly arrival signaled by a mysterious rocket appearing as if it had crashed into a plaza in London. The shift towards the spectacular in Telectroscope

---

60 Steampunk literature features fantastical and futuristic contraptions made using nineteenth-century steam technology. The genre has expanded into film and television and influenced a number of fashion designers and subcultures. Steampunk enthusiasts even met specifically at the sites in London and New York to have a trans-Atlantic conversation.
foregrounds the theatrical, fictional components of the work, rather than its ability to generate spontaneous connections. The goals of Artichoke—to produce explicitly larger-than-life spectacles—parallel the motives behind the contemporary emergence of light festivals and large-scale projection events. Even projects like *SONG 1* stem from a similar desire to illuminate the city street with an extravagant, one-of-a-kind spectacle.

**Lumière: Nocturnal Illumination of Places**

One of the significant ways moving images interact with the concept of place is through the illumination of architecture. In addition to special events and installations, many cities also feature regular spaces for spectacular projections. In Montreal, for instance, planners in 2003 named the entertainment and cultural district where museums and theaters are located the “Quartier des Spectacles” to promote tourism and development. In addition to major additions to the Place des Arts complex, this initiative features nightly animated projections onto a variety of buildings in the area. The technology of projection mapping has increasingly become part of nocturnal urban projections throughout the world. Projection mapping involves projecting animations on an irregular surface by digitally reading the contours of that surface and manipulating the image. The result may give the illusion of three-dimensional animations, and often artists use projection mapping to disintegrate the surfaces of architecture visually. With the increased availability of projection mapping software, these nocturnal spectacles are attractive as both unplanned guerilla interventions and special events. The spectacular nature and technological sophistication of projection events can lead passersby to question whether or not the work is part of advertising. A *New York Times* article on the proliferation of projection mapping events in New York’s Lower East Side cites a person driving by a guerilla projection of
a monkey as asking “Hey!...Is this a commercial or is this art?” In 2011 when electronic-music artist Deadmau5 used 3D projection to illuminate and illusionistically deconstruct London’s Millbank Tower, the audience responded with boos and jeers to the corporate-sponsored finale (in which the building became a Nokia phone). While many of the uses for projection mapping are decorative or part of marketing or advertising efforts (one I witnessed was on the façade of Macy’s in New York for the 2014 Super Bowl), there are examples that engage with place more deeply. The Macula, a contemporary Czech collective, uses projection mapping on historical buildings, often celebrating local histories. Casting elaborate animations on clock towers or churches, The Macula creates incredible nocturnal spectacles that convey the history of a place through animation.

The Lumière Festival in Durham, England and Londonderry (Derry), Northern Ireland similarly engages with highlighting significant historical architecture with technologically sophisticated projection mapping and interactive light sculptures. The 2013 Durham festival included an interactive projection that transformed a modernist government building into a jukebox (Volume Unit by The Media Workshop), an illusionistic 3D projection of an elephant (Elephantastic by Top’là Design), a high-definition spherical projection of the sun’s surface (Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s Solar Equation), and a spectacular projection of imagery from stained glass windows and medieval manuscripts on Durham Cathedral (Crown of Light by Ross Ashton). While some of these works are traveling (such as Elephantastic and Solar Equation), many of them were site-specific, and created in order to engage with the historical place of

---

62 The city is often referred to as Londonderry by Loyalists and Derry by Republicans. The city council voted in 2015 (after the events discussed here) to drop “London” from their name.
Durham. Additionally, much like the *emda* initiatives and the Glow Festival discussed briefly in chapter three, the festival wished to explore connections between business and art interests in public spaces. The event included a symposium “Arts Means Business” where developers, policymakers, and artists illustrated “how artists and the creative industries offer innovative solutions to seemingly intractable problems, and [meet] many of the challenges facing 21\(^{st}\) century urban society.”\(^{63}\) The spectacular illuminations are not only a means of solidifying and exploring historical place, but also part of place-making initiatives in urban revitalization.

Beyond projection mapping and temporary festivals, major architectural sites are also engaging with more permanent media spectacles. Though originally intended as a temporary project to commemorate 75\(^{th}\) anniversary of San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge, Leo Villareal’s *The Bay Lights*, an illumination made by 25,000 LED lights, will now be a permanent fixture of the iconic landmark. Similarly, sites like the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Empire State Building in New York have used new technologies of illumination and animation to reinforce their iconic status at night. Beginning with a bicentennial illumination in 1976, the Empire State Building has used colored illumination to mark various holidays or organizations throughout the calendar year. In 2012 the building acquired a more energy-efficient and computer programmable LED system capable of animation. Owners and programmers contend that they would like to keep the technology in the non-commercial spirit of the earlier lights, only with more pizazz: “We want the Hong Kong experience…[but] we won’t be showing TV shows on the side of the building.”\(^{64}\)

---


Recent light shows have included images from American art inspired by the opening of the new Whitney Museum of American Art and a July 4th light show with a synchronized Grateful Dead soundtrack broadcast on local radio.\(^65\) The illuminations not only make iconic architecture visible at night, but constantly change in hopes that visitors and passersby will continue to look up. Additionally, the Empire State Building’s illuminations and animations look impressive on aerial shots from helicopters that circulate on television for sports and events in the city.

