

Art and Cinema: Some Critical Reflections

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Over the last thirty or so years, moving image practices and the critical and theoretical debates surrounding them have transformed the space of contemporary art and curatorial practice. In this essay I want to examine some aspects of this contribution and revisit a key moment—that of the mid-1980s cultural theory in Britain—as a way of situating more clearly the work that has already been done in this area. The questions raised then, I argue, are still pertinent for discussions of contemporary visual art practice and international exhibitions today.

"TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY"¹

Visitors to recent contemporary art exhibitions, notably the Venice Biennale 2001, cannot fail to have been struck by the series of "dark rooms" provoking encounters with a wide range of video and film practices, albeit often murkily presented by DVD video projection.² I want to explore some of the paradoxes or contradictions engendered by the presence of artists' film and video in the gallery, which challenges both our relationship to the museum and our perception and interpretation of moving images. In particular, our relationship to the dominant moving image regimes of film and television is brought into question.

At the same time I want to explore what I perceive as a tension between advocates of the single-channel cinema (or TV) experience and those of gallery installation work, which I think comes down to both a mistrust and a misunderstanding of cinema. Mistrust because cinema is often felt to embody the claims of the popular against the more elite pleasures of the traditional art gallery, although this distinction is becoming increasingly irrelevant, misunderstanding because the cinema is an integral if not generative part of twentieth century art and the cinematic a key mode of twentieth century subjectivity. We are always already in cinema, one way or another.

In discussing the role of the moving image in the art gallery context it is necessary to ask which kind of cinema we are talking about. The history of cinema in the twentieth century is a history of a plurality of cinemas. Indeed, even the arrival of sound film was considered such an epistemological break that many critics (such as Erwin Panofsky) were inclined to define it as a distinct art form, sharing the same support medium as silent film. I am adopting a tripartite division of the field of cinema: narrative, avant-garde, and documentary, derived from recent discussions of genre theory.³ This has the effect of liberating the experimental and the avant-garde from the binary opposition to mainstream "Hollywood narrative" posed both by theorists and practitioners⁴ and enables us to think more rigorously about its role in the history of contemporary art. It also allows us to analyze documentary cinema's indexical relation to reality independently from the "reality effect" of the classic realist narrative.

Artists' film and video has emerged as a major if not dominant moving image discourse in the museum and gallery circuit: avant-garde and experimental moving image practices are reconfigured and restaged; Hollywood narratives are reworked and represented (Pierre Huyghe, Douglas Gordon) in forms of critical or cynical pastiche. Documentary has also emerged as a major reference point. The twentieth-century archive of photographic and magnetic (film and video) images is preserved and reworked in a range of artists' work: e.g., in the work of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucci, Pere Portabella, Trinh T. Minh-ha, or Fiona Tan—several of whom have developed a practice of decons-

tructing and reworking the colonial archive, insisting that the possibility of rereading and engaging with this "past" is as important as creating a present or imagining a future. Filmmakers Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard have eloquently and consistently developed a practice of preserving the history and memory of cinema through the intervention of new technologies.

Chris Dercon has described a developing gallery-based cinema as neither experimental nor classical, but a cinema of fragments:⁵ "Young artists ... from all over the world imitate a wide variety of Western visual expression, avant-garde techniques and, inevitably, the cinema ... Significantly many young artists are responding to existing forms of mimesis in cinema itself. So we can now speak of a secondary mimesis, which is becoming recognizable in films made by visual artists."⁶ New kinds of cinemas are being developed, entailing new visual and sonic conditions in the production of subjectivity.

