Teacher's Documentation

28.06.2017 - 29.09.2017

BEIRUT ART CENTER
مركز بيروت للفن

ALLAN SEKULA PHOTOGRAPHY AT WORK

MARWA ARSANIOS FALLING IS NOT COLLAPSING, FALLING IS EXTENDING

This Document is aimed at teachers: it is not meant for students' use. It does not replace the visit, nor is it a record that documents the exhibition. It is a research tool to be used by the teachers to address the exhibition in relation to different knowledge backgrounds so that they can refer to it in the course of their practice. The Workbook exists to facilitate the teachers's use of the visit for work-in-class purposes and to inspire them and guide them through their teaching practices.

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Cover Images: Allan Sekula, Fish Saché from Titanic's Wake, 1999-2000, 23 photos.
Courtesy of the Allan Sekula Studio LLC and Galerie Michel Rein, Paris/Brussels.
Marwa Arsanios, Falling is not Collapsing, Falling is Extending, 2016. Video Still.
Courtesy of the artist.

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I. Curator's Statement

Allan Sekula أَلَن سِكولا

Photography at Work identifies echoes and genealogies of Allan Sekula's work in photography, writing and film. An American photographer, filmmaker, writer, and great traveler, Allan Sekula (1951 – 2013) has been for 40 years a unique reference in the study of photography, art and politics. With over fifty photographs, slide shows, and films chosen from the expanse of Sekula's prolific artistic practice throughout his life time, this exhibition reiterates and recontextualizes one main questions concerning photography: what can it do and what is at work within this specific medium?

Sekula's early practice of photography hinged on documenting "within concrete life situations, situations where there was either an overt or active clash of interests and representations". Through his observation of the American middle-class of the West Coast, he contested late modernism by means of exploring social transformations and reconfigurations under the conditions of the globalized economy.

This exhibition begins with his first two major works: Aerospace Folktales (1973), shown as a documentation, and Untitled Slide Sequence (1972-2011). Aerospace Folktales is described by Sekula as a "bit of a disassembled movie" depicting the intimate daily life of a laid-off aerospace engineer at Lockheed. Untitled Slide Sequence documents workers heading out of a factory at the end of a workday, at the time when unemployment associated with the Vietnam War hit the California industries.,The presentation of Untitled Slide Sequence in two versions, that is, at two different speeds, from the years 1972 and 2011, stresses the dissolution of the postwar American dream during the 1970s recession as a forebearer of late capitalism's precarious economic, political and artistic landscape.

These works culminate with the now very famous slide show on the 1999 Seattle World Trade Organization (WTO) protests, Waiting for Tear Gas (2000), and with the single photograph, Europa (2011) that alludes to the dreams and nightmares of migration in

يتعرّف الفوتوغرافيا في المعمل على المنطلقات والأبعاد التي خطّت مسيرة الفنّان الأميركيّ أَلَن سكولا في مجالات التصوير الفوتوغرافيّ والكتابة والأفلام. أَلَن سكولا المصوّر الفوتوغرافيّ وصانع الأفلام والكاتب والرحّالة، هو صاحب أعمال شكّلت مرجعيّة بارزة في دراسات التصوير الفوتوغرافيّ والفنّ والسياسة على مدى أكثر من عامًا. ويضمّ المعرض أكثر من عملًا ما بين صور فوتوغرافيّة وعروض شرائح وأفلام، يستعيد من خلالها سؤالًا رئيسيًّا عن ماهيّة التصوير الفوتوغرافيّ في سياق اللحظة والمكان الراهنين ماذا يمكن لهذا الوسيط أن يفعل وما هي محرّكاته؟

ارتكزت ممارسة سكولا الفنيّة باكرًا على التوثيق في النطاق الواقعيّ للحياة اليوميّة، حيث يتمظهر سواء في العلن أو في الخفاء، ذاك الصراع الدائر بين المصالح والتصوّرات. وقد عاين سكولا معيشة الطبقة الوسطى في الغرب الأميركي، مساجلًا ومشكّكًا في المفاهيم الفنّيّة السائدة لمرحلة الحداثة المتأخّرة انطلاقًا من قراءته للتحوّلات وإعادات التشكّل المجتمعيّة تحت تأثير ظرفيّات الاقتصاد المعولم.

يُستهلّ هذا المعرض بعملين من أوائل أعماله التي حازت على الشهرة وأسّست لموقعه كفنّان بارز في المشهد هما حكايا شعبيّة من مصانع الفضاء والذي يعرض في صيغة مطبوعة، و سلسلة شرائح بلا عنوان . وصف سكولا العمل الأوّل، حكايا شعبيّة من مصانع الفضاء بالفيلم المفكك، وهو يصوّر الممارسات اليوميّة لأحد مهندسي الفضاء الذين سرّحتهم شركة لوكهيد من العمل في السبعينيّات. أمّا الثاني،سلسلة شرائح بلا عنوان، فيصوّر مجموعة من العمّال وهم يغادرون مصنعًا في نهاية دوام العمل، وذلك في مطلع فترة التراجع الاقتصاديّ والبطالة اللذين ضربا مصانع كاليفورنيا إبّان حرب فيتنام. ويُعرض هذا العمل في صيغتين، تمثّلان سرعتين مختلفتين، الأولى تعود إلى العام والثانية إلى العام . وتهدف هذا المقاربة إلى التدليل على التلازم بين لحظة انحسار الحلم الاميركيّ أثناء فترة الركود في السبعينيّات ولحظة صعود المشهد الراهن المتأرجح اقتصاديًّا وسياسيًّا وفنّيًّا في ظل منظومة الرأسماليّة المتأخّرة.

تُتوّج هذه المسيرة بعملين من أواخر أعماله، في انتظار الغاز المسيل للدموع الشهير و أوروبا، وهو عبارة عن صورة فوتوغرافيّة واحدة توجز الأحلام والكوابيس التي تلازم حال الهجرة في أرجاء عالم مفتوح الحدود فيما آفاقه السياسية مُوصدة.

the globalized world, whilst evoking foreclosed political spaces.

Underpinning Sekula's project is the idea of presenting the sea as the invisible or forgotten space driving the advance of capitalism. Two chapters of Sekula's long-term maritime series, Fish Story (1989-1995) and a selection from Titanic's Wake (2003), underline his significant understanding of this fluid territory as a place where capitalist and imperial power structures are both stabilized and disturbed.

These connections and more have been mapped out for this exhibition by the students of the Studio Arts Program at the American University of Beirut, thus creating a supplementary space within, an interior exteriority.

Special thank to Sally Stein, and to Ina Steiner and Michel Rein.

Marie Muracciole

ويتوطّد مشروع سكولا الفنّي من خلال فكرة البحر بوصفه الفضاء الخفيّ أو المنسيّ الذي يدفع عجلة الرأسماليّة. وتُبرز مشاريعه الخاصة بالملاحة والبحر فهمه المؤسّس إزاء هذه المساحة الرخوة باعتبارها موضعًا تجد فيه منظومة السلطة الرأسماليّة والإمبراطوريّة في آن واحد أسباب استقرارها واضطرابها.

وقد رَصد جميعَ هذه العلاقات والتشعّبات في أعمال سكولا طلّابُ مادّة التصوير الرقميّ في الجامعة الاميركيّة في بيروت، ما ينشئ مساحة متمّمة تتوسّط المعرض من خارجه.

ماري موراسيول

Marwa Arsanios

"Matter, like meaning, is not an individually articulated or static entity. Matter is not little bits of nature, or a blank slate, surface, or site passively awaiting signification; nor is it an uncontested ground for scientific, feminist, or Marxist theories. Matter is not a support, location, referent, or source of sustainability for discourse. Matter is not immutable or passive. It does not require the mark of an external force like culture or history to complete it. Matter is always already an ongoing historicity"

Karen Barad, Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes To Matter

مادة كالمعنى، لا تّصاغ بشكل فردي كما أنها ليست كينونة جامدة. المادة ليست شذرات صغيرة من الطبيعة أو صفحةً بيضاء أو بقعةً من الخواء في انتظار المحتوى، كما أن المادة ليست محلًا للتنظير العلمي أو النسوي أو الماركسي. المادة ليست خاملة وليست غير قابلة للتحّور، لا تحتاج لفاعل من خارجها كالثقافة أو التاريخ ليكمّلها. المادة هي تاريخٌ قيد التدوين باستمراركارن بَراد، أدائيةٌ ما بعد بشرية نحو فهمٍ جديد

كارن بَراد، أدائيةٌ ما بعد بشرية نحو فهمٍ جديد

كيف تصبح المادة مادة

في لبنان ما بعد الحرب، هناك حدثان يفصلهما عقدٌ ونيف من الزمن يشكلان معًا بعضًا من أوجه النيولبرالية الصاعدة، والتي بدأت تتضح عالميًا منذ ثمانينات القرن الماضي. في هذا المعرض تتتبّع مروة أرسانيوس مسارًا متصلًا يمتد بين أزمة النفايات في العام بعد قرار الحكومة اللبنانية بإقفال مطمر الناعمة ما أدّى إلى طمر النفايات في البحر مباشرةً، وإعادة إعمار منطقة وسط بيروت في أوائل تسعينات القرن الماضي. خلال هذه الفترة، قام أوليغارشات العقار بتحويل أطنان من القمامة ومخلفات الهدم من البر إلى البحر، بهدف توليد أراض جديدة من ردم البحر والاستحواز على العقارات التي انخفضت قيَمتها في الجوار. تدرس أرسانيوس هاتين اللحظتين لتؤّطر التحوّلات الشاملة التي ساقتها الرأسمالية المتأخرة وآثارها على الفضاء البيئي والسياسي الاجتماعي في لبنان. من خلال تقديم الدلائل المادية على هذه التحوّلات يعالج عمل أرسانيوس المادة كتاريخ قيد التدوين باستمرار، بحسب المنظّرة الأميركية كارن بَراد. من خلال نماذج طبوغرافية لمطامر بيروت ورسوماتٍ لأشكال الحياة الطبيعية فيها، والتي تشكل نظامًا إيكولوجيًا مناوئًا يعمل في محيط من السموم، تخطّ أرسانيوس حدود الأرض المتوغّلة في البحر كجزر على وشك التحوّل إلى واحات عقارية تكرّس لأنظمة مختلفة من الحياة. هذه الأدوات والاستراتيجيات الخرائطية ترجّح وجودِ دورٍ فاعلٍ للمادة سواء جامدة أو حيّة، تعيش في هذه المواقع تحديدًا وفي المدينة إجمالًا في إنتاج وعمل السلطة. يُتوّج هذا المشروع بفيلم هو انحدارٌ أفقي، والذي يتّخذ المعرض من اسمه عنوانًا له. ينطلق الفيلم من حدث تدمير المنزل الذي ترعرعت فيه

In postwar Lebanon, two events separated by more than a decade characterize the emerging facets of neoliberalism which have been taking shape globally since the 1980s. In this exhibition, Marwa Arsanios follows a certain continuity between the 2015 'garbage crisis' when the Lebanese government's decision to shut down the Naameh landfill lead to dumping the city's waste directly in the sea, and the reconstruction of Beirut's city center in the early 1990s. During that period, 'real-estate oligarchs' drove both garbage and rubble from demolished buildings into the sea in order to reclaim land and acquire the devalued properties from the nearby area.

Arsanios examines those two moments in order to address the ubiquitous transformations driven by late capitalism and their impacts on Lebanon's environmental and socio-political reality. Her work presenting the material leads on these transformations treats matter as an "ongoing historicity", in the words of American theorist Karen Barad. By creating topographic models of Beirut's landfills and making drawings of the flora and fauna constituting defiant ecosystems in those toxic sites, Arsanios maps out the "cartographies of the extended lands" as islands that would soon be developed into real-estate havens as well as their living systems. These mapping devices and strategies tend to suggest matter's - both inanimate and living on those sites

and in the whole city – active role in the workings of power.

This project culminates in the film Falling is not Collapsing, Falling is Extending (2016-2017) which lends its title to this exhibition. The film takes as its starting point the demolition of Arsanios's childhood home in the plan for reconstructing Beirut's city center. It places the footage of the emptied house and its surroundings side by side with the yet unmaterialized real-estate dream gradually proceeding from the rubble transported from the city center to the sea.

Marie Muracciole

الفنّانة ضمن مخطط إعادة إعمار منطقة وسط بيروت. تتجاور في هذا الفيلم لقطات من المنزل المهجور والمفرغ من أمتعته في انتظار مصيره من الهدم، مع لقطات تصوّر المآل الأخير لهذا الحطام حيث يستنهض الأحلام العقاريّة التي تنتظر أن تتحقّق على الأرض المردومة من البحر

ماري موراسيول

II. Allan Sekula

Allan Sekula, Or What Is Photography ?

Benjamin Buchloch

I deliberately pose the question as a citation, absurd as it is, almost grandiloquent, by calling up the title of Jean-Paul Sartre's series of essays "What Is Literature," published in six installments in Les temps modernes in 1947. Sartre conceived at that moment of two types of literature, and he constructed them as utterly distinct spheres. One would be the sphere of autonomous poetry, the other that of engaged literature. They were not to be confused either by aesthetic judgment, historically comparative evaluation, or any of the avant-garde typologies that had identified until recently, for example, the mutually exclusive practices of surrealism and constructivism, or of abstraction and socialist realism. Rather, Sartre defined the new functions of a type of reportage literature as a politically motivated form of literary or representational practice, a conflicted proposition of returning to a type of realism, one that he seemed to resurrect at that time without knowing or without acknowledging either the multiple predecessors of critical realist and politically motivated reportage representations, or by referring to the previously fought battles, debates, and theorizations of realism; rather, Sartre asked what type of realism would be possible at that historical moment. Its utter opposite was to be a poetical form of writing, which Sartre exempted from any kind of responsibility toward the representational functions he had assigned to literary reportage.

Precisely this dual opposition to Sartre's model of reportage writing, the nouveau roman and an emerging structuralist semiology and deconstruction of images, would contribute in a major way to a reformulation of American formalism of the post-Greenberg era. Both semiology and nouveau roman were at the center of the artistic and theoretical debates that laid the foundations for American minimalism and conceptual art in the late 1960s (one could easily trace that impact in the writings of Sol Lewitt or find it corroborated by Mel Bochner's and Dan Graham's ostentatious claims for Michel Butor and Alain Robbe-Grillet as theoretical models for the formulation of emerging conceptualist artistic practices). A major critique of Sartre's literary theory came from a position that equally assumed that the critical reduction of writing to the most minute facets and figures of writerly writing would actually enhance both readerly and writerly precision. Equally, it would aim to accomplish the ideal of a critical self-reflexivity and self-referentiality that would dialectically oppose artistic and literary production to all forms of ideology and myth, the two most abhorred legacies of representational cultures in the immediate post-WWII period and, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, doubly dreaded because of the renewed rise in the emerging powers of American cultural industrial production. The most important origin for that other critique of realism is the writings of Theodor W. Adorno, who argued that even the most minute facets of figuration and narrative constituted first of all a breach of contract with the reader's rightful claim to an utter authority of self-determination.

As absurd as promising a definition of literature was in 1948, to claim a systematic definition of photography's functions and aesthetic principles in 2013 would be even more preposterous. As anybody having even briefly studied the history of photography will know by now, the mechanical technology of producing still images as a discursive, cognitive, and epistemological field is probably more contradictory than even the fields of painting and sculpture have ever been.

Early on, since the mid-to-late 1960s, Allan Sekula had been increasingly involved in studying the photographic practices and debates of the 1920s and 1930s, the period in which Siegfried Kracauer, writing in 1927, had called photography the va banque (or, go-for-broke) game of history.

While Sekula knew well that different historical interests and conflicts were now at stake in the recovery of these photographic histories and paradigms (ranging from photography as critical documentary to purely ideological

apparatus) Sekula—like photography's critics and practitioners of the 1920s and 1930s—aimed to reinstate the medium's centrality in the processes of critically reflecting and representing the conditions of collective experience.

To the eclectic accumulations of photographic images in Rauschenberg's early work, at least two different responses will be developed in the early 1960s: one is the dual strategy of singularization and serialization with which Andy Warhol would dismantle Rauschenberg's neo-montage operations. Suddenly, the single iconic image, either uniquely framed, or serially repeated, required a totally different form of reading. And while I would not argue that Warhol reintroduced a model of realist referentiality, his work certainly entailed an increased focus on the actual potential of the photographic image.

