THIS IS THE THIRTY-FIRST OF THE
WALTER NEURATH MEMORIAL LECTURES
WHICH ARE GIVEN ANNUALLY EACH SPRING ON
SUBJECTS REFLECTING THE INTERESTS OF
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THE DIRECTORS
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TO THE TRUSTEES OF
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FOR GRACIOUSLY HOSTING
THESE LECTURES

“A VOYAGE ON
THE NORTH SEA”

ART IN THE AGE OF THE
POST-MEDIUM CONDITION

ROSALIND KRAUSS

THAMES & HUDSON
PREFACE

At first I thought I could simply draw a line under the word medium, bury it like so much critical toxic waste, and walk away from it into a world of lexical freedom. “Medium” seemed too contaminated, too ideologically, too dogmatically, too discursively loaded.

I wondered if I could make use of Stanley Cavell’s automatism, the term he had appropriated to attack the double problem of “addressing film as a (relatively) new medium and of bringing into focus what seemed to him unexplained about modernist painting.” The word “automatism” captured for him the sense in which part of film—the part that depends on the mechanics of a camera—is automatic; it also plugged into the Surrealist use of “automatism” as an unconscious reflex (a dangerous allusion, but a useful one, as we will see); and it contained the possible connotative reference to “autonomy,” in the sense of the residuum work’s freedom from its maker.

Like the notion of medium or genre within more traditional contexts for art, an automatism would involve the relationship between a technical (or material) support and the conventions with which a particular genre operates or articulates or works on that support. What “automatism” thrusts into the foreground of this traditional definition of “medium,” however, is the concept of improvisation, of the need to take chances in the face of a medium now cut free from the guarantees
of artistic tradition. It is this sense of the improvisatory that welcomes the word's associations with "psychic automatism", but the automatic reflex here is not so much an unconscious one as it is something like the expressive freedom that improvisation always contained, as the relation between the technical ground of a genre and its given conventions opened up a space for release — the way the fugue makes it possible, for example, to improvise complex marriages between its voices. The conventions in question need not be as strict as those of a fugue or a sonnet; they might be exceedingly loose or schematic. But without them there would be no possibility of judging the success or failure of such improvisation. Expressiveness would have no goal, so to speak. The attraction of Cavell's example for me was its insistence on the internal plurality of any given medium, of the impossibility of thinking of an aesthetic medium as nothing more than an unworked physical support. That such a definition of the medium as mere physical object, in all its reductiveness and drive toward reification, had become common currency in the art world, and that the name Clement Greenberg had been attached to this definition so that, from the '50s on, to utter the word "medium" meant invoking "Greenberg," was the problem I faced. Indeed, so pervasive was this drive to "Greenbergize" the word that historically previous approaches to its definition were now stripped of their own complexity. Marie Denis's famous 1890 dictum about the pictorial medium — "It is well to remember that a picture — before being a battle horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote — is essentially a plane surface covered with colors assembled in a certain order" — was now being read, for example, as merely presaging an essentialist reduction of painting to "flatness." That this is not Denis's point, that he is instead describing the layered, complex relationship that we could call a recursive structure — a structure, that is, some of the elements of which will produce the rules that generate the structure itself — was (and is) just . . . ignored. Further, that this recursive structure is something made, rather than something given, is what is latent in the traditional conception of "medium" to matters of technique, as when the arts were divided up within the Academy into ateliers representing the different mediums — painting, sculpture, architecture — in order to be taught. Thus, if I have decided in the end to retain the word "medium," it is because for all the misunderstandings and abuses attached to it, this is the term that opens onto the discursive field that I want to address. This is true at the historical level in that the fate of this concept seems to belong chronologically to the rise of a critical postmodernism (institutional critique, site specificity) that in turn has produced its own problematic aftermath (the international phenomenon of installation art). It seemed, that is, that only "medium" would face onto this turn of events. And at a lexical level, it is the word "medium" and not something like "automatism," that brings the issue of "specificity" in its wake — as in the designation "medium-specificity." Although this is another, unfortunately loaded concept — abusively recast as a form of objectification or reification, since a medium is purportedly made specific by being reduced to nothing but its manifest physical properties — it is (in its non-abusively defined form) nonetheless intrinsic to any discussion of how the conventions layered into a medium might function. For the nature of a recursive structure is that it must be able, at least in part, to specify itself.

Stuck, therefore, with the word "medium," I must thrust it equally on my reader in the reflections that follow. I hope, however, that this note in the form of a preface will have gained me some distance between the word itself, with its long history outside the recent battles over "formalism," and the assumptions about the term's corruption and collapse that those battles generated.
With the canny clairvoyance of the materialist, Broodthaers anticipated, as early as the mid-1960s, the complete transformation of artistic production into a branch of the culture industry, a phenomenon which we only now recognize.

Benjamin Buchloh

I

A cover, devised by Marcel Broodthaers for a 1974 issue of Studio International, will serve as the introduction to what I have to say here. It is a rebus that spells out FINE ARTS, with the picture of the eagle supplying the last letter of “fine” and that of the ass functioning as the first one of “arts.” If we adopt the commonly held view that the eagle symbolizes nobility, height, imperious reach, and so forth, then its relationship to the fineness of the fine arts seems perfectly obvious. And if the ass is presumed, through the same kind of intellectual reflex, to present the lowliness of a beast of burden, then its connection to the arts is not that of the eagle’s unifying movement—the separate arts raised up or subsumed under the synthetic, larger idea of Art—but rather, the stupefying particularity of individual techniques, of everything that embeds practice in the tedium of its making; “Dumb like a painter,” they say.

But we can also read the rebus as an eclipse of the appropriate letter of the given word, and so arrive, somewhat suggestively, at FIN ARTS, or the end of art? and this in turn would open onto a specific way that Broodthaers often used the eagle, and that onto a particular narrative about the end of art, or—reading his rebus more carefully—the end of the arts.

There was, indeed, a narrative about this end to which Broodthaers was especially sensitive in the late 1960s and early ‘70s. This was the story of a militantly reductive modernism that, by narrowing painting to what was announced as the medium’s essence—namely flatness—had so contracted it that, suddenly, refracted by the prism of theory,
it had emerged from the other side of the lens not simply upside down but transformed into its opposite. If, the story goes, Frank Stella’s black canvases showed what painting would look like once materialized as unrelievedly flat — their supposed essence understood as nothing more than an inertly physical feature — they announced to Donald Judd that painting had now become an object just like any other three-dimensional thing. Further, he reasoned, with nothing any longer differentiating painting from sculpture, the distinctness of either as separate mediums was over. The name that Judd gave to the hybrids that would form out of this collapse was “Specific Objects.”

It was Joseph Kosuth who quickly saw that the correct term for this paradoxical outcome of the modernist reduction was not specific but general. For if modernism was probing painting for its essence — for what made it specific as a medium — that logic taken to its extreme had turned painting inside out and had emptied it into the generic category of Art: art-at-large, or art-in-general. And now, Kosuth maintained, the ontological labor of the modernist artist was to define the essence of Art itself. “Being an artist now means to question the nature of art,” he stated. “If one is questioning the nature of painting, one cannot be questioning the nature of art. That’s because the word art is general and the word painting is specific.”

It was Kosuth’s further contention that the definitions of art, which works would now make, might merely take the form of statements and thus rarely the physical object into the conceptual condition of language. But these statements, though he saw them resonating with the logical finality of an analytical proposition, would nonetheless be art and not, say, philosophy. Their linguistic form would merely signal the transcendence of the particular, sensorial content of a given art, like painting or photography, and the subsumption of each by that higher aesthetic unity — Art itself — of which any one is only a partial embodiment.

Conceptual art’s further claim was 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 in which paintings and sculptures inevitably participated as they were forced to compete in a market for art that increasingly looked just like any other. In this declaration was folded yet another paradox of recent modernist history. The specific mediums — painting, sculpture, drawing — had vested their claims to purity in being autonomous, which is to say that in their declaration of being about nothing but their own essence, they were necessarily disengaged from everything outside their frames. The paradox was that this autonomy had proved chimerical, and that abstract art’s very modes of production — its paintings being executed in serial runs, for example — seemed to carry the imprint of the industrially produced commodity object, internalizing within the field of the work its own status as interchangeable and thus as pure exchange value. By abandoning this pretense to artistic autonomy, and by willingly assuming various forms and sites — the mass-distributed printed book, for example, or the public billboard — Conceptual art saw itself securing a higher purity for Art, so that in flowing through the channels of commodity distribution it would not only adopt any form it needed but would, by a kind of homeopathic defense, escape the effects of the market itself.
Although by 1972 Broodthaers had ended his four-year enterprise called the “Museum of Modern Art, Eagles Department” — a sequence of works by which, in producing the activities of the Museum’s twelve sections, he operated what he once referred to as a fictitious museum — it is clear that one of the targets of that project carries over onto the Studio International cover. Having explained, a few years before, that for him there was what he called an “identity of the eagle as idea and of art as idea,” Broodthaers’s eagle functioned more often than not as an emblem for Conceptual art. And in this very cover, the triumph of the eagle announces not the end of Art but the termination of the individual arts as medium-specific, and it does so by enacting the form that this loss of specificity will now take.

On the one hand, the eagle itself will be folded into the hybrid or intermedia condition of the rebus, in which not only language and image but high and low and any other oppositional pairing one can think of will freely mix. But on the other hand, this particular combination is not entirely random. It is specific to the site on which it occurs, which here is the cover of that organ of the market, an art magazine, where the image of the eagle does not escape the operations of the market.
served by the press. Accordingly, it becomes a form of advertising or promotion, now promoting Conceptual art. Broodthaers made this clear in the announcement he drew up as his cover design for the magazine *Interfunktionen*, at about the same time: “View,” it reads, “according to which an artistic theory will function for the artistic product in the same way as the artistic product itself functions as advertising for the order under which it is produced. There will be no other space than this view according to which, etc. … [signed] Broodthaers.” The redoubling of art as theory, then, delivers art (and most particularly the art for which it is the theory) to exactly those sites whose function is promotion, and does so without what might be called a critical remainder.

And it does so without a formal remainder, as well. In the intermediate loss of specificity to which the eagle submits the individual arts, the bird’s privilege is itself scattered into a multiplicity of sites—each of them now termed “specific”—in which the installations that are constructed will comment, often critically, on the operating conditions of the site itself. To this end, they will have recourse to every material support one can imagine, from pictures to words to video to readymade objects to films. But every material support, including the site itself—whether art magazine, dealer’s fair booth, or museum gallery—will now be leveled, 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. This reduction was given manic form by Broodthaers as he affixed “figure” labels to random sets of objects, effecting their equivalence through the tags that assign them as either “Fig. 1,” “Fig. 2,” “Fig. c,” or “Fig. 12.” In the Film Section of his museum, not only did he stick these labels onto mundane objects such as mirrors, pipes, and clocks, but the movie screen itself was riddled with figure numbers as well, so that everything in the film projected onto it—from Chaplin’s image to the Palais Royal in Brussels—now entered this compendium of Broodthaers’s “Fig.”s.
10 (opposite, top left) Marcel Broodthaers, Livre tableau, 1969–70.


13 (top left) Marcel Broodthaers, Museum of Modern Art, Egles Department, Film Section, 1971–2. Painted screen in outer room.

14 (above left) Marcel Broodthaers, Museum of Modern Art, Egles Department, Film Section, 1971–2.


In the *Section des Figures (The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present)*, mounted by his fictional museum, Broodthaers famously submitted more than three hundred different eagles to this principle of leveling. In this way, the eagle itself, no longer a figure of nobility, becomes a sign of the figure, the mark—that is—of pure exchange. Yet in this there is a further paradox that Broodthaers himself did not live to see. For the eagle principle, which simultaneously implodes the idea of an aesthetic medium and turns everything equally into a readymade that collapses the difference between the aesthetic and the commodified, has allowed the eagle to soar above the rubble and to achieve hegemony once again.¹¹ Twenty-five years later, all over the world, in every biennial and at every art fair, the eagle principle functions as the new Academy. Whether it calls itself installation art or institutional critique, the international spread of the mixed-media installation has become ubiquitous. Triumphant in declaring that we now inhabit a post-medium age, the post-medium condition of this form traces its lineage, of course, not so much to Joseph Kosuth as to Marcel Broodthaers.


¹² (above) Marcel Broodthaers, detail of *Museum of Modern Art, Eagles Department, Section des Figures (The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present)*, 1972.
19, 20, 21, 22 (opposite and above) Marcel Broodthaers, details of *Museum of Modern Art, Eagles Department, Stavros de Figure: (The Eagle from the Olgycoen to the Present)*, 1972.
At about the same time when Broodthaers was producing this meditation on the eagle principle, another development, with undoubtedly wider reach, had entered the world of art to shatter the notion of medium-specificity in its own way. This was the portapak—a lightweight, cheap video camera and monitor—and thus the advent of video into art practice, something that demands yet another narrative.

It is a story that could be told from the point of view of Anthology Film Archives, a screening room in New York’s Soho, where in the late ’60s and early ’70s a collection of artists, filmmakers, and composers gathered night after night to view the repertory of modernist film put together by Jonas Mekas and projected in an unvarying cycle, a corpus that consisted of Soviet and French avant-garde cinema, the British silent documentary, early versions of American Independent film, as well as Chaplin and Keaton movies. The artists who sat in the darkness of that theater, the wingchair-like seats of which were designed to cut off any peripheral vision so that every drop of attention would be focused on the screen itself, artists such as Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, or Carl Andre, could be said to be united around their deep hostility to Clement Greenberg’s rigid version of modernism with its doctrine of flatness. Yet if they were gathered in Anthology Film Archives in the first place it meant that they were committed modernists nonetheless. For Anthology both fed into and promoted the current work of structuralist filmmakers such as Michael Snow or Hollis Frampton or Paul Sharits, its screenings providing the discursive ground within which this group of young artists could imagine their way into a kind of film that, focused on the nature of the cinematic medium itself, would be modernist to its core.

Now, the rich satisfactions of thinking about film’s specificity at that juncture derived from the medium’s aggregate condition, one that led a slightly later generation of theorists to define its support with the compound idea of the “apparatus”—the medium or support for film being neither the celluloid strip of the image, nor the camera that filmed them, nor the projector that brings them to life in motion, nor the beam of light that relays them to the screen, nor the screen itself, but all of these taken together, including the audience’s position caught between the source of the light behind it and the image projected before its eyes. Structuralist film set itself the project of producing the unity of this diversified support in a single, sustained experience in which the inner interdependence of all these things would itself be revealed as a model of how the viewer is intentionally connected to his or her world. The parts of the apparatus would be like things that cannot touch or each other without themselves being touched; and this interdependence would figure forth the mutual emergence of a viewer and a field of vision as a trajectory through which the sense of sight touches on what touches back. Michael Snow’s Wavelength, a 45-minute, single, almost uninterrupted zoom, captures the intensity of this research into how to forge the union of such a trajectory into something both immediate and obvious. In its striving to articulate what Merleau-Ponty had termed the preobjective, and thus abstract, nature of this connection, such a link could be called a “phenomenological vector.”

For Richard Serra, one of Anthology’s denizens, a work like Wavelength would have performed a double function. On the one hand,
Snow's film enacts itself as pure horizontal thrust, such that its inexorable forward movement is able to create the abstract spatial metaphor for film's relation to time, now essentialized as the dramatic mode of suspense.15 Serra's own drive to make sculpture a condition of something like a phenomenological vector, itself the experience of horizontality, would thus have found aesthetic confirmation in Wavelength.16 But more than this, in structuralist film itself Serra would have found support for a newly conceived idea of an aesthetic medium, one that, like film's, could not be understood as reductive but again, like film's, was thoroughly modernist.

Serra's reformulated idea of what an aesthetic medium might be participated in his generation's newly won understanding of Jackson Pollock and a notion that if Pollock had progressed beyond the easel picture, as Clement Greenberg had claimed, it was not to make bigger and flatter paintings.17 Rather, it was to rotate his work out of the dimension of the pictorial object altogether and, by placing his canvases on the floor, to transform the whole project of art from making objects, in their increasingly referent form, to articulating the vectors that connect objects to subjects.18 In understanding this vector as the horizontal field of an event, Serra's problem was to try to find in the inner logic of events themselves the expressive possibilities or conventions that would articulate this field as a medium. For, in order to sustain artistic practice, a medium must be a supporting structure, generative of a set of conventions, some of which, in assuming the medium itself as their subject, will be wholly "specific" to it, thus producing an experience of their own necessity.19

For the purposes of the argument here it is not necessary to know exactly how Serra went about this.20 Suffice it to say that Serra drew these conventions from the logic of the event of the work's making, when that event is understood as a form of series, not in the sense of stamping out identical casts as in industrial production, but in that of the differential condition of periodic or wavelike flux in which separate sets of serial repetitions converge on a given point. The important thing is that Serra experienced and articulated the medium in which he saw himself to be working as aggregative and thus distinct from the material properties of a merely physical objectlike support; and, nonetheless, he viewed himself as modernist. The example of independent, structuralist film -- itself a matter of a composite support, yet nonetheless modernist -- confirmed him in this.

At this juncture it is important, however, to make a little detour into the history of official, reductivist modernism itself, and to correct the record as it had been written by Judd's logic of specific objects. For like Serra's, Greenberg's view of Pollock had also led him eventually to jettison the materialist, purely reductive notion of the medium. Once he saw the modernist logic leading to the point where, as he put it,
“the observance of merely the two [constitutive conventions or norms of painting — flatness and the delimitation of flatness — ] is enough to create an object which can be experienced as a picture,” he dissolved that object in the fluid of what he first called “opticality” and then named “color field.” This is to say that no sooner had Greenberg seemed to isolate the essence of painting in flatness than he swung the axis of the field ninety degrees to the actual picture surface to place all the import of painting on the vector that connects viewer and object. In this he seemed to shift from the first norm — flatness — to the second — the delimitation of flatness — and to give this latter a reading that was not that of the bounding edge of the physical object but rather the projective resonance of the optical field itself — what in “Modernist Painting” he had called the “optical third dimension” created by “the very first mark on a canvas [which] destroys its literal and utter flatness.” This was the resonance he imparted to the effulgence of pure color as he spoke of it, not only as disembodied and therefore purely optical, but also “as a thing that opens and expands the picture plane.” “Opticality” was thus an entirely abstract, schematized version of the link that traditional perspective had formerly established between viewer and object, but one that now transcends the real parameters of measurable, physical space to express the purely projective powers of a preobjective level of sight: “vision itself.”

The most serious issue for painting now was to understand not its objective features, such as the flatness of the material surface, but its specific mode of address, and to make this the source of a set of new conventions — or what Michael Fried called “a new art.” One such convention emerged as the sense of the oblique generated by fields that seemed always to be rotating away from the plane of the wall and into depth, a perspectival rush of surfaces that caused critics like Leo Steinberg to speak of their sense of speed: what he called the visual efficiency of the man in a hurry. Another derived from the seriality — both internal to the works and to their production — to which the color-field painters uniformly resorted.

25 (left) Kenneth Noland, installation of Coarse Shade and Sinia in the Andre Emmerich Gallery.

Thus it could be argued that in the '60s, "opticality" was also serving as more than just a feature of art; it had become a medium of art. As such it was also aggregative, an affront to what was officially understood as the reductivist logic of modernism — a logic and doctrine attributed to this day to Greenberg himself. Neither Greenberg nor Fried theorized colorfield painting as a new medium, however; they spoke of it only as a new possibility for abstract painting. Nor was process art — the term under which Serra's early work was addressed — adequately theorized. And certainly the fact that in both cases the specificity of a medium was being maintained even though it would now have to be seen as internally differentiated — on the order of the filmic model — was not theorized either. For in the case of that latter model, the impulse was to try to sublate the internal differences within the filmic apparatus into a single, indivisible, experiential unit that would serve as an ontological metaphor, a figure — like the 45-minute zoom — for the essence of the whole. In 1972, structuralist film's self-description is, as I have said, was modernist.

Into this situation there entered the portable, and its televi- sional effect was to shatter the modernist dream. In the beginning, as artists began to make video work, they used video as a technologically updated continuation of the mode of address organized by the new attention to the phenomenological, although it was a perverse version of this since the form took was decidedly narcissistic: artists endlessly talking to themselves. To my knowledge only Serra himself immediately acknowledged that video was in fact television, which means a broadcast medium, one that splinters spatial continuity into remote sites of transmission and reception. His Television Delivers People (1973) — a message displayed in a continuous crawl — and Prisoner's Dilemma (1974) were versions of this.

It is this spatial separation, coupled with the temporal simultaneity of instantaneous broadcast, that has led certain theorists to try to locate the essence of television in its use as closed-circuit surveillance. But the fact of the matter is that television and video seem Hydra-headed, existing in endlessly diverse forms, spaces, and temporalities for which no single instance seems to provide a formal unity for the whole. This is what Sam Weber has called television's "constitutive heterogeneity," adding that "what is perhaps most difficult to keep in mind are the ways in which what we call television also and above all differs from itself." If modernist theory found itself defeated by such heterogeneity — which prevented it from conceptualizing video as a medium — modernist, structuralist film was routed by video's instant success as a practice. For, even if video had a distinct technical support — its own apparatus, so to speak — it occupied a kind of discursive chaos, a heterogeneity of activities that could not be theorized as coherent or conceived of as having something like an essence or unifying core. Like the eagle principle,
it proclaimed the end of medium-specificity. In the age of television, so it broadcast, we inhabit a post-medium condition.

The third narrative, which I will set out with considerably more dispatch, concerns the resonance between the post-medium position and poststructuralism. For during this same late ’60s/early ’70s moment, deconstruction began famously attacking what it denervously referred to as the “law of genre,” or the aesthetic autonomy supposedly ensured by the pictorial frame.¹² From the theory of grammatology to that of the parergon, Jacques Derrida built demonstration after demonstration to show that the idea of an interior set apart from, or uncontaminated by, an exterior was a chimera, a metaphysical fiction. Whether it be the interior of the work of art as opposed to its context, or the interiority of a lived moment of experience as opposed to its repetition in memory or via written signs, what deconstruction was engaged in dismantling was the idea of the proper, both in the sense of the self-identical—as in “vision is what’s proper to the visual arts”—and in the sense of the clean or pure—as in “abstraction purifies painting of all those things, like narrative or sculptural space, that are not proper to it.” That nothing could be constituted as pure interiority or self-identity, that this purity was always already invaded by an outside, indeed, could itself only be constituted through the very introjection of that outside, was the argument mounted to scuttle the supposed autonomy of the aesthetic experience, or the possible purity of an artistic medium, or the presumed separateness of a given intellectual discipline. The self-identical was revealed as, and thus dissolved into, the self-different.

In the university this, along with other poststructuralist analyses, such as those of Michel Foucault, proved a powerful argument for an end to the separation of academic faculties within distinct branches of knowledge, and thus a powerful support for interdisciplinarity. And outside the academy, in the art world—where autonomy and the notion that there was something proper or specific to a medium were already under attack—this gave a glittering theoretical pedigree to practices of rampant impurity—like Fluxus or Situationist détournement (subversive appropriation)—that had long since been underway.

In the late 1960s and early ’70s, Marcel Broodthaers appeared to be the knight errant of all this. In being a fantastic feat of institutional détournement, his “Museum of Modern Art” also seemed to constitute the ultimate implosion of medium-specificity. And even as it did so, it appeared to be setting forth the theoretical basis of its own project. As we have seen, for example, the affixing of figure numbers to a miscellany of objects operated as both a parody of curatorial practice and an emptying out of the very meaning of classification. Accordingly, the figures functioned as a set of meta-captions whose operation was theoretical. Broodthaers himself commented: “A theory of the figures would serve only to give an image of a theory. But the Fig, as a theory of the image?”¹³

Yet if Broodthaers can be seen to be moving within the poststructuralist circle of theory, we must also remember his deep ambivalence about theory itself. We must recall the statement from Interjektionen in which theories are reduced to, or perhaps revealed as, nothing more than “advertising for the order under which [they are] produced.” According to this condemnation, any theory, even if it is issued as a critique of the culture industry, will end up only as a form of promotion for that very industry. In this way, the ultimate master of détournement turns out to be capitalism itself, which can appropriate and reprogram anything to serve its own ends. Thus, if Broodthaers did not live to see the absolute confirmation of his entirely pessimistic “View,” he had nonetheless predicted both the eventual complicity between theory and the culture industry and the ultimate absorption of “institutional critique” by exactly the institutions of global marketing on which such “critique” depends for its success and its support.
This leads us, however, to another story. For if capitalism is the master of détournement, absorbing every avant-garde protest in its path and turning it to its own account, Broodthaers—by some ultimate turn of the screw—was in a strange kind of mimetic relationship to this. To put it simply, there is a way in which he conducted a form of détournement on himself.

Acknowledging this in the press release issued during the 1972 Documenta, where the final sections of his Museum (now renamed the “Museum of Old Master Art [Art Ancien], 20th-Century Gallery: Eagles Department”) were installed, namely the sections of promotion and public relations, Broodthaers speaks of the “contradictory interviews” he had given on the subject of his museum fictions.14 Indeed, Broodthaers’s best critics have been alert to the peculiar inconsistencies that mine both the artist’s explanations of his work and the unfolding of the work itself. Benjamin Buchloh has written, for example: “If anything, it would be his persistent sense of contradictions that could be called the most prominent feature in Broodthaers’s thoughts and statements and, of course, in his work.”15

At one point Buchloh sees this as a species of blague, a willful, tongue-in-cheek form of double negation in which a petrified language acts to mimic the present-day reification of speech itself at the hands of the consciousness industry. To this effect, he quotes a Broodthaers text called “My Rhetoric,” in which the artist writes: “I, I say I; I, I say I. I, the Museus King. You say you. I tautologize. I ‘can it.’ I sociologize. I manifestly manifest . . .” and so on.16

Douglas Crimp has also fastened on this feature of contradiction, which Broodthaers sometimes called his own “bad faith,” as when he explained his decision in the early 1960s to stop being a poet and start being an artist. The reason, he wrote, was that since he hadn’t the money to collect the art objects he loved, he decided to create them instead: to become a creator, then, by default of not being able to be a collector.17
In a certain sense, the whole of the museum fictions, in which Broodthaers is installed as director, enact the collecting function. But Broodthaers also distinguishes this public form of collection from a personal one in a work called *Ma Collection*, a work given a special aura of privacy and inwardness by the presence, within its assembly of images, of the picture of Stéphane Mallarmé. Focusing on this distinction between public and private, or institutional and personal, Crimp addresses Broodthaers’s odd privileging of the personal collector through the lens of Walter Benjamin’s analysis of such a nineteenth-century collector as a positive countertype not only to the bourgeois consumer but also to the contemporary private collector who now operates on the pattern of commodity consumption. Against the consumer who is driven to amass objects either to display them as capital or to use them up, the true collector, Benjamin says, liberates “things from the bondage of utility.” What is decisive in the act of collecting, he goes on, is “that the object be dissociated from all its original functions in order to enter into the closest possible relationship with its equivalents. This is the diametric opposite of use, and stands under the curious category of completeness.”

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Un texte de Marcel Broodthaers
à propos de *Ma Collection*

*Ma Collection* est une pièce composée de deux volumes dont chaque face est exploité. Dans le premier volet comportant des documents d’expositions auxquelles j'ai pu participer est insérée une page du catalogue de la foire de Cologne 71 reproduisant les photos des mêmes documents. Le second volet de *Ma Collection* est orné d’un portrait du poète européen Stéphane Mallarmé en qui je vois le fondateur de l’art contemporain. “On sait que d’aujourd’hui, l’histoire.”

*Ma Collection* est une pièce où le système taxonomique est utilisé pourян le lieu d’exposition. (Elle aurait donc plus de sens qu’une collection de nœuds postes.) Le catalogue de la présente exposition sera utilisé comme détail pour construire une pièce d’art futur en évoquant des expositions auxquelles j’ai participé depuis 1971.
Here, the equivalency principle that levels objects to the measure of their exchange value, and which Broodthaers seems to attack in the application of "Fig. numbers within the Film Section of his museum, is valorized in the situation of the personal collection. This Broodthaers also seems to acknowledge, in that the "Fig. numbers captioning the images in Ma Collection could be seen as working to form the new relationships forged by the "true" collector. These relationships, which Benjamin calls a "magic circle," allow each object to exfoliate into so many "sites of memory. "Collecting," he says, "is a form of practical memory and, among the profane manifestations of "proximity," the most convincing one."

This structure in which two opposing forms of equivalence can converge in the object — that of exchange and that of "proximity" — is a dialectical condition in which everything within capitalism — every object, every technological process, every social type — is understood as invested with a double valence: negative and positive, like an object and its shadow, or a perception and its after-image. This is what links type to countertype, or, in the case of the commodity, produces what Benjamin called "the ambivalence between its utopian and its cynical element."

That the cynical element gains the upper hand over the course of time goes without saying. But Benjamin believed that at the birth of a given social form or technological process the utopian dimension was present and, furthermore, that it is precisely at the moment of the obsolescence of that technology that it once more releases this dimension, like the last gleam of a dying star. For obsolescence, the very law of commodity production, both frees the outmoded object from the grip of utility and reveals the hollow promise of that law.

Broodthaers’s deep attraction to the forms of the outmoded has been remarked upon by his various critics. His system of references focuses mainly on the nineteenth century, be they to the Ingres and Courbet in the first manifestation of his museum, or to the example of Baudelaire and Mallarmé for his books and exhibitions, or to the panorama and the
winter garden as his models for social spaces. In fact, as Benjamin Buchloh has commented, this “altogether dated aura of nineteenth-century bourgeois culture that many of his works seem to bring to mind might easily seduce the viewer into dismissing his work as being obviously obsolete and not at all concerned with the presuppositions of contemporary art.”

But what Crimp is suggesting is that the power that Walter Benjamin invested in the outmoded should be acknowledged in Broodthaers’s use of it—as in his assumption of the form of the “true” collector. This was a power that Benjamin hoped his own prospecting in the historical grounds of nineteenth-century forms would be able to release. Writing of his own *Paris Arcades* project, he said: “We are here constructing an alarm clock that awakens the kitsch of the past century into ‘re-collection.’” That Benjamin’s archaeology was retrospective was a function of the fact that he believed its view could open up only from the site of obsolescence. As he remarked: “Only in extinction is the [true] collector comprehended.”

The true collector, however, was not the only outmoded figure to whom Broodthaers was attracted. Another was that of the film-maker from the early moments of cinema when, as with the Lumière Brothers or with D. W. Griffith’s and Chaplin’s stock-company operations (such as Biograph or S. and A.), movie production was entirely artisanal. As Broodthaers began to make films in earnest in 1967 and into the early ’70s, he cast his own production in precisely this mold. He imitated the gestures of the silent-movie comic actors, particularly Buster Keaton, capturing the amazing sense they radiated of dogged persistence in the face of endless adversity. And he replicated the primitive look of early cinema with its uneven exposures spliced together and its flickering gait.

That the kind of spontaneous activity represented in this model would be rendered obsolete by the industrialization of cinema at the hands of the big studios in Hollywood and Europe was an issue for just that structuralist film being made in the late 1960s in the context of Anthology Film Archives and shown annually at the Experimental Film Festival at Knokke-le-Zoute, on the Belgian coast, an event that Broodthaers twice attended. The demonstration that it was possible to defy the system and to make film single-handedly, on practically no
budget, and from the scraps and discards of old stock, as exemplified at Knokke by the Americans and the Canadians, undoubtedly reinforced Broodthaers’s earlier experiments in film. But though many of the Americans saw this defiance of Hollywood as a progressive, avant-garde move, the opportunity for a modernist concentration of the disparity of the Hollywood production into the single, structural vector that would reveal the nature of film itself, Broodthaers read it retrogressively, a return to the promise of the enfolded cinema’s beginnings.

In so far as it accompanied with structuralist film’s modernism, Broodthaers was not denying film as a medium. He was, rather, understanding this medium in the light of the openness promised by early film, an openness woven into the very mesh of the image, as the flickering irresolution of the illusion of movement produced the experience of sight itself as dilated: a phenomenological mixture of presence and absence, immediacy and distance. If the medium of primitive film resisted structural closure in this sense, it allowed Broodthaers to see what the structuralists did not: that the filmic apparatus presents us with a medium whose specificity is to be found in its condition as self-differing. It is aggregative, a matter of interlocking supports and layered conventions. The structuralists strove to construct the ultimate synecdoche for film “itself” — motion both reduced to and summarized in the ultimate camera movement (Snow’s zoom), or filmic illusion typified in the flicker film’s dissection of the persistence of vision (Paul Sharits’s work) — one which, like any totalizing symbolic form, would be unitary; Broodthaers honored the differential condition of film: its inextricable relation between simultaneity and sequence, its layering of sound or text over image.

As Benjamin had predicted, nothing brings the promise encoded at the birth of a technological form to light as effectively as the fall into obsolescence of its final stages of development. And the televisual portable that killed American Independent Cinema was just this declaration of film’s obsolescence.

If I am pursuing the example of Marcel Broodthaers in the context of the post-medium condition, it is because he stands at, and thus stands for, what I would like to see as the “complex” of this condition. For Broodthaers, the presumed spokesman for intermedia and the end of the arts, nonetheless wove for his work an internal lining that has to be called redemptive. I am taking this notion of redemption from Walter Benjamin, whose idea of the counter-type — the dialectical after-image of a social role now reified and corrupted under capitalism — seems to operate over part of Broodthaers’s activities as collector. And further, the analysis of photography that Benjamin constructed can be seen to slide over Broodthaers’s practice of film.

At first this may seem counter-intuitive, for like Broodthaers, Benjamin is famous for a deconstructive attitude toward the very idea of a medium. To this end he used photography not only as a form that erodes its own specificity — since it forces the visual image into dependence on a written caption — but as a tool to attack the idea of specificity for all the
arts. This is because photography's status as a multiple, a function of mechanical reproduction, restructures the condition of the other arts. As an example, Benjamin explained that "to an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility." And what follows from this is that, becoming prey to the law of commodification, the separate work of art, as well as the separate mediums of art, enter the condition of general equivalency, thereby losing the uniqueness of the work — what Benjamin called its "aura" — as well as the specificity of its medium.

But far from being an undiluted celebration of this state of affairs, Benjamin's contemplation of photography was also cast in the mold of his retrospective attitude, which is to say his sense that, as a fossil of its birth, the outmoded stage of a given technological form might betray the redemptive obverse of that technology itself. In the case of photography this other promise was encoded in the amateur, non-commercialized character of its earliest, pre-commercialized practice, as artists and writers such as Julia Margaret Cameron, Victor Hugo, and Octavious Hill took pictures of their friends. It also had to do with the length of the pose exacted by their work, during which there was a possibility of humanizing the gaze, which is to say, of the subject's escaping his or her own objectification at the hands of the machine.

The refuge that Broodthaers took in a practice of "primitive" cinema betrays this same thought of the redemptive possibilities encoded at the birth of a given technical support. And it is this thought that I would like one to see as acting on all of Broodthaers's production as, like a raking light shining at a strange angle over a surface, it brings into relief an entirely new topographical structure. If I do not have space to give anything like a full demonstration of this here, I would nevertheless suggest that the filmic model is a subset of a larger contemplation about the nature of the medium conducted through the guise of what I think functioned as the master medium for Broodthaers, namely fiction itself, as when Broodthaers referred to his museum as "a fiction." For fiction always seems to have contained a revelatory aspect for him; as he said of the difference between official museums and his own: "a fiction allows us to grasp reality and at the same time what it hides."

What is at issue in the context of a medium, however, is not just this possibility of exploiting the fictional to unmask reality's lies, but of producing an analysis of fiction itself in relation to a specific structure of experience. And it was just this structure of a spatial "behind" or layering that was for him a metaphor for the condition of absence that is at the heart of fiction.

That the novel as the technical support through which fiction was conventionalized during the nineteenth century was of particular interest to Broodthaers emerges not just in his statements, like the one he pronounced in reference to the "Theory of Figures" exhibition — where he sees the objects bearing "Fig." numbers as "taking on an illustrative character referring to a kind of novel about society." It also takes on physical shape in relation to his own practice of producing work in the form of books.

One of these, Charles Baudelaire, Je vais le moysun qui déploie les ligeze (1973), is a specific engagement with the revelatory power of the novel. For in its peculiar dilution of a Baudelaire poem, the book's novelized, sequential form is made not only to expose as self-delusory the romantic belief in poetry as a form of total immediacy — a collapse of the difference between subject and object— but also to open that immediacy to its real temporal destiny, in which the subject can never become identical with himself. Based on Baudelaire's early poem "La Beauté," where subjective immediacy is given voice by a sculpture vouching the way its own self-sufficiency and simultaneous presence is able to symbolize the infinity of a perfect whole ("Je suis belle, ô mortels! comme un rêve de pierre"). The book sets its sights on emptying out this very notion of simultaneity.

Printing the poem in its entirety on the first page, which is marked "Fig. 1," Broodthaers singles out in red the line of verse through which
the sculpture defies any temporal dilation of its perfect form, the one that reads, "I hate the movement that shifts the lines." Throughout the following pages of the book, however, Broodthaers proceeds toward just this shift or displacement, as the verse itself becomes layered into the movement of its own vanishing horizon, with each of its words consigned to the bottom of a single page.

It could be objected that, with this revision of Baudelaire's poem, Broodthaers is simply following the example of Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés*, in which the words of the title ("Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard") are similarly extended along the bottom of several pages, the text of the poem itself made radically spatial by the irregularity and dispersal of its lines on every page, sometimes even running across the gutter of the book, to transform the verses into something like an image.

The argument for this parallelism might be further supported by the sprinkling of "Fig." numbers on the upper part of the pages of Broodthaers's *Baudelaire*, acknowledging the way *Un coup de dés* transforms the sequential condition of writing into the simultaneous realm of seeing in a move to which Broodthaers frequently referred. "Mallarmé is at the source of modern art," he would explain. "He unwittingly invented modern space."

But Broodthaers's own understanding of Mallarmé's strategy runs counter to what the *Baudelaire* book performs. First, the very condition of Broodthaers's "Fig." notation insists on the incomplete, or fragmentary status of the word, its resistance to the possibility of the image's ever being fully (self-)present: as his question "But the Fig. as a theory of the image?" suggests, the "Fig." theorizes the image into the self-deferring and displacing status of fiction. In this sense, the "Fig." questions rather than imitates the calligrammatic status of Mallarmé's pages. And second, the way sequentialization works in the *Baudelaire* opposes its operations in Mallarmé. For in *Un coup de dés*, the slow unfurling of the title along the bottom of the poem's pages serves more like a continuous pedal point, or like the harmonic suspensions that serve to transform the diachronic flow of musical sound into the heart-stopping illusion of the synchronic space of a single chord that we hear, for example, in Debussy. That the dilation we are made to experience in the *Baudelaire* is something else again is reinforced by being restaged in the film that
Broodthaers conceived in the same year, *A Voyage on the North Sea*, in which once again the gestalt of the image is narrativized (see pages 54-5).

Casting its cinematic voyage in the form of a "book," the film's utterly static shots (each lasting about ten seconds) alternate intertitles, beginning with "PAGE 1" and running to "PAGE 15," with motionless images of boats. These begin with a photograph of a distant, solitary yacht, seen four times as one progresses from page one to page four, and then shift to a nineteenth-century painting of a fishing fleet under sail, which over successive "pages" is shown in various details.

The first of these, in performing the radical leap from the full marine scene, with its schooners and longboats, to a giant close-up of the weave of the canvas, cedes by the next "page" to such a near view of the double billow of the main sail that it takes on the look of an abstract painting, only in turn, after the announcement of the following "page," to yield to another view of canvas weave that parades as a kind of radical mono-

In the progression might suggest that the narrative summoned by the "book" is an art-historical one, telescoping onto three successive pages the story of modernism's exchange of the deep space necessary to visual narrative for an increasingly flattened surface that now refers only to its own parameters, the "reality" of the world supplanted by the reality of the pictorial given. But by the next "page," the monochrome detail again retreats to a full-view of the schooner, as in successive moves Broodthaers scrambles the account of a modernist progression.

What we are offered in its place is the experience of a passage between several surfaces, in a layering that draws an analogy between the stacked pages of a book and the additive condition of even the most monochrome of canvases, which, however objectified it might be, must nonetheless apply paint over its underlying support. Indeed, as the book's "pages" unfurl, this voyage appears to be one of a search for the work's origins, such an "origin" being suspended equally between the materiality of the work's canvas flatbed (the modernist "origin") and the image projected on that opaque surface as the index of the viewer's originating desire to open up any given moment of experience to something beyond itself (reality as "origin"). In both encompassing and enacting such desire, fiction is, then, the acknowledgment of this very incompleteness. It is the form that an unappeasable lack of self-sufficiency takes as it sets off in a search for its own beginnings or its own destiny as a way of imag-

The modernist story that yielded the supposed "triumph" of the monochrome believed that it had produced this totalization in an object that was utterly coextensive with its own origins: surface and support in an indivisible unity; the medium of painting so reduced to zero that nothing was left but an object. Broodthaers's recourse to fiction tells of the impossibility of this story in the enactment of a kind of layering that can itself stand for, or allegorize, the self-differential condition of mediums themselves.

When Broodthaers refers to the novel in his definition of a "Theory of Figures," he speaks of the complexity he hopes to have achieved with the commonplace objects like pipes and mirrors that "illustrate" this work. "I would never have obtained this kind of complexity," he says, "with technological objects, whose singleness condemns the mind to monomania: minimal art, robot, computer."51

In such a remark is folded two components of the argument I have been pursuing in this meditation on the medium. First, that the specificity of mediums, even modernist ones, must be understood as differential, self-differing, and thus as a layering of conversations never simply collapsed into the physicality of their support. "Singleness," as Broodthaers says, "condemns the mind to monomania."52 Second, that it is precisely the onset of higher orders of technology — "robot, computer" — which allows us, by rendering older techniques outmoded, to grasp the inner complexity of the mediums those techniques support. In Broodthaers's hands, fiction itself became such a medium, such a form of differential specificity.
Fredric Jameson characterizes postmodernity as the total saturation of cultural space by the image, whether at the hands of advertising, communications media, or cyberspace. This complete image-permeation of social and daily life means, he says, that aesthetic experience is now everywhere, in an expansion of culture that has not only made the notion of an individual work of art wholly problematic, but has also emptied out the very concept of aesthetic autonomy. In this state in which “everything is now fully translated into the visible and the culturally familiar, [including all critiques of this situation], . . . aesthetic attention,” he says, “finds itself transferred to the life of perception as such.” This is what he calls a “new life of postmodern sensation,” in which “the perceptual system of late capitalism” experiences everything from shopping to all forms of leisure as aesthetic, thereby rendering anything that could be called a properly aesthetic sphere . . . obsolete.52

One description of art within this regime of postmodern sensation is that it mimics just this leaching of the aesthetic out into the social field in general. Within this situation, however, there are a few contemporary artists who have decided not to follow this practice, who have decided, that is, not to engage in the international fashion of installation and intermedia work, in which art essentially finds itself complicit with a globalization of the image in the service of capital. These same artists have also resisted, as impossible, the retreat into eiotolated forms of the traditional mediums—such as painting and sculpture. Instead, artists such as James Coleman or William Kentridge have embraced the idea of differential specificity, which is to say the medium as such, which they understand they will now have to reinvent or recirculate.53 The example of Marcel Broodthaers, which I have been presenting here, has been fundamental to this task.

NOTES

2 In this regard, see Stanley Cavell, “Music Discomposed,” in Must We Mean What We Say? (New York: Scribner’s, 1989), pp. 199–202.
3 This problem is further complicated by the very need to break off Greenberg’s name with the use of scare-quotes in the way I have done in this sentence so as to indicate that this reading of his own use of the word “medium” involved (and involves) a strange misunderstanding, one that I address below (see pp. 27–30).
4 Throughout this text I will use medium as the plural of medium in order to avoid a confusion with media, which I am reserving for the technologies of communication indicated by that latter term.
5 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Introductory Note to the Special Broodthaers Issue,” October, no. 42 (Fall 1987), p. 5. Benjamin Buchloh’s central role in the critical reception of Broodthaers’s work as that unfolded in the early ’70s is obvious in the many citations of his writing that grace throughout this essay, as in its reference to his curatorial activities as an editor and publisher in connection with his journal intuitions. Here, in approaching this statement placed as an epigraph to what follows, I want to state my own gratitude to Benjamin Buchloh for the generosity of his willingness to read this text in manuscript and to discuss it with me, in the open exchange of approbation and disagreement that makes dialogue with him consistently so challenging and illuminating.
7 The back cover is also by Broodthaers. It is a mystery of the same kind of children’s “subject lesson” dies (2 for zebra, 3 for horse, 4 for watch, with the appropriate picture on each disc) and dies bearing letters only. Under the grid of these disc, Broodthaers has painted “éléments du découpage ne peuvent servir part sous forme d’orthographe cachée qui est un fromage.” This refers to two aspects of his own work. On the one hand, it performs a riff on the Le Corbusier-fête of the first and the crew that had turned Broodthaers for his exhibitions and films La Corbusier et le vert (1967). On the other, it alludes to the type in the announcement for his exhibition “Court-Circuit” (1967), in which the typesetters left out the “n” in Broodthaers and the artist added the letter by hand, thereby turning the mistake into an autographic work or marketable objet ou, in French slang, “found” (money).
8 My attention was first drawn to this covers, and its particular play on words, by Benjamin Buchloh in his important essay “Marcel Broodthaers: Allegories of the Avant-Garde,” Artforum, vol. XVIII (May 1980), p. 57.
9 For the presentation and theorization of this transformation from specific to general, see Theorie des Dunes, Kunst und Duchamps (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), particularly the chapters “The Marxism and the Blank Canvas.”
10 Broodthaers’s explanation appears in Lesen, the two-volume catalogue of the exhibition “Der Adler vom Oligotroph bis Heute” (Düsseldorf, Städtische Kunsthalle, 1972), vol. 2, p. 19. In the draft of a text apparently addressed to Jurgen Habermas, Broodthaers played with the conceptualists’ claim to “theory” and their ambition to limit art to apocryphal statements that would produce its “definitions”.

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57
10 Intersections, no. 11 (Fall 1978), cover. Bernadett Boczkó, editor and publisher of this avantgarde journal, commissioned the cover from Broadhead, as well as another work for its issue: a film scenario called "Science," in which a fictitious movie scenario consisting of a "short," a news broadcast, and a full-length feature is set out through pictures. "Science" was bracketed by a pair of images of palm trees, under which the caption "Exotic Vegetation" announced Broadhead's forthcoming book of the same name. It was Boczkó who translated Broadhead's cover text, "Two," into English in collaboration with the artist. Once again, my attention to the little-known work was alerted by Boczkó in "Broadhead: Allegories of the Avant-Garde," op. cit., pp. 57-58.

11 By coining the term "eagle principle" for that part of Broadhead's use of the eagle that critiques Conceptual art and thus a certain trend of events within the history of postwar art, I am trying to distinguish this from the full range of what Broadhead meant the eagle to address, which obviously includes the political dimension of the symbol and more specifically, within Broadhead's European context, its penetration and exploitation by fascists.


14 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, trans. C. Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962). The section titled "The Body" addresses the internalizations of the body's "back" and "front" within a spatial understanding of the meanings of these relationships. Those, given preobjectively by the space of the body, thus function as a preintuitive model for meaning itself. The body as the productive ground of all experience is the relative of objects or the first "world" explored by Phenomenology of Perception.

15 Annette Michelson writes: "As the camera continues to move steadily forward, building a tension that grows in direct ratio to the redirection of the field, we recognize, with some surprise, those contours as defining the contours of narrative, of that narrative form animated by dissociated temporality, turning upon cognition, towards resolution. Waiting for an image, we are 'suspending' towards resolution...Snow, in reusing the expectation as the core of film form, redoubles space as being...emphatically 'temporal'." Viewing the film of the metaphorically prophetic marriage, Snow becomes a grand metaphor for narrative form. ("Toward Snow: Part I," Artforum, vol. 7X, 3/11/71, pp. 11-12).


18 In analyzing the lines of attention that connect a subject to his world, Sonty speaks not only of the reciprocity of points of view—the vectors that connect my body as my point of view on things with that aspect which marks out the points of view of others on my body—but also of those movements through the world which are new forms of appropriating it, through play for example, "Sport," he writes, "is a free transformation of the world into the supporting element of the action. This fact makes it a creative art. The environment may be a field of snow...to see it is already to possess it. It represents pure extremity, radical spatiality, as all differentiation, in its monotonous, and its whiteness manifest the absolute use of substance; it is the inside which is only inside...What I wish it that this inside might be a sort of cannibalism of myself while still remaining in-iself. One wants to 'do something out of snow'—to impose a form on it which abides so deeply to the matter that the matter appears to exist for the sake of the form..." To do this, beyond skill, rhythm, play, a way of possessing this field, I am doing something with its subjectivity. In my activity I am changing the matter and meaning of the snow.

19 Note that Sonty would consider the same theme of "snow" as the "Theater of Illusion," in Art and Objecthood (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1968), p. 98.

20 In relation to one version of that notion, Fried writes that this would allow something "powerful enough to generate new conventions, a new art" (Michael Fried, "The Art as Idea, in Art and Objecthood (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1968), p. 88).

21 Leo Steinberg, Other Criteria (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 7-9.

22 Cavell's use of the term "intention" to suggest the idea of a medium as a support for practice upon the beginning of such a theorization. For example, it is the idea of a medium that is not a "medium" and its form development would take as necessarily serial in nature, each member of the series being a new instance of the medium itself.


24 Stanley Cavell seeks to locate this series through television's material basis as "the current of simultaneous event reception," and a form of perception specific to it, which he calls "monitoring" (see Stanley Cavell, "The Face of Television," in Video Culture: A Critical Investigation, ed. John Hanhardt (Rockefeller, N.Y.: Visual Studies Workshop, 1986). Other attempts to articulate the specificity of television and/or video include James Franco, "The Concept of Live Television: Ordeals of Ideology," in Régis Debray: Television: Critical Approaches, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Friedrich, MD.: University Press of America, 1984); Mary Ann Doane, "Information, 'Crisis,' and Catastrophe," in Essays on Television: A Cultural Critique, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington October 1969). What is this reading scene, however, is the way Greenberg understood the category of opticality as a support for practice, and thus that he never says this as a medium. And what this means in turn is that Greenberg's own "modernism" is more complex than either his articulates or Judd and company wanted to understand, or do. What is blackground's own "modernism" in postmodernism is more complex than either his articulates or Judd and company wanted to understand, or do. What is blackground's own "modernism" in postmodernism is more complex than either his articulates or Judd and company wanted to understand, or do.
33. This, inscribed on an unmarked wall of 1974, is a complex statement. The first half points to the image principle's double status of image as the physical object that protects the image from this condition (the second sentence). The second sentence is far less negative and opens onto the redemptive possibilities toward which the "Fig." as a new type of image - a fragment that participates wholly in neither language nor image - might gesture. This is suggested by the role of the "Fig." as an object and the book Charles Baudelaire. Je sais le mouvement qu'il apporte a la ligne, both drawn below: I am extremely grateful to Benjamin Buchloh for his suggestions about the complexity of the Baudelairean "Theory of Figures" and the allegorical status of this notion within his work.  
36. Ibid., p. 54.  
37. For this argument about Broodthaers's relation to the Benjaminian figure of the collector, see Douglas Crimp, "This Is Not a Museum of Art," in Marcel Broodthaers, exh. cat. (Munich, Walker Art Center, 1989), pp. 71-72. Broodthaer's explanation about becoming a "renewed" S from his essay "Comme de beaux dans un sandwich" (Munich, no. 57-61 (December 1965), pp. 239-6, as cited in Crimp, op. cit., p. 27.  
39. "The "Fig." numbers in Ms. Collected are for once consecutive, unlike the random character that Broodhaer uses as the principle of numbering in the "Sections des Figures" exhibition ("The Eagle from the Olfactory to the Present"), or the aleatory quality of the sprinking of "Fig. 1," "Fig. 2," "Fig. A," etc.  
40. Ibid., p. 73.  
46. Although Broodthaers had made two earlier films, La Clé d'1'Artifice (1975) and Le Chant de生成 (1951) - the first, a throwback to early "experimental" cinema such as Léger's Le Futur cinématique, the second, a compilation film using existing documentary film sources - it was in 1967, with Le Cercle de TVecrém, that Broodthaer began to work extensively in film and to become a figure in a move to a new form of representation in the medium. This was the same year that Michael Snow's Wavelength won first prize at the Rotterdam Experimental Film Festival. Jacques Leduc, who founded the Festival, was the head of the Royal Film Archives in Brussels, which functioned as a repository of the same type of cinematic repertoire privileged by Anthology Film Archives.  
47. In his essay "Le Cinéma Expérimental et les Fables de La Fontaine. La raison du plus fort," written in relation to his exhibition "Le Cercle au rond," Broodhaer describes Snow's film in some detail. He then turns it in relation to European "institutional" film, particularly Säulenschlächter, the German film-maker Luis Mommertz (Marcel Broodthaers: Cinemas, Barcelona: Tapiss Foundation, 1997, pp. 60-61; my thanks to Manja Glinsch for calling my attention to this reference to and in Mommertz.)  
52. See note 13, above.  
53. The marble stone footage in A Voyage on the North Sea is taken purely from the master of a somewhat earlier film, Analyze d'une Peinture, but reedited with the page-number inferences and the photographic shots of ballets taken by Broodthaers. In an interview conducted on the occasion of Broodthaers's 1974 exhibition of his Literary Paintings, in which Analyze d'une Peinture was screened, Benjamin Buchloh and Michael Ovitz questioned the artist about the film. In his questions to Broodthaers, Buchloh assumes that the film is an allegory of modernism, one that analyses and attacks its self-consciousness: "Your way of moinsently repeating the painterly gestures of reduction and multiplication in film - does that not collide with an anachronistic principle?" "A painting of a painting as well?" Broodthaers replies to this in a way that is not unlike my "Reinventing the Medium," op. cit.  
54. It is my view that when Broodthaers uses the word subject as he does above - "painting as a subject" - he is often pointing not to anything like "subject-matter" or content, but to the issue of the medium.  
56. Ibid.  
58. In previous essays, cited above (note 19), I have discussed the work of James Coleman and Jeff Wall in this regard. In a subsequent study I will focus in on the work of William Kentridge.
Translation of text on page 38

A text by Marcel Broodthaers on *Me Collection*

*Me Collection* is a work composed of two panels, both sides of which are used. Within the first panel, there are inserted documents from exhibitions at which I have been able to exhibit, there is inserted a page from the catalogue of the Cologne fair of '71 with photos of the same documents. The second panel of *Me Collection* is adorned with a portrait of the European poet Stéphane Mallarmé, whom I consider to be the founder of contemporary art. "Un coup de dès jamais n’abolira le hasard." *Me Collection* is a work in which the taurolatrical system is used to contextualize the exhibition sites. It would therefore have more meaning than a stamp collection. The catalogue of the present exhibition will be used as a detail to make up a future work of art attesting to the shows at which I have exhibited since 1971.

Translation of text on page 40

Marcel Broodthaers

*Me Collection*

... Where a contract is at issue...

Since I appear in this collection, which is also a selection from among the art catalogues of the past several years, it does not constitute a traditional readymade.

But, if one accepts that the representation of my art carries with it a change of sense/meaning, it would then be a new form of readymade, a baroque readymade.

This dubious readymade would therefore be equivalent to a dubious work of art. How to market doubt if it does not have a clear artistic quality? Moreover, I do not have the nerve to speculate on *Me Collection*, although with the money received I could relieve the misery that ravages the Indies, or even finance an avant-garde revolution. A contract, a good contract would get me out of trouble by aligning my interests with established customs.

For further information, please contact...

Personally, I would like to receive a tax (1 royalty) on the publications, if there are any, that reproduced my declaration and the images from this page of the catalogue of the Cologne '71 fair.

However, should anyone still wish to own the physical object of *Me Collection*, then the price would be up to my conscience (Price negotiable).

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