The illumination of significant buildings in spectacular ways of course precedes the advent of projection mapping and recent public initiatives. Arguably we can trace nocturnal projections and spectacle as far back as the spectacular nightly Baroque fireworks and fountains at Versailles (and possibly earlier). The use of sound and light projections on historical sites to tell historical narratives, however, is a product of the twentieth century. In 1952 curator Paul Robert-Houdin introduced the first *son et lumière* (“sound and light”) show at the Chateau de Chambord in the Loire Valley in France.\(^66\) These “open air museums” used a series of projectors to “re-inject” the past into important sites, creating spectacular events aimed at generating a sense of place and history upon the physical projection screen, most often infused with celebratory grand narratives.\(^67\) In terms of their use of nocturnal light spectacle to forge narratives of national identity, the *son et lumière* shows are related to the transparency paintings and panoramas discussed briefly in chapter one. The 19th century pleasure garden illuminated transparencies transported viewers to battlefields or other significant sites of national identity, whereas the *son et lumière* uses the same mode of address to layer a static building, illuminating

place in a way that not only validates a structure’s historical form and function, but attempts to secure for it a place in the contemporary city. We can certainly connect contemporary light festivals to this tradition, but significantly many of the contemporary illuminations use interactivity in order to make this relevance apparent, as the boombox projection in Durham did. Furthermore, many artists, including Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, deliberately eschew the term “son et lumière” for fear of its association with state-aggrandizing, top-down spectacles.

Critical Synthesis: Krzysztof Wodiczko

Krzysztof Wodiczko’s urban projections bring the voices and experiences of the disenfranchised into the public sphere. Wodiczko’s projectors create an experience derived from both the ephemeral quality of projected light and the moving picture and the permanence of his architectural surfaces of projection—a collision of meanings at the surface of the screen that can produce a critical awareness. Wodiczko is keenly interested in the concept of place, particularly in the layered meanings that accumulate on architecture and monuments in the city. In one sense his works illuminate ignored places in urban settings, calling our attention to their constant peripheral presence in our daily experience. In another sense his projections completely undercut the monument by explicitly highlighting lived experiences and injustices outside the realm of official history. Like Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Wodiczko has an international practice, producing major projection events all over the world, though with a decidedly more site-specific relationship to his venues. Many of his works have been analyzed in journal articles and book chapters, and the artist also has published a number of writings. With a few exceptions, discussed below, most of the writing about Wodiczko’s practice has focused on the political and critical

aspects of his work and downplayed his relationship to cinematic projection. My analysis bridges these two aspects of his work by considering the multiple ways he investigates the concepts of site and place.

The flickering light and fading images of the projected video in works like *Bunker Hill Monument Projection* (1998) or *Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran’s Projection* (2012) act in direct opposition to the immovability and permanence of the traditional urban monument or architectural facade. (Figs. 43 and 44) Wodiczko’s works most often include some form of communication with groups that are disenfranchised, marginalized, or outright ignored by the larger culture. This includes grieving mothers of murder victims, immigrant communities, the homeless, and combat veterans. Wodiczko’s use of moving and projected images creates an experience that is at once public, political, personal, and uniquely cinematic. Like Aitken’s *SONG 1*, many of Wodiczko’s projections rely on nocturnal darkness, sound projection, and the spectacular scale of architecture. With Wodiczko, however, the image produces neither *SONG 1*’s seductive sense of reverie nor a pop-up temporary social space like the nighttime works of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, but rather the projected images cause a collision between the discursive site of the community and the physical site of the screen, interrupting and potentially transforming our understanding of the public sphere and our experience of place.

*The Discursive Site: Articulating Memory through Transitional Objects*

Some of the artist’s main concerns in his public works are the self-representation of marginalized people and communication within the community. In a photograph referenced in his writings and in public talks, an immigrant man faces the camera on a public bus in an
unknown city as two European people look at him.\textsuperscript{69} According to the artist, this image represents a seemingly insurmountable communication gap between the situation of isolation of the man who looks at the camera’s colonizing gaze and the couple who “cannot confront the presence of a stranger any more than they can confront their own strangeness, which is repressed and hidden in their unconscious.”\textsuperscript{70} In order to bridge this gap Wodiczko turns to the concept of the “transitional object,” a term coined by psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott. The artist defines his use of Winnicott’s concept as “an object that will allow [one] to play and achieve a distance, perhaps even an ironic distance, from the painful and impossible experience, in order to stand behind or next to his own experience and somehow open it to the [others].”\textsuperscript{71} Such an object performs a strange operation—it generates another distance in order to allow communication between two parties. Through the strangeness of the transitional objects, voices and testimonies typically unheard in the public sphere can become part of the history of a place. Winnicott and Wodiczko explicitly reference the concept of “play,” which, as outlined in chapter three, can connote a sense of safety, an opportunity to “open up.”

Examples of these strangely uncanny transitional objects are found in a series of communicative devices for Wodiczko’s Xenology project intended to empower and give voice to the foreigner and outsider. These included \textit{Alien Staff} (1992), \textit{Porte-Parole (The Mouthpiece)} (1993), \textit{Aegis: Equipment for a City of Strangers} (1998), and \textit{Dis-Armor} (1999). Used in public spaces, these mediatized performances (that is performances enacted through some sort of engagement of the live body with a mediating technology) proffer opportunities for self-


\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 91.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
determination and speech through the otherworldliness of futuristic technologies. In *Dis-Armor*, for example, the user wears a headpiece and backpack that records the movements of the speaker’s eyes and relays them in real-time to small monitors on the backpack. The work’s strangeness was designed as a way for troubled kids in Japan to speak about their experiences without the pressure of eye contact. The apparatus (which looks like something from a science fiction film) would seemingly prompt the wearer to feel even more outcast, but when performed it offered both a sense of protection and a means to initiate conversation. In *Alien Staff* the walking stick, long a symbol of nomadism, becomes the transitional object to allow immigrants and refugees to share their experiences.

