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Dan Graham's Video-Installations of the 1970s

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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The beginning, end, and everything
between and beyond
with all my love

To Kristy.

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Abstract

DAN GRAHAM'S VIDEO-INSTALLATIONS OF THE 1970S

Michael Jake Shaffer, M.A.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2010

Director: Dr. Eric Garberson, Associate Professor, Department of Art History

This dissertation examines the video-installations created by American artist Dan Graham in the 1970s. It investigates the artist's relationship to Minimalism by analyzing themes Graham highlights in his own writings and in interviews. In particular, I explore how the artist's understanding of Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, and R.D. Laing informed his post-Minimalist work and how concepts gleaned from these sources are manifest in his video-installations. Also undertaken are discussions of the artist's interest in aestheticized play, the just-past present, the debate between Behaviourism and phenomenology, surveillance, and Modern architecture. In addition, I investigate Graham's position in Conceptual art, use of site-specificity, and the practice of institutional critique.

At the outset, I provide an in-depth analysis of two of Graham's magazine pieces, *Schema (March 1966)* and *Homes For America*, that ties together the artist's reading of Marcuse and his rejection of Minimalist phenomenology. Next, I give an account of the artist's connection to early video art and his use of time-delay in works such as *Present Continuous Past(s)* and *Two Viewing Rooms* as a means to highlight the just-past present.

Finally, I examine Graham's architectural video-installations *Yesterday/Today*, *Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade*, and *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings* as instances of site-specific art and as part of the artist's practice of institutional critique. I also explore his references to the notions of art-as-window and art-as-mirror as an expansion of his engagement with Minimalism. Throughout, my discussion includes comparisons between Graham's work and that of other artists like Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, and Hans Haacke.

In sum, this study offers an expanded understanding of how Graham employed video and installation in his art as a means to move beyond Minimalism and to interrogate contemporary American society.

Introduction

With his video-installations of the early to mid 1970s American artist Dan Graham advances a critique of Minimalism while positing an active role for the viewer in the creation of meaning for his works. For Graham, such viewer participation underlines the individual's ability to interrogate the social constructions that constrain self-knowledge. As this study puts forth, the artist connects Minimalism's failure to elicit active viewership to its inability to address contemporary society. In his writings and in interviews, Graham addresses both this problem and a possible solution using terms he draws from theorists Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse, from the psychologist R.D. Laing, and from an interest in Modern architecture. I offer a new reading of Graham's video-installations that accounts for how the artist positions himself in relation to Minimalism and how his understanding of Benjamin, Marcuse, Laing, and architecture informs what can be labeled the political meaning of his art. The video-installations, it is argued here, are political in so much as Graham allows viewers to investigate how an individual's engagement with a work of art and with his or her own self-knowledge are coordinated by social conventions. Graham's video-installations, to borrow a phrase from Marcuse, aim for a "solution of a political problem: the liberation of man from inhuman existential conditions."¹ As the artist's projects attempt to show, everyday behaviors and experiences are not generated *ex nihilo*. Seemingly natural activities such as standing in front of an office building, reading a magazine, and looking at suburban homes are, for Graham, dictated by social institutions ranging from art museums to corporations.

¹ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 187.

This study maintains that the video-installations, in an effort to counter-act such a situation, are viewer-centered. Instead of offering up a pre-determined experience, these projects depend on the spectator assuming an active role in the creation of the work's meaning. The artist calls forth this type of viewership by not creating a specific and static viewing experience. Instead, his art can be understood as one of open possibilities. There is not one single experience to be had in front of a Graham video-installation. The works serve instead as focusing tools, a kind of lens through which viewers may gain a new awareness of their positions in myriad discourses. Exactly how an individual viewer may employ this realization is not of concern to Graham. Rather, his video-installations seek to challenge what he considers the un-critical way in which individuals approach their lives and the society in which they live.

The starting point for my analysis of the video-installations is the artistic and political concepts Graham employs in his numerous essays and interviews. While he has never provided a concise statement of his political beliefs, the artist's position, in general, can be termed leftist. Much of Graham's art and writings are informed not only by the counter-culture of the United States in the 1960s, but, as I point out, also by his familiarity with the work of the Marxist theorists associated with the Frankfurt School. Not only did the writings of the Frankfurt School help define much of the thinking of the New Left in the mid twentieth century, but they also had a lasting impact on artists working in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. In both his essays and in interviews, Graham has explained his desire to create art that questions social constructs as stemming from a familiarity with some of the major figures of the Frankfurt School. This is not to suggest that the Frankfurt School was the sole avenue by which the artist arrived at his

conception of art and politics. His acquaintance with the school was one of a number of theories and writings Graham has offered as possible foundations for his work. What is clear is that the artist was not particularly involved with the subtleties of critical theory's roots in classical Marxism nor was he concerned with the work of all the members of the Frankfurt School. His knowledge of both in the late 1960s and early 1970s was selective, with a clear preference for the works of Marcuse and Benjamin. The ideas of the Frankfurt School, most often subsumed under the broad term "critical theory," were characterized by "an aversion to closed philosophical systems. To present it [critical theory] as such would therefore distort its essentially open-ended, probing, and unfinished quality."² Instead of being concerned with the production of broad, systematic overviews of their philosophical positions, most of the scholars associated with the school sought to interrogate the limits and assumptions of other philosophical models.³

The theories and theorists that the artist refers to in his essays are examined here in order to understand how the ideas that he drew from them might inform an interpretation of his art. Such an investigation is long over-due. Graham's writings are cited in the scholarship on his work as a matter of routine, but there has not been an in-depth analysis of how the notions laid out therein inform his video- installations. For this project, a causal relationship is not assumed between the artist's political and philosophical interests and the meaning of his art from the 1970s. Instead, a multifaceted understanding of the video-installations is made available by considering Graham's

² Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research 1923-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), 41. While Jay's study is, as of the writing of this dissertation, over thirty years old, it nevertheless remains a central and accessible introduction to the various members and ideas of the Frankfurt School.

³ Jay, 41.

theories within the context of his critical assessment of Minimalism and in relation to the primacy the video-installations afford to viewer interaction.

The first chapter begins by considering the artist's earliest works, his magazine pieces from the mid to late 1960s. With both *Schema* (March 1966) and *Homes For America* (1966-67), the artist used the magazine format as a way of directing a critique not only towards Minimalism, but also at the art world mechanics of reproduction and consumption. *Schema* is an inventory of the grammatical attributes of a text that can be created in either a generic or specific format. The number of occurrences of each grammatical construction (words, sentences, adjectives, etc.) are listed, and the work is published in a magazine. *Homes For America* is an illustrated essay on post-World War II tract housing. Graham took numerous photographs of suburban New York and New Jersey and composed a text explaining the history and building of tract housing in America. With their blending of artistic aims, such as an interrogation of Minimalism, with political themes, like Marcuse's analysis of one-dimensional society, the magazine works are the foundation of the artist's later video-installations.

For this study, video-installation is defined as a hybrid art form in which video technology (specifically video cameras and monitors) is installed in a physical space. While the video aspect of Graham's pieces may be obvious, his projects of the 1970s are installations in two senses. In the first case, the artist constructed new spaces in which he placed video equipment. In addition, he installed video cameras and monitors in pre-existing spaces, such as office buildings or shop windows. The hyphen in the term "video-installation" is employed here as a way of maintaining the sense that video-installation is a combination of two artistic practices that, in Graham's art, operate in

tandem. This fusion of video and installation allows the artist to move beyond the communicative boundaries of video art. As culture critic Eleanor Heartney has pointed out,

much early video still retained something of the classical Western division between subject and object...video installation, by contrast, places the viewer's consciousness and body in the middle of the art work. Even if it is not directly interactive, video installation implies a far more active role for the viewer.⁴

While video and installation function together in Graham's video-installations, to better explore the meanings one may derive from each technique I have elected to consider issues relevant to the artist's use of video and installation in separate chapters. The second chapter examines the use of time-delay and the video image in the artist's work. The third chapter explores the social and artistic themes highlighted by his placement of video cameras with time-delay features in specific physical spaces. While making such a division facilitates the presentation of my conclusions regarding Graham's art, it is not meant to suggest that the video and installation elements of the artist's projects should be considered as separate topics. Indeed, many of the conclusions about Graham's approach to architecture presented in the third chapter are predicated on the analysis conducted on video art in the second chapter.

⁴ Eleanor Heartney, "Video Installation and the Poetics of Time," in John Ravenal, *Outer & Inner Space: Pipilotti Rist, Shirin Neshat, Jane & Louise Wilson, and the History of Video Art*, exh. cat. (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2002), 15.

As will be discussed in chapter two, video art remains a field of varied artistic practices that has eluded consolidation into a concise historical trajectory. Artists have used video cameras to record and play back images since the mid-1960s. Whereas early video artists such as Nam June-Paik manipulated the video signal itself to change images taken from popular culture or to generate wholly new visuals, others like Bruce Nauman employed the video camera as a documentary tool for performance art. Concurrently, artist collectives such as Paper Tiger and TVTV employed video technology as a way of producing “guerilla television,” a subversive form of media that appropriated television as a way of undermining everyday modes of mass communication such as televised news programs. Graham’s video-installations do not fit into any of these categories. There is, however, some precedent for his combination of video and installation in the work of Peter Campus, Frank Gillette, and Ira Schneider, artists who in the late 1960s recorded live images and then controlled the playback of this material through video technology features such as time-delay. The history of early video art is composed of artists who employ video technology for a variety of personal objectives. My analysis of Graham's position within this diverse field follows the conclusion put forth by artist and writer Laura Cottingham, artist and video art archivist Kate Horsfield and by art historian David Joselit. All have noted that the production and reception of video art in the 1960s and 1970s was, for artists and viewers, loaded with political significance.⁵

The second chapter considers *Present Continuous Past(s)* (1974) and *Two Viewing Rooms* (1975) and accounts for the artist’s use of video as a means for viewers to

⁵ Laura Cottingham, "New Wine in Old Bottles: Some Comments on the Early Years of Video Art," in Ravenal, 7. Kate Horsfield, "Busting the Tube: A Brief History of Video Art," in *Feedback: The Video Data Bank Catalog of Video Art and Artist Interviews*, ed. Kate Horsfield and Lucas Hilderbrand (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 7. David Joselit, *Feedback: Television Against Democracy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 98.

not only examine the actions of others, but also to consider their own behavior. With his use of the time-delay playback features of video technology, Graham underscores the ways in which an individual's understanding of self is always mediated by social relations. In both of these pieces, the artist sets up video cameras in a gallery to record the viewer's movements within that space. These actions are then played back either on a time-delay in the same room, as is the case with *Present Continuous Past(s)*, or in present time in an adjoining room, as in *Two Viewing Rooms*. Both of these projects continue the examination of Minimalism's insistence on pure experience that began with the magazine pieces. Furthermore, this study provides a reading of *Present Continuous Past(s)* and *Two Viewing Rooms* that acknowledges Graham's understanding of Laing and Benjamin and elaborates on the connections between a critique of Minimalism and an analysis of contemporary society.

While the majority of the artist's time-delay video-installations discussed in the second chapter were not site-specific, he did create three pieces between 1975 and 1976 that required particular spaces. At the start of the third chapter, I examine these works as examples of both site-specific art and the practice of institutional critique. Such a strategy draws attention to the ways in which these projects make use of their architectural contexts to heighten viewer awareness. The first of the works addressed, *Yesterday/Today* (1975), employs the time-delay features that the artist used in *Present Continuous Past(s)*, but requires placement within an art gallery or museum with discrete areas. Whereas the earlier works may be realized in any space, the later piece is predicated on two distinctive spaces; one public, one private. In one construction, for example, Graham placed the recording camera in the office of a gallery director (private)

and the playback monitor in the gallery's viewing area (public). This opening up of the private/public divide not only continues the institutional critique initiated by the magazine works, but it also exposes how the separation of private and public space in the art world informs the viewer's experience of art. In 1976, the artist began taking the basic set-up of the video-installations beyond the confines of the art gallery. For the projects *Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade* (1976) and *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings* (1976), Graham installed the video camera, monitor, and mirrors in specific locations. I suggest that investigating the artist's understanding of the social function of architecture in turn allows for an exploration of the links these works posit between vision, architecture, commerce, and self-identity. With the use of the video camera and the mirror, the artist is able to alter how viewers interact with certain public spaces, such as the showcase window or the office building. Thus, Graham's video-installations strive to draw forth from the viewer an analysis of how these structures function, both physically and metaphorically, as a nexus of social control. In addition, *Showcase Windows* and *Glass Office Buildings* also proceed from the artist's consideration of two metaphors for the viewing of art: as a window and as a mirror. In his writings on video and architecture, he highlights this theme and suggests that the video-installations expose the underlying similarity between the notions of art as window and as mirror. In addition, Graham proposes that the video-installations plot a new understanding of the viewing experience that stems from the engagement of a viewer with the video image.

Throughout, this study focuses on Graham's video-installations and does not consider at length the myriad other projects the artist has created in a career spanning

over forty years. In the first chapter, the magazine pieces are examined in depth as they are not only the first major works the artist completed, but they also provide the clearest indication of the artistic and political themes Graham works with in the video pieces. I have limited the present examination to the artist's video-installations for two primary reasons. First, as will be discussed in detail below, the existing scholarship on Graham's video-installations has not fully considered the possible links between the ideas addressed in the artist's writings and his art. Considering these links not only acknowledges how the artist conceptualized these projects, but it also expands the understanding of the video-installations to include their artistic and political aims. Secondly, since the late twentieth century, the video-installation has been a widespread activity in the art world. Artists as diverse as Doug Aitkin, Matthew Barney, Pierre Huyghe, and Sam Taylor-Wood have all worked with video and installation in their art. Despite the genre's high profile in the global art market, there are few in-depth investigations of its historical and artistic significance. Graham was one of the first artists to combine the new video medium with large-scale installations. Thus, my analysis of the artist's projects not only defines the terms upon which Graham's art can be interpreted, but it also suggests a possible way of exploring contemporary video-installation art.

The framework for the present interpretation of Graham's video-installations rests upon the artist's writings and statements. The terms I employ in my analysis of the video-installations are, for the most part, the artist's own. My examination of Graham's interviews and writings highlights several concepts that are central to understanding the artist's magazine pieces and video-installations. For example, the artist has repeatedly used the phrases "aesthetic play" and "just-past" when discussing his work. Not only

does this study put forth an explanation as to where Graham encountered these ideas, but it also explicates what these phrases meant to him and how such an understanding can be located in his art. Constructing such an analysis involves a careful consideration of the breadth of the artist's interviews and writings.

Graham has given extensive interviews during his career, notably with art historians Benjamin Buchloh, Ludger Gerdes, and Hans Dieter Huber; these sources are cited throughout this study. In general, scholarly treatments of the artist's work tend to include author interviews with the artist. More often than not, these studies do not consider previous interviews and thus overlook crucial points Graham has raised regarding his work. For this project, I bring together and interpret the valuable information found across all the interviews the artist has given. Graham's interviews are replete with passing mentions of complex philosophical ideas and casual name-dropping of rock bands, scientists, and writers. The task of shifting through these sources involved innumerable decisions to pursue certain topics while leaving aside other fascinating subjects raised by the artist. For example, the author whom Graham most frequently cites is the science-fiction writer Philip K. Dick. I elected to leave such lines of inquiry unexplored in the present study to ensure that the analysis remains focused on the artist's reading of Marcuse, Benjamin, and Laing — investigations I believe are more productive for understanding Graham's video-installations.

In addition to considering the interviews, I have consulted the three primary collections of Graham's writings. The earliest anthology, *Video, Architecture, Television: Writings on Video and Video Works 1970-1978* (1979), was compiled by the artist, edited by art historian Benjamin Buchloh, and published by the Nova Scotia

College of Art and Design Press. The publication combines an exhibition catalogue with a compilation of twelve of Graham's essays on a range of topics including architecture, performance, television, and video. While most of the writings contained in *Video*, *Architecture*, *Television* were re-published in later anthologies, this publication remains an essential source, as it provides numerous illustrations of the video-installations and reproduces Graham's notes on the works *Yesterday/Today*, *Showcase Windows*, and *Glass Office Buildings*. The most complete collections of Graham's writings are *Rock My Religion* (1993) and *Two-Way Mirror Power* (1999), both published by MIT Press and edited by art historians Brian Wallis and Alexander Alberro respectively. As Wallis states in his introduction, the writings in *Rock My Religion* reflect the artist's persistent concern with the intersections between "everyday life, popular culture, and urban spaces."⁶ The artist's interest in popular culture is evident in the diverse subjects he addresses in the essays, such as discussions of singer Dean Martin, President Dwight Eisenhower, punk band manager Malcolm MacLaren, and city gardens. In *Rock My Religion*, as in *Two-Way Mirror Power*, the writings are divided according to the major mediums with which Graham has worked in his career. Both publications deal with the magazine works of the 1960s, the performances of the 1970s and 1980s, and the outdoor pavilions of the 1980s and 1990s. *Two-Way Mirror Power*, however, also contains sections on the video-installations and the artist's film projects.

In his preface, Alberro acknowledges that the two compilations share six texts, including the essay "My Works For Magazine Pages: A History of Conceptual Art,"

⁶ Brian Wallis, "Introduction: Dan Graham's History Lessons," in *Rock My Religion*, ed. Brian Wallis (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), viii.

which he considers “indubitably one of Graham’s most important writings.”⁷ In addition, Alberro cites his own 1997 analysis of *Schema*, “Content, Context, and Conceptual Art: Dan Graham’s *Schema* (March 1966),” which was originally published in the exhibition catalogue *Dan Graham* edited by Gloria Moure and re-published in the anthology *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice* (2004) edited by Michael Corris. Alberro argues that Graham’s magazine pieces indicate a shift from Minimalism’s object-centrism to Conceptual art’s concern with information and communication. He goes on to contrast the visual structure of *Schema* to the notions of art put forth by the Modernist art critics Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried and to Minimalist concepts of site-specificity. Alberro concludes that *Schema* (March 1966) posits a contemporary society in which the magazine is the most prevalent means of encountering art.⁸ The present study picks up at this point and explores the connection between Graham’s magazine works and contemporary society. “My Works For Magazine Pages” provides the foundation for the discussion of both *Schema* and *Homes For America* in the first chapter. Instead of focusing on how Graham’s art indicates a shift from one art movement to another (Minimalism to Conceptual art), I propose that the magazine pieces critique both Minimalism and the art market while questioning the individual’s role in contemporary society. This understanding is based not only on “My Works For Magazine Pages,” but also on the early Graham essay “Subject Matter,” in which the artist provides his most complete assessment of Minimalism. That “Subject Matter” has not received the same

⁷ Alexander Alberro, “Preface,” in *Two-Way Mirror Power*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), ix. “My Works For Magazine Pages: A History of Conceptual Art” was originally published in *Dan Graham*, ed. Gary Dufour, exh. cat. (Perth: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1985).

⁸ Alexander Alberro, “Content, Context, and Conceptual Art: Dan Graham’s *Schema* (March 1966),” in *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice*, ed. Michael Corris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 59.

scholarly attention as “My Works” is not surprising. The text was published independently by Graham after being rejected for being too unclear by the journals *Artforum* and *Arts*.⁹ When understood in connection to the lucid “My Works,” “Subject Matter” underlines the particular problems Graham identified with Minimalism's conceptions of the relationship between viewer and art object.

Here it is crucial to define what is meant by the terms “Minimalism” and “post-Minimalist” in the present study. The prominent place Minimalism has occupied in art-historical studies since the late 1960s has resulted in copious scholarship geared towards defining the aesthetic and conceptual principles of the movement, to debating which artists are to be considered “Minimalist,” and to arguing the importance of Minimalism for later twentieth-century art. At present, the best-known text on Minimalism is James Meyer’s *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*.¹⁰ For Meyer, “Minimalism...is best understood as a dynamic field of specific practices... [and] as a critical debate in which artists were the leading participants.”¹¹ He goes on to assert that Minimalism was not a monolithic, static movement with a readily identifiable set of artistic or philosophical assumptions. Meyer’s approach, as noted by art historian Pepe Karmel, is built on the studies of Minimalism by Rosalind Krauss in the 1970s.¹² For Krauss, Meyer, and numerous other scholars who have examined Minimalism, the movement was established from a heady blend of philosophy and avant-garde art practices that defined

⁹ Endnotes to Dan Graham, “Subject Matter,” in *Rock My Religion: writings and art projects 1965 – 1990*, ed. Brian Wallis (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 50.

¹⁰ James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

¹¹ Meyer, 4-6.

¹² Pepe Karmel, “Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties. Review of books: what it meant to be minimal,” *Art in America* 90.1 (January 2002): 35-37. Here, Karmel is referring to Rosalind Krauss, “A View of Modernism,” *Artforum* 11.1 (September 1972): 48-51, Krauss, “Sense and Sensibility: Reflections on Post ‘60s Sculpture,” *Artforum* 12.3 (November 1973): 149-56, and Krauss, *Passages on Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1977).

the terms for much of what has become known as post-modern art. The scholarly consensus at this moment is that Minimalism, in general, strove to concretize pure, phenomenological experience into a work of art. While the intricacies of Minimalism's reception of phenomenology is beyond the scope of my study, in the first and second chapters I do discuss Graham's reaction to what he felt was Minimalism's phenomenological foundation. At that point, I further clarify the fact that not all of the Minimalist artists were equally involved in phenomenological explorations. Rather, it is my contention that with his critique of Minimalism, Graham collapsed some of the subtle differences between artists such as Donald Judd and Robert Morris in an attempt to fashion his own relationship to Minimalism, in general.

In this study I call Graham a post-Minimalist artist as the majority of his works under consideration were created in the mid-1970s, once Minimalism had lost some of its visibility in the art world to Conceptual art, performance art, installation art, and video art. In addition, it is my contention that the magazine pieces and video-installations do not represent an outright dismissal of Minimalism, but rather are examples of the artist attempting to move beyond Minimalism while at the same time re-examining Minimalism's assumptions regarding the role of the viewer in the creation of a work's meaning. In most scholarly studies, Graham is simply deemed a Conceptual artist. In the first chapter I explore this label and offer that such an uncritical identification should not be taken for granted. Furthermore, there needs to be a more concentrated examination of the artist's link to both Minimalism and Conceptual art. As I am not concerned with fashioning an essentialist label for Graham's art, I leave the semantics of the term "post-Minimalist" for future research. This should not indicate that I feel that such a

designation is wholly correct or that I consider "post-Minimalist" a more appropriate categorization than "Conceptual art" for Graham's work. I include the discussion of Conceptual art as a way of situating his work within a proper historical context among artists who were also involved in the same desire to move beyond Minimalism.

How the video-installations can be considered in light of Minimalism is, as I point out in the second chapter, inseparable from an examination of Graham's interest in psychology. In turn, I claim that the artist's characterization of the video-installations suggests that the disavowal of Minimalism's approach to phenomenology was, in part, a political maneuver. In his text, Meyer mentions Graham's *Homes For America* as a critique of Minimalism's relationship to consumer culture. He uses this example, however, merely to preface a broadside aimed at scholars who have suggested an explicit political significance for Minimalist art.¹³ In this instance, Meyer is directing his ire toward the work of art historian Anna Chave. Chave's examinations of Minimalism, especially her polemical essay, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," have become canonical in so much as "every subsequent writer has felt compelled to disagree with her."¹⁴ The present study is not concerned with questions of if and how Minimalist artists engaged in political or apolitical commentary through their art. What is examined here is Graham's positioning of his art given his own understanding of Minimalism.

In the essays "Subject Matter" and "My Works For Magazine Pages," the artist advances a critique of Minimalism that focuses on the use of the gallery as context and the assumption of an *a priori* viewing experience. Throughout, my investigation

¹³ Meyer, 184.

¹⁴ Karmel, 35. Anna Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," *Arts Magazine* (January 1990): 44-63.

maintains that this conclusion is at the core of Graham's thinking on both Minimalism and the ways in which individuals come to understand their position in contemporary society. What is clear is that he did not agree with the Minimalist conception of a pure, unmediated experience before a work of art. Thus, Graham's view of Minimalism occupies a position between the accepted discourse on the phenomenological posturing of Minimalism and the politicized interpretations of the movement that are often surrounded by intense scholarly debate.

The links I propose between Graham's appraisal of Minimalism and the social meanings of his art proceed on terms suggested by the artist himself. In an interview with Gerdes, Graham asserts that his art of the 1960s and 1970s was motivated by an "anti-establishment" stance common to Conceptual art.¹⁵ Furthermore, the artist credits much of the content of his work to the reading of Marcuse in the 1960s.¹⁶ In his 1983 essay "Dan Graham and the Critique of Artistic Autonomy," art historian Thierry de Duve acknowledges this theme. De Duve notes that when discussing his work, the artist often employs terms associated with the Frankfurt School. In providing an overview of Graham's connection to Marcuse, the author speculates that the artist's understanding of the theorist is framed by the American counter-culture of the 1960s.¹⁷ While my own reading of the artist's understanding of Marcuse does not counter de Duve's analysis, it does explore this topic in greater detail by examining Marcuse's texts *One-Dimensional Man* and *Eros and Civilization* in relation to Graham's magazine pieces. In particular, I argue that when Graham speaks to the alienation and rampant consumerism that he sees

¹⁵ Ludger Gerdes, "Dan Graham interviewed by Ludger Gerdes," in *Dan Graham: Selected Writings and Interviews on Art Works, 1965-1995*, ed. Adachiara Zevi (Rome: I Libri Di Zerynthia, 1996), 184.

¹⁶ Graham interview with Gerdes, 179.

¹⁷ Thierry de Duve, "Dan Graham and the Critique of Artistic Autonomy," in *Dan Graham: Works 1965-2001*, ed. Marianne Brouwer, exh. cat. (Porto: Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves, 2001), 52.

as defining contemporary society, he is drawing on Marcuse's ideas. In interviews and in his own writings, the artist never identifies the specific Marcuse texts he read in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Given their publication dates, 1964 and 1966 respectively, it is probable that when Graham refers to Marcuse he is speaking of *One-Dimensional Man* and *Eros and Civilization*. In addition, this study also departs from de Duve's in its focus on the video-installations. While de Duve does examine *Present Continuous Past(s)*, his consideration is part of a larger investigation of the artist's oeuvre including the performances and pavilion projects.

De Duve also contends that Graham's art does not share in the same "emancipatory alternative" posed by the Frankfurt School theorists. Instead, the artist's work, as de Duve puts it, underlines the "mediatization" of contemporary life.¹⁸ In a similar line of analysis, Joselit states that with the time-delay video-installations, "Graham shatters the myth of coherence in communities interpellated by television."¹⁹ Joselit's succinct interpretation of the time-delay video-installations is discussed in the second chapter with regards to the term "feedback" and how Graham understood this central aspect of 1970s video art. Here, it is important to note that my examination of the video-installations moves beyond the notion that these projects merely point out the means by which the individual's needs and desires become irrelevant in contemporary American society. For both de Duve and Joselit, the video-installations highlight what Joselit labels the "political atomization and impotence" masked by commercial television. While such a reading is supported by Graham's remarks on the role of Frankfurt School theory in his art, understanding his work as wholly negative because it does not redress

¹⁸ de Duve, 52-53.

¹⁹ Joselit, 106.

the alienation of the individual is to overlook the artist's interest in having a viewer acknowledge the ways in which his or her experiences are mediated by interactions with other viewers.

Understanding how the video-installations elicit active participation on the part of the viewer forms the basis for the second and third chapters. This study works out the formal and conceptual mechanics of the video-installations. One of the crucial technical features of the video-installations is the artist's use of time-delay playback. In a work such as *Present Continuous Past(s)*, Graham places a video camera and monitor in a gallery room lined with mirrors. The monitor plays back whatever occurred in front of the video camera eight seconds ago. There are thus two intertwined temporal moments in the piece, the present in the mirror and the past in the monitor. Viewers first witness themselves in the present act of viewing, and then they may contemplate this act through the video image of themselves at an eight-second remove. As in the connection of the magazine pieces to Marcuse, Graham provides a possible means of exploring how the use of time-delay video allows for a political understanding of the video-installations.

In this case, the artist notes that a number of the ideas with which he worked in the video-installations were first explored by Benjamin. In interviews and his writings, Graham is never clear about which Benjamin texts he encountered prior to the creation of the video-installations in the early to mid 1970s. In conversations with Gerdes and with art historian Brian Hatton and in the essay "Legacies of Critical Practice in the 1980s" (1987), Graham cites Benjamin's notions of the "just-past" and the capacity of a work of art to elicit the condition of "dialectics at a standstill" in which the "just-past" may be

employed as a means to assess contemporary culture.²⁰ While this connection is worked out in the second chapter of this study, I do not consider Graham's citation of Benjamin a statement of inspiration or intention. Instead, what the artist offers through his mention of Benjamin is a possible avenue of interpretation for the video-installations. The use of the just-past elements of the video-installations, in particular the time-delay features, does not stem directly from the artist's reading of the theorist's works. What is argued here is that Graham discovered a common theme between his art and Benjamin's theories that provided a useful term ("just-past") for explaining an essential element concerning the reception of the video-installations. These projects, by re-playing the past through time-delay video, bring recently passed moments forward into the present time. As suggested in the second chapter, the video-installations allow for the individual viewer to consider his or her own self and experiences as part of a chain of past experiences constantly submerged under the present.

Thus far, there have been few scholarly attempts to explore the possibility of reading the video-installations using Graham's understanding of Benjamin. In a footnote, de Duve aligns Graham's "ambivalence" towards the fetishization of the commodity to Benjamin, but de Duve's primary discussion of the theorist is framed by a comparison between the ideas of Benjamin and those of another member of the Frankfurt School, Theodor Adorno.²¹ Within this context, de Duve advances his understanding of *Present Continuous Past(s)* and introduces the notion that Graham's art explores "now-time," which in turn the author connects to an analysis of the artist's performance and

²⁰Graham interview with Gerdes, 191-2. Brian Hatton, "Dan Graham: Present Continuous," *Artscribe* 89 (November-December 1991): 64-71. Graham, "Legacies of Critical Practice in the 1980s," in *Discussions in Contemporary Art*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 1987), 86-91.

²¹ de Duve, 56-57.

architectural pieces. In another text from the Porto catalogue, art historian John Miller likewise cites Benjamin's conception of the just-past as helpful in emphasizing the political significance of Graham's art.²² Miller's essay, however, is focused on the pavilions and Graham's explorations of rock music from the late 1970s and early 1980s. At the time of his magazine-pieces, the artist may have been familiar with two of Benjamin's best-known essays, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and "Theses on the Philosophy of History," both of which were published in English in 1968 as part of the anthology *Illuminations*.²³ Neither of these texts, however, address the notion of the just-past that Graham cites as crucial to his use of video time-delay. In light of this, my analysis turns to *The Arcades Project*, which contains fragments of Benjamin's concept of "dialectics at a standstill" that are valuable for teasing out how the video-installations can be understood as arresting the onslaught of the present in order to foster, in the viewer, a consideration of both the past and present.²⁴ As argued in the second chapter, it is in this moment of reflection that viewers may launch an inquiry of the social production of self-knowledge.

There has been little work done on Graham's position in the history of video art, the topic of the first section of chapter two. Analyzing the early history of video art provides a basis for an integrative investigation of the artist's own themes and his fusion of video with installation. My project situates Graham's use of video technology within its historical context, thus the scholarship I employ in my review of

²² John Miller, "Now Even the Pigs're Groovin'," in *Dan Graham: Works 1965-2001*, ed. Marianne Brouwer, exh. cat. (Porto: Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves, 2001), 356-374.

²³ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 217-252 and 253-264, respectively.

²⁴ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999). In the second chapter, I explain why *The Arcades Project*, even if it was not available in English until almost 30 years after the creation video-installations, is an appropriate text to consult for understanding Graham's use of video.

video art is focused on texts published in the 1960s and 1970s. Limiting my discussion to these formative years in the history of video art allows me to explicate the discussion on video technology's possible role in society that was active when the artist began incorporating video into his own work. One of the issues encountered in pursuing an inclusive history of video art is the difficulty of attempting exactly to define a medium with amorphous formal and conceptual properties. In surveying the history of scholarship on video art, one finds numerous examples of critics who suggest that sometime in the future, the critical apparatus for understanding video art will become available. For example, in a 1980 *Artforum* article on the history of video art Barbara London claims that "in the '80s, video equipment will be further refined, and as the number of television and museum programs grow, so should an adequate vocabulary that defines video work."²⁵ Unfortunately, such a "vocabulary" has never been satisfactorily identified.

Scholarly treatments of video art from the 1980s and 1990s routinely bemoan the lack of critical insight supplied by writers on video art from earlier decades. Representative of this sentiment are the essays in one of the most complete surveys of video art's early years, the special edition of *Art Journal* published in autumn 1985.²⁶ Ann-Sargent Wooster posits that "a critical model for video has not yet been constructed," and she goes on to claim that "after condemning video art for being narcissistic and boring, art critics [of the late 1970s and early 1980s] shifted their focus away from video and began to treat it as invisible."²⁷ Acknowledging the

²⁵ Barbara London, "Independent Video: The First Fifteen Years," *Artforum* 19 (September 1980): 41.

²⁶ *Art Journal* 45.3 (Autumn 1985).

²⁷ Ann-Sargent Wooster, "Why Don't They Tell Stories Like They Used To?," *Art Journal* 45.3 (Autumn 1985): 204.

marginalization of video art, Benjamin Buchloh further explains that video artists are to blame, at least in part, for their own removal from critical attention because they "generally maintained an uneasy relationship with the institutions of reception and distribution of the high-art avant-garde — the museum and the gallery — and an even uneasier one with the customers of this distribution system, the private collectors."²⁸ The author goes on to assert, "recent developments in the art world have proven the optimistic assumptions of the video artists of the late sixties and early seventies wrong on each account and have thus effectively transformed their claims into myths."²⁹ This dismissive conclusion, along with a change in the technology employed to create video art helped foreclose the critical discourse on video art's early years in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Ironically, while scholars either ignored or lambasted early video art, the artistic practice itself was gaining traction among galleries and collectors.

The gradual acceptance of video into the rarified spaces of the "high-art avant-garde" coincided with the abandonment of video art's original form, closed-circuit video.³⁰ By the start of 1990s, video art had become more concerned with the projection of images and the practice of video-installation, which Kobena Mercer has called "the paradigm of choice for neoconceptual art."³¹ This shift, from closed-circuit to projection/installation, has yet to be fully explained in the scholarship on the history of video art. Accounting for such an adjustment would demand a critical investigation not only of the change in formal elements, but also a careful examination of the attitudes

²⁸ Benjamin Buchloh, "From Gadget Video to Agit Video: Some Notes on Recent Video Works," *Art Journal* 45.3 (Autumn 1985): 217. As I point out in the first chapter, Graham has always sought to distance himself and his art from the same institutions Buchloh mentions in his essay.

²⁹ Buchloh, "From Gadget Video to Agit Video," 217.

³⁰ David Joselit, "Inside the Light Cube," *Artforum* 42 (March 2004): 154.

³¹ Kobena Mercer, "Knowing Me, Knowing You: Video Art as a Practice of Hybridization," in *Marcel Odenbach*, ed. Dan Cameron, exh. cat. (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), 25.

towards the commercial, cultural, political, and artistic significance of video art to artists, critics, and audiences in the 1990s. Such an expansive project is beyond the aims of my present study because Graham, by the mid-1980s, had largely abandoned the use of video in his art.³² Instead of resolving the many issues at stake in post-1970s video art, I elect to remain focused on those understandings of video art from the 1960s and 1970s that are applicable to Graham's work of the same time.

The survey of video art's history put forth in the second chapter notes the early contributions of video theorists such as Gene Youngblood in his 1970 text *Expanded Cinema*. Youngblood argues that the new medium has the potential to fulfill the “ongoing historical drive” to manifest consciousness outside the mind. Likewise Paul Ryan, who studied under media theorist Marshall McLuhan, argues in his 1973 book, *Birth And Death And Cybernation: Cybernetics of the Sacred*, that video could be used for a variety of critical endeavors, including as a means to reach self-understanding and as a tool for critiquing capitalism. While both Youngblood and Ryan are concerned with video as a means to explore the self, their work was directed toward an audience familiar with communications theory, not an exclusively art-world audience. There is no doubt, however, that their published writings were disseminated among those artists interested in exploring new technology. Both Youngblood and, to an even greater extent, Ryan were associated with the highly influential periodical *Radical Software*. Conceived in 1969 by the artist Frank Gillette as an outgrowth of the Raindance collective of video artists,

³² The artist has explained his move away video as a financial decision. In the 1980s, video equipment companies halted production of the reel-to-reel machines Graham used in the 1960s and 1970s and began to focus instead on digital video; a medium that the artist found prohibitively expensive. Graham interview by Tania Cross and Andrea Merckx (December 2005), first published in *The Early Show: Video from 1969 to 1979*, ed. Constance De Jong (New York: The Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter College, 2006), n.p. Republished in *Dan Graham: Beyond*, ed. Bennett Simpson and Chrissie Iles, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2009), 61.

Radical Software served as a forum for exploring video technology and its impact on the world during its brief existence between 1970 and 1974. In 1976 Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot compiled a selection of *Radical Software's* published material on seventy-three video artists including Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, Peter Campus, Hermine Freed, Joan Jonas, Mary Lucier, Bill Viola, and Graham.³³ In the second chapter, I discuss Graham's relationship to *Radical Software* by noting that while the artist was certainly familiar with the publication; his video-installations do not directly emerge from the same conceptual or artistic foundations as does the work of the members of Raindance. While it is possible to connect *Radical Software* directly to the artist's turn toward video art in the early 1970s, the magazine was aimed at a specialized audience familiar not only with video technology but also with the writings of McLuhan. Explicating the general understanding of video in the art world when Graham created his video-installations necessitates consideration of less-specialized discussions on video art.

