Scripting Artworks: Studying the Socialization of Editioned Video and Film Installations

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SCRIPTING ARTWORKS:
STUDYING THE SOCIALIZATION OF EDITIONED VIDEO AND FILM INSTALLATIONS

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Introduction
In 2006, the Museum of Modern Art in New York presented a mid-career retrospective of Scottish artist Douglas Gordon.\textsuperscript{1} \textit{Play Dead; Real Time} (2003), a video installation featuring actions of an elephant from different angles and perspectives on multiple screens, was presented in the third room of the exhibition. When I entered the exhibition space, I was surprised to see that the videos were shown on two large screens and two monitors, what in technical terms is called a four-channel video installation. When I had initially seen the work in the exhibition \textit{Noah’s Ark} organized by the National Gallery of Canada and presented in the Cité de l’énergie in Shawinigan, Quebec, in 2004, it was a three-channel video installation.\textsuperscript{2} In Shawinigan, the different sequences of moving images were projected onto two large translucent screens and played on a video monitor whereas in New York, a second monitor was added to the installation. At the time, I knew that \textit{Play Dead; Real Time} had been sold as an edition of three, which meant that three different collectors or institutions owned it and that the work could therefore be presented simultaneously in three different spaces. What intrigued me, however, was the different configuration of the work at the Museum of Modern Art. When I left the museum, I had several questions in mind: Why was it that two instantiations of what I thought was the same artwork were different? Was \textit{Play Dead; Real Time} a three- or four-channel video installation? Was it an artwork that had different “versions”? If one of the editions of an editioned artwork is modified, what does it mean for the others editions? Who decides on how the work is going to be displayed? Why are there variations from one exhibition to another? Is it relevant or necessary to keep track of these changes, and if so, how?

Another visit, of the exhibition \textit{Bas Jan Ader, Please don’t leave me}, presented at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam that took place about a month later raised similar questions on the topic of editioned artworks and on the varied manifestations that video and film-based artworks can go through over time.\textsuperscript{3} Indeed, the reading of the introductory text of the exhibition puzzled me, as it ended with the following statement:

\begin{quote}
For technical reasons the 16 mm films are being shown on DVD. This enables visitors to view the films with as little interruption as possible and avoids the interference from the sound of multiple film projectors. This also detracts from the suggestion that these works are installations.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Bas Jan Ader, Please don’t leave me}. Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, 26 August – 5 November 2006.
This explanation left me feeling somewhat ambivalent. To facilitate the looped projection of Ader’s films and to avoid the disturbance of the noise made by film projectors in the exhibition space, the institution chose to transfer them to a more recent format: video. In conservation science, this strategy is called a migration. Yet, it was also argued that by projecting the artist’s films with video projectors rather than film projectors, the projected films would not be interpreted as installations. The fact is that, projected either by film or video projectors, these films would have remained projections. Ader’s films, like many other artists’ films, can either be screened in a cinema or exhibited in a museum. Therefore, they have several presentation formats and possibilities for subsequent manifestations. This time, when I left the exhibition space, I wondered: Does the choice of exhibition support matter to the viewer’s experience of the work? How different is it to see these films on a video format rather than a film one? Should the audience be informed of these changes, and if so, how?

These two examples serve to illustrate that there is a degree of variability in the exhibition of video and film-based artworks. In the case of Douglas Gordon’s Play Dead; Real Time, the number of monitors used in the presentation of the work depends on the size of the exhibition space and the path that the artist thinks the audience should cover. In the case of Ader, it raises the question of what is the medium: if conceived as films, should the works always be presented in the original format? These cases seem to indicate that the decisions regarding how to display such artworks are, in most cases, the result of discussions between different parties (artist, artist’s assistants, curators, conservators, technicians), but also of other considerations: the size of the exhibition space, the equipment available, and so on.

My visit to the MoMA and to the Boijmans van Beuningen Museum in 2006 triggered a series of questions on editioned video and film installations for which I did not have any answer or could not readily find answers in the literature. While reading on the circumstances of apparition of contemporary art in a book written by French scholar Jean-Marc Poinsot, I came across the term socialization and it helped me orient the direction of my research and I how wanted to study editioned video and film installations. Poinsot asserts that the socialization of an artwork and its presence in the world are ensured by its récits autorisés (sanctioning narratives) – the statements accompanying it. The use of the term socialization is relevant since it implies that artworks are part of a bigger structure; they evolve in a network. In my research, I adapt this term as defined by Poinsot and assert that the socialization of editioned video and film installations (and of many other artworks) is ensured

by the intersecting events that are their exhibition, distribution and preservation. Video and film installations are highly social objects; they do not consist of a unique and single material thing. Rather, these works have a variable nature, need to be reinstalled every time they are shown, and have a physical and material existence only when exhibited. Consequently, their socialization is ensured by different parties and events, and is the result of interactions within a whole network. Many mediators interact within this network and contribute to the “shaping” of these works. In the present dissertation, my interest lies in the mediations taking place and the roles of the mediators in the exhibition, distribution, and preservation of these artworks. Through case studies, I intend to make these mediations visible.

Core Problem of the Dissertation and its Relevance

In the last few decades, an increasing number of moving-image works have been presented in exhibition venues. Art historian Hal Foster even stated in 2003 that video and film-based works have become the medium per default of contemporary art.5 The medium of production of these time-based works (multi-channel videos, video installations, film installations, etc.) makes them more conducive to replication. Consequently, they can then be sold in editions, meaning that more than one institution or collector can acquire the “same” artwork. More importantly, these artworks need to be installed each time they are presented, a step that requires the interpretation of a series of prescriptions. The re-exhibition of a work can also lead to changes, for instance, in the display (as was the case with Douglas Gordon’s Play Dead; Real Time briefly discussed above), in the exhibition support (as was the case for the presentation of Bas Jan Ader’s films in Rotterdam) or in the technology used. During their “life cycle,” these artworks can go through varied configurations, which leads one to acknowledge that more than one version of a work of art exists. The present dissertation offers a reflection on the different modes of existence of video and film installations. It is an attempt to answer the question on how to capture the modes of existence of these works.

Tate Modern conservator Pip Laurenson suggests considering time-based media installations as existing “on the ontological continuum somewhere between performance and sculpture.”6 They share similarities with performances as they live through instantiations: between exhibitions, they have no concrete existence, as they are taken apart. They also share

5 “Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art” [Malcolm Turvey, Hal Foster, Chrissie Iles, George Baker, Matthew Buckingham, Anthony McCall], October 104 (Spring 2003): 93.
similarities with sculpture because they are in three dimensions and expand in space when exhibited. Adding to this perspective, other features of video and film installations may be outlined. Among these features is their time-based nature, since these works have a duration – a loop can last from a few seconds to several hours; their limited life span due to the technology used to create and present them; their multi-instantiability, as they have the possibility to be exhibited more than once; and their accompaniment by a series of prescriptions indicating how they should be displayed. Bringing together all these considerations leads to the recognition of the variable nature of these artworks.

Video and film installations are two-step artworks: each of their manifestations begins with the interpretation of a series of prescriptions, the result of which is a physical manifestation of the work of art. This type of artwork belongs to what Nelson Goodman, and after him, Gérard Genette, have called the allographic regime. For Goodman and Genette, the types of objects that works of art can consist of can be subdivided into two regimes: autographic and allographic. Whereas paintings, sculptures, and drawings belong to the autographic regime because their object of immanence is a physical object, other art forms, such as music and theater, belong to the allographic regime. Since video and film installations need to be installed each time they are presented and their physical presence is temporary (it lasts the time of the exhibition), I suggest including them in the allographic regime.

Seeing as video and film installations have a variable nature, I contend that it is more productive to envisage them as processes rather than as stable objects. These artworks have a life that can be documented. It is also for this reason that throughout this dissertation, the metaphor of the artwork’s life cycle is being used. Whereas life cycle is generally defined as the series of changes in the life of an organism, including reproduction, for the purposes of this dissertation, life cycle is defined as the series of changes in the life of an artwork, which includes, in some cases, its reproduction. As the case studies of the following chapters explain, the term reproduction can mean, in the case of editioned artworks, either duplication or the production of offspring. I prefer using the term “life cycle” to “biography,” “trajectory”

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7 For example, when a video installation is dissembled at the end of an exhibition, its support – either DVDs, Digital Betacam, High Definition Video – is stored in a vault or on a server of its owning institution, the projection screens are stored along with the rest of the audio-visual equipment. However, in some cases, if the audio-visual equipment is not proprietary to a specific artwork, it can be used in the presentation of other artworks.

8 I borrow the term “multi-instantiability” from philosopher Stephen Davies who uses it to describe musical works for performance, which have the possibility of being performed more than once. See: Stephen Davies, *Musical Works and Performances* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 13.

or “career,” which are used by colleagues also doing research in this field, since the idea of reproduction fits better within the model of the life cycle. 10 In this dissertation, I propose to study the history of the life cycle of a few editioned artworks by analyzing what happened to all their editions. I assert that if the history of a work were based on only one of its editions, it would be incomplete.

In the present dissertation, the focus is put on the intersecting events occurring in the life cycle of the artworks: the inaugural exhibition, the artwork’s distribution, its preservation, and the subsequent re-exhibitions. These events are crucial phases in the formation of the artwork’s identity. By the identity of the artwork I mean the features that define what the artwork actually consist of, both in material and conceptual terms (what it is made of, what it is about, what it means). Like many contemporary artworks, video and film installations cannot be described uniquely in material terms, because their materiality varies over time and they need to be reinstalled every time they are exhibited. Rather, the variable nature of these artworks calls for a conceptual approach. In the field of art conservation, Pip Laurenson has asserted that the identity of the work is what “describes everything that must be preserved in order to avoid the loss of something of value in the work of art.” Furthermore, she contends that the identity of these works

is defined by a cluster of work-defining properties which will include the artist’s instructions, artist approved installations intended to act as models, an understanding of the context in which they were made and the willingness and ability of those acting as custodians of the work to be sensitive in the realization of a good installation. 11

To Laurenson’s definition, I would add that the procedural nature of time-based artworks implies that their identity is constantly being redefined. Moreover, in the case of editioned artworks, the identity of these works is spread over a specific number of editions. It is all the editions that make the work. Also, if the work has known different states or versions, it is all the versions that define it.


11 Pip Laurenson, “Authenticity.”
The aim of this dissertation is primarily to understand how the exhibition, distribution and preservation contribute to the shaping of the identity of editioned video and film installations and secondly to develop a model for describing these works. The main research questions are: What are the conditions for editioned video and film installations’ actualizations? Who are the mediators involved in the life cycle of these artworks? What are their influence(s) on the life cycle of editioned works of art? How do these mediators shape the identity of these works? And finally, how do they affect the works’ socialization, its exhibition, distribution and preservation?

In order to answer these questions, this dissertation proposes the development of the notion of script as a methodological tool. The purpose of this tool is to study the mediations and mediators at work in the life cycle of editioned video and film installations. Script, as used in this doctoral dissertation, has been influenced by definitions such as the one proposed by Madeleine Akrich in the field of Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) and by Gérard Genette in the field of literary studies. Whereas for Akrich the script is a set of instructions implicit in the technical object, I propose an active theoretical standpoint: scripting artworks, which I define as a process to grasp the necessary conditions for time-based artworks’ instantiations. Scripting an artwork is the conceptualization of what happens during the socialization process of an artwork (see Chapter Two). By developing a model to engage with the study of editioned video and film installations, this dissertation aims to help identify what these artworks actually consist of, taking into account that they are rather like processes than fixed objects. Furthermore, it intends to contribute to the domain of historiography of media art and more broadly, to the historiography of contemporary art. Seeing that many contemporary artworks are process-based and also have a variable nature, the findings of this study are also pertinent for many of these other works.

Contextualizing the Theoretical Problem
To study the life cycles and the socialization of editioned video and film installations, I decided to work at the intersection of four different fields: art history, sociology of art, museum studies and conservation science. Within these fields, research on contemporary art exhibition, distribution and preservation is fairly young. Whereas the topics of contemporary art exhibition and conservation are often intertwined in publications, the distribution of these works is seldom addressed or scrutinized. Martha Buskirk’s book *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* is certainly one that has covered important grounds on the very question of identifying what contemporary artworks actually consist of or what they are, having
addressed the issues of authorship, original and copies, and context in the practice of minimal artists, conceptual artists and pop artists. In this book, Buskirk scrutinizes the mediations that surround artworks, such as artist’s statements and certificates.\textsuperscript{12} A few years before, Jean-Marc Poinsot, in \textit{Quand l’œuvre a lieu : L’art exposé et ses récits autorisés}, wrote about the apparition modes of works of art at the end of the 1960s, and more precisely on conceptual art. Through numerous essays, he aimed to define the relationships between the artwork and the exhibition site. These essays begin by identifying the conditions surrounding the appearance of the artwork and by defining its limits, its scope and its circumstances.\textsuperscript{13} In his book, by studying the sanctioning narratives, the statements used by the artists to accompany their artworks, Poinsot tries to identify the process by which each artist gives an image of his/her authority, of his/her intentions and of the work to preserve.\textsuperscript{14} In each of these two books, a great deal of attention is given to the mediations accompanying the artworks and their exhibitions. Both books demonstrate how crucial all these mediations are in the life cycle of artworks as they help understand how the identity of these artworks is constructed. Although Buskirk does not discuss editioned video installations, she does discuss the issue of editioned artworks, but without proposing a way to document the changes that occur in the life cycle of these works. Drawing from their writings, I propose a way to keep track of the different versions that an artwork can go through during its existence.

In the field of contemporary art conservation, quite a few volumes have been published since the 1990s. The contributors to these books have mainly been people working in museums and conservation laboratories since the awareness of the ephemerality of contemporary art caught up first with curators, conservators, and artists. Among pioneer publications in the field, which have rapidly become key references, one can mention: \textit{Modern Art: Who Cares?} (1999), \textit{Mortality Immortality? The Legacy of 20\textsuperscript{th}-Century Art} (1999), and \textit{Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Approach} (2003).\textsuperscript{15} These collaborative volumes, which are very practice-oriented, offer food for thought as they gather perspectives from different actors in the art world: artists, curators, conservators, technicians and so on. In addition, they include reflections on the challenges of preserving contemporary artworks, and also on the rapidly changing nature of the field of art conservation. In fact,


\textsuperscript{13} Jean-Marc Poinsot, \textit{Quand l’œuvre a lieu}, 11.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 12.

many contemporary artworks have a variable nature and call for a different approach than the traditional material approach. This has led curator Pip Laurenson to propose engaging with contemporary artworks using a conceptual approach.16

Whereas the research in the museum sector has been very active since the 1990s, it is only very recently that academic research on the preservation of contemporary art has emerged.17 For instance, Vivian van Saaze, in her doctoral dissertation, Doing Artworks: A Study into the Presentation and Conservation of Installation Artworks, shows, through three case studies, that it is not only the artists who produce the artworks, but that a lot of people and conditions are involved in the process of exhibiting and preserving installation art.18 She demonstrates that “doing artworks” is a dynamic and collaborative process. Van Saaze also contends that it is not only the nature of the artworks that has changed over the last decades, but also that museum practices have had to adapt to the challenges that come with the exhibition and preservation of installation art. Her dissertation has paved the way for further investigations in the field of presentation and preservation of installation artworks in museums. Building upon her contribution to the field, in my research, I added another dimension, the phase of distribution of editioned video and film installations.

Among the topics investigated in the present dissertation, the field of video and film installations’ distribution is certainly the one on which there are very few publications. There is literature on how the market of video and film-based artworks have evolved, such as Lori Zippay’s essay “The Digital Mystique: Video Art, Aura and Access” (2005) the collective publication Content in Context: New Technologies for Distribution (2005) and a chapter on video art in Noah Horowitz’s book Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in a Global Financial Market.19 However, what is still missing are ontological considerations of what happens to these artworks once they have been distributed, once they have entered collections. When authors write about video or film-based works, the different editions constituting it and the

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changes that they go through during their life cycle are seldom considered. To a certain extent, in my dissertation, I picked up where these authors left off and I not only discuss the editioning of video and film installations, but I also consider what happens to these editions once they are distributed in the art world.

The study at hand expands the existing approaches of contemporary art presentation, distribution and preservation in three ways. First, it contributes to the history of video and film installations with a novel and unique perspective, namely that of the exhibition history of these works. Second, it brings a new insight to art theory by exploring concepts from Actor-Network-Theory, music and performance studies that do justice to the dynamic, evolving and process-bound nature of time-based media. I am not the first person in the field to adapt such approaches, as Pip Laurenson has advocated an approach of time-based media artworks conservation based on literature on musical works and their performances, and Vivian van Saaze has used Actor-Network-Theory to study the presentation and conservation of installation artworks. But my dealings with these theories differ from theirs because of my object of study – editioned video and film installation – and the concept that I adapted – the script, explained in Chapter Two. Third, the dissertation proposes a new model for describing editioned artworks of which multiple versions exist in order to help understand what the artwork actually consists of.

**Methodology**
The approach that has been chosen to study the life cycles of video and film installations was influenced by methodologies developed in other disciplines (sociology of techniques, Actor-Network-Theory, sociology of mediation, performance studies). Concepts from these disciplines have been borrowed and adapted in order to create a more appropriate framework to deal with the variable nature of video and film installations. Since the field of research in art exhibition, distribution and preservation is still in its infancy, it is mainly bottom-up research that is being done. Most researchers conduct case studies that lead them to uncover a number of recurrent features and thus progress to theories. I have also chosen to use this approach in my dissertation because I had identified three works that raised several questions, some of them similar, others different. Therefore, by comparing how the identity of these works evolved over time, I was able to outline a set of features on the socialization of editioned artworks.

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In this dissertation, I reconstruct the life cycles of three artworks: Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time*, Mike Kelley’s *Day Is Done* (and its offspring) and John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*. This is done through the study of the exhibition, distribution and preservation history of these works. Whereas in catalogues raisonnés one can find the complete list of exhibitions in which the work was shown, little is said on how the work has changed over time. The approach of video and film installations developed in this dissertation helps identify what the artwork was when first exhibited, how its identity has evolved over time and what it has become today.

My encounter with the artworks discussed in this dissertation occurred in very different contexts: one took place in the exhibition space, one through the reading of exhibition reviews, and one during an institutional encounter. My visit of the exhibition *Douglas Gordon: Timeline* at the Museum of Modern Art triggered a series of questions of the different “editions” and “versions” of a *same* artwork. My reading of exhibition reviews of Mike Kelley’s 2005 exhibition *Day Is Done* and the fragmentation of a large-scale installation intrigued me as I started wondering how the “offspring” of this project were going to be exhibited afterwards and what kind of connections would be made to the inaugural exhibition. Finally, it was the fact that two acquisition files existed in the National Gallery of Canada’s management system that aroused my interest in the different versions of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* and the preservation process that had been chosen in the 1990s.

These three specific editioned artworks were selected because they raised different problems. In the case of Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time*, it was mainly exhibition issues that were at stake: the work encountered variability in its presentation depending on the exhibition space at hand. The study of this artwork for this dissertation raises the question of how to document these changes and how changes made to one of the editions affect the other editions. Are we still talking about the *same* work? Or does a modified edition become a different artwork? The study of the life cycle of Mike Kelley’s *Day Is Done* is challenging as the title itself – *Day Is Done* – refers to many things at once: a project, an exhibition, a large-scale installation, a book, and a film. Moreover, after its inaugural exhibition, *Day Is Done* was fragmented and the offspring sold as unique works of art. The distribution of this project is exceptional since certain offspring are editioned artworks and others are unique works of art. Once these offspring begin their life on their own, are they still related to their inaugural exhibition (and if so, how)? And how can one engage with a project that has so many offspring? Finally, the study of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*
raises the question: how does one engage with an artwork that has known different states (a film version, a video version and a digital version) and therefore has, as Gérard Genette would qualify it, plural immanences? How do all the versions contribute to the shaping of its identity?

Sources
In order to reconstruct the life cycles of the editioned video and film installations studied in this dissertation, I have done mainly archival research. Indeed, as these artworks take different forms depending on the exhibition spaces and the contexts, consulting files and documents has enabled me to record the variations that occurred in their re-exhibitions. Whenever possible, and if granted the permission, I consulted exhibition files, curatorial files and conservation files. Through this material, I gained access not only to information on how these works have been exhibited (mainly through exhibition shots), but also to the acquisition contracts and descriptions of preservation interventions that have occurred in these artworks’ life cycles. I also traveled to different venues to see exhibitions in which the studied artworks were displayed in order to experience them and to compare how they have been exhibited in different venues. My research led me to different institutions and collections, namely, the National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa), Hamburger Bahnhof (Berlin), the Museum of Modern Art (New York), Kunstmuseum (Wolfsburg), the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Wiels (Brussels), the Goetz Collection (Munich) and DOX (Prague). Together with the files consulted, these visits helped me to describe for the readers how these artworks were behaving in the exhibition space. Through my descriptions and analysis, I aim to give the readers the impression that they were in the exhibition space, that they were witnesses of different moments and events occurring in the life cycle of these artworks.

In addition, I scrutinized exhibition reviews of all the exhibitions discussed in the dissertation to compare the descriptions, interpretations, and receptions of these artworks. I was interested in seeing how the discourse on these artworks had evolved over time. These exhibition reviews played a double role in the present study. First, they influenced the artworks’ perception and thus contributed to shaping their identity. Second, they were a source of information, and their reading sometimes helped identify other mediators present in the life cycle of the artwork discussed.

Dissertation Outline

The structure of this dissertation has been organized in order to show how the scripting process establishes the identity of editioned artworks. The dissertation has been divided into five chapters. The first chapter discusses three major phases occurring in the life cycle of editioned video and film installation (exhibition, distribution, preservation) and problematizes them. Since video and film installations are polymorph, ephemeral and can be shown in multiple places at the same time, I contend that to fully grasp what these artworks are and to identify the necessary conditions for their instantiations, the study of their socialization (their exhibition, distribution, and preservation) is required. The second chapter presents the theoretical and conceptual framework of the dissertation. In order to develop a dynamic approach that complements the current models, in order to engage with and study contemporary art exhibition, distribution and preservation discussed in the previous chapter, I had to adapt models and concepts from other disciplines (Actor-Network Theory, performance studies and the sociology of mediation). This enabled me to broaden the framework in which I would study these works and also to have the tools to identify the different mediators present in the life cycle of editioned artworks. In this chapter, I also compare different definitions of score and script, and propose my own definition of script and also justify the active theoretical standpoint and the methodology of this study: scripting artworks.

Chapters Three to Five are dedicated to case studies. In the third chapter, the central questions examined are: What happens to the other editions if one of them is modified? Are we still talking about the same work? How did the owners of the work deal with the alteration(s)? Who were the mediators that lead to the modifications of the artwork? What are the consequences on the artwork’s script(s)? In order to address all these questions, the chapter takes Douglas Gordon’s Play Dead; Real Time (2003) as an example since this artwork is variable in its physical manifestations.

Chapter Four examines the fragmentation of artworks and large-scale projects after their inaugural exhibition. It explores possible ways of scripting projects that produce a great variety of offspring. It also discusses how the different offspring continue (or do not continue) to relate to one another. In this chapter, the peculiar distribution of Mike Kelley’s Day Is Done is studied in order to deal with these questions because the project comprises a substantial number of offspring that have been acquired by different institutions and private collections and have been re-exhibited a few times.

The fifth chapter investigates what we learn from the study of artworks which have had
different manifestations and have been through varied technical and material appearances. It also discussed the fact that a non-editioned artwork can become, at some point in its life cycle, an editioned artwork. To illustrate this point, in this last case study chapter, I examine John Massey’s film installation *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* (1982), since it became an editioned artwork about twenty years after its creation and consists of many versions.

In the conclusion, I outline the scripting process of editioned video and film installations in a more abstract sense, and explain how this theoretical tool serves the purpose of better understanding these artworks’ socialization. I discuss how the method of *description* helps gain a better insight into how the identity of these artworks has evolved over time. Finally, I reflect on the benefits and the limits of my approach.
Chapter 1

Exhibiting, Distributing, and Preserving (Editioned) Video and Film Installations
1.0 Introduction

In August 1965, the New York-based magazine *Tape Recording* lent a Norelco video recorder to Andy Warhol in exchange for an exclusive interview.¹ Over the following weeks, the artist produced at least 11 videotapes that he first presented publicly on October 29, 1965, at a party in an underground space.² The party itself was recorded and played back to those who were present.³ Later on, Warhol used two of the tapes he had shot of Edie Sedgwick, his muse of the time, in the making of his 16 mm film *Outer and Inner Space* (1965) (Fig. 1.1). The film is made of two 33-minute reels with sound. Each reel portrays a filmed Edie sitting next to a flattened Edie (a prerecorded video sequence played on a monitor). In the film, the actress is talking to a person outside the frame and occasionally, when she turns a little towards the right, one is given the impression that she is having a conversation with herself, as if the filmed Edie were talking to the videotaped and televised Edie. As stated by curator Callie Angell, the “outer and inner” of the title “refers not only to the dichotomy between Sedgwick’s outer beauty and inner turmoil, so vividly diagrammed in this double portrait, but it also describes the two very different spaces of representation occupied by the video/television medium and by film.”⁴ By using both video and film for the making of *Outer and Inner Space*, Warhol explored the similarities and differences between the two mediums. Working with film and video was rather infrequent in the 1960s, but it became common practice in the 1970s, as some artists were using videotapes to record, and would then transfer the result to films (and vice versa).

For the inaugural screening of *Outer and Inner Space* in January 1966 at the Filmmakers’ Cinematheque in New York, a place where many experimental filmmakers were presenting their films at the time, Warhol chose to project the two reels in synchronicity, one next to the other. Screened in this fashion, *Outer and Inner Space* became a quadruple portrait of Sedgwick, as both reels juxtapose a filmed Edie sitting next to a televised Edie. In other circumstances, the two reels have been projected one after the other, making the film last 66 minutes. Therefore, *Outer and Inner Space* is a film-based artwork that, like many moving

² As indicated by Callie Angell, “the only accessible footage from these early video exists in [Outer and Inner Space], which Warhol, in effect, preserved by reshooting them in 16 mm.” Callie Angell, “Doubling the Screen: Andy Warhol’s Outer and Inner Space,” The Millennium Film Journal 38 (Spring 2002), accessed July 4, 2011, [http://mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html](http://mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ38/angell.html).
³ Michael Rush, *Video Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007) 52. In this publication, Rush states incorrectly that the event took place on September 29, 1965.
image-based artworks, has various screening/exhibition modalities; its physical manifestations depend on the space and curatorial decisions.

Warhol’s *Outer and Inner Space* and his other films were screened in the 1960s, but were withdrawn from circulation in the 1970s, as the artist had difficulty distributing them. Callie Angell argues that one of the explanations for this is that they were considered too weird. In 1984, the artist deposited his films at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Four years later, the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art began a large-scale project to catalogue, research, preserve and release anew the films of Andy Warhol. Callie Angell had been given the task of contextualizing his films and placing them at the core of Warhol’s work.

The restored *Outer and Inner Space* was premiered at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1998 as a double projection and presented in one of the exhibition rooms of the institution. For a period of about 30 years, the film had not once been screened in front of an audience in a cinema or been exhibited in a museum. The preservation of Warhol’s films enabled institutions, as well as the public, to discover (or rediscover) a part of the artist’s production that had been inaccessible for decades. Since film reels decompose over time, if they are not treated and preserved, they eventually become impossible to present on account of irreversible damage. In the case of Warhol’s films, new reels of film have been printed and they have also been digitized for long-term preservation. Nowadays, institutions willing to show Warhol’s films can borrow either 16 mm film reels, DVDs or High Definition (HD) Video Files. Warhol’s films are kept on different formats not only for conservation purposes, but also to facilitate their public presentation.

The discussion of Warhol’s *Outer and Inner Space* introduces the three key phases occurring in the life cycle of a video or film-based artwork that ensure its socialization: its inaugural exhibition (or screening) and the following presentations, its distribution, and its preservation. The case of this particular work by Warhol is exemplary of how these phases influence the life cycle of an artwork and contribute to its socialization. It shows how interdependent these phases are, since if *Outer and Inner Space* had not gone through a preservation treatment, it would be impossible for the work to be shown today. By

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7 In addition to numerous contributions to exhibition catalogues and journals, Callie Angell published a catalogue raisonné on Warhol’s *Screen Tests* in 2006. A second catalogue raisonné on Warhol’s other films is forthcoming, but will have to be finished by other researchers as Callie Angell passed away in 2010.
scrutinizing these different events and how the life cycle of the artwork has evolved, one gets a better insight into what the work is and how it can be exhibited, distributed, and preserved.

This chapter revolves around three major phases occurring in the life cycle of editioned video and film installation (exhibition, distribution, preservation) and problematizes them. Since video and film installations are polymorph, ephemeral, and can be shown in multiple places at the same time, I contend that to fully grasp what these artworks are and to identify the necessary conditions for their instantiations, the study of their socialization (their exhibition, distribution, and preservation) is required. Their very nature invites specialists to approach them as a continuum rather than as stable, fixed and material objects. This chapter aims to give the reader background information and tools to understand the variable nature of (editioned) video and film installations.

The chapter is divided into three sections, each focusing on one of the intersecting events occurring in the life cycle of an artwork. The first section examines the challenges of exhibiting and re-exhibiting video and film-based artworks. Since these works change over time, I use a few examples to show that studying their exhibition history is valuable for understanding how they have evolved since their inaugural exhibitions. The examples illustrate why I propose to view them as a continuum. Moreover, this analysis also exemplifies that these works go through different versions in their life cycles, all of which, at some point in time, stood for what the work of art was/is. It is for this reason that I use the terminology introduced by Gérard Genette of artworks that have plural immanences (1.1).

The second section explores the distribution systems of video and film installations. At first, distribution systems evolved on the fringe of the art market, which led to the creation of an alternative system – distribution centers – to help them circulate. This second section will show that with the creation of limited editions, art dealers found a way to successfully integrate video and film installations into the art market (1.2). The third section discusses the challenges and strategies of the preservation of film and video-based artworks, since the medium of these works and the technological equipment to present them have a limited lifespan. Influenced by conservator Pip Laurenson, I defend a conceptual rather than material approach for the analysis of these works of art. Furthermore, I suggest revisiting the definition of authenticity that addresses the very nature of these variable works of art (1.3). Finally, in the conclusion of the chapter, I show how these specific characteristics of variable artworks require that they be studied within a dynamic model, a model that will be developed in the following chapter.
1.1. Exhibiting and Re-Exhibiting Video and Film Installations

As explained above, Andy Warhol’s *Outer and Inner Space* has different presentation modalities: it can be screened in a theater or exhibited in a museum. Moreover, the two reels of film can either be projected one after the other or at the same time, alongside each other. These features of *Outer and Inner Space* are only noticeable if one studies its re-exhibitions and different screenings.

In between exhibitions, film and video-based artworks have no concrete physical existence on account of being taken apart. For instance, the projectors used to present the two 16 mm films for *Outer and Inner Space* are stored in crates and the film reels are kept in canisters, stored on a shelf in a climate-controlled vault. When these works are put on display or screened, a series of prescriptions need to be interpreted and decisions made. The curators need to choose the format of presentation (single or double-screen projection), the exhibition support (16 mm, DVD or HD files), the frequency of projection (continuous, once per hour, a few times per day, single screening), the size of the projections, and so forth. Whereas some works, such as this one by Warhol, have quite straightforward requirements and do not offer room for many variations other than the ones mentioned above, other two-step artworks, such as Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* discussed in the introduction of this dissertation and in Chapter Three, encounter more variations not only in their display, but also in the choice of components exhibited.

The exhibition of any artwork contributes to and ensures its socialization. As Jean-Marc Poinsot argues, the moment of the exhibition is *quand l’œuvre a lieu*, it is when the artwork occurs, takes place, happens. In the case of video and film-based artworks, the exhibition also temporarily gives them a material and physical presence. When exhibited, the artwork is also part of a larger structure. As Mary Anne Staniszewski contends, “a work of art, when publicly displayed, almost never stands alone: it is always an element within a permanent or temporary exhibition created in accordance with historically determined and self-consciously staged installation conventions.”

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8 *Outer and Inner Space* is not Warhol’s only work that can be seen either as a single or double projection. Indeed, as mentioned in the brochure *The Films of Andy Warhol* produced by the MoMA Circulating Film and Video Library, the following works can be presented in single or double-screen format: *Lupe* (1965), *The Velvet Underground* (1966), *The Chelsea Girls* (1966) and **** (Four Stars) (1967).


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variability in its display, but also in its framing. This is what leads scholars such as Jean-Marc Poinso and Mary Anne Staniszewski to insist on the importance of studying artworks within their exhibition contexts. Being acquainted with the re-exhibitions of a work of art helps gain a better insight into what it actually consists of and the type of experiences it can engender.

In this sub-section of the chapter, I will begin by discussing a few displays and framings of Andy Warhol’s *Outer and Inner Space* to justify why I propose to approach film and video-based artworks as continuums. Although relevant to a wide variety of contemporary artworks, the scope of this study is limited to video and film installations. My aim is to analyze the variations that have taken place over the years and to show that the work exhibited back then is not exactly the same as the one seen now.

As stated in the introduction of the chapter, Warhol’s *Outer and Inner Space* was first projected at the Filmmakers’ Cinematheque in New York as a double-screen projection in 1966. The work was projected only once that evening. Since it was restored in 1998, it has been screened and exhibited on many occasions. The inaugural exhibition of the restored version took place in a museum – the Whitney Museum of American Art – and it was presented as a double projection. Despite the fact that it was shown in an exhibition room, the work was not presented continuously, but had a specific screening schedule; it was screened five times a day. One could say that this showing of the work at the Whitney Museum of American Art was in between a museum display (where artworks are presented continuously) and a cinema presentation (where films are screened at specific times).

In 2006-2007, *Outer and Inner Space* was presented in *Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection*, an exhibition gathering projection-based artworks from 1963 to 2005 held at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. In 2007-2008, it was also included in the exhibition *Andy Warhol: Other Voices, Other Rooms* presented at the Stedelijk Museum CS in Amsterdam.

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11 The term ‘framing’ is used here in the sense given to it by literary scholar Mieke Bal who prefers the use of *framed* to *contextualized*. Bal argues that context “is primarily a noun that refers to something static,” whereas the “act of framing, […] produces an event.” See Mieke Bal, “Framing,” in *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 135.

12 Callie Angell, “Doubling the Screen.”

13 See brochure *Andy Warhol: Outer and Inner Space*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 15 October – 29 November 1998. This presentation of the film was part of *The New American Film & Video Series*.


15 Exhibition *Andy Warhol: Other Voices, Other Rooms*, Stedelijk Museum CS, Amsterdam, 12 October 2007 – 13 January 2008. Curator: Eva Meyer-Hermann. The exhibition was presented at a temporary location called the Stedelijk Museum CS (for Central Station) as the Stedelijk Museum building was under renovation. After being
The curatorial approaches of these exhibitions were very different and the display of the “same” work led to contrasting interpretations. In Berlin, *Outer and Inner Space* was part of a group exhibition on the art of projection. The work was presented in its own dark room as a double-projection and in its original format, 16 mm film. The visitors entered from the left and were invited, once their viewing was done, to proceed to the next room of the exhibition on the right. Such a setting created a very intimate ambience. Moreover, the film projectors were hidden in a projection room, which contributed to avoiding sound interferences with the already almost inaudible soundtrack. In contrast to the Berlin framing, in Amsterdam, *Outer and Inner Space* was included in a monographic exhibition dedicated to Warhol’s less-known works such as his films and television programs. More precisely, it was presented in the Filmscape section of the exhibition. In a very large room of the Stedelijk Museum CS, 19 films by Warhol were gathered to create this “landscape” of films. All the films were presented in a digitized version, supported on HD video files, and were projected by video projectors. This choice of presentation implied a change in their reception, as the films lost the texture of the 16 mm format. The result of gathering all the films in the same room contributed to creating a large-scale installation, one artwork. Even though every film was clearly identified, one could not avoid making connections with the multi-channel video installations that we see so often in museums and galleries nowadays. The conglomeration of the films in one space could have turned out to be quite chaotic considering that some of them had a soundtrack, but a very sophisticated system was used. The visitors would only hear the soundtrack when standing or sitting in front of a specific film and directly underneath the speakers.

The Berlin display was closer, to a certain extent, to a screening taking place in a cinema. The work was isolated from the other works in the exhibition whereas in Amsterdam, it entered into dialogue with many other films by Warhol. This Amsterdam Filmscape was also very Warhol-esque in terms of the artist’s tendency to experiment with how to display moving images. One such example is the expanded cinema production *Exploring Plastic Inevitable* that was presented at several locations between 1966 and 1967.¹⁶

¹⁶ As described by Branden W. Joseph, “At the height of its development, the Exploring Plastic Inevitable included three to five film projectors, often showing different reels of the same film simultaneously; a similar number of slide projectors, movable by hand so that their images swept the auditorium; four variable-speed strobe lights; three moving spots with an assortment of colored gels; several pistol lights; a mirror ball hung from the ceiling and another on the floor; as many as three loudspeakers blaring different pop records at once; one or two sets by the Velvet Underground and Nico; and the dancing Gerard Malanga and Mary Woronov or Ingrid Superstar, complete with props and lights that projected their shadows high into the wall.” *Exploring
The discussion of these different instantiations of Andy Warhol’s *Outer and Inner Space* shows that this work does not have a stable presentation format and that it changes over time. Therefore, it is more productive to approach it as a continuum than a stable object because it is all its manifestations that define what it is. The 1966 manifestation at the Filmmakers’ Cinematheque of *Outer and Inner Space* differed from the one in the filmscape of the *Andy Warhol – Other Voices, Other Rooms* in 2007-2008, but since Warhol himself presented his work in different ways and in very different contexts, the variation in the display of this work is one of its features. To gain a better insight into what artworks are, this example is a great illustration of the need to study their exhibition history.

Another feature of video and film-based works is their plural immanences. I borrow this term from Gérard Genette. For Genette, the works that are plural are those whose plurality is not a technical byproduct, but, rather, results wholly from authorial intention, as when an artist, after producing a painting, text, or musical composition, decides to produce a new version of it, different from the first in one degree or another, yet sufficiently similar to (and derivative of) it for cultural convention to treat it as another version of the same work rather than another work.¹⁷

Whereas for Genette the other version is the result of an authorial intention, I would argue that in some instances, another version of the work can be created in collaboration with or by another party. For instance, in the case of Warhol’s films, since the artist passed away in 1987, he has not been involved in the transfer of his 16 mm films to video format. Nevertheless, the video version of *Outer and Inner Space* is another version of the same work, originally produced on 16 mm film. Genette might argue back that the video versions of Warhol’s films are technical byproducts, but I contend that there is a lot of expertise required in the transfer of 16 mm films to a video format and that aesthetic decisions have to be made. There is a transfer of the responsibilities from the artist to different mediators. I argue that nowadays, *Outer and Inner Space* has different versions: a filmic version (supported on 16 mm film) and a digital version (supported either on DVDs or HD video files).

The case of Peter Bogers’ *Heaven* is another example of a work that has plural immanences, as it is made of different versions. In 1995, the Festival aan de Werf (Utrecht) commissioned a work from the artist. In response to this invitation, the artist created *Heaven*,

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a work that was presented in an empty house in the center of the city (Fig. 1.2). Seventeen black-and-white monitors were displayed in three rooms of the house. Each monitor presented a different video and they all had an intriguing soundtrack. The sounds incited the visitors to walk about in the different rooms in order to see the corresponding images on monitors (for instance, a closing door, a ticking clock, and a baby being breastfed). At the end of the festival, the work was dissembled.

At first, Heaven was created as a site-specific work. However, the creation of a second version, the one acquired by the Stedelijk Museum, contributed to the socialization of this artwork. Indeed, the inaugural exhibition of this installation could have been its only one as well if the artist had decided not to make another version of it. The work would have continued to exist only through documentation, publications and the memory of people who had seen it. By creating a version for the Stedelijk Museum, Bogers ensured that, although different from its inaugural manifestation, Heaven would have a continued existence physically and materially. The version acquired by the Stedelijk Museum has been exhibited in different locations, such as in the Huize Frankendael in Amsterdam as part of the exhibition The Living (Fig. 1.3). Every time it is presented, the configuration of the work varies and is adapted to the available space.

Even though site-specific, Peter Bogers represented the work in other environments and it was acquired by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1996. The museum acquired what the artist called the second version of the work. The number of monitors was reduced to fifteen and they are now all displayed in one room. Whereas the sound of each video was played continuously before, the sound of only three monitors can be heard at the same time now in order to avoid chaos, since all monitors are currently in the same space. After a few minutes, the sound fades out and the soundtrack of three other video sequences can be heard.

The example of Peter Bogers’ Heaven shows that even a site-specific work can become, as Susan Hapgood has stated, “movable under the right circumstances.” In this case, the artist was very involved in the making of the new version of the work and its following re-exhibitions. The example also makes explicit that Heaven is a work made of different versions and it is only through the study of its exhibition history that one can fully understand the work in all its dimensions. It is a work of a variable nature in the sense that the artist adapts it to the environment where it is shown. The display of the monitors is decided upon

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19 Susan Hapgood, “Remaking Art History,” Art in America 78, no. 7 (July 1990): 120.
after the viewing of the exhibition space. That very space becomes a component of the artwork, as a dialogue is taking place. Finally, it is all these versions of the work that make up the artwork known as *Heaven*.

The example of Bogers’ *Heaven* also brings forward the connection that video and film installations have with the exhibition space. The exhibition of these works implies spatial and also temporal considerations. The awareness of the exhibition space is a phenomenon of the second half of the 20th century, but it has its precedents, as artists over the past centuries have been thinking of how to display their works in a manner that would have a greater effect on the viewer. The French painter Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) is a case in point: he imagined his viewers more as participants. As Thomas Crow related, instead of presenting his historical painting *The Intervention of the Sabine Women* (1799) at the Salon of 1799, he decided to exhibit it in its own space. The visitors had to pay an admission fee in order to see the painting. For the first time, it was possible for the visitors to see David’s historical painting at eye-level. The artist had also hung a mirror on the opposite wall, which had the effect of making the viewer a participant in the artwork. Crow sees in David’s manner of exhibiting his painting “an effort to mystify and spectacularize the act of viewing.” The attempt to challenge the act of viewing and to include the viewer in the artwork is one of the most important characteristics of installation art. However, with installation art, it is in the space – and not in the painting – that the artists have tried to include the spectators.

Since their inception, video and film installations have been presented in quite dark spaces, as projected images require dimmed light to be seen properly. The modernist exhibition space – supposedly neutral in order to avoid distracting the viewers from the art – described as a “white cube” by Brian O’Doherty, has been transferred over the years into a hybrid space between the white cube and the black box; the latter term is normally used to describe the movie theater. David Joselit has coined the term “light cube” to refer to this type of space, a befitting name seeing as the existence of these works depends on a specific source of light.