*Alien Staff*, which went through multiple design stages and was performed in Barcelona, New York, and Warsaw, was a portable walking stick outfitted with a small monitor and speaker at the top, controlled via sensory electrodes in the staff, which communicate via gestural movement with a laptop in a custom-made shoulder bag. Additionally the staff had a container or reliquary that held important objects—literally conversation pieces—that the performer would reference when communicating with others. Wodiczko sees this mixture of conversation and prerecorded material in the presence of both the speaker and the listener as creating a “critical, political, and ethical field where both the interlocutor and the stranger, by referring to what is prerecorded and what is broadcast, could actually take up an external and critical position to it.” The media image itself operates as a transitional object, or in Sherrie Rabinowitz’s words, the image becomes a “place” of communication. Though *Alien Staff* is a decidedly mobile work,

---

72 Mediatization is defined as “the meta process by which everyday practices and social relations are historically shaped by mediating technologies and media organizations.” Knut Lundby, ed., *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), x.

it still conveys a concept of place, both in terms of understanding the city as a pluralistic space with multiple voices, and as a means of connecting experiences of places. Furthermore, it turns the city street into what James Meyer defines as a “functional site”—“a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual filiations and the bodies that move between them.”

Wodiczko’s transitional objects are not limited to a wearable scale, and the same strategy is evident in his larger projection work, for which he is better known. During the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, Wodiczko arranged a projection event for the exterior walls of the Denver Performing Arts Center and the future site of a shelter for homeless combat veterans, War Veteran Vehicle Projection. (Fig. 45) Part of the artist’s long-standing engagement with local communities, this work incorporated statements by US military veterans battling homelessness, and was also shown in Liverpool and Poland with involvement of war veterans in those communities. The projected images were the words of the veterans, flashing rapidly as the speakers’ voices are heard over loud speakers, followed by an even faster repetition of particularly powerful phrases describing personal experiences accompanied by the sounds of gunfire and other weapons of war. The effect is jarring and disruptive to the surrounding environment, and certainly elicits attention from both those who came to see the event and passers-by.

The projector/apparatus also takes on added significance. Wodiczko converted combat Humvee vehicles into mobile projectors that can be operated by the veterans themselves, replacing missiles with light. What for Baudry was a menacing, hidden apparatus of domination becomes here a visible, interactive agent of communication and potential healing—though one

---

that retains the traces of militaristic domination and violence. In his earlier Hirshhorn Museum projection, where the three slide projectors were placed on visible scaffolding, Wodiczko remarked that he did not care for “too much mystery attached to the technology” as he wanted to distance his projections from institutional speech.\footnote{Roger Gilroy, “An Interview with Krzysztof Wodiczko: Projection as Intervention,” \textit{New Art Examiner} 16, no. 6 (February 1989): 31.} With \textit{War Veteran Vehicle Projection}, the projector’s visibility is both militant in its message and protective for the speaker. An earlier conceptual rendering for the project featured a futuristic motorcycle with contractible wings that looked like concept art from the television series \textit{Battlestar Galactica} (2004-2009). The visionary design as well as the refitted Humvee provide a sense of armor and protection for the speaker that “operates as a metaphor for the difficult and lengthy process of dismantling the emotional armor which much first be recognized and acknowledged by the veterans themselves, their families, friends, and the larger public.”\footnote{Dora Apel, “Technologies of War, Media, and Dissent in the Post 9/11 Work of Krzysztof Wodiczko,” \textit{Oxford Art Journal} 31, no. 2 (January 1, 2008): 279.}

Strongly influenced by theories of trauma and therapy, especially the work of D.W. Winnicott, Wodiczko viewed this project as a means for communication and reintegration into civilian life. It is part of a larger series of projects working with veterans, including \textit{Veteran’s Flame} (2009) and …\textit{OUT OF HERE: The Veterans’ Project} (2010). \textit{Arc de Triomphe: World Institute for the Abolition of War} (2012), a visionary proposal to transform one of Paris’s best known war memorials into a discursive research space, while not a moving image projection, continues his career-long practice of rhetorically dismantling the monument and generating discursive sites.\footnote{Essays, renderings, and the full concept are included in the publication Krzysztof Wodiczko, \textit{The Abolition of War} (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2012).} Communicating experiences between veterans and civilians has always been
incredibly difficult, an all-too-often avoided undertaking sequestered to the realm of mental illness treatment. Quoting Judith Herman, author of *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Wodiczko discussed how “the struggle for recovery from trauma—to ‘finding a narrative voice through testimony’—has a greater chance of success when performed as a public speech-act, even more so ‘when directed as a social utterance to and on behalf of others.’” The artist revisited the use of a mobile projector and animated words in his 2013 projection for the Londonderry (Derry) Lumière Festival in Northern Ireland. In this version the vehicle was an ambulance, and testimony was from local people affected by or accused of crimes during the Troubles. The method of oral history in Wodiczko’s projections disrupts official, honorific public places. In Londonderry, it even disrupted the celebratory nature of the Lumière Festival.

To Lisa Saltzman, the oral testimony in Wodiczko’s works relates it to video’s very ontology, the act of bearing witness. Expanding on Rosalind Krauss’s essay “Video and the Aesthetics of Narcissism,” Saltzman also looks to the Latin root *videre*, to see, to conjugate video as literally “I see,” suggesting that declaration is as much a part of video as vision. Regarding *Bunker Hill Monument Projection* she writes:

Wodiczko’s project brought together two forms, one, the monument, explicitly dedicated to the project of remembrance, the other, video, at least nominally

80 Though Artichoke did not shy away from the violent sectarian history of this city in its 2015 commission of David Best’s *Temple*, a temporary, collaborative structure destined for a collective bonfire—an event typically reserved for demonstrations of Republican or Loyalist flag burning.
82 Ibid., 29–30.
dedicated to the activity of seeing, if not also to the experience of having seen. And in superimposing one form upon the other, video projection upon monument, the project at once insisted upon and blurred those differential functions, pointing to the capacity, and incapacity, of each form to fulfill its expected function.\textsuperscript{83}

The superimposition Saltzman analyzes in \textit{Bunker Hill Monument Projection}, one of Wodiczko’s most well-known works, extends to many of his other projects in public space. Not only does layering and superimposition explore the possibilities and impossibilities of bearing witness, but it also generates a new meaning through the collision of official memory with a plurality of personal testimonies.