In his essay "The Machine in the Museum or the Seventh Art in Search of Authorization,"⁷ Bruce Jenkins argues that cinema has redefined the way in which we understand contemporary art, which indeed is much more deeply indebted to cinema and the moving image than some critics and artists would like to admit. Experimental cinema in particular, he argues, internalized key questions of modernism very early on (viz. Duchamp's founding critique of cinema's illusionism in *Anemic Cinema*, 1926, and Joseph Cornell's detemporalization of the cinema in *Rose Hobart*, 1939). I would extend Jenkins's argument to include pre-World War II documentary (think of Dziga Vertov or Joris Ivens), which, I would argue, was equally adept at responding to the challenges of modernism in the 1920s and 30s, whereas narrative cinema, in the guise of art cinema, responded rather later. Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960) is a key instance in art cinema's incorporation of modernism.⁸ Antonioni is important because of his rigorous separation of the look and the gaze. He breaks the relay between actor, character, and audience, while at the same time elaborating a more fragmented regime of looking. Jenkins makes a further key point that the social organization of film production itself also posed a challenge to artists: "namely the 'unusual and unnatural' situation of an artistic enterprise based on cooperation"⁹ - an issue I shall return to shortly.

In a recent catalogue essay, "On the aesthetics of video installations," Boris Groys focuses on two ways in which the moving image changes the gallery-going experience.¹⁰ The first concerns illumination—the fact that moving image exhibits are not illuminated by the museum's light but emit their own source of light or darkness: "Video and film installations have now introduced deepest night or dusk into the museum." The artist, as Groys points out, now controls the light by which we see their work. The second concerns a shift in the temporal conditions influencing our perception of art. Moving pictures have begun to suggest to the viewer how much time they should spend on contemplation. However, should we "interrupt our contemplation of some video or film work in order to return to it at a later point, we will inevitably be filled with that very same feeling of having missed something crucial and will no longer be sure what is really happening in the installation." Moving images, in other words, return us to the experience of real life, "that familiar place... where one is forever haunted by the feeling of being in the wrong place at the wrong time." Moving image installations create an anxiety in the viewer for which there is no adequate and satisfactory solution: "Whatever the individual's decision, either to stay put or to keep moving, his choice will always amount to a poor compromise." In the cinema, on the other hand, the audience is traditionally immobile, secure in the knowledge that, provided they didn't miss the beginning of the film, they will have seen everything they need to see to understand the work.

Curators who work with moving images also insist on Groys's point that the installation of film and video in the gallery context represents a freeing up of the spectator from what they regard as the restrictions of traditional cinema. Lynne Cooke, writing on Marijke van Warmerdam, comments: "... since there is no fixed seating, spectators must determine their own vantage points, a process in

which they become conscious of their activity as viewers. In this her works are far removed from the classic, passive cinematic experience in which the audience, cocooned in a darkened chamber, traditionally forfeits all self-consciousness, becoming totally immersed, discarnate observers."¹¹ Similarly Chrissie Iles, in a major moving image exhibition catalogue, *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977*, after pinpointing a range of aesthetic strategies (Cezanne, Cubism, Duchamp) which "laid the groundwork for the postminimalist decentering of the viewing subject," continues: "Cinema becomes a cocoon, inside which a crowd of relaxed idle bodies is fixed, hypnotized by simulations of reality projected onto a single screen. This model is broken apart by the folding of the dark space of cinema into the white cube of the gallery."¹²

This metaphor of a darkness folded into or inserted into the white cube is a potent one. While for Groys it spells the end of the white cube, for Iles the white cube spells the end of a particular kind of cinema experience. Of course in the gallery context the moving image reads differently and the artists' and curators' insistence on refusing the viewer a safe, protected, old-fashioned cinema space should not be underestimated. However, my feeling is that much writing on film and video in the gallery can too easily gloss "sifting in a cinema" with "passivity," or "mobility" with "freedom," overlooking the often overtly political single-channel film work concerned with creating an active spectator in the traditional cinema setting.

Indeed, to watch a film in a cinema in Puerto Rico, Lagos, or Bombay is to encounter a very different, active call-and-response approach to spectatorship not a million miles away from that which Third Cinema struggled to create in developing (in Bertolt Brecht's phrase) a cinema of "pleasure and instruction."