In early experiments of expanded cinema, artists such as Anthony McCall with, for instance, *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) and *Long Film for Ambient Light* (1975) (Fig. 1.4 and 1.5), have made visible to the audience elements that were not intended to be explicitly

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seen by viewers in the cinema: the projector, the beam of light, the screen, the projectionist, and the space itself in which the projection was taking place. By inviting the visitors to move about, he also got rid of the physical mobility restrictions imposed by the viewing experience of a film in a cinema. *Line Describing Cone* “is dealing with the projected light-beam itself;” it “begins as a coherent line of light, like a laser beam, and develops through the 30 minute duration, into a complete, hollow cone of light.” Rather than being projected on a screen, the film is projected on a wall. As viewers are invited to walk about, around and through the cone of light, *Line Describing a Cone* cannot be presented in a standard cinema room; being a three-dimensional work, it needs an empty space filled with smoke. In 1975, at the Idea Warehouse in New York, McCall proposed something even more radical, a film that didn’t use camera, filmstrip, projector or screen. *Long Film for Ambient Light* used space, light and duration. Over the course of twenty-four hours, McCall invited visitors to walk into an empty Manhattan loft whose windows had been covered with diffusion paper, and which was lit in the evening by a single light bulb hanging from the ceiling. In *Long Film for Ambient Light*, McCall stripped down the cinematic experience to its most fundamental feature: light and duration. On the same occasion, it made explicit to the viewers that if there is no light bulb in the projector, then the film remains invisible.

While artists like Anthony McCall have worked with a phenomenological approach and have invited viewers to walk in, walk through, and walk about in the exhibition space, other artists have used projection to create experiences that do not require the viewers to move about as much in the exhibition space. There are conflicting views on the type of spectatorship related to moving image artworks. On the one hand, curator Chrissie Iles argues that “the new cinematic form of video installation envelops the viewer in a more inclusive sensory experience that recalls both the multiscreen expanded cinema works” and the perceptual experiments of artists who have worked with closed-circuit video installations in the 1970s for instance. On the other hand, art historian David Joselit contends that “projection undermines one of the most progressive effects of the closed-circuit apparatus: its conceptualization of the spectatorship as interactive.” To illustrate these different kinds of spectatorship, I will use two examples: Peter Campus’ *Shadow Projection* (1974) and Pipilotti Rist’s *Ever is Over All* (1997). *Shadow Projection* is a closed-circuit video installation in

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which the viewer can see herself projected into the exhibition space as her presence is recorded live by a surveillance camera (Fig. 1.6). This interactive artwork uses a theatre light, a surveillance camera, a screen and a projector. The surveillance camera and the projector are connected in order to form a closed circuit. Once the visitor stands in front of the light, the surveillance camera records her body and the recorded image is projected in real time on the screen displayed in the exhibition space. If the visitor is facing the screen, then it is her back that is projected onto it; if she is facing the camera, then her front is projected onto the screen; either way, the visitor will never be able to see her front as she cannot look in both directions (towards the surveillance camera and towards the screen) at the same time. Campus’ work made the visitors realize that *Shadow Projection* could not be apprehended by a unique and single point of view. A frontal perspective was no longer possible.

In contrast, Rist’s *Ever is Over All* is a two-channel video installation projected in the corner of a room (Fig. 1.7). The video usually projected on the left wall shows a woman wearing a blue dress and red shoes holding a long-stemmed flower made of steel walking happily on a sidewalk. Once in a while, she uses her steel rod to smash the windows of cars parked along the sidewalk. At some point during the loop, a policewoman passes by and greets her, as if approving the action happening on the street. The second projection presents colored fields of red-hot-poker flowers filmed by a camera that seems to be floating in the air. From time to time, close-ups of the flowers are shown and these sequences help the visitors understand that it was that flower that was used as a model for the steel rod held by the woman in the other projection. A soundtrack accompanies the projections; it is joyful music that is only momentarily interrupted by the sound of the windshields being smashed. The size of the projections, the bright colors of the two videos, the floating images, the jolly music, the surprising actions of the woman (her cheerful walk punctuated by violent gestures) make *Ever is Over All* a work that captivates and absorbs the viewers’ gaze and mind.

When comparing the experiences engendered by these two works, one can notice that upon the encounter of *Shadow Projection*, the viewer is required for the artwork to exist. In response to Joselit’s statement on the kind of spectatorship that projection engenders, I would argue that with works from the cinematic phase, the visitors do not necessarily have to move about in the space in order to understand what is at stake or to activate the artwork, but that they nevertheless are perceptually stimulated. As Raymond Bellour asserts, with artworks

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such as *Ever is Over All*, the experience of the visitors takes place in their head. John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* studied in Chapter Five is another such example. Although immersive, these installations require an active engagement from the viewer, who has to construct the meaning of the different images in his/her head, contrary to cinema where connections are made for the viewer.

Video and film installations have not only changed the exhibition space, but also the temporal experience of the visitors. Boris Groys argues that, “With the introduction of moving pictures into the museum the situation changes dramatically because these pictures begin to dictate the time of viewing to the viewer and steal the autonomy he is used to.” In this statement, he indicates the tension that arises from viewing time-based works in the museum. The visitors are constantly confronted with the question: should I stay or should I go?

In this first section of the chapter, by briefly discussing the re-exhibitions of Andy Warhol’s *Outer and Inner Space*, I have argued that it leads one to consider the work not only as a continuum but also as a work that has different versions, or *plural immanences* as Gérard Genette would say. With other examples, I also illustrated the kind of spatial and temporal considerations that the exhibition of film and video-based works implies and indicated their relevance for the identity of these works. Therefore, a study of film and video-based works needs to take into account their exhibition history. Finally, it is important to say that the support of such works enables them to be reproduced. Like feature films, they can be distributed extensively. However, since they circulate in the art world – where *uniqueness* is an important feature – an artificial rarity has been created and nowadays, like photographs and lithographs, video and film installations are sold in limited editions. Yet, although editions are based on a scarcity principle, the editioning in fact contributes to a greater circulation and socialization of video and film installations. The following section of the chapter is dedicated to explaining how this system works and how it came into being. In other words, what does the distribution of these works imply?

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1.2 Distributing Video and Film Installations

Another important phase in the life cycle of an artwork is its distribution, since it contributes to the work’s socialization. In order to remain in the public sphere and to be seen and experienced, artworks have to circulate and eventually be collected. The consequence of the non-circulation of Warhol films mentioned before was that an important part of his oeuvre remained unknown to the public and most scholars until the late 1990s, when the MoMA, in collaboration with other institutions, proceeded to preserve and release the films anew. Warhol’s restored films are now available for rent through MoMA’s Circulating Film and Video Library and the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh.28 In this second section of the chapter, I discuss the two main modes of distribution of video and film-based artworks: the alternative system (the one of distribution centers such as Electronic Arts Intermix) and the commercial art market (where the limited editions mode of distribution was created).

In the 1960s and 1970s, private collectors or institutions seldom collected video- and film-based artworks. As Lori Zippay points out, “for many years video art functioned as a kind of enfant terrible, an outsider on the fringes of the art world, supported within an alternative network of production, distribution and exhibition.”29 Video, as well as expanded cinema, were transgressing and defying the modes of exhibition and distribution in place.

In the beginning, video was associated with television as the principle medium of distribution. The emergence of video and film-based works in the 1960s led to experiments on how to make these works accessible to the public. Rather than having visitors come to the gallery, attempts were made to reach the public directly in their living rooms. For instance, one can think of Gerry Schum’s Television Gallery (Fersehgalerie Gerry Schum in German). With this project, Schum, in collaboration with Ursula Wevers, intended to help land artists who had never worked with film to create works with this medium. The artists’ films were later transferred to a video format in order to be broadcast.30 One of the programs created for television was Land Art, which gathered short films of eight artists: Richard Long, Barry Flanagan, Dennis Oppenheim, Robert Smithson, Marinus Boezen, Jan Dibbets, Walter de Maria and Michael Heizer. The Television Gallery was inaugurated on March 28, 1969 in one

of the studios of the German broadcaster SFB.\(^{31}\) In the studio, the films were played on monitors, like they would have been during a gallery exhibition. Photographs of the eight individual projects were also hung on the walls. The gallery opening was filmed, and when on April 15, 1969, the program Land Art was broadcast on SFB, it was preceded and followed by sequences of the opening.\(^{32}\) The program lasted 38 minutes and did not include any spoken word. Schum contended that “an art object realized in regard of the medium TV does not need a spoken explanation.”\(^{33}\)

The audience of the program Land Art reached 3% of the market, which corresponds to 100 000 viewers.\(^{34}\) Even if this number represents to just a small share of the market, the broadcasting of Land Art enabled the program to reach a larger audience than if it had only been presented in a gallery. However, since the artists’ films were considered too radical and because there was a lack of mediation of these artistic creations, the collaboration with the public broadcaster ceased after a short period.\(^{35}\) Even if Schum’s attempt to have films by artists aired on television had a limited life span, his initiative was nevertheless recognized by the art world, as Land Art was presented in Harald Szeemann’s 1969 seminal exhibition When Attitudes Become Form: Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information: Live in Your Head in Bern, Switzerland. Although originally intended for television broadcasting, Land Art was more often presented in the context of exhibitions.

Another example of artworks broadcast on television is the program The Medium is the Medium, presented in 1968-1969 on the Boston channel WHGB-TV. It featured the works of six artists: Allan Kaprow, Nam June Paik, Otto Piene, James Seawright, Thomas Tadlock, and Aldo Tambellini.\(^{36}\) From 1974 to 1993, the New Television Workshop at WHGB produced videos by artists. Like it had been the case in Germany, videos by artists presented on American television never fit into world of mass entertainment because they were considered too experimental and radical. Artist Peter Campus, who has created many of his videos in the WHGB studios, recalls that when he made Three Transitions in 1973, the

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31 SFB, Sender Freies Berlin was a public radio and television service for West Berlin.
technicians were inquiring: “What is this? Why are we doing this?” and that even the producer, Fred Barzyk, asked: “What is this crazy person doing?” Clearly, the artist’s critical reflection on the nature of television broadcasting conflicted with mainstream broadcasting’s aim to make the medium invisible. Even though the format was perfectly suited for public broadcasting, videos by artists have, paradoxically, been more often exhibited in galleries and museums than presented on television. Since television was not a feasible option, other modes of distribution emerged.

Since Gerry Schum’s attempt to broadcast film and video works by artists on television encountered too much resistance, he opened a gallery in Dusseldorf in 1971 with the aim of producing, exhibiting and selling videotapes. On the one hand, as artist Chris Meigh-Andrews contends, “The establishment of Videogalerie Schum anticipated the emergence of video as a significant art form and paved the way for the wider acceptance of artists’ video alongside other more established art media.” On the other hand, this example shows how intertwined the history of video-based artworks and film-based artworks are, since even if artists used film in the making of a work, it did not necessarily mean that it would be exhibited as a film. In certain instances, it could be transferred to a video format and be broadcast on television or distributed on videotapes.

In 1971, Howard Wise created one of the first distribution centers, Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), in New York. The organization’s founding mission was “to develop and support the emergent video medium by providing artists with access to funding, technology, and other resources.” It also aimed “to promote video and electronic art outside the commercial gallery system.” In the 1970s, many distribution centers were created around the world, as, for example, Vidéographe in Montreal in 1971; London Video Art (now the Lux Centre), founded in 1976; Video Data Bank, founded in Chicago in 1976; Montevideo (now the Netherlands Media Art Institute), founded in Amsterdam in 1978, Vtape, founded in Toronto in 1980. At the very beginning, the aim of the distribution centers was to facilitate

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41 Even though founded in 1976, the Video Data Bank (VDB) did not start distributing videos until 1983. At first, the VDB was conducting interviews with artists. The aim was to use video “as a disseminator of ideas coming out of the art world.” See Kate Horsfield’s contribution to the Round Table “Buying Time/Collecting
not only the distribution of artists’ videotapes, but also to assist them in their production. In their first years, the distribution centers provided the artists with the expertise and technical support that they needed in the making of their videos. Over the years, being confronted by the limited lifespan of the medium, distribution centers had to adapt to the situation, which led to preservation initiatives. Nowadays, preservation is at the core of their mission and they provide resources on video preservation to both artists and institutions.

Alongside the existing video distribution system discussed above, a few art dealers also started selling videos and films in the 1960s. However, these works did not represent a significant share of the art market. Although early attempts were made to integrate these works into the art market by Castelli-Sonnabend Videotapes and Films (CSVF) in New York and Art/Tapes/22 in Italy by offering tapes in both limited and unlimited editions, the market wasn’t ready. As related by Marita Sturken, many thought that video “was a medium that simply could not be co-opted by the commercial art world.” However, in the 1990s, as more and more artists began working with video and film, these types of works started to be collected extensively by institutions and on a smaller scale by private collectors. As Noah Horowitz observed, “the first significant wave of video buying occurred only once its museological significance was becoming more apparent and its technology more manageable.” The commercial art market adapted the distribution of these works to a system already in place, the one of limited editions. As Martha Burkirk explains, “When materials or techniques derived from mass production are taken up by artists, the demands of the art market mean that inherent multiplicity has to be realigned in accordance with conventions that restrict production, the most common of which is the limited edition.” This is exactly what happened with art dealers who began to sell videos by artists and video installations in numbered editions, meaning that a very limited number of the same work was


Despite the fact that the distribution centers charged fees either when selling or renting the videos by artists, this did not mean that this system was developed enough for the artists to make a living solely on the distribution of their video works. On this matter, see: Ingrid Wiegand, “Distribution at Galleries, Museums, and Media Centers,” Televisions 6 (3), 1978, accessed July 4, 2011, www.experimentaltvcenter.org/history/collections/ctext.php?id=5&page=1.


available on the market, a number that was determined by what the market allowed at a particular moment in time. The concept of the limited edition was used in other art fields (such as etching, lithography and photography) and therefore, art dealers simply had to follow this as a guideline in order to turn a medium that is easily reproducible into a rare product. Paul Messier elucidates that: “Limiting an edition […] is designed to protect both the integrity of the artist and the interests of the collector from the indefinite production of potentially substandard work. A subset of a limited edition is the artist’s proof.” As museum collections are based on the idea of a unique work of art, museums preferred to acquire “unique or editioned rather than in uneditioned distribution.” Museums thus acquire more works from art dealers or the artists themselves than from distributors.

Today, the two distribution systems of video and film-based artworks co-exist. There is a certain distribution of labor: distributors such as EAI and Vtape distribute mainly single-channel videos while commercial art galleries sell limited editions of video and film installations, along with a few single-channel videos. In a sense, these two models also compete in the market of video-based works. As Lori Zippay contends, “Video art distribution today is faced with two seemingly irreconcilable histories, models, and economies.” Video was born out of “an alternative political and cultural system that celebrated the medium’s reproducible status as anti-art object, outside of the commercial gallery system.” Artists working with that medium challenged the notion of the rare and unique art object. However, when artists and art dealers realized that there was a market for selling video and film-based artworks, creating a limited edition was a highly suitable manner by which to give these works the rarity required for making them fit into the art market.

The co-existence of two distribution systems for these artworks is not atypical. As the American sociologist Howard Becker wrote, there have always been different distribution systems working concomitantly. The artwork distribution system is constantly evolving: on the one hand, this is because the artists that do not fit into the existing system try to create other systems; on the other hand, well-known artists will use their “power of seduction” on the existing system in order to get their non-conforming works accepted and integrated into the system. Whereas Becker seems to attribute that change to artists only, I would argue that

48 Chrissie Iles and Henriette Huldisch, “Keeping Time,” 68.
50 Howard Becker, Art Worlds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 95.
51 Ibid., 130.
it is not only artists who create alternative distribution systems. As we have seen, gallerist Howard Wise was behind the creation of the first video distribution center in New York. Therefore, I would attribute these changes to different actors in the art worlds.

Even if art dealers have extended the concept of editioned artwork to video and film installations, since there are no written rules on how it should be done – at the moment it is more like an agreed-upon norm – the concept remains flexible. Nor are there concrete rules about deciding how many editions of a work the artist and the art dealer can release. One commonly encounters editions of two to five plus one or two artist’s proofs (generally indicated as “a.p.”). The artist’s proof usually remains in the artist’s collection, but it can be sold to a private collector or an institution as well. The editions are numbered, meaning that if an artwork is released as an edition of three, then each edition will be given a number: 1/3, 2/3 or 3/3. The number of editions is decided at the moment the artwork is released on the market. However, there have been some cases in which a new edition or artist’s proof was released a few years after the artwork had been made available on the market. John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, discussed in Chapter Five, is one such example. His work was first sold as a unique artwork, and more than twenty years after its creation, an artist’s proof was released onto the art market.

To complicate things further, some artists working with film create different versions of a work under the same title: a movie version that is screened in cinemas and an installation version that is exhibited in galleries and museums. This is current practice for artists such as Eija-Liisa Athila, Douglas Gordon, Philippe Parreno, and Harun Farocki. For instance, Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno’s *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2006) operates simultaneously in the two systems and it manifests itself in different forms. It exists as a 90-minute feature film, disseminated by film distributors and as an installation and sold by the art dealer Yvon Lambert (Gordon’s Parisian art dealer). The strategy of having two versions broadens the distribution options of these works and gives them the opportunity to be seen by different publics; it benefits from a greater socialization and more income.

Even though this work by Gordon and Parreno has integrated both distribution systems, the artists have bent the norms of the limited edition in some ways. As it is originally intended, a limited edition means that all the copies of the edition are the same; whether the museum acquires edition 1/3 or edition 3/3 of a work, it should be identical. However, the museum version of Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno’s *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* described above is quite unique in its distribution. As mentioned on Yvon Lambert’s website,
an edition of seventeen has been made available on the market.\textsuperscript{52} The museum version of \textit{Zidane} is a two-channel video installation. The left projection is the feature film that can be seen in cinemas, and the right projection is the footage recorded with one of the seventeen cameras. Indeed, seventeen cameras had been used during the shooting of the football match. Whereas normally all seventeen editions would have been the same, in the case of \textit{Zidane}, every edition is unique because the footage projected on the right is different: each number of the edition comprises the feature film plus the footage of one of the seventeen cameras. So basically, this edition consists of seventeen different versions of the same work. Although this example is an extreme case, it shows that even with editioned artworks, every edition can be unique. There is more variability possible with editioned video and film installations than with editioned prints or photographs. The different modes of distribution discussed above in addition to the plural immanences of these works show that these works are evolving in different spheres.

One of the most important points to make about these editioned video and film installations is the fact that they have a greater chance of circulating, and, therefore, to be exhibited. It gives them a significantly higher chance of socializing. It also means that the number of intermediaries increases; more people are involved in interpreting the prescriptions accompanying these artworks, thus leading to more variations in their physical manifestations. Moreover, as artist Anthony McCall has argued, “what’s quite interesting about having a limited number of owners of a work of time-based art is that it spreads the responsibility for preservation and conservation.”\textsuperscript{53} The next section of the chapter will address the very question of the preservation and conservation of editioned video and film installations.

\textbf{1.3 Preserving Video and Film Installations}

Since the video and film mediums have a limited life span, their preservation is a key phase in their life cycle. If not preserved, their socialization is severely compromised. This is exactly what happened to Andy Warhol’s films, which were withdrawn from circulation in the 1970s. In addition, once they were deposited at the MoMA in the 1980s, they could not be presented on account of their deteriorated state. Before they could be screened or exhibited again, they


\textsuperscript{53} “Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art” [Malcolm Turvey, Hal Foster, Chrissie Iles, George Baker, Matthew Buckingham, Anthony McCall], \textit{October} 104 (Spring 2003): 95.
needed to undergo a restoration process. Not only were the 16 mm films restored, but they were also digitized and are now supported on more recent formats (DVDs and HD video files). Whereas the original support of the work – film – allowed for a unique way to present them – projection – the more recent formats offer Warhol’s film new presentation possibilities. For instance, whereas in the exhibition Andy Warhol: Other Voices, Other Rooms, some of his Screen Tests were supported on HD files and projected onto the walls of the exhibition space, in the exhibition Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll since 1967, the selection of Screen Tests was played on television monitors. Yet, while the migration of artworks to more recent formats is inevitable from a preservation perspective, the radical changes in their display engendered by the use of more recent support raise questions about their aesthetic appearances and also about who gets to decide which changes are acceptable and which ones are not. In this third section of the chapter, I first discuss the concept of authenticity, which is key to art conservation theory. Second, I introduce different preservation strategies for time-based art, as some of them will be further discussed in the case study chapters.

Revisiting the Concept of Authenticity

In conservation science, the concept of authenticity is at the core of any reflection on how to preserve an artwork. As Pip Laurenson explains, “in conservation the prevalent notion of authenticity is based on physical integrity and this generally guides judgment about loss.” With time-based media artworks, the very notion of authenticity is challenged on account of the fact that the support of these artworks has a limited life span. In some instances, these works are no longer playable in their original format. Since the mid-1990s, there has been an increased awareness of the ephemerality of contemporary artworks, including video and film-based works. Just a few years after acquiring a piece of video art, for instance, institutions faced situations such as not being able to exhibit a work because of the advanced degradation of the videotape or because the necessary equipment used to present it was no longer working. Artists, too, had to deal with the obsolescence of the media they were working with. Bill Viola recalls that while gathering the works he wished to include in his retrospective

54 Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll since 1967, Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal, 10 October 2008 – 11 January 2009. As the Stedelijk Museum exhibition Andy Warhol: Other Voices, Other Rooms, this exhibition traveled to other venues as well.

exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, he found out that some of his videos made in the 1970s were no longer playable in their original format.56

If the original format of an artwork cannot be saved, in order to ensure its socialization, it has to be transferred to another support and playback technology. This means that the preservation of a time-based artwork is often accompanied by a noticeable change in the physical appearance of the work; this is, of course, if the work of art is considered from a purely material point of view. As Pip Laurenson summarizes, “For traditional conservation the identity of the work is understood in terms of its material identity and this is considered the proper focus of conservation.”57 For time-based media artworks’ conservation, she proposes considering these artworks within a conceptual framework where the “reference ‘state’ of an object has been replaced with the concept of the ‘identity’ of the work.”58 The approach proposed by Laurenson is tailored towards the variable nature of time-based works of art.

I asserted in the first section of this chapter that time-based artworks should be envisaged as continuums. Consequently, since they evolve over time, so does their authenticity. Building upon Laurenson’s approach, I have suggested elsewhere to consider authenticity as a process.59 I argued that the authenticity of editioned video and film installations (and other time-based artworks) is continually redefined and challenged by mediators such as the exhibition space, the carrier of the work, and the people interacting with the work. This explains why the concept of authenticity can no longer be considered as a fixed notion and must be redefined to espouse the very nature of time-based artworks.

**Preservation Approaches**

Neither institutions nor artists were necessarily prepared or equipped to face the challenges of the preservation of variable media artworks. This situation led to the creation of a few networks that aimed to do research and develop models for dealing with the preservation of ephemeral, unstable, variable, temporary artworks. The initiatives and networks created to study the preservation of contemporary art focused on different issues and some of them dealt with contemporary artworks in general, whereas others decided to focus on new media art.

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57 Pip Laurenson, “Authenticity.”
58 Ibid.
Among the networks set up over the last decade are the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art (INCCA), the Variable Media Network (VMN), Forging the Future and Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage (DOCAM). Most of them conducted research projects, realized publications, launched websites with resources for the documentation and preservation of different types of works, and organized international conferences and summits to disseminate the knowledge acquired within the network.

Among the outcomes of the various networks mentioned above, the variable media approach defended by the Variable Media Network – permanence through change – has been the most influential for this study. Instigated by Jon Ippolito, former associate curator of media arts at the Guggenheim Museum, the Variable Media Network is an alliance of the Guggenheim Museum in New York and the Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology in Montreal. The major contributions of this network were the bilingual publication *Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Approach*, the Variable Media website and the *Variable Media Questionnaire* (VMQ). The VMN put forward the idea that in order to remain accessible and presentable, variable media artworks had to sometimes be changed, restored, updated etc. Therefore, the motto of this organization is “permanence through change.” The VMN also advocated for a documentation method that was based on the study of the behavior of artworks rather than putting the focus on their materiality. To document the behaviors of artworks, the VMN created the *Variable Media Questionnaire* (VMQ). This questionnaire is an interactive tool that aims “to spur questions that must be answered in order to capture artists’ desires about how to translate their work into new mediums once the work’s original medium has expired.”

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Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage: [www.docam.ca/](http://www.docam.ca/).


62 *Variable Media Questionnaire*, Variable Media Network, accessed July 4, 2011, [http://www.variablemedia.net/en/welcome.html](http://www.variablemedia.net/en/welcome.html). The first version of the VMQ became available upon request in the fall of 2003. In its initial form, the questionnaire was supported by File Maker, software that was not necessarily accessible or owned by cultural institutions. The questionnaire itself was quite exhaustive and would have been quite long to fill out while conducting an interview with an artist. In the end, it has served more as a reference tool and a reminder of questions to ask while conducting interviews with artists, their assistants, curators, etc. The website of the VMN is still accessible, but the network itself is no longer active as its founders became involved in other networks. Jon Ippolito is now involved in *Forging the Future*, “a consortium of museums and cultural heritage organizations dedicated to exploring, developing, and sharing new vocabularies and tools for cultural preservation.” One of the developments of this consortium was an updating of the VMQ,
Describing the behavior of the artwork rather than its materiality was justified by the fact that with a medium-specific description of a video artwork, for instance, as soon as the format becomes obsolete, the format-based prescriptions for the re-creation or re-exhibition are obsolete as well. Moreover, if the questionnaire were to use a medium-based description, it would imply that every time a new medium is used in the making of an artwork, it would have to be added to the questionnaire.

I situate my discussion of the artworks studied in this dissertation between a medium-specific description and a behavioral description. Speaking of these works in terms of how they behaved turned out to be insufficient, as their support is a significant factor to acknowledge when studying their life cycles due to the fact that it clearly contributed to shaping their identity. Their behavior in the exhibition space guided their preservation, but their preservation had to happen beforehand because of their obsolete support. The behavioral approach can be a useful one, depending on where one stands. For instance, in *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media*, Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook consider the artworks they discuss by their behavior, and only when needed do they then discuss their media in more detail. I argue, however, that to properly understand these works, a behavioral approach needs to be supplemented with the study of the distribution of the artwork and its preservation.

The Variable Media Network proposes four preservation strategies to deal with the obsolescence of variable media artworks: 1) storage, 2) migration, 3) emulation and 4) reinterpretation. Some of these strategies have been used to preserve the artworks discussed in the case study chapters. Storage is known to be the most conservative strategy. In the case of a work using a projector, this preservation option would imply storing a great number of projectors. This way, when one of them stops working and can no longer be repaired, the institution has replacement projectors in stock. The second strategy, migration, involves upgrading the equipment and the source material of an artwork. For instance, a film-based artwork can be digitized and then presented as a digital video projection rather than a film projection. The third proposed strategy, emulation, goes further in that it requires finding a way to imitate the appearance of the work with the use of different means. Finally,


reinterpretation entails reinterpreting the work each time it is presented. This method is inspired by performed artworks, such as theatrical plays. Each time a play is presented, it is reinterpreted. This preservation strategy is quite radical and there is a risk of moving away from the very nature and identity of the artwork. However, as Jon Ippolito argues, it “also represents the most flexible approach to cultural as well as technical obsolescence.”

During its life cycle, an artwork can go through a series of preservation strategies. Moreover, as the case studies of this dissertation show, artists can propose alternative preservation strategies to the ones described above. The preservation of these artworks is undertaken by a number of intermediaries and is the result of a consensus. It is a collaborative process. Preserving an artwork involves making decisions and modifying. As conservator Salvador Muñoz Viñas has written, “Each time an object is modified, some of its possible meanings are strengthened, while others are restricted forever.”

Or, as Pip Laurenson has phrased it, the conservation of time-based media installations implies change and loss. The preservation process also implies establishing where the identity of the artwork lies at a specific moment in time, while keeping in mind that these artworks have to be envisaged as continuums.

1.4 Conclusion: Studying Video and Film Installations as Continuums

This first chapter has addressed the major phases occurring in the life cycle of editioned video and film installation (exhibition, distribution, preservation) and has problematized them. I have argued that it is by considering all these events that one can gain a better insight into what the artwork actually consists of. Through the discussion of the life cycle of Andy Warhol’s *Outer and Inner Space*, I have shown how intertwined these phases are. Indeed, after being projected a few times in different contexts and having known different exhibition modalities, this work, and also the artist’s other films, ceased to circulate because they were considered too weird. When Warhol’s films were finally given to the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the 1980s, they had to be restored in order to be presentable again. Not only were the 16 mm films restored, but they were also migrated to another format: video. Nowadays, *Outer and Inner Space* can be presented not only as either a single projection (the two reels projected one after the other) or a double projection (the two reels projected at the

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65 Jon Ippolito, “Accomodating the Unpredictable,” 52.
67 Pip Laurenson, “Authenticity.”
same time), as Warhol had established, but institutions also have a choice of carrier: 16 mm film, DVDs or High Digital Video Files. The study of the socialization of this work helps put into words where its identity lies.

In the first section of the chapter, the few artworks discussed served to illustrate the point that because film and video-based artworks change continuously, they need to be envisaged as continuums. The changes they go through during their life also imply that different versions of the same work exist. In other words, these artworks have plural immanences. In the second section of the chapter, I explained how the editioning of these works takes place. The major consequence is an increase in the exhibition possibilities of these works, which therefore increases the chances of variation in their display. In the third section, I discussed the preservation challenges and strategies of film- and video-based artworks, as the support of these works and the technological equipment to present them have a limited lifespan.

The historical facts I have raised throughout this introductory chapter indicate that a dynamic approach is needed to study the socialization of editioned video and film installations. Moreover, since I contend that these works must be envisaged as continuums, engaging with them implies studying their entire life cycles, which means examining each of their public instantiations, how they circulate in the art world and how they have been preserved until now. Before delving into the case studies, the next chapter introduces the theoretical and methodological standpoints of the present dissertation.
Chapter 2

Scripting Editioned Video and Film Installations
2.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I analyzed the exhibition, distribution and preservation of editioned video and film installations. I contended that studying the different phases of the life cycle of these artworks helps determine their identity and the necessary conditions for their instantiations. As outlined in the introduction of this dissertation, video and film installations belong to what Gérard Genette, following Nelson Goodman, calls the allographic regime. Allographic artworks possess two modes of existence: an ideal immanence and a physical manifestation. The ideal immanence is described in the notations accompanying the artwork. The interpretation, execution and/or performance of the notations lead to a physical manifestation. Since film and video-based artworks are re-exhibited, during their life cycle, they go through a series of different physical manifestations, all based on the interpretation of the notations accompanying them. As video and film installations are polymorph and have a variable nature, I contend that they need to be envisaged as continuums and they call for a dynamic model of analysis. Because these works are process-based, it also means that the notations that accompany them, what I call the artwork’s script, also evolve. Therefore, I propose to develop a new approach – scripting – to deal with these works that have variable manifestations and plural immanences. Scripting is the conceptualization of what happens during the socialization process of artworks: how their identity is shaped by their respective exhibition, distribution and preservation histories. De-scription is the method used to put into words the socialization process; it is the act of retrieving the script, of putting into words what is not visible. By doing so, one can identify the mediators that make the existence of the work of art possible. To justify what led me to this theoretical and methodological standpoint, the present chapter aims to unfold the theoretical and conceptual influences of the dissertation and explain how certain approaches and concepts, from the fields of art history and the sociology of art to other fields such as Actor-Network-Theory and performance studies, have been adapted for the study of the life cycles and the socialization of editioned video and film installations.

The chapter begins with a discussion on the notations accompanying artworks since the 1960s. Definitions of terms such as sanctioning narratives, scores and scripts are compared, and this analysis leads me to propose the definition of script that will be used throughout the

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1 Gérard Genette, *The Work of Art: Immanence and Transcendence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 91. Philosopher Nelson Goodman was the first one to introduce these categories of authographic and allographic arts in *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976). As the definition of these two regimes used in this dissertation as closer to the ones developed by Gérard Genette, I refer to this second author.
dissertation (2.1). In the second part of the chapter, I explain the conceptual standpoint of the dissertation: *scripting artworks*. This is followed by the description of the different steps of the research and the outline of the manner in which the case studies are apprehended (2.2). This second chapter aims to set the stage for the case studies discussed in the following chapters.

2.1 The Artwork’s Script

Many artworks created since the 1960s, including video and film installations, are accompanied by various kinds of notations that need to be interpreted: statements, series of prescriptions on how to materialize and/or display the artwork, photographs, schemes, and certificates. Whereas music has been transmitted over centuries by means of a score, visual artworks such as video and film installations, made of different technical components that need to be assembled in the exhibition space, are nowadays sold with a floor plan and a set of instructions. These instructions, whose specifications vary from one artist to another, are either given by the artist or established by the acquiring institution in collaboration with the artist and/or other parties, such as the artist’s art dealer and assistant(s). These notations are given different names in the literature, but are usually referred to as scores or scripts. This first section of the chapter aims to compare different notational models that accompany artworks by way of assessing their purposes, their strengths, and their limits. This discussion leads to my own definition of script, the one referred to throughout this dissertation. I will subsequently use the script as a methodological tool to study the socialization of video and film installations.

To speak of the statements that ensure the socialization of the artwork and its presence in the world, Jean-Marc Poinsot has introduced the term sanctioning narratives [*récits autorisés*].² This term refers to the titles, signatures, dates, comments, declarations, illustrations’ accompanying notes, certificates, installation instructions, reviews, descriptions, catalogues and catalogues raisonnés, and all other information diffused by the artist. They contribute to making the iconographic contract of the artwork explicit, which “constitutes a set of answers to the raison d’être of the artwork and its matter and, simultaneously, the history of its production and its apparition.”³ The task of the sanctioning narratives is to

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“propose keys and procedures to access the signification and the contents of the works.”4 By no means do the sanctioning narratives constitute the artworks themselves nor can they replace them.

Among the sanctioning narratives, Poinsot does not establish a clear distinction between the artist’s statements on his/her œuvre from those of other parties. I advocate, however, that the artist’s statements cannot be considered as equivalent to others’ statements on his/her work. All statements ought to be considered and integrated in the script (or are part of what Poinsot calls the sanctioning narratives), but some statements have more weight and authority than others. Indeed, even though the artwork is the result of a collective process, in the way it is dealt with in the actual art world and legal system, it is still perceived as the product of one author: the artist. The latter remains the figure of reference. This issue merits further explanation and will therefore be discussed below.

What Poinsot refers to as the sanctioning narratives has been called the score or the script of the artwork by other authors. To discuss the notations accompanying a visual artwork, it appears that the word “score” has been adopted in the Anglophone literature, while “script” is the preferred term in the Francophone literature. For some authors, these words are used interchangeably; for others, there is a very clear distinction. Nelson Goodman is one of the authors for whom the distinction is important and relevant. He claims that a “score, whether or not ever used as a guide for a performance, has as a primary function the authoritative identification of a work from performance to performance.”5 In his view, rather than instructing musicians on how to perform the work, it is used to mark “off the performances that belong to the work from those that do not.”6 Goodman indicates a distinction between score and script by stating that the score is a character in a notational system, while the script is a character in a notational scheme, but not in a notational system.7 What distinguishes the notational system from the notational scheme is that to belong to the former, the characters must meet two syntactic requirements (disjointness and finite differentiation) and three semantic requirements (unambiguity, disjointness, and finite differentiation).8 In other words, the characters making the score are certain classes of utterances, inscriptions and marks, which can be interpreted, according to Goodman, without confusion. Each character has a single meaning, which, in principle, cannot lead to

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4 Ibid., 216. [My translation.]
5 Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art, 128.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 178 and 199.
8 Ibid., 156.
misinterpretations. On the other hand, the script being made of words, “is either ambiguous or lacks semantic disjointness or differentiation.” Indeed, each word can be interpreted differently, thus making it difficult to identify the work from performance to performance. According to Goodman’s definitions of score and script, the score would therefore be a more precise tool accompanying a work of art, as the information it contains is clearer than that which is carried in a script. However, describing a work of art without using words seems an impossible task. Moreover, one can also argue that symbols are not necessarily clearer than words, especially if someone is unfamiliar with their meaning. Goodman’s definitions work well in the field of music but are more problematic in the field of visual arts.

In comparison, French author Gérard Genette, who applied Goodman’s definition to works of art, defines “score” and “script” differently. Genette argues that the use of score is problematic, as it can have two meanings: “it sometimes designates the notation of a work in its ideality, and at other times denotes a physical, and by definition particular, copy of this ideal score.” As for the script, he defines it as “the verbal denotation of a non verbal object.” The latter definition has been influential in my own definition of script, as one of the defining characteristics of the script of an artwork is a verbal description of it using a series of statements. Genette further explains that the script is an ideality and “it in fact only constitutes a potential manifestation which is in turn actualized only in real manifestations.” The script is not the work, but it contains essential information that leads one to understand what the work consists of. Consequently, the script also acts as a guide for future iterations of the work.

Other definitions of score, such as the one proposed by philosopher Stephen Davies, are more suited than Goodman’s to be adapted in such a way as to adequately describe the notations accompanying a work of art. Defined by Davies, a score “is a musical notation the main purpose of which is to serve as a work prescription. It records a set of instructions, addressed to performers, the faithful execution of which generates an instance of the piece it specified.” Davies’s definition has been influential for my definition of script for two reasons. First, because of the prescriptive function that he gives to it. Second, because like musical works for performances, it is possible for video and film installations to be re-exhibited. Therefore, each exhibition generates a new instance of the artwork. This second

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9 Ibid., 201.
11 Ibid., 79.
12 Ibid., 130.
feature concords with Genette’s idea that an artwork has several manifestations and that all of them contribute to defining it.

In the field of media art, more specifically, some scholars have chosen to use the term score rather than script. Richard Rinehart argues that the “reason that musical scores provide a useful model for media art notation is that they comprise the clearest type of description that compiles formalized (systematic) discrete elements into documents that aid in the re-performance or re-creation of works of art.” Rinehart’s choice to base a formal notation system for media art on the idea of score is explained by the fact that both music and media art have variable forms. Rinehart’s conception of the score is certainly closer to Davies’ definition than Goodman’s as he contends that musical scores “also demonstrate how to navigate the border between prescription (maintaining the integrity of the work) and the variability that is inherent in media art.” Whereas in the score described by Rinehart there is room left for interpretation, from Goodman’s perspective, a “complete compliance with the score is the only requirement for a genuine instance of a work.” According to him, “the most miserable performance without actual mistakes does count as such an instance, while the most brilliant performance with a single wrong note does not.” In Goodman’s terms, the notation system that Rinehart tries to implement is in fact closer to a script.

Another definition of the term script, this time used outside of the art field, is of interest for this study because it considers the relationships between an object and its users. In the field of the sociology of technique, sociologist and engineer Madeleine Akrich has argued that “like a film script, technical objects define a framework of action together with the actors and the space in which they are supposed to act.” Prior to the release of a technical object in the world, its designer thinks of possible utilizations by users. What Akrich calls the “script” or the “scenario” of a technical object is the intended use implicitly inscribed in the technology’s design. The technical object is also accompanied by prescriptions (notifications, contracts, recommendations, etc.). All these elements – the use, the manual, the designer’s hand – are part of the script. To understand the interactions between the designer, the technical object and the user, Akrich proposes “to go back and forth continually between the designer and the user, between the designer’s projected user and the real user, between the world inscribed in

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15 Ibid.
16 Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art, 186.
the object and the world described by its displacement.”  

Performing this action is what Akrich calls *description*: “it is the inventory and analysis of the mechanisms that allow the relation between a form and a meaning constituted by and constitutive of the technical object to come into being.”

The notion of script as defined by Akrich cannot be directly transposed to the art world on account of the fact that artworks are created to be “used” differently than technical objects and also offer different kinds of experiences, one of them being aesthetic. Yet, the script as defined by Akrich is an interesting concept because of the dynamic feature that Akrich attributes to it, as one is encouraged to constantly go back in forth between the designer’s point of view and the user’s point of view and to acknowledge the kinds of variations that occur. Inspired by such an approach, one could, when studying what goes on in the art field, then go back and forth between the artist’s concept and the persons interpreting the work (curators, conservators, technicians, registrars, visitors, etc.). *De-scribing* here would mean identifying and analyzing the interactions taking place between the artistic creation (or art object), its creator, and other mediators interacting with it. In the end, the purpose of *description* “is to put on paper the text of what the various actors in the settings are doing to one another.”

By writing these descriptions down, the script, first implicit and without a material appearance, would be given an existence through language.

For the translation of the use of script from the field of sociology of technique to the field of visual arts, I am indebted to the work of Julia Noordegraaf in her book *Strategies of Display: Museum Presentation in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Visual Culture*. In this publication, she analyzes the museum as script, which enables her “to retrieve the set of instructions for using and interpreting the displays, instructions that often remain implicit in museum presentations.” Noordegraaf’s contribution to the field of visual culture has helped me identify how the script could be a useful tool for my research. Nevertheless, since our objects of analysis were different – Noordegraaf studied museum presentation while I study the exhibition, distribution and preservation of variable media artworks – our respective use of the script is different. In her book, Noordegraaf identified a script that was dominant during a specific period of time. She studied four different historical periods and used the method of

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19 Madeleine Akrich, “The De-Scription,” 209. [Akrich’s emphasis.]
20 Ibid.
description to withdraw the scripts of these periods. She thus used the concept of script in relatively stable settings. In contrast, since my object of study was unstable, I needed a different conceptualization of the term script and I have used it in an active way, scripting, which I will elaborate further in the chapter.

The definition of script I use in my research elaborates on existing definitions used in different fields: Actor-Network-Theory, philosophy, literature, music studies and visual arts. I also chose to use the concept of script over the term score as my definition was mostly influenced by Madeleine Akrich’s and Gérard Genette’s definitions of script. Also, I find that the word score is quite often related to musical scores, whereas script is mainly linked to textual descriptions.

Building upon the definitions of script and score enunciated above, I state that the script of a variable media artwork is made of a combination of sanctioning narratives, as defined by Poinsot (artist’s statements, writings & interviews, press releases, reviews, etc.) and prescriptions, as defined by Madeleine Akrich (notices, contracts, advice, etc.). There is an overlap between these two concepts since Poinsot would state that the notices and contracts are sanctioning narratives. Nevertheless, I contend that it is necessary to operate a distinction between what has been said on the artwork and the prescriptions leading to its materialization or its physical manifestations. Therefore, in this dissertation, when I use the term “sanctioning narratives,” I refer to the titles, signatures, dates, comments, statements, declarations, certificates, reviews, and catalogues. When I use the term “prescriptions,” I refer to installation instructions leading to the exhibition of the artwork. In addition, I propose to differentiate two types of prescriptions included in the script. There are first what Ivan Clouteau calls prescriptions auctoriales, which are the prescriptions of the artists.23 Second, there are prescriptions that can be added to the first by other mediators who have interacted with the artwork. For instance, when an institution or collection acquires an artwork, its staff often adds specific remarks to the instruction booklet on how to install the work provided by the artist and gather as much information on the work as possible. For example, if the artist did not give any precision on which type of projectors to use to project the videos in the exhibition space, the audio-visual staff can write down which model has been used and for which reasons.