\textit{Montage in Space: Opening up the Monument to Plurality}

It is important to stress how much Wodiczko sees his practice as operating outside the purview or perhaps even in opposition to many of the publically-sanctioned projects discussed in this dissertation. He aligns his practice with the notion of “disruption” or “interference.” In 1987 he claimed opposition to the general term “art in public places,” claiming the category was “at best liberal urban decoration” and at worst “patronizing bureaucratic-aesthetic environmental pollution.”\textsuperscript{84} More recently, Wodiczko critiqued Richard Florida’s Creative Class concepts in “The Transformative Avant-Garde: A Manifest of the Present.” He writes, “In the context of the appropriation of art by the Experience Economy and by the Event Economy business that orchestrates ‘urban experience’ through urban spectacles (often to attract the Creative Class to redeveloped city centers), artists today must focus on projects that challenge the commercial anaesthetization and trivialization of living ‘experience.’”\textsuperscript{85} His projects provide not only opportunities for the disenfranchised to obtain a voice in public space, but also interventions into

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 44.
particular places—interventions that Wodiczko views as anathema to the place-making initiatives behind spaces like Millennium Park or the BBC Big Screens and in critical relationship to official monuments and memorials.

Like Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, however, Wodiczko’s video projections are technologically sophisticated and costly to make, meaning they are still partially supported by larger cultural organizations. The projection in Londonderry (Derry) was part of the Lumière Festival, and *Homeless Projection* (2014) was part of Montreal’s Quartier des Spectacles. While in many ways these projects actively critiqued the celebratory tone of the Lumière festival or the displacement of homeless individuals by the “Experience Economy”-driven initiatives in Montreal, the projections are by no means guerilla. Miwon Kwon points out that the interventionist strategies of Wodiczko, Group Material, Les Levine, and the Guerrilla Girls were not accepted as art within the “public art industry” until later in the 1980s. They were (and are), however, accepted and even mainstreamed, indicating that there is clearly a middle ground between complicity and conflict with larger bureaucratic cultural initiatives, if only to gain access to the very spaces the artist wishes to critique and open up.

Wodiczko has written that he seeks “not to ‘bring life to’ or ‘enliven’ the memorial…but to reveal and expose to the public the contemporary deadly life of the memorial.” Most frequently, these are some of the most symbolically loaded places in urban cities: war memorials. In the case of *Bunker Hill Monument Projection*, the artist uses the signifier of violence past to re-examine the local community’s unspoken yet pervasive violence of the present, specifically gangland killings in Charlestown, Massachusetts. A neighborhood profiled in crime films such as

---

86 Kwon, *One Place after Another*, 71–72.
*Monument Avenue* (Ted Demme, 1998) and *The Town* (Ben Affleck, 2010) and known as one of the more impoverished areas of Boston, Charlestown was undoubtedly the most out-of-the-way location of the four projects in the Boston Institute for Contemporary Art’s exhibition “Let Freedom Ring,” a commissioned weeklong event reimagining the historic Freedom Trail curated by Jill Medvedow.⁸⁸

As discussed in chapter one, many traditional public art forms (such as obelisks) are directly implicated in historical violence.⁹⁹ James Young’s definition of the “counter-monument” combats the monolithic official (and violent) history of the monument with a participatory, pluralist, and democratic history. He discusses specifically Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz’s *Harburg Monument against Fascism* (1986-1990), a work that inverts the traditional urban monolith’s permanence by sinking a thirteen-yard high aluminum pillar covered in soft lead into the ground over time as members of the community scratch their names and messages on its surface until it disappears.⁹⁰ The ephemerality of Wodiczko’s projections (he even argued that the projectors must be turned off in order to avoid cooptation by the memorial) as well as their plurality of voices aligns them with Young’s concept of the “counter-memorial,” but their engagement with projected light carries a further critical element through the collision of meanings on the surface of the screen. Giuliana Bruno writes of his practice, “Wodiczko has incessantly used the medium of projection to interrogate the face and façade of architecture as a

---

⁸⁸ The other projects included Jim Hodges’s *Here We Are*, a sound installation behind Old North Church, Mildred Howards S.S., an installation inside Old South Meeting House, and Barbara Steinman’s *Colonnade*, a series of hangings with text at the Parkman Bandstand in Boston Commons. These three locations are within walking distance and near popular tourist destinations, whereas the Bunker Hill Monument is located across the Charles River away from the more popular areas.

⁹⁹ Mitchell, “The Violence of Public Art.”

⁹⁰ Young, “The German Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today.”
dense surface: a permeable site for the mediation of memory, history, and subjectivity.”

She likens the monument projections in the late 1990s to his later gallery installations *If You See Something...* (2005) and *Ghosts* (2009), which turn architecture inside out and use projections to evoke a space beyond interior walls. This “permeable site” for mediation also extends to his earlier practice, and relates to the cinematic concept of montage.

Wodiczko’s exploration of projected light and the moving image predates the public projections for which he is best known. Following the Polish artist’s increasing presence as resident artist at colleges in the U.S. and Canada in 1975, he began investigating the relationship between line and image in a series of installation works that used slide projectors. In *References* (1977), a series of three carousel slide projectors projected randomly selected images from official Polish media onto three canvases, each marked with a single horizontal, vertical, or diagonal line. It was following an installation of this piece in Warsaw that Wodiczko came under the watchful eye of Polish censors and elected not to return to the Communist country following his next trip to North America, fearing he might not be able to leave again. Peter Boswell sees the two-dimensional genesis of Wodiczko’s interest in the parallels between architecture and images in this piece: “by the randomness of their order, he revealed that each type of line could be equally suitable to the images regardless of subject matter.”