Psychoanalytic-based film theory was developed through an analysis of a spectatorial regime—classic Hollywood cinema focused on the role of the gaze sutured into the shot-reverse-shot figure—and a historically specific mode of spectatorship: the regular moviegoer, supported by a panoply of magazines as well as the architecture of the picture palace. However, its key concepts of the gaze and subjectivity as theorized through the experience of cinema were developed to explain the ideological hold of mass cinema: "The goal of the theoretical project was to disengage the spectator from his/her habitual, pre-designated location in the dominant cinematic apparatus through a process of critical unraveling of the apparatus and thereby produce a politically conscious audience for another cinema."¹³

One of the reasons for film theory's focus on Hollywood was to find—in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's phrase—"alternatives to Empire."¹⁴ In its move from theorizing sexual difference to issues of race, 1980s film theory began an ongoing theorization of difference which extended into cultural and critical studies *tout court*.¹⁵ Despite the importance of this move there is considerable unfinished business in the relative theoretical neglect of other regionally dominant cinemas—Iran, Nigeria, and India, for example. It is no accident that this theoretical project continues today in the Indian subcontinent.

These cinemas propose a range of aesthetics and politics that differ from those of mainstream Hollywood or art cinema: a nostalgia for a rural, religious past in the video theatrics of Nigerian soap opera which emerged out of the Yoruba traveling theater movement (Ola Balogun), continuing feudal relations of power and identity in Hindi narratives; an attempt to develop a theocratic modernism in Iranian art cinema (Mohsen Makhmalbaf), and so on.

In Godard's account there is an acceptance of this major shift in the spectatorial regime of narrative cinema:

Woman: When did the gaze collapse?

Man: 10 years ago? 15 years? Maybe 50, before TV? Who knows?

Woman: Be more precise.

Man: Before TV took precedence.

Woman: Over what? Over current events?

Man: Over Life?

Woman: Yes.¹⁶

For Godard the loss of cinephilia is compensated for by his investing video with many of the qualities of painting,¹⁷ evidenced, for instance, in his framing of subjects against the light, a device familiar from German Romantic artists such as Caspar David Friedrich or Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Godard's critique refers to the end of the classic Hollywood system and the interlocking aesthetics of National European Cinemas (which he explored in his *Histoire du Cinema* shown in Documenta X).

Godard's own practice involves the three modes of cinema (avant-garde, documentary, and narrative, as already referred to), e.g., a modernist reworking of Hollywood narrative by the Nouvelle Vague, or an attempt to produce another way of seeing and thinking about the documentary image as in his and Anne-Marie Mieville's short-lived (and utopian) project to produce images to protect newly independent Mozambique from the international media by creating "an autonomous image which of itself would be a challenge to any new image that they anticipated would soon arrive in Africa."¹⁸

Spectatorial positioning is complex and relational. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have coined the phrase "transnational or cross-cultural spectatorship" to emphasize the fact that "spectatorial identification is culturally, discursively, and politically discontinuous, that it is fissured, even schizophrenic, suggests a series of gaps; the same person might be crossed by contradictory discourses and codes."¹⁹

The ideological functioning of cinematic spectatorship has, over the past fifty years, shifted to the wider, more fragmented and dispersed regime of the visual, encompassing advertising, television, mass circulation magazines, and so on. Consequently curatorial and artistic practices that are concerned with deconstructing and reconstructing spectatorship have had to find approaches that are not merely architectural. The construction and problematization of the subject involves a series of discursive relays in which curatorial practice has played an essential role in opening up the signification of individual works into discursive frameworks that have inevitably moved beyond the gallery setting. But I would argue that there can be no necessary connection between a particular formal approach to the conditions in which a work is experienced (e.g., creating a mobile spectator) and a presumed radicality.

The key question is whether the new physical mobility that the spectator is offered in gallery and museum installations really involves a critique of dominant spectatorial regimes of cinema. Do gallery-based moving image practices participate in the construction and problematization of the subject in this way? Do they explore the discontinuities inherent in spectatorship, in the sense in which Homi Bhabha defines it, as an overcoming of binary oppositions and the opening up of a "process of translation"?²⁰

My argument here, though restricted to a particular issue concerned with the claims being made for film and video in the gallery space, is part of a wider argument about the terms and conditions for radical film and video work in the post-Cold War era, and the kinds of spectatorial engagements they propose. I would argue, for instance, that Stan Douglas's *Win, Place or Show* (1998) is precisely political in its hyperbolic engagement of the cinematic machine with his construction of an endless

series of shot variations within a televisual narrative format. Whereas Douglas Gordon's *left is right and right is wrong and left is wrong and right is right* (1999), a reworking of Otto Preminger's *Whirlpool* (1949) into a feature-length flicker film (à la Bruce Conner), is to my mind more formalist. Both works—presented together in New York's Dia Center for the Arts exhibition, "Double Vision" (February 1999—March 2000) force the spectator into gallery-style mobility. However, one of them, I would argue, proposes the terms of a critique quite absent in the other.