Contrary to the score of a musical piece or the script of a play, which exist in published form, the script of an artwork has to be understood as something abstract that does not

entirely manifest itself either in a material form or at a specific location. One of the major differences between the script of an artwork as I define it and the script of a play is the fact that in the latter case, the script exists prior to the performance, whereas in the case of an artwork, a portion of the script exists prior to the inaugural exhibition, but most of it will appear afterwards, as it is in constant evolution. For instance, the prescriptions – the indications on how to display the work in the exhibition space – are usually written down after the work has been exhibited a few times or when it is sold to an institution. Moreover, whereas the script of a play or the score of a musical work is, in most cases, the result of the work of one author or one composer, the script of a variable media artwork is the result of the work of a community of mediators. All mediators contribute to the scripting of the artwork. At some point in time, one mediator – a researcher – de-scribes the script in order to unfold it.

As stated above, the script includes, among other things, the artist’s sanctioning narratives. In the introduction of this dissertation, I explained that Pip Laurenson states that the identity of time-based artworks is defined by a group of work-defining properties. Laurenson’s work-defining properties are very much artist-centered and are in line with the strong insistence that has been put on the importance of capturing the artist’s intent in recent literature on the preservation of contemporary art. From a legal perspective, Julia Meuser argues in the same sense: “the basis of any reflection upon what constitutes an artwork – at least according to the traditional understanding of law, and the prevailing idea of art – must be the wishes of the artist.” Even if I do agree with these stances, I contend that to fully engage with artworks of a variable nature and with artworks in general, delving into the influences of other mediators can improve our understanding of these works. Moreover, there is also a difference between “the intention of the artist” and “what the artist has done.” As artist Marcel Duchamp wrote in 1957:

In the creative act, the artist goes from intention to realization through a chain of totally subjective reactions. His struggle toward the realization is a series of efforts, pains, satisfactions, refusals, decisions, which also cannot and must not be fully self-conscious, at least on the esthetic plane. The result of this struggle is a difference between the intention and its realization, a difference which the artist is not aware of.

Therefore, not only does the artist’s intent have to be captured, but the discourse of the artwork itself must also be scrutinized. Within the script, the difference between the artist’s intention and the artist’s realization has to be pointed out.

A parallel can be made here with a fundamental principle that sociologist Bruno Latour sees as underlying all studies of science and technology: “the force with which a speaker makes a statement is never enough, in the beginning, to predict the path that the statement will follow. This path depends on what successive listeners do with the statement.”27 No matter how precisely the artist defines the artwork, by letting it out into the world, he/she can no longer completely control what happens to it. For this reason, it is crucial to analyze the intersecting events occurring in the life cycle of an artwork. Several “mediators” will interact with the artwork and leave traces in its script.

In my research, I use the term mediators in the sense given to it by researchers working in the field of Actor-Network-Theory. As Bruno Latour claims, mediators “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry.”28 Mediators can be either human (for instance, the artist, the curator, the conservator, the technician, the art historian) or non-human (exhibition space, technology used to create the work, exhibition catalogue, etc.). The mediators contribute to the shaping of the identity of an artwork and they have an impact on its exhibition, distribution and preservation. As sociologist Antoine Hennion argues, to study how the mediators are bound and unbound helps conceptualize the artwork in a more global manner: the meaning of the artwork is studied, along with the history of its production, its circulation on the market, etc.29

The script has to be recognized as a conceptual tool and should open up the interpretations and the reading of the work. Its aim is not to turn the artwork into something static. Even if the script includes a series of statements defining the identity of the work and prescriptions to guide future instantiations, the case studies of this study show that these statements and prescriptions are from time to time updated and redefined by mediators involved in the artwork’s life cycle. The scripts of time-based artworks are, like the artworks themselves, processes or continuums; they do not have a permanent instantiation or format.

Their purpose is not to counter the contingency of these variable artworks, but to acknowledge it.

2.2 Scripting Artworks

In order to avoid interpreting the script as a static conceptual tool, I suggest engaging with video and film installations from the perspective of scripting. Throughout the rest of this dissertation, I will be describing the scripting process that occurs during the life cycle of three editioned video and film installations. De-scripting an artwork is a process wherein the researcher – in the present work, myself – writes down descriptions of the work’s life cycle: how it has been exhibited, distributed, and preserved; in other words, how its socialization has evolved. It is a way to acknowledge all the mediators making its existence possible and a process that leads to more informed decisions when it comes time to exhibit, distribute and preserve works of art.

My active theoretical stance – scripting – has also been influenced by a new paradigm of documentation, “scoring the work,” articulated by information specialist Corina MacDonald. As she argues, “[d]ocumentation of variable media art must comprehensively consider the facets of container (infrastructure), content (experience) and context (knowledge). It must be responsive to the evolution of a work and its network of production.”30 Whereas scoring the work is a new model of documentation for MacDonald, I propose describing the work as a process to seize its identity and the necessary conditions for time-based artwork’s instantiations. I also chose the term of scripting over documenting because to document means to support or accompany with documentation, which is a stance that is less analytically active than scripting. Indeed, when unfolding the scripting process of an artwork by means of de-scription, one analyzes the roles of the mediators in the life cycle of an artwork. The de-scription therefore involves not only the consultation of documents, but also their interpretation.

In order to understand the theoretical grounds of presentation, distribution, preservation and the close interrelations between these aspects in the case of (editioned) video and film installations, I use a framework that enables me to consider artworks as processes. The sociology of art, as defined by Howard S. Becker, offered me such a possibility, as it “focuses on how the work is made” and remade, “on the process by which it takes shape, on a step-by-

step understanding on how the work came to the form it has when the analysis is undertaken (including an appreciation of all the various forms the work has taken and might yet take).”

To study artistic processes, Howard S. Becker, Robert R. Faulkner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett state that one can look in two directions. Either there is a conventional agreement “that at a certain point the work has achieved its ‘final’ form,” which implies then the study of “the activities that led up to that moment as ‘upstream’ and those that follow as ‘downstream’ from that crucial moment,” or we recognize that the work keeps changing. The latter leads experts to consider that there is no such crucial point, but that “there are dozens or hundreds of such points, at which the form of the work is affected in consequential ways by the activities of the artist or others involved in its making.” This second direction invites analysts to choose any point in the process as a point of departure and “then to look into the past to see how the work got to this point or into the future beyond that point to see what happened to it after that.”

It is this second direction that I take in my study since the artworks I have selected as case studies keep changing.

To study the life cycle of editioned video and film installations, I also broaden the previously described art sociology framework with some concepts from Actor-Network-Theory. At first, ANT was used to study the fabrication of scientific facts, but it has since been used to explain other kinds of social fabrications as well. With this alternative method for studying the fabrication of scientific facts and technical artifacts, Bruno Latour advocates the need to follow scientists in their laboratories in order to fully understand how science is done. This is an anthropological approach in which one studies science in its making. By baring the mechanism of the scientific process, Latour intends to show that science is about processes and not only end products. ANT has been complementary to the sociology of art approach in my research since, as I pointed out at the end of section 2.1, ANT requires studying not only human mediators but also non-humans. An art sociology approach focuses greatly on human mediators, but as the case studies in the following chapters will make explicit, several non-human mediators also contribute to the shaping of the identity of


33 The seminal book of this Bruno Latour, Science in Action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), is one of the early publications in the field of ANT. ANT was developed at the Centre de Sociologie de l’Innovation (CSI) in Paris by sociologists and engineers Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, John Law, Madeleine Akrich and Antoine Hennion, among others.
artworks in crucial ways. Adopting the ANT perspective therefore prevents me from focusing solely on human mediators.

The process-based nature of video and film installations calls for a description of the series of changes occurring in their life cycle rather than a focus on the achieved, materialized work of art. Video and film installations are never done; they need to be installed, uninstalled, preserved, upgraded to a more recent support when their current one becomes obsolete, and so forth. These artworks live through instantiations and each instantiation varies from the others. Whereas Latour chose to enter the science and technology world through the back door of science-in-the-making, this dissertation investigates *art-in-the-making* and more precisely, the necessary steps leading to an artwork’s manifestation. A direct transposition from Latour’s method of doing science-in-action would lead to the study of how an artwork has been created, therefore following artists in their studios or other places where they create their works. What I aim to do in my research is different because I am interested not only in the creation process of video and film installations, but even more in what happens to them once they start being exhibited, distributed and preserved. Having this emphasis means that I follow, describe and analyze artworks through their varied instantiations rather than following artists the way Latour follows scientists and engineers. In other words, I proceed backwards and study the different phases that video and film installations have been through.

In my manner of following the artworks I studied in this doctoral dissertation, I proceeded differently than Latour, and also differently than Vivian van Saaze in her doctoral research. Van Saaze has done fieldwork in contemporary art museums and has used ANT and ethnographic methods for the analysis of the presentation and conservation of installation artworks. As she states, the findings of her research were “mainly produced during several ‘ethnographical moments’ in selected museums” and during meetings of the research projection *Inside Installations: Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art* (2004-2007). Within that project, she was a participant observer. In contrast, I have worked in a different research setting, as I was not part of a research project and did not participate in meetings wherein the artworks I studied were being discussed. I have conducted what could be called *historical ethnography*, as I relied on documents, catalogues, and articles to reconstruct the life cycles of the artworks I studied, and identified the interactions that took

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34 Indeed, art sociologists argue that “art is not an individual product” and that “it takes a lot of people to make an artwork, not just the one usually credited with the result.” See: Howard S. Becker, Robert R. Faulkner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Editors’ Introduction,” 2.

place between the various mediators involved.\(^{36}\) I have also traveled to the exhibition venues where the artworks I chose as case studies were on display to complement my findings based on the archival material. I traveled there to document them myself.

I can summarize my manner of proceeding as such: first, I came across artworks whose socialization puzzled me. Second, after identifying a set of key questions, I began reconstructing their life cycles. I tried to access as much documentation as possible on their exhibition, distribution and preservation histories. Third, over the course of the last four years, when these works were on display, I traveled to see the exhibitions in order to document their display myself. Fourth, I proceeded to analyze the various phases of their socialization and I have examined how the mediators involved in their life cycle have contributed to the shaping of their identity.

To study the life cycles of editioned artworks that have plural immanences, and to develop the concept of scripting, empirical research was the basis of this study. The following three chapters are each based on a case study. Each of them studies at length the exhibition, distribution and preservation of an editioned video or film installation. The case studies were selected in order to help understand the variable nature of editioned video and film installations and the necessary conditions for their instantiations.

Once the case studies were selected, I began their description. I first made a list of all their exhibitions (see Appendixes 1, 3, 4). Each work selected has been studied through the mediations that are the exhibition, the catalogue and the exhibition reviews. When possible, I traveled to different venues in order to see and experience the artworks I had selected as case studies. I also saw exhibitions including other works of these artists in order to compare how they have been exhibited and to be able to identify characteristics of these artists’ exhibition practices. Art historians often study artworks and their displays through the means of photographic reproductions but it is quite difficult to do so with moving image artworks and other forms of contemporary art. I therefore share with art historian Suzanne Paquet, a Land Art specialist, the need to travel to see the works and to find my own “point of view.”\(^{37}\)

Whereas Paquet has chosen to practice tourism (i.e., traveling to various isolated areas where artists have intervened on the landscape) as a methodological tool, I have made exhibition visits an integral part of my methodology. This enabled me to produce my own

\(^{36}\) It is following the suggestion of Julia Noordegraaf that I use this concept of historical ethnography.

documentation of specific exhibitions and to compare it to other documents I used in my study.

Even though, for obvious reasons, I did not see any of the inaugural exhibitions of the artworks and projects I discuss in the following chapters, I did extensively research the circumstances of their apparition and the modalities of their inaugural exhibition. In all cases, my interpretation is based on first-hand observations if I managed to visit the exhibitions in which these works were presented, and otherwise on secondary material such as exhibition views, reviews, published interviews, curatorial and conservation files, etc. In this study, I did not conduct interviews because the main purpose of *de-scription* is to reconstruct the network of relations in which the artworks’ identity takes shape. Although interviews might be helpful for retrieving the intentions of human agents, they are not always necessary. These intentions also become apparent, perhaps even in a more objective way, from written statements or the actual manifestations of the works.

The experience of seeing the works exhibited allowed me to witness a number of changes that occurred in their life cycles, to document them and analyze the consequences. Many of the variations I have seen were not necessarily mentioned or explained either in the exhibition catalogues or in the exhibition reviews. These changes could have gone unnoticed if they had not been documented. During this period of exhibition visits, I wrote down many observations, took photographs and made sketches of how the works were displayed in the exhibition space. This enabled me to give specific examples when comparing the different displays. When possible, I also consulted the curatorial and conservation files of *Play Dead; Real Time*, the offspring of *Day is Done* and *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*.38 This latter step made it possible for me to analyze the type of auctorial prescriptions the artists provided to the institutions that acquired their works.

To study the socialization of editioned video and film installations, the model of scripting helped focus on aspects that I would not have otherwise seen. This dynamic approach prevented me from considering these artworks as “finished” objects. Since *de-scription* is a method that implies the active involvement of the analyst, it necessarily implies a level of subjective interpretation. In this study, I am the one scripting, I am the one retrieving the scripts of *Play Dead; Real Time, Day Is Done* and *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*.

38 Some institutions restrict the access to their files for a certain period of time. For instance, when I inquired in 2007 if I could consult the exhibition file of the exhibition Douglas Gordon: Timeline presented at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, I received the following answer: “As a matter of Museum policy, Registrar and Curatorial Exhibition Files are closed to researchers for 15 years following an exhibition.” (Email from MoMA Archives, May 31, 2007).
Partial Illustration). I am the one describing; I am using words to transpose the script of these works into the English language. By scripting the life cycle of the artwork, I also become one of the mediators involved in its life cycle. I am a mediator who studies the role of the other mediators. Since I am the one scripting, it also means that this interpretation is individual and that for anyone who applies this model of analysis, even if studying the same works, the results could vary.

2.3 Conclusion

The following case study chapters have each been developed in order to address a series of questions pertaining to key aspects of the life cycles of the selected artworks. The structure of the chapters was influenced by the life cycles of these artworks and the various events that contributed to the redefinition of their identity. In each case, I first study the inaugural exhibition (and surrounding circumstances) of these works. I then discuss the distribution of the works, their re-exhibitions, and finally, their preservation. While scripting the chosen artworks, I also identify the roles and influences of mediators involved in their life cycles.

In the third chapter, Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* (2003) serves as an example to demonstrate how the inaugural exhibition is crucial for the identity formation of artworks. In this chapter, it is mainly the exhibition phase of the socialization of this work that is analyzed since its re-exhibitions are what led to changes in its identity. In addition, this chapter shows that despite the fact that with editioned artworks, the “same” artwork can be seen in different venues at the same time, it does not mean that all these exhibitions of the work are exactly the same – the display of the work can vary, as can the number of components exhibited. In this chapter, the central questions examined are: what are the necessary conditions for the actualizations of *Play Dead; Real Time*? How many versions of the work exist? If one of its editions is modified, what happens to the other editions? Are we still talking about the same work? How did the owners of the work deal with the alteration(s)? Who were the mediators that lead to the modifications of the artwork?

Chapter Four examines the fragmentation of artworks and large-scale projects after their inaugural exhibition. Mike Kelley’s *Day Is Done* is used as a case study because of the numerous offspring of the project. In this chapter, the complex distribution of *Day Is Done* is studied and some of the re-exhibitions of the offspring of the work are analyzed in order to see whether or not their framing continues to connect them to the large-scale project or not. This chapter also explores possible ways of scripting projects that produce a great variety of
offspring and discusses how the script of each offspring continue (or do not continue) to relate to the project’s overall script. In this chapter, the central questions are: what is *Day Is Done* today? How did its distribution affect its identity? Which mediators have contributed to shape its identity?

The fifth chapter investigates what we learn from the study of artworks that have had different physical manifestations and have been through varied technical and material appearances. This chapter studies the life cycle of John Massey’s film installation *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* (1982) and focuses on the quest for finding the work a suitable exhibition format, since its initial support was inadequate for the presentation of the work. It also discusses the fact that a non-editioned artwork can become, at some point in its life cycle, an editioned artwork. The scripting of the life cycle of this work highlights its plural immanences and how the different versions of this work relate to and have influenced one another. In this chapter, the central questions are: what was *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* in 1982 and what is it now? How many versions of the work exist? Who are the mediators that have been involved in its life cycle and how have they shaped its identity?

The *de-scription* of the three case studies discussed in the following chapters will help illustrate how to study artworks as processes or continuums. Describing an artwork implies choosing a point of entry into its life cycle, an event that triggered the researcher’s curiosity and led him/her to study the artwork and its socialization. This step is followed by the study of everything that led up to the event where we perceived the work as such and the study of what followed. It is studying the evolution of the identity of an artwork over time, since what it was back then is not what it is now. It also means that what the work is now is not what it will be in the future.
Chapter 3

Making/Displaying Douglas Gordon’s

*Play Dead; Real Time*
3.0 Introduction

To explain how Play Dead; Real Time came into being, Douglas Gordon recounts that it began when he woke up one morning thinking of an elephant. He called his representing gallery in New York – the Gagosian Gallery – and asked the staff to find him an elephant for the following week.\(^1\) The elephant, called Minnie, was brought into New York in a truck in the middle of the night. Once in the gallery, Gordon asked Minnie’s trainer to have her play dead and lie down. The actions of the elephant were shot on 16 mm film and later on, transferred to video. Since the artist has told the story of the making of this piece a few times, slightly different versions exist, but in most cases, he specifies that it occurred to him that he had never seen an elephant lying down.\(^2\) A few months after the shooting, the three-channel video installation Play Dead; Real Time (Fig. 3.1) was presented in the same space where it had been shot.\(^3\)

Between 2003 and 2006, Play Dead; Real Time was exhibited five times, similarly to how it was shown at the Gagosian Gallery, with the exception that the mise en abyme effect was lost. Indeed, since the work was presented in different spaces than the one in which it had been filmed, the connection between the space seen in the three videos making up Play Dead; Real Time and the exhibition space of the Gagosian Gallery could no longer be noticed. In 2006, for the occasion of his mid-career retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Douglas Gordon decided to add a second monitor to Play Dead; Real Time in order to encourage the visitors to move about in the room. The artist made that decision because the exhibition space was bigger than the previous ones in which the artwork had been displayed. It was the same video that could be seen on both monitors, but they were not played in synchronicity. By adding this second monitor, the artist had modified the work. This altered version of Play Dead; Real Time was a four-channel video installation. Considering this modification, would Play Dead; Real Time be described as a three- or a four-channel video

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installation? Or both? Moreover, since the artwork had been sold as an edition of three, one could also have wondered if the other editions would also encounter such variations when re-exhibited. And would the artist always be the one behind the decisions on how to display *Play Dead; Real Time*, or would other mediators also be involved? Which components could potentially be modified?

In this first case study chapter, I reconstruct the life cycle of *Play Dead; Real Time*. Using the method of *de-scription*, I unfold the script of this artwork at different moments in time in order to analyze how the identity of *Play Dead; Real Time* has evolved and which mediators have contributed to shaping it. This first case study demonstrates how the inaugural exhibition is crucial for the identity formation of a work, or even its coming into existence. It also shows what happens when the artist is greatly involved in the re-exhibitions of his works. In the case of Gordon, displaying his works is a crucial step in his artistic production. Each time a work is exhibited, it reaches a temporary stage of completion, and remains at this stage until the following exhibition. Because of this artist’s exhibition practice, the exhibition and the exhibition space become very important mediators and greatly influence how Gordon’s artworks are displayed. Since the artist is significantly involved in the installation of his works, this raises questions for their posterity, which makes registering the different variations taking place even more necessary.

Since its inaugural exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery, the artwork has been re-exhibited eighteen times (Appendix 1). The study of the re-exhibitions of this video installation reveals that the artwork has encountered variations in its presentation as well as in its components. This chapter studies the socialization of *Play Dead; Real Time* mainly from the exhibition perspective. The distribution and preservation of this artwork will also be discussed, but these phases have not been as significant in the life cycle of this work as they have been for the other artworks discussed in the following case study chapters.

In the first section of the chapter, I briefly introduce Douglas Gordon’s artistic production and then analyze the first phases of the socialization of *Play Dead; Real Time*; mainly its inaugural exhibition and its acquisition by institutions. I also discuss the state of the scripting process of this artwork after its first six public manifestations (3.1). In the second section of the chapter, I study at length the display of *Play Dead; Real Time* in the exhibition *Douglas Gordon: Timeline* held at the MoMA in 2006, since it is a presentation that altered the identity of the work. The decision made then by the artist to add a second monitor to the work indicates how setting up an exhibition is an important part of his artistic practice. In fact, Gordon sculpts the spaces in which he shows his work. I will support this argument by
discussing a few other examples of Gordon’s exhibition practice (3.2). In the third section of the chapter, I consider another work of Douglas Gordon entitled *Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work from 1992 Until Now. To be seen on monitors, some with headphones, others run silently, and all simultaneously* (1992 – ongoing) in which the three videos making *Play Dead; Real Time* have been included. I argue that with this ongoing work, the artist archives all his moving image-based works and at the same time provides an alternative preservation solution for a large part of his artistic production in the form of an artwork (3.3).

3.1 Bringing an Elephant in the “White Cube”

In this first section of the chapter, I describe the phases of the life cycle of *Play Dead; Real Time* that are linked to its creation, its first public presentation and its distribution. More precisely, I analyze what was announced in the press release, the actual manifestation of the artwork in the space of the Gagosian Gallery, and the reception of the exhibition. I also situate this artwork within Douglas Gordon’s artistic production. The *de-scription* taking place in the first section of the chapter helps identify mediators that contributed to defining the identity of this artwork.

**Douglas Gordon and the Making of Play Dead; Real Time**

Douglas Gordon studied at the Glasgow School of Art from 1984 to 1988 and at the Slade School of Art in London from 1988 to 1990. In the late 1980s, he exhibited mostly in Scotland and was very involved in the Glasgow art scene, but from the early 1990s, he started showing his work in several venues in Europe. In 1996 he was awarded the Turner Prize, in 1997 the Venice Biennial Premio 2000, and in 1998 the Hugo Boss Award. In 1999, Larry Gagosian, one of the most powerful art dealers in the world, began to represent him and became his primary art dealer. Larry Gagosian opened his first gallery in 1980 and now

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4 The Turner Prize is an award granted every year to a British Artist aged under 50 to celebrate new developments in contemporary art. See Tate website, accessed July 4, 2011, [http://www.tate.org.uk/uk/tt/turnerprize](http://www.tate.org.uk/uk/tt/turnerprize). For information on the Premio 2000 prize, see the Venice Biennial website, accessed July 4, 2011, [http://www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org). Founded in 1996, the Hugo Boss Prize (an award of $100,000) is granted to an artist every two years in order to recognize his/her achievement in contemporary art. The prize is the result of cooperation between Hugo Boss and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. See the Hugo Boss Prize website, accessed July 4, [http://www.hugoboss-prize.com/Main.html?cid=zz&lan=en&from=hp&prizeOpener](http://www.hugoboss-prize.com/Main.html?cid=zz&lan=en&from=hp&prizeOpener).

operates what art historian and expert of the international art market Noah Horowitz calls “an empire of contemporary art galleries.” Larry Gagosian now has galleries in three different locations in New York, one in Los Angeles, two in London, one in Paris, one in Rome, one in Geneva, one in Hong Kong and one in Athens. The Gagosian Gallery therefore has the power and the financial means to support the artists it represents in the creation of their works. Consequently, when Gordon asked the staff of the gallery to find him an elephant, his request was fulfilled immediately.

Prior to the making of *Play Dead: Real Time*, Gordon was mainly known for his appropriation of Hollywood films and found footage. It was with *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) (Fig. 3.2) that he caught the attention of many, in Scotland and abroad. In this work, the artist used a VHS copy of Alfred Hitchcock’s 109-minute horror-thriller *Psycho*, and slowed it down to make its projection last 24 hours. One of the results of this intervention is that he made it impossible for the film to be seen from beginning to end. First, on a practical level, since exhibition centers and museums are not open 24 hours a day. Second, the deceleration of the projection of the film is done to such a degree that one cannot keep track of the plot. As curator Philip Monk contends, “For many, Hitchcock’s film is symbolized by the iconic footage of its lurid shower scene. The temporal dilation of *24 Hour Psycho* works against such symbolic condensation to deny the pleasure of this sight: it takes too long to reach this ‘climax’.”

Gordon has appropriated others’ film material in several of his works. In fact, a part of his artistic production can be read through the scope of what art historian Hal Foster calls the “archival impulse.” As Foster contends,
Some practitioners, such as Douglas Gordon, gravitate toward “time readymades,” that is, visual narratives that are sampled in image-projections, as in his extreme versions of films by Alfred Hitchcock, Martin Scorsese, and others. These sources are familiar, drawn from the archives of mass culture, to ensure a legibility that can then be disturbed or detourné; but they can also be obscure, retrieved in a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter-memory.\(^\text{12}\)

Gordon has used footage of motion pictures such as *Psycho*, *Taxi Driver* and *The Searchers*.\(^\text{13}\) He has also worked with found footage, as for instance in *10 ms\(^{-1}\)* (1994), where he uses footage dating from the First World War (Fig. 3.3). Gordon selected a fragment showing a man dressed only in underwear trying to stand up, but unable to do so. The sequence chosen by the artist is projected on a large screen, lasts 10:37 minutes and is looped. The repetition of the loop reinforces the incapacity of the man, no matter how hard he tries, to stand up. The hopeless situation is also emphasized in the title of the artwork: *10 ms\(^{-1}\)*, which evokes the formula used to calculate the speed at which an object is falling to the ground under the influence of gravity at a certain point in its trajectory.

Gordon has also produced his own footage. Some of these works have been made directly on video and others have been shot on film and then transferred to a video format for exhibition purposes. This is the case of *Feature Film* (1999), and also of *Play Dead; Real Time*. For *Feature Film*, he filmed James Conlon conducting the playing of Bernard Herrmann’s score composed for Alfred Hitchcock’s film *Vertigo*.\(^\text{14}\) The playing of the score lasts 75 minutes. During the shooting, the camera filmed uniquely the conductor. Zooms were done on his hands and his facial expressions. At no point in time is the orchestra seen. With *Feature Film*, Gordon created a singular portrait of the conductor by focusing only on him rather than filming the entire context in which the playing of Herrmann’s score took place.

It is on this very aspect of isolation of the subject that I wish to base my introduction of *Play Dead; Real Time*. In this work, Gordon portrays an elephant in an art gallery. For the shooting, Minnie was brought in the Gagosian Gallery on 24\(^{\text{th}}\) Street in New York in between two exhibitions. Therefore, the space was completely empty; no artworks were hanging on the walls or standing in the room. Minnie was removed from her usual habitat – a reserve – and brought into this immaculate exhibition space with its white walls and shiny floor, a “white

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cube,” where nothing in the space could detract our attention from the pachyderm. In that space, she executed the orders of her trainer who made her do what Gordon requested: to have the elephant play dead and eventually, get back up. The elephant obeyed, but did not enjoy her time in the gallery, as close-ups of her eyes seen in one of the three videos making up the work – Other Way – indicate that she cried during the shooting. Contrary to other tricks accomplished by Minnie during the shooting, the crying was not staged. It occurred because elephants do not like to lie down.

Cameraman Michael McDonough shot the actions performed by Minnie on 16 mm film. The footage was later transferred to a video format and edited. The preservation copies are kept on Betacam tapes and DVDs are used as exhibition copies. Play Dead; Real Time is comprised of three different videos: This Way and That Way are presented on the two large double-sided screens, and Other Way is played on a video monitor. During the shooting, the camera was placed on a dolly. This Way was shot clockwise, and That Way counterclockwise. Other Way presents details of the elephant made with zooms in and zooms out. All three videos are silent.

The Inaugural Exhibition of Play Dead; Real Time

From February 22nd to March 29th, 2003, Gordon exhibited in the very space where the actions of Minnie the elephant were filmed, the three-channel video installation Play Dead; Real Time. The socialization of this artwork began a little before the opening of the exhibition with the distribution of the press release on February 3rd. In the press release, it was announced that the exhibition was going to comprise three new large-scale video projection works. This official statement therefore contributed to creating the expectations that the visitors would be seeing three new artworks by Douglas Gordon. Although the press release announced three different artworks, the exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery featured only one large-scale installation: Play Dead; Real Time, which comprised the three videos mentioned above: This Way, That Way, and Other Way. The first two videos were projected on two large

16 Michael McDonough is a professional cameraman and has worked, for example, on the film set of Michael Moore’s movie Bowling for Columbine (2002).
17 The video This Way lasts 19:16 minutes, That Way 14:44 minutes and Other Way 21:58 minutes. When on display, all videos are looped.
freestanding translucent screens and Other Way was run on a monitor placed directly on the gallery floor.19

For the duration of the exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery, the walls were left white; the same color that they had been at the time of the shooting. This helped the visitors to make the connection, to notice the mise en abyme: the inclusion of the exhibition space in the videos projected on the translucent screens and the video monitor.20 Since projection-based works require darkened space in order to maximize the quality of the projections, the space could not be kept as luminous as it had been during the shooting. Throughout the exhibition, the large space was darkened; the only light provided was by the projections, the monitor and the emergency lights. Nevertheless, since the screens and the monitor were placed directly on the shiny gallery floor, the reflection of the projected images on the floor also made it noticeable that the floor on which the elephant had been standing was the same as the one on which the visitors were standing. Art historian Michael Fried has argued that it was never made explicit that the videos were filmed in the same gallery where the show took place, but the reading of the exhibition reviews shows that this aspect was generally noticed.21 For instance, in the Village Voice, Jerry Saltz wrote: “Without prompting, you realize the space in the film is Gagosian’s.”22

Since Play Dead; Real Time was created in the same space where it was exhibited, it can be qualified as site-specific work. The approach favored by Gordon here is in line with “site-specific practices of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which incorporated the physical conditions of a particular location as integral to the production, presentation, and reception of art.”23 What distinguished Gordon’s Play Dead; Real Time from site-specific artworks created in earlier decades is that these earlier works were mainly anti-commercial. They were

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19 The screens used for the display of Play Dead; Real Time are 3,47 m high and 6 m long. The size of the screen of the television monitor is of 25 inches (63,5 cm). [The size of the monitors has encountered variations between 25 to 29 inches depending on where the artwork was exhibited.] Source: Bert Ross, assistant to Douglas Gordon. Documentation provided in June 2007.


22 See: Jerry Saltz, “Elephant Man.”

23 Miwon Kwon, One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity (Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 2002), 1. Whereas Kwon seeks “to reframe site specificity as the cultural mediation of broader social, economic, and political processes to organize urban life and urban space” in her book (Kwon, 2002, 3), in my dissertation, I stick to one of the possible definitions of site-specificity she enunciates at the beginning of her book as it is the one that is closest to Douglas Gordon’s approach.
created in a specific venue and context and their “material” existence would last only for the
duration of the exhibition. In most cases, the site-specific interventions were dismantled or
even destroyed at the end of the exhibition. However, as I indicated in Chapter One, art
historian Susan Hapgood has argued that the definition of the term site-specific has broadened
and can also mean “movable under the right circumstances.” The fact that Play Dead; Real
Time could eventually be exhibited somewhere else made it possible for the work to be sold
and continue to circulate.

In terms of the theme of the work, the press release also stated that:

For these monumental works Gordon uses a giant Indian elephant as the subject being
filmed. The elephant has classically symbolized memory, and here functions as a trope
for our own remembrances of circuses, zoos, and nature documentaries, various
situations where the chaotic power of the wild is held safely at a distance and is
controlled. As the title suggests, the elephant appears to conform to command and lie
on its side before attempting to return to its feet. The impossibility of the idea, and the
incapability to occupy both states simultaneously are reminiscent of the artist’s
continuing investigations of the polarities between control and free will, life and
death.

The press release invites the visitors of the exhibition and the reviewers to make connections
between Gordon’s artwork and circuses, zoos and nature documentaries. The framing is
oriented in that direction. I would argue however, that another reading of the work is possible,
and the interpretation I propose is shared by most of the reviewers of the exhibition. I contend
that Gordon’s Play Dead; Real Time can be interpreted as a metaphor of the current state of
the art market and more broadly of the art world. The making of this work and its result tells
us that nowadays, an artist can call up his/her gallery, ask them for almost anything, and
his/her request will be fulfilled. The mise en abyme is an important feature of the inaugural
exhibition of Play Dead; Real Time; Gordon did not shoot the videos just anywhere, he
brought the elephant into the white cube, and even more precisely into his representing
gallery. There is institutional critique at stake in this work. I use the term institutional critique
not in the most common sense given to it nowadays – as attacks of the institution, of the
museum – but in the sense given to it by artist Andrea Fraser who states that institutional
critique refers to working critically within the institution. Whereas a large part of the artistic
production of artists such as Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher,
and Andrea Fraser can be referred to as institutional critiques, this is not the case for Douglas

24 Susan Hapgood, “Remaking Art History,” Art in America 78, no. 7 (July 1990): 120.
25 Press release of the exhibition Douglas Gordon: Play Dead; Real Time, Gagosian Gallery (24th Street), New
26 Andrea Fraser, “From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique” (2005), in Institutional Critique
Gordon’s work. I propose, nonetheless, to interpret *Play Dead; Real Time* from the perspective of institutional critique on the account of the fact that Gordon uses irony to reflect on his position in the art world. The interpretation of *Play Dead; Real Time* makes one realize that the artist not only engaged with the physical and architectural aspects of the Gagosian Gallery, but also with what it means for an artist to be represented by one of New York’s biggest art dealers. Therefore, the definition of site-specificity enunciated above can be broadened and is in line with how Andrea Fraser defines the methodology of institutional critique, as a “critically reflexive site-specificity.”²⁷ By bringing an elephant into a gallery – the elephant being one of the major attractions in a circus – Gordon reflects on the state of what the art world is: it is all a big circus in which he – the artist – gets to be the clown. There is self-reflection involved; he is aware of being part of this spectacle, but at the same time, he enjoys being part of it. The artwork he has produced in this context, *Play Dead; Real Time*, is impressively beautiful. Gordon is aware of his position in the art world, but viewers should also notice that he reminds them, through this work, that they are also part of it: the configuration of the piece is done in such a way that visitors are invited to perambulate. Moreover, when visitors walk in the beam of light between a projector and one of the screens, their shadows are seen on the screens; they are part of the spectacle.

The reviews of the inaugural exhibition of *Play Dead; Real Time* were very positive. For instance, Jerry Saltz wrote in the *Village Voice* that *Play Dead; Real Time* “is hypnotic, multi-leveled, and much more moving than it has any right to be.”²⁸ And even though *Play Dead; Real Time* was not Gordon’s first solo exhibition in New York, it is nevertheless considered his breakthrough in the United States.²⁹ The reviews of the exhibition play several roles in the life cycle of *Play Dead; Real Time*. First, they contribute to the interpretation of the work, as becomes evident from the discrepancies between the press release and the general interpretation of the work. Second, the reviews are sources of information for the identification of other mediators.

The exhibition encountered broad media coverage: reviews were published in newspapers such as *The New York Times* and also in magazines like *The New Yorker*, *Artforum*, *Flash Art* and *ARTnews*.³⁰ The critic of *The New York Times*, Roberta Smith, began

²⁷ Andrea Fraser, “What is Institutional Critique?” in *Institutional Critique and After*, ed. John C. Welchman (Zurich: JRP|Ringier, 2006), 305. [Fraser’s emphasis.]
²⁸ Jerry Saltz, “Elephant Man.”
²⁹ Aidan Smith, “Confessions.”
her review by stating that the two shows at the Gagosian Gallery “prove that institutional critique can be fun.”31 She continued by writing: “What began by mocking the spectacle of art evolves into a celebration of the private, almost dumb pleasure of visual experience.”32 Reviewers appreciated the different levels of representation visible within the work: the portrait of an elephant, and also the underlying institutional critique. As Margaret Sundell reviewed in *Artforum*, “In the context of this gallery’s spotless converted-warehouse space, it’s hard not to see the poor beast as a quasi-comic cipher for the contemporary artist, burdened to the point of collapse by the demands of over-production.”33

Another element that was greatly appreciated by the critics was the atmosphere created for the spectator. Indeed, *Play Dead; Real Time* offers the viewers the experience of proximity with an elephant, an experience that is neither possible in a zoo nor if the elephant is not accompanied by its trainer. Of course, there is a barrier – the screen – which makes it safe for the viewers to get as close as they want to the elephant. It is a virtual way of engaging with it, and their presence in the space will not affect the behavior of the elephant at all. It is possible to get as close as desired without being scared of being stepped on by one of those heavy legs or being attacked. There is also a tension between what is seen and what is evoked. At no point in time does Minnie’s trainer appear in any of the videos making up the work, but it is clear that the pachyderm is following instructions. Considering the fact that elephants do not like to lie down – and that is made obvious by how difficult it looks for her to rock to and fro to eventually get back on her feet – she would not have played dead on her own.

The analysis of the reviews of the inaugural exhibition of *Play Dead; Real Time* leads to the acknowledgment that this video installation had a very strong connection to the site where it was shown. This is evident not only on account of his use of *mise en abyme* – the space of the Gagosian Gallery was seen in the three videos making *Play Dead; Real Time* – but also because Gordon had critically reflected on what it means to show an artwork at the Gagosian Gallery, one of the biggest commercial galleries in the world. The institutional critique done by Gordon in *Play Dead; Real Time* worked because of where it was initially shown. But how

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would it work when it would be exhibited elsewhere? I will get back to this point later, when discussing the re-exhibitions of *Play Dead; Real Time*. Before continuing to follow the path of the exhibitions of the work, I need to explain how the work began to circulate in the art world after its inaugural showing.

**Distributing and Collecting *Play Dead; Real Time***

After the exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery, *Play Dead; Real Time* was sold in a limited edition of three. The first edition (1/3) was acquired by private collector Richard J. Massey and then donated to the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the spring of 2006. The second edition (2/3) was acquired in 2005 through the collaboration of two institutions: the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, part of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and the Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK) in Frankfurt. The National Gallery of Canada acquired the third edition (3/3) in the spring of 2003. The artist also owns an *Hors Commerce Proof*, which is a proof that cannot be sold on the market, also meaning that it cannot be exhibited in public.35

Once acquired by the institutions stated above, *Play Dead; Real Time* was re-installed in new contexts. The National Gallery of Canada (owner of edition 3/3) was the first to install it within the rooms where its permanent collection is shown. In fact, before acquiring an artwork, it is the policy of the National Gallery of Canada to install the artwork in its galleries in order for the acquisition committee to base its decision on the viewing of the artwork, not on a photograph and a description of it. It was installed in May 2003 and officially acquired soon after.36 In February 2004, the edition that would eventually be co-owned by the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington D.C. and the MMK in Frankfurt (2/3) was integrated into the last venue of the touring exhibition *Douglas Gordon* which took place at the Hirshhorn in Washington. It was the first time that *Play Dead; Real Time* was presented within the context of other works by the artist. The MMK, co-owner (which means that when the artwork is

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34 The coacquisition of a work by different institutions is a phenomenon that began in the years 2000, but in a very small scale. This enables institutions to share the acquisition and high preservation costs of time-based artworks. On this matter, see Noah Horowitz, *Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in a Global Financial Market* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 67.
35 The status of that *Hors Commerce Proof* remains to be clarified, as it seems that since 2009, it has been exhibited publicly. The *Hors Commerce Proof* would then be recognized as an artist’s proof. When *Play Dead; Real Time* was shown in Avignon as part of the exhibition *Douglas Gordon: Où se trouvent les clés?* (Collection Lambert en Avignon, 6 July – 23 November 2008) and in Prague in the exhibition *Douglas Gordon: blood, sweat, tears* (DOX: Center for Contemporary Art, 4 June – 27 September 2009) the credits for the loan of the work were given to the artist and the Gagosian Gallery.
36 See curatorial files of *Play Dead; Real Time*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. [Consulted July 25, 2007 and January 7, 2010.]
presented in Washington, it cannot be exhibited in Frankfurt) of edition 2/3, featured *Play Dead; Real Time* for the first time in 2005 for the occasion of *What is New, Pussycat?*, an exhibition presenting the recent acquisitions of the institution. Edition 1/3, acquired by private collector Richard J. Massey, was not exhibited publicly until it was donated to the MoMA in 2006 for the artist’s mid-career retrospective. The artist modified this edition when it was first presented, and this variation is the subject of the section 3.2.

**The State of the Script After the First Six Exhibitions of *Play Dead; Real Time***

At this point in time (in 2005), the *description* of *Play Dead; Real Time* reveals that it is a three-channel video installation and has always been exhibited as such. It was initially a site-specific work that was eventually exhibited in other venues. The *mise en abyme* was unique to the inaugural exhibition of the work, but other features were recurrent in the re-exhibitions of the artwork. For instance, the two freestanding translucent screens were always placed at an angle of approximately 90 degrees, but never touching; a few meters always separated them. The monitor would always be placed in a position that would make it impossible for the visitors to see all three videos at the same time. The position of the monitor was guided by the idea of inviting the visitors to walk about in the exhibition space.

In terms of written instantiations of the script, the collections that acquired the work created documentation in order to re-exhibit *Play Dead; Real Time* according to the instructions provided by the artist. For instance, at the National Gallery of Canada, a specific floor layout was drawn by a conservator of the institution under the supervision of Bert Ross, assistant to Douglas Gordon. It was decided then that the work would be shown in a specific room of the museum, B-106 (Fig. 3.4). 37 By producing such documentation, the National Gallery of Canada made sure that it would always be displaying the work according to the artist’s will.

In the end, however, this specific floor plan was only used once; a few years after the work was first shown at the National Gallery of Canada, some of the rooms on the first floor of the institution were redesigned, walls were moved and room B-106 no longer has the same measurements as when *Play Dead; Real Time* was installed there. The original plan and set of instructions therefore had to be updated. This example demonstrates that even the installation instructions and floor plans that are part of the script of an artwork evolve and need to be updated constantly. The scripting evolved between 2003 and 2009.

37 See conservation files of *Play Dead; Real Time*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. [Consulted 25 July 25, 2007.]
Another element that was peculiar regarding the installation of the work produced at the National Gallery of Canada was that the artist required that the walls of the room in which *Play Dead; Real Time* was presented be painted grey. The size of the room, which was smaller than the one at the Gagosian Gallery, led the artist to that decision. The relationship between the work and the exhibition space was different than at the Gagosian Gallery where it entered in dialogue with it. In Ottawa, the approach – guided by the idea of inviting the visitors to walk about – was to make the walls as invisible as possible, to create the illusion that the space was actually bigger than it was in reality.38

The *description* of the life cycle of *Play Dead; Real Time* that was done in this first part of the chapter had the purpose of putting into words how the identity of this artwork has been shaped between its inaugural exhibition and its sixth exhibition. The analysis has shown how crucial the inaugural exhibition of this work has been on account of unique features: the *mise en abyme* and the critically reflective site-specificity. Seeing *Play Dead; Real Time* at the Gagosian Gallery led to an interpretation of the work as a self-criticism on the part of the artist and framed the reception of the work within the area of institutional critique. The analysis of the reviews of the work has shown that despite the framing of *Play Dead; Real Time* attempted in the press release, the interpretation of the work mainly addressed the topic of institutional critique, and thus showed the role of reviews as mediators shaping the work’s identity.