Though certainly the conceptual framework for investigating underlying relationships between two juxtaposed images or formal elements is present here, I argue that this early piece also has a uniquely filmic component—namely, early experiments in the practice of montage.

Montage, the juxtaposition of differing shots within a film, was a central tenet of early

---

91 Bruno, *Surface*, 76.
Soviet avant-garde cinema. Lev Kuleshov’s famous experiment used found footage and intercut the same shot of actor Ivan Mozzhukhin with still shots of food, a young woman, or a girl’s coffin. Developed in the late 1910s and 1920s, Kuleshov’s experiments highlighted the importance of editing in film and caused viewers to think that the actor’s face and reactions were actually different based on what he was “looking at.” Kuleshov and his followers thus concluded that narrative and character development in a film was more a product of editing than acting, since it was, in fact, the very same footage of Mozzhukhin every time. The randomness of the slides in References and the use of found footage parallels Kuleshov’s exploration of montage demonstrating how juxtaposition changes the perception of any image. Having been trained in the Constructivist school of thought while pursuing his studies at the Akademia Sztuk Pieknyc (Academy of Fine Arts) in Warsaw from 1962-68, Wodiczko would have long been familiar with both the famous experiments of Kuleshov and the highly influential writings of Sergei Eisenstein.

As one of the most influential filmmakers and theorists of the Soviet avant-garde, Eisenstein also privileged editing’s ability to construct meaning within a film text. Unlike the followers of Kuleshov, however, who were more interested in the construction of meaning through a series or chain of fragments, Eisenstein saw the creation of meaning as happening through collision, a notion he derived from Marxist/Hegelian dialectics, whereby a thesis must collide with its antithesis in order to produce something new (synthesis).93 His famous films, such as Battleship Potemkin (1925), and well-published theoretical writings have been highly influential for filmmakers all over the world for nearly a century. Eisenstein extends this

emphasis on colliding elements in filmmaking beyond editing and into the shot itself, stating “the shot is not a montage element—the shot is a montage cell (a molecule).” After extending the notion of montage inward from editing to the individual shot, can we not also extend this dialectical collision of meaning outward, beyond the film and into the cinematic situation—to the very fabric and architecture of cinematic projection?

As videos, Wodiczko’s moving images do not adhere to Eisenstein’s stated definition of montage. They are most often composed of one or a few long static shots, such as the grieving family members discussing lost loved ones in Bunker Hill Monument Projection, the hands of witnesses to a violent history in The Hiroshima Projection (2000), or a flickering candle that accompanies personal stories of war in Veteran’s Flame (2009). Any transitions are signaled by fades, which do not produce the jarring collision Eisenstein championed. However, if we extend Eisenstein’s notion of dialectical montage beyond the image and into the cinematic and architectural situation, we can read this productive synthesis as occurring on the surface of the screen/monument itself. Indeed the confrontational rhetoric by both Wodiczko and Eisenstein seems to suggest these strategies are somewhat similar, and at least aimed toward the same type of active engagement of audiences with the cinema. “Slide warfare” attacks the surface of the monument not to destroy it, but to make it speak a new history, to produce a new meaning. It animates the monument so that the people can speak through it.

In 2012 Wodiczko continued his work with veterans to produce Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran’s Projection in Union Square. Opening on Veteran’s Day and running every night for one month, this work contained oral testimony and projected the face and hands of veterans on

---

94 Eisenstein, “The Dramaturgy of Film Form [The Dialectical Approach to Film Form] from ‘Film Form’ (1929),” 29.
the statue of Abraham Lincoln, making the official figure of war on American soil “speak” the private histories of veterans of foreign wars once they returned home. The memorial’s sculptural surface departed from the larger architectural façade projections, as did its more modest location in the park. Sponsored by the Union League Club of New York, the Lincoln statue was designed by Henry Kirke Brown and initially installed adjacent to the artist’s equestrian monument to George Washington in 1870. Not wanting to pour salt into the recent wounds of the Civil War (both for southern visitors and New York draft rioters), Brown and the Union League decided to downplay Lincoln’s militarism and power over the southern states. Consequently, the statue was criticized for its lack of military might in comparison to Washington, and Lincoln’s unassuming pose and baggy clothing were similarly attacked. Following the addition of the subway station below the park in 1930, the statue was moved to the north end of the park where it currently stands surrounded by trees in the middle of a path that crosses the park east-to-west. The sculpture is less immediately noticeable than the more prominent Washington at the busier south end of the park (known as a site for temporary memorials after the 9/11 terror attacks), making its use as screen in Wodiczko’s projection even more of a surprise encounter for passersby.

I was able to view Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran’s Projection during two nights in the fall of 2012, once with a class of students and once by myself. In both instances, I was struck by how intimate the work was in comparison to the larger projections I knew through video and photographic documentation. The figure was certainly above the viewers, but the scale was not at the level of a building. Brown’s statue stands at 11 ½ feet including the large plinth. The image stretched oddly around the surface of the sculpture, in a manner similar to many of Tony

Oursler’s sculptural projections in galleries.\textsuperscript{96} Given that it was during colder months, only a handful of spectators stayed for the entire 40-minute loop, but those that stayed did so with rapt attention and generally in silence. Unlike the modified Humvee or some of Wodiczko’s live performances [such as \textit{The St. Louis Projection} (2004) or \textit{Tijuana Projection} (2001)], the Union Square piece consisted solely of pre-recorded material and did not include the physical presence of the speakers, just as at Bunker Hill. There was a striking amount of ambient sound and light around the project, meaning many people did not realize it was going on until they came within a few yards. It also produced some curious juxtapositions such as the laughter of teenagers walking through the crosswalk, skateboarders, or cheerful music from a nearby Christmas performance.