It can be argued that Third Cinema has provided a discursive space for a range of different cinematic practices that contemporary art has not been able to emulate and that the processes of deconstruction and reconstruction of aesthetic discourse in the visual arts have taken a different course to those alternative, experimental, and political cinemas included under the general rubric of Third Cinema. Indeed, one of the aims of this Documenta is to draw our attention to this alternative tradition.

Hamid Naficy has developed the intriguing concept of an "accented" cinema to describe and define a postcolonial cinema of exiled and diasporic subjects based on a "double consciousness" - "constituted both by the structure of feeling of the filmmakers themselves as displaced subjects and by the traditions of exilic and diasporic cultural productions that preceded them."²¹ An offshoot of the Third Cinema movement, accented cinema is more situated, less polemical but nevertheless still political.

Let me give some other examples of such accented Third Cinema practices. Shirin Neshat's video and film narratives are engaged in a complex dialogue with the representational schemas of Iranian cinema. Her veiled women protagonists do not simply function as representatives of repression and inequality; her use of the veil acts as a spectatorial lure, drawing the audience's attention to the fact that a different regime of looking as well as power is being questioned in her work. These issues are explicit, too, in the work of Indian filmmaker Amar Kanwar, whose *A Season Outside* (1997) uses the confrontational performance of national identities enacted on an India—Pakistan border crossing as a starting point for the investigation of the construction of an Indian masculinity divided between the demands of the nation-state and the family and the very different tradition presented by Buddhism. Isaac Julien moves between the single-channel avant-garde and art cinema format and the multi-channel installation with its attendant proposition of a mobile spectator. His work in both formats, I would argue, exposes, deflects, and reconstructs the cinematic gaze (e.g., through the use of the sequence or *le travelling*) and, in so doing, opens the audience to other concerns: to make questions of race or sexual difference a matter of indirect reference rather than embodiment.

Contemporary cinematic practices propose a series of scopic regimes, some voyeuristic, others exhibitionistic, with a concomitant range of aesthetics. This makes it imperative to re-examine the heritage of avant-garde and experimental film and video and in particular the contribution of, to adopt Naficy's term, "accented" artists to these debates.

WHEN WAS THE AVANT-GARDE?

If the avant-garde is a historically conditioned phenomenon and emerges only in a moment of real political disjuncture, it will appear in various forms in different parts of the world in different times.²²

While it is generally agreed that the collapse of the project of the "historic avant-gardes" coincided with the changed political climate in post-World War II Europe and North America, critics and art historians are sharply divided on whether the notion of the avant-garde is appropriate for postwar art at all. Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Peter Burger have argued that the avant-garde project is de-

dedicated to the destruction of bourgeois art, and that the postwar avant-garde is, in the words of Hal Foster, "merely neo ... so much repetition in bad faith that cancels the prewar critique of the institution of art."²³ Foster takes a position in favor of successive vanguards precisely to make contemporary artistic practice viable. Geeta Kapur extends or rather "deflects" this argument in order to unpick its "(Euro)Americanist" bias:

An African or Asian avant-garde will come into its own if at least two moves take place simultaneously. One, a move that dismantles the hegemonic and conservative features of the national culture itself. Two, a move that dismantles the burdensome aspect of western art, including its endemic vanguardism. That is to say, such an avant-garde would have to treat the avant-garde principle itself as an institutionalized phenomenon, recognizing the assimilative capacity of the (western) museums, galleries, critical apparatuses, curators and media.²⁴

What is interesting and useful about Kapur's position is that it allows one to bracket off contemporary art practices which have abandoned any dialogue with issues of politics, the state, or national culture and whose avant-gardism has become institutionalized, while simultaneously investigating other sites where it can be argued that avant-garde work is indeed going on today or was disregarded in the recent past.²⁵