This first section of the chapter also explained how the work began to circulate after the exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery: as an edition of three. The institutions that acquired the work played an important role, as they ensured that *Play Dead; Real Time* could continue to circulate in the art world. The *decription* of the life cycle of *Play Dead; Real Time* that is done in the next section of the chapter will show that other mediators contributed to shaping the identity of this work and challenged the understanding that we had of it after its first six presentations.

### 3.2 The Plural Immanences of *Play Dead; Real Time*

In this second section of the chapter, I continue the scripting of the life cycle of *Play Dead; Real Time* by means of *decription*. I discuss a phase where the identity of the work shifted greatly; when the artist modified edition 1/3 of *Play Dead; Real Time*, the edition that had just

been donated to the Museum of Modern Art in New York by collector Richard J. Massey. I study the socialization of the work from that point on and scrutinize the re-exhibitions of the other editions of the work to verify if such variation in the display and number of components occurred only once, or consistently. The analysis of the different “versions” of the work – a three-channel video installation and a four-channel video installation – presented in different exhibitions shows that this artwork has plural immanences and that it is all the versions that, together, make up *Play Dead; Real Time*.

**Play Dead; Real Time: A Three- or Four-Channel Video Installation?**

In 2006, Klaus Biesenbach, the curator of the Department of Film and Media at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, organized *Douglas Gordon: Timeline*, the artist’s mid-career retrospective. The show mainly focused on the artist’s moving image and textual works. *Play Dead; Real Time* was presented in the third room of the exhibition, which was very spacious. In order to encourage the visitors to walk about the room, the artist decided to add a second monitor to the installation. The positioning of the monitors was such that from any standpoint, the visitors could not see all videos at once. In order to watch *This Way, That Way* and *Other Way*, they had to move about. The video *Other Way*, the one displayed on the monitor, was duplicated and presented on two monitors for this occasion, but the two monitors were not synchronized. The exhibition space turned out to be a mediator of importance in the life cycle of this artwork, as it triggered a significant variation in the display of the work. From a three-channel video installation, it thus became a four-channel video installation.

In the installation instructions provided to the MoMA by the artist’s studio, it was written that the addition of a monitor was for this exhibition only and that “The work in its true form has only one monitor.” Therefore, the artist made it clear that this variation was his decision and that he still considered *Play Dead; Real Time* as a three-channel video installation. With this statement, he also asserted his authority and did not grant permission to the Museum of Modern Art to decide, in the future, if the work would be displayed with either one or two monitors depending on the exhibition space.

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The set of instructions provided to the Museum of Modern Art also informed the institution that the modified position of the two freestanding screens similarly was a decision made by the artist. Indeed, the document stated:

There is no fixed permutation for showing *Play Dead: This Way* and *Play Dead: That Way* on retro or front screen. Each work can be shown on either screen, depending on the positioning of the screens and how this works with the entrance onto the work. This is a decision taken installation by installation by Douglas Gordon.43

This document produced by Douglas Gordon’s studio is another mediator in the life cycle of *Play Dead; Real Time* and has the purpose of making explicit that it is the decision of the artist on how *Play Dead; Real Time* is going to be displayed in the exhibition space.

In the specific case of the exhibition *Douglas Gordon: Timeline*, the artist not only added a monitor to *Play Dead; Real Time*, but also added mirrors in the frames of the passages connecting the different rooms. When the visitors stood in the frame between the first and second room of the exhibition, they could see the reflection of an elephant in the mirror placed in the frame leading to the space where *Play Dead; Real Time* was presented. The artist used the mirrors to connect the different spaces, but as stated in the document given to the Museum of Modern Art concerning *Play Dead; Real Time*, “The mirrors used in *Douglas Gordon: Timeline* are not part of the work, they are included as a feature of the architecture of this exhibition.”44 They were elements used by Gordon to sculpt the exhibition space and to create continuity from one exhibition room to another.

According to these documents, the use of mirrors and the addition of a second monitor were isolated occurrences, specific to the exhibition space of the MoMA. The reading of these statements would lead one to conclude that these variations would never happen anywhere else, that they were exceptions and therefore could be noted in the script of the work, but would not influence or should not be considered when decisions were to be made in future re-installations of *Play Dead; Real Time*. However, the study of later re-exhibitions of the other editions of *Play Dead; Real Time* shows that the editions 2/3 and 3/3 have also been modified in the context of Douglas Gordon’s solo exhibitions.

For the *Douglas Gordon: Between Darkness and Light* exhibition presented at the Kunstmuseum in Wolfsburg in 2007, the artist had planned to install edition 2/3 (co-owned by the Museum für Moderne Kunst and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden) with two

43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
monitors, but at the moment of installation, decided to use only one (Fig. 3.5). Despite the fact that Play Dead; Real Time was shown there as a three-channel video installation, in the brochure distributed to the visitors the artwork was described as a four-channel video installation. This situation shows that working with a single source of information can be problematic when scripting an artwork. Indeed, the exhibition brochure acts here as a mediator that provides erroneous information. It did so for the visitors of the exhibition, but it also does for researchers who use it as a reference. The consultation of the exhibition catalogue is not helpful here for finding out if the work was exhibited as a three- or a four-channel video installation, as the work is simply listed as a video installation; the number of components is not indicated. This example illustrates that my museum visit acts as a mediator of reliable information, in contrast to the exhibition brochure that acts as a mediator in which some details are misleading. Therefore, for the scripting of this particular manifestation of Play Dead; Real Time, my museum visit and my observations played a crucial role. To this day, edition 2/3 of Play Dead; Real Time has not been exhibited as a four-channel video installation, but since the artist had planned on doing so in Wolfsburg, this confirms the fact it is really the size of the exhibition space, and not the number of components used for the inaugural manifestation of Play Dead; Real Time, that influences how it is displayed.

In September 2007, Play Dead; Real Time (edition 3/3, owned by the National Gallery of Canada) was installed in Montreal at the Galerie de l’UQAM. For this venue, the artist decided that a second monitor would be used. Once again, the decision to add a second monitor stemmed from the intention to extend the visitors’ walk. In the press release, the artwork was described as consisting of two large screens and a monitor. Once again, the press release contained inaccurate information, as the work was exhibited in its four-channel video installation form. As I had not seen the display of the work in Montreal, I did not know

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46 See the exhibition brochure Douglas Gordon: Between Darkness and Light, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 21 April – 12 August 2007. The visitors could read, in German, the following entry on Play Dead; Real Time: “Videoinstallation; 2 Video-Player, 2 semitransparente Projektionsfolien, 2 Projektoren, 2 Monitore, Maße variabel.”  
47 Douglas Gordon: Between Darkness and Light (Wolfsburg: Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 2007), 126.  
48 My visits of the exhibition Douglas Gordon: Between Darkness and Light took place on August 11 and 12, 2007.  
50 Conversation with Bert Ross, assistant to Douglas Gordon, Glasgow, September 12, 2007.  
about how it had really been displayed until I talked to Douglas Gordon’s assistant, Bert Ross, who also provided me with some installation shots (Fig. 3.6 and 3.7). These mediators – the artist’s assistant and the photographs – overruled the press release as mediator in my reconstruction of the life cycle of the artwork.

*Play Dead; Real Time* has been shown as a four-channel video installation in the exhibition *Douglas Gordon: Où se trouvent les clefs?* at the Collection Lambert in Avignon, and in the exhibition *Douglas Gordon: blood, sweat, tears* presented at DOX, Center for Contemporary Art in Prague. The repetition of the use of a second monitor when *Play Dead; Real Time* was presented corroborates the existence of two versions of the artwork: a three-channel video installation and a four-channel video installation. The choice of presenting one version rather than the other depends on the exhibition space. To date, each time a second monitor has been added, it was within the context of a Douglas Gordon solo exhibition, with the artist being present to decide the display of the work. It seems as though the decision of whether or not to add a monitor rests with the artist only, and not with the institution owning *Play Dead; Real Time*. Nevertheless, the institutions could have opposed such a decision, since they all had acquired *Play Dead; Real Time* as a three-channel video installation. In a sense, for Douglas Gordon, it is not a matter of the work being part of an edition that influenced its display; rather, it is a matter of how it can be presented in the exhibition space and how the viewer can interact with it.

In fact, Gordon is very much involved in the installation process of his artworks, especially when it comes time to present solo exhibitions. One can wonder what the role of the curator of the exhibition has been, as it seems like Gordon carefully instructed the layout of the exhibition. Gordon’s manner of proceeding is a good example of German philosopher Boris Groys’ statement that “contemporary art can be understood primarily as an exhibition practice.” By that, Groys means that it is more and more difficult nowadays to differentiate the role of the artist and the role of the curator within the exhibition context. Solo exhibitions give Gordon the opportunity to revisit his works and in most cases, the entire exhibition

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52 As mentioned above, it is likely the artist’s proof of *Play Dead; Real Time* that was exhibited in Avignon as the credits for the loans are given to the artist and the Gagosian Gallery (and not to any of the owning institutions of the work). Also, in the catalogue, the credits for the photographs *Play Dead; Real Time* – installation shots of the work as displayed in Avignon – are given to the National Gallery of Canada, but the Canadian institution had not loaned the work. This information has been verified with the loan officer of the National Gallery of Canada in June 2009.
becomes one large installation. Every work in the exhibition is staged in accordance with the other works in the exhibition.

The study of Gordon’s solo exhibitions shows that he constantly revisits his work. In some cases, a reinterpreted piece keeps the same title, but presents variations, as was the case with *Play Dead; Real Time*. In these cases, the works have plural immanences; their identity is defined by all versions. In other cases, he appropriates his own artistic production and creates new works out of concepts, materials, footage and so on, of earlier works. For instance, in the exhibition *Douglas Gordon: Timeline*, in the room preceding the inaugural display of *Play Dead; Real Time* as a four-channel video installation, Gordon presented *M: Futile Fear* (2006), a reinterpretation of his work *Feature Film* (1999), briefly discussed earlier in the chapter. Two versions of *Feature Film* already existed: a feature film version and a museum version. The first version, presented in cinemas, has the running time of the score, 75 minutes. The second version, presented in museums, combines a projection showing the conductor James Conlon and a video version of Hitchcock’s film *Vertigo* played on a monitor. This version of the work lasts 128 minutes, as the film lasts 128 minutes. When there is no music in *Vertigo*, then the screen on which *Feature Film* is projected goes blank. When there is music in *Vertigo* (Bernard Herrmann’s soundtrack), then Conlon’s movements are projected on the screen (or the wall, depending on how the work is presented in the exhibition space). Both soundtracks are played in synchronicity. In 2006, at the Museum of Modern Art, *M: Futile Fear* – whose title uses exactly the same letters as *Feature Film*, used the recorded material of *Feature Film*, but organized differently: a triple projection. The monitor presenting Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* was removed as well. The central projection presented the footage from *Feature Film*, the side projections were mirrored images of the central one and projected upside down. The triple projection reinforced the circularity of Bernard Herrmann’s score and the circularity of the movements of the conductor. Whereas *24-Hour Psycho* has no soundtrack and the emphasis is on the images, in *Feature Film* and *M: Futile Fear*, there is a balance between images and sound.

In terms of scripting, Gordon’s interventions described above have different consequences. When he introduces variations in the display of a work, as it has been the case with *Play Dead; Real Time*, it means that the identity of the work is being reshaped, that the work exists in more than one version and that it is all the versions that define it. It means that the artwork’s scripting process is rerouted. When he reinterprets a work and gives the result a

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55 The co-existence of a museum version and a film version of moving-image based work has been discussed in the section 1.2 of Chapter One.
new title, as was the case with *M: Futile Fear*, it means that the scripting process of *Feature Film* was also rerouted; it branched off. *M: Futile Fear* is an offspring of *Feature Film* as it shares the same footage and soundtrack. Even if they are considered two different artworks, *Feature Film* and *M: Futile Fear* share the same scripting process. In Chapter Four, I will come back to this point in my de-scription of the life cycle of Mike Kelley’s *Day Is Done*.

**Other Variations in the Presentation of *Play Dead; Real Time***

The study of the life cycle of *Play Dead; Real Time* reveals that the main variation that has occurred is that it can nowadays be presented as a three- or four-channel video installation, depending on the choice of the artist. Nevertheless, even though the artist has established a series of prescriptions on how to display the work and requirements concerning the exhibition space (room areas of a minimum of 24.8 x 13.07 m and ceiling heights of a minimum of 5 m), he has been very accommodating in order to facilitate its presentation in many different locations.56 When looking at the equipment list, one also notices that, over the period of the first four years, it had already been upgraded and the projectors that are now used allow for a better image with deeper color and contrast.57 In this section of the chapter, some examples of variations and concessions made by the artist serve to illustrate that even though Douglas Gordon has described the “ideal” space to display *Play Dead; Real Time*, if it is possible to make the work fit into a space that does not meet his criteria, he will modify his own requirements. The main idea being to give visitors the chance to experience *Play Dead; Real Time* whenever possible. Discrepancies aside, these examples are used to point out the roles of other mediators in the life cycle of this work that have not been analyzed until now.

In most cases, *Play Dead; Real Time* has been displayed in large spaces in which nothing stood between the visitors and the work. However, the artist made concessions in Montreal, when the work was exhibited at the Galerie de l’UQAM and at DOX in Prague. In Montreal, concrete columns stood in the exhibition space (Fig. 3.6 and 3.7), and in Prague, the two freestanding screens were placed between steel pillars (Fig. 3.8). The presence of columns or pillars in the space is not ideal, as they partly obstruct the view of the work, especially from a distance. Nevertheless, their presence also results in inciting visitors to move about so that they can see the work from one or more different angles, which is what Gordon wishes in the first place. Also, on at least two occasions, *Play Dead; Real Time* has been presented in rooms whose ceilings were only slightly higher than the screens: at the

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57 Email from Bert Ross, assistant to Douglas Gordon, May 18, 2007.
Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (MART) (Fig. 3.9) and at the Saint Mary’s University Art Gallery in Halifax, Canada. In Halifax, for instance, the ceiling was only 19 centimeters higher than the screens. In Rovereto, although the artist accepted to have the work presented in the space even though the ceilings were lower than five meters, another aspect of the presentation of the work was not modified consciously. When it came time to order the two large screens required for the presentation of Play Dead; Real Time, the institution made a mistake and one of the two screens was not double-sided. Thus, the projected image could only be seen on one side. This anecdote is exemplary of a possible misreading of the installation prescriptions (a part of the script) accompanying Play Dead; Real Time. This misreading lead to a variation in the presentation of the artwork and resulted in the fact that visitors could not walk from one side of the screen to the other and see the same projection. Even though the artwork was not installed as prescribed by the artist, this presentation turned out to be passable, as the artist allowed it to be displayed as such at MART.

Julia Noordegraaf, inspired by Madeleine Akrich, has written that “the museum script is always the product of its designers and its users.” I would adapt this statement to the present study by stating that the artwork’s script is always the product of the artists (and their assistants) and its interpreters. Several mediators interact with the artwork’s script and its interpretation leads to a manifestation of Play Dead; Real Time. Since a number of mediators are involved, misinterpretations of the script can occur, as was the case in Rovereto. In contrast to events that contribute to defining what Play Dead; Real Time is, events such as this one contribute to showing what it was not intended to look like; both screens were intended to be translucent so that the actions of Minnie could be seen on both sides. This event is also a good example of how Douglas Gordon can be accommodating in order to see his artworks exhibited.

Working With and Through the Artist’s Sanctioning Narratives

While scripting the life cycle of Play Dead; Real Time, I have worked with different sources, one of them being the artist’s sanctioning narratives, his statements on Play Dead; Real Time.

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58 Email from Heather Anderson, associate curator of contemporary art, National Gallery of Canada, January 8, 2010.
The study of the interviews and public presentations in which Douglas Gordon has spoken about this work shows that his discourse and his manner of speaking about it have evolved. In 2004, when asked to talk about the version *Play Dead; Real Time* that was shown in the retrospective *Douglas Gordon* presented at the Hirshhorn, Gordon stated that it was the only work that he did not have a funny story about. He stated: “I woke up one morning and thought I think I will make a film of an elephant.” He also added that he was still trying to figure out why he had done it. However, when he saw *Play Dead; Real Time* presented in proximity of 10ms, where a man is seen constantly falling down, he realized that the former work was more about an elephant falling down than lying down, as he had previously phrased it.\(^1\) It might not be a coincidence that these two works have been shown in proximity to each other, as was the case for instance in the retrospective *Douglas Gordon: Between Darkness and Light* in 2007. Through different interviews that the artist has participated in over the years, he seems to have developed a humorous way to explain how the work came into being. However, his statements on the work have much more to do with the practicalities of how the shooting took place rather than on the possible readings of the work, such as institutional critique. The ironic tone that he uses when he recounts how he made the work and his insistence on bringing the elephant to the Gagosian Gallery invites experts to interpret *Play Dead; Real Time* along the lines of institutional critique.\(^2\)

Working with Gordon’s sanctioning narratives can also be problematic since, as he admits himself, he likes to tell conflicting stories.\(^3\) When scripting the life cycles of the artist’s works, one must take care to identify the discrepancies between what the artist says and what he has done, between what he states his intentions were and what his realizations were. Among the discrepancies, I mentioned earlier in the chapter the instructions provided by the artist to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in which it was stated that *Play Dead; Real Time* would to be exhibited as a four-channel video installations only in the exhibition *Douglas Gordon: Timeline*. The description of the life cycle of this work done throughout the chapter has shown that the artwork was shown as a four-channel video installation on more than one occasion. It shows how the script of the work has evolved and that the artwork now has two versions: a three-channel and a four-channel version. In Chapter

\(^1\) “Meet the artist: Douglas Gordon” (part 2), Smithsonian Videos (2004), accessed July 4, 2011, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjYb6EN0v8w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjYb6EN0v8w).

\(^2\) The ironic tone is, for instance, easily identified in the interview Gordon has given to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: “Douglas Gordon on working with elephants,” San Francisco Museum of Modern Art video interview, last modified November 2, 2010, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vR07wSggs7k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vR07wSggs7k).

\(^3\) “Meet the artist: Douglas Gordon” (part 2), Smithsonian Videos (2004), accessed July 4, 2011, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjYb6EN0v8w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjYb6EN0v8w).
Four, I will compare how Gordon’s sanctioning narratives are different from Mike Kelley’s, who speaks and writes much more about his intentions and the meaning of his work. It will be shown that Kelley has greater concerns about framing the reception of his artistic production than does Gordon.

The point of departure of this second section of the chapter was the display of Play Dead; Real Time in the exhibition Douglas Gordon: Timeline presented at the Museum of Modern Art in 2006. In the de-scription of the re-exhibitions of this work by Gordon, I have shown that what could have been an exception in the display of the work – its presentation as a four-channel video installation – turned out to be a feasible option, which reshaped the identity of the work. Two versions of Play Dead; Real Time now coexist: a three-channel and a four-channel video installation. Even if the three editions of the work are integrated into museum collections, it is still the artist who decides if a second monitor will be added to the work or not. The scripting shows that Gordon is still a mediator of great importance in the display phase of his artistic production. This leads to the acknowledgment that displaying Play Dead; Real Time is also part of the making of the work.

3.3 Archiving Play Dead; Real Time

In the previous sections of this chapter, I mentioned a few examples of Douglas Gordon’s works that were the results of his reinterpretations of his own works, such as M: Futile Fear (2006), which is a reinterpretation of Feature Film (1999). In this section of the chapter, I discuss the inclusion of the three videos that make up Play Dead; Real Time – This Way, That Way and Other Way – in another work by Gordon that has a self-explanatory title: Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work from 1992 Until Now. To be seen on monitors, some with headphones, others run silently, and all simultaneously (Fig. 3.10). This work was first presented at the Galeria Foksal in Warsaw in 1999. It can be interpreted as Gordon’s video and film archive, as every time the artist makes a new piece including video or film, he integrates it into Pretty Much Every Film and Video... as well. Therefore, after the making of Play Dead; Real Time, the videos This Way, That Way and Other Way were added to that work. Pretty Much Every Film and Video... is a work in progress, whose end date will correspond to the moment when the artist ceases to make videos or films. When first

exhibited in Warsaw, the work counted about thirty monitors. Ten years later, when presented in Prague, it included 71 monitors.65

Pretty Much Every Film and Video... can also be interpreted as an alternative presentation strategy for Douglas Gordon’s Play Dead; Real Time, and also for all his other film- and video-based artworks. From one exhibition to another, the display of the work varies, as the artist has not drawn a specific floor plan for the work. The monitors used for the presentation are owned by the institution presenting it. Based on an exchange with Tanya Zimbardo, Assistant Curator at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, an institution which owns one of the editions of the work, art historian Anne Bénichou reports that the presentation of the work must, in principle, avoid any form of categorization or organization of the videos and films in order to favor the dispersion and the mixing of the themes and periods of production.66 The dispersion of the videos has been applied to most of the presentations of the work, as for instance in Wolfsburg in 2007 (Fig. 3.11), but in the 2009 display of Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work... done in Prague, a very clear categorization had been made. The monitors had been placed along three walls. The first section on the left gathered the Hollywood films the artist had manipulated and the works made with found footage; the second section grouped the video works that recorded different actions of the artist’s hands (Fig. 3.12), the third section clustered the works in which he had filmed animals and insects (Fig. 3.13), and the last section comprised his other works. The three videos making up Play Dead; Real Time were included in the third category.

I pointed out earlier that the inaugural presentation of Play Dead; Real Time featured a mise en abyme, as the exhibition space was included in the videos of the work and, therefore, a visual conversation took place between the work and the very space in which it was presented. In Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work..., another kind of mise en abyme takes place, as the artist includes all his films and videos in a separate work. This mise en abyme is made explicit by the self-descriptive title of the piece, but even more so, in the context of Douglas Gordon’s solo exhibitions. On these occasions, the visitors unfamiliar with the artist’s œuvre are given the opportunity to identify some of the works, presented in their original format as installations or single-channel videos in other rooms of the exhibition, in Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work... This video installation has been included in Gordon’s retrospective exhibitions presented in Edinburgh in 2006-2007, in Rovereto in

2006-2007, in Wolfsburg in 2007, and in Prague in 2009. In Rovereto, Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work... was displayed in proximity to Play Dead; Real Time (Fig. 3.14).

Since Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work... offers a synthesis of Gordon’s work with the moving image, in retrospective exhibitions, it is often placed in the very last room. The display of these moving image works is done democratically in the sense that they are all presented on monitors that have more or less the same size and the soundtracks, if played, are played at the same volume. Even though the title mentions that some monitors are connected to headphones, the headphones have been removed from the installation in recent displays of the work, as for instance in Wolfsburg in 2007 and Prague in 2009. Yet, on account of the fact that scale and time are very important features of Gordon’s artistic production, this work does not do justice to Gordon’s other works. For instance, in Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work..., it is not a slowed down version of Hitchcock’s Psycho over the course of 24 hour that is played, but the film at its normal speed.

One could wonder why Pretty Much Every Film and Video... is a work of art and not only considered an archive. The answer to this question can be found in the creation process of Douglas Gordon and by discussing two other of his works, List of Names (1990-ongoing) and prettymucheverywordwritten, spoken, heard, overheard from 1989... (ongoing).67 I suggest interpreting these works as archives that took the form of artworks. List of Names was exhibited for the first time at the Third Eye Centre in Glasgow.68 As the title suggests, the artist wrote down the list of all the people he remembers meeting in his life. In principle, every time he meets someone new, that person is added to the list. For Gordon, this work represents his idea about memory, “an incredible, complex machine, with an amazing power to recall, and an equally unpredictable possibility of failure.”69 Indeed, it is impossible to remember everyone. As Katrina M. Brown has written, it is the list of “Gordon’s own chosen ones.”70 In the exhibition space, the list is printed directly on the wall.71 Its presentation varies from one exhibition to another as the list expands, but the order of names as well as they can, for instance, be ordered by surnames, chronologically, and so on.

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67 The title of this second work has been written differently as on the website of the Tate, one can read: Pretty much every word written, spoken, heard, overheard from 1989... See Tate’s website, accessed July 4, 2011, http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/douglasgordon/default.shtm. To avoid confusion for the reader, I will stick to the spelling of 2006, when the work was first presented at MART.
71 A glimpse of List of Names can be seen on the top right corner of Figure 3.5.
Similarly to *Pretty Much Every Film and Video...* and *List of Names*, that are accumulative artworks, *prettymucheverywordwritten, spoken, heard, overheard from 1989...*, is a wall installation gathering text-based works. The work was presented for the first time at MART in 2006 and gathered all the artist’s text pieces. Prior to that exhibition, the artist had exhibited his text-based works in different exhibitions, but it was the first time that they were all presented together and assembled under the umbrella title *prettymucheverywordwritten, spoken, heard, overheard from 1989...* The texts the artist posts on the walls come from literature, biblical texts, and popular culture. Their meaning is often multiple, ambiguous and/or obscured. For instance, one, directly hailing its reader, states: “I am aware of who you are & what you do” (Fig. 3.15). Another says: “From the moment you hear these words, until you kiss someone with green eyes” (Fig. 3.16). Just as *Pretty Much Every Film and Video...* can be seen as an archive of Gordon’s video and film-based artworks, and *List of Names* can be seen as an archive of names of persons the artist remembers having met in his life, *prettymucheverywordwritten, spoken, heard, overheard from 1989...* can be seen as an archive of his text-based works. But they are not simply archives as the artist exhibits them; he presents them publicly under varied configurations. Setting them up in the exhibition space is part of the process. Just as I have argued earlier that displaying Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* is also making it, I assert that updating these works and displaying them is also making them. The creation process goes on.

Just as an archive is a collection of historical documents or records and is a form of heritage, *Pretty Much Every Film and Video...* is a collection of all Gordon’s film and video-based artworks. Therefore, this artwork can also be interpreted as a form of preservation of the artist’s moving image works. It is of course a symbolic preservation, as Gordon does not attempt to maintain the exact appearance of all the works included in *Pretty Much Every Film and Video...* in terms of how they look when exhibited on their own. It is only the footage of all his moving image artworks that is included, not the manner through which they are presented in the exhibition space. *Pretty Much Every Film and Video...* is a form of preservation done through a mise en abyme. In this mise en abyme, on account of the fact that *Play Dead; Real Time* has occasionally been shown as a four-channel video installation, one could wonder if *Pretty Much Every Film and Video...* sometimes included four videos featuring an elephant rather than three. The fact that this has never actually been the case contributes to preserving the memory that *Play Dead; Real Time* was conceived as a three-channel video installation.
3.4 Conclusion

The starting point of the analysis done in this chapter was my encounter with Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2006. The presentation of the work there varied from an earlier display that I had seen, which made me wonder what the artwork consisted of. In order to better understand how the identity of *Play Dead; Real Time* had been shaped since its inaugural exhibition in 2003, I used the methodological tool of description. This manner of proceeding enabled me to conceptualize the socialization of *Play Dead; Real Time*.

In the first section of the chapter, I analyzed the inaugural exhibition of the work, its reception and its distribution. The analysis of this phase of the life cycle of the work revealed that it was very strongly connected to the site where it was made, the Gagosian Gallery. Gordon’s work can be qualified as site-specific also because of conceptual implications. The portraits of the elephant that the artist makes can also be interpreted as a trope for his own position in the art world. Just as the elephant is one of the major attractions in a circus, Gordon is an important figure in the contemporary art scene and he is represented by one of the world’s most powerful art dealers. Therefore, the re-exhibition of *Play Dead; Real Time* in other locations tends to divert from the institutional critique interpretation of the work that reviewers emphasized when it was first exhibited. These reviews contributed to the interpretation of the work and their analysis showed the discrepancies between the press release and how *Play Dead; Real Time* was generally interpreted. The reviews of the following exhibitions of the work also moved away from the institutional critique interpretation as the work could no longer establish the same dialogue with the exhibition space, since it had been shot at the Gagosian Gallery (and not in all these new exhibition spaces where it was being shown).

In the second section of the chapter, I studied the phase of the life cycle during which the identity of the work was reshaped as the artist decided to introduce a variation in the number of components and added a second monitor. The study done here has shown that two versions of the work co-exist: a three-channel and a four-channel video installation. Therefore, *Play Dead; Real Time* is a work that has plural immanences, it is made of different versions, all of which are instantiations of what it is. The study of the socialization of this work over time has helped identify mediators that have influenced the shaping of its identity. The configuration of the work is determined based upon the size of the exhibition space. To this day, it is almost always the artist who decides on how *Play Dead; Real Time* will be
displayed. The *decription* of the re-exhibition process has helped identify the artist as a mediator of importance not only in the creation process, but also in the re-exhibition process. To a certain extent the *decription* revealed that there is not necessarily an ideal space to present the work, aside from the Gagosian Gallery because of all the connotations that come with it. For Gordon, displaying his works is also making them, since he uses them to sculpt the space in which they are exhibited.

In the third section of the chapter, I discussed the inclusion of the videos making up *Play Dead; Real Time* in an ongoing work by Douglas Gordon, *Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work from 1992 Until Now*. *To be seen on monitors, some with headphones, others run silently, and all simultaneously*, to point out that the artist constantly revisits and reinterprets his works. It makes it impossible to speak of a finished version of a work since they keep evolving and their display in the exhibition space is one of their key features. In a way, the creation process stops in the exhibition space, until the work is presented again.

Throughout this chapter, I have identified mediators that played a role in the socialization of *Play Dead; Real Time*. Some mediators, such as the artist, have been influential in all phases of its life cycle; others have played a role at specific moments in time, as, for instance, the exhibition reviews. I also pointed out the double role played by the exhibition reviews: as mediators of how the work has been received, and as sources for the identification of other mediators. In the next chapter, I will point out how exhibition reviews can also play a third role: that of inciting artists to create new artworks.
Chapter 4

On the Impossibility of a Re-exhibition:
Mike Kelley’s *Day Is Done*
4.0 Introduction

In 1966, American minimal artist Carl Andre exhibited his series *Equivalents I-VIII* at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in New York (Fig. 4.1). Each *Equivalent* was made of 120 sand-lime bricks layered two deep, organized in a rectangular configuration that was a variation of the number sixty. For instance, *Equivalent VIII* was made of two layers of six bricks wide and ten bricks long, whereas *Equivalent VII* was made of two layers of six brick long and ten bricks wide. Even though arranged differently, all *Equivalents* had the same height, mass and volume. At the end of the exhibition, a collector acquired *Equivalent VII*; the other seven *Equivalents* stayed in the artist’s collection, which led him to sell the remaining bricks back to the factory where he had obtained them. In 1969, a gallerist asked Andre to recreate the series *Equivalents*, with the exception of number VII. As the factory producing the sand-lime bricks had closed its doors, the artist had to use a different kind of brick: firebricks. Nowadays, if all *Equivalents* were to be exhibited together, one of them would be different from the seven others, as it is made of a different type of brick.\(^1\) In the case of Andre’s *Equivalents*, it is not necessarily their spreading to different collections that would make their re-exhibition as an ensemble impossible, or at least odd, but its material constituent. Since seven of them are now made of firebricks and one of sand-lime bricks, they are no longer equivalent in height, mass or volume. What the example also shows is that even if created in the context of a series, the *Equivalents* were considered by the artist as eight individual works of art and have been spread across different collections.

The inaugural exhibition of certain artistic projects or artworks can be done on a large scale (conceptually, physically, and/or economically), making it impossible to be sold thereafter as a whole. Consequently, a possible distribution strategy is to fragment the artwork and to make the fragments or “offspring” available on the art market as individual works of art. This is the strategy that American artist Mike Kelley has adopted for *Day Is Done*, exhibited at the Gagosian Gallery in New York in 2005. The 25 video/sculpture installations that constituted the large-scale installation *Day Is Done* were sold separately. In addition, in the years that followed the 2005 exhibition, the artist made alternative configurations of the project: a film and a book. Nowadays, the title *Day Is Done* refers to many things at once: an exhibition, a large-scale installation, a film, and a book. Moreover, *Day Is Done* is only one part of an ongoing project that the artist began at the end of the 1990s entitled the *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction (EAPR)* series. This series is developing in

a very organic way and the great number and variety of offspring make its presentation, distribution and preservation particularly challenging. The present chapter focuses on the socialization of Day Is Done in particular, but nevertheless relates it to the EAPR series when necessary.

In the preceding chapter, the scripting of Douglas Gordon’s Play Dead; Real Time focused on its re-exhibitions because it was mainly during those instances that the identity of the work was shaped. The scripting of Play Dead; Real Time involved studying one artwork that had different versions. The socialization of Mike Kelley’s Day Is Done evolved differently because of the scale of the project and also its distribution history. The original project Day Is Done has by now many offspring, some of which are editioned, others not. In this chapter, I reconstruct the life cycle of Day Is Done and I analyze its creation, the events leading to its first manifestation, its inaugural exhibition per se, its fragmentation, and finally, the re-exhibition of its offspring. The de-description of the life cycle of Day Is Done helps identify the mediators that have shaped its identity. Throughout the chapter, I describe the scripting process of Day Is Done, which involves describing some of its offspring at some point. As the project has a great number of offspring, I could not study the socialization of each and every part. I selected a few that serve as examples.

In this chapter, I use the metaphor of a tree to describe the scripting process of Day Is Done. The roots of the tree are the mediators that led to the making of the work. As I will explain later, some reviews of Kelley’s exhibitions of the late 1980s and early 1990s triggered the creation of an entire body of work. The trunk of the tree is the exhibition Day Is Done that took place at the Gagosian Gallery in 2005. Finally, the branches of the tree correspond to the moment when the scripting process was rerouted, when the offspring of Day Is Done were spread to different collections.

This chapter first provides background information on Mike Kelley; it discusses his exhibition practice and how he proceeds to mediate his own work (4.1). In the second section of the chapter, after explaining the background of the EAPR series, I begin the scripting of the first phases of the life cycle of Day Is Done: the pre-exhibition publications, the inaugural exhibition and the reception of that exhibition (4.2). In the third section, the fragmentation of the work and its distribution are detailed and the acquisition and re-exhibition strategies of a few private collections and public institutions are examined. This section of the chapter also shows how certain offspring of Day Is Done continue to relate (or do not continue to relate) to the larger body of work to which they belong (4.3). In the fourth section, alternative configurations of the project – a catalogue and a film – are studied, and their connections to
the 2005 exhibition theorized (4.4). In the conclusion of the chapter, I discuss the challenges of de-scripting such a large-scale project (4.5).

4.1 Mike Kelley’s Artistic Practice

Prior to beginning the de-scription of the life cycle of Day Is Done, in this first section of the chapter, I introduce Mike Kelley’s artistic practice. I do so in order to demonstrate how his production is developing in a very organic way, that most of his works are created in the context of series and that some series are born of other series. The inaugural exhibitions of these series hold a special place within the artist’s exhibitions, as they are large-scale and it is often the only occasion that all components of a series will be displayed together. Therefore, I propose interpreting these inaugural exhibitions as landmark exhibitions within Kelley’s artistic production. As I will explain below, I adapted the definition of landmark exhibitions advanced by art historian Reesa Greenberg. Finally, in this section, I also deal with the texts that the artist writes to accompany most of his projects, what he himself calls his “functional writings.” I analyze their purposes, as later on in the chapter, I frequently refer to the texts accompanying Day Is Done and reflect on their use in the scripting of this project.

Mike Kelley and his Landmark Exhibitions

Mike Kelley was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1956. He has been living in Los Angeles since 1976. He obtained a Bachelor in Fine Arts from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1976 and a Master’s in Fine Arts from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia (Cal Arts) in 1978. At the University of Michigan, Kelley received a formalist art education, strongly influenced by abstract expressionist painter Hans Hofmann. At the California Institute of the Arts, most of Kelley’s teachers were conceptual artists, such as John Baldessari, Michael Asher, Laurie Anderson, Douglas Huebler and David Askevold. Kelley therefore evolved in an artistic environment where the idea, the concept and the process prevailed over the end result (the art object). For instance, Douglas Huebler, the faculty member who was in charge of supervising Kelley more closely, was performing interventions that required a system of documentation witnessing them: photographs, maps, and drawings; all accompanied by descriptions. Huebler’s Variable Piece #46 is made of a series of sixteen black-and-white photographs and a statement – short and factual. The text informs the viewers that Huebler and Donald Burgy played a Ping Pong match on February 3, 1971; that Huebler won; that the photographs were all taken at one-minute intervals with the exception
of the one taken when the match ended; and finally, before the date and the artist’s name, the following: “16 photographs, (none designated by its place in the sequential order) join with this statement to constitute the form of this piece.”² Within Huebler’s practice and that of many other conceptual artists, the statements did not accompany the artworks, but were an integral part of them. As I will argue below, statements and written texts have become crucial over the years in Kelley’s artistic practice. Yet, there is a major difference between Kelley’s statements and those of Huebler. For the latter, the statements are an integral part of the artwork, whereas for the former, they are written to accompany and to frame the reception of his artistic production. They are not a constituent part of the artwork; they are the artist’s sanctioning narratives and contribute to the scripting process.

For the 1978 graduate show at Cal Arts, Kelley produced a series of birdhouse sculptures with the aim of clearing his mind. At first, he consulted how-to manuals, and after making a few, he started to make variations such as a house for a tall bird, a house for a wide bird, and a Gothic birdhouse. Kelley later stated: “I think even though the birdhouses were ridiculous they were acceptable within the terminology of the time because they were reductive, they were primary structures of a sort.”³ They befitted the conceptualist aesthetic of the time. At Cal Arts, Kelley also started doing performances. His work at the graduate show caught the attention of curator Richard Armstrong, who was working back then at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art. Armstrong invited Kelley to present a series of performances.⁴ All of Kelley’s performances were planned well in advance and based on a detailed script. The preparation of the performances also included the making of objects, which for him were “props for verbalization;” they guided the writing of the script of the performances.⁵ At the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s, Kelley predominantly did live performances, sometimes alone, sometimes in collaboration with other artists such as Tony Oursler, Don Krieger, Jim Casebere, Michel Smith and Bob Flanagan.

In 1986, performance ceased to be Kelley’s main artistic medium. Firstly, because the artist did not want to be ghettoized as a performance artist; secondly, because his performances were becoming more and more complex and were taking a very long time to

⁴ The series of performances was entitled Mike Kelley in Performance. See Armstrong’s recollection of their encounter and first collaborations in his essay “In the Beginning,” in Mike Kelley: Catholic Tastes, ed. Elisabeth Sussman (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993), 43-55.
⁵ “Mike Kelley interviewed by John Miller,” 8.
rehearse, sometimes up to half a year; thirdly, because they were too expensive to produce;
and finally, because the last project he got involved with – *Half a Man* – seemed to him that
once started, could never end, because its topic, the social notions of sex, was part of the
culture at large. Kelley wondered: “How do you end something that is part of the culture at
large?” Instead of presenting *Half a Man* as a performance piece that would address gender
and identity formation, the artist developed it over five years as a body of work comprised of
a series of banners, stuffed animal works, arenas, paintings, dialogues, drawings and
photographs. The last chapter of this series, entitled *Craft Morphology Flow Chart* (1991),
consists of stuffed animals and dolls displayed on several tables; black-and-white photographs
of each stuffed animal and doll with a ruler placed next to them to show their actual size; and
a drawing of a few soft toys made by an archeological illustrator (Fig. 4.2). In this work,
Kelley intended to address the pure material nature of the crafts and simultaneously used three
systems of representation. First, the organization of the crafts was done by categories,
according to their shape and the fabric used to make them. Second, all of the stuffed animals
exhibited had been photographed next to a ruler so that viewers would know their exact
measurements. Third, some of the crafts had been drawn in black-and-white in an
archeological drawing style. Displayed in such fashion, the dolls recall how bodies are kept
in a morgue or how archeological artifacts are shown in museums. Moreover, the precise
measurements of the soft toys and the documentation of some of them through drawings also
draw connections with systematic approaches practiced in the institutions mentioned above.

The development of *Half a Man* through different chapters or phases and over a certain
period of time is very representative of Kelley’s artistic practice, which can be characterized
as serial and polymorph. As Kelley’s artistic production develops in an organic way, some
series trigger the making of new series, and most of them are also created with the means of
different mediums: performances, installations, sculptures, paintings, drawings and books.
The artist has the habit of first presenting his series in one of his representing galleries
because he finds that he has more control over the show. It is also a manner of being
responsible for their framing. The exhibition itself becomes a medium. It is, however, an
irreproducible medium; the exhibition will happen only once, and at the end of it, the works
on display will be sold to different collections. Also, the artist has stated that he is not

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7 Most of Kelley’s “arenas” are made of found stuffed animals displayed on a blanket.
8 Kelley has briefly written on this work in his text “In the Image of Man,” in *Carnegie International 1991*, vol.
9 Karsten Löckemann and Stephan Urbaschek. “A Telephone Conversation with Mike Kelley, August 2008,” in
Mike Kelley, ed. Karsten Löckemann and Stephan Urbaschek (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 2008), 91.
interested in spending his “life travelling around the world setting up old artworks.”

In opposition to Douglas Gordon, who is involved in most of the re-exhibitions of his works, Kelley is greatly involved only when he presents new artworks and series. After that, he leaves it to others to display them. But when he is involved, as with Gordon, the entire exhibition becomes, in most cases, a large-scale installation.

Since the inaugural exhibitions of Kelley’s various projects imply a unique staging and are often the only occasions for viewers to see the entire series together, I suggest interpreting these exhibitions as *landmark exhibitions*. Usually, the term landmark exhibition is used to refer to exhibitions that have marked the collective memory because of their inclusions of new artistic forms, non-conventional readings, or new ways of seeing art. In the field of contemporary art, exhibitions such as *When Attitudes Become Forms* or *Les magiciens de la terre* are considered landmark exhibitions. As art historian Reesa Greenberg contends, “We think of exhibitions as moments in time – isolated points – and refer to extraordinary exhibitions as stations or landmarks – spatio-temporal points, implying a journey where an historical path or line paused and was re-routed.”

Transferring this remark to a different scale, rather than applying it to the histories of exhibitions at large, apply it to the exhibition histories of one artist; in the case of Mike Kelley, I propose to use the qualification landmark exhibitions to speak of the artist’s inaugural exhibitions of his series. Indeed, since the series are displayed as a whole only once, or in some cases, travel to a few venues prior to being fragmented, Kelley’s inaugural shows are extraordinary. At the end of the exhibition, the path of a specific series is re-routed, or more precisely, the series is divided. The fragmentation of his exhibitions will be discussed further in the chapter, when I explain how it occurred with *Day Is Done*.