But an equally marked distantiation separates Sekula from Rauschenberg and Warhol, in the same manner that it distinguishes him from those Los Angeles artists such as Ed Ruscha, John Baldessari, and Douglas Huebler, who, after Warhol's impact, had returned the photographic medium to further artistic, even though not to any critical or political, reflection. And furthermore, what distinguished Sekula's aesthetic from his now famous artistic peers in the mid-to-late 1970s' moment of postconceptual photographic projects was first of all the desire to reconstruct photography's innate dialectical tension between discursive and documentary dimensions. His resolve to resurrect photography's historically inherent referentiality not only ran counter to all the rules that had been formulated in the 1960s by both poststructuralist and post-Duchampian practices, but it also brushed "photography against the grain," the Benjaminian title Sekula gave to his first book of writings and works published in 1984 by the Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Thus the trajectory that I want to trace could be defined as that of a slow process of a dual historical recovery. One recovery was the recognition that the photographic image and photographic culture at large had been an integral (although not foundational) set of practices that had been inextricably bound up with the history of the pre-WWII avant-gardes. Mysteriously excised from that history after WWII, this photographic culture had also been banned from the discourses of the neo-avant-gardes in both New York and Europe during the first ten years of reconstruction. The second, more challenging aspect of the recovery project concerns the criteria defining the historical dimension and potential functions of a renewed photographic realism, a discussion that had been entirely absent from the initial phases of photographic recovery. What I am trying to understand in this irresponsibly brief sketch are the motivations and preconditions under which the photographic image and photographic technology were rediscovered and reintroduced into artistic discourses in the 1960s. Sekula's project expanded this archaeology of photography—or rather, the process of performing the archaeology of the recovery itself—in both his writings and in his actual work.

Sekula's work formulated one of the junctions between the politics of representation and the representation of politics.

What questions did Sekula ask at the beginning of the 1970s, when he entered the field as both a historian and practitioner of photography? The following epistemological questions were posed, along with proposed changes, of the field of photography and its history and practice not just by Sekula but equally by Martha Rosler (Sekula's companion at the time) and by Fred Lonidier, the third figure in the San Diego group of anticonceptualists: 1. Why had photography in the context of conceptual art proffered an increasingly limited arsenal of photographic means (repetition, seriality, deskilling, decontextualization, self-reflexivity, to name but a few), strategies that had led to the construction of a discursive history of photography that had erased most if not all of its referential and representational resources? 2. The formal procedures and structural orders that had taken the place of these referential and representational resources were a number of eternally repeated, often self-deprecating jocular structures posing as advanced semiological critiques of representation, bordering on mere patriarchal mannerisms of photography imitating the long-lost narratives of painting. They revealed an apparently complete ignorance of photography's historical past and present potential: how to record and to represent collective and individual social experiences in modernity with greater egalitarian detail and clarity and a more differentiated range than painting had ever achieved? 3. Did conceptualist photography now offer, by contrast, a photography merely determined by the desire to vary some of the key aspects of the Duchampian legacies: anonymity, deskilling, random order, connotation versus denotation, structural self-referentiality versus denotative representation, open cumulative series versus structured narratives?

A comparison could be made between Huebler's Variable Piece #70 (begun 1971), and one of Sekula's first major works, Aerospace Folktales (1973). Here the principles and the structural conception of photography are fully inverted in a dialectical movement by Sekula, diametrically opposing conceptual photography on all accounts. I hope to assist with the slow dismantling of the attitudes of haughty

dismissal and repressive rejection that greeted Sekula's project of a critical realism during the first forty years of its production. Particularly remarkable about Huebler's approach were the formal and structural operations that had made his work foundational to conceptualist photographic practices, especially the opening up of the representational field to a sheer infinity of aleatory constellations. This opening up in particular meant that Huebler followed an earlier assault on photographic conventions formulated by Rauschenberg when the latter announced in the late 1950s that he would initiate a project of photographing every square foot of earth for the remaining time of his artistic activities. Huebler counteracted this vast project of cognitive mapping with an even more radical proposition in the early 1970s, when he stated an intention to spend the remaining time of his artistic career photographing every living human being on earth. This new recognition, at least by Huebler, of social totality as an inevitable and necessary horizon of a universal audience address demanded not only that all readers and spectators should be equally placed in the reception process but the very fact that a conception of a universally structured nonhierarchical society should govern the increasingly infinite, aleatory, and open forms of representation as well. The concept of an aleatory infinity not only followed Duchamp's readymade principles, but it also had tremendous political and social implications. After all, the concept operated like an expanded manifesto of one of photography's earliest egalitarian promises: to provide to all members of all classes access to political and iconic representation—one of the most provocative potentials unleashed by photography on the traditionally hierarchical and exclusionary politics of the image. Yet these formal operations recognized at the same time that the actually existing social totality was utterly anomic and unstructured, and that the work—very much in the vein of Warhol's adaptation of the Duchampian principle of indifference—could not, or would not, even attempt to contribute to a critical redefinition of the laconic and ultimately indifferent pessimism or melancholic cynicism inherent in that approach. But even the very concern for the potential participation of an anonymous mass audience in the production and reception of cultural representations was, in and of itself, astonishing enough. After all—at least until the advent of minimalism in the mid-1960s—the conditions of social collectivity and class had not exactly been considered as central determinations of cultural production by American artists in the post-1945 period.

In this comparison we can comprehend, step by step, the reversal from structuralist principles that had governed conceptualism to a fundamentally different theory of photographic representation. Against Huebler's abstract universality of a potential photographic subject, Sekula poses its uttermost opposite: the seeming privacy of the family. Many of the images in Aerospace Folktales are pictures of Sekula's own family. Thus his project in 1973 not only seems to resurrect the social reality of labor and everyday life but to implement these reconsiderations by resurrecting the biographic and the biographeme at the very moment when both had been totally discredited from any possible account of representation or the writing of history.

Could any member of the audiences in 1973 stand to see an artist documenting and reflecting on the conditions of a white, middle-class family in California whose paterfamilias, an engineer until recently working for a major American aerospace corporation, was now out of work, fixing lamps and household items at home? Undoubtedly not. Precisely in order to maintain the myth of the parthenogenesis of the patriarchal artist and as the producer of an abstraction of a higher order, any such biographisms would have been totally banished from the dominant discursive formations of that time.

Sekula's embodiment of representation consists of three dimensions. First, Sekula's work foregrounds the private sphere of the family and the biographic dimension of artistic experience, perceived and presented as an actual trace of public and political transformations, the field where these changes can best be analyzed and observed. Second, in these works the body and its behavior is always defined by multiple relations of daily social interactions, as the social fabric where the impact of economic and political and ideological demands can be made fully transparent. Yet, to the same degree that Sekula's focus on the family and the domestic introduce the biographical as yet one more dimension of critical analysis, they dismantle the abstract claims with which almost all postwar American art had banned the private and the biographical in a powerful gesture of abstraction and prohibition not only from any horizon of art's potential legibility and interpretability but from any further investigation of the actual conditions of cultural experiences within larger social and political frameworks. Third, concerning Sekula's reconstitution of what he calls a critical realism, the last issue remaining for us to address is the most difficult of all: whether and how actual situations of labor are represented in Sekula's work, considered as a response to the photographic conditions of conceptualism. This issue may be traced in Sekula's Untitled Slide Sequence and Aerospace Folktales, as well as a third, quite different project, Performance under Working Conditions, a video work from 1973. All three works are distinguished by the fact that they address labor explicitly but do not actually depict it.

Thus the embodiment of labor and the incorporation of the representation of the everyday as suggested by Sekula in 1972 and 1973 seems to have been both too radical and too conventional to be acceptable to the artistic and cultural, as well as theoretical, formations ruling both the spheres of film and photography, on the one hand, and the spheres of postminimal and conceptual art, on the other. Yet paradoxically—and this might have made his work even more illegible—Sekula took many of the clues about the body and the task-oriented performance that recent and then contemporary art history had given him and repurposed or reperformed them to the very audiences who had just become acquainted and identified with the seemingly most radical strategies of structural analysis and semiological deconstruction of representation in the work of the most advanced filmmakers and artists of the mid-to-late 1960s. Referentiality itself, however, was always thought by Sekula in dialectical terms. To reestablish and renegotiate photography's innate bonds with material and social reality was both a promise and a plight, since it implied the need first of all to reconstruct photography's initial project of producing visual evidence of the social participatory processes within which subjects are formed through class, labor, and production as much as through linguistic representation and perceptual genres and conventions.

Even when Sekula rethought photography's initial promise to serve as a tool, and at times even a weapon, of emancipation and self constitution, he always counteracted that utopian radicality with the realist's pessimism of the intellect. In his precise analyses of what actually had come of photography's originary enlightenment claims, he reminded us that from the beginning photography had provided as many—if not more—new means of surveillance and seduction than it had actually enabled representations of actual or potential agency. Sekula had learned from Michel Foucault that photography, like language, was the very system within which subjects are both constituted as subjects and within which they are subjected to ideology, economic exploitation, and control.

Sekula's optimism of the will always held on to his initial strategies of focusing on the representations of labor and the labor of representation (those of the social collective as much as those of his own role and place as an artist) as one of his central subjects and objects in which precarious self constitution and enforced alienation are always dialectically at work. Sekula seems to have understood early on that simulated détournement and the bliss and mess of free-floating signifiers had had their historical play and had lost the game; therefore, he refused to follow the directions neo-liberalism gave to its cultural producers in the present. Instead, Sekula focused increasingly on the conditions of production under globalization, mostly concealed from or disavowed by the comforts of Westernized consumption. His (and Noël Burch's) chef d'oeuvre, The Forgotten Space (2010), not only reestablishes some of the originary solidarity that documentary filmmakers and photographers had always attempted to sustain with those condemned to extreme forms of globalized alienated labor, but it also irreversibly dismantles the delusions that artistic practices in the present can still credibly claim to provide brief moments of compensatory reprieve or even amusement, let alone perceptual or cognitive enlightenment, unless they themselves engage in processes of laborious construction in which the actual complexity with which ideological deception operates in the present is deconstructed with the necessary attention to context, detail, and theoretical and critical illumination that alone can counteract the monolithic myths of deception.

Allan Sekula. This Ain't China: A Photonovel, 1974. Twenty-nine black-and-white photographs and one color photograph in eight frames, nine color photographs in single frames, text booklets, two chairs. Courtesy the Estate of Allan Sekula.

The Critical Realism Of Allan Sekula

Interview by Pascal Beausse

Allan Sekula began investigating the economy and social conditions of late capitalism in the early 1970s. Reactivating the form of the documentary within his system of photo-texts, has confronted the prohibitions that weigh the representation of work, economic fluxes, war and education. This interview was given during a residency at the Atelier Calder, near Tours.

I didn't start as a photographer. In 1970-71 I was making sculptures and performing actions: stealing meat from a supermarket and throwing it on the highway, riding a freight train past a place where I used to work. So early on I was trying to provoke a clash with technical and economic systems. But action art seemed to devolve into artistic self-aggrandizement. I became less interested in the petty criminal and transient as romantic disguises, and more interested in documentation, especially the ambiguity of the documentary function and the aesthetic modesty and worldliness of the photograph. I was drawn to a very mundane idea of documentary: something very direct, uninflected by obvious aesthetic treatment. I began to think that it might be possible to photograph everyday life - leaving a factory, or housework – as if it were performance.

To rethink the documentary style was quite original at that time.

By the early 1970s, documentary was becoming a decadent genre; more precisely, it was passing through a mannerist and subjectivist phase on its way to a decadence achieved only in the '80s. The old myth that photographs tell the truth was being supplanted by the new myth that they lie. What passes for self-consciousness in contemporary photography is an endless reiteration of the Cretan paradox, but with a hierarchical twist: "All photographers are liars. I am an artist who uses photographs. Therefore I am smarter than the cretin-photographer who thinks she is telling the truth." So throughout the '80s a theatricalized epistemological skepticism was being added to Walker Evans' 1971 idea of a dandified, distanced "documentary style". Remember that John Szarkowski had already, in 1967, announced the death of social documentary in his MoMA exhibition "New Documents", featuring Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, and Gary Winogrand. With this enormously influential exhibition, Szarkowski stated explicitly that serious photography could only have an ironic and fatalistic relation to the social world, and he did so – quite pointedly – at a time of enormous social upheaval. What interested me by 1972, to the contrary, was a way of reviving the social dimension of documentary. That meant embracing a hybridity of materials, playing with the relation between staging and the everyday event, understanding even that the everyday event already embodied an element of fiction or theater. I was drawing variously on the American sociologist Erving Goffman, on Bertolt Brecht's notion of the "social gest," and on my own observations of the informal symbolic inversion from below of power relations, the common everyday equivalent in working life of Jean Genet's play The Maids. I was moving toward a dialogic model of social interaction. More generally, there was no way to rethink the documentary tradition without incurring an intellectual debt to the lineages of sociological thought to Marx, Durkheim and Weber, and especially to Marx's very precise sociological studies, like the 18th Brumaire.

At the same time you began to write about the history of photography.

My first serious effort, in 1974, was to set the figure of Lewis Hine against the figure of Alfred Stieglitz, imagining the two as mythical partners in a binary semiotic system, a meta-discourse of photography which pitted the "art photograph" against the "social document". Stieglitz's model of metaphoric neo-symbolist photography led to an autonomous modernist art, while Hine's realist reportage model extended outward to an ameliorative social project, the project Szarkowski had pronounced death by the late '60s. To be provocative, I would say today that Hine was more willing to look modernity in the face than was Stieglitz, and was by this measure a more modernist program.

One reason Hine seems anachronistic now is that his Progressive-era reformism was appropriated by the New Deal, then forgotten during the Cold War assault on the American labor left. The sweatshop factory conditions Hine documented have returned with a vengeance at the end of our century, but his niche in the pantheon is covered with cobwebs. Stieglitz gets a regular dusting, his elegiac laments for a corrupt business civilization are easier to emulate. History-writing has been for me a way of indirectly posing problems to be taken up by photographic practice.

The representation of work was one of your subjects from the beginning. With your first series, you faced the impossibility – or real difficulty – of photographing work sites and workers.

Taking a bitter lesson from the exposé of Hine and the early "muckraking" journalists, capitalists learned to restrict the circulation of images of the inner life of the factory. Socialist bureaucrats learned the same lesson, as is evidenced by Krysztof Kieslowski's film about a curious worker with a camera, The Camera Buff. So transparency is restricted. But transparency, when achieved, is also illusory, as Brecht famously suggested when he said that a photograph of the Krupp works or the AEG tells us "next to nothing" about the actual relations of production, requiring instead that something "artificial, posed" be "built up". For my part, I begin not with a pure positivity of labor, (a prospect shared by socialist realism and the corporate-liberal sentimentalism of The Family of Man) but with the understanding that work exists in a fundamental condition of negativity, haunted objectively and psychologically by unemployment and by the extraction of surplus value. It's a problem even of language: we are encouraged to believe that we live in a "postindustrial society," when in fact the industrial function has been globalized.

Yes, some thinkers are now talking about the "disappearance of work", but, in reality, it's the complete opposite. With Untitled Slide Sequence (1972), you gave your own verson of the "Sortie de l'usine" [Workers leaving a factory]. As Straub & Huillet did later, in Trop tôt, trop tard (1981), you searched for the right place to put the camera in front of the crowd of workers.

The work consists of every picture I made while standing on a pedestrian overpass leading from a big aerospace factory at the end of the day shift. I was standing more or less where a militant selling newspapers would stand, but actually inside the company property, so that my project ended when the guards detected my trespassing. The roll of film was cut into individual dias and projected in the same sequence, like un-edited motion picture footage, but different in that one is choosing individual exposures on a somewhat "physiognomic" basis, not just selecting a beginning point and an ending point. It's really a work between still photography and cinema. This has always interested me about slide projection: it's a kind of primitive cinema, unable to synthesize movement. The slide projector is a quasi-industrial apparatus, similar to what one finds in many assembly lines: bottling machines for example. The rhythm of the slide projector is the rhythm of the automated factory, but the individual frame individuates both the photographer and the subject. The sequence effects a bracketing of the invention of the cinema: Muybridge pushed in the direction of social movement, away from the space of the laboratory or test track, and the Lumières pushed back toward the still. The work exhibits a certain nostalgia for working-class pedestrian space, the brief massed interval between the vast functionally dispersed interior of the aerospace factory and the isolation of the private automobile: the internal between work and home. Later, I discovered an affinity with Dorothea Lange's photographs of shipyard workers in Oakland made during the Second World War, which stressed this mass and individual movement from the space of production to the space of consumption.

