MAKING LIGHT:
CRITICALITY AND CAROUSEL PROJECTION IN THE WORK OF MARCEL BROODTHAERS AND ALLAN SEKULA

by

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Abstract

The invention of the Carousel slide projector made it possible for artists to create looping slide sequences for continuous display in contemporary art galleries. Slide projection already had a strong association with institutional and educational use, however, and a growing association with corporate marketing. How could artists use slide projection without having their work coloured by the medium's existing connotations?

This thesis discusses two early slide sequences that demonstrate a proactive approach to this problem. Marcel Broodthaers' *Bateau Tableau* (1973) critiques art history's role as institutional gatekeeper and interpreter. In an absurd recreation of an art historical slide lecture, a single painting is repeatedly re-photographed until it is utterly defamiliarized, reduced to its basic materiality, refusing any art historical "reading" of the painting. Allan Sekula's *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972) recreates the set-up of the film *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, but replaces the Lumière factory with an aerospace plant where workers manufacture fighter-bombers, transforming the industrial optimism of the original film into a condemnation of the military-industrial complex.

These works show how artists turned the slide projector's institutional and corporate connotations to their own ends. They also show that the projection apparatus itself can help to support this kind of critical project. The intermittent interruption caused by the projector's automatic advance, in particular, draws attention to the mediating presence of the apparatus in a way that allows artists to comment on the technology itself, and to critique the way that the device's connotations influence viewers' perception of the images that it reproduces. A discursive assessment of slide projection's historical relationship to other technological media, especially film projection and digital slide software like PowerPoint, shows that analogue slide projection is particularly well suited as a platform for this type of critical artistic commentary. The early history of slide projection is thus of ongoing relevance: as "new media" become increasingly important in contemporary art, artists continue to grapple with the challenge of using technologies with pre-existing institutional or commercial associations—making it important to understand the strategies that artists have used to navigate this challenge in the past.

Lay Summary

In the 1960s, artists began making looping slideshows to display as gallery artworks. But how could they use slide projection without having their work coloured by the medium's existing associations with institutional and commercial communication? Two early artists' slideshows demonstrate a proactive approach to this problem: Marcel Broodthaers' *Bateau Tableau* (1973) uses slide projection to critique art history, while Allan Sekula's *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972) uses slide projection to critique the military-industrial complex. Through their critiques, these artists distance their use of slide projection from the typical institutional or commercial use of the medium. Comparing slide with film projection or PowerPoint shows that both the historical context and the mechanism of slide projection help to make this possible. This comparison helps to make sense of artwork made after the heyday of the slide projector too, as artists continue to face similar challenges when working with other technological mediums.

Preface

This thesis is the original, unpublished, and independent work of the author, Nicholas Loewen.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the late 1960s, artists began creating slideshows—not to accompany lectures, but to install in the galleries as artworks. As they repeatedly hummed and clacked their way through image after image, these early artists' slide sequences demonstrated new artistic approaches to critical image-making.

Slide projection had a decades-long history in the hands of entertainers, art historians, teachers, and salespeople, but artists showed little interest in the medium until 1961, when Kodak's new Carousel projector made it possible to create slide sequences that would play automatically in an endless loop. If artists were latecomers to slide projection, however, how would they respond to the medium's pre-existing associations with institutional and commercial use? Many artists were invested in the anti-capitalist and anti-institutional politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s; how could they use slide projection to articulate a critique challenging those very systems with which it was already associated?

To answer these questions, I will discuss two slide sequences, one by the Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers and one by the American Allan Sekula. Broodthaers' *Bateau Tableau* (1973) presents a playful critique of art history through an absurd recreation of a slide lecture. Sekula's *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972) uses a series of candid portraits of aerospace workers to register a critique of the military-industrial complex, in a deadpan parody of the early film *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* by the Lumière brothers (1895). In answering these questions, I will show that these artists' adoption of the medium of slide projection comes at a time of significant transformation in contemporary art. The early 1970s saw a shift in both the mediums and the politics that contemporary artists took on, influenced by the anti-war movement in the United Sates and the upheaval and aftermath of May 1968 in Europe. As the austerity of Conceptual Art lost ground to more diverse multimedia exploration, contemporary art also became increasingly associated with anti-institutional and anti-capitalist activism.

Broodthaers and Sekula were both instrumental in this reimagining of contemporary artwork's role as a means of social criticism: Broodthaers helped to establish the movement that would become known as Institutional Critique, while Sekula pioneered a new Critical Realism. By studying their slide work, we can see how this new criticality was influenced both by the political events of the period as well as by the development and adoption of new mediums, like

the Carousel projector. The artistic adoption of slide projection coincided with the beginnings of video art, and with other technological experimentation that would set the stage for the subsequent development of "new media" art.[1] Many of these readymade technological tools came with pre-existing cultural associations (like slide projection's connection with the lecture hall and the corporate boardroom), associations to which artists would have to respond. This is true of today's "new media" as well, and so the strategies that artists developed to subvert or complicate the expectations surrounding slide projection are of contemporary relevance.

The artistic adoption of commodity technology can be seen as a continuation of the turn away from traditional mediums that helped to define the Conceptual Art of the 1960s. This turn away from traditional mediums did not mean that artists were no longer interested in the significance of medium or the process of mediation, however, and where other art historians have tended to see these early slide works as evidence of a move away from an artistic investment in the significance and specificity of medium, I will argue the opposite. Broodthaers' and Sekula's work demonstrates a keen attention to the way that an artwork's medium influences the perception of its content. While both artists use slide projection to reference other mediums (like painting or cinema), they do not erase the boundaries between mediums but rather draw the viewer's attention to the mediating function of the slide projector, making the apparatus itself a meaningful component of the artwork. By making careful use of the specific capabilities offered by the Carousel projector, and by responding to the apparatus's historical associations, Broodthaers and Sekula were able to transform the slide projector into a powerful support for

[1] The development of video art has been more celebrated in art history than slide work has—but this focus on video can obscure the extent to which video developed alongside experimentation with other mediums, like slide projection, however, and how work in each medium influenced work in others. Allan Sekula and Martha Rosler, for example, worked closely throughout the 1970s, and during her 1973 *Garage Sale* Rosler exhibited "a slide show of a seemingly typical local white family, bought at a local estate sale, played continuously while an audiotape loop, offering a meditation on the role of commodities in suburban life" ("Meta-Monumental Garage Sale," MoMA, 2012, https://www.moma.org/calendar/performance/1261)—reflecting Sekula and Rosler's shared interest in domestic space and labour, and prefiguring some of the concerns addressed in Rosler's canonized video work, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975). Slide projection features in later work by Rosler as well, such as *Martha Rosler Reads Vogue* (1982), a video that includes a taped slide sequence. This connection between slide projection and experimentation with other technological media can be seen in the work of a number of influential contemporary artists. Vito Acconci's *Pornography in the Classroom* (1975), for example, features a video, a film, and a slide sequence. Even more experimental is Gustav Metzger's *Liquid Crystal Environment* (1965), a set of heat-sensitive slides that change colour as they are projected. In this thesis I primarily connect early slide projection with later "new media" by addressing the ongoing conceptual relevance of the issues that artists like Sekula and Broodthaers addressed in their slide projections—but a more direct analysis of the lines of influence between early slide projection and contemporary "new media" would also be a valuable future research project.

their anti-institutional and anti-capitalist critiques. The playful articulation of this critique, moreover—the dry wit of Broodthaers' mock art historical slide lecture, and of Sekula's interpretation and recreation of the seminal Lumière film—demonstrates a resistance to the possibility of taking the slide projector seriously as an artistic medium, and to the potential codification of slide projection into an institutionalized form of artistic production.

As unassuming as they may seem, then, these slide projections are of substantial significance—not only because they helped to establish a critical approach to artmaking that is still influential in contemporary art, but also because they did so through a relatively early experimentation with a readymade technological medium, making them important as precursors to the "new media" work that has since become increasingly prevalent.

1.1 Outline

There are three primary parts to this thesis. First, a social history that describes how slide projection was used before it became a medium for contemporary art (Chapter 2) and that accounts for the context which led artists to adopt the medium (Chapter 3). Second, an analysis of two early artists' slide sequences, focusing on the strategies that artists developed in response to the medium's institutional and corporate connotations (Chapters 4 and 5). And third, a conclusion (Chapter 6) that reflects on the more recent history of slide projection, both as an artistic medium and more broadly, noting the medium's continued use in contemporary art and the ongoing relevance of the artistic strategies developed in early slide sequences.

In Chapter 2, I outline a social and technical history of the medium of slide projection, showing how it came to be associated with educational and business use, before it was taken up by artists. Where most histories focus on projection's use within a single discipline, I emphasize the relationships between the different discourses which surround projection. In addition to accounting for projection's social history, I also articulate a new theory about the relationship between slide projection and motion picture projection, because understanding the difference between the experience of viewing a film and viewing a slide projection is key to recognizing how slide projection functions in contemporary art. Histories of art and film typically recognize that both cinema and modern slide projection have a common ancestor in the older form of the Magic Lantern show, but little has been written about the significance of the divergence of slide and film at the turn of the nineteenth century. To account for this moment of rupture, I argue that

cinema and slide projection grew apart as slide projection became associated with a developing discourse of scientific vision and optical objectivity, while cinema maintained projection's earlier association with theatricality and magic. Further, I argue that despite their formal similarities the two mediums have since developed along largely separate trajectories. I then address slide projection's development from a scientific or educational tool into a corporate one, a shift which is connected to the invention of the Carousel projector, and which thus helped to pave the way for the use of slide projection in contemporary art. In Chapter 3 I discuss the early history of slide projection in contemporary art, highlighting the importance of the Carousel projector and the influence of the radical politics of the late 1960s on the emergence of artistic slide projection. Drawing on Michel Foucault's essay on the "photogenic" projection-based painting practice of Gérard Fromanger, I suggest that as a novel artistic medium the Carousel projector provided artists with an opportunity to experiment with a form that was not yet limited by institutional pre-conceptions about how it should be used artistically—and that through careful handling of the medium, artists like Broodthaers and Sekula might be able to play with the medium while continuing to avoid the creation of those pre-conceptions.

In Chapter 4 I discuss *Bateau Tableau*, showing how Broodthaers used slide projection's association with art history to frame his critique of the discipline, and how certain innate characteristics of the projector make it especially well suited as a technical support for his criticism of the institutionalization of contemporary art. Noting the playful nature of Broodthaers' approach, I argue that this playfulness serves as a means of defending the freedom of experimentation and expression offered by the Carousel projector. Broodthaers positions himself as court jester—invested in the institution, but also intensely critical of it—and his satirical critique demonstrates a refusal to accept prescribed expectations of behavior or creativity, thus making his work difficult to integrate into a larger or more serious institutional project.

Allan Sekula observed a complementarity between his own Critical Realism and the form of Institutional Critique with which Broodthaers has come to be associated, saying that "one mode spirals outward, the other inward."[2] In Chapter 5, then, I follow the spiral in the opposite

[2] In Jan Baetens and Hilde Van Gelder, eds., *Critical Realism in Contemporary Art: Around Allan Sekula's Photography* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006).

direction, reflecting on Sekula's subversive use of projection's commercial associations in *Untitled Slide Sequence* to critique larger political-economic structures. Returning to the relationship between slide projection and film, I argue that whereas the cinematic apparatus obscures its own mediating effect, the slide projector continually reminds viewers of its mediating presence—and that, through this interruption, it can be used to encourage a broader critical reflection on the way in which a medium itself can be used to shape perception.

I conclude in Chapter 6 with a reflection on the lasting significance of these early projections, as well as a discussion of slide projection in more recent work, as the ongoing artistic use of slide projection indicates that the Carousel projector still has something to offer artists—something that its apparent digital successors have been unable to replace.

Chapter 2: A history of projection

Much of the history of projection has been written in a fragmentary way, with accounts focusing on the use of projection within a particular discipline; many historians are concerned only with the cinema, or with the art history classroom. To understand how artists have used slide projection, however, we must understand how their work relates to the larger history of the medium. Artists' slide works are best understood not as a distinct historical development, but rather as a new element in a larger network of historical relationships—relationships between the different historical uses of projection, particularly in art history and cinema, but also the social and political relationships out of which these technologies and discourses developed. Before discussing the use of slide projection by artists, therefore, it is necessary to begin by outlining the earlier history of projection, synthesizing key observations from some of the more fragmentary accounts.

As a starting point, I will adopt a framework provided by Jennifer Eisenhauer, who has suggested that the social perception of projection can be divided into three primary discursive periods or categories: first, "magical vision," then "scientific vision," and finally "corporate vision."[3] The appeal of this framework is that it allows us to see that each major technological development in the history of projection is the product of a period of social change, and that in each of these moments of technological and social change projection is put to a new use. In other words, this approach recognizes the reciprocal relationship between technological and social development.

This framework will need some revision, however. Eisenhauer focuses exclusively on the role of projection in art education, and in this narrow view misses some of the developments which shaped the history of projection more broadly. Whereas Eisenhauer presents a chronological history of one branch of the projected image's family tree, I will attempt to sketch out the relationships between multiple branches. Eisenhauer's discursive framework helps to make this possible, however. If we understand discourses as describing shared patterns of

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[3] Jennifer F. Eisenhauer, "Next Slide Please: The Magical, Scientific, and Corporate Discourses of Visual Projection Technologies," *Studies in Art Education* 47, no. 3 (April 2006): 198–214, https://doi.org/10.1080/00393541.2006.11650082.

Note: the author has since changed her surname to Richardson.

thought, and their relationship to power and knowledge, then we can treat discourse as separate from chronological period, and less tidily sequential: older and newer discourses may at times coexist, and even interact.

2.1 Magical vision

Both art historians and film historians recognize the shared history of cinema and slide projection, but neither tend to comment on the social significance of their divergence in the early twentieth century, or on the subsequent relationship between the two media. Eisenhauer, for example, writes only about slide projection. The film historian Charles Musser has argued for the development of a holistic theory of "screen practice," which would recognize a continuity between cinema and earlier slide-based entertainments—but he nevertheless only discusses slide projection in its role as a precursor to film.[4] It is by reading these two together that it becomes possible to more fully understand the relationship between slide and cinema.

Musser and Eisenhauer write similar accounts of the first two centuries of projection. This was the period in which, per Eisenhauer, projection belonged to a discourse of magical vision. Both Eisenhauer and Musser identify the mid-seventeenth century as slide projection's point of origin, when innovators like Athanasius Kircher and Christiaan Huygens created the first "magic lantern" style projectors. They agree that projection was first used for entertainment: Eisenhauer writes that "a common use of the lantern within the discourse of magic vision was the projection of ghosts and apparitions," although Musser notes that Kircher was nevertheless committed to "the demystification of the projected image," insisting on revealing to his audience that the apparently supernatural occurrences which they had witnessed were in fact mere illusions.[5] Even in its earliest form, then, there is a similarity between slide projection and cinema: the history of slide projection begins with theatrical performance, and insofar as that performance presented narrative content, it was understood to be fictional.

The invention of the motion picture projector, however, comes after what Eisenhauer sees as a point of rupture: the displacement, in the mid-nineteenth century, of the discourse of magical

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[4] Charles Musser, "Toward a History of Screen Practice," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9, no. 1 (January 1984): 59–69, https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208409361190.

[5] Eisenhauer, "Next Slide Please," 200; Musser, "Toward a History of Screen Practice," 61.

vision by the discourse of scientific vision. As Eisenhauer shows, industrialization had sparked a new interest in "objectivity, neutrality, and scientificity," and, with the help of the newly invented photographic slide,[6] projection "was re-discovered as a valuable technology able to extend the capabilities of the human eye toward a perceived kind of scientific seeing, an objective visual extension."[7] Eisenhauer quotes an 1878 advertisement, the headline of which describes the lantern as "an educational instrument, and a means of rational amusement."[8] This is clear evidence of a shift in the use and perception of slide projection: the slideshow was now seen primarily as an intellectual tool, with entertainment as a secondary consideration.

Musser also acknowledges this cultural shift, describing how this new emphasis on "objectivity" led to the end of "phantasmagoria" and a new interest in more documentary presentations.[9] He does not see this as a transformative rupture, however. Instead, he emphasizes a continuity from early slide-based entertainments to cinema. He argues against the idea that the invention of the motion picture projector (and camera) in the late nineteenth century mark the definitive origin point for cinema. Emphasizing practice rather than technology, he shows that the motion picture projector was at first understood simply as a refinement of the magic lantern. He quotes, for example, Henry V. Hopwood, who wrote that "a film for projecting a living picture is nothing more, after all, than a multiple lantern slide."[10] Musser notes, moreover, that even the more documentary presentations of the mid to late nineteenth century retained a substantial degree of theatricality, and that slide projections and short films "were often integrated into the same program."[11]

Reading Eisenhauer and Musser together, we can see that the difference between motion picture and slide projection is not merely technological, but also discursive. Motion picture projection is reliant on technological innovations, like photography, which were developed under the discourse of scientific vision—but as a practice, cinema (with its emphasis on entertainment

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[6] The first photographic slides were made in the late 1840s, and commercially produced slides became available in the early 1850s. See Howard B. Leighton, "The Lantern Slide and Art History," *History of Photography* 8, no. 2 (April 1984): 107–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1984.10442204.

[7] Eisenhauer, "Next Slide Please," 208; 200.

[8] Quoted in Eisenhauer, "Next Slide Please," 203.

[9] Musser, "Toward a History of Screen Practice," 66–67.

[10] Musser, "Toward a History of Screen Practice," 59.

[11] Musser, "Toward a History of Screen Practice," 67.

and storytelling) remains within the discourse of magical vision.[12] The practice of slide projection, on the other hand, was more thoroughly transformed by the discourse of scientific vision. Where the discourse of magical vision was characterized by a theatrical mode of presentation, scientific vision would come to be characterized by its own form: the slide lecture.

2.2 Scientific vision

The key characteristic of the new discourse of scientific vision, as it developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was an emphasis on what Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison have called "noninterventionist" or "mechanical" objectivity.[13] Endeavouring to dispense with the apparently fallible subjectivity of hand-drawn illustrations, the scientific community embraced technological means of image-making, including photography. The invention of photographic slides thus allowed a re-invention of projection as a tool for "objective" scientific communication, and as a result, slide projection became closely associated with education. Eisenhauer shows that slide projection came to be understood "as a kind of publicly accessible microscope," an affordable means of sharing scientific knowledge with a wider public.[14]

As Daston and Galison have shown, however, the appeal of "objectivity" was not only the product of a need for accurate technical reference material, but was also a product of a "profoundly moralized" outlook which equated objectivity with self-restraint, honesty, patience, and hard work.[15] As "objective" imagery became implicit evidence of moral rectitude, the photographic slide lecture became a means of legitimizing a variety of enterprises that were not themselves inherently scientific.

Elizabeth Shephard's work on turn of the century slide presentations shows how the legitimizing power of "objectivity" influenced the transition from the entertainment-focused magical discourse to the education-focused scientific discourse: presentations created for

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[12] There are, of course, films that engage to some extent with the scientific discourse. Stereotypical documentary films, for example, are often effectively a sort of recorded slide lecture (with narrator substituted for lecturer, and filmed interviews serving the same role as quotations).

[13] Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, "The Image of Objectivity," *Representations* 40, Special Issue: Seeing Science (Autumn 1992): 81–128, https://doi.org/10.2307/2928741.

[14] Eisenhauer, "Next Slide Please," 203.

[15] Daston and Galison, "The Image of Objectivity," 83.

temperance societies and Sunday schools combined the fictional narrative form associated with the magical discourse with the instructive and moralizing intentions of the scientific.[16] Writing about slide projectors produced in the early twentieth century by the British "Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee" (COVIC), Gabrielle Moser has shown how slide projection was used as a platform for colonial propaganda, again relying on the apparently scientific nature of the slide lecture.[17] COVIC created presentations that would be shown to children in England and in British colonies under the pretense of geographical education, in order to instill a sense of "imperial citizenship." Echoing the earlier comparison between projector and microscope, Moser quotes geography historian James R. Ryan, who notes that "the technology's reputation as a 'form of indoor, imaginative fieldwork, often emulating manly imperial adventure'" made it particularly useful in this role.[18]

* * *

The typical form of the art historical slide lecture developed in this same period. Like the aforementioned pedagogical projects, the emerging field of art history was able to capitalize on the legitimization offered by the apparent objectivity of the projected photograph. The first documented art historical slide lecture was presented by Bruno Meyer at the First International Congress of Art History in Vienna in 1873.[19] While the event was not particularly successful, Meyer and a growing contingent of art historians continued to champion the form throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, until the slide lecture finally became a defining feature of the discipline in the early twentieth.[20] The success of the art historical slide lecture, then, was the result of several factors: first, the growth of art history in America; second, the introduction of

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[16] Elizabeth Shepard, "The Magic Lantern Slide in Entertainment and Education, 1860–1920," *History of Photography* 11, no. 2 (April 1987): 91–108, https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1987.10443777.

[17] Gabrielle Moser, "Photographing Imperial Citizenship: The Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee's Lanternslide Lectures, 1900–1945," *Journal of Visual Culture* 16, no. 2 (August 2017): 190–224, https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412917710826.

[18] Moser, "Photographing Imperial Citizenship," 201.

[19] Maria Männig, "Bruno Meyer and the Invention of Art Historical Slide Projection," in *Photo-Objects: On the Materiality of Photographs and Photo Archives* (Berlin: MaxPlanckGesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften, 2019), 275–290, https://www.mprl-series.mpg.de/studies/12/index.html.

[20] See Männig, "Bruno Meyer and the Invention of Art Historical Slide Projection," and Howard B. Leighton, "The Lantern Slide and Art History," *History of Photography* 8, no. 2 (April 1984): 107–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1984.10442204.

the side-by-side slide comparison by Heinrich Wölflinn in 1912; and third, the maturing discourse of scientific vision.[21] Eisenhauer argues that projection provided "the fledgling discipline of art history" with "a visual epistemology through which to emphasize the objective analysis of the visual and to simultaneously situate itself as a unique, individual, and essential discipline of study."[22] Quoting Donald Preziosi, she furthermore writes that "photography and projection technologies are not simply supplementary technologies within the discipline, but establish the 'founding definitions of art historical practice.'"[23] Eisenhauer even compares the art historical practice of formal analysis to the scientific method, describing a careful process of observation through which "the art historian as expert could deduce hypotheses and make predictions about related works of art."[24]

Furthering this point, I would argue that this "scientific" use of slide projection also helped to encourage an interest in categorizing artwork and in constructing historical taxonomies—and thereby empowered art historians as arbiters and gatekeepers within the art community and its institutions.[25] Indeed, within the art world the slide lecture has since become symbolic of this institutional power. As I will discuss later, Marcel Broodthaers would use projection to evoke the spectre of art history, satirizing the "objective" gaze by reducing a painting to its most basic

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[21] For the history of art historical slide projection in America, see Howard B. Leighton, "The Lantern Slide and Art History," *History of Photography* 8, no. 2 (April 1984): 107–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1984.10442204.
The date for Wölfflin's introduction of the slide-comparison is given in Allan T Kohl, "Revisioning Art History: How a Century of Change in Imaging Technologies Helped to Shape a Discipline," *VRA Bulletin* 39, no. 1 (December 2012). For further commentary on Wölfflin's method, see Robert S. Nelson, "The Slide Lecture, or the Work of Art 'History' in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 3, (2000): 414–34.

[22] Eisenhauer, "Next Slide Please," 204.

[23] Eisenhauer, "Next Slide Please," 204.

[24] Eisenhauer, "Next Slide Please," 205.

[25] With the widespread adoption of Wölflinn's comparative approach, the process of assessing images according to their similarities and differences became a hallmark of the art historical slide lecture. Categorization was even more important behind the scenes, however: as slide collections grew, systematic classification of the slide collection became an organizational necessity, and the work of categorizing images became an unavoidable feature of art historical study.
The first slide collections were small enough that they could be managed by individual researchers, but by the middle of the twentieth century it was more typical to rely on a larger institutional "slide library," and by the 1970s these slide libraries had grown complex enough to attract expert attention from librarians. In 1974, for example, Betty Jo Irvine published one of the first books on the topic, which reviewed of several of the cataloguing systems in use at museums and universities in the USA; see Betty Jo Irvine, *Slide Libraries: A Guide for Academic Institutions and Museums.* (Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1974). Susan Zee Boerner, "Fundamentals of the Slide Library." (Master of Library Science, Denton, Texas, Texas Women's University, 1977).

visual elements—canvas, colour, brushstroke—in a way that strips the image of any possible personal or cultural context and significance.

Another insight into the way that slide projection is used in art history comes from Robert Nelson, who discusses not only the history of the slide lecture but also the linguistic and presentational style that is typically associated with the slide lecture today. Nelson notes that art historians tend to speak in a way that is "only possible if the slide is taken not as shadow, projected photograph, or copy of an original, but as the object itself." [26] Elaborating on this, he writes:

> The slide, although a photograph, creates not the 'perception of having been there,' Roland Barthes's notion of the ontology of a photograph, but a reality that *is* there, Christian Metz's description of a movie. The projected image is thus less a sign and more a simulacrum of the art object, an entity that in some way is that object itself, or, rather, a thing in itself, a past made present, even as it is understood to be past.[27]

I posit that this sense of immediacy is a fundamental feature of all projected images. As Nelson observes, it is the key to the escapist experience of cinema, for example. But reading Nelson alongside Eisenhauer, we can see that the same immediacy is also central to the use of projection within the discourse of scientific vision, as it helps to reinforce the sense of the "objectivity" of the image. One of the key distinctions between slide and film (which I will discuss in greater depth in Chapters 4 and 5), however, is that while the slide projector can elicit a sense of identification, it cannot create the appearance of continuous motion, and so the illusion of the image's "reality" is broken each time the slide is changed. It is this repeated self-disruption, I will argue, that Broodthaers and Sekula put to critical use in their slide sequences.

2.3 Corporate vision

The slide projector became a mass-produced commodity—and once projectors and slides were standardized, furthermore, it soon became possible to purchase not only commercially produced

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[26] Robert S. Nelson, "The Slide Lecture, or the Work of Art 'History' in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 3, (2000): 417.

[27] Nelson, "The Slide Lecture," 418.

projectors but also pre-made slides.[28] These developments made slide projection substantially more accessible as a tool, and as a result slides saw increasing use for marketing and business purposes in the twentieth century, as what Eisenhauer calls the discourse of "corporate vision" matured.[29] Under this new discourse, persuasion supplanted education as the primary purpose for projection, and the lecture gave way to the "pitch" as the dominant form of presentation.[30] The beginning of the transition to the corporate discourse can be seen in the early 1900s, in the use of slide projection for advertisements in cinemas and shop windows, as well as in the persuasive intention behind some slide lectures, such as those created by temperance activists and colonial authorities.

It was Kodak's introduction of the "Carousel" projector in 1961, however, that cemented the link between slide projection and corporate discourse.[31] The Carousel was a mass market machine, and it made available to ordinary consumers a feature originally intended for corporate or commercial: it could advance through a sequence of slides automatically, repeating the sequence in an endless loop. This function had previously been reserved for specialty machines

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[28] Sunday schools, temperance societies, and art historians all relied on commercially produced slides or slide sets (sometimes accompanied by pre-written scripts for the presenter) purchased from catalogues. See Elizabeth Shepard, "The Magic Lantern Slide in Entertainment and Education, 1860–1920," *History of Photography* 11, no. 2 (April 1987): 91–108, https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1987.10443777, and Howard B. Leighton, "The Lantern Slide and Art History," *History of Photography* 8, no. 2 (April 1984): 107–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1984.10442204.

COVIC's lessons on colonial geography and citizenship were produced by volunteers and government officials, not a private corporation, but they too were delivered to teachers as readymade packages. See Moser, "Photographing Imperial Citizenship," 190–224.

[29] The use of slide projection for window displays is discussed briefly by Janet Ward in *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley: University of Calfornia Press, 2001), 221.

A primary venue for lantern-slide advertisement was the cinema, in between films. I am not familiar with any academic history of this advertising, but images of slides shown in cinemas can be seen online—see, for example: Michelle Davenport, "Cinema Glass Slides — Political Ads," National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, accessed October 23, 2020, https://www.nfsa.gov.au/latest/cinema-glass-slides-political-party-campaign-advertisements; "Glass Slides," Learn About Movie Posters, accessed September 4, 2020, http://www.learnaboutmovieposters.com/newsite/index/articles/glassslides.asp; and "Lantern Slides," Silent Cinema Society, accessed September 4, 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20171017234030/https://www.silentcinemasociety.org/glass-lantern-slides/.

[30] Eisenhauer shows that this transformation even extended to the classroom, as teaching shifted from a modernist focus on simply *informing* students of fundamental truths, to a postmodern model which focuses on *convincing* students to accept ideas which are acknowledged as socially constructed.

[31] Eisenhauer connects the beginning of the corporate discourse with a different event—the invention of PowerPoint, which I discuss in Chapter 6.

designed specifically for use in shop displays or at conventions.[32] By replacing the linear slide tray typically used in earlier machines with a circular tray, however, Kodak was able to create an affordable system with a simpler looping mechanism and twice the capacity of the earlier linear-tray systems. The circular tray was a tremendous success, and soon became the standard design for all projectors, regardless of use or manufacturer. The basic design of the projector had been reshaped, following the expectations of corporate vision.

The new design made possible new uses—including the display of slide sequences in contemporary art galleries, as I will discuss in the next chapter. Despite its corporate heritage, however, the Carousel was advertised as a tool that would make home slide shows simpler to create and present. Private slide presentations were not new (pre-made lantern slide sets were available for private display in the early twentieth century,[33] and later the development of 35 mm slide film in the mid-1930s made it easy for amateur photographers to create their own slides[34]), but amateur slideshows grew in popularity in the postwar period, alongside the corporatization of

[32] This is noted in McKeever, "A Brief History of Slide Projectors" (Kodak, 2004), http://resources.kodak.com/support/pdf/en/manuals/slideProj/history.pdf.

It is further backed up by Robert L. McIntyre, "How to Choose a Slide Projector," *Popular Photography*, September 1956, which mentions on page 75 that "Automatic projectors of the reel and drum type have been on the market for many years. Designed for continuous automatic-display purposes, they present a series of pictures over and over again. They are fine for commercial use, but lack the flexibility required for amateur slide showings."

[33] For a discussion of the lantern slide in home entertainment, see Elizabeth Shepard, "The Magic Lantern Slide in Entertainment and Education, 1860–1920," *History of Photography* 11, no. 2 (April 1987): 91–108, https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.1987.10443777.

[34] 35 mm film was developed for motion picture use, but became a popular format for still photography in the late 1920s. The first 35 mm cameras had the benefit of being small, lightweight, and easy to use, but the use of motion picture film meant that they had to be loaded in a darkroom. Daylight-loadable film cassettes made the format more accessible; Kodak introduced the now-standard 135 format cassette in 1934. In 1936 Kodak began to sell cassettes preloaded with Kodachrome, which was both the first general-purpose colour film and the first significant positive (ie, slide) film for still photography. Kodak began to offer processing into ready-to-project slides with cardboard mounts in 1939. The 35 mm slide format was therefore reasonably accessible to amateurs for about two decades prior to the invention of the Carousel projector, but the actual presentation of slides remained relatively tedious until the introduction of magazine- or tray-fed projectors in the 1950s.

Images of the "American Tourist Multiple" camera, which required darkroom loading, can be seen on Massimo Bertacchi webpage "Early 35mm Cameras," http://corsopolaris.net/supercameras/early/early_135.html. The date for the introduction of the 135 cassette is given in Risto Sarvas, David M. Frohlich, *From Snapshots to Social Media – The Changing Picture of Domestic Photography*, 76. The history of Kodachrome is outlined in Allan T Kohl, "Revisioning Art History: How a Century of Change in Imaging Technologies Helped to Shape a Discipline," *VRA Bulletin* 39, no. 1 (December 2012). A timeline of Kodak projectors is available in McKeever, "A Brief History of Slide Projectors" (Kodak, 2004), http://resources.kodak.com/support/pdf/en/manuals/slideProj/history.pdf.

slide projection.[35] While the amateur slideshow is of substantial historical significance, therefore, in the discussion of contemporary art that follows I will focus only on the relationship between artists' projections and their institutional or corporate precedents.[36]

[35] In fact, I would argue that insofar as the amateur slideshow became a means of "advertising" ones happiness and success by recreating the highlights of vacations and special events (in a way that was perhaps similar to more recent image-sharing on social media), even these private presentations bore a connection to the corporate discourse.

[36] A more thorough study of amateur slide projection and its relationship to contemporary art would be a valuable direction for further study. My impression, however, is that it wasn't until the 1980s and 90s (that is, after the creation of the work that I discuss in this thesis) that artists would become interested in the experience and history of amateur slideshows and home presentations. While Allan Sekula's photography embraces a vernacular style that may be similar to the amateur photography of the early 1970s, he doesn't appear to make a specific, conscious reference to the amateur slideshow—whereas later works by James Coleman, for example, more clearly draw on a sense of nostalgia for the medium of slide projection.

Chapter 3: Carousel projectors and contemporary art

Prior to the 1960s, the primary artistic use of projection was as an aid in copying images to canvas. The painters most famously associated with this technique used opaque projectors,[37] however, not slide projectors, and they saw projection as a mere convenience which simplified the practice of painting. The first noteworthy artistic experiments with slide projection came in the 1950s when, for example, Bruno Munari created abstract illuminations by collaging translucent plastics and found material into slide frames. Twelve of Munari's slides were included in the exhibition "Two Graphic Designers: Bruno Munari and Alvin Lustig" at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955.[38] Later, in 1958 and 1959, Ad Reinhardt presented two "non-happenings" at the Artist's Club in New York, in which his "aim was to show about 2,000 of the 10,000 slides he ha[d] taken of 'significant forms' of architectural and sculptural work in 'The Moslem World and India.'"[39] But while these early experiments brought slide projection closer to use as an artistic medium, they still operated on the edge of recognizability as "art." Reinhardt's presentations would appear to be typical art history lectures, if not for their excessive length, and Munari's slides were presented as part of a design practice, rather than an artistic one. Slide projection only became more common as an artistic medium after the appearance of the Carousel projector in 1961. Many more artists began to work with slides in the 1960s and 1970s, creating both simple image sequences and more complex multimedia pieces, most of which relied on the use of a Carousel projector. By making it simpler to create and exhibit slide work, Kodak had inadvertently created a new medium for contemporary art.

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[37] Opaque projectors reproduce ordinary drawings and printed images (that is, images made on opaque material) by means of a bright lamp, mirror, and lens. (Slide projectors, by contrast, require images on translucent material, but can be made with only a lamp and a lens.)

[38] The checklist for the exhibition describes the work as "12 slides containing abstract designs on glass . . . composed of bits of burnt or broken glass, paper, string, mica, feathers and other materials, each of the slides being an original design completed by light when it is projected on a screen." "Two Graphic Designers: Alvin Lustig and Bruno Munari" (Museum of Modern Art, 1955), https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_master-checklist_326003.pdf.

The press release for the exhibition notes the use of a "continuous projection machine," presumably a forerunner of the carousel projector. "Graphic Design by Lustig and Munari at the Museum of Modern Art" (Museum of Modern Art, 1955), https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_326004.pdf.

[39] Dietrich Scheunemann, *Avant-Garde/Neo-Avant-Garde* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 114.

One of the earliest discussions of slide projection in contemporary art is Michel Foucault's 1975 essay "Photogenic Painting," on the work of Gérard Fromanger.[40] This essay offers important insight into the artistic intentions behind the development of early slide work. Before discussing Foucault and Fromanger, however, it is best to begin by reflecting on some of the cultural context behind the essay and the work that it discusses.

The Carousel projector arrived at a time when contemporary artists were reimagining the political function of their work, as well the political significance of popular media and media technology. American artists who opposed the Vietnam War found themselves responding to the television and press images that defined the public perception of that conflict. European artists who supported the strikes that began in Paris in May 1968 likewise found themselves responding to the media coverage of those events, and in some cases even attempting to fulfill the role of mass media themselves.[41] Artistic use of slide projector must therefore be read in the light these larger developments in the political history of media technology (and this is true not only of Fromanger's work, but also of Broodthaers' and Sekula's as well, as I will show in the next two chapters).

In "Photogenic Painting," Foucault discusses photorealistic paintings that Fromanger created by painting directly into the light of snapshot photographs (some his own, some taken from the press) that he projected onto his canvas with a Carousel projector.[42] What Foucault does not mention is that this is a variation on a process used in 1968 by the Atelier Populaire, of which Fromanger was a founding member. The Atelier was a group of artists organized to mass-produce posters in support of the anti-establishment protests and strikes in Paris during the summer of 1968. The artists of the Atelier printed their posters using silkscreens, and sometimes used opaque projection as an aid in transferring appropriated press images onto their screens.[43] As Liam Considine has shown, they were initially wary of these tools and their association with commercial media and advertising, but the events of 1968 proved the need not only for a rapid

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[40] Michel Foucault, "Photogenic Painting/La peinture photogénique," in *Gérard Fromanger*, Revisions 2 (Black Dog, 1999), 81–105.

[41] Liam Considine, "Screen Politics: Pop Art and the Atelier Populaire," Tate Papers, Autumn 2015, https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/24/screen-politics-pop-art-and-the-atelier-populaire.

[42] Fromanger's self-portrait *La Vie d'artiste* (1975) shows the artist at work in his studio, with the silhouette of a Carousel projector in the foreground.

[43] Considine, "Screen Politics."

means of producing imagery but also for a more direct artistic engagement with mass media. While the French artists borrowed their techniques from American Pop Art (the silkscreen from Warhol, and the opaque projector from Lichtenstein), they nevertheless stood in staunch opposition to the "consumerist superficiality" of a Pop Art that valourized corporate imagery by attempting to raise it to the level of high art.[44] Their intention was to achieve the opposite: to appropriate mass-media tools for their own revolutionary purposes, and to set aside artistic pretensions in favour of simple creativity.

This same need for a contemporary art invested in a critical but unpretentious exploration of image-making is a major theme of Foucault's essay on Fromanger. Foucault was concerned that if artists and the public were "deprived of the technical ability to produce images . . . we could be handed over, bound hand and foot, to the power of other images, political and commercial, over which we have no power."[45] He complained that in its move toward the conceptual and the theoretical, contemporary art had turned its back on image-making, ceding responsibility for visual culture to the mass media—and so he argued for the development of a more popular, democratic, and amateur image culture. Influenced by Gisèle Freund new image culture's recently published book *Photography and Society*,[46] Foucault found the model for this in the amateur community that surrounded early photography, in which "love of the image was ubiquitous," and in which images circulated freely in a "vast field of play," unhampered by concern for authorship, medium or artistic tradition.[47] Foucault casts Fromanger as a leader in this return to photographic experimentation, suggesting that Fromanger's hybridization of photography and painting, along with his deprecation of artistic authorship (apparently demonstrated by his use of readymade or banal imagery) were similar to some of the tendencies seen in early photography.

Foucault does not explicitly explain why the photographic apparatus proved so potent as a platform for artistic experimentation, but his argument implicitly suggests that the creative freedom enjoyed by early photographers was rooted in the fact that as a new invention the

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[44] Considine, "Screen Politics."

[45] Michel Foucault, "Photogenic Painting," in *Gérard Fromanger*, Revisions 2 (Black Dog, 1999), 89.

[46] This line of influence is described by Catherine M. Soussloff in *Foucault on Painting* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 105–6.

[47] Foucault, "Photogenic Painting", 88; 84.

photographic apparatus provided a means of image-making that was not yet codified, not constrained by expectations, expert practitioners, or an institutional apparatus governing what could or could not be made, what could or could not be copied. As a unique and novel form it was able to open up the possibility of creating images outside the parameters of the art institution or the commodity market. As he indicates, the same was also true of the Carousel projector, at least in its role as artistic medium.[48]

Foucault also laments, however, that early photography was soon "taken over by laboratories, technicians and businessmen," after which amateur trickery and "plagiarism" were stamped out.[49] Generalizing from this observation, I would posit that, as the example of early photography shows, the creative freedom offered by a new form is always met with a constant threat of institutionalization. In a capitalist context all forms of production or expression are seen as potential sources of value to be captured, and indeed one of the functions of the museum or gallery is to facilitate the comparisons and value judgments that allow artworks to be exchanged as commodities. This is true not only of individual artworks, but also of whole mediums: as a medium develops historical and conceptual significance, the medium itself becomes one of the key attributes based on which artworks can be compared. The art institution, in its role as gatekeeper, thus has an interest in defining and codifying artistic mediums, even though this very process can serve to limit the creative freedom offered by those mediums.

This tendency toward institutionalization and commodification would present a challenge for artists working with slide projection. Catherine M. Soussloff suggests that Foucault saw a utopian potential in Fromanger's combination of photography and painting, which promised to transform the traditional medium of painting into a platform for critique of contemporary history, while also extending the intellectual or critical viewing associated with painting to more "popular" photographic images; Soussloff writes that "it was as if photography in the mid-1970s needed painting to reveal the true nature of the contemporary image."[50]

While Fromanger's work may have helped to reinvigorate contemporary painting, however, I would suggest that by making slide projection subservient to the more traditional medium of

[48] The projector had pre-existing associations with art historical and corporate use, but there were not yet strong expectations about how it should be used *artistically*.

[49] Foucault, "Photogenic Painting," 88.

[50] Catherine M. Soussloff, *Foucault on Painting* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 114.

painting, he did not use the new technology to its full potential. Moreover, while the artists of the Atelier Populaire had avoided commodification by taking their work to the streets, Fromanger later returned to exhibiting and selling his paintings in commercial galleries.[51] I would suggest that he thus remained somewhat beholden to institutional circuits of exchange—and that the commodification of his paintings may have dampened their critical impact.

The most potent use of slide projection, as I will show, comes from artists like Broodthaers and Sekula who wholeheartedly embraced the slide projector as a medium in its own right—artists who made full use of the new technology in all of its unique specificity, in the same way that the early photographers had experimented with all of the particular capabilities of the camera. In the work of Broodthaers and Sekula, moreover, the projection apparatus becomes central to the articulation of an anti-institutional or anti-capitalist critique, establishing an antagonistic stance that helps to protect their work, and the medium of slide projection, from the threat of institutionalization or commodification.

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[51] In his description of the Atelier Populaire's move to the streets, Liam Considine even quotes Fromanger: "The prints were intended for sale in nearby galleries and the proceeds were meant to support striking students and workers. However, amid the chaos of the events the demands of the street overtook those of the gallery: as artist Gérard Fromanger recounted, 'the idea was to bring [the posters] to a supporting gallery for sale. But we didn't make it ten metres in the street before the students snatched them and pasted them in the street themselves. We understood immediately: there was the idea!'" Considine, "Screen Politics."

The exhibition for which Foucault wrote "Photogenic Painting," by contrast, was held at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher (now Jeanne Bucher Jaeger) in Paris, a commercial gallery of substantial pedigree.

Chapter 4: Marcel Broodthaers' *Bateau Tableau*

Marcel Broodthaers' *Bateau Tableau* (1973) appropriates the form of the art historical slide lecture to present a satirical critique of art history's role as an institutional gatekeeper. The work is an absurdly obsessive study of a single image, an amateur painting of a marine scene that Broodthaers purchased second-hand. Despite the faux art historical style of Broodthaers' slide sequence, this painting is of no real historical significance, and the series of photographs that Broodthaers' creates stalwartly refuses to produce any narrative effect or conclusive academic argument. Instead, the work draws attention to the limitations of reproduction and signification, thereby calling into question the objectivity of art historical study and storytelling.

This work comes in the aftermath of the anti-institutional protests of 1968, and at a time when the Conceptual Art of the 1960s was giving way to new trends toward installation and intermedia work. With these new trends came an increasing commodification and institutional co-optation of contemporary art, of which Broodthaers was wary. Broodthaers' playful approach to institutional critique in *Bateau Tableau* thus responds to one of the key challenges of this moment, that of navigating the pre-existing connotations of newly adopted artistic mediums. In the case of *Bateau Tableau*, this meant finding a way to make use of slide projection without being constrained by the medium's associations with art history; Broodthaers overcame this challenge by exploiting the medium's institutional association himself, making his use of slide projection not merely an incidental aesthetic choice, but rather the foundation on which he builds his critique. Slide projection proves particularly well suited as a support for this critique, as its clumsy mechanism draws attention not only to its presence but also to the way that it overtly mediates the experience of the image, and thus to the way that this mediation can influence viewers' perception of the content of the projected image.

4.1 Anti-institutional activism and playful critique

Slide projection was a significant and consistent feature of Broodthaers' practice, and *Bateau Tableau* is one of several slide-based works in which Broodthaers mocks the medium's

association with art history.[52] Despite being best known for his early work as a poet and for his integration of language and literature into his artwork, Broodthaers created more slide projections than he did books; between 1966 and 1976 he created thirty-seven slide works, whereas between 1957 and 1975 he created only twenty-two books, including his poetry (but not including his exhibition catalogues, or projects published posthumously).[53]

Broodthaers' use of slide projection developed alongside the emancipatory projects of the late 1960s, but his approach matured in the early 1970s as the limitations of the politics of May 1968 and the strategies of Conceptual Art became clear. While *Bateau Tableau* comments particularly clearly on the art historical use of slide projection, it is also representative of the larger concerns of a transformative moment in contemporary art. It responds to the re-interpretation of the role of artistic medium that was underway at the time, and demonstrates a recognition of the need to account for the complex connotations of newly adopted forms like slide projection.

Broodthaers had taken a leading role in the anti-institutional activism of May 1968, serving as a spokesperson for a group of artists occupying the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.[54] He left the occupation early, however, perhaps struggling in part with the group's rhetoric. Although he had helped the group to write a manifesto that "condemns the commercialization of all forms of art," Deborah Schultz points out that Broodthaers saw commerce as "an inherent part of all art objects" (he had begun his artistic career with the desire to "sell something," after all)—and so there was a tension between Broodthaers' political tendency and his realist assessment of the art world.[55]

Broodthaers thus turned his attention to a more theoretical engagement with the movement, and to the development of a practice that would explore his complex relationship with art's

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[52] A key source on Broodthaers' slide work is the exhibition catalogue *Marcel Broodthaers: Projections*, ed. Anna Hakkens, (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1994). I have unfortunately not been able to access this book due to the suspension of interlibrary loans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[53] For full lists of Broodthaers' book and slide works, see Wilfried Dickhoff and Bernard Marcadé, Marcel Broodthaers, ed. Marie-Puck Broodthaers (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), pages 306 (books) and 315 (slide projections).

[54] Deborah Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers: Strategy and Dialogue* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 77–78.

[55] The manifesto is quoted in Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers*, 78. Schultz's assessment is given on page 79. Broodthaers' declared his desire to "sell something" in the famous invitation to his first exhibition (quoted by Schultz on page 60), which begins "I, too, wondered if I couldn't sell something and succeed in life."

institutions. He opened his studio for meetings of likeminded artists, the most notable of which was a large event that he hosted on September 27, 1968, "to analyze what wasn't working in the Belgian artistic world, to analyze the relations Art-Society."[56] In planning this gathering, which would become the opening night of his *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, he realized that he did not have enough furniture to seat all of the guests that he had invited. His solution was to rent a number of crates (of the sort used to store and transport artwork) to use as seating. To decorate, he created a slide sequence by photographing postcards of nineteenth century paintings. He then taped the postcards to the wall, and projected the slides next to the "originals." After the opening event he decided to project the slides onto a crate rather than the wall, creating one of his earliest slide works, the installation now titled *Projection sur caisse*.[57] Earlier in the year he had also connected the arts and the protest movement in his first stand-alone slide projection, *Caricatures-Grandville*, which juxtaposed illustrations by Grandville ("rang[ing] from the fantastical, to scenes from the French Revolution proclaiming 'Liberté'") with newspaper photographs of student demonstrations.[58]

Broodthaers' position on "the relations Art-Society" became increasingly complex over the following years as the anti-institutional efforts of 1968 fell flat.[59] In the same period, he aligned himself with the Conceptual Art movement, while remaining a constant critic of conceptualism's

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[56] Broodthaers, quoted in Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2010), 12.

[57] Haidu, *The Absence of Work*, 108.

In its final form, *Projection sur caisse* consists of "fifty 35mm slides projected on commercial packing crate, with postcards on wall, crate;" see "Marcel Broodthaers. Projection Sur Caisse (Projection on Crate). 1968," Museum of Modern Art, n.d., https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/25/462.

[58] Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers*, 46.

In dating this work to 1968, I am following the listing given by Dickhoff & Marcadé (which I take to be in chronological order). I may be mistaken in this, however, as different sources present this work differently. Marian Goodman Gallery has exhibited an edition which consists of 80 slides, for which they give a date of 1967. Deborah Schultz, as well as Dickhoff & Marcadé, however, describe this as a 100 slide piece dating to 1968. In any case, this appears to be Broodthaers' first stand-alone slide projection. See "Marcel Broodthaers, Caricatures: Grandville, 1967," Marian Goodman Gallery, accessed August 12, 2020, https://www.mariangoodman.com/exhibitions/30-marcel-broodthaers-and-james-lee-byars/works/artworks29174/. (Broodthaers' very first use of slide projection was in *Grandville & MB* a happening at the Club de Jazz in Ghent, in which Broodthaers' projection was accompanied by a musical performance; See Deborah Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers: Strategy and Dialogue* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 46, and Tanya Angulo Alemán, "La utopia pervinguda. El model d'autoria de Marcel Broodthaers" (Universitat Politècnica de València, 2004), 203.)

[59] As Thierry de Duve writes, "hope of a radical liberation from cultural institution" rapidly waned, and by "1972, a few cold showers later, the debate had moved to the failure of the emancipatory aspirations of four years before." Thierry de Duve, "Figure Zero," in *Marcel Broodthaers: A Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2016), 31–39, 37.

optimistic pursuit of a decommodified art.[60] Conceptual Art had, as Rosalind Krauss writes, imagined "that by purifying art of its material dross, and by producing it as a mode of theory-about-art, its own practice had escaped the commodity form"—but this rejection of the art object simply led to the replacement of commercial circuits of validation and exchange with art-institutional systems of assessment and administration.[61] The earlier consumerist aesthetic was thus substituted for what Benjamin Buchloh has called an "aesthetic of administration."[62] Favouring ideas, definitions, and linguistic games over vulgar visuality, Conceptual artists adopted the textual and visual signifiers of "administrative and legal organization and institutional validation," leading to a proliferation of typed memos, filing cabinets, fax machines, and other corporate ephemera.[63]

By the end of the 1960s Conceptual Art began to lose its spotlight to what Krauss describes as an "international fashion of installation and intermedia work."[64] While this new trend brought a return to object-making, it perpetuated contemporary art's investment in the administrative role of art institutions, relying on these institutions not only as sites in which installations could be exhibited, but also as the providers of an interpretive framework for this new work. The result was (or is) a situation in which artists "have recourse to every material support one can imagine . . . but every material support, including the site itself—whether art magazine, dealer's fair booth, or museum gallery—will now be levelled, reduced to a system of pure equivalency by the homogenizing principle of commodification, the operation of pure exchange value from which nothing can escape and for which everything is transparent to the underlying market value for which it is a sign."[65] Despite having replaced commerciality with institutionality, then, artists

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[60] Broodthaers participated, for example, in the *Konzeption-Conception* exhibition at the Leverkusen Städtisches Museum, which Benjamin Buchloh has described as "the first major European exhibition of conceptual art." Buchloh, "Open Letters, Industrial Poems," 97.

Nevertheless, he also "distanced his work from that critique of the commodity status of the aesthetic object formulated in late '60s conceptual art, which abandoned traditional pictorial and sculptural materials and procedures in favor of a transformation of art into linguistic definition." Buchloh, "Open Letters, Industrial Poems," 74.

[61] Rosalind Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea": Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 10–11.

[62] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (1990): 105–143, https://doi.org/10.2307/778941.

[63] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969," 119.

[64] Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea,"* 56.

[65] Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea,"* 15.

remained entangled in a system which was, to a large extent, functionally equivalent to the system of commodification which Conceptual Art had sought to escape.

Broodthaers participated in the turn to intermedia and installation work, but set himself apart by maintaining his antagonism toward contemporary art institutions. While he relentlessly mocked institutional practices, however, he wasn't necessarily hostile to the idea of the art institution in the abstract.[66] As Thierry de Duve argues, his concern was with "the contradiction between the museum as the seat of an arbitrary, monopolistic art power"—that is to say, the museum as it really was—"and the museum as a legitimate repository for the best art"—the museum as he wished it to be (and the museum in which he wished to exhibit).[67] In the first of these roles, the art institution serves to bolster the status and power of the museum administration, whereas in the second it would serve to validate the significance of the artist.

What Broodthaers realized was that he could reverse the typical pattern of co-optation by taking on the role of the museum administrator or art historian. By appropriating the aesthetic of administration he not only granted himself the status associated with institutional authority, but also produced a potent critique of the contemporary art institution—and by undertaking this playful critique, he proactively defended his work against institutional cooptation.

I use the word "playful" here with a theoretical intention, to describe a particular relationship to a social system or structure which regulates and constrains behaviour. If taking that structure "seriously" means acting in accordance with its needs and expectations, then to be "playful" is to embrace the subversive freedom found in unilaterally rejecting or stepping outside of the system. I would suggest, then, that Broodthaers' playful misapplication of the art institution's signifiers countered the institution's tendency to absorb everything with which it comes into contact, because insofar as this play runs contrary to the needs and expectations of the institution, the institution would struggle to instrumentalize it to support its own ends. Thus by taking on the unique position of court jester, Broodthaers was able to maintain a close proximity to the institution while nevertheless mocking it mercilessly and refusing to become beholden to its expectations or codes of conduct.

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[66] See de Duve, "Figure Zero."

[67] de Duve, "Figure Zero," 34.

Broodthaers' playful approach was particularly important for his work with slide projection, where it allowed him to transform an apparently institutional medium into a platform for institutional critique. Slide projection had a strong association with art history (as I showed in Chapter 2), and Broodthaers capitalized on this association, parodying art historical presentations to render a critique of art history as an institutional discipline. This playful use of slide projection was possible, I would argue, because slide projection was relatively novel as a medium for contemporary art—and with few pre-existing expectations about how the medium should be used artistically, Broodthaers was able to chart his own course.

In Chapter 3 I discussed the way that the playful experimentation of the early amateur photographers diminished after photography was commercialized and institutionalized. Continuing with the theory of playfulness that I have just outlined, I would suggest that the example of early photography reflects a general principle: that once an apparatus becomes associated with a "serious" use (i.e., once it is used in support of a dominant system of power), it becomes much more difficult to make playful use of that apparatus. When it comes to slide projection, however, the invention of the Carousel projector and its adoption as an artistic medium provided an opportunity to take the projector out of its typical institutional context, enabling Broodthaers' playful use of the medium. By toying with the slide projection in a way that was directly antagonistic toward institutional use of the medium, moreover, Broodthaers implicated the apparatus in a playful institutional critique that could help to prevent or delay the institutional standardization of slide projection as an artistic medium.

4.2 *Bateau Tableau* as a critique of art history

Bateau Tableau offers a particularly simple demonstration of Broodthaers' use of slide projection to critique art history. In this work Broodthaers repeatedly reproduces a single painting to create a slide sequence that resembles, at least at first, an art historical presentation (despite typically being projected from a plinth onto a white gallery wall).[68] The painting is a

[68] The piece is shown installed in this way in exhibition documentation for *Bateau Tableau* at Campoli Presti in 2012, and for *Orpheus Twice* at the David Roberts Art Foundation in 2013, as well as in collection documentation from the Walker Art Centre; see "Bateau Tableau 1973," Campoli Presti, accessed December 9, 2020, https://www.campolipresti.com/exhibitions/bateau-tableau-1973; "Exhibition: Orpheus Twice. [. . .]," David Roberts Art Foundation, accessed December 9, 2020, http://davidrobertsartfoundation.com/exhibition/the-to-have-seen/; and "Bateau Tableau," Walker, accessed May 5, 2020, https://walkerart.org/collections/artworks/bateau-tableau.

marine scene, all sea, sky, and sails. In the centre of the canvas are two ships, one nearer and one farther away, both making their way toward the viewer. In the foreground is a boat with three rowers, set to pass between the nearer ship and a wooden buoy. Small sails dot the horizon. The painting is not especially beautiful; the paint is handled clumsily, and the canvas hangs awkwardly on its stretchers, with creases pulling toward the corners. Although it has been dressed up with a gilt frame, it is clearly an amateur work. Describing this painting, and his relationship with it, Broodthaers offered this commentary:

> The marine painting . . . was bought at a Parisian boutique in rue Jacob. Out of fear that it would slip away I didn't dare to haggle and paid a higher price—out of love at first sight—even though it was unsigned. The subject of the painting, depicted in a style reminiscent of the late XIXth century, is the return of a French fishing flotilla (sailing under the blue, white and red flags). In the foreground: a buoy, a piece of wreckage, a boat manned by Bretons, recognizable by the red blouse and black vest that they wore at the time. Everything indicates that the flotilla is approaching a port of Finistère, sails billowing in the breeze; however, we can deduct from the sea's relatively unperturbed state that this mild breeze cannot alone fill the sails and it is the abundance of a victorious wind that is main force behind their swell. Facing the coast where women, parents and spectators scuttle around and spread the good news of the ship's return, two fishermen whose outlined silhouettes lean on the railing, recon, if we could overhear them, their rightful share of the profits from the catch. The hold is full of cods, not to mention turbots and soles . . .[69]

This description, which appears to reference evidence found in the image—"everything indicates," Broodthaers says, and "we can deduct"—reads as a playful caricature of art historical language. But many of the details that Broodthaers describes are not actually present in the painting. The port of Finistère, the hold full of cod, and the onlookers on the shore are all Broodthaers' inventions. In this description, then, Broodthaers parodies an art historical tendency to read too much into images. The same tendency is a target for criticism in *Bateau Tableau*, but in the slide sequence Broodthaers takes a different approach. Here he carefully creates a series of photographs that resemble an art historical study, but that stalwartly refuse to guide the viewer to any art historical or narrative conclusions.

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[69] Quoted in a publication that accompanied the exhibition *Dark Waters* at Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, June 12–July 26, 2014). Ellipses in the original.

The painting itself is too mundane to be of real interest as a subject of study, and Broodthaers emphasizes this through his photographs. He offers up every feature of the canvas for close scrutiny, often focusing on the least significant or interesting details of the scene—patches of blue water, the corners of sails, even the nails in the back of the canvas' stretchers. The slide sequence has no clear beginning or conclusion. As the seemingly endless loop progresses and the details of the painting are repeatedly re-produced, the slides strip the painting of meaning, reducing it to pure materiality.[70] The transitions between slides are abrupt, defying any possibility of narrative continuity as they cut inexplicably between full views and close-ups or between unrelated parts of the picture. Altogether, *Bateau Tableau* systematically contradicts the typical process of art historical investigation, using the slide sequence not to contextualize the image by comparing it and contrasting it with related images, but rather to incessantly reproduce the same uninteresting painting until it effectively unmakes whatever narrative may have initially been discernible in the image.

This narrative defamiliarization reflects a critique of art historical storytelling that was of personal significance to Broodthaers himself. As Rachel Haidu has noted, to understand Broodthaers' work it is important to remember that he saw himself as a perpetual outsider. In his native Belgium, he was among the Francophone minority, while in France, his Belgian background made him an unwelcome foreigner.[71] Broodthaers' description of the painting reproduced in *Bateau Tableau* (which I quoted above) emphasizes both geographical detail and local identity—he notes not only that the boutique was located on *rue Jacob*, but also that it was *Parisian*; he emphasizes that the flotilla is *French*, sailing under the tricolour, and describes the ship's crew not merely as sailors, but as *Bretons*, headed for a *port of Finestère*. This language, in combination with the faux art historical style of the description, is indicative of Broodthaers' attention to the way that art history has traditionally insisted on appealing to nationality as a significant feature for the classification and analysis of artwork, and his attention to the role that art history and painting have thus had in constructing and communicating the mythology that

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[70] Eric de Bruyn eloquently observed that "the projection tends to dissolve the illusionary scene of the seascape and to reduce the painting to (a representation of) its material base: a few daubs of paint on the rough, woven surface of the canvas." Eric C. H. de Bruyn, "Bateau/Tableau/Drapeau: On Eran Schaerf's and Eva Meyer's Pro Testing and the Contemporary Politics of Allegory," in Allegorie: DFG-Symposion 2014, ed. Ulla Haselstein (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 697–728, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110333657-028.

[71] Haidu, *The Absence of Work*, 20.

underpins a modern perception of national identity. The problems inherent in interpreting artwork according to perceived national styles or characteristics would have been acutely clear to Broodthaers, as an artist of indeterminate identity. Implicit in *Bateau Tableau*'s rejection of art historical narrative, then, is a challenge to this institutional focus on local identity.[72] Where the art historical slide lecture typically serves to legitimize art historical narrative by associating it with seemingly objective or scientific visual evidence (as I discussed in Chapter 2), *Bateau Tableau* does the opposite: by reproducing the painting in a way that reveals the details of its appearance but refuses to connect them to an art historical narrative, the work not only challenges the specific mythologizing of national identity associated with images of this type, but also challenges the "arbitrary, monopolizing art power" of art historical judgement more broadly.[73]

4.3 Comparison and differentiation as a critical strategy

An important influence for Broodthaers was the work of his fellow Walloon (French-Belgian) artist René Magritte, who famously juxtaposed an illustration of a tobacco pipe with the caption "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" ("this is not a pipe") in his 1929 painting *La Trahison des images* ("The Treachery of Images")—reminding the viewer that an image of a pipe is not a "real" pipe, and that the word "pipe" has no inherent connection to this image or to the object that it represents (to give a simple interpretation).[74] *Bateau Tableau* shows Broodthaers own interest in the arbitrary nature of signification. Even the title of the piece draws attention to the possibility of slippage between signifiers, as Broodthaers explained: "if we repeat several times in a row *tableau* and *bateau*, then without fail, just where the tongue twists, one word will be said in the place of the other. Thus we could just as well be holding forth on the latest boat as the latest

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[72] Accounting for the significance of identity to Broodthaers also helps to explain his interest in the sea (a recurring theme in his work). The North Sea—bordered as it is by Belgium, France, and the Netherlands (as well as Germany, Denmark, Norway, England, and Scotland) shares Broodthaers' indeterminate nationality. It also, however, suggests the utopian possibility of identity-less "international waters."

[73] de Duve, "Figure Zero," 34.

[74] A thorough interpretation of Magritte's work is given by Foucault in his essay Michel Foucault, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," *Les Cahiers du Chemin* 2 (January 1968): 79–105. In 1969 Broodthaers outlined plans for a publication in response to Foucault's text, but he later canceled the project in 1972. Fragments from that project have been published posthumously as *Ceci est une pipe/This Is a Pipe/Dies ist eine Pfeife* (Leuven: MERZ, 2001). Foucault's essay is also the subject of Chapter Four of Catherine M. Soussloff's *Foucault on Painting* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

painting."[75] Broodthaers' photography, meanwhile, challenges the art historical tendency (which I discussed in Chapter 2) to treat projected slides not as reproductions but rather as real instantiations of the original artwork that they depict. By emphasizing the materiality of the painted image, and by disassembling it into a series of closely cropped frames, Broodthaers highlights the slide's status as reproduction. *Ceci n'est pas un tableau*.

Broodthaers' emphasis on the reproduction and mediation of the image can be read in connection with his critique of art history; if reproduction or mediation can influence perception of the image, then the objectivity of art history's visual "evidence" and the claims based on that evidence may be called into question. Broodthaers was also engaged, however, in a larger reflection on the ideological function of mediation more generally, not just in slide projection or painting but in other mediums as well. This topic of mediation was one of philosophical and artistic significance at the time, as theorists like Foucault were popularizing structuralist explorations of the way that meaning is communicated and transformed,[76] and as artists were making increasing use of new mediums that, like slide projection, came with pre-existing cultural associations and ideological functions that required careful navigation. Broodthaers' interest in this topic led him to create several similar studies of the same seascape painting, including three films and a book, in which he experimented with slightly different strategies for drawing the viewers' attention to the impact of reproduction and mediation on their experience of the painting. Comparing the strategies Broodthaers used to achieve this in the films and the book with the simpler approach that he took in *Bateau Tableau*, we can see that slide projection proved well suited as a platform for a reflection on the power of mediation to shape meaning, as the slide projector has a natural tendency to draw attention to its own mediating presence.

The film *Analyse eines Bildes/Analyse d'une peinture* (1973) consists of a series of still images of the painting, followed by a live-action scene of Broodthaers rolling up a blank

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[75] Quoted in Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers*, 206.

[76] Broodthaers' work also seems to have been influenced by Walter Benjamin's classic essay on "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility." Whether Broodthaers read Benjamin directly, however, or whether Benjamin's ideas reached him through others is unclear; Rosalind Krauss has noted that Broodthaers did not own any books by Benjamin, but nonetheless concludes that Broodthaers was likely familiar with Benjamin's writing. See Rosalind Krauss, "The Angel of History," *October*, no. 134 (2010): 111–21.

canvas.[77] The book *Un voyage en mer du nord* (1973) features many of the same images as *Bateau Tableau*, plus several black and white photographs of modern yachts.[78] Another film, also titled *Un voyage en mer du nord* (1974), features still images taken from the book, intercut with white-on-black title cards announcing the apparent page numbers for the images.[79] The film *Deux Films* (1973) mixes elements of *Analyse* and *Un voyage*; it consists of two parts, the first identical to *Analyse*, and the second similar, but with the addition of some of the yacht photographs.[80]

In her book *"A Voyage on the North Sea": Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* Rosalind Krauss presents the layering of forms found in the film *Un voyage* as the ultimate demonstration of her idea that in the aftermath of Conceptual Art, a critical approach to making and understanding art requires that "the specificity of mediums . . . must be understood as differential, self-differing, and thus as a layering of conventions never simply collapsed into the

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[77] Schultz also notes that "when the film was first shown the painting was hung on the wall beside the screen." Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers*, 205.

[78] Broodthaers created three versions of the book—one in French (*Un voyage en mer du nord*, edition of 1000, Hossmann, Bruxelles), one in German (*Eine reise auf der Nordsee*, edition of 1000, Verlag M. Dumont Schauberg, Köln), and one in English (*A Voyage on the North Sea*, edition of 1100, Petersburg Press, London). The first 100 copies of the English version and the first 10 of the French edition were sold with a copy of the film. Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers: Strategy and Dialogue*, 205.

[79] The website for the Museu d'Art Contemporary de Barcelona (MACBA) suggests that *Bateau Tableau* was created to be "projected alongside the film [*Un voyage*], but this would never be seen to fruition in the artist's lifetime." "A Voyage on the North Sea, 1973-1974," Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, n.d., https://www.macba.cat/en/art-artists/artists/broodthaers-marcel/voyage-north-sea-0.

MACBA cites the exhibition catalogue for the 1997 Fundació Antonia Tàpies exhibition *Marcel Broodthaers: Cinèma*. Due to restrictions on interlibrary loans during the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been unable to consult this book. I suspect, however, that this quotation presents something of an oversimplification. As I have noted, the book version of *Un voyage* precedes the film, and seems to have been derived from the photographs which appear in *Bateau Tableau*. It is possible, however, that the idea of the book came before the idea of the slide sequence, and that it was in the process of taking the photographs for the book that Broodthaers' realized that the images could serve double-duty as a slide projection. By 1973, however, Broodthaers had already made more slide works than he had books, and so it seems unlikely that *Bateau Tableau* was such an afterthought. (He created nineteen slide works between 1966 and 1972. In 1973 he created three, including *Bateau Tableau*, and began four that would be finished in subsequent years. Including his poetry, he created ten books between 1957 and 1972, and made an additional six in 1973. For the full lists see Dickhoff & Marcadé, *Marcel Broodthaers*, pages 306 [books] and 315 [slide projections].)

[80] Broodthaers also made use of the painting in a few other works that are less similar to *Bateau Tableau*. In 1973 he made two works entitled *Journal d'un voyage utopique*, both of which consist of several sheets of paper on which he combined small reproductions of the painting with hand-drawn doodles and annotations. In 1975 he included the painting itself (as well as a copy of the book of *Un voyage*, among other objects) in the *Salle Outremer* of his exhibition *L'Angelús du Daumier* at the Centre national d'art contemporain in Paris. The *Salle Outremer* was then exhibited again in a posthumous retrospective at the Kunsthalle Bern in 1982. Several additions were made for this second exhibition, including a pencil drawing of the painting (1973) and a copy of the film of *Un voyage en mer du nord*. For more on the *Salle Outremer*, see Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers*, 199–200.

physicality of their support."[81] In the films and the book that he made in response to the seascape painting, Broodthaers does indeed draw attention to the mediating role of film and print by transgressing the conventions associated with each form. In *Analyse* and *Deux Films* he defamiliarizes the film form by mimicking the slideshow's halting progression from still to still, and in *Un voyage* he adds a conflation of film with print. In the book he forces a confrontation with the materiality of print by leaving the fore-edge of the pages uncut, and including on the inside of the front cover a request that the reader not cut the pages.[82] After the title page, however, the book contains no other text, and again the silent sequence of images that follows bears a resemblance to a slideshow.

Compared to these other works, Broodthaers' approach in *Bateau Tableau* is much more straightforward; here he merely projects his photographs of the painting, adding no additional complications or commentary. What makes *Bateau Tableau*'s comparative simplicity possible, I would suggest, is that the medium of slide projection is naturally "self-differing" in a way that the other mediums are not. In the films and the book Broodthaers must rely on a "layering of conventions" from multiple mediums in order to encourage a reflection on mediation, whereas in the slide sequence he is able to simply exploit the effect produced by the inherent separation between slides. Unlike a film frame or a book page, each slide is itself a complete, discrete object, and this naturally results in a sense of differentiation between images, even within a single slide sequence. Capitalizing on this discontinuity between slides, *Bateau Tableau* not only draws the viewer's attention to the similarities and differences between details of the painting, but also to the difference between the painting as an object and the painting as a projected reproduction. A fundamental feature of the Carousel projector is the abrupt transition and percussive echo of each slide change, which has the effect of interrupting the viewer and drawing their attention back to the apparatus that is mediating their experience.

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[81] Rosalind Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea": Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 53.

[82] "Before cutting the pages the reader had better beware of the knife he will be wielding for the purpose. Sooner than make such a gesture I would prefer him to hold back that weapon, dagger, piece of office equipment which, swift as lightning, might turn into an indefinite sky. It is up to the attentive reader to find out what devilish motive inspired this book's publication. To that end he must make use, if need be, of select readings from today's prolific output. These pages must not be cut." Marcel Broodthaers, *Un voyage en mer du nord* (Brussels: Hossmann, 1973).

Deborah Schultz notes that "Broodthaers described his slide projections as a 'système de lecture' or a 'photo-film,'" and suggests that he "sought to remove the boundaries between media."[83] But I would argue that while it is true that slide projection provided Broodthaers with "a way of reproducing and of re-presenting works in a combination of media," the effect of this re-presentation is not to remove the boundaries between media, but rather to draw attention to the differences between them—and to attempt to reveal how each functions as a distinct means of communicating knowledge or exercising power.[84]

For Broodthaers this revelation of the ideological effects of mediation primarily serves as a support for institutional critique. In the case of *Bateau Tableau*, making viewers aware of the slide projector's mediating presence allows Broodthaers to challenge the ideologically charged narratives that art historians have used the device to communicate—such as the mythology of national identity that he critiques in this work. While Broodthaers deftly navigates the institutional connotations of slide projection, however, he does not address the medium's connection with corporate or commercial image-making. In the following chapter, therefore, I will discuss Allan Sekula's use of slide projection as a platform for a critique of military-industrial capitalism.

[83] Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers*, 155.

[84] Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers*, 155.

Chapter 5: Allan Sekula's *Untitled Slide Sequence*

During the Second World War, slide projection was used to train American soldiers in aircraft identification, and the success of this training program helped to pave the way for the increasing popularity and sophistication of slide projection in the post-war years.[85] As slideshows then became an increasingly common feature of business presentations, slide projection developed an association with corporate and commercial communication. In *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972),[86] however, Allan Sekula turned this association on its head, transforming the slide projector from a commercial tool into a key support for his anti-capitalist, anti-war critique. The challenge of inverting the medium's corporate connotations in this way led to two important developments in Sekula's early work: first, the beginning of his signature emphasis on representing the individuality of industrial workers, and second, a reckoning with the ideological effects of cinema, in comparison to other media like slide projection.

Captioned "End of Day Shift, General Dynamics Convair Aerospace Factory, San Diego, California, 17 February 1972," *Untitled Slide Sequence* is a series of candid portraits of factory workers, photographed departing from the factory where they construct fighter bombers and cargo planes destined for Vietnam.[87] The twenty-five black-and-white photographs capture the workers as they reach the top of a flight of stairs. In the background, others headed for the same staircase make their way down a road enclosed by factory buildings and past a security checkpoint. The framing is unsteady, handheld, and in the last four photographs it changes abruptly, panning sideways and downward. The final photograph shows only cracked pavement, a long evening shadow, and a pair of walking feet. Sekula had been "standing more or less where a militant [activist] selling newspapers would stand, but actually inside the company property, so

[85] Robert A. Reiser, "A History of Instructional Design and Technology: Part I: A History of Instructional Media," *Educational Technology Research and Development* 49, no. 1 (2001): 57.

[86] Sekula also made a printed version of this work in 2011.

[87] Benjamin James Young, "Sympathetic Materialism: Allan Sekula's Photo-Works, 1971–2000" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2018), 90 (artwork subtitle) and 111 (Convair factory products).

that [his] project ended when the guards detected [his] trespassing."[88] After half a minute of darkness, the sequence repeats.[89]

The work has been exhibited in both more "artistic" and more "cinematic" ways; sometimes it is shown on a white gallery wall, the projector placed on a plinth, and sometimes it is placed in a darkened space, with chairs arranged to create a small theatre.[90]

The premise of the work mimics that of the film *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895) by Auguste and Louis Lumière, which amounts to "an industrial 'commercial' for [the Lumières'] centre of production," in the words of James M. Skinner.[91] Along with *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (1895), it connects enjoyment of the cinema with an optimistic vision of industrial production, celebrating the factory not as a workplace but as the source of the pleasure and leisure of modern life. Much less optimistic, *Untitled Slide Sequence* replaces the Lumière factory with a plant where workers assemble military aircraft. It also replaces the continuous, illusionistic motion of the film with the jerky start-and-stop of slide projection, a breakdown that, interpreted in the context of Sekula's larger critique, suggests that the idea of capitalist production as peaceful and natural is just as much of an illusion as the appearance of continuous motion in the films. The slower pace of the slide projection also allows Sekula to

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[88] Allan Sekula, "Allan Sekula: Réalisme critique/The Critical Realism of Allan Sekula," interview by Pascal Beausse, *Art press*, no. 240 (November 1998): 23. (The English translation is included in the original publication.)

[89] The slide tray is filled with three copies of the twenty-five image sequence, leaving six empty slots. Each repetition of the sequence is thus followed by two blank frames, or almost half a minute of darkness. (Each of Sekula's slides is shown for thirteen seconds; see Young, "Sympathetic Materialism," 90.)

There are two blank frames because while typical slide trays hold eighty images, Kodak's trays have an additional slot. This extra slot is unsupported on the bottom, meaning that it will not hold a slide when removed from the projector, so it is often left empty. The projector treats it like any other empty slot, however (yielding a blank or black screen). For more details about slide trays, see "81 Slides for a Kodak Slide Tray?," DigitalSlides, accessed October 11, 2020, https://www.digitalslides.co.uk/wp-2013/81-slides-for-a-kodak-slide-tray/.

[90] The work was given the "artistic" treatment, for example, in *Photography at Work* at the Beirut Art Centre in 2017, and at *Octopus 14: Nothing Beside Remains* at Gertrude Contemporary in 2014. For documentation of these see "Allan Sekula · Photography at Work," Beirut Art Centre, 2017, http://www.beirutartcenter.org/en/exhibitions/allan-sekula-photography-at-work, and Dan Rule, "Octopus 14: Nothing Beside Remains," Raven, 2014, https://ravencontemporary.wordpress.com/portfolio/octopus-14-nothing-beside-remains-dan-rule/.

It was given the "cinematic" treatment, however, in the Generali Foundation's 2007 collection show, and in *Dokumentationskunst: Performing the Document* at Galerie Traversée in 2011. For documentation see "Collection," Generali Foundation, 2007, http://foundation.generali.at/en/info/archive/2009-2007/exhibitions/collection.html and Heinz Schütz, "KUNSTFORUM International, Band 209: Dokumentationskunst," Ingrid Wildi Merino, 2011, http://ingridwildimerino.net/txt-Galerie_Traverse.php.

[91] James M. Skinner, "Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory and Other Lumière Shorts," in *The Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1013.

capture a sense of the personality of the workers, presenting them as real people rather than as abstract icons of labour. Describing the piece, Sekula connected "the rhythm of the slide projector" with "the rhythm of the automated factory"—but also noted that "the individual frame individuates both the photographer and subject."[92]

Sekula critiques military-industrial capitalism, then, by using the slide projector to provoke a reflection on the way that the mass media, especially film, have been used to promote this capitalism. His attention to the role of the media reflects a topic of growing significance at the time. The proliferation of media coverage of the war in Vietnam—the first "television war"—drew public attention to the role that technological media could play in shaping public perception.[93] At the same time, artists who opposed the war were growing increasingly invested in the idea of art as a platform for socio-political critique, while also beginning to work more and more often with readymade technological mediums like slide projection. Together, these circumstances created a need for a critical interrogation of the implications of a relatively anti-capitalist artistic program.

5.1 Activism and the aerospace industry

Created in 1972, *Untitled Slide Sequence* presents a more nuanced and more subtle articulation of ideas that Sekula had begun to explore two years earlier. Sekula's early art practice developed alongside his participation in anti-war activism at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), where he studied from 1968 to 1974.[94] Influenced by his activism, his early works typically paired a critique of the military-industrial complex with a commentary on the relationship between shared social space and private property. On February 5, 1970, for example,

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[92] Sekula, "Allan Sekula: Réalisme critique," 23.

[93] See Michael Mandelbaum, "Vietnam: The Television War," *Daedalus* 111, no. 4, (1982): 157–69.
Mandelbaum notes, for example, that Lyndon Johnson blamed negative television coverage of the conflict in Vietnam for the unpopularity of the war—and of his presidency. The extent to which television news truly influenced public perception of the war is unclear, but its influence was certainly assumed to have been significant, engendering a public conversation about the role of the media. (An assessment of the evidence for televisions influence is offered by Daniel C. Hallin in "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media," *The Journal of Politics* 46, no. 1 (February 1984): 2–24, https://doi.org/10.2307/2130432.)

[94] Sekula earned his BA (Visual Arts) in 1972, and his MFA (Visual Arts) in 1974, both from UCSD. "C.V.," Allan Sekula Studio, accessed October 26, 2020, https://www.allansekulastudio.org/cv.html. Benjamin Young notes that he began his undergraduate work in 1968. Young, "Sympathetic Materialism," 24.

Sekula called attention to the limits of "public" access to social space by installing in UCSD's Revelle Plaza (then a hub for anti-war protests) a sculpture featuring a stolen sign which read "Property of the Regents of the University of California / Permission to Enter or to Pass Over is Revocable at Any Time."[95] The work, titled *Sculpture Commemorating the 102nd Anniversary of the University of California*, remained in place until the university forced Sekula to remove it on April 7, 1970. Another intervention in the plaza, carried out in May 1970, more directly condemned the war itself. In a work now known as *Body Bags* or *Meat Piece*, a group of UCSD students and faculty, including Sekula, filled ten transparent "body bags" with cadavers sculpted using surplus military uniforms, raw meat, and other materials. They carried these into the plaza on stretchers, and unloaded the bags in an orderly line facing the university library. The installation was removed by campus police within a few hours. The artists responded the next day with a sign: "A sculpture was removed from this area by the police after midnight on 5-26-70. The sculpture offended health and safety code 4475.76—so does war."[96]

In *Untitled Slide Sequence* Sekula's interest in shared social space comes through as "a certain nostalgia for working-class pedestrian space, the brief massed interval between the vast functionally dispersed interior of the aerospace factory and the isolation of the private automobile."[97] His trespass on Convair's property also bears a similarity to the unauthorized interventions in Revelle Plaza (and his hasty retreat mirrors their enforced removal). The deadpan black and white photography of *Untitled Slide Sequence* is modelled in part on contemporary performance documentation, including photographs of the Revelle Plaza interventions.[98] Where Sekula had previously treated photography as secondary to performance or sculpture, however, in the slide sequence the act of creating the photographs itself became the performance. While Sekula's photography is typically described as "documentary," in this case it

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[95] Young, "Sympathetic Materialism," 34.

[96] See Fred Lonidier's photograph, *Body Bags: Sign Protesting the Removal of the Work by University Authorities*, May 1970, UC San Diego Library, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb93219968.

[97] Sekula, "Allan Sekula: Réalisme critique," 23.

[98] Sekula documented *Sculpture Commemorating* himself, creating a small booklet; see Young, "Sympathetic Materialism," 34. While working on *Body Bags*, he invited Fred Lonidier to see the work-in-progress, and Lonidier went on to document the project from beginning to end; see "Being There with Fred Lonidier, MFA '73," an interview in *Triton Magazine*, May 3, 2019, https://tritonmag.com/fred/. In an interview with Carles Guerra, Sekula said that he "liked the rough quality of performance art documentation from the early 1970s, such as the images that appeared in Avalanche magazine." Allan Sekula and Carles Guerra, "Found Paintings, Disassembled Movies, World Images," *Grey Room* 55 (April 2014): 130–41, https://doi.org/10.1162/GREY_a_00144.

is also *documentation* of his trespass and escape. Photography would later become the cornerstone of Sekula's practice, making *Untitled Slide Sequence* a key turning point in his earlier career.

Untitled Slide Sequence also marks another important shift in Sekula's practice, from a critique of the "military" half of the military-industrial complex to a critique of the "industrial." This shift in Sekula's approach reflects a shift in American military strategy. By early 1972 the American public had grown more critical of the war in Vietnam, and Nixon had withdrawn tens of thousands of soldiers from the conflict. With this withdrawal, however, came an increasing emphasis on air power—a development which Sekula would certainly have been aware of (as both an anti-war activist and the son of an engineer at Lockheed Aircraft), and one which helps to explain his focus on the aerospace industry in *Untitled Slide Sequence*.[99]

Sekula's new attention to industry's role in the conflict led him to develop a new approach to representation. Unlike the more sculptural Revelle Plaza works, in *Untitled Slide Sequence* Sekula began to depict real people, establishing an approach that would become a common feature of his practice as he sought to photograph those who are rarely represented in artwork and in the media, or who, if they are represented, are treated not as dignified individuals but as curiosities, objects of pity, or mere labouring bodies.

Benjamin Young has noted the difference in tone between Sekula's photographs of the Convair workers and the photographs kept in Convair's own archives.[100] The Convair photographs include images made to facilitate engineering work (records of tests and measurements, for example), photographs taken for use in marketing material, and occasionally group portraits of factory workers. All of these were evidently made to serve the company's corporate agenda; even the group photographs are as much records of corporate assets as they are portraits. Sekula's photographs, by contrast, attend much more closely to the individuality of his

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[99] Nixon's troop withdrawal is noted by John S. Bowman in *The World Almanac of the Vietnam War* (New York: Pharos Books, 1986), https://archive.org/details/worldalmanacofvi0000unse/, 295. The increase in air power is noted on page 296. Incidentally, on February 17, 1972 (the day that Sekula created the photographs for *Untitled Slide Sequence*), three US planes were shot down during a bombing mission that had been announced the day before. See Bowman, page 300.

Sekula's 1973 work *Aerospace Folktales* documents his family life, and his father's difficulties after losing his job at Lockheed. See Allan Sekula, "Aerospace Folktales," in *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973-1983* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984), 105–164.

[100] See Chapter 3 of Young, "Sympathetic Materialism," especially pages 92–100.

subjects. His presence as a photographer is confrontational and nonconsensual—many of the workers are visibly wary of his presence (the rest appear ambivalent or unaware)—but nevertheless, he is able to capture a sense of each individual's identity. Taken outside of the structured space of the workplace, his images effect a flattening of social hierarchy. Although it is easy to guess which of the passers-by are the most wealthy (a pair of white men in dark suits, carrying papers) and which are the least (those who carry lunchboxes rather than briefcases; the Black man who has tucked his thermos under his arm while he adjusts his ID badge), everyone is nevertheless photographed in the same way as they mingle together in the shared space of the walkway. The photographs manage to capture a sliver of personality: who smiles and who scowls, who chats and who reads. (A man with a shirt pocket overflowing with pens carries a newspaper. So does one of the few women, whose shawl and hairstyle match the friend—or sister?—with whom she walks.)

5.2 Slide projection and critical realism

Sekula described *Untitled Slide Sequence* as "a work between still photography and cinema,"[101] and in creating the work he was influenced by the observational method underpinning the photographic sequences of Eadweard Muybridge, an important precursor to early film. While Sekula endeavoured "to follow movement in everyday social situations" in a similar way to Muybridge, however, he dispensed with the "laboratory and the grid and the metronomic regularity of interval shutters" which Muybridge had used to strip his photographs of context and individuality, and to reduce human behaviour to a mere pattern of mechanical movement.[102] A key characteristic of *Untitled Slide Sequence* (and of Sekula's work more broadly) is an insistence on recovering the personal or human element that industrial processes typically obscure. This humanizing characteristic can be connected to the medium of slide projection itself: the ceaseless mechanical advance of the slide projector evokes the rhythm of the automated production line, but its hesitating motion also provides time to dwell on each image. While the staging of *Untitled Slide Sequence* references *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*,

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[101] Sekula, "Allan Sekula: Réalisme critique," 23.

[102] Allan Sekula and Carles Guerra, "Found Paintings, Disassembled Movies, World Images," *Grey Room* 55 (April 2014): 134, https://doi.org/10.1162/GREY_a_00144.

then, it interrupts the abstraction of labour seen in the Lumière film. The film presents workers only en masse, creating an abstract caricature of "the worker." By breaking up the continuous motion of the film, Sekula gives the viewer time to see the Convair employees not merely as workers, but as people. He does not heroize them, but neither does he ignore them. There is a tension in the images, not only between the photographer and his distrusting subjects, but also between the possibility of honouring the workers as complex individuals and the possibility of accusing them of complicity in the military-industrial system, of supporting a war which Sekula condemns.

This tension is typical of the "critical realism" for which Sekula is known—an approach in which photography is used to document an event as it happened, but also to comment on the material and ideological circumstances giving rise to that event. Hilde van Gelder and Jan Baetens describe critical realism as "a practice, a research method rather than an artistic style . . . a way of seeking to understand the social reality by critically 'making notes' of it."[103] Imre Szeman and Maria Whitman further observe that "it is an essential aspect of Sekula's 'critical realism' that the photographs must both insist on their relationship with reality while simultaneously drawing attention to the fact that they are partial and constructed, without either position canceling the other one out."[104] In light of this, I would argue that Sekula's critical challenge to the Lumières' celebration of industrial capitalism is made possible by the way that the slide projector helps to encourage a recognition of the constructed nature of the image. Here it is useful to once again compare the slide projector with the cinematic apparatus to which Sekula responds. Jean-Louis Baudry described the cinema as "an apparatus destined to obtain a precise ideological effect, necessary to the dominant ideology: creating a fantasmatization of the subject, it collaborates with a marked efficacity in the maintenance of idealism."[105] Baudry argued that by inducing the viewer to identify with the film image in the same way that one identifies with one's mirror image, the cinema separates subjectivity from corporeal experience and thereby encourages a belief in the primacy of the immaterial over the material. Further, he

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[103] Jan Baetens and Hilde Van Gelder, eds., *Critical Realism in Contemporary Art: Around Allan Sekula's Photography* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2006), 9.

[104] Imre Szeman and Maria Whiteman, "Oil Imag(e)Inaries: Critical Realism and the Oil Sands," *Imaginations* 3, no. 2 (September 6, 2012), https://doi.org/10.17742/IMAGE.sightoil.3-2.5, 50.

[105] Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," trans. Alan Williams, *Film Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1975): 46, https://doi.org/10.2307/1211632.

argued that this identification with the film image distracts the viewer, preventing them from considering the mediating function of the cinematic apparatus, and thereby helping to hide its ideological function. Baudry also observed, however, that when the cinematic illusion of movement is disrupted "the spectator is brought abruptly back to discontinuity—that is, to the body, to the technical apparatus which he had *forgotten*."[106] As I have noted previously, the unnatural stop-and-start motion of the slide projector means that the enchantment of the image is broken each time a new slide lurches into view, as the viewer is continually reminded of the presence of the mediating apparatus. The slide projector's inability to create continuous naturalistic motion thus prevents it from producing the idealism implicit in cinema, making it more suitable as a support for Sekula's materialist position. Compared to the film projector, the slide projector is in a constant state of "breakdown," and indeed as a "broken down" version of *Workers Leaving the Factory,* the very form of *Untitled Slide Sequence* suggests the breakdown of the military-industrial capitalism which the work takes as its target.[107]

5.3 Playful anticapitalism as a critical strategy

Drawing again on the idea of playfulness that I outlined in the previous chapter—that is, playfulness as a subversive rejection of a structure that constrains thought or behaviour—I would argue that, despite the gravity of *Untitled Slide Sequence*'s subject matter, there is nevertheless a certain playfulness in Sekula's rejection of the classic cinematic experience that his Lumière-style staging references. This can be understood through a psychoanalytic theory of humour: Freud proposed that humour functions as a pressure-relief valve for the unconscious, a way of venting the mental discomfort created by a tense situation—and I would suggest that this applies not only to the artificial tension created in the set-up to a joke, but also to more longstanding personal or social discomfort.[108] Considered according to this model, the interruption of expectation created by *Untitled Slide Sequence*—both at a surface level, in its inversion of the

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[106] Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," 42. Emphasis in the original.

[107] Incidentally, the Silent Cinema Society notes that in the early days of cinema, lantern slides "served as an emergency pacifier whenever the film broke or caught on fire." "Lantern Slides," Silent Cinema Society, accessed September 4, 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20171017234030/https://www.silentcinemasociety.org/glass-lantern-slides/.

[108] See Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960).

Lumière film's meaning, and at a deeper level, in its repeated disruption of identification with the projected image—fulfills a function akin to that of the punchline to a joke. The potency of humour, and of satire in particular, is rooted in its ability to both draw attention to social discomfort and to provide a moment of relief from that discomfort. Sekula's critique operates in a similar way.

There is an amusing irony to the way that Sekula uses the slide projector, an apparatus typically associated with marketing, to critique a film that functions in effect as a commercial for capitalism. This inversion of expectations, like Broodthaers' transformation of the slide projector from an institutional tool into a platform for institutional critique, is made possible by the slide projector's tendency to draw attention to its own mediating presence. By making the artifice of slide projection visible to the viewer, the artist is able to assert a degree of critical agency (for both artist and the viewer) over the function of the apparatus.

What makes the slide projector exceptional as a platform for artistic critique, however, is not that it can support a reflexive commentary on its own significance as a medium. Rather, what makes the slide projector exceptional is that through its ability to reference or reproduce works created in other mediums, it allows artists to comment critically on the ideological associations and effects produced by those mediums as well—as Broodthaers does by juxtaposing slide and painting, in the form of the anonymous seascape, and as Sekula does by juxtaposing slide and film, in the form of *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*. Through slide projection these artists are able to playfully appropriate these images and mediums, removing them from typical circuits of display and exchange in order to subject them to greater critical scrutiny.

The strategies of playful critique that artists like Broodthaers and Sekula developed in their slide projections were an important contribution at a time when artists were making increasing use of readymade technological media, but also becoming increasingly aware of how their chosen mediums might themselves influence the messages communicated in their work. Sekula's ability to exploit both the physical characteristics and the historical connotations of his medium in service of his own critical project is an early demonstration of a skill that has since become increasingly relevant as artists have continued to work with technological or "new media" supports, including digital projection.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The development of technological media in the postwar period created both opportunities and challenges for artists. Like other new media, the Carousel projector opened up new avenues for artistic experimentation—but it was not a neutral support. Slide projection carried pre-existing associations with institutional and corporate use, which conflicted with the anti-institutional and anti-capitalist tendencies of contemporary art in the early 1970s. Artists like Marcel Broodthaers and Allan Sekula, who recognized the ways in which the projector's cultural connotations could influence the perception of projected images, were able not only to subvert those connotations, but also to parlay that subversion into a larger reflection on the ideological function of technological media more generally. The slide projector was particularly well suited as a platform for this critique, as its clunky mechanism naturally draws attention to its own presence and its mediating function. Also important, however, was the playfulness with which Broodthaers and Sekula approached their critique. Both Broodthaers and Sekula adopted typically institutional or corporate forms of presentation (Broodthaers by referencing the art historical slide lecture, and Sekula by referencing corporate photography and the Lumières' celebration of industrial capitalism), but they then used these forms to articulate anti-institutional and anti-capitalist positions, subverting expectations in the same way that the punchline to a joke subverts the expectations established in its set-up. In this way, by making a point of engaging with slide projection on their own terms, these artists ensured that perception of their work was not implicitly influenced by the medium's pre-existing associations—and also laid claim to the Carousel projector as a medium for artistic experimentation, without allowing it to be codified into an institutionalized medium.

The critiques and strategies that Broodthaers and Sekula developed are of enduring significance. So too is the Carousel projector, both as an ancestor of the digital media that have become increasingly prevalent in contemporary art since the 1980s and as a medium that is itself still being used in new artworks.[109] We can round out our understanding of the early history of

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[109] Examples from 2019 include Hyung-min Yoon's *Black Book (Slideshow)* and Andrea Geyer's *Feeding the Ghost*; from 2018, Cassie Riger's *news (orange)* and Alexandra Navratil's *Under Saturn (Act 2)*; and from 2017, Holly Schmidt's *Lost Lessons (Midnight Pacific)*, Robin Cameron's *When is it?*, as well as multiple exhibitions of slide-based work by Vesna Pavlović, to name a few.

slide projection, therefore, by considering it in the light of subsequent developments in projection as a technology, a cultural object, and an artistic medium.

The most notable event in this later history has been the development of digital projection, which has made analogue projection (both slide and motion picture) obsolete for most purposes. Most "slideshows" are now created digitally—and these digital slide presentations are even more commonplace than their analogue predecessors used to be. But while many artists work with software to create and manipulate images, and while many use digital projection to display interactive or video work, only a few have chosen to use digital projection to show sequences of still images—whether through PowerPoint, Keynote, or any other commercial "slide" software.[110] The only place where PowerPoint has not become a standard fixture, it would seem, is the art gallery.[111] Why have these digital systems not provided artists with an adequate substitute for analogue slide projection?[112] Answering this question will help us to understand more recent slide work—and it will also provide further evidence that the early work of artists like Broodthaers and Sekula helped to make later experimentation possible.

6.1 The presence of the projector

In 2015, writing in what she presumed to be the "twilight" of the Carousel projector, Martha Langford argued that "as slide projection moves from industry to artisanship . . . the industrial trajectory of planned obsolescence—the logical progression to the new—is being interrupted by

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[110] There are a number of people who have made creative use of digital slide software, but few are participants in the same contemporary art community which would claim artists like Broodthaers as members. (The website PowerPoint Heaven [http://pptheaven.mvps.org/, last updated January 13, 2013], for example, catalogues a number of illustrations, comics, animations, and games.)

Shannon Mattern was able to find eight artists to highlight in a recent *Art in America* article on PowerPoint-based work, but much of their work makes use of PowerPoint as an image editing or animation tool, rather than strictly as a digital slide system. Shannon Mattern, "Using PowerPoint, Artists Ask How Performative Presentations Shape Our Thinking," Art in America, February 5, 2020, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/artists-using-powerpoint-critique-rhetorical-strategies-tan-lin- tony-cokes-david-byrne-1202676971/.

[111] Contemporary art's aversion to PowerPoint was illustrated particularly clearly in the exhibition *Dreamlands: Immersive Cinema and Art, 1905–2016* at the Whitney Museum, which included two multimedia pieces that had originally included both slides and film (Jad Yulkut's *Destruct Film*, 1967, and Stan VanDerBeek's *Movie Mural*, 1968). In each case the film was replaced with a digital copy, while the slides continued to be projected using classic Kodaks.

[112] Orit Gat addresses these questions briefly in an article for *Rhizome*, presenting conclusions that overlap with mine to some extent. Gat also notes that PowerPoint does see use in artistic lecture-performances. Orit Gat, "Projected Projects: Slides, PowerPoints, Nostalgia, and a Sense of Belonging," *Rhizome* (blog), November 28, 2011, https://rhizome.org/editorial/2011/nov/28/projected-projects-slides-powerpoints-nostalgia-an/.

new works of art that draw on pools of experience."[113] Looking at work by Mikko Canini and Sophie Jodoin, Langford concludes that digital projection lacks physical characteristics which appeal to artists. She writes, for example, that "the mechanical noise of the advancing machine inscribed itself in the collective memory as a rhythmic life force."[114] If these artworks treat the projector as a physical embodiment of temporality, then we see again that the appeal of the medium is that it draws attention to itself rather than effacing its own presence, transforming a reflection on the nature of the medium into a key component of the work.

Artists' slide projections are typically exhibited in ways that require the projector itself to be visible. Placed on a plinth, the projector may even be afforded a privileged presence usually reserved for sculpture. The physical placement of the projector in the gallery can help to attract attention to the apparatus, and this is spatial interruption is taken to the extreme in Canini's work: Langford writes that at BNLMTL 2014 "some visitors literally tripped over [his projectors], as [they] were fixed to the floor in a rectangular passageway."[115] The physical (or *bodily*) presence of the device is equally significant for Jodoin's *une certaine instabilité émotionelle* (2013–15). A study of fragmentation and fragility, this work consists of a series of drawings exhibited on a long table, and, on the other side of a dividing wall, a sequence of slides projected by a Carousel projector on a plinth. Even when the machine is out of sight, the "distinctive 'breathing' sound of the projector" permeates the space.[116] As Langford describes it, the design and effect of Jodoin's piece bears a notable resemblance to that of Broodthaers' *Bateau Tableau*; Langford writes that

> Jodoin's work distinguishes itself in its refusal to resolve into discourse. Careful not to lead the viewer—her use of the authoritarian machine is boldly counter-intuitive—Jodoin rejects linearity, presenting both drawings and slides in no particular order, and as a work subject to additions and subtractions for the rest of its life. The discipline of the museum could threaten that plan, as we have seen, but Jodoin . . . will doubtless find strategies to preserve her project's openness to improvisation.[117]

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[113] Martha Langford, "When the Carousel Stops Turning . . . : What Shall We Say about the Slide Show?," *Intermédialités*, no. 24–25 (Automne 2014–Printemps 2015), https://doi.org/10.7202/1034158ar.

[114] Langford, "When the Carousel Stops Turning . . ."

[115] Langford, "When the Carousel Stops Turning . . ."

[116] Jodoin, quoted in Langford, "When the Carousel Stops Turning . . ."

[117] Langford, "When the Carousel Stops Turning . . ."

These works require the Carousel projector because the analogue apparatus is more obstinately *present* than its digital successor. Compared to analogue projectors, digital devices are too silent, and too easily hidden. (In most exhibitions of slide-based work the projector is placed on a plinth in the space shared by artworks and viewers; digital projectors, by contrast, are often installed out of sight, suspended from the gallery ceiling.)[118]

Langford also shows that the slide projector provides a certain "historical distance" that appeals to artists; the outdated analogue medium can suggest obsolescence, failure, or fragility in a way that a modern digital projector naturally cannot. This gets to a key distinction between early artists' slide projections and more recent works. Artists like Broodthaers and Sekula were conscious of the cultural history of projection, but they nevertheless treated slide projection as a new medium. More recently, artists have tended to treat the projector more historically, drawing on their knowledge of its earlier uses in contemporary art, but also acknowledging the medium's (anticipated) demise.

6.2 PowerPoint and corporate vision

The artistic rejection of digital slide projection has to do not only with hardware, but also with software. In the discursive history of slide projection that I outlined in Chapter 2, I argued that the discourse of corporate vision began with the Carousel projector. In so doing I diverged from the framework given by Jennifer Eisenhauer, on which I was drawing. Eisenhauer does not mention Carousel projection at all, and gives a different starting point for the discourse of corporate vision—the invention of PowerPoint in 1987.[119] Carousel projection and PowerPoint have a close history, however: PowerPoint was designed to make slides that looked like those that companies were already creating for use with Carousel and overhead projectors, and indeed the first versions of the program (which predated readily available digital projectors) were used to create images that could be printed to film or transparent plastic for use with analogue

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[118] There are of course a few exceptional cases where slide projectors are installed more discretely; as I mentioned in the previous chapter, Sekula's *Untitled Slide Sequence* has been installed with the projector on a plinth, but it has also been shown in a theatre-style arrangement, with the projector placed behind arranged seating.

[119] Eisenhauer, "Next Slide Please," 207–208. The date for the invention of PowerPoint is given in Robert Gaskins, *Sweating Bullets: Notes about Inventing PowerPoint* (Vinland Books, 2012): 181.

projectors.[120] This is why I argue that PowerPoint represents a continuation of an already-established corporate discourse—even if it is in PowerPoint that this discourse finds its ultimate expression.

This clarification of PowerPoint's connection with the corporate discourse helps to explain why PowerPoint is unpopular with artists. If the invention of the Carousel projector marked the shift from scientific to corporate discourse, then it also marked a moment when the discursive significance of the medium was somewhat pliable. It was in this context of invention and transformation that artists like Broodthaers and Sekula were able to lay a claim to the medium, connecting it to another discourse—that of contemporary artmaking. Like the early amateur photographers celebrated by Foucault, these artists capitalized on the relative freedom offered by a new artistic form. Unlike the early photographers, however, they connected their playful experimentation with a satirical criticality, through which they defended their use of the medium from the risk of institutionalization or commercialization—a strategy which has since been maintained by later artists, as Langford's description of Jodoin's work shows.

PowerPoint, meanwhile, was born into the corporate discourse, leading not to a transformation of the discourse but rather to its intensification. While the analogue slide projector made it equally easy to display any photograph (or indeed, any translucent image, as Bruno Munari's collaged slides showed), PowerPoint was specifically designed to create business presentations full of charts and bulleted lists.[121] Where the Carousel projector had been sold as an affordable consumer product, furthermore, PowerPoint required thousands of dollars of computer and display equipment to use. While the software technically could have been used for more unusual purposes, it did not encourage experimentation. As a result, artists did not lay claim to PowerPoint (or to any subsequent slideshow software) when it was new, nor did they establish an early precedent for digital slide projection on which later artists could build. The social perception of PowerPoint has now become so negative (and so connected to corporate and

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[120] Robert Gaskins, who led the team that created PowerPoint, has written an autobiographical history of the software, *Sweating Bullets: Notes about Inventing PowerPoint* (Vinland Books, 2012). The original output formats are described on pages 15–19.

[121] The design for PowerPoint was based on an informal study of existing business presentations; see Gaskins, *Sweating Bullets*, 33 and 88–89. Gaskins even writes that "despite my finding that over 90% of individual U.S. classrooms still contained an overhead projector in 1985, I did not for a moment suggest targeting educational customers. PowerPoint was a business product." *Sweating Bullets*, 117.

institutional drudgery) that it would be difficult to make meaningful or nuanced artistic use of the technology. In Chapter 4 I noted how difficult it is to make playful use of an apparatus that has come to be associated with "serious" use (that is, use in support of a dominant system of power). PowerPoint has always been used in a "serious" way—whereas the Carousel projector, although derived from corporate technology, was marketed for amateur use, and was thus much easier for artists to treat playfully and experimentally.

As a result, while PowerPoint has become the ultimate corporate medium, artists have now inherited sole ownership of the Carousel projector. Those who write about the obsolescence of slide projection are therefore be somewhat mistaken; as a medium for contemporary art, the slide projector is not at all obsolete. Indeed, the obsolescence of analogue projection for corporate and institutional has arguably been a boon to its artistic use, as it has transformed slide projection into a purely artistic tool. The end of corporate and institutional slide projection has also complicated the medium's historical and cultural connotations in a way that artists like Canini and Jodoin are happy to exploit. Although film and processing are growing harder to come by, artists continue to create new slide sequences, and it may be some time yet before the Carousel projector loses relevance as an artistic medium.

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