**Framing the Reception: Mike Kelley’s “Functional” Writings**

As stated above, Mike Kelley prefers presenting his series for the first time in art galleries rather than museums, as he feels that he has fewer restrictions. Rather than having to collaborate with a curator, he is free to frame his works the way he wants to. In addition to his

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11 The exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form: Works, Concepts, Processes, Situations, Information* was curated by Harald Szeemann and presented in 1969 at the Kunsthalle in Bern. The exhibition revolved around artistic gestures and acknowledged the creation process as an integral part of works of art. The exhibition *Les magiciens de la terre* was curated by Jean-Hubert Martin and held at the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Grande Halle de la Villette in 1989. It was the first time in France that contemporary non-occidental art was presented.

involvement in setting up inaugural exhibitions of his series, Kelley also produces texts to accompany his work, texts that he calls his “functional” writings, to differentiate them from his other writings on the work of other artists or the art world.\textsuperscript{13} Since the very beginning, Kelley has been writing statements on his work, but he has done it even more systematically as of the mid-1990s, a period during which he became increasingly dissatisfied with the reception of his work, which was interpreted biographically even though his production was not intended to be autobiographical. By putting his intentions down on paper, Kelley positions himself not only in the production, but also in the reception pole of his oeuvre, as his texts contribute to orienting and framing how his artworks will be interpreted.\textsuperscript{14} Therefore, in the scripting process, it is important to pay attention to the reviews in order to notice the similarities and discrepancies between the artist’s statements and how his works have been received. Kelley also gives public lectures and gives interviews.\textsuperscript{15} This seems to be a strategy to control the reception of the work, to counter the misinterpretation of his intentions on the part of the critics and the public. As he argues, in the preface of \textit{Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticisms},

The essays were not labors of love, rather they were a response to my dissatisfaction with the way my work was being written about critically. I decided I had to write about my own work if my concerns were to be properly conveyed. Also, I was not pleased with how contemporary art history was being constructed, so I felt it was my duty to raise my voice in protest and write my own version – whenever I could.\textsuperscript{16}

Kelley’s functional writings are the first public instantiations of the scripts of his artworks. More precisely, they are the artist’s sanctioning narratives. They constitute the part of the script that deals with the conceptual features of the artwork. They contribute to framing the reception of his works. Kelley’s functional writings do not include \textit{auctorial prescriptions}, i.e., instructions on how to display the work. The installation instructions are not made public, they are given to institutions who own or who will be exhibiting one of his


\textsuperscript{14} In his functional writings, the artist explains the conceptual origins of specific projects. Kelley’s writings have been assembled in two different books edited by John C. Welchman. \textit{Foul Perfection} gathers Kelley’s essays and criticisms on the work of other artists and \textit{Minor Histories: Statements, Conversations, Proposals} assembles texts on his own artistic practice along with interviews he gave.


works. In the second chapter, I also insisted on comparing the sanctioning narratives with the artist’s realizations. In this case, this would imply comparing what the artist has written on a specific project and how the project manifests itself in the exhibition space. This is a necessary step in the de-scription of an artwork since it will expose the discrepancies (if any) between the artist’s sanctioning narratives and the framing and display of the artwork.

Though Kelley’s written statements are useful to understand his intentions and are one of the first physical manifestations of the artwork’s script, as curator Anne Pontégnie pointed out, these statements “to some extent castrated [the artist’s] critical reception.”\textsuperscript{17} By being so involved in the reception pole of his artistic production, Kelley has established the boundaries for his critical reception and has therefore left little room for interpretation to anyone engaging with this work. In a way, by being so precise in his writings, Kelley goes against the very nature of his artistic production, which can be interpreted on so many levels. With his texts, he is trying to “fix” his artworks, to freeze them in time, which in the end is very much against the nature of how his artistic production evolves. As Anne Pontégnie argues, “Mike Kelley is setting out to do something so multiple, in both its form and its content, and so indivisible in its internal consistency, that it is almost impossible to freeze a ‘moment’ in it that could be understood, despite the exhaustiveness of the information given.”\textsuperscript{18} The relationships between Kelley’s functional writings and his artworks will be further discussed later in the chapter once I begin the scripting of \textit{Day Is Done}, since analyzing the artist’s sanctioning narratives is a part of the process to retrieve the artwork’s script.

\textbf{4.2 \textit{Day Is Done} and the Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction Series}

In this second section of the chapter, I begin the scripting of \textit{Day Is Done}. This first requires contextualizing this work within the \textit{Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction}, the series to which it belongs. Then, I study the first phases of the socialization of \textit{Day Is Done} that are connected to its making and its inaugural (and only) exhibition. I argue that the socialization of the work began before it was even exhibited, with the pre-exhibition publications and the press release. Contrary to the launching of some of his other series, Kelley did not publish a text on \textit{Day Is Done} until two years after the exhibition took place. Nevertheless, as I show, he still attempted (and succeeded) in framing the reception of his


\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
work through the means of published interviews and an article written by art historian John C. Welchman.

The Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction Series

The starting point of the series Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction was Kelley’s reaction to the critiques of his work from the 1980s and early 1990s, a period during which he created artworks using soft toys and various craft materials. Some critics interpreted that body of work as if the artist was dealing with child abuse. For instance, the first comment Ralph Rugoff made when he interviewed Kelley in 1991 was: “The dolls and stuffed animals in your work often evoke objects left at the scene of a child abduction.”19 Or, in his review of Kelley’s mid-career retrospective presented at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1993, Robert Hughes commented on the artist’s soft sculptures in these words: “the effect really depends on the nakedness with which Kelley presents the toys as elements in a free-form psychodrama about threat and vulnerability; they’re like the dolls that witch-hunting lawyers use to elicit the evidence of children in abuse prosecutions.”20 As Kelley recalls, “Everybody was going on as if these works were somehow about child abuse, though I had never thought of them in those terms. I related them more to the commodification of emotion: familial bonds, binds, obligations, emotional repayment, and things like that.”21 This discordance between the artist’s intentions and a part of the reception of his artistic production – and I say a part because not all critics read the words in terms of child abuse – raises questions about who is in charge of the meaning of the work. The artist meant to say one thing and it was interpreted as something else.

In light of such responses to his work, Kelley came to the conclusion that we are “caught up in a conspiracy to push the idea that we [live] in a world governed by sexual abuse,” and thus decided to make this very conspiracy the subject of an artistic project.22 In Chapter Three, I pointed out that the exhibition reviews played a double role in the description of Play Dead; Real Time: they mediated how the artwork has been received and they were a source for identifying other mediators. In the case of Kelley’s EAPR series, the reviews of his previous exhibitions triggered the theme of the series and thus influenced the identity of the works in this series from the start. Kelley’s first creation in reaction to the

22 Ibid., 347.
misreading of his work was *Educational Complex* (1995), an architectural model composed of all the schools he attended and his childhood home (Fig. 4.3). When Kelley couldn’t remember a particular room in a building, he represented it with a blank space. *Educational Complex* was first exhibited in 1995 at Metro Pictures, New York, and displayed among other series also inspired by memories of a traumatic nature that the artist produced concurrently, such as *Timeless/Authorless* (1995). This series gathers 15 black-and-white photo-text works, which resemble blown-up newspaper clippings. The texts are either restaurant reviews from newspapers in cities where Kelley has lived, studied or exhibited his work, or “recovered memories” of abuse he suffered in childhood. Some photographs from high school yearbooks accompany the texts.

To fill up the blank spaces left in *Educational Complex*, Kelley began a series of videos entitled *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction*. This series was strongly inspired by his readings and research on Repressed Memory Syndrome (RMS). Defined in Kelley’s own words, RMS “is the notion that memories of traumatic experiences can be completely and unconsciously blocked out and made inaccessible to the conscious mind.” He further adds that

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\text{[m]any therapists who champion the idea of Repressed Memory Syndrome believe that all memories dredged up during therapy are true. This is the kernel of the debate: one camp defends the notion that in almost all cases recalled memories of childhood sexual abuse are historically true, while another camp argues that these memories are often fantasies, or are even unwittingly implanted in the patient by the therapists themselves.}^{23}
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In the field of psychiatry and psychology, the theoretical concept of Repressed Memory is very controversial.\(^{(24)}\) In the excerpt quoted above, Kelley summarizes the two main positions in the debate. One well-known case that Kelley had in mind was the McMartin Preschool case, the trial for which lasted throughout the 1980s. Allegations of sexual abuse were made against the McMartins, the family in charge of the preschool. Parents of children attending that institution claimed that their children had said they had been abused in secret tunnels

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situated underneath the building, which led to an excavation in 1990. The searches turned out to be a dead end and all charges against the McMartin family were dropped in 1990.\textsuperscript{25}

When Kelley began working on the \textit{EAPR} series, he decided to assume that all the things that I can’t remember are traumatic, and I’ll fill in the holes in my memory with traumatic fictions – reversing the traditional ‘family romance’; instead of replacing my boring memory with an idealized past, I would replace it with a dramatically worse one.\textsuperscript{26}

Just as Kelley’s scripts of his performances in the 1970s and 1980s were inspired by props he created, the scenarios of the videos of the \textit{EAPR} series were inspired by photographs that he found in high school yearbooks and in his local newspaper. Some of the photographs used in the series were also used in the series \textit{Timeless/Authorless} discussed above. The photographs gathered by Kelley do not depict standard school events, but rather certain rituals such as ceremonial and religious performances, Halloween, equestrian events, and end-of-the-year plays. The story lines of the different scenarios of the videos stemmed from descriptions of traumatic events the artist had read in the literature on Repressed Memory Syndrome. In the \textit{EAPR} series, the artist intertwines details of his own biography with recollections of popular films, cartoons, and literature. Therefore, the “personal and ‘mass cultural experience’ are treated equally as ‘true’ experience.”\textsuperscript{27} In refusing to differentiate between personal recollections and the narratives of mass media, Kelley provided different representations of abuse. When confronted with Kelley’s works, the viewers cannot identify which traumatic events the artist has experienced and which ones he has not.

As part of the \textit{EAPR} series, Kelley sets out to make 365 videos, one for each day of the year. To date, 32 of the planned 365 videos have been exhibited; the first one of the series was presented in 2000 at the Emi Fontana Gallery in Milan (Fig. 4.4 to 4.7), the following 31 videos were shown together in 2005, gathered under the title \textit{Day Is Done}, at the Gagosian Gallery in New York. Once the 365 videos are completed, Kelley intends to show them


during a 24-hour period starting at midnight and ending the next day at midnight with a grand finale: a donkey basketball game.  

It is a photograph of two men performing in a play that inspired the first video of the EAPR series entitled Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (A Domestic Scene) (Fig. 4.8). Since the subject of the photograph was a play, Kelley decided to write a script that would last a half-hour, like the early television dramas did. As Kelley explains, these dramas “were basically plays performed live on television.” The script was also influenced by the work of Tennessee Williams, Saul Bellow, and Sylvia Plath. The black-and-white video stages two men living together, in poor conditions, in an apartment where furniture is chaotically arranged: the stove stands in the middle of the room with a single bed placed in front. There is no table or chair, and the organization of the space does not make sense. One of the men is extremely agitated, and on the verge of being suicidal; the other is trying to calm him down while also trying to dominate him. The “domestic scene” created by Kelley is quite dramatic. The 30-minute episode creates a schizophrenic atmosphere from which there seems to be no way out: no way out of the apartment (the entire scene takes place there), and no way out of the situation (such a lifestyle is not fully embraced by society).

Like many previous projects of Kelley’s, EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene) exists in many forms (or configurations) all sharing the same title: an installation (that has been acquired by François Pinault); a single-channel video, which is distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix in New York; and a series of photographs, sold in a limited edition of five. The installation version of the work comprises the stage set on which the video was shot which is placed next to a monitor that plays the 30-minute video. A series of photographs was displayed on a gallery wall next to it. To explain his intentions, and consequently, to frame the reception of this work, Mike Kelley wrote a text to accompany this work. When the work was displayed, the text was either included in the press release or printed in the exhibition catalogues.

Looking into the exhibition history of the installation version of EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene), it can be noticed that the configuration of the work has changed after its inaugural

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29 The same photograph has also been integrated into Kelley’s photo-text work Timeless/Authorless #11 (1995). In the latter, which looks like a blow-up of a newspaper clipping of the Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, the text is a part of Kelley’s “Recovered Memory #4.” See Mike Kelley, “Timeless/Authorless: Four Recovered Memories,” in Minor Histories: Statements, Conversations, Proposals, ed. John C. Welchman (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2004), 274-291.
31 Ibid.
exhibition. When first exhibited, the stage set could not be installed as seen in the single-channel video *EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene)*, as the exhibition space of the Emi Fontana Gallery was not big enough. For this exhibition, the stage set was presented differently (see Fig. 4.4 to 4.7). Starting from the second exhibition of the installation version of *EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene)*, the work was always presented in spacious spaces, enabling it to be shown as in the video, as was the case in Brussels in 2008, for instance (Fig. 4.9). This example shows the importance of delving into the exhibition history of a work, since its inaugural exhibition is not always a referential one. In the case of this particular video installation of Kelley’s, its display got settled after the second exhibition. In Chapter Five, the reader will see that it can take up to twenty years for works of art to get a more or less stable display.

In this brief *de-scription* of how the *EAPR* series came into being, I pointed out a number of mediators involved in its life cycle. First, there were some exhibition reviews of Kelley’s antecedent exhibitions that provoked the artist to create a series on his fictional abuse, showing how influential reviews can be in shaping the identity of an artwork. Second, I wrote about the found photographs coming mainly from high school yearbooks that inspired the artist to write the scenarios for the videos of the *EAPR* series. To return to the metaphor of the tree used in the introduction of this chapter, the exhibition reviews and the found photographs correspond to the roots of the tree; they are mediators that were used to inspire and create the artwork. Third, I mentioned the text that Kelley wrote on *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (A Domestic Scene)*, which is a sanctioning narrative part of the artwork’s script. The text acts as a mediator of the artist’s intentions and was written by Kelley in order to orient the reception of the work. The text contributes to the socialization of *EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene)* in that it explains the conceptual foundations of this artwork. Fourth, using the example of the first video installation of the *EAPR* series, I illustrated that the exhibition space is also a mediator in the life cycle of an artwork. In the case of *EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene)*, the display of the stage set used for the making of the video, which the artist has sold as an installation, had to be modified – uniquely for the inaugural exhibition – to fit into the gallery. Judging from later displays, the stage set has subsequently been presented as seen in the *EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene)* single-channel video. The *de-scription* of this first chapter of the *EAPR* series has illustrated just how polymorph Kelley’s projects are. In the following sub-section, I will proceed with the *description* of *Day Is Done* and show how its socialization has evolved.
Day Is Done: A Landmark Exhibition

Five years after the inaugural manifestation of EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene), Mike Kelley released another chapter of the EAPR series: Day Is Done (Fig 4.10). This time, the work was presented in Kelley’s New York art dealer’s gallery, the Gagosian Gallery. Above, I have suggested interpreting Kelley’s inaugural exhibitions of his series as landmark exhibitions within the history of his exhibitions, as it is often the only occasion that all offspring of the series will be exhibited together. Since in Day Is Done the visitors were presented with most of the constituents of this second chapter of the EAPR series, I contend that it was a landmark exhibition. In this sub-section of the chapter, I study how the socialization of Day Is Done took place; I examine the pre-exhibition publications, the inaugural exhibition and the reception of the exhibition.

The exhibition Day Is Done: Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #2-32 opened at the Gagosian Gallery on 24th Street in New York on November 11, 2005. For this show, Kelley integrated the videos EAPR #2 to #32 into 25 video/sculpture installations so that viewers could see the props and decor used in the making of the videos while also watching the video projections. The artist explained that his intention with Day Is Done “was to create a kind of spatialized filmic montage: a feature-length film made up of multiple simultaneous and sequential scenes playing in architectural space.”

In order to avoid complete chaos, a synchronization system ran the videos from three different spots simultaneously so as to avoid playing them all at the same time. Consequently, the visitors had to choose to view one of the three videos from one of the three locations in the gallery; when finished, they had to move throughout the exhibition space to view the other video(s) in a similar fashion. Kelley wanted to create an “experience akin to channel surfing” for the visitors.

Kelley’s inspiration for the scenarios of the Day Is Done videos, like in the case of EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene), stemmed from black-and-white yearbook photographs, many of which represented song-and-dance numbers. With the help of Scott Benzel, Kelley composed the extremely varied musical tracks (techno, country, gospel and Broadway musicals) heard in Day Is Done, and Kate Foley choreographed the dance numbers. In a text, Kelley stated: “My narrative glue consists of a thin plot in which workers in an undefined

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33 Mike Kelley, Day Is Done, 463.
34 John C. Welchman, “1000 words: Mike Kelley Talks About Day is Done,” Artnet 44, no. 2 (October 2005): 235.
‘institutional workplace’ attend a yearly grand spectacle.”35 The videos integrated the decors and props used during the shooting, and feature scenes such as a train dance number; the Virgin Mary’s crowning; a lonely singing vampire; a motivational speech; and a chicken dance.

Since the EAPR series was a fastidious project with a high production cost, the artist had to find the financial means to realize it. In 2005, his association with art dealer Larry Gagosian, the same dealer representing Douglas Gordon, turned out to be a strategic one. Indeed, Gagosian offered Kelley “vast gallery acreage and major financing for the artist’s most complex installation to date.”36 An artist’s association with such an art dealer means that the value of their work on the market is increased and it guarantees them a great connection with buyers. The Gagosian Gallery has been a mediator of importance in the life cycle of Day Is Done, as it contributed to its socialization in different ways: it provided the artist financial means to realize this large-scale project, it provided the exhibition space to present it, it increased the chances of the artist to have reviews on account of the gallery’s good visibility, and it put the artist in contact with many buyers.37

Other events, namely, the pre-exhibition publications occurring prior to the opening of Day Is Done, also contributed to its socialization. The Gagosian Gallery is known to extensively advertise its upcoming shows in art magazines, “not so much to attract customers as to reinforce the Gagosian brand, keep gallery artists in the public eye, and reassure previous buyers that “their” artist is being promoted.”38 This time, however, Kelley’s show was not only advertised, it was written about and discussed to a great extent even before the exhibition opened. On October 26, 2005, a little less than three weeks before the opening of the exhibition, the Gagosian Gallery sent out a press release.39 Sending out a press release a few weeks before the opening of an exhibition is common practice. The purpose is to create a number of expectations for the press, visitors and potential buyers. In the press release, Day Is Done was described as “a feature-length ‘musical’ composed of thirty-two separate video chapters.” It was also indicated that the artist had found the initial images for this project in

35 Ibid.
37 The acquisition of the various offspring of Day Is Done will be discussed later on in this chapter, but at this point, it can be mentioned that most of the offspring were acquired by private collectors, some of them regular customers of Larry Gagosian.
39 Press release: “Mike Kelley: Day is Done,” Gagosian Gallery, October 26, 2005, accessed July 4, 2011, http://i1.exhibit-e.com/gagosian/3fcc6928.pdf. In the press release, Kelley’s title project is spelled Day is Done, but since the artist always spells it Day Is Done, it was decided to spell it “Day Is Done” throughout the chapter.
high-school yearbooks. Finally, the press release announced that this project was going to exist in many forms; the large-scale video installation on view at the Gagosian Gallery would be only one of them.

In addition to the press release, prior to the opening of the exhibition on November 11, 2005, strategic media handling took place. The pre-exhibition coverage of Kelley’s upcoming exhibition reached an unprecedented level in the artist’s career. Two major international art magazines – *Artforum* and *Flash Art* – published interviews and articles on *Day Is Done*. In October 2005, “1000 words: Mike Kelley talks about *Day Is Done*” was published in *Artforum*. A short introduction written by John C. Welchman, an art historian specializing in the work of Mike Kelley, preceded the artist’s text. Welchman was familiar with the content and the creation context of the coming exhibition and gave a description of what to expect: “an ambitious multiplex of thirty-one videos and associated sculptural ‘stations.’” He also contended that the exhibition was “reactivating Kelley’s long-career investigation into the social mutations of desire and repression.”

Welchman’s introduction was followed by Kelley’s statement, which began with a description of the *Educational Complex* and his intention to fill the blanks in the architectural model with the *EAPR* series. Kelley then summarized what he had done in *EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene)*. Finally, in the last section, he described how the videos would be presented (in sculptural islands), how he planned to use the space at the Gagosian Gallery, his working method for the creation of this chapter of the project, and concluded with his desire “to create a contemporary *gesamtkunstwerk* that is not utopian in nature but is an extension of our current victim culture.”

The three pages dedicated to Kelley’s *Day Is Done* in *Artforum* also included many color photographs of *Educational Complex*, of *EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene)* and a few video stills of the videos included in *Day Is Done*. The text in *Artforum* set the stage for the visitors and ensured that they would arrive well-informed and prepared to see the artist’s latest artistic creation. The text can also be interpreted as one of the first public instantiations of *Day Is Done*, not as the prescriptive part of the script (that contains information on how to display the work), but as a gathering of the artist’s sanctioning narratives.

The November-December 2005 issue of *Flash Art* dedicated nine pages to Kelley’s latest production. It included an exclusive interview with the artist conducted by John Waters

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40 John C. Welchman, “1000 words,” 233.
41 Ibid., 235.
and an article – again, by John C. Welchman. In the interview, Kelley spoke of his intention to create 365 videos, explained how he was going to transform the space of the Gagosian Gallery to suit its large-scale installation, and addressed the presentation logistics of the numerous projections. Kelley and Waters also discussed the great variety of themes dealt with in the 31 videos. Towards the end of their conversation, whereas Waters shows great enthusiasm and tells Kelley that he has made an epic, the artist lucidly answers: “That could be a problem: this whole thing could just be one enormous vanity project.” The artist reveals his awareness of the danger of such an ambitious project, of which he had only completed the first two chapters at that point in time.

In his article “Day is Done: The False, the Real and the Memory in Mike Kelley’s Thirty Two Stations,” John C. Welchman wrote about memory, and also gave a few examples of the videos included in the exhibition Day Is Done. The publication of Welchman’s text prior to the opening of the exhibition also meant that a critical discourse on this chapter of the EAPR series began even before the public had had the chance to see it. Welchman’s article was based on conversations with the artist, the text published in Artforum mentioned above, on photographs and the viewing of single-channel videos later integrated into the video/sculpture installations. In Flash Art, he was able to reflect on the relationships between the yearbook photographs and the videos, and also the subjects addressed in Day Is Done. As he wrote, “One of the most interesting issues that this work raises is the idea of falsity – especially the nature of the ‘false’ as it appears in accounts of False Memory Syndrome that have long interested Kelley, and inform Day is Done.” The very last sentence of his article prepared the visitors for the spectacular features of the exhibition: “Unraveling a serpentine spiral of song and dance cunningly filtered through myth and memory, fact and fantasy, Kelley has ordained here a mesmeric event-structure that knits art and popular masquerade into a tragic-comic Technicolor dream-coat.” The descriptions of the work he provides make it seem as though Welchman had seen the exhibition. If the reader of this article did not pay attention to the date of publication, he/she could believe that it was in fact a review of the exhibition and not a pre-exhibition publication. It served to prescribe the exhibition layout on the basis of Kelley’s ideas.

43 John Waters, “Mike Kelley,” 58.
44 John C. Welchman, “Day is Done,” 60.
The pre-exhibition publications were an efficient way to publicize *Day Is Done*. But, more importantly, the tactic of publishing articles and interviews in two major art magazines showed an attempt to frame and orient the reception of *Day Is Done*. Similarly to technical objects that come with an instruction booklet clearly expressing their intended use, the press release and the texts published in *Artforum* and *Flash Art* were means of communicating the artist’s intentions to the visitors. These publications constitute the first public instantiations of *Day Is Done*’s script. They are not *auctorialis prescriptions*, as they do not state how to install the artwork in the exhibition space, but they address its theme, its coming into being, the artist’s sources of inspiration, and the mediators involved in its making. In the analysis of the exhibition reviews, I will point out how successful the framing of the exhibition was.

The opening of *Day Is Done* took place on the evening of November 11, 2005 and reviews of the evening described it as quite an event. Art critic and curator David Rimanelli reported that upon his arrival at the Gagosian Gallery, he faced a queue stretching along West 24th Street, New York and noticed that bouncers were present to control the crowd. Once inside the gallery, he was told that all New York dealers were present, and Europeans dealers as well.\(^{45}\) So, the opening of the exhibition attracted a large crowd and it shared similarities with a night at the discotheque where one has to line up outside along a velvet rope under the supervision of bouncers. The discotheque atmosphere continued when the crowd entered the gallery, since Kelley had staged *Day Is Done* in a spectacular manner. The gallery space had been opened up, lights were coming from everywhere (projections, spots, etc.), music was included in many of the projected videos, and the entire installation was very colorful.

*Day Is Done*’s debut attracted a great crowd, but also caught the attention of many critics; reviews were published in newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Village Voice*, and in major art magazines such as *ARTnews*, *artpress*, *Art in America*, *Frieze*, and *Art US*. Most reviews were extremely positive. For instance, Stephen Maine asserted that “Mike Kelley’s transformation of this ordinary space was a technical feat, but the visual and auditory barrage of *Day Is Done* […] was equaled by the humor and pathos of its subject and the intelligence of its design.”\(^{46}\) In *ARTnews*, Barbara Pollack spoke of a “tour de force exhibition” and qualified Kelley’s *Day Is Done* as his masterwork.\(^{47}\) The pre-exhibition publications are not explicitly mentioned in the reviews, with the exception of Steven Stern’s review published in *Frieze*, but the contextualization of the project in the various reviews

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\(^{45}\) David Rimanelli, “Night of 1,000 Dealers.”


seems to indicate that the critics had been well informed of the creation process and the artist’s intentions with his Day Is Done project. The scripting process of this artwork seemed to have been done smoothly; the reviewers of the exhibition reacted to the exhibition in the framework determined by the artist in the press release and in the pre-exhibition publications. In other words, Kelley’s sanctioning narratives had been well understood. This point also stresses their importance in the scripting of this work. The exhibition reviews stayed within the framing established by the artist’s sanctioning narratives and the pre-exhibition publications.

The de-scription of the inaugural exhibition and its reception done in this part of the chapter led me to reflect on different types of documents that are part of Day Is Done’s scripting process. An artwork’s script includes exhibition reviews as well as the artist’s installation instructions (floor plans, a list of equipment to use, directives for the adjustments of projectors, etc.). These documents have different purposes and are intended for different people. The exhibition reviews are mediators of how the work has been received, and they can also help identify other mediators in its life cycle. Whereas the exhibition reviews will be read by a greater audience (museum staff, gallery staff, artist, art dealers, people interested in the arts), the installation instructions will be interpreted only by the mediators involved in putting the work on display, and, on rare occasions, by researchers. They affect the socialization process differently, as the latter lead to the exhibition of a work, and the former follow the exhibition of a work. Still, both are essential to the artwork’s socialization.

Fragmenting Day Is Done

The size of the installation Day Is Done and Kelley's high-ranking position in the international market made it impossible for the work to be sold as a whole. Acquiring it would have been too expensive for any institution. Therefore, the life cycle or the journey of Day Is Done had to be re-routed: to continue to exist, not as an exhibition, but as a series of works, the large-scale installation had to be fragmented. It is a distribution strategy that Kelley and his dealer had thought of in advance. To prepare the ground for buyers, it was already announced in the press release that: “Day is Done will exist in several forms.” Also,

49 For example, the video/sculpture station Transmission (one of the 25 installations included in the exhibition Day Is Done) was sold by the auction house Christie’s on March 17, 2009 for € 35,000 ($45,000). This indicates that the price for the entire installation Day Is Done could reach up to 25 times this amount. Accessed July 4, 2011, http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=5180279.
Kelley has claimed that he was not interested in selling leftovers or objects witnessing past performances or exhibitions, and later stated in an interview that he “felt that the individual set pieces should be able to stand on their own as things, so [he] designed the sets as sculptures from the start.” Even though first presented as part of an ensemble, the artist thought they could stand-alone as well; they did not need to be exhibited in the presence of the other components of *Day Is Done*.

Similarly to *EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene)*, which has different configurations (or offspring) – editioned single-channel video, installation, series of photographs – *Day Is Done*’s offspring consisted of first, 25 video/sculpture installations; second, sculptures and props that were not included in the 25 video/sculptures stations; third, the limited series of photographs (an edition of five for each of them); and fourth, the preliminary drawings made by the artist prior to the shooting of the videos. Other offspring of the series were created or reconfigured in the years following the *Day Is Done* exhibition and are discussed in the fourth section of this chapter (4.4).

The closing of the exhibition *Day Is Done* corresponded to the end of a phase in its life cycle: its offspring were then beginning a life of their own, they would no longer be manifested in the presence of the other offspring of the series. The spreading of the offspring also corresponds the moment when the scripting process was rerouted, branching off in different directions. In the following section, by describing the life cycle of some of the offspring of the series, I analyze what happens to the scripting of *Day Is Done*, and whether or not it continues to evolve.

### 4.3 The Offspring of *Day Is Done*

In this third section of the chapter, I take up the scripting of *Day Is Done* at the moment when the exhibition was taken apart, when the different offspring were sold to different collections. Therefore, the scripting process branched off in different directions. The fragmentation of *Day Is Done* at the end of the exhibition in 2005 signified the end of the possibility to re-exhibit it in such a fashion as was seen at the Gagosian Gallery. In theory, if all the offspring were reassembled, it would be possible to restage *Day Is Done* as initially shown, but in practice, it is a very unlikely option, as the offspring are numerous and spread worldwide (Appendix 2). Indeed, different parties have acquired offspring of *Day Is Done*, mainly

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private collectors. For example, the Munich-based collector Ingvild Goetz acquired three installations: *Woods Group*, *Joseph Supplicates*, and *Lonely Vampire*; the French collector François Pinault, owner of the installation version of *EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene)*, purchased *Pink Curtain*; the Miami-based Rubell family acquired *Fresno*; the Broad Art Foundation in Santa Barbara acquired *Gym Interior*; and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam bought *Black Curtain* and *Switching Marys*.52

In order to better understand how the scripting process was rerouted and branched off in different directions after the exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery in 2005, the two following sub-sections will describe the socialization process of five offspring of *Day Is Done*, namely *Woods Group*, *Lonely Vampire*, *Joseph Supplicates*, *Black Curtain* and *Switching Marys*. It will also address the following question: by acquiring two or three “fragments” of *Day Is Done*, were the Goetz Collection and the Stedelijk Museum creating sub-groups of the large-scale project? To answer this question, I will study the exhibitions of these offspring.

**Black Curtain and Switching Marys in the Collection of the Stedelijk Museum**

Two video/sculpture installations of the series *Day Is Done* were acquired by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam: *Black Curtain* and *Switching Marys*. To this day, even though the institution owns two offspring of the series, they have never been exhibited together. In this sub-section of the chapter, I study the socialization of these offspring: I discuss how they have been “framed” in thematic exhibitions and how they have been related to *Day Is Done*. I also discuss the installation guide provided by Mike Kelley’s studio.

*Switching Marys* is a three-channel video installation in which the technical equipment has been visually integrated (Fig. 4.11 and 4.12). The installation’s three projectors are hung on a ladder along with Mary’s blue cape and her flower crown, and the speakers are displayed on a Greek column and stumps. Two of the projection screens are oval and present two images of Mary in alternation: in one, Mary stands on a stump with her arms down and her palms open towards us; in the other, she stands on a fake Greek column with her arms up and palms turned towards the sky. The projections of these images give the impression that they are sliding from one oval screen to the other. The two oval screens face a third screen onto

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52 To this day, I have been able to find 11 of the 25 video/sculpture stations (see Appendix 2). Since their acquisition by museums or private collectors, they all have been exhibited at least once. Amongst the ones I was able to trace, two were acquired by a museum (the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam), and the nine others by private collectors or foundations. When I contacted the Gagosian Gallery to inquire if all the fragments of the *Day is Done* exhibition had been sold, the staff of the gallery said they could not provide me the information I was looking for due to their privacy policy (Email from the Gagosian Gallery, January 29, 2010). See also Appendix 3 for an (incomplete) exhibition list of the offspring of *Day Is Done*. 
which is projected a video depicting the crowning of Virgin Mary by a little blond boy who has to climb up a ladder (one of the installation’s props) to put a crown of flowers on her head. In the second part of the video, Mary is portrayed as a hag and is seen chasing and screaming at the little boy, accusing him of ruining the most important day of her life. While standing on the ladder, the young boy turns around and blinks in a mocking way at the crowd while putting the crown on Mary’s head. The video, at first peaceful and beautiful, suddenly becomes suddenly scary and traumatic. Towards the end, when the evil Mary catches up with the young boy and corners him, he starts shouting “No, no – Bray’s Burgers, next door, basement, motorcycle gang! I want to wake up!” while flashback images of Bray’s Burgers hamburger stand (site referred to in other EARP video scenes as one of abuse) are projected. This last scene of the video shows “recovered memory” sequences. Switching Marys is certainly one of the greatest illustrations in Day Is Done of Repressed Memory Syndrome since the little boy is having flashbacks of a traumatic event.

Black Curtain, the second offspring acquired by the Stedelijk Museum, is a two-channel video installation in which the two projection screens are separated by a black curtain. The projections show two dance performances from EAPR. The first video, EAPR #14 (Modern Dance), is a somber, 3:30-minute modernist dance performed in silence. The second video, EAPR #15 (Goth Dance) is a 2:59-minute Goth dance performed to a techno pop song. In both videos, performers dance with a black curtain in the background. In the installation, the videos are played one after the other, and visitors are invited to go on the other side of the curtain to view the next projection. The costumes worn by both dancers are displayed on the structure holding the curtain. Part of the Day Is Done series, Modern Dance and Goth Dance are meant to be entertaining distractions for the staff working in the Educational Complex.

In 2006, the Stedelijk Museum’s director, Gijs van Tuyl, had planned to show Switching Marys and Black Curtain in Below the Surface, an exhibition presenting the museum’s recent acquisitions. The show was held in a temporary location situated in a former post building (the ‘CS building’). When the two works were installed in this site, their viewing turned out to be chaotic; they were placed too close to one another, and there was no synchronization system that allowed for only one of the video/sculpture installations to run at a particular

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53 During a lecture given in Paris, Kelley said that it is a place in Detroit where he was abducted by motorcyclists when he was a teenager. See: “Vidéo et après: Mike Kelley,” March 6, 2006, 136 minutes, accessed July 4, 2011, http://www.cnac-gp.fr/Pompidou/WebTV.nsf/0/256050E7964BA029C1257451004DACBD?OpenDocument&sessionM=4.1&L=1.
time. Therefore, it was decided to exhibit only *Switching Marys*. Nevertheless, in the *Stedelijk Museum Bulletin*, van Tuyl indicated that the institution had acquired two parts of Kelley’s *Day Is Done* project and added that “Each part presents the re-enactment and resuscitation of an extracurricular high school activity: carnival plays, religious passion plays, dressing up sessions, hazing rituals, reviews, All Hallows, Christmas festivities and so on.” The text in the *Bulletin* thus related this fragment of *Day Is Done* to the whole.

In *Below the Surface*, *Switching Marys* was presented with recent acquisitions of the Stedelijk Museum. In the explanatory text, van Tuyl explained the aim of the exhibition:

> with this exhibition an attempt has been made to sketch the opening lines of a contemporary narrative – albeit a hybrid narrative without a linear storyboard. The exhibition was composed as a symphony with six passages that together comprise a diversified, rhythmic whole, embracing themes such as human existence, violence, death, good and evil, aesthetics and ethics, art and politics, media, magic and religion; in brief, all the aspects of the human condition.

Within the so-called symphony with six passages, Kelley’s *Switching Marys* was displayed in proximity to (or “appropriately prefaced by,” to use van Tuyl’s terms) a photograph by Philip-Lorca diCorcia of a lit pole dancer. *Switching Marys*’ inaugural exhibition outside of *Day Is Done* thus took place in the context of an exhibition addressing a large scope of topics. The framing of *Switching Marys* within that exhibition remained rather open.

In December 2008, *Switching Marys* was reinstalled in the Nieuwe Kerk, in Amsterdam, as part of the exhibition *Holy Inspiration: Religion and Spirituality in Modern Art*, which showed artworks from the Stedelijk Museum collection. As stated in the exhibition booklet distributed to the visitors, the works in the exhibition “reflect[ed] religion as experienced by a range of twentieth-century artists.” Further, it was indicated that: “*Holy Inspiration* exhibits the evidence of a Christian iconographic tradition that remains very much alive; of influences exerted by Eastern religions; and of how feelings of religious connection to nature can be expressed through art.” In one of the three videos that have been integrated into the video/sculpture installation *Switching Marys*, Kelley revisits the popular ritual that is May Crowning. Linked to another video of the *EAPR* series where a young girl wins a beauty contest, in *Switching Marys*, the same young girl is depicted as the Virgin and is given a flower crown. In this work, the artist connects events of popular culture – beauty contests – with religious rituals – May Crowning – and mixes their related iconography. In the

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54 Conversation with Gert Hoogeveen, Chief of the Audiovisuals Department at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, July 24, 2008.
56 Ibid., 61.
exhibition catalogue, Marty Bax classified Kelley’s work among contemporary artists who “use religious (especially Catholic and Orthodox) iconography to comment critically on today’s welfare society.” Other artists exhibited in the show, such as Gilbert & George, Damien Hirst, Julian Schnabel and Bill Viola, were also classified in this group.

Of the two offspring of Day Is Done owned by the Stedelijk Museum, only Switching Marys could be included in this exhibition, as the content of Black Curtains does not address religious iconography. And even though the EAPR series and Day Is Done were described in the exhibition catalogue, it is the religious scene depicted in Switching Marys that led to its inclusion in the exhibition. This time, the Stedelijk Museum framed Switching Marys in an exhibition that highlighted its religious features. In the exhibition booklet, the visitors were informed that “Catholic rituals are central to the Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction video project.”58 No other comments on the EAPR project itself, or on the inaugural 2005 exhibition of Day Is Done, were provided. The exhibition catalogue though, gave a short explanation of the EAPR series and its starting point: the architectural model Educational Complex. The catalogue also mentioned that Switching Marys was first installed in the Day Is Done exhibition held at the Gagosian Gallery.59

The framing of Switching Marys in Holy Inspiration contrasted to the loose framing of the work done when it was exhibited in 2006 as part of the new acquisitions of the Stedelijk Museum. In Holy Inspiration, the catholic ritual of the May Crowning was put forward. Thematically speaking, the content of the work was directly addressed. In the exhibition booklet, the emphasis was put uniquely on catholic rituals. In the catalogue, a very short description of Switching Marys broadens the interpretation suggested in the exhibition booklet, as it also mentions other themes at the core of the EAPR series such as repressed memories, traumas, rituals and extracurricular activities. Among all the framings of the offspring of Day Is Done studied in this section of the chapter, this one is by far the one that addressed the very content of a specific offspring more directly.

Yet, in Holy Inspiration, the presentation of Switching Marys in the exhibition space turned out to be problematic. In the Nieuwe Kerk, the work was displayed in its own space with black-painted walls and ceilings, and a carpeted floor. The only light in the space was provided by the three projectors and one spot light directed on a sidewall of the room to help the visitors circulate in the space and towards the exit. However, unlike previous exhibitions,

58 Ibid.
the videos were played with the volume at a minimum, attenuating the effect of the scary video scene projected on the rectangular screen. When the exhibition first opened, the Stedelijk Museum staff set volume for the sound according to Kelley’s precise instructions but once the exhibition opened, the staff working at the Nieuwe Kerk decided to keep the volume at a minimal level because the soundtrack bothered them. 60 Most probably unaware of Mike Kelley’s auctorial prescriptions on the setup of the sound, the staff of the Nieuwe Kerk did not respect the exhibition modalities of Switching Marys. The soundtrack of this artwork is very important as the sound intensifies throughout the 5 minutes and 10 seconds of the video loop. In a way, what happened to Kelley’s piece shown in Holy Inspiration could be seen as analogous to a situation in which the guards of a certain museum room were to decide to temporarily cover a part of a painting arguing that they found the color or the figure disturbing. Within the four possible forms of intervention established by Madeleine Akrich that users can make on dispositifs – displacement, adaptation, extension and diversion – what took place here is an adaptation. 61 The staff of the Nieuwe Kerk (the “users” in an ANT vocabulary) introduced a modification to the exhibition modalities prescribed by the artist in order to avoid being irritated by the installation soundtrack. This example of the misreading of the script or even ignorance of the script’s existence can lead to a presentation that fundamentally altered the artwork’s manifestation and impact.

Earlier in the chapter, I have stated that the pre-exhibition publications of the exhibition Day Is Done were the first public instantiations of the series’ script. When the offspring of Day Is Done were sold to institutions and private collectors, very detailed installation guides accompanied the installations. For instance, in the curatorial files at the Stedelijk Museum, one can find a ten-page installation guide for Black Curtain and a nine-page installation guide for Switching Marys. 62 Each guide begins with a brief description of what the installation consists of. For instance, Black Curtain is described as such: “This work consists of a free standing frame on casters which supports a curtain with valance, two alternately playing video projections, and two framed photographs.” 63 The rest of the guide contains installation photographs of the installation as displayed at the Gagosian Gallery; a detailed floor layout, instructions on how to assemble the different components of the work: the curtains, the

60 Email from Gert Hoogeveen, Chief of the Audiovisuals Department at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, December 22, 2009.
62 See curatorial files at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, consulted June 28, 2011. A copy of these installation guides is also kept in the Audiovisuals Department.
63 Installation guide of Black Curtain. See curatorial files at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, consulted June 28, 2011.
screens, the electronics; recommendations on the adjustments of the image and sound; precisions on where to hang the photographs; specifications of the lighting adjustments, and so on. Some measurements are very precise, as for instance the distance between the two screens and the curtains, but some of the installation decisions are left to the institution, as for instance the placement of the photographs. The guide stipulates that the photographs should be hung in proximity to the video they correspond to, but that they “do not have a set determination and should be hung with the architecture of the space in mind.”

These installation guides produced by Mike Kelley’s studio are prescriptive and inform the people in charge of displaying the offspring of *Day Is Done* in the exhibition space of the different steps to follow in order to install the artworks according to the artist’s will. They do not provide deep insight into the content and themes of the artworks, but they aim to ensure that even if displayed outside of the large-scale installation *Day Is Done*, their individual settings will be as close as possible to how they were displayed at the Gagosian Gallery in 2005.

Since being acquired by the Stedelijk Museum, *Switching Marys* and *Black Curtain* have only been exhibited in group shows though never at the same time nor next to one another. (*Black Curtain* was exhibited in *Eyes Wide Open*, another exhibition in which the Stedelijk Museum presented its latest acquisition, along with artworks from the Monique Zajfen Collection.) Such a presentation strategy has given them a life of their own, freeing them, but only partially, from their inaugural exhibition context, especially physically and also thematically, as it was done, for instance, in the exhibition *Holy Inspiration*. In the next section of the chapter, I will describe how the Goetz Collection has chosen to exhibit its three *Day Is Done* offspring.

**Woods Group, Lonely Vampire, and Joseph Supplicates in the Goetz Collection**

When the exhibition *Day Is Done* ended at the Gagosian Gallery, Munich collector Ingvild Goetz bought three video/sculpture installations: *Woods Group*, *Lonely Vampire*, and *Joseph Supplicates*. With the selection she made, Ingvild Goetz gathered installations representative of different photograph sources that inspired Kelley’s project: men dressed as vampires (*Woods Group* and *Lonely Vampire*); people wearing Halloween costumes, especially horror-related (*Woods Group*); and photographs of ceremonial and religious spectacles (*Joseph Supplicates*).  