One of the first studies of video geared specifically to a general art world audience is Jonathan Price's *Video Visions: A Medium Discovers Itself* (1972). Price, attempting to define video art in a way that would appeal to audiences perhaps not familiar with the decidedly underground *Radical Software*, argues that video signifies a new mode of artistic expression that will expand the limits of what can be labeled "art." A few years later, artist and scholar Alan Kaprow's 1974 *Artforum* article "Video Art: Old Wine, New Bottle" leveled a scathing attack on video art. Kaprow suggests that artists must abandon two out-dated models associated with the video medium: the use of video to record performances simply as a way of broadcasting one's work; and the use of

³³ *Video Art: An Anthology*, ed. Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1976). In most instances, *Radical Software* published artist's proposals or brief artist's statements.

video as a documentary political tool. Instead, Kaprow contends that video must engage the viewer in radically new ways and establish a critical understanding of both medium and viewership. Here a clear link emerges to Graham's own use of video. Unlike Youngblood and Ryan, who conceive of video as a global communication system, or Price who seeks to define the formal boundaries of video art practice, Graham, like Kaprow, understands video as allowing for a new examination of viewership and its role in contemporary society. This idea is worked out in the second chapter with an exploration of Graham's citations of Benjamin, Laing, and the issue of surveillance in the video-installations.

The most recent and valuable reading of how Graham's video-installations address themes of social control is Eric de Bruyn's 2006 essay "Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism."³⁴ Acknowledging the artist's interest in *Radical Software*, de Bruyn argues that the video works of the 1970s proceed from an interest in what the author terms a "topological" understanding of how technology interacts with society.³⁵ In brief, de Bruyn contends that Graham, like the writers of *Radical Software*, saw society as a patchwork of innumerable communication pathways through which information flows from one point to another. The topological aspect of the artist's video projects involves the exploration of how the individual is controlled by and yet able to manipulate these chains of communication.³⁶ While such a conclusion is valuable for constructing what de Bruyn labels a "genealogy" of the artist's topological perspective, the author also admits that his essay is only a cursory exploration into the subtleties of the artist's topology.³⁷

³⁴ Eric de Bruyn, "Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism," *Grey Room* 23 (Fall 2006): 32-63.

³⁵ de Bruyn, "Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism," 55.

³⁶ de Bruyn, "Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism," 58.

³⁷ de Bruyn, "Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism," 37.

The second chapter of the present study analyzes how Graham conceived of the ways in which chains of communication coordinate how individuals understand their position within a society and thus conceive of their own selves.

In Graham's art, the concept of self as construction of social experiences can be traced back to his reading of the psychoanalyst R.D. Laing. In his essay "Performance: End of the '60s," the artist notes that Laing's writings on behavior were especially important to his conception of how society dictates the terms upon which individuals interact.³⁸ In short, Laing stipulated that how one engages with others is part of a complex web of social constructions that coordinate self-definition. In his texts *The Politics of Experience* (1967), *The Divided Self* (1969), and *Self and Others* (1970), Laing argued that when the individual fails to recognize how social interactions are, in fact, managed by normative expectations of behavior, the result is a profound alienation from humanity and an inability to acknowledge that the understanding of both the other and the self are products of social interaction. The conclusion that society is defined by the alienation of the individual is analogous to Marcuse's insistence on the phrase "one-dimensional" to describe contemporary society. Weaving these two concepts together in an examination of Graham's video-installations reveals that the artist's use of video provokes moments in which behaviors governing the experience of self are laid bare. Other than the occasional passing reference to the psychologist, there is little in the scholarship on Graham that even mentions Laing or the possible avenues of interpretation that are opened up by an analysis of his concepts. This oversight may be traced back to the approach taken in one of the best known interpretations of Graham's art, Birgit

³⁸ Dan Graham, "Performance: End of the 60's," in *Two-Way Mirror Power*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1999), 142.

Pelzer's 1979 essay "Vision in Process."³⁹

Pelzer and the scholars who have subsequently investigated Graham's art have turned to the work of another psychoanalytic theorist, Jacques Lacan, as a means of understanding the video-installations. According to this line of inquiry, the multiple points of view in these projects place the viewer at the constantly displaced center of a visual web. The images of the viewer's self presented by the mirrors and the video cameras shift attention back and forth between the self in the present moment (the mirror) and the self at a temporal remove (the time-delay features of the video images). Understanding the effect of such a transient vision of self involves negotiating the social codes that are at once both apparent and obfuscated in the video-installations. Recourse to Lacan, as proposed by Pelzer and picked up in much of the literature on Graham, allows for an exploration of the mechanics of self-identification that are triggered by the artist's use of video. In such a reading, the artist's use of mirrors becomes crucial to understanding the psychological and phenomenological significance of the video projects. Through their combination of mirror and video, the video-installations, according to Pelzer, offer the promise of complete subjecthood only to reveal that such a resolved identity remains elusive. Thus, she proposes that the projects are connected to any number of discourses concerning psychology, phenomenology, communication theory, identity, power, and space. Pelzer's use of Lacan in her understanding of Graham's art is founded, at least in part, on the work of Krauss. In her 1976 essay "Video and Narcissism," Krauss argues that video is essentially a self-reflexive medium.⁴⁰ She maintains that the act of recording oneself on video can be thought of as

³⁹ Birgit Pelzer, "Vision in Process," *October* 10 (1979): 105-119.

⁴⁰ Rosalind Krauss, "Video and Narcissism," *October* 1 (1976): 50-64.

parallel to Lacan's mirror-stage in which a child looking into a mirror formulates an image of itself based on this reflection, thus creating a self-image based on disjunction. In video works, Krauss argues, the video camera acts as the Lacanian mirror, reflecting back to the artist a holistic image of his or her self that he or she interprets as true. Thus, she concludes that the medium is primarily concerned with exploring the idea of mediated selfhood. While such an interpretation certainly identifies one of the key concepts in many videos of the 1960s and 1970s in which artists record themselves, in Graham's case the image is of the viewer. In Graham's video-installations, the video camera acts neither as mirror in a Lacanian sense nor as a present-time reflection of self. Instead, the video provides images of the just-past self.

When questioned on the impact of Lacanian thought on his art, Graham notes that this idea is worked out by Pelzer.⁴¹ Art historian Hans Dieter Huber speculates that the artist first read Lacan shortly before the creation of the performance piece *Performance-Audience-Mirror* in 1977, and Graham acknowledges that he was familiar with Lacan at the time he introduced mirrors into his performance projects.⁴² The initial English translation of Lacan's *Écrits* was produced in 1977 and was preceded by a lecture tour of American universities, including Columbia, in late 1975. So while the artist probably first *read* Lacan in 1977, as he notes, he also might have heard the psychoanalyst discussed among friends in New York at an earlier date.⁴³ Nevertheless, when asked if an understanding of Lacan sparked the addition of mirrors to his work, Graham responds,

⁴¹ Dan Graham, interview by Hans Dieter Huber (Stuttgart, June 1994), *Dan Graham Interviews*, ed. Hans Dieter Huber (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Cantz Verlag, 1997), 14-15.

⁴² Hans Dieter Huber, "Split Attention: Performance and Audience in the Work of Dan Graham," in *Dan Graham Interviews*, ed. Hans Dieter Huber (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Cantz Verlag, 1997), 63.

⁴³ Graham, interview with Huber (Stuttgart, June 1994), 14-15.

“No, I don’t think so. I think Lacanian thinking was after the fact.”⁴⁴ In this way, the artist’s possible employment of Lacanian theory appears to be similar to his references to Benjamin, possible avenues of interpretation rather than clear indications of intention. Graham, however, does acknowledge that Benjamin was one of the writers in whose work he was most interested during the 1970s, a status he does not afford Lacan. He further points out that his reading of Benjamin and Laing informs two distinct aspects of his art: from Laing, the inception of the work; from Benjamin, its reception.⁴⁵ Whereas Pelzer’s understanding of the reflective and time-delay properties of video in the video-installations points to an analysis of the self (via Lacan,) that does not account for the role others play in the individual’s understanding of self. Laing’s concepts of behavior and identity insist on the social dynamic of self-creation. Identifying these aspects of Graham’s video-installations underlines the goal of these projects, to spark the awareness of how one’s self-knowledge is a product of social interactions. Pelzer concludes that the video-installations do examine the issue of alienation in contemporary society while also critiquing the ways in which normative modes of communication, such as television, can act as a repressive apparatus. She does not, however, indicate how the artist’s works characterize and are meant to undermine what Graham regards as an oppressive society.

Typically, the artist’s video-installations are subtle in their exploration of oppression. There is little in the time delay rooms that directly speaks to how contemporary society distances the individual from his or her own self-knowledge. Nevertheless, one work, *Two Viewing Rooms* (1975), does offer a more pointed

⁴⁴ Graham interview with Huber, 17.

⁴⁵ Graham interview with Huber, 21.

engagement with what could be termed a repressive technology — video surveillance. In the second chapter, I consider how the artist's projects, through the manipulation of physical space and the video medium, allow the viewer to become both observer and observed. In a work like *Two Viewing Rooms*, the spectator can move between two rooms that are separated by a one-way mirror. The two spaces are physically connected and linked by a video camera located in one room filming the actions taking place in the other room. The images captured on the camera are then played in present-time on a monitor in the room being filmed. A person in the filmed room is aware that his or her actions are being recorded from the attached room which may house an unseen spectator. Surveillance, the act of observing without being observed, can be employed as a technique to monitor and influence behaviors. In Graham's piece, however, a viewer can easily move from the position of being observed to that of observer, thus emptying surveillance of many of its potentially repressive effects. In normal surveillance situations, an oscillation between viewer and viewed is impossible as the position in front of the monitor is afforded the power of observing without being seen.

To analyze how *Two Viewing Rooms* can be understood as adjusting the imbalance of power in surveillance, the present study draws from the most thorough examination of surveillance as art, the essays included in the exhibition catalogue for *CTRL [SPACE]*, a 2001 exhibition hosted by the ZKM Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany. The art historians, historians, and sociologists who contributed to the catalogue advance an understanding of surveillance indebted to the writings of Michel Foucault, especially the theorist's well-known text, *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Foucault, in his examination of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, concludes that the

panoptic apparatus, in which those viewed internalize the constraints of power, may be employed in any number of social situations to control individuals. In his essay on Graham's *Time Delay Room I* (1974) and *Yesterday/Today* (1975), art historian Gregor Stemmrich notes that the video-installations blur the traditional panoptic line between observers and observed, and thus implode the entire surveillance system.⁴⁶ The closest artistic parallel to Graham's use of surveillance and video technologies is the video projects created by Bruce Nauman in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the essay "Subject Matter" and in conversation with Buchloh, Graham acknowledges that he was aware of Nauman's video-installations in the late 1960s. He goes on to state that while Nauman's pieces were geared toward manipulating the viewer's physical movements, his own video-installations stressed audience participation without dictating any particular type of interaction.⁴⁷ In exploring the possible connections between Nauman's and Graham's use of video surveillance, I cite the studies of Marcia Tucker and Dörte Zbkiowski, both of whom have examined the surveillance aspects of Nauman's art.⁴⁸ What becomes clear in such a comparison is that while Nauman's pieces elicit in the viewer the unease of surveillance situations, Graham's works seek an approach to surveillance that allows for the viewer to contemplate the use of surveillance in daily life. The second chapter closes by tying this discussion back into the previous understandings

⁴⁶ Gregor Stemmrich, "Dan Graham," in *CTRL [SPACE]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*, ed. Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe, Germany: ZKM Center For Art and Media, 2001-02), 68.

⁴⁷ Dan Graham, "Four Conversations," interview by Benjamin Buchloh, in *Dan Graham: Works 1965-2001*, ed. Marianne Brouwer, exh. cat. (Porto: Museu de Arte Contemporanea de Serralves, 2001), 69-84.

⁴⁸ Marcia Tucker, "Bruce Nauman," in *Bruce Nauman: Work from 1965-1972*, ed. Jane Livingston and Marcia Tucker (Los Angeles: LACMA and Whitney Museum of Art, 1972) and Tucker, "PhNaumenology," in *Bruce Nauman*, ed. Christine van Assche (London: Hayward Gallery, 1998). Dörte Zbkiowski, "Bruce Nauman," in *CTRL [SPACE]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*, ed. Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel (Karlsruhe, Germany: ZKM Center For Art and Media, 2001-02), 64.

of Benjamin and Laing.

The third chapter considers three of Graham's video-installations that, in comparison to the time-delay rooms examined in chapter two, involve a greater use of public space and architecture. Similar to the discussion of video art in the second chapter, the investigation of installation art at the start of the third chapter acknowledges the manifold practices that are understood as installation. I am not concerned with providing my own interpretation of installation as art, but rather, my examination builds on the conclusions reached by scholars who have undertaken such a task. In their general histories of installation art both Nicolas de Oliveira and Claire Bishop point out that the term "installation" is not stable and what can be labeled "installation art" is constantly expanding and shifting.⁴⁹ Borrowing from Michael Fried, de Oliveira suggests that all installation art is "theatrical" and that such projects "bring together the spheres of making and viewing."⁵⁰ While Bishop also stresses the importance of the viewer for the creation of meaning in installation art, she conceives of this situation in phenomenological terms. Citing Merleau-Ponty, she writes that all installation art presupposes an embodied viewer and that it is possible to characterize installation art works by the type of experience offered to the viewer.⁵¹ As is pointed out in the first and second chapters of the present study, Graham rejected Minimalism's use of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and sought to infuse his art with political content. In addition, to regard the video-installations solely

⁴⁹ Nicolas de Oliveira, Nicola Oxley and Michael Petry, *Installation Art in the New Millennium: Empire of the Senses* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 28. Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1.

⁵⁰ de Oliveira, 18. The author also notes that "theatricality" was once considered negative, but that in installation art such a characterization is positive.

⁵¹ Bishop, 6-10. Bishop is here echoing the conclusions regarding installation art and phenomenology posited by Robert Hobbs in his "Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology and Installation Art," in *Installations: Mattress Factory 1990-1999*, ed. Claudia Giannini (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 18-23.

from a phenomenological perspective would not explicate the artist's concern for creating projects that spur a viewer toward a realization of his or her position within social discourses on architecture, consumerism, and self-knowledge. My exploration of these themes involves an understanding of Graham's use of the related practices of site-specificity and institutional critique. In doing so, I employ the work of Rosalyn Deutsche, Andrea Fraser, and Miwon Kwon as a groundwork for my analysis.⁵² The writings of these scholars on site-specificity and institutional critique allow the third chapter to provide a historical and artistic context in which to situate the artist's architectural video-installations of the mid 1970s. While such works are not strictly site-specific and Graham is not fully committed to the practice of institutional critique, drawing attention to these interconnected themes highlights how the video-installations question the ways in which space, especially architectural space, coordinates the communication of social knowledge.

The three pieces studied in depth in the third chapter all make use of the standard video camera and monitor set up to record viewer action that the artist employed in the time-delay rooms at the core of the second chapter. *Yesterday/Today* (1975), the first video-installation discussed in the third chapter, records the activities taking place in either the director's office of an art gallery or in a museum café in order to play back these events, at a day's remove, on a monitor located in the exhibition space of the gallery or museum. *Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade* (1976) places both the recording camera and the viewing monitor within the display windows of

⁵² Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996). Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," *Artforum* 44.1 (September 2005): 278-283. Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts.: MIT Press, 2002).

retail stores, allowing viewers to see themselves among the goods for sale. Finally, *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings* (1976) highlights the oscillation between clarity and obfuscation in modern glass office architecture by installing video cameras and mirrors in those spaces. In the scholarship on Graham, these three projects have not received the same attention as the magazine pieces or the other video-installations. One possible explanation for this omission is that these late video-installations coincide with Graham's better-known performance works such as *Performance-Audience-Mirror* (1977) and his creation of architectural models like *Alteration to a Suburban House* (1978), a work that is a forerunner of the pavilion projects of the 1980s and 1990s. For the present study, the site-specific aspects of *Yesterday/Today* and the video pieces represent the most complex weaving together of the artistic and political themes Graham first explored with his magazine pieces and expanded in the video-installations. By situating these projects within existing physical and conceptual contexts, the artist draws on the discursive structures that define the role of architecture and space in the construction of an individual's identity. As in the previous chapters, the analysis of these projects in the third chapter proceeds on terms advanced by the artist himself in his writings and in interviews. In particular, I make extensive use of Graham's writings published in *Video, Architecture, Television* (1979). In cooperation with Buchloh, the artist published several short essays detailing his thoughts on the links between video and architecture alongside his notes and diagrams for the majority of the video-installation pieces.⁵³ This anthology is the most complete collection of Graham's writings on the video-installations and also provides numerous illustrations that are re-published in later

⁵³ Dan Graham, *Video, Architecture, Television: Writings on Video and Video Works, 1970-1979*, ed. Benjamin Buchloh (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, 1979).

exhibition catalogues. Focusing on three of his architectural video-installations, as I do here, ties the artist's interest in architecture to his analysis of a traditional metaphor for the viewing experience, the metaphor of art as a window or as a mirror.

Every attempt has been made to provide artist's diagrams for projects I discuss along with any accompanying photographs of the works. There has yet to be an exhibition devoted exclusively to the video-installations, as these pieces were displayed for a finite period of time and then disassembled.⁵⁴ The dates provided here for Graham's works correspond to those assigned by the artist in his writings. Many of the video-installations, while originally conceived in the 1970s, were not constructed until later in his career. Any lag-time between the conception of a work and its eventual construction is noted in the following chapters.

⁵⁴ This lacuna is evident in the most recent exhibition of the Graham's art, *Dan Graham: Beyond* organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and the Whitney Museum of American Art. While this retrospective did include a time-delay room work not discussed in the present study, *Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay* (1974/93), the essays in the accompanying catalogue did not address the video-installations: *Dan Graham: Beyond*, ed. Bennett Simpson and Chrissie Iles, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2009).

Chapter 1

Beyond Minimalism

In his early writings and works of art, Graham explored what he termed the “concealed political, historical, [and] expressionistic” aspects of Minimalism. His particular concern was the Minimalist insistence on a traditional object-based understanding of viewership. The essay “Subject Matter,” most likely written in the mid to late 1960s, put forth Graham’s critical reading of Minimalism’s approach to the relationship between art object and viewing subject.¹ “Subject Matter” is discussed at length in the first section of this chapter as it provides the foundation for the analysis of *Schema* (March 1966) and *Homes For America* (1966-67) that follows. In both of these magazine pieces, the artist set forth his examination of Minimalism while also proposing a new, socially relevant avenue for the visual arts.

To establish its understanding of *Schema* and *Homes for America*, this study also utilizes Graham’s “My Works for Magazine Pages: A History of Conceptual Art” (1985). In this essay, he develops his thoughts on the creation of the magazine projects of the late 1960s. I consider Graham’s choice of the magazine article as medium and his interest in the writings of Marcuse as part of the artist’s critique of Minimalism. Doing so explicates his use of the phrase “aestheticized play” – a concept he attributes to Marcuse – when he explains the political significance of the magazine pieces. By working out how the notion “aestheticized play” can lead to a new understanding of *Schema*, I have

¹ Graham asserts that “Subject Matter” was written in the early 1960s, but the manuscript was rejected by several magazines (Philip Leider of *Artforum* declared it too unclear) before being published independently in 1969.

attempted to draw out the relevant political meanings of Graham's magazine work that, in turn, can lead to a new understanding of *Schema*. Furthermore, such an analysis of the magazine pieces sets the foundation for the examination of the video-installations in the second and third chapters of this study.

The connections proposed here between the artist's aims and his understanding of Marcuse are specifically worked out in relation to *Schema*. This piece is direct in its critique of Minimalism, and it is the key example of the artist provoking "aestheticized play" by affording the viewer a primary role in the creation of a work's meaning. Furthermore, the interpretation of *Homes for America* proposed here is built on my own analysis of Graham's citation of Marcuse and on Alberro's examination of the possible connections between *Schema* and the then nascent Conceptual art movement.² My examination of *Schema*, while mindful of Alberro's contributions, proposes a new interpretation that also focuses on the relation between Graham and Critical Theory. Alberro's work, however, is crucial for understanding how the selection of the magazine as medium underscores the critique of Minimalism at the center of Graham's art.

At the close of this chapter, I explore the artist's often tenuous relationship with Conceptual art. Even though Graham is routinely cited as a progenitor of Conceptual art, his role in the shift from Minimalism to Conceptual art requires greater scrutiny. The only in-depth analysis of how the artist's work could be considered "conceptual" is Alberro's "Structure as Content: Dan Graham's *Schema March (1966)* and the Emergence of Conceptual Art" (1998). Alberro points out numerous salient features of Graham's magazine pieces that would be of particular importance to Conceptual artists in the late 1960s and early 1970. In particular, he notes that the Minimalists, by insisting on

² Alberro, "Content, Context, and Conceptual Art," 50-62.

the concept of site-specificity, sought a break with Greenbergian ideas of medium-specificity. Graham, as an early Conceptual artist, posited the notion of context-specificity, a blend of Minimalist and Pop art ideas regarding the social situations in which works of art are received.³ While I do not take issue with Alberro's understanding of Graham's role in the early days of Conceptual art, how exactly Graham's work can be said to relate to other Conceptual artists remains un-discussed in Alberro's essay. To state that Graham's work is, unquestionably, Conceptual glosses over several problematic issues. First, Conceptual art is not a monolithic style with clear boundaries or a consistent set of defining principles. In addition, Graham's art, while sharing some formal features with that of other Conceptualists like Kosuth, is nevertheless radically different in how it addresses the role of the audience. My exploration of the artist's connection to Conceptual art does not seek to resolve this problematic issue. Nevertheless, clarifying the links between Graham and Conceptual art does, in part, illuminate why the artist abandoned the magazine format and began using video technology to create his work — the central topic of the next chapter.

“Subject Matter” at the Limits of Minimalism

The best overview of Graham's ideas on Minimalism is found in his essay “Subject Matter.” Asked in 1969 by the art dealer John Gibson to produce a book on the new “ecological art” of Richard Long and Robert Smithson, the artist instead considered the connection between Minimalist art and the works of Bruce Nauman and Steve

³ Alberro, “Structure as Content: Dan Graham's *Schema* (March 1966) and the Emergence of Conceptual Art,” in *Dan Graham*, ed. Gloria Moure, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1998), 26. In chapter 3, I return to the issue of site-specificity and discuss how Graham's video-installations can be understood as taking part in an expanded form of site-specific art.

Reich.⁴ Throughout the essay, Graham's interest in avant-garde performance, dance, and music is apparent as he argues for a mutable relationship between the spectator and the art object. In general, "Subject Matter" defines how the concept of viewership in the art works of Lee Lozano, Nauman, and Reich can be understood in relation to the work of Carl Andre, Donald Judd, and Richard Serra. The text is composed of brief paragraphs about each artist and requires the reader's close attention to discern the connections Graham suggests between disparate topics. For example, Graham includes off-set quotes from Andre, Gibson, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Judd, and Roland Barthes on topics ranging from the "new novel" to Claes Oldenburg's sculpture to kinesthesia.

After quoting Robbe-Grillet that "Objects will be *there* before being *something*; and they will be there afterwards, hard, unalterable, eternally present, mocking their own 'meaning'," Graham explores the dual notions of object and order in Judd's work.⁵ A Judd work, he argues, separates the viewing subject from the art object and thus "has the appearance of an open phenomenal world; things are as they (simply) appear to be."⁶ Without an "interior core of meaning," Judd's objects should derive significance from the physical relation between the art work and the exterior architectural elements of its placement. Graham acknowledges Judd's drive to present "the thing as a whole, its quality as a whole...the main things are alone and are more intense, clear, and powerful" but also asserts that Judd's work gives no suggestion that a transcendent meaning has been transformed by the artist's actions into a visual representation.⁷ Graham goes on to claim that Judd's use of the notions of "order" and "structure" imply that the viewer and

⁴ Graham, "Subject Matter," 50. The book on "ecological art" was never finished.

⁵ Graham, "Subject Matter," 38.

⁶ Graham, "Subject Matter," 38.

⁷ Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 116.

art object are conceptually in place before they are physically present within an art gallery. According to Graham, Judd's conception of "order" is entirely local because his objects do not point beyond their immediate physical presence in an architectural environment. Instead, the Judd object always returns the viewer's attention back to the object itself. The physicality of a Judd piece serves to direct the viewer's focus to the three-dimensional presence of the object itself.

After exploring the idea of place in Judd's work, Graham moves to a discussion of Carl Andre. Graham argues that Andre's art proposes a situation between viewer and art object in which the time and physical space of engagement are pre-determined by the artist's decision to place the object within a context. The object's placement in a space, arguably the crucial moment in the creation of a Minimalist art work, results in a set viewer/object relationship that exists before the arrival of a viewer. As Graham offers, the viewer of an Andre work is only able to recover bits of meaning generated by the artist's action of placing an object in a particular time and space, events which have occurred before the physical arrival of a viewer. As he writes, "the artist precipitates the in-formation and the observer (in a later time/space, but in the same place in the particular sense Andre uses this definition) senses the percipient (reads it)..."⁸ Thus, Andre's work does not allow the spectator to be "'transported' into an imaginary world or view." Instead, both the object and the viewer are grounded in the here and now of the present space and time in which perception takes place. As a rejoinder to such a proposition, Graham points out that the engagement of viewer and art object is never static. At the end of his analysis of Andre, Graham issues his most concise interpretation of how Minimalism accounts for the relationship between viewer and object:

⁸ Graham, "Subject Matter," 40.

Andre's art – as is the case with Judd and [Sol] LeWitt – treats viewing subject as object-ground; just as the artist, in placing the material grounds for viewing, *is in/places the object in* a prop position to their functioning. The artist and viewer are read out of the picture. (This is the object-distance ascribed to 'object' art.) Both *concepts* (first definitions) and *objects* are either *before the fact* – as *in fact* is the viewer in relation to viewing the art object – or *after the fact* (re-presentations), thus, defining an a priori (static) 'architecture' between what is sent and what is received (a priori 'architecture' defines a *set* way of relating to the experience). Whereas, *in fact*, both the artist, the transported material (itself still part of an ongoing environmental process), and the viewing subject are in-formation (in the process of change).⁹

As Graham would have it, Minimalist artists such as Judd and Andre disregard the fact that both the object's relation to its physical environment and the viewer's engagement with that object are fluid. Instead, they assume a static viewer and art object in so much as both are unable to shift according to a particular context. Graham argues that both viewer and art object are constantly "in-formation" meaning a mutable relationship between viewer and art object. In other words, he conceives of a continuous dialogue between art object and viewer in which the two change each other.

Whenever Graham addresses this central idea of his essay, he uses the word "in-formation." This term allows him to encapsulate several ideas within one phrase. First,

⁹ Graham, "Subject Matter," 40. Emphasis is Graham's.

“in-formation” means the formation of viewing subjects and objects according to the channel of communication that Graham conceives between viewer and art work. Furthermore, when a viewer and object are in such a relationship, they are “in-formation” as the formation of their relative roles in the dialogue is an ongoing activity. Finally, “in-formation” also refers to the movement of information between object, context, and viewer. The object, much like a written text, holds forth certain concepts (information) to the viewer and the viewer in turn brings his or her own concepts to bear in reading the object. The context in which this back-and-forth between viewer and object takes place is also filled with information that the viewer may consider in understanding the object. Graham questions the extent to which Minimalism allows for viewer participation in this complex “in-formation.” By over-emphasizing the role of the object, Minimalism, as Graham understands it, denies the viewer’s ability to do more than merely acknowledge pre-existent concepts. This critique is at the core of the magazine-based art works and of his explorations into the interconnections of object, context, and viewer. In the above passage, Graham claims that the work of Andre, Judd, and LeWitt does not address the reality of “in-formation” as an active, on-going event. Instead, he claims that their work posits a “static-architecture” in which both the viewer and the art object are pre-determined realities.

In the next section of “Subject Matter,” Graham turns to the art of Richard Serra. He states that rubber-sheet pieces such as *Slight of Hand* (1967) offer the viewing subject the “residue” of a past action.¹⁰ The “residue” that the viewer encounters is the physical result of the artist’s activity upon a specific material. In other words, the “residue” is the

¹⁰ Graham, “Subject Matter,” 44.

art object itself. In such work, the “in-formation time” in which the art object was created is the time and place in which the material was shaped into its final form. The “in-formation time” is not available to the viewer as she or he cannot recover past actions taken by the artist. According to Graham, Serra’s work does not demand the illusionistic abandonment of the viewer’s present-time condition but rather, “the viewer stays in his own time-space continuum in attempting to reveal the process [of in-formation].”¹¹ The viewer’s consideration of the work is one stream in the confluence of two distinct time-space moments: the creation of the work (first event) and the viewing of the work (second event). This convergence, as Graham understands it, results in the viewer recognizing his or her own activity in front of the art object, “In reading, the viewer goes first to the declarative ‘how’ of it and then back to the visual-materialness of the in-formation present in the process, in the ‘structure,’ the subject matter (‘nature’) of that in-formation in which one reads the situation.”¹² Observers are locked in their own time-space constraint as is the object that they address: “the residue still remains in its own self-enclosed frame of reference despite the shifting interaction as the viewer walks around the object, its transformations yielding a record of its past.”¹³ In such a situation, neither the spectator nor the object is altered. So while observers may acknowledge the past actions that resulted in the object they see in front of them, they ultimately cannot reflect on anything but their own act of reflection. Graham posits that in the viewer-object relationship created by Serra’s work, the artist’s creation of an art object is reified by the viewers’ comprehension of themselves as viewers. In other words, the spectator understands that the object in front of them is art because they define themselves as

¹¹ Graham, “Subject Matter,” 44.

¹² Graham, “Subject Matter,” 44.

¹³ Graham, “Subject Matter,” 44.

viewers of art. In such a structure, “the viewer’s time-field is as much part of the process (reading) as is the artist’s former relation to the same material.” This equation of viewing to creation is what would later prompt Graham to assert that his essay rejects formalism in favor of content.¹⁴

In addition to posing a critical analysis of Minimalism, “Subject Matter” examines Nauman’s performance pieces of the late 1960s. In the sections devoted to Nauman’s work, Graham uses the first-person singular to convey the feeling of participating in a performance. As he insists, performance artists do not generate “residues” of creative acts that occurred in a non-recoverable past. The art in a Nauman piece, according to Graham, occurs when an audience member views the artist’s actions. Thus, the artist’s body becomes the medium. The relationship between viewer and work of art, Graham suggests, is more direct when one is confronted with a living, moving, and responding human body rather than an immutable object. Because both the viewer and the artist in this sense perform the piece, the notion of time in a Nauman work differs from that of a Minimalist creation. Instead of separating into discrete periods the time of the art object’s creation and its viewing, Nauman’s performances are generated in the present time with the observer. Therefore, “it is possible for both groups of players (the performers and the audience members) to establish between time as a counting measure and time as a field-time, a relationship that will shift variously in the process of the piece.”¹⁵ The viewing of a Minimalist work is the meeting of two distinct space-time moments in the present. A performance work, on the other hand, creates a new space-time field in which there are no fixed positions marked out between audience, artist, and

¹⁴ Graham interview with Buchloh, 75.

¹⁵ Graham, “Subject Matter,” 50.

art work. In his later video-installations Graham explores the political and artistic potential of this open field.

Beyond the Limit I: *Schema* (March 1966)

At the core of Graham's magazine pieces of the 1960s is the notion that art and society are indivisible. Many of these works were produced as sketches and never published. *Schema* (March 1966) is discussed here not only because it has been written about extensively, but also because it was actually published.¹⁶ With this piece, Graham addresses how works of art are consumed through the methods of reproduction and reception set up by the art magazine as an institution. Formally, *Schema* is a list of the various attributes of the text itself. The work can exist in two forms: a generic format (fig. 1) that lists the general features of the work or a similarly formatted description of a specific instance of that format (fig.2.) For example, in the generic form, the eleventh line of *Schema* would state "number of lines." In the specific form, on the other hand, if the piece is composed of 27 lines, the eleventh line would proclaim "27 lines." By acknowledging its formal composition on the magazine page, the piece underscores its own context within the larger physical and conceptual structure of the magazine.

According to Graham, the *Schema* works of 1965-1966 "are not simply self-referential," as they also draw attention to the magazine as a system of support.¹⁷ For the artist, the magazine is a hub of intersecting ideas about the reproduction, exhibition, and reception of art works. Surrounded by the reviews, articles, and reproductions normally found in art magazines, *Schema* (March 1966) highlights one of the functions of these periodicals

¹⁶ For examples of the un-published magazine pieces, see *Dan Graham: Works 1965-2000*.

¹⁷ Graham, "My Work for Magazine Pages," 134-135.

in the art world. Art magazines, as the artist understands them, give a tangible and physical structure to the nexus of art and commerce. Furthermore, the artist has replaced the Minimalist model of the immutable art object in the static art gallery with a variable art work encased in the context of the mobile magazine. As he points out in “Subject Matter,” the typical Minimalist art object exists as both a physical and conceptual reality outside a viewer’s engagement with the work and the physical context in which the object is exhibited and seen by viewers. On the other hand, the magazine, as Graham conceives of it, may point to the issue of how works of art are displayed and received. In addition, the tangible object of the magazine is physically mobile in so much as it is easily transferred from one receiver/reader to another. Also, each magazine may follow a particular format in terms of typesetting, spacing, paragraphs breaks and so forth. This inner logic is brought to the forefront of a reader’s attention because *Schema (March 1966)* lists the formal properties of the work itself. Therefore, Graham’s magazine works are at once self-referential while also capable of addressing the larger context of the art world. The Minimalist object, as the artist asserts in “Subject Matter,” is incapable of simultaneously pointing in both these directions as its conditions of reception are already in place before both its installation in a particular space and the arrival of a viewer.

Graham writes, “through the actual experience of running a gallery, I learned that if a work of art wasn’t written about and reproduced in a magazine it would have difficulty attaining the status of ‘art.’”¹⁸ In his understanding, the magazine is

¹⁸ Graham, “My Work for Magazine Pages,” 131. In late 1964, Graham was hired as the director of the recently opened John Daniels Gallery located at 17 East 64th Street in New York City. A new arrival to the city, the gallery was his first introduction to the art world. In the fall of 1965, the gallery went bankrupt and closed. In almost all accounts of Graham's life and art written either by the artist or by scholars, this moment is cited as the beginning of the artist's career. Art historian Rhea Anastas provides an in-depth exploration of Graham's time at the gallery in her "Minimal Difference: The John Daniels Gallery and the First Works of Dan Graham," in *Dan Graham: Beyond*, 111-126.

responsible for enshrining an object as art because it reproduces the work in an image (a photograph) and written word (a review). Magazines hold up the work as having an economic value as a consumable product to be bought and sold. With *Schema* (March 1966), the artist unpacks the art gallery-magazine complex and reveals the workings of a system of production and consumption in which the terms of exchange are uncritically accepted. For Graham, the magazine, functions as a nexus of discourses on communication and consumption.

One way to understand Graham's contention that magazines link together information and economic consumption is to compare two seemingly disparate magazines, the international arts magazine *Artforum* and the international men's lifestyle magazine *Maxim*. A casual glance through an issue of *Maxim* reveals illustrated articles on recent movies, cars, video games, and sports alongside pictorials of women in lingerie or bikinis. These texts are surrounded by numerous advertisements for clothes, cars, and video games. Many of the objects and activities described at length and photographically reproduced in a *Maxim* article may not be available to the average reader. Similarly, the women on display are also physically unavailable. A male reader of *Maxim*, in all likelihood, has just as much of an opportunity to test drive sports cars with a basketball star as he does to become physically intimate with the actress Megan Fox. The objects on display in the advertisements, however, are available for purchase. So while the exact products and women discussed and reproduced in the article may be beyond the means of the reader, an approximation of the *Maxim* lifestyle is attainable through the purchase of a pair of Levi's jeans. Likewise, any given issue of *Artforum* will contain sophisticated discussions regarding a particular art work or a famous contemporary artist's oeuvre.

These essays are accompanied by photographs of the objects under consideration. The text and image, as Graham would see it, reinforce each other and fix the object's position as art. In addition, *Artforum* is well-known for its numerous advertisements for galleries that specialize in selling contemporary art. The same operation of substitution present in *Maxim* is in effect in *Artforum*. The art works written about and photographed are usually owned by museums or by private collectors. Readers seeking to take part in the *Artforum* lifestyle of critical and sophisticated engagement with contemporary art may visit any of the galleries advertised. There they may purchase works that perhaps will not be held in the same regard as the ones displayed in the articles and photographs, but these objects might approximate the celebrated status of the well-known art works and thus give the buyer the sense of taking part in a rarified dialogue. Graham's periodical-based pieces draw the readers' attention to, but do not unravel, such social, cultural, and economic threads that are intertwined in the gallery-magazine complex. His contention is that such operations are not immediately apparent to the reader of an arts magazine.

Schema (March 1966) does not set out a new artistic ideology aimed at replacing existing structures in the art world. Graham's magazine pieces are not a call for the destruction of the gallery, the museum, or even the magazine. He instead focuses the viewer's attention on particular aspects of these institutions in order to divulge the unacknowledged links between art, economics, politics, and society. He felt that Minimalism lacked such a critical gesture. The artist's drive to scrutinize the art network, but not eradicate it, is grounded in his understanding of the critical theory generated by the Institute for Social Research, alternatively known as the Frankfurt School.