In an influential paper, "The Commitment to Theory,"²⁶ Homi K. Bhabha proposed the concept of a "third" space which he made the condition for the articulation of cultural difference: "It is the ,inter'—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture."²⁷ In seeking to overturn the dualism underlying much contemporary and theoretical practice, Bhabha further sets out the enunciative terms for a vanguard artistic practice, supplementing those of Kapur:

The language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave, the mercantilist and the Marxist, but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation ... In such 3 discursive temporality, the event of theory becomes the negotiation of contradictory and antagonistic instances that open up hybrid sites and objectives of struggle...²⁸

In the years that have passed since that initial formulation, this notion of a third space has become something of a mantra for artists committed to exploring social—political questions in their work while at the same time working to maintain the notion of autonomy in their artistic practice. What was important about Bhabha's formulation at that time was that it broke open a number of binary positions which were constantly being returned to in the cultural field and keeping it mired in its Zhdanovian heritage.²⁹

In insisting on a semiotic interpretation of cultural production, Bhabha was building on a line of reflection from Soviet linguists such as Mikhail Bakhtin who asserted the importance of the social in their analyses while insisting on the autonomy of the linguistic or semiotic instance. By deploying Bakhtin, Bhabha was also building on the work of the British film journal *Screen*, which, in the 1970s, had initiated a major epistemological break in the ways we think about visual culture but at the time had been unable to extend its thinking from psychoanalytically inflected discussions of sexual difference to broader questions of cultural difference.

Subsequent development of cultural theory has made notions of cultural difference and "other"-ness almost commonplace—even the mainstream US media such as CNN after September 11 are beginning, albeit in a limited way, to acknowledge differences under the *pax* (or as we should now rename

it *bellum*) *Americana*. Although, as Bhabha would undoubtedly point out, much of the burgeoning discourse concerning racism, migration, human rights violations, the "war against terror," and so on, is in fact an attempt to foreclose the enunciative spaces that are constantly opening up. Difference cannot be written out, but it can be managed.

The Edinburgh International Film Festival Conferences from the 1970s until 1986 were probably the most important single location in the anglophone world for the development of theoretical debates on cultural production, with a specific focus on film. Documenta11 could be seen as also participating in the tradition of these combative, theoretically informed cultural events—Documenta11 is first and foremost a series of frameworks, platforms within which issues can be discussed. And we need to approach the exhibition in Kassel and the contributions of its artists in that light, and focus on the enunciative specificity of the works and projects presented.

COLLECTIVE PRACTICE

Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, and Arnold Hauser have all pointed to the collaborative aspect of cinema and its potential for de-individualizing art practice and dislocating regimes of authorship, ownership, and control. In Britain, even as late as the 1980s, a film and video workshop movement enshrining notions of collective practice was established in an alliance between activist filmmakers, the then fledgling Channel 4 Television, and the film and television trade union ACTT.

This was a direct descendant of the Third Cinema debates in the New Latin American Cinema movement. In their manifesto "Towards a Third Cinema," Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino argue that the New Third Cinema "of liberation" will not be that of Hollywood (first cinema), nor *cinema d'auteur* (second cinema), but a cinema which makes films "*that the System cannot assimilate and which are foreign to its needs or ... that are directly and explicitly set out to fight the System* [italics in original]"³⁰ and in which films are produced as part of collaborative politico-cultural work.

The aesthetic strategy of the New Latin American Cinema combined Italian neo-realism and Nouvelle Vague *vérité* realism (e.g., Glauber Rocha's *Terre em Transe*, 1967), with anti-realist montage drawing heavily on the avant-garde and militant documentary tradition (e.g., Solanas and Getino's *The Hour of the Furnaces*, 1968, or Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's very different *Memories of Underdevelopment*, 1968). The 1980s workshop movement in Britain was able to embark on an analytical, critical, and theoretical debate with the realist premises of the British documentary movement and art cinema, drawing on advanced work in film theory and cultural studies that had emerged in London and Birmingham in the 1970s.³¹ See, for example, Black Audio Film Collective's *Expeditions: Signs of Empire/ Images of Nationality* (1982-83), a semi-abstract tape—slide performance juxtaposing fragments of colonial discourse, or Isaac Julien and Sankofa Film and Video Workshop's *Looking for Langston* (1989), which synthesizes several visual genres including documentary footage, fictional narrative, and the *tableau vivant*. A number of workshops (Black Audio, Ceddo, Retake, Sankofa) were also concerned with fighting the exclusionary and often racist practices in the British media industry.