In Aerospace Folktales (1973) you investigate the impact of the economic macrostructure on the microstructure of the family. The work is also autobiographical, exploring the experience of your father, who was unemployed at the time. There is a similarity with Godard's Numéro Deux (1975).

When I saw Numéro Deux,, and I heard the line "A mon avis, Maman c'est un paysage, Papa c'est une usine," it summed up for me something that I had been investigating – the collapse of the separation of the two worlds of the factory and the house. If the house is a factory, always the factory of housework, and with unemployment it becomes the factory of waiting for work or working to get work, everything spirals inward. My idea was that social documentary had tended always to look downward, not straight across at the social circumstances of the author, in this case at the world of college-educated intellectual labor. Aerospace Folktales is actually a veiled autobiography, embedded in a distanced, "objective" style, and yet the subjective tensions are there to be detected. The work consists first of a picture sequence describing the domestic space of a claustrophobic working-class apartment inhabited by a white-collar family. The montage is punctuated by silent-film style intertitles, and accompanied by a triangulated, overlapping cacophony of audiotape recordings: my voice, my mother's voice, my father's voice. Only by sitting in red canvas director's chairs adjacent to the speakers can listeners discern the individual voices. I described the work as a "dissembled

movie", lacking the "dictatorship of the projector." The polyphony and paraliterary mixing of verbal and visual elements, combined with shifts in overall tone, provided a loose model for future work.

Fish Story (1989-1995) is a very important work, where you synthesized a lot of your research. I think you tried as Melville did, in the sense of trying to restore a global knowledge of the maritime economy, and of globalization. It's a very challenging way of working.

The thematic impulse behind Fish Story was to examine the contemporary maritime world, a world with an undeserved reputation for anachronism. How to counter the fantasy, common among elites, that information is the crucial commodity, and the computer the sole engine of our progress? The sea may be a forgotten space, but it's not an irrelevant space, nor is it simply the "in-between" space of capitalism. The maritime world is fundamental to late modernity, because it is the cargo container, an American innovation of the mid-1950s, that makes the global system of manufacture possible. The container ship and the oil tanker are the last dismal reincarnations of the Pequod. The American poet Charles Olson remarked presciently in 1947 that Melville had already discovered, a century before, "the Pacific as sweatshop." The maritime world of gargantuan automation but also of persistent work, of isolated, anonymous, hidden work, of great loneliness, displacement and separation from the domestic sphere. For that reason it's interesting to find the social in the sea, as Melville did. Fish Story is also an "art historical" study, tracing a lineage of representations of the sea economy, from Dutch 17th century painting to the unacknowledged "objective correlative" of the cargo container found in Minimalist and Pop Art, whether it be the Brillo Box of Warhol or the serial cubes of Donald Judd. The radical difference lies in the container's mobility, against the theatrical inertness of the art object. For shippers, who speak of "intermodality," the box is more important than the vehicle. So, the package begins to take on a life of its own, a kind of ghostly animation. Here we can revisit Marx's parable of commodity fetishism: the wooden table that stands on its head and begins to evolve grotesque ideas. I speak of the container as the "coffin of remote labor power" because the labor that produces the transported goods is always somewhere else, located in fluid, reassignable sites determined by the relentless quest for lower wages. This labor is no longer proximate, metonymically accessible, except through some great imaginative geographical leap, the uncanny ability to wear Nike sneakers and jump in the imagination to an assembly line in Indonesia.

It seems that after Fish Story, you continued to have a great interest in the sea, the maritime world. I'm thinking of your recent series. You continued to think about liminality, the fluxes of goods and peoples, and about the idea of nationality at a time of the globalization of the economy.

In the last two years, I've made four new works, three of which follow directly from Fish Story. With Dead Letter Office (1997) I literalized the metaphor of container-as-coffin, photographing a large Hyundai container factory in Tijuana, on the Mexican border with California, as well as a small Mexican-owned coffin factory in the same city. I also photographed the set for Titanic, located – with bad environmental consequences – next to a fishing village on the coast about 80 kilometers south of the border, and events surrounding the 1996 Republic convention in San Diego, as well as invasion exercises conducted by the U.S. Marines. All in all, a very tendentious list of choices, the sort of combination that no photojournalist would be permitted to bring together: the expensive retelling of the story of modernity's encounter with the abyss, equally expensive rehearsals for the next invasion of a weaker country, fatuous political spectacle, everyday work at three dollars a day. This border region is unique, the only place on the planet where the urban first and third worlds collide, where the attenuated or broken metonymy I mentioned before is actually accessible to everyday experience. So the work tries to describe the local geography of a new transnational apartheid-machine. I was thinking of two indirect precedents: Melville's Bartleby the Scrivener, with the truculent clerk who refuses to work, his spirit broken by prior employment in the "dead letter office", and Arcady Boytler's 1933 film La mujer del Puerto, a carnivalesque adaptation, set in Vera Cruz, of Guy de Maupassant's tale of capitalist dispersal, anonymity, and incest, "The Port". To put it bluntly, it's difficult to send a letter between Tijuana and San Diego, a distance of only a few miles. Given the choice of several sites, I made a point of exhibiting the work in Tijuana, but not in San Diego. Tijuana is actually the more cosmopolitan of the two cities, for all its underdevelopment and crazy industrial-frontier violence.

Deep Six, in French Passer au bleu (1998), is also a work with a kind of literary pretext.

On both sides of the Channel, in Dover and the Pas-de-Calais and on the channel ferry Sea France Renoir, I made two sets of photographs offered up as illustrations for imaginary editions for Thomas Paine's Rights of Man, and Katherine Porter's novel Ship of Fools. Paine and Porter belong, respectively, to the first and last generations of American writers to be formed by the experience of sea travel. I wanted initially to make a work

against the Tunnel, a work of respect for the ferry crossing. Each book seemed to dictate a different photographic rhetoric: for Porter, the physiognomic agility of a kind of maritime "street photograph"; for Paine, a more solemn tableau of labor and landscape.

There is in Deep Six/Passer au Bleu a play with the colors – blue-white-red - of the American and French flags. As an ironic metaphor of Thomas Paine's lost social views, the flag is amidst the garbage in New York. Another image echoes this with the military medal of a member of the National Front during a demonstration in Paris.

Don't forget the Union Jack, the flag under which Paine was born and the only one of the three not to stand for a republic. The flag of Burke, Paine's great conservative antagonist, and a hero to the Right even today. I structured the work around this triple trichromy.

It would seem that you use different styles in your series as an actualization of the different photographic conventions. How do you work with this notion of style?

For example, in Dead Letter Office, there are different ways of photographing the same assembly line, first with direct flash: two women working, checking the labels on cans of tuna, a triptych of three consecutive frames. It's "cinematic" but direct flash-lighting is anti-cinematic and "photojournalistic". So the codes are mixed. And the second pair of images shows a more isolated woman working on the same line, with a nearly obscured man beside her. These two photos are made with available light and very shallow focus on his hand and her hand. So there's a further shift in the coding. The continuous triptych simulates an instrumental view of work, the separated diptych suggest moments of inattention and daydream, especially as the women looks up in one of the two frames. For me this "montage" of several views was a way of countering – in a phenomenologically suggestive way – what Roland Barthes spoke of as the "eternal aesthetics of laborious gestures" when he looked at The Family of Man. The problem of critical realism is this: how do we find the interval within which the idea of freedom resides? By careful attention to time, realizing that the camera too often kills and obscures lived time. Photoshop is of no help here.

"Dead Letter Office".1997.Shipyard welder cutting steel for Hyundai truck chassis.(court. galerie Michel Rein, Tours)

III. Marwa Arsanios

Press Review
Interview by Mor Charpentier

History is a nightmare, but it's the only dream we've got. For several years the artist Marwa Arsanios, based in Beirut, has been excavating the lost ideals of midcentury Arab society through an unexpectedly fertile source: back issues of the state-owned Egyptian cultural magazine Al-Hilal. Its depictions of modern women, utopian urbanism, and swift industrialization haunt the artist's penetrating videos, performances, and research projects — which examine the post-Arab Spring world with historical awareness and sometimes biting irony. Whether looking at Algerian independence heroes or Lebanese architectural schemes, Arsanios's gaze on the past elucidates the misfortunes and the possibilities of contemporary Beirut, and of the world at large.

You began the works that constitute the Al-Hilal project in 2012. Where did you discover the archive?

A friend of mine had this collection of old magazines, mostly dating from the 50s and 60s. Al-Hilal was printed in Egypt, but it was a pan-Arab magazine. It was a culture magazine, but it was very politicized. And the magazine was obviously a state project, because all magazines were nationalized during the era of Arab socialism, during Nasser's regime. This was one of them. Everything that appeared in the magazine is a state project, or a Nasserist project.

Was it a women's magazine?

It wasn't particularly a women's magazine, but part of Nasser's project was women's liberation. There was a feminist project, although a quite conservative one. Al-Hilal advocated a kind of secularism that was trying to incorporate Islam. It wasn't Islamist as such, but it tried to understand and incorporate Muslim society. So, there were a lot of socialist ideals, socialist ambitions, like industrialization and social housing — urban issues appeared frequently. Articles looked at the category of the woman, the peasant, and the worker, and they were talked about in the magazine in quite distinct ways.

And these were presented as kinds of citizens who would participate in the building of a new nation. A new political subject

Exactly: new political subjectivities, and a new political collective. There were very much these ambitions back then. Also, in a weird way, although Al-Hilal was writing about the working class, they were really trying to think about what a middle-class Egyptian or Arab person would be like. What would a middle-class Egyptian or Arab read? How should a middle-class Egyptian or Arab woman behave? So it was trying to form these new middle-class subjectivities and subjects as well.

So the history of the postwar Arab world was already mediated from the time you started the project. It wasn't as if you started with history, and then looked at how it was represented through images. The images and the articles come first.

And that's an interesting way of looking at history, through magazines, through ephemera. History as it's being written, by writers who wanted to craft it. Al-Hilal was a magazine for a mass readership, and it used a popular register to address these issues. Also, a magazine forces you to offer an instant perspective on things. It's another pace of writing. As for the images, a lot of the covers that I use in Becoming Jamila were commissioned by famous illustrators, painters and artists. They were artworks. Photography didn't appear in the magazine until 1962, and I like that earlier period, which expresses a utopian image of the nation. I'm fascinated by how grand national projects were represented before

photography, how painting and illustration could serve as a space to imagine another world, although in a very naïve way. After 1962 photography came in, and with photography came another kind of imagery, especially of women's bodies. Actually, many of the images that were used inside the magazine were appropriated from other magazines, often western magazines like Reader's Digest. They just cut and pasted them. The whole construction of Al-Hilal was quite precarious.

We forget too often that from the 1950s until the oil crisis, the Middle East was a place where governments' modernization and urbanization efforts could extend to utopian heights. A few years ago I saw a show at the Center for Architecture that looked at modern architecture in Baghdad before Saddam Hussein. Frank Lloyd Wright wanted to turn Baghdad into this fantasia with floating islands; he even proposed a Garden of Eden.

That beginning of the oil boom, before the crisis.... When you look at it now, in a very anachronistic way, you can see it's a very naïve manner of looking at the world. Maybe it was good for me to look at that period, and its ideals, during the so-called Arab Spring. I was living in Beirut at the time, and I think it was interesting to look at these magazines with the backdrop of what was happening. Something important happened in 2011, though looking at what's happened since then, I don't think that the Arab Spring could have led to anything else. Looking at the 50s and 60s, I realized just how fucked up these societies were, how brutal and how violent. These regimes, and what came out of these regimes, are the reason the Arab Spring turned out like this. What came out of anticolonial liberation movements were horrible dictatorships, and these horrible nation states were a model that couldn't work. And I think 2011 was really questioning the very model of nation states. Maybe this is what is still going on. Everything is collapsing. Let's face it, the model of liberal democracy in not working very well in America either.

It also explains why artists like you, who didn't live through that period, would find it so interesting. For people our age, who, to be blunt, have always had a little less hope than our parents' generation, looking at those dreams and their malfunction — looking in a forensic way, as a sort of post-mortem — can be helpful to explain why we don't have our own language for grand projects.

We realize also that what they have created, what they have been part of, actually forms the crisis we are facing down now. The inheritance is a monster.

You mean Lebanon ?

Not only that. Also the whole global economic system. It goes beyond places. My work is very related to where I am, embedded in the context where I live. But because I function more and more in a global art economy, flying around the world, the issues in my work are also becoming more global.

In Becoming Jamila, the other major component besides Al-Hilal is Gillo Pontecorvo's film The Battle of Algiers (1966). The actress in your video is preparing to star in a new film about Jamila Bouhired, one of the leaders of the Algerian anticolonial struggle, who's of course one of the supporting characters in The Battle of Algiers. You even remake one of Pontecorvo's most famous scenes, in which Jamila plants a bomb in a café. Maybe you can tell me about cinema, and how that fed into the project as well.
It came from the magazine first. I kept reading about Jamila, and I couldn't figure out who Jamila was. Of course, I knew the film, but I hadn't connected it directly to her. I started going into the different representations of Jamila, and how she was represented in cinema, because there were many other films made about her. Also how she was represented in Al-Hilal — Nasser really used her as part of his propaganda project. She appeared on the cover several times, holding a gun, representing the courage of Algerian women. I thought that the idea of acting and of political representation were intimately related. What does it mean for one woman to represent a nation's women? There's a metaphor there of acting, of playing a role. That's where cinema came in. So I was trying to look at the relationship between this woman and her heroic image. Jamila is still alive, but she's no longer a public figure. She didn't go into politics, whereas all her ex-comrades in the FLN, men and also women, all went into governmental positions in Algeria.

Your film isn't a remake of The Battle of Algiers, though. It's a story about a fictional actress who is planning to star in a new film. Yet The Battle of Algiers was a contemporary film; Algeria had only just won its independence. The film in Becoming Jamila, if it were ever made, would be a film about events half a century old.
But this is why I didn't make a film about Jamila; I made a film about a film about Jamila. The Battle of Algiers was a contemporary film, whereas if I were going to really make the film now, it would be a film d ' époque, a period piece. That is not the place I want to go. I want to rethink the politics of the 50s and 60s in a very contemporary way. I could have made a film

about Kurdish rebels, the women in Kobane, let's say. I could directly tackle these issues. But I think that in talking about Jamila, I'm also talking about them. And yet at the same time, by reusing and re-abusing Jamila's image, I'm also possibly reproducing the image of the heroic fighter. Or I'm totally seduced by her, so I'm not actually producing a new politics. I'm always failing to find this new politics, but I still have to try.

The newest component of the Al-Hilal project, the film Olga's Notes: All Those Restless Bodies (2014), is much more melancholy, I find. You depict half a dozen dancers, and show how their bodies have been implicated, even distorted, by not just artistic but political forces.

It started with this article that I found in Al-Hilal about this dance school in Cairo that Nasser set up. It said that the dance school is producing the "new body" — the dance school producing the "modern body." Literally, it was saying that. It started there, and I wanted to figure out the dance process, and how the production of the body in dance takes place. One dancer comes from a school in Brussels, and she performs Yvonne Rainer. Another performs a ballet that actually premiered in Cairo. Natacha, the oldest dancer in the film, was in the national dance school in Beirut, approximately twenty years ago. I asked her to re-present a dance that made her famous, but she can't remember it. The choreographer she was working with at the time was supported by many Arab governments, creating a weird fusion of modern and Oriental ballet, and she was a star dancer. There's also a pole dancer — there are a lot of pole dancing clubs in Beirut.

The way that these bodies move through space, and move in the frame of the camera, can be very powerful but also upsetting. You see how their bodies have broken down as they've got older. There's also the political resonance. I'm interested in how all of that starts to overlap, especially when you are watching Natacha. It's a more pessimistic work, certainly.

In 2011, I was so optimistic. Now there's much more pessimism, which I don't like. After everything that's happened in Syria since 2011, I feel what we are living through is beyond, really beyond, the amount of violence any human brain is capable of understanding. And I feel this has affected me in weird ways. You become haunted by it. I have a lot of Syrian friends who are living now in Beirut, who came there from Damascus. And you can't really keep a distance, it's impossible. Things are happening so close.

It goes back to the pessimism you were speaking about earlier. It's not just about the civil war in Syria. It's about a more global and inevitable economic situation and about the role of the artist in that economy.