The two most complete studies of the relation between Graham and critical theory, de Duve's 1983 essay "Dan Graham and the Critique of Artistic Autonomy" and Jeff Wall's 1991 text *Dan Graham's Kammerspiel*, do not fully explore the specific connections between the artist and the ideas of Marcuse and Benjamin. Both writers assert that Graham was familiar with critical theory, in particular Marcuse, but neither devotes much space to working out which Marcuse texts the artist consulted or the ways in which his understanding of critical theory informs his art. In interviews, furthermore, the artist consistently deflects questions regarding his theoretical interests. For example, when Buchloh notes that Graham was one of the first American artists to incorporate the ideas of the Frankfurt School in his work, the artist responds that European music of the early 1960s was especially interesting.¹⁹

Graham's interest in critical theory was part of a broader trend in the art world of the late 1960s to seek a socially aware means of producing art. Wall points out that the early Conceptual artists, dissatisfied with "Minimalism's suburbanite asceticism and the smirking ironies of Pop representation," sought a complete and radical break from what they considered to be the politically bankrupt art works from the 1950s and 1960s.²⁰ Conceptual art, such as Graham's early magazine pieces, interrogates "modern art as a complex of institutions which produce styles, types of objects, and discourse, rather than questioning art in the academics' terms, as works of art first and foremost."²¹ Wall points out that "the transformation from emblematics to a directly critical and discursive form of expression is Conceptualism's central achievement."²² This striving for a

¹⁹ Graham interview with Buchloh, 71.

²⁰ Jeff Wall, *Dan Graham's Kammerspiel* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1991), 8 -13.

²¹ Wall, 10.

²² Wall, 11.

“critical and discursive” art form is evident in Graham’s magazine pieces. For instance, in "My Works For Magazine Pages," he posits a dual understanding of the term “context” for works of art:

From one perspective, the art object can be analyzed as inseparably connected to the institution of the gallery, or museum; but from another perspective it can be seen as having a certain independence, as it belongs also to the general cultural framework which the magazine is part of. Magazines specialize in a way which replicates other social and economic divisions.²³

In the above passage, Graham alludes to a new way of analyzing the institutional practices that frame the production of art objects. He asserts that the art object can be understood within the same cultural context as the magazine. All magazines, he contends, cater to a particular field. The art magazine, for example, is connected to the gallery system’s dealers, artists, critics, and patrons, all of whom are invested in the economic survival of the art world.²⁴ The art magazine is a lucrative tool through which the gallery system markets itself and its wares to potential consumers. These consumers are economic, as in patrons who buy works, and intellectual, as in art critics and historians who generate a reifying discourse to surround the product/art work being sold. Graham maintains that advertising provides the financial backbone for the whole enterprise.²⁵ In underscoring the role of advertising in the continued success of art magazines that in turn support the entire gallery system, Graham performs a critical

²³ Graham, “My Work for Magazine Pages,” 131.

²⁴ Graham, “My Work for Magazine Pages,” 132.

²⁵ Graham, “My Work for Magazine Pages,” 132.

interrogation of the model from the inside out. Such a move is similar to the philosophical strategy of immanent critique employed by a number of the critical theorists associated with the Frankfurt School. In his early works, the artist presents a way for viewers to consider not only the art work itself, but also to deconstruct the complex nexus of production and reproduction that holds the art market together. Ultimately, this goal is indivisible from the historical situation in which these works were created. For, as Graham relates to Gerdes:

...in the Sixties it was important to show how the Establishment, seen in Establishment terms of established institutions from the school to the museum, could be taken apart to expose their foundation in order to liberate them... I think I share in the interest of *that* time commonly shared by many Conceptual artists of dismantling Establishment structures.”²⁶

In his 1983 essay for an exhibition of Graham’s pavilions (the architectural works constructed in the 1980s), de Duve asserts that Graham’s interest in Frankfurt School critical theory can be traced back to the artist’s reading of Marcuse in the mid to late 1960s.²⁷ In an effort to illuminate the political meanings of Graham’s art, de Duve provides an analysis of four art works from the 1970s that he regards as offering insights for understanding Graham’s later architectural pieces. Acknowledging the difficulty in pinning any standardized philosophy on the creation of Graham’s work, de Duve notes

²⁶ Graham interview with Gerdes, 184.

²⁷ de Duve, 52-53.

that the closet ideological model to the artist's own is that of the Frankfurt School.²⁸ He observes that the alienation from society Graham and many artists of the 1960s experienced led them to a utopian vision of what art could achieve in contemporary culture. In the late 1960s Graham's work, as de Duve proposes, exhibited the artist's interest in the concept of "self-awareness as a group," to use Graham's own phrase. To explain this notion, de Duve considers the "American dream: the commune as the incarnation of Walt Whitman's 'transcendental I'..." a decidedly American concern for the coupling of group ethos with the individual's self-realization.²⁹ In other words, de Duve argues that Graham's works of the early 1970s share in a long-standing American characterization of society as a group of interacting individuals. While these participants may share a common social vision, they see their individuation as compatible with, yet not entirely predetermined by, that vision. The art historian states that this conception of "self-awareness as a group" does not correlate with Marxist attitudes about class consciousness. Such a de-emphasizing of classical Marxist ideas is a result, de Duve suggests, of the American reception of critical theory within "the culture of the hippies and Woodstock" in the 1960s.³⁰

Graham's familiarity with Marcuse was indeed framed by the counter-culture of the late 1960s. In a 1991 conversation with Gerdes, the artist states that Conceptual art and Pop art shared an interest in critiquing the "heroic and individual art gestures" of Abstract Expressionism. The artist goes on to claim that Pop and Conceptual art deviate from one another in their respective vantage points. Pop art, in its erasure of the traditional barriers between high and low culture, can be understood as negative: a

²⁸ de Duve, 52.

²⁹ de Duve, 52.

³⁰ de Duve, 52.

questioning of Abstract Expressionism's celebration of pure artistic creativity. Whereas "Conceptual art accepted the same thing [the critical stance towards Abstract Expressionism], but saw that in terms of positive, affirmative, rather than negative possibilities...by affirmative possibilities, I mean those postulated by someone like Marcuse."³¹ Instead of reveling in the destruction of art's supposed sanctity, Conceptual art sought a productive means to reassert art's positive role in society. This does not imply, however, that Conceptual art considered contemporary culture to be healthy. The goal behind this positive outlook was to alter the social order, not to celebrate its current form. Specifically intriguing to Graham was Marcuse's notion of "aestheticized play" and how provoking such a moment could radically change the passivity of contemporary society.³² According to the artist, the culture of the 1960s was defined by "new commodities which seemed to destroy any possibility of artists...creating new value." This state of affairs presented an artist with two possible responses. One could mourn the devaluation of aesthetics and arrive at a negative stance toward culture, a hopeless place where the individual artist and his creative vision (the two concerns Graham identifies with Abstract Expressionism) are locked out of contemporary society. On the other hand, one could follow an optimistic path:

This devaluation could have possibilities. It also meant that the receiver...might be made creative and liberated in his use of time. Life might become a form of aestheticized play. The art receiver could be a creative participant in art; art's task was to help make this aestheticized play available

³¹ Graham interview with Gerdes, 178.

³² Graham interview with Gerdes, 178-179.

to everybody.³³

The idea of “aestheticized play” is crucial for understanding Graham’s art of the 1960s and 1970s. When questioned by Gerdes about this term, the artist responds that in his work, he always sought a “...playfulness value. Marcuse said he was in favor of aestheticized play, that this notion should take the place of art.”³⁴ While the interviewer does try to have Graham explain this phrase further, the artist appears unwilling to focus on his own art and Marcuse. Instead he begins discussing Conceptual Art in general and its interpretation in the 1980s and 1990s. For Graham, Marcuse identified both a problem and a solution. In the first case, the theorist’s writings in *One Dimensional Man* (1964) describe contemporary society as “one-dimensional.” In such a situation, individuals are unable to attain true liberation as the potential for critical antagonism has been neutralized by the individual's subsumption into the established social order. As Marcuse conceives of the one-dimensional society, the individual has become entangled in a system of production and consumption based on the creation and satisfaction of false needs. The weaving together of individual and consumption is so insidious, that it is nearly impossible to untangle one's self and engage in oppositional thought and behavior. This flattening out of critical inquiry renders both the society and the individual one-dimensional. Recognizing such a situation, Graham sought a means to unravel the individual from the one-dimensional society. To do so, in his work he proposed the idea of aestheticized play.

³³ Graham interview with Gerdes, 178.

³⁴ Graham interview with Gerdes, 178.

While the exact term “aestheticized play” is not employed by Marcuse in his *Eros and Civilization*, Graham states that his work relates to Marcuse’s ideas of aesthetic playfulness. *Eros and Civilization* is not only one of the best known works by the theorist, but it is also his most complete discussion of aesthetics and play and is the closest in date to Graham’s magazine pieces.³⁵ With the term “aestheticized play,” the artist is creating his own phrase to capture Marcuse’s numerous concepts. Overall, the stated goal of *Eros and Civilization* is to combine Freudian psychoanalysis with Marxist social theory.³⁶ The present study is not concerned with the validity of the philosophical task Marcuse sets himself, or with the intricacies of his engagement with Freud and Marx. Rather, my investigation is limited to how Graham read and, through his art, interpreted Marcuse's ideas. In addition, it is valuable to note that what the artist terms "aestheticized play" in Marcuse's writings is, in fact, an elaboration of the philosopher's thoughts on the role of the artist in the creation of a work of art. Graham gathered up some of these ideas, twisted them to reflect his own interest in the viewer, and termed the resulting concept "aestheticized play." Whether or not the artist's interpretation was a misreading of Marcuse's argument is not an issue for my examination. The focus here is on how this appropriation took place and what the results were for the artist's projects. Graham is certainly not a true Marcusean Marxist and has never claimed to be a political

³⁵ Marcuse further outlines his understanding of aesthetics in later writings, most notably in *The Aesthetic Dimension*. This text, however, was first published in English in 1978 (the German version of the text in 1977), two years after the latest Graham piece discussed in this dissertation and over ten years after the works being examined in this first chapter that date from 1966-67.) While it is indeed possible that Graham, by the time of the interviews quoted in this study, was familiar with the ideas laid out in *The Aesthetic Dimension*, that work (unlike the earlier *Eros and Civilization*) does not deal with the notion of play. Instead, the short text is a critique of classical Marxist attitudes towards aesthetics that Marcuse contends render works of art mere products of social determinism, an understanding that he argues cancels out art’s ability to elicit a radical subjectivity in the face of oppressive social mechanics.

³⁶ See the Introduction to Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

theorist; Marcuse's philosophy gave the artist a means to explain some of the concepts he works with in his art.

Eros and Civilization begins with the author's assertion that "intensified progress seems to be bound up with intensified unfreedom. Throughout the world of industrial civilization, the domination of man by man is growing in scope and efficiency."³⁷ Nevertheless, Marcuse notes that within this widespread domination are the "preconditions for the gradual abolition of repression."³⁸ Repression, for the theorist, is conceived as "both the conscious and unconscious, external and internal processes of restraint, constraint, and suppression."³⁹ Furthermore, repression in the contemporary industrial world has taken on an advanced and nebulous form, which Marcuse labels the performance principle. Briefly stated, the performance principle is the capitalist emphasis on economically productive labor as the only means through which individuals may fulfill their needs and desires. As Marcuse puts it, "whatever satisfaction is possible necessitates *work*, more or less painful arrangements and undertakings for the procurement of the means for satisfying needs."⁴⁰ The especially nefarious reality of the performance principle is that while it spurs the individual to constantly toil, his or her own "pleasure is 'suspended' and pain prevails."⁴¹ Marcuse offers a possible escape from this bleak situation with recourse to the Freudian Eros, a life instinct that celebrates pleasure and in particular, sexual pleasure.⁴² There are, however, impediments to the

³⁷ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 4.

³⁸ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 5.

³⁹ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 8.

⁴⁰ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 35.

⁴¹ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 35.

⁴² Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 22.

activation of Eros in the face of repression. Here Marcuse identifies the subordination of phantasy to reason as a central obstacle:

Reason prevails: it becomes unpleasant but useful and correct; phantasy remains pleasant but becomes useless, untrue – a mere play, daydreaming. As such, it [phantasy] continues to speak the language of the pleasure principle, of freedom from repression, or un-inhibited desire and gratification.⁴³

Thus, phantasy, which Marcuse connects to the imagination, can not only question, but also suggest another world, one that is radically different from the present one ruled by the performance principle. At this point in the text, Marcuse turns to the ability of art to give a visible reality to phantasy. He goes on to fuse together the return of Eros and its ability to undermine the performance principle with an understanding of aesthetics, which in turn is of crucial importance for Graham's work.

Marcuse asserts that under present conditions, "the discipline of aesthetics installs the *order of sensuousness* as against the *order of reason*."⁴⁴ As he recounts, this contemporary notion of aesthetics counters an earlier understanding of the concept found in late eighteenth-century studies undertaken by Immanuel Kant and then Friedrich Schiller in response to Kant. Marcuse claims that in its "original meaning and function," the aesthetic "aims at a realm which preserves the truth of senses and reconciles, in the reality of freedom, the 'lower' and 'higher' faculties of man, sensuousness and intellect,

⁴³ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 142.

⁴⁴ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 181. The emphasis is Marcuse's.

pleasure and reason.”⁴⁵ After laying out the philosophical shifts in the use of the term “aesthetic,” the theorist concludes that the term “aesthetic” now signifies art.⁴⁶ Rather than picking one particular understanding of aesthetics, Marcuse unites the historical meaning of aesthetics (the examination of sensuousness) and the contemporary meaning of aesthetics (the study of art). For the theorist, art is a product of an aesthetics that seeks to balance the rift between the sensuous and reason. In this reconciliation, art provokes a “liberation of the sensuousness” that as Marcuse explains, has a political power because,

...in the established civilization, their [sensuousness and reason]relation has been an antagonistic one,...civilization has subjugated sensuousness to reason in such a manner that the former, if it reasserts itself, does so in destructive and “savage” forms, while the tyranny of reason impoverishes and barbarizes sensuousness. The conflict must be resolved if human potentialities are to realize themselves freely... The quest is for the solution of a political problem: the liberation of man from inhuman existential conditions.⁴⁷

The deep discord between sensuousness and reason can be mended through aesthetics and by extension art, because “what sensuousness recognizes as true, aesthetics can represent as true, even if reason rejects it as untrue.”⁴⁸

Marcuse goes on to state that the provocation of sensuousness found in art is an intrinsic type of play impulse, a basic human need to revel in the imagination without the

⁴⁵ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 172-73.

⁴⁶ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 182-83.

⁴⁷ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 187.

⁴⁸ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 183.

bonds of established rationality and reality.⁴⁹ He contends that play can be considered political: “The reality that ‘loses its seriousness’ is the inhumane reality of want and need, and it loses its seriousness when wants and needs can be satisfied without alienated labor. Then, man is free to ‘play’ with his faculties and potentialities...and only by ‘playing’ with them is he free.”⁵⁰ Again, for Marcuse the aesthetic is concerned with the invocation of sensuousness, a type of order that celebrates the baser instincts of humanity and acts as a balance to the demands of reason and rationality. The aesthetic thus corresponds to a type of free play of the cognitive functions between sensuousness and reason, which in turn can be employed to undermine the repressive demands of a dominating and purely rational society. This, then, is the foundation of Graham’s claim that his work aims to be a type of “aestheticized play.” The artist invented this term to encompass Marcuse’s ideas on both aesthetics and play, for he shares in Marcuse’s contention that “art challenges the prevailing principle of reason: in representing the order of sensuousness, it invokes a tabooed logic – the logic of gratification as against that of repression.”⁵¹ “Aestheticized play” captures the playfulness of an aesthetics which strikes a balance between sensuousness and reason. This back and forth is possible when imagination is allowed to offer new and perhaps even radical alternatives to the rational status quo.⁵²

⁴⁹ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 187. Marcuse notes that his conception of the play impulse is, in part, derived from Schiller’s *The Aesthetic Letters, Essays, and the Philosophical Letters* (1794).

⁵⁰ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 188.

⁵¹ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 185.

⁵² The concept of play has a long history in German philosophy. Marcuse appears to follow (albeit in broad strokes) an understanding of play first discussed by Kant and Schiller. On the other hand, Hans-Georg Gadamer addresses an alternate interpretation of play in his *Truth and Method* (originally published in German in 1960, and in English translation in 1975. The citations here are from the Second, Revised Edition translated and revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall and published by Crossroad Publishing in 1989.) In fact, Gadamer’s stated objective in examining play is to free it from the “subjective” understandings of the term proposed by Kant and Schiller (101-102). By this Gadamer means

While Graham states that Marcuse's goal of replacing traditional art with pure aestheticized play goes too far, he goes on to explain that he sought a certain "playfulness" in his work that liberated it from being "essentially academic." Likewise, the artist contends that he has distanced himself from "art reduced to simply use value."⁵³ Here it is important to note the context in which Graham employs "use value," and that in his conversation with Gerdes, the term is never explicitly defined. While the notion of use value Graham is discussing may have its roots in Marxist theory, it is not the same "use value" as used by Marx. For Graham, contemporary understandings of Conceptual art posit a false opposition between use value and the aesthetic. Use value, as employed here by the artist, signifies the ability of art to satisfy a human need for information with little concern for the visual properties of the art object itself (the aesthetics.) Graham takes issue with this faulty antagonism between use value and the aesthetic. Such a conception, he claims, glosses over the fact that in order for one of his artworks to be successful, it must balance use value and the aesthetic.⁵⁴ As I argue here, the playfulness of Graham's art underscores the interdependence of his work's use value and aesthetics.

Schema (March 1966) embodies this idea of retaining a sense of the aesthetic while also being open to a playful reading. The ability to provoke a playful reading is the use value of the piece. *Schema's* visual structure (its type face and the positioning of the

the primacy afforded by earlier philosophers to the player in the act of play. In other words, Gadamer is calling for an interpretation of play that focuses less on the player or even the actions this player takes that constitute what is commonly known as "play." The emphasis in *Truth and Method* is on play as a mode of being in itself. Graham's own understanding of play, as noted above, is grounded in his reading and interpretation of Marcuse. While it would be hasty to declare that Gadamer's theories do not have bearing on the artist, there remains no evidence to suggest that Graham was familiar with Gadamer in any way other than perhaps elliptically through Marcuse, who in turn does not mention Gadamer by name in either *Eros and Civilization* or in *One-Dimensional Man*. Therefore, the complexities of the relationship between Marcuse's critical theory and Gadamer's hermeneutics, even if they share an interest in play, fall well outside the purview of my investigation.

⁵³ Graham interview with Gerdes, 66.

⁵⁴ Graham interview with Gerdes, 179.

words) together with its physical context in the magazine make up the work's aesthetic form. The visual quality of the piece signifies that it is a work of art, a fact Graham asserts when he concludes that his magazine pieces must be aesthetic in order to function as art.⁵⁵ While *Schema* (March 1966) is aesthetic enough both to be of visual interest to the viewer and to warrant recognition as a work of art, it also has, according to Graham, an "immediate use value."⁵⁶ *Schema*'s use value is its interrogation of the economic processes in the art world that allow objects to be understood as art. In addition, as the traditional function of a magazine is the communication of information to the reader, the magazine context of the piece meets the artist's criteria for art objects that have a distinct social purpose. Furthermore, the only means by which the work is transferable is through social exchange of the magazine itself. The magazine is thought of as a discardable object and thus not subject to the same economic machinations as art world commodities; namely the exhibition, reproduction, and purchase of works of art.⁵⁷ In this way, Graham sought to insulate the social relevancy of *Schema* (March 1966) so that the work could resist art world efforts to enshrine it as a commodity.⁵⁸

What is ultimately significant about a Graham magazine piece is that the use value of the work cannot be separated from its ability to spark aestheticized play. The magazine creations focus on "the question of audience, its perception of itself and of performance in the act of perceiving."⁵⁹ A work like *Schema* (March 1966), by way of

⁵⁵ Graham interview with Gerdes, 180.

⁵⁶ Graham interview with Gerdes, 180. Emphasis is Graham's.

⁵⁷ This characterization of the magazine as discardable is Graham's own. See Graham interview with Gerdes, 180.

⁵⁸ The obvious contradiction here is that the magazine page, like any other text based work of art, is easily reproduced, framed, and sold. That Graham and other Conceptual artists in the 1960s saw textual works as escaping the economics of the art world does not so much speak to the artists' lack of foresight as it underscores the general utopian vision they shared and the power of the gallery system to commodify.

⁵⁹ Graham interview with Gerdes, 180.

its context in the magazine, is concerned with the notion of timeliness rather than timelessness. As Graham explains, the usefulness of a magazine is dependent on its appearance as current and “up-to-date.”⁶⁰ This ephemeral condition is opposed to gallery art, which the artist characterizes as “defined by its enclosure as ‘timeless’.”⁶¹ *Schema* (March 1966), on the other hand, “only exists by its presence in the functional structure of the magazine and can only be exhibited in a gallery second-hand.”⁶² The work cannot be rendered “timeless” by the art gallery, because its physical structure is wholly dependent on its presence within a magazine, a medium devoted to “defining ‘new’ or ‘up-to-date’ in terms of the present moment.”⁶³ The timeliness aspect of the magazine format triggers the viewer’s awareness of the presentness of *Schema* (March 1966). The work is here, now, and current. The presentness of the work is also reinforced by its formal structure. *Schema* (March 1966), as a description of itself, is self-defining and tautological. This self-reflexivity, in turn, is intended to make viewers aware of the present tense in which they are viewing the work. Consequently, viewers acknowledge not only the work’s physical existence, but also their own activity of viewing. At this moment aestheticized play is possible because the viewer participates in the realization of the work in so much as the work of art exists in its being read in the present moment by the viewer. As this back-and-forth between viewer and art object is derived from both *Schema*’s physical context and visual structure, the work’s use and aesthetic value are interdependent. Furthermore, while the physical and conceptual structure of the work triggers aestheticized play, it also ensures that this activity is not defused by the context

⁶⁰ Graham, “My Works for Magazine Pages,” 135.

⁶¹ Graham, “My Works for Magazine Pages,” 135.

⁶² Graham, “My Works for Magazine Pages,” 134.

⁶³ Graham, “My Works for Magazine Pages,” 135.

of the art gallery. The emphasis on the present tense of the work and the viewer's interaction with it (defined here as the work's use value) means that to display the work out of the magazine context and in the art gallery would eliminate much of the significance of the work.

At this point, it is useful to return to the theories of Marcuse in order to further underline how and why aestheticized play can be a form of social critique. In the post-war economy of the United States in the 1960s, artists and intellectuals began to experience a profound sense of alienation from American society. Contemporary society, they held, was predicated on the creation, merchandizing, and consumption of an endless supply of commodities. Marcuse, who in 1952 began his American teaching career at Columbia University, completed his study of commodity culture, *One-Dimensional Man*, in 1964. Along with the earlier text, *Eros and Civilization*, this work was adopted by the nascent New Left movement. In *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse offers a bleak a picture of the modern world:

Today's novel feature is the flattening out of the antagonism between culture and social reality through the obliteration of the oppositional, alien, and transcendent elements in the higher culture by virtue of which it constituted *another dimension* of reality. This liquidation of *two-dimensional* culture takes place not through the denial and rejection of the 'cultural values,' but through their wholesale incorporation into the established order, through their reproduction and display on a massive scale.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964), 57.

In the one-dimensional society that Marcuse describes, true liberation is kept in check by the “suffocation of those needs which demand liberation.”⁶⁵ Humanity, stupefied by deceptive liberties, accepts social controls that encourage endless consumption and alienated labor to produce consumable goods, what Marcuse identifies as the performance principle in *Eros and Civilization*. In the one-dimensional society, even the idea of freedom has become another tool of domination. This system of production and rabid consumption is propagated by the media and supported by industries and commercial organizations with an economic stake in controlling people by keeping them complacent. The sprawling apparatus of domination in the one-dimensional society severely restricts the possibility of critical thought and oppositional action. One’s identity becomes a reflection of society itself, one-dimensional in so much as “people recognize themselves in their commodities: they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment.”⁶⁶

Graham’s response to this mass alienation was to provoke the moment of aestheticized play in which viewers participate in the creation of a work’s meaning. In turn, viewers would decline to be pacified by the one-dimensional society and counter its effects with refusal, the only remaining critical stance according to Marcuse. In *One Dimensional Man*, Marcuse elaborates on the idea of a “Great Refusal.”⁶⁷ The proactive and critical member of society, unable to achieve true liberation via the social avenues proposed by those in power, can become more fully individual by refusing to be part of

⁶⁵ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 7.

⁶⁶ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 9.

⁶⁷ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 8. In the text, Marcuse credits the term “Great Refusal” to the English mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). For an in-depth discussion of the origins of the idea of the “Great Refusal” in Whitehead’s writing and the shared concerns of Marcuse and Whitehead see Duston Moore’s “Whitehead and Marcuse: The Great Refusal, Universals and Rational Critical Theories,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 7.1 (2007): 83-108.

his or her own domination. The path away from the one-dimensional society begins with this rejection of repressive authority and all social policies that seek to limit individuals from attaining happiness and self-realization. Aestheticized play, for Graham, is both an end goal and a means for achieving that objective. By eliciting aestheticized play, *Schema* allows for an active, engaged viewership through which Graham aims to counter-balance the oppressive regulations that prevent individuals from satisfying their own needs and desires.

Beyond the Limit II: *Homes For America*

Originally published in *Arts Magazine*, Graham's *Homes For America* (1966-67) (fig. 3) was created from a photographic project in which the artist took numerous photographs of the buildings he saw on trips through suburban New Jersey and the boroughs of New York City. In 1966, he organized these photographs into a slide show for the exhibition "Projected Art" at Finch College. Later that same year, he included some of the photographs in an essay published in the December 1966 / January 1967 issue of *Arts Magazine*. In an interview with art historian Mike Metz, Graham explains the decision to include an essay with his photographs as a critique of both Minimal art and pop-sociological studies of suburbia. Graham recalls:

At the time, *Esquire* magazine was publishing sociological exposés like David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*. They used photographers in the school of Walker Evans, photographers who were showing vernacular workers' housing, suburban housing, but usually from a humanistic negative viewpoint.

I wanted to keep all of those meanings but empty out the
pejorative expressionistic meanings.⁶⁸

As Pelzer observes, the style of Graham's writing for *Homes for America* is a parody of "the neutral tone of journalistic reportage."⁶⁹ There is an element of dry humor in the piece, especially in the section where Graham notes that "there is a choice of eight exterior colors," for each of the pre-fabricated homes available in a Florida development. In the middle of the color listing, Graham includes the swatch labeled "Lawn Green." The repetition of and visual aid for this trivial bit of information becomes a parody of the objective detachment of the authorial voice one often encounters in pop-sociology of the 1950s and 1960s.

In her 1973 essay "The Pop-Sociology of Suburbs and New Towns," sociologist Sylvia Fava criticizes the types of sociological examinations commonly found in popular media outlets such as magazines and television shows.⁷⁰ Defining pop-sociology as a style of sociological examination that involves "no suspension of judgment or assessment of evidence and is therefore stereotyped and unscientific," Fava laments that in public perception such studies have become synonymous with academic sociology.⁷¹ By way of example, she cites writer Harry Henderson's 1953 article for *Harpers* "The Mass Produced Suburbs: How People Live in America's Newest Towns." Henderson not only describes the general aesthetics of the suburbs as "monotonous," but also comments on a

⁶⁸ Mike Metz, "Dan Graham interviewed by Mike Metz," in *Two-Way Mirror Power*, 185.

⁶⁹ Birgit Pelzer, "Double Intersections: The Optics of Dan Graham," in *Dan Graham*, ed. Birgit Pelzer, Mark Francis, and Beatriz Colomina (New York: Phaidon, 2001), 38.

⁷⁰ Sylvia Fava, "The Pop-Sociology of Suburbs and New Towns," *American Studies* 14.1 (Spring 1973), 121-133.

⁷¹ Fava, 121. While she disproves of the equation of pop-sociology to academic sociology, Fava also suggests that sociologists should be mindful of pop-sociology as these works, in her opinion, represent how a society regards itself.

"marked feeling of transience [that] pervades everything."⁷² He goes on to provide his observations on various facets of suburban life, including dog ownership, wallpaper selection, and the clothing worn by children. Henderson uses this information, gleaned mostly from coffee and cocktail meetings with homeowners, to reflect on how the suburban communities represent a "new American way," one with neither "history, tradition, nor established customs."⁷³ These kinds of sweeping claims regarding American life led Fava to declare that pop-sociology "may be provocative but it is often superficial, often to the point of inaccuracy or confusion."⁷⁴ Going further in her critique, she asserts that the moralizing tone common to pop-sociology limits the ability of the approach to draw substantive conclusions.⁷⁵ Similarly, Graham's avoidance of the belittling tone of pop-sociology underlines the artist's desire to provide a robust analysis of suburbia.

Homes For America begins with a brief history of tract housing developments, and Graham asserts that these home formats generally fail to establish a distinct community identity. The artist notes that house buyers have a limited choice in the process: there is both a finite list of possible house layouts and a list of color schemes. Graham also provides a sample of such a serialized development layout. With this cataloging of the possible permutations for the housing development, he deconstructs the pretense of buyer choice in housing developments that operate under what Graham labels a "serial logic." This term encompasses the finite number of variations on a given set of housing layouts and color combinations. By simply switching the elements, the home

⁷² Harry Henderson, "The Mass Produced Suburbs: How People Live America's Newest Towns," *Harpers* 207 (November 1953), 29.

⁷³ Henderson, 26.

⁷⁴ Fava, 122.

⁷⁵ Fava, 121.

builder can offer the illusion of home personalization while not offering the individual buyer any real choice. The selection of pre-determined housing schemes and colors is not, in Graham's estimation, a true choice at all.

The post-war housing boom in the 1950s and 1960s proceeded apace, and the tract house became a key ingredient of the American dream. As geographer Larry Ford notes in his study of American housing trends, *Cities and Buildings: Skyscrapers, Skid Rows, and Suburbs*, the housing explosion was funded by government policies which privileged newer construction and white, middle-class buyers.⁷⁶ In addition, the notion of home ownership was coupled with the drive to fill these new domestic spaces with appliances ranging from washing machines and two-toned refrigerators to hi-fi sets and televisions. Driving this consumption was the media propagation of a particular family ideal. Ford states that the

typical American household in the 1950s was the 'normal' family of mom, dad, two or three children, a station wagon, and a dog. Magazines, newspapers, advertisers, and the powerful new medium of television all offered a barrage of images to support this norm.⁷⁷

Televised sitcoms chronicled the daily routines of suburban life and were laced with advertisements claiming that the buying of particular products would make this life more enjoyable. Together, the sitcom and the advertisement (much like the lifestyle and advertisement combination of *Maxim* and *Artforum*) presented a persuasive version of

⁷⁶ Larry R. Ford, *Cities and Buildings: Skyscrapers, Skid Rows, and Suburbs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 164-165.

⁷⁷ Ford, 164. The issue of television as an oppressive medium is discussed in the following chapter in the context of video art and guerilla television.

contemporary American life in which the happy, healthy, suburban family was centered on consumption. Marcuse laments the resulting passive acceptance of the status-quo when he writes:

The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals and more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life – much better than before – and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges a pattern of *one-dimensional thought and behavior* in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe.⁷⁸

In adopting the discourse of suburban home ownership, Americans also internalized a discourse on consumerism as a means of happiness. This substitution of consumerism for freedom, Marcuse argues, prevents true liberation. As Graham's *Homes For America* suggests, one is left with the empty choice of Moonstone Grey or Coral Pink for the exterior of a pre-fabricated house.

While *Homes For America* can be read as a condemnation of the American society which produced pre-planned suburbs, Graham is also offering a critique of Minimalism with the work. Not only do the rows of similar looking suburban tract homes approximate the standardization of Minimalist objects, but Graham also equates

⁷⁸ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 12.

the Minimalist denial of the individual experiences to the false-choice of the pre-fabricated house. He concludes that the Minimalist artist

was interested in what one calls reductiveness. One principal was that less is more. The idea to reduce things – ideas, surface, content – to that point where they seemed to be blank...and yet behind the apparent blank surface was often an incredible complexity.⁷⁹

That Graham would apply the well-known motto of Mies van der Rohe to Minimal art underlines his opposition to what he sees as the basic tenets of Minimalist art. When questioned about his knowledge of architectural theory, Graham states that he became interested in the work of Robert Venturi during the late 1960s and began to share with the architect a resistance to Mies's vision of modern architecture.⁸⁰ An example of this rejection is Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction*, which Graham claims to have read in 1968. In the text, Venturi sets out his idea for architecture capable of addressing the complexities of modern life and quips, "Less is a bore."⁸¹ The crux of Venturi's argument is that the drive towards simplification divorced architecture from "the experience of life and the needs of society."⁸² As he writes:

I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning; for the implicit function as well as the explicit function. I prefer 'both-and' to 'either-or'...A valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combinations of focus: its

⁷⁹ Graham interview with Gerdes, 181.

⁸⁰ Graham interview with Buchloh, 78.

⁸¹ Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 17.

⁸² Venturi, 17.

space and its elements becomes readable and workable in several ways at once.⁸³

While Venturi's analysis is primarily aimed at Mies's rejection of complexity in favor of simplification, Graham directs a similar critique at Minimalism. Venturi seeks architecture capable of provoking a concentration of various meanings and experiences in a building, and Graham likewise aspires to open-endedness in his art. Generating an object replete with possible readings is, in Graham's estimation, a method of challenging Minimalism. For Graham, the Minimalist object downplays the significance of the viewer's subjectivity and, thus, functions much like large-scale tract housing developments in that both ignore the individual's needs and desires.

Alberro has suggested that in his focus on the viewer and on the present time in which a work of art is perceived, Graham is moving from "the Minimalist concept of site specificity to the Conceptual notion of context specificity."⁸⁴ Much of Alberro's analysis of *Schema (March 1966)* in relation to Minimalist art is applicable to *Homes For America*, especially in the sense that both works manipulate the context of the magazine to offer a revision of Judd's call for "specific objects." In addition, the works form a critical examination of the "Minimalists' fascination with industrially produced objects."⁸⁵ According to Graham, the American tract house has its roots in California builders' attempts to streamline production to keep up with the demand for new housing. By only offering a limited set of possible formats and color schemes, these builders could mass produce houses with no consideration of individual taste. Much like Judd's "specific objects" the repetition and stasis of the *a priori* tract house (it is already there

⁸³ Venturi, 16.

⁸⁴ Alberro, "Content, Context, and Conceptual Art," 57.

⁸⁵ Alberro, 57.

before the buyers possess it) denies the immediacy of a home buyer's desires and needs. The tract house creates a false sense of power in the new home owners who believe that their individual tastes and wants have already been met. The tract house forces buyers into situations where they conclude that this is obviously what is wanted because it is already here. The assumption of a pre-existent experience offered by the tract-home is akin to an Andre sculpture in that both the object and the experience the object elicits are already in place before the arrival of the buyer/viewer.⁸⁶

The "serial logic" Graham identifies in tract housing development mimics the seriality of Minimal art objects, namely in the repetition of simple elements. Considering one of the artist's photographs of tract housing, *Row of New Tract Houses, Jersey City, N.J.* (1966), alongside Judd's *Untitled* (1968) underlines the visual similarities between photographs of tract housing and the Minimalist object (figs. 4 and 5.) Both the row of tract houses and the row of stainless steel boxes offer the viewer a set of complete and wholly self-contained objects. The repetition in both works stresses the formal sameness of each individual occurrence. Both are examples of a complete series, each visually complete in itself. Likewise, the tract homes and the steel boxes both clearly demarcate what is and is not the house / the art. The architectural correspondence between each tract home aids in broadcasting the features that make-up the home itself. For example, the repetition of windows of the same shapes, size, and type in all the homes defines the relationship between window and home. Similarly, the Judd work, with its six steel boxes, defines what is and is not the work of art (steel box equivalent to art; the wall is not art.) It is from this visual resemblance that Graham makes the conceptual connection between the Minimalist object and the tract house. Furthermore, with both the tract

⁸⁶ See the above discussion of "Subject Matter" for more on this point.

houses and in the Judd work, the observer has no role but to acknowledge the seriality put forth by the objects. There is no space for viewer interaction or interpretation beyond mere comprehension of the pre-existent series and the self-definitions held forth by the works. The formal and conceptual similarities between the row of tract homes and the Minimalist series took on a further complexity when Graham arranged the photographs into slide presentations as a group of vertically stacked 35mm slides that recalls the formal properties of Judd's *Untitled* (1968) or any of Morris's untitled cube pieces of the mid to late sixties. *Schema* (March 1966) and *Homes For America*, however, do not mimic Minimalist art, but rather, both works point to their physical and conceptual context in the magazine. Unlike with the tract house or the Minimalist art work, the line between art work and not art work is blurred in *Schema* and *Homes For America*. The surrounding articles, advertisements, and photographs found in the typical magazine erase the clear distinction between what constitutes the work of art and what is just another magazine page. In this way, the two magazine pieces invite viewer interaction, as reading the work becomes part of the definition of the work itself for it is only in considering *Schema* and *Homes For America* in the context of the magazine as a whole that the works' meaning becomes clear.

The artist states that *Homes For America* is his one piece that is most similar to the traditional magazine article in that it subscribes to the traditional layout of pictures alongside words.⁸⁷ Graham remarks that *Homes for America* acknowledges the normative relationship between text and image in the magazine layout: "They [the images] are illustrations of the text, or inversely, the text functions in relation to the

⁸⁷ Graham, "My Work For Magazine Pages," 136.

photographs thereby modifying their meanings.”⁸⁸ This play of image and text in the creation of meaning for the piece is not a process, according to Graham, that makes the article into a work of art. Rather, he insists that the image-text schematic underscores *Homes For America* as a magazine piece, not as a work of art. The artist identifies this refusal of art status as the most important feature of the work.⁸⁹ While analyzing *Homes For America* as a magazine article limits its acknowledgement as an art object, it allows for an exploration of Graham’s insistence on disposability. The magazine, as the artist argues, is a throwaway medium contrasted to what he terms the “heavy” objectness of Minimal art. Alberro argues that this preference for the disposability of the magazine and its “secondary information” highlights Graham’s position at the forefront of the Conceptual art movement.⁹⁰ With *Homes For America*, Graham shows that the focus on how information is packaged and received can lead to critical examinations of both the art world and larger social issues concerning individual identity and consumerism.