At that time I was part of a London-based group, the Society for Education in Film and Television, and the journal *Screen*, both of which were challenging the terms of the debates on the role of the mass media in contemporary society—through a massive importation of mainly French theoretical work from linguistics, semiotics, and psychoanalysis. The possibility of political and social change through ideological struggle in culture was very much on the agenda in the early 1970s—whence we used to paraphrase Karl Marx, "the point is to change things." Louis Althusser's work, combined with both Soviet and Chinese writing about the social function of art, was very important for us then.

This was the time of Documenta 5, which uniquely brought together avant-garde film and video practices with these elaborate politico-cultural schemas. In the UK, these discourses and their practitioners kept themselves very separate. There were in fact two avant-gardes: the film co-op movement, which was concerned with formal experimentation—Greenbergianism in the cinema if you will—and a looser political cinema concerned with struggles in representation as in the work of Godard, or Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub. These were soon to be joined in the *Screen* avant-garde by an unlikely mix of a range of art cinema filmmakers such as Miklos Jancso and Nagisa Oshima.

In the thirty years that have passed, one would agree with Godard that the project for a political avant-garde cinema appears to have collapsed. The end of the Cold War and the failure of "actually existing socialism" were major factors. The aesthetico-political practices of film collectives—the films and videos produced internationally by the women's movement, Cinema Novo in Latin America, or the wide range of film and video associated with working-class struggles such as the UK miners' strike, or Cinétracts in France in 1968—have disappeared from view. Most of the film co-ops and their supporting institutions closed down, due to both a lack of institutional support and a change in the audience as attention shifted to the major rearticulation of moving image practices in the gallery context.

My argument, however, is that the project for a political avant-garde cinema continues to inform new work staged in the gallery context and that its debates and issues are being rearticulated and restaged by artists and filmmakers for our "bad new times." Much of the tension and hostility that the moving image engenders in the gallery can be attributed to anxiety about restarting a series of political and aesthetic encounters that were both bruising but ultimately productive in the 1970s and 80s.

In Documenta11, we want to refocus attention on a range of historical and contemporary collective or collaborative practices. However, it is also important to remember the important tradition of the political documentary, central to militant Latin American cinema: "The cinema known as documentary with all the vastness that the concept has today, from educational films to the reconstruction of a fact or a historical event, is perhaps the main basis of revolutionary filmmaking. Every image that documents, bears witness to, refutes or deepens the truth of a situation is something more than a film image or purely artistic fact; it becomes something which the system finds indigestible."³² The Chilean Colectivo Cine Ojo based their name on that of the formative Cine Eye movement in Soviet Russia associated with Dziga Vertov. *Memoirs of an Everyday War* (1986) reworks 1980s Chilean media footage to provide an analysis of the bizarre language of the Pinochet dictatorship in which the terms of revolution and fascism were completely reversed (Pinochet was revolutionary; the opposition fascist).

The work of Igloolik Isuma Productions, an Inuit production company in Nunavut, Canada, is about renewing traditional oral narratives in new media, and in so doing provides a support for the cultural survival of a first nations people. Fareed Armaly's collaborative project *From/To* is exemplary in its attention to the wide range of oppositional media strategies in the Palestinian struggle for autonomy and independence. As well as the complex work of reading the traces of the struggle that *From/To* enacts, Armaly also provides a framework, a kind of virtual "pavilion" for a range of other filmmakers and activists. Where else can one find information on Palestinian film history or activist films?

These issues are not the province of groups and collectives alone. Filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha, for example, has consistently engaged a feminist and anti-ethnocentric gaze in her single screen projects, starting from her seminal *Reassemblage* (1982/83).