The testimony by veterans was decidedly serious content for public space. The artist has remarked how his works allow for testimony about issues typically difficult to discuss even in the private sphere to enter into the public realm. Stories of violence, suicide, drugs, schizophrenia, and fear were part of the series. At one point a veteran told a gruesome tale of remembering the lingering smell of blood and the image of bloated bodies affected by Agent Orange. At another a soldier remembered his commanding officer losing control and frantically shooting a feral dog. In a moment that broke with the confessional tone of the rest of the piece a veteran whistled, and directly addressed the audience with “wake up people, help the vets!” This direct address, combined with the confessional tone of the other testimonies, places the viewer in an awkward position, as though she were responsible or complicit in the trauma the veterans endured. This strategy is paralleled in Santiago Sierra’s performance series \textit{War Veterans Facing}

\textsuperscript{96} In a more recent projection onto the John Harvard Statue at Harvard Yard, Wodiczko has employed 3D projection mapping for a more seamless illusion.
the Corner (2011-ongoing). In Sierra’s work, the viewer is denied the individual voice or face of the veteran (they are explicitly told not to speak or answer questions from the public). As the performer stands at attention as close as possible to the wall, the viewer assumes the position of the one who put him there, creating a tense, even antagonistic relationship in the gallery that calls attention to the broader issues of the treatment of veterans.

With Wodiczko’s veteran projects, the artist similarly wishes to place the viewer on the threshold of discomfort. This is particularly true in ...OUT OF HERE, in which the gallery becomes an immersive environment simulating an abandoned warehouse in Iraq surrounded by ambient sounds of children playing and a developing chaotic firefight and explosions. Actual veterans supplied the voice acting and had narrative input. In one sense this work transports us to the site of violence, creating a physical sense of enclosure with projections on three of the gallery’s four walls. In another sense, the work calls attention to our distance from the conflict via the placement of the warehouse windows too high to determine what’s actually happening beyond the voices and sounds we hear and the occasional soccer ball, explosion, or bullet hole that registers on the screen. The dual recognition that we are, in fact, safely in a gallery and not Iraq places the viewer at an uneasy conceptual threshold. This tension between proximity and distance facilitates a literal and figurative space for communicating the unspeakable experiences of war and including the voice and presence of the “other” or “stranger” in the spaces of the familiar. Unlike with Sierra’s project, however, the participation of veterans is meant not only to communicate an issue to the viewer but become a therapeutic process through which these trauma survivors can begin to heal through communication.

Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran's Projection was located in Union Square, the physical site of official commemoration of preserving the union through war, the familiar space in which
the previously unspeakable experiences are communicated through the strangeness of projection. The ideal figure of Lincoln was made to wear new clothes, not those of executive power but of the citizenry who answer the call to duty. The fabric of the cinema screen became the wearable projection in Wodiczko’s work. Place was renegotiated through projection, specifically the collision of official and oral histories.

With either the specter or the witness of violence, injustice, or hardship ever present in his projected works, Krzysztof Wodiczko transgresses the boundaries between public and private expression through a renegotiation of place. International relations scholar Francois Debrix charts three types of ritual mediation in intercultural communications: representation, transformation, and a preferred third type, which he sees best exemplified in the work of Wodiczko, that problematizes the ideological work performed by the latter two. Debrix writes, “This third ritual of mediation resists the temptation of closing up cultural interpretation and of imposing a certain, privileged meaning that is often the outcome of the previous two rituals. Instead, this other use of mediation encourages plurality of cultural meanings and enables the deployment of multiple political possibilities.”

This definition of a more progressive form of mediating between disparate groups or individuals mirrors much of the artist’s own writings and statements about the importance of the “permanent presence” of the other in a truly democratic society. Furthermore, the emphasis on plurality echoes the political theory of agonism found in the writings of Chantal Mouffe, which are important to a number of critiques and theories of

---

97 The concept of reading the cinema screen as fabric, and connecting fashion to place through the root habitare (to dwell in Latin) and abito (to wear in Italian) are components of Giuliana Bruno’s reading of projection surfaces in two of her main books: Bruno, Public Intimacy: Architecture and the Visual Arts, 32; Bruno, Surface, chapter 1.
socially engaged art.\textsuperscript{99} Wodiczko’s public works both call attention to and critique the sites of their ephemeral existence and create a new cinematic and rhetorical space for communication and healing specifically through this collision of meanings.

About both his artistic strategies and his personal position as a “resident alien,” Wodiczko wrote:

> My Utopia is based on a refusal to accept the place in which I am—a new concept of “no place” as Utopia. Utopia—that is a place that is unacceptable; and the hope that is born from this unacceptable experience is extrapolated into the future as another side of this Utopia—so that the future will not repeat the injustices and catastrophes of the present and the past.\textsuperscript{100}

The very concept of utopia, then, is rooted in a negation of the specificity of place—not as a means of abolishing place altogether for the sake of sameness, but rather as a refusal to accept the injustices and “unacceptable experiences” that underlie each place. Utopia as a “no place” necessitates the plurality of voices and parallels the spectral spaces created through the transporting and transformative qualities of cinematic projection. By projecting onto a specific, historically and symbolically loaded place, Wodiczko opens up a “no place” where new meanings are produced through communication across previously insurmountable distances.

**Conclusion**

In the works discussed in this chapter the relationship between moving images and the places they occupy is densely layered. Far from producing generically similar public advertising spaces, public screens and moving images can become embedded within (or even come to tear) the fabric of a particular place. The image becomes a place as much as the place becomes part of the image. In the practices analyzed above, artists, curators, and developers have had to redefine


\textsuperscript{100} Wodiczko, “Open Transmission,” 111.
the relationship between screens and public places in response to shifting technologies and changing demographics. Though the mediums of film and video are seemingly ephemeral in nature, our experience of their effects is shaped as much by the immovable aspects of the site as the transient images they present. By considering the concept of place in relationship to moving image-based public art, screens and moving images are seen to negotiate new sites of public meaning production.