Dan Graham, Conceptual Artist: A Problem of Labels

The power of the notion that art can have both an aesthetic value and a real use value is one that Graham contends has been forgotten in later accounts of Conceptual art that analyze works as only having “absolute use value.”⁹¹ He goes on to assert that focusing on the negative aspects of Conceptual art confuses the optimistic “social idealism, a moralism coupled with ‘gallows’ humor and a healthy nihilism” of 1960s

⁸⁸ Graham, “My Work for Magazine Pages,” 136.

⁸⁹ Graham, “My Work for Magazine Pages,” 136.

⁹⁰ Alberro, “Content, Context, and Conceptual Art,” 59.

⁹¹ Graham interview with Gerdes, 181.

Conceptual art with the bleaker neo-Conceptualism of the 1990s.⁹² In his own writings, the artist has hinted at his connection to Conceptual art. For instance, the title of Graham's best known essay, "My Works for Magazine Pages: A History of Conceptual Art," would suggest that the artist sees his own relationship with Conceptual art as an unproblematic issue. In an interview with art critic Daniela Salvioni from 1990, however, Graham states, "I'll call myself a Conceptual artist, though I don't like Conceptual art," or more recently, he has claimed to have been disillusioned with Conceptual art in the 1960s and that he found the movement "a bit boring and lacking in humor."⁹³

On one level, it would be easy to dismiss Graham's unwillingness to label himself a Conceptual artist as simply an attempt to establish himself as an unique artist and not just a member of a group. Doing so, however, glosses over the important points about art in America in the late 1960s and early 1970s that are suggested by an exploration of Graham's relationship to Conceptual art. Graham derived much of his understanding of Conceptual art from LeWitt, whom he cites as crucial to his early artistic development during the year he directed the John Daniels gallery.⁹⁴ LeWitt's well-known "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (1967) defines the term "conceptual" in art. After indicating the conceptual nature of his own work, LeWitt suggests that art is a means for conveying an idea. The form of the work itself, he states, "is of very limited importance; it becomes the grammar for the total work. In fact it is best that the basic unit be deliberately

⁹² Graham interview with Gerdes, 181. Instead of Marcuse, with whom Graham identifies 1960s Conceptualism, he aligns this "pessimistic form" of neo-Conceptualism with the writings of Baudrillard and Adorno.

⁹³ "Dan Graham interviewed by Daniela Salvioni," in *Dan Graham Selected Writings and Interviews on Art Works, 1965-1995*, ed. Adachiara Zevi (Rome: I Libri di Zerynthia, 1996), 168; and "Dan Graham interviewed by Mark Francis," in Phaidon.

⁹⁴ Graham interview with Huber, 32.

uninteresting so that it may more easily become an intrinsic part of the entire work.”⁹⁵

The realization that an art object’s form may act as a vehicle through which ideas are conveyed instead of form as an end in itself (as is the case in High Modernist and Minimalist art) is central for Graham’s magazine based work of the 1960s. Since the magazine article is embedded in a network of reproduction and reception, it has the ability to point to the art world’s economic operations. The fact that the magazine article is, according to Graham, a medium that people passively encounter everyday, means that its form correlates with LeWitt’s call for uninteresting objects.

The primacy afforded to the idea(s) of the artist is the most salient characteristic of Conceptual art. As art historian Johanna Drucker contends, “In the face of the culture industry and the shrinking space for fine art within the field of visual culture, Conceptual art retreated to the high ground of idea-based work...In the dialogue between idea and object, Conceptual art simply brackets the second term of the equation to enable the idea to occupy pride of place.”⁹⁶ In this generally accepted understanding, two crucial aspects of Conceptual art are evident. First, the privileging of the idea over the object. Second, the emphasis that the conception, the idea behind the work of art, had a clear social dimension. In order to understand how Graham’s work is both similar to and different from that of other Conceptual artists of the 1960s and 1970s it is helpful to explore the comparisons the artist draws between the work of Marcel Duchamp and Dan Flavin. In short, while Graham is disparaging of the former, he cites the latter as being of immense value to the conception of his own art.

⁹⁵ Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” in *Conceptual Art: a critical anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), 13.

⁹⁶ Johanna Drucker, “The Crux of Conceptualism,” in *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice*. ed. Michael Corris (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 253.

In “My Works for Magazine Pages,” Graham outlines the differences he perceives between Duchamp’s ready-mades and Flavin’s fluorescent light installations. As Duchamp’s work is often cited as a historical precursor for Conceptual art, it is worthwhile to examine why Graham is dismissive of the earlier artist.⁹⁷ As Graham explains, he began making the magazine pieces because he “felt that the ‘solution’ Marcel Duchamp had found to this problem of art’s ‘value’ was unsatisfactory.”⁹⁸ Graham’s analysis of Duchamp is lucid and sharp:

In his “ready-mades,” Duchamp brought objects which were not considered art when placed outside the gallery, into the gallery to prove dialectically that it is in fact the gallery which gives the object its value and meaning. Instead of reducing gallery objects to the common level of the everyday object, this ironic gesture simply extended the reach of the gallery’s exhibition territory. In bringing the “non-art” object into the gallery, Duchamp wished to place in apparent contradiction the conventional function of the gallery to designate certain objects as “art” and to exclude others.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ For two examples of scholars who have made the widespread contention that Duchamp was a forerunner of Conceptual art see Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1972), IX and Benjamin Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999), 522. In his essay, Buchloh notes that Graham’s art has less to do with Duchamp than the work of Joseph Kosuth, but he maintains that the earlier artist was a flash point for what would eventually become called Conceptual art. Here, I expand on the understanding of Graham’s art as an alternate form of Conceptual art that does not follow Duchamp and forms a different type of artistic practice than that of Kosuth. In one biting example of his disdain for Duchamp, Graham declares that the artist’s political implications were compromised by his willingness to be a “gigolo to the Philadelphia elite,” Graham interview with Buchloh, 73.

⁹⁸ Graham, “My Works for Magazine Pages,” 12.

⁹⁹ Graham, “My Works For Magazine Pages,” 12.

While Graham does not find fault with Duchamp's goals, he identifies problems in the methods Duchamp employed in examining the art gallery:

Essentially Duchamp attempted to question the aristocratic function of art and the art gallery as an institution. Because this question was only presented on a logical abstract level, his critique was itself immediately integrated back into the institutional system of gallery or museum art, becoming a kind of "idea" art. A further problem with Duchamp's analysis is the resolution of the contradiction between gallery art and art in relation to its social value based on a historical concept; the condition of art is seen as neither social nor subject to external social change.¹⁰⁰

Graham's magazine work connected his critical stance towards the art world with his desire to create art with a social message. In the above passage, it is clear how Graham came to a negative opinion of Duchamp's work.¹⁰¹ The link between Duchamp and Conceptual art was firmly established when, according to artist and art critic Ursula Meyer, "Conceptual Art completed the break with traditional esthetics that the Dadaists, and notably Marcel Duchamp, initiated."¹⁰² This notion that Conceptual art, especially the particular slant of Conceptualism associated with Kosuth, grew out of Duchamp's radical stance towards the art world is a common art historical judgment. Graham's work, however, destabilizes such a conclusion. While Kosuth asserted that "all art after

¹⁰⁰ Graham, "My Works For Magazine Pages," 12.

¹⁰¹ Of course, it is well documented that Duchamp himself felt that his own attempts to dismantle the art gallery had been in some way compromised by the subsumption of his work into the twentieth-century art historical tradition, but it is unclear if Graham acknowledges, or accepts, this admission.

¹⁰² Ursula Meyer, IX.

Duchamp is Conceptual in nature,” Duchamp was, for Graham, a point of antagonism. Graham distances himself from Kosuth’s version of Conceptual art when he notes, “I also became disillusioned with Conceptual art, as it became established through Joseph Kosuth and *Art & Language*.” He acknowledges that his rejection of this particular type of Conceptual art was precipitated by the same beliefs that led him to condemn Duchamp – both were incapable of offering a sustained critique of the art world because of their similar desire to interrogate the meaning of the word "art."¹⁰³

While the artist did use a combination of text and image, a format with formal parallels to Kosuth’s and Ian Burn’s work, in his own writings and in interviews, Graham gives no indication that he is interested in a semiotic reading of texts and images. The use of words and images in Graham’s work is less about the way in which art functions as a kind of language, than about the appropriation of the text-image construction found in magazines. Furthermore, he is not as concerned with breaking apart the text-image unit as he is with proposing a critical assessment of the magazine’s function within the art world. Unlike the Duchampian snow shovel or bottle rack, which are shown in galleries and exhibition halls, the physical space of the art gallery in a Graham magazine piece is referred to, but not present as the work’s immediate form. In other words, the magazine pieces do not need the physical space of art gallery or museum to function. Works such as *Schema (March 1966)* and *Homes For America* point to, but do not visually represent, larger art world institutions like the gallery system and its multitude of spaces, publications, and activities. Graham’s work offers a comment on the art system, but it also questions the idea that the value of a work of art is predicated on economic conditions of the work's consumption and exchange. For the artist, the creation of

¹⁰³ Dan Graham interview with Mark Francis, in *Dan Graham* (Phaidon, 2001), 14.

disposable magazine pages suggested one way in which he could operate at a critical distance from the art world. Nevertheless, the artist has called such a desire a “utopian idea.”¹⁰⁴ Graham, in the end, recognizes that his magazine pieces, just like the radical ready-mades of Duchamp, eventually became co-opted by the art system they attempted to subvert.

The artist with whom's work Graham routinely identifies is Dan Flavin, especially the latter's fluorescent light sculptures. In “My Works For Magazine Pages,” Graham sets up an extended comparison of Flavin's work with that of Duchamp. As Graham writes, Flavin's art “examined how specific, functional architectural elements of the gallery interior prescribed meaning and determined specific readings for the art defined within its architectural frame.”¹⁰⁵ In Graham's estimation, Flavin's light installations interrogate the assumed neutrality of the gallery's space by drawing the viewer's attention to the seemingly “minor decoration” of the light fixtures. These lighting effects, Graham contends, frame the works of art on display. He argues that Flavin not only underscores the role of lighting in the creation of architectural space, but that the light artist also exposes the entire gallery system.¹⁰⁶ Flavin's fluorescent tubes, created as standardized and replaceable units, are intended to be disposable objects. Graham goes on to quote Flavin's statement that the fluorescent tubes ““can be bought in any hardware store.”” From Flavin's model of how a work of art can be directed at the gallery system while also refusing to be enshrined as commodities, Graham concludes that an artist does not have to generate objects that can be easily bought and sold by galleries. In fact,

¹⁰⁴ Graham interview with Francis, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Graham, “My Works For Magazine Pages,” 11.

¹⁰⁶ Graham, “My Works For Magazine Pages,” 11.

Graham posits that Flavin is more effective than Duchamp at questioning the limits of what can be considered art.

The debt the artist owes to the writings of LeWitt in his understanding of Conceptual art has been both acknowledged by Graham and documented by several scholars, including Alberro and Buchloh.¹⁰⁷ In his introduction to *Conceptual Art: a critical anthology*, Alberro posits that LeWitt's theories of Conceptual art were fundamentally opposed to those offered by Kosuth:

Kosuth's aesthetic theory clearly restricts viewing experience to two possibilities: the viewer either comprehends the idea, or does not...In contrast, LeWitt's model of conceptualism posits an unlimited public. The content of artworks produced following this model is more than the private history of the artist and allows for a multiplicity of readings."¹⁰⁸

While Alberro does not ally Graham with the theories of either LeWitt or Kosuth, his analysis of the work of Daniel Buren, which he characterizes as echoing the ideas of LeWitt, is similar to the understanding of Graham's *Schema (March 1966)* that is proposed in the "Context as Content" essay. Both Buren and Graham, Alberro suggests, create works that question the "means by which the art system affirms the art object as significant, or meaningful, avant-garde art."¹⁰⁹ This art system critique is indeed part of

¹⁰⁷ See Alberro, "Context as Content," and Buchloh, "Moments of History in the Work of Dan Graham," in *Conceptual Art: a critical anthology*, 376. The Buchloh piece, first published in 1978, not only insists that Graham's work has been ignored in contemporary accounts of Conceptual art, but also that the artist's work is "a rarely qualified protagonist" for Minimalist art (376). For his own part, Graham has noted that he recommended Buchloh for an appointment at the Nova Scotia College of Art in the mid-1970s, and that he finds Buchloh to be "stubbornly dogmatic and hard to convince, often negative; when he's convinced he's like absolutely great," Graham interview with Huber, 44.

¹⁰⁸ Alberro, "Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, xx-xxi.

¹⁰⁹ Alberro, "Reconsidering Conceptual Art," xxv.

the significance of Graham's magazine pieces. There remains, however, the issue of reading these works alongside artist's interest in Marcuse and how such an analysis is connected to Conceptual art.

With his interest in altering social norms, Graham is perhaps closer to the Hans Haacke, whose art, according to Alberro, "problematizes the networks of relationships through which power is exercised in the art world and exposes the social, economic, and political bases of power."¹¹⁰ Graham's own version of Conceptual art is best understood as foreshadowed by LeWitt's writings and as a balance between the theories of Buren and Haacke. This is not to suggest that Graham's art is predicated on Buren's or on Haacke's. First, there is scant evidence that Graham followed the careers of either artist. Second, both Buren and Haacke were contemporaries of Graham in so much as they achieved notoriety at the same time he did in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Finally, teasing out a genealogy of Conceptual art into which to place Graham in relation to Buren, Haacke, Kosuth, and any other Conceptual artist is a problematic undertaking, as all claims to an accurate historical trajectory of Conceptual art should, in the words of Alberro, "be considered with skepticism, since they are so limited, confusing, and often explicitly constructed in order to promote a particular, partial legacy."¹¹¹

The value found in explicating Graham's position in the muddled, subjective, and often self-serving history of Conceptual art lies in the greater understanding it allows of Graham's work in its art-historical context. He was certainly not the only artist to negotiate a new avenue for art that sought to directly criticize Minimalist aesthetics. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the artist is perhaps less removed from

¹¹⁰ Alberro, "Reconsidering Conceptual Art," xxiv. For more on Haacke and Graham see Chapter 3.

¹¹¹ Alberro, "Reconsidering Conceptual Art," xvi.

Minimalism than is initially apparent in his own writings from the late 1960s. In a recent interview, for example, Graham proclaims, "I set up a conflict in my own work between minimalism and the subverting of minimalism."¹¹² This statement underlines a crucial point: the artist identifies some central aspect of his art as related to or even stemming directly from Minimalism. In short, the video-installations the artist created in the 1970s highlight this very issue of Minimalism turned against Minimalism. While retaining the formal simplicity of Minimalist objects, Graham pushed at the limits of Minimalist considerations on the role of the viewer and questioned the extent to which Minimalism could address contemporary society.

In the early 1970s, however, Graham abandoned magazine-based art in favor of exploring the new technology of video with the space of installation. At first consideration, such a shift might indicate a departure from his initial idea of what artistic format is best suited not only for examining Minimalism, but also for the creation of socially relevant art. The artist's use of video, however, represents both a continuation of and a re-focusing on the aesthetic and social themes Graham first explored in the mid-1960s. The magazine pieces underscore how the artist located a space between Minimalism and Conceptual art. On one side, Minimalism stresses the individual viewer while denying that viewer a truly individual experience. On the other side, Conceptual art typically seeks a socially engaged artistic practice that questions the ability of an art work to communicate with the viewer while interrogating the system by which objects become understood as art. Graham's art is a negotiation between these two poles. He does not fully reject the Minimalist focus on the viewer as individual, but he also does

¹¹² "Dan Graham: Minimalism against Minimalism," interview with Violaine Boutet de Monvel and Jonathan Reiger, *Esse arts + opinions* 61 (September 2007): 46-53.

not completely subscribe to the Conceptual art notion of art exclusively concerned with communication. If, for the artist, Minimalism is too concerned with the individual, then Conceptual art is too interested in making universal pronouncements. In Graham's work, this tension between Minimalism and Conceptual art is the friction between the artist's competing aims of speaking to an individual viewer while also addressing society as a whole. The artist's shift from magazine-based art to his use of video technology is not only a refinement of this balancing act, but also an avenue through which to expand his engagement with Minimalism.

Chapter 2

Present History

On a technological or formal level, Graham's video-installations of the 1970s grew out of the artist's film experiments of the late 1960s. Conceptually, however, Graham's works of the 1970s were still rooted in the themes at the core of the earlier magazine pieces. Below, I explore how the artist's work is both similar to and yet different from other video art practices of the 1960s and early 1970s. Doing so not only provides a historical context for the video-installations, but it also presents an examination of how video and art became linked. This connection was crucial for Graham's video-installations. The artist's conception of video as a form of socially relevant and critical art is derived in large part from his interest in the work of other video artists and critics who espoused a similar notion.

While elucidating Graham's position in the history of video art highlights how his thinking on video as art was informed by the work of other artists, it leaves aside the specific meanings Graham explored in his use of video. The second section of this chapter ties the artist's interest in the time-delay and feedback features of video technology to the work of Walter Benjamin. In interviews with Gerdes and Brian Hatton, and as part of roundtable discussion on contemporary art and theory, Graham notes that the concept of the just-past underscores much of his own understanding of time-delay and feedback.¹ In turn, he credits the phrase "just-past" to the writings of Benjamin. Few

¹ See: Gerdes, Brian Hatton, "Dan Graham: Present Continuous," in *Dan Graham*, ed. Gloria Moure, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1998), 206-214, and Graham, "Legacies of Critical Practice in the 1980s," in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press and Dia Art Foundation, 1987), 86-91.

scholars have explored how this connection between Benjamin's ideas and Graham's art can be used to advance an understanding of the meaning of the video-installations. As the artist's references to Benjamin occur in interviews conducted after the creation of the video-installations and because Graham never pointedly states that he had Benjamin in mind when he generated the works in the mid-1970s, it is reasonable to conclude that when Graham speaks of Benjamin's just-past, he is offering a possible avenue of interpretation, not a statement of inspiration. In Graham's work, the use of video time delay allows the artist to create a situation in which both present and past are active at the same time. In doing so, his work not only aims to interpellate an engaged viewer, but it also attempts to articulate the conceptual position of that viewer in relation to the art work, the art world, and society in general. With such a situation, Graham hopes to foster in viewers a type of spectatorship capable of examining the social mechanisms that are woven into engagements between self and other.

Furthermore, I suggest that the ability of video to play back both past and present actions afforded Graham an opportunity to address how self-knowledge is tied to social interaction. Central to such a reading is an exploration of the theories of the Scottish psychoanalyst R.D. Laing, whose work the artist cites as crucial to his understanding of the construction of self. Finally, this chapter examines Graham's use of surveillance in the video-installations as another means of addressing how social interaction coordinates self-knowledge.

Dan Graham and the History of Video Art

The problem of how best to define and therefore limit the vast field of video art to a set of particular aims, concerns, artists, and formal techniques has plagued the medium since its inception. Indeed, even the origin story of video art can be a contentious issue. For example, in Michael Rush's 2003 survey text *Video Art*, 1965 is cited as the watershed year for video art, as Sony Corporation introduced the first hand-held video camera, the Porta-pak, to the commercial market.² In earlier examinations of video art, however, scholars Gene Youngblood and Gregory Battcock begin their histories of video art with experiments in science laboratories and television stations during the 1940s and 1950s.³ The genealogy of video art I present in this study is not intended to be a systematic or far-reaching investigation of the multitude of video practices that came to the attention of the art world in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Instead, my own recounting of the early years of video art is focused on how the medium was understood at the time when Graham produced his video-installation pieces, the years between 1965 and 1978. Even with such limits, the task of sorting through the various theories associated with video art is daunting. As art historian Jeff Perrone concluded in 1976:

And like the bogus metaphilosophy and pseudo-linguistics of certain Conceptualists, video theory by video artists [of the 1960s and early 1970s] tended to be obscure, idealistic, and cribbed out of context from authorities in unrelated fields... There had been a flurry of

² Michael Rush, *Video Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 7.

³ Gregory Battcock, "Introduction," in *New Artists Video: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), xiii-xxii. Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970).

exegesis, but little that could pass as unpartisan, since it came from the artists themselves. And we hoped when a writer took video seriously and asked these questions [i.e. how to define the medium], that we would be enlightened.

Typically, we were not.⁴

Perhaps Perrone's assessment is too harsh toward the early video artists and critics who took on the unenviable task of writing about a nascent artistic practice. Nevertheless, his point remains valid; the initial attempts to define the medium were, on the whole, nebulous efforts to provide a theoretical framework for video art.

To help sort through this complex field, I use the designation "video art" to stand for all the various uses of video in works of art. While this general definition is the scholarly standard, it is crucial to note that video art of the 1960s and 1970s can be subdivided into three primary practices. First, there were artists such as Nam June Paik who created what can be termed "art video." These artists focused on how the video signal could be manipulated to create aesthetic images. Paik's early color television manipulations (1965-1968) are a seminal example of this aesthetic use of video. In these pieces, the artist used a variety of magnets and image processing devices to distort the shape and color of prerecorded video images. Second, the work of artist collectives like TVTV is best understood as "television art." For example, the group's *Four More Years* (1972) presents candid interviews and collected footage from the 1972 Republican National Convention. For the project, members of TVTV carried cameras around the convention recording the kinds of interactions that were not reported by network television. Similar to the numerous other guerilla television groups that formed in the

⁴ Jeff Perrone, "The Ins and Outs of Video," *Artforum* 14.10 (Summer 1976): 54.

late 1960s and early 1970s, TVTV's goal was to undermine national news coverage by presenting an unsettled version of events through the medium of video.⁵ What is notable about these groups is the emphasis they placed on video as a way to disrupt normative communication processes with little concern for the aesthetic experience of watching a video. Finally, there were artists who employed video in the recording of performance pieces. This type of video work can be called "artist's video." Artists such as Vito Acconci and Bruce Nauman, both of whom had achieved critical attention before employing video technology, utilized video cameras to record and play back studio- or gallery-based performances. In artist's videos such as Acconci's *Trademarks* (1970) (fig. 6) and Nauman's *Slow Angle Walk* (1968) (fig.7), the artist's body is at the center of the piece.⁶ The video medium functions as a way to record and to transfer the experience of viewing the artist's performance from a specific temporal and spatial moment to another time and space. Acconci and Nauman are less concerned with the aesthetics of the video medium or the possible connections between video and television than they are with the ability to create a portable recording of their actions.

Other than sharing a similar medium, namely video, there are few overriding themes identifiable in early video art. In the 1960s, video represented an undeveloped frontier for artists who, in the wake of Minimalism and Conceptual art, sought a direction beyond the traditional ideas of how art is created and viewed. In addition, video was regarded as a means for taking control of television and furthering global communication. The earliest users of video approached the medium with a sense of endless possibility.

⁵ Other groups include Ant Farm, Paper Tiger TV, and Raindance.

⁶ As will be discussed later in this chapter, not all of Nauman's work fits the artist's video designation.

The writings on video from the 1960s and 1970s tend to present the optimistic view that video can have a positive impact on daily life.

Representative of this sentiment is media theorist Gene Youngblood's well-known 1970 book *Expanded Cinema*. Youngblood posits that the new video medium has the potential to fulfill an "ongoing historical drive" to manifest consciousness outside the mind. The media sphere of the late twentieth century, Youngblood argues, divides the individual from his or her own self and art from life. To counteract this, he argues that the "art and technology of expanded cinema mean the beginning of creative living for all mankind."⁷ The "expanded cinema" of the writer's title is an inclusive term for the myriad of new combinations of film and television. He goes on to note that while still rare, the use of video as art is the most promising expanded cinema technique.⁸

Throughout his analysis of expanded cinema, Youngblood maintains that these new practices will allow individuals to personalize the cinematic process by recording their lives and thoughts without abstracted language. In turn, he foresees a future in which all humanity is tapped into a global intermedia system and able to share their own objective and subjective realities.⁹ Expanded cinema provides everyone with the possibility of being part of this new intermedia environment, of constructing and broadcasting their own experiences to an audience. This is not, Youngblood is quick to point out, a new form of self-expression. Rather, expanded cinema is a form of "life-expression," a form of art that is lived and experienced into being.¹⁰ Unlike the static image or the redundant drone of mass-market television, filmic entertainment, and advertising, expanded cinema

⁷ Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1970), 42-43.

⁸ Youngblood, 263.

⁹ Youngblood, 128-130.

¹⁰ Youngblood, 133.

is mutable. Both global and personal at once, expanded cinema is the ultimate expression of self-knowledge within a collective ego.

Citing the work of Paik, Youngblood observes that the video artist exists at the border of current video practices. Unlike the engineers who pioneered the use of video technology in science labs at universities, the video artist appears less concerned with the technical aspects of the video apparatus. As Youngblood states, “His [Paik’s] techniques are hardly exclusive and are far from sophisticated (engineers say he does everything he shouldn’t) and his cluttered loft on New York’s Canal Street is scientifically unorthodox to say the least.”¹¹ Nevertheless, the video artist’s aesthetic sensibilities, in Youngblood’s opinion, elevate his work beyond science experiments and into the realm of art. The theorist goes on to state that when it leaves the laboratory and enters the art world, video presents a problem for the divide between art and technology. By allowing an individual to control a medium of mass communication, video opens up broadcast television to personal, subjective, and artistic expression on a global level. While Youngblood’s work highlights the possible benefits of expanded cinema practices, it also emphasizes the underdeveloped state of writing and thinking on video as an art form. The complexities of talking about video as art are evident in the author’s analysis of Paik’s work. After recounting various ways the artist manipulates the tubes, rays, and electric volts of the standard television set, Youngblood remarks that “technical descriptions tend to underplay the sheer intuitive genius of Paik’s video art.”¹²

While Paik’s impact on video art cannot be overemphasized, his particular method of exploring video as an artistic medium represented but one possible strategy for

¹¹ Youngblood, 304.

¹² Youngblood, 304.

artistic expression. Through devices such as synthesizers, his work manipulated television images to create new aesthetic experiences. In contrast, Graham's use of video did not create new images or alter pre-recorded material. Instead, he explored video's ability to relay to viewers images of themselves in the act of viewing. It is important to note that using video cameras in this way was not without precedent in the art world. Artists such as Les Levine, Frank Gillette, and Ira Schneider employed closed-circuit television systems in the creation of what Youngblood terms "teledynamic environments."¹³ These teledynamic environments are the closest predecessors to Graham's own video projects. In closed-circuit video systems, the camera is pointed at the viewer. Whatever is placed in front of the camera's lens is transmitted back to a receiver and played on a nearby television screen. For example, in Levine's *Iris* (1968) three concealed video cameras film a viewer in close-up, middle-distance, and wide-angle views. The images are then played back on six nearby television monitors so that a viewer sees his or her own image from three differing vantage points. In works such as the *Time Delay* rooms of the mid-1970s, Graham also employed a closed-circuit video system, but with the crucial addition of time-delay playback. In Youngblood's estimation, the use of closed-circuit video systems is dissimilar to the use of video to create aesthetic television images. The artist who creates a teledynamic environment "is concerned not so much with what is being communicated as with *how* it's communicated and the awareness of this process."¹⁴ Even though Youngblood does not extend his analysis to include a discussion of video art's position in the art world of the 1960s, the recognition that the subject of video art is communication implies a point of similarity

¹³ Youngblood, 337.

¹⁴ Youngblood, 339. Emphasis is Youngblood's.

between video art and Conceptual art. Such a connection uncovers the link between Graham's art and that of other earlier video artists.

Similarly to how *Schema* and *Homes for America* interrogated the popular media format of the magazine, many early video artists explored how the communicative apparatus of television could be subverted as a means to disrupt normative understandings of how information is packaged and received. In concentrating their video work on the viewer as individual, artists such as Peter Campus, Gillette, Michael Snow, and Schneider interrogated the complex binding of advertisement and entertainment that makes up mass-market television. While Graham's use of video is an extension of his earlier magazine-based art practice, his work also shares in video art's examination of how information is made available to an audience. Thus, his political interests and aesthetic ideas were carried over in the move away from the magazine works and found new expression in his video-installation art. Graham's video-installations do not fit neatly into any of the three categories of video art discussed above. His works were not concerned with the aesthetics of image creation, or with the creation of a kind of guerilla television. Furthermore, unlike artist's videos, Graham's video-installations focus on the viewer and his or her interaction with the video image.

In his 1972 study, *Video Visions*, artist and critic Jonathan Price echoes Youngblood's positive attitude, and provides another set of three categories into which video art practices can be divided.¹⁵ This task of sorting video art stems from Price's conclusion that video may one day become "an act of worship, a display of religious self-understanding, a poetic reminder of our own depth."¹⁶ Impeding contemporary efforts to

¹⁵ Jonathan Price, *Video Visions: A Medium Discovers Itself* (New York: Plume Books, 1972).

¹⁶ Price, 215.

analyze video as art, Price argues, is the problem of interpreting artists who “place a high value on ambiguity.”¹⁷ Such a situation, according to the author, has led to a mode of art criticism filled with “insiders’ prose [that] has so often stoned us with acid-laced sunshine, grandiose visions of intergalactic communication, cryptic messages of cable-repair jargon, and too-personal diaries.”¹⁸ In an effort to clarify the muddled discourse on video art, he identifies three general notions that underpin how video art is understood within the art world. What distinguishes Price's approach from Youngblood's is the emphasis the former places on the *reception* of video art rather than the latter's focus on the *production* of video art. *Video Visions*, nevertheless, does implicitly assert that in video art, the reception and production of the art work are indivisible. So while the text may not be entirely distinct from *Expanded Cinema* in its approach, Price provides a useful, albeit limited, glimpse of the art world's response to video art at the time Graham began his use of the video-installation format.

In the first of his three categories, Price cites artists such as Douglas Davies and Keith Sonnier who explore how a singular idea can be addressed through various media. This tactic, he argues, came about due in part to the work of Pop and Minimalist artists who pushed the boundaries of what could be considered a work of art.¹⁹ Second, the author notes that some scholars of video art and certain video artists, such as Paik and Richard Serra, examine the uniqueness of artistic mediums and how “each medium does certain things well, other things poorly, the argument runs. The task of the artist is to study his new medium [video], to find out what it does well, and then to explore those

¹⁷ Price, 93.

¹⁸ Price, 92.

¹⁹ Price, 92.

areas fully.”²⁰ Even though Price does not mention the ideas of Clement Greenberg when discussing this particular theme in video art, Perrone (writing four years later) declares Greenbergian formalism the “most pervasive and potent theory being sold at the time of video’s emergence as art.”²¹ Furthermore, Perrone suggests that early video art borrowed Greenbergian notions of medium specificity in an attempt to prove its value as art.²² The final category of video art analysis according to Price is connected to “the cult of personality – that romantic Western idea that art should somehow be self-expression.”²³ Into this group, he puts artists like Acconci and Nancy Holt, who can be said to make artist’s video. These artists focus the video camera on their own actions, creating what Price calls “diary tapes.” While acknowledging the prevalence of these “diary tapes,” he also remarks that this form of video art is the most technologically simplistic and is often used as a starting point by artists who eventually move on to other forms of video art.²⁴ As Graham’s video-installations do not record and play back the actions of the artist, they do not fit into this final category of video art. In addition, with the video-installations the artist does not stress the technology or the formal properties of the art work. Again, Graham is less concerned with creating art video than he is with fostering viewer interaction through the use of video. Ultimately, of Price’s three interpretive models, the notion of using video art as a means of exploring one idea in a variety of media is the most pertinent for Graham’s work. The critique of Minimalism and the concern for how information is packaged and received that underlies the magazine pieces are still at the core of the video-installations.

²⁰ Price, 93.

²¹ Perrone, 53.

²² Perrone, 53.

²³ Price, 92.

²⁴ Price, 92.

Price was not alone in pointing out the problems in interpreting video art. In his 1974 essay, "Video Art: Old Wine, New Bottle," artist Alan Kaprow argues for the abandonment of what this study has termed television art and artist's video, both of which he regards as limiting the experimental possibilities of the new medium.²⁵ He discounts television art, which he labels documentary or political video,

because although it has been made welcome in art when no one else wants it, its legitimate work must be done in the real world and not in the art world...to include it in a discussion of art just because it has made the art world its crash-pad is to limit its utility to a small intelligentsia, and to defuse its arousal intent by a pretense to esthetics.²⁶

Likewise, Kaprow states that in artist's video, which he terms "taped art performance," the act of recording and playing back a performance via video does not add to the experience of the art work. Citing both Acconci and Joan Jonas, he goes on to posit that most artist's videos "are just more or less adequate recordings of the performances...which could have been done just as well or better as film. Videotape is simply cheaper and faster."²⁷ Graham's video-installation pieces do not fit into either of the two categories that Kaprow suggests should be left out of any serious analysis of video art. In fact, Graham's work can be understood within the framework of what Kaprow considers the most promising format of video art, "environmental open-circuit video." These types of video projects involve the placement of video cameras in an art gallery to record and play back the events taking place within that space. While Kaprow

²⁵ Alan Kaprow, "Video Art: Old Wine, New Bottle," *Artforum* 12.10 (Summer 1974): 46-49.

²⁶ Kaprow, 46.

²⁷ Kaprow, 46.

does not mention Graham in his article, the author does include works by Gillette, Schneider and Nauman as examples of environmental video. As noted earlier, Graham's video-installations have a similar physical format to the works of Gillette and Schneider, and Graham, as evident in his essay "Subject Matter," was familiar with and admired Nauman's work. Even though Kaprow sees potential in the environmental videos, he nevertheless contends that "their built-in assumptions about people, the indifference to the spaces into which the hardware is put, and the constant reliance on the glitter of the machines to carry the fantasy – strike me as simple-minded and sentimental."²⁸

Graham's own approach to video art was determined less by a fascination with the technological complexity of the new medium than by his earlier magazine pieces. As he shot photographs of suburban housing that would become *Homes For America*, Graham realized that the collected photographs could be employed in the creation of non-text based art works. Following this idea, he composed slide lectures to accompany the photographs and presented the slide shows at art fairs and colleges in the late 1960s. According to Graham, he undertook the slide projects as a way of exploring photography, a medium he felt no one understood properly, an idea he credits to his "naïve understanding of McLuhan."²⁹ After the publication of *Schema (March 1966)* and *Homes For America*, Graham's slide shows gained greater art world attention. In conversation with Buchloh, Graham states that when he made the images for the slide works he felt that "good photography was very pretentious." Instead, he preferred the

²⁸ Kaprow, 47.

²⁹ "Dan Graham Interviewed by Simon Field," in *Selected*, 77. Originally published in *Art and Artists* 2.10 (January 1973): 16-21. The artist never clarifies this statement regarding McLuhan. See my discussion below regarding McLuhan, Benjamin, and *Radical Software*. The media theorist did have a high profile in the popular culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s with his *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (1964) and *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (1967) both becoming bestsellers. As Graham is dismissive of this connection between himself and McLuhan and the slide lectures are not within the purview of the present study, I have chosen to forgo an in-depth examination of this topic.

amateur quality of photos created using devices like the Kodak Instamatic camera.³⁰ The artist goes on to explain that he enjoyed “the kind of photography that anybody could do” because of his interest in “instantaneousness.”³¹ That one could quickly and photographically record a journey into the rail yards and suburban landscapes of New Jersey suggested for Graham an alternate photographic practice that was outside the “official formal photography that museums collect.”³² His slide works stand in contrast to the elevation of what he regarded as a popular medium to the rarified status of high art, a move that he felt disregarded snap-shot photography’s place in everyday life.

Graham’s early slide works, nevertheless, are not exclusively concerned with the museum or art gallery. In fact, the artist gives little sense that he considered the slide projects an attack on art institutions. Instead, the photographic works were created outside the “high art” world of museum photography, a choice that while oppositional, was not meant to form an extended critique. These works were undertaken as a response to minimalist artists such as Donald Judd. In trying to capture the “colors and iridescent transparency of Judd through projected slides,” Graham reduced the Minimalist object to a thin layer of colored film framed by slide mounting.³³ The visual effect of holding the slides together imitates the formal properties of the stereotypical Minimalist art object – a metal cube. By showing the slides in succession, the artist created a serial art work,

³⁰ Graham interview with Buchloh, 74-75. The Kodak Instamatic camera, launched in the American market around 1963, was one of the first inexpensive and easy to use cameras widely available to the public. The Instamatic was a huge success in the United States and is often considered the originator of the “point-and-shoot” style cameras that remain popular today. In the Buchloh interview, Graham further claims to have been introduced to the benefits of the Instamatic by Robert Smithson in the early to mid 1960s.

³¹ Graham interview with Buchloh, 75.

³² Graham interview with Buchloh, 75.

³³ Graham interview with Buchloh, 74.

further mimicking Minimalist practices.³⁴ Along with his essays, the slide projects earned Graham notoriety, which led to a part-time teaching job and the prospect of exploring new media.

In 1969, Graham was invited to lecture and work at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax during summer sessions. He discovered that the college owned film equipment he could borrow. Seizing this opportunity, Graham created a series of six films from 1969 to 1973 that gained him greater attention and laid the foundation for his use of video. The most complete survey of the six films — *Sunset to Sunrise* (1969), *Binocular Zoom* (1960-70), *Two Correlated Rotations* (1969), *Roll* (1970), *Body Press* (1970-72), and *Helix/Spiral* (1973) — is Eric de Bruyn's essay, "The Filmic Topology of Dan Graham," in the 2001 exhibition catalogue for the retrospective of the artist's work at the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves in Porto, Portugal. De Bruyn's study of these works not only includes thorough descriptions of their formal features, but it also provides a sophisticated reading of how the films function as recordings of actions performed by Graham. In general, the films are a more intense phenomenological examination of vision and viewership than what is found in the video-installations.³⁵ In a work such as *Roll* (1970) (fig. 8), in which Graham placed one stationary camera on the studio floor and held another camera in his hands as he rolled across the first camera's field of vision, the tension between objective and subjective viewership is emphasized. These films, intended to be shown in tandem, underline the bodily aspect of vision while inserting the spectator into a position whereby the

³⁴ Graham interview with Buchloh, 74.

³⁵ In his use of the adjective "phenomenological," de Bruyn is characterizing how the films underscore the notions of embodied consciousness that were proposed by the philosophers associated with phenomenology, specifically Edward Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Below, I discuss Graham's response to phenomenology's role in Minimalism in relation to the video installation works.

connections between corporeal and cinematic space are clear.³⁶ While the scholarly writing on these films stresses the notions of embodied viewership, there remains work to be done on how these filmic productions further themes found in the magazine pieces and video-installations. Specifically, consideration is needed to explicate how Graham's films continued the artist's critical dialogue with Minimalism. As is proposed here, he sought to question the limits of a Minimalist visual experience by breaking down such an object-centric approach. The films are part of this procedure, as they suggest a type of critical viewership that is ultimately concerned with how the viewer interacts with and helps create the work itself.

By 1973, however, Graham abandoned film in favor of live performances and video works. While he experimented with video at Nova Scotia, he devoted most of his efforts there to the staging and recording of the film series. After leaving the school, he felt that continuing the film projects would prove too expensive. In addition to the financial motivations for changing media, Graham recounts that his decision to employ video technology was, in part, triggered by his interest in the magazine *Radical Software*.³⁷ *Radical Software*, which was published in eleven issues between 1970 and 1974, was a product of the video art collective Raindance. The varied background of the founders of Raindance was reflected in the multitude of topics covered in the *Radical Software* essays.³⁸ Issues of the magazine featured discussions on upcoming video art

³⁶ Pelzer has noted this element in Graham's films in her "Double Intersections," 45.

³⁷ Dan Graham interview with Eric de Bruyn (March 1996), in *Dan Graham*, ed. Gloria Moure, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1998), 203.

³⁸ When Raindance was formed between 1968 and 1969 Frank Gillette was an artist, Paul Ryan was a media theorist, and Ira Schneider was an experimental psychologist. For more on the history of Raindance and *Radical Software* see the publication's official website www.radicalsoftware.org. The site, compiled by Davidson Gigliotti (himself an active member of several video collectives in 1960s and 1970s) and Schneider, includes an archive of all the articles published in the magazine and a history of Raindance and

projects, new video technology and its applications, television programs, and polemical statements from artists and critics declaring the birth of a new social, artistic, and cultural moment. In general, *Radical Software* was conceived as an "attempt to turn on others to the idea [of video] as means of social change and exchange."³⁹ The first issue of the magazine laid out the defining principles of both the publication and the Raindance group. As noted by Davidson Gigliotti, foremost among these guidelines was the belief in what the Raindance members termed an "ecological" approach to understanding the role of technology in society.⁴⁰ For the Raindancers, adopting an "ecological" perspective meant considering the ways in which technology, such as video, could be analyzed as part of "cultural, informational, and political" systems.⁴¹ Ultimately, the goal of such an ecological examination was to liberate the means by which information is communicated.⁴² Graham not only shared a similar concern for creating socially engaged art, but also held an analogous conception of how the social communication of information could be explored by unpacking the myriad discursive strands bound together in everyday activities, such as the purchase of an art magazine.

Acknowledging the connection between Graham and *Radical Software* is crucial for understanding the artist's decision to explore video technology. In conversation with de Bruyn, Graham shares his enthusiasm for the magazine and remarks that Ryan was

Radical Software written by Gigliotti and based on interviews with the surviving members of the organization.

³⁹ "Message to the Reader," *Radical Software* 1.1 (Spring 1970), <http://www.radicalsoftware.org/e/volume1nr1.html> (accessed November 1, 2009).

⁴⁰ Davidson Gigliotti, "History," <http://www.radicalsoftware.org/e/history.html> (accessed November 1, 2009).

⁴¹ Gigliotti.

⁴² Gigliotti. Given this objective, it is not surprising that Raindance and *Radical Software* were two of the major factors behind the formation of the guerilla television group TVTV.

one of the "great video philosophers and pioneers."⁴³ In light of such statements, both de Bruyn and art historian William Kaizen have noted the artist's affinity with the general objectives of *Radical Software* and Raindance.⁴⁴ For his part, Kaizen has posited that *Radical Software* helped introduce Graham not only to the ideas of McLuhan, but also to the work of social scientist Gregory Bateson and the Raindance ecological stance.⁴⁵ The author goes on to assert that the artist's video pieces of the 1970s are, in part, a critique of the utopian vision of technology promoted in the pages of *Radical Software*.⁴⁶ While he does not confirm or deny such an interpretation, Graham comments that *Radical Software's* philosophical debt to McLuhan sparked his own interest in the theories of Benjamin, a connection that I explore below.⁴⁷ While Kaizen may overemphasize Graham's desire to move away from *Radical Software*, the artist's goals were certainly more politically oriented. De Bruyn underlines this same conclusion when he writes that "the politics of technology that emerged in *Radical Software* remained severely under theorized. Its contributors mostly maintained a misty-eyed, psychedelic attitude toward social change, eschewing any Marxist analysis of the mediatized conditions of contemporary life."⁴⁸ From the magazine pieces onward, Graham's art has always involved asking the very political questions left unexplored by the members of Raindance.

In addition, unlike the members of Raindance, Graham's art has never involved an intense focus of the role of television in the media saturation of contemporary society.

⁴³ Graham interview with de Bruyn, 203.

⁴⁴ de Bruyn, "Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism," 55. William Kaizen, "Steps to an Ecology of Communication: Radical Software, Dan Graham, and the Legacy of Gregory Bateson," *Art Journal* 67.3 (Fall 2008): 86-107.

⁴⁵ Kaizen, 86.

⁴⁶ Kaizen, 95.

⁴⁷ Graham interview with de Bruyn, 203.

⁴⁸ de Bruyn, "Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism," 55.

Joselit has examined *Radical Software's* political objectives and devotion to guerilla television at length and concludes that their projects were meant to act as interventions into network television. Network television, as conceived by the members of Raindance, was the most expansive and pervasive technological means to share information.⁴⁹ That such a global communicative device was closely guarded by major broadcast corporations and monitored by the government, highlighted the necessity for radical artists, such those affiliated with Raindance, to create their own form of activist television that would undermine the supposed neutrality of network television. While Joselit makes the case for reading Graham's time-delay video-installations as part of the same movement, the artist's projects rarely include network television. His work is more concerned with themes such as time and self-knowledge than with subverting network television. In fact, in Graham's best known piece that includes television programming, *Video Projection Outside of Home* (1978) (fig. 9), the television images presented to the world are whatever the occupants of the home are currently watching. In such a project, the focus is less on the insidious nature of network television and more about the division between public and private space. While the members of Raindance and Graham may not share the same single-minded interest in television, they do have a similar political orientation.

In his analysis of Graham's connection to Raindance, de Bruyn ties the political content of the artist's projects to a revision of ecological tactics utilized by the *Radical Software* writers. De Bruyn terms this politicized version of video ecology the artist's "topological" approach.⁵⁰ This maneuver was triggered by the artist's realization that the

⁴⁹ Joselit, 98-99.

⁵⁰ de Bruyn, "Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism," 36, 55-56.

ever-expanding, ecological perspective on the connections between technology and society was not capable of providing for a sustained interrogation of how technology can be used to limit or expand human consciousness. Part of the artist's topology, as de Bruyn conceives of it, involved an investigation of how individuals were manipulated by and could themselves manipulate technology in the service of communication.⁵¹ Such a conclusion is enriched by the analysis of how the video-installations, through their use of time-delay features, continue the critique of Minimalism offered by the magazine pieces while also addressing the roles history and time play in the management of self-knowledge.

Graham's Video-Installations and Time

In his 1989 essay "Performance: End of the '60s" Graham writes:

A premise of 1960s 'Modernist' art was to present the present as immediacy – as pure phenomenological consciousness without the contamination of historical or other *a priori* meaning. The world could be experienced as pure presence, self-sufficient and without memory. Each privileged present-time situation was to be totally unique or new. My video time-delay installations and performance designs use this 'Modernist' notion of phenomenological immediacy, foregrounding an awareness of the presence of the viewer's own perceptual process, while at the same moment they critique it by showing the impossibility of locating a pure

⁵¹ de Bruyn, "Topological Pathways of Post-Minimalism," 56.

present tense.⁵²

Such an investigation of what the artist labels the Modernist ideal of a “pure present tense” is crucial for understanding how Graham’s video-installations critique Minimalism. In his attempt to challenge Minimalism, the artist elided much of the complexity of the movement by mixing the more Greenbergian ideas of Judd into Morris's phenomenology-inflected conception of art. To untangle Graham's response to the phenomenological aspects of Minimalism, it is first crucial to clarify the artist's position on phenomenology as a philosophical movement. The artist certainly did not take issue with phenomenology per se. For example, Graham has stated that one of his earliest intellectual references was the work of the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, whose own existential philosophy was predicated on Edmund Husserl's phenomenology.⁵³ In addition, the artist has stated that his interest in how time is understood "started with phenomenology" picked up both from reading Sartre and from knowing some of the Minimalist artists active in New York during the 1960s.⁵⁴ Furthermore, a core concept of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* is that "the world is already constituted, but also never completely; in the first case we are acted upon, in the second we are open to an infinite number of possibilities...we exist in both ways at once."⁵⁵ This notion is one possible avenue for understanding Graham's relation to phenomenology. Philosopher Jon Stewart has characterized Merleau-Ponty's understanding of freedom as a belief that "the world and the individuals who inhabit it mutually conditioned each other. The world

⁵² Graham, “Performance: End of the ‘60s,” in *Two-Way Mirror Power*, 144.

⁵³ Graham interview with Buchloh, 69. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is, according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, routinely cited the principal founder of phenomenology. In brief, Husserl's philosophical method in which the focus is not on the thing under examination, but rather on one's consciousness of that thing, is a basis for the numerous philosophers (among them Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Derrida) who expanded on this basic precept.

⁵⁴ Graham interview with Boutet de Monvel and Reiger, 53.

⁵⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 453.

shapes the individual by its performed meanings and structures," but the individual remains free to modify those institutions as he or she sees fit.⁵⁶ In "Subject Matter," Graham's constant refrain that viewer and art object are "in-formation" proposes a similar conception of the individual's relation to the world. While both the work of art and the context in which viewing takes place hold forth particular concepts, viewers can and do bring their experiences to bear in their interpretation of the work. Therefore, while the artist only mentions Sartre in passing and never cites Merleau-Ponty directly, his conception of the viewing experience does underline the interest in phenomenological philosophy among certain members the New York art scene of the mid to late 1960s.⁵⁷

With the video-installations, Graham does not advance an interrogation of phenomenology as a philosophy. Rather, he puts forth a criticism of Minimalism's *application* of phenomenology to art. When Graham speaks of Minimalism's phenomenological approach, he uses the term "phenomenological" to signify the notion of embodied consciousness central to the general philosophical ideas of phenomenology. What he takes issue with is how Minimalism understood embodied consciousness as "pure," meaning that it is an ahistorical and forever present-tense fact that is independent of any other *a priori* meanings. Not only does such a treatment violate some of the key concepts of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, but it also (as Graham points out in

⁵⁶ Jon Stewart, "Merleau-Ponty's Criticisms of Sartre's Theory of Freedom" in *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 211.

⁵⁷ Left aside here are the well-known, much discussed and profound disagreements between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. This issue, however, has played little to no part in the phenomenological understandings of Minimalism that have proceeded from a decidedly Merleau-Pontian perspective. That Graham mentions Sartre should not be taken as an indication that he sought to integrate into his art, or was much less even aware of, the philosophical clash between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty.

"Subject Matter") denies the possibility for a viewer to assume a critical stance towards both art and history.⁵⁸

Furthermore, Graham's work is rooted in the realization that "Conceptual art's feeble response to the clash of its political fantasies with the real economic conditions of the art world marks out its historical limit as critique."⁵⁹ Through the video works, Graham assesses Conceptual art's failure to pose a complete scrutiny of Minimalist ideas regarding experience, communication, and the commodification of art. As Wall states, Graham's art forms a "critical interrogation of the discourses proposed by Pop and Minimal art, as they emerge in the critique of Conceptualism."⁶⁰ Thus, the artist's work is doubly critical. Not only does he interrogate Minimalism, but through his works he also questions the ability of Conceptual art to examine the problems of Minimalism. With the video-installations Graham analyzes both the subject of inquiry (Minimalism) and the lens through which that subject has been scrutinized (Conceptual art).

The aim of undertaking a kind of double-criticism is also found in the work of Walter Benjamin. Benjamin's notion of what Graham labels the "just-past" helps illuminate the artist's rejection of both Minimalism's "pure present tense" and Conceptual art's "struggle toward political immediacy."⁶¹ The artist's primary issue with both Minimalism and Conceptual art is the emphasis both place on the here-and-now of viewership. Thus, Minimalism and Conceptual art disregard the fact that the act of viewing an artwork, like the art object itself, is a cultural practice whose definition is entangled in a complex web of social conventions extending beyond the present moment.

⁵⁸ Another, psychological, aspect of Graham's approach to phenomenology is discussed at length below.

⁵⁹ Wall, 17.

⁶⁰ Wall, 23.

⁶¹ Wall, 11.

By employing the time-delay feedback, Graham allows for a type of viewership in which the dual acts of viewing and interpreting are understood as mediated by historical and social conditions. Time-delay feedback technology here means the use of a video camera to record live action which is then played back on a television monitor at a remove of a certain number of time increments. This situation, an example of what can be termed “feedback,” is clarified further in the discussion of the works below. Graham’s work does not hold forth a neutral type of viewing. Experiencing the video-installations demands that the viewer recognize how viewing is a product of social and historical structures. In this way, the video-installations undermine the ideal of a “pure phenomenological consciousness” in front of an art work.

One of the first works Graham created that addressed how the notion of supposedly unmediated viewership can be manipulated and inverted is *Two Consciousness Projection(s)* (1972) (fig. 10). This piece, through the use of a video camera, a television monitor, and two performers, highlights the impossibility of pure, present-tense perception. The first performer focuses her attention on the television monitor image of herself supplied in real-time by a video camera aimed at her by the second performer. In his notes for the work, the artist states that the first performer should be female and the second performer male. Graham also mentions that the sex and social class of the performers can be changed in order to bring about new results. He further stipulates that the female performer should verbalize her thoughts while watching herself on the television monitor. Concurrently, the male performer should focus “only *outside* himself on the woman, observing her objectively through the camera connected

to the monitor,” and verbalize his thoughts to the audience.⁶² As the artist notes, the audience will soon become aware that the consciousnesses of both performers are overlapping and determining each other’s perceptions. For example, the comments the woman makes while seeing herself are based not only on the objective self-view she is presented with on the monitor, but also on her subjective interpretation of that self-image. In projecting (verbalizing) these thoughts, the female performer can dictate the way in which the supposedly objective camera man films her in the near future. As Graham writes, “each’s verbal impression, in turn, affects the other’s perception,” so that how the man films the woman is in some way controlled by how she responds to the results of his filming.⁶³ Thus, the objectivity of the male performer (who, according to Graham’s instructions, is only to verbalize what he sees via the camera) is called into question. The audience recognizes that neither performer is able to be objective about what he or she sees because each individual's viewing process is always informed by the projections of the other.

Furthermore, the artist states that during *Two Consciousness Projection(s)*:

A field is created in which the audience and performers place reciprocal controls on the other. The audience’s reactions to the man’s responses (his projection of the woman) may function for him as a ‘superego’, inhibiting or subtly influencing the course of his behavior or consciousness of the situation. Likewise, the man’s responses on the periphery of the woman’s consciousness

⁶² Dan Graham, *Video- Architecture-Television, Writings on Video and Video Works, 1970-1978*. ed. Benjamin Buchloh (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press, 1979), 4.

⁶³ Graham, *Video-Architecture-Television*, 4.

interfere with her self-consciousness so that her behavioral responses, including those of self-perception may be 'subconsciously' affected. Each of the three elements functions mutually as a feedback-device governing behavior – a 'superego' or 'subconscious' to the consciousness and response of the others. An abstractly presupposed psychological (or social) model is physically observable by the audience.⁶⁴

Here, the artist is drawing the audience's attention to the ways in which behavior and perception can be socially controlled. While this theme was also apparent in the magazine pieces, with *Two Consciousness Projection(s)* the "social model" is only implicitly addressed. When Graham mentions a "presupposed psychological (or social) model," he is not speaking to one particular theoretical formulation. Instead, he is indicating that the work makes apparent the controls placed on the behaviors of both the viewers and the participants. In everyday social situations, this kind of social conditioning of behavior would go unrecognized. In revealing these structures, Graham highlights the inability of the participants (both performers and viewers) to be objective in their approach to the work. All responses, including those of the audience, are conditioned by the other projections in the field. Graham remarks that at first the audience may align itself with the male performer as an objective viewer of events, but eventually viewers find themselves identifying with the female performer who might be complicit with or struggling against the objectifying projections of the male performer.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Graham, *Video-Architecture-Television*, 4.

⁶⁵ Graham interview with de Bruyn, 202.

When viewers recognize this oscillation, they also acknowledge their own subjective reactions to the piece. The moment when viewers apprehend that neither performer is capable of a "pure" reaction, they also become aware of their own positions in relation to the work of art.

In 1974 Graham created *Present Continuous Past(s)* (figs. 11 and 12), which established the essential formal and conceptual framework for the remainder of his video installations. Subsequent works are variations on the central themes of *Present Continuous Past(s)* provoked by alterations of the work's basic physical components of mirror, video camera, and monitor. The formal layout of the work is based on the four walls of a gallery room: two adjacent walls are covered in mirrors while a third wall holds a video camera mounted above a monitor, leaving the fourth wall empty. The artist centers all attention on the viewer as the mirrors reflect the multiple viewpoints of an individual standing in front of the monitor. As illustrated in Graham's diagram for the work, the monitor plays back whatever was placed in front of the camera eight seconds ago. Additionally, the mirror-covered walls allow the viewer to experience a sense of time regression within the video image. Again, Graham's sketch for the work proves helpful here as he notes that contained within the eight-second delay image are images from sixteen and twenty four seconds ago. Thus, in experiencing *Present Continuous Past(s)*, the viewer is presented with temporally successive views of the self within the same physical space. Acknowledging that a multitude of time events can occur simultaneously in the present tense illuminates a possible way of interpreting Graham's work through the writings of Benjamin.

As previously noted, the artist was familiar with the writings of the Frankfurt School by the mid-1960s and incorporated Marcuse's critical assessment of the one-dimensional society into his own analysis of Minimalism. In *Present Continuous Past(s)*, Graham continues this examination by undermining the modernist obsession with the present. As he states in conversation with art historian Ludger Gerdes:

I think the idea of basing art on a strict phenomenology of the present and the work's visual presence assumed that every present would be equal to the present that just passed, that we'd have a series of presents, that they would be sufficient. My critique is that this devaluates the former, just-past present. Walter Benjamin expresses this idea first; he notes that in consumer culture the importance of what has been recently passed and just discarded...leads to an amnesia about that time period.⁶⁶

From a historical perspective, Graham's reference to Benjamin is curious. The idea of a just-past that the artist credits to the theorist is most completely worked out in the latter's unfinished manuscript known as the *Arcades Project*. This text was not published in English until 1999; nevertheless, there is evidence that Graham was aware of Benjamin's central ideas in the early to mid 1980s.⁶⁷ Thus, what is presented in the above quote is not an explanation of inspiration or intention, but rather a suggestion for interpretation.

⁶⁶ Graham interview with Ludger Gerdes, in *Dan Graham: Selected Writings and Interviews on Art Works, 1965-1995*, ed. Adachiara Zevi (Rome, Italy: I Libri Di Zerynthia, 1996), 191-2.

⁶⁷ Graham discusses Benjamin at length in his "Legacies of Critical Practice in the 1980s," in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Dia Art Foundation and Bay Press, 1987), 86-91. In addition, his essay "Corporate Arcadias," *Artforum* 26.4 (December 1987): 68-74, cites political philosopher Susan Buck-Morris's "Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*: Redeeming Mass Culture for the Revolution," *New German Critique* 29 (Spring/Summer 1983): 211-40, in which the author quotes, in English, passages from the first, German language, publication of *The Arcades Project*.

The just-past elements of Graham's video-installations do not stem from a direct reading of Benjamin, but rather from a common theme the artist recognized between their works. Furthermore, the artist states that he came to the notion of Benjamin's just-past through a previous interest in what is termed "drug time."⁶⁸ In Graham's explanation, "drug time" is the understanding of time's progression as conceived by those under influence of drugs, specifically the sensation that the passage of time only occurs in one's mind.⁶⁹ The artist's "drug time" is the foundation of his interest in the just-past and Benjamin's writings offer a productive term for a concept Graham regards as essential to his video-installation work. Explicating this idea and how it can be defined via a consideration of the video installations allows for an expanded understanding of these works.

With *Present Continuous Past(s)*, Graham foregrounds a viewer's perceptual process within the art work and makes that viewer witness to his or her own interactions with the work and other viewers.⁷⁰ Such awareness, the artist maintains, critiques a belief in an un-interrupted or "pure" present tense. To spark this kind of self-acknowledgement, the artist creates a particular kind of spectatorship in *Present Continuous Past(s)* in which the present-time action of viewing is fragmented into a series of engagements with just-past events. Viewership becomes an act of watching one's self viewing. Each particular perceptual moment in front of the video-installation is not unique but is composed of a chain of chronologically specific moments that have already occurred. Thus, *Present Continuous Past(s)* is a commentary on how the past is always at hand in the present tense. For Graham, the past is continuous. The present, therefore, does not break this chain, but is a construction of the previous links.

⁶⁸ Graham interview with Boutet de Monvel and Reiger, 53.

⁶⁹ Graham interview with Boutet de Monvel and Reiger, 53.

⁷⁰ Graham, "Performance: End of the '60s," 144.

If, as the artist indicates, the Modernist conception of the present needs to be revised, then how does one characterize Graham's model of the past that is to serve as a remedy? The artist provides little explanation as to his own ideas on the topic. Instead he offers that his notion of the just-past comes from Benjamin, marijuana consumption, and the Rolling Stones. Graham's 1991 interview with art historian Brian Hatton offers some clarification as the artist remarks that the video pieces operate on the "strategy of triggering 'dialectical images from the phantasmagoria'" that were identified by Benjamin. As Benjamin writes:

the true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again...For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably."⁷¹

The image of the past that one requires in order to launch a concentrated analysis of the present is always under the threat of disappearance. Benjamin suggests that the power latent in an image is "dialectics at a standstill." The dialectical images he describes as "genuinely historical" are such because they illuminate "the relation of what-has-been to the now" as dialectical.⁷² Furthermore, these images are able to abate the onslaught of the now that destroys past moments. Likewise, Graham does not arrest past experiences in his video-installations. Instead, the artist allows both past and present to be held in visual and conceptual tandem. Visually, the mirrored walls of *Present Continuous*

⁷¹ Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Walter Benjamin: Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1986), 255.

⁷² Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 463.

Past(s) reflect the current time, while the video playback re-presents the past. The viewer arrives at a sense of time that is as equally aware of the past as it is of the present.

Oscillating between the two sets of time-based experiences, spectators realize the interconnectedness of the just-past with the present. By freezing the stream of new experiences that keeps one locked in a kind of ahistorical present tense, Graham frees the viewer to contemplate the very current in which they are held.

Ultimately, Benjamin considered “dialectics at a standstill” as the crucial move beyond the oppressive structures first identified by Marx. In such a pause, one could unravel the social dynamics that keep the past forever in debris and the present in a state of constant change. Likewise, the artist’s application of a similar situation also sought a political goal. As de Duve posits, *Present Continuous Past(s)* can be understood as political in three distinct ways.⁷³ First, the work “render[s] the medium explicitly self-referential” in that video can be thought of in relation to television and thus a form of mass media. Graham illustrates that both are subject to external control. Second, the piece can elicit a kind of “info-terrorism” from viewers who may place their hands over the camera’s lens and thus erase the whole “*mise en abyme*.” Finally, *Present Continuous Past(s)* allows viewers to detach themselves from their own image, creating the possibility for rumination on one’s own place within the “fabrication of historical perspective.” For the most part, the present study agrees with the last of de Duve’s conclusions. The consideration of video as an offshoot of television is an analysis found in the earliest discourses on video art. Graham, however, does not seem concerned with such a connection in his work of the 1970s. Instead of extending the art historian’s tempting metaphor of viewers as pre-digital age computer hackers and information

⁷³ de Duve, 55-57.

pirates, here the focus is on the how the viewer interacts with a Graham video-installation and what political repercussions can be seen in this meeting. Works such as *Present Continuous Past(s)* showcase Graham's belief in the political power of self-awareness.

The self-awareness that Graham strives to elicit from the viewer arises in his or her acknowledgement of the "just-past present." For the artist, the just-past present opens up the possibility of Benjamin's "dialectics at a standstill." The reappearance of past moments in the present generates a method of interrogating both past and present states of being. In the end, the "just-past present" is fleeting in a work like *Present Continuous Past(s)*. The playback images are not slowed down or stopped completely, but rather unfold as if happening again in real time. Standing in front of the camera and looking into the monitor for more than eight seconds will provide an image of one's self in the act of looking. Thus, the spectator is held in a state between witnessing subject and object of contemplation. This dialogue between viewer and art work is best understood with Graham's term "feedback," the loop created when one is part of a video-installation in which the line of demarcation between viewer and art object becomes unclear. Feedback, in the artist's estimation, can also result in a viewer's interior state being observable. As he writes, "feedback creates both a process of continuous learning and also the subjective sense of an endlessly extendible present time in flux, an interior time connected to an unfixed future goal and continually re-experienced immediate past."⁷⁴ For example, when I see myself on the television monitor in *Present Continuous Past(s)* I also become aware that any activity undertaken will be seen again, not only by me, but by anyone else who may be present at a future moment. The work thus forces me to ask: In the future, what kind of image of myself do I want to present to the observing world? Within this

⁷⁴ Graham, "Video in Relation to Architecture," in *Selected*, 110-1.

question there is also the realization that all of one's actions up to and including physically leaving the work will henceforth be re-played and become part of someone else's experience. In this moment, a work such as *Present Continuous Past(s)* opens another field for critical exploration: the social construction of self-identity.

The Future Tense: Self and Social Self

In addition to noting that his video art has a definite “psychedelic” edge, Graham contends that video feedback began in learning environments and psychological studies that pre-date his own work.⁷⁵ An example of such a use of video would be sociologists or psychologists who set up video cameras to record the actions of their subjects. Here it is valuable to explore another aspect of Graham's reaction to phenomenology, his examination of the philosophy as it informs psychological models. In conversation with Francis, the artist remarks that his works of the 1970s contrasted "American behaviorism and European phenomenology."⁷⁶ Here Graham is addressing the rift that arose between behaviorist and phenomenological approaches to psychology in the 1940s and 1950s. When his artistic career began in the 1960s, the tension between these two models was a pressing issue in the academic study of psychology. For example, in 1964 Rice University hosted a symposium, *Behaviorism and Phenomenology: Contrasting Bases For Modern Psychology*, dedicated to showcasing the work of the leading proponents in

⁷⁵ Graham, “Video in Relation to Architecture,” in *Selected*, 113.

⁷⁶ Graham interview with Francis, 17.

each field.⁷⁷ In order to elucidate this aspect of the artist's work it is first necessary to provide a brief summary of the debate in its historical context.

In his history of phenomenological psychology, education researcher Peter Ashworth notes that American psychology of the late 19th and early 20th centuries sought to investigate the meaning of experience, an objective that later phenomenological studies would also pursue.⁷⁸ At the same time in Germany, Husserl codified what would become known as phenomenological philosophy. By the time Husserl's works came to the attention of American psychologists in the 1930s, however, a new scientific model of psychology had come to prominence. Behaviorism, which is most often associated with the studies of B.F. Skinner, disregarded experience-based theories of psychology as too bound to philosophy and un-scientific. Instead, behaviorism sought a methodical approach to the human mind based less on theoretical speculation and more on laboratory experiments. At its core, behaviorism's goal was the development of practical applications that would allow psychologists to identify and modify human behavioral patterns.⁷⁹ While behaviorism dominated American psychology in the 1940s and 1950s, by the early 1960s some psychologists began to incorporate the ideas of phenomenology back into the discipline. At the forefront of this movement was Robert MacLeod, who in 1964 identified the primary concerns of phenomenological psychology.⁸⁰ For him, phenomenological psychology was not a strict method based entirely on Husserl's

⁷⁷ The resulting papers and often heated roundtable discussions were published as *Behaviorism and Phenomenology: Contrasting Bases For Modern Psychology*, ed. T.W. Wann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

⁷⁸ John Ashworth, "Introduction to the Place of Phenomenological Thinking in the History of Psychology," in *Phenomenology and Psychological Science: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Peter Ashworth and Man Cheung Chung (New York: Springer, 2006), 11-44.

⁷⁹ John A. Mills, *Control: A History of Behavioral Psychology* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 4-6.

⁸⁰ This characterization of MacLeod is found both in the introduction to the volume edited by Wann and in the Ashworth text.

philosophy, but rather a way of thinking about the subtle and variable links between experience and consciousness.⁸¹ In this suggestion lies the heart of the division between behaviorism and phenomenology. Skinner rejected what he saw as phenomenology's insistence on the conception of the individual as forever bound to his or her own private world and countered that the only way to scientifically regard consciousness is by examining how people behave in response to stimulation from the world around them.⁸² In response, the phenomenological psychologists pointed out that researchers should not assume that they are able to escape or ignore their own bias when studying the experiences of others.⁸³ In any psychological project, the phenomenological adherents proposed, there is a meeting and overlapping of two experiences: that of the researcher and that of the subject. These two experiences shape each other. Thus, any meaning derived from the encounter between researcher and subject is conditional and can not be held up as an essential, monolithic truth about human interaction. Again, such a notion is similar to Graham's "in-formation" that occurs at the meeting of viewer and art work. This concept is at the center of what could be labeled the artist's phenomenology.

When Graham claims that he sought to contrast "American behaviorism and European phenomenology" he is suggesting that his work puts forth both psychological models in tandem. A work such as *Two Viewing Rooms* (1975) (figs. 13 and 14) with its use of a one-way mirror in conjunction with video cameras highlights this combination of behaviorism and phenomenology. The piece described in *Video Architecture-Television*

⁸¹ Robert MacLeod, "Phenomenology: A Challenge to Experimental Psychology," in *Behaviorism and Phenomenology*, 51.

⁸² B.F. Skinner, "Behaviorism at Fifty," in *Behaviorism and Phenomenology*, 85-89. At the symposium where MacLeod and Skinner presented their lectures, the moderator, T.W. Wann, remarked that each side perhaps mis-understood the other's core concepts and thus assumed a more radical division than was actually present.

⁸³ MacLeod, 51.

(1979) and first presented at the Museum of Modern Art in Art in 1980 consists of two rooms (one brightly lit, the other dim) separated by a one-way mirror.⁸⁴ Darkened Room A contains a video camera on a tripod that is pressed up against the glass wall dividing the two rooms. Entry to Room A is gained from a different direction than to Room B so as to maintain the sense of two unconnected areas. Room B contains a video monitor and two mirrored walls, one of which is shared with Room A. The image on the monitor is relayed from the camera in Room A and shows any activities taking place in Room B. The artist has stated that the one-way mirror element of works such as this was borrowed from psychological laboratory experiments in which researchers could watch subjects without being seen themselves.⁸⁵ In the scenario set up by *Two Viewing Rooms*, an individual in Room A may assume the position of the behaviorist researcher in so much as he or she may objectively observe the actions of an individual in Room B. Spectators in Room B, on the other hand, are aware that their actions and reactions are being recorded and viewed by an un-seen observer. As is the case with *Present Continuous Past(s)*, individuals in Room B, via their engagement with recorded and mirrored self-images, become aware of their own embodied experience. In other words, Room A of *Two Viewing Rooms* is behaviorist in orientation, while Room B allows for the phenomenological viewpoint. The ability of viewers to take part in both sides of the work by leaving one room and entering the other sparks the recognition that neither perspective is wholly suitable for understanding their experiences in the world. The behaviorist position denies the individual's role in the construction their own

⁸⁴ The description here is based on Graham's notes and diagrams for the work originally published in *Video Architecture-Television*, 39. The work's details are also provided in *Dan Graham*, ed. Gloria Moure, 107-109.

⁸⁵ Graham interview with Hatton, 146.

consciousness, instead seeing their experiences solely as reactions to external stimuli. On the other hand, the phenomenological attitude with its focus on the individual's own embodied perception does not completely reveal how experience is shaped by external controls. By mixing the two stances together, *Two Viewing Rooms* elicits an acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of both sides.

While it would appear hasty to align behaviorism with Marcuse's one-dimensional society, there is nevertheless a point of contact, especially in the charged political climate of America in the 1960s and 1970s. Psychologist Laurence D. Smith asserts that Skinner's behaviorist ideology was, in part, a "call for the submission of the individual and culture to the rule of science linked...to its ideal of a rationally planned society."⁸⁶ By the 1970s, the behaviorist devotion to social progress through the manipulation of behavior had drawn considerable attention and condemnation. The denunciation of Skinner was so pervasive in the 1970s that it is worth quoting Smith at length to acknowledge the extent of the loathing the behaviorist inspired. While Skinner appeared on a Time magazine cover and had several of his books reach the *New York Times* best-seller list,

The left-wing linguist Noam Chomsky...portrayed Skinner's views on cultural design as leading to a totalitarian state with 'gas ovens smoking in the distance.' A 1971 speech by Spiro Agnew depicted Skinner as a dangerous radical bent on undermining the American family and such cherished precepts as the individual and human

⁸⁶ Laurence D. Smith, "Situating B.F. Skinner in Behaviorism in American Culture," in *B.F. Skinner and Behaviorism in American Culture*, ed. Laurence D. Smith and William R. Woodward (London: Associated University Press, 1996), 304.

freedom... [And] the noted philosopher Karl Popper,
described him as 'an enemy of freedom and of democracy'...⁸⁷

While Graham may not have shared such an intense disapproval of Skinner's behaviorist impact on American culture, he did hold a similar concern that principles of social ordering and progress sought to undermine the potential of individuals to interrogate their own society. In offering a phenomenologically inclined alternative, *Two Viewing Rooms* furthers this political analysis while at the same time questioning the extent to which such an alternative can fully acknowledge the depth of repression.⁸⁸

To counteract the pervasive alienation and oppression he saw in society, Graham claims to have established a position for himself in the 1970s as a kind of “art-guru,” and he credits this objective, in part, to his interest in the writings of the Scottish psychologist R.D. Laing.⁸⁹ In works such as *The Politics of Experience* (1967) and *Self and Others* (1969), Laing discussed how behavior and self-identity are fashioned through social interaction. Oftentimes cited as a member of the anti-psychiatry movement, the psychologist routinely distanced himself from this label. Instead, he considered his scholarship as a new direction in the attempt to understand human behavior. In addition, Ashworth has characterized Laing's thought as essentially phenomenological, but with a hint of Sartre's existentialism.⁹⁰ Overall, Laing's conception of identity as a social construct rejects the notion that psychological problems are generated in isolation within the individual's mind. Rather, he asserts that society itself, by defining what is and is not

⁸⁷ Smith, 295.

⁸⁸ In the criticisms of Skinner, there is also a recurring rebuke of behaviorism's obsession with efficiency. In the third chapter, I examine Graham's similar critique of the Bauhaus principles of efficient design and progress. In the 1970s there was a widespread critical reconsideration of the ideals of social progress that were developed in the mid-twentieth century.

⁸⁹ Graham, “Performance: End of the ‘60s,” 142.

⁹⁰ Ashworth, 170.

normal interaction among individuals, can structure how one relates to self and to others. Variance from these prescribed engagements, he adds, is what is understood as psychological illness. Laing concludes that by examining how behavior is structured by social conventions one can begin to loosen the oppressive apparatus that detaches the individual from self-knowledge.

Much like the Frankfurt School critical theorists, Laing interprets the current condition of humanity as a form of extreme alienation:

We are born into a world where alienation awaits us. We are potentially men, but in an alienated state, and this state is not simply a natural system. Alienation as our present destiny is achieved only by outrageous violence perpetuated by human beings on human beings.⁹¹

Furthermore, the author presents a bleak picture of humans who have “killed perhaps 100,000,000 of their fellow normal men in the last fifty years.”⁹² This violence arises from the individual being estranged from self. Unable to fully know one’s self, one is more likely to become complacent in the face of widespread violence enacted against others. The assumption here is that without the knowledge of one’s self as individual, the possibility of others having a self becomes remote. According to Laing there is a potential remedy: the realization that all behavior is a function of experience. Graham’s video works address this solution and attempt to undermine self-estrangement by suggesting “that the (inter)personal could re-politicize the body politic.”⁹³ This model of

⁹¹ Laing, *Politics of Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), xv.

⁹² Laing, *Politics of Experience*, 12.

⁹³ Graham, “Performance: End of the 60’s,” 142.

the interpersonal drives the engagement of viewer with self and with others that is the conceptual corner-stone of the video-installation pieces.

The most productive way of unpacking the artist's use of the interpersonal is to discuss the concept in the terminology used by Laing. The interpersonal is what Laing defines as "interexperience...[the] relation between experience and experience."⁹⁴ In the artist's video-installations, this field of dialoguing experiences is brought to the forefront of the viewer's attention by the use of both mirrors and video playback. The viewer witnesses his or her own reflection in the mirror and is also made aware of his or her past actions along with those of other spectators through the video image. Thus, a type of interchange is possible between the experiences facilitated by the work. Laing describes interexperience: "the other person's behavior is an experience of mine. My behavior is an experience of the other."⁹⁵ Within *Present Continuous Past(s)*, one is not only witness to the other, but also to one's self as other with the acknowledgement of the experience of others who are in turn experiencing one's actions. Both the mirrors and the video in the work offer the self as an object for contemplation. It is therefore possible that in Graham's work, through the careful arrangement of both physical and temporal factors, the viewer can experience self as other.

Crucial to understanding the interpersonal or interexperience is the assumption that behavior is a guide for how experience takes place. As both Laing and Graham would have it, one can only experience another person through that person's actions, which are in turn dictated by the other person's experiences. Given that the behavior one adopts in particular situations is governed by socially mandated norms, the conclusion

⁹⁴ Laing, *Politics of Experience*, 4.

⁹⁵ Laing, *Politics of Experience*, 4.

can be made that experience is a socially controlled state of being. For example: Peter is speaking with his supervisor Paul about a work project. Peter assumes the role of subordinate and this is reflected in his posture, voice tone, word choice, and body movements. Paul's experience as supervisor is, as Laing would offer, actualized by his experience of Peter's subordination. Likewise, Paul's behavior towards Peter actualizes Peter's experience as subordinate. In this situation, there is a socially mandated interpersonal relationship between Peter and Paul that drives their experience of each other and of themselves. However, any shift in behavior that deviates from this socially prescribed dialogue has the potential to upset the experience. What Graham's video-installations allow for is a dismantling of normative communication between viewers and their selves. By showing past behaviors, the work offers viewers the chance to consider what self they present to others and to adjust their actions to shift future representations of themselves in turn.

Behavior, according to Laing, is defined by cultural conventions that operate below the activities of daily life. Just as both Peter and Paul in the above scenario automatically assume their roles when in dialogue with one another, viewers of works of art may interact with the art object according to set principles. In recognizing this element of viewership, many Minimalist artists placed objects in the same physical space as the viewer as a way to break with traditional codes of viewer-object relations in which the two are separate and discrete parts of a total experience: the work of art is there, the viewer is here. Unlike Minimalism, which retained the object as the locus of the art experience, Graham's works erase this reference point and position the viewer at the center. If Minimalism was an attempt to focus the viewer's attention on the dynamics of

looking, then Graham's art furthers this objective by altogether eliminating the object. The following chapter considers Graham's work in terms of space and how the installation as art work further undermines traditional notions of art and viewership. At that time, greater attention is given to the object as part of the art experience. I am not suggesting here that the artist's objects are entirely without importance, but rather that Graham's work relies on the viewer to generate meaning. Without a traditional object, the viewer is left to contemplate his or her own image as viewer. As previously noted, the artist's attempts to negotiate a new artistic direction away from Minimalism were sparked in part by an attempt to critique one-dimensional society. Considering this objective in relation to Laing's notions of behavior and self allows for a reading of the artist's work as an opportunity for viewers to dismantle normative social practices.

It is important to note here that neither the artist nor his work actually pulls apart normative social functions. These radical activities are left open for viewers to pursue if they choose. A comparison with another work of 1970s that does attempt to break down social conventions proves especially illuminating for this aspect of Graham's art. In his well known *Seedbed* (1972) (fig. 15,) Acconci positioned himself below the gallery floor, out of sight, and relayed his masturbatory musings regarding the audience via a public address system installed in the gallery. In such a piece, the artist's actions give rise to a feeling of social awkwardness among gallery goers and blur the boundaries between public and private behavior. The theme of breaking the public/private divide has been identified by the art historians Frazier Ward and Gloria Moure as one of the core

principles of Acconci's work.⁹⁶ Similar to Graham, Acconci understood the self as a public construction and part of his transgression of the normative divisions between public and private is aimed at uncovering the social self.⁹⁷ In addition, Acconci's performance and installation pieces of the late 1960s and 1970s can be examined as part of the same desire to critique Minimalism that is evident in Graham's contemporaneous works.

As Ward points out, Acconci derived many of his artistic cues from the process art of the Minimalist artist Richard Serra.⁹⁸ Serra's emphasis on the physical activities the artist undertook to create an object is reflected and expanded in Acconci's use of his own body as medium.⁹⁹ In *Seedbed*, as the artist shares with Mark C. Taylor, "I was part of the floor; a viewer who entered the room stepped into my power field - they came into my house."¹⁰⁰ This concept of the artist's "power field" underlines how he thought of the audience of his works of the early 1970s.¹⁰¹ Moure argues that "this concept [power field] suggests that one 'area' of behavior can superimpose itself on another (absorbing it concentrically) through a process of influence based on the incitement, tension and the subsequent response."¹⁰² This "tension" in a work such as *Seedbed* arises from the

⁹⁶ Frazier Ward, "In Private and Public," in *Vito Acconci*, ed. Frazier Ward (New York: Phaidon, 2002), 16-67. Gloria Moure, "From Words to Things," in *Vito Acconci: Writings, Works, Projects*, ed. Gloria Moure (Barcelona: Polígrafa, 2001), 9-56.

⁹⁷ Ward, 26.

⁹⁸ Ward, 35.

⁹⁹ Ward, 35. Graham contends that Acconci's reception of Serra was precipitated by the latter's having read drafts of "Subject Matter." See Graham interview with Buchloh, 76. I leave aside the validity of this claim as the possible connections between Graham and Acconci as post-Minimalist artists is not the primary focus of my study. The aim here is to clarify and amplify the points I raise regarding the role of the viewer in Graham's video-installations and not to provide a thorough analysis of Acconci's pieces.

¹⁰⁰ Acconci interview with Mark C. Taylor in *Vito Acconci*, 13.

¹⁰¹ While Acconci gained widespread notoriety for his more "in-your-face" attitude towards viewership, this aspect of his art was most present in the pieces he created in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Again much like Graham, Acconci has focused more on architectural projects since the 1980s.

¹⁰² Moure, 27. Intriguingly, both Moure and Ward credit Acconci's adoption of the idea of power fields to his interest in the work of social scientist Kurt Lewin (1890-1947). Graham, in his interview with Buchloh,

audience being made part of the work and privy to what is assumed to be Acconci's private thoughts and actions. The explicit behavior of the artist under the floor boards consumes the spectator's attention, making his or her behavior in the piece almost entirely dependent upon Acconci's actions. To be sure, the audience is crucial to Acconci's work, for without witnesses, the artist's performance would not be a type of exhibitionism. The actual violation of social norms, however, is committed by the artist himself. One can be both repulsed by and take part in this breach, but it is the artist and his work that are ultimately responsible for upsetting social conventions. Acconci acknowledges as much when he concurs that in a piece like *Seedbed* he is challenging the normative social division between public and private, but that only an "outsider" (i.e. an audience member) can verify and reify his transgression and thus make the work meaningful.¹⁰³

In Graham's video-installation projects, on the other hand, the artist is removed from the functioning of the work, and the actions of the piece do not involve social misconduct. Instead, it plays back whatever the viewer chooses to do with the work. Thus, in Acconci's piece the political implications are underlined by the artist himself, whereas in a Graham work the possibility for critical action remains latent pending viewer activation. Both are examples of political art works, as they suggest an alternate form of social action, but Graham imbues his video-installations with the potential for political action instead of the more confrontational and active politics of Acconci's work.

mentions that his mother studied under Lewin, but shows little further interest in Lewin's work. See Graham interview with Buchloh, 69.

¹⁰³ Acconci interview with Taylor, 13-14.

The Monitored Viewer: Video and the Issue of Surveillance

Video cameras, when used to record and play back the activities of viewers, suggest the surveillance potential of the medium in the social sphere. Generally, scholars in the fields of sociology, psychology, and criminal justice apply the label "surveillance" to any activities seeking to collect and manage personal information like credit scores, medical records, and telephone conversations that are not undertaken by the individual to which this information applies. In the following discussion, I employ "surveillance" to denote the use of closed-circuit televisions and video cameras by an individual or institution to monitor the actions of another individual or group. Such a selective reading of this term is appropriate in the present study as it is closest to Graham's use of video cameras in his work. While the analysis here is occasioned by the technological similarity of the artist's use of video cameras to video surveillance, I am examining Graham's video-installations in relation to surveillance as a social reality in which multiple discourses on self-identity, public safety, and social control are active.

There are two interconnected ways to explore the theme of surveillance in a Graham video-installation such as *Two Viewing Rooms*. First, the work may be linked to cultural and political discourses regarding surveillance taking place in the early to mid-1970s. Second, *Two Viewing Rooms* can be understood in terms of the artistic dialogue surrounding video art in the late 1960s and early 1970s. After discussing the first of these approaches, I turn to the second and offer a comparison of Graham's video-installations to those of Nauman as a way of explicating the social and political dimensions of the former's work.

Since the late 1960s, video cameras have been employed in the United States to monitor and control the behavior of individuals in both public and private spaces.¹⁰⁴ As sociologist and journalist Christian Parenti points out, "By the late 1960s CCTV [closed-circuit television] was already coming into regular use as video technology became cheap enough for practical use."¹⁰⁵ The advent of cost-effective video technology in the early 1960s allowed government agencies, businesses, and other institutions to monitor and perhaps prevent events (e.g., riots or theft) that could potentially damage the smooth functioning of their social projects. In the 1970s, economic and social restructuring increased the attention on ways in which surveillance could be used to facilitate public safety.¹⁰⁶ For example, Graham states that corporations and city offices began installing atriums inside buildings during the late 1960s.¹⁰⁷ Such activities were, in the artist's estimation, undertaken in response to the perceived danger of the streets and public parks of the city. As he notes, the cultivated interior/exterior space of the corporate atrium also usually contained video surveillance equipment that allowed the building's owners to ensure the safety of the occupants. At the same time, commercial spaces such as banks and stores were outfitted with closed-circuit video systems in an attempt to deter theft. By the mid to late 1970s, municipal authorities began installing cameras on especially notorious street corners as a method of crime prevention.

In chronicling the development of surveillance activities, Parenti declares that the understanding of surveillance in the 1970s was in large part based on the work of the

¹⁰⁴ Such a geo-political distinction is crucial to note as research on the history and use of video surveillance in the United Kingdom is a related, but decidedly separate, field of scholarship.

¹⁰⁵ Christian Parenti, *The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America From Slavery to the War on Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 110. This text is a historical consideration of surveillance.

¹⁰⁶ Parenti, 110-111.

¹⁰⁷ Graham, "Video in Relation to Architecture," in *Illuminating Video: An essential guide to Video Art*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990), 174-75.

architect and city planner Oscar Newman.¹⁰⁸ Newman's text, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design* (1972), is widely credited with introducing new models of city planning that became popular in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰⁹ One of the core concepts of *Defensible Space* is the creation of what Newman terms "natural surveillance." In this technique, the city planner designs public and private spaces that are easily observable by the occupants of those spaces.¹¹⁰ In theory, such openness allows home and business owners to monitor their own property as well as the property of their neighbors, thus imbuing the community with a collective sense of security. In addition, "natural surveillance" would deter criminal activity through the suggestion of constant monitoring.¹¹¹ Thus, the characterization of surveillance in the 1970s underscored what can be called the dual-inscription of the surveillance situation. On one hand, those being watched are understood to hold the potential for illicit behavior, while on the other, those watching are understood to be in a position, not only of authority, but also of safety. Therefore, surveillance functions to define observer, observed, and the relation between these two positions. This dual-inscription aspect of surveillance is at the center of Graham's pieces in which he employed surveillance-like activities.

The most notable instance of surveillance in Graham's video-installation work is *Two Viewing Rooms*, which is described in detail above. In this work, a person in Room B is aware that he or she is being recorded and that there is the possibility of an un-seen

¹⁰⁸ Parenti, 112.

¹⁰⁹ Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design* (New York: Macmillan, 1972). For an extended discussion of Newman's ideas and their lasting impact on urban and suburban planning see: Danielle M. Reynald and Henk Elffers, "The Future of Newman's Defensible Space Theory: Linking Defensible Space and the Routine Activities of Place," *European Journal of Criminology* 6.1 (January 2009): 25-46. The authors also provide examples of successful and failed implementations of Newman's theories.

¹¹⁰ Reynald and Elffers, 29.

¹¹¹ Reynald and Elffers, 29.

observer in Room A viewing his or her actions. Crucially, one can leave either room and enter the opposite space, reversing the role of observer and observed. The inability of a viewer in Room A to influence the behavior of a spectator in Room B is the key formal element in *Two Viewing Rooms*' capacity to direct an inquiry into the social aspects of surveillance. Unlike most surveillance situations, there is no implicit threat of the unseen observer in Room A imposing his or her will on the person in Room B. Graham's work allows both the observer and the observed to maintain a meditative ease within the work. The contemplative position the viewer assumes in relation to the work is furthered by the installation of the piece in a museum or art gallery. This institutional space normalizes both the act of viewing someone else's behavior and the knowledge that one is under surveillance. The physical location of *Two Viewing Rooms* in an art gallery or museum allows a viewer to feel, in some ways, that it is safe to be looked at and to look. The museum setting affords viewers the opportunity to experience some of the effects of surveillance from the position of both observer and observed, safe in the knowledge that *Two Viewing Rooms* is, after all, just a work of art and cannot produce the same, if more unnerving, effects of surveillance as when it is used in other locations such as prisons. The term "surveillance" may suggest that one is unaware of being watched or that the person or persons who are watching are not visually accessible to those under surveillance. In Graham's work, it is obvious that one is under surveillance. Furthermore, viewers may leave Room B and enter Room A to take part in the surveillance activities. The lack of implied correction, the location of the work, and the freedom of movement between the rooms, diffuses many of the potentially frightening

aspects of the surveillance situation. In this way, Graham allows a viewer to address the act of surveillance from a critical perspective.

In addition, *Two Viewing Rooms* dissolves the equation of power with unseen viewership that is often found in surveillance. Even in situations such as Newman's "natural surveillance" in which the threat of physical coercion is relatively absent, the individual monitoring a space is assumed to have authority over the individual being seen. Like other works of visual art, Graham's video-installations call forth a type of spectatorship that insists on a complete viewing experience. For example, I could not claim to truly have seen Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Hunters in the Snow* if all that I saw was the pack of dogs in the bottom left foreground of the painting without seeing the rest of the work. Similarly, one could not claim to have experienced *Two Viewing Rooms* without entering *both* rooms and interacting with the work from both sides of the one-way mirror. Therefore, any sense of authority one would attain by being in Room A could be easily dismantled by the simple act of walking next door. The instability of authoritative viewership in *Two Viewing Rooms* undermines the relations of power set up by the surveillance situation in other contexts. Furthermore, an audience member in Room B can be understood to help dictate the experience of an audience member in Room A as whatever an individual in Room A sees is reliant on the actions of an individual in Room B. The inter-dependency of the two viewing experiences and the breaking down of the power balance of normative surveillance scenarios highlights the political meanings that can be located in *Two Viewing Rooms*.

The political dimension of surveillance is tied to the notion that vision itself is never neutral. The idea that vision is an extension of social power has roots in the

theories of Michel Foucault and other scholars. The most complete survey of surveillance as an art form is the collection of essays published in conjunction with the exhibition “CTRL [SPACE]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother” held by the ZKM Center for Art and Media in 2002.¹¹² In general, the writers who contributed to this catalogue base many of their conclusions on Foucault’s examination of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon.¹¹³ As a way of controlling prison populations, the Panopticon (essentially a large viewing tower centrally oriented among cells,) “induce[ed] in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.”¹¹⁴ For Foucault, the visible yet unverifiable power of the Panopticon denotes a shift in traditional methods of discipline. Historically, the authority of a monarch was reified by the use of corrective violence such as public spectacles. The punishment of aberrant members of the population via public torture and execution by extension disciplined the behavior of the viewing public. With the Panopticon, there was no longer the need for such gruesome scenes as those subjected to the panoptic gaze internalized the constraints of power.¹¹⁵ In prison panopticism, the inmates practice a form of self-restraint as they are never certain when and who is watching their actions. Even though the Panopticon’s surveillance mechanism is best understood within the context of the prison system, the panoptic principle can be identified in other social situations. For example, in factories or schools the power of an unseen observer can be employed to control the behavior of workers or school children

¹¹² *CTRL [SPACE]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*, ed. Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel, exh. cat. (Klsruhe, Germany: ZKM Center for Art and Media, 2002).

¹¹³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

¹¹⁴ Foucault, 201.

¹¹⁵ Foucault, 202.

without the need for the constant physical presence of an authority figure. As Foucault concludes, “whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behavior must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used.”¹¹⁶

Indeed, one is reminded here of Newman's "natural surveillance" city plans in which the possibility of vision afforded by open spaces is thought to deter the potential actions of criminals.¹¹⁷

The openness of the Panopticon to innumerable variations on social control underlines the utility of Foucault's theories on surveillance for a field of activities beyond the prison. Street corner cameras, satellite photography, and even works of art based on surveillance may be understood via panopticism. *Two Viewing Rooms*, with its one-way glass and blurring of the traditional panoptic separation of observed and observer allows for viewer rumination on the power of vision to enable or constrain behavior.

Furthermore, behavior can be linked to self-understanding, a conclusion noted by both Laing and Graham. *Two Viewing Rooms* creates a situation where vision mediates the engagement with self. In the work's fluid surveillance system, what one sees and is seen doing is derived from one's interaction with the work itself. Such a situation is what art historian Gregor Stemmrich has labeled the balance of “surveyed observance and observed surveillance” in Graham's work.¹¹⁸ The stalemate between being viewed and viewing that Stemmrich identifies gives the artist's video installations the potential to subvert surveillance as a social system. In the typical panoptic surveillance mechanism, there is no freedom to move from one position to another: one is either the symbolic or

¹¹⁶ Foucault, 205.

¹¹⁷ Newman considered "natural surveillance" to also aid in improving the general aesthetics of urban areas. For example, if I see my neighbors painting their houses or mowing their lawn I am more likely to maintain my own property because I conclude that if I can see their houses, they must be able to see mine.

¹¹⁸ Gregor Stemmrich, “Dan Graham,” in *CTRL [SPACE]*, 71.

real inmate subjected to the authoritative gaze of the actual or metaphorical warden in the tower. The movement from Room A to Room B in *Two Viewing Rooms* allows for spectators to experience both sides of the panoptic dynamic, thus exposing how surveillance activities structure the behavior of the both viewer and the viewed. Stemmrich further elucidates the social aspect of surveillance systems when he writes, “Exploring this situation [of video surveillance] amounts to a process of social learning in which communication between different levels of observation and behavior generates a form of intersubjective intimacy.”¹¹⁹ In *Two Viewing Rooms*, the individual may undergo a self-education on the power of surveillance to direct behavior and self-knowledge. Crucially, this learning is not removed from the public sphere as the work’s location in the gallery or museum allows for other viewers to both witness this process of education and take part in it themselves. *Two Viewing Rooms*, like all of Graham’s video-installations, is not an art object intended for private contemplation. The presence of other spectators underlines one’s engagement with self as a social process. Ultimately, the modified panoptic schema in a work such as *Two Viewing Rooms* is less about offering discipline and punishment than about providing a means to achieve self-realization.

The closest artistic parallel to Graham’s use of surveillance is Nauman’s *Video Surveillance Piece: Public Room/Private Room*, created between 1969 and 1970 (fig. 16.) In his work of the late 1960s Nauman, whose first solo show in New York City was held at the Leo Castelli gallery in January 1968, experimented with video alone and in

¹¹⁹ Stemmrich, 71.

combination with installation art.¹²⁰ Graham attended a Nauman exhibition at the Whitney Museum while transitioning from the text works to his films. From his own writings, it is clear that Graham admired Nauman's performances and corridor works.¹²¹ Indeed, the artist suggests that part of his own rejection of Minimal art came from his familiarity with Nauman's attempts to create an extended present tense in his performances.¹²² In this comment, Graham is referring to the pieces Nauman created by filming himself engaged in various slowed-down activities. For example, in the work *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* (1967-68), Nauman's movements are so deliberate and individually distinct that each slight shift of his body almost appears to be isolated from all other movements. In this way, the seemingly fluid activity of walking around a square is read as a series of singular, present-tense bodily alterations. When asked to explicitly define his relationship to Nauman, Graham explains that his own video pieces stressed independent audience participation to a far greater extent than Nauman's more manipulative works.¹²³ For example, in Nauman's *Performance Corridor* (1968) (fig. 17) the viewer may physically interact with the work of art, but only in the carefully structured manner defined by the artist. The narrowness of the passage allows for only one person to access the work at any given time and the tightness of the space ensures that one has a sense of physical restraint when inside the piece. The artist has declared that his corridors and video-installations are a "way of limiting the situation so that someone else can be a performer, but he can do only what I want him to. I mistrust audience participation. That's why I try

¹²⁰ Marcia Tucker, "Bruce Nauman," in *Bruce Nauman: Work from 1965-1972*, ed. Jane Livingston and Marcia Tucker, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: LACMA and Whitney Museum, 1972), 32.

¹²¹ See: Graham, "Subject Matter."

¹²² Graham interview with Buchloh, 76.

¹²³ Graham interview with Buchloh, 76.

to make these works as limiting as possible."¹²⁴ Graham, from the magazine pieces to the time-delay video-installations, has always provoked audience participation, but sought to limit the ways in which the work of art can control this experience. The relative importance assigned to dictating audience interaction with the work of art is the basis for the principle distinctions that can be made between Nauman's and Graham's video-installations.

Art historian Marcia Tucker writes that Nauman's video-installations of the late 1960s and early 1970s signified a new direction for the artist. In his earlier recorded projects, like *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* mentioned above, Nauman employed his own body as both subject and object of the art work.¹²⁵ By using video cameras turned on the viewer, "it is the spectator who becomes both the actor and observer of his own body."¹²⁶ Underlying this situation is the issue that the information one is presented with in video-surveillance system is never complete. Art historian Christian Katti notes, "surveillance and observation result in something that one can call a 'blind spot' ...something that surveillance and observation cannot see, cannot observe, for systematic reasons."¹²⁷ Whereas in Graham's video-installations the process of surveillance allows access to the social construction of behavior and self,

¹²⁴ Bruce Nauman interview with Willoughby Sharp, in *Bruce Nauman*, ed. Robert C. Morgan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 235. This interview was originally published as "Nauman Interview," *Arts Magazine* (March 1970).

¹²⁵ Numerous scholars have explored Nauman's work in terms of the artist's use of his own body as art. My investigation of Nauman is primarily confined to the video-installations the artist created that do not include his own body. In addition, I am addressing how Nauman and Graham differ in respects to the ways their video-installations seek to manipulate viewer interaction. Therefore, I leave aside many of the erudite observations that have been made regarding Nauman's performances as body art. I am also making an unexplored distinction between the means by which one may investigate the way an artist uses his or her own body as art and the way an artist, through a work of art, uses the body of a spectator.

¹²⁶ Marcia Tucker, "PhNaumenology," in *Bruce Nauman*, ed. Christine van Assche, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1998), 83.

¹²⁷ Christian Katti, "'Systematically' Observing Surveillance: Paradoxes of Observation According to Niklas Luhmann's Systems Theory," in *CRTIL [SPACE]*, 53.

Nauman's work is more concerned with the process of information denial. For instance, in Nauman's *Video Surveillance Piece* (fig.16) the spectator confronts a video monitor on the floor of a gallery room. The monitor broadcasts a video signal taken from an adjoining, inaccessible room. In the inaccessible room there is another monitor, but here it is connected to a video feed taken from camera in the viewer's room. Thus, the viewer's self image is only caught in fleeting moments on the inaccessible monitor as the camera in the open room pans the entire space. As Katti points out, surveillance always produces its negative: concealment. In *Video Surveillance Piece* there arises a menacing tension as viewers can never be certain who is monitoring them and for what purpose.¹²⁸ Unlike in a Graham work where a viewer may change sides in the surveillance equation, Nauman's piece prevents such a shift. Curator Dörte Zbkiowski contends that with Nauman's use of video-surveillance "the viewer has unwittingly become part of a series of experiments."¹²⁹ Nauman, like the social scientist, dictates the terms upon which the viewer interacts with the art work. As in much of his video-installation work, Nauman explores the ways in which our physical bodies allow us self-definition. Seeing one's self image at a double remove both televisually and physically (a self-image within an image within a physically inaccessible room) offers up the self as object of contemplation. This self meditation, however, is always incomplete as one can never change the terms of engagement with that self-image. Alternatively, in a Graham video-installation the viewer is given full access to the sites of both the recording and playback process. Nauman and Graham work with different parts of the same social equation. Graham's video-installations use surveillance to trigger a re-evaluation of self knowledge

¹²⁸ Dörte Zbkiowski, "Bruce Nauman," in *CTRL [SPACE]*, 66.

¹²⁹ Zbkiowski, 66.

as social process. Nauman's pieces, on the other hand, acknowledge the social production of self, but they lead the viewer to the conclusion that such construction is always mediated and that complete self-knowledge is never possible.

Denial or failure is a constant theme of Nauman's work that further illustrates the extent to which Graham's video-installations strive for an opposite experience. In conversation with Chris Dercan, Nauman stated that "what interests me is the experience of putting...pieces of information together: physical information and visual or intellectual information. The experience lies in the tension between the two, of not being able to put them together."¹³⁰ The irreconcilable "tension" that informs all of Nauman's video-installations is absent from Graham's pieces. The aims of works such as *Present Continuous Past(s)*, *Two Viewing Rooms*, and *Two Conscious Projections* are additive in so much as they trigger a revelation of and spur a critical dialogue about the hidden mechanics of normative social activities and interactions. Nauman, on the other hand, has claimed that his work seeks to "withdraw" information and experience from the viewer, in effect making withdrawal or lack an experience in itself.¹³¹ As evident in *Video Surveillance Piece*, viewers can never gain access to the sealed room and only catch glimpses of themselves through two layers of images, a monitor on a monitor. Just as Graham's process can be understood as additive, Nauman's aims can be considered subtractive.¹³² Nauman characterizes the aspects of removal in his work as putting the viewer in a situation wherein he or she has a feeling similar to having missed a step on a

¹³⁰ Nauman interview with Chris Dercan, in *Bruce Nauman*, ed. Robert C. Morgan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 313.

¹³¹ Nauman interview with Achim Hochdörfer, in *Bruce Nauman: Audio-Video Underground Chamber*, ed. Achim Hochdörfer, exh. cat. (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, 2005), 132.

¹³² I return to this reading of Graham's work as additive at the end of the next chapter when I consider his work in relation to the architectural projects of Gordon Matta-Clark.

flight of stairs, further claiming that this experience is "like getting hit in the back of the neck."¹³³ There is no such suggestion in Graham's video-installation that the artist fosters this kind of violent viewer interaction with the work of art. His projects do not determine or subordinate the viewer's experience to the artist's actions, as is the case with Acconci, or to the work of art, as is the case with Nauman. Instead, Graham's video projects allow the audience to attain a kind of critical contemplation on how various discourses on history, phenomenological experience, behavior, social control, and self knowledge all intertwine to form a cultural matrix through which one understands the world.

¹³³ Nauman interview with Joan Simon, in *Bruce Nauman*, ed. Robert C. Morgan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 271.

Chapter 3

The Placement of Critique

When Graham created his video-installations in the mid-1970s, the use of video was relatively new to the art world. As explored in the previous chapter, his employment of video technology as art allowed for a critical evaluation not only of Minimalism's phenomenologically based approach to viewership, but also of how self-knowledge is a social construction. Considering the video aspects of these works underscores the artist's use of time delay and feedback in the video-installations, but these projects also involve the placement of video cameras, monitors, and occasionally mirrors in pre-existing spaces. Therefore, in the following discussion I explore how Graham's video-installations promote a critical engagement on the part of the viewer with the space in which the art work has been installed. Doing so not only elucidates a thematic continuity with the earlier magazine pieces, but it also highlights the ways in which the artist's work puts forth a critique of the art world, the commodification of self, and the ways in which Modern architecture may subvert the political potential of historical memory. Furthermore, such a reading underlines how, in the video-installation projects, this critique is turned into an investigation of the means by which individuals encounter and understand their identities as both viewers and consumers in the social sphere.

The interpretation I provide in this chapter is based on the premise that a consideration of Graham's video-installations only as examples of installation art is unable to account for the numerous social, political, and artistic implications suggested

by the artist's use of the installation format. Making such a claim is not to imply that the video-installations cannot or should not be analyzed as part of the history of installation as an artistic practice. Rather, my examination of Graham's work acknowledges that the term "installation" is too amorphous a starting point for an insightful investigation of the artist's projects beyond the action of putting a video camera into a space. It is my contention that a nuanced understanding of Graham's video-installations necessitates an account of the ways in which these works address the spaces in which they are encountered by viewers. In order to provide such an analysis, this chapter begins with an exploration of the themes of site-specificity and institutional critique in the video-installations. Graham's art does not entirely fit within narrow understandings of either of these practices. Nevertheless, considering the use of these two related strategies in the art of the 1960s and 1970s clarifies the historical and artistic context in which the artist made the video-installations.

While Graham's video-installations were not intended for one specific place, as is typically signified by the designation "site-specific," considering these projects as site-specific affords an interpretation of how these works address space as both a physical and conceptual construct. In turn, such a consideration leads to an analysis of the artist's connection to the practice of institutional critique, which came to the attention of the art world during the late 1960s.¹ As is the case with site-specific art, there is no simple link between Graham's video-installations and institutional critique. Part of the difficulty in

¹ I have elected to use the lower case when discussing institutional critique because my primary concern here is with institutional critique as a mode of artistic activity or working method. Institutional Critique could be understood as a distinct movement in the art of the late twentieth century and thus its title might be capitalized in the same way as Minimalism. Nevertheless, it is beyond the purview of the current study to define the boundaries of Institutional Critique as I am mainly interested how the action of critically examining particular artistic and social institutions relates to Graham's projects.

making such a connection is the vagueness of the term "institutional critique." The best attempt at an overarching definition is supplied by artist Andrea Fraser, whose own work is often cited as exemplifying institutional critique. Fraser asserts that "the practice of institutional critique is generally defined by its apparent object [of examination], 'the institution,' which is, in turn, taken to refer primarily to established, organized sites for the presentation of art."² Only one of Graham's video installations discussed at length in this chapter, *Yesterday/Today* (1975), was created for exhibition in an art gallery or museum. The artist's projects, however, can be understood as an expanded form of institutional critique in that he brings the critical stance associated with institutional critique's approach to the art world to bear on examinations of non-art world social structures. As posited below, in Graham's *Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade* (1976) and *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings* (1976), this assessment is directed at the spheres of business and commerce.³

While an interpretation of Graham's video installations that acknowledges the related practices of site-specificity and institutional critique underlines the historical context of the video installation projects, it leaves aside the artist's understanding of vision, viewership, and architecture. As put forth in the previous two chapters, the magazine pieces and time-delay rooms propose a type of engaged viewership through which an observer can unpack the interconnectedness of Minimalism, the just-past, and self-awareness. Emphasizing the architectural context of these later pieces exposes how

² Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," *Artforum* 44.1 (September 2005): 280.

³ The present study was prepared prior to the publication of *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* by the MIT Press in October 2009. The MIT volume, edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (the editors of the well-known *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*), will no doubt inform future scholarly treatments of institutional critique.

a work such as *Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade* (1976) can be considered an investigation into the commodification of self identity. Likewise, *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings* (1976) uncovers the often unexplored links between vision, architecture, and business, and the artist's stated attempt to negotiate between the conflicting metaphors of art-as-window and art-as-mirror adds a richer complexity to the piece. Finally, this chapter puts forth an interpretation of *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings* that recognizes the artist's engagement with architectural theory and his rejection of the aesthetic, social, and political goals of Modern architecture. As I highlight, Graham aligned the aims and effects of Modern architecture with those of Minimalism.

Graham's site-specificity and institutional critique

The video-installations of the mid-1970s are part of Graham's abiding interest in providing the conditions, both physical and conceptual, in which viewers are able not only to interact with the art work itself but also to reflect on their own social experiences. There is little in the artist's projects of the 1970s that is groundbreaking in terms of the formal handling of materials. The utilization of video cameras to create art was a well-established practice by the end of the 1970s, the modern medium of installation can be said to begin as early as the Surrealist exhibitions of the 1930s, and since the 1960s other artists, such as Nauman, placed video cameras in art galleries to record visitor movement. Where Graham's work differentiates itself is in the artist's ability to conceive of situations in which viewers become aware of both their own position in relation to the work of art and the myriad of discourses entwined in the production and reception of art.

The artist acknowledges the extent to which the viewer is incorporated in his art when he explains to Gerdes:

My own work is often quasi-philosophical. It might be a scientific, social, or philosophical model which ultimately fails or doesn't work. It may touch on assumptions about people in social groups, family structure, individual psychology or perception so these assumptions of a quasi-social, educational or scientific type which the audience brings to the work are useful in providing a setting for the work to function.⁴

What is significant about the above statement is Graham's assertion that the audience's mental state helps form the work's "setting." In the artist's estimation, the formal or physical properties of the video-installation piece operate in conjunction with the audience to allow the work to produce meaning. The assumptions viewers bring to the work are reflected, as in the case of Graham's use of mirrors, and replayed, as when he employs video cameras and monitors. In effect, the material elements of the work allow viewers to respond to their own actions and reactions. As put forth in the previous chapter, by adjusting the time in which these actions/reactions are encountered through the use of the time-delay mechanics of video cameras, the artist opened up the possibility for critical reflection on the often unacknowledged links between Minimalism, history, and the social construction of self-knowledge.

In a series of three video-installations from the mid-1970s, Graham added further complexity to his projects by underlining the physical context in which audiences

⁴ Gerdes, 199.

encountered the work. With *Two Consciousness Projection(s)*, *Present Continuous Past(s)*, and *Two Viewing Rooms* viewer attention was focused on his or her own behavior and the response of other viewers to that behavior. While such a "feedback" loop is also central to Graham's architectural video-installations, these pieces further reveal how the interaction between the individual and his or her understanding of self is mediated by the physical structure in which this interface occurs. In other words, the analysis of self-knowledge suggested by the earlier video installations is, in the architectural video-installations, shown to be an active and conditional process. Graham's use of the physical space of the work as part of the work itself necessitates a further examination of how, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the spaces of art became a field of inquiry for post-Minimalist artists.

The most productive way to begin to think about how Graham's architectural video-installations use space to create meaning is to regard these works as part of a larger trend in the art of the late 1960s towards site-specificity. The site-specific work of art, in the words of artist Robert Barry, "cannot be moved without being destroyed."⁵ At first glance, Graham's architectural video-installations do not satisfy this broad criterion. *Yesterday/Today*, *Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade*, and *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings*, while created for one particular space (an art gallery/museum, shopping arcade, and glass office building respectively), could be removed from their intended physical locations and still, at very least, mechanically

⁵ Robert Barry interview with Arthur R. Rose, first published in *Arts Magazine*, 43.4 (February 1969), reprinted in *Art in Theory: 1900-2000*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2003), 851-852.

function.⁶ Art historian Miwon Kwon has observed, however, that post-Minimalist site-specific art should be understood beyond the inextricable attachment of art object to particular location. Site-specific art of the late 1960s "implicitly challenged the 'innocence' of space and the accompanying presumption of a universal viewing subject (albeit one in possession of a corporeal body) as espoused in the phenomenological model."⁷

The artistic objectives of site-specific artists parallel the critique of Minimalism that runs through Graham's magazine pieces and video installations. While at a basic level site-specific art questions the phenomenological assumptions of Minimalism, how this interrogation was achieved through art not only varied considerably between artists, but also shifted over time. Kwon offers what she terms "three paradigms of site-specificity" in an attempt to address the differences between practitioners.⁸ In the first of these roughly chronological groups fall some Minimalist artists; she cites Morris and Judd, who employed a phenomenological understanding of how individuals interact with art objects in an attempt to underline the embodied spatial and temporal dynamics of vision. For these first site-specific artists, "site" was defined as the physical reality of both the viewer and the art object. The middle form of site-specificity, which arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s, moved away from such a literal interpretation of "site," and sought to question the social and institutional practices that create sites. The artists following this approach, such as Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, and Hans Haacke, are

⁶ The well-known example of site-specific art's attachment to its physical location is the controversy surrounding the removal of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981) from Federal Plaza in New York in the late 1980s. Certainly, Graham's installations do not follow such a strict interpretation of site-specificity.

⁷ Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002), 13.

⁸ Kwon, 29-31.

often better known as taking part in what is commonly called "institutional critique." The final type of site-specificity Kwon identifies comprises late twentieth-century artists who understand site, as she says, "discursively." Here the author remarks that "site is now structured (inter)textually rather than spatially, and its model is not a map but an itinerary, a fragmentary sequence of events and actions...whose path is articulated by the passage of the artist."⁹ Both in terms of chronology and conceptual foundation, Graham's architectural video installations are part of the middle site-specific strategy in which the artist examines social and institutional spaces. This type of site-specificity, art historian Rosalyn Deutsche contends, "reveal[s] the ways in which the meaning of art is constituted in relation to its institutional frames...the discursive and historical circumstances within which artwork, spectator, and site are situated."¹⁰

From the above discussion it becomes apparent that the definitions of site-specific art provided by both Deutsche and Kwon align with Fraser's general interpretation of institutional critique in which she posits that the practice is defined by its object, the institution. It is just as clear, however, that institutional critique of the late 1960s was first and foremost concerned with the politics of creating, exhibiting, and receiving works of art. Deutsche, Kwon, and numerous other scholars have put forth politicized understandings of site-specific art and have thereby brought the scholarly understanding of its objectives closer to those of institutional critique. It is nevertheless plain that

⁹ Kwon, 29. Here it is valuable to note that other scholars have taken issue with Kwon's "paradigms of site-specificity." In a recent essay, art historian Jason Gaiger cautiously accepts the validity of Kwon's first two paradigms, but argues, "that her use of the term 'site' to describe a discourse or field of knowledge extends the term beyond its legitimate usage and threatens to undermine the coherence of her account." See: Jason Gaiger, "Dismantling the Frame: Site-Specific Art and Aesthetic Autonomy," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49.1 (January 2009): 43-58. As it is my argument that Graham's work occupies the second category of Kwon's paradigms, I have left aside the worthy questions Gaiger raises regarding how Kwon conceives of site and discourse in her third category.

¹⁰ Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996), 61-62.

institutional critique was primarily an attempt to insert politics into art. As Hans Haacke, an artist considered to be at the forefront of institutional critique, wrote in 1974:

Irrespective of the 'avant-garde' or 'conservative,' 'rightist' or 'leftist' stance a museum might take, it is, among other things, a carrier of socio-political connotations. By the very structure of its existence, it is a political institution...The question of private or public funding of the institution does not affect this axiom.¹¹

In site-specific projects, the physical context of the work's exhibition is not only acknowledged, but also forms an integral part of the work itself. While certainly open to political interpretations (e.g., a critical assessment of the museum as a publicly funded institution) on the part of the viewer, such a practice may not explicitly address such issues in its physical form.

A brief comparison of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) (fig. 18) and Marcel Broodthaers' *Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles* (1968) (fig. 19) demonstrates the difference proposed here between site-specific art and institutional critique. While numerous scholars have argued that Smithson's placement of black rocks in a spiral pattern into the Great Salt Lake forms part of the artist's engagement with both art institutions and notions of viewership and display, the physical form of the work itself may not immediately suggest such implications. *Department of Eagles*, part of Broodthaer's fictive *Museum of Modern Art*, is explicit in showing its relation to institutional codes of exhibition, reception, and financial support. In creating wall labels,

¹¹ Hans Haacke, "Statement," originally published in *Art into Society, Society into Art*, exh. cat. (London: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1974.) Re-printed in *Art in Theory 1900-2000*, 930.

gold bars, films, and reproductions for a constantly expanding, albeit imaginary museum, Broodthaers directly pointed to institutional practices. In other words, the relative importance the artist assigned to grappling with the art institution as evidenced by the work of art itself is the most obvious distinction between a site-specific art work and an institutional critique project. Furthermore, site-specific art commonly places greater emphasis on the physical location of the work while institutional critique often does not demand one particular placement in order for the piece to function. Whereas Smithson created *Spiral Jetty* specifically for the Great Salt Lake, Broodthaer's *Museum of Modern Art* was a transient art collection that was never fixed at a particular site. In his examination of the early years of institutional critique in the 1960s, Buchloh notes that Conceptual art of the late 1960s

is a recognition that materials and procedures, surfaces and textures, *locations and placement* are not only sculptural or painterly material to be dealt with in terms of a phenomenology of visual and cognitive experience or in terms of a structural analysis of the sign (as most of the Minimalist and post-Minimalist artists had still believed), but that they are always already inscribed within the conventions of language and thereby within institutional power and ideological and economic investment.¹²

Although directed at broader issues, Buchloh's observation underscores the primary distinction between site-specific art and institutional critique: namely the relative

¹² Benjamin Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 136. Emphasis is mine.

emphasis on site and fostering a critical dialogue on institutional practices of exhibition and reception.

Site-specificity and institutional critique are not, however, mutually exclusive. A notable example of the two being combined is Graham's video-installation *Yesterday/Today* (1975) (figs. 21 and 22.) The artist describes the properties of the work:

A video monitor in a public space [usually the art gallery] displays a present-time view of the visual activities of a second, nearby room [typically a gallery office]. This space is one having a characteristic presence in which the inhabitants' daily activities follow a defined routine with rhythmic periodicity related to a specific time of the day, where people discuss ongoing activities (informing an ongoing chronicle), and which imposes a definite modification in role, or of consciousness, upon someone entering it. The visual scene on the monitor is accompanied by an audio play-back of sounds, tape-recorded from the second room, one day before, but at exactly the same time of day.¹³

Graham contends that *Yesterday/Today*, through its play-back mechanism, affords viewers the opportunity to unravel the complex bond of real space and representations of that space.¹⁴ For example, the spectator may notice both a disconnect and a similarity between the visual and aural representations of the second space. What one sees

¹³ First published in Dan Graham, *Video- Architecture-Television, Writings on Video and Video Works, 1970-1978*, ed. Benjamin Buchloh, exh. cat. (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press, 1979). Re-published as Dan Graham, "Yesterday/Today, 1975," in *Dan Graham*, ed. Gloria Moure, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1998), 110-113.

¹⁴ Graham, "Yesterday/Today, 1975," 110.

occurring and what one hears may in fact coincide, especially if the daily routine of the second space is regular. There are moments, however, in which the aural and visual representations slip out of sync with one another. Graham fosters such disjunctions by dictating the placement of the camera and the general guidelines for what will be shown to the viewer. For instance, the artist may elect to have the recording camera placed in a room in which very little actually occurs. In such a scenario, the rare moments of activity recorded on the audio track, when played back a day later but now overlapped onto an image of an empty room, would provide a fractured representation of the second space. In other words, the level or extent of the disjunction between aural and visual representations within *Yesterday/Today* can be altered at the artist's discretion simply by moving the recording equipment to another room. While the formal properties of the work do allow the artist to create a tension between auditory and visual representations of space, he nevertheless makes no claims either in his writings or in interviews that *Yesterday/Today* can actively shift the way a viewer regards representations of space and time. Rather, he insists that the work provides the opportunity for reflection on these issues by having a kind of “‘soap opera’ structure... [that] contradicts the usually stressed visual, instantaneous, and silent comprehension of the visual artwork.”¹⁵ In jarring the spectator from the traditional experience of art, his characterization of which is that of the silent, passive viewer standing still in front of a painting in a museum, Graham forces the viewer to contemplate the activity of viewing itself. In such a charged state, spectators are primed for an inquiry into both the actions on the monitor and the sounds they hear.

Graham asserts that the ideal audience for *Yesterday/Today* is composed of the gallery employees themselves as these individuals would be most familiar with how the

¹⁵ Graham, "Yesterday/Today, 1975," 112.

sights, sounds, and spaces of their job function as an institution.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the visitor to the art gallery or museum would also be able to conduct a critical analysis of these art-world spaces. In the normal course of events, the average spectator is kept outside art market dealings. The mere act of looking at an art work in a gallery does not afford one entrance into the rarified spaces occupied by the real brokers of economic power who often operate in relative anonymity.¹⁷

There is, of course, very little that happens on a daily basis in an art gallery office that would make for riveting viewing. The point of *Yesterday/Today* is not to hold the viewer's attention with surprise characters or heated exchanges as in a "soap opera," but rather to establish a kind of seriality to the proceedings. The same actions, repeated each day, form what can be labeled "institutional events" that play out on the physical stage of the gallery. For example, the ways in which visitors are greeted by the staff or the ways in which financial transactions are handled become, through repetition, understood by both gallery workers and visitors as the appropriate and natural events that occur within an art gallery. In the work's installation at the John Gibson Gallery in New York City the monitor was shown in the large, open, and public area at the front of the gallery. The recorded space of the work was the gallery director's office that was adjacent to the main viewing room. The viewers in the first space would be privy to the inner workings of the gallery as represented by the daily routines of the director and his associates. For this particular installation, the second space was not a wholly private area. Typically, the door to the director's office was open to receive business partners or for the curious

¹⁶ Graham, "Yesterday/Today, 1975," 112.

¹⁷ Certain dealers are well known to many people, and are, in fact, very public figures. However, even if known, the majority of financial actions undertaken by dealers remain private.

gallery visitor.¹⁸ The artist remarks that the office space is accessed in a different fashion by regulars than by the general public, who he claims are intimidated by the office. Therefore, with *Yesterday/Today*, the viewer gains access to the behind-the-scenes action of the gallery. None of these day-to-day routines could be considered thrilling in a cinematic sense, but making viewers privy to this public yet definitely private realm can be read as an attempt to provoke an awareness of the “functional, social, and economic realities of the art gallery.”¹⁹

Furthermore, the subject and content of *Yesterday/Today* can be varied by shifting the location of the video camera. Whereas in galleries the recording camera was usually mounted in a semi-private office, in museum installations the camera was often placed in a public space. For example, in the Art Gallery in Winnipeg the recording apparatus was located in the museum’s café.²⁰ The café, which was located on its own floor of the building, was just as publicly open as the space of the work’s display, the exhibition galleries. However, the museum café contains a more disparate group of users than the exhibition space:

the café’s clientele was a general cross-section of users of the museum – museum staff (discussing personal, bureaucratic, political, and practical problems...), local businessmen on a coffee or lunch break (discussing business, civic, and personal problems), local art lovers (discussing recent music, dance, and art events as well as financial support

¹⁸ Graham, "Yesterday/Today, 1975," 113.

¹⁹ Graham, "Yesterday/Today, 1975," 113.

²⁰ This particular installation took place in 1978.

for cultural institutions).²¹

Taken together, the recorded material provides a real-life glimpse of all the various discourses that are concurrently active within the space of the art museum. These personal and yet public dialogues represent the economic and social background of the art institution. The mix of individuals in the museum café forms a microcosm of the art world. The mundane primary use of the space (for a quick snack, lunch, coffee, etc.) normally diffuses critical engagement with the institution. The café is a place for a break from, not a continuation of, the intense mental activity that supposedly occurs in the exhibition halls. Graham goes on to state that café discussions, while an intrinsic part of the museum, do not take place in front of the art works. The convention of meditative silence when confronting a work of art generally prohibits the kind of social interaction that enlivens the café.²² To aid in turning the seemingly neutral activities of the café into events worthy of critical thought, the artist exploits the power of exhibition spaces to render images works of art worthy of analysis. Thus, the everyday events of the museum café can now be addressed as a crucial part of the overall institutional system.

Yesterday/Today is site-specific in that "the 'work' no longer seeks to be a noun/object but a verb/process, provoking the viewers' *critical* (not just physical) acuity regarding the ideological conditions of their viewing."²³ As is the case with *Present/Continuous Past(s)*, the artist is less concerned with the creation of a physical object than with provoking a deeper and more analytic understanding of the act of viewing. Graham's instructions for the work specify that viewers of *Yesterday/Today* must be able to physically leave their location in the second (exhibition) space and enter

²¹ Graham, "Yesterday/Today, 1975," 113.

²² Graham, "Yesterday/Today, 1975," 113.

²³ Kwon, 24. Emphasis is Kwon's.

the space in which the activities they are now viewing originally took place. Therefore, the work is composed of two temporal locations: the recording area in the past tense and the present tense of both the viewing area and the recording space now at a day's remove from the events that were recorded. The viewer is able to move from one position to the other with the same critical mindset. In the example of the café, a viewer watches yesterday's activities at both a temporal and physical distance. They scrutinize these events within the boundaries of the exhibition gallery, perhaps revealing part of the social fabric that constitutes the museum. Then, the viewer may move to the café itself, now with a new concentration on the underlying social, political, and economic dynamics that are taking place within this space. *Yesterday/Today* is a focusing tool in that it calls forth a type of critical viewership that stretches beyond the moment of viewing and into everyday life. Much as in the magazine pieces of the 1960s and in the time-delay video-installations like *Present/Continuous Past(s)*, here Graham sets up a situation in which the effectiveness of the work lies in its ability to push viewers outside the limits of the traditional art experience and into a more analytically oriented viewership of real life. Nevertheless, *Yesterday/Today*, by its placement in and reliance on the physical and conceptual reality of the museum or gallery frame satisfies Deutsche's definition of site-specific art that requires such works to incorporate their institutional frame into their aesthetic form. Whereas *Present/Continuous Past(s)* allows the viewer to focus, almost exclusively, on his or her own understanding of self-definition within certain prescribed social formats, *Yesterday/Today* expands such an analysis to the social institutions of the art world that govern the production, reception, and consumption of works of art. In other words, *Present/Continuous Past(s)* can be said to deal with an individual's self

knowledge, while *Yesterday/Today* attempts to examine the social structures that coordinate how viewers encounter art. While *Present/Continuous Past(s)* holds up a mirror and a camera to the individual, *Yesterday/Today* holds up a mirror and a camera to the institution. Such an interpretation does not mean that *Yesterday/Today* does not, or can not, provoke a type of self-knowledge, for that objective underlies almost all of Graham's projects from the 1970s. The work is still viewer-centric, but the context has assumed greater focus. It is appropriate, therefore, to ask how *Yesterday/Today* can be understood as institutional critique.

As Fraser has noted, "from 1969 on, a conception of the 'institution of art' begins to emerge that includes not just the museum, nor even only the sites of production, distribution, and reception of art, but the entire field of art as a social universe."²⁴ Such a notion seeks to tie together all the individuals and groups active in the field of art at every level of production, reception, and interpretation. This analysis of institutional critique is broad and inexact. In fact, Fraser remarks, "none of the half-dozen people often considered the 'founders' of 'institutional critique' claim to use the term."²⁵ The interpretation of *Yesterday/Today* put forth above suggests that Graham shared with the artists who engage in institutional critique a desire to open the art institution up to greater critical scrutiny. The artist, upon losing his job as a gallery director early in his career, resolved to examine and expose the often hidden mechanisms at work in the art world that govern how certain objects become culturally understood as art. *Yesterday/Today* both expands upon and refines this early objective by provoking a kind of mindful and

²⁴ Fraser, 281.

²⁵ Fraser, 279. While she never identifies who these half-dozen founders could be, it is safe to assume that she means, at very least, Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, and perhaps herself.

analytic viewership within the institutional framework of the art gallery or museum. Acknowledging this institutional critique aspect of the artist's work allows for a deeper understanding of how *Yesterday/Today* relates to other Post-Minimalist art forms of the early 1970s. In particular, it is productive to consider Graham's approach to eliciting a critical spectatorship in comparison to the poll projects created by Haacke in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In short, both Haacke's work and *Yesterday/Today* attempted to spur a similar type of engaged viewership, but Haacke's art was always more direct in its political implications.

Haacke's *Gallery-Goers' Residence Profile* (1960-71) (fig. 22) was a two-part installation that first collected data from gallery visitors and then exhibited this information. Using pushpins, visitors to the first part of the installation at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York City marked their current place of residence and their place of birth on maps of Manhattan, New York City, the New York metropolitan area, the United States, and the world. Haacke collated this data and then presented the statistics with accompanying photographs of buildings in Manhattan displayed as a schematic of Manhattan as part of the second half of the project at Galerie Paul Maenz in Cologne, Germany. *Gallery-Goers' Residence Profile*, the first of numerous polls and profiles that the artist conducted in the 1970s, has been cited as a turning point in Haacke's career. As numerous scholars have suggested, *Gallery-Goers' Residence Profile* set the stage for Haacke's infamous pieces *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holding, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* (1971) and *Manet-PROJEKT '74* (1974), both of which were removed by their intended exhibiting institutions (the Guggenheim in New York City and the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne, respectively) because museum

directors were concerned about the exposure of the business dealings of the institution's trustees.²⁶ Furthermore, Buchloh has argued that Haacke, like Graham, has been overlooked in scholarly accounts of post-Minimalist art practices of the 1970s.²⁷ In the case of Haacke, this oversight may be due in part to the artist's forthright Marxist message. Throughout his career, Haacke has not only cited Marx in his writings and interviews, but has also had essays written about his work by prominent Marxist-aligned theorists such as Frederic Jameson and Pierre Bourdieu.

At the core of Haacke's institutional critique is his understanding of art as an "industry," by which he means "the range of activities of those who are employed or working on a freelance basis in the art field."²⁸ As part of this "art industry," the museum supervises the creation and acknowledgement of ideological positions within the art world by excluding certain voices, either artistic or scholarly, from gaining widespread recognition. Haacke goes on to contend that if the museum fails to be self-critical about its own complicity in this process, then it is the responsibility of other members of the "art industry" to challenge the institution's lack of self-analysis.²⁹ For the artist, what is at stake in the opening up of the museum institution is the very ability of an individual in a democratic society to have a degree of self-determination in the processes by which the

²⁶ The notion that *Gallery-Goers'* marks a turning point in Haacke's oeuvre is put forth in Walter Grasskamp, "Real Time: The Work of Hans Haacke," in *Hans Haacke*, ed. Walter Grasskamp, Molly Nesbit, and Jon Bird (London: Phaidon, 2004), 28-81. This view is shared by Buchloh, "Hans Haacke: From Factographic Sculpture to Counter-Monument," and Deutsche, "The Art of Not Being Governed Quite So Much," both in *Hans Haacke For Real: Works 1959-2006*, ed. Matthias Flügge and Robert Flack, exh. cat. (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2006), 42-59 and 62-79, respectively. For further discussion of why Haacke's projects were not shown, see the descriptions of the works (edited by the artist) in the Berlin catalogue.

²⁷ Buchloh, "Hans Haacke: From Factographic Sculpture to Counter-Monument," 43-44. The author also claims that Haacke may not have been able to capitalize on the notoriety generated by the poll projects in the 1970s because the artist's primary New York dealer, Howard Wise, had chosen to focus exclusively on video art in 1970.

²⁸ Hans Haacke, "Museums, Managers of Consciousness," in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, ed. Brian Wallis, exh. cat. (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986), 60-61.

²⁹ Haacke, "Museums, Managers of Consciousness," 66.

human condition is defined.³⁰ With *Gallery-Goers' Residence Profile*, Haacke draws attention to the social and economic make-up of the visitors to the art gallery. Thus, he highlights that "the art institution is a material rather than transcendental site, one whose identity, far from being autonomous, is constructed as pure by excluding other sites."³¹ The project shows that 940 of the 2,018 gallery visitors who marked their residence as part of the work lived in New York City. Another 1,421 visitors indicated that they lived in the Tri-State area of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.³² What becomes clear in these statistics is that the majority of visitors to the Howard Wise installation lived in geographical proximity to the gallery. In a later essay, Haacke would conclude that "the visitors to commercial galleries of contemporary art in New York seem to be an extremely select audience, which recruits itself from the ranks of the college-educated middle and upper-middle classes."³³ Furthermore, such exclusive access to the power of the art institution also propagates "the idealist notion of an art created out of and exclusively for 'disinterested pleasure' (Kant), a claim contradicted by history and everyday experience, [and] upheld by formalist art theory as promulgated and normatively established by Clement Greenberg."³⁴ Doing so not only disregards the economic and social realities of the art institution, but also it limits the possibility for critical inquiry into how the art institution functions within the larger art industry.

In 1971, Graham joined many of his New York based peers in boycotting the Guggenheim in response to the cancellation of Haacke's solo exhibition at the museum in

³⁰ Haacke, "Museums, Managers of Consciousness," 71-72.

³¹ Deutsche, "The Art of Not Being Governed Quite So Much," 69.

³² See: "*Gallery-Goers' Residence Profile, Part 2*," in *Hans Haacke For Real: Works 1959-2006*, eds. Matthias Flügge and Robert Flack, exh. cat., (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2006), 111.

³³ Haacke, "The Constituency," in *Hans Haacke For Real: Works 1959-2006*, ed. Matthias Flügge and Robert Flack, exh. cat. (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2006), 266. This essay was first published in 1977.

³⁴ Haacke, "The Constituency," 267.

the *Shapolsky et al.* controversy. A year later, Graham would take part in Documenta 5, an exhibition of contemporary art in Kassel, Germany, that included works by Haacke.³⁵ Given both of these events, it is clear that Graham was aware of Haacke's projects prior to the creation of *Yesterday/Today* in 1975. While I do not want to suggest a direct connection between Haacke's poll works and Graham's video-installations, it is nevertheless valuable to examine how the two artists critiqued the institution. As discussed in the first chapter, Graham's magazine pieces were created, in part, out of the artist's disenchantment with the economics of the art world. Based solely on the amount of controversy generated, it would appear that Haacke's work was the more radical and explicit in its interrogation of art institutions. Graham, however, has never been subtle when sharing his opinions about the art world. For example, in a 1969 speech to the Art Workers' Coalition, Graham proclaimed, "the art world stinks; it is made of people who collectively dig the shit; now it seems to be the time to get the collective shit out of the system."³⁶

What is clear is that Haacke and Graham shared a similar concern for engaging in a dialogue about the art world and its institutions. Accounting for the difference between their approaches requires a consideration of the relative roles each artist assigns to the viewer. As Deutsche has posited, "Haacke's polls set down the condition for the audience to transform itself into a different kind of public, one composed of desubjugated subjects, practicing the art of critique."³⁷ Indeed, *Yesterday/Today* affords the viewer the opportunity to contemplate the everyday activities that take place within the art gallery or

³⁵ Grasskamp, "Kassel, New York, Cologne, Venice, Berlin," in *Hans Haacke For Real: Works 1959-2006*, ed. Flügge and Flack, exh. cat. (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 2006), 26.

³⁶ Graham, "Presentation to an Open Hearing of the Art Workers' Coalition," in *Art in Theory 1900-2000*, 916.

³⁷ Deutsche, "The Art of Not Being Governed Quite So Much," 71.

museum and thereby recognize the social and artistic role of the institution. Graham, however, does not ask or command outright that the viewer take part in the installation. With Haacke's polling pieces, the viewer is directed, usually via wall text, to take part in the work of art, an element of his work that Deutsche has labeled "direct address."³⁸ Instead, *Yesterday/Today* relies on the context of the gallery or museum to provoke viewer participation. For Graham, the fact that the work is exhibited in a space normally reserved for intellectual inquiry is enough of a trigger. While Haacke shows viewers the dynamite, lights the fuse, and allows them to fill in the explosion, Graham just shows the dynamite and leaves the lighting of the fuse up to the spectator.

Part of the dissimilarity between Haacke and Graham in their use of institutional critique could be understood as arising from Graham's unwillingness to place himself, as an artist, fully into the video-installations. In fact, the majority of his comments on the video-installations were published independently of the original exhibition of the works. Haacke's polls, on the other hand, would not function without the artist's voice, via the text, giving directions to the viewer. In contrast, Graham removed himself from the flow of information or meaning from artist to viewer with the work of art itself acting as a conduit. This removal allows viewers to participate in his work to any degree they wish. Furthermore, because *Yesterday/Today* only shows events from one day prior to the present moment, activities from two days past are removed from the work permanently. The actions of any viewer who elected to participate in the work by visiting the museum cafe would be eliminated in less than 48 hours. To this day, *Gallery-Goers' Residence Profile* fossilizes the places of residence of the visitors to the Howard Wise Gallery in 1969, making them permanently part of the work of art and any institution in which the

³⁸ Deutsche, "The Art of Not Being Governed Quite So Much," 66.

work is exhibited. In this way, Haacke called on the viewer to become part of both the institution and its critique. Graham, with his concern for creating works of art that could not become part of the economic machinations of the art world, allows viewers to have a sense of escape from the institution while also suggesting that an objective position from which one can critique the institution is indeed possible. Nevertheless, it is far too reductive to declare Haacke to be in some sense practical and Graham to be utopian. Both artists rejected the notion of a pure phenomenological experience in front of a work of art in favor of a more robust analysis of how viewership occurs within a myriad of pre-determined contexts. Haacke's critique remained rooted in the art institution, while Graham used the institution as the first step in expanding the individual's capacity to investigate the diverse discursive systems through which individuals attain self-knowledge. With *Yesterday/Today* the artist's fostering of critical reflection begins with the viewer analyzing how art institutions coordinate a particular type of engagement with art works. In addition, Graham makes use of the same time-delay features and blurring of the boundaries between observer and observed found in the time-delay rooms. With *Yesterday/Today* the artist is again allowing for viewer analysis into the same themes addressed in the earlier time-delay rooms such as the just-past present, the role of behavior in the creation of self-knowledge, and the inability of a viewer to attain a kind of pure phenomenological consciousness in front of a work of art.

Self and Commodity

Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade (figs. 23 and 24,) one of Graham's first video installations constructed outside the physical boundaries of the art

gallery or museum, draws parallels between economic consumption and vision. Similar to earlier projects such as *Present/Continuous Past(s)*, the work is composed of mirrors and video equipment. In this particular piece, however, mirrors and video are installed in the showcase windows of a shopping arcade. Whereas the earlier video-installations highlight concepts of self-vision and the institutional spaces in which viewers see themselves, *Showcase Windows* also draws out the discursive apparatuses of shopping and consumerism.

The work, as Graham writes,

takes place in two facing and parallel shop windows, located in a modern shopping arcade where people pass through the arcade between the two windows. Each shop window contains a mirror on its back wall, opposite and parallel to the window. This mirror reflects what is inside the showcase and the view through the window. This view through the window includes the reflections on either side of both windows, the interior of the other window, and the spectators (shoppers) passing....Both shop windows have monitors placed in front of the window. The monitor within the left window faces outward toward the window; whereas the monitor within the right window faces inward towards the mirror. The camera on top of the left monitor faces inward...the camera on the top of the right monitor faces outward.”³⁹

³⁹ Graham, “*Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade*,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 47. The artist's formal description of the piece and his text on the work's mechanics were originally published

The view recorded by the left camera is played back in real-time to the monitor on the right, while the images captured by the camera on the right are played back on an eight-second time-delay on the monitor to the left. The artist further stipulates that the shop windows include normal product displays and that spectators may enter the shop windows from within the stores. As for many of his works, Graham wrote a brief essay on *Showcase Windows* that outlines some of the ideas he explores in the piece. The artist suggests that the viewing situation in front of a shop window is similar to that of being in front of a work of art. “A spectator standing in front of a shop window (like an art viewer standing in front of a painting) feels his perception disturbed if other people are trying to occupy his particular position or, if he becomes too aware of other showcase displays and people responding to them.”⁴⁰ Similar to how the meditative moment in front of the work of art may be interrupted by the presence of other viewers and art works in the gallery, the shopper’s attention may be broken by other consumers and displays in the same space.

Showcase Windows frames vision as a type of consumption. Graham creates a situation in which both economic consumption and visual consumption are conflated. The viewers are at once spectators and shoppers who encounter images of themselves among the goods for sale in the shop window. Before quoting Marcuse at length in his “Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television” the artist states, “glass is helpful in socially alienating buyer from producer, thereby concealing the product’s connection to

in Graham, *Video/Architecture/Television: Writings on Video and Video Works 1970-1978*, ed. Benjamin Buchloh (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1979). All of the writings from that collection have been re-printed in numerous more recent volumes. The work was installed in Groningen, the Netherlands, in 1978.

⁴⁰ Graham, “Notes on Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 49.

another's real labor and allowing it to acquire exchange value over and above its use value."⁴¹ The critique of capitalist society's replacement of use value connected to labor with abstract exchange value is also found in Graham's statement that under capitalism "ego is confused with commodity."⁴² Hence, the shop window, for the artist, is a symbol of a larger social system that distracts the individual from self-knowledge. Furthermore, the mechanics of window shopping operate by allowing the passerby to attach self-fulfillment to the goods on display. Shoppers, as Graham explains, feel an acute sense of lack in front of the store window. The items presented for consumption, which are not in the possession of the spectator, offer the promise of satiated need through the act of purchasing a material object. In fact, one could posit that the shopping window display both creates the need or desire for a particular item while also suggesting that the means to satisfy this longing, consumption, will make one complete. While the transparent glass allows the viewer/shopper to see the items for sale, it also physically separates the viewer from the objects desired.⁴³ The goods are there to be seen, but not touched. The glass of the shopping window also provides a dim reflection of the viewer's self that, when coupled with the physical division of spectator from material good, furthers a feeling of lack.

Showcase Windows makes the projection of self-image onto consumer goods a visual reality. The work places the viewer's self-image among the objects for sale. Both the glass divisions and the mirrors at the back of the showcase are in place before the artist installs the video cameras and monitors. Graham does not create an art object with *Showcase Windows* as much as he generates a situation into which a viewer arrives.

⁴¹ Graham, "Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television," in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 57.

⁴² Graham, "Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television," in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 57.

⁴³ Graham, "Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television," in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 57.

Once the cameras and monitors are in place, the self-image the viewer encounters is rendered another commodity alongside many others. The glass not only divides individual from object, but it also serves to keep spectators at a physical remove from their own images. Nevertheless, by making visible the mechanics through which self is conflated with commodity, the artist affords the audience the opportunity to leave the work in a state of heightened critical awareness. After the uncomfortable experience of seeing one's self as commodity, viewers may leave with a desire to alter this system. Graham's piece, therefore, does not itself shift social norms. Rather, *Showcase Windows* places the impetus for change on the viewer. The work serves as a wake up call, hinting that viewers have power to transform society if they critically regard the normally unseen bonds that link self-identity to material goods and consumption to self-knowledge.

A useful understanding of the social, economic, and historical mechanics of the shopping arcade is put forth by Benjamin in *The Arcades Project*. The theorist's core idea is that the seemingly prosaic shopping arcades of nineteenth-century Paris can, in fact, be a site of critical contemplation on the passage of history and the political realities of modern life. Such a conception helps illuminate how Graham's installation of video cameras and monitors in a shopping arcade can point to the larger issues of history, consumerism, and self-knowledge. As discussed in the second chapter, it is crucial to recognize that there is no direct line of inspiration from Benjamin's writings to the artist's projects. At the time he created *Showcase Windows* in 1976, Graham certainly did not have access to the entire *The Arcades Project*. Nevertheless, some of Benjamin's

fragmentary thoughts concerning the shopping arcade permit a more incisive analysis of the artist's use of shopping windows.⁴⁴

At a general level, Benjamin defines the iron and glass shopping arcades of nineteenth-century Paris as ruins not yet ruined. These centers of retail and consumption are, in his estimation, "residues of a dream world."⁴⁵ The construction of a "dream world" is, for Benjamin, the fundamental nature of each historical period. Specifically, he claims that each epoch dreams of the succeeding one while precipitating its arrival through the creation of cultural artifacts that seek to usher in the future age.⁴⁶ In such a situation, the arcade is doubly inscribed. It points to both the historical realities of the time in which it was constructed and to the future that society imagined for itself. Therefore, to regard the arcade is to at once contemplate both the past and the future that was envisioned in that past. In turn, this past-future is especially valuable for analyzing the present moment, as the present is created out of the detritus of the past dream.

For Benjamin, what makes the arcade particularly useful for an examination of the present is that the arcade is an expression of the phantasmagoria, the seductive illusion generated by capitalist, commodity-producing society that comes to be collectively understood as the natural order by the members of that society.⁴⁷ The phantasmagoria is the dream world future of the capitalist society, a place where

⁴⁴ As this study focuses on Graham's video installations, my approach to *The Arcades Project* has been selective. Much of Benjamin's text is composed of quotes taken from other writers and short notes regarding the numerous ideas the theorist was considering for further research and elucidation. While I do make some overarching claims regarding Benjamin's objectives in consulting particular sources, I am not attempting to enter into the scholarly debate surrounding the possible conclusions Benjamin was aiming for with his project.

⁴⁵ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 13.

⁴⁶ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 13.

⁴⁷ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 14-15. See also Rolf Tiedemann, "Dialectics at a Standstill," in Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 938.

consumption is detached from the realities of labor and use value is permanently submerged behind exchange value.⁴⁸ The arcade plays its part in the capitalist phantasmagoria by offering up new and desirable commodities to the passerby. The merchandise lures the consumer into the capitalist system, promoting an understanding of the world and of the self that is rooted in the act of consumption. The power of the arcade to subsume the individual into its market economy is evident, according to Benjamin, in the flâneur. The idle stroller of the nineteenth-century arcade became a piece of merchandise himself, constantly drawn into ever shifting relationships with the other passersby, the commodities, and the architecture of the arcade itself.⁴⁹

While it is tempting to assign the viewer of Graham's *Showcase Windows* the role of Benjamin's flâneur, to do so is to make a faulty connection.⁵⁰ Benjamin claims that his stroller disappeared with the construction of new department stores in which the need for selling a wide-variety of commodities became paramount.⁵¹ He goes on to contend at several points in his notes that "the sandwich man is the last incarnation of the flâneur" as he is able to move freely among the urban crowd while also hawking a commodity.⁵² The observer of Graham's work is thus too contemporary to be an instance of Benjamin's flâneur. Nevertheless, viewers of *Showcase Windows* do, like Benjamin's flâneur, encounter themselves in the phantasmagoria of the shopping arcade. What this video-installation makes visible is the normally unseen insertion of the spectator into the phantasmagoria that Benjamin identified in his study. For consumers, the items on

⁴⁸ Tiedemann, 938.

⁴⁹ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 42.

⁵⁰ There is considerable debate regarding Benjamin's interpretation of the flâneur. I leave aside this line of inquiry as it is my assertion that the identification of viewer of a Graham video installation as an example of Benjamin's flâneur is to overstate this similarity.

⁵¹ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 448.

⁵² Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 451.

display in the showcase windows bring forth a mental construction of future moments in which they possess a particular commodity.

As is the case with the earlier video installations, in *Showcase Windows* Graham uses time-delay as a means of pausing the constant flow of new information and allowing viewers to consider the interwoven discourses in which they are presently enmeshed. Therefore, the work is another example of Graham's "strategy of triggering 'dialectical images from the phantasmagoria.'" In the previous chapter, I have argued that this objective, in turn, informs the artist's provocation of the "just-past present" in which viewers may become aware of their own behaviors and the social construction of their self-knowledge. The eight-second delayed playback in *Showcase Windows* sparks the realization of the duality of the arcade in which both the past and the future dream of the past are present. Also like Benjamin, the artist understands this recognition to have political implications. When Benjamin presented the primary objective of his analysis of the arcades, he also supplied a fitting portrayal of how *Showcase Windows* functions:

Marx lays bare the causal connection between economy and culture. For us, what matters is the thread of expression. It is not the economic origins of culture that will be presented, but the expression of the economy in its culture. At issue, in other words, is the attempt to grasp an economic process as perceptible *Urphenomenom*, from out of which proceeded all manifestations of life in the arcades.⁵³

Graham's project is not as historically contingent as Benjamin's, inasmuch as *Showcase Windows* does not strive to reveal a previously overlooked means to investigate the

⁵³ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 460.

distant past. The video installation is, however, focused on making the viewer aware of the "expression of the economy in culture." While the work may not conform exactly to the same political implications such a phrase entails, it does underline the complex binding of self and commodity in capitalist society. Along with a similarity to Benjamin's critical examinations of history and the present, Graham's video installation projects share in the theorist's belief in an open-ended and potentially positive engagement with the idea of progress. Even though Benjamin concludes that "as soon as it becomes the signature of historical progress *as a whole*, the concept of progress bespeaks an uncritical hypostatization rather than critical interrogation," the historical project that he lays out in *The Arcades Project* suggests a way to possibly maneuver against the onslaught of progress in which critical inquiry is foreclosed.⁵⁴ Likewise, Graham's video-installations suggest a means of potential recourse against the seemingly inescapable crush of the present moment's connection to the normative economic and social means of production, reception, and consumption.

In addition to focusing specifically on the arcade, Benjamin also devoted sections of *The Arcades Project* to architecture. Although these areas of the text are composed primarily of citations and brief quotes from the writings of other scholars, it is apparent that the theorist was intrigued by how the industrial building materials of the nineteenth century, namely iron and glass, were combined to create and reinforce the phantasmagoria of the arcade.⁵⁵ For him, the iron and glass arcades signified the nineteenth century's future vision much in the same way that Greek and medieval

⁵⁴ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 478.

⁵⁵ See the notes on iron construction in Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 150-170.

architecture speak to the future dreams of those historical epochs.⁵⁶ Similarly, Graham's art works of the late 1970s began to focus more explicitly on how architecture, and in particular modern glass office buildings, can be understood to broadcast messages regarding the creation of an efficient society.

The Window and the Mirror

In the same year that he created *Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade*, Graham also installed *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings* (1976) (figs. 25 and 26.) With this work, the artist underscores the political and economic themes articulated in the combination of video and architecture by exposing the links between Modern architectural aesthetics and economic power. Furthermore, this architectural video installation examines two metaphors for the visual experience of art: the window and the mirror. In adding visual and conceptual complexity to the seemingly innocuous act of looking through an office window, Graham elicits an active and critical form of spectatorship that is directed towards the discursive structures of art, viewership, business, and architecture. Again, such a strategy can be understood as part of the artist's approach to the practice of institutional critique.

Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings consists of two opposite-facing rooms in parallel modern glass office buildings.

Each room contains a mirrored wall opposite and parallel to the window which reflects the contents of the room and the view seen through the window... Each room has a large video monitor placed in front of its window so that the screen

⁵⁶ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 150.

faces the mirror reflecting its image as well as that of the observer. A camera placed on top of each monitor faces the mirror to record its entire view. The view from the camera in the left building is transmitted live to the monitor in the right building; but the view from the camera in the right building is transmitted 8 seconds delayed to the monitor in the left building.⁵⁷

In selecting the office building as a site for an architectural video-installation piece, Graham places his work within a discursive arena that seeks to be both open and closed. The glass of the office building structures vision in such a way that “one looks *through* and not *at*” the interior world of the corporation. Standing on the outside of a glass building, the spectator does not see the inner space of either the building itself or the corporation it houses. Even if one wishes to focus on the interior space of the building, one can only look through the building or at the images of the exterior environment reflected off the surface of the polished glass. The interior remains unexamined in such a visual situation even though the use of glass as architectural material suggests an unhindered view of the inside. Before exploring the political connotations Graham locates in the use of glass in modern glass office buildings, it is crucial to examine how the artist defines the type of viewership offered in *Glass Office Buildings*.

The tension between interior/exterior and transparency/reflection found in *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings* is a product of the artist’s use of video technology in conjunction with glass and mirrors. The glass window, according to Graham, “creates a picture plane that places the world at a measured distance for the viewer on either side.

⁵⁷ Graham, “*Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings*,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 46.

The world, held at a distance, frames a conventional view which is defined by the specific size, shape, and direction of orientation of the opening of the window frame.”⁵⁸

Such an organization of viewing into a conditioned action is, he proceeds to explain, similar to how Renaissance artists employed perspective to add the illusion of depth to the two-dimensional surface of a painting.⁵⁹ For Graham, the traditional conception of a work of art carried down from the Renaissance assumes that an image either opens up into a space other than the present one in which the viewer exists or serves as a continuation of the viewer’s space. That the depicted realm conforms to the same laws of vision active in the real world is underscored by classic linear and atmospheric perspective devices. In addition to showcasing the artist’s talent and scientific understanding of vision, perspective also allowed the viewer to immediately recognize the art work as a visual window. Formal elements of the work such as a defined foreground-middle-background and a vanishing point were to be acknowledged at first glance. These standards not only set up viewing as similar to looking through a glass window, but further underlined the artist’s individual identity.⁶⁰ Graham notes that “the spectator faces the [Renaissance] painting and looks forward into its projected space; in doing this, he reconstructs the exterior (and also ‘interior’) view of the painter at the point in time and space when he made the painting.”⁶¹ Ultimately, in window-like art the viewer’s vision is directed by the work itself. The physical frame and the perspective devices of the work dictate a specific experience. Thus, the spectator is placed in a particular viewing position. The viewer recognizes the logical design informing the structuring of

⁵⁸ Graham, “Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 54.

⁵⁹ Graham does not give a particular citation for this common understanding of Renaissance art and the window.

⁶⁰ Graham interview with Hatton, in *Video, Architecture, Television*, 12.

⁶¹ Graham, “Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 54.

space, which in turn indicates that the object being looked at is indeed art. The work of art, in the art-as-window conception, is therefore an *a priori* fact in that it exists before the arrival of a viewer who merely receives the pre-existing message.

On the other hand, “a mirror’s image optically responds to a human observer’s movements, varying as a function of his position. As the observer approaches, the mirror opens up a wider and deeper view of the room-environment and magnifies the image of the perceiver.”⁶² Whereas the window presupposes a spectator and posits a particular type of viewing, the mirror image relies on the position assumed by the viewer when in front of the surface. Whatever is placed before the mirror becomes the mirror image. If the art-as-window idea assumes an *a priori* art work, then the art-as-mirror concept assumes an *a priori* viewer. The mirror, unlike the window, is empty of meaning before the arrival of a spectator. The observer of art-as-mirror brings to the work all possible meanings. Therefore, if the glass window is akin to the perspectival devices of Renaissance painting and the mirror inverts this system, then the mirror can be understood as metaphor for the understanding of art as a forum for viewer self-reflection. Minimalism took part in this process of reversing the window metaphor of vision, and Graham was certainly familiar with the postulations of Judd and Morris that highlight this objective.⁶³

For his part, Judd's insistence on "specific objects" sought to undermine what he saw as the privileging of illusionistic representations of space.⁶⁴ An element of Judd's rejection of illusionism was a belief that such practices opened the work up to meanings

⁶² Graham, “Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 54.

⁶³ In the introduction, I point out that other scholars, specifically Krauss, have understood Graham's video-based projects through the psychoanalytic writings of Lacan. I focus my analysis on how Graham's conception of art-as-mirror is connected to his critique of Minimalism's phenomenological assumptions.

⁶⁴ See Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, 134-135.

extraneous to the object. The artist's conclusion that non-illusionistic works were solely capable of dealing with "the thing as a whole" seems to refute the notion that the specific object could allow for viewer self-reflection. As James Meyer has pointed out, however, Judd's strategy was ultimately grounded in his affinity for Greenbergian Modernism's obsession with quality.⁶⁵ Judd, like Greenberg, understood quality as intricately bound with visual interest. In his blunt statement that art "needs only to be interesting," Judd was, in fact, claiming "that it [the art work] need only be worth looking at. It may not be a good work, but it held one's gaze. A work that caused one to look again was even more interesting; a great work had a lasting interest."⁶⁶ So despite the artist's declaration that he was not concerned with the viewer of his work, his conception of quality and interest demands that a spectator take an active role in the process of seeing art.⁶⁷ In addition, as Judd sought to abandon the art-as-window construction in which the viewer is inserted into an illusionistic reality, his specific objects still established a pre-defined relationship between spectator and object. Only instead of the viewer entering the illusionistic space of the art work, the art object now occupied the physical space of the viewer, and it is in this sense that Judd's specific object can be understood as inverting the window metaphor. While his interpretation of Greenbergian Modernism may not demand a mirror-like art form in the truest sense, Judd nevertheless sought to dismantle the window metaphor. In this process he also inadvertently opened up a way for later artists, critics, and scholars, via what Meyer characterizes as a mis-reading of Judd's use of the term

⁶⁵ Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, 139-140.

⁶⁶ Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics of the Sixties*, 141.

⁶⁷ In an interview with Barbara Rose, Judd stated, "I don't consider the viewer." Interview quoted in Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics of the Sixties*, 158. Ever since the publication of "Specific Objects" in 1965, exposing the numerous incongruities in Judd's theories has been a standard practice within late-twentieth century art scholarship. Meyer details many of these efforts in his discussion of the essay.

"interest," to situate claims that the Minimalist object had the ability to provoke any number of possible meanings.⁶⁸ To be sure, Judd was not primarily concerned with endowing his objects with an infinite number of possible meanings. Despite efforts to clarify Judd's position, the interpretation of the artist's demand for interesting art works as an appeal for objects free from *a priori* meaning was prevalent enough in the late 1960s for Graham to state that Judd's art lacked "an interior core of meaning."⁶⁹ As pointed out in the first chapter, Graham concluded that Judd's pieces did not address or even acknowledge the fluidity of the viewing experience in which the viewer takes an active role. In other words, Graham considered Judd's works to be metaphorical mirrors that did not recognize themselves as such.

Morris's relevance to the mirror metaphor is far more direct than is the case with Judd. In large part, this is due to his application of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological model of perception to his own theorization of the viewing experience. As discussed previously, Morris focused on creating three-dimensional pieces through which the spectator would be able to gain an "awareness of oneself existing in the same space as the work....One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions."⁷⁰ In such a situation, the various activities that surround and make up the action of seeing a work of art become part of the work itself. By placing the object within the same physical space as the viewer, Morris sought to underline the active role the spectator must assume when confronted with an art work.

⁶⁸ Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics of the Sixties*, 140. The author goes so far as to suggest that, possibly to Judd's chagrin, this incorrect interpretation of "interest" helped spark the turn towards postmodernism in the art world.

⁶⁹ Graham, "Subject Matter," 38.

⁷⁰ Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," first published in *Artforum* 5.2 (October 1966): 20-23. Reprinted in Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 15.

This method of relating to the physical form of the art object via the body is similar to looking in a mirror. One's physical position in relation to the piece is just as crucial to experiencing the work as the mirror image is dependent on one's physical place in front of its reflective plane. Graham's conclusion is that Minimalist art fails to realize the potential of the mirror for art while also, as is the case with Morris, problematically assuming that self-reflection can be triggered by a quasi-sculptural, three-dimensional object. Graham is therefore equating the idea of art-as-mirror to Minimalism's phenomenological approach to art. In both cases, he is not rejecting the model outright. Instead, his projects draw attention to the unexamined social implications of these conceptions and the way in which they are applied in Minimalist art.

Glass Office Buildings explores the window and mirror types of viewership while adding a third, more radical visual experience. First, the windows of the building suggest the concept of the window as a framing device. Second, the mirrors used in the work indicate the possibility of self-reflection. Finally, there is the video image, based neither on the window nor the mirror metaphor for the viewing of art. For Graham, these video images are the most productive as they draw forth an active and critical viewership. Again, when the artist employed time-delay video techniques, he understood the video image as synonymous with the just-past. The artist notes that "five to eight seconds is the limit of 'short-term' memory or memory which is part of and influencing a person's (present) perception."⁷¹ All of Graham's time-delays are at this eight-second threshold for short-term memory so as to ensure that viewers recall the actions they performed in front of the camera at the same time they are witnessing these actions on delay. Unlike both the window and the mirror, the video image is mutable. Windows pull the viewer

⁷¹ Graham, "Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television," in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 60.

into a past moment in which the artist was present in front of the work during its creation and therefore fix the position of the spectator before the art object. Mirrors invert this system by reflecting whatever is placed in front of them, thus they are “perceived as a static instant, place (time and space) becomes illusorily eternal.”⁷² If the window is equated to the past, then the mirror represents a perpetual present tense. Time-delay video allows for a feedback situation in which viewers attain an awareness of their own selves in the act of viewing. Graham writes, “while the mirror alienates the ‘self’, video encloses ‘self’ within its perception of its own functioning, giving the person the feeling of a perceptible control over his responses through the feedback mechanism.”⁷³ This “perceptible control” is possible because the video feedback replays just-past actions for the viewer to consider in the present moment. Therefore, each of these three viewing positions — window, mirror, and video — correspond to a particular temporal situation. The window represents the past, the mirror the “pure present tense,” and the video is what Graham terms the “just-past.”

As discussed previously, the just-past is that critical moment in which one may ruminate on the social constructions that mediate the knowledge of self. In *Glass Office Buildings*, this self realization is embedded within the discursive strands surrounding the physical location of the work. The artist interrupts the transparency of the Modern office building window by placing mirrors on the back walls of the rooms. Instead of looking *through*, one is now able to look *at* the context. The video-images allow spectators to see themselves as they not only relate to their own image, but also to the physical and conceptual structures of glass architecture: the window, the mirror, and the video. Here

⁷² Graham, “Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 55.

⁷³ Graham, “Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 55.

Graham is tying together two seemingly disparate themes. *Glass Office Buildings* is both a meditation on the use of architecture in the service of business and an interrogation of three modes of viewership that correspond to three discrete temporal moments. Self-vision, in a work such as this, is equated to the act of viewing the office building. Similar to the way in which glass architecture elicits a particular type of uncritical viewership, the viewing of self is done without recognition of the social institutions (both physical and conceptual) that dictate and frame self-knowledge. By conflating these two experiences in one work, the artist opens both to analysis.

In order to fully explicate how *Glass Office Buildings* can coordinate a critical viewership of architecture, it is necessary to understand Graham's consideration of architectural theory and his especially pertinent thoughts on Modern architecture as an aesthetic and social system. According to Wallis, the artist's interest in architecture represents "the shift in Graham's own work from the deconstruction of video and commercial office buildings (as in *Video Pieces for Two Opposing Showcase Windows*, 1976) to pavilion-like glass sculptures presented in a garden or park site."⁷⁴ What is suggested by this statement is that the two architectural video-installations of 1976 seek to interrupt or "destroy" their sites, as opposed to the pavilions, which could be considered additions to their sites.⁷⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to ask what is present in the glass office building that Graham seeks to interrupt. The artist provides a clue to how he understands architecture when, in his "Essay on Video, Architecture and Television," he contends that the modern office building is not only derived from an identifiable

⁷⁴ Wallis, editor's note at the end of Graham, "The City as Museum," in *Rock My Religion*, 262.

⁷⁵ This idea, as it relates to the pavilions, is discussed in the Conclusion.

aesthetic program, but is also based on a social and economic ideology.⁷⁶ The formal structure of glass architecture, Graham claims, follows a formula that demands: “efficient form is beautiful and beautiful form is efficient. This has a ‘moral’ dimension: ‘efficient’ connotes a melioristic, ‘scientific’ approach seemingly uncontaminated by ‘ideology,’ which, pragmatically, has (capitalistic) use value.”⁷⁷ The clean look of glass architecture broadcasts the efficient business practices of the companies inside the building. In addition, “the glass’s literal transparency not only falsely objectifies reality, but is paradoxical camouflage; for while the actual function of a corporation may be to concentrate its self-contained power and control by *secreting* information, its architectural façade gives the illusion of absolute openness.”⁷⁸

Graham was not alone in his questioning of the social significance of Modern architecture. "In the 1960s and 1970s," Buchloh explains, "architecture as social site was conceived as an actual 'negation' of all utopian aspirations; it was presented in terms of its utter failure to have delivered on any of the avant-garde promises."⁷⁹ Graham saw the collapse of the mid-twentieth century utopian vision in the deterioration of the urban public sphere in the 1970s. This disintegration of the urban environment did not occur only on a physical level. As the artist contends, his architectural works of the 1970s sought to expose how "Modernist architecture and urban planning....provided an instrument that allowed the existing power structure to strip the city of its historical

⁷⁶ Graham, “Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 59-60.

⁷⁷ Graham, “Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 59. This notion is discussed in depth below in relation to the essays the artist published in the early 1980s and how this approach to architectural theory can, in turn, inform an interpretation of *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings*.

⁷⁸ Graham, “Essay on Video, Architecture, and Television,” in *Two-way Mirror Power*, 59.

⁷⁹ Buchloh, "Hans Haacke," 43.

memory."⁸⁰ *Glass Office Buildings* proceeds on such an examination. The architecture of the modern city, according to the architectural theorist Manfredo Tafuri, has part of its foundation in what he identifies as the "international reorganization of capital" following the economic crisis of the 1930s.⁸¹ It is his assertion that in the post-war period, the utopian objectives of the early twentieth century avant-garde were conflated with the reification of capitalism as a natural order. Under capitalism's rampant cycle of production and consumption, the layout of the city and the relationship of each individual building to that layout became what Tafuri labeled "the Plan." The Plan was not simply the idealized design for the city, but also the rationale by which capitalism would turn Modern architecture into "the bearer of ideals of progress and rationalization to which the working class is extraneous."⁸² In the process, architecture would become the "reality of the Plan."⁸³

Graham puts forth his own critical investigation of the city plan in the essay "The City as Museum" (1981) by laying out some of the basic tenets of Tafuri's thought. In agreement with the theorist, he declares that "although architects since then [the revolutions of the nineteenth century] have often believed that their moral task is the criticism of society, architecture has for the most part continued to reinforce the dominant social order."⁸⁴ In Graham's estimation, one of the clearest examples of this linking of architecture to the "dominant social order" is the glass office building. This particular

⁸⁰ Wallis, "Dan Graham's History Lessons," in *Rock My Religion*, xv.

⁸¹ Manfredo Tafuri, "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," trans. Stephen Sartarelli, in *Architecture in Theory Since 1968*, ed. K. Michael Hays, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 28. This essay was originally published in Italian in 1969. It was translated and expanded for its first English publication as Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luiga La Penta, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976). As noted below, Graham cites Tafuri in his 1983 essay on Gordon Matta-Clark.

⁸² Tafuri, 32.

⁸³ Tafuri, 28.

⁸⁴ Graham, "The City as Museum," 244.

architectural form, according to the artist, is based on ideas derived from the artists and architects associated with the Bauhaus school.⁸⁵ As he tells Hatton, "there was the Bauhaus idea of simple clear glass which would show people on the outside exactly how productive the corporation was on the inside."⁸⁶ Specifically, Graham contends that the Bauhaus introduced productivist notions of art's role in society into Modern architecture. Productivist understandings of art, which were developed by Russian Constructivist critics and artists associated with the INKhUK in the early 1920s, posited that "artists should enter directly into industry to produce formally expedient and socially useful objects."⁸⁷ The glass office building came to embody this productivist spirit as its entire program of design was aimed at maximum functionality. As Graham writes:

In the functionalist building, symbolic form (i.e., ornament) is apparently eliminated from the building (form and content being merged). There is no distinction between form and its material structure; that is, the form represents nothing more or less *than* the material. Second, a form or structure is seen to represent only its contained function, the building's structural and functional efficiency being equated with its real utility for those who use it. Aesthetically, this idea is expressed in the formula: efficient form is

⁸⁵ Graham interview with de Bruyn, 107.

⁸⁶ Graham interview with Hatton, 146.

⁸⁷ Christina Kiaer, "Boris Arvatov's Socialist Objects," *October* 81 (Summer 1991): 106. Art historian Boris Arvatov was one of the leading proponents of the Constructivist movement in Russia and is credited with helping introduce productivist concepts to the other members of the Moscow based Institute of Artistic Culture (abbreviated from Russian as INKhUK). As is generally accepted, the members of the Bauhaus school became familiar with many of the Russian Constructivist ideas, in part, via Kandinsky and Moholy-Nagy, both of whom had contact with artists associated with the INKhUK.

beautiful and beautiful form is efficient.⁸⁸

The artist connects this goal of efficiency with the erasure of a critical understanding of how buildings function within a society. Here it is useful to quote Graham's "Art in Relation to Architecture/Architecture in Relation to Art" at length as he makes one his most significant commentaries on how the social power of the glass buildings signifies mid-twentieth century utopian visions of progress and productivity.

One can see this uncontaminated functionalism in the later buildings of Mies van der Rohe, especially his corporate office buildings of the 1960s. These use transparent glass curtain walls to eliminate the distinction and contradiction between outside and inside. Glass and steel are used as 'pure' materials, for the sake of their materiality. Until recently, these Bauhaus-derived buildings were generally sheeted in transparent glass. As a result, they read from inside out, making evident their functional construction. The function of the building was expressed in terms of the structural, evident materiality of the glass and steel that were exposed directly to view, as were the human activities within the building. The social function of the building was subsumed into its formal disclosure of its technical, material, and formal (self) construction. The neutrality of the surface, its 'objectivity,'

⁸⁸ Graham, "Art in Relation to Architecture/Architecture in Relation to Art," 226.

focused the viewer's gaze only on the surface material/structural qualities, deflecting it from the building's meaning/use in the social system's hierarchy. The glass gave the viewer the illusion that what was seen was seen exactly as it was.⁸⁹

Glass Office Buildings breaks the illusion held forth by the glass and steel office building by inserting into this seemingly neutral space a dynamic type of viewing that acknowledges past, present, and future moments. By provoking in the individual viewer a heightened awareness of how his or her own vision of past, present, and future self is coordinated by the architecture of the glass building, Graham's piece underlines the moralistic and social dimension to Modern architecture. The combination of window, mirror, and video vision allows viewers to recognize that what is seen is not a simple, natural construction. The building in *Glass Office Buildings* is rendered a site of numerous visual experiences that underline the social complexity at the core of both Modern architecture and the ideology from which it was generated.

Given the connection he establishes between exploitative capitalism and functionalist architecture, Graham provides his most damning indictment of Minimalism when he writes:

Functionalism in architecture and aesthetic formalism are philosophically similar. By the same token, functionalist architecture and Minimal art have in common an underlying belief in the Kantian notion of artistic form as a perceptual/mental 'thing-in-itself.' This presumes that art objects are

⁸⁹ Graham, "Art in Relation to Architecture/Architecture in Relation to Art," 226-227.

the only category of objects 'not for use,' objects in which the spectator takes pleasure without interest. Minimal art and post-Bauhaus architecture also compare in their abstract materialism and their formally reductive methodology. They share a belief in 'objective' form and in an internal self-articulation of the formal structure in apparent isolation from symbolic (and representational) codes of meaning. Both Minimal art and functionalist architecture deny connotative, social meanings and the context of other, surrounding art or architecture.⁹⁰

Therefore, an attempt to break down the false neutrality of the glass office building is a reiteration of the themes the artist explored in both the magazine pieces and the earlier video-installations.

Furthermore, it is possible to locate Graham's critique of Minimalism in his examination of Modern architecture. A connection between architect and Minimalist artist is suggested by Graham when he declares that Modern architecture posits two conflicting concepts of the architect's role in society. In one definition, the architect is seen as a type of social engineer, while in the other the architect is understood as an artist.⁹¹ In post-Bauhaus architecture, he claims, these two seemingly antithetical conceptions were never satisfactorily reconciled. Here Graham is echoing the analysis of the architect George Baird, who in his 1969 essay "'La Dimension Amoureuse' in

⁹⁰ Graham, "Art in Relation to Architecture/Architecture in Relation to Art," 228.

⁹¹ Graham, "Art in Relation to Architecture/Architecture in Relation to Art," 226.

Architecture," identifies these two notions.⁹² Rather than using the terms "engineer" and "artist," Baird proposes the "Life-conditioner" and the "*Gesamtkünstler*."⁹³ The Life-conditioner (Graham's "engineer") has a scientific approach to the practice of architecture in which he intends his work to put forth no pre-determined experience. Instead, the Life-conditioner sees his audience as objects for study. The *Gesamtkünstler* (Graham's "artist,") on the other hand, maintains a paternalistic stance towards spectators: "he is thus committed to a 'total' predetermination of their experience of the environment, from every conceivable point of view."⁹⁴ Employing terms from Saussuerian semiotics, Baird goes on to maintain that despite their apparent incompatibility, the Life-conditioner and the *Gesamtkünstler* both "attempt to shift the impact of the individual design from the level of *parole* to that of *langue*."⁹⁵ In this movement towards the collective realization of their work, both positions expose their "belief that their designs embody what we might call an *absolute perceptual transparency*; a belief that they can take for granted their fellows' capacity to see each design 'as it in itself really is.'"⁹⁶

In Graham's reading of Minimalism, the Life-conditioner and the *Gesamtkünstler* can be said to represent Morris and Judd, respectively. Both seek a kind of "absolute perceptual transparency" to their work that speaks to the collective instead of the individual. Morris, in his devotion to phenomenology, draws the faulty conclusion that his pieces can cordon off all the contextual information surrounding the work of art. For

⁹² George Baird, "'La Dimension Amoureuse' in Architecture," in *Architecture in Theory from 1968*, 40-55. This text was originally published in Charles Jencks and George Baird, *Meaning in Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1969).

⁹³ Baird, 41. The author italicizes the term "Gesamtkünstler" and refers to both positions using the masculine third person "he." I have elected follow these conventions.

⁹⁴ Baird, 41.

⁹⁵ Baird, 44. In Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) semiotics, *parole* (speech) refers to the utterances made by individual subjects whereas *langue* (language) means the social system of signs that gives meaning to the individual *parole*.

⁹⁶ Baird, 45. Emphasis is Baird's.

him, the three-dimensional Minimal object occupies the same space as the viewer and therefore the viewer's conscious experience will be dramatically heightened by engaging with one of these objects. Judd, as the Life-conditioner, creates his work as if he is outside the collective *langue*, but is, in fact, trying for a radical modification of the *langue*.⁹⁷ With their insistence on their own formal properties, the "specific objects" seek to satisfy the Life-conditioner's craving for designs that do not take into account the experience of the viewer. This disregard for the viewing experience in Judd's work is, however, a false front considering that the recognition of a work's aesthetic purity depends, first and foremost, on the viewer. Similar to the Life-conditioner, Judd claims a certain neutrality while at the same time desiring to alter the way in which spectators understand and experience art. Both artists strive for a kind of wholeness in their work. Judd's wholeness is one of formal properties in balance with one another. Morris's wholeness is one of experience; the viewer is to have a complete experience in front of the work of art. Graham, as I have noted throughout this study, is critical of such Minimalist efforts to provoke a collective and total experience of art. *Glass Office Buildings*, through the use of time delay video, mirrors, and windows, reveals such conceptions of wholeness to be faulty. In fact, a viewer's experience of the work, the architectural context, and of his or her own self is composed of numerous individual experiences which all overlap and inform one another. Coordinating these disparate instances into one total statement is not the goal of *Glass Office Buildings* as such an aim is exactly what Graham criticized in both Modern architecture and Minimalism. Rather, the project exposes the interlocking streams of information active within the site of its installation.

⁹⁷ Baird, 43-44.

The architectural video-installations can be seen to point implicitly to an institutional critique. The artist, by avoiding the art gallery and museum, highlights his own assumption that these institutional spaces are not able (or perhaps willing) to show works that elicit politicized readings. Nevertheless, reading "institution" to signify merely the art gallery or museum is to ignore a more expansive interpretation of this term that is suggested in a work such as *Glass Office Buildings*. Just as the events of *Yesterday/Today* form what I have called an "institution of events," the myriad discursive streams at work in the Modern glass office building constitute a type of institution. *Glass Office Buildings* offers an individual the opportunity to unravel the interconnected information making up this particular institution and thereby fosters an awareness of the individual experience in front of the glass office building. Graham's work allows for a viewer to evaluate how discursive currents on urban planning, history, commerce, architecture, vision, and self-identification are tied together, reified, and naturalized through the glass office building. Thus, *Glass Office Buildings* can be said to take part in the practice of institutional critique, but as in the case with the time-delay rooms, the role of institutional interrogator is ultimately left open for the viewer to occupy.

Destruction and Addition: Gordon Matta-Clarke and Graham

To conclude this examination of Graham's architectural video installations, it is helpful to consider his interpretation of work by Gordon Matta-Clark, another site-specific artist involved in an expanded form of institutional critique. In his 1983 essay "Gordon Matta-Clark," Graham discusses the artist's projects as an example of the destruction of the very same architectural codes he sought to undermine in his own

work.⁹⁸ Wallis notes that even though Graham had met Matta-Clark, it was not until after the latter's death in 1978 that he realized his acquaintance's interest in Marxism and architectural theory.⁹⁹ In reading the essay, one is left with the sense that Graham deeply admires Matta-Clark's work for challenging both architecture and conventional social structures. Tafuri, as Graham suggests at the outset of his analysis, set the stage for Matta-Clark's interventions into existing architectural structures with his assertion that architecture destroyed the urban environment.¹⁰⁰ In his large-scale works, Matta-Clark was well-known for using abandoned urban buildings and spaces that were scheduled for demolition. Likewise, Benjamin's interest in recuperating historical memory through ruins provides a theoretical base for understanding what Graham labels Matta-Clark's "exposures."¹⁰¹ For example, in *Conical Intersect* (1975) (fig. 27), Matta-Clark cut a series of circles into an abandoned working-class Paris tenement that stood alongside the Centre Pompidou, then under construction. In Graham's words

the conical removals penetrated the buildings, the holes optically functioning like periscopes, directing the attention of people on the street to, specifically, the alignment of the buildings to both the Eiffel Tower and the new Centre Pompidou....with the aid of this 'periscope,' viewers could look not only into the interior of the Matta-Clark sculpture/building, but *through* the conical boring to these

⁹⁸ Graham, "Gordon Matta-Clark," in *Rock My Religion*, 194-205. Originally published in *Art Press* XX (Summer 1983).

⁹⁹ Wallis, editorial notes at the end of Graham, "Gordon Matta-Clark," in *Rock My Religion*, 204.

¹⁰⁰ Graham, "Gordon Matta-Clark," in *Rock My Religion*, 195.

¹⁰¹ Graham, "Gordon Matta-Clark," in *Rock My Religion*, 196.

other buildings that embody past and present eras of Paris.¹⁰²

Graham sees in Matta-Clark's exposures a challenge to the ideology of progress that is celebrated by Modern architecture. In stripping away architectural layers, Graham posits, Matta-Clark is also revealing the "hidden nonstructural and historical layering" of Paris that many individuals would otherwise not pause to consider.¹⁰³ In his fragmenting of architecture, Matta-Clark succeeds in the same task Graham set for himself with *Glass Office Buildings*, the creation of a subversive historical memory that questions the "natural" wholeness of Modern architecture and Minimalism. Both *Conical Intersect* and *Glass Office Buildings* interrupt the flow of information normally received by viewers of a building. Matta-Clark achieves this by cutting away from the structure to reveal the ideological undercurrent of progress behind the demolition to make way for a new museum. By doing so, *Conical Intersect* draws attention to the building about to be torn down and how that structure relates to two of Paris's most recognizable monuments. The assumption here is that before *Conical Intersect*, the abandoned building was understood as just that, an abandoned and soon to be erased structure. What Matta-Clark's piece does is replace this memory with awareness of the historical reality of the building and its architectural and conceptual relationship to its context. The new memory of the structure is not of the building itself, but of the Matta-Clark artwork *Conical Intersect*. By appropriating the cultural status of art, the artist has ensured that the soon-to-be demolished building will not be written out of the future as was originally planned. Likewise, *Glass Office Buildings* uses video cameras to provoke in the viewer a sense of extended just-past present time in which each successive moment not only builds on the

¹⁰² Graham, "Gordon Matta-Clark," in *Rock My Religion*, 202. Emphasis is Graham's.

¹⁰³ Graham, "Gordon Matta-Clark," in *Rock My Religion*, 202.

previous moment, but also points to the future moment. Ultimately, both pieces are expressions of the kind of two-faced reality of the present tense that Benjamin identifies in his writings. What distinguishes Graham's projects from those of Matta-Clark is the lack of negation in his aesthetic program. As Graham argues, despite the fact that Matta-Clark is primarily a subtractive artist, his projects still strive for a communication value.¹⁰⁴ While Graham's own work shares a similar drive towards communication, it does so by an opposite maneuver, addition.

In the architectural video installations, the communication Graham seeks is between viewers and their own positions within the tangled web of discourses on art, vision, commerce, architecture, and history. *Yesterday/Today*, *Shopping Windows*, and *Glass Office Buildings* attempt to both elicit and focus a viewer's attention on the ways in which seemingly neutral spaces such as cafes, shopping malls, and office buildings are filled with social and ideological messages. Graham, by adding video cameras, mirrors, and monitors to these spaces, interrupts the unending flow of information that projects from these spaces and envelops the individuals in those spaces. Normally, such places are so loaded with discourses that individuals are unable to unpack the strands and examine why and how they came to be inscribed in a particular space. As noted earlier, Graham recognizes the naiveté in the assumption that one would be able to escape these networks. In the end, the architectural video installations are not so much about attaining a kind of objective view, as they are concerned with fostering a new, more critical awareness of the social mechanics that coordinate how individuals interact with and understand both space and themselves.

¹⁰⁴ Graham, "Gordon Matta-Clark," in *Rock My Religion*, 201.

Conclusion

The understanding of Graham's video-installations of the 1970s proposed in this study underscores the role of the viewer in the creation of the work's meaning. Beginning with his magazine pieces of the 1960s, the artist has been concerned with encouraging active and critical viewership. As the first chapter offers, his earliest art works and writings question assumptions associated with Minimalism. Graham, rejecting Minimalist notions of a "pure experience" provoked by an art object, created his magazine pieces to point out how experience is always mediated by social and cultural factors. As he put forth in the essays "Subject Matter" and "My Works For Magazine Pages," Graham believed that Minimalism failed to provide an adequate means of investigating how the act of viewing an art work is defined, in part, by the context in which the art work is received. In response, the artist created works that are open-ended in that they elicit viewer interaction. It is Graham's aim that the viewer, by engaging with the art work, would become a more critical member of society. Such an approach, as the first chapter concludes, is similar to the objectives found in Marcuse's writings of the same period on liberation and the one-dimensional society.

In order to facilitate the reading I offer of the artist's work as dependent on engaged viewership, this study breaks the second and third chapters into investigations of themes related to the artist's use of video and installation, respectively. As I note in the introduction, working with this separation is not solely an attempt to address the formal or technical facets of Graham's video-installations. Instead, I make this division as a strategy to examine issues apparent in the video-installations that are highlighted through

the use of a particular artistic technique. In this way, my interpretive approach to Graham's work has positioned the formal elements of the video-installations as starting points for an expanded consideration of the artist's social, historical, and political ideas.

Video, as noted in the second chapter, allowed the artist to manipulate the viewer's temporal engagement with the work of art. Through the use of time-delay, these video-installations prompt viewers to confront notions of self-perception and the tying together of the past and present. Such an aim can be understood in comparison to the ideas of the theorist Walter Benjamin. Most of the video-installations use video to provoke a consideration of what Graham termed the "just-past present." This concept, which the artist credits to Benjamin, is found in works in which the artist makes use of the time delay and feedback possibilities of video, such as *Present Continuous Past(s)* and the time-delay rooms. Viewers of these projects, I argue, not only become aware of themselves as viewing subjects, but are also able to interrogate how the past, no matter how subsumed, is always available in the present.

By tying together the work of Marcuse and Benjamin with that of Laing, I posit that Graham's projects seek to provide moments for a critical examination of how an individual's experience of the world is framed by social interaction. Similar to Marcuse, the artist viewed contemporary society as defined by the inability of the individual to achieve true liberation. The capitalist emphasis on consumption, in Marcuse's reading, leads to a false sense of freedom that flattens out critical thought about how society works. With the video-installations Graham aims to open this one-dimensional society for the viewer so that he or she may interrogate its more subtle features.

As pointed out in chapter two, the artist identifies two major aspects of one-dimensional society that are often overlooked. First, the use of time-delay in the video-installations highlights how the past is erased from a society's collective consciousness with the constant demand for the present. As Benjamin points out, while society may be concerned with the here-and-now of the present while also dreaming of a more perfect future, the past always exists below the surface of daily life, informing both the present and the future. Using time-delay video technology, Graham seeks to interrupt the coercive stream of the present and make viewers pause and consider how their experience of the present and of the future is, in large part, dictated by what occurred in the past. While making viewers aware of the just-past present, the artist also strives to make viewers recognize the interconnectedness of individuals. From his understanding of Laing, Graham arrived at the notion that self-knowledge is generated via social engagements between self and other. For Laing, the meeting of two individuals is a process of self-definition in which the behaviors and experiences of both individuals shape one another. One-dimensional society is particularly insidious as it forces one to ignore how the creation of self is, in fact, a dynamic process played out between thinking, feeling, and interacting individuals. The one-dimensional individual is isolated from the rest of society and is only defined by the labor he or she performs and the products he or she consumes. In response to one-dimensional society's notion "I consume, therefore I am," Laing and Graham offer the concept "I interact with you, therefore both you and I are." By underlining the just-past present and the interconnectedness of experiences, Graham attempts to undermine one-dimensional society by allowing viewers to recognize their own complacency in the system. Ultimately, such a goal is political as it seeks to

liberate the individual from the existential inhuman conditions that define contemporary society.

Again, such an approach can be interpreted in light of the artist's rejection of Minimalism. The insistence on a pure phenomenological experience is, in Graham's estimation, symptomatic of the larger social problems inherent in a one-dimensional society. For the artist, pushing an artistic doctrine that espouses the ability of a viewer to attain a kind of unfettered self-realization in front of an art work ignores the fact that the relationship of viewer to art work is replete with social conventions. By failing to account for the context in which the interaction between viewer and art work takes place, Minimalism did not achieve the kind of socially relevant art which Graham felt could question one-dimensional society. This does not mean that he disavowed the benefit of self-knowledge or the notion that art could provide a viewer with the opportunity to reflect on his or her self. Instead, Graham pursued an art that would acknowledge the social conventions governing the reception of art and the creation of self-knowledge, while also understanding this acknowledgement as a possible means to launch a critical inquiry into one-dimensional society. In short, Minimalism's goals may have been correct, but Minimalist art, with its insistence on a static viewer-art object relationship, lacked a political edge. Graham's use of mirrors and video cameras affords viewers the ability to see themselves as viewers and thus reflect on the social issues that Minimalism ignored.

To clarify how the spectatorship of self can also be understood as a political activity, the second chapter concludes with an examination of themes of surveillance in Graham's work. In the past twenty years, artists and art critics have commented on how

surveillance and media, in ever more pervasive ways, frame our lives. Most often, such an interest leads to an exploration of Foucault's linking of surveillance, vision, and power. Graham's works are valuable as investigations into the effects of surveillance because he does not attempt to induce a kind of frightened response that calls forth the negative aspects of a surveillance society. Instead, the video-installations use the observation of self and other as an avenue to self-knowledge.

Space and architecture are the central themes of the third chapter. Graham's works depend not only on viewer interaction, but also on the physical and conceptual contexts in which they function. Arguing that these video-installations can be thought of as instances of site-specific art, I contend that works like *Yesterday/Today*, *Video Piece for Showcase Windows in a Shopping Arcade*, and *Video Piece for Two Glass Office Buildings*, underline the artist's experiments with how the video apparatus of the works could be varied for particular settings. The works discussed in this chapter highlight how the artist's architectural video-installations both question and expand the boundaries of what can be considered institutional critique. The architectural video projects of the 1970s also underscore the artist's conflation and revision of what he identifies as two traditional conceptions of art viewership: art-as-window and art-as-mirror. Graham asserts that his video installations of the 1970s do not conform to the notion that the art work should open up to an experience beyond itself, a situation he describes as the window conception of art. Nor does the artist agree that Minimalism erased the art-as-window conceit by suggesting a perceptual experience that reflects back onto the viewer, an idea he labels art-as-mirror. Instead of resolving the tension between art-as-window and art-as-mirror, Graham's works occupy an area in between these poles. In such a

position, they point to an artistic direction that is neither traditional nor entirely dismissive of the past. Indeed, his exploration of the window-mirror dichotomy draws attention to the underlying similarity of these constructs. The architectural video-installations underscore the artist's insistence that Minimalism, with its quasi-phenomenological definition of viewership, reiterated the same problematic assumptions made in Modern architecture's functionalist understanding of architecture's role in society. In making such a connection, Graham exposes the ignored ideological underpinnings of both approaches.

Furthermore, by using pre-existing locations like office buildings and shopping arcades, the artist drew upon the myriad discursive structures present there that manage how individuals interact with each space. Such an understanding reinforces my central conclusion: Graham's video-installations do more than examine art world assumptions. Indeed, these works bring forth for interrogation the complex tying together of viewership, self-knowledge, and ideology. While his early magazine pieces may have been occasioned by the artist's refusal of Minimalism, the later video-installations refined this theme by focusing on how works of art may be employed to generate active, engaged, and critical modes of viewership.

Throughout this study I have attempted to clarify the artistic and social context of the 1960s and 1970s in which Graham created the magazine pieces and video-installations. Contrasting the artist's approach to those of his contemporaries, for example Acconci, Nauman, and Matta-Clarke, presents an expanded understanding of Conceptual art, video art, and installation art. Such a contrast not only stresses the

historical specificity of the artist's work, but it also highlights the diversity of artistic responses to Minimalism.

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Vita

Michael Jake Shaffer was born April 28th, 1980 in Norfolk, Virginia to George and Janice Shaffer.

In 2002 he was awarded a B.A. in Art History from the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia. While studying at UMW, he received an undergraduate research grant to pursue a senior thesis on the architecture of Las Vegas, Nevada.

Shaffer earned a M.A. degree in Art History from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia for his thesis *Robert Gober: Other Spaces*. While working towards this degree he was granted a School of the Arts Thesis Fellowship.

As he wrote and revised his PhD dissertation Shaffer was awarded a Thalheimer Research Scholarship, a Phi Beta Kappa Scholarship, the Frederika and Paul Jacobs Graduate Scholarship in the VCU Department of Art History, and a Virginia Commonwealth University Doctoral Assistantship.

At VCU and at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia he has taught surveys of Western Art, nineteenth century art, and African American art, introductions to design and criticism, and courses on twentieth century art and new media. In addition, he has worked with VCU's Sculpture department in preparing graduating seniors for their future careers as artists. In 2008, Shaffer was presented with the Virginia Commonwealth University Service Award in recognition of his work for the university.

Michael Shaffer resides in Richmond, Virginia.