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64 Ibid.  
Woods Group includes the videos EAPR #6, #7, #7A, #7B and #7C, grouped into a four-channel video installation. The videos are projected on screens attached to a chain-link fence. Elements seen in the videos are also displayed in the installation: artificial bushes (referring to the real bushes shown in the videos) and some of the wizard, vampire, druid and wandering ghoul costumes. Lonely Vampire is an installation comprising the stage set in which the video EAPR #20 was shot. The video is projected onto the back of the set and in this video, a half-hidden man, dressed as a vampire, sings behind a curtain while making gestures to control the movements of a wooden chair. The set looks like a small stage on which a motorized wooden chair spins in front of a curtain while behind it a monitor runs a 56-second loop taken from a 1950s science fiction B movie showing an astronaut adrift in outer space. Finally, Joseph Supplicates, another single-channel video installation, features the video EAPR #23 (Joseph Supplicates), depicting the scene of Joseph asking Mary’s parents for their daughter’s hand in marriage. In the video, Mary and her parents are sitting on folding chairs placed in a row, and Joseph is kneeling down. In the installation version of Joseph Supplicates, the three chairs are aligned on a platform facing a double-sided screen onto which the video EAPR #23 is projected. In front of one of the chairs (in the video this chair corresponds to Mary’s) is a kneeling figure replicating Joseph’s lower body. Connected to the platform, there is also a metal extension supporting the rack of ritual rods used in the video sequence.

After being acquired by Ingvild Goetz, Woods Group, Joseph Supplicates, and Lonely Vampire were loaned to the Contemporary Arts Centre Wiels in Brussels for the retrospective, Mike Kelley: Educational Complex Onwards 1995–2008.66 As indicated in the exhibition title, the starting point of the exhibition was the architectural model Educational Complex, and, as stated on the institution’s website, the show was “conceived as a history, in which every work forms a chapter. Its unfurling allows to understand how and why Mike Kelley has, since 1995, made use of the notion autobiography to explore, in a poetic way, the forms of power and the power of forms.”67 The architectural model Educational Complex (1995) was on show on the first floor of the centre. Many works also linked to the Educational Complex were presented in that exhibition such as Repressed Spatial Relationships Rendered as Fluid series (2002), a group of mobiles actualizing the drawings taken from memory for the Educational Complex. On the top floor of the Contemporary Arts Centre Wiels, the three

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video/sculpture installations belonging to the Goetz Collection were presented alongside the series of photographs of *Day Is Done* and the installation *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (A Domestic Scene).*

In Brussels, *Woods Group, Lonely Vampire,* and *Joseph Supplicates* were shown as autonomous entities; each being identified with its own wall label. This showing at Wiels constituted the inaugural exhibition of these offspring as individual works of art. Spreading the video/sculptures in the gallery contrasted with the set up used in the show at New York’s Gagosian Gallery where islets were very close to one another, staged in a “labyrinthine sequence,” and where the only source of light in the exhibition space came from the numerous projections, creating a very hypnotic atmosphere. This initial arrangement also gave a sense of density to the display and the visitors were completely immersed in the artwork. Granted more space in Brussels, the installations could run continuously without one disturbing the exhibition of another (Fig. 4.13 to 4.15). Since they were so spread out in the exhibition space, it contributed to emphasizing that they were three distinct installations rather than parts of one large-scale installation. Besides, whereas the *Day Is Done* presentation at the Gagosian Gallery required a transformation of the gallery space and completely engulfed it, the offspring, as displayed in Brussels, did not necessitate any intervention on the actual exhibition space. Since the space at Wiels was not overcrowded with projections, stage sets, props and sculptures, it was easier for the visitors of that exhibition to focus on one installation at the time.

Withdrawn from the ensemble that composed *Day Is Done* in 2005, the meaning and the reception of *Woods Group, Lonely Vampire, Joseph Supplicates* shifted. When confronted with *Day Is Done,* viewers could intuit a certain narrative flow, as some of the characters are included in different scenes and in different video/sculpture stations. Indeed, some of the characters in the videos integrated into the *Woods Group, Lonely Vampire,* and *Joseph Supplicates* installations are part of other videos in the series; therefore, they migrate from one screen to another, from one moving tableau to another. For instance, the character of Mary seen in *Joseph Supplicates* is also part of videos included in other installations that were exhibited in *Day Is Done: Picking a Mary, Switching Marys, Procession Ramp,* and *Candy Cane Throne.* Therefore, when the three video/sculpture installations acquired by the Goetz collection were shown as part of *Day Is Done,* the visitors were invited to follow a certain tread, to make connections between the varied video/sculpture islets. In Brussels, neither in

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the wall text nor in the exhibition booklet, were these works individually discussed. At each occasion, more emphasis was made on the artist’s intentions with the series than its content. No explicit clues were given to the public as to what Woods Group, Lonely Vampire and Joseph Supplicates were actually about. Like all of subsequent exhibitions of Day Is Done’s offspring, an emphasis was put on discussing the body of work as a whole rather than the different works constituting it. Even if the scripting process was rerouted at the end of the 2005 exhibition, a very strong connection still existed between the offspring as individual works of art and the body of work to which they belonged. This suggests that each of the offspring does not acquire its own separate scripting process but remains rooted in the inaugural exhibition.

A few months later, in 2008, the Munich-based Goetz collection organized an exhibition of over 40 works by Mike Kelley. Woods Group, Joseph Supplicates and Lonely Vampire were included in the show and, as in Brussels, they were shown in the same room, once again distanced from one another, allowing for all projections to be run at the same time (Fig. 4.16 and 4.17). In Munich, the space was certainly the brightest of the three (New York and Brussels being the other two), as ceiling lights were also used. This situation contributed to a change in the viewer’s experience of the works as they were no longer in a dimly lit space. Through the press release, the visitors were informed that with Woods Group, Lonely Vampire and Joseph Supplicates, the Goetz Collection was presenting “three of the most important works from the series.” This statement was not further explained or justified in the press release or in the exhibition catalogue. The reading of the interview published in the catalogue informs us, however, that Woods Group is one of Kelley’s favorite installations of the EAPR series. The artist states: “it is a kind of forum for the presentation of my writing. It contains videotapes of actors speaking various dialogues that are very abstract – somewhat similar to the kind of writing I did for performances in the 1980s.”

Perhaps an installation such as Woods Group can be interpreted as a key one within the body of work of Day Is Done as one of the videos projected stages a vampire delivering a motivational speech to the workers of the Educational Complex. In the very beginning, the vampire insists on the importance played by assemblies and claims that “They not only provide a respite from the daily work schedule, through them we are exposed to speeches, music, drama, and other

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uplifting forms of communication." During assembles, workers also “witness the seasonal plays… and crown the yearly ‘Joseph’ and ‘Mary,’ who are chosen from our ranks. By hearing that a Joseph and a Mary ought to be selected, the visitors could then make a connection with the installation *Joseph Supplicates* that was presented in the same room. And, seeing that a vampire was giving a motivational speech in which he celebrated events, music and dramas, links could be made to *Lonely Vampire*. These connections could be made in Brussels and in Munich, since the three works were presented alongside each other in both exhibitions.

Since their acquisition by the Goetz collection, *Woods Group*, *Lonely Vampire*, and *Joseph Supplicates* have been shown together on two occasion, first in Brussels in 2008, and then in Munich in 2008-2009. It seems as though these three fragments have been fixed in a presentation mode that links them together, creating a mini-version of *Day Is Done*. They might fail to reproduce the “event” feature of the inaugural showing of *Day Is Done*, but they nevertheless show a representative sample of the re-enactments created by Kelley inspired by photographs and the literature on repressed memory syndrome. The socialization of the three installations acquired by the Goetz Collection is much more intertwined than that of the two installations acquired by the Stedelijk Museum, as the latter two have not been exhibited together. Though part of the same collection, their socialization did not occur concurrently. Yet, in 2010, when a selection of the collection of media art works owned by Ingvild Goetz was presented at ZKM in Karlsruhe, only *Woods Group* featured in the exhibition. Therefore, the socialization process of the three works owned by Ingvild Goetz was rerouted, since it was not the mini-version that was shown, but only *Woods Group*. Nevertheless, the exhibition catalogue included mentions of the three works in addition to an entry on the single-channel video *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #1 (A Domestic Scene).* In fact, the catalogue gave the impression that the three artworks that had once been part of the large-scale installation *Day Is Done* had been included in the exhibition. The text in this catalogue is made up of long quotations of Mike Kelley’s 2007 text on *Day Is Done*, to

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71 Excerpt from video EAPR #6 (Motivational Speech). See also the libretto in Mike Kelley, *Day is Done* (New York: Gagosian Gallery; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 521.

72 Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 521.


which I will come back later in the chapter, and of the essays that appeared in the catalogue of the Mike Kelley exhibition held at the Goetz Collection in 2008.75

To this day, in the various exhibition-accompanying publications, the offspring of Day Is Done are still framed and interpreted from the perspective of their belonging to a larger body of work. No extended formal interpretation of their individual content has been made so far. The owning institutions of these works have adopted quite a paradoxical position: they display them as autonomous entities, but the iconography of the installations acquired has not been extensively analyzed in publications – rather, the accompanying information always relates the individual works to the series as a whole. On account of the framing that has occurred so far, I assert that the mediation of these works done via wall labels, exhibition booklets, and exhibition catalogues, contributes to treating the exhibition of these works outside of the Day Is Done exhibition as partial manifestations, as if “some parts or aspects [...] are momentarily or definitively inaccessible.”76 The emphasis has been put on how their entire project came into being and on what the visitors could not see, rather than discussing the content of the individual works the visitors were facing.

The de-scription done in this part of the chapter has shown that even if the offspring of Day Is Done are considered individual works of art, when interpreted, more attention is paid to the body of work to which they belong than their unique content and theme. They remain strongly connected to their inaugural exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery. Within the genealogy of the project, more emphasis is always paid to the ancestor – the Day Is Done exhibition of 2005 – than to the offspring. In the next section of the chapter, I will discuss alternative configurations of Day Is Done, the book Day Is Done and the film Day Is Done that the artist made after the exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery. I will highlight their role in the socialization of the overall project Day Is Done.

4.4. Alternative Configurations of Day Is Done

The previous section of the chapter focused on discussing and analyzing the exhibited components of the Day Is Done project. In this section, I describe phases of the life cycle of Day Is Done that occurred after its 2005 exhibition: namely the release of the film Day Is

Day Is Done that took place in 2006 and the publication of the catalogue Day Is Done that occurred in 2007. The aim of this section is to show that all offspring of Day Is Done – the video/sculpture installations discussed above, the film, and the book – have to be considered as part of a whole – the project Day Is Done – and that the socialization of this project continues to take place because of its offspring.

The Film Day Is Done
In 2005-2006, Mike Kelley made a film with the videos integrated into the exhibition Day Is Done. Whereas the video EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene) was realized in the tradition of early television dramas, with this alternative configuration of Day Is Done, the artist wanted “to weave a large group of Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstructions into something resembling a feature-length musical film.”77 Indeed, the film, available on two DVDs, lasts 169 minutes and gathers dance and song numbers along with a few spoken scenes. This film offers the Day Is Done project another distribution possibility and is certainly, of all the different configurations of Day Is Done, the easiest format to present. It is also the one that allows the broadest diffusion as it can be rented and screened in theaters, in festivals as well as in museums. Aside from the book, to which the next section of this part of the chapter is dedicated, it is one of the most affordable offspring of the project.78

In the film, the videos EAPR #2 to 32 are not edited in order. After the opening credits, the film begins with a view of the Educational Complex (not Kelley’s architectural model, but in this occurrence, Cal Arts, the art school Kelley attended for his Masters degree). All of the film’s scenes either take place in the complex or in its surroundings. After hearing the whistle of a train (i.e. “choo-choo”), viewers are introduced to the first three characters of the film executing a train dance in the institution’s corridors. Their dancing throughout the building serves as intermissions between different first scenes of the film. The sound of the train whistle serves as a warning that it is time for all the workers to gather for a motivational speech. Vampires, ghouls, devils, goths and other kinds of carnivalesque characters are leaving their offices and heading outside guided by a druid, which will lead them to a stage where the Motivational Vampire will give his speech. Four workers – forming the Woods Group - will leave to wander in the complex’s woody surroundings, but most workers will

77 Mike Kelley, Day is Done, 507.
78 Like the single-channel video of EAPR #1 (A Domestic Scene), Day Is Done is also distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix. See Electronic Arts Intermix website for the fees, accessed July 4, 2011, http://www.eai.org/titleOrderingFees.htm?id=14349#terms.
either participate in or attend to different dance and song numbers of the yearly grand spectacle.

As critic Paul Young has suggested, *Day Is Done* is “more of a collage than a typical narrative film.” As critic Paul Young has suggested, *Day Is Done* is “more of a collage than a typical narrative film.” It is made of many short scenarios based on specific photographs. In the film, to indicate to the viewers that a scene is a re-enactment of a photograph, Kelley has inserted title cards. For instance, prior to the motivational speech, the title *Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction #6* appears, but the subtitle *Motivational Speech* does not. Kelley not only assembled the videos in a non-numerical way, he also divided them into fragments. For instance, when presented in the installation version, the video *EAPR #7B (Woods Duo)* lasts 9:22 minutes. In the film version, the video has been divided in 6 fragments that are intertwined with other *EAPR* videos.

With the film, Kelley turned *Day Is Done* into a structured carnivalesque delirium. I use the term structured since a lot of editing has taken place. Contrary to Sven Lütticken, who interprets Kelley’s film *Day Is Done* as a by-product of the exhibition, I consider the film as another configuration of *Day Is Done*; it is one of the project’s offspring. Kelley did not plainly edit the videos in numerical order, he rethought the project and “intermixed [the videos] into meandering semi-narrative.” Making a film out of the assembled videos is a process that is typical of Kelley’s artistic production: every body of work the artist creates includes artworks created with a great variety of mediums.

Since the re-exhibition of the large-scale installation *Day Is Done* is unlikely to happen, the release of the film *Day Is Done* contributed to the socialization of the project, as it gives the public the opportunity to see all the videos that were shown in the large-scale installation at the Gagosian Gallery. Its launching had the effect of rerouting the scripting process of the project. It is another offspring that now circulates in the art world. Like the other offspring of *Day Is Done* – the 25 video/sculpture installations – discussed above, it is considered by the artist as an individual work of art. I would like to suggest that it also plays a key role in the scripting process of *Day Is Done*, being a single-channel video reconstruction of what the artist had done through the means of an exhibition in 2005. The broken narrative of the film helps understand how all the video/sculpture installations are intertwined.

81 See the text on the DVD box of *Day Is Done*. 

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In section 4.3 of the chapter, I have argued that in their framing, the 25 video/sculpture installations were always strongly connected to the body of work to which they belonged. In the reviews of the film *Day Is Done*, the ancestor – the 2005 exhibition – is also always referred to. 82 This supports my conclusion that, although the scripting process “branches out” in different directions with the emergence of the offspring, it never loses the connection with its core. The 2005 exhibition is still looming large in the background of all of *Day Is Done*’s offspring.

**The Catalogue *Day Is Done***

About two years after the end of the *Day Is Done* exhibition, Yale University Press and the Gagosian Gallery published the catalogue *Day Is Done*. It contains over 450 pages of installation shots and video stills, and reproductions of Kelley’s drawings of the props and costumes used in the making of the videos. It also includes different texts – sanctioning narratives written by the artist, i.e., “*Day Is Done*,” “Scene Notes,” “The Music of *Day Is Done*,” an essay, “Fête accompli” written by John C. Welchman and a libretto, which gathers all the dialogues and lyrics of the different video/sculpture installations. In his texts, Kelley describes his working method, explains his intentions, and identifies his sources of inspiration. Two CDs of music come with the catalogue as well. They gather all the music composed and recorded by Kelley and Scott Benzel. The catalogue *Day Is Done* is a great source of information for those who haven’t seen the exhibition at the Gagosian Gallery. Still, it gives the viewer a different experience than does the exhibition. Indeed, videos are not like paintings; they cannot be reproduced by another means such as a photograph. They can be described in words, but cannot be confined to one single image.

In the first section of the chapter, I have discussed Kelley’s functional writings, the texts he writes to accompany his works that have the purpose of clearly indicating his intentions, and serve to frame the reception of his exhibitions as well. When *Craft Morphology Flow Chart* was first presented at *Carnegie International* in 1991, Kelley’s text was printed in the catalogue. When the first chapter of the *EAPR* series was exhibited at the Emi Fontana Gallery in 2000, Kelley’s text on the project was given to the visitors of the exhibition in the form of a leaflet. In the case of *Day Is Done*, prior to the opening of the exhibition, Kelley published a text of one thousand words in *Artforum* and gave interviews. One could have

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expected that his framing of the project would cease there. However, the artist decided to expand his initial text and included it in the book *Day Is Done* published almost two years after the exhibition. I assert that the book contributed greatly to the scripting process of *Day Is Done*. Indeed, in this publication, the artist has reached an outstanding level of documentation of this chapter of the *EAPR* series, which could not have been attained if the book had been published concurrently with the exhibition. It would not have been as elaborate. Being published after the exhibition gave the artist a certain distance to choose what would remain of *Day Is Done*, and how he wanted the exhibition and its conception to be remembered. Inevitably, the book is an incomplete script, as it does not speak of the fragmentation of the project, as it does not enumerate the numerous collections and institutions that acquired the work, nor does it reflect on what to expect in the future. It serves to understand the conceptual background of the project and helps readers and researchers visualize what the 2005 exhibition looked like. Yet, it does not include a series of auctorial prescriptions on how to install the offspring in the exhibition space, like the ones included in the installation guides of the 25 video/sculpture installations discussed in section 4.3 of the present chapter. It is a great tool of reference which ought to be complemented by other documents, such as installation guides, exhibition reviews, and so on.

Even if advertised as a catalogue on the Gagosian Gallery website, I would argue that its status is in between an artist’s publication and a standard exhibition catalogue.\(^83\) I use the term artist’s publication and not artist’s book as the artist’s book is an artwork and *Day Is Done* – the book – is not an artwork but depends on an artwork, more precisely on an artwork that took the form of an exhibition in 2005. Among the usual functions of an exhibition catalogue, Anne-Mœglin-Delcroix states that the catalogue is at least an artwork’s trace or the memory of an exhibition; it is a scientific and critical tool written by experts on the topic; and by authenticating the artworks and in acknowledging their importance, the catalogue contributes to establishing their value as artistic products on the market.\(^84\) Similarly, Klaus Scherübel contends that the exhibition catalogue functions alongside artworks and the exhibition of those works by granting them a degree of permanence while simultaneously guaranteeing their public existence. It also conditions the current or future perception of artworks via the content of its critical commentaries and the quality of the documentation and information it contains. Thus,


not only is the catalogue a tool for mediation, but it is authoritative within the art system.85

Day Is Done – the book – is indeed a tool for mediation: it acts as the memoir of the 2005 exhibition, it includes the essay of scholar John C. Welchman, and it documents the project by different means (artist’s essay, photographs, drawings, libretto). In the end, it contributes to the acknowledgement of the existence of this project and its varied offspring in the different spheres of the art world. Even though Kelley has stated that the different offspring were individual works of art, in his text “Day Is Done,” he mainly speaks of Day Is Done as an ensemble. Despite the fact that the exhibition has taken place and that the video/sculpture installations have been spread to different collections, one is still given the impression that he/she could see Day Is Done as a whole again. I argue that despite the almost impossible re-exhibition, Day Is Done still exists precisely because of the various mediators that scripted the work and in spite of its physical fragmentation.

John C. Welchman’s essay published in the book makes it more explicit that the exhibition has taken place and is a thing of the past. His essay’s title, “Fête accompli,” is a play on words. When read in French, it contains a mistake, as “fête” is a feminine word, so the author should have written “fête accomplie.” Welchman plays with the words “fête” and “fait” that sound alike, and rather than writing “fait accompli” (a thing that has already happened), he writes “fête accompli.” Indeed, the day of the people working in the Educational Complex is done, they have attended the yearly grand spectacle. Their day fulfilled with carnivalesque events is over. Just as he had announced already in 2005 in Artforum, Day Is Done, the exhibition, was “Kelley’s chicken dance around the art world.”86

His essay published in the book reflects on how the artist has done so, and discusses the different themes addressed in the 25 video/sculpture stations.

In contrast to the reception of the 2005 exhibition and of the film released in 2006 that was generally extremely positive, the reception of the book Day Is Done has been quite negative. For instance, deputy director of the magazine Art Monthly, Ian Hunt, has qualified Kelley’s catalogue as a “heavyweight production” and part of a trend to gigantism that shows money talking between galleries and publishers, and readers innocently seeking information and enlightenment feeling like so many country cousins. The Kelley volume, glossy documentation of an elaborate mixed-media work, is coherent, arranged as chapters following on from photos of extracurricular activity from high-school yearbooks, and of course there’s wit and

86 John C. Welchman, “1000 Words:” 233.
interest to be found in it, but it also feels like failure to edit and a lost chance to appropriate the available commodity form, the music DVD.\textsuperscript{87}

Hunt’s suggestion of appropriating the DVD format for documentation of this project is an interesting one. Indeed, the photographs, texts and music of \textit{Day Is Done} included in the catalogue cannot replace the moving tableaux that composed the large-scale installation. This can prompt one to wonder why the artist has decided to publish all the dialogues of the \textit{EAPR} videos #2 to 32, and also accompanied the book with two CDs of music, but did not provide any video recordings of the installation at the Gagosian Gallery. In the \textit{Library Journal}, D. Bryant compared the publication to the 2005 exhibition and stated: “as a book, it simply disappoints. Not recommended.”\textsuperscript{88}

In these two reviews, the authors express their disappointment, as the book failed to re-enact the exhibition, but I would argue: so would any kind of documentation. The catalogue should not be envisaged as a replacement of the exhibition, but as a complement. By publishing the libretto, which is a compilation of the songs and spoken material of \textit{Day Is Done}, Kelley gave readers the opportunity to take the time to engage with the abstract texts that he wrote having been influenced by photographs of carnivalesque events depicted in high school yearbooks. Therefore, I suggest considering this book, and the film as well for that matter, as another offspring of the project \textit{Day Is Done}. To return to the metaphor of this project proposed in the introduction, the book is a branch of the tree. Engaging with it implies not only taking into account the branch, but also the entire tree. The \textit{de-scription} of \textit{Day Is Done} carried out throughout the chapter has shown how intertwined all offspring are with one another.

\subsection*{4.5 Conclusion}

The chapter began with a very brief description of the fragmentation of Carl Andre’s \textit{Equivalents} series. In the case of the \textit{Equivalents}, their re-exhibition as an ensemble is made impossible as one of the eight \textit{Equivalents} is made of a different type of brick than the seven others. Nevertheless, the interpretation of each one of them is always made in connection to

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\textsuperscript{87} Ian Hunt, “Summer Reading,” \textit{Art Monthly}, no. 308 (July-August 2007): 45. Hunt comment on the heavyweight production can also be taken literally as the book weights 8,5 pounds (approximately 3,9 kg).
\textsuperscript{88} David Bryant, “Kelley, Mike & John Welchman. \textit{Day is Done},” \textit{Library Journal}, issue 13 (15 August 2007): 84.
\end{flushright}
the series to which they belong. Throughout the chapter, the *de-scription* of the life cycle of Mike Kelley’s *Day Is Done* has shown how the identity of this work has been shaped over time. *Day Is Done* is only a chapter or a part of the *EAPR* series that Kelley began in reaction to the critical reception of some of his earlier bodies of work. Since his works made with soft toys and other craft materials had been interpreted by certain critics as though they were about him having been abused, Kelley began a series dealing with (fictional) abuse and traumas. This series was also inspired in large part by literature on Repressed Memory Syndrome. The exhibition reviews of his earlier production have been mediators that triggered the very making of the *EAPR* series.

The section of the *EAPR* series scrutinized in this chapter, *Day Is Done*, is an artwork that initially took the form of an exhibition. As I have argued in the chapter, it was a landmark exhibition. The scale of the installation shown at the Gagosian Gallery made it impossible to be sold as a whole, which led to its fragmentation into 25 video/sculpture installations. The artist and his art dealer had already planned this fragmentation prior to the opening of the show. The spreading of the offspring into different collections meant that from that point on, the works would be exhibited outside of the context in which they were born. The *decription* of some of the re-exhibitions of the offspring has shown that different strategies have taken place. For instance, the Goetz Collection acquired three offspring, as if attempting to create a mini-version of *Day Is Done*. On two occasions (in Brussels and Munich), *Woods Group*, *Lonely Vampire*, and *Joseph Supplicates* were exhibited in proximity to one another. Nevertheless, when exhibited together or alone, the interpretation of the offspring usually pays more attention to the body of work to which they belong rather than to the offspring themselves. This leads to the conclusion that rather than ceasing to socialize after it was spread to different collections, *Day Is Done* continued to socialize through its offspring. The 2005 exhibition remains the backbone of any interpretation of the offspring. The present chapter has shown how the scripting process of *Day Is Done* has evolved over time and how it branched off after the 2005 exhibition, but despite the fragmentation and the release of other offspring, a film and a book, all parts still very strongly refer back to the 2005 exhibition, both conceptually and thematically. To allude, one last time, to the metaphor of the tree, I suggested that the roots of *Day Is Done* can be found in a part of the critical reception of

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90 The framing of *Switching Marys* in the exhibition *Holy Inspiration* organized by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam is an exception.
Kelley’s artistic production from the 1980s and early 1990s. It is these reviews that led him to begin the EAPR series to which *Day Is Done* belongs. The trunk of *Day Is Done* is its 2005 exhibition held at the Gagosian Gallery. Finally, *Day Is Done*’s tree branches are the many offspring that were released on the market after the 2005 show.

Engaging with *Day Is Done*, no matter from which angle implies the study of a network in which numerous offspring and mediators interact. Using *scripting* as a concept, and *description* as a method gave me the ability to discern the exact details of the socialization process of *Day Is Done*, identify all the mediators involved in its life cycle and their respective influence, and thus better grasp the identity of the work. Instead of seeing the offspring as individual works, my *de-scription* has shown that each of them in fact connects back to the center: the 2005 exhibition.
Chapter 5

On Finding a Suitable Exhibition Format:
John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*
5.0 Introduction

In 1985, the National Gallery of Canada acquired John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* (1982), a work that consisted of three projections of 16 mm films presented alongside each other with sound. *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* can be described as a fiction film, made in a road movie format, about the encounter of two men, a driver and a hitchhiker, the action of which is divided into three projections. The central color projection is a film presenting a continuous 30-minute conversation between the two men. The side black-and-white projections are silent films that serve to illustrate with texts and images what goes on in the driver’s mind (left projection) and the hitchhiker’s mind (right projection). *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* is a work on the impossibility of knowing what goes on in the minds of others and, consequently, on the challenges of understanding each other.

Even though the National Gallery of Canada’s policy is to display its new acquisitions, once *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* entered the collection, it was put directly into storage. The work could not be exhibited, as it had, since its inaugural exhibition in West Berlin in 1982, a synchronization problem. The perfect synchronization of the three projections is crucial to the understanding of the piece as the side projections serve as “a linguistic interpretative play-off” and offer “a meta-dialogue to the central screen’s ‘true’ account.”¹ One could say that the support of the work – 16 mm films – and the equipment used to present it were inadequate. After being acquired, *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* disappeared from view for a period of about ten years until a group of mediators – the artist, curators and conservators of the National Gallery of Canada and other curators interested in exhibiting it – tried to find a solution to make it presentable again. As I will argue below, Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* is a work that was clearly defined conceptually in 1982, but did not reach a functional state until 1993-1994, and only in 2000 found a presentation format that was fully satisfactory according to the artist.

In this chapter, I reconstruct the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* using the method of de-scription. This method serves to show which mediators have contributed to the shaping of the identity of the work. Like in the previous chapters, the de-scription of the life cycle of this work demonstrates how artworks can change after their inaugural exhibition. This was done mainly from the presentation perspective in the chapter on Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* and the distribution perspective in the scripting

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of Mike Kelley’s *Day is Done*. It follows, then, that in this chapter, it is primarily the preservation perspective that will be put forth. Indeed, it was the search for a suitable exhibition format that led to changes of carrier and changes in the display of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*. In addition, because more and more video installations started to be sold in limited editions in the mid-1990s, describing the work makes one aware that its migration to a video format in 1993 challenged its status as a unique artwork. A tension built up between the National Gallery of Canada, which had initially acquired *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* in the mid-1980s, and the distribution system for video and film-based artworks that became predominant in the 1990s. This chapter scrutinizes the various attempts to transform this non-editioned artwork into an editioned one. The description also shows that it is not only about “editions,” but also about different “versions,” as the work has been through different states (filmic version, video version, digital version). Essentially, the method of description helps understand what *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* was back in 1982 and how it has developed into what *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* is now.

The first leading argument of this chapter is that since the preservation process made this work’s re-exhibition possible, it has played a crucial role in the life cycle of the work. The second leading argument is that it might have become an editioned artwork, but it is also a work that has gone through many versions, a filmic version, a video version and a digital version. To support these arguments, the chapter has been divided into three sections. In the first section, the phases in the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* that are linked to its creation and its release in the art world are described. In this part of the chapter, I analyze how Massey attempted to give shape to an idea he had, how he initially worked with a form of technology that did not allow the artwork to happen (5.1). The second section discusses the migration of the work to a more recent format and the different configurations it went through over a period of 20 years before reaching a presentation format that has now persisted for 10 years. It points out how crucial this migration has been to ensure that *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* could finally be exhibited without any technical failure (5.2). The third section analyzes how the preservation strategy of the artwork – migration – challenged its status as a unique artwork. Different standpoints are compared: that of the institution that acquired the work, that of a curator that was involved in the migration of the work and aware of the costs involved, and that of the artist. It shows how influential the acquisition contract and the changed art market have been. It also demonstrates that because of the migrations, there is more than one version of *As the Hammer Strikes (A*
Partial Illustration). It is in fact a work consisting of multiple versions, all of which have contributed to defining what the artwork is (5.3).

5.1 Giving Shape to an Idea: John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*

This first section of the chapter covers the phases in the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* that are linked to its creation and its release in the art world. The description of the making of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, of its inaugural exhibition, of its second exhibition, and the analysis of its reception serve to make the scripting process visible. It also helps identify the mediators that have contributed to the definition of the work’s identity. The purpose of this first part of the chapter is to show that despite the efforts of the initial mediators involved in the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, its support and its display in the exhibition space presented some challenges that eventually called for changes that would allow it to be exhibited as it had been conceptually conceived by John Massey in the early 1980s.

**John Massey and the Making of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)***

John Massey studied at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto from 1971 to 1974. At the time, Roy Ascott, a pioneer of cybernetics and telematics in art, was the president of the College. Under his leadership, the Ontario College of Art went through a radical pedagogical revolution, but this only lasted until Massey graduated. As John Bentley Mays writes, “At the centre of Ascott’s program was a thoroughgoing critique of art and the art system, which cherished the subversive and perverse and intellectually rigorous, and left virtually no place for easel painting and formal sculpture.”² In the 1970s, Massey primarily made installations and series of photographs. *The Embodiment* and *The Fire Room* were the first two artworks he exhibited publicly in Toronto in 1976.³ In his first installations, Massey explored, through different means, how we occupy space. In 1988, reflecting back on his artistic practice, he stated: “It has been the drama of how we do or do not grasp space as we stand within it that has led me to construct much of my work.”⁴

² John Bentley Mays, “No Exit,” *Canadian Art* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 44.
³ They were shown in an industrial space that the artist had rented on the Ground floor of King Square, Toronto.
⁴ John Massey quoted in Gordon Lebredt, “Some Thoughts on Twilight’s Last Gleaming,” *C Magazine*, no. 27 (Fall 1990): 35.
For instance, for *The Embodiment*, Massey built a room open only on one side, like a theater scene, in which he placed two beds of different sizes, one small and one big, and three lamps (Fig. 5.1). The first lamp was mounted on the left wall of the room, above the small metal bed. The light provided by its blue light bulb evoked the light of Blue Movies – pornographic films. In front of the back wall, in between the two beds, a floor-standing lamp served to lighten the entire scene. On the right hand side, close to the foot of the sculpted wooden bed, a heat lamp was melting the beeswax covering the bed frame. The light, the heat, and the smell conveyed signs of occupation, yet, no human beings were present in the room. The different sizes of the beds also brought in ambiguity. Though both beds seemed to be models of children’s beds, one was child-size, while the other was adult-size. It was left to the visitors to imagine who lived in that space and which activities took place in it.

Whereas in his first artworks Massey explored the occupation of space through installations and series of photographs, with *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, he explored mental space. More precisely, as he says himself in the artwork, he is “interested in how [his] mind works.” Prior to the creation of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, Massey had been carrying around a tape recorder to keep track of exchanges he had with people he encountered. Among the conversations he recorded, one took place in his van after he had picked up a hitchhiker in Flesherton and dropped him off in Orangeville in Ontario, Canada. After transcribing the conversation, Massey re-enacted it with the help of a film graduate student from York University, Tony Sloane. In other words, *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* is the fictionalization of an actual event. Massey played his own role as driver and Sloane, the hitchhiker. To record the 30-minute conversation on film, the artist placed a camera at the back of the van. He also shot some footage from other angles, allowing, for instance, close-ups of the driver and the hitchhiker.

Presented in the exhibition space, the outcome is a triple projection with sound. The central color projection is the continuous sequence recorded from the back of the van. The two black-and-white side projections are the result of an editing process. Their purpose is to illustrate what goes through these two men’s minds. The left projection serves to depict what goes on in Massey’s head, while the right projection depicts what goes on in the hitchhiker’s head. Confronted with *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustrations)*, the viewers are not only witnessing a conversation, but they are given the impression that they know exactly what these men are thinking and imagining. The conversation the two men have, which is actually

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5 Excerpt from *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration).*
quite banal, touches on various topics: where they live, where they work, strip-clubs in Toronto and things they have seen on television, among them, the TV show That's Incredible. The hitchhiker (H) has a speech impediment, which often forces the driver (D) to ask him to repeat what he just said. For instance, at one point, the hitchhiker, without any introduction or connection to what they had been talking about previously, describes what he had recently seen on television. The conversation goes like this:

H. I watched th’ increble one night. Wa’ch tha’ increble. Tha’ – coupl’ – ugh – last time – onysee, oh, last night. This guy use’a. He’s a torpedo – you saw tha’ on TV before?
D. A what?
H. Torpedo.
D. A torpedo, yeah.
H. Guy’s goin’ on his back, steel plat’ aroun’ – ts.
D. He was riding a torpedo?
H. No, on th’ motocycle. He on the, th’ back. He spa’.
D. Oh, on the motorcycle. On a motocycle?
H. No. cnara’, whatchacallit the racing car, o’ some sort, An’ see – an’ he go, hol’ on the bla’ handles. Shshshshshshshshshsh An’ it start spark all shooti’ all o’er the place.
D. Oh, he was lying on the ground?
H. Yeay. Wi’ steel.
D. Yeah – beng dragged along.
H. Yeah – like a human torpedo.
D. Like a human torpedo. I see. Oh yeah.
H. So see – all this spark is shooting out. (he chuckles)
D. Yeah. Amazing.  

When the hitchhiker asks the driver if he has ever seen a torpedo before, the sequence projected on the left screen shows a torpedo flying in the air. However, the images projected on the right are presenting a man wearing a suit and a helmet being dragged behind a fast car. There is a play in the work between the words spoken by the two men and the images that are used to illustrate what is being said. It is only after hearing a more precise description of what the hitchhiker saw on television that the driver understands that he is referring to a human torpedo. Once the driver understands what he hitchhiker is trying to describe, the sequences on both sides of the central projections become similar so that visitors will gather that the two men have reached a point of understanding. This is the moment that “the hammer strikes,” when the cognitive ignition occurs. To confirm this breakthrough, the three words “a human torpedo” even appear on the left projection.

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6 The script of their conversation has been reproduced in the exhibition catalogue This Much is Certain (London: Royal College of Art, 2004). The excerpt copied here can be found on pages 134-135.
As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) shares many features with road movies, but contrary to road movies seen in a cinema that consist of a single projection, Massey has extended the action of his road movie over three projections. This format of presentation gave him the opportunity to not only present to the audience a conversation between two men on the road, the central projection, but also to illustrate what was going on in these men’s heads in the side projections. The audience is given access to their thoughts. The side projections, which complement the central projection, are examples of how human beings can have different interpretations of the same thing or how they can understand it differently. As the subtitle of the work indicates, what he is giving us is only “a partial illustration,” as one can never fully grasp how his/her own mind works or anyone else’s, for that matter. For instance, when the hitchhiker asks Massey where he works, the latter answers that he is an artist. Right away, the hitchhiker asks him if he makes a lot of money and what kind of art he does. When he wants to know if he makes “houses and stuff like that,” the image seen on the right is a painting of a house surrounded by a landscape. As soon as the hitchhiker has said this out loud, quite a similar reproduction of a painting of a house in a landscape appears in the left projection. Then, when the driver states that he tries to make his work about how his mind works, the image used to illustrate that on the left projection is a photograph taken from Massey’s 1982 series The House that Jack Built. On the right projection, as no images seem to come to the hitchhiker’s mind, the image presented is not an illustration of what the hitchhiker imagines, but what he concretely sees at that moment: Massey driving the van.

The first time Massey had worked with film – for Guidance (1978) – he adopted the single-screen projection format. However, when looking at the creation of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) in the continuity of his photographic work, which was always made up of series, it comes as no surprise that the action was divided into three projections. In 1981, Massey began working on the series of photographs The House that Jack Built, inspired by the nursery rhyme This is the House that Jack Built, a cumulative tale that does not tell how Jack built the house, but rather how different things, animals and persons are connected to that house. The series of photographs shows different angles of a model replicating the artist's studio at the time onto whose interior and exterior walls were projected various slides.

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7 Massey continued working on this series of photographs over the years and it now carries the date 1981-1992. The series now counts 23 gelatin silver prints, each measuring 30.5 x 48.3 cm.
8 Guidance (1978), black-and-white 16 mm film, 20 minutes.
9 The nursery rhyme has been reprinted in the exhibition catalogue John Massey. The House that Jack Built (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2004), 34. The nursery rhyme begins as such:

“This is the house that Jack built. // This is the malt / That lay in the house that Jack built. // This is the rat / That ate the malt / That lay in the house that Jack built.”
illustrating the nursery rhyme. Massey states, “At some point I realized that I was identifying with the small volumetric space as if it were a surrogate for the inside of my head. I had made a room … a physical interior that could act as a psychic interior.”

The exploration of his psychic interior continued with *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, this time through a tripartite film projection. Whereas the series of photographs such as *The House that Jack Built* were used to illustrate a story that unfolds over time and the photographs are organized in a specific order, in *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, Massey worked with the notion of simultaneity. Different actions occur at the same time and the viewer has to decide where to look as three versions of the story unfold in front of him/her at the same time.

**The Inaugural Exhibition of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)**

In the previous chapters, it was shown that the inaugural exhibition is crucially important, being the moment of release of the artwork into the art world. In the case of Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* and Mike Kelley’s *Day Is Done*, the inaugural exhibitions are the references when it comes time to re-exhibit these works. They were landmark exhibitions, especially in the case of *Day Is Done*, as the project got fragmented afterwards. In the case of Gordon, the major change after the inaugural exhibition was that it was no longer displayed in the location it was shot, and, therefore, the dialogue with the exhibition space could not be maintained. The case of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* is different for many reasons. First, contrary to Gordon and Kelley who showed their works in solo exhibitions, Massey first presented *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* in a group show that received extremely unfavorable criticism. The context of the reception of his work was different since the public was attending an exhibition on Canadian art and culture rather than coming to see the artist’s most recent work, as in the case of Gordon and Kelley. Second, as the decription below shows, the conditions of the inaugural showing of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* were far from optimal. In fact, one could state that its inaugural exhibition was a counter-example, showing how this mediator caused the work’s disappearance. The decription of the inaugural exhibition reveals that the medium used by the artist was inadequate but also that the requirements he had for the display of his work were not respected by the organizers of the exhibition *OKanada.*

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Upon the invitation of Pierre Théberge, then the Chief Curator at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Massey presented *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* in *OKanada: An Exhibition of Canadian Culture* at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin in 1982-1983. The exhibition *Okanada* was accompanied by an extensive program of performances and films, and aimed to present Canadian art and culture to the German public. *Okanada* gathered the work of about 100 artists of various disciplines: architecture, visual arts, music, video, film, literature, dance and theater. The corpus of works on display covered a wide historical period, from 1830 to 1982. The exhibition was divided into three sections: *Historische Malerei Kanadas 1830-1975* [Canadian Historical Paintings 1830-1975], *Nördliche Polaritäten: Architektur in Kanada seit 1950* [Northern Polarities: Architecture in Canada since 1950] and *Zeitgenössische Bildende Kunst in Canada* [Contemporary Art in Canada]. This last section was divided into three parts: Structures, Video, and Performance. Pierre Théberge was the curator of the part of the exhibition entitled Structures which comprised Betty Goodwin’s *In Berlin, A Triptych: The Beginning of the Fourth Part*, Max Dean’s *Telefon-Projekt* and John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*. One year before the exhibition took place, all three artists visited Berlin to study the city and the exhibition site. They were asked to consider this environment in the making of their works for *Okanada*, to take into account the “physical space available; the nature and dimensions of the designated area.”

When viewing Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, it is hard to identify which elements were inspired by his trip to Berlin, since the action unfolds on a North American road. Moreover, in their exchange, the protagonists discuss topics that a German audience could have difficulty connecting with, such as the roads in Ontario, the TV show *That’s Incredible* and strip clubs in Toronto. Of course, to the artist’s credit, the work is much more complex, as the focus is not these very banal topics, but rather how the human mind works. For viewers, however, the difficult English and the subjects of conversation made *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* challenging to grasp at first.

In terms of the presentation of the work in the exhibition space in Berlin, *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* required the construction of a room. Three months before the opening, curator Pierre Théberge sent instructions and a floor plan drawn by Massey to the staff of the Akademie der Künste (Fig. 5.2). These instructions are among the first instantiations of the artwork’s script. The requests of the artist were the following: an

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11 See file 1227-02 of the exhibition *Okanada* in the archives of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin. [Archives consulted on March 25, 2011.]

obscure and well soundproofed room in order to avoid the sound spreading into Betty Goodwin’s installation, the construction of a projection room for the three projectors, three screens of about 2.5 meters wide, chairs for the visitors in order for them to be comfortable to watch the approximately 30-minute piece, and finally, the planning of projections at fixed times and the hiring of a projectionist. These prescriptions were to be executed prior to the artist’s arrival in Berlin for the installation of his work. A few days before the opening of the exhibition, the artist came to install his work. To synchronize the three projections, Massey had devised his own synchronization system. He had installed a rubber strap around each of the three projectors’ motors (Fig. 5.3). Each strap was attached to a pivot and each pivot was attached underneath the table by two other rubber straps. The customized mechanical system made it almost impossible to maintain the synchronicity of the three projections; it did not work properly and kept breaking. As the excerpt of the following letter bears witness, the projection system encountered difficulties early on. Soon after Massey left Berlin after installing the piece, Nele Hertling, Research Assistant at the Department of Music and Performance Arts at the Akademie der Künste and coordinator of OKanada, informed him that the projection system had broken down. In a letter addressed to Jörn Merkert, the Scientific Secretary of the Fine Arts Department at the Akademie der Künste, dated December 30, 1982, the artist wrote:

[Hertling] told me that a new system had been substituted for mine and that it was her feeling that its operation was superior to mine. If this is true I am deeply grateful and regret the malfunctioning of my own. She has also told me that the films were out of commission for not more than a day and a half. This too I am most thankful for.