With the inspiration of artists like Wodiczko and Jenny Holzer, activists have even begun to use this medium as a means of protest. The Illuminator collective, begun during the 2011 Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protests, produces unannounced, unapproved urban projections with activist content. Like Wodiczko, their projections layer the content of the message projected with the architectural surface, such as projecting the OWS slogan “We are the 99%” onto the Verizon corporate building in downtown Manhattan or projecting statistics on student loan debt onto buildings at New York University, one of the most expensive colleges in the United States. Three artists with the collective were arrested for their projection onto the Metropolitan Museum of Art protesting the recent unveiling of the David H. Koch Plaza. Messages included “The Met.* / *brought to you by the Tea Party” and “KOCH=CLIMATE CHAOS / The Met is a museum, not an oil lobby.”101 (Fig. 46) This action has a much longer history within institutional critique and even within activism—in 1989 following the cancelling of Robert Mapplethorpe’s exhibition under political pressure from the right, the Coalition of Washington Artists projected the artist’s work on to the museum’s exterior in an act of protest against censorship. This public

demonstration was featured on the cover of *Artforum* in September 1989.

These actions illustrate how members of the public continue to negotiate places through projection and moving image media, and how these media are intimately entwined in the threshold between the public and private spheres. The screen becomes the place where the permutations and delineations of these boundaries are projected, be it the uneasiness with advertising terminology at the Mosaic screen, the surprise collapse of space in *Hole in Space*, or the taboo public testimonies of trauma in Wodiczko’s projections. Furthermore, the site-specificity of public projection, integral to place-making initiatives and critical projections, illuminates the situated nature of film and media spectatorship in general. As these case studies show, moving images in public spaces have the potential to renegotiate both the spaces they occupy and the very nature of media spectatorship itself. Far from operating on the fringes of contemporary art or cinematic exhibition, the modes of cinematic address analyzed in this dissertation are integral to understanding contemporary moving image spectatorship more broadly. Visual enchantment, the body, and place are embedded in the very fabric of media viewing today. Far from taking us further away from the here and now, moving images in public places inform the historical and discursive sites they occupy.
Conclusion

Moving images in public spaces generate unique exchanges with viewers. Navigating contemporary urban space requires a constant renegotiation of myriad screen practices, though this situation need not be overwhelming or anathema to participation in the public sphere. Elena Papadaki writes, “it could be suggested that the more mediated our life becomes, the less thrilled we can be with the appearance of screens in the public space.”\(^1\) However, she further argues, “in order for any artwork using the same technology to be meaningful, there needs to be a general rethink of its contextual purpose and content in relation to its potential audience.”\(^2\) In this light, moving image-based public art must break out of the contemporary urban mediascape to reach audiences and have significant meaning. As the work of the artists and cultural initiatives explored in this study demonstrate, spectacular projections, screens, and animations in public space can be effective channels for moving and even challenging art to reach a broad and diverse audience. These projects engage both in rethinking and negotiating various channels of advertising and spectacle in urban spaces in order to create “perfect moments” of engagement and "opportunities for members of the public to understand and negotiate their own relationships” with art.\(^3\)

Artists engaging with media and moving images form a significant branch of contemporary public art, a trend likely to continue given the increasing availability of high quality LED screen technology, high lumen projectors, and projection mapping software. These technological changes even open up the potential for guerilla projects, expanding the definition

\(^1\) Elena Papadaki, “Curating Lights and Shadows, or the Remapping of the Lived Experience of Space,” *The Senses and Society* 10, no. 2 (May 4, 2015): 231.
\(^2\) Ibid., 234, n.17.
\(^3\) Taylor, “Programming Video Art for Urban Screens in Public Space”; Knight, *Public Art*, xi.
of street art to include spectacular projects and light projection. The affordability of the technology to make moving image-based public art possible does not, however, entirely democratize the process. As spaces like Times Square and the city centers of the BBC Big Screens illustrate, public moving image screens are controlled largely by commercial and municipal interests. Even given this climate, there are still possible avenues whereby public artists and art agencies can create situations for public art.

For this reason, I have made analyzing the practical and financial aspects of each public art project as significant as its aesthetic and formal qualities. Doug Aitken’s *SONG 1* is inseparable from the institutional aims of the Hirshhorn; *Crown Fountain* had to navigate the interests of private funding and branding in twenty-first century public spaces; and light and projection festivals exist within larger place-making urban planning projects. Furthermore, access to each particular screen situation is made possible by incorporating empirical evidence and observation of actual spectators into an art critical framework, whenever possible. By activating the methodology put forth in this dissertation—one that involves a close consideration of the physical, social, and institutional specificities of each screen situation—researchers, artists, and curators can understand how certain artworks can redirect our visual attention through enchantment, generate playful spaces of engagement, and participate in larger discourses of place. Moving image-based public art can also act as a lens through which we can understand the larger renegotiations of spectatorship occurring on multiple levels of daily life in public space through new screen situations. Beyond public art, this dissertation further contributes to the scholarly articulation of moving image spectatorship as embodied and spatial.