You're a bit stuck, actually. What can you do? How much can you do? You have to find some tools, not stay pessimistic and do nothing. Boycotting, for example, can work, but you have to be powerful enough, or numerous enough. That's happening with the Gulf Labor Coalition, who are protesting the museums in Abu Dhabi. That's what happened at the São Paulo Biennial last year.

I didn't go to São Paulo last year, but I went to Sydney — and it worked there too. The threat of a boycott by artists was enough to get the biennial to break its ties with a company that was linked to immigrant detention camps. When I got to Sydney, though, I was shocked by the anger that government officials or newspapers columnists unleashed on the artists. The message was: we love art, but who do you think you are? Your job is to shut up and make beautiful objects — you're naïve.

"You're naïve." I hear this a lot. Which is the most patronizing, horrible thing you can hear. And there is a new kind of artist that is coming up now that's comfortable with that, a super-professional artist who doesn't really care. You keep on trying. You know that most probably you're going nowhere. But you keep on trying. This is a strategy — this is being an artist, actually. Trying, trying forever. It's the opposite of a utopian model. Making a space to think, to take time, to do research, to just talk, sit and talk for hours, over a drink, slowing down everything. This is a way of trying: slowing down every possibility of production. Thinking about the process, thinking about the research. When everyone wants you to just make stuff, thinking is also an artistic act.

Falling Is Not Collapsing, Falling Is Extending

Dima Hamadeh and Marwa Arsanios

Drawing parallels between two distinct narratives in Beirut's recent history, Marwa Arsanios' research examines the material outcomes of the neoliberal project that took shape at the beginning of the 1990s, immediately following the end of the Lebanese Civil Wars. Starting from the recent visual and political memory of the garbage crisis that began in 2014, this project addresses the threatening long-term transformations brought about by the structures of late capitalism and their local manifestations in Lebanon's environmental and sociopolitical reality.

Marwa Arsanios reflects on this reality, taking as a launching point the summer of 2015 when the closure of the Naameh landfill south of the city caused thousands of tons of garbage to fill the streets of Beirut and Mount Lebanon with trash, and led to a public outcry against state corruption. The "garbage crisis" erupted concurrently with the emergence of art museums and other cultural institutions throughout the city. Despite the growth in cultural infrastructure, a number of building projects remain fallow, and overflowing landfills threaten the city's environment and the health of its inhabitants.

Installation view, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, September 17, 2016–January 8, 2017. Photo: Brian Forrest

Arsanios' project includes a digital video, small topographical models of the city's landfills, and a suite of drawings that depict the flora and fauna surviving in these dumps despite their toxicity. The topographical models of the Karantina and Costa Brava dumps show only the most basic contours and features of these sites, suggesting that they are simply empty spaces to be filled. The models are meant to function as "cartographies of extended lands," in the artist's words, that will become "inaccessible islands built on rubble and garbage, where real estate havens will be created. These will most of the time remain empty because people will buy them as assets or investments." The models show that the landfills are actually part of a new form of empire-building thinly veiled as redevelopment and capitalist progress.

Marwa Arsanios, Falling Is Not Collapsing, Falling Is Extending, digital video, (still), 2016

The film Falling Is Not Collapsing, Falling Is Extending proceeds from the moment the building where the artist grew up was demolished, and moves towards looking at land reclamation created over garbage dumps and landfills that are then turned into real estate investment projects, thus extending a link between the materiality of the waste and real estate economy. In this film, Arsanios depicts a portrait of a space, alternating between distant shots of Beirut's expansion over the sea and closing in on the personal loss of her childhood home. At a certain point, Arsanios inserts herself in the film through an old recording from many years ago. In those recordings, Arsanios speaks about the urbanization of Beirut, as if to remind herself and us that the story travels far back, both in her own memory and in the collective experience of the city's inhabitants

IV. Workbook

Often depicting labor within the workspace, Sekula has developed a visual language questioning the function of documentary photography in media, art and society. His works are concerned with the consequences of the economic changes arising from globalization. Throughout his works, he developed a rigorously critical perspective toward the tradition of social or critical realism; a photographic lineage that stretches back to Lewis Hine.

Relating to Lebanon's contemporary context, Marwa Arsanios utilizes an archival documentary approach that adopts a diversity of media, ranging from photography to illustration. Her methodology, puts into question the popular detached approach to documentary through the development of personal and meticulous relationships with the elements and materials being used, destroyed and reused in the continuously changing urban landscape of the country.

This set of exercises is complementary to Sekula's and Marwa's methods of work, tying in Sekula's critical approach to the intimacy of Marwa's experimental process. The first one aims to interpret and compare what a sequence of images is and its outcomes, while the second exercise pushes the students to apply/take to the field the comparative and analytical base taught in the previous exercise. The third exercise introduces a hands-on approach to analytical development, putting into question the relationship between materiality to the process of artistic production as well as the relationship of the latter to the greater socio-economic reality. The fourth exercise, treated separately from the other three, introduces to an even younger age group how to read images beyond the directness of their visual composition on multiple scales.

دفتر التمارين

غالبًا ما تصوّر سيكولا العمالة داخل مكان العمل. فطوّر لغة بصرية للتساؤل حول مهمة التصوير الوثائقي في وسائل الإعلام والفن والمجتمع. وتتعلق أعماله بعواقب التغيّرات الإقتصادية الناشئة عن العولمة. في جميع أعماله، طوّر منظورًا نقديًا صارمًا بشأن تقليد الواقعية الاجتماعية أو النقدية؛ وهي سلاسة صور فوتوغرافية تعود إلى لويس هاين.

وفيما يتعلق بالسياق المعاصر في لبنان، تستخدم مروة أرسانيوس نهجًا وثائقيًا أرشيفيًا، الذي يتبنى مجموعة متنوعة من وسائل الإعلام، تتراوح من التصوير الفوتوغرافي إلى الرسم التوضيحي. أمّا أسلوبها، فيطرح تساؤلًا حول المنهج الشعبي المستقل المعتمد تجاه التوثيق، من خلال تطوير العلاقات الشخصية والدقيقة مع العناصر والمواد المستخدمة والمدمرة، والتي يتمّ إعادة استعمالها في المشهد الحضري المتغيّر باستمرار في البلاد.

هذه المجموعة من التمارين تُشكل تكملة لأساليب عمل سيكولا ومروة، مما يربط نهج سيكولا النقدي بحميمية عملية مروة التجريبية. الأول يهدف إلى تفسير ومقارنة ما هو تسلسل الصور ونتائجه، في حين أنّ التمرين الثاني يدفع الطلاب إلى تطبيق في الميدان، أساس المقارنة والتحليل الذي تمّ دراسته في التمرين السابق. أمّا التمرين الثالث فهو يقدّم نهجًا عمليًا للتطوير التحليلي، مما يثير التساؤل حول العلاقة بين الأهمية النسبية وعملية الإنتاج الفني، فضلًا عن علاقة هذا الأخير بالواقع الإجتماعي والإقتصادي الأكبر. والتمرين الرابع، الذي تمّ معالجته بشكل منفصل عن التمارين الأخرى، يقدّم لفئة عمرية أصغر، كيفية قراءة صور خارج نطاق الطابع المباشر لتشكيلهم البصري على مستويات متعددة.

1. A Sequence of Images _ Understanding

سلسلة من الصور - نظريّ

a. Aims of this exercise

Through this exercise we develop and understand the creative process of an idea. Moreover, how a body of images undermines the dominant narratives that the artist questions. We also explore how sequencing a series of images in different ways can change the meaning of the considered work.

أ- أهداف هذا التمرين

نطوّر ونفهم من خلال هذا التمرين العمليّة الإبداعيّة وراء فكرة العمل الفنّي، كما نتعرّف على الكيفيّة التي يمكن بها لمجموعة من الصور أن تضحد السرديّات السائدة التي يسائلها الفنّان. نستكشف أيضًا كيف يمكن لترتيب الصور بطرقٍ مختلفة أن يغيّر معنى العمل الفنّي محلّ البحث.

b. Materials needed

The choice of images that will be provided to the students is open to interpretation. That said for the sake of discussing the notion of sequencing images, we recommend that the images chosen make sense together in a sequence as well as on their own.

ب- المواد المطلوبة

سيكون إختيار الصور، التي سيتمّ توفيرها للطلاب، قابلًا للتأويل. ومع ذلك، من أجل مناقشة مفهوم تسلسل الصور، نوصي بأن تحمل الصور المختارة معنى لوحدها، وأيضًا معنى يربطها ببعضها البعض في تسلسل.

c. Activity

Each student or pair of students is given one image. Ask them to write what they think of (or see in) the image. Afterwards, the students (or groups) exchange photos and repeat the same process of writing their reflections of the image. Push them to think outside the framework of the image itself by either developing a backstory to the photographed subject or a bigger explanation of the context of the photo. After the students finished writing their contemplations of the second photo, have them compare their notes on both photos as each student or group takes their turn to explain their ideas. From there, merge both students or groups and provide them with a third photo, using their original notes of each photo have them create a narrative that combines all three photos into one sequence. Have the total class, which now should be formed of larger groups, compare their sequences and share why their sequences turned out as they did and how they understood the concept of creating a narrative through individual photographs.

ج- النشاط

يُعطى لكلّ طالب أو لكلّ زوج من الطلاب، صورة واحدة. وسيطلب منهم كتابة رأيهم حول الصورة أو ما يرونه فيها. بعد ذلك، سيقوم الطلاب أو المجموعات بتبادل الصور وإعادة العملية نفسها، أيّ كتابة أفكارهم حول الصورة. في هذا النشاط، سيتمّ دفعهم للتفكير خارج إطار الصورة نفسها، إمّا عن طريق وضع قصة خلفية لمن تمّ تصويره، أو عبر شرح أكبر لسياق الصورة. وبعد انتهاء الطلاب من كتابة تأملاتهم حول الصورة الثانية، سيقومون بمقارنة ملاحظاتهم حول الصورتين، حيث أنّ كل طالب أو مجموعة سيتناوب لشرح أفكاره. وبعد هذه المرحلة، سيتمّ دمج كلا الطالبين أو المجموعتين، وتزويدهم بصورة ثالثة. سيستخدمون ملاحظاتهم الأصلية حول كلّ صورة، لإنشاء سردًا سيجمع الصور الثلاث في تسلسل واحد. أخيرًا، سيكون الصف مكوّن من مجموعات أكبر، وسيقوم الجميع بمقارنة تسلسلاتهم وتبادل لماذا توصلوا إليها، وكيف فهموا فكرة إنشاء سردًا من خلال صور فردية.

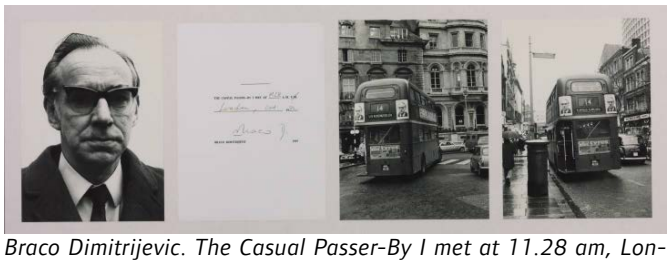
d. Conclusion

Compare the different sequences of images; discuss the similarities and differences between the works of the different student groups and introduce the notion of objective narrative construction versus subjective narrative construction.

د- الاستنتاج

مقارنة التسلسلات المختلفة لصور، ومناقشة أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين أعمال المجموعات الطلابية المختلفة، وتقديم فكرة بناء سرد موضوعي مقابل بناء سرد شخصي.

Martha Rosler. Balloons, from the series House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home. 1967-72. Cut-and-pasted printed paper on board. Richard S. Zeisler Bequest (by exchange) and The Modern Women's Fund Committee of The Museum of Modern Art. © 2012 Martha Rosler



Braco Dimitrijevic. The Casual Passer-By I met at 11.28 am, London, October 1972, Tate Modern, ©1972 Braco Dimitrijevic

2. A Sequence of Images _ Reading

a. Aims of this exercise

The exercise has two objectives: firstly, to develop an understanding of how one perceives and interprets «child labor». Secondly, reading an image on multiple scale (the image itself, relative to others and finally to the context).
A. Develop an emotional understanding/reading of the image (reading of the image on its own).

B. Reflective and/or comparative reading skills (the images relative to each other).

C. Introduce a critical approach to reading an image and group of images further relating them to the context(s).

b. Materials needed

The images shown below in the document could serve as an exemple

The Gymschool, St. Petersburg, 2014, Rineke Dijkstra.

مدرسة الجمباز، في سانت بطرسبرغ، عام 2014 ، المصوّرة رينيك ديجكسترا.

سلسلة من الصور - قراءة

أ- أهداف هذا التمرين

للتمرين هدفان أولًا، التوصل إلى فهم كيف يتصوّر الفرد ويفسّر عمالة الأطفال. ثانيًا، قراءة صورة على نطاق متعدد الصورة نفسها، نسبة إلى أخريات، وأخيرًا، نسبة إلى السياق.

١-تطوير فهمًا/قراءة عاطفية للصورة (قراءة الصورة بمفردها).
٢-مهارات قراءة عاكسة و/أو مقارنة (الصور بالنسبة إلى بعضها البعض).
٣-تقديم نهجًا نقديًا لقراءة صورة ومجموعة من الصور، وربطها بالسياق أو السياقات.

ب- المواد المطلوبة

يمكن أن تكون الصور المتوفرة في الوثيقة بمثابة مثال.

Leipzig Boy Choir, 2013, Rineke Dijkstra.

جوقة فتيان ليبزيغ، عام2013 ، المصوّرة رينيك ديجكسترا.

Tengle children, Hale County, Alabama, 1936, Walker Evans.

أطفال من عائلة تينغل في مقاطعة هيل، في ألاباما، عام 1936. المصوّر ووكر إيفانز.

New York, New York. 61st Street between 1st and 3rd Avenues. Children playing in the street. 1938, Walker Evans.

نيويورك، نيويورك. شارع 61 بين الجادتين الأولى والثالثة. أولاد يلعبون في الشارع. 1938، المصوّر ووكر إيفانز.

Callie Campbell, 11 years old, picks 75 to 125 pounds of cotton a day, and totes 50 pounds of it when sack gets full. "No, I don't like it very much." Photographed in Potawotamie County, Oklahoma. on October 16, 1916.

كالي كامبل، عمرها 11 عامًا، وتقطف بين 75 و 125 كيلوغرامًا من القطن يوميًا. كما أنّها تحمل 50 كغ عندما يمتلئ الكيس. لا، لا أحبه كثيرًا، تمّ تصويرها في بوتاوتامي، أوكلاهوما، في 16 تشرين الأولأوكتوبر،1916.

Pipe-smoking messenger boy working for Mackay Telegraph Company. He said he was fifteen years old. Photographed in Waco, Texas, in September of 1913, Lewis Hine .

مرسل يدخن الغليون ويعمل لشركة ماكاي تلغراف. قال إنّه كان يبلغ من العمر خمسة عشر عامًا. تمّ تصويره في واكو، تكساس، في أيلول 1913 ، من قبل لويس هاين.

c. Conclusion

The exercise will conclude with an open discussion about the relatability of the images to the student audience and their lifestyles.

د- الاستنتاج

سيتمّ اختتام التمرين بمناقشة مفتوحة حول مدى ارتباط جمهور الطلاب وأسلوب حياتهم بالصور.

3. A Sequence of Images _ Making

a. Aims of this exercise

This exercise puts into practice what has been understood in the prior task while exploring different ways of expressing oneself and ideas concerning a chosen topic.

b. Materials needed

Photography and writing are not the only two media possible to use in this exercise. The film essay method, embodied by the work of Noël Burch and Allan Sekula, or the use of materials as a self-standing archival medium, as in the works of Marwa Arsanios, could serve as alternative approaches.

series of images, collages (see the work of Martha Rosler), diagrams, video shots, texts, interviews, etc. (theforgottenspace.net)

c. Activity

The works will evolve around the topic of urbanization. Each student will pick out two or three buildings in construction located in the same area in Beirut. He/She will have to study its impact on the city and society (interviewing workers, future habitants, the contractors, the owner of the project,etc..), and formulate a body of 'work' concerning it. Once the works are gathered, give each of the students one of his colleagues' work. Every student should present his interpretation of the received work. A discussion between the author and the narrator of the work should follow; this step is essential for the evaluation of the work. Finalize it with an open discussion between the latter two and the rest of the class.