Massey also indicated to Merkert that it would be helpful to him to know what kind of system was used to replace the synchronization system he had made.

The technical problems encountered during the inaugural exhibition of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) resulted in changes in the equipment used to display the work and its script. Indeed, the prescriptions accompanying the work had to be changed. This letter shows that it is not the artist who was behind the changes, but he was consulted and did agree with them, as they enabled his artwork to be exhibited. By contacting the Akademie der

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14 OKanada, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 5 December 1982 – 30 January 1983. Curator of the part of the exhibition in which Massey’s work was presented: Pierre Théberge.

15 See curatorial and conservations files of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration), National Gallery of Canada. [Files consulted on July 25, 2007.]

Künstle, Massey was trying to understand how its staff had modified the synchronization system. The staff — acting here as influential mediators in the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* — modified the customized system created by the artist, as it had failed to maintain the synchronicity of the three projections. This change introduced is what Madeleine Akrich would call, in the field of the sociology of technique, an “adaptation,” which involves the introduction of a few modifications in the device that entitles an adjustment to its environment without affecting its primary function.¹⁷ Applying this concept to the situation of Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, it can be said that certain mediators involved in the life cycle of this work – more precisely the staff of the Akademie der Künste – modified the customized projection system of the work built by the artist in order to ensure that the three films would unfold in synchronicity for the time of the exhibition. When creating the artwork, Massey first had a concept in mind, made the three different films and then built a synchronization system. As the initial synchronization system broke down, modifications had to be made in order to have the technology satisfy the artistic concept. The adaptation of the customized system by some mediators modified how the system was used, but not its purpose. Still, this adaptation was a short-lived one, as it sometimes failed to maintain the synchronicity of the three projections.¹⁸ It was a temporary adaptation that occurred in the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*.

The Reception of the Inaugural Exhibition of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*

During the scripting process, the analysis of the reception of an artwork is important, as exhibition reviews play a double role and both of their roles are exploited here during this process. First, they are important mediators since they frame the meaning of the work and thus influence its identity. Second, they are a source of information and can help identify other mediators who had influences on the life cycle of an artwork. In the previous section, I demonstrated that during its inaugural showing, *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* encountered technical difficulties, and, as the examination of the exhibition reviews points out, the soundtrack of the work provided another problem. This information is made clear only through the analysis of the exhibition reviews and essays written on Massey’s work. In one of the later essays, Peggy Gale recalls that the soundtrack was muffled and that the breakdown seemed imminent, either because of the failure of the equipment or through “a

¹⁸ See information on the synchronicity problems of the work in the 1980s in the curatorial and conservation files at the National Gallery of Canada. [Files consulted on July 25, 2007.]
rupture of the communication between driver and passenger on-screen.” Gale contended that, “There was always the easy option of moving on to the rest of the exhibition, abandoning the clumsy conversation as inconclusive.”

Generally speaking, the visual art section of the exhibition *OKanada* was panned by the German critique. An extremely negative review by Heinz Ohff, Berlin’s most widely read critic, published on the very first day of the exhibition in Berlin’s largest and most prestigious newspaper, *Der Tagesspiegel*, set the tone for the subsequent critical reception. As Stephen Godfrey pointed out, “that was an immediate kiss of death.” Heinz Ohff contended that the show was “uninspired, uninformative, nonsensical and badly made.” The German critic condemned the democratic approach of having so many curators involved since the consequence was a show that went in all directions. Ohff also wondered why Canadian artists who had already exhibited in Berlin, such as Alex Colville and Mark Prent, had not been included in *OKanada*. But for the organizers of this exhibition, the fact that Colville and Prent had already shown their work in Berlin was the very reason they were omitted.

In most of the reviews, the section curated by Pierre Théberge was among the most criticized. For instance, Michael Nungesser qualified this part of the exhibition as disappointing and problematic, and stated that the selection of artists seemed random. In his article “Why did *OKanada* exhibit fail so miserably?,” Stephen Godfrey wrote:

Miss Hertling agrees there were disappointments in the visual arts section. For example, of the three installations which comprised the contemporary art section, one by Max Dean involving a cluster of telephones didn’t work because of the differences in hardware in the two countries, while Miss Hertling said the three-screen installation by John Massey was nearly unintelligible because it relied heavily on a colloquial English soundtrack.

These reviews of *OKanada* highlight the technical problems that the artworks faced in Berlin, but they also provide reasons as to why they were not understood by the public. For instance, in the case of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, not only did one of the protagonists of the film have a speech impediment, but the type of language used by the two

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21 Stephen Godfrey, “Why did *OKanada*.”
22 Heinz Ohff, “Au Kanada!” *Der Tagesspiegel*, December 5, 1982. In German, the words used by Ohff are “uninspiriertes, uninformatives, unsinnliches, schlecht gemachtes.”
24 Stephen Godfrey, “Why did *OKanada*.”
26 Stephen Godfrey, “Why did *OKanada*."

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men in their exchange was challenging to understand. Therefore, one can wonder to what extent Massey kept in mind one of the requests of the organizers of the exhibition asking artists to consider the cultural polarity between Canada and Germany and “how their art would be interpreted by a foreign public which might not understand the artistic and intellectual context in which the works were created.”

What the reviews of the exhibition reveal is that Massey’s work had been understood conceptually; as in almost all cases the artwork is accurately described. For instance, Camilla Blechen wrote that “John Massey presents a film study of misunderstandings between a hitchhiker and a truck driver,” but the use of colloquial language turned out to be a barrier for the general public.

In an interview given years later, John Massey contended that “OKanada was like suicide.” The artist found the experience very difficult because of “the vociferous dismissal of As the Hammer Strikes by the German critique.” Indeed, even if Massey’s work has been correctly described in the reviews of the exhibition, the critics of Der Tagesspiegel and of Kunstforum did not praise his work. But as John Bentley Mays argues, “this rejection was also Massey’s first serious encounter with art-world fickleness and the unfortunate readiness of critics to mete out damnation to artists whose work they have not really comprehended.”

Yet, when one puts in parallel the critiques of Massey’s film installation and of the OKanada exhibition in general, and the very topic of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration), Massey’s artwork is probably the work that illustrates best how difficult it is for two persons, and by extrapolation for two cultures, to understand each other. It takes time and a great share of mediation to reach the point at which “the hammer strikes.”

One of the recurrent criticisms of the exhibition is the lack of explanations. If we take, for instance, the contemporary art section in which Massey’s work was featured, it comprised only three artworks and the accompanying brochure included very brief and general statements on the three artists. It was only by reading the exhibition catalogue that the public could become acquainted with the artistic production of Betty Goodwin, Max Dean and John Massey’s work. As reported in the Canadian art magazine Vanguard in an issue where the

27 Preparatory text of the section Contemporary Art of the exhibition OKanada. See file 1227-02 of the exhibition OKanada in the archives of the Akademie der Künste, Berlin. [Archives consulted on March 25, 2011.]

28 Camilla Blechen, “OKanada in West Berlin a big show for a big country,” The German Tribune, 2 January 1983: 12. [Before being translated into English, Camilla Blechen’s article was initially published under the title “Die Rückkehr in die Stadt” in the Frankfurter Allgemeine, December 16, 1982.]

29 John Bentley Mays, “No Exit,” 46.


31 John Bentley Mays, “No Exit:” 46-47.

failure of the exhibition was examined, the indignation of the critics “aroused by having three installations fobbed off on them as – according to their expectations – the totality of contemporary Canadian art.” In that same issue Heinz Ohff was asked to restate his position, first published in Der Tagesspiegel in 1982. The critic concluded his contribution by stating: “That OKanada will be remembered as one of the worst shows ever seen in the Berliner Akademie der Künste is due to a deficiency of informational content as well as the will to provide it. This event has hurt Canada and her culture rather than helped it.”

In comparison to the very positive reception of the inaugural exhibitions of Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* and Mike Kelley’s *Day Is Done* analyzed in the previous chapters, the reception of the inaugural presentation of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* was extremely negative. Also, as I will discuss later, Massey’s work was not immediately acquired by an institution, as it has been the case with Gordon’s and some of the offspring of Massey’s. Before integrating a museum collection, Massey’s film installation was exhibited again, this time in Montreal, where the critical reception was much more positive.

**The Second Exhibition of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)**

After Berlin, the section of the exhibition *OKanada* curated by Pierre Théberge was presented at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts under the title *The Berlin Project*. John Massey’s and Betty Goodwin’s works were shown as they had been in Berlin. Since Max Dean’s work never reached a functional state, in Montreal, it was decided to present documentation on *Telefon-Projekt* rather than the project itself. The artists and Théberge had learned from what worked well in Berlin and what did not work at all. In Massey’s case, the *decription* of the inaugural exhibition has shown that despite the list of prescriptions sent by curator Pierre Théberge on the behalf of the artist a few months prior to the exhibition, some of his requirements were not respected. When it came time to exhibit *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, both the curator and the artist were better aware of how to display this work in order to create the conditions for a better reception.

In Montreal, Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* was presented despite the fact that the synchronicity problems had not been completely resolved. Critic John Bentley Mays pointed out in his review that the film featured “muffled but nevertheless

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35 The exhibition was held from 22 June – 4 September 1983.
36 See the curatorial and conservation files at the National Gallery of Canada. [Files consulted on July 25, 2007.]
audible conversation.” He acknowledged that the acoustics of the room were much better in Montreal than in Berlin. The Toronto critic recalled that in Berlin, “the poor acoustics of the room in which it was shown made Massey’s arresting film incomprehensible even to people used to hearing English, Germans (and Canadians) could hardly be faulted for thinking it so much mumbo jumbo.”37 In comparison, in Montreal, he stated that “John Massey’s marvelous film is enjoying the good acoustics it deserves.”38

The reviews of The Berlin Project were much more positive than those of OKanada. The Globe and Mail critic nevertheless argued that the three works in the exhibition required “uncommon patience, and curiosity strong enough to carry the viewer through the heavy intellectual weather kicked up by the artworks to whatever resolutions and enchantments lie on the other side.”39 The works on display were certainly not easy to grasp, but the reviewers still thought it was worth the effort. Bentley Mays argued: “Had they been so disposed, for example, the German critics could have seen in all three works an obsessive concern with communications – roads, specialized languages, passageways, telephones, Freudian slips, remote anonymity, misunderstanding – as a context, not merely a tool.”40

When comparing the reviews of the two exhibitions, one of the main distinctions that stands out is the fact that the Canadian critics were familiar with the artistic production of Max Dean, Betty Goodwin and John Massey. For instance, in their articles both John Bentley Mays and Gilles Daigneault discussed the works exhibited in The Berlin Project in relation to what the artists had done previously. Critic Gilles Daigneault argued that As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) could be interpreted as insipid if not confronted to his earlier artistic productions.41 This point can explain the differences in the reception of the work in Berlin and in Montreal. The reviewers of the show in Berlin gave an accurate description of the work, but some of them did not appreciate it and could not situate it within the evolution of John Massey’s artistic production, in contrast to Daigneault who compared it to prior works of the artist.

According to John Bentley Mays, the new setting of these works in Montreal gave them strength. One of the reasons advanced by the Globe and Mail critic was that the exhibition space in Montreal was much more intimate than the one in Berlin. The latter was described as

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Gilles Daigneault, “Le ‘projet Berlin’ au Musée des beaux-arts,” Le Devoir, July 2, 1983. To solve this problem, the critic recommended the reading of Pierre Théberge’s essay on Massey’s work.
a “sterile, white gallery the size of a 747 hangar.” It was his opinion that the German exhibition space “could hardly have been worse.”  

From Bentley Mays’ review, one learns that the work gains from being in a room with good acoustics and in a more intimate space. Here again, the reviews of the exhibition are mediators in the scripting process, they contribute to the shaping of the identity of the work. They are also sources of information and allow the readers to identify other mediators that ought to be considered in the reconstruction of the life cycle of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration): the exhibition room and the sound.

The State of the Script After the First Two Exhibitions of As the Hammer Strikes

Earlier in the chapter, I mentioned that the instructions sent by Pierre Théberge, on behalf of John Massey, to the staff of the Akademie der Künste could be considered one of the first instantiations of the written script of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration). More precisely, they were auctorial prescriptions of tasks to execute to ensure adequate preparation of the room where the artwork would be displayed. The study of the first two manifestations of the work has shown that it gains strength if shown in a soundproofed room. This request was already integrated into the artwork’s script, but had not been respected in Berlin. This type of experience could serve to indicate to the artist which aspects to consider insisting upon when providing instructions for future presentations of this specific work. Unlike in Berlin, the work had a greater chance of being understood because the staff of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts respected this request.

A second point to be made is that at this stage, the physical state of the artwork was still not in line with the concept intended by the artist. Indeed, maintaining the perfect synchronicity of the work was a challenge. The adaptation made in Berlin by the staff of the Akademie der Künste was not a suitable long-term solution, as it did not succeed in perfectly synchronizing the three projectors. Therefore, the artwork needed to be partially rethought in order to make it possible to exhibit it again.

The first two manifestations of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) can be qualified, using Gérard Genette’s typology, as partial manifestations, and more precisely, as lacunary manifestations, which is one of the two forms of partial manifestations. The other form is an indirect manifestation, as for instance Leonardo’s Mona Lisa in a reproduction. In a lacunary manifestation of an artwork, “some parts or aspects […] are momentarily or

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42 John Bentley Mays, “The Berlin Project.”
definitely inaccessible.” During its inaugural showings, Massey’s artwork was at times momentarily inaccessible because of technical failures, but also because the sound experience was not optimized since exhibition space had bad acoustics.

Lacunary manifestations can occur at different moments in an artwork’s life cycle. Genette introduces the topic of the lacunary manifestation with the example Venus de Milo (circa 100 BC), now in the Louvre collection in Paris. The arms of this Greek sculpture made of marble, rediscovered in 1820 on the island of Melos, were never found. Therefore, the manifestation of this work in the Louvre is lacunary, as the arms of this sculpture are missing. The partial loss of this sculpture – arms, but also some metal jewelry and a possible polychromy – is the cause of its contemporary lacunary manifestation. When the audience faces the Venus de Milo as it is today it is visually obvious that this sculpture is missing some parts.

In contrast to this example, the first two exhibitions of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) were lacunary manifestations due to technical failures rather than because of the effect of time, as it was the case for the Venus de Milo. The initial state of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) – a film installation – did not give the artwork the possibility to “be” and also to be experienced by a public. Whereas the exhibitions of the Venus de Milo will always be partial or lacunary manifestations as some parts are permanently inaccessible, in the case of Massey’s As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration), lacunary manifestations could cease to exist if the synchronicity problem was resolved.

The scripting of the first phases of the socialization of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration), namely its creation, its first two exhibitions and the reception of the work in these exhibitions, has revealed that the technology used to exhibit it contributed, at times, to making it disappear. The very socialization of the work was challenged by its medium. In the next section of the chapter, I continue the de-scription of the work and study how the identity of the work changed in order to make it presentable in the exhibition space.

5.2 Finding a Suitable Exhibition Format

In the first section of the chapter, the description of the phases of the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* linked to its creation and its inaugural exhibitions served to identify the mediators that contributed to the shaping of its identity. It also showed that it was necessary to find a solution to the problem of the synchronicity of the projections. Moreover, it demonstrated that if the prescriptions provided by the artist in terms of the appropriate exhibition space were respected, the experience of the visitors was improved.

In this second section of the chapter, I focus on the phases of the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* that are related to finding a suitable exhibition format. The purpose of the second part of this chapter is to examine the changes implied by the migration of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* to a video format. Again, the method of description helps identify the mediators that have played a key role in the migration process and also make the scripting visible.

The Acquisition of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* by the National Gallery of Canada

Despite the synchronization problem and before any solution was envisaged for its long-term durability, the National Gallery of Canada acquired *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* in 1985. This meant that an important institution became a new and influential mediator in the life cycle of the work. Most influential, in fact, as among the functions of the museum, one can mention preserving and exhibiting the artworks that are part of their collection. By selling his work to the National Gallery of Canada, John Massey also transferred part of the responsibility of what would happen to *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* to another party.

*As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* was Massey’s fourth artwork to enter the collection of the National Gallery of Canada. The institution had previously acquired the installation *The Embodiment* (1977), the film *Guidance* (1978) and the series of photographs and transparencies *Body and Soul: A Cinematic Stasis* (1983). In her acquisition report, Jessica Bradley, Assistant Curator of Contemporary Art, gave a thorough description of the work and argued that *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* was the artist’s most ambitious attempt at bringing complex elements – experience and imagination, word and image, objectivity and subjectivity – “together simultaneously, engaging the viewer in an experience which unfolds in real time.” She also stated that it has been made with
“sophisticated technology.” 44 The purchase of the work included the customized synchronization system, four projectors, the internegatives and a set of exhibition prints (all of which were 16 mm films). 45 Nowhere in the acquisition contract or in any document included in the curatorial files can one find any indication that the institution was aware that the artwork was not in a state that allowed it to be exhibited since the synchronization problem was not yet resolved. Despite the policy that requires that the works be displayed after being acquired, As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) went directly into storage. The work had reached the point of being part of a museum collection, but paradoxically, it could not be exhibited because of the failure of the equipment used.

Exhibitions are key events in the life cycle of works of art, because if not exhibited, they are invisible. It was therefore necessary to come up with a solution. In 1991, John Massey wrote a letter to Diana Nemiroff, the Curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery of Canada, in which he stated “I am relatively sure that you have not shown this work since purchasing it. That is understandable since, in its present form, the piece is cumbersome.” 46 The artist later thought of a solution that would involve the transformation of the piece into a three-channel video installation. At that stage, he inquired if the institution was “sympathetic to the project.” 47 The artist’s motivation to make the piece functional once again came from his desire for it to be re-exhibited again, and was also rooted in the project of Ihor Holubizky, curator at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, who was organizing an exhibition presenting Massey’s major pieces, among them, As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration). 48 Discussion began between the artist, Holubizky and the staff of the National Gallery of Canada. It addressed two main topics: upgrading the work to a more recent support and technology that would enable the perfect synchronicity of the three projections, and, the possibility of turning the work into an editioned artwork. The last topic will be addressed in the next section of the chapter; first, I focus on the migration of the work.

From a Film Installation to a Video Installation

After exchanges between all parties – artist, curator Ihor Holubizky from the Art Gallery of Hamilton and two curators from the National Gallery of Canada, Jean Gagnon (Curator of

44 See the acquisition report of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration), dated March 13, 1985 in the curatorial file at the National Gallery of Canada. [File consulted on July 25, 2007.]
45 Even if the work requires three projectors to be presented, an extra one was probably acquired in case one of the others needed to be repaired.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
Media Arts) and Diana Nemiroff (Curator of Contemporary Art) – a preservation strategy was agreed upon. What the artist called a “video-disc reconstruction” at the time is nowadays referred to as a migration. Migrating *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* implied upgrading the equipment used to support and present it. In May and June of 1993, the three 16 mm films were transferred onto Betacam tapes, which became the new masters. The 16 mm audio track was first transferred to digital audiotape and then to Betacam tapes. As Betacam tapes slowly degrade every time they are played, laser disks were produced and served as exhibition copies. To solve the synchronicity problem of the three films, a PC-2 controller made by Technovision was used. Rather than trying to synchronize the projections mechanically – as was done in 1982 – this control device permitted the synchronization of the three films electronically. The result of this migration was the creation of a new “version” of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, a video version. From a film installation, it had become a video installation. The term version has to be understood here as a new kind of physical manifestation of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, that differs from the previous kind of physical manifestation, but that is the one that will be exhibited from then on, until, possibly, an updated version is made.

In most cases, the migration of an artwork occurs because the equipment ceases to work, because it is obsolete, or because the carrier is damaged. The change of carrier and of technology used to display it was necessary in the case of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* not because the technology had degraded or because the reels of 16 mm were damaged, but because the work did not function properly in the first place. The 16 mm films were replaced by videos and the customized projection system and film projectors were substituted by a computerized synchronization system and video monitors.

The migrated version of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* was first displayed in the exhibition *John Massey* presented at the Art Gallery of Hamilton in 1994 (Fig. 5.4). The migration to a video format was accompanied by a number of significant changes at the material level, at the aesthetic level and in terms of the configuration of the work in the exhibition space. In this particular case, the support of the work was no longer

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49 In the publication *Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Approach*, the term migration is defined as such: “To migrate an artwork involves upgrading equipment and source material.” See: Alain Depocas, Jon Ippolito and Caitlin Jones, ed., *Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Approach* (Montreal: Fondation Daniel Langlois pour l’art, la science et la technologie & New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Fondation, 2003), 126.

50 See conservation file, National Gallery of Canada. [File consulted on July 25, 2007.]


film, but video; the films were no longer projected, but played on television monitors, which also affected the size of the images seen; the sound quality was improved; and rows of chairs invited the visitors to sit down at about the same level as the images displayed on monitors. The presentation of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* did not encounter any technical problems in this updated format.\(^53\)

When the discussion took place between the different parties on a possible preservation strategy for this work by John Massey, the solution of the video reconstruction was quickly agreed upon and no party insisted on trying to find a solution that would allow the work to remain in a filmic state. The conservation approach shifted from the purely material – in this case film – to a conceptual approach. The de-scription of the conservation approach of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* shows that it was the identity of the work that remained the focus in this preservation process rather than its material constituents.\(^54\) While deciding on a preservation strategy, what was discussed was finding a manner in which to synchronize the three films. The technology available at the time and the knowledge of the people involved in the discussion led them towards a migration to a video format. Their approach was to do justice to the work’s concept, thus “over-ruling” its original material manifestation.

Among the disadvantages of migration as a preservation process is that it might change the appearance of the work substantially.\(^55\) Despite the significant changes that occurred with the video version, critics lauded the transfer to video format. For instance, Peggy Gale, who had seen the inaugural presentation of the work in Berlin when it was still in its filmic state, contended:

> The effect on the work is interesting. Instead of the somehow murky sound and image of the film – so appropriate to the dialogue and the bland passing landscape – and the veiled, distanced sense of events, the new format has sharpened and made immediate the information aspect of the piece. The viewer seems to take up a position inside the van’s cab, no longer at arm’s length. With the change of scale and the physical qualities of video, attention is more focused and the commentary of the two side-images assumes the character of an amused sequence of whispered asides, as though there were yet another companion in the cab. The clearer sound and the new precision of computer-controlled synchronized playback lend a quiet confidence to the presentation while the more intimate television screens renew a viewer’s sense of participation in unfolding events.\(^56\)

\(^53\) See conservation file, National Gallery of Canada. [File consulted on July 25, 2007.]

\(^54\) This example is a great illustration of the conservation approach proposed by Pip Laurenson to deal with time-based media artworks discussed in Chapter One.


\(^56\) Peggy Gale, “To Put into Visible,” 16.
This analysis of the migration by Gale points out the differences between the new version of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* and the inaugural version. The migration of the work to a video format implied the loss of certain aspects of the work such as the texture of film and the unclear sound, which seemed appropriate to the work’s content. Nevertheless, it also gained quite a few things in the process: the image and sound quality were improved, the synchronization of the three films worked perfectly, and the visitors were finally given the impression of sitting in the van with the two protagonists. As it was the case for the mediators involved in the conservation process of the work, for critics such as Peggy Gale and John Bentley Mays, it was also more important to preserve the concept of the work than its materiality.57

**A Third Version**

Since the reception of the migrated version of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* was so positive and the work had found a format that did not encounter any technical problems, one could assume that it had reached a “final” state, that no other modifications would be necessary until the technology failed again. However, regardless of the positive reception, this new version of the work, shown on monitors, was only exhibited twice.58 In 2000, Canadian curator Ydessa Hendeles included *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* in her show *Canadian Stories: Ian Car-Harris, Max Dean, John Massey*.59 For the occasion, Massey made the decision to project the three films rather than have them played on video monitors (Fig. 5.5). This change in the display of the work brought it closer to its inaugural presentation. However, the presentation was slightly different, since in Berlin, the films were projected on freestanding screens that were not in line, but at angles.

Being projected once again reinforced the cinematic features of the work and allowed for the projections to be blown up without being interrupted by the frame of the video monitors. This evolution in the display of the work was in line with the most common ways of presenting video-based artworks: in the 1980s and early 1990s on television monitors, and

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57 Ibid., 11-19; and John Bentley Mays, “No Exit:” 43-47.
58 After the exhibition in Hamilton, *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* was finally exhibited for the first time at the National Gallery of Canada in the show *John Massey: How my mind works* (17 July – 4 September 1995). Despite the fact that the institution also owned the filmic version of the work, it is only the “video disc reconstruction” that was exhibited in that institution as it was the one that had reached a functional state. The exhibition was curated by Janice Seline, assistant curator, contemporary art at the National Gallery of Canada.
from the mid-1990s, by means of projection. The effect of intimacy created by the smaller image sizes of monitors was diminished, as the projections, which were not particularly large, were projected higher. Therefore, the visitors – now invited to sit on benches rather than chairs – were not given the impression of sitting at the back of the van. This display created a certain distance between the audience and the action taking place in the projected film.

In 2003, two loan requests from European institutions led the National Gallery of Canada to take the migration of the work one step further. Contrary to the migration of the work that took place in the 1990s that aimed to give the artwork a future life and that was led by a possibility to exhibit it again, I would qualify this second migration as a preservation strategy. The second migration was also aimed at facilitating the presentation of the work. In the description of the first migration done earlier in the chapter, it can be seen that, surprisingly, no conservators were involved in the decisions made regarding the artwork in the 1990s. The decisions were made inside the institution by two curators – one of them Jean Gagnon, a media arts specialist, the artist, and the curator of the Hamilton Art Gallery. The conservation department at the National Gallery of Canada was never involved. Also, the reconstruction of the work was not done within the institution. The 16 mm films were sent elsewhere (as they always are since the institution does not have the necessary facilities). But this step was mainly taken care of by the curator of the Hamilton Art Gallery. It was only in the year 2000 that conservators began to be mediators in the life cycle of this work.

This second migration implied migrating the Betacam masters produced in 1993 to DVDs. Three sets were made: two for the National Gallery of Canada and one for the artist. The set that was given to the artist was for his personal use only and it was agreed that he would neither sell it nor show it publicly. Since 2000, every time the work has been exhibited – in Frankfurt, London, Ottawa, Vancouver, Berlin, Melbourne, Montreal, and Glasgow, it has been projected onto a wall. These repetitive manifestations of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* in the same manner and with the same exhibition support reinforce the fact that, about 20 years after its inaugural exhibition, it has reached a functional and satisfactory state. Its manifestations are no longer lacunary as the two first ones (Berlin, 1982

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61 The late involvement of the conservators in the process can seem surprising. However, as Tate conservator Pip Laurenson indicates in an interview, in many museums, the curators of time-based media are also the ones responsible for their preservation. See: Julia Noordegraaf, “Chapter 9.4. Preserving and Restoring Media Art at Tate: An interview with Pip Laurenson (Head of Time-based Media Conservation),” in *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives*, ed. Julia Noordegraaf *et al.* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming (2012)).
and Montreal, 1983) were. Finally, I would also call this most recent version of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* the “digital version,” the version that followed the filmic version and the video version. This most up-to-date version of the work – that which is shown in exhibitions – is presented as three digital videos projected onto a wall.

The scripting done in this part of the chapter has shown the different steps that have led giving *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, first, a functional state, and second, satisfactory aesthetics, according to the artist. This section has focused on the study of the migration of the work, the change of support and the consequences for its display. In the next section of the chapter, I examine the implications of these changes on turning the work into an editioned artwork, but also how its different versions have been dealt with.

### 5.3 The Plural Immanences of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*

The migration of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* to a video format in 1993-1994 contributed to challenging its status as a unique artwork, given that it happened during a period where video and especially video installations began being sold in limited editions. In this section, the de-description of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* focuses on two main topics. First, it addresses how the Collection Management System of the National Gallery of Canada dealt with the different versions of this artwork. Second, it also serves to retrace and analyze the different attempts made to transform this non-editioned artwork into an editioned one.

#### Different Versions, Different Acquisition Numbers

The different material manifestations of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, in addition to the different manners of presenting it in the exhibition space, helped define the ideal presentation requirements of the work. They also seem to suggest that the work has been through three different versions thus far: the filmic version (3 x16 mm film projections onto screens – 1982-1983), the video version (3 videos presented on television monitors – 1994), and the digital version (the work supported on a video format and projected onto a wall – 2000 onwards). All these versions carry the same title *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* and are all attempts to give shape, in the best possible (technical) way, to the idea

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62 If I were to follow on Chrissie Iles’s categorization of video and film installation introduced in the first chapter, this third version of Massey’s work would be called the cinematic version. Whereas Iles named the three phases – phenomenological & performative, sculptural, and finally cinematic – influenced on how these works are displayed in the exhibition space, I describe here the three versions of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* have evolved in technical terms.
that John Massey originally had at: trying to illustrate, “how his mind works,” as he says himself in As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration). Again, using Genette’s typology, this work by Massey has plural immanences in the sense that it “immanates in several nonidentical objects.”63 All these versions represented, at one point in time, the current materialized form of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration). They have all contributed to the shaping of its identity. This therefore demonstrates the relevance of studying the different versions of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration), as they have all contributed to its socialization.

The fact that the artwork has different versions that are all referred to as As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) is not how it is interpreted in the National Gallery of Canada’s collection management system. Indeed, the artwork has been granted two acquisition numbers, which gives the impression that the institution owns two artworks entitled As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration). When the work was migrated to a video format in the early 1990s, a new entry was created in the collection management system. In the first entry (acquisition number 28799), the work is described as “one 16 mm colour film and two 16 mm b/w films, 30 minutes each, with three projectors and synchronizing system.”64 When migrated to a video format prior to the 1994 John Massey exhibition held at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, a new entry was made in the National Gallery of Canada’s collection management system. The new version of the work was given the acquisition number 37971. The entry in the database also indicated that it was a video installation and that it was purchased in 1994. Over the years, the staff of the Collection Management Department tried to merge the two files, but this procedure was not authorized by one of the contemporary art curators.65 Not only does the work now have two acquisition numbers, it also has two curatorial files, the first documenting the 1982 film version, the second, the video version. Despite its two acquisition numbers, only the most recent version of the work – which I have called the digital version – is the one being exhibited and loaned to other institutions. The version linked to the acquisition number 28799 will never be loaned or exhibited again.

In the case of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) by dividing the history of the work and, in a way, not acknowledging it previous state, the National Gallery of Canada ignores part of its history, part of its life cycle. In the collection management system, rather

63 Gérard Genette, The Work of Art, 163.
65 See curatorial file, National Gallery of Canada. [File consulted on July 25, 2007.]
than defining the identity of the work based on its complete existence and its beginning as a “conceptual” project, the digital version of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) that is now exhibited and loaned is dealt with from when its functional existence began, in 1993. The way the institution deals with this work shows signs of amnesia. By denying the existence of the filmic version or by being blind to the history of the work, the institution denies the fact that As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) is a work that has plural immanences; that it exists in different forms, even though only the most recent version is the one that is exhibited. The de-scription done in this section has given a more complete view of how the work’s identity has been shaped over time. Furthermore, even though its support today is video, its presentation in the exhibition space remains how the artist had thought of it at first: the projection of three synchronized films that portrays the difficulty for two human beings to understand one another.

**From Non-Editioned to Editioned**

As stipulated in the acquisition contract of the National Gallery of Canada and signed by the artist in 1985, As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) was acknowledged as a unique work of art. At the moment of the migration in 1993, the artist and the curator of the exhibition at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Ihor Holubizky, suggested the creation of an edition of three of the work: the first edition would be owned by the National Gallery of Canada, a second that would be owned by the artist and that he could eventually sell to an institution and a third would be owned by the Art Gallery of Hamilton. In this way, the artist could benefit as more than one edition of the world could circulate, and it would also allow him to share the cost of migration with the National Gallery of Canada. This idea also reflects what was taking place on the art market, where video and film installations started to be released in numbered editions. Discussions took place between Jean Gagnon, the Associate Curator of Media Arts, and Diana Nemiroff, the Curator of Contemporary Art. Both curators refused the proposal to turn As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) into an editioned work due to its status as a unique artwork. They used the acquisition contract as an argument, pointing out that it ought to be seen as an influential mediator in the life cycle of the artwork. Since the artist and the institution were legally bound by this contract, referring to it made it a strong argument. In 1993, the National Gallery of Canada provided the artist with a set of three laser

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67 See section 1.2 of Chapter One.
disks of the artwork and made him sign an agreement saying that they were meant for his personal use only and that the National Gallery of Canada must remain the sole distributor of the work. The acquisition contract played the role of an influential mediator in the life cycle of this work because it identified it as a unique artwork and therefore, could be used as an argument to prevent the work from becoming editioned.

At that point, tension built up between those in favor of the possibilities of duplication given by the migrated version of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* and those preoccupied with the conditions under which the National Gallery of Canada had acquired the artwork. Creating more than one copy of the videos produced during the migration process would have been an easy task. When John Massey sold *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* to the National Gallery of Canada in 1985, no art dealer was representing him. *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* was Massey’s first attempt in the world of film installations. He had previously worked with photographs, sculptures and installations. Despite the possibility of reproduction of films, he sold *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* as he had sold his other works: as a unique artwork.

In 2003, when the exhibition support of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* was upgraded from laser disks to DVDs, the National Gallery of Canada provided a set of DVDs to the artist, and, once again, made him sign an agreement stating that the DVDs were “for the personal use of the artist only.” The letter of agreement also stipulated:

> *As the Hammer Strikes* was originally purchased with the understanding that it is a unique piece therefore the artist’s copy of the work cannot be sold or shown in public. The National Gallery of Canada must remain the sole distributor of the work and all loan requests for this installation will continue to be referred to the institution.  

68 Here again, the same mediator – the acquisition contract – was used as a justification to refuse to transform this non-editioned artwork into an editioned one. However, there is a contradiction taking place: on account of its numerous versions (filmic, video, digital), *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* can hardly be called a unique artwork. As shown earlier, the National Gallery of Canada has even attributed two different acquisition numbers to this work. In the 1990s, when the time came to find an exhibition format suitable to the artwork, as shown previously, the institution addressed this problem with a conceptual approach, rather than focusing on the materiality of the object. Paradoxically, when it came time to discuss the uniqueness of the work, the institution did not deal with the work conceptually, but used the old argument that *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*

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68 Letter of agreement between the National Gallery of Canada and John Massey, signed by the artist on April 5, 2004. See curatorial file, National Gallery of Canada. [File consulted on 25 July 2007.]
was a physical object, like a painting or a sculpture. The National Gallery of Canada tried to “erase” a part of the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, to make it invisible.

In March 2006, John Massey approached the director of the National Gallery of Canada, Pierre Théberge, and asked him if the 2004 letter of agreement could be amended and if the copy for his ‘personal use only’ could become an artist’s proof (AP). This time, the National Gallery of Canada agreed to John Massey’s request. According to the emails included in the curatorial file, the decision was made between the Director of the institution and the deputy director.\(^6\) None of the contemporary art conservators had been consulted. With this new agreement, *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* became a *unicum* artwork with an artist’s proof.\(^7\) Eventually, the artist could sell his artist’s proof to an institution, which means that the National Gallery of Canada is no longer the sole distributor of the work.

It is relevant to mention that Théberge was the curator who first invited Massey to expose the work in Berlin in 1982. The history linking John Massey and Pierre Théberge turned out to be most influential, and Théberge is a mediator of importance in the life cycle of the work, first as the person who invited the artist to exhibit the artwork and thus allowing it to come into existence, and more than twenty years later, as the authority figure who gave his approval to turn this non-editioned artwork into an editioned one. Théberge influenced crucial phases in the life cycle of this artwork. Nowadays, *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* can be shown in two different locations at the same time, having been transformed from a unique piece into an editioned artwork.

Since the artist owns an artist’s proof, it is the artist’s proof that has been lent to institutions rather than the edition owned by the National Gallery of Canada. The instructions on how to display the work are now provided by the gallery representing the artist, Georgia Scherman Projects.\(^7\) The fact that the artist’s proof circulates more than the edition owned by the National Gallery of Canada gives the artist greater control over how the work will be exhibited. So far, the display has been consistent since 2000 (Fig. 5.6 and 5.7). Nevertheless, since the artist owns an artist’s proof, he could eventually decide to change its display. The scripting of the life cycle of the work so far, however, has not shown that the edition owned by the artist and the edition owned by the National Gallery of Canada have been exhibited.

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\(^6\) The email of the deputy director, David Franklin to the artist is dated on March 30, 2006. See curatorial files, National Gallery of Canada. [File consulted on 25 July 2007.]

\(^7\) *Unicum* comes from Latin and means unique. In this case, the work was sold as an edition of one (1/1), and later an artist proof (AP) was released on the market. To this day, Massey has not sold his artist’s proof to an institution.

differently. They have not encountered variations like the editions of Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* discussed in Chapter Three. This consistency in the manifestations of the work reinforces the hypothesis that *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* has now reached a stable format, and will remain stable at least until the technology fails again.

Despite the fact that there are now two editions of the work circulating in the art world, these two editions have differences. In terms of the work history, I would argue that the edition owned by the National Gallery of Canada is the only integral and complete one since the original support on which the artwork was produced – 16 mm film – is no longer in the hands of the artist. Even the masters of the video version of the work produced in 1993, on Betacam format, are only owned by the National Gallery of Canada. As a matter of fact, the artist’s proof of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* can only be sold as a video installation. Whereas the edition owned by the National Gallery of Canada has known different states: the inaugural version, the video version and the cinematic version, the artist’s proof has only known one state: the digital version. If the artist were to sell it, the acquiring institution or collector would miss out on the history of the work, on the various manners it has been displayed in the exhibition space. It is only in the curatorial and conservation files of the National Gallery of Canada that the most complete documentation on the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* can be found. One could argue that this does not matter, since the only version currently shown is the digital version, but nevertheless, the *decription* done throughout this chapter has pointed out how determinant the different versions of the work have been in shaping its identity.

**5.4 Conclusion**

The scripting of the life cycle of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* done throughout the chapter with the methodological tool of *decription* has shown that in 1982, only its conceptual state was achieved. It was later, in 1993, that a functional state was attained and even later, after the year 2000, that it found a stable presentation format. The *decription* has also helped identify three different versions of the work: the filmic version, the video version, and the digital version. These different versions of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* make it a work, as Gérard Genette would called it, of plural immanences because the title can refer to two things at once, i.e., a film installation and a video installation.
In the previous case study chapters, the changes that occurred after the artworks’ inaugural exhibitions were mainly studied from the presentation perspective (Chapter Three) and from the distribution perspective (Chapter Four). In this chapter, it is the preservation perspective that was the focus. Among the major events that occurred in the life cycle of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) were its migrations. The preservation process of this work is a great illustration of the approach defended by the Variable Media Network, *permanence through change*, where preserving the concept of the work is emphasized. This process might involve changes in the materiality and the physical appearances of the work, but the aim is to extend the life cycle of variable media artworks. In the case of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration), one could even argue that the inaugural version of this artwork was a prototype. Different mediators had to be involved in order to help the artist give a functional physical manifestation to an idea he had in the early 1980s. This speaks to the relevance of using *scripting* as a theoretical framework, as it helps identify the role of each mediator in the life cycle of an artwork and understand how the work was back then and how it has evolved into what it is today.

The *de-scription* of the life cycle of As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) has made visible the mediators involved in the making of this work and the shaping of its identity. In the first part of the chapter, which dealt with the making of the work and its inaugural exhibitions, it was shown that good acoustics and an intimate exhibition space improved the viewing experience of the visitors. Also discussed was the fact that the medium chosen to make the work failed to do justice to the concept the artist had intended to put forth. In addition, it showed that the reviews of the inaugural exhibitions played a double role: they indicated how the work had been interpreted, and they were also sources of information that led to the identification of other mediators. In the scripting process, both their roles could be discerned. In the second part of the chapter, which focused on the phase of the life cycle of the work during which a suitable exhibition format was chosen, the role of new mediators was discussed. Since the National Gallery of Canada acquired the work, a transfer of responsibilities took place and it is the institution that then has the duty of exhibiting and preserving the artwork. Nevertheless, it was a curator from another institution, interested in exhibiting As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration) who triggered the preservation process of this work and who suggested the migration solution. In the third section of the chapter, which dealt with the plural immanences of the artwork, it was shown that the notion of editions is not just a product of the art market system, but also, if understood in a broader way, of a preservation process, as the work has been through different versions (filmic
version, video version, digital version). Finally, the description of the different phases of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* has shown how its socialization evolved since 1982.
Conclusion
It was in the exhibition space that this doctoral dissertation began. More precisely, it was when I noticed that Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* had encountered a variation in its display and the number of components exhibited. I wondered why two manifestations of the same artwork could present such variations. When I began delving into the subject, I learned that video and film installations were sold in limited editions; that in order to remain exhibited, they had to be preserved, a process that might lead to modifications in the appearance of the work; that artists sometimes reinterpreted their works for the occasion of an exhibition, which led to the making of a new version of it, yet, that this version would be considered another version of the same work, and not a new work. Therefore, when trying to articulate the identity of these artworks, many parameters had to be considered: their concept and their materiality, but also the history of their exhibition, distribution, and preservation.

My initial observations led me to identify a certain number of features of video and film installations, among them their time-based nature, their multi-instantiability, and their limited life span. Also, I learned that they are two-step artworks: their physical manifestation in the exhibition space is preceded by the interpretation of a series of notations prescribing how they should be displayed. Therefore, only when exhibited do these works physically exist.

Another feature of video and film installations is that they can be released as editioned artworks. Similarly to photographs and lithographs, which are usually sold in limited editions, it has been current practice since the 1990s to sell video and film installations in limited editions. The limit of the editions available on the market is nevertheless artificial, as the reproduction of these works could, in principle, be infinite. All the same, limiting the editions is what enabled these works to be integrated into the art market that has for centuries been based on the idea of unique works of art. In most cases, video and film installations are sold in editions of three to five, and, in theory, all the editions are the same. If an artwork is sold in an edition of three, it means that three institutions or private collectors can acquire it. It also implies that the work can be exhibited concurrently in three different places, and in three different manners because the instructions leading to its physical manifestation could have been interpreted in slightly different ways. Taking into account all these features, determining the identity of these artworks is challenging because there are many variables to consider.