Returning to the notion of moving images as being inherently *situated*, such a consideration further understands how it is that screens and images communicate with us in
In rhetorical studies, the “situation” plays a significant role in examining rhetorical strategies and effectiveness. First discussed by Aristotle, “the rhetorical situation” was most fully articulated in an essay of the same name by Lloyd Bitzer. “Not the rhetor [speaker] and not the persuasive intent, but the situation is the source and ground of rhetorical activity—and, I should add, of rhetorical criticism,” he writes, suggesting that the circumstances of a particular instance of rhetoric (which he breaks down to the exigence, audience, and constraints) are more significant than content. While Bitzer’s concept is more proscriptive than is entirely applicable to works of art, the relationship between situation and effective communication he sets forth is useful. Much like screens in public settings, he argues that situations “may become weakened in structure due to complexity of disconnectedness” including multiple situations vying for audience intention, multiple exigences (some of which are incompatible), and a scattered or uninformed audience. These tenuous elements of context echo the challenges faced by artists working in the public realm, especially with competing moving image and screen-based stimuli. Bitzer’s argument also underscores the significance of analyzing the particular situation of an instance of public address, which extends to how we should analyze, interpret, and critique public art.

Furthermore, by better comprehending the rhetorical strategies screens employ in public space, public artists and commissioning bodies can better utilize public screen media to generate meaningful exchanges with members of the public. Far from being merely distractions or vehicles of a debilitating consumer culture, screens in public spaces are powerful media for bringing art to a large and diverse audience. By prompting us to remove our urban blinders and

---

5 Ibid., 67.
potentially engage with those around us (either physically or discursively), moving image-based public art has a potential, through the attraction of spectacle, to reinvigorate the public sphere. As many of the examples discussed in this study illustrate, successful examples of moving image-based public art require a familiarity with the languages and strategies of installation art, film, broadcast media, or advertising to prompt engagement in passersby and illuminate the interstices—or the spaces “in-between”—in the public sphere. Far from the alleged suture of narrative cinema (which closes the viewer out), moving image-based public art has the ability to generate an active spectatorship.\(^6\) Whizzing past Brand’s *Masstransiscope*, a subway rider is invited to look up briefly and enjoy a whimsical animation on a dreary morning commute. By playing within one of Lozano-Hemmer’s nocturnal projections, one becomes more aware of the surveillance networks that pervade public spaces. Through experiencing Wodiczko’s interventions, we look at our places of official memory through a new critical lens and ask ourselves what voices and stories are excluded from the public realm. These instances prompt genuine engagement far from an overwhelming or totalizing experience, but also using the seductive and playful powers of spectacle and cinematic illusion and projection.

By breaking down the study of moving image-based public art into three categories defined by visual attraction, playful interaction, and place articulation, this study charts a typology for analyzing the work of contemporary artists not limited by an ever-changing landscape of available moving image technologies. Rather, this three-part scheme underscores the many factors at play in every screen situation and creates a scaffold for further analysis of public works. I argue that by generating these categories of moving image-based public art, my

\(^6\) The notion of “suture” is part of the apparatus branch of film theory discussed in chapter one, whereby the diegetic world takes over, where the viewer’s space is sublimated into the narrative world via editing and camera placement.
dissertation contributes not only a useful model for future research, but also renegotiates the concepts of spectacle, play, and place in public art criticism. Rather than privileging the latter category as more authentically engaged with an ideal conception of “community,” this typology illustrates the potential of all three modes of address to extend opportunities to passersby to negotiate their own experiences with art, to paraphrase Knight’s populist criteria for success. Artists’ strategies necessarily engage with and overlap with those of commerce and publicity, suggesting another need for the researcher, artist, and commissioning agency to engage in interdisciplinary, comprehensive understanding of how moving images operate in public spaces.

Underlying much of my analysis has been an understanding of public art that considers artistic practice alongside an analysis of popular and vernacular instances of screen spectatorship in public spaces. Given that the presence of visual moving image media in public spaces was in many ways created by the advertising industry, any moving image in public art must negotiate its language. Perhaps even more significantly, the language and strategies of industry must also inform any critical or historical analysis. As David Joselit argues in his analysis of video art practices, “several different image-making practices can and do cohabit the same technology,” thus arguing for “a genealogy of particular image technologies, without artificially dividing them into a priori categories such as ‘television’ and ‘video art.’” Through “productive association” of the languages and strategies of both realms of image-making, Joselit argues that we can not only better understand the strategies made by artists, but also the processes by which audiences and spectators encounter works of art. Rather than focusing on one “image-making technology,” this study has taken the mediated spaces of the contemporary city as its object of study, layering public art practices and commercial forms of broadcasting and spectatorship into “productive

Joselit, “The Video Public Sphere,” 53.
association” to articulate contemporary moving image spectatorship as both situated and (potentially) active.
Bibliography


Bishop, Claire. “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.” October 110 (Fall 2004): 51–79.


———. Interview by author, November 26, 2013.


CCFlash, the Cultural Council Foundation Newsletter, August 2, 1978.


Gibbons, Mike. Skype interview by author, January 29, 2014.


Heathorn, Kevin. Interview by author, July 17, 2013.


Lozano-Hemmer, Rafael. Interview by author, March 27, 2015.


Nriapia, Chris. Interview by author, July 20, 2013.


old-performs-Chopin-homeless-man-gives-classical-masterclass-Amateur-musicians-

Taub, Eric A. “Bathed in New Lights, Empire State Building Will Star in More Vivid Show.”


Taylor, Kate. “Programming Video Art for Urban Screens in Public Space.” First Monday
Special Issue #4 (February 6, 2006).


The Spectacle of Contemporary Perception: Olafur Eliasson. Artists Speak: Conversations on


“Tom Hanks Joins Advisory Committee of the Eisenhower Memorial Commission.” Press

Traynor, Elizabeth. Email exchange with author. Email, July 29, 2015.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience. 5th or later Edition edition.

Turvey, Malcolm, Hal Foster, Chrissie Iles, George Baker, Matthew Buckingham, and Anthony
McCall. “Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art.” October 104 (Spring


“WPIX with Frank Casey.” Television broadcast. WPIX-11, September 17, 1980.