Due to the reflective and social nature of the exercise, the opportunity to explore neighborhoods in Beirut that display a strong socio-economic diversity is highly suggested. To this end, we recommend the areas of Mar Mikhail, Ain El Mrayseh, Hamra, Ramlet El Bayda or Furn El Chebbak.

d. Conclusion

Compare all of the produced works, pointing out the scope of every medium. Think of the outcome in the context, then relate it to Sekula's work.

سلسلة من الصور - عمليّ

أ- أهداف هذا التمرين

يستثمر هذا التمرين ما تمّ فهمه في التمرين السابق، كما يستكشف في الوقت ذاته طرقًا مختلفةً للتعبير عن الأفكار المتعلقة بالموضوع محل البحث

ب- المواد المطلوبة

الكتابة والفوتوغرافيا ليسا الوسيطين الوحيدين اللذين يُمكن استخدامهما في هذا التمرين. أسلوب المقال الفيلمي، كما في أعمال نويل بورش وألن سكولا، أو استخدام الخامات كوسيط أرشيفي قائم بذاته، كما في أعمال مروة أرسانيوس، يمكن أن تكون طرقًا بديلة

ج- النشاط

تدور الأعمال حول موضوع التمدّن. يُطلب من كل تلميذة أن يتختار بنايتين أو ثلاث قيد الإنشاء في محيط المنطقة نفسها. يقوم تقمن التلاميذالتلميذات بدراسة تأثير هذه البنايات على المدينة والمجتمع من خلال التحاور مع عمّال البناء والسكّان المستقبليين والمقاولين .وملّاك المشروع، إلخ ومن ثمّ تطوير عمل بحثي حول الموضوع بمجرد جمع الأعمال، يُعطى كل تلميذة عمل زميلهته ويُطلب منهمن شرح انطباعاتهمن عنه. تُجرى بعد ذلك محاورة بين صاحبة العمل ومن يتقوم بالشرح. تشكّل هذه المحاورة خطوةً أساسيةً في تقييم .العمل. يُتبع ذلك بنقاش جماعيّ بين آخر متحاورين وباقي الصف بالنظر إلى الطبيعة الاجتماعيّة والتأمليّة لهذا التمرين، تُعطى الأفضلية لاستكشاف أحياء بيروت التي تُظهر تنوعًا أكبر من الوجهة الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، لذا يفضّل العمل على أحياء مثل مار مخايل وعين المريسة والحمرا ورملة البيضا وفرن الشّباك

د- الاستنتاج

قارنـ/ي كل الأعمال التي تم إنتاجها، مع توضيح حيثيّات كل وسيط استُخدم .في إنتاجها. فكّر/ي ضمن سياق العمل، ثم اربط/ـي ذلك بأعمال سِكولا

4. Building, Breaking and Re-Building

a. Aims of this exercise

The exercise has three objectives: first, to introduce an understanding of materiality; second, to understand the process of creation as being directly related to the materials themselves (their constraints and abilities); third, to introduce the notions of entropy and decay as being social processes as much as they can be natural.

b. Materials needed

Each student/group of students should be given a set of diverse materials, of natural origin and manufactured origin. We recommend to diversify the origin of the materials to allow the students to explore and experiment with the creational/formative opportunities that the materials would allow and to compare them to each other.

For example, one set of materials could include sand, clay, paper or cardboard and miniature building blocks.

c. Activity

The exercise can be executed individually or by groups of students.

Experiment with the creation of different shapes and forms with the different materials provided (boxes, angular shapes, curves, etc.). Once the pieces are done and the students are satisfied, document and discuss the limitations and opportunities that each material provided.

Make each student/group of students pick their favorite piece and have another group act upon it. This could be by simply destroying or dismantling the piece, adding to it or reshaping it all together.

Discuss how the students felt about having their works changed by their classmates and vice-versa. From there develop an argumentative approach to what it means to act upon something/a material and to be subjected to change.

d. Conclusion

To question the nature of decay and change. Introducing them to differentiate between the multiple natures of "change" (was it by natural causes or by individual action)

بناء وهدم وإعادة بناء

أ- أهداف هذا التمرين

لهذا التمرين ثلاثة غايات: أولها هو فهم ماديّة الأشياء، وثانيها هو فهم عملية الإبداع كعملية متصلة بشكل مباشر بالمواد نفسها محدّدات تلك المواد وإمكاناتها، وآخرهًا هو طرح مفاهيم الإنتروبيا والتحلل كعملياتٍ اجتماعية بقدر ما هي عمليات طبيعية أيضًا

ب- المواد المطلوبة

يُعطى كل تلميذ/ة أو مجموعة من التلاميذ/التلميذات مجموعةً من المواد المتفرقة، بين مصنّعة وطبيعية. يفضّل أن تكون المواد متنوعة المصادر ما يسمح للتلاميذ/التلميذات باستكشاف وتجريب خيارات إبداعية وتشكيلية تختلف بحسب كل مادة ومقارنة تلك الخيارات ببعضها البعض. على سبيل المثال، مجموعة المواد الواحدة يمكنها أن تشتمل على الرمل والطين والورق العادي أو المقوّى ومكعبات البناء الصغيرة

ج- النشاط

.يمكن أن يقوم التلاميذ/التلميذات بهذا التمرين فرادى أو في مجموعات
يُطلب من التلاميذ/التلميذات تأليف أشكال مختلفة باستخدام المواد المتفرقة التي ستعطى لهم/ن يمكن لهذه الأشكال أن تكون مربعة أو متكسّرة أو منحنية، إلخ بمجرد الانتهاء من تأليف هذه الأشكال على نحو يتراه التلاميذ/التلميذات مرضيًا، يتمّ توثيق هذه الأشكال وتتم مناقشة التلاميذ/ .التلميذات عن المحدّدات والإمكانات التي توفّرها كل مادة من المواد
يُطلب من كل تلميذ/تلميذةمجموعة أن تختار عملًا من أعمال المشاركين/ات الآخرين وتُسند إليه/ا مهمة تغييره؛ قد يكون ذلك .بتدمير العمل أو تفكيكه أو إكماله أو إعادة تشكيله بالكامل
يُسأل كل تلميذ/تلميذة عن شعوره/ا تجاه تغيير عمله من قبل الزملاء، والعكس بالعكس. يتم استثمار النقاش لتطوير مقاربة جدليّة حول معنى العمل على شيء ما أو مادّة ما ومعنى أن يكون هذا الشيء أو هذه المادة عرضة للتغيير

د- الاستنتاج

تساءل/ي عن طبيعة التحلّل والتغيير. إطرح/ي عليهم التفريق بين الطبائع المختلفة للتغيير؛ هل نتج هذا التغيير من جرّاء عامل طبيعي أم أنه حدث بفعل فاعل؟

V. Additional Readings

Beginning with Allan Sekula's text, entitled "Eleven Premises on Documentary and a Question", the artist sets in motion a critical deconstruction of the evolution of documentary photography in modern artistic practice and the interconnectivity of that same historical sequence to the development of modernity. In turn, the influence and grasp of modernity – in its now globalized and hyperbolized form – on the art world becomes masked by the art's intellectualization and conceptualization of its own practice. In a nutshell, the more interwoven artistic practice is to the economic and global social structures, the more that same art world attempts to detach itself from it in vein.

Martha Rosler's text, "Political Aspects of Documentary Photography", goes hand in hand with the latter through its narration of the history of documentary's rise and fall throughout the 20th century. In her case specifically, she enumerates artists that she believes place themselves in between the "social world" and the "art world", their practices riddled with difficulties and paradoxes. Allan Sekula included amongst the many, Rosler's text criticizes artist's distancing from the urban and social contexts that surround them, while melancholically shedding light on the attempts of the few to reintroduce documentary to the world in a way that artistically reexamines the settings, conditions and propagation of documentary art.

Set around the same time as Sekula's and Rosler's practices as artists, Rosalyn Deutsche's text, entitled "Evictions", sheds light on the practice of "institutional critiques" by artists of the mid and late 20th and century. Born during a time when art was undergoing modern standardization, intellectualization and regulation by artistic institutions such as museums and galleries. Weaving the connections between space, the urban environment and artistic practice, Deutsche's text raises important questions regarding the accessibility of art and the clash between artists, publics and institutions in regards to the interpretation and definition of art, all set within the context of modernity and its unfailing spread across all sectors.

In addition to being a practicing artist, Smithson was an actively engaged with the theoretical aspects of the major artistic, art-historical, and cultural issues of his time.

Time as being one of the main themes of his art, and of his important mediums, is a point made clear in one of his earliest published articles, Entropy and the New Monuments. In fact, Time is crucial to the notion of entropy that Smithson began to elaborate in his earliest published writings. In Entropy and the New Monuments he sets forth a new model for the function of time in art. In A Sedimentation of The Mind : Earth projects, he treats Time as a major factor in the art as object's credibility as well as for the artists's state. In this essay, Smithson places emphasis on the fact that the development of the Earth Art contributed to the consistent change in the perception of art by the public as well as the change in the attitude of artists to art.

Eleven Premises on Documentary and a Question

Allan Sekula

Beginning with Allan Sekula's text, entitled "Eleven Premises on Documentary and a Question", the artist sets in motion a critical deconstruction of the evolution of documentary photography in modern artistic practice and the interconnectivity of that same historical sequence to the development of modernity. In turn, the influence and grasp of modernity – in its now globalized and hyperbolized form – on the art world becomes masked by the art's intellectualization and conceptualization of its own practice. In a nutshell, the more interwoven artistic practice is to the economic and global social structures, the more that same art world attempts to detach itself from it in vein.

1: Realism is always a response to earlier realisms.

Dans Du réalisme artistique (1921) Roman Jakobson nous rappelle que les realismes changent au fur et à mesure que les conventions qui precedent deviennent périmées et inusitées. La métonymie – le sens par la proximité conextuelle - Roman Jakobson, in "On Realism in Art" (1921) a reminds us that realisms change as previous conventions become stale and unused. Metonomy—signification by contextual adjacence—undergoes shifts in scale, attention to detail, etc. These changes can happen very quickly. The deadpan irony of the voice-over in Luis Buñuels Las Hurdes (1933) is a scathing and rapid response to the authoritative narrator's voice in early sound newsreels.

2: There is no such thing as "naïve realism." There is only naïve conventionalism.

Again, we owe the very term "naïve realism" to Jakobson.

The pressure on documentary is to follow the prevailing conventions of institutionalized reportage in the interest of brevity, clarity, legibility, etc. Thus well-honed naiveté is a survival instinct in a brutal and competitive media environment. Sometimes, this surrender to convention has interesting implications. Michael Moore's slovenly working-class "man in the street" pose contradicts his actual celebrity status, but lends truth value to his statements. In the media system of the United States, working-class speech is either maudlin sentimentalism (as in country music) or dysfunctional buffoonery (as in the Jerry Springer Show, which combines the ethics of the Roman circus with the narrative twists and "surprises" of La philosophie dans le boudoir. Given these obstacles, Moore's naïve conventionalism is not so naïve after all. But to argue for formal "difficulty" in documentary, as I do, is to imagine another sort of intelligence in one's audience.

3: The popular faith in images is overestimated.

The media system is founded on an unfounded slander: namely, that the audience is stupid. Media experts imagine a population of fools whose faith in images is rock-solid. As I periodically remind my students, the official myth that photographs tell the truth has given way to the official myth that photographs lie. Only media experts understand the perniciousness of this photographic untruth which only they have discovered.

But it is reasonable to think that even in the cultural depths of the Jerry Springer Show the lumpen-proletarian reserve army of celebrity is being as inventive and creatively self-fictionalizing as were the divine marquis' libertines. The guiding principal of reality television: Anything for a buck. And if that means replacing professional actors with non-professionals, or pretending to have engaged in multiple incest, so be it. The relation between truth and fiction is unaltered.

4: Theatrics are intrinsic to everyday life.

We can think here of Bertolt Brecht's notion of the social geste. Or the American sociologist Erving Goffman's ideas about the dramaturgy of everyday life. Examples abound in Rithy Panh's film Burnt Theater (Theatre bruleé (2005). The protagonists are unemployed veterans of a Phnom Penh theatre troupe squatting in the charred ruins of the complex in which they once performed. They veer between scrounging for food and impromptu rehearsals of Khmer puppet-shows and Cyrano de Bergerac. At one point they capture bats roosting in the collapsing ceiling, and cook up a tasty supper. As they sit and eat, their chatter focuses entirely on the quality and monotonous inevitability of the cabbage in the soup: "cabbage Monday, cabbage Tuesday, cabbage Wednesday…." The bats are the unspoken delicacy, the non-dit of the meal, even as they chew avidly at the tiny bones. This refusal to play the role of ethnographic subjects for a foreign audience is, I think, quite deliberate, and constitutes theatre of a high order

in its own right. The film is structured between the materiality of the actions of the protagonists and their own discursive relation to that reality, which is, precisely, the reality of unemployed actors. This reverses the logic of the Jerry Spring Show which offers up the pseudo-reality or spectacle of the unemployed as actors.

5: Documentary entails authorial self-effacement.

Rithy Panh is exemplary in this regard, as is Frederick Wiseman. Michael Moore's showboating and bluster stands at the opposite extreme. Jerry Springer is in between: playing perpetually horrified witness at a spectacle of his own making.

Erroll Morris's The Fog of War (2004) is another extreme example of authorial self-effacement, with Morris' trademark "interrogatron," building the illusion of direct speech to the spectator into the literal cinematic apparatus itself. This cinematic platform gives Robert MacNamara enough rope to hang himself. He does so only indirectly—"in effigy," as it were—by offering up the technocratic barbarism of Curtis LeMay, his Air Force commander during the firebombing of Japan, as a prologue to his own unacknowledged culpability in the air war against Viet Nam.

6: Most claims for "new documentary" reverse premise 5 in favor of subjectivism, and the theatrics of authorial self-revelation.

First, the idea that documentary should announce itself a fiction strikes me a trivial and even a bit ludicrous.

The ratio between "respect for the author" and "respect for the object" is delicate in documentary. Sometimes, the answer can indeed be found in self-mockery, or more precisely, in creating the conditions for authorial vulnerability, putting oneself at the mercy of one's cinematic subjects.

Ross McElwee's Sherman's March (1986) is a great example of a precise way of working out that ratio, providing a psycho-sexual portrait of white males of the American South that is without parallel. The director achieves this through encounters with his mother and a succession of former, future, and potential girlfriends, all of whom play variations on the roles of Penelope and Athena to his Odysseus. Anyone who wants to understand the mother-infused romanticism and seductive energy of Elvis or Bill Clinton should see this film.

7. Modernism is uncomfortable with documentary (and with realism in general) despite the lesson of premise 1.

Modernism is uncomfortable with the intractability of the world. Documentary confronts that intractability head on, as a political and representational-aesthetic problem. Again Louis Buñuel and Rithy Panh share this approach.

Modernism's anti-documentary bias is born of the tyranny of the plastic arts, with the imperative of making new things that stand in an exceptional relation to the larger world. Even the ready-made succumbs to this plastic exceptionalism, even if it is reduced to purely nominative (rather than plastic) gestures. Despite Jakobson's insights from 1921, the "linguistic turn" does not prepare the way for a sustained acceptance of documentary within the subsequent history of modernism.

We should remind ourselves that there was no contradiction between radical modernism and documentary realism in the early films of Dziga Vertov, Joris Ivens, and Jean Vigo, the latter especially in Apropos de Nice.

8. Modernism needs documentary as a "bad object."

Another, less-Freudian way to say this would be to modernism indirectly celebrates its own "undercodedness" by overcoding documentary as "transparent." These are Umberto Eco's terms, from A Theory of Semiotics (1976). Undercoded statements are novel, unanchored in convention, and this susceptible to illegibility or semantic "difficulty" Overcoded statements are designed for unambiguous denotative meaning.

Mallarmé's rejection of instumentalized language is generalized into the critical accusation that documentary is a journalistic and purely informative enterprise, resistant to any modernist "poetics." Here we have also to consider visual modernism's bias against prose. Over-attention to subject matter and to narrative become sign of artistic weakness and inferiority. But documentarians need to work like novelists and reporters and exhaustively research their subjects. Why not consider the work of journalists in a more generous way: think of George Orwell, or Ryszard Kapuscinski, or Frances Fitzgerald. Are they lesser artists? And if so, by what standard?

Then there is the reality of the art market. I will give a simple everyday example here. I often meet with art students who resist documentary approaches even as they are otherwise attracted to them. One stated rationale for this approach-avoidance syndrome is always the same: the gallery system is not receptive.

