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

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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

¹ Richard Ekstract, “Pop Goes the Videotape: An Underground Interview with Andy Warhol” (1965), in *I’ll Be Your Mirror. The Selected Andy Warhol Interview*, ed. Kenneth Goldsmith (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2004), 71-78.

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>.

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.

⁴ Callie Angell, “Andy Warhol: *Outer and Inner Space*,” in *From Stills to Motion & Back Again. Texts on Andy Warhol’s Screen Tests & Outer and Inner Space* (Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery, 2003), 14.

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.⁵ 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.⁶ Callie Angell had been given the task of contextualizing his films and placing them at the core of Warhol's work.⁷

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

⁵ "Callie Angell: The Films of Andy Warhol," Interview conducted by Michael Rush on WPS1 Art Radio, aired May 29, 2006, accessed July 4, 2011, <http://artonair.org/show/callie-angell-andy-warhol-screen-tests7>.

⁶ See the description "Andy Warhol Film Project" on the Whitney Museum of American Art Website, accessed July 4, 2011, <http://www.whitney.org/www/research/warhol.jsp>.

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.⁸ 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 Poinot argues, the moment of the exhibition is *quand l'œuvre a lieu*, it is when the artwork occurs, takes place, happens.⁹ 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."¹⁰ From one exhibition to the other, an artwork encounters

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 **** (1967).

⁹ Jean-Marc Poinot, *Quand l'œuvre a lieu : L'art exposé et ses récits autorisés* (Geneva: Les presses du réel, 2008 [1999]).

¹⁰ Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge and London : The MIT Press, 1998), xxi.

variability in its display, but also in its *framing*.¹¹ This is what leads scholars such as Jean-Marc Poinot 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.¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ In 2007-2008, it was also included in the exhibition *Andy Warhol: Other Voices, Other Rooms* presented at the Stedelijk Museum CS in Amsterdam.¹⁵

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*.

¹⁴ Exhibition *Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection. Films, Videos and Installations from 1963 to 2005*, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 25 September 2006 – 27 February 2007. Curators: Stan Douglas, Christopher Eamon, Joachim Jäger and Gabriele Knapstein.

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 Warholesque 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

shown in Amsterdam, the exhibition traveled to numerous venues such as the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, the Hayward Gallery in London and the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio.

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*,

Plastic Inevitable was a complex project in which Warhol's films were only one of the elements. For further details, see Joseph's essay "My Mind Split Open": Andy Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*" in *X-Screen: Film Installations and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s*, ed. Matthias Michalka (Köln: Walther König, 2004), 14-31.

¹⁷ Gérard Genette, *The Work of Art: Immanence and Transcendence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 164.

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.¹⁸ 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."¹⁹ 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

¹⁸ Peter Bogers, *Heaven*, accessed July 4, 2011, [http://www.peterbogers.com/work/site-specific-public%20space/1995%20Heaven%20\(Utrecht\)/1996-heaven.htm](http://www.peterbogers.com/work/site-specific-public%20space/1995%20Heaven%20(Utrecht)/1996-heaven.htm).

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."²⁰ 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.²¹ 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.²²

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

²⁰ Thomas Crow, "Patriotism and Virtue: David to the Young Ingres," in *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History*, ed. Stephen F. Eisenman (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 47.

²¹ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999).

²² David Joselit, "Inside the Light Cube," *Artforum* 42, no. 7 (March 2004): 154-159.

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.”²³ 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.”²⁴ 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

²³ Anthony McCall. “Two Statements,” in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 250.

²⁴ Chrissie Iles, “Issues in the New Cinematic Aesthetic in Video,” in *Saving the Image: Art After Film*, ed. Tanya Leighton and Pavel Büchler (Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts & Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University, 2003), 132. David Joselit, “Inside the Light Cube,” 154.

which the viewer can see herself projected into the exhibition space as her presence is recorded live by a surveillance camera (Fig. 1.6).²⁵ 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

²⁵ *Shadow Projection* was initially shown at The Kitchen in New York from May 9-18, 1974. See The Kitchen Calendar of May 1974, accessed on July 4, 2011, http://www.eai.org/user_files/supporting_documents/MAY74EAI.pdf.

such as *Ever is Over All*, the experience of the visitors takes place in their head.²⁶ 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."²⁷ 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?