In his essay for this catalogue, "The Black Box," Okwui Enwezor refers to the uneven way past Documentas have engaged the issues that emerged globally in the second half of the twentieth century, the search for freedom propelled by independence and liberation struggles, the rethinking of the project of modernity among previously dominated and colonized societies, the reconceptualization of the relationship between the West and the non-West. In attempting a diasporic understanding of modernity, Documenta11 is attentive to this issue of locality emblematically formulated by Hardt and Negri and which needs to be brought into play with Kapur and Bhabha's insistence on the importance of locality or location—location in the sense of Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic*,³³ or Enwezor's *Trade Routes*,³⁴ referring to the process of movement through which the contemporary diasporic subject is constituted.

Examples of this diasporic consciousness raised in some of the film and video work in the exhibition are the border crossings of Mexican illegal immigrants in Chantal Akerman's *The Other Side*; the traces of the expulsion of Ugandan Asians in Zarina Bhimji's new work *Out of Blue*; Isaac Julien's exploration of the imaginary of the post-World War II Afro-Caribbean diaspora's "circum-atlantic" peregrinations in *Paradise Omeros*; Ulrike Ottinger's journey to Odessa (*Südostpassage — Southeast Passage*) in a reversal of the routes of Eastern European migration, and so on.

Jean-Marie Teno's film *Vacances au pays — A Trip to the Country* (2000) is emblematic here. Teno develops the term "tropical modernity" to explore the effects of colonial and postcolonial modernization on Cameroon society, a modernism that was at the same time imposed, longed for, and never achieved. The two small skyscrapers of Yaounde come to stand in for the longed-for modernism represented by the Manhattan skyline. However, this film, like so many others in Africa, can only be made from the position of the exile. As Edward Said has pointed out, "Modern culture is in the large part the work of exiles, emigres, refugees"³⁵ since the cultural and political conditions for critical artistic production are not available in the artist's country of origin.

In *Empire*, Hardt and Negri argue that "Globalization, like localization, should be understood instead as a *regime* for the production of identity and difference, or really of homogenization and heterogenization;" and that what needs to be critically addressed today is "the *production of locality*, that is, the social machines that create and recreate the identities and differences that are understood as the local."³⁶ Art practice, in particular moving image art practice, has a key role in this endeavor.

Mark Nash. *Art and Cinema: Some Critical Reflections*. In: *documenta und Museum Fridericianum Veranstaltungs-GmbH* (ed.): *Documenta11_Platform5: Exhibition Catalogue*. Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern-Ruit. 2002, pp.129-136.

References

- 1 Also the title of a work by Michael Snow from 1974, included in *Chrissie Iles, Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977* (exh. cat.), New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2001.
- 2 Cinephile moving image curators have argued persuasively that video and film have their own medium specificities, even though cash-strapped galleries currently prefer to wove works over to DVD. Luckily there are certain artists such as Tacita Dean or Liisa Roberts who insist on continuing to use celluloid.