Besides the fact that they are editioned, another complicating factor is that these artworks often exist in different versions. For instance, a moving image-based artwork can exist as an installation, presented in a museum, and as a film projection, screened in a cinema. This is the case of Andy Warhol’s *Outer and Inner Space*, which can be projected in a cinema either as a single or double projection, or it can be exhibited in a museum as a double
projection. Moreover, since the film reels have been migrated to more recent formats, the artwork can either be presented on 16 mm, DVDs, or HD video. When the artwork is exhibited, decisions need to be made: how is it going to be presented (single or double projection)? And in which format (film, DVD, HD file)? Like many other video or film-based artworks Warhol’s *Outer and Inner Space* offers different presentation formats.

In summary, the majority of video and film installations are editioned and exist in different versions. These features affect these works differently. The first feature makes them multiple works that are – in principle – all equivalent. Indeed, in theory, editions 1/3, 2/3 and 3/3 are all the same. Yet in practice, as the research in this dissertation has shown, while these editions increase the visibility of these works, it also means that they start to lead lives of their own, with slight variations occurring each time the works are exhibited. The second feature, their existence in different versions, complicates matters even more in that the material composition changes with each exhibit, often greatly impacting the aesthetic appearance of the work. Similarly, as the case of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* discussed in Chapter Five shows, the appearance of a new version might send the previous one into oblivion, thus potentially erasing part of the work’s identity.

There are other reasons why these artworks exist in different versions, why they have *plural immanences*, as Gérard Genette would say. One has to do with the fact that they are two-step artworks. Since the prescriptions about how to install the work in the exhibition have to be interpreted by various persons, the end result can vary. Moreover, if the artist is involved in the display, he/she can use the installation process as an opportunity to alter the work. These interventions by artists can raise ethical questions, as the work is not simply being reinstalled, but reinterpreted. Another reason why variable media artworks can change over time has to do with the technologies used to create and exhibit them, due to the fact that they have a limited lifespan. In order for these artworks to remain presentable, they have to go through a preservation process that will affect their functioning as well as their appearance. In some cases, the difference is barely noticeable; in others, the difference is striking.

One of the major issues when dealing with artworks that have a variable nature, like video and film installations, is to determine their identity: what they actually consist of, both conceptually and materially. In the same way that a person’s identity is not stable, the identity of a video or film installation is unstable. The identity of a human being develops over the course of many years. During this process there are always features that remain the same, as for instance a person’s genetic material, but there is also a part of his/her identity that is shaped by external factors such as cultural, political, religious, and environmental contexts,
and by outside events. Correspondingly, the artwork has a core, features that remain the same, but its identity is also shaped by events that it goes through over time, namely its exhibitions, distribution and preservation. It is these events that ensure the socialization of the artwork, its presence in the world. These three events are closely intertwined since, if the work has not been preserved, or if its exhibition support has degraded, for instance, then it cannot be exhibited. Also, if the work is not distributed, it cannot be acquired, and it is therefore less likely that it will be exhibited and preserved, since these are two notable functions of institutions.

The exhibition of video and film installations enables them to “happen” since it is only after a series of prescriptions has been interpreted that their physical manifestation occurs. What these works physically look like when not on display is very different than when they are on display. When in storage, they consist of different pieces of equipment and reels of films or videotapes kept on shelves. The exhibition is also a moment when the meaning of the artwork is *framed*. The framing produced for the occasion of an exhibition can offer new interpretations of the work, it can put forward elements that had not been seen or considered before. Therefore, exhibitions can contribute to the shaping of the identity of artworks.

Considering the fact that video and film installations encounter alterations and different states during their life cycles, studying their exhibition histories enables one to identify the different versions of a work and understand how it has evolved over a certain period of time. The three case studies of this dissertation have shown how the exhibition can affect the shaping of the identity of an artwork. In the case of Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time*, it was shown how the exhibition space can influence how the artist decides to display the work in addition to how it can lead him to alter the work. Moreover, each exhibition offers artists the chance to revisit their artistic production. This can either lead them to alter their work, as Gordon did with *Play Dead; Real Time* when he decided to add a second monitor to extend the walk of the visitors, or even to create entirely new works, as he did in 2006, when he manipulated the footage used in the making of *Feature Film* (1999) to make *M: Futile Fear*. The discussion of Mike Kelley’s *Day Is Done* has shown that a specific exhibition – what I qualified as a landmark exhibition – can overshadow the interpretations of subsequent exhibitions of a project or of its offspring. In this particular case, even though the re-exhibition of *Day Is Done* as seen at the Gagosian Gallery in 2005 is impossible since the large-scale installation has been fragmented and the offspring spread over collections around the world, it continues to exist as the most important reference for interpreting the offspring. Finally, the last case study has shown that in some cases exhibitions can even harm the
socialization of an artwork. In fact, they can be counter-examples, since the work does not appear in them as it was intended by the artist, as was the case of the inaugural exhibition of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*.

The distribution of an artwork is another important phase in its life cycle. If an artwork is not distributed, its socialization can be compromised. Editioning and fragmentation are the two main distribution strategies for video and film installations. Editioning is a form of distribution that has been developed in order to make these works fit into the art market, especially since institutions customarily acquire artworks that are sold in limited editions rather than unlimited artworks. Editioned artworks have a greater chance of socializing, as they can be exhibited in more than one place at the same time. Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* is a prime example of that, having been exhibited nineteen times since 2003. Its inclusion in different exhibitions held concurrently would not have been possible if it had not been released on the market as an edition of three. More rarely, there are works that were first sold as unique artworks but, at some point in time, became editioned artworks, as if to catch up with the manner in which video and film installations are sold nowadays: in limited editions. This was the case of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* created in 1982 and sold to the National Gallery of Canada in 1985 and which became an editioned artwork in the years 2000.

Mike Kelley’s *Day Is Done* is an example of fragmentation as a distribution strategy. After its inaugural exhibition, the large-scale installation *Day Is Done* was fragmented and released on the market as 25 video/sculpture installations. Other offspring were also released on the market, some in limited editions, such as the single-channel videos (that have also been integrated into the 25 video/sculpture installations), the series of photographs, and others in the form of individual works of art, such as other props used during the making of the *EAPR* videos that have not been integrated into the video/sculpture installations. As I pointed out in Chapter Four, this strategy of distribution is also the only way to make the production of such a large-scale project financially feasible.

The third event that is crucial to the socialization of a work is its preservation. Indeed, if an artwork is not kept in a “functional” state, then it cannot be exhibited. The third case study of this dissertation has shown how crucial it is for an artwork to have a suitable presentation format. When first exhibited in 1982, John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* encountered technical difficulties and it was impossible to maintain the synchronization of the three films. Once a stable format was found and the synchronicity of the projection could be ensured, the work could finally be exhibited on a continuous basis.
The series of changes that these artworks go through over time necessitates approaching them as continuums. It is by studying their life cycles that one can better grasp what their identity is, what they consist of, conceptually and materially. For the purpose of my study, in which I aimed to examine the socialization of editioned video and film installations, I needed a concept that took into consideration the entire social network in which an artwork is embedded and would enable me to follow the shaping of the identity of video and film installations. Moreover, since non-human mediators, such as their material components and exhibition reviews, affect the identity of these artworks, I needed a dynamic model that would also help me consider human and non-human agency. With the notion of script, the field of the sociology of technique offered me such a concept. As defined by Madeleine Akrich, the script is a concept used to describe the interactions between the designer, the technical object and the user. I have adapted the concept to my object of study and have argued that the concept of script enabled me to study the interactions between the mediators evolving within the social network of an artwork. Moreover, since the identity of an editioned video and film installation is constantly shaped by the mediators involved in its life cycle, the script of an artwork is also constantly updated. To espouse this continuously evolving feature of the script, I took an active theoretical stance: scripting artworks. Scripting is the conceptualization of an artwork’s socialization.

In order to retrieve the scripting process of editioned video and film installations, I adapted Madeleine Akrich’s method of de-scription. I have done the exercise of putting into language the socialization process of a few artworks. I reconstructed the life cycles of these artworks and described how they have been exhibited, distributed and preserved. I applied the methodology of de-scription to three case studies. My selection of the case studies was done based on the questions they raised. Then, I proceeded to reconstruct their life cycles and consulted documentation on their exhibition, distribution and preservation histories. Over the course of four years, if the works were on display, I also travelled to the exhibition venues to document their presentation in the exhibition space and how they had been framed in the context of specific exhibitions. Finally, I analyzed the different phases of the socialization of these artworks and indentified the mediators that have shaped their identity.

When I proceeded to my reconstruction of the life cycles of these works, my point of entry was not necessarily their first public manifestation; rather, it was the moment that raised within me a series of questions, that made me wonder what the artwork actually consisted of. From that entry point into the life cycle of these works, I described all the events that preceded that event, and all the events that followed. My points of entry always made me
focus on a particular phase in the life cycle of an artwork, even though all phases were always considered.

In Chapter Three, I focused on the exhibition history of Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time*, as it is mainly this phase that has shaped the identity of the work. It is indeed the occasion of an exhibition that led the artist to alter the work, to add a second monitor and turn it into a four-channel video installation. This variation could have occurred only once, but the study of the exhibition history of the work has shown that since 2006, depending on the size of the exhibition space, the work has been shown either as a three- or a four-channel video installation. Two versions of the work co-exist nowadays.

The reconstruction of the life cycle of *Play Dead; Real Time* has enabled me to identify influential mediators in the life cycle of this artwork. Among them is the artist, who is the only one, to this day, who decides if the work is going to be displayed as a three- or a four-channel video installation, even though all editions of the work have been integrated into museum collections and are no longer part of his personal collection. The exhibition space of the Gagosian Gallery has also played an important role in the life cycle of the work as *Play Dead; Real Time* was initially a site-specific work. When initially displayed there, the viewers could identify that the videos had been shot in the very same location where the work was being displayed. The artwork entered into dialogue with the space where it was presented. Finally, the exhibition reviews have also played a crucial role in the shaping of the identity of this artwork, since they diverged from the framing done in the press release of the 2003 exhibition and interpreted *Play Dead; Real Time* as a form of institutional critique. The study of the re-exhibitions of this artwork has also shown that nowadays, this institutional critique is less discussed, as one of the elements is missing: the very site where the work was shot and exhibited. The *mise en abyme* feature is gone. The exhibition space of the Gagosian Gallery – and all the symbolism that exhibiting there carried with it – is no longer imminently tangible.

In Chapter Four, I focused on the distribution of *Day Is Done*. My point of entry into the life cycle of this work was its fragmentation after its inaugural – and landmark – exhibition of 2005. I described different acquisition strategies, such as the fact that some collections acquired more than one offspring. The study of the re-exhibitions of the three offspring acquired by the Goetz Collection and of two offspring acquired by the Stedelijk Museum has shown that they have proceeded differently: the Goetz Collection has tried to create a mini-version of *Day Is Done*, whereas the Stedelijk Museum presents them as two artworks by Mike Kelley. Nevertheless, in most cases, their exhibition is still overshadowed by the 2005 exhibition; in the text accompanying their exhibition, more attention is always
paid to *Day Is Done* than to the interpretation of the offspring themselves. Among the influential mediators identified in this chapter were the exhibition reviews of Mike Kelley’s shows of the late 1980s and the early 1990s that triggered the making of an entire body of work that the artist had begun in the mid-1990s, and to which *Day Is Done* belong. The 2005 exhibition is constantly referred to, indicating that it is a mediator that has played a major role. To this day, it remains the core of any interpretation of *Day Is Done* and its offspring. The pre-exhibition publications in major art magazines – *Artforum* and *Flash Art* – were important, having framed the reception of *Day Is Done*. Very few interpretations of the work diverged from what the artist had stated his intentions to be with *Day Is Done*.

In Chapter Five, I focused on the preservation of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, and more precisely, on the quest to find this work a suitable exhibition format. This case study has shown that it can take over twenty years for an artwork to reach a stable presentation format. In its life cycle, *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* has known different states, its has been through different versions: a film version, a video version, and a digital video version. The examining of this life cycle has also shown that a few attempts were made to turn the work into an editioned one. The acquisition contract turned out to be an influential mediator in the life cycle of this work, as the National Gallery of Canada used it as an argument to stipulate that the work was acquired as a unique artwork, and therefore could not become an editioned one. Another mediator finally overruled this acquisition contract: the Director of the institution, who was also the curator who had invited John Massey to exhibit *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* in Berlin in 1982.

In this study, I started with the fact that these artworks were editioned. I was wondering to what extent this feature contributed to the shaping of their identity. After having proceeded with the decription of these artworks, I can conclude that, rather than by their different editions, their identity is shaped by their different versions. Indeed, the case of Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* has made strikingly clear that when the artist decides to alter the work and add a second monitor to extend the visitors’ walk, it has nothing to do with the edition 1/3 of *Play Dead; Real Time*. The decription of the work has made evident that it is always *Play Dead; Real Time* that he modified, and not a specific edition of it. The three editions were not three different artworks, but one. What the case of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* has made striking is that its versioning has clearly altered its appearance: at first, three 16 mm films were projected onto freestanding screens, then the work was supported on laser disks and the three films were played on video.
monitors, and now, the exhibition support is DVDs and the three films are projected onto a gallery wall.

The method of *de-scription* enabled me to reconstruct the life cycles of *Play Dead; Real Time, Day Is Done* and *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* and allowed me to identify all relevant mediators in the scripting process. Studying the exhibition history of these works shed light on how they have been framed in different exhibitions, how they have been displayed in the exhibition, and also how they have been interpreted in the context of these specific exhibitions. Studying the distribution history of these works made visible how they circulated in the art world and how the different editions and offspring continued to relate to one another. Finally, studying the preservation history of these works brought to the fore that their preservation was based on a conceptual, rather than a material approach. The method of *de-scription* also helped identify their different versions, and I was able to identify if each new version was the result of an alteration made by the artist or if they were the result of a preservation process.

The foremost benefit of my method is that it yields a broader knowledge of the identity formation of artworks. For example, as demonstrated by the discussion of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, not taking into account the work’s scripting process would mean that the cinematographic origin of the work, both in terms of the aesthetic appearance of the moving images and sound, and the display of the work, would be obliterated. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, it is inevitable that time-based artworks manifest themselves differently throughout the course of their lives. Yet the *de-scription* of the case studies has shown that a broad knowledge base on the socialization that occurs throughout the life cycle of an artwork is a necessity for doing justice to the works’ identity. Moreover, my method made me consider dimensions that normally might be left out. In particular, the *de-scription* pointed towards details that are easily overlooked otherwise, as for instance the two acquisition numbers granted to *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*. As it turns out, these details, that seemed minor at first, have had a great impact on the socialization of these artworks; they have made the identity of these works shift in important ways. In the case of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, taking into account its two acquisition numbers helps understand not only the position of the institution in the preservation process of this work, but also how the different versions of the work are dealt with.

The method I developed could be suitable for curators and conservators, as it helps one understand how the identity of an artwork has been shaped over time. Delving very systematically into the exhibition, distribution, and preservation history of an artwork would
bring one to an awareness of all the ways in which a specific artwork has been displayed over time. Perhaps, though, the method is impractical for people working in museums, as it requires a lot of archival research in different institutions. Also, as is often the case in archival research, some documents may be out of reach or unavailable, as when I was denied the permission to access the curatorial files at the Museum of Museum Art in New York because of their access policy or when I was confronted with the privacy policy of the Gagosian Gallery. Nevertheless, even if curators and conservators cannot apply this method for practical reasons (lack of time, restricted access to certain documents, etc.), they can benefit from the outcomes of the current research on the socialization of *Play Dead; Real Time, Day Is Done*, and *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*, and could also, in the future, benefit from the findings of other researchers who have used this method.

Even if generalizations on the socialization of editioned video and film installations can be drawn from the case studies of this research, some aspects remain to be explored. The cases studied in this dissertation have proven that the institutions that acquired these works had, at most times, a very open and conceptual approach when dealing with the presentation, distribution and preservation of these works. It would be interesting, however, to study cases in which the institutions dealt with the works differently. Hypothetically, what if, for instance, one of the institutions that had acquired Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* had refused to see its edition displayed as a four-channel video installation, arguing that the work had been acquired as a three-channel video installation? How would this particular edition of the work have undergone the socialization process? The de-scription of other artworks could shed light on conflicting positions between different mediators present in the life cycles of editioned video and film installations.

In summary, although this dissertation started as an investigation into how the different editions of a work affected its identity, the conclusion is that it is the different versions of an artwork that shape its identity. These findings are therefore also relevant for other, non-editioned time-based artworks. Applying my theoretical standpoint, scripting, and my method, de-scription, would provide researchers with a more complete view of the shaping of the identity of time-based artworks and would broaden the knowledge base for making decisions on the exhibition, distribution and preservation of time-based artworks.
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Conservation file of *Play Dead; Real Time*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. [Consulted on July 25, 2007.]

Curatorial file of *Black Curtain*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. [Consulted on June 28, 2011.]

Curatorial file of *Switching Marys*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. [Consulted on June 28, 2011.]

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Conversation with Gert Hoogeveen, Chief of the Audiovisuals Department, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, July 23, 2008.

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Kelley, Mike. Day is Done [film], 2007, DVD, color, sound, 169 minutes.


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N.B. The photograph above does not match the description of the Switching Marys done in the section 4.3 of Chapter Four. The photograph was taken when the projections on the oval screens were not properly synchronized. On one of the two screens, Mary should be seen with her arms up (see Figure 4.12).
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Source: [http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/search/artwork_zoom_e.jsp?mkey=14508](http://cybermuse.gallery.ca/cybermuse/search/artwork_zoom_e.jsp?mkey=14508)

Figure 5.2
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Appendixes
# Appendix 1

Exhibition list of Douglas Gordon’s *Play Dead; Real Time* (2003)

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<th>Edition</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Presented as part of the institution’s permanent collection]</td>
<td>National Gallery of Canada</td>
<td>20 May 2003 - 26 April 2004</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Noah’s Ark</em></td>
<td>National Gallery of Canada, Shawinigan Space</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Espace Agnès b., Festival d’automne à Paris</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>What is New, Pussycat?</em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Douglas Gordon: Timeline</em></td>
<td>Museum of Modern Art, New York</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>[Presented as part of the institution’s permanent collection]</td>
<td>Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Douglas Gordon. Play Dead; Real Time</em></td>
<td>Saint-Mary’s University Art Gallery, Halifax</td>
<td>8 January - 6 February 2011</td>
<td>3/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Douglas Gordon</em></td>
<td>Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main</td>
<td>11 November 2011 - 25 March 2012</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = The work was presented with two monitors.
## Appendix 2

The 25 video/sculpture installations of *Day Is Done* (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offspring</th>
<th>Collection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Purple Reflected Institutional Exit</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Woods Group</em></td>
<td>Goetz Collection, Munich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Singles' Mixer</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Fresno</em></td>
<td>Rubell Family Collection, Miami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Candle-Lighting Ceremony</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Black Curtain</em></td>
<td>Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Structuralist Mines</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Heartthrob Split</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Morose Ghoul</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Shy Satanist</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lonely Vampire</em></td>
<td>Goetz Collection, Munich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gym Interior</em></td>
<td>The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Picking A Mary</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Joseph Supplicates</em></td>
<td>Goetz Collection, Munich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Switching Marys</em></td>
<td>Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Devil's Door</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Candy Cane Throne</em></td>
<td>Collection of Rachel and Jean-Pierre Lehmann, Geneva &amp; New York</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pink Curtain</em></td>
<td>Collection of François Pinault, Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Transmission</em></td>
<td>Sold at Christie's, Paris, 17 March 2009, owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gospel Rocket</em></td>
<td>Collection of Patricia Marshall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Stained Glass Window</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nativity Play</em></td>
<td>Sold at Christie's, New York, 13 May 2008, owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Procession Ramp</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Horse Busts, Horse Bodies</em></td>
<td>Collection of Eugenio Lopez, Mexico &amp; Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Empty Gym</em></td>
<td>Owner unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. When indicated “Owner unknown,” it means that I could not identify the owner of the work. It is possible that some of the offspring of *Day Is Done* are still part of the artist’s collection.
### Appendix 3

Exhibition list of the offspring of *Day Is Done* (incomplete)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offspring</th>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purple Reflected Institutional Exit</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woods Group</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Kelley</td>
<td>Goetz Collection, Munich</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 December 2008 - 25 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast forward 2. The Power of Motion. Media Art Sammlung Goetz</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>ZKM, Karlsruhe</td>
<td>18 June - 3 October 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles' Mixer</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresno</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Eye: L.A. Artists from the Rubell Family Collection</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Rubell Family Collection, Miami</td>
<td>4 December 2006 - 31 May 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candle-Lighting Ceremony</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yokohama Triennale 2008: Time Crevasse</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Yokohama</td>
<td>13 September - 30 November 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Curtain</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes Wide Open: New to the Stedelijk &amp; Monique Zajfen Collection</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Stedelijk Museum CS, Amsterdam</td>
<td>22 December 2007 - 1 June 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structuralist Mines</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearthrobp Split</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morose Ghoul</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy Satanist</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lonely Vampire</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Kelley</td>
<td>Goetz Collection, Munich</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 December 2008 - 25 April 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym Interior</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>The Broad Art Foundation, Santa Monica</td>
<td></td>
<td>19 November 2006 - 4 September 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Broad Contemporary Art Museum, Los Angeles</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 February - 10 October 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picking A Mary</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Supplicates</td>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Title</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Dates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switching Marys</td>
<td>Goetz Collection, Munich</td>
<td>1 December 2008 - 25 April 2009</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day is Done</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devil's Door</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy Cane Throne</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Video: Artists and Histories</td>
<td>Getty Center, Los Angeles</td>
<td>15 March - 8 June 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink Curtain</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Where are we going?&quot; Selection from the François Pinault Collection</td>
<td>Palazzo Grassi, Venice</td>
<td>29 April - 1 October 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transmission</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel Rocket</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorderly Conduct: Recent Art in Tumulous Times</td>
<td>Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach</td>
<td>3 February - 25 May 2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stained Glass Window</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nativity Play</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procession Ramp</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Busts, Horse Bodies</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty Gym</td>
<td>Gagosian Gallery, New York</td>
<td>11 November - 17 December 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 4

Exhibition list of John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* (1982)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Film / video version</th>
<th>Projection support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>OKanada</strong></td>
<td>Akademie der Künste, Berlin</td>
<td>5 December 1982 – 30 January 1983</td>
<td>3 x 16 mm film projection</td>
<td>Screens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Berlin Project</strong></td>
<td>Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal</td>
<td>22 June – 4 September 1983</td>
<td>3 x 16 mm film projection</td>
<td>Screens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>John Massey</strong></td>
<td>Art Gallery of Hamilton</td>
<td>12 February – 24 April 1994</td>
<td>3 laser discs</td>
<td>Video monitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>John Massey: How my mind works</strong></td>
<td>National Gallery of Canada</td>
<td>20 July – 4 September 1995</td>
<td>3 laser discs</td>
<td>Video monitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canadian Stories</strong></td>
<td>Ydessa Hendeles Foundation, Toronto</td>
<td>14 October 2000 – 30 June 2003</td>
<td>3 x DVDs</td>
<td>Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adorno. The Possibility of the Impossible</strong></td>
<td>Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfort</td>
<td>29 October 2003 – 4 January 2004</td>
<td>3 x DVDs</td>
<td>Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>This much is certain</strong></td>
<td>Royal College of Art, London</td>
<td>13 March – 4 April 2004</td>
<td>3 x DVDs</td>
<td>Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>John Massey: As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)</strong></td>
<td>National Gallery of Canada</td>
<td>3 May – 6 September 2004</td>
<td>3 x DVDs</td>
<td>Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>John Massey: As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)</strong></td>
<td>Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver</td>
<td>6 May - 19 June 2005</td>
<td>3 x DVDs</td>
<td>Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cinema Paradiso</strong></td>
<td>Australian Centre for Contemporary Art</td>
<td>16 October – 2 December 2007</td>
<td>3 x DVDs (A.P.)</td>
<td>Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Road Runners</strong></td>
<td>Vox, Montreal</td>
<td>7 March – 30 May 2009</td>
<td>3 x DVDs (A.P.)</td>
<td>Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elastic Frames</strong></td>
<td>Transmission, Glasgow</td>
<td>8 February – 5 March 2011</td>
<td>3 x DVDs (A.P.)</td>
<td>Wall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scripting Artworks: Studying the Socialization of Editioned Video and Film Installations

Summary
Since the end of the 1960s, an increasing number of moving-image works have been presented in exhibition venues. The medium of production of these time-based works (multi-channel videos, video installations, film installations, etc.) makes them more conducive to replication. Consequently, they are, like photographs and lithographs, sold in limited editions, meaning that more than one institution or collector can acquire the same artwork. In addition to being editioned, these artworks are also made of many versions since they can change depending on the exhibition space and also on account of the ephemeral technology used to create and exhibit them. This dissertation examines the socialization of editioned video and film installations, i.e., the intersecting events occurring in their life cycles: their exhibition, distribution, and preservation. Throughout the study, I demonstrate that the examination of these events is crucial for a better understanding of the identity of these variable artworks. The aim of this dissertation is first, to understand how the exhibition, distribution and preservation contribute to the shaping of the identity of editioned video and film installations and second, to develop a model for describing these works taking into account their variable nature.

The first two chapters set the framework of this study. In Chapter One, by referring to specific artworks selected for their exemplary features, I show how the exhibition, distribution and preservation of video and film installations can lead to changes in the manner of framing and displaying these works, in how they circulate, and in finding ways to ensure that they can still be exhibited despite the fact that the technology used at the moment of their creation became ephemeral. The artworks analyzed in the first chapter also have the purpose of illustrating how video and film-based artworks change continuously and that they need to be envisaged as continuums.

In Chapter Two, I present the theoretical and conceptual framework of the dissertation. Drawing on existing definitions of scripts such as the one proposed by Madeleine Akrich in the field of Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) and by Gérard Genette in the field of literary studies, I develop the notion of script as a methodological tool. The purpose of this tool is to study the mediations and mediators at work in the life cycles of editioned video and film installations. Whereas for Akrich the script is a set of instructions implicit in the technical object, I propose an active theoretical standpoint: scripting artworks, a process-based
approach that enables one – in this case me – to grasp the necessary conditions for time-based artworks’ instantiations. Scripting an artwork is the conceptualization of what happens during the socialization process of an artwork. It enables one to identify the mediators, both human and non-human, that shape the identity of the artwork. By developing a model to study editioned video and film installations, this dissertation aims to help identify what these artworks actually consist of conceptually and materially, taking into account that rather than being clearly defined and static, their identity takes shape during an ongoing process. To reach the level of conceptualization targeted, I adapted Akrich’s method of de-description, a method used to describe and analyze the interactions between humans and objects in different social settings. With this method, I proceed with the exercise of putting into language the socialization process of three artworks, the three case studies of this dissertation. De-scripting an artwork is a process wherein the researcher, or the conservator, or the curator, writes down descriptions of the work’s life cycle: how it has been exhibited, distributed and preserved. It is a way to acknowledge all the mediators making its existence possible and a process that leads to more informed decisions on how to exhibit, distribute and preserve works of art.

Chapters Three to Five are dedicated to case studies. In Chapter Three, I raise the following question: what happens if one of the editions of an editioned artwork is modified? To answer this question, I proceed with the reconstruction of the life cycle of Douglas Gordon’s Play Dead; Real Time (2003). The de-description of this artwork focuses on its exhibition history, as it is mainly during this phase that its identity is shaped. The chapter begins with the explanation of how this artwork came into being and what kind of relationship it had with its inaugural exhibition site. I argue that the inaugural exhibition of Play Dead; Real Time can be interpreted as a form of institutional critique. In the second part of the chapter, I discuss the subsequent exhibitions of the work and contend that the artwork is made of different versions. The exercise of putting into language the socialization process of Play Dead; Real Time leads to the identification of influential mediators in its life cycle; among them, the artist and the exhibition space where the work was initially presented. In the last section of the chapter, I consider the inclusion of Play Dead; Real Time in another work by Douglas Gordon: Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work from 1992 Until Now. To be seen on monitors, some with headphones, others run silently, and all simultaneously and discuss how Gordon constantly revisits and reinterprets his works, which makes it impossible to speak of a finished version of a work.

Chapter Four examines the fragmentation of artworks and large-scale projects after their inaugural exhibition. It explores possible ways of scripting projects that produce a great
variety of offspring. In this chapter, the peculiar distribution of Mike Kelley’s large-scale project *Day Is Done* (2005) is studied, as it comprises a substantial number of offspring that have been acquired by different institutions and private collections and have been re-exhibited a few times. I first analyze the inaugural exhibition of *Day Is Done*, which I qualify as a landmark exhibition because of its scale, but also because of its irreproducible features. I then proceed to the examination of the re-exhibition of certain of its offspring and discuss how they continue (or do not continue) to relate to one another. In the last part of the chapter, I conclude that the scripting process of *Day Is Done* has branched off after the inaugural exhibition, but that despite the fragmentation and the release of other offspring, a film and a book, the 2005 exhibition is still looming large in the background of all of *Day Is Done’s* offspring.

The fifth chapter investigates the case of an artwork which has had different manifestations and has been through varied technical and material appearances. It discusses the fact that a non-editioned artwork can become, at some point in its life cycle, an editioned artwork. In that last case study chapter, I examine John Massey’s *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* (1982), since it became an editioned artwork about twenty years after its creation and consists of many versions. The chapter focuses on the preservation history of the work since it has played a crucial role in defining its identity. The first section of the chapter depicts the inaugural exhibition of *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* and the technical problems that the work encountered. The second section of the chapter considers the migration of the work to a more recent format and the different configurations it went through over the years. It is during the different preservation processes that the identity of the work was shaped: from a film installation, it became a video installation. In the last section of the chapter, I analyze how the transfer of the work to a video format also triggered the possibility of turning it into an editioned work. Now that two editions of the work exist, it increases its chances of being exhibited. The *description* done in the chapter helped identify influential mediators in the identity formation of this work such as the exhibition reviews, which have played a double role: that of influencing the perception of the work and its identity formation, and that of a source of information for the identification of other mediators. In the conclusion of the chapter, I point out that it is only after twenty years that the artwork has finally reached a stable presentation format that does justice to the concept that John Massey had intended to put forth in 1982.

I conclude my study by reflecting on the scripting process of editioned video and film installations and by explaining how this theoretical tool serves the purpose of better
understanding these artworks’ socialization. I discuss how the method of *de-scription* enabled me to reconstruct the life cycles of *Play Dead; Real Time, Day Is Done* and *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* and allowed me to identify all relevant mediators in the scripting process. Studying the exhibition history of these artworks shed light on how they have been framed in different exhibitions, how they have been displayed in each exhibition, and also how they have been interpreted in the context of specific exhibitions. Studying the distribution history of editioned works made visible how they circulated in the art world and how the different editions and offspring continued to relate to one another. Finally, studying the preservation history of these works brought to the fore that their preservation was based on a conceptual, rather than a material approach. The method of *de-scription* also helped identify their different versions, and I was able to assert if each new version was the result of an alteration made by the artist and/or other parties, or if they were the result of a preservation process. In the end, it turns out that rather than the fact that they are editioned, it is the existence of multiple versions that most radically influences the identity of editioned video and film installations.
Scripting Artworks: Onderzoek naar de socialisatie van in oplage verschenen video- en filminstallaties

Samenvatting
Sinds het einde van de jaren zestig is een toenemend aantal media-kunstwerken geëxposeerd in musea en andere tentoonstellingsruimten. Het medium voor de productie van deze time-based kunstwerken (multi-channel video’s, video-installaties, filminstallaties, enzovoort) brengt met zich mee dat er kopieën worden gemaakt. Als gevolg daarvan worden de werken, net als foto’s en litho’s, verkocht in beperkte oplagen, wat betekent dat meer dan één instelling of verzamelaar hetzelfde kunstwerk kan verwerven. Niet alleen verschijnen deze kunstwerken in oplage, maar ook worden er meerdere versies geproduceerd: omdat de werken kunnen veranderen al naar gelang de tentoonstellingsruimte, of vanwege de vergankelijke technologie die is gebruikt bij het creëren en het tentoonstellen van het werk. Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de socialisatie van in oplage verschenen video- en filminstallaties, dat wil zeggen: de gebeurtenissen tijdens hun levenscyclus die aan elkaar raken: het tentoonstellen, de distributie en de conservering. In dit onderzoek toon ik aan dat het bestuderen van deze gebeurtenissen van cruciaal belang is voor een beter begrip van de identiteit van deze veranderlijke kunstwerken. Het proefschrift beoogt ten eerste inzicht te verschaffen in de vraag hoe het tentoonstellen, de distributie en de conservering bijdragen aan de vorming van de identiteit van in oplage verschenen video- en filminstallaties, en ten tweede beoogt het een model te ontwikkelen voor de beschrijving van deze werken, waarbij rekening wordt gehouden met hun veranderlijke natuur.

In de eerste twee hoofdstukken wordt het onderzoekskader neergezet. In hoofdstuk één laat ik, aan de hand van specifieke kunstwerken die zijn geselecteerd op grond van hun karakteristieke kenmerken, zien dat het tentoonstellen, distribueren en conserveren van video-en filminstallaties kan leiden tot veranderingen in de manier waarop de werken worden ingekaderd en tentoongesteld, alsook in de manier waarop ze circuleren, en dat het kan leiden tot het zoeken van nieuwe manieren om te zorgen dat ze blijvend tentoongesteld kunnen worden, ook wanneer de technologie die bij de totstandkoming werd gebruikt verouderd is. De kunstwerken die in het eerste hoofdstuk aan een nader onderzoek worden onderworpen dienen ook ter illustratie van het feit dat op video en film gebaseerde kunstwerken voortdurend aan verandering onderhevig zijn en als een continuüm beschouwd dienen te worden.
In hoofdstuk twee zet ik het theoretische en conceptuele kader van dit proefschrift uiteen. Gebruikmakend van bestaande definities van *scripts*, zoals de definitie die is voorgesteld door Madeleine Akrich op het terrein van de Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) en door Gérard Genette op het terrein van literatuuronderzoek, heb ik de notie ontwikkeld van het script als methodologisch instrument. Het doel van dit instrument is het bestuderen van de de bemiddelaars die een rol spelen in de levenscyclus van in oplage verschenen video- en filminstallaties. Waar het script voor Akrich bestaat uit een verzameling instructies die besloten liggen in de techniek van het object, stel ik een actief theoretisch standpunt voor: *scripting artworks*, een proces-gerelateerde benadering die ons – in dit geval mij – in staat stelt te zien wat de benodigde voorwaarden zijn voor de concretisering van *time-based* kunstwerken. *Scripting an artwork* is het conceptualiseren van wat er gebeurt tijdens het socialisatieproces van een kunstwerk. Het stelt ons in staat de als dan niet menselijke bemiddelaars te benoemen die de identiteit van het kunstwerk bepalen. Door een model te ontwikkelen om in oplage verschenen video- en filminstallaties te bestuderen, beoogt dit proefschrift een bijdrage te leveren aan het vaststellen van waar deze kunstwerken in conceptuele en materiële zin feitelijk uit bestaan, waarbij in aanmerking wordt genomen dat hun identiteit niet zozeer duidelijk omliggend en statisch is, maar vorm krijgt tijdens een voortdurend proces. Om het conceptuele niveau te bereiken dat mij voor ogen stond heb ik Akrichs methode van *de-scription* gebruikt, een methode die is toegepast voor het beschrijven en analyseren van de interactie tussen mensen en objecten in verschillende sociale situaties. Met behulp van deze methode ben ik aan de slag gegaan om het socialisatieproces van drie kunstwerken onder woorden te brengen – de drie casestudies van dit proefschrift. De *de-scriptie* van een kunstwerk is een proces waarbij de onderzoeker, de restaurator of de curator, beschrijvingen van de levenscyclus van het werk op papier zet: hoe het tentoongesteld, gedistribueerd en geconserveerd is. Het is een manier om recht te doen aan alle bemiddelaars die het bestaan van het werk mogelijk hebben gemaakt, en het is een proces dat leidt tot beter onderbouwde beslissingen over het tentoonstellen, distribueren en conserveren van kunstwerken.

Hoofdstuk drie tot en met vijf zijn gewijd aan de casestudies. In hoofdstuk drie stel ik de volgende vraag centraal: wat gebeurt er wanneer er iets wordt gewijzigd aan een van de edities van een in oplage verschenen kunstwerk? Om antwoord te geven op die vraag maak ik een reconstructie van de levenscyclus van Douglas Gordons *Play Dead; Real Time* (2003). De *de-scriptie* van dit kunstwerk richt zich op de tentoonstellingsgeschiedenis, aangezien de identiteit voornamelijk in deze fase wordt gevormd. Het hoofdstuk begint met een
beschrijving van de ontstaansgeschiedenis van dit kunstwerk en beschrijft in welke verhouding het stond tot de plek waar het als eerste werd tentoongesteld. Ik betoog dat de plek waar *Play Dead; Real Time* voor het eerst werd tentoongesteld gezien kan worden als een vorm van institutionele kritiek. In het tweede deel van dit hoofdstuk ga ik in op de latere keren dat het werk is tentoongesteld en laat ik zien dat het kunstwerk uit verschillende versies bestaat. Door het socialisatieproces van *Play Dead; Real Time* onder woorden te brengen word je gedwongen de belangrijke bemiddelaars in de levenscyclus te benoemen; onder meer de kunstenaar en de plek waar het werk als eerste werd tentoongesteld. In het laatste deel van dat hoofdstuk kijk ik naar de integratie van *Play Dead; Real Time* in een ander werk van Douglas Gordon: *Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work from 1992 Until Now. To be seen on monitors, some with headphones, others run silently, and all simultaneously*, en ga ik dieper in op de vraag hoe Gordon voortdurend terugkeert naar zijn werken en ze herinterpreteert, wat het onmogelijk maakt om van een voltooide versie van het werk te spreken.

Hoofdstuk vier behandelt de fragmentatie van kunstwerken en grootschalige projecten nadat ze voor de eerste keer zijn tentoongesteld. Er wordt onderzocht op welke wijze projecten te *scripten* die een grote variëteit aan nakomelingen genereren. In dit hoofdstuk wordt gekeken naar de opmerkelijke distributie van Mike Kelleys grootschalige project *Day Is Done* (2005), aangezien dat bestaat uit een aanzienlijke hoeveelheid werken die eruit zijn voortgekomen en die zijn verworven door verschillende instellingen of privé-verzamelingen, en enkele malen opnieuw zijn tentoongesteld. Ik kijk allereerst naar de inaugurele tentoonstelling van *Day Is Done*, die ik kwalificeer als een gedenkwaardige tentoonstelling, niet alleen vanwege de schaal maar ook vanwege de niet te representeren aspecten. Vervolgens kijk ik naar de herinstallatie van de nakomelingen en bespreek ik hoe die werken al dan niet blijvend in relatie tot elkaar staan. In het laatste deel van het hoofdstuk kom ik tot de conclusie dat het *scripting* proces van *Day Is Done* zich na de eerste tentoonstelling heeft vertakt, maar dat ondanks de fragmentatie en het uitbrengen van andere nakomelingen, een film en een boek, de tentoonstelling uit 2005 nog altijd zeer nadrukkelijk op de achtergrond aanwezig is bij alles wat is voortgekomen uit *Day Is Done*.

Het vijfde hoofdstuk gaat nader in op een kunstwerk dat uit meerdere manifestaties bestaat en dat verschillende technische en materiële verschijningsvormen heeft gekend. In dit hoofdstuk wordt gekeken hoe een niet in oplage verschenen werk op een bepaald moment in zijn levenscyclus een in oplage verschenen werk kan worden. In dit laatste hoofdstuk van de case studies onderzoek ik John Masseys *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)*
(1982), aangezien dat zo’n twintig jaar na het ontstaan uitgroeide tot een kunstwerk in oplage, en uit verschillende versies bestaat. In dit hoofdstuk ga ik dieper in op de conserveringsgeschiedenis van het werk aangezien die een cruciale rol heeft gespeeld bij het bepalen van de identiteit. Het eerste deel van het hoofdstuk schetst de inaugurele tentoonstelling van *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* en de technische problemen waar het werk mee te maken kreeg. Het tweede deel van het hoofdstuk betreft de migratie van het werk naar een meer recente drager en de verschillende configuraties die het in de loop der jaren heeft doorgemaakt. Tijdens de verschillende conserveringsprocessen is de identiteit van het werk gevormd: van een filminstallatie werd het een video-installatie. In het laatste deel van het hoofdstuk analyseer ik hoe de overgang van het werk naar een videoformaat ook de mogelijkheid in de hand heeft gewerkt om er een werk in oplage van te maken. Nu er twee versies van het werk bestaan zijn de kansen toegenomen dat het geëxposeerd kan worden. De *de-scription* in dit hoofdstuk heeft geholpen om vast te stellen wat de invloedrijke bemiddelaars zijn geweest bij de totstandkoming van de identiteit van dit werk, zoals de tentoonstellingsrecensies, die een dubbele rol hebben vervuld: ze hebben zowel de perceptie van het werk als de vorming van de identiteit beïnvloed, en daarnaast zijn ze een bron van informatie geweest bij het vaststellen van de identiteit van andere bemiddelaars. In de conclusie van dit hoofdstuk betoog ik dat het kunstwerk pas na twintig jaar eindelijk een stabiele presentatievorm heeft bereikt die recht doet aan het concept dat John Massey in 1982 voor ogen stond.

Ik besluit mijn onderzoek met een bespiegeling over het *scripting*-proces van in oplage verschenen video- en filminstallaties en met een uiteenzetting hoe dit theoretische instrument kan dienen voor een beter begrip van de socialisatie van deze kunstwerken. Ik bespreek hoe de methode van *de-scripting* mij in staat heeft gesteld de levenscycli van *Play Dead; Real Time, Day Is Done* en *As the Hammer Strikes (A Partial Illustration)* te reconstrueren, en hoe die methode het mogelijk heeft gemaakt om alle relevante bemiddelaars in het *scripting*-proces te identificeren. De bestudering van de tentoonstellingsgeschiedenis van deze kunstwerken heeft licht geworpen op de vraag hoe ze in verschillende tentoonstellingen zijn ingekaderd, hoe ze op elk van die tentoonstellingen zijn geëxposeerd en ook hoe ze zijn geïnterpreteerd binnen de context van specifieke tentoonstellingen. Door te kijken naar de distributiegeschiedenis van in oplage verschenen werken is zichtbaar gemaakt hoe ze circuleerden binnen de kunstwereld en hoe de verschillende edities en nakomelingen met elkaar in verband zijn blijven staan. Tot slot is uit de bestudering van de conserveringsgeschiedenis van deze werken naar voren gekomen dat hun conservering was
gebaseerd op een conceptuele benadering en niet zozeer op een materiële benadering. De
methode van *de-scripting* heeft er bovendien voor gezorgd dat de verschillende versies
konden worden geïdentificeerd, en bij elke nieuwe versie ben ik in staat geweest vast te
stellen of deze het resultaat was van een aanpassing gedaan door de kunstenaar en/of andere
partijen, of het resultaat van een conserveringsproces. Uiteindelijk blijkt het bestaan van
diverse versies, en niet zozeer het feit dat een werk in oplage is verschenen, de meest
ingrijpende invloed te hebben op de identiteit van in oplage verschenen video- en
filminstallaties.