Film students do not exhibit the same ambivalence. Film culture parallels modernism, but does not entirely embrace it. Just as Eisenstein discovered Dickens in D. W. Griffith, so we find both

Griffith's necessary modernism of the close-up and his reactionary anti-modernity in Steven Spielberg. Spielberg is less radical than Dickens, and a lot less radical than Ross McElwee in the sense that Sherman's March—a film without African-Americans—tells us more about the legacy of chattel slavery than does Amistad (1997). Assume we use the old fashioned activist test of "art as a weapon" and the dictum "know your enemy." Which film is more likely to help young African-Americans engage in the continuing struggle for racial justice and equality? A film that sentimentalizes a history of slave insurgency or a film that offers a contemporary psychological insight into the minds of both conservative and neoliberal Southern whites? Which film is more likely to encourage and deepen mistrust of Bill Clinton (or Newt Gingrich) or the legion of other great-grandsons of the Confederacy engaged in American political life today? So the fight within film culture is often more wide-ranging and interesting than that with the other visual arts.

9. Neoliberalism has no use for documentary in the classical sense, since the "social" disappears from the horizon of neoliberalism.

Thus contemporary documentaries—especially in the United States—are replete with what might be described as atomized, sub-social themes. This is ironic in a political culture that is once again willing to describe itself in positive terms as "imperialist."

Of course, on a broader front, we are seeing documentary films that are about neoliberalism in many of its guises: Errol Morris's aforementioned The Fog of War, Rithy Panh's Land of the Wandering Souls (Terre des âmes errantes) (2000), Johnathan Nossiter's Mondovino (2004), Agnes Vardas, Les glaneurs et la glaneuse (2004), Hubert Sauper's Darwin's Nightmare (2004), and Wang Bing's West of the Tracks (Tie xie xu /A l'ouest des rails (2003).

10. Neoliberalism is a restoration of class power, built on the ideological obscuring of class relations (the "social") in favor of market autonomy.

This is stated definitionally, with David Harvey as a source, in his new book A Brief History of Neoliberalism (2005)

11: Documentary is the bad-conscience of neoliberalism.

I revise this premise in light of having just seen (21 May 2006) an HBO documentary Baghdad E.R. (directed by Jon Alpert and Matthew O'Neill) in my hotel room on a visit to New York. Army medical teams in the Green Zone amputate and patch up American troops, sending them home or back into the Red Zone, in a task that most of them recognize as one of Sisyphean absurdity. The end titles give us the precise number of Americans wounded and killed up to a date late in the postproduction of the film. Even though we have seen Iraqi's among the victims wheeled into the operating room, no equivalent numbers are offered for the larger population of Iraqi "nationals" as they are referred to by everyone in the film. Existential duress and unrelenting hard work: American virtue at the edge of an abyss in which no one else really exists.

12. Can documentary be more than that?

Can documentary pose an ethical debate surrounding social alternatives to neoliberalism? This is already one of the achievements of Agnes Varda, in her sly interrogation of the rule of law as it falls upon the fragments of the commons.

Political Aspects of Documentary Photography

Martha Rosler

October 1981, Camera Austria, *Internationales Symposion Der Sammlung Fotographis Länderbank Wien*

Martha Rosler's text, "Political Aspects of Documentary Photography", goes hand in hand with the latter through its narration of the history of documentary's rise and fall throughout the 20th century. In her case specifically, she enumerates artists that she believes place themselves in between the "social world" and the "art world", their practices riddled with difficulties and paradoxes. Allan Sekula included amongst the many, Rosler's text criticizes artist's distancing from the urban and social contexts that surround them, while melancholically shedding light on the attempts of the few to reintroduce documentary to the world in a way that artistically reexamines the settings, conditions and propagation of documentary art.

Let us acknowledge photographic images as instances of ideological combat. We should recall that there is a half-hidden struggle over even the word "documentary". John Grierson, critic, film director, later head of the British Film Unit, when he introduced the term in the thirties in a review of a film by Robert Flaherty, had in mind work that fit in with his general aim of developing an educated, electorally active public. The idea of "documentary" had nothing to do with a mere isolated "actuality", and its criterion was not a simple positivist truth-value. The idea of documentary was knit into the pattern of 20th century civilization in which a central figure was the means of communication. For Grierson and others, democratic participation absolutely required a constant flow of information and ideas in coherent points of view, such as documentary might supply.

The word "documentary" in this sense has been lent backward in time to such reform-minded still-photographer journalists as Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine in the early 20th century United States. For them the camera could be thought of as not a gun, drawn on its "subjects", but a fiery pencil that with a flash and flare inscribed into the historical and journalistic record as well as into the consciences of the "comfortable" classes, the images of the previously unphotographed poor. These reformers were arguers first, photographers second. What was new was the political use of the camera to demand concerted social change. Rather than a physiognomic mythology of criminality, depravity, or madness, such as that developed by Cesare Lombroso or Dr. Hugh Diamond, Riis & Hine, and other reformers (not journalists) like Jane Addams and Lilian Wald, believed in the emphatic response: that if you could see the working poor, you would apprehend a dignity held in common in spite of poverty and degrading circumstances. Riis and Hine were after more than enlightenment in their public: they wanted change. For them the State was a site of struggle: change laws, alter circumstances, and dignity and a kind of human nature would win out. What they didn't want was revolution.

In the 1950's and after, documentary in the United States (and elsewhere) fizzled. What happened to the documentary photographers of the 30's, those involved in government propaganda for the New Deal and those engaged in oppositional practice?

Robert Frank, anarchic bohemian, tourist in the fabled land of no yesterday, no today, and endless tomorrow, appears, in hindsight to displace them all, bringing isolated subjectivity and melancholia in place of certitude and concerted militancy. We also get in John Szarkowski, a presiding genius of this swing from exteriority to interiority; his epiphanic ex-cathedra pronouncements from the templed Museum of Modern Art manage to make "mystery" and ineffability the meaning of documentary.

Szarkowski, in creating the careers of Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand, and Diane Arbus in the late 60's said that what distinguished these "new documentarians" from those of the 30's was that they embraced the pleasures and terrors of the world whereas the earlier the earlier ones had sought to change the world. Was he consciously opposing Karl Marx, who said: "hitherto, philosophers, have sought to understand the world; we seek to change it"? Szarkowski wrote his remarks about "pleasures and terrors" in 1967, at a high point of the Vietnam War. He was not referring to the pleasures and terrors of Vietnam.

By the late 1960's the social documentary project had been obscured. In the period described by sociologist Daniel Bell as bringing in the end of ideology in docile post-McCarthy America it was prudent for people in all fields to follow the lead of "social sciences" in dedicating themselves to a "value-free" (read amoral, apolitical) neutral objectivism, coupled with a leap-of-faith metaphysics. But especially because of the social movements of the 60's, activists have found photography to be indispensable. The oppositional "underground" press, for example, depended on it. The people whose work I will refer to now are also committed to an activist, socially engaged photographic practice. But their chosen course

is a difficult one because by their simultaneous engagement with so-called photographic art they live with contradictions. It is not just to say that they have no patience with political or aesthetic purists, both of whom claim a more perfect politics; they don't even notice those arguments. They are committed to pursuing a dual practice whose amalgamation is potentially always capable of falling apart. It is a practice that resides in "the world at large" and it resides in galleries, museums, lecture halls and symposia such as this. They do not mark their closure within "discourse" per se. They swim in the stream of art-world discourse, to varying extents, but they are more interested in having an effect on the world that nothing to do with it. They tend to have in mind some immediate action or the consolidation of a "community" through the development of a culture of opposition. In this their aims are more radical than Grierson's. Further, they would not be satisfied to claim a goal of winning a broad audience to their points, of simply "providing information"; they would be contemptuous of the notion of a "free marketplace of ideas." And their auteurship is often a wistful far-out distanced second to their didacticism. There are problems and ambivalences here, the ones we always we always suffer in an art world vigilantly wielding twin pincer blades of fashionableness and formalism and in a political climate that wields its own pair of pincers, instrumentalism and mystification. It is difficult to have a foot in the art world and one out of it: how to keep your balance?

For these photographers, "changing the discourse" means the redefinition of ideological givens, most particularly about the meaning of work and workers, sexuality and gender, and militancy. As with any appropriated practice, the whole field of documentary and activist photography must be redefined, returning to it not a mere "legitimacy", baldly stated, but the certitude and militancy leached out of it by its dismemberers, its mystifiers, its universalizers, subjectivizers, pseudosociologizers, and aestheticizers, lubricated perhaps by money. For nonart audiences, work about working, about women, and about selective action, pose different problems. It is easier, of course, to have an audience of like-minded folk with whom you share assumptions than direct work outward to a broader public. But in any case all those works I will refer to recognize the necessity of working the image with verbal texts.

For most of these photographers the exposure of abuses in both real-life circumstances and in ideological presentations is not a liberal maneuver: they are not interested in asking for one segment of the population to take pity on and act politically for the subject of their work. They wish to promote militancy, not to create or perpetuate an imagery of victimhood or of nobility. They do not always succeed. Chauncey Hare's view of exploitation is much more systemic and systematic. An engineer with Standard Oil in Point Richmond, California for 20 years, he was simultaneously a photographer who held 3 Guggenheim Fellowships during that period. An anti-Marxist, Hare nevertheless believes that our system is totally exploitative of people's lives and labor. While he was publishing a big book with Aperture, our most prestigious photo publisher, he was quitting Standard Oil and producing booklets and photos to send out to all the workers at Standard Oil. He has photographed the company from top to bottom and interviewed retired workers and officers.

Fred Lonidier is another California photographer interested in the abuses of work. In "The Health and Safety Game" he took a relentlessly systemic view of the institutionalized violence of work under capitalism. He used game theory as a sort of choreography of the "moves" that the two players, Labor and Management, make. Fred shows that and other works both in art galleries and in union halls and public office building lobbies and published them in union newspapers. He has also done work about civil service workers, produces work within the mass-production photo industry that comments on the industry itself and is meant to be read by the production workers during the course of production.

Dr. Deborah Barndt, a Toronto photographer who works with the participatory Research Group and the International Council of Adult Education. In her work with immigrant women from Asia an Latin America, she assist them in evaluating and maintaining part of their traditional culture while learning how to live, work and communicate in English-speaking Canada. Much of her work is shown within the ethnic communities that collaboratively produced it.

Allan Sekula is a photographer now living in Ohio who is also a photo critic. Part of his work "This school is a factory" is included in the "Extended Photography" show. In Vienna it is a work about channeling working-class youngsters into low-level technical jobs, to serve the needs of local industry and service work. In an earlier work, "Aerospace Folktales", he dealt sympathetically with his father, a then unemployed aerospace engineer in Los Angeles and his militarist ideology. In "This Ain't China" (1979) he dealt with the attempt to organize a union in a small pizza parlor in San Diego, while puncturing the documentary of struggle and imagery of workers.

In central combat with common beliefs about images of women, a group of women photographers called the "Hackney Flashers" put together exhibitions in and around their working class English community, Hackney. They also produce discussion booklets and slide-packets for classroom and group use, questioning media images. They wish to combat consumerism, devaluation, isolation, and passivity and to raise issues of class and privilege.

Evictions: Contemporary Art, Urbanism, and Spatial Politics

Rosalyn Deutsche

Chapter 5, *Agorophobia:Public Art and Democratic Culture*, 1997, City University of New York, pp. 324-326

Set around the same time as Sekula's and Rosler's practices as artists, Rosalyn Deutsche's text, entitled "Evictions", sheds light on the practice of "institutional critiques" by artists of the mid and late 20th and century. Born during a time when art was undergoing modern standardization, intellectualization and regulation by artistic institutions such as museums and galleries. Weaving the connections between space, the urban environment and artistic practice, Deutsche's text raises important questions regarding the accessibility of art and the clash between artists, publics and institutions in regards to the interpretation and definition of art, all set within the context of modernity and its unfailing spread across all sectors.

Questions about the constitution, transformation, and uses of the public are, of course, not new in public art discourse, although directing them at critical redefinitions of public art is. Since the 1980s, art critics on the left have tried to reframe aesthetic debates about public space by abandoning normative evaluations of the word public in favor of functional analyses that examine its uses in particular historical circumstances. In 1987, for example, Craig Owens noted "how malleable the concept of the public can be" and concluded that "the question of who is to define, Manipulate and profit froa 'the public* is...the central issue of any discussion of the public function of art today."51

Owens examined the way in which rhetoric about "the public good" and "the protection of culture for the public" has historically provided an alibi for modern imperialism. Using Nelson Rockefeller's cultural and economic investments in Latin America as an example, Owens argued that those individuals who represent the economic interests most deeply implicated in destroying other cultures in order to bring them into the sphere of capitalist social relations have also collected the artifacts of those cultures in the name of preserving culture for the public.

In the 1980s I criticized a similar rhetoric of the public good that provided an alibi for urban redevelopment. Owens's and my arguments were part of a far broader effort in critical sectors of the art world to redefine the public so that the concept might be Marshalled against two developments in art: first, Massive economic privatization— the art-market explosion, attacks on public funding, growing corporate influence on exhibition policies— and second, the growth of a new public art industry serving as the aesthetic arm of oppressive urban policies.

Owens and I each invoked the concept of art as a political public sphere to counteract the inversion we identified as the hallmark of conservative discourse about the public— forces that profit from the destruction of public spaces and cultures pose as their protectors.52 "If culture is to be protected," Owens asked, "is it not precisely from those whose business it is to protect culture?"53

Today, however, critical voices in the art world cannot afford to formulate ideas about "real" public art solely by exposing the relations of domination concealed by liberal or conservative notions— any more than leftists have been able to confine their critique of democracy to uncovering the mystifications of bourgeois democracy while ignoring the authoritarian potential of some of their own ideas about "real" democracy. To do so is to claim that public space can simply be liberated from conservatives and liberals who have hijacked it from its rightful owners. The history of radical social thought cautions against making this claim— itself an appropriation of the public. Leftists do not simply represent the true meaning of public space. They, too, define and have, moreover, "manipulated and profited from *the public.'" In critical social theory, as Nancy Fraser writes, 'private' and 'public' have long been powerful terms "frequently deployed to delegitimate some interests, views, and topics and to valorize others... to restrict the universe of legitimate public contestation."54 Left art criticism needs to take a closer look at what— and at whoa— its use of the term public forces into privacy. Setting critical conceptions of "art in/as a public sphere" against celebratory conceptions of "art in public places" or "the new public art" is by now a commonplace that hardly exhausts all contests over what it means to bring the word public into proximity with art.

Without in any way relinquishing this earlier critique, but in the interest of extending the scope of a genealogical inquiry into the meaning of the public in art, I would like to stage a different yet, to my mind, no less urgent confrontation: not the customary meeting between celebratory and critical conceptions of public space but an encounter between two critical events that took place in the New York art world during the 1980s. The adjective public figures prominently in both events but describes divergent concepts of space. The first is an exhibition entitled "Public Vision" held in 1982.

"Public Vision," organized by Gretchen Bender, Nancy Dwyer, and Cindy Sheraan, was presented at White Columns, a small alternative space then on the edge of Soho in Lower Manhattan.55 The exhibition brought together a group of women artists many of whose work is associated with what would soon become known as the feminist critique of visual representation. The show was small, brief, and undocumented. In retrospect, however, it has the quality of a Manifesto. Mounted at the height of an internationally proclaimed, male-dominated neoexpressionist revival of traditional aesthetic values, it announced the arrival of a new feminist politics of the image destined to unsettle established aesthetic paradigms. "Public Vision" also promised that art informed by feminist theories of representation would change the course of what was then the most radical critique of traditional paradigms: the discourse about postmodernism.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, certain artists launched a critique of art institutions that challenged the claim of aesthetic transcendence. Artists like Hans Haacke, Martha Rosier, Adrian Piper, Daniel Buren, and Marcel Broodthaers demonstrated that the meaning of a work of art does not reside permanently within the work itself but is formed only in relation to an outside— to the manner of the work's presentation— and therefore changes with circumstances. Indeed, the very designation of an object as a work of art depends on the work's framing conditions— including the physical apparatus that supports it, prevailing discourses about art, and the presence of viewers. The significance of an artwork is not simply given or discovered, it is produced. Artists engaged in what became known as "institutional critique" investigated this process of production by making the context of art's exhibition the subject matter of their work, thereby demonstrating the inseparability of the artwork from its conditions of existence. They transformed the exhibition spaces and museological apparatus through which illusions of aesthetic detachment are constructed. Sometimes, as with Haacke's Broadness and Diversity of the Ludwig Brigade, they drew attention to the specific social and economic interests that "detachment" has historically served.