²⁶ On this matter, see Raymond Bellour, "Of an Other Cinema," in *Black Box Illuminated*, ed. Sara Arrhenius, Magdalena Malm and Cristina Ricupero (Stockholm: IASPIS, Helsinki: NIFCA and Lund: Propexus, 2003), 39-58.

²⁷ Boris Groys, "Media Art in the Museum," *Last Call* 1.2 (2001), accessed January 13, 2006. <http://www.belkin-gallery.ubc.ca/lastcall/past/pages2/page2.html> [no longer available online].

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

²⁸ "MoMA's Circulating Film & Video Library," accessed July 4, 2011, <http://search.moma.org/learn/resources/circulatingfilm>. "Film and Video Collection," Andy Warhol Museum, accessed July 4, 2011, <http://www.warhol.org/collection/filmandvideo/>.

²⁹ Lori Zippay, "The Digital Mystique: Video Art, Aura and Access," in »Present Continuous Past(s)« *Media Art. Strategies of Presentation, Mediation and Dissemination*, ed. Ursula Frohne, Mona Schieren and Jean-François Guiton (New York: Springer Wien, 2005), 190.

³⁰ Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art: The Development of Form and Function* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006), 20.

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

³¹ SFB, *Sender Freies Berlin* was a public radio and television service for West Berlin.

³² Ursula Wevers, “Gerry Schum: The Television Gallery – The Idea and How it Failed” (1979), in *Museums by Artists*, ed. AA Bronson and Peggy Gale (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 284.

³³ Gerry Schum quoted in “Gerry Schum, *Television Gallery*,” *Media Art Net*, accessed July 4, 2011, <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/die-fernsehgalerie/>.

³⁴ Ursula Wevers, “Fernsehgalerie Berlin Gerry Schum – *Land Art*,” in *Stationen der Moderne*, ed. Michael Bollé and Eva Züchner (Berlin: Nicolai, 1989), 539.

³⁵ “Gerry Schum,” *New Media Encyclopedia*, accessed July 4, 2011, <http://www.newmedia-art.org/cgi-bin/show-oeu.asp?ID=00002552&lg=GBR>. See also Helmut Friedl, “Galerie Télévisuelle Gerry Schum – *Land Art*, Berlin 1969,” in *L’art de l’exposition: Une documentation sur trente expositions exemplaires du XX^e siècle*, ed. Bernd Klüser and Katarian Hegewisch (Paris: Éditions du Regard, 1998), 355-368.

³⁶ WGBH, “The Medium is the Medium,” accessed July 4, 2011, <http://main.wgbh.org/wgbh/NTW/FA/TITLES/Medium291.HTML>.

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?”³⁷ 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.”³⁸ 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.”³⁹ It also aimed “to promote video and electronic art outside the commercial gallery system.”⁴⁰ 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 1980.⁴¹ At the very beginning, the aim of the distribution centers was to facilitate

³⁷ John Hanhardt, “Peter Campus,” *Bomb* 68 (Summer 1999), accessed July 4, 2011, <http://bombsite.com/issues/68/articles/2236>.

³⁸ Chris Meigh-Andrews, *A History of Video Art*, 23.

³⁹ Electronic Arts Intermix, “A Kinetic History,” accessed July 4, 2011, <http://www.eai.org/kinetic/ch2/sponsored.html>.

⁴⁰ John Thomson, “Exporting Content: The American Experience of Video Art Distribution,” in *Content in Context: New Technologies for Distribution*, ed. Carling Masteling, Marieke Isha, and Gaby Wijers (Amsterdam: Netherlands Media Art Institute, 2005), 23.

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.⁴² 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."⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 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."⁴⁵ 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."⁴⁶ 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

Video," New York: Paula Cooper Gallery, 1999, accessed July 4, 2011, http://www.imappreserve.org/pdfs/Educate_Train_pdfs/ArtTable.pdf.

⁴² 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.experimentalvcenter.org/history/collections/ctext.php?id=5&page=1.

⁴³ Marita Sturken, "Paradox in the Evolution of an Art Form: Great Expectations and the Making of History," in *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990), 111.

⁴⁴ Chrissie Iles and Henriette Huldish, "Keeping Time: On Collecting Film and Video in the Museum," in *Collecting the New: Museums and Contemporary Art*, ed. Bruce Altshuler (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 66.

⁴⁵ Noah Horowitz, *Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in A global Financial Market* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 69.

⁴⁶ Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2003), 64-65.

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.”⁴⁷ 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.”⁴⁸ 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.”⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ Whereas Becker seems to attribute that change to artists only, I would argue that

⁴⁷ Paul Messier, “Dara Birnbaum’s *Tiananmen Square: Break-In Transmission*: A Case Study in the Examination, Documentation, and Preservation of a Video-Based Installation,” *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 40, no. 3 (fall/winter 2001): 195.

⁴⁸ Chrissie Iles and Henriette Huldish, “Keeping Time,” 68.

⁴⁹ Lori Zippay, “The Digital Mystique,” 191.

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 Ahtila, 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.⁵² The museum version of *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 *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.”⁵³ The next section of the chapter will address the very question of the preservation and conservation of editioned video and film installations.

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

⁵² “Douglas Gordon,” Galerie Yvon Lambert, accessed July 4, 2011, http://www.yvon-lambert.com/douglas_gordon-A22.html.

⁵³ “Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art” [Malcolm Turvey, Hal Foster, Chrissie Iles, George Baker, Matthew Buckingham, Anthony McCall], *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.⁵⁴ 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.”⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁵ Pip Laurenson, “Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations,” *Tate Papers* (Autumn 2006), accessed July 4, 2011, www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/06autumn/laurenson.htm.

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.

⁵⁶ Bill Viola, “Permanent Impermanence,” in *Mortality, Immortality? The Legacy of the 20th-Century Art*, ed. Miguel Angel Corzo (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1999), 87.

⁵⁷ Pip Laurenson, “Authenticity.”

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Ariane Noël de Tilly, “Moving images, editioned artworks and authenticity,” in *Art, Conservation, and Authenticities: Material, Concept, Context*, ed. Erma Hermens and Tina Fiske (London: Archetype Publishing, 2009), 208-216.

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).⁶⁰ 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).⁶¹ 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.”⁶²

⁶⁰ International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art: <http://www.incca.org/>.

Variable Media Network: www.variablemedia.net/.

Forging the Future: <http://forging-the-future.net/>.

Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage: www.docam.ca/.

⁶¹ 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 Foundation, 2003). The publication can be found on the Variable Media website, accessed July 4, 2011. <http://www.variablemedia.net/>.

⁶² *Variable Media Questionnaire*, Variable Media Network, accessed July 4, 2011, <http://www.variablemedia.net/e/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.⁶³ 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.⁶⁴ 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,

<http://forging-the-future.net/>. The Daniel Langlois Foundation got involved in a multi-site research project called DOCAM (Documentation and Conservation of the Media Arts Heritage): www.docam.ca/.

⁶³ Jon Ippolito, "Accommodating the Unpredictable: The Variable Media Questionnaire," in *Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Approach*, ed. Alain Depocas, Caitlin Jones and Jon Ippolito (Montreal: Fondation Daniel Langlois pour l'art, la science et la technologie & New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2003), 48.

⁶⁴ Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, *Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media* (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2010), 6.

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.”⁶⁵

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.”⁶⁶ Or, as Pip Laurenson has phrased it, the conservation of time-based media installations implies change and loss.⁶⁷ 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

⁶⁵ Jon Ippolito, “Accommodating the Unpredictable,” 52.

⁶⁶ Salvador Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005), 195.

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.