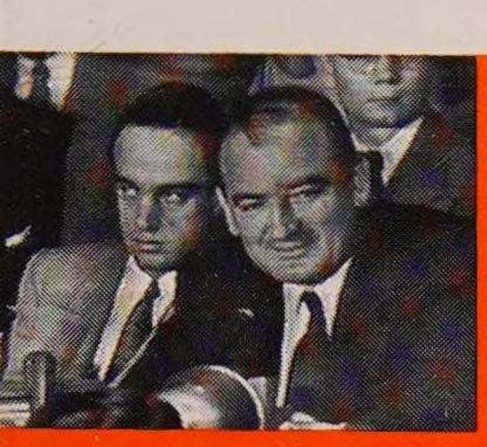
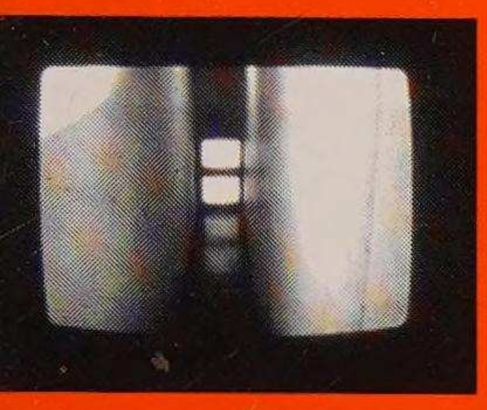
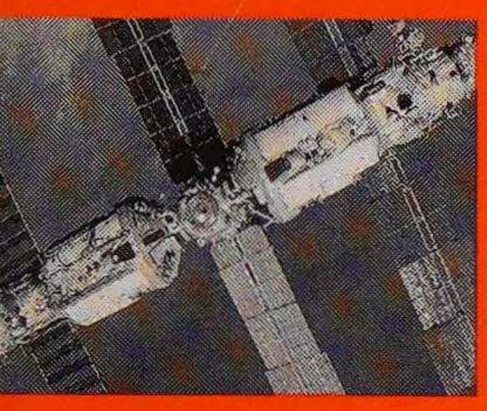










Architecture Art
Media Politics

Grey Room

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Contributors

Eric de Bruyn is an art historian who has taught at Bard College, SUNY Purchase, Indiana University, and the Hochschule für Künste in Braunschweig. His most recent publications appeared in *Dan Graham: Works 1965–2000* (Richter Verlag, 2001) and *Kunst Kino, Jahresring* 48.

Janet Kraynak is a New York-based art historian and critic. She is currently completing a book on Bruce Nauman's art of the sixties and seventies. Her book *Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words: Writings and Interviews* is forthcoming from the MIT Press in 2003.

Sergei Krikalev is a Cosmonaut who has flown as a flight engineer and mission specialist on the MIR Space Station and joint United States/Russian Space Shuttle missions. For his flight experience he has been awarded the titles of Hero of the Soviet Union, the Order of Lenin, the French title of L'Officer de la Legion de Honneur, and the new title of Hero of Russia. He was also awarded the NASA Space Flight Medal in 1994 and 1998.

Andrei Ujica has published a number of writings, including *Television/Revolution: Das Ultimatum des Bildes* (1990). He dedicated himself to filmmaking in 1990, co-directing *Videograms of a Revolution* with Harun Farocki (1992). His critically acclaimed film, *Out of the Present*, was released in 1995. He is currently working on a film project entitled *The End of Gravity*.

Paul Virilio is an architect, urban planner, and former director of the Ecole spéciale d'architecture in Paris. He is the author is numerous books including *The Information Bomb* (Verso, 2000) and *Ground Zero* (Verso, 2002). His conversation with Slyvère Lotringer, "After Architecture," appeared in *Grey Room* 03.

Cornelia Vismann is a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study at the Wissenschaftskolleg of Berlin and an Assistant Professor at the Max Planck Institute for European Legal History in Frankfurt am Main. In addition to research in rhetoric and media theory in relation to law, she has practiced in the area of labor law. Her publications include "Jurisprudence: A Transfer-Science", in *Law and Critique* (1999), *Akten: Medientechnik und Recht* [Files: Media-Technique and Law] (2000), and, with Friedrich Kittler, *Vom Griechenland* [On Greece] (2001).

Point of Order.
Dir. Emile de Antonio, 1963.
A documentary chronicle of
the army-McCarthy hearings
as broadcast on television.



Point of Order.
Top: Senator Joseph McCarthy.
Bottom: Roy Cohn.



Tele-Tribunals: Anatomy of a Medium

CORNELIA VISMANN
TRANSLATED BY SARA OGGER

Today courtrooms are capitulating to television cameras, a tendency not much impeded by legal prohibitions against it. Things were different in America in the 1950s, when the medium of television became popularized. Even though the medium of live broadcast seemed made for covering court trials, instead television concentrated on broadcasting tribunal-like proceedings. Courtroom trials were reserved for another medium, cinema.

Although the court and television have been joined in recent years, it is worth noting that preceding this development were four decades of latency, which the following study seeks to explain through an analysis of Preminger's courtroom drama, *Anatomy of a Murder*.

Hearings

In 1954 the United States Congress set up an investigative committee to examine certain machinations on the part of the military: it was alleged that a member of the army had been unlawfully privileged. Most of the suspicion was directed at a senator from Wisconsin. Had his name not been McCarthy, the army hearing would have received less attention, if any, and perhaps never have been the subject of an investigative committee. But, then again, irregularities within the army may have been a welcome excuse for the newly elected Eisenhower government to put an end to the days of the loyalty-oath.

The end of the era for which McCarthy's name had become a synonym was meant to be celebrated in public. Thus the form of an investigative committee was chosen, which, unlike a proper court proceeding, was accessible to all through television. With Joseph McCarthy and Joseph Nye Welch, both nearly the same age, two protagonists arose from the inscrutable mass of those attending the proceedings, each of whom embodied a specific mode of power; the tribunal's symmetrical structure meant that the hearing was styled as a duel between the secret service and democracy. Both Josephs were attorneys, one a circuit lawyer from Wisconsin, the other a trial lawyer from Boston. Both struggled in the name of their nation, and so it is hardly surprising that their meeting should be broadcast nationwide.

When the Investigative Committee vs. the Army convened in 1954,

it was, other than the inauguration of President Eisenhower a few months earlier, the first nonsports mass event in the United States to be broadcast on television.[1] At the time, NBC, CBS, Bumont-Station, and ABC made daily broadcasts from the courtroom. During the live broadcasts a drastic reduction in shopping was recorded and there was a rapid increase in the number of television sets purchased. When after a week the two largest TV stations, NBC and CBS, decided to broadcast the daily duel at night, at 11:15 p.m., instead of during the day, there was such a vehement protest that NBC went back to broadcasting live, even though it meant losing advertising revenues from canceled shows.[2] A live, directly televised democracy emerged and was tested out on the tube. Since then it is hard to recall any issue in American politics that hasn't been cast in the form of a hearing and telecast as a duel. Indeed, something only really becomes a political issue after having first attained the status of a televised hearing.

Hearings belong to the genre of tribunals, as opposed to the genre of court trial. The difference between the two types of procedure is best demonstrated, in fact, by the army-McCarthy-hearings. When it was Joseph N. Welch's turn to appear in the auditorium as special counsel to the army, he represented an emissary from a realm of law that stood in sharp contrast to the tribunal. It must have been immediately apparent for the spectators in the room that the committee room was not familiar turf for him as a lawyer. According to reports, Welch manifested some annoyance upon entering at the ambiguity of the situation he met: a crowded auditorium with no clear seating assignments or hierarchies, no clear delineations between tribunal members and television crews. With each gesture, Welch indicated that he was used to a courtroom, not a tribunal: "He seemed confused, even immobilized, by the anarchy of the proceedings: the cameras, the bright lights, the crowd, the noise, the whispering of attorneys to witnesses, the inattention of the judges—or were they jurors?—and the endless repetition of testimony." Looking back,



Point of Order.

this bewildered gentleman describes this experience as a "shock for a lawyer used to the traditionally ordered interiors of courtrooms."[3]

The orderly and hermetic world of the court, with its specifically dedicated architectural environment, stands in contrast to the tribunal, a kind of road show that can be held anywhere. Without the rules and precedent of proper trial procedure, it works not only with cameras, bright lights, and noise, but also with unscrupulous tricks and lies; greedily borrowing procedural forms and strategies from sports as much as from the law. This permeability eats away at the distinction between inside and outside, the very distinction that is most essential to the judicial performance. It is not so much that the cameras transmit the proceedings to the outside, but rather that the great mass audience, glued to the TV-screen, becomes part of the tribunal. In the unmarked tribunal space all positions become an object of contention. The judge's traditional position as moderator is vacated. There is no operator of the proceedings, no one safeguarding the rules of the trial. Procedural anarchy ensues. The winner of a tribunal duel is the one who forces and thereby determines the parameters of the discourse.

Joseph McCarthy was a virtuoso in the arena of the tribunal. His style was antagonistic, aggressive, and no-holds-barred. In the course of the investigative committee hearing, however, the old-fashioned jurist Welch was nevertheless able to achieve mastery over the proceedings. His opponent was well aware that the mood in the auditorium had shifted unfavorably. He fell back on an anti-communist attack against one of Welch's assistants, accusing him of being a member of the leftist National Lawyers Guild. The attack misfired. It even worked against the accuser, as a jurist who followed the scene on TV would later report: "McCarthy wanted to discredit Welch, but he was above suspicion, so he singled out a young lawyer who assisted Welch and accused him, without proof, of communist leanings. Welch turned to McCarthy: 'Have you left no sense of decency, sir?' he asked him."[4] This now legendary retort ended the hearing. It was the final judgment on a man without decency, who would die three years later of causes related to alcoholism.

In an almost old-world European way, Welch refused to engage in a duel whose terms were set by a dishonorable man with contemptible methods, adopting instead the role of sovereign judge. Despite McCarthy's formal acquittal, TV-audiences celebrated Welch as a "hero of American conscience."[5] From then on Welch (whose name sounds to German ears like a pronoun meaning "which"), came to stand for decency and dignity in a mercenary and undignified medium. He became a symbol and guarantor of the traditional modes of seeking truth and justice outside the closed system of the courtroom, in the TV studio. By showcasing Welch, TV tacitly endorsed a style that it was in the process of elbowing aside.

Courtroom Drama

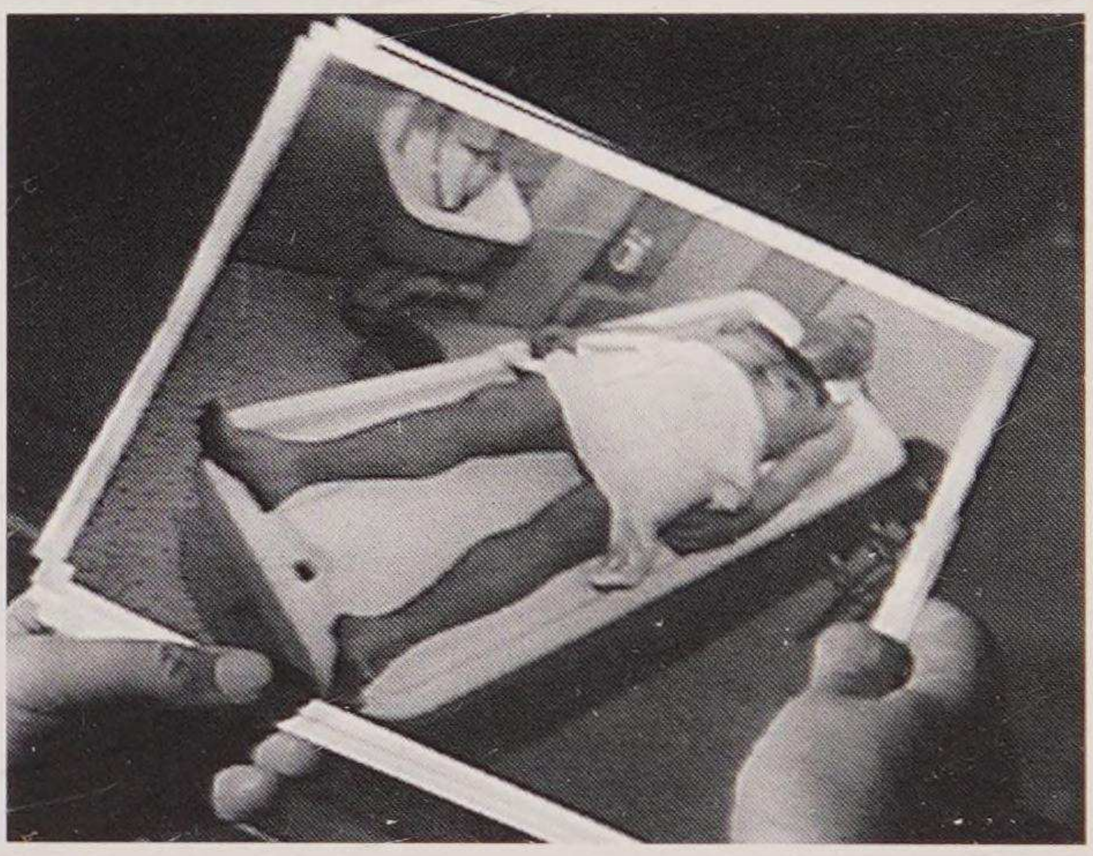
The jurist cited above, who viewed the war of words between Welch and McCarthy on TV, says of himself that "with millions of others [I] had become an ardent admirer of Welch, who was one of the major forces in the defeat of McCarthyism,"[6] but he also saw in it the demise of those very legal forms that were being exploited by television. Five years after the hearing, in 1959, the quoted jurist, who earned his J.D. in Vienna, made a film about law. He had in the meantime become a film director in Hollywood—his name was Otto Preminger.[7] His film *Anatomy of a Murder* depicts a traditional court trial, as if to remind the American public that there is such a thing as proper legal proceedings and not just hearings.

Preminger's film is focused not on the two sides in the trial, as in the adversarial American system, but rather on the judge—who plays no role in a tribunal. This focus lends the film, which was based on a script written by an American judge, its continental European character.[8] It emphasizes a mode of procedure which seems to be overturned by a tribunalized style of investigation.

In order to formulate a filmic argument for the courtroom drama as the antithesis to the tribunal, the person playing the judge became the linchpin of the film. The director first offered the role to Spencer Tracy who turned it down. Then Preminger sought a real judge instead. Joseph Nye Welch was all but born for the job of evoking the realm of justice that the TV hearings threatened to eclipse. With this casting choice, Preminger gave contemporary moviegoers a chance to reacquaint themselves with a public favorite from the days of the tribunal. The figure of the judge in this film, exaggerated almost to the point of caricature, was designed to satisfy what might be construed as a latent American longing for a paternal figure who presides over the trial's search for justice in a way both kindly and strict, and who, despite his inclination for jovial little chats, demands order in the end.

Outside the world of the film this longing for an all-governing *pater justitiae* paved the way for a cult of the great constitutional judges:

> In the USA . . . this return of [the image or rather imago of the father] is indicated by the recent rise of a whole literary genre of judges' biographies. Looking back on the 20th cen-







Right: *Anatomy of a Murder.* Dir. Otto Preminger, 1959.

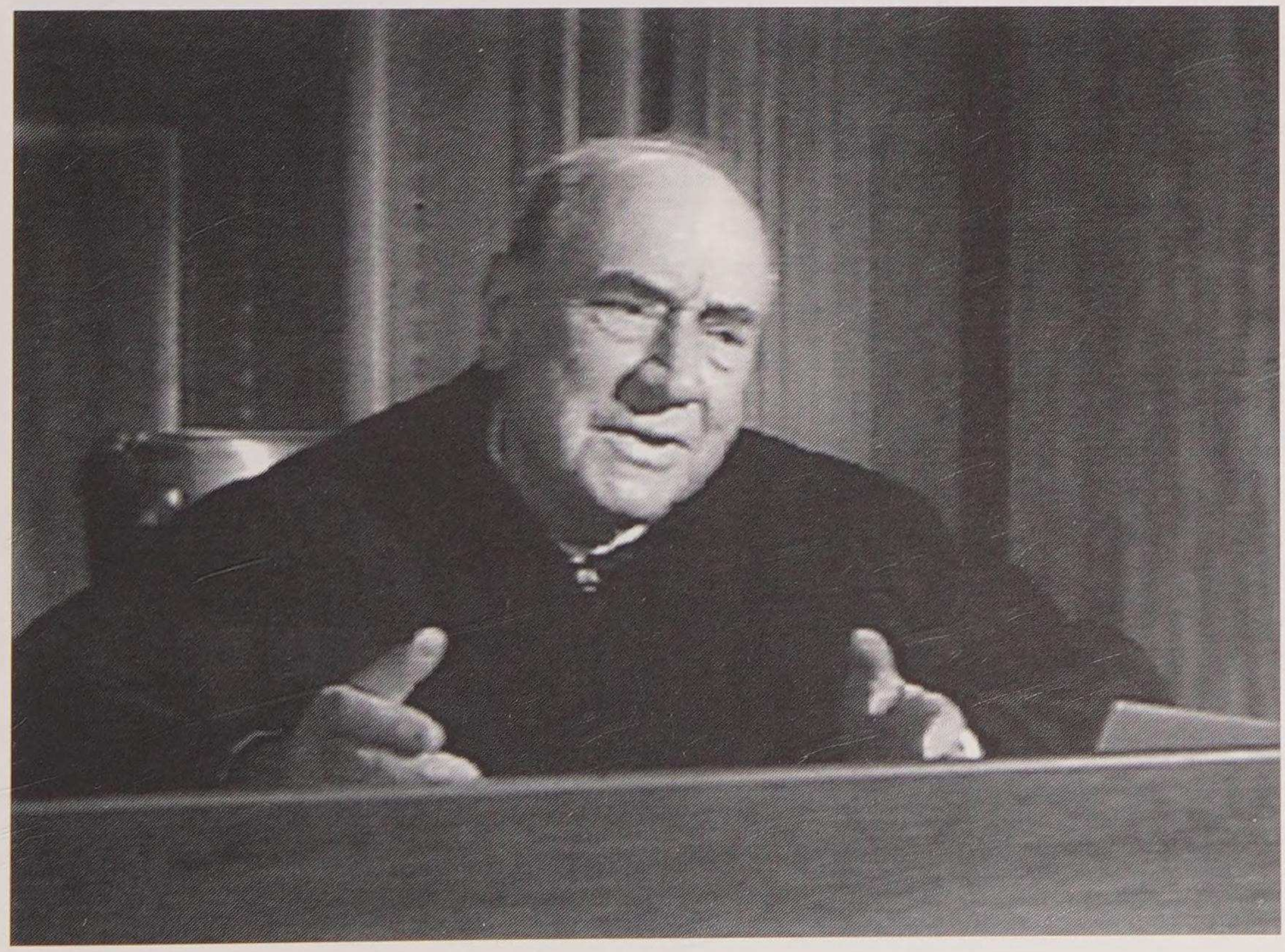
Opposite: Joseph Nye Welch cast as Judge Weaver. *Anatomy of a Murder.*

tury, Supreme Court decisions have been structured according to a series of great personalities in the judgeship who made constitutional history.[9]

Thus it is not accidental that a courtroom film intending to offer a contrast with the tribunal process should approach this task by invoking the spirit of legendary judges.

Anatomy of a Murder begins with two bachelors getting together to browse through old case opinions. They open a "Selection by Chief Justice Holmes." Here Oliver Wendell Holmes, possibly the most famous jurist in United States history, stands for the idea that justice occurs not just according to logical principles but that the ability to determine and evaluate the truth also depends on the psychological makeup of the judge. In the film, the ideal of the intuitive judge is embodied by Judge Weaver, alias Judge Welch. And this judge is in turn a proxy for another judge. That his name is Maitland, like the name of the famous nineteenth-century English legal historian, may be a hint deliberately inserted by Preminger. Sir Frederic William Maitland is known for his lifelong effort to prove that both justice cultures, the Anglo-American and the continental, had common roots in Roman law. The use of the name Maitland, then, suffices to set aside the ongoing and fruitless comparisons between the two systems of justice and instead to emphasize their structural commonalities. These commonalities come together in the figure of the judge, the mediator, who grants the right to speak and the time to do it, who puts the trial's participants in their place and determines the order in which they may tell their stories.

In the browsing of case opinions scene, Preminger has one of the bachelors, played by James Stewart, bluntly deliver the line: "Powell



McCarthy, a good jurist." This casually dropped name is the first nominal connection to the army hearing, thus summoning old ghosts. It is uttered in the same breath as the name of Judge Holmes and calls forth a biographical concordance between these otherwise two very different legal characters.[10] Like Joseph McCarthy, Oliver Wendell Holmes had been a member of the army.[11] When Holmes and McCarthy are named together at the very beginning of the film, the coordinates within which the trial will take place are already determined: judges who were in the war and soldiers who were called before the court. Accused of murder is a "marksman in the army who saw combat in the Korean War." His wife, a divorcée, had formerly been the wife of an old army buddy from the Second World War. Even the murder weapon, a Luger developed by a countryman of Preminger's, comes from that war. The defendant took it from a fallen German soldier and brought it, unchecked, over to America, whose freedom, as is well known, expresses itself in the right to bear arms. The defendant excuses his killings with a classic form of argument in films about military courts: the incompatibility between standards of military and civilian orders.[12] What would be seen as a patriotic act in war is reviled in the civilian world as manslaughter or murder.

Not that this state of contradiction exonerates the defendant. His attorney assumes an entirely different tack. He takes a page from the lay psychologist Oliver Wendell Holmes and pleads the incapacity of the perpetrator, since at the moment of the deed he was in an extraordinary psychological state. The argument carries the jury. Still, this success remains short-lived. Once acquitted, the defendant himself sews the seeds of doubt about the verdict simply by repeating the very words used by his lawyer, "irresistible impulse," in justification of his taking off after the trial without paying his lawyer's fees.

Like a flash of lightning, this laconic misuse of an allegedly legal term exposes how truth in the courtroom is a matter of form that is beholden to legal procedure. It draws our attention to a semantic game with little relevance outside the criminal justice system; ultimately it proves nothing. In the film, the only things revealed are the *mechanisms* of the search for justice, rather than any substantial truth.

What this filmic autopsy of the court reveals is







Anatomy of a Murder.

merely the skeleton of a murder, its anatomy, not the passions and drives that led up to it. Two different motives are suggested to the viewer: jealousy or revenge. Either the defendant avenged the rape of his wife by murdering the rapist, or he killed his wife's lover. Enraged jealousy or cold-blooded revenge—the clues could speak for either version. The welts and bruises on the wife's face may have resulted from the rape or from a jealous, violent husband. Both motives are equally probable; neither is ultimately verified in the film.

This judicial morality play eschews hermeneutic certainty. The camera, which in other court films often shows us the truth that the court is unable to reach, here offers the audience no privileged knowledge. On the contrary, in *Anatomy of a Murder* the camera is strictly limited to the perspective of the court. In this respect it resembles the camera in classic courtroom films. These films had their raison d'être in the fact that the courtroom trial is one of the few, if not the only, real-life situations in which the theatrical unity of time and place can be translated into the cinematic setting with any plausibility. However, if the court and the camera are coextensive—that is, reduced to an equally limited perspective, the viewer is placed in the jury's position and has his or her sense of mystery flattered.

The camera of the former theater director, who wrote plays for the stage based on sensational Viennese trials, does not aim to bring the genre of cinema back to its theatrical roots.[13] True, the camera in *Anatomy of a Murder* is nearly as immobile as the judge in his chair. But by leaving the courtroom at the end of the trial, it affords a glimpse of the outside. That alone suffices to render the edifice of truth—so carefully constructed from the witness statements, cross-examinations, and expert testimony—as fragile as a deck of cards. The brief dissociation of the camera's position from that of the judge does not install some omniscient point of view above and beyond that of the judge. Its effect is more subversive. It alerts us that the alliance between camera and judge is dissolved and, in doing so, illuminates the machinery of legal justice by cinematic means.

Is it a coincidence that this metacourtroom drama was never shown on television during Preminger's lifetime? Preminger won a successful suit against a broadcaster that, having secured the television rights to the film, wanted to reduce its length to a TV-friendly ninety minutes and to interrupt it with blocks of advertising.[14] Even in such incidental matters the indecency of the television medium became offensive to the film's director, who exercised a judge's sovereignty over his work. Preminger insisted on unlimited control of the process: "It is . . . my job as a director, to direct everything—even the writer, just as I direct actors."[15] His biographer characterizes his directing style as a thoroughly rigorous process: "he asserts

complete control over everything he does and never relinquishes it until his films are out of distribution. Even then, the pictures remain under his jurisdiction."[16] This power over his own images was endangered the moment pictures were shortened and sequences chopped up for the sake of ratings and commercials—instead of following an autonomous aesthetic code.

Tribunalization of Trials

These two key scenes from 1950s America—the hearing of 1954 and the courtroom film of 1959—show a dividing line between the anomie of television and the autonomy of cinema, which sets up its own aesthetic rules, and thus also between the tribunal and the courtroom trial. While court and film achieve a certain complicity in their mediality, the tribunal seeks a greater affinity with television.

Justifiably wary of television, the legal system, which does not belong to the media-saturated world of television, for a long time delayed the invasion of cameras. From the beginning of cinema, when reporters in the new medium sought the right to report on court proceedings via film, the American Federal Court had recognized no such right. Going further back, the 1846 federal rules of criminal procedure were interpreted in such a way that film cameras were prohibited from main trials. The federal courts reaffirmed the prohibition many times, extending it to include television cameras as well. In 1972 the prohibition was expanded to include civil courts. This remains true on a federal level, but many individual states have loosened up their restrictions.

In Germany cameras are likewise prohibited in the courtroom. Section 169 of the Court Constitutional law (*Gerichtsverfassungsgesetz*) decrees that for the duration of the proceedings no sound or film recordings intended for the public are to be permitted.[17] That the law was passed in 1969 is no coincidence, for it was a time when households in the Federal Republic of Germany were becoming fully equipped with TV sets—mostly for the occasion of the televised moon landing—and so for the first time they could receive live reports in their living rooms.

It is easy to write off the media shyness of Germany's judges[18] as a kind of snobbery.[19] But it also revealed a fear that the admission of TV cameras into the courtroom, would make a fair trial impossible. Chief Justice Warren Burger—one of the most vehement opponents of broadcasting Supreme Court cases and, as it happens, a former professor of media-obsessed and tribunal-savvy Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr—expressed this concern in simple terms when he compared trial reportage in newspapers with live broadcasts on TV: "In a newspaper the words aren't coming right out of the mouth of the judge or attorney. On television you see the person and it's coming right out of his mouth."[20] What comes directly from

the mouth of a representative of the justice system should not be duplicated in another medium. This doubling of speech denies the judge's words their exclusivity. Thus the rationale behind the juridical reserve in the matter of cameras must be sought in the medium itself.

The presence of cameras competes with the mediality of the justice system. "What is a trial if not the putting of words in the place of violence, and money in the place of pain?" asks the French jurist Antoine Garapon, thus reformulating the mediatic function of the court.[21] It is supposed to translate the criminal act into a symbolic form. The court trial posits the frame within which a speechless and unrepresentable act is captured in words and in which the immeasurable suffering of the victims is converted into money. Were a camera present, it would only encourage dramatization, as has often been critically suggested. Dramatic rhetoric has been allowed openly in court cases at least since the introduction of attorneys as representatives of the accused. The camera intervenes in even the forensic ritual of coding violence and threatens to topple the media conversion of act to language in favor of another: act to image.

In the courtroom trial, judge and camera occupy the same position. They mediate the process of arriving at justice, they grant permission to speak, remind witnesses to adhere to the question, and ensure that proper procedure is followed. They are monitors in a literal sense; for precisely this reason judges do not want to share their thrones with their technical counterpart. The simultaneous presence of judges and cameras is only conceivable if the camera were to be inconspicuous. Only cameras that do not challenge the judge's authority have any chance of being tolerated. Thus in 1965 the experimental use of film and TV cameras was permitted but relegated behind a soundproof panel.[22] Excluded from the space of representation, they were allowed to exercise their monitoring function only when hidden from view.

When judges and cameras agree upon a division of labor and monitor events each in their own way, then the recording of trials is at least made more palatable. It is therefore hardly surprising that the U.S. prohibition on cameras at the trial itself was made less restrictive precisely at a time when cameras became invisible without the aid of awkward courtroom enclosures. In the 1980s, "as television cameras became smaller, quieter and less noticeable, a few states began to permit TV coverage," and they found a place in the courts more frequently.[23]

Even German constitutional law has reacted to the technical breakthrough of invisible cameras. A camera "accidentally" left running for the verdict in the 1993 "AWACS trial" served as proof that these inconspicuous devices no longer disturbed the proceedings

and the Federal Constitutional Court permitted the retroactive broadcast of this recorded passage. On this occasion the justice system cited television's self-definition as a medium of authenticity, arguing that in such proceedings "the most authentic possible reporting is in the public interest" and was to be placed above all other interests.[24] A section subsequently introduced to Federal Constitutional Court law (17 a) has since allowed for the opening and conclusion of trials at the Constitutional Court to be taped for television. In all other trials, such as those of the criminal and civil courts, there is still a general prohibition, which the Federal Constitutional Court confirmed in a January 2001 decision concerning a complaint lodged by a private television network.

In a dissenting opinion some judges of the Constitutional Court formulated their concerns. They felt that a strict prohibition was probably untenable in this day and age, since the media has become an "important companion to nearly every citizen." The reality of the media had to be recognized by the justice system and it was important that certain trials, or segments of trials, were made available to a wider public than that of the courtroom.[25]

What is currently viewed as a dissenting opinion will someday become the prevailing one, if for no other reason than that television as a medium has its own momentum. Greedy for live broadcasts, it long ago discovered the immediacy and dramatic character of court trials and has produced a number of series based on court events. The arguments currently used by the legal system cannot prevent this tendency. The justice system, which seems to have forgotten its own medial character, has seen its final argument against the competing medium being laid to rest with video cameras that operate noiselessly and almost invisibly.

The media-based arming of the courts has been encouraged by a tendency within the justice system itself, a move toward *tribunalization.* Many of the most recent international courts, such as that at The Hague, have their origins in the tribunal. Tribunals occur when the extant justice system is not appropriate; during transitional periods, after a change in government, and so on. Ruti Teitel calls these tribunal processes "transitional justice," processes in which the illegality of an overthrown system is investigated. From their beginnings, these tribunals have shown a tremendous affinity for the medium of television, because they depend on a public audience for their very existence. In the international courts that originate from the tribunal, then, the presence of cameras has already been written into the architecture.[26]

The lines between real court trials and fictional courtroom dramas are additionally blurred when television series re-create courtroom scenes and TV stations report live from the courts. There is also a similar blurring of lines when a district attorney or large legal firms

test out a given trial ahead of time by staging and videotaping anticipated scenarios, down to the details of potential witness statements and jury reaction; and then rehearse their appearances on the basis of an evaluation of the video material. Like a classic courtroom drama, the trial that then takes place follows a script full of unexpected plot twists and surprises for the rest of the trial participants.

If even the traditional courts open themselves to television and video, the strict separation between the inside and outside of the courtroom that is constitutive of the legal system will cease to be valid. The legal scholar Peter Goodrich described how the theatrical logic of the justice system, which is based on the difference between the arcane and the public, avoids the video logic of presence:

> The trials of the century evidence the emergence of law in the videosphere. . . . These inscriptions, the cameras, the monitors, the networks and relays, displace the older distinctions between inside and outside the court and the law. The law has now become manifestly itinerant, but in a new sense—one in which its relays are as much the subject of media constraints, the genres of spectacle or viewing, as they are the obedient servants of the lawyer's message. . . . The law became instantaneous, and the public presence of law was taken out of the exclusive and solemn or learned hands of the lawyers and passed down . . . to waiting reporters who would read and interpret it live on camera.[27]

According to Goodrich, the instantaneous and itinerant *modus operandi* dissolves a justice system that has built its authority on the obscure power of files and a monopoly on truth bound up with the rhetoric of writing and inimical to the image:

> The videosphere suggests a diametrically different relation between law and its past. Under the performative demands of screen acting, the very visibility and immediacy of decision, the impossibility of hiding behind occult writs or invisible prior judgments, make the decision into a frame of embodiment, a staging of images, a self-conscious and transparent rite.[28]

For to Goodrich, video liberates the judiciary from the rigid script of a court trial that operates, despite all calls for transparency, much like a cabinet behind closed doors. It thus opens new possibilities for drama: "The videosphere makes visible the literal inscription of legality: the pain, the fear, the drama and catharsis, tragedy or comedy of rules."[29] The change looks like this when one thinks of it from the point of view of the judiciary: as visualization and exposure of the court's iconophobic legal formality and its violent inscription in the body of the judged.

Theatricality as a possibility for negating the compulsion and violence of the law sounds like a fine idea. The TV medium itself, which is said to manifest these emancipating effects on the closed trials in court, suggests a different evaluation. The transformations of the judiciary in the videosphere, as Goodrich describes them—the varied occupation of different positions in the trial; the institutional, functional, and spatial boundlessness of the proceedings; their sheer presence—all these, in the end, are characteristics of the tribunal. If television cameras are present in court proceedings, elements that have their origins in the disorder of the tribunal will of necessity seep into the court trial. The ritual of the legal search for justice will give way to the logic of the duel. The judge's function as a mediator—like that of a film director—is disordered as soon as a trial is broadcast on television, made to fit into a broadcast format, framed and interrupted by ads. Under the directives of a televisual system of justice, there would not be a better, less ambiguous justice, if only for the reason that the tribunal can ironize the court trial. Under TV directives an equally ambiguous justice would hold sway, one that would adapt itself ever further until it was indistinguishable from the rest of the television shows in tribunal format.

Anatomy of a Murder.



Notes

With thanks to Stefanie Diekmann, Ekkehart Knörer, and Kevin McAleer .

1. According to Cavell, the inauguration of President Eisenhower several months earlier had been the first media-based mass event in the United States. Stanley Cavell, "The Fact of Television," in *Themes Out of School: Effects and Causes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 248.

2. David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1983), 416.

3. Oshinsky, 424.

4. Otto Preminger, *Preminger: An Autobiography* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 154.

5. Preminger, *An Autobiography,* 154.

6. Preminger, *An Autobiography,* 154.

7. In Otto Preminger's biography the law, theater, and film are tightly interwoven at the most personal level. As assistant to Max Reinhardt, Preminger would one day take on the case of a baron's daughter with the pseudonym Marion Mill, who filed a complaint against a nightclub owner for breach of contract. Preminger, J.D., won the trial, gave his client a role in the piece he was currently directing, and ultimately married her: "Among the legion of pretty girls hoping to make their name in the theatre and to succeed Unter Reinhardt was an eighteen-year-old from Budapest, daughter of a Baron, who just graduated from the University of Vienna. Her stage name was Marion Mill . . . Miss Hoffman, realizing that a lawyer involved in the theatre world would be more sympathetic to her case than one from the 'outside' world, sent her to a young assistant director in one of Reinhardt's theatres who also happened to be a doctor of law. . . . His name was Otto Preminger." Gerald Pratley, *The Cinema of Otto Preminger* (New York: Castle Books, 1971), 8.

8. The script was by Robert Traver (a pseudonym for John Voelker, then a retired judge).

9. Ingeborg Maus, "Justiz als gesellschaftliches Über-Ich. Zur Funktion von Rechtsprechung in der vaterlosen Gesellschaft," in *Sturz der Götter? Vaterbilder im 20. Jahrhundert,* ed. Werner Faulstich and Gunter E. Grimm (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 122.

10. This juxtaposition of the two names may also contain a reference to Alger Hiss, former assistant to Holmes and the first victim of the HUAC.

11. Holmes, who often based his psychologically intuitive judgments on experiences he himself had in the Civil War, was First Lieutenant in the 12th Massachusetts Regiment of Volunteers, the military body that was to become the United States Army.

12. To name one example, *A Few Good Men* (1992–1993) with Tom Cruise and Demi Moore.

13. In Vienna, Preminger had dramatized a trial that had been a popular sensation, and which shortly thereafter enjoyed success as a Broadway production: *Libel! A Courtroom Drama by Edward Wool.*

14. Prately, 129.

15. Prately, 69.

16. Prately, 23.

17. The exceptions to this prohibition included in the first draft were excised from the final version because of pressure by various criminal jurists.

18. Previous attempts to moderate the strict prohibition of cameras in the German justice system have been thwarted chiefly by members of the judiciary. See the dissenting opinion to the Decision of the Bundesverfassungsgericht's (Federal

Constitutional Court) ruling of 24 January 2001: 1 BvR 2623/95 par. 90, 101. See also, Peer Zumbansen, "Federal Constitutional Court Affirms Ban of TV-Coverage of Court Proceedings," in *German Law Journal* 2, no. 3 (15 February 2001).

19. In a recent decision of the Federal Constitutional Court on the admission of television recordings in the courtroom—which was not even about the trial in session, but just the beginning and end of a courtroom proceeding—the judges in claimed their right to privacy against camera recordings. See the Decision of the Federal Constitutional Court of 21 July 2000: 1 BvQ 2001.

20. Quoted from Tony Mauro, "The Camera-Shy Federal Courts: Why Are Cameras Accepted in State Courts but Are Dreaded in Federal Courts?" *Media Studies Journal* 12 (1998): 62.

21. Antoine Garapon, "Justice Out of Court: The Dangers of Trial by Media," in *Law as Communication,* ed. David Nelken (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1992), 236.

22. See *Estes v. Texas,* 381 U.S. 532 (1965). In this 1965 lawsuit with a special vote by Chief Justice Warren the issue was whether the case against Billy Sol Estes could be considered a fair trial once the courtroom was reconstructed for the hidden cameras.

23. Fred Graham, "Doing Justice with Cameras in the Courts: How Important Is the Public Operation of the Judicial System?" *Media Studies Journal* 12 (1998): 33. The Supreme Court mentions this technical development explicitly in a decision from 1981. See *Chandler v. Florida* 101 U.S. 802 (1981), 813: "It is urged . . . that many of the negative factors found in Estes—cumbersome equipment, cables, distracting lighting, numerous camera technicians—are less substantial factors today than they were at that time"; quoted by Ralph Alexander Lorz, "Gerichtsberichtserstattung und Informationsanspruch der Öffentlichkeit aus der Sicht deutscher und amerikanischer Verfassungsrechtsprechung," in *Herausforderungen an das Recht der Informationsgesellschaft,* ed. A. Haratsch, D. Kugelmann, and U. Repkewitz (Stuttgart: Mainz et al.: Boorberg Verlag, 1996), 75, n. 88.

24. Decision of the Federal Constitutional Court, 1 BvQ 17/00, printed in *Neue Juristische Wochenschrift* 2000, 2890.

25. See the Decision of the Federal Constitutional Court of 21 July 2000: 1 BvQ 2001.

26. See Laura Kurgan, "Residues: ICTY Courtroom No. 1 and the Architecture of Justice," *Alphabet City 7: Social Insecurity* (2001): 112–129.

27. Peter Goodrich, "Europe in America: Grammatology, Legal Studies, and the Politics of Transmission," *Columbia Law Review* 101 (2001): 2075.

28. Goodrich, 2076.

29. Goodrich, 2076.



Bruce Nauman. *Live Taped Video Corridor*, 1970. (Shown in right of illustration) Wallboard, video camera, two video monitors, videotape player, videotape, dimensions variable. ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Dependent Participation: Bruce Nauman's Environments

JANET KRAYNAK

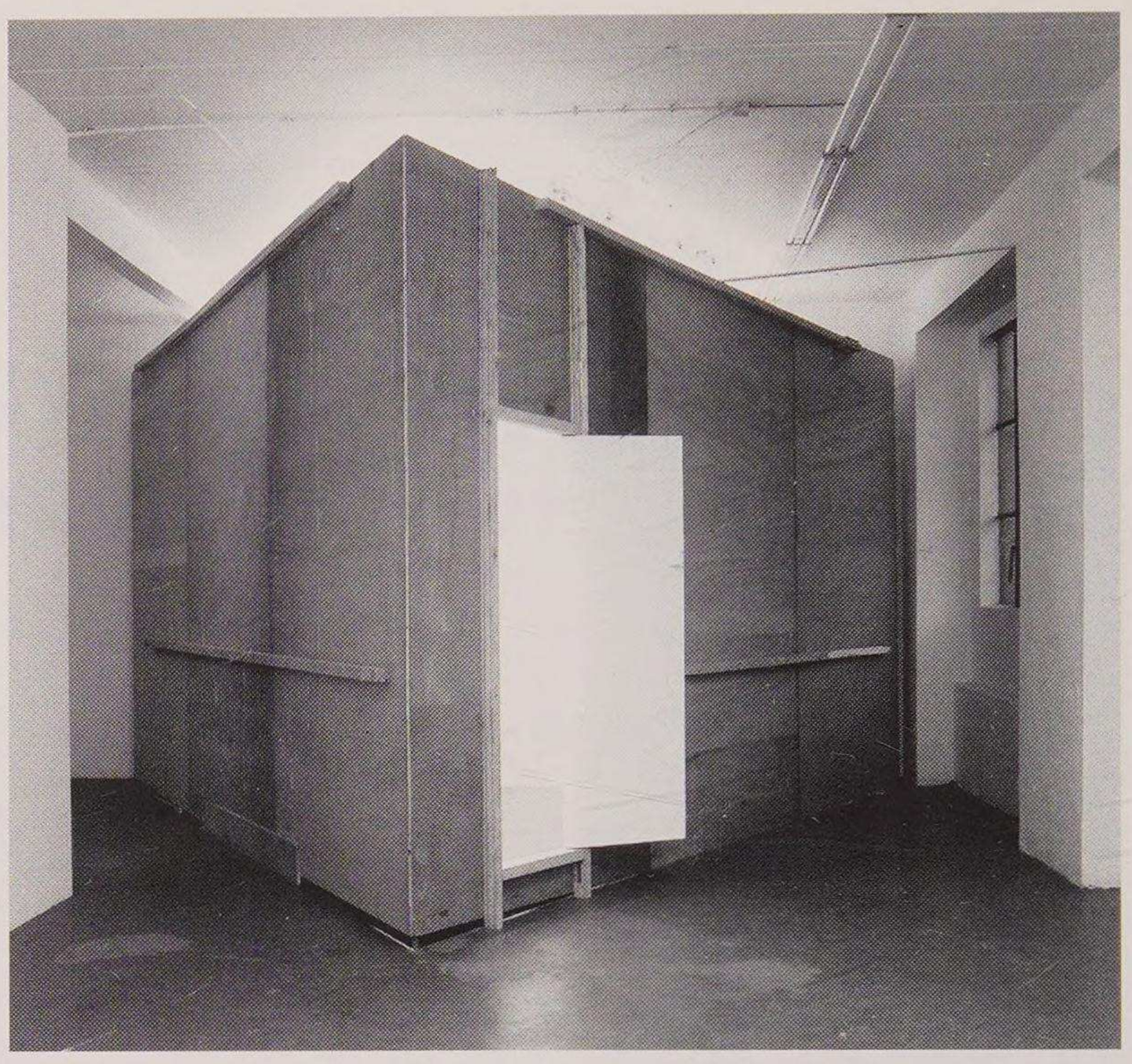
I don't like the idea of free manipulation . . . A lot of people had taken a lot of trouble educating the public to participate—If I put this stuff out here you were supposed to participate.[1]

A lot of the work is about that, frustration and anger in the, with the social situation, not so much out of specific personal incidents but out of the world or mores or any cultural dissatisfaction, or disjointedness or something, and it doesn't always appear that way in the work, I think. Somehow it generates work. It generates energy from the work.[2]

Between 1969 and 1974 Bruce Nauman produced a series of hybrid sculptural installations that assertively engage and operate upon the beholder's body, senses, and mind. Erected from temporary walls or permanent rooms, some of the sculptures direct the beholder's passage through space while video monitors play prerecorded imagery and/or channel live-feed images of the viewer as she circulates the sculptural arena. In others, video is replaced by swaths of intense colored lights that illuminate the interiors, performing optical tricks or inducing woozy feelings of nausea. In some, empty space is rendered acoustical through recorded sounds of the artist yelling, laughing, exhaling; or through walls lined with thick acoustical materials that invite the viewer to touch and produce sound. In other installations textual "instructions," in the form of prose writings, are mounted on the walls, serving as directives for the beholder's feelings and actions.

In Nauman's installations the sculptural meets the architectural, the former realized as an environmental arena in which the beholder's role is no longer one of passive witness. Instead, the viewer is directly, physically engaged—"performing" rather than "viewing" the object—and indeed the completion of the object is contingent upon such interactions. As such, they have a long precedent in the pre- and postwar avant-garde, in which methods of artistic production were investigated and transformed as a means of reconsidering the traditional relations between art objects and their audience, and as a means of envisioning a different type of subject than

the modernist contemplative one. Examples cross the boundaries of time and meaning: from the Russian Constructivist doctrine of productivism and Brecht's concept of estrangement to John Cage's incorporation of the audience into the musical composition, Minimalism's phenomenological experiments, and Conceptual art's rethinking of the networks of artistic distribution, among others.



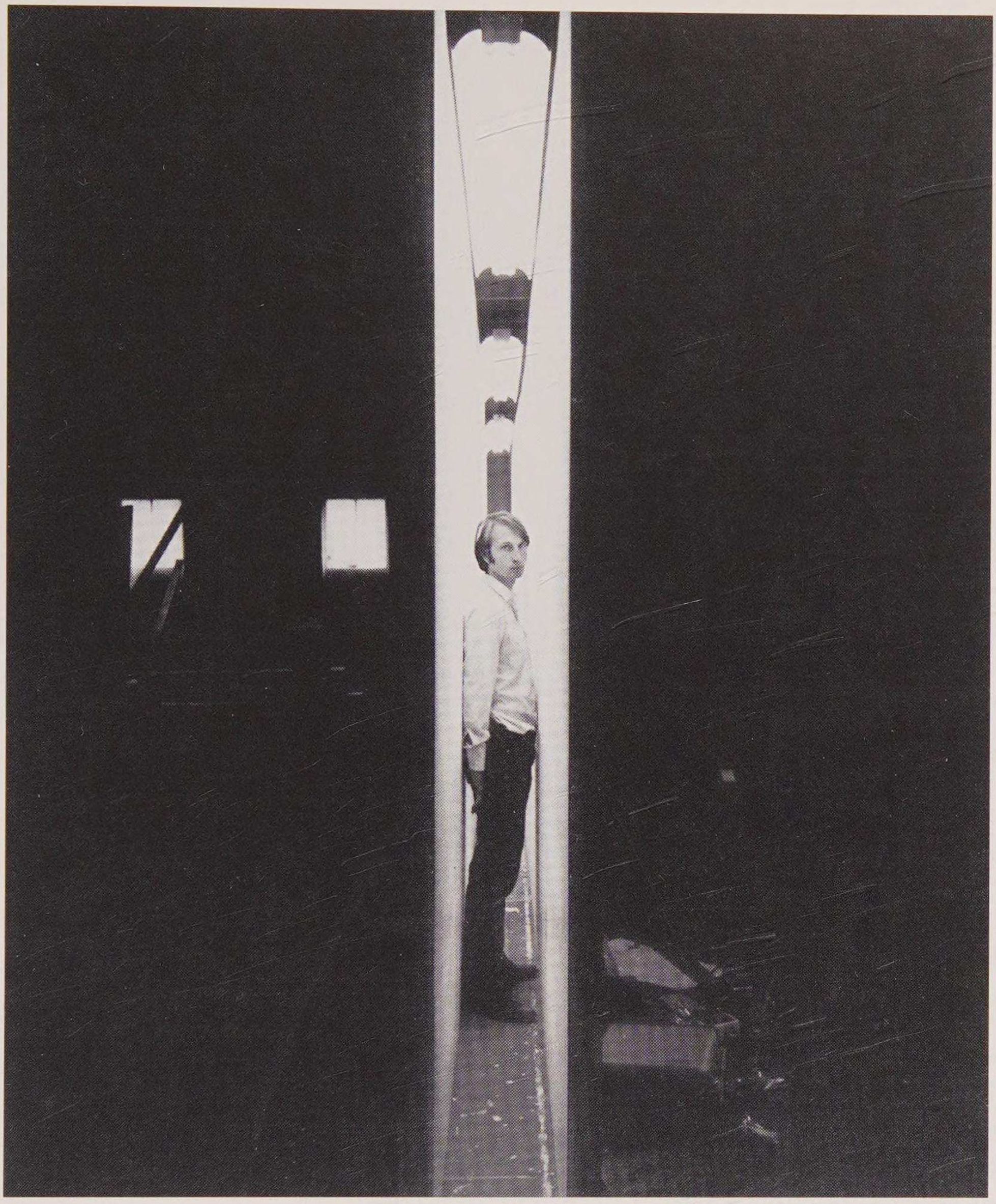
Above: Bruce Nauman. *Yellow Room (Triangular)*, 1973. Wallboard, plywood, yellow fluorescent lights, dimensions variable. Courtesy: Sperone Westwater Gallery, New York. ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Opposite: Bruce Nauman. *Green Light Corridor*, 1970. Wallboard, green fluorescent light fixtures, dimensions variable. ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

While the shift toward audience participation historically has been motivated by diverse concerns, frameworks that emphasize its positive attributes as well as its potential for critical transformation dominate the art-historical interpretation. Whether the Marxian model of de-alienation (in which the redefinition of object relations leads to a politically emancipated subject); or poststructuralist critiques of authorship (where the activation of the reader dismantles the aura of the individual work and authorial intention); or the ideological model of collectivism (as an antidote to the passive lull of bourgeois leisure and media), participation is seen as an interventionist gesture that furthers the ambitions of a progressive avant-garde.[3]

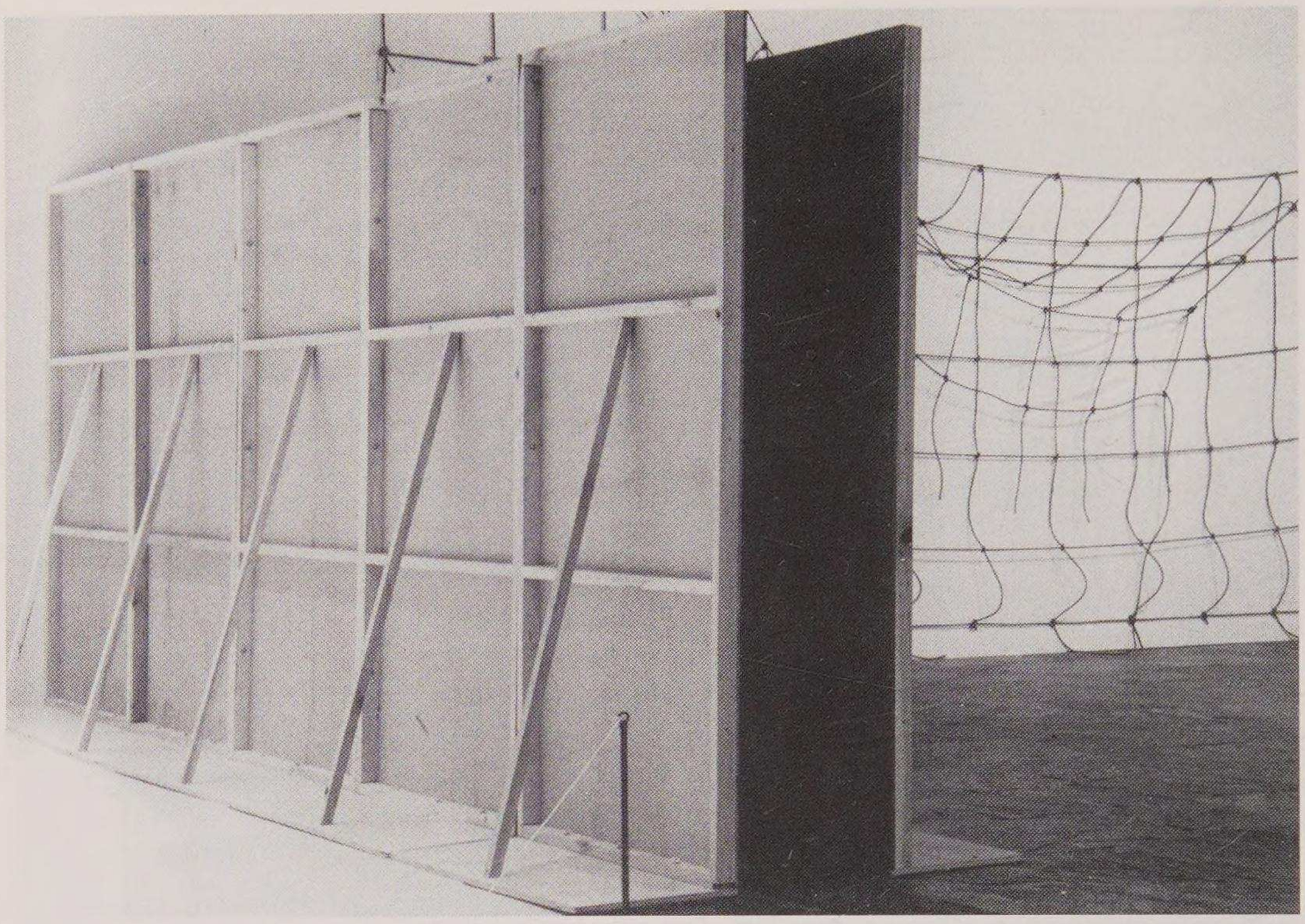
But here I want to consider the question of the participatory artwork in terms of a more limited art-historical framework of the late 1960s, as well as its specific expression in Nauman's early installations. Despite individual differences of materials or design, Nauman's environments consistently figure spectatorial participation as a strange, even alienating, encounter. The viewer is assaulted with sound, frightened with foreboding narrow spaces, and cornered by video cameras recording her every move. Recorded images, moreover, are instantly played back to the viewer, whose body is often reduced to a partial fragment or fleeting shadow, resulting in a sense of corporeal dispossession. Physically and psychologically, the viewer continually confronts a collapse of identification between her experience as a body/subject and her image or representation. Technical devices, in conjunction with carefully conceived architectural structures, interrupt passage through space, yielding highly charged environments. In the process the viewer becomes almost an object—a sculptural element—while external space itself seems to assume agency: overwhelming the spectator not necessarily in terms of scale but as a controlling or disciplining factor.

In short, participation in Nauman's environments emerges as an oppressive concept that is at the *expense* of the viewer: or, at least,



while Nauman's installations depend upon the viewer's interaction, they are nonetheless ambivalent about the possibilities such involvement affords and, as such, create uncomfortable experiences. Such wariness is echoed in the artist's frequent comments over the years regarding his "mistrust" of audience participation. In the following exchange with Willoughby Sharp, for example, Nauman speaks of his work, *Corridor Installation (Nick Wilder Installation),* from 1970:

> Nauman: The cameras will be set upside down or at some distance from the monitor so that you will only be able to see your back. I have tried to make the situation sufficiently limiting, so that spectators can't display themselves very easily.
>
> Sharp: Isn't that rather perverse?
>
> Nauman: Well, it has more to do with my not allowing people to make their own performance out of my art. Another problem that I worked out was using a single wall, say twenty feet long, that you can walk around. If you put a television



Above: Bruce Nauman. *Performance Corridor*, 1969. Wallboard, wood, 96 x 240 x 20". ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

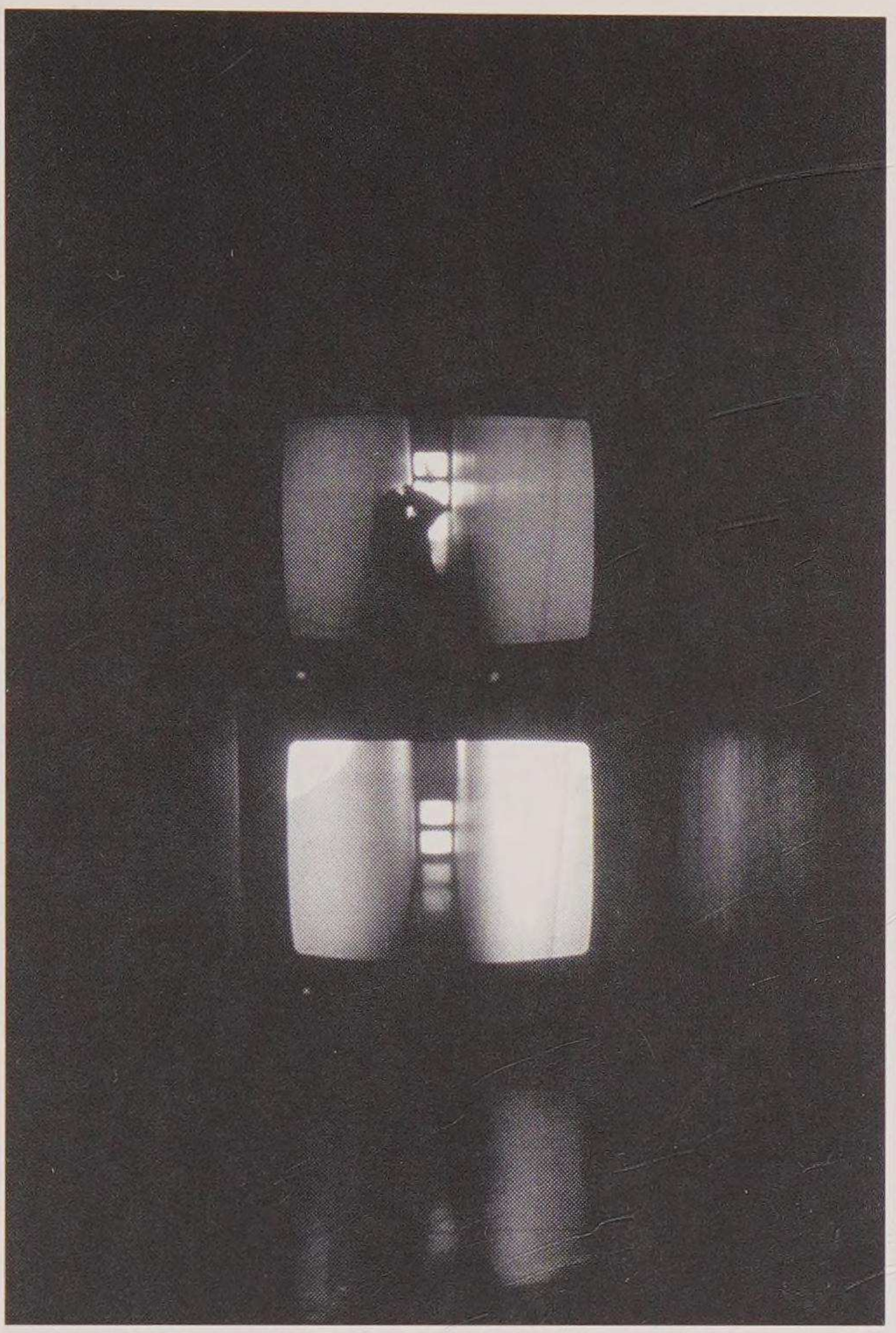
Opposite: Bruce Nauman. *Live Taped Video Corridor*, 1970. Detail. Wallboard, video camera, two video monitors, videotape player, videotape, dimensions variable. Courtesy: Sperone Westwater Gallery, New York. ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

camera at one end and the monitor around the corner, when you walk down the wall you can see yourself just as you turn the corner, but only then. You can make a square with the same function—as you turn each corner, you can just see your back going around the corner. It's another way of limiting the situation so that someone else can be a performer, but he can do only what I want him to do. I mistrust audience participation. That's why I try to make these works as limiting as possible.[4]

Similarly, in another interview, Nauman disdains the creation of open-ended situations, which, he complains, reduce art to a form of "game playing": "I don't like to leave things open so that people feel they are in a situation they can play games with. . . . I think I am not really interested in game playing. Partly it has to do with control, I guess."[5]

What to make of this apparent tension between the need (or desire) for reciprocal involvement on the part of the viewer and concomitantly a reluctance to allow for it or, at least, to preclude unfettered access? Because of the ways with which the spectator is compelled to perform certain tasks and is physically manipulated within the spaces, as well as the artist's comments (such as those cited above), there has been much speculation regarding not just the nature of Nauman's sculptures but also the artist's perceived relationship with, or even personal feelings toward, his audience—often with uneasy transpositions being made between Nauman's art and persona.[6] But I want to forgo this tendency to personalize—not the least because the evidence of Nauman's artwork does not support such an approach, but also because I am interested in more consequential considerations of historical exigency: specifically, how Nauman's environments raise the very question of participation and how this involvement is interpreted.

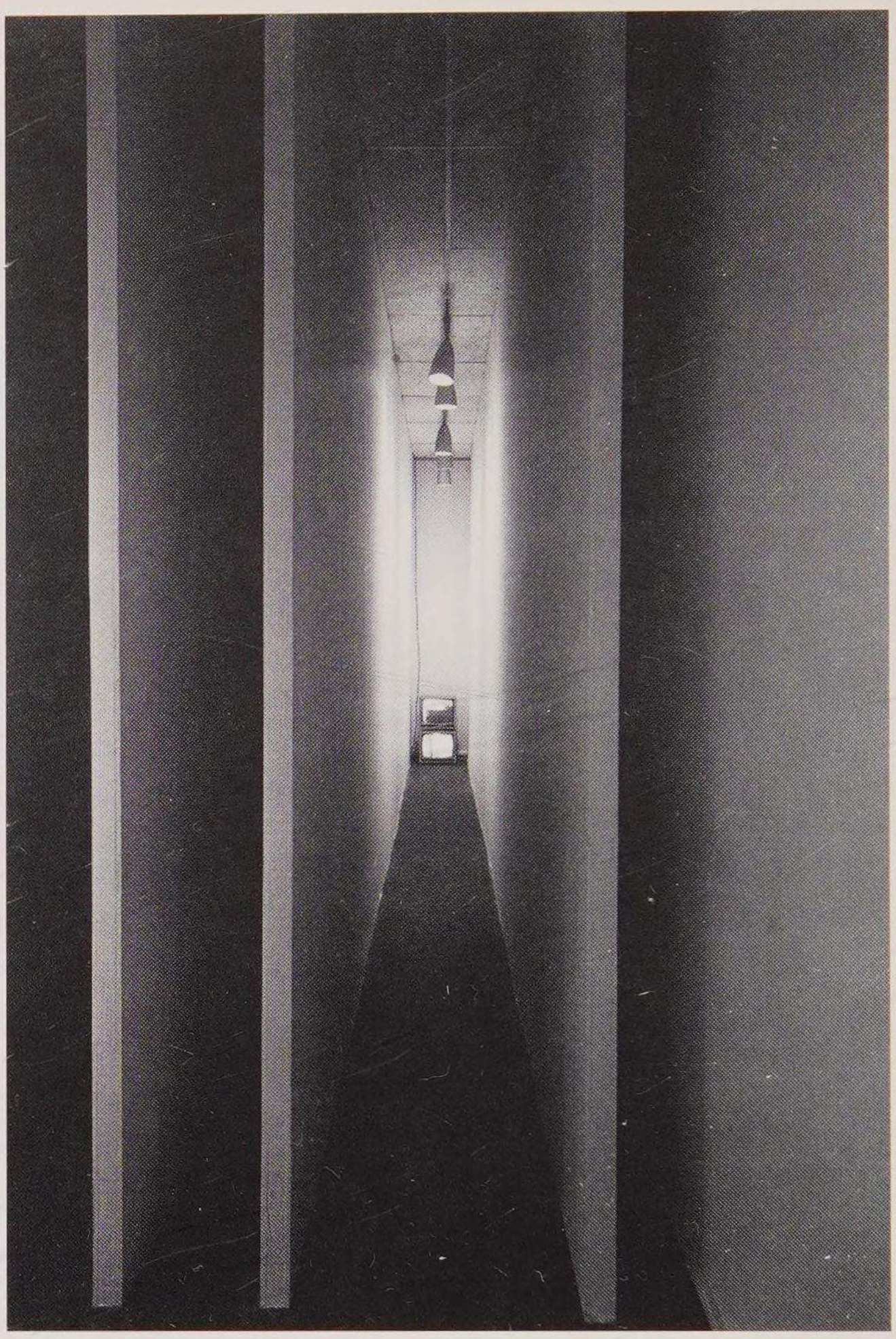
Participation, this essay suggests, is a historical rather than a static



concept, one that bears particular resonance with the emergence of technocratic society in the late sixties. Characterized not simply by the pace and stuff of technological change (including computers, television, and the familiar trappings of media culture), technocracy also specifically refers to the increasingly administrative order that accompanies these developments. Nauman's environments negotiate this new technocratic space, giving form to the acute anxieties with which it was greeted. The discussion will be guided by a number of contemporary sociological and philosophical writings that attempt to analyze the nature of these changes as well as the conflicts and fears engendered by a social system still in the making. In these writings, what emerges is that participation functions simultaneously as a source of seduction and controversy, touching upon a series of arising social tensions that are part of the larger history of the sixties and its lasting influence on contemporary culture.

Nauman's Environments

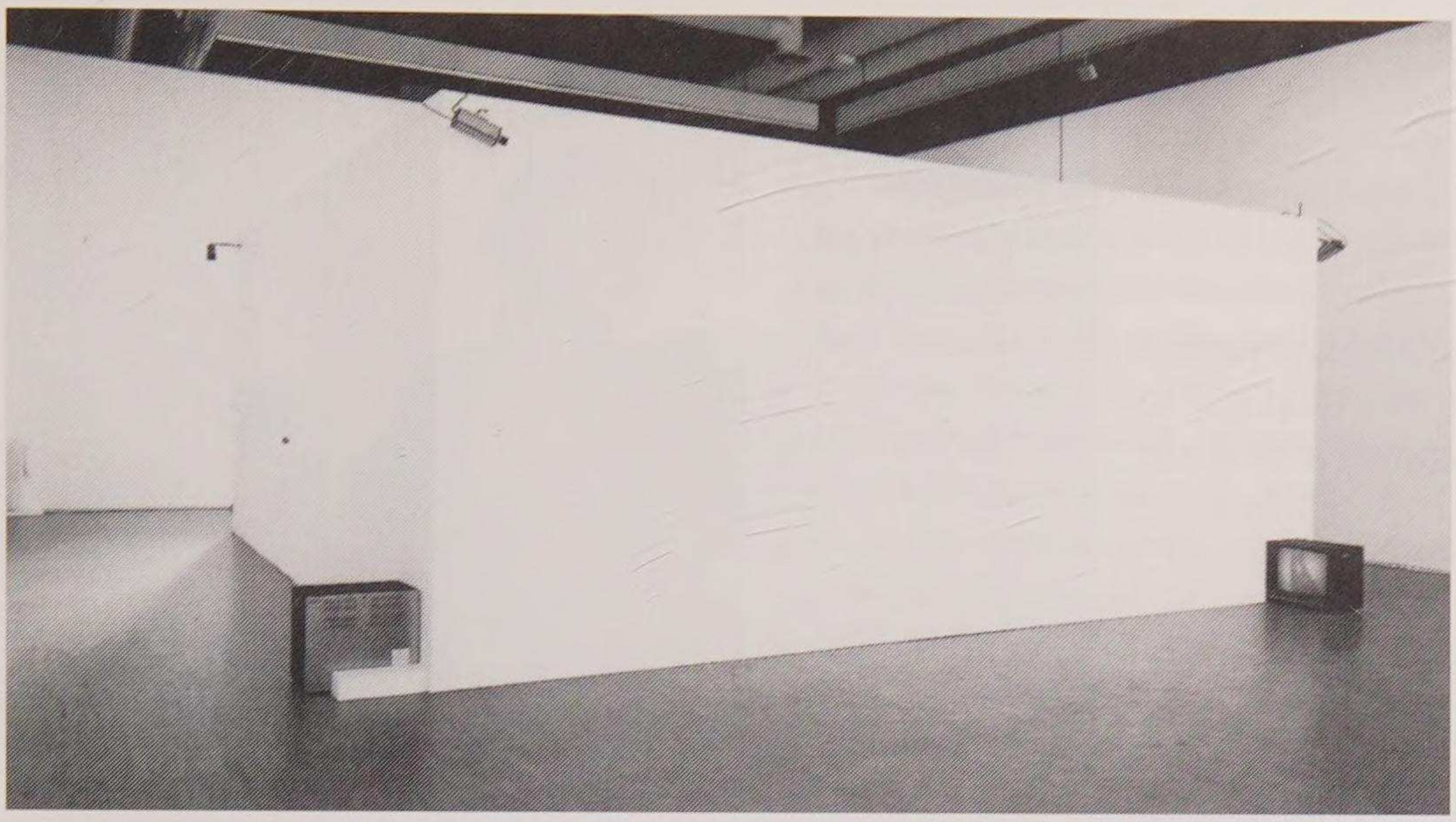
Typical of Nauman's production, the 1970 *Live Taped Video Corridor* is an elaboration an earlier work, in this case the artist's first environmental sculpture *Performance Corridor*. Employing the same simple structure of a plywood corridor with an entryway open at one end, in the later work, two video monitors are placed atop each other on the floor at the closed end of the corridor: a dead end passage that leads to nowhere. As in *Performance Corridor* the beholder performs the simple task of walking in and out of the corridor's interior, enveloped by its narrowly set walls. Here, however, visual and bodily experience is mediated by video: a prerecorded image of the empty corridor as well as a continuous live feed from a recording camera that is mounted high on the wall near the structure's opening and tracks the viewer's movement through space. As the viewer works her way toward the corridor's mouth, walking closer to the picture, her body continually recedes, appearing ever smaller. This disconcerting effect is the result of a simple technical detail: because the monitor is placed at the far end of the corridor and the camera at its entry point, as the viewer moves forward, desiring to see and "touch" her image, she is actually traveling further away from the recording device. Due to the orientation of the camera, moreover, the viewer can only see herself from behind: a perspective of one's body to which one is not normally privy.



In *Live Taped Video Corridor* a disturbing disjuncture results between vision and experience: I *feel* myself getting closer, yet I *see* myself receding further away. The two forms of sensorial information do not coordinate but rather contradict each other. Such strangeness is not only unfamiliar but unsettling: an uncomfortable space that welcomes me into its depths yet seems to mock me, subjecting me to its parameters. Concomitantly it depends upon me, however, and I am, technically, a desiring participant.

In subsequent pieces such perceptual effects continue with increasingly elaborate spatial configurations that generate new avenues of audience engagement. In *Corridor Installation (Nick Wilder)* of 1970, the simplicity of the single corridor is multiplied into a sprawling construction consisting of six individual corridors of differing widths, only some of which the beholder can enter, as well as an enclosed, inaccessible room. The corridors are variously lit and unlit; some contain cameras and video monitors showing combinations of prerecorded and real-time imagery, while others are empty, extremely narrow, and unpassable. Shifting between access and prevention, each individual configuration explores different perceptual and phenomenal conditions. In the fourth corridor, for instance, a monitor sits at the far end of the passage, feeding a live picture of the floor and ceiling of the enclosed, empty room taken by a camera placed in its interior on an oscillating mount. As the beholder exits this corridor, turning a corner into the fifth passage, she encounters a television monitor that captures, for a brief instant, a fleeting, fragmentary image of the viewer's back. As if to heighten its destabilizing effect, the image appears sideways, upsetting one's sense of bodily orientation.[7]

If *Corridor Installation* is descriptively confusing, it is experientially unwieldy. The beholder negotiates a maze of intricately designed spaces, arriving at physical impasses, but, even when entry is permitted, finds herself unable to move about freely and subjected to so many weird perceptual tricks. Reinforcing this sense of being "cornered," Nauman shortly afterward created two related installations, *Four Corner Piece* and *Going Around the Corner Piece,* in which the beholder's passage from one place to another—as seen in the fourth and fifth corridors described above—becomes the basis



Opposite: Bruce Nauman. *Corridor Installation (Nick Wilder Installation)*, 1970. Wallboard, three video cameras, scanner and mount, five video monitors, videotape player, videotape (black and white, silent), dimensions variable. ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Above: Bruce Nauman. *Going Around the Corner Piece*, 1970. Wallboard, four video cameras, four video monitors. Walls 120 x 240" each. ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

of the sculptural installation. In the latter piece a full-scale square room is constructed and placed in the center of a gallery, like an enlarged minimalist cube. With no entry point the viewer instead circumnavigates its exterior, at each turn encountering a partial, momentary image of her back going around the corner that plays on a video monitor set upon the floor. Desperate to "capture" the image—to *see* oneself properly—the beholder finds herself caught up in an endless cycle of replay, turning around and around and around the corners to no avail. As a result, the viewer is in the awkward—and ultimately frustrating—position of seeming to chase herself from behind, not unlike the proverbial dog hopelessly chasing its tail. (Perhaps, in light of an installation Nauman produced almost two decades later, a more apt analogy is a hapless rat.[8])

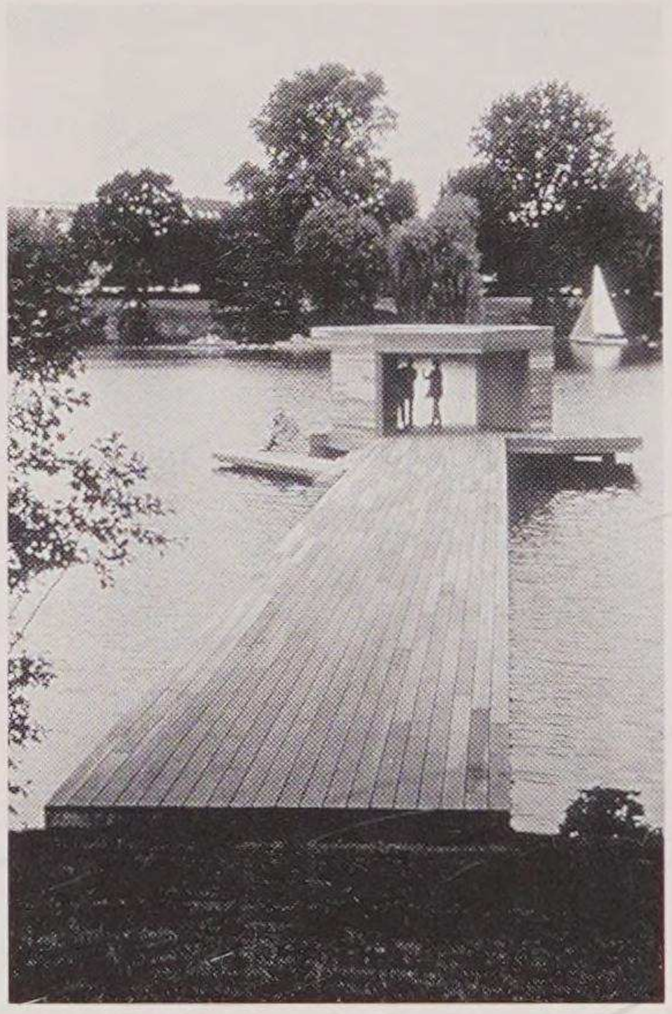
The subject's spatial discomfort, of being ill at ease in the external world, is a recurring theme in the literature on modernity: the notion of not belonging tied to both the physical and figurative displacements wrought by industrialization, the architecture of urban life, and the sublime effects of overwhelming space.[9] Yet here I am less interested in the effects of estrangement than in those of solicitation; that is, the simultaneous beseeching and thwarting of the beholder that lies at the center of Nauman's environments.

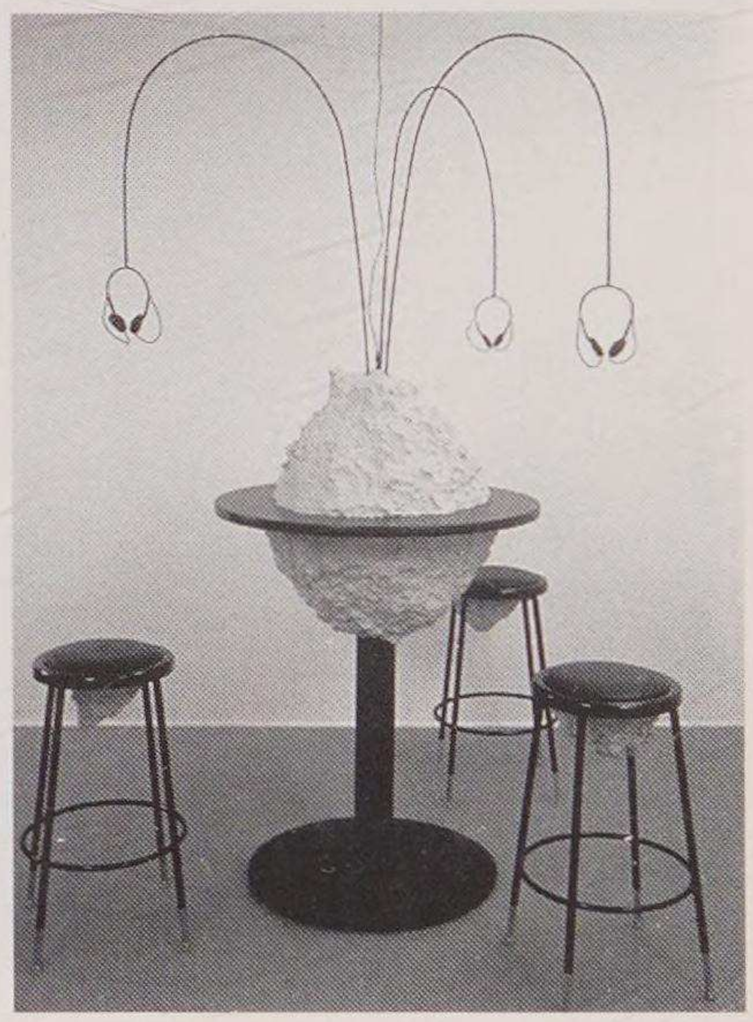
While, collectively, Nauman's sculptures might be the most systematic in this regard, numerous participatory artworks from the sixties and seventies are similarly characterized by a decidedly confrontational nature, in which the audience is subjected to various forms of manipulation or assault, yielding often unsettling, ambiguous experiences in which the goal of participation is not entirely clear. For example, in Allan Kaprow's *A Spring Happening* (1961) the audience was confined to the darkened interior of a small crate, while various—sometimes frightening—events took place outside, ones that were audible, but barely visible to the participants, who, as Judith Rodenbeck maintains, are figured as "objects, collage elements, exchangeable tokens."[10] In Vito Acconci's *Seedbed* (1972) the unsuspecting beholder, walking up a room-size ramp installed in a gallery, is caught off guard by the potentially embarrassing sounds of a private, sexual act. In Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964) and

Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0* (1974), on the other hand, the gesture to engage takes the form of a dare, in which the audience is confronted with the burden of *how* to act, with potentially serious—and violent—consequences for the artist.[11]

While such provocative relationships vis-à-vis the viewer constitute a significant tendency in the history of participatory artworks, in current practices the move toward audience involvement frequently manifests itself as a benignly *inclusive* aesthetic. For museums and other institutions, moreover, participation is promoted as a resolutely democratic enterprise, capable of rendering often inaccessible contemporary art less mysterious and more pleasurable for a general audience. The viewer engages in various lighthearted activities: relaxing on a lovely dock installed above a lake, eating food served by the artist, or playing with an inviting mass of sculptural putty while listening to the music of the indie band Stereolab on a walkman.[12] In these (and other) examples the once radical premises and potentially destabilizing effects of participation are transmogrified into a user-friendly doctrine of artistic viewing. The artist is no longer producer but caretaker and nurturer who provides sustenance, entertainment, and other pleasures for an audience that can enjoy such spoils without having to purchase anything.[13]







Top: Marina Abramović. *Rhythm 0*, 1974. Detail. Photograph from performance (published as an edition in 1994). One black-and-white photograph, 29¾ x 39½"; and one letterpress text panel, 10¼ x 7¼" (not shown). Courtesy: Sean Kelly Gallery, New York.

Bottom, left: Jorge Pardo. *Pier*, 1997. Installation view. Sculpture Project, Münster, Germany, 1997. Redwood, metal, cigarette vending machine. Courtesy: Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York.

Bottom, right: Charles Long. *Bubble Gum Station*, 1995. Modeling clay, sound equipment, furniture, 91 x 60". Courtesy: Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

Because these artworks putatively circumvent the commodity system, providing an experiential encounter for the spectator, they are frequently positioned within a genealogy of sixties' practices (such as decommodification, dematerialization, and institutional critique), invoking the language, if not the substance, of radical politics and progressive aesthetics. However, as I have argued elsewhere, such acts of social engagement and benevolence often mask what is in fact an *economic* relationship (i.e., one based upon return) that is identifiable if the model of economy is shifted: from the commodity to gift exchange.[14]

While the subject of my earlier discussion focuses on recent artistic practices and develops an alternative theoretical model, it shares with the current essay several key points: first, far from operating *outside* the dominant system, this "gift economy" (as, it will

be argued, "participation") is structurally immanent to that system.[15] Second, they both propose a reading of *participation as obligation:* a tacit form of control in which reciprocity is all but guaranteed and desires and will are exploited, becoming, in effect, forms of submission—or dependency. Technocratic society, we shall see, is precisely built upon this dynamic: a dialectic of participation and control.

The Programmed Society

The notion of technocracy first widely arose in public discourse in the United States during the twenties and thirties when a group of scientists and social engineers proposed a rationalistic, technological order as a means of curing the social and economic crises brought on by the Great Depression. For these self-described technocrats, however, faith rested not in technology as an isolated instrument but in its principles of efficiency, which, they believed, could be adapted to the social sphere. As historian William Akin notes, "In the technocrats' minds the ills of the economy were traceable not to the machine per se, but to an *inefficient adjustment of the social order* to modern high-energy technology."[16] For the technocrats, governmental and business institutions—the traditional cornerstones of the capitalist system—were inadequate and inefficient systems that had led the nation to the edge of economic disaster. In their place the technocrats promoted the value of the "technician" (or engineer) and enlisted the scientific management theories of Thorstein Veblen and Frederick W. Taylor, both of whom argued for a broad social application of the principle of technical rationality.[17]

While the technocratic period represents a relatively minor episode in social and political history, debates regarding the emergence of technocracy reached a fever pitch during the sixties.[18] In attempting to grasp the implications of the transformation from an industrial, production-based economy to an informational, service-oriented one, writers such as Daniel Bell speculated that a wholesale reconfiguration of the social structure was underway.[19] While Bell's tome (whose title, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting,* reveals the extent to which the future was perceived to be in the present), is one of the most influential on the subject, it ultimately amounts to an apologia for the new system. For Bell, technocracy represents merely one stage in the "progress" of modern society, with the potential to realize the unfettered dreams of capitalism. For others, however, the advent of technocratic society ushers in a moment of profound social crisis. In the sociological writings of Jean Meynaud, Jacques Ellul, and Alain Touraine, among others, techno-optimism is replaced by skepticism and even anxiety—a dystopic view of technology that recalls the philosophical writings of Heidegger, Adorno, Horkheimer, and the contemporary work of Herbert Marcuse, in which technoscientific

progress is viewed as inextricably bound to new forms of social domination and oppression.[20]

Technocracy's skeptics draw attention to the increasing value placed upon technical "expertise" and the rise of ever more specialized forms of knowledge. As such, they maintain, traditional ideals give way to a relentless (and somewhat blind) pursuit of innovation and technical progress. Despite his otherwise rosy perspective, Bell himself identifies the emergence of technocracy as a historical crux, in which modernism's two models of social change—toward "equality" (advocated in the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville) and toward "bureaucracy" (anxiously elaborated by Max Weber)—meet and clash:

> In the last hundred and fifty years, the social tensions of Western society have been framed by these contradictory impulses towards equality and bureaucracy, as these have worked themselves out in the politics and social structure of industrial society. Looking ahead to the next decades, one sees that the desire for greater participation in the decision-making of organizations that control individual lives (schools, hospitals, business firms) and the increasing technical requirements of knowledge (professionalization, meritocracy) form the axes of social conflict in the future.[21]

While Bell does not develop this reading beyond initial speculation, for Alain Touraine the interdependence of equality (i.e., the desire for a more inclusive society) and bureaucracy (i.e., technical, social, and administrative hierarchization) is the central principle of technocratic society and the main source of its disaccord. Both the tenor and content of Touraine's analysis is more typical of the literature, where the sense of urgency regarding the emergence of technocratic society is seen both in the passionate (and often paranoid) nature of the rhetoric and the extent of its reach.[22] Revealing his dim view, Touraine's study replaces the relatively neutral descriptives "technocratic" or "post-industrial" with the loaded term *"programmed":* "the programmed society," he explains, more accurately captures "the nature of production methods and economic organization" of postindustrial culture. For our purposes here, however, it functions as a useful rhetorical shorthand, one that underscores the dual meaning of "programmed": the technical sense (i.e., computer language or programming, systems logic, game theory) associated with a knowledge-based economy; and the social condition of being controlled or managed.

Touraine's book explores the three principle forms of domination, which, he argues, are characteristic of the programmed society: "social integration," "cultural manipulation," and "political aggressiveness." The latter speaks to the development of the technobureau-

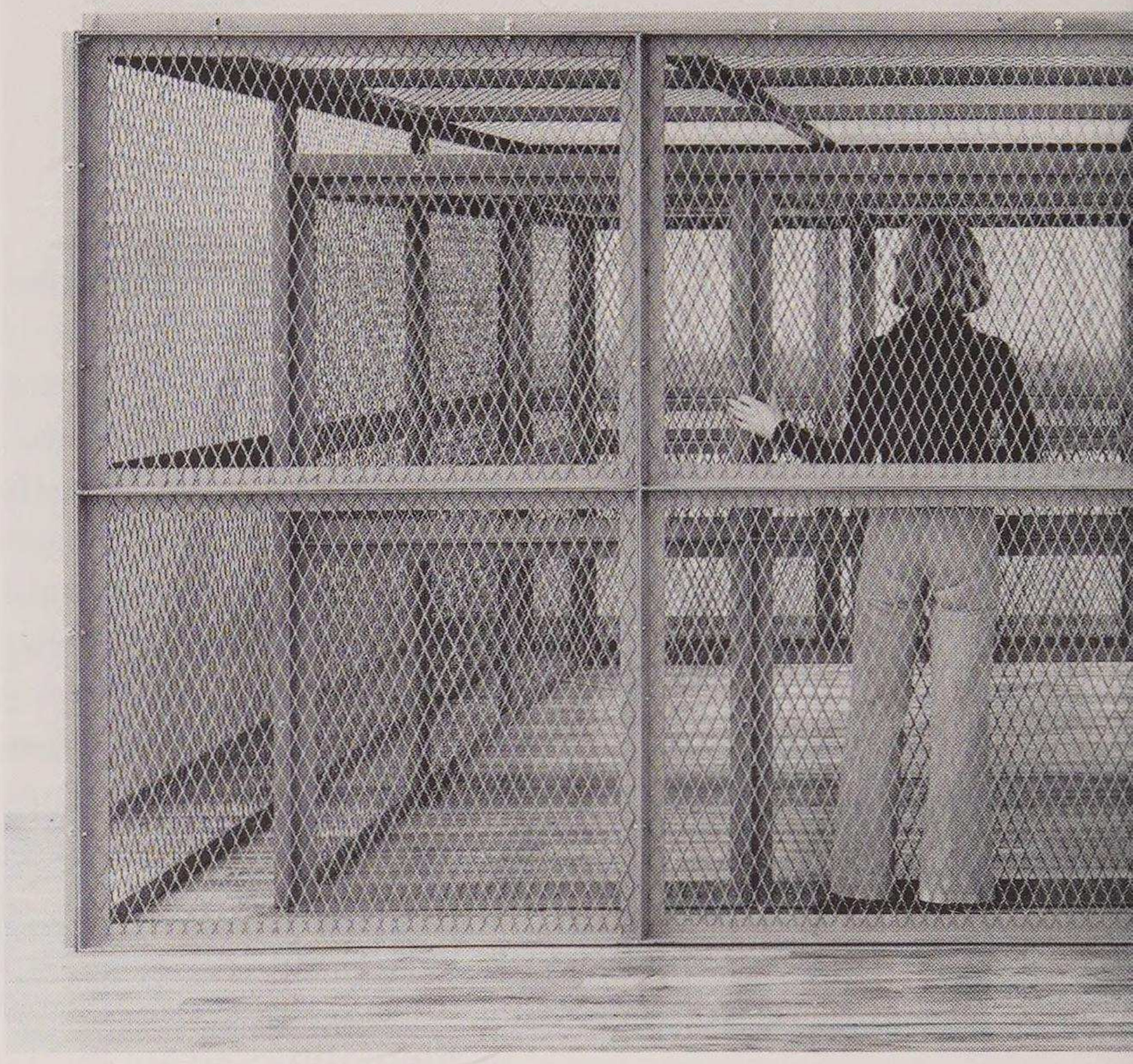
cracy, while the two former relay the push-pull, so to speak, of the new system. Touraine writes: "[T]he individual is pressured into participating—not only in terms of his work but equally in terms of consumption and education—in the systems of social organizations and power which further the aims of production."[23]

In short, Touraine argues that technocratic society, unlike earlier eras of industrialism, is contingent not upon *exclusion* but upon widespread *inclusion*. Participation is axiomatic to this system, but it is coerced. Moreover, its manipulative power rests upon the relative "success" of the system, as well as its deviousness: the benefits and pleasures it affords and, as such, the needs it seemingly fulfills, all the while eschewing overt oppression. Whereas in Marxian theory economic exploitation of the workers or working classes results in their social alienation, in the programmed society, Touraine maintains, those of relative affluence—and, as such, with greater "participation" in social, political, and economic life—are nevertheless subject to the lure of propaganda, advertising, and consumption. In short, in addition to the traditional oppressed classes, new ones are formed that cross a broad social strata, all becoming passive participants in their own domination.

Technocratic society, therefore, sees a dramatic shift, in which participation leads not to self-determination but, paradoxically, to *alienation*. "Ours is a society of alienation," Touraine writes, "not because it reduces people to misery or because it imposes police restriction, but because it seduces, manipulates, and enforces conformism."[24] In other words, alienation is wrought by complicity and conformity, which ultimately serve to nullify or "manage" dissent. The programmed society, Touraine argues, amounts to an insidious yet potent system of "*dependent participation.*"[25]

Weak Participants

To be clear: I am not advocating a deterministic view; that is, that Nauman's controlling environments are a consequence of technocracy or can be "framed" by its context. Rather, I want to suggest that Nauman's environmental sculptures share or are energized from one of the central principles of technocratic society—that of "dependent participation." Art-historically this approach allows for an alternative model of explanation, destabilizing the oppositional logic of the contemplative versus participatory artwork and their relative roles within the history of modernism. In contrast, through the model of dependent participation, participation itself represents a form of submission—one not so dissimilar to the slavishness of the seduced viewer that Brechtian distanciation seeks to counter, or the benumbed consumer of mass media that postmodern critiques, embracing semiotic theory, challenge. With this theoretical approach Nauman's environmental sculptures can be seen to question one of the

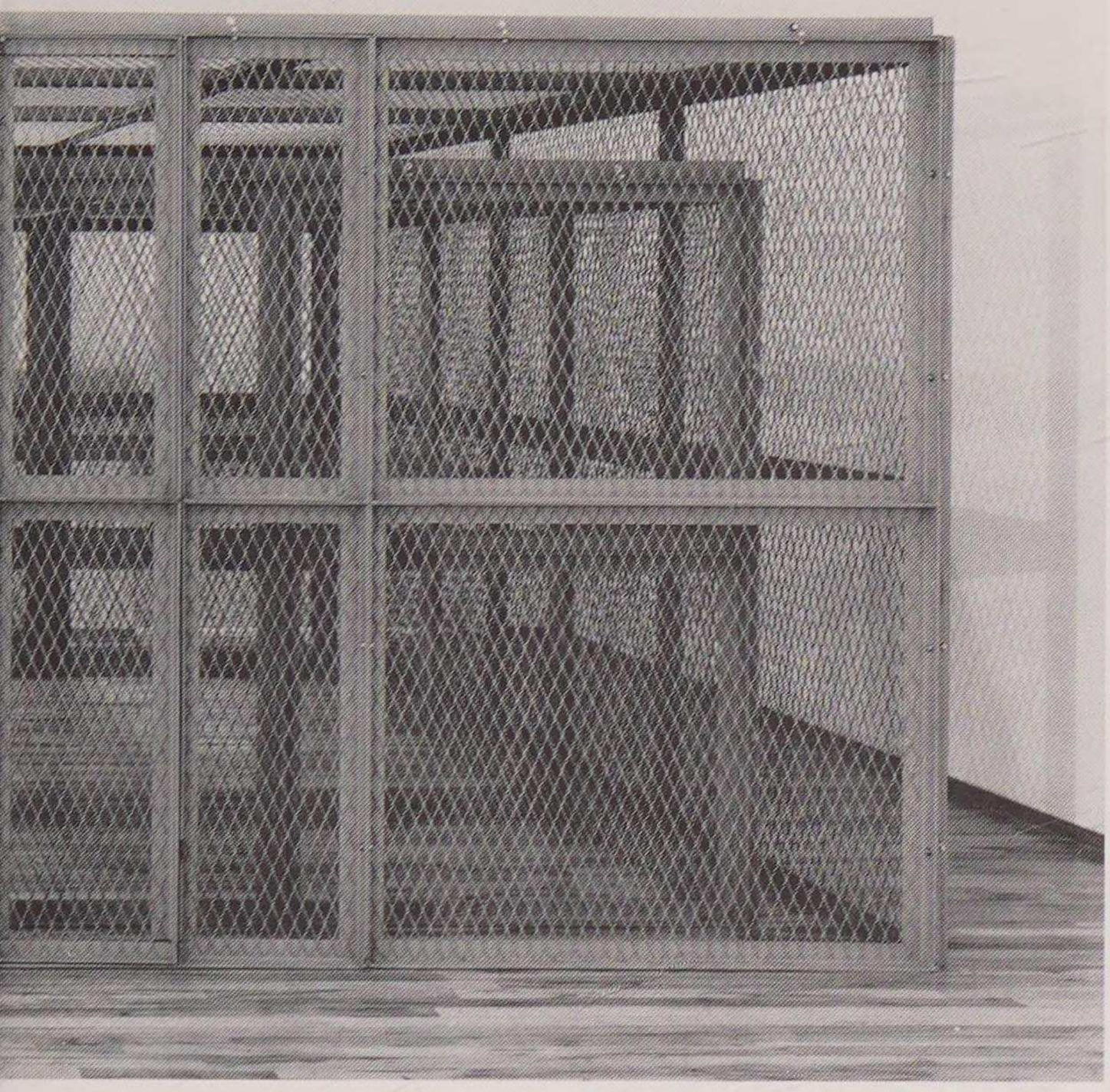


stakes upon which much progressive sculptural work of the sixties turned: namely the possibility (and benefits) of direct experience.

Central to the notion of "presence" and the phenomenological aspirations of Minimalist sculpture (and famously derided by Michael Fried as its problematic "theatricality"), the idea of direct experience was embraced as an antidote to modernism's transcendentalism.[26] Instead, meaning is grounded in the here and now of the temporal, material world, contingent upon the transient situations of encounter. Such forms of lived experience, in the critical thinking of the late sixties, undermined art's rarified (and artificial) aesthetic boundaries and, moreover, questioned the logic of medium specificity that preserved or accommodated this separation. The doctrine of presence reaches its apex in writings on performance, which is not simply insistently temporal but is heralded as the most immediate and "present" of all forms—given the assumed structure of the copresence of artist and viewer, or, in case of interactive installations, the necessity of the viewer's immediate engagement in order to "see" and ultimately create the work.

But if we consider Nauman's installations, direct experience is insistently, even aggressively, precluded. To recall one of the examples described above, *Live Taped Video Corridor* does not simply disturb phenomenal and perceptual states but seems to insist that experience can *only* be generated through representation and reproduction: a point reinforced in the semantic tethering of "live" (presence) and "taped" (reproduction) in its title.

The effects of media on perception, subjectivity, and reality, of course, have been extensively addressed in the critical literature, particularly in relation to the notion of spectacle culture.[27] In media society, to sum these arguments, subjective experience and reality are not simply received but constructed through forms of mediation—such as television, advertising, and other media. In the most extreme readings this leads to the derealization of the real, its displacement by so much simulacra, as well as the dissolution or "splitting" of the subject herself, who is caught within a mire of imagery and perceptual stimuli. Here, however, I want to leave aside this framework, which has been productively argued in other contexts,[28] as well as its potential focus on the literal presence of technology in Nauman's environmental installations, which is not my concern.[29] Rather, I am interested in a more circumscribed issue: how such



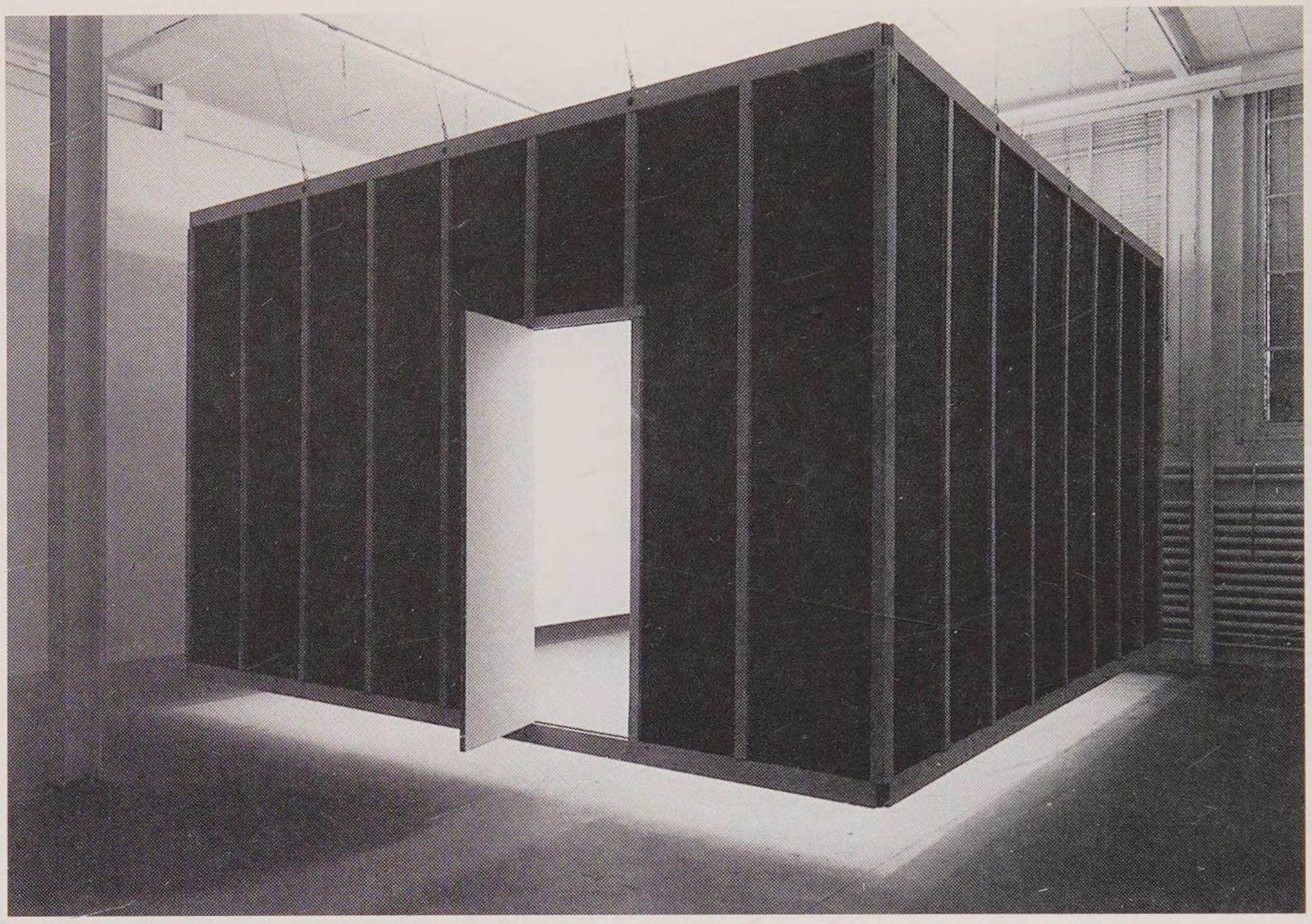
Bruce Nauman. *Double Steel Cage Piece*, 1974. Steel, 84 x 162 x 198". Courtesy: Sperone Westwater Gallery, New York. ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

mechanisms do not simply filter experience but render it largely *unmanageable.* In other words, the beholding subject, at the whim of forces that surpass desire or agency, becomes, to borrow Touraine's descriptive, a *"weak participant."*[30]

Nauman's *Double Steel Cage Piece* (1974) operates on the edge of this premise, in which the possibility of "willing"—but not necessarily free—participation is negotiated. The aspects of authority and control latent in the earlier, abstracted spaces are here thematized into a literal prison. Incarcerating the viewer between two parallel screens of thick wire, the work seems to give concrete form to the Foucauldian nightmare of disciplinary society, in which technology is not simply viewed as a dehumanizing force but gives rise to potent physical and institutional agents of control.[31] In *Double Steel Cage Piece* the viewing subject similarly emerges as a disciplined one, who acts—or, rather, behaves—accordingly.

Experience, in short, is not simply mediated and controlled, but it is *predetermined.* This structure, while characteristic of most all of Nauman's installations, is first, and most economically, realized in *Performance Corridor* (1969). Without the aid of technical devices, but simply due to the physical constraints of its narrow walls (built, moreover, to the measure of the artist's sweeping hips), a succession of like performances results: the "original" one being a video of the artist's performance, which is subsequently reenacted by the audience, whose autonomy is severely compromised by the nature of the physical structure. What results is a series of *programmed* iterations of the simple act of walking in and out of a corridor.

Heuristically speaking, the curtailing of direct experience—or its management—in Nauman's environments guarantees *repetition:* the outcome is largely determined in advance, and the most effective means of circumscribing the beholder's experience is put into place. All potential variations are carefully considered and reduced through a combination of architectural elements and technical devices so that—in *Going Around the Corner,* for example—the monitors are neatly positioned to face one direction, which, in turn, leads to the audience moving in lock-step, circulating the perimeter in an orderly line, without much interpretive modification. *Floating Room: Lit from Inside* (1972), to give another example, offers an equally guided experience. A square room, elevated several

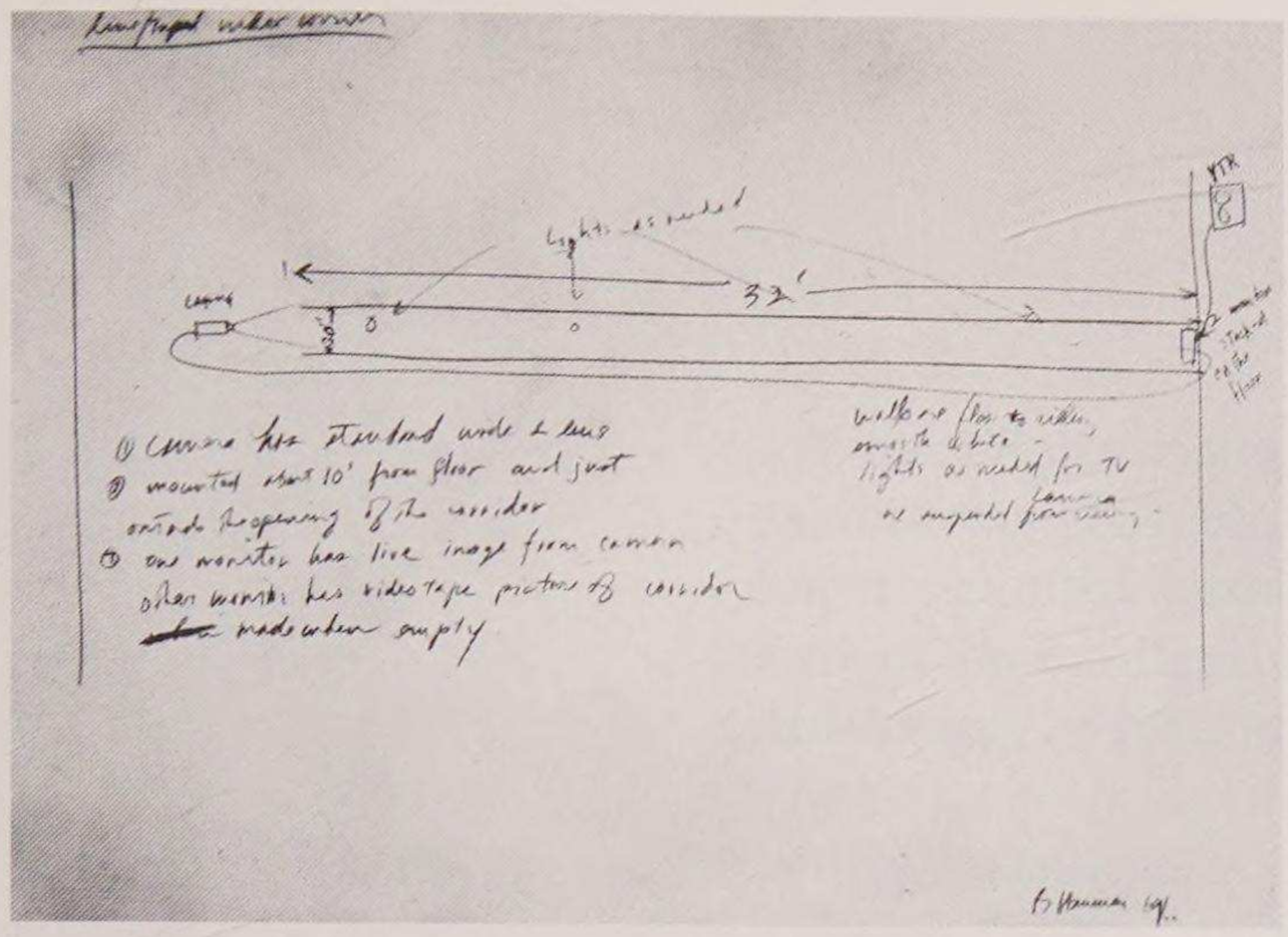


Bruce Nauman. *Floating Room: Lit from Inside*, 1972. Wallboard, wood, fluorescent lights, 120 x 192 x 192", suspended 6 inches above floor. ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

inches off the floor, is illuminated on the inside by glaring lights. Despite the disorienting nature of its interior space—in which walls fail to reach the floor and the intensity of the lighting induces nothing less than a pulsing headache—the viewer is nonetheless compelled to enter: because the only alternative is to remain within the physical unknown of a completely darkened gallery. As critic Jan Butterfield, referring to *Green Light Corridor* (1970), once remarked to the artist: "I think it is a very frightening piece. The manner in which it was structured made it necessary to participate in it your way—and that is frightening."[32]

Through highly prescribed details, Nauman's environments are structured by repetitious interactions. Repetition, however, is central to the principle of *efficiency*, the sine qua non of technological progress. In the sixties a widespread application of the technical notion of efficiency led to the formation or expansion of fields of knowledge, including game or decision theory, in which the ultimate aim (not unlike Nauman's environments) was to anticipate human responses—and, in so doing, to *manage* them.[33] Through an adaptation of scientific principles of rationality and theories of logic, a means of envisioning and then limiting the range of possible behaviors was found, thereby ensuring a particular outcome.

While their pragmatic uses were numerous (military, scientific, economic, etc.), game or decision theory also demonstrates a more generalized characteristic of technocratic culture: its realization of an information- or knowledge-based society, in which "technical" expertise enters into areas hitherto largely immune to it. Information theory, cybernetics, and decision theory (what Daniel Bell aptly terms "intellectual technologies"), for example, operate according to a similar logic in which means and outcome—or input and output, to use the computer terminology—are calculated. Through



Bruce Nauman. *Untitled (Live/taped video corridor)*, 1969–70. Pencil on paper. 22 x 30". ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

computation, seemingly unquantifiable variables are parsed into discrete units of analysis, yielding a manageable order. "The goal of the new intellectual technologies is, neither more nor less," Bell exclaims, "to realize the social alchemist's dream: the dream of 'ordering' the mass society. . . . If the computer is the tool, then *decision theory* is the master."[34]

In short, such knowledge systems, which are central to sixties' technocratic society, are resolutely goal-oriented, working both prescriptively and predictively to ensure the most efficacious and expedient result. As such, they function as an analogue for technocratic culture as a whole—which may be described as a *society of performance.* Whether referring to economic activity, educational institutions, or machines such as the computer, the goal of the given system or institution is one and the same: efficiency, or a graduated process of improving "performance."

If in his public comments Nauman disdains "games" in the vernacular sense as nonserious "play," his sculptural environments nonetheless incorporate the logic of game theory. Various restraints, both physical and mental, simultaneously anticipate and then circumscribe human response. In the process uncertainty and interpretive deviation are minimized as much as possible, a dynamic that economists, in an application of game theory, have described as "minimax"—or the minimization of maximum loss.[35] Nauman's installations constitute spaces of "performance"—defined, that is, as *efficient interaction.* To emphasize, *performance* here does not simply refer to the viewer creating *a* performance as a *participant;* rather, through the social theory of technology, *performance* acquires a very different meaning, one that concerns the formation of a rationalistic social order.

Whereas the Minimalist exploration of phenomenological conditions of perception banked on the ability to assert and engage the direct experience of the beholder, Nauman's installations aim to calculate and determine that experience through laws of probability. This perhaps explains why the artist often describes all aspects of his sculptural work (whether visual, conceptual, or perceptual) as "modes of information: dry language that seems directly at odds with the highly experiential or material qualities of the works themselves."[36] But with this claim and the use of game theory—with its quasi-scientific mapping of responses and the mitigation of choice and conflict—as a theoretical model for performance (defined now as "efficiency"), it may appear that this essay is proposing that Nauman's installations constitute embodiments of technorationality. Quite to the contrary, however, I am interested in the point at which

the rationalization of society comes under pressure. Rather than the realization of reason, in other words, Nauman's "performance" environments speak to the moment of reason's collapse, when technological change ushers in an acute crisis of legitimation—a topic of a philosophical debate that arises and is played out against the backdrop of technocratic society.

The Fate of an Idea: Technocracy and Reason

In the late sixties, sociologist Jean Meynaud voiced his fear that "politics" would be displaced by technocracy.[37] What Meynaud means by this is that the pursuit of traditional "political" ideals, including those at the foundation of bourgeois society (i.e., freedom, self-determination, justice), will gradually dwindle away in favor of the singular mission to increase "productivity." Writing a decade later, with the benefit of hindsight and the present realization of developments upon which earlier thinkers could only speculate, Jean-François Lyotard takes this sociological observation one step further, developing a philosophical account of the shifting nature of knowledge and society.[38]

In a not-so-subtle challenge to Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative reason, Lyotard reflects upon what Andrew Feenberg describes as the "technical turn" of contemporary knowledge.[39] Deftly marrying contemporary theory and the social discourse of technology, Lyotard specifically engages with the problematic of "performance." His subject is not simply computer and information technologies, however, but the reorientation of knowledge itself under the forces of technical change. He writes, "Technology is a game pertaining not to the true, the just, or the beautiful, etc., but to efficiency: a technical 'move' is 'good' when it does better and/or expends less energy than another."[40] Lyotard emphasizes that the "goal" of knowledge has ceased to be the revelation of truth or the realization of human possibility and instead has become the optimizing of "performance." Accordingly, he adapts the linguistic concept of *performativity* (i.e., the performative utterance or language game) as both a methodological model and the fundamental principle of contemporary, technocratic society—which being knowledge- or information-based is "linguistically" oriented. According to the logic of the language game, ever-shifting rules produce a different outcome: hence Lyotard's now well-known notion of the local or "little" narrative that displaces master or "grand" narratives. But Lyotard not only argues that knowledge is subject to change and competing ideals; rather, with the advent of "language" technologies (problems of communication, cybernetics, computer languages, information storage, to name a few of his examples), it is no longer even a product of individual "knowing." It is, in his words, "exteriorized":

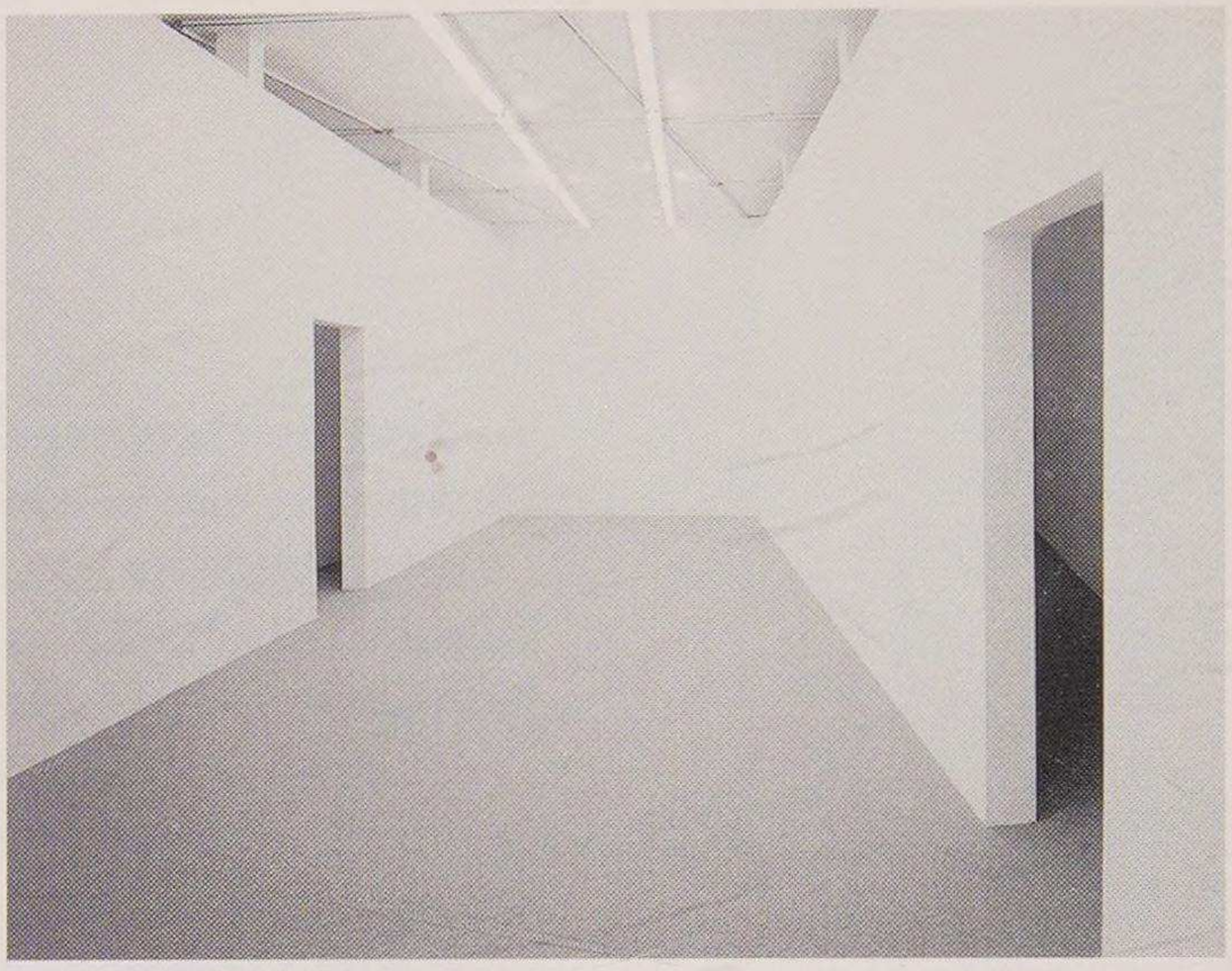
> We must thus expect a thorough exteriorization of knowledge with respect to the "knower," at whatever point he or she may occupy in the knowledge process. The old principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissociable from the training *(Bildung)* of minds, or even of individuals, is becoming obsolete and will become ever more so. The relationship of the suppliers and users of knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use is now tending, and will increasingly tend, to assume the form already taken by the relationship of commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce—that is, the form of value. Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production; in both cases, the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its "use-value."[41]

In this passage not only does Lyotard renounce both subject-centered Hegelianism and the willful humanism of Habermas, but he emphasizes the commodification of knowledge itself—a subject of earlier speculation, which, he can now assert with some certainty, has come to pass.[42] With the removal of knowledge from the subject's control and the emphasis on "performance" over "truth," however, society loses its bases of legitimation. To recall Lyotard's statement cited previously, what is "good" is no longer necessarily what is "true." Rather "goodness" is gauged by productivity, while expending the least possible effort—an acutely passive condition. Due to this reorientation, Lyotard argues, society abdicates any claim to rationality. "The games of scientific language become the games of the rich," Lyotard inveighs, "in which whoever is wealthiest has the best chance of being right. An equation between wealth, efficiency, and truth is thus established."[43]

In this "game"—one of struggle and conflict, and precisely *not* the Habermasian dream of trouble-free consensus—Lyotard finds a series of losses: of the possibility of resistance, of the actual fulfillment of human need, and of political idealism. Lyotard's position, however, resists nostalgia, containing no dream of returning to a pretechnical past. Within this system, he counters, the source of domination and resistance are one and the same: the only path for the subject is opened up by an increased access to knowledge that technology affords; while at the same time technology (or rather, technical society) instills conformity. Hence the ambivalence of Lyotard's treatise, stuck in the dialectic of participation and control.

The Dream of Interactivity

The equivocality of Lyotard's argument, which distinguishes it from the wholesale technophobia of earlier philosophical accounts, is



Bruce Nauman. *Left or Standing, Standing or Left Standing*, 1971/99. Wallboard, yellow fluorescent lights, 2 monitors, 1 videodisc player, 1 videodisc, text. Dimensions variable. Courtesy: Sperone Westwater Gallery, New York. ©2002 Bruce Nauman/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

useful in understanding why we are not simply oppressed but are also seduced by Nauman's environments. What can be irritating lighting, as in the glaring yellow of the *Left or Standing, Standing or Left Standing,* is also the source of wondrous optical tricks: the simple juxtaposition of different lighting technologies (fluorescent and incandescent) produces painterly illusions in three-dimensional space.[44] What can be a terrifyingly narrow space in *Live Taped Video Corridor* also induces a profound pleasure in the game it creates: no matter how much the beholder realizes the futility of the task, she will repeatedly try to "beat the machine" and somehow line up her image to match bodily experience. What can seem to be impossibly manipulative, as the illuminated cleave of space in *Green Light Corridor,* also reveals "chinks" in the system—or the point where intervention is unable to completely dictate the outcome, as Nauman readily acknowledges.[45]

In Nauman's manipulative yet pleasurable spaces there is also a cautionary tale, one regarding participation as a panacea, a message that resonates perhaps even more intensely in contemporary culture where *dependent participation* is increasingly the reality—and even the operative principle—of a global information society. Advanced information technologies, such as the Internet, afford endless opportunity for interactivity; but hidden—and not so hidden—within them, are ever more insidious mechanisms of manipulation (browser tracking, personally targeted marketing, "cookies," etc.). In this system choice is illusory and participation obligatory: after all, if we don't accept the mechanisms, we cannot purchase a book, a ticket, or even view our own private records online. As Alain Touraine observed forty years ago, to refuse to participate is not a possibility. To be a subject in contemporary culture, one cannot simply reject the cards that historical possibility has dealt. There is little or no choice, which is why perhaps "choice"—and its cousin, "customization"—are now such ubiquitous buzzwords: forms of coercive management sporting a benign guise.

That the body of the spectator in Nauman's environments is the actor through which these dramas and conflicts are played out is not surprising. As a historical agent the individual is still the cornerstone, the pawn of a technocratic system that increasingly markets "individual" desire and which, despite providing less autonomy and choice, proffers a fantasy of more and more. Likewise, in Nauman's installations the subject ultimately is the one who must navigate a minefield of participation and control, discovering those small opportunities where conformity breaks down and possibility, even if fleeting and limited, accrues.

Notes

This essay is part of a longer study on the problem of performance in the art of the sixties and seventies, here addressed through the social theory of technology. I want to thank the editors of *Grey Room*—Reinhold Martin, Felicity Scott, and especially Branden Joseph—for their helpful comments and advice in the final preparation of this essay.

1. Bruce Nauman, interview by Lorraine Sciarra, 1972, Pomona College, Claremont, Cal., 9.

2. Bruce Nauman, interview by Michele de Angelus, 1980, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C., 79.

3. Beyond the European/American context, in the South American postwar avant-garde the participant assumed an equal—if not more crucial—role in an explicitly political project: for example, Lygia Clark's interactive "relational objects" and "propositions" produced during the sixties; or Hélio Oiticica's "Quasi-cinemas" (a series of interactive, multimedia installations made in the early seventies) and "Parangolé," which Oiticica describes as follows: "*Parangolé* is anti-art par excellence; and I intend to extend the practice of appropriation to things of the world which I come across in the streets, vacant lots, fields, the ambient world, things which would not be transportable, but which I would invite the public to participate in. This would be a fatal blow to the concept of the museum, art gallery, etc., and to the very concept of 'exhibition.'" Hélio Oiticica, "Position and Program," in *Conceptual Art: a Critical Anthology*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 9.

4. Willoughby Sharp, "Nauman Interview," *Arts Magazine* 44, no. 5 (March 1970): 23.

5. Jan Butterfield, "Bruce Nauman: The Center of Yourself," *Arts Magazine* 49, no. 46 (February 1975): 55.

6. For example, Paul Schimmel writes, "Throughout Nauman's career he has baited, controlled, bored, infuriated, scared, insulted, angered, imperiled, experimented with, and manipulated us—his viewers—into experiencing his work within his parameters." Schimmel, "Pay Attention," in *Bruce Nauman*, eds. Neal Benezra, Kathy Halbreich, and Joan Simon, exh. cat. and catalogue raisonné (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1994), 69. A more extreme biographical leap is evidenced in the following observation by Andrew Solomon, from an article that profiles the artist on the occasion of the opening of his 1995 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York: "Looking at Nauman's retrospective is like walking through someone else's psychoanalysis: it's full of patterns and recurring wishes, anxieties and obsessions; it's sometimes rather comical and often hostile; it keeps turning out to be about something other than what's apparently being said. Like someone else's psychoanalysis, Nauman's work is often boring and repetitive. . . . I had seen Nauman's work for years and had never wanted to meet him. I had thought he was probably sadistic and controlling and brilliant and unforgiving and cold." Andrew Solomon, "Bruce Nauman: Complex Cowboy," *The New York Times Magazine*, 5 March 1995: 29–30.

7. For further description of the piece, see entry no. 172 in the catalogue raisonné. Benezra, Halbreich, and Simon, 241.

8. Referenced here are Nauman's two related pieces, *Learned Helplessness in Rats (Rock and Roll Drummer)* (1988) and *Rats and Bats (Learned Helplessness in Rats II)* (1988). In both, a rat navigates the interior space of a Plexiglas maze, placed on the floor of a darkened gallery, while a combination of closed-circuit

and prerecorded imagery is projected onto the walls of the gallery. The rat essentially performs the same role as the beholder in the earlier corridor installations described above.

9. For example, architectural historian Anthony Vidler theorizes modern space through the Freudian notion of the *unheimlich:* He writes, "[T]he labyrinthine spaces of the modern city have been constructed as the sources of modern anxiety, from revolution and epidemic to phobia and alienation . . ." See Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), ix.

10. Rodenbeck further observes: "This piece is often discussed in relation to the notion of 'rebirth'—a mythic, even epiphanic reading. . . . [But] attendees recall the smell of fear—Kaprow himself admits he was interested in this as an element. The imagery—no, the actuality—of confinement as well as the assaultive violence of the audience's 'liberation' by a roaring lawnmower has as much to do with the historically specific imagery of the Holocaust or of behaviorist experiments as it does with any mythical notion of 'rebirth.'" Judith Rodenbeck, *Crash: Happenings (as) the Black Box of Experience, 1958–1966* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2002), 105–106.

11. Frazer Ward has written compellingly about the issue of performance and audience involvement through a theory of ethics exploring the nature of "acts" rather than simply the entreaty "to act." Frazer Ward, "Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0:* Performance, Audience, Ethics," paper presented at the College Art Association Annual Conference, Philadelphia, Penn., February 2002.

12. The works referred to here include Jorge Pardo's *Pier* (1997), installed in situ for the "Sculpture Projects" exhibition, Münster, Germany 1997; Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)* (1992), as well as the artist's many other performances/installations in which he prepares and serves food; and Charles Long's *Bubble Gum Station* (1995), an installation (which is part of a series of sculptures collectively titled *The Amorphous Body Study Center*) consisting of a central pedestal holding a large blob of bright pink clay, which viewers are encouraged to manipulate while listening to music through headphones attached to the sculptural mass. Of course, not all contemporary works interpret audience participation in such terms: for example, Andrea Zittel's *A-Z Carpet Furniture* (1993; part of her *A-Z Designs for Living* series), among other works, touches upon the more oppressive or sinister aspects of design, controlling the viewer/inhabitant through domestic objects and spaces. Other pieces by the artist, however, such as *Escape Vehicles,* more readily approach the "user-friendly" doctrine of participation. In *Escape Vehicles* the collector customizes the interior of a small unit (the shell of which is designed by Zittel), creating a private space of personal taste and objects. Even this work, however, tarries between pleasure and oppression: as Stefano Basilico mentioned to me, in the *Escape Vehicle* one basically designs one's own coffin, a decidedly morbid task.

13. Miwon Kwon, in an important study of the historical and theoretical transformations of "site-specific" practices, discusses this relatively recent phenomenon of the "artist as service-provider." Drawing upon—and inverting—Benjamin Buchloh's construct of the "aesthetics of administration," which he developed in relationship to conceptual art, Kwon theorizes the "administration of aesthetics" in the art of the 1980s and 1990s. Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 51.

14. The argument was developed in relation to the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose various projects entail serving food and drink, performing live music, and

re-creating a full-scale model of the interior of his apartment in a gallery, an so on—all of which generate spaces for social exchange. The "generosity" often attributed to these works, is, however, misleading, in that, according to the structural logic of the gift, it demands reciprocity and fosters social contracts of obligation. See Janet Kraynak, "Rirkrit Tiravanija's Liability," *Documents* 13 (Fall 1998): 26–40.

15. In the essay on Rirkrit Tiravanija's work cited above, I draw upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic "capital," which represents an intangible, yet powerful, source of economic and political wealth, and contend that "the gift" in fact constitutes a central economic force in late capitalist society.

16. William Akin, *Technocracy and the American Dream: The Technocratic Movement 1900–41* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), x (emphasis added).

17. In *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (1904) Thorstein Veblen maintains that the rationality and objectivity of the scientist (or the engineer) was an antidote to the uncontainable self-centeredness of the capitalist businessman, who, rather than aiding the economy, was detrimental to its smooth functioning. Frederick Taylor, whose theory of scientific management has been widely discussed, was similarly committed to scientific principles of rationality, which, he argued, could be applied to generate increasingly efficient models of work, the factory, and, by extension, social life. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1911).

18. Referring to the sixties as an important turning point, Andrew Feenberg, in his study on the philosophy of technology, writes: "It is not easy to explain the dramatic shift in attitudes towards technology that occurred in the 1960s. By the end of the decade early enthusiasm for nuclear energy and the space program gave way to technophobic reaction. But it was not so much technology itself as the rising technocracy that provoked public hostility." Feenberg, *Questioning Technology* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 4.

19. Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

20. Jean Meynaud, *Technocracy,* trans. Paul Barnes (New York: Free Press, 1968); Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society,* trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Knopf, 1967); Alain Touraine, *The Post-Industrial Society: Tomorrow's Social History: Classes, Conflicts, and Culture in the Programmed Society,* trans. Leonard F.X. Mayhew (New York: Random House, 1971); and Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964). Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977); Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972).

21. Bell, 8.

22. For example, Theodore Roszak, in *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), argues that "counter-culture" in the United States arose as a specific reaction to technocratic society. Similarly, Andrew Feenberg explores the relationship between the student revolts of May 1968 in France and technocracy, including their protest against the transformation of the university into a "knowledge factory." See, Feenberg, *Questioning Technology,* 21–43.

23. Touraine, 7.

24. Touraine, 9.

25. Touraine, 9. The complete quote is "Alienation means canceling out social

conflict by creating dependent participation."

26. In his essay (now equally as famous for the accuracy of its reading of Minimalist sculpture as for its decidedly negative assessment), Michael Fried posits an opposition between Minimalist "presence" (defined as material and temporal) and modernist "presentness," the latter an essentially atemporal construct in which time exists in an ideal, arrested state. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (June 1967), 12–23.

27. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1970), first English translation. Debord writes, "The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people mediated by images." Later on, Jean Baudrillard radicalized Debord's notion of spectacle, claiming that the "real" itself no longer exists, rather is atomized into an endlessly self-referential chain of signifiers. Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," in *Selected Writings,* ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 166–184.

28. See Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999). For some recent studies that develop such themes in relation to television, technology, and postwar media culture more specifically, see Anna McCarthy, "From Screen to Site: Television's Material Culture, and Its Place," *October* 98 (Fall 2001): 93–111; Pamela M. Lee, "Bridget Riley's Eye/Body Problem," *October* 98 (Fall 2001): 27–46; David Joselit, "The Video Public Sphere," *Art Journal* 59, no.2 (Summer 2000): 46–53; and Branden W. Joseph, "'My Mind Split Open': Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable," *Grey Room* 08 (Summer 2002): 80–107 (in the same issue, see also David Joselit's "Yippie Pop: Abbie Hoffman, Andy Warhol, and Sixties Media Politics": 62–79).

29. One danger this approach poses is of lapsing into technofetishism, which, given Nauman's complicated relationship to new technologies, is highly suspect. Despite continually experimenting with different techniques and media, the artist often utilizes outdated or outmoded techniques—such as neon, which in the 1960s, as Brenda Richardson notes, was already tainted by obsolescence. See Brenda Richardson, "Bruce Nauman: Neons," *Bruce Nauman: Neons*, exh. cat. (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1982), 13–39. Furthermore, when Nauman employs newer technologies—such as the Sony Portapak video camera in the late sixties and, most recently, infrared digital photography—he often subjects the medium to extreme forms of manipulation, harnessing it for decidedly dated visual effects such as filmic graininess. The futuristic and the retro are thus continuously inverted.

30. Furthermore, Touraine writes, "A choice between returning to traditional cultural themes and memberships or the passive consumption of the mass media does not exist. These are two closely connected manifestations of cultural underdevelopment, which is itself *bound to the weak participation of the masses* in the values and products of technical civilization and social democracy." Touraine, 203 (emphasis added).

31. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

32. Butterfield, 54.

33. Game theory has a long history, but two key postwar texts are H.W. Kuhn and A.W. Tucker, eds., *Contributions to the Theory of Games*, vol. I of *Annals of Mathematics Studies* 24 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950); and John Charles Mckinsey, *Introduction to the Theory of Games* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1952).

34. Bell, 33.

35. As cited in Bell (31), the economic application of the principle of "minimax"

appears in John van Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944).

36. For example, in the following, Nauman refers to two early sculptures: *A Cast of the Space under My Chair* (1965–1968), a somewhat battered cubic form, and *Shelf Sinking into the Wall with Copper-Painted Plaster Casts of the Spaces Underneath* (1966), both which are largely unreadable in the absence of their titles: "I think, in a sense, a lot of the titles . . . where there were titles like *Shelves Sinking into the Wall,* and all that, were sort of trying to give two pieces of information. . . . And probably what I found out from that is that you can give two pieces of information and the piece is finally about that. It's about the tension of not being able to put them together." Nauman, interview by de Angelus, 73–74.

37. "Let us suppose that in a world in which the profit motive becomes more and more paramount," Meynaud writes, "the political authorities (as is already partly true) failed to keep a close watch on the activities of technologists, who do not all have the public interest at heart; in the end, the effect would be a barely perceptible evolution towards a régime which would be democratic only on the surface. The elected representatives would be deprived of the substance of their power. . . . The democratic principle would then be nothing more than the 'front' . . . behind which the true leaders of the country would justify or disguise their domination." Meynaud, *Technocracy,* 15–16.

38. Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

39. Andrew Feenberg, *Alternative Modernity: The Technical Turn in Philosophy and Social Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

40. Lyotard, 44.

41. Lyotard, 4–5.

42. And perhaps even more so in contemporary culture, where, for example, in educational institutions, the drive for "efficiency" is equated with tangible evidence such as test scores rather than the acquisition of knowledge, and where the reward is not the creation of an educated or enlightened population, but money—in the form of additional school funding or salary incentives. Such outcomes of technocracy, only feared by earlier writers, are increasingly the rule of contemporary society.

43. Lyotard, 45.

44. Formerly called *Installation with Yellow Lights, Left or Standing, Standing or Left Standing* (1971/1999)—named for the accompanying text written by the artist—consists of a trapezoidal room whose walls do not extend to the ceiling and which is illuminated with bright, yellow fluorescent lights. Two corridors on either side of the central room are lit with incandescent lights; as a result, when the viewer looks up to the gap between the wall and ceiling, the two forms of light blend, yielding a purple afterimage.

45. In response to an inquiry by Jan Butterfield regarding whether or not he "queries people afterwards" to check if the participant's reaction to any given installation is similar to his own, Nauman comments: "People will tell me that they tried it and it didn't do what I said it would for them; or that they read a great deal about a given piece, but didn't have the response they were 'supposed to'; or, conversely that they did not seem to relate at all to what I had written in the instructions. For example, I will say at some point that the exercise will become very sensual, or very sexual, and people will tell me that it didn't for them." Butterfield, 55.

Out of the Present.
Dir. Andrei Ujica, 1995.
Sergei Krikalev

Editors' Note

These two conversations were initiated by the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporaine on the occasion of the exhibition *1 monde réel,* and took place in the spring of 1999. The first, between Andrei Ujica and cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev, more conversational in tone, revolves around the experience of space travel. The second, between Ujica and Paul Virilio, is more theoretical. Both address Ujica's 1995 film, *Out of the Present,* a cinematic reconstruction of Krikalev's historic ten-month flight on board the MIR Space Station, a journey in which the cosmonaut departed from the Soviet Union and, following the August coup in Moscow, returned to Russia.



Toward the End of Gravity I

SERGEI KRIKALEV/ANDREI UJICA
TRANSLATED BY SARA OGGER

Andrei Ujica: It must be about five years since we first met, in Moscow. At the time, I had come here to make a film about your mission aboard the MIR Space Station in 1991–1992. In 1995 the film *Out of the Present* was finished, and since then neither of us has ever really escaped from this story: for my part, it's a bit as if I myself had been in space, as if I'd really taken part in this adventure; and for your part, you've become—if you think about our appearances at festivals—a veritable celebrity, or at any rate a film personality. The decisive difference between us, though, remains the same: you've been in space and I haven't. You've personally experienced space; for you, it's a real world. What does it mean, ultimately, to live up there?

Sergei Krikalev: When you return to the earth, the flight is of the moment and immediate, but at the same time it starts to feel unreal. Precisely because you remember all the details exactly, it makes it all the harder to believe that you really spent time there. For me, your film is a kind of forced remembrance of the flight, sort of like a vacation film you watch later, which evokes all these extra images not even on the screen. That's what it's like for me when I see the film. Other than that, it's always the same: after a while every trip seems to become immaterial and starts to resemble a fiction. That's why I often find it difficult to grasp that I've personally experienced one adventure or another.

AU: Still, what does it really mean to live in space? What's the first thing you think of?

SK: It's not easy for me to answer this question, because I've been on a total of four space flights, which means that I've spent in all more than fifteen months in outer space, and each of these flights was different. If you leave the country for a few days, then you can summarize your feelings in just a few sentences, but if you undertake a longer trip, then things get more complicated. The 1991–1992 mission was my second flight. I already had an idea of life on board, like what is required of you and how to handle yourself. Alright, then, the decisive difference between life on Earth and life in space is, without a doubt, the lack of gravity, because you constantly have to be cautious of even the slightest motions, to gauge the entropy of things, and to be patient. And that's true for the entire time in space. In the end, life there is marked by two things: being dependent on a very compact and, after a while, restrictive living area, and the

weightlessness. But what I normally think of first when I recall my life in space is the view out the window. What you can see out there is overwhelming.

AU: Let's talk a bit more about weightlessness. Here we're primarily dealing with a physical experience that starts when one reaches orbit. As far as I know, that experience is anything but pleasant. At a certain point, though, this sensation is said to give way to its opposite.

SK: Each person experiences it differently. I was lucky, personally, because I didn't suffer too much. Still, it's not easy. Weightlessness is, no matter what, a kind of burden. It changes us physically: our faces swell because the blood rushes to the head, while the blood vessels themselves also expand. And this state continues during the entire flight. You need a certain amount of time to get used to it, which doesn't mean that it gets any easier. On the other hand, for me personally it is easier to get used to weightlessness than to get used to gravity again later.

AU: From a psychological point of view the most important change is probably the loss of any real points of orientation. Unlike our situation on Earth, where we stand with both feet firmly planted on the ground because gravity creates a "universal" stable vertical axis, all this disappears in zero gravity. What sort of specific consequences does this have?

SK: On Earth there are two mutual horizontal axes: front/back and left/right. These are different than the vertical axis of up/down. In outer space, they are all equivalent. And when you think about it, that's perfectly normal. For in themselves all directions are equally important. Why should there be a hierarchical distinction between the vertical and the horizontal? In space I can sleep on the wall of the cabin or work on the ceiling. In order to give us our accustomed points of orientation, though, the space station contains helpful indicators such as light and color. One can hardly imagine the amount of psychological study that must go into the construction of a space station, all with the sole purpose of minimizing the cosmonaut's feeling of alienation from home. The ceiling, or better, the surface designated as such, is different from the other surfaces in its white color and lighting, even though you could sleep as well as work there. Correspondingly, the side defined as the floor has its own color. The side walls, too, are nothing other than surfaces entirely comparable in their function. In this way, simple orientation points are created artificially, where otherwise all directions are equal. You could turn the space station upside down and still the same axes of reference would be in place. Despite all this it would be wrong to say that all directions are equal in space. It is true from a physical perspective, since all directions are born equal in their relation to the center of gravity. But since one is on a space station

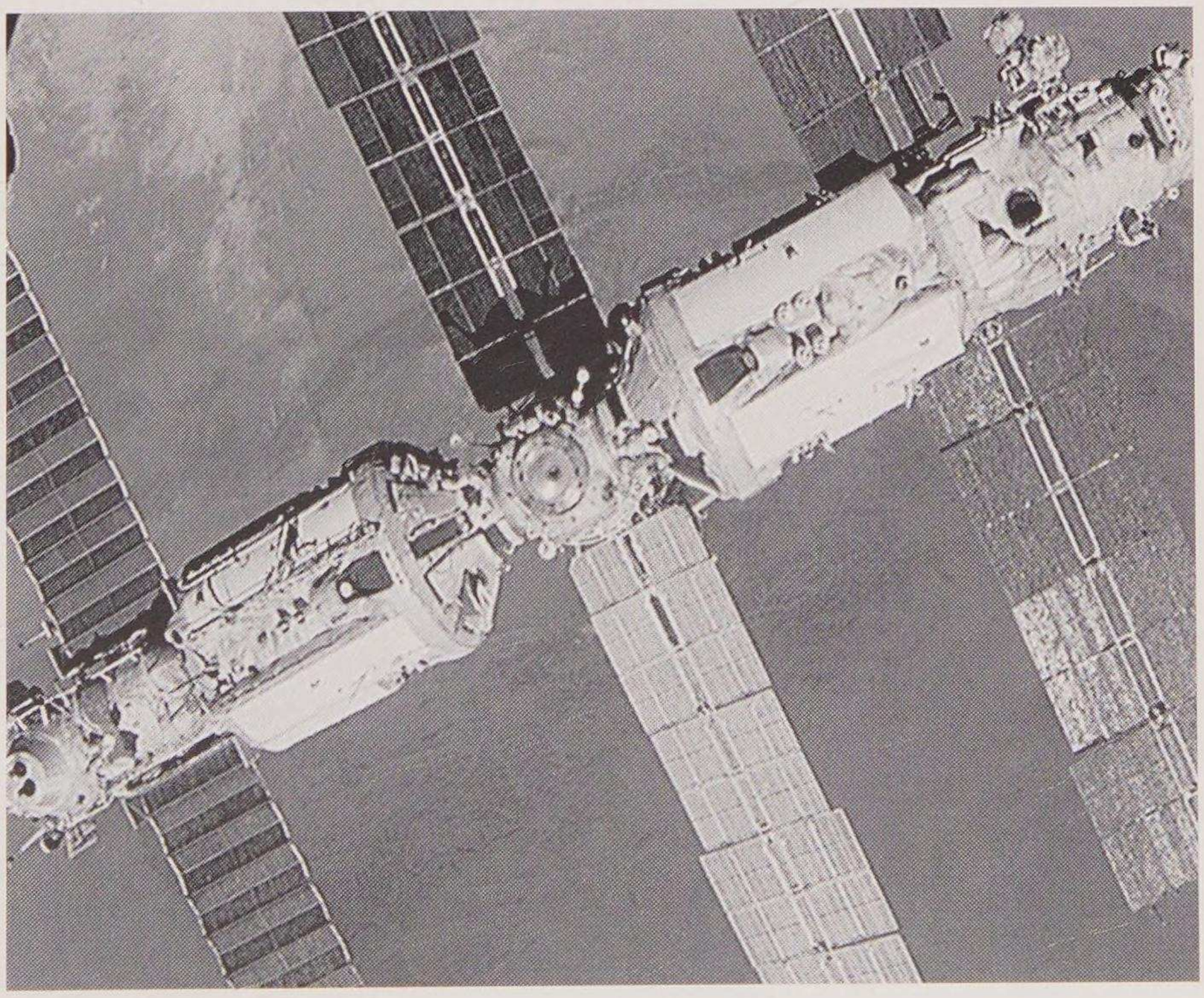
that does nothing but continually circle the Earth, one is still subject to its gravitational tug. And in two ways, that is, in a psychological sense too. For this reason Earth is given special consideration. And we end up differentiating one direction from the rest: the direction of the Earth. If you are constantly looking toward one direction, you become increasingly aware of it. Just as here below we have historically loaded or emotion-filled places that will always mean something to us, in space we have the Earth as a whole. So its direction can't be one among others.

AU: It must be a very strange feeling not to have any weight for some length of time . . .

SK: You know, the bodily sensation in zero gravity is the same as that in a free fall. When someone falls from a tree, the feeling that occurs in the short time before hitting the ground is exactly the same as in a state of weightlessness. A pretty strange feeling. Many people recognize it from that dream that makes you suddenly wake up. In space flight you start to "fall" as soon as you enter orbit. The propulsion jets are turned off, the acceleration is over, and the fall begins. And this state of affairs lasts until landing. It's not a matter of a few dream minutes, but rather lasts for months. Eventually you get used to it, but at first it's hard even to go to sleep. Imagine that you've jumped from a plane and, before your parachute opens, you have to try to live a completely normal life—do your work, get some rest, etc. That is exactly what zero gravity is like.

AU: So then what's it like when gravity reestablishes verticality upon your return to Earth, when you're aware of your body's weight again? Are you depressed because your body is suddenly so heavy? Do we terrestrials maybe tend toward depression because everything here is constantly being pulled downward, including our thoughts?

SK: Hard to say. Mixed feelings are common. On the one hand it's nice to be back in our natural environment, which was the whole universe to our ancestors. The development of human life



Out of the Present.

has been ruled by the law of gravity since its origins. On returning, my perceptions return more or less to normal, and thanks to gravity I am very aware of our upright bodily position. Then you see the sun in a blue sky, which had been black the whole time in outer space. Even though there's a lot of adjustment at first—at least until the muscle loss incurred during the flight isn't making things quite as difficult any more—it's still pleasant to be here. Your body finds itself back in the surroundings for which it was intended. Of course it's always a bit annoying to remember that on Earth you can't just leave things sitting in the air. In space, when you let go of an object, as everyone knows, it doesn't just fall. I can go somewhere else for a while, and find it suspended just where I left it. On the other hand it's not practical—you can't just put things down on a table. If you try it, things float off. You have to secure things, otherwise they're constantly moving around. But once you're used to it, there are certain advantages in zero gravity. You can transport heavy objects without difficulty, or float in a room. It's easy to move upward, which in some circumstances is the better solution. All in all, life in space is really something special.

AU: Is that what makes you want to go back to outer space?

SK: Even on this question I'm of two different minds. It's hard for me to make a clean distinction between them for you. There are a number of factors behind my wish to return to space. The flights are not just a part of my career, but its very pinnacle. You spend a lot of time on Earth training, and every space mission represents the culmination of years of preparation. Beyond that, it's incredibly interesting to see parts of Earth where you've never been and where you'll probably never go. It is true that it's not at all healthy to stay in space for long periods of time—and, as I mentioned, also quite exhausting and burdensome—but it's hardly a bad memory. As far as I know, everyone who has ever been in space is glad to go back. We cosmonauts are like sailors. Sailors long for the high sea, and no sooner do they have solid ground beneath their feet than they're already dreaming of heading out again.

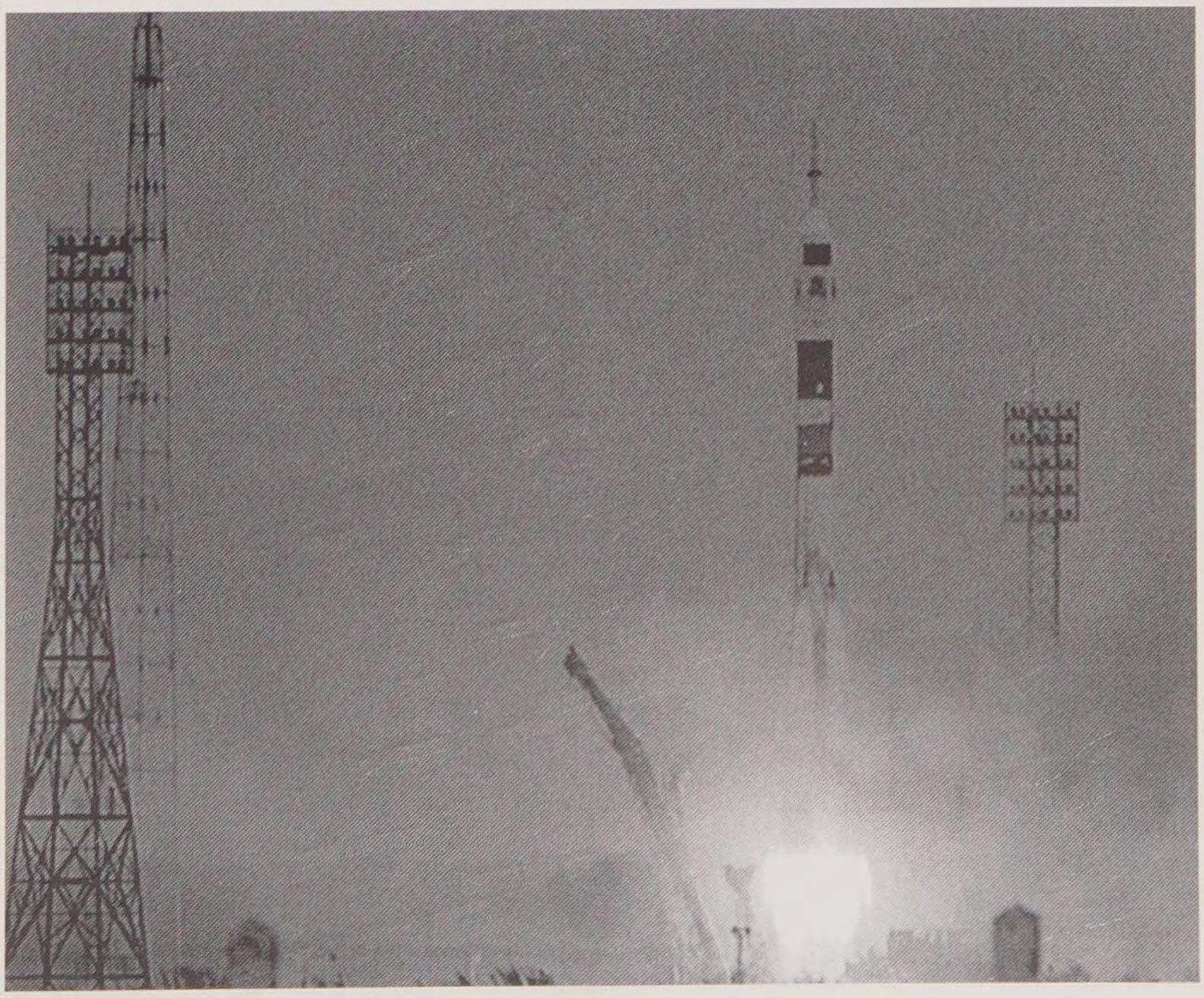
AU: There are only a few people who have had the privilege, once reserved for divinity, of seeing Earth from space. No more than several hundred. That must occur to you, too, now and again. Has the fact that you belong to these select few changed you in any significant way?

SK: Probably. It is always difficult to make claims like that about oneself. Important experiences in general open up new ways of seeing and change people. In space you recognize in all concreteness how small Earth really is. The curvature of the horizon becomes visible—you can see with your own eyes that it's round. Our world is far from being as big as we often think it is. And the atmosphere around it is so thin that it's frightening. You have an entirely differ-

ent view of things, and that does change a person. Most people who have participated in a space mission later become much more concerned about the environment, about the general living conditions on Earth. Because they know exactly what they're talking about. Other than that, though, I can hardly put a name to how space may have changed me. It's undeniable that life in a space station leaves its trace. For me it has to do with the very specific kind of responsibility one is faced with there. We spend most of our time accomplishing our work objectives. For its own understandable artistic purposes, the film shows this only sparingly. In truth, we continually collected data for various scientific experiments. Whole teams of scientists spent endless amounts of time and effort to prepare the experiments we were to execute on board. So one has a moral duty to fulfill the task as well as possible. In even the smallest details I was charged with in space, I felt this sense of responsibility. That has to have molded me; that much I'm sure of. For an answer to your actual question, though, you would have to talk to people who knew me well before my first mission. My development progressed too slowly and incrementally for me to be a good judge of it.

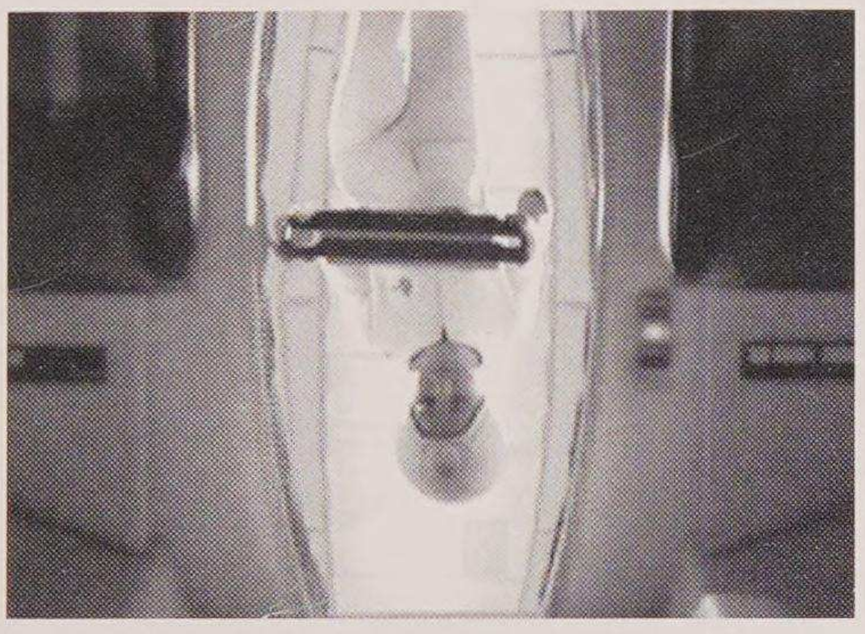
AU: I'd like to talk to you about the view from space. Do you still remember the first time?

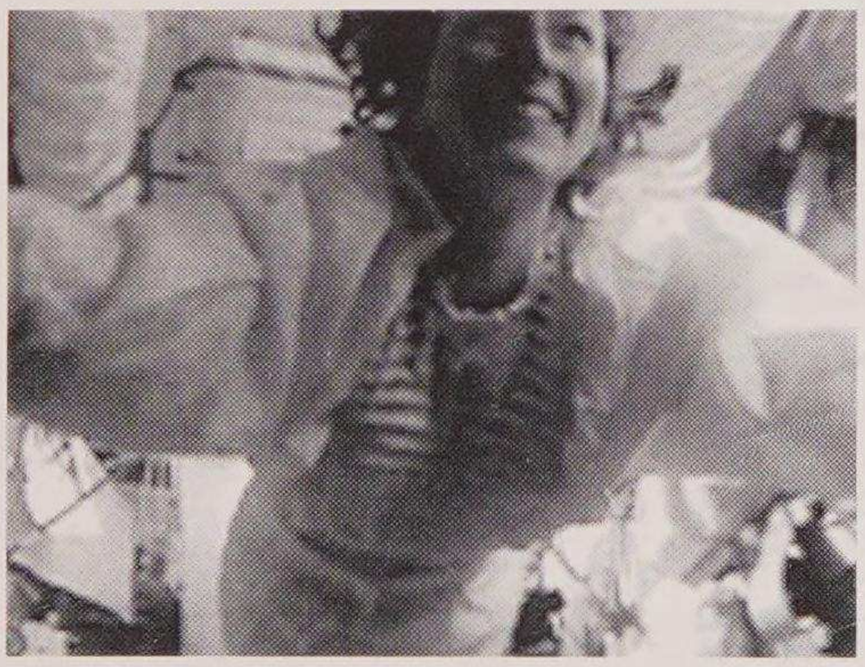
SK: If I were to try to describe it to you, the words would fail me. Because this is the critical difference between what has been experienced and the imagining of that experience. Which ultimately holds true for every frontier experience. Everybody knows that the sky is black in space. But when you've seen with your own eyes how the Sun appears in the black heavens and that the stars are right next to the Sun, then it's indescribable in the truest sense of the word. You know, the stars shine without twinkling. When you look down on the earth, you can recognize a lot immediately. But often you don't really know exactly where you are anymore. On my first space flight, when I looked back at Earth for the first time, first



Out of the Present.

I saw the ocean and then land. It was South America. A region at the other end of the world, where I had never been, and which now, a few minutes into the mission, I could see through the porthole. I saw the ocean, pristine jungle, giant rivers. Landscapes that I'd only ever seen in photos drifted past my window. I could even see storms on the ocean. What can I say—it's something like the difference between a photo and a film, or a film and real life. Children who are grown up enough to travel by themselves experience something like it: they recognize a town from stories or books, for example, but it's the first time they've ever been there, and so suddenly they get another image of it. When someone has seen all the regions of the earth with his own eyes in a single orbital pass, then it's never the same as it was. These impressions become indelible.









AU: What is takeoff like? Are you at all preoccupied with the thought that in leaving the earth, you are crossing the last border left to man? Or is this more the case when you are making an excursion outside the ship and are out in the free cosmos? What is it like when you open the hatch and there's nothing left between you and the emptiness of space?

SK: Well, after a while not even the view of Earth through the porthole is surprising to us anymore. It is still unique, but you get used to having a view like that. But what meets the eye when you open the hatch is overwhelming each and every time. . . . You've seen the suit that we have to wear outside. It is truly cumbersome. The spacesuit for trips outside resembles a small spaceship. Importantly, the oxygen tank it's equipped with lasts only a few hours. If, for whatever reason, you were to let go of the space station, you could be lost in space. Then there would be no hope of getting back to the station within the time provided by the life-support system. You have to consider every move carefully.

AU: But you are attached to the station with a cable.

SK: Actually there are two. Both are fixed to the space suit and they can withstand quite a bit. But while weight up there is reduced to a minimum, one's mass remains the same. There's the danger, for example, that you might accidentally grab hold of an object that—ejected from the station—was thrown into space and pulls you in the opposite direction. That can cause a serious problem despite the solid cable. Or you make some other little mistake. If you were to forget to look at the oxygen indicator for a moment, you might falsely assume that you had enough oxygen to get back to the space station, when really it was almost out.

It is very easy to lose your bearings in outer space. To

come back to your question: leaving the space station always reminds me a bit of parachuting. All the people seated in the airplane stare down through the window. Many are afraid of the jump, some not at all. And when you stand in the doorway with the parachute you carefully folded yourself at your back, and just before stepping into nothingness you look at the landscape you were just gazing at through the window, then that is something quite unique. In space you have these same perceptions and you feel the same things, but in an exaggerated form. Even if I know exactly how safe my space suit is, it's anything but self-evident to go out there. In the space station you've learned by then how to deal with the feeling of free fall. But when you find yourself all alone at the open boarding hatch, you have the impression that it is intensifying.

AU: And then?

SK: It takes a certain self-overcoming to leave the space station. Eventually you become more familiar with it, but every time you look at the earth you still get almost the same feeling as parachuting. You see your own feet and then nothing else between you and the ground. I still remember exactly how I felt the first time a parachute opened over my head. I looked up and everything was great. Then I lowered my head, and saw my feet and under me, far underneath me, the ground. In space it was similar. I saw my feet and the earth. Just that this time, there were about 400 kilometers between me and the earth. In this case, though, knowing it was even under me was comforting.

AU: Has it ever happened in the history of space travel that someone disappeared into space?

SK: Fortunately not. For that would be certain death. Quite a few precautions have been taken to minimize that risk.

AU: It happened in Stanley Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

SK: True. Scriptwriters can afford to loose people; ground control can't.



Opposite, top to bottom:
2001: A Space Odyssey.
Dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1968.

Out of the Present.

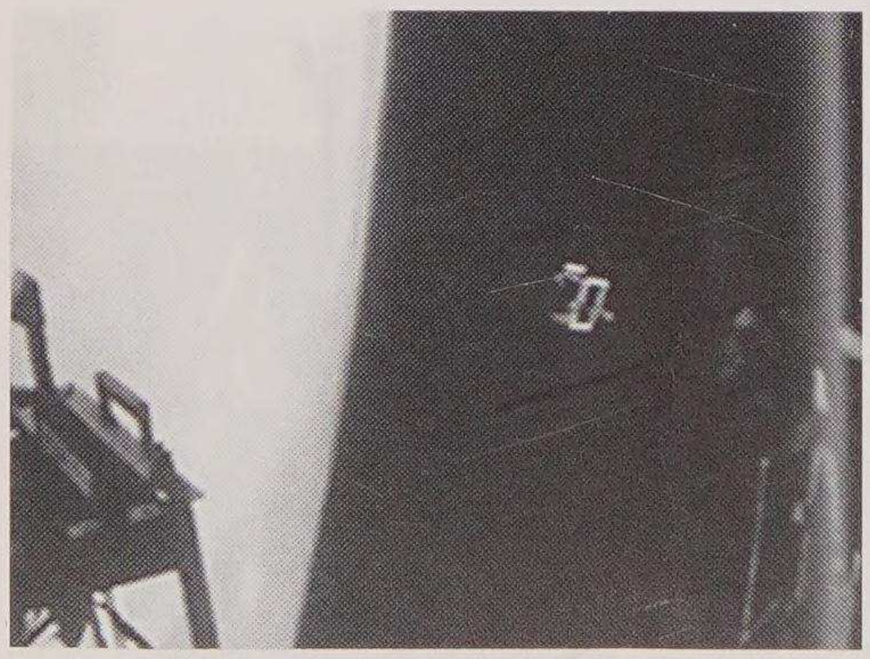
2001: A Space Odyssey.

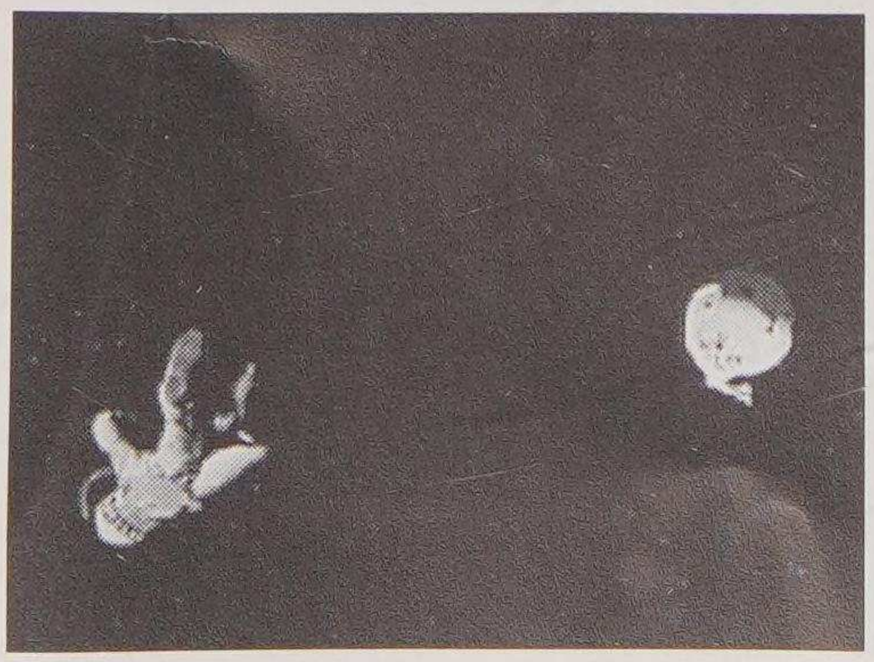
Out of the Present.

Right: *Out of the Present.*

AU: A silly question. Perhaps you could say a few words about daily life in the space station . . .

SK: In your film you mostly show clips that we made in our free time. Some of those are rather funny. We did also try to film scientific experiments and repair work—our actual daily schedule—but that was seldom possible. Using the camera during the work was an extra burden that we didn't usually have time for. Often it was a luxury we couldn't afford. Daily life in the space station really revolved around work. The difference between life on Earth and life in space consists not only in zero gravity or in the speed at which we orbit the earth, but also in the fact that in a space station everything happens in one and the same place: work, daily life, and leisure. It is not very far from my bed to the "training station" to the workstation. The kitchen is right next to my writing desk. And even though the space station puts thousands of kilometers behind it—just during the time I'm eating lunch—I spend the whole day moving back and forth just a few meters. That is the biggest difference compared to my life on Earth. Moscow is decidedly bigger than a space station. But there is something else that is really different: on Earth we do a lot of things we're not really aware of. When I'm thirsty I pour some fruit juice in a glass, drink it, and don't give it another thought. Just like you would never think about your breathing. We say things like "I'd like to get some fresh air" without having any idea what they mean. In outer space you need a whole technological apparatus just to be sure there is enough air. Besides which, the air to gas composition constantly has to be checked. On Earth gravity ensures that oxygen and carbon dioxide are separated in the air, and they circulate on their own. In a space station this has to be accomplished artificially. If the air were at a standstill, it could quickly lead to asphyxiation. That has nothing to do with the total amount of oxygen in the space, but rather with the fact that we need to have the oxygen around our head. There are quite a few details like this that you constantly have to attend to because they affect primary life functions.





AU: During sleep, I understand that you use a fan designed to ensure that there's enough air to breath, since one's head is immobile for long periods of time.

SK: Yes, there is this fan for air circulation in the face area while we sleep. The engineers factored in the possibility of a breakdown and installed a sensor that, in the event of the slightest technical difficulty, triggers an alarm that has the whole team hitting the ceiling. Because if even a single fan is not working properly, the life of a crewmember is in danger.

AU: In the space station, you're on Moscow time. You officially work eight hours a day and have the weekends

off. What is Sunday like in space?

SK: Not much different from a Sunday on Earth, but with an important difference: you can't go out. Even though our whole dwelling is crossing great distances, in real terms we're always in the same place. In general, people use the weekend to finish things that the week was too short for. That's no different in the space station. Normally it's only by Sunday that I can get around to putting away the instruments used in the previous week's experiments. Or else I get the experiments ready for the next week: I look for the necessary equipment, put it together and if necessary spend some time poring over directions. Then we also have to put the household in order now and then and tidy up our personal belongings. If any repairs on the space station itself are needed, then everything else has to wait. Just like at home, where now the car breaks down, now the house needs work.

AU: To my knowledge, you all watch videos in the space station since there's no way to watch TV.

SK: Actually, there are all kinds of TV signals, but because of the great speed at which we travel, each channel can only be received for a few minutes.

AU: Does that mean that during each revolution around the Earth, you could see images of the coup in Moscow for a few minutes on Soviet television, then a few more on Chinese TV, a short while on Japanese TV, et cetera, as if the whole world below were zapping you to the next channel?

SK: Yes, we had to constantly turn the knobs looking for channels. We tried to pick up video signals from TV stations equipped with directional antennas, but by the time we had a halfway decent picture we were leaving the transmission area.

AU: Did you ever watch videos in the space station?

SK: Every once in a while. On the weekend when our work was done—if everything worked out, that is, and we could afford to take



Opposite, top: *Out of the Present.*

Opposite, bottom: *2001: A Space Odyssey.*

Right: *Out of the Present.*

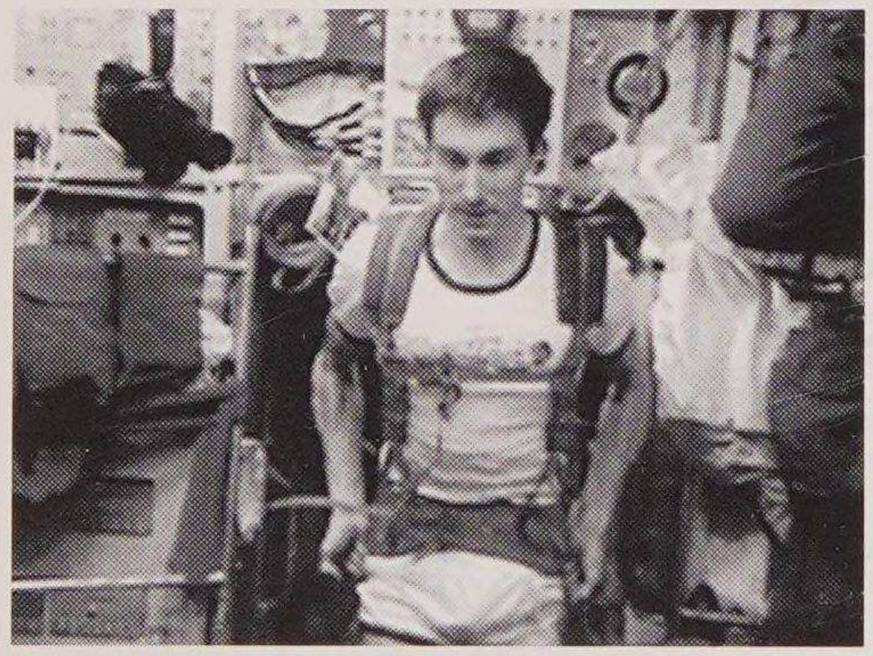
a night off.

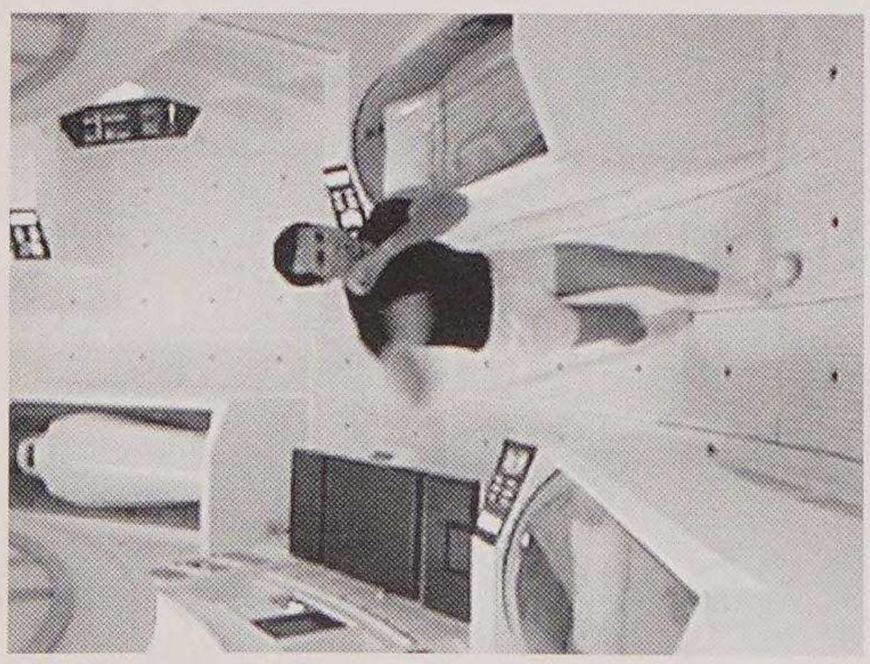
AU: What was the best film that you saw in space?

SK: I can't really say—the best thing is the selection. The tradition was that every crewmember bring some films. I still remember my first flight. Jean-Loup Chrétien was with us, and so we had several French films on board. Before my second flight there had been a Japanese astronaut who'd left Japanese films. And keep in mind that the MIR station is now completing its twenty-seventh mission. There's a proper video library up there now.

AU: You once told me about the constant noise that fills the space station. Strictly speaking, you live for months in the interior of a machine, comparable to a passenger ship. How can you stand it?

SK: That is in fact one of the great hardships of life in space, which becomes most noticeable on longer trips. The noise has different levels, but it is nevertheless constantly there. At night we can shut certain equipment off, though that doesn't do much. You try to protect your ears, as far as that's possible. You have to deal with it somehow, but it's not easy. Listening to music to drown out the noise is only partly effective. If you put it on too loud, it's just another source of noise. Nevertheless we listen to a lot of music. While working and especially while doing gymnastics. If you're repeating the same motions over and over again on the running machine or the home trainer, then that's easier with music.







AU: And how are your dreams? Do you dream differently when you're in space?

SK: In general I dream very little. Maybe it has to do with the fact that I'm always exhausted by the time I lie down to sleep. That's no different in space. As far as I can remember some dreams I had there, at the beginning of a flight they're usually terrestrial images. I see myself at home or with my family on vacation. They are memories of my life, which takes place largely on Earth. But after a while you start to have dreams that happen in space. And these dreams don't seem at all strange, since they're just repeating experiences that have happened or could happen there. They are mostly things that have to do with the day-to-day work in the space station.

AU: If I remember correctly, you have seen Tarkovsky's film *Solaris*.

SK: *Solaris* is one of the films that are on board the MIR, and during one of my flights I watched it again.

AU: On the spaceship the protagonist is haunted by nightmares from his former life. Have you had nightmares in space?

SK: No, not so far as I remember.

AU: I would like to ask you one last question about the

spaceship. Where do you look more often: toward Earth or into the depths of space, into eternity?

SK: You really do look in both directions. Nevertheless it seems to me that you do look more often at Earth, since it is our home. Our relatives live there, our friends, and we come from there. If someone were born on the Moon and had lived most of their life there, he or she would look toward the Moon more than somewhere else. And so we are more interested in the earth and are always trying to make out places that are familiar and that mean something to us.

Moscow, 29 April 1999



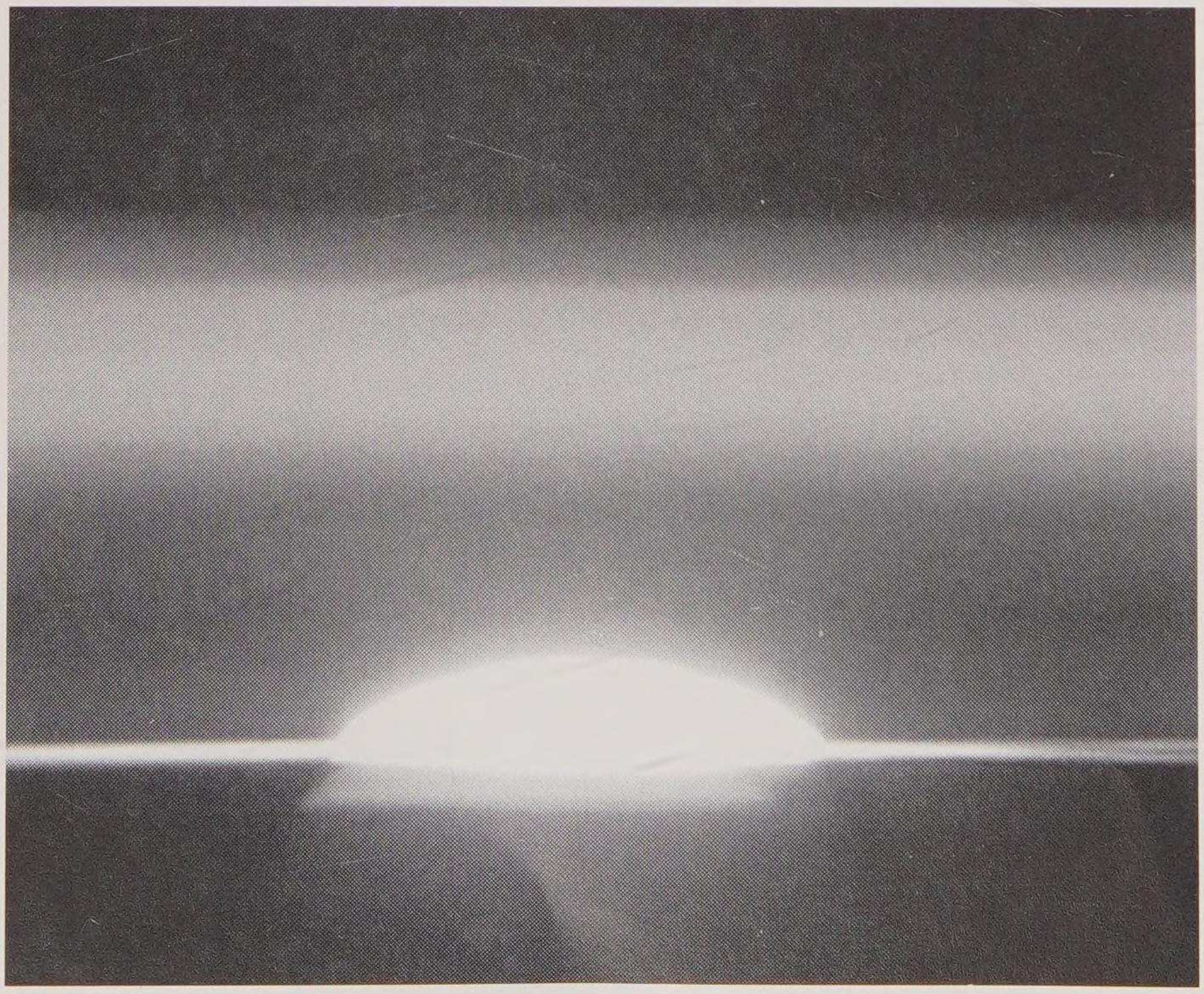
Opposite, top:
Out of the Present.

Opposite, center:
2001: A Space Odyssey.

Opposite, bottom:
Out of the Present.

Right: *Out of the Present.*

Out of the Present.
Dir. Andrei Ujica, 1995.



Toward the End of Gravity II

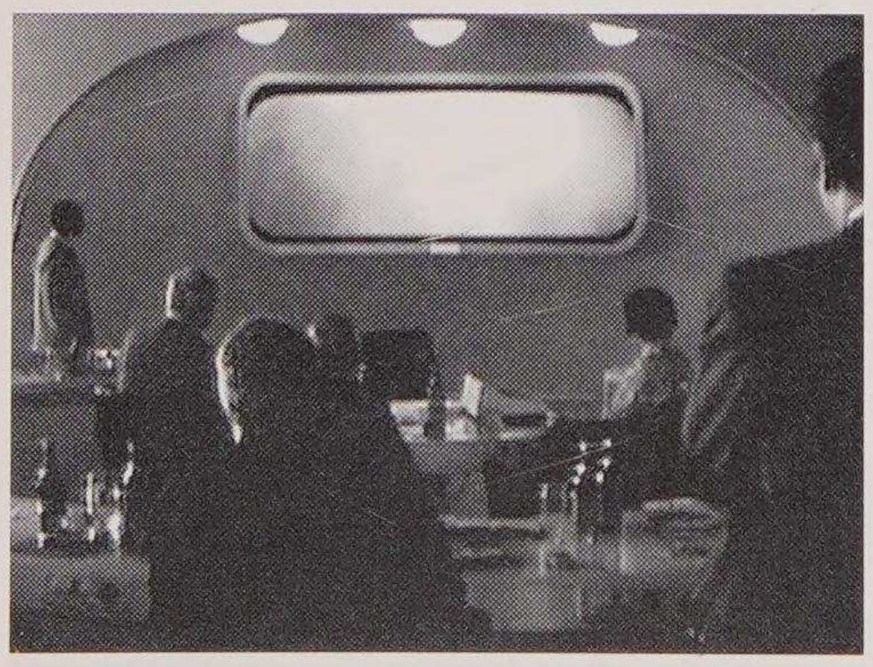
ANDREI UJICA / PAUL VIRILIO
TRANSLATED BY SARA OGGER AND BRANDEN W. JOSEPH

Paul Virilio: Andrei, your film *Out of the Present* is not just about the MIR Space Station, but also about drawing a comparison between the conception of outer space at the end of the twentieth century and what it was at the beginning. The first important film on this theme was Fritz Lang's *The Woman in the Moon* (1929), in which, incidentally, the first countdown appears—one of the countdown's inventors, rocket scientist Hermann Oberth, having been a consultant on the film. Later we had Wernher von Braun and Peenemunde [the village of Peenemunde on the Baltic coast was a testing ground for rockets in the Second World War] and then Cape Canaveral—but also the V1 and, today, cruise missiles, which are its direct heirs. I can't see cruise missiles without seeing in my mind's eye the V1s and V2s, the booster rockets Atlas and Saturn, the Soviet rockets, as well as the advent of satellites. All of this is thematized in your film. It's about the invention of outer space by military technoscience, tied to the balance of terror between the East and the West, as well as to the necessity for not only aerial supremacy but also a spatial supremacy. We all remember the anxiety with which the Americans greeted Sputnik. I saw it myself, in the skies above Porte d'Aubervilles; I was young, but I saw its star pass overhead. All of that, certainly, is reflected in the MIR Space Station, since MIR is the child of Sputnik. It is no longer possible to think of life on Earth today—with the revolution in information technology, the control of telecommunications, even the war in Yugoslavia—without thinking of the multitude of satellites cluttering outer space: spy satellites, weather satellites, news and TV satellites, observation satellites for the National Security Agency, and satellites for reflecting light, those "artificial moons" that MIR failed twice to launch. Your film appeared at a time when the sky—space—was very crowded and when attitudes about the conquest of space had profoundly changed. MIR's state of crisis thirteen years after it was put into orbit is also a crisis in the relationship of heaven and Earth. The space station is not just old junk cobbled back together in order to stay in the cosmos. There is a larger question posed, one that is present in the three films that we're to talk about: Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey,* Tarkovsky's *Solaris,* and *Out of the Present.* It's a question of our confinement to the surface of the earth.

What does this mean? Man's entry into space was preceded by

guinea pigs, the dog Laika, a monkey, etc. Humans followed the animals: Gagarin, Armstrong, Krikalev. . . . Today we're faced with the question of what will replace man, that is, the end of manned space flight evident in, for example, the choice of an automated probe like the Mars Pathfinder and its robot Sojourner which was such a hero last summer. At the exact moment that the MIR, in the summer of 1997, sent out an SOS like a ship in troubled waters, Pathfinder generated a lot of excitement by publishing photographs of the Red Planet on the Internet. We are witnessing a fundamental change in out relationship with outer space. The automated probes are for Mars a little bit like what the cruise missiles are for war. On the one hand, there is a refusal to touch the ground—in Iraq, for example, in the former Yugoslavia, or in Khartoum—and on the other hand, we no longer have any hopes for landing, that is touching down, on Mars. Why? On account of the great amounts of time and money required to sustain humans in space, the trip is automated. We find ourselves facing a phenomenon that your film portrays astonishingly well: Is it the end of manned space flight? Isn't the sad and rather deplorable situation of MIR a sign that humans will soon be replaced by machines? It isn't just on Earth that people are being unemployed by automation. Even in space the elite of cosmonauts and astronauts are being traded for probes *[sondes]* that are nothing more, so to speak, than machines for measuring. Just as a sounding probe is used to measure the depths of the ocean, one can conclude that it will no longer be an issue of exploring space but of sounding out the proportions of the universe in hopes that we'll never need to go out there again. Not because we aren't physiologically capable of it but because the journey time would necessitate teleportation, that is, travel at the speed of light or very near it, which is unthinkable and, if we believe Einstein, theoretically impossible.







But let's move on to the films. First, *2001,* an optimistic film by Kubrick that portrays the hubris of the American superpower, then, shortly thereafter, *Solaris* . . . I don't recall a large time difference between the two films . . .

Andrei Ujica: There were four years between them . . .

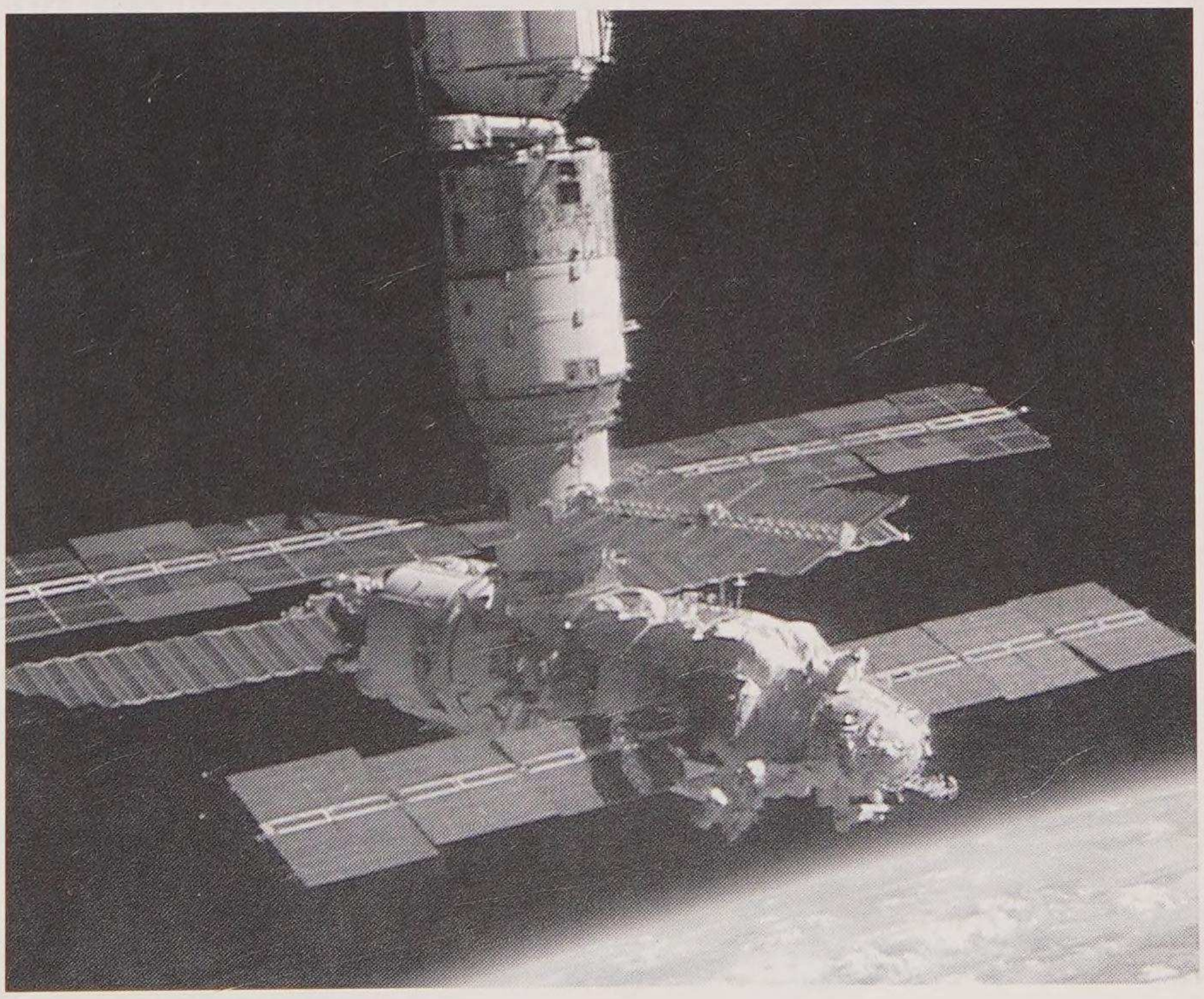
PV: . . . four years . . . but one was, of course, from the West and the other from the East. In the comparison *Solaris* is characterized by a certain modesty and self-doubt in the face of this kind of world domination. It somewhat prefigures cybernetics; that is, a planetary brain that dreams the world. After Tarkovsky certain theoreticians of cyberculture have begun to talk of a planetary brain in which the human would be just one neuron among others. Then there is your film, *Out of the Present,* which

is an expression of another crisis, the crisis of our relation to history.

AU: Personally, I'm convinced that manned space flights will not be totally replaced by automation. Even more, they're the way of the future. Man's fundamental disposition to cross whatever is considered the new frontier has always prevailed against all odds. That includes economic reason, which is so often just the bearer of small-minded reluctance. Besides which, there wouldn't be—if space flight were to be done only by unmanned probes—any new space movies, which is simply inconceivable on Earth today. In *2001: A Space Odyssey* Kubrick poses nothing less than the question of the existence of God. And this question is answered with an unambiguous yes. This is what gives the film its optimistic character. It is more than just the usual victory of an American hero in the fight against evil. The positive aspect of *2001* does not derive from the result of the duel between the space cowboy and the out-of-control machine, but rather from a happy end that is metaphysical in nature. And the radical loneliness in which this all takes place is what lends the whole its true depth—something rarely seen in cinema.

Solaris, the second significant philosophical science fiction film asks no clear questions and provides no answers, either. Tarkovsky poses us a riddle for which there are many possible solutions. Maybe that makes *Solaris* all the closer to us, now that we're approaching the turn of the century. My relationship to these two films is in one respect very similar to the one I have to two literary masterworks. I reread two works every ten years and, depending on my internal disposition—itself colored by the mind-set of the decade—I alternately think *The Brothers Karamazov* or *The Idiot* is Dostoyevsky's greatest novel. Which strictly speaking is a superfluous kind of evaluation.

When I traveled to Moscow to begin work on *Out of the Present,* I had this in mind: it was to be a film about the MIR station—the apotheosis, as it were, of the October Revolution—and the last



Opposite, top: *Out of the Present.*

Opposite, center:
Solaris. Dir. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1972.

Opposite, bottom:
2001: A Space Odyssey.

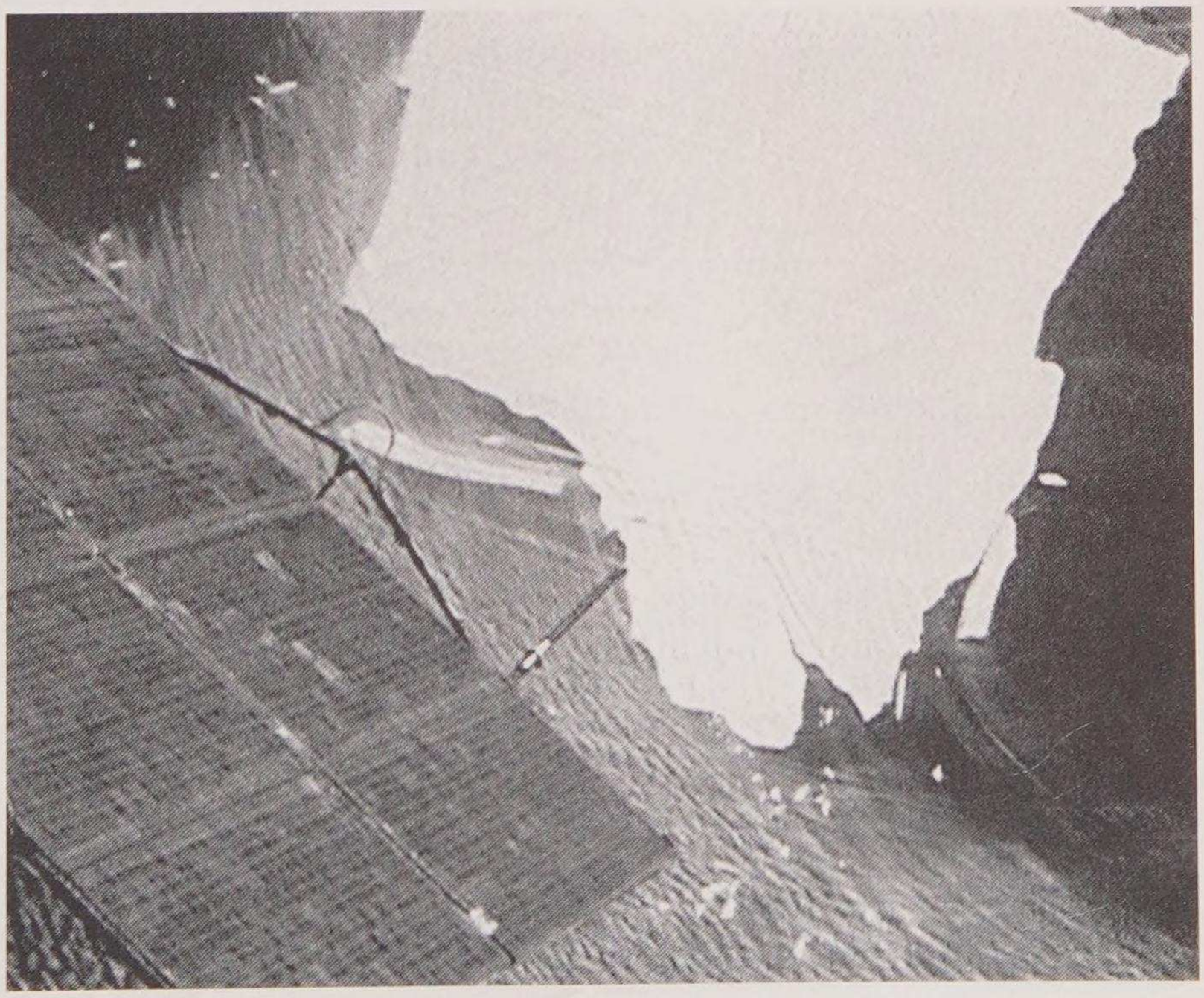
Right: *Out of the Present.*

Soviet cosmonaut, Sergei Krikalev. He completed a mission between May 1991 and March 1992—twice as long as had initially been planned. During this time the August coup in Moscow took place, which resulted in the dissolution of the Soviet Union. So Krikalev started in the Soviet Union and landed ten months later in Russia. I am completely fascinated by the idea someone could, from within the very memorialization of the October Revolution in space, witness the end of that period. Unusually, I had a firm idea of the form my film would take even before my arrival in Moscow. I wanted to show Krikalev's flight exclusively through the use of original footage, that is, with videos taken during that mission. I had no idea whether there would be enough material of this kind, but I was nonetheless determined to make the film this way or not at all. Additionally, I wanted to have two original sequences filmed in space—on actual film—that would serve as a prologue and epilogue to the film. We were in fact able to send a 35 mm camera to MIR, which filmed the first purely cinematographic footage in space. The thought behind this was that if the flight of Krikalev were to be reconstructed only from images created without my help—that is, from the video recordings that are the standard documentation of a mission—then that would be how it is in real life. Video is real life, but cinema is 35 mm and chemical colors. It took a good bit of effort before I got to look over the whole image archive of the Krikalev mission, but then I was happy to see that there was enough material there to make a whole film. It wasn't simple, but it was possible. And so I shut myself up in my apartment in Moscow with all the video cassettes and a monitor, and had a peculiar experience: I had the feeling I was experiencing the flight myself and arrived at the realization that being in space has something elemental about it. For this reason, *Out of the Present* presents the flight more or less from one subjective perspective in order to make this same realization possible for the viewer. Thus I entered into a play between theory and art, where the question was: How does one translate secondary material into a primary discourse? In this case that means: contemporary video documents into a stand-alone narrative. I decided to have the film narrated from the perspective of one of the cosmonauts, but without any analytical commentary. He performs it in his own voice, telling the story via its internal course of events. I employed music in such a way that it would at times be in dialogue with that of *2001*. These are all typical elements of cinematic films. In the end, *Out of the Present* portrays a real event reconstructed from documents but also openly avails itself of the emotional arsenal of fiction.

PV: In listening to you talk, one cannot not think that the Soviet Union became the victim, through Marxism, of the illusion that man will be freed by technology, an illusion that is still, at this

moment, a fact in the West and the United States. This myth of a Communism that would become "cosmism" was a reality in the Soviet Union. My Russian friends used to tell me of this cosmism, which was supposed to strengthen Communism or better yet make it obsolete, and which replaced the Communist ideology of work with a mystical ideology of man's rise as master of the world. When you show us the implosion of the Soviet Union through the window of the MIR, it is effectively the success of Soviet military-industrial technoscience that is permitting us to observe the end of the USSR and the end of an ideology. We are dealing with a paradox that is not only that of the Soviet Union but that of the whole world at the end of the twentieth century. The film functions as one big metaphor of a drama that is the current drama of the whole world. At the time of filming, the plot had to do with the coup and with Gorbachev, but today it addresses the world and the relationship to history of all people on Earth. If it slips a bit into the genre of reality TV, one could also say that too is a fact of history at the end of the millennium. Fiction participates fundamentally in reality. The relation to the emotional power of technology, whether it be telecommunications or the technology necessary to put objects into space, is part of our world. Let's take as an example the fifth mission of the Space Shuttle Discovery. What did the astronauts say? "On the first day we looked at our country, on the third or fourth day we were showing each other the continents, but from the fifth day we realized that there's only one Earth!" But what they didn't tell us is precisely what Krikalev was able to tell us: What do you look at at the end of a month, or a year? What is there besides celestial emptiness? The starry night? The great cosmic night?

AU: There is a scene in the film showing a press conference, in which Krikalev fields questions in the MIR station from international journalists gathered in Paris. At the time he'd already been in



Out of the Present.

space nine months and was nearly at the end of his mission; he was the man of the hour as far as the media were concerned. Naturally all of them wanted to know what he thought about the widespread changes occurring on Earth during his absence. Yeltsin had taken Gorbachev's place, and Krikalev's home town was no longer called Leningrad but rather St. Petersburg. The central question of the journalists was, "Which of these important occurrences impresses you the most?" To which his answer was, "Hard to say. So much has happened in the meantime. But what really astounds me is the following: a few minutes ago, it was night outside the window, now it's day and the seasons are rushing by. That is the most impressive thing that I can see from up here." It really is amazing: ever since the Enlightenment the highest historical goal of mankind has been to subjugate nature through technological progress. But observing the earth from 400 km up sufficiently enables us to grasp the extent of this illusion. 400 km in itself is hardly a great distance. That distance is—you said it once yourself—exactly the stretch between Paris and Strasbourg. Vertically, though, it is far enough to achieve this "view from space," which reveals that nature still has the upper hand and that the political is just a subordinate phenomenon.

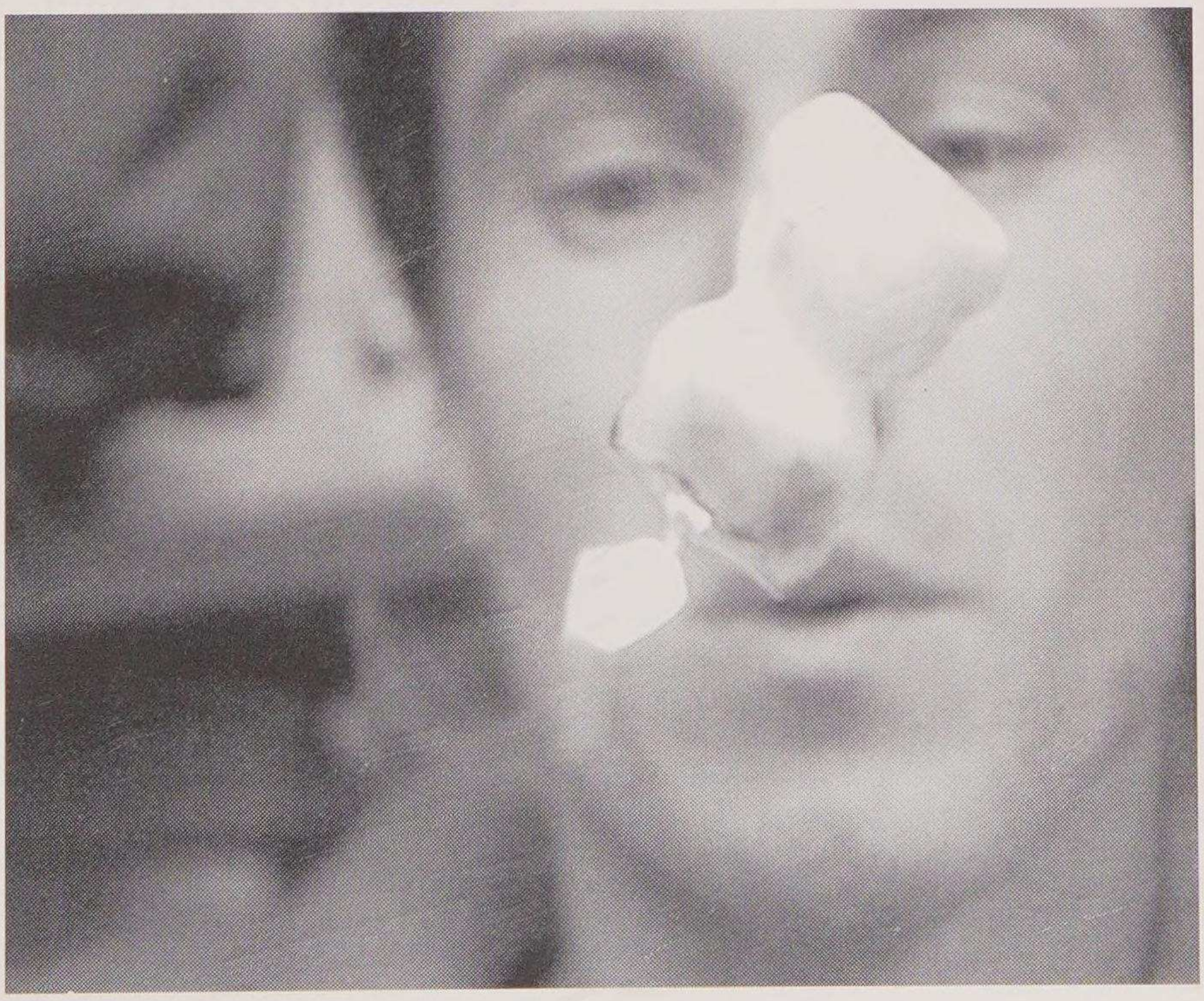
PV: I think it's there that things change. In other words, one realizes at what point, in space, the view reveals what is most essential. Other than the view, there is no physical or physiological contact. No hearing, no feeling in the sense of touching materials, with the exception of an actual Moon landing. Thus, the conquest of space, of outer space—isn't it more the conquest of the *image* of space? Everything is perceived by means of the eyes. The main information for the cosmonaut or astronaut is the images, because the other senses are unable to give any significant extra or contradictory information. Vision supercedes touch, smell, even movement through space—even in a space suit or on excursions outside the ship. The individual is totally scopic. Thus, the question with regard to Krikalev and the MIR Space Station is how to live with a perception of the world limited to visual space, limited to vision to the detriment of all the other senses? What sort of loss do we suffer in that case?

AU: This reminds me of another film scene: the direct telecommunication linkup to the cosmonauts in the MIR station as part of a press conference taking place in the control center just outside Moscow. At one point the former Soviet cosmonaut Sebastianov asks Krikalev (whom he calls Sacha) and Alexander Volkov, the ship commander of the second part of Krikalev's Mission, "Sacha, Volkov, what part of Earth do you like best from up there?" to which Volkov answers: "The part we can't see: the people." You might say that this is about the loneliness of the total view.

PV: Couldn't one say that this exorbitant privileging of the eye

poses the question of both cinema and television? Haven't cinema and television prefigured the conquest of space? When we say something like "we haven't conquered space but rather the image of space," aren't we agreeing with someone like the engineer Vladimir Zvorykin, for whom television is not about producing programs but about putting cameras on rockets as a replacement for the telescope? In other words, we're going to send up an automatic, electronic eye as a kind of envoy for our body, no longer participating in the voyage except as TV viewers. The success of such a conquest of space would mean the perfection of television (as in tele-vision or seeing afar) achieved at the expense of physical contact. You could say that the mastering of space in itself means the loss of the body—Krikalev becomes a kind of angel before our very eyes. Jeffrey Hoffman, for instance, who repaired the Hubble telescope, recalled, "I lost the feeling of my own body, and all that remained of me was mind *[esprit]*." Doesn't the question raised by Tarkovsky in *Solaris*, and lived through by Krikalev in a way, relate to this idea of the human's becoming-angel, of a cosmic "angelicness" *[angélologie]* taking the place of human nature, displacing the material, raw, animalistic human being in favor of an omnipotent eye?

AU: It is true that the human being is strongly reduced to the eye while in space, becoming to some extent an incarnation of television and cinema. But there is another truth of space, which is manifested in a general distention of proportions. During the direct linkup to MIR just mentioned, Krikalev shows the people in the control center his recent video recordings of Earth. The Russian television journalist Orlov comments on them: "These are very beautiful pictures. You might think that they were taken from an airplane." And Krikalev replies: "Right, but when you can see all of Kamchatka or two oceans at once, then you realize quickly enough the kind of dimensions we're dealing with here." Cosmic visuality is probably a rejuvenation of the aesthetic category of the sublime.



Out of the Present.

Cinema can't give more than an occasional hint of it.

PV: When we speak of Krikalev and the privileging of vision to the detriment of the other senses, we mustn't forget Russian Futurism and Vertov's *The Man with the Movie Camera;* that is, the human's "becoming eye" that is so present in Vertov and other avant-garde cinema. In the famous *The Man with the Movie Camera* the central idea is the panoptic. The panoptic world preceded the world of police surveillance and the control later established by the Stalinist state. The wish for a panoptic view of the world anticipated the police-view of surveillance cameras, the Stasi, the KGB, the CIA, and so on. With the conquest of space, aren't we confronted precisely with the assumption of panopticism? Doesn't it entail an aestheticization of politics that, unlike fascism, is not based on a liturgical *mise-en-scène*, but on cinematicism, the rendering of history in light and images? This, of course, necessitates a domination of the terrain. One must put into orbit the means to control not just a neighborhood, a bank, or a supermarket, nor even just the political life of a nation, as Ceausescu did in Romania, but rather the entire course of history. Since 1997, the Americans have had a project for Global Information Dominance, according to which the images from spy satellites recently put into orbit can be relayed in real time. I'm not speaking here of politics in a traditional sense, but of a metapolitics, a politics that functions only through the image and no longer functions except through the image, because the image is the most economical form of information.

AU: Hollywood has understood this for a long time now and for at least the last twenty years has worked to secure a cultural hegemony around the globe. Today we are dealing not just with a metapolitics, but to an equal extent with a metaculture.

PV: Yes, but today's Hollywood treats the world like a reality show, the world as a story. When Zvorykin says that the future of television *[le devinir de la television]* is the telescope, he's not talking only about astronomy but also about the process of becoming image, the becoming aesthetic of the politics of tomorrow. So we are not in a position comparable to that of the media-based manipulations of television. The phenomenon we're dealing with is situated on a historical level. It is stronger and more impressive than anything UFA studios or Hollywood can do or even that Vertov could imagine. Now we have arrived squarely in your territory, film and video.

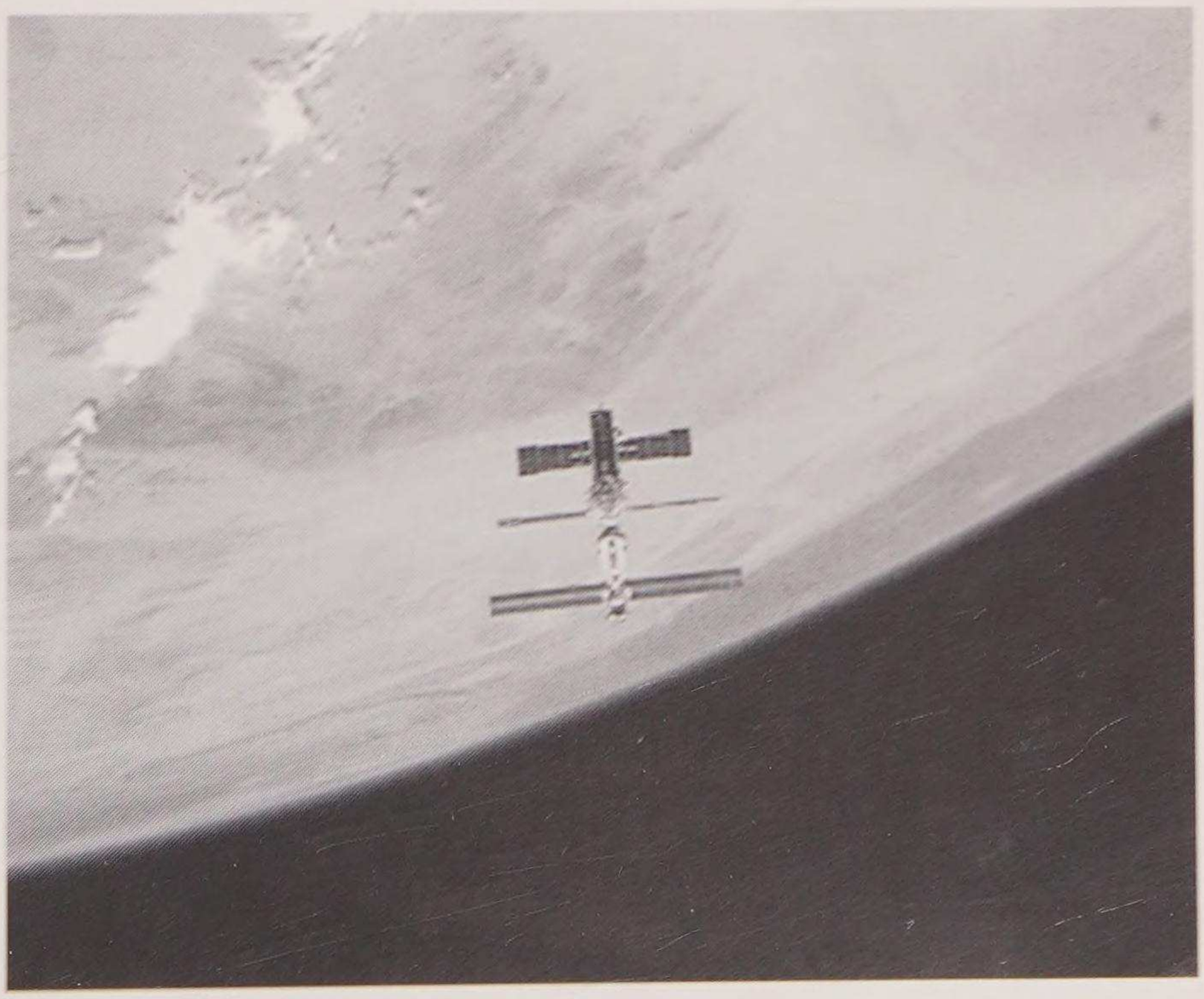




AU: Isn't it true that moving images fundamentally tend toward fiction and always aim to change into art? And isn't there also the reverse of this? For, while it is the eternal dream of the documentary film to achieve the emotional power of an artwork, the cinematic film does everything it

can to reach the authenticity of a document, the genuineness of the real. To ask this another way: Isn't this a problem of discursiveness in general? The same thing is happening to words. Based on the same documents about Napoleon's battle in Russia, one could write a historical treatise or *War and Peace*. Theoretically speaking, such parallels are still the most exciting: when the text of a historian—let's take Michelet on the French Revolution—conjures the same emotional effect as a great novel, and when, vice versa, the lines of a novelist—for example, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*—evince the loyalty to truth of a treatise.

PV: We can't speak of the conquest of space without speaking of the conquest of speed. We've passed in some sense from the acceleration of travel—from horses, to trains, to superfast trains, to supersonic jets, and so on—to the acceleration of dawn. When an object is put into orbit, what's accelerated is not only the traveler but the day. In a single orbital day (if we can speak of such a thing), there are several sunrises and sunsets in succession. In other words, the astronomical day, the orbital day, no longer has anything to do with the alternation of day and night and the twenty-four hours that regulate/structure our lives. With space travel we have passed from voyages in geographical space—Marco Polo or Christopher Columbus, for example—to voyages in time: the cinematic sequence of images through orbital systems such as the MIR but also rockets and the possibility of going to our own satellite, the Moon. But we have equally gone from the relative speed of the horse, train, and airplane—speeds predicated on gravity—to escape velocity, that is, 28,000 km per hour, which allows us to launch objects as heavy as the MIR into orbit. Ultimately, we have access to a further velocity of 40,000 km/hour, at which we can fly to the Moon or Mars. We are dealing with a cinematic phenomenon, a purely perceptual phenomenon of projection, of putting into motion not only the horizon—as in the case of a galloping



Opposite, top:
2001: A Space Odyssey.

Opposite, bottom:
Out of the Present.

Right: *Out of the Present.*

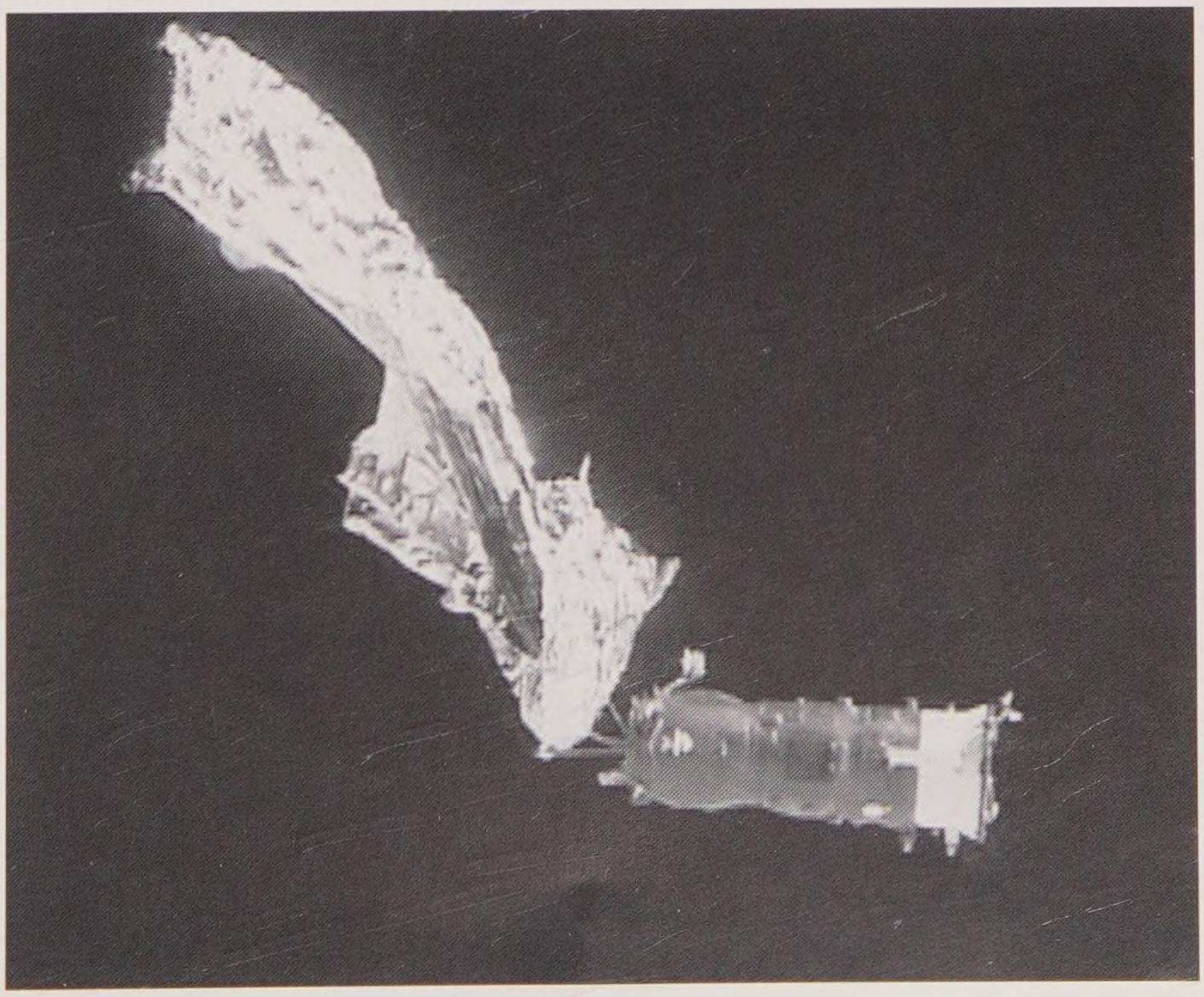
horse—but time itself. We are faced with an event without references, you could say, which is tied to the modification of time itself. That is why the crisis of MIR is a crisis of geocosmic space-time. World time, as it is experienced by passengers aboard MIR, essentially proceeds by putting into parentheses the local time of seasons, regions, and nations in favor of a global time that is purely astronomical, devoid of any concrete history. We are witnessing a dehistoricization and a cinematization of history, which to my mind explains the end of historical materialism. We've gone from Communism to cosmism, in part because we've put historical materialism out of work!

AU: We cannot talk about the conquest of space without asking ourselves how far man would have to travel in order to discover another world. From an astronomical point of view, a flight to the Moon or even to Mars is nothing more than a visit to the nearest desert. What differentiates Magellan or Columbus from today's space travelers has to do with distances that cannot be overcome. In contrast to those travelers on the globe, space travelers—victims of our all too modest technology—have no chance whatsoever of reaching truly new shores. Certainly not if they are living in a space station that remains stationary. That won't change unless propulsion motors are invented that would make possible further stages of cosmic speeds and thus expeditions into the depths of the universe. Cosmonauts and astronauts are clear about this and are accordingly realistic. They are well aware that they are underway not as discoverers but as mere observers. The temporal dimension of their travel, though, is another matter. In a space station one can perceive the two fundamental categories of time simultaneously. One of the windows allows a view to the stars, to eternity—that is, to astronomical time. Through the other window, the window to Earth, one experiences a compression of terrestrial time. The MIR station makes a complete circle around our planet within ninety-two minutes. Which is exactly the length of *Out of the Present*. During these ninety-two minutes, all the basic cycles of terrestrial time pass by: day and night and the four seasons. During a single orbit the space traveler looks at a whole day. Which also corresponds to one year. And all that is no longer than a normal film.

PV: That is, literally, a historical revolution. It's not a political one, but an incomparable historical revolution. Not Fukuyama's "end of history," but the revolution of history, in the original sense of the word *revolution*: that a day corresponds to a year! That's why *Out of the Present* is a kind of witness to the transformation of history, like the Lumière film of the train arriving at La Ciotat station (1895) illustrated a transformation of the perception of history. Is *Train Entering a Station* a documentary or a feature film? I think you can speak of it as neither. It is a witness to a rupture,

the putting of the image into motion, and thus a modification of our relationship to history. *Out of the Present* belongs in the same category. It is an eyewitness to a revolution of time as well as to an important historical event, and at the same time a fiction, because it contains no system of reference. *Train Entering a Station* had no precedents. It is, in a certain sense, the first film. *Out* is also a first film: the first film from beyond the world, the first film of a new cinematicism which is no longer merely, I will say, dromoscopic. It no longer has anything to do with a sequence of images, as in a passing landscape, as if one were sitting on a train—nothing to do with the view associated with speeds of moving across the ground. *Out of the Present* offers a revolutionary view of historical time, of global time, which we break into with Krikalev.

AU: During my work on the film I really did have the feeling that I'd been in space myself. I already mentioned the way immersing myself in the film material caused this sensation for me. Perhaps this was the reason I sought to enter a dialogue with *2001* and *Solaris*. Because the more I became involved in imagining outer space, the more these two films became my only attachment to the reality of the world. All of that plays out in the visual framework. Yet there is a further aspect of space travel that we haven't spoken of yet: weightlessness. What sort of weight it carried didn't become clear to me until my conversations with the cosmonauts. While working with the film footage, I had already concluded that there must be such a thing as an addiction to space. Space travelers constantly dream of returning to space. And that despite the fact that the take-off and landing—in the truest sense of the word—are so physically punishing that really nobody would be prepared to subject themselves to these tortures a second time. Thus the question occurred to me: there must be something there beyond the global gaze that attracts one much like a repetition compulsion. In this way I learned of the unbridled allure of zero gravity.



Out of the Present.

PV: I think it's true that weightlessness seems like quite an experience. (I say "seems" because I've never experienced it other than to a certain extent in water. Scuba diving can give some hint of it.) But the lack of weight is also a *denial* of gravity; that is, a denial of the body, of weight. To have a body means having weight. The weight that I have on Earth is the weight of the earth, which means that the attraction of the earth (in the proper sense of *earth*, "ground") gives me a weight that is that of my proper body. On the Moon the weight of my body would change because it is only a weight predicated on the conditions of Earth's attraction. On Mars this weight would in turn be a different one than on the Moon. But the loss of weight brings us into the loss of the body. Not during swimming or dancing or even under the circus tent do we really ever achieve true weightlessness. And therein lies the temptation. It is the temptation of "angelicness" *[angélologie]*, that is, flight—not like a bird's, which relies on weight and gravity, but rather an extraterrestrial, even extrahuman *[supraterrestre et meme suprahumain]*, flight that leads us toward angelicness. Doesn't the debate about virtual reality and virtual space tend in the same direction? Aren't we here, too, prone to the temptation to lose our body in order to enter a metaphysical realm now that we have already entered the metageophysical world? An individual like Krikalev is a metageophysical traveler. Naturally, he is still in the physical, but he is already extracted from the geophysical which on Earth saddled him with a weight that is a condition of his very existence. The geophysical gives us the weight of our physiology. We are now entering a world beyond, without points of reference; that is, without bodies. Why this return of angelicness? A return that has nothing to do with the return of the divine but rather with something else that has no name.

AU: The comparison with angelicness really gets to the heart of the matter, for the global gaze and the loss of body in weightlessness are connected. The fascination of the view from space derives its unique attraction only from the disappearance of weight. That is why all attempts to artificially create this experience on Earth are only ersatz, since here we can never really be rid of our weight. Cyberspace, much like the cinema, can give us at best only a hint of this joyous state. That is why the greatest cinematic achievement of *2001: A Space Odyssey* consists in having made possible the most impressive earthbound perception of weightlessness: in the famous scene of the cosmic ballet, where the spaceships turn to the strains of a waltz.

PV: Only dance, only choreography can evoke weightlessness on Earth with any seriousness. But can't one say that this has been surpassed by teleportation? And here we're back to *Solaris*, where the loss of body is not just the result of the loss of gravity but rather

of the transference from one body to another.

AU: Teleportation does come shimmering through in the case of cybertechnology. But there is still a regrettable difference to the experience of space: the joyful feeling of weightlessness. We have already experienced it in the prenatal state. That is why all cosmonauts who spend long enough in space undergo a peculiar regression. As if they had reached childlike purity again. In using virtual technologies, we do lose our body, but its weight remains. And this is intimately connected to our states of depression.

PV: The question is effectively whether this loss of the body is progressive or regressive. It's extremely complicated. What I find most interesting about Tarkovsky's film is that he invents the clone by means of the resurrection by duplication, in particular of a woman. *Solaris* is considerably ahead of Kubrick because the question of the body in *Solaris* is central. . . . The cloning of people in *Solaris* prefigures the plans of a Dr. Richard Seed or anyone who, in the age of genetics, is working on the reproduction of human life. . . . That's why we have to pose the following question: Is this becoming-angel a dangerous temptation or a desirable progression? If we don't take this question seriously and merely remain at the level of physical sensation—as in, weightlessness is fun—we will regress in an infantile and horrifying way. The transcendence of humanness can lead not just to the extra- or superhuman but also to the inhuman, to use Jean-François Lyotard's concept [see Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (1991)]. The danger that always lurks behind technological and scientific progress—**whether in the realm of cosmic transportation or the potential realm of teleportation—is the arrival at the inhuman.**

AU: When you think about it, Tarkovsky's film is a psychological studio play set in space. *Solaris* owes its complexity in large part to this kind of dramaturgical move. The simple Western psychology employed in *2001,* in contrast, is considerably closer to the real expe-



Out of the Present.

rience of space. What we are looking at here are two entirely different modes of cultural memory. For example, Tarkovsky's space station is full of relics from man's cultural past. We find a library adorned with valuable books, etchings of the old masters—Breughel, for example—-and even a few antiques. And he's perfectly correct: there is no reason to get rid of one's culture on the way to space. Tarkovsky goes even a step further in the assumption that during a stay in space our capacity for memory would remain intact. Accordingly, one would also remember even the most disturbing things. The plot of *Solaris* consists of the incarnation of nightmares. The aseptic, futuristic design of the spaceship in *2001* is entirely in the spirit of science fiction and thus devoid of any reference to history or culture. These appear elsewhere in the film: in the episodes at the beginning and the end, which bracket the space adventure. They appear as the man-apes at the beginning and the invisible god at the conclusion. Other than that, even with Kubrick the astronauts are accompanied on their trip by a cultural commentary—the music. The psychological framework of *Solaris* has too many layers to really resemble the reality of space. And so the film contains little that is revealing about this reality. That the infantile regression of the contemporary idea of fun is terrible goes without saying. But I don't believe that space holds that danger for us. It would be really very hard to stupefy us any more than already happens in gravity.

PV: There is a saying in French: "Only a fiend *[bête]* would mimic an angel." Which is simply to say that just behind the extrahuman lies the inhuman. At the moment, Dr. Seed—I wonder if he's seen *Solaris*—is attempting to clone his wife. Now that is very interesting. Because that means one could commit adultery with one's own wife. Which is precisely the problem of the main figure in *Solaris*.

AU: If it isn't just a nightmare, that is! Tarkovsky's visions are truly astounding. He foresaw two very specific events that later became reality and staged them in his film. Which is especially surprising given how hermetic he was as an artist. *Stalker* is the premonition of the Chernobyl catastrophe and *Solaris* is a prophecy of genetic technology.

PV: There is one character in *Out of the Present* who appears only briefly but who has a particularly strong presence: the female British astronaut. The presence of this woman who manages in an almost caricatural manner to preserve her femininity in outer space confers an extraordinary ambiguity on the position she occupies in the film. She is not sent to the space station as a woman, of course, but like the men as a sexless being. . . . The loss of the body in space also entails the loss of gender and thus the loss of difference to the Other. The question of the extrahuman also entails the question of the elimination of gender roles. It is precisely because this woman

has lost her gender that she emphasizes her feminine appearance and floats through the MIR in a frilly pink nightgown. We are dealing with a phenomenon of substitution, which shows that the question of the gender of angels is far from having been resolved.

AU: Helen Sharman's participation in the Krikalev mission really cheered me up, because it would have been horribly dull to make a film without any women at all. As far as her sexual identity is concerned, you should note that she was only in the station for about ten days, too short a time to have lost it. In the case of the men who stayed there for up to a year, this was very different. Long periods in space are accompanied by a decrease in libido, to the point of nonexistence. Space travelers, as opposed to sailors, do not suffer from the lack of sexual encounters. All the more wonderful, then, that Sharman should appear to them as a pink angel. Only in this way does the reattainment of a childlike state in space relate to the angelic. After a while, people in space are thrown back, physiologically speaking, into a prepubescent age. The age of the boys' choir, where one sings with an angel's voice until it finally breaks . . .

PV: But we need a body, a gender, in order to be able to live, to maintain a complete and organic vitality not limited to mere visual perception. Isn't it strange that John Glenn wanted to grow old in space? That he wanted to test his old body, after his young one, in zero gravity? For me this recent flight of John Glenn's is a trope for the aging of space. With the conquest of space is also expressed the aging of man, his premature aging. We have become too old for this world. Our fragile bodies long for an angelic state, for the firmament. But we no longer explore space; we content ourselves with measuring the universe. This is the end, then, of the travelers, the seafarers and their libidos—Moby Dick or Billy Budd. The traveler has become a TV viewer. He is satisfied with the invention of the universe as image, with the invention of an astronomical cybercinema that will be the future of mankind.



Out of the Present.

AU: Maybe John Glenn just wanted to rejuvenate himself. According to the theory of relativity, time is reversible in outer space. Krikalev, for example, is now about one and a half minutes younger than his official age, having spent fifteen months of his life in space. He has the velocity of MIR to thank for that. Who knows, maybe it will just help us to die a few seconds younger. I am uneasy about one implication: Does space allow aspects of the angelic to become real? Space travel, after all, consists solely of this riddle plus a view from space. Isn't it astounding how physical metaphysics have become?

PV: We can end this conversation only as questioners. Is virtual space, travel in cyberspace, destined to supercede astrophysical space, travel in the cosmos?

AU: Yes, if we're prepared to relinquish the sublime.

Paris, 7 April 1999

P.S. Since this conversation took place, nearly four years have passed and the MIR station has been scrapped. A new international space station is under construction. With it, mankind is about to establish a permanent outpost in space. We are slowly preparing to abandon the Earth. Put another way, we will probably forever be commuting between gravity and weightlessness. In this way history will cease to occur solely in gravity. That is the end of gravity-centrism. That is THE END OF GRAVITY.

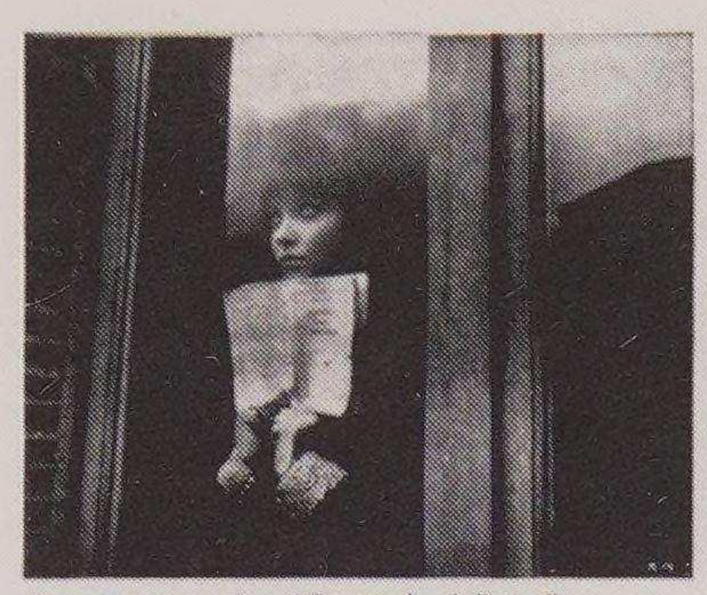
—Andrei Ujica, Berlin, 2002

Note

These texts were originally published in the exhibition catalog *1 monde réel* published by the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain and Actes Sud, Paris, 1999. They appear here translated primarily from the versions that Ujica revised and edited for German publication in *Lettre International* (Summer 2001): 73–80. The Virilio sections were translated with reference to the original French texts.



Out of the Present.



Catatonia in the "Capital of Pain."



Phenomena of consciousness.



Alias William Burroughs.

Mel Bochner. *Alfaville*, 1968.
Detail.

Alfaville, or the Utopics of Mel Bochner

ERIC DE BRUYN

Sometimes reality is too complex. Fiction gives it form.
—Alpha 60[1]

Narrative gives more than form to reality, it bestows meaning on that reality. Narrative is consumed in the world, Roland Barthes once wrote, but the reverse also holds true: the world is consumed as a narrative.[2] Imagine then, if you will, the confusion of a reader who, on turning to page fourteen in the May 1968 issue of *Arts Magazine,* happens upon a text called *Alfaville, Godard's Apocalypse*. Our surprised reader is presented with nothing that would ordinarily go by the name of narrative. *Alfaville* passes itself off as a review of Godard's *Alphaville,* a movie that had its premiere in 1965, but it seems more adequate to describe this discursive object as an extended exercise in estrangement.[3]

Alfaville was authored by Mel Bochner, although it remains to be seen what the notion of author means in his case. The text forms a composite affair, which defies easy categorization. The text does not fully set itself apart from other genres of writing, such as art criticism or the sociological essay. That it might faintly look like something we already know is part of its lure. Yet, it is also clear that the text is structured in a multiple fashion: it resembles as much a table of contents (i.e., the table *is* the concrete text) as it does an index table (i.e., the table refers to a text that is *elsewhere*); it reads as an inventory of data that were amassed by the author and as a compilation of quotes drawn from other sources. *Alfaville*, in short, insists on its own inability to complete the summation not only of the text of Godard's *Alphaville,* but also of the larger text it literally inhabits: the discursive spaces of information.

Even though an incomplete tale, *Alfaville* does remind us of a narrative we are fond of telling ourselves in order to give form to the reality of the sixties. This story concerns how the development of postindustrial society reached a point of critical mass. This postmodern scenario has proven trustworthy in its explanatory power, but the strength of this historical model can, at times, also be its weakness. The historical fiction of postmodernism necessarily operates on an ideological level; that is to say, it provides both an explanation and a representation of our imaginary relationship to the real conditions of existence. Hence, the elements of science fiction that

can cling to such narratives. I am thinking, in particular, of those totalizing representations of the information age, such as the euphoric globalism of Marshall McLuhan or the critical dystopia of Guy Debord, which emerged during the period itself. We have since come to understand that the more interesting narratives of postmodernity will not only resist this homogeneous view of cultural experience, they will also reinstate a multiplicity of subjective, discursive, and institutional positions within the cultural realm; they will acknowledge the unevenness of historical time with its coexistence of different technical and economic moments, and they will view technology not only as an instrument of disciplinary power. In short, such narratives will not give up on the dialectic of utopia and critique but on the desire to achieve a final synthesis of the dialectic. *Alfaville,* I submit, offers such a tentative mode of narrative, as well.

Let me proceed to situate *Alfaville* upon a more limited scale of historical events. When he wrote *Alfaville,* Mel Bochner was a young artist who had previously written art criticism in support of minimal art.[4] He formed part of a milieu of postminimalist artists, such as Robert Smithson and Dan Graham, whose work participated in a migration of artistic practice into the spaces of information, both old and new, already under way in Pop art. I am referring, for instance, to the use of the film and video media, but also the adoption of the magazine as a site of presentation. Importantly, Bochner, Smithson, and Graham viewed the mass media as more than a means of distribution, they were involved in an active disturbance of the media's protocols and codes.[5] There is an aspect of subversion and mimicry at work in such examples as Graham's *Homes for America* (1966), Smithson's *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey* (1967), or *The Domain of the Great Bear* (1966), which was coauthored by Smithson and Bochner. These magazine works overturned and transgressed the discursive principles of the magazine article at a time when the "artist's page" had not yet become a standard feature of art magazines.

My focus will remain on *Alfaville* in the following pages, and I shall not be concerned with locating *Alfaville* within the expanded field of magazine works.[6] Nevertheless, the informational network that *Alfaville* taps into is of a dizzyingly large dimension. I shall identify the main subtext of *Alfaville,* however, to be the genre of science fiction and, by extension, utopian fiction. Godard's *Alphaville* is first and foremost a science fiction movie, although it also passes itself off as many other things. In this sense the confusion of genres in Godard's cinema reveals a close affinity to the strategy of the magazine pieces by Bochner and others. Indeed *Alphaville,* which carried the subtitle *A Strange Adventure of Lemmy Caution,* dissimulated what the spectator thought he or she knew: not only the

conventional forms of cinema, but also the everyday reality of Paris. Bochner's *Alfaville* is engaged in a similar act of defamiliarization. In fact, *Alfaville* does not let the viewer miss this point, since Bertolt Brecht's name is inscribed on its surface more than once. We might say, first of all, that *Alfaville* estranges *Alphaville* from itself. In a certain sense *Alfaville* becomes a remake of *Alphaville*. Yet *Alfaville* also functions as an alienation of its own setting. On its own intimate scale *Alfaville* defamiliarizes the magazine page itself, but the alienation device of *Alfaville* also operates on the larger scale of its sociohistorical context. Yet, the critical detachment once sought by Brecht also begins to break down in *Alfaville*, and we shall need to explore what this loss of distance implies for Bochner's critical project.

Mapping *Alfaville*

Utopic practice is an architectonics, an art of systems.
—Louis Marin[7]

Alfaville occupies four consecutive pages in *Arts Magazine*, and the continuity of its space is interrupted only at the margins where the folio numbers and publication data appear. Bochner mapped out the double page spreads of *Alfaville* according to the regularity of a three-column grid subdivided into four horizontal rows. The artist created thereby an impression of great uniformity, even rigidity in the layout. Yet even this apparent simplicity of the typographic grid masks a greater complexity. The checkered structure of *Alfaville* delineates a multiple space of semantic relationships, which catch the reader/viewer in their maze. Indeed, it is this remarkable ability of *Alfaville* to articulate at once the most uniform and most heterogeneous of spaces that makes it such a compelling work.

Following good modernist practice, *Alfaville*'s grid forms a device of self-reflexivity. It points to its own physical surface of support, but simultaneously the incursion of the words and images within the field of the grid dispel any illusion of the work being selfsame. On one level *Alfaville* forms a site-specific object of discourse since it exists only *in this place*. Perhaps one reason that *Alfaville* remains a lesser-known work is that it exists only in one place, namely in the May 1968 issue of *Art Magazine*.[8] Yet, on another level *Alfaville* functions as a discursive event in which *nothing takes place* but the dispersions of language itself. Accordingly, we might say that *Alfaville*'s narrative, in so far as such a thing exists, never arrives at any definite place.[9]

The grid of *Alfaville* establishes a continuous visual ground to the work, but it also works to fragment the text. In this sense Bochner's layout does not negate the standard typographic practice of the magazine but inverts its aesthetic principles. A functionalist decree

Alfaville,
Godard's Apocalypse

by MEL BOCHNER

"Torpor is the enemy."—Eca de Quieroz

A centrally located circular light, too intense to look at, blinks on and off at regular intervals. The sound track opens in a raspy, monotone:

"Sometimes . . . reality . . . is . . . too . . .
complex . . .
Fiction . . . gives . . . it . . . form . . ."

"In a series of pictures he transforms the nothingness of listless and uniform days into an oppressive condition of repugnancy, boredom, false hopes, paralyzing disappointments and piteous fears. Nothing happens but that nothing becomes heavy—a grey and random human destiny moving towards its end." Erich Auerbach on Flaubert's Madame Bovary.

Alphaville Locations: Deserted lobbies, parking lots, shopping plazas, cloverleaf intersections, curtain-wall buildings, self-service elevators, hotel bathrooms, phone booths, circular staircases, highways around large cities, a bedroom with a juke box.

"My movies are blocks."—Jean-Luc Godard.

CAST:

Lemmy Caution.....Eddie Constantine
Natasha von Braun.....Anna Karina
Henri Dickson.....Akim Tamiroff

Alfaville ——— society of the present-future ——— ruled by a mad physicist outcast from earth ——— governed by a computer, "Alfa 60," which acts always in the "common good" ——— phenomena maintained by a "crisis constant" ——— the state provides strangers with women ——— anxiety as an operational value ——— behaviorism ——— drive—cue—response—reward ———. For Alfa 60 the boundary of life is language———. "There is nothing else to experience except words; as long as words keep their meanings and meaning its words" ——— political executions are carried out in a swimming pool.



Natasha and Lemmy suffering dumbly from certain external and unintelligible strains.

Lemmy: *This book you call The Bible ... it's a dictionary.*
Natasha: *Is there a difference?*

"Logic pervades the world:
the limits of the world
are also its limits."
—Wittgenstein

If words define experience, then behavior becomes subject to the problems of language . . . tautology, conundrum, diffusion, paradox, ambiguity, contradiction, vicious circle.

Words are suspect, the dictionary is altered at the whim of the "authorities," convention collapses. Communication ceases. Thought becomes impossible. Symbols separate from their assigned meanings, questions go unanswered, answers go unquestioned, words substitute for action. Action becomes impossible. Stasis.

Wherever Lemmy Caution goes he takes snapshots with a Kodak Instamatic Camera and flashcube attachment.

A sign caught in the headlights:
LOGIC: SILENCE

Mel Bochner. *Alfaville*, 1968.
As published in *Arts Magazine* (May 1968).

Surfaces: A. The film *coarse, grainy, uneven, pocked.* *B. Object matter* *hard, brittle, smooth, reflective.* *1. transparent* *glass, plexiglas.* *2. opaque* *stainless steel, poured concrete, aluminum, formica, chrome.*	Eddie Constantine is numbed by a powerful sottishness as he moves down the labyrinthian corridors of Alfaville. His mind is sluggish and opaque. Lassitude. His face is parched and immobile. His body heavy, virtually stagnant. His reactions slow and tepid, he acts, it seems, out of nothing more than a slightly roused boredom. His avowal of humanist values such as love and personal feeling are all the more disproportionate.	*"Perhaps all pleasure is only relief."* —William Burroughs "There seems a certainty in degradation." —T. E. Lawrence *"The love of life is the kiss of death."* —Ad Reinhardt "If you look at something long enough, I've discovered that the meaning goes away."—Andy Warhol
"Once we have devised computers with a genuine capacity for self-improvement, a rapid evolutionary process will begin. As the machine improves both itself and its model of itself, we shall begin to see all the phenomena associated with the terms 'consciousness,' 'intuition' and 'intelligence' . . . it is unreasonable to think machines	*could become nearly as intelligent as we are and then stop, or to suppose we will always be able to compete with them. Whether or not we could retain some sort of control of the machines, assuming that we would want to, the nature of our activities and aspirations would be changed utterly by the presence on earth of intellectually superior beings."*—M. L. Minsky	Shots: A. Frames cut off, casual, often missing the action, static, exaggerated angles (in the manner of TV news coverage), discontinuous. B. Tonality washed-out grays over- or under-exposed, random negative footage, irregular patches of extreme dark or light.



Godard as the Law.

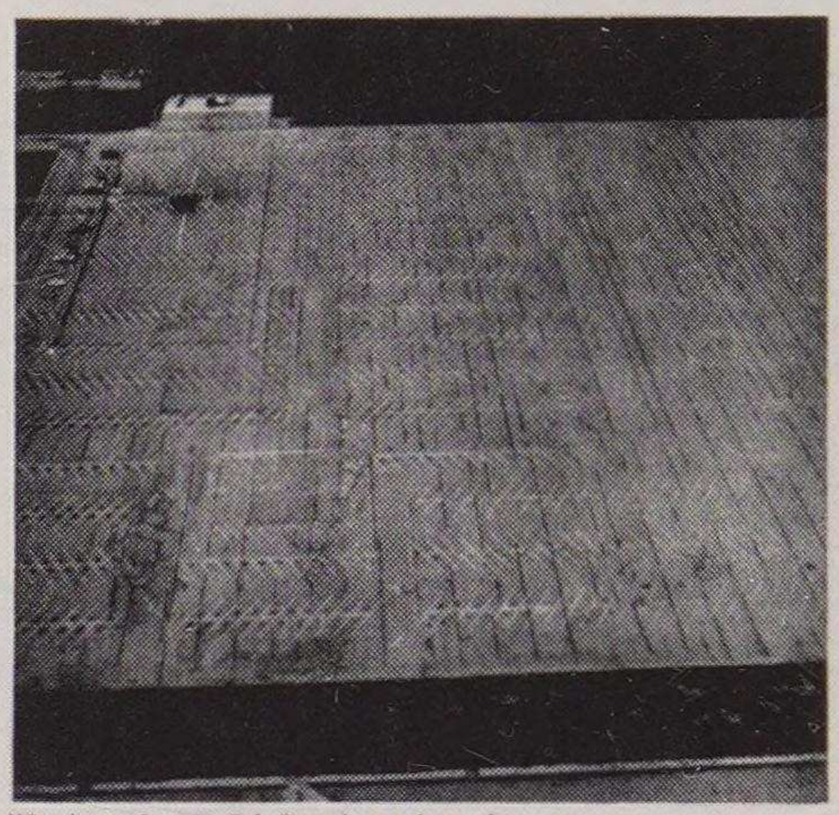


Systems of tentative paralysis.

On the perimeter of the city live those who cannot conform. In this gray zone Lemmy locates his old friend Henry Dickson, a fellow "Outlander," living in a sleazy hotel. On the stairs Lemmy asks, "Is Dick Tracy dead? Is Flash Gordon still alive?" Once inside the dilapidated room he is forced to hide behind a chest of drawers while a beautiful, scantily clad girl (a state prostitute and spy) offers herself to the old man. While engaged in preliminary love-making, the old man is seized by a heart attack. His last words to Lemmy: "Save those who weep."	*The implications of* Alphaville *are moralistic. Godard opts for humanist values in the context of his projection of "technologism." He sees* Alphaville *as present and apocalyptic. The erasure of individuality and personality, or what Lemmy Caution calls "poetry," he views as tragic. Godard's "sociology" is exceedingly romanticized. Man has already been displaced from the center of the universe.*	*"You must never say* why; *only because."* —Natasha von Braun "Time is a circle, the descending arc is the past, the ascending arc the future, there is only the present."—Alpha 60 *"Time is never a corruption or even a catastrophe, but merely a change of place, a hideout for data."*—Roland Barthes



Barriers of reflection.



"Parking lots." Ed Ruscha, photo/Aeanis.

In Alphaville there is no time. The clock is a circle and time is the measurement of the movements on its "face." "Before" in relation to "after" is the character of time. "Before" and "after" are divisions of "time" separated by "now." But "now" as a "part" of time is unavailable. It has no duration, and the bleak search for the "present" becomes the interminable "past." At that juncture time stops.

"The movies are a world of fragments."
—Jean-Luc Godard

Political executions are carried out in the swimming pool. The person to be executed, hands tied, is led to the edge of the diving board. Around the balcony various officials look on. The condemned man generally makes a short speech about freedom, existence or human solidarity. The strange hollow sound of his words is punctuated by a burst of machine-gun bullets. After he falls into the water, a bevy of girls gracefully dive in after him and, if necessary, finish the execution with knives.



Catatonia in the "Capital of Pain."



Phenomena of consciousness.



Alias William Burroughs.

Godard's eschatology is conventional within the tradition of "crisis" literature and art of the twentieth century. Yeats, Pound, Wyndham Lewis, all envisioned the Apocalypse and an ensuing "renovation out of decadence." They confronted it with the posture of authoritarianism; the Surrealists, in turn, preferred pseudo-anarchism. More recently, artists such as Warhol have presented an attitude of passivity. In his movies Warhol demonstrates a preoccupation with the more fictive elements of "crisis" by presenting everything as stereotype. Even more interesting than Warhol are the movies of Roger Corman, especially his *Wild Angels*. Unlike Godard, he makes no assessments of the "contemporary malaise"; his concern is only with appearances and the surface of things. The *Wild Angel* motorcyclists are complete fabrications, only tangentially based in fact. When Corman's characters speak, motives do not exist. Nancy Sinatra, a motorcycle gang girl, in reply to her boyfriend's question "How have I changed?" says, "I don't know . . . it's just kinda weird." The audience is distanced by banality and what Brecht refers to as the "alienation effect." Godard, on the other hand, eschews the artificial and attempts to portray believable human feelings. He asks that we forego theatricality and believe emotionally in the plight of a "hero" and "heroine" who are themselves in a state of disbelief.

Mel Bochner. *Alfaville*, 1968.
As published in *Arts Magazine*
(May 1968).



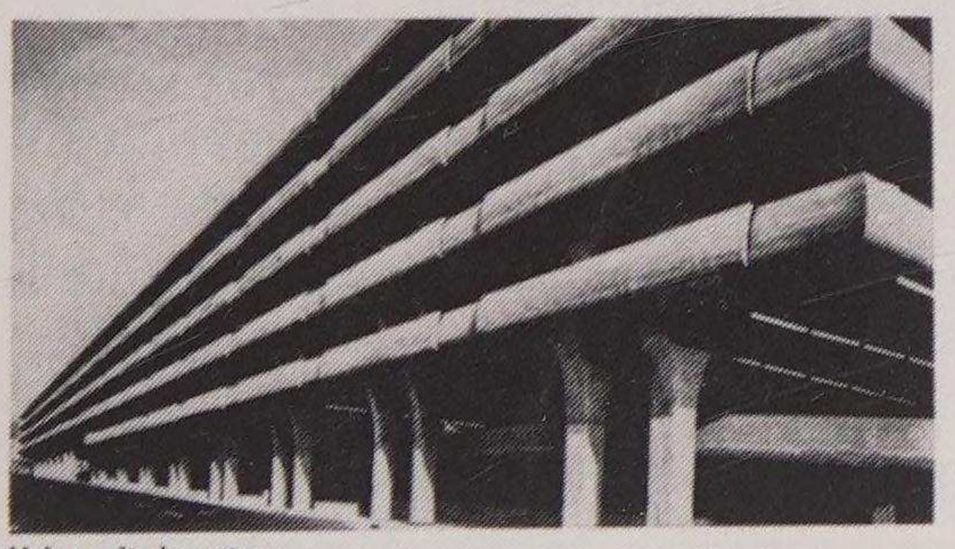
Fictitious excess within rigid boundaries: "Corman's Wild Angels"

"Never show reality. If a man must travel over land, use land that has been burned up in a forest fire. Preferably he should journey over or past water, because water has a dreamlike quality. And there must be fog and fire . . . The function of the camera is to portray reality, but I like to show that much reality is unreal."

—Roger Corman

"The alienation effect consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware of from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking, and unexpected. What is obvious is in a certain sense made incomprehensible. Before familiarity can turn into awareness, the familiar must be stripped of its inconspicuousness; we must give up assuming that the object in question needs no explanation. However frequently recurrent, modest, vulgar it may be, it will now be labeled as something unusual . . . an alienation of the automobile takes place if after driving a modern car for a long while we drive an old model T-Ford. Suddenly we hear explosions once more; the motor works on the principle of explosions. We start feeling annoyed that such a vehicle can move; in short, we understand cars, by looking at them as something strange, new, as a triumph of engineering and to that extent something unnatural. Nature, which certainly embraces the automobile, is suddenly imbued with an element of unnaturalness, and from now on this is an indelible part of the concept of nature."

—Berthold Brecht



Urban dis-location.



Contrivances of experience.

"[In] The last scene of the film . . . Natasha tells Lemmy that she loves him, but pronounces it as a child speaks its first words. She has been reborn, and for them both a normal human life is possible again."

—Jean-Luc Godard

Godard suggests a morality which is at best questionable, for finally any "values" based on "normal human life" versus "cold, inhuman computer" are contrived. The old conventions of ethics and rationality are all used up.

"Everything has been said before."

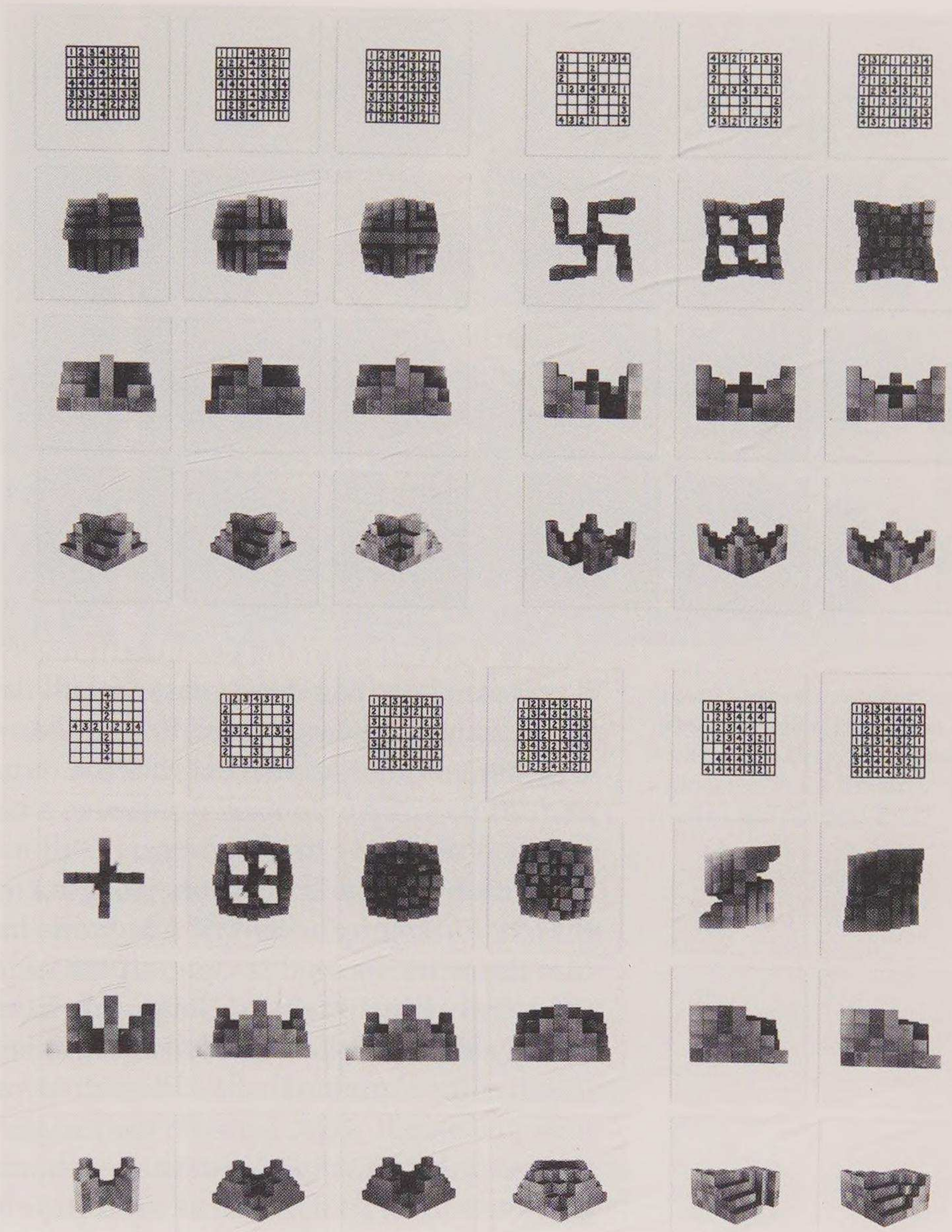
—Alpha 60

of readability would dictate that the typographic grid function as a nonobtrusive tool of visual organization, but Bochner's emphatic use of rule lines to demarcate the page into separate blocks distinctly flouted this elementary law of design. Bochner foregrounded the grid in *Alfaville* in order to obtain a division *within* the text rather than as a means to establish its linear continuity. He situated, that is, the text at a formal level of segmentation that precluded the containment of narrative order within the unity of a singular, perspectival viewpoint.

Hence the inescapable impression that *Alfaville* makes on the viewer as a highly static and artificial construct.[10] We might say that Bochner's piece estranges us from the narrative situation that we customarily settle into during our encounters with the mass media, whether this situation is inaugurated by our turning on the television or our opening of the pages of a magazine. But, then again, Bochner deliberately plays off such conventions. That is to say, he does not seek to invent new protocols of reading, which might deflect or supplant those imposed by the mass media. Such was the enterprise undertaken by modernist literature, and it is quite likely that Bochner was familiar with the combinatory and performative strategies of Stéphane Mallarmé's *Book* or even the typographical experiments of Michel Butor.[11] However, *Alfaville* does not seek to establish an *alternative* protocol, which after all is contained within the very narrative system it seeks to oppose. *Alfaville,* rather, seeks to expose the duplicities and contradictions of the narrative system as such.

Narrative is an integrative structure that proceeds in consecutive, incremental steps. It might do so swiftly, or it might delay the chain of events, spin out its logical thread of space and time. For instance, detective stories make frequent use of so-called "baffling" signs, which not only draw out the suspense but also present the reader with misleading signs of direction.[12] Godard's *Alphaville* belongs, among other things, to this detective genre, and Bochner's account of the movie is particularly sensitive to its phenomenal aspects of dilation and indirection. He describes the main character of the movie, for instance, as being "numbed by a powerful sottishness as he moves down the labyrinthine corridors of Alfaville. His mind is sluggish and opaque. Lassitude." Bochner's summary of the narrative thus slows down itself in the process of picturing a cinematic atmosphere heavy with lethargy. Bochner's sentences do not lead anywhere, but are stretched thin to the point of breakage. Language is fragmented into snippets of sentences and words, a world splintered into so many bits of information and objectified "phenomena of consciousness," scattered through a labyrinthine space, like Godard's "dumbly suffering" subjects.

But the process of disintegration does not eclipse all appearance of order. On the one hand, *Alfaville* still holds up a world to our view.



Mel Bochner. *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams,* 1966. Thirty-six gelatin silver prints and twelve pen-and-ink drawings mounted on board, 73 x 55".

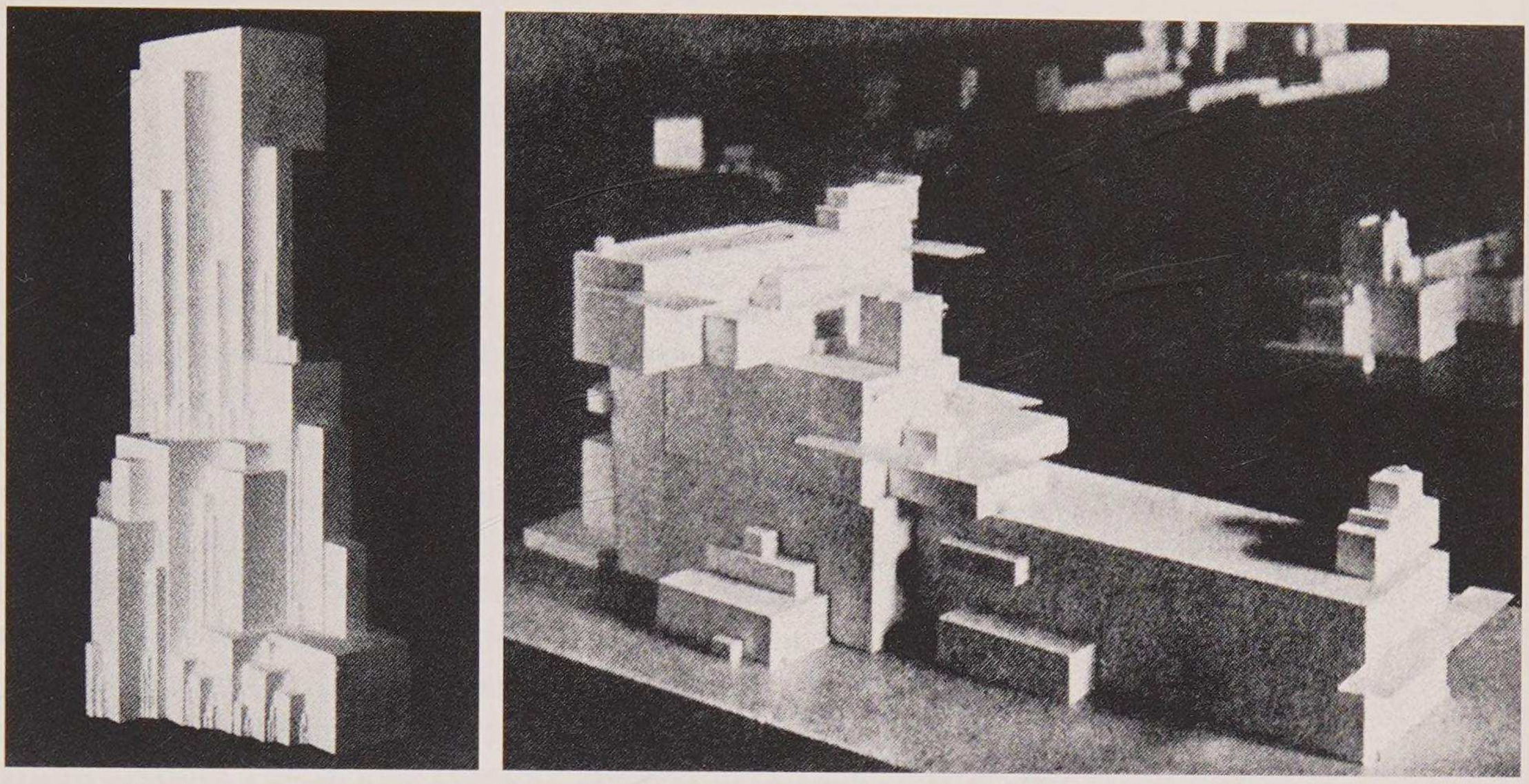
It might be a depleted, dispirited, and dystopic world where even the hero "acts out of nothing more than a slightly roused boredom," but it is a world that we can imagine inhabiting and which we might or might not identify with our own reality. On the other hand, we must not let this imaginary level of Bochner's *Alfaville* distract us from its structural logic, which thrives on contradiction. In order to clarify this point, I propose that we describe *Alfaville* as a kind of *model;* that is, as a model of the text, a model of *Alphaville*, and a model of the world. Perhaps this tactic might seem to open the way to further confusion; however, let us not mistake this notion of the model with a kind of blueprint of reality. *Not models for something, but models of something*—formed Bochner's agenda.[13] It follows that the model, for Bochner, does not represent a perfect plan to be realized, but forms something both abstract and concrete.

I feel emboldened to invoke this notion of the model in the context of Bochner's work for a number of reasons. First of all, the model has been operative in Bochner's practice since 1966. It initially appears in a photographic work called *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams,* which displays a systemic set of structures built from identical

wooden cubes.[14] The original impetus behind the photo work was documentary. For an exhibition Bochner wanted to re-create a daily task he had set himself over a period of several months: constructing different arrangements of wooden cubes on his desk. Each day he dismantled the old structure in order to build a new one. The only remaining record was a set of numerical diagrams. Bochner hired a professional photographer to shoot a few reconstructed versions of the diagrams. This work manifests therefore the *structural* nature of the model, which establishes a narrative by articulating a set of invariant units (like the "blocks" of *Alfaville*). Bochner's procedure clearly derived from the permutational systems of Minimalism, but it was also born of a desire to defeat all illusionism in the work. The result, however, was to be different than the artist anticipated.

Bochner quickly realized that the redoubling of *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams* onto itself resulted in a variety of unexpected effects, not the least being that a pervasive "illusion of literalism" had canceled the wished for presence of "anti-illusionism."[15] It was not that *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams* had become all illusion but that the work seemed to open up an indeterminate space between the purely illusional and the purely literal. Since this self-contradictory status of the work has been examined in detail elsewhere, it will suffice to state that *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams* not only took place, as it were, *between* the images (as no single camera angle summed up the whole), but that each image revealed many incongruities *within* itself (such as multiple shadows and optical distortions). In short, *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams* juxtaposes a set of representational systems, both discursive and visual, that cannot be made to fully overlap. The work opens a differential gap between these procedures of the map and narrative, the diagram and perspective. Thus, in the last instance, we might conclude that the model operates in a *nonstructural* manner because it does not resolve all contradictions upon a narrative level (in contrast to the mythical structure of ideology), but foregrounds these conflicts in the dispersions of its system.

It is important to understand that the conflicts that Bochner's model sets into motion are not only of a perceptual or spatial kind but are temporal and historical as well. Perhaps this is more evident in *Alfaville,* where we come across the names of Flaubert, Wittgenstein, and Godard, all on the same page. However, *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams* also encapsulates different historical moments within itself. There is one such moment that I wish to point out, a particularly pregnant one that will enable me to draw a link between the model and the figure of utopia. Bochner has suggested a precedent for his models in the *Arkhitektonics* of Kasimir Malevich. He knew Malevich's models from the illustrations in Camilla Gray's *The Russian Experiment in Art:* a book that had been instrumental in introduc-



Kasimir Malevich, *Arkhitektonics*, 1924–28. Original illustration from Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962).

ing the constructivist legacy to the (post)minimalist generation.[16] While Bochner was fascinated by the images in Gray's book, there is little value in suggesting a formal parallel between the models of Bochner and Malevich. The true analogy resides on an architectural and, by extension, *utopian* level, because Malevich's works were utopian to the extreme, lacking any possible means of execution. What struck Bochner most about the *Arkhitektonics* was that the Russian artist gave no consideration to such practical matters as where to place a window or a door. That is the reason why the *Arkhitektonics* appear to be utterly without scale.[17] It is this lack of ratio in *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams* that Bochner's model holds in common with the *Arkhitektonics*.[18]

For an object to have no scale is another way of saying that an object exists in a kind of nonplace, in a space beyond measure. Furthermore, to provide the lineaments of such an impossible non-space, as Louis Marin has demonstrated, is of the essence of the utopian figure.[19] Utopia does not belong to the functional level of social or political discourse, but displaces reality into an *other place,* outside the actual boundaries of geographic space and historical time. Marin describes this other place as an in-determined place, which means to say that it *transforms* and *displaces* the imaginary relations we entertain with our real conditions of existence. The proper sign of utopic discourse will therefore be an incessant exchange between the dual terms of fiction versus reality, topography versus history, author versus narrator.[20] Utopic discourse is truly a dialogic discourse, a kind of disputation, just as Bochner's own compilation pieces, of which *Alfaville* forms but one example, are constructed as a kind of "dialogue" between different voices.[21] We need, therefore, to differentiate between a utopic practice that sets out to intensify and systematically work over the ideological contradictions within the social domain and the utopic figure, which would project a simulacral image of a perfect society.[22] It is the former model of a utopic practice that will hold my interest.

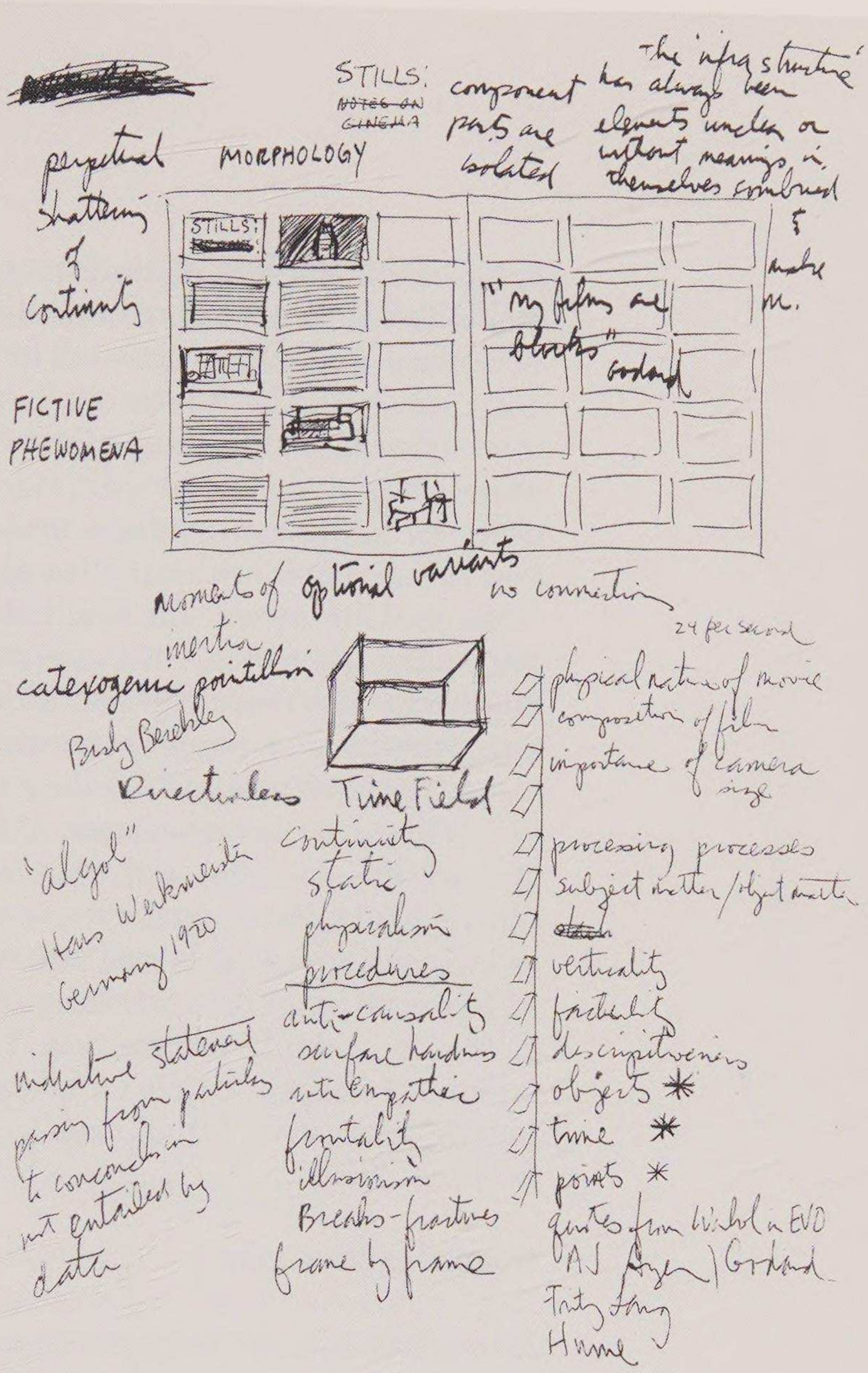
As Marin argues, the interplay of fiction and history in utopic practice is governed by a structural logic of neutralization.[23] I shall

have to be brief on this subject. For our purposes it is sufficient to recognize that the *neutral figure* forms a supplementary third term that edges itself between the two extremities of a contradiction. It designates a zero degree of opposition, therefore, instead of a dialectical synthesis of opposites. I have indicated that a similar process of neutralization is at work in *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams*. In contrast to Malevich, however, the utopic practice of Bochner has become detached from the utopian figure. *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams* stretches its perceptual contradictions across its multiple surface. There is no total perspective on the whole, no coherence to its spatial narrative. In short, Bochner's models figure forth a necessarily incomplete act of representation:

> The notion of completion is at fault. What is experienced and what is known continually replace each other. Nothing reveals itself without at the same time concealing something else. The concealed is the source of thought. And thought, which we hope to use to "fill in the gaps" is in itself bottomless or . . . incomplete.[24]

The relationship of *Alfaville* to *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams* is now easily brought into focus. Dan Graham once compared the latter to a "directionless time-field," which is a good description of the procedures of the neutral that reverses the terms of spatial and temporal experience.[25] *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams* references, in particular, the protocinematic, spatialized temporality of Eadweard Muybridge's serial photographs.[26] But this neutralizing logic is also very close to the spirit of Godard who pitched a model of "theatrical realism" against the naturalistic illusions of *cinéma verité*. One of Godard's most oft-quoted remarks is that "life and the unreal are inseparable. If you begin with life you find unreality behind, and vice versa."[27]

An earlier draft for *Alfaville* was called *Stills: Notes on Cinema*. Across several vertical columns of text and images, in the artist's scrawling handwriting, we decipher Godard's phrase: "My films are blocks."[28] In the margins of the drawing is written: "The infrastructure has always been elements unclear or without meanings in themselves combined and made one" and "component parts are isolated." Bochner deconstructs film, therefore, in a systematic manner similar to the procedures of *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams*. Film functions as a model of reality in a return of the myth of total cinema, but with a twist. The ontological notion of a total cinema held that a total representation of life was possible, even though the ideal had to be postponed into infinity. A total cinema would exist, therefore, in depth as a synthesis or composite of all possible perspectives, but Bochner's simulation of a total cinema exists as a surface where one does not compose but simply selects from the



Mel Bochner. *Stills: Notes on Cinema,* 1967. Notebook page with drawings, 11 x 8½".

available stock footage: "Vertical progression of horizontal images—a cancelation. Time is many points, all times and all movies have the same number of points." But this system of fragments is incomplete and conflicted—"order breaks down of its own accord because it is a superimposition."[29] *Alfaville* thus renders the "perspectival shattering of continuity."

A formal analysis of *Alfaville* reveals that the regularity of the grid masks an underlying pattern of systemic contradictions. Any organizational rule that is discovered in a subset will not carry over to the whole. For instance, some parts of the text flow over into the next box, while others do not, and some paragraphs are aligned at the top, others at the center or bottom of the block. These shifting relations of congruence and opposition are repeated on the level of the images, which forms a secondary system that is partially superimposed and partially integrated within the total space of the text. Within one horizontal strip of images, Bochner might suggest various formal or dynamic relationships of repetition and reversal, while at the synoptic level of the whole spread he will intimate further possibilities of a symmetrical or diametrical kind, as if

imitating the rhythms of filmic montage itself. Indeed, we might say that *Alfaville* forms a kind of model of cinema.

Godard once suggested what he thought the ideal format of film criticism should be.[30] First of all, he asserted that criticism should shed its formalist preoccupation with problems of style. Instead, a writer should engage in what Godard called "instructional criticism" by juxtaposing images and commentary in such a manner that the commentary *on* the image would form part *of* the image. "One could imagine," the filmmaker offered, "criticism similar to Michel Butor's novels, which are more or less critical commentaries on events. The criticism would be the dialogue of the film, with photographs or comments: the whole thing would comprise a critical analysis of the film."[31] Indeed the essay would be structured in its totality as a conversation or dialogue between the various levels of word and image, film and critic, and, we might add, text and reader. Clearly Godard's thoughts on criticism reflected his own beginning as a film critic, and it is well known how he compared filmmaking to the writing of critical essays.[32] Bochner's *Alfaville* answers closely to Godard's proposition. Yet *Alfaville* is not a tribute but a critique of Godard. Before we take up a discussion of Bochner's disputation, however, I shall need to address the place of the neutral in *Alphaville*.

Godard and the Law

It was 24 hours, 17 minutes Oceanic Time when I arrived at the suburbs of Alphaville.[33]

The voice is that of Eddie Constantine, alias Lemmy Caution, who describes his own close-up image as it appears on screen. We see him behind the wheel of his white Ford Galaxie, driving through the deserted streets of a nocturnal metropolis. As he waits for a traffic light to change, he lights a cigarette and transfers a gun from the glove box into his pocket. Then, caught in the headlights of his car, a road sign becomes visible: *Alphaville. Silence. Logic.* Lemmy Caution, with the viewer in tow, has arrived at the city of destination. I shall interrupt the narrative at this point, however. We shall be less concerned with the convoluted adventures of Lemmy Caution in Alphaville-the-city than the uncanny transformations that the movie sets in motion within the spatiotemporal field of our actual, historical experience.

Eddie Constantine is the name of an American actor who had attained star status in France during the 1950s while acting in a series of B-grade movies. He was especially known in his role as a secret agent, Lemmy Caution, modeled on the hardboiled detective of the American film noir, but by 1965 Constantine/Caution had

come to seem a holdover from a previous, spent era of cinematic glory.[34] This used-up sense of time was what attracted Godard to Constantine and, by extension, to the serial genre of the detective and science fiction movie.

In *Alphaville* Lemmy Caution travels under the alias of Ivan Johnson, reporter for the *Figaro-Pravda*. "Lemmy Caution" constitutes, therefore, a kind of double or nonperson; he is neither one (Constantine) nor the other (Johnson). In short, Lemmy Caution embodies through this split condition the place of the neutral. Hence, Caution's trouble decoding the secret messages he receives, but also the viewer's difficulties following Caution's path through the circular, mirrored maze of Alphaville's space.[35] Caution's gestures, as Bochner notes, appear to lack inner volition: "His mind is sluggish and opaque. . . . His body heavy, virtually stagnant." Yet, cutting through this inertia, without warning, are sudden acts of irrational violence. While such unprovoked deeds of aggression parody the gratuitous violence that is typical of the *film noir* genre, they also form a symptom of the antagonistic core of the Caution character.[36]

> *Where you find the Red Star Hotel . . . in no way can it be compared to our splendid passages, all glittering . . . with luxury and light. It is merely a huge, tall, narrow, labyrinth . . .*[37]

Constantine's voice-over narrates the "strange adventures" of Lemmy Caution from a temporal distance, but this framing device does not provide the spectator with a unified perspective on Alphaville-the-city. In fact, Constantine is not the only internal commentator of the movie. Preceding the establishing shot of *Alphaville* is a voice-over by Alpha 60, the central computer of Alphaville, who conveys the epigrammatic phrase that introduces the present essay.[38] Alpha 60 appears here not only in the guise of a movie character—the evil opponent of our hero Lemmy Caution—but as a shorthand representation of the cinematic apparatus, because the computer's presence is represented by a burst of stroboscopic light, as if we were peering into the beam of the projector. In a self-critical gesture, the myth of Alpha 60—the total rationalization of the real—is revealed as similar to the classic, narrative law of the cinematic medium itself. From the outset, therefore, *Alphaville* is articulated in a double fashion. Caution will destroy Alpha 60 in the end. Nonetheless, it is Alpha 60 who announces the subsequent chain of events, which are narrated after-the-fact by Caution/Constantine.

This incoherence at the level of the narrator implies that the linearity of the plot will not ensure a diegetic unity of space and time. The mythical Alphaville is a capital city situated in a remote and dark galaxy, yet to some contemporary spectators a more-than-passing resemblance with the wintry streets of Paris would be apparent.

Alphaville is the double of Paris, which enables Paris to see itself as other than the way it normally sees itself:

> In this way each of Lemmy's reports can be used to compile a documentary on the town and its inhabitants. These images will be true documentary images of present-day life. But our story will sometimes deviate from their *sens primitifs* to give it a novel, rather strange, mysterious quality.[39]

Alphaville not only distantiates Paris from itself but also projects a negative, reverse image of Paris. These neutralizing operations of distancing and reversal entail that the distance between things becomes difficult to gauge for the viewer. At some times the gap between the mythical Alphaville and the historical Paris will appear in all its otherness. At other times the two places will appear to seamlessly coincide. Alphaville is a *plural* (or neutral) place; that is to say, its narrative topology cannot be located on any existing map, nor could we ever conceive of such a map. Yet, at the same time, this does not mean that Alphaville resides completely in an imaginary *elsewhere,* among the cluster of dream images of some catastrophic future. Alphaville-the-city is the figure of a narrative operation (i.e., *Alphaville*-the-movie), which works over the semantic units or clichés of reality. "Wherever Lemmy Caution goes," Bochner writes, "he takes snapshots with a Kodak Instamatic Camera and flashcube attachment."

To describe Alphaville as plural, therefore, is to indicate a breakdown of the topographical function of naming and marking a "place." Examples of such nominal markers are the monument or the road sign, which overlays space with a grid of geographic and historical coordinates. *Alphaville* presents such a directional sign at the beginning, but its architectural monuments are not the symbolical landmarks of the past. Godard's city of the future resembles a bureaucratic remodeling of the utopian dream of modernist architecture for the sixties: bright, hygienic, minimal, and uniform.[40] The movie décor does not consist of spaces of inhabitation but of spaces of transit. *Alphaville*'s locations are those of *dis-location;* a paratactic series of "deserted lobbies, parking lots, shopping plazas, cloverleaf intersections, curtain-wall buildings, self-service elevators, hotel bathrooms, phone booths, circular staircases, highways around large cities, a bedroom with a jukebox."

The road sign spells it out for us: *Alphaville. Silence. Logic.* Whoever enters this rationalized space is subjected to constant surveillance. Not only is there no private space, but there is also no private language. Between the sign and its meaning there can be no distance, no noise. Words must *be* what they *appear* to be, dictated by the transcendent authority of Alpha 60—the dictionary is referred to as the Bible in *Alphaville.* But this 1:1 mapping of language onto

reality cannot help but come up against its own limits. The delusions of logic infect the city's citizens with an absolute distrust of the arbitrariness of the sign. As a result, Alphaville's residents dwell in a desert of communication in which one only exchanges clichés, as one exchanges one generic place for another.

> *Natasha: In other words, we minimize the unknowns.*
> *Lemmy: What you mean is, it's not Alphaville you're prattling on about . . . it's Zeroville.*[41]

For the denizens of Alphaville, the city constitutes a space of total reification where all questioning has come to an end. The master computer Alpha 60 is an instrument of disciplinary power, a social feedback mechanism that functions as the arbiter of all human interrelations. All social conflict is eliminated from Alphaville because history has been reduced to the rational computation of probabilities. According to this cybernetic model, experience assumes a tautological nature, expelling the phenomenon of otherness from the social body. Time moves in a perfect circle. The loop is never broken, time does not move beyond itself, as in the phenomenological *ek-stase* or the revolutionary shattering of the historical continuum.[42] Since the thought of exteriority has become impossible in Alphaville, there is no time, as Bochner notes. Action becomes impossible and communication ceases.

Lemmy passes through one wasteland into another. He enters through an intersidereal, deserted *zone* and escapes through it, but let us not think that the rush of images that lie in between and seem filled with the unfamiliar details of a future landscape truly engender the repleteness of another universe. The film does little to conceal the utter banality, the cliché-ridden nature, of its story line; surely we are not being asked to *believe* in the theatrical proceedings, if even for the length of the movie. We might agree that Alpha 60 portrays the potential evils of surveillance and conjecture that the film condemns new technologies of communication, but we would be mistaken to take such a commonplace, such moralism, as the only surface on which the film operates.

Alphaville cannot be fully identified with such a dystopic or catastrophic theme: its infrastructure, to use Bochner's term, is not isomorphic with its superstructure. There are more than a few moments in *Alphaville,* for instance, when the narrative seems to derail. The reality effect of this science fiction movie is a weakened one, to say the very least.[43] The fictional trajectory of *Alphaville* puts several contraries in play, but it does not necessarily affirm one utopic (or dystopic) view of things over the other. To provide an example, *Alphaville* rewrites within the discursive domain of an *other* world the geopolitical terms of conflict that dominated the sixties. This process of neutralization, however, will indicate a rupture in the

very fabric of historical space; that is, it will indicate the fundamental limits of ideological representation. *Alphaville* divides the world into the two axes of north-south and east-west, but these axes do not intersect. The east-west axis belongs to the "Outerworld," whence Lemmy Caution comes, but it also suggests the integration of the Western and Soviet systems on the "galactic" scale of the spectacle. We never actually visit this realm in *Alphaville,* but we readily understand that it signifies a postideological future in the guise of a nominal conflation of New York and Moscow, Ivan and Johnson, Figaro and Pravda.[44] To get from the Outerword to Alphaville, however, one must travel through an empty void or zone (which indicates the true figure of the neutral). *Alphaville*'s city exists in its own truncated space, which is divided in northern and southern sectors. In sum, Godard's movie attempts to imagine a center to the dispersive networks of spectacular power but can only manage to do so by an imaginary detachment from geographical reality.

There is another example of the neutral at work in *Alphaville* that perhaps comes more readily to mind. It concerns the movie's mixing of genres, its collapse of the boundaries between high and mass culture. *Alphaville* is cluttered with quotes from the domain of film noir, science fiction serials, detective novels, and comic strips, besides its many references to philosophy, modernist literature, and surrealist poetry. Sometimes Godard reveals his sources openly, but not always. Lemmy Caution might be quoting from Pascal in a casual situation without our realizing it. Yet, the question lingers whether Godard's method has completely divested itself of a hierarchical view of culture; whether, that is, the Godard of *Alphaville* remains more an exponent of a modernist than a postmodernist tradition. Such is the question that Bochner will make us pose again to Godard.

> *It was 23 hours, 15 minutes Oceanic Time . . . when Natasha and I left Alphaville, along the peripheral boulevards.*[45]

Before we leave Alphaville, I need to insert a comment on the narrative structure of the science fiction genre. Lemmy Caution speaks of himself from another time, from an impossible future that is already past.[46] This curious extratemporal dimension of *Alphaville* is in itself a definitive aspect of the science fiction genre, as Fredric Jameson has convincingly argued.[47] From the previous account of *Alphaville* it has become clear that the movie does not provide the spectator with the full presence of some possible future—dystopic or otherwise. Indeed the past tense of *Alphaville* does not take a predictive cast; its events are portrayed as belonging to the already written, as belonging to the past.

This duplicity of the temporal structure of *Alphaville* is perhaps more pronounced than in most versions of the genre, but we can

encounter similar elements in *Alfaville,* which overlaps different historical moments within the synchronicity of a "future-present." Both *Alphaville* and *Alfaville* are somewhat ex-centric practices when it comes to the genre of science fiction (and utopian literature), but their references, nonetheless, are deliberate if not similar. It will be useful, therefore, to comprehend why science fiction develops its peculiar dialectic between the past and the future or, as Jameson has written, seeks to transform "our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come."[48]

First of all, the genre of science fiction is not an autonomous form; there is a historicity to its discursive practice. Science fiction emerged as a popular genre with Jules Verne in the late nineteenth century, at the same moment that another popular genre, the historical novel, began to lose its appeal. It was Gustave Flaubert who put the historical novel to rest by representing history as nothing but a monstrous collection of ill-assorted ideas, a catalog of clichés. What this *Flaubertization* of literature brought to the fore was the collapse of an evolutionary sense of time in bourgeois consciousness due to the reifying forces of the marketplace. Once the anchoring of the present in a determinate past, which had been fictionalized by the historical novel, became a structural impossibility in the realm of imagination, the future assumed the role of the past—hence, Jameson's definition of science fiction as representing the present as the past of a future.

The second step in Jameson's argument is to argue that the anticipatory nature of science fiction has undergone an alteration since the late nineteenth century. The capacity to extrapolate from a current state of technology and science into the future, to provide a "realistic" image of social change has become impossible in postmodernity. Our present, that is, represents the reverse side of Flaubert's inability to imagine historical progress as a linear process. The current crisis, however, is compounded by our inability to detach ourselves from the present in order to gain a perspective on the whole. If reality has assumed a simulacral aspect, then it is because we cannot place ourselves outside the framework of the globalized network of communication technologies and transnational institutions of late capitalism.[49]

Faced with this infinite—or, rather, *scaleless*—appearance of postmodernity, Jameson maintains that it will be necessary to develop elaborate "strategies of indirection." Such discursive strategies, or processes of cognitive mapping, insert themselves as catalyzing agents within the mediated realm of everyday experience. The "fictitious excess within rigid boundaries" (to steal Bochner's phrase) of such New Wave authors of science fiction as J.G. Ballard and Philip K. Dick, provide an example of such a strategy in practice.[50] Their texts present the reader with a kind of collage of reality, a

structural inversion of its signs, which have been transcoded into a proliferating range of neologisms. Science fiction operates, therefore, as a kind of subterfuge or decoy not dissimilar to the function of the magazine pieces of Bochner, which aim to install a partial distance, at best, between the reader and his or her own present. We are speaking, therefore, of a strategy that conjoins a method of distraction with a method of displacement or, in the language of the art world, with a crossing of the vectors of "Pop" and "Minimalism."[51] Such abrupt, if minor interruptions in the imaginary continuum of the social will deflect the intolerable nature of a seemingly "random human destiny" (Bochner). Yet this slight release of utopic energy in the present comes with the understanding that such discursive transgressions will come up against their own limitations in the real.

Dedicated to B.B.

Film can easily satisfy the demands of Brecht's alienation effect. It can be broken at any time. It progresses discontinuously.
—Mel Bochner[52]

If *Alfaville* can be said to give the reader a sure footing, it is in the act of criticizing Godard's presumed humanism. I have shown that a structural affinity exists between the two practices, an affinity that I have indicated by means of the related terms of the neutral and the utopic model. But Bochner sees at least one significant difference—*Alphaville* is inadequate, we might say, as a strategic model of indirection.

> The implications of Alphaville are moralistic. Godard opts for humanist values in the context of his projection of "technologism." He sees *Alphaville* as present and apocalyptic. . . . Godard's sociology is exceedingly romanticized. Man has already been displaced from the center of the universe.

In Bochner's view *alpha* is short for "eschatology." He argues that Godard retreats from the more radical implications of his filmic method into a "used up" morality. In the end Godard embraces the plot of redemption enacted by that outmoded figure, Lemmy Caution: "[Godard] asks that we forego theatricality and believe emotionally in the plight of a 'hero' and 'heroine' who are themselves in a state of disbelief." One might argue with the validity of this thesis (I have implied as much), but ultimately it is not its truth-value that stands in question. I am more interested in how this argument impacts on the one critical method that Bochner and Godard both inherited from the past, namely Brecht's alienation device.[53]

The lengthy literature on Godard has exhaustively detailed how

his films continuously interrupt their movement in order to comment upon their own actions. Such moments of rupture are frequent occurrences in *Alphaville:* a character will "forget" to act, for instance, and instead begins to recite from a book, or a flashing neon sign is cut into the flow of images. The intermittent snapshots that Lemmy takes of his surroundings form another example of such a device of discontinuity. The movie also interrupts itself on a more material level: a car chase scene is printed in negative, for instance, and the light on screen alternates suddenly between the murky, nighttime images of the streets and the bright, almost blinding, clarity of the interior shots.[54] Godard's movies, in other words, foreground the formal and material underpinnings of cinema, their techniques of constructing meaning, which shows the Brechtian pedigree of his style.

To Bochner, however, Godard did not go far enough. Bochner comes to this conclusion through a remarkable comparison of Godard's *Alphaville* to the films of Andy Warhol and Roger Corman.[55] Bochner's link between Pop art and Godard was not an unusual one. It had become a staple of the Godard literature by the midsixties. However, Bochner did not *identify* Godard as a Pop artist. To him, Pop signified a state of complete indifference and disaffection: "More recently artists such as Warhol have presented an attitude of passivity. In his movies Warhol demonstrates a preoccupation with the more fictive elements of 'crisis' by presenting everything as stereotype." Warhol is thus linked to another position on *Alfaville*'s game board