Institutional critiques often stressed the activity of the viewer but sometimes treated this as the accomplishment of a determinate task. Haacke's work, for instance, invited viewers to decipher relations and find content already inscribed in images but did not ask them to examine their own role and investments in producing images. Likewise, feminist analysis of images of women in terms of positive or negative content presumed that images contain stable meanings simply perceived by preconstituted viewers. Some images are false and deficient; others, true and adequate. This analysis thus lapses into a positivist fiction. By contrast, artists in "Public Vision" went beyond the positive-negative images approach to produce what might be called "critical images." They unsettled the modernist model of visual neutrality at its core by proposing that meaning arises only in an interactive space between viewer and image— but not between preexisting viewers or images. Rather, these artists explored the role played by vision in constituting the human subject and, moreover, in the continuous reproduction of this subject by cultural forms of visuality.

They did not confine their analysis of the politics of the image to what appears inside the borders of a picture, within the visual field. Instead, they turned their attention to what is invisible there— the operations that generate the seemingly natural spaces of the image and the viewer. In so doing, these artists treated the image itself as a social relationship and the viewer as a subject constructed by the very object from which it formerly claimed detachment.

Robert Smithson, who died in a plane crash in 1973, remains as compelling a presence among artists today as he was then. During his lifetime he was greatly respected (and disliked by some) for the crucial role he played in helping to redefine the practices and parameters of contemporary art. In recent years the iconoclastic Smithson has himself become part of the art-historical canon that he fought against so vigorously — and that he helped to enlarge. He has now come to symbolize the expansive, anti formalist movements that emerged in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, and he is acknowledged as an early and influential advocate of cultural and historical relativism. Simthson not only insisted on redefining the physical nature of art and its role within society, he also focused attention on what he took to be the arbitrary and unreflecting intellectual and historical frameworks within which art and criticism were conceived and presented.

Jack Flam

A Sedimentation of The Mind: Earth Projects (1968)

Robert Smithson

In Jack Flam, editor, *Robert Smithson the Collected Writings,* pp. 100-114, University of California Press.

Smithson's essays tackles different points, each set in a separated paragraph. He begins with comparisons between the surface of the earth and the human mind, the "earth's surface and the figments of the mind have a way of disintegrating into discrete regions of art." Focusing on Pollock, he then draws a comparison between the artist's tools and the container they operate on. He describes it as such "the paint brush vanishes into Pollock's stick, and the stick dissolve into 'poured paint' from a container (...) What then is one to do with the container ?" Following the same progression as for tools, this "entropy of technique" leaves the artist with "no limit." Later in the essay, he writes about the "primary process' of making contact with matter." Here, he's talking about dedifferentiation tending towards a swing between oceanic limitlessness and strong determinants. Further ahead, he proclaims his 'non-sites' as gatherings in the "fragments" of raw matter, unifying "technology" with the Earth; his non-sites, by being part of the earth, are limitless in nature while allowing him to still be the architect. Afterwards, he uses this argument to discuss about his anti-technologism. In fact, Smithson seeks to recognize the latter's limits, putting it in a limiting position towards the art world "Why steel is valued over rust is a technological value, not an artistic one."Hence, the artist who refuses "technological miracles" can have access to "esthetic consciousness".

The earth's surface and the figments of the mind have a way of disintegrating into discrete regions of art. Various agents, both fictional and real, somehow trade places with each other. One's mind and the earth are in a constant state of erosion, mental rivers wear away abstract banks, brain waves undermine cliffs of thought, ideas decompose into stones of unknowing, and conceptual crystallizations break apart into deposits of gritty reason. Vast moving faculties occur in this geological miasma, and they move in the most physical way. This movement seems motionless, yet it crushes the landscape of logic under glacial reveries. The entire body is pulled into the cerebral sediment, where particles and fragments make themselves known as solid consciousness.

The manifestations of technology are at times less "extensions" of man, than they are aggregates of elements. Even the most advanced tools and machines are made of the raw matter of the earth. Today's highly refined technological tools are not much different in this respect from those of the caveman. Most of the better artists prefer processes that have not been idealized, or differentiated into "objective" meanings. Common shovels, awkward looking excavating devices, what Michael Heizer calls "dump tools", picks, pitchforks, the machine used by suburban

contractors. Machine's like Benjamin Holt's steam tractor (invented in 1885). Drills and explosives that can produce shafts and earthquakes. With such equipment, construction takes on the look of destruction. They seem to turn the terrain into unfinished cities of organized wreckage. A sense of chaotic plank engulfs site after site. Subdivisions are made — but to what purpose ? Building takes on a singular wildness as loaders scoop and drag soil all over the place. Excavations from shapeless mounds of debris, miniature landslides of dust, mud, sand and gravel. The actual disruption of the earth's crust is at times very compelling, and seems to confirm Heraclitus' Fragment 124, "The most beautiful world is like a heap of rubble tossed down in confusion." The tools of art have too long been confined to "the studio". The city gives the illusion that earth does not exist. Heizer calls his earth projects "The alternative to the absolute city system."

Recently, in Vancouver, Iain Baxter put on an exhibition of Piles that were located at different points in the city; he also helped in the presentation of a Portfolio of Piles. Dumping and pouring become interesting techniques. Carl Andre's "grave site" — a tiny pile of sand, was displayed under a stairway at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts last year. Andre, unlike Baxter, is more concerned with the elemental in things. Andre's pile has no anthropomorphic overtones; he gives it a clarity that avoids the idea of temporal place. A serenification takes place. My own Tar Pool and Gravel Pit (1966) proposal makes one conscious of the primal ooze. A molten substance is poured into a square sink that is surrounded by another square sink of coarse gravel. The tar cools and flattens into a sticky level deposit. This carbonaceous sediment brings to mind a tertiary world of petroleum, asphalts, ozokerite, and bituminous agglomerations.

PRIMARY ENVELOPMENT

At the low levels of consciousness the artist experiences undifferentiated or unbounded methods of procedure that break with the focused limits of rational techniques. Here tools are undifferentiated from the material they operate on, or they seem to sink back into their primordial condition. Robert Morris (Artforum, April 1968) sees the paint brush vanish into Pollock's "stick", and the stick dissolve into "poured paint" from a container used by Morris Louis. What then is one to do with the container ? This entropy of technique leaves one with an empty limit, or no limit at all. All differentiated technology becomes meaningless to the artist who know this state. At this point I must return to what I think is an important issue, namely Tony Smith's "car ride" on the "unfinished turnpike". "This drive was a revealing experience. The road and much of the landscape was artificial, and yet it couldn't be called a work of art." Smith is talking about a sensation, not the finished work of art; this doesn't imply that he is anti-art. He is describing the state of his mind in the "primary process" of making contact with matter. This process is called by Anton Ehrenzweig "dedifferentiation", and it involves a suspended question regarding "limitlessness" that goes back to Civilization and Its Discontents. Michael Fried's shock at Smith's experiences shows that the critic's sense of limit cannot risk the rhythm of dedifferentiation that swings between "oceanic" fragmentation and strong determinants. Ehrenzweig says that in modern art this rhythm is "somewhat onside" — toward the oceanic. Most critics cannot endure the suspension of boundaries between what Ehrenzweig calls the "self and the non-self". They are apt to dismiss Malevich's Non-Objective World as poetic debris, or only refer to the "abyss" as a rational metaphor "within narrow bounds". The artist who is physically engulfed tries to give evidence of this experience through a limited (mapped) revision of the original unbounded state. I agree with Fried that limits are not part of the primary process that Tony Smith was talking about. The bins or containers of my Non-Sites gather in the fragments that are experienced in the physical abyss of raw matter. The tools of technology become a part of the Earth's geology as they sink back into their original state. Machines like dinosaurs must return to dust or rust. One might say a "de-architecturing" take place before the artist sets his limits outside the studio or the room.

BETTER HOMES AND INDUSTRIES

In Art in America , Sept. —Oct. 1966, there is a Portrait of Anthony Caro, with photographs of his sculpture in settings and landscapes that suggest English gardening. One work, Prima Luce 1966, painted yellow, matches the yellow daffodils peaking out behind it, and it sits on a well cut lawn. I know, the sculptor prefers to see his art indoors , but the fact that this work ended up where it did is no excuse for thoughtlessness about installation. The more compelling artists today are concerned with "place" or "site" — Smith, de Maria, Andre, Heizer, Oppenheim, Huebler —to name a few. Somehow, Caro's work picks up its surroundings, and gives one a sense of contrived, but tamed, "wildness" that echoes to the tradition of English gardening.

Around 1720 the English invented the anti formal garden as a protest against the French formal garden. The french use of geometric forms was rejected as something "unnatural." This seems to relate to today's debate between so called "formalism" and "anti-formalism." The traces of weak naturalism cling to the background of Caro's Prima Luce. A leftover Arcadia with flowery overdose gives the sculpture the look of some industrial ruin. Caro's concatenations of steel and aluminium may be viewed as Kantian "things-in-themselves.", or be placed into some syntax based on So and So's theories, but at this point I will leave this notions to the keepers of "modernity." The English consciousness of art has always been best displayed in its "landscape gardens." "Sculpture" was used more to generate a set of conditions. Many art magazines have gorgeous photographs of artificial industrial ruins (sculpture) on their pages. The "gloomy" ruins of aristocracy are transformed into the "happy" ruins of the humanist. Could one say that art degenerates as it approaches gardening ? These "garden-traces" seem part of time and not history, they seem to be involved in the dissolution of "progress". It was John Ruskin who spoke of the "dreadful Hammers" of the geologists, as they destroyed the classical order. The landscape reels back into the millions and millions of year of "geologic time."

FROM STEEL TO RUST

As "technology" and "industry" began to become an ideology in the New York Art World in the late '5as and early '60s, the private studio notions of "craft" collapsed. The products of industry and technology began to have an appeal to the artist who wanted to work like a "steel welder" or a "Laboratory technician." This valuation of the material products of heavy industry, first developed by David Smith and later by Anthony Caro, led to a fetish for steel and aluminium as a medium (painted or unpainted). Molded steel and cast aluminium are machine manufactured, and as a result they bear the stamp of technological ideology. By excluding technological processes from the making of art, we began to discover other processes of a more fundamental order. The break or fragmentation of matter makes one aware of the sub-strata of the Earth before it is overly refined by industry into sheet metal, extruded I-beams, aluminium channels, tubes, wire, pipe, cold-rolled steel, iron bars, etc. I have often though about non-resistant processes that would involve the actual sedimentation of matter or what I called "Pulverizations" back in 1966. Oxidation, hydration, carbonization, and solution are four methods that could be turned toward the making of art. Technological ideology has no sense of time other than its immediate "supply and demand", and its laboratories function as blinders of the rest of the world. Like the refined "paints" of the studio, the refined "metals" of the laboratory exist within an "ideal system." Such enclosed "pure" systems make it impossible to perceive any other kinds of processes than the ones of differentiated technology. By refusing the "technological miracles" the artist begins to know the corroded moments, the carboniferous states of thoughts, the shrinkage of mental mud, in the geologic chaos — in the strata of esthetic consciousness. The refuse between mind and matter is a mine of information.

THE DISLOCATION OF CRAFT — AND FALL OF THE STUDIO

Plato's Timaeus shows the demiurge or the artist creating a model order, with his eyes fixed on a non-visual order of Ideas, and seeking to give the purest representation of them. The "classical" notion of the artist copying a perfect mental model has been shown to be an error. The modern artist in his "studio", working out an abstract grammar within the limits of his "craft" is trapped in but another snare. When the fissures between mind and matter multiply into infinity of gaps, the studio begins to crumble and fall like The House of Usher, so that mind and matter get endlessly confounded. Such a condition exists without any appeal to "nature". Sadism is the end product of nature, when it is based on the biomorphic order of rational creation. The artist is fettered by this order, if he believes himself to be creative, and this allows for his servitude which is designed by the vile laws of the Culture. Our culture has lost its sense of death, so it can kill both mentally and physically, thinking all the time that it is establishing the most creative order possible.

THE DYING LANGUAGE

The names of minerals and the minerals themselves do not differ from each other, because at the bottom of both the material and print is the beginning of an abysmal number of fissures. Words and rocks contain a language that follows a syntax of splits and ruptures. Look at any word long enough and you will see it open up into a series of faults, into a terrain of particles each containing its own void. This discomforting language of fragmentation offers no easy gestalt solution; the certainties of didactic discourse are hurled into the erosion of the poetic principle. Poverty being forever lost must submit to its own vacuity; it is somehow a product of exhaustion rather than creation. Poetry is always a dying language but never a dead language. Wittgenstein has

shown us what can happen when language is "idealized", and that it is hopeless to try to fit language into some absolute logic, whereby everything objective can be tested. We have to fabricate our rules as we go along the avalanches of language and over the terraces of criticism.

THE CLIMATE OF SIGHT

The climate of sight changes from wet to dry and from dry to wet according to one's mental weather. The prevailing conditions of one's psyche affect how he views art. We have already heard much about "cool" or "hot" art, but not much about "wet" and "dry" art. The viewer, be he an artist or a critic, is subject to a climatology of the brain and eye. The wet mind enjoys "pool and strains" of paint. "Paint" itself appears to be a kind of liquefaction. Such wet eyes love to look on on melting, dissolving, soaking surfaces that give the illusion at times of tending toward a gaseousness, atomization or fogginess. This watery syntax is at times related to the "canvas support." The artist or critic with a dank brain is bound to end up appreciating anything that suggests saturation, a kind of watery effect, an overall seepage, discharges that submerge perceptions in an onrush or dripping observation. They are grateful for an art that evokes general liquid states, and disdain the desiccation of fluidity. Aristotle believed that heat combined with dryness resulted in fire: where else could this feeling take place than in a desert or in Malevich's head ? "No more "likenesses or reality", no idealistic images, nothing but a desert !" says Malevich in The Non-Objective World. Walter De-Maria and Michael Heizer have actually worked in the Southwestern deserts. Says Heizer, in some scattered notes, "Earth liners installed in Sierras, and down on desert floor in Carson-Reno area." The desert is less "nature" than a concept, a place that swallows up boundaries. Jackson Pollock's art tends toward a torrential sense of material that makes his paintings look like splashes of marine sediments. Deposits of paint cause layers and crusts that suggest nothing "formal" but rather a physical metaphor without realism or naturalism. Full Fathom Five becomes a Sargasso Sea, a dense lagoon of pigment, a logical state of an oceanic mind. Pollock's introduction of pebbles into his private topographies suggests an interest in geological artifices. The rational idea of "painting" begins to disintegrate and decompose into so many sedimentary concepts. Both Yves Klein and Jean Dubuffet hinted a global or topographic sedimentary notions in their works —both worked with ashes and cinders. A sense of the Earth as a map undergoing disruption leads the artist to the realization that nothing is certain or formal. Language itself becomes mountains of symbolic debris.

THE WRECK OF FORMER BOUNDARIES

The Strata of the Earth is a jumbled museum. Embedded in the sediment is a text that contains limits and boundaries which evade the rational order, and social structures which confine art. In order to read the rocks we must become conscious of geologic time, and of the layers of prehistoric material that is entombed in the Earth's crust. When one scans the ruined sites of pre-history one seeps a heap of wrecked maps that upsets our present art historical limits. A rubble of logic confronts the viewer as he looks into the levels of sedimentations. The abstract grid containing the raw matter are observed as something incomplete, broken and shattered. If art is art it must have limits. How can one contain this "oceanic" site ? I have developed the Non-Site, which in a physical way contains the disruption of the site. The container is in a sense a fragment itself, something that could be called a three-dimensional map. Without appeal to "gestalts" or "anti-form", it actually exists as a fragment of a greater fragmentation. It is a three-dimensional perspective that has broken away from the whole, while containing the lack of its own containment. There are no mysteries in these vestiges, no traces of an end or a beginning.

CRACKING PERSPECTIVE AND GRIT IN THE VANISHING POINT

Parallactic perspectives have introduced themselves into the new earth projects in a way that is physical and threedimensional. This kind of convergence subverts gestalt surfaces and turns sites into vast illusions. This kind of convergence subverts gestalt surfaces and turns sites into vast illusions. The ground becomes a map. The map of my Non-Site #1 (an indoor earthwork) has six vanishing points that lose themselves in a preexistent earth mound that is at the center of a hexagonal airfield in the Pine Barren Plains in South New Jersey. Six runaways radiate around a central-axis. These runaways anchor my 31 subdivisions. The actual Non-Site is made up of 31 metal containers of painted blue aluminium, each containing sand from the actual site. Heizer's Compression Line is made by the earth pressing against the sides of two parallel lengths of plywood, so that they converge into two facing sunken perspectives. The earth surrounding this double perspective is composed of "hardpan" (a hard impervious sediment that does not

become plastic, but can be shattered by explosives). A drainage layer exists under the entire work.

THE VALUE OF TIME

For too long the artist has been estranged from his own "time". Critics, by focusing on the "art object", deprive the artist of any existence in the world of both mind and matter. The mental process of the artist which takes place in time is disowned, so that a commodity value can be maintained by a system independent of the artist. Art, in this sense, is considered "timeless" or a product of "no time at all"; this becomes a convenient way to exploit the artist out of his rightful claim to his temporal processes. By separating art from the "primary process", the artist is cheated in more ways than one. Separate "things", "forms", "objects", "shapes", etc. with beginnings and endings are mere convenient fictions: there is only an uncertain disintegrating order that transcends the limits of rational separations. The fictions erected in the eroding time stream are apt to be swamped at any moment. The brain itself resembles an eroded rock from which ideas and ideals leak. When a thing is seen through the consciousness of temporality, it is changed into something that is nothing. This all-engulfing sense provides the mental ground for the object, so that it ceases being a mere object and becomes art. Every object, if it is art, is charged with the rush of time even though it is static, but all this depends on the viewer. The existence of the artist in time is worth as much as the finished product. The stronger and clearer the artist's view of time the more he will resent any slander on this domain. The deeper an artist sinks into the time stream the more it becomes oblivion. Many would like to forget time altogether, because it conceals the "death principle". Floating in this temporal river are the remnants of art history, yet the "present" cannot support the cultures of Europe, or even the archaic or primitive civilizations; it must instead explore the pre- and posthistoric mind; it must go into the places where remote futures meet remote pasts.

Entropy and the New Monuments (1966)

Robert Smithson

In Jack Flam, editor, *Robert Smithson the Collected Writings,* pp. 10-16, University of California Press.

In his essay "Entropy and the New Monuments", Smithson communicates his efforts at understanding of an art, which at once addresses and rejects the dominant surrounding structures. "Art which at once addresses and rejects dominant surrounding structures", a topic which Smithson understands and talks about in his essay "Entropy and the New Monuments". Effectively, in his writings, he details what he saw as the emergent trend amongst his contemporaries to produce work that faces "the possibility of other dimensions, with a new kind of sight." Entropy, The Second Law of Thermodynamics, is where he sources his discussion. By stating " extrapolates the range of entropy by telling us energy is more easily lost than obtained," he is describing the work's ability to radically engage with our world in new ways by being "monuments to or against entropy."

Many architectural concepts found in science-fiction have nothing to do with science or fiction, instead they suggest a new kind of monumentality which has much in common with the aims of some of today's artists. I am thinking in particular of Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Sol Le Witt, Dan Flavin, and of certain artists in the "Park Place Group." The artists who build structured canvases and "wall-size" paintings, such as Will Insley, Peter Hutchinson and Frank Stella are more indirectly related. The chrome and plastic fabricators such as Paul Thek, Craig Kauffinan, and Larry Bell are also relevant. The works of many of these artists celebrate what Flavin calls "inactive history" or what the physicist calls "entropy" or "energy-drain." They bring to mind the Ice Age rather than the Golden Age, and would most likely confirm Vladimir Nabokov's observation that, "The future is but the obsolete in reverse." In a rather roundabout way, m.any of the artists have provided a visible analog for the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which extrapolates the range of entropy by telling us energy is more easily lost than obtained, and that in the ultimate future the whole universe will burn out and be transformed into an all-encompassing sameness.

Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future. Instead of being made of natural materials, such as marble, granite, or other kinds of rock, the new monuments are made of artificial materials, plastic, chrome, and electric light. They are not built for the ages, but rather against the ages. They are involved in a systematic reduction of time down to fractions of seconds, rather than in representing the long spaces of centuries. Both past and future are placed into an objective present. This kind of time has little or no space; it is stationary and without movement, it is going nowhere, it is anti-Newtonian, as well as being instant, and is against the wheels of the time-clock. Flavin makes "instantmonuments"; parts for "Monument 7 for V. Tatlin" were purchased at the Radar Fluorescent Company. The "instant" makes Flavin's work a part of time rather than space. Time becomes a place minus motion. If time is a place, then innumerable places are possible. Flavin turns gallery-space into gallery time. Time breaks down into many times. Rather than saying, "What time is it?" we should say, "Where is the time?" "Where is Flavin's Monument?" The objective present at times seems missing. Flavin's destruction of classical time and space is based on an entirely new notion of the structure of matter.

Time as decay or biological evolution is eliminated by many of these artists; this displacement allows the eye to see time as an infinity of surfaces or structures, or both combined, without the burden of what Roland Barthes calls the "undifferentiated mass of organic sensation." The concealed surfaces in some of Judd's works are hideouts for time. His art vanishes into a series of motionless intervals based on an order of solids. Robert Grosvenor's suspended structural surfaces cancel out the notion of weight, and reverse the orientation of matter within the solid-state of inorganic time.This reduction of time all but annihlates the value of the notion of "action" in art.

Mistakes and dead-ends often mean more to these artists than any proven problem. Questions about form seem as hopelessly inadequate as questions about content. Problems are unnecessary because problems represent values that create the illusion of purpose. The problem of "form vs. content," for example, leads to illusionistic dialectics that become, at best, formalist reactions against content. Reaction follows action, till finally the artist gets "tired" and settles for a monumental inaction. The action-reaction syndrome is merely the leftovers of what Marshall McLuhan calls the hypnotic state of mechanism. According to him, an

electrical numbing or torpor has replaced the mechanical breakdown. The awareness of the ultimate collapse of both mechanical and electrical technology has motivated these artists to build their monuments to or against entropy.

The much denigrated architecture of Park Avenue known as "cold glass boxes," along with the Manneristic modernity of Philip Johnson, have helped to foster the entropic mood. The Union Carbide building best typifies such architectural entropy. In its vast lobby one may see an exhibition called "The Future." It offers the purposeless "educational" displays of Will Burtin, "internationally acclaimed for his three-dimensional designs," which portray "Atomic Energy in Action." If ever there was an example of action in entropy, this is it. The action is frozen into an array of plastic and neon, and enhanced by the sound of Muzak faintly playing in the background. This kind of architecture without "value of qualities," is, if anything, a fact. From this "undistinguished" run of architecture, as Flavin calls it, we gain a clear perception of physical reality free from the general claims of"purity and idealism."

The slurbs, urban sprawl, and the infinite number of housing developments of the postwar boom have contributed to the architecture of entropy. Judd, in a review of a show by Roy Lichtenstein, speaks of "a lot of visible things" that are "bland and empty," such as "most modern commercial buildings, new Colonial stores, lobbies, most houses, most clothing, sheet aluminum, and plastic with leather texture, the formica like wood, the cute and modern patterns inside jets and drugstores." Near the super highways surrounding the city, we find the discount centers and cut-rate stores with their sterile facades. On the inside of such places are maze-like counters with piles of neatly stacked merchandise; rank on rank it goes into a consumer oblivion. The lugubrious complexity of these interiors has brought to art a new consciousness of the vapid and the dull.

But this very vapidity and dullness is what inspires many of the more gifted artists. Morris has distilled many such dull facts and made them into monumental artifices of "idea." In such a way, Morris has restored the idea of immortality by accepting it as a fact of emptiness. His work conveys a mood of vast immobility; he has even gone so far as to fashion a bra out of lead.

This kind of nullification has re-created Kasimir Malevich's "non-objective world," where there are no more "likenesses of reality, no idealistic images, nothing but a desert!" But for many of to day's artists this "desert" is a "City of the Future" made of null structures and surfaces. This "City" performs no natural function, it simply exists between mind and matter, detached from both, representing neither. It is, in fact, devoid of all classical ideals of space and process. It is brought into focus by a strict condition of perception, rather than by any expressive or emotive means. Perception as a deprivation of action and reaction brings to the mind the desolate, but exquisite, surface structures of the empty "box" or " lattice."

As action decreases, the clarity of such surface structures increases. Tlus is evident in art when all representations of action pass into oblivion. At tlus stage, lethargy is elevated to the most glorious magnitude. In Damon Knight's Sci-fic novel, "Beyond the Barrier," he describes in a phenomenological manner just such surface structures. This could be an inchoate concept for a work by Judd, LeWitt, Flavin, or Insley. It seems that beyond the barrier, there are only more barriers. Insley's "Night Wall" is both a grid and a blockade; it offers no escape. Flavin's fluorescent lights all but prevent prolonged viewing; ultimately, there is nothing to see. Judd turns the logic of set theory into block-like .facades. These facades hide nothing but the wall they hang on. Le Witt's first one-man show at the now defunct Daniel's Gallery presented a rather uncompromising group of monumental "obstructions." Many people were "left cold" by them, or found their finish "too dreary." These obstructions stood as visible clues of the future.

LeWitt's show has helped to neutralize the myth of progress. It has also corroborated Wylie Sypher's insight that "Entropy is evolution in reverse." LeWitt's work carries with it the brainwashed mood of Jasper Johns' "Tennyson," Flavin's "Coran's Broadway Flesh," and Stella's "The Marriage of Reason and Squalor." Morris also discloses this backward looking future with "erections" and "vaginas" embedded in lead. They tend to illustrate fossilized sexuality by mixing the time states or ideas of "1984" with "One Million B.C." Claes Oldenburg achieves a similar conjunction of time with his prehistoric "ray-guns." This sense of extreme past and future has its partial origin with the Museum of Natural History; there the "cave-man" and the "space-man" may be seen under one roof. In this museum all "nature" is stuffed and interchangeable.

The "moderne" interior architecture of the new "movie house" is a mental conditioner.)The physical confinement of the dark box-like room indirectly conditions the mind. Even the place where you buy your ticket is called a "box-office." The lobbies are usually full of box-type fixtures like the soda-machine, the candy counter, and telephone booths. Time is

compressed or stopped inside the movie house, and this in turn provides the viewer with an en tropic condition. To spend time in a movie house is to make a "hole" in one's life.

Recently, there has been an attempt to formulate an analog between "communication theory" and the ideas of physics in terms of entropy. Often the false has a greater "reality" than the true. Therefore, it seems that all information, and that includes anything that is visible, has its entropic side. Falseness, as an ultimate, is inextricably a part of entropy, and this falseness is devoid of moral implications.

Like the movies and the movie houses, "printed-matter" plays an entropic role. Maps, charts, advertisements, art books, science books, money, architectural plans, math books, graphs, diagrams, newspapers, comics, booklets and pamphlets from industrial companies are all treated the same. Judd has a labyrinthine collection of "printed-matter," some of which he "looks" at rather than reads. By this means he might take a math equation, and by sight, translate it into a metal progression of structured intervals. In this context, it is best to think of "printed-matter" the way Borges thinks of it, as "The universe (which others call the library)," or like McLuhan's "Gutenberg Galaxy," in other words as an unending "library of Babel."

Make a
sick
picture
or a sick
Readymade
Marcel Duchamp, from the Green Box

Many of Morris's wall structures are direct hom.ages to Duchamp; they deploy facsimiles of ready-mades within high Manneristic frames of reference. Extensions of the Cartesian mind are carried to the most attenuated points of no return by a systematic annulment of movement. Descartes' cosmology is brought to a standstill. Movement in Morris's work is engulfed by many types of stillness: delayed action, inadequate energy, general slowness, an all over sluggishness. The ready-mades are, in fact, puns on the Bergsonian concept of "creative evolution" with its idea of "ready made categories." Says Bergson, "The history of philosophy is there, however, and shows us the eternal conflict of systems, the impossibility of satisfactorily getting the real into the ready-made garments of our ready-made concepts, the necessity of making to measure." But it is just such an "impossibility" that appeals to Duchamp and Morris. With this in mind, Morris's monstrous "ideal" structures are inconsequential or uncertain ready-mades, which are definitely outside of Bergson's concept of creative evolution.

VI. Biography

Allan Sekula

Sally Stein

Allan Sekula was born on January 15, 1951 in Erie, PA, the first of five children of Evelyn Shepard Sekula, a homemaker, and Ignace Sekula, a chemical engineer who worked most of his life in the aerospace industry and the USAF. He died in Los Angeles on August 10, 2013 after contending with advanced gastric-esophageal cancer during the previous two years. Before his teens, his family relocated to San Pedro, CA, the port of Los Angeles, where Allan continued to live until college and where he grew to love the sea and the rich culture, both social and maritime, of the harbor. He enrolled at UC San Diego with undergraduate plans to study marine biology but after a few art courses with John Baldessari, he switched majors to visual arts; after receiving a BA, he continued at UCSD in the MFA program, working intensively with writer and performance art teacher David Antin at the same time as he formed a close network with young, socially-committed left photographers Martha Rosler, Fred Lonidier, and Phel Steinmetz. Shortly after receiving his MFA degree in 1974, he began publishing widely read articles offering critiques of the social uses of photography and its anodyne embrace by the art world in ARTFORUM. He taught briefly at NYU in the School of Cinema Studies, then for five years at Ohio State University's Department of Photography and Cinema, before returning in 1985 to Los Angeles to join the faculty of California Institute of the Arts where he taught for nearly three decades. The essays collected in his first book, Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973–83 (1984), significantly altered the way in which the documentary function of photography was conceptualized. His more recent volumes mobilize us through his visual art and writing to carefully consider the effects of capitalism, globalization, information formats, and the dematerialization of image and word. Since the early 1970s, his works with photographic sequences, written texts, slide shows, and sound recordings have traveled a path close to cinema. At times, they refer to specific films. In other instances, such as his 1973 work Aerospace Folktales, they operate like a "disassembled movie" while resisting the "dictatorship of the projector." Sekula's books include Photography against the Grain, 1984; Fish Story, 1995; Geography Lesson: Canadian Notes, 1996; Dismal Science, 1999; Performance under Working Conditions, 2003; TITANIC's Wake, 2003; and Polonia and Other Fables, 2009. These works range thematically from critical investigations of the history of photography to studies of family life in the grip of the military-industrial complex, branching out into explorations of myths of national identity. His longstanding interest in questions of maritime economies and their relation to globalization led to a number of widely exhibited works, including The Forgotten Space.

Marwa Arsanios
Mor Charpentier

Marwa Arsanios was born in Washington DC, USA in 1978. She currently lives and works in Beirut, Lebanon.

She obtained her MFA from Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts, London, UK (2007) and was a researcher in the fine art department at the Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, the Netherlands (2011-2012).

Her work has been featured in recent solo exhibitions at the What representations?, Witte de With, Rotterdam, the Netherland; Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon (Portugal) and Art in general, New York (USA), and in group exhibitions in London (UK), Beirut (Lebanon), Tokyo (Japan), Athens (Greece), Oxford (UK), Santiago de Chile (Chile), Rome (Italy), Paris (France), Damascus (Syria), Berlin (Germany), among other cities around the world. Her work was shown in international invents, among which the Venice Biennial, Future Generation Art Prize, Venice, Italy (2013); Istanbul Biennial, Turkey (2011); Thessaloniki Biennale, Greece (2015); Home Works 5 and 6, Beirut, Lebanon (2013 and 2010); the Jerusalem Show, Jerusalem, Israel (2012); Art Dubai in the Bidoun Lounge Art Park, Dubai, United Arab Emirates (2009); the Berlinale's Forum Expanded, Berlin, Germany (2010). Her videos have been screened in several festivals and events such as the Rio de Janeiro film festival, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2010); the e-flux storefront in New York, USA; and at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, France.

Marwa Arsanios is a founding member of the artistic organization and project space 98weeks Research Project that focuses its research on a new topic every 98 weeks. She is one of the organizers of the travelling project Platform Translation.

She won the Sharjah Art Foundation's Production Programme grant in 2014, and the Pinchuk Future Generation special prize in 2012. She was also nominated for the Sovereign Asian Art Prize in 2012.

She has been granted the artist's residency at the Arab Image Foundation (Beirut, Lebanon) for 2009, the research residency at the Tokyo Wonder Site (Tokyo, Japan) in 2010, and the three months residency at the Jan Van Eyck Academie (Maastricht, the Netherlands) in 2011.