- 3 See Alan Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism possible?," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, 9:2, pp. 121-25, quoted in Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 20. One can imagine these fields as an overlapping series of circles, and it is often at the overlapping points of the avant-garde with other kinds of cinema that significant work takes place (viz, avant-garde/documentary, e.g., Trinh T. Minh-ha; avant-garde/ narrative, e.g. Chantal Akerman and Ulrike atinger; avant-garde/ narrative/documentary, e.g., Jean-Luc Godard and Tomas Gutiérrez Alea).
- 4 See, for example, filmmaker Peter Gidal's attempt to produce and theorize a non-representational image in experimental films and writings (see his *Materialist Film*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989).
- 5 It is worth remarking that this fragmentation of vision was already implicit in the Cubist and Duchampian project, and we may indeed now be seeing a "modernization" of moving image practice delayed for so long by the domination of realist narrative. However, this new fragmentation is also bound up with a resistance to and redefinition of narrative temporality as duration (Andy Warhol, Michael Snow) in the development of what Gilles Deleuze in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (London: Athlone, 1989) has defined as the time—image—essentially a post-World War II phenomenon.
- 6 Chris Dercon, "Gleaning the Future from the Gallery Floor," *Vertigo*, 12:2, spring 2002, p. 3.
- 7 Bruce Jenkins, "The Machine in the Museum or the Seventh Art in Search of Authorization," *Witte de With Cahiers*, no. 3, Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, and Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 1995.
- 8 The film, you will recall, is about the search for a missing person, Anna, but halfway through, the film loses interest in this narrative and abandons itself to an exploration of the spaces of southern Italy and the alienation of erstwhile comedienne Monica Vitti.
- 9 Jenkins, "The Machine in the Museum or the Seventh Art in Search of Authorization," quoting Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, p. 250.
- 10 Boris Groys, "On the aesthetics of video installations," in *Stan Douglas: Le Détroit* (exh. cat.), Basel: Kunsthalle Basel, 2001, unpaginated.
- 11 Lynne Cooke, "B(e)aring Meaning," in *Manjke van Warmerdam: Single, Double, Crosswise* (exh. cat.), Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1997, p. 8.
- 12 Iles, *Into the Light*, p. 34.
- 13 M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film*, New Delhi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 2.
- 14 See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.; Oxford, UK: Harvard University Press: 2000.
- 15 See, for example, these issues of *Screen*: *Screen*, 26:3-4, 1985, "Other Cinemas, Other Criticisms"; *Screen*, 29:4, 1988, "The Last Special Issue on Race?"
- 16 Jean-Luc Godard, *Éloge d'Amour* (2000), dialogue.

- 17 One should point out that this equation, not camera-stylo but video-peinture, has a longer history, viz. Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Oberwald Mystery* (1980).
- 18 Manthia Diawara, lecture, October 4, 1999, published in *I said I love. That is the Promise. The video politics of Jean-Luc Godard*, eds. Gareth James, Annette Schindler, and Florian Zeyfang (published in English by Ojeblikket, Copenhagen). Cinema Novo film director Ruy Guerra had invited both Godard/Miéville's company Sonimage and Jean Rouch to work with him in accord with the newly independent Mozambique government's desire to establish a kind of television that would empower Mozambican viewers rather than recolonize them.
- 19 Robert Stam and Ella Habiba Shohat, "Film Theory and Spectatorship in the Age of the 'Posts,'" in Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, eds., *Reinventing Film Studies*, London, Oxford, New York: Arnold, 2000, p. 398.
- 20 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 33.
- 21 Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 22.
- 22 Stam and Shohat, "Film Theory and Spectatorship in the Age of the 'Posts,'" p. 374.
- 23 Hal Foster, "What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde," *October*, no. 70, fall 1994, quoted in Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*, New Delhi: Tulika, 2000, pp. 374-75.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 374.
- 25 Vanguard film practices have continued to take place at the fault lines of the Soviet empire, for example: the 1960s Czech new wave; or the films of Dusan Makavejev in Yugoslavia or Sergei Paradjanov in Georgia. Equally, on the Indian subcontinent, filmmakers such as Mani Kaul or Kumar Shahani have questioned the political and aesthetic framing of the investigation of national identity begun by Satyajit Ray under the aegis of Jawaharlal Nehru.
- 26 Homi K. Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," first delivered at the 1986 Third Cinema Conference held in Edinburgh and subsequently published in its proceedings *Questions of Third Cinema*, eds. Jim Pines and Paul Willemsen, London: BFI, 1989. "The Commitment to Theory" is also published as the opening chapter in Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*.
- 27 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 38.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 29 Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov's theses on Soviet Socialist Realism reestablished the primacy of the social in cultural debates in the Soviet Union and of state control of artistic matters, putting an end to the experimentation of the historic Soviet avant-gardes.
- 30 Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema" [1969], in Michael T. Martin, ed., *New Latin American Cinema, Vol. 1: Theory Practices and Transcontinental Articulations*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997, p. 43.

- 31** My reference is to the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham; and the journals *Screen* and *Theoretical Practice* in London.
- 32** Solanas and Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema," p. 69.
- 33** Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993; London and New York, Verso, 1993.
- 34** *Trade Routes: History and Geography*, exh. cat. for the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale, 1997, artistic director: Okwui Enwezor (Johannesburg: Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, The Hague: Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, 1997).
- 35** Edward W. Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 173.
- 36** Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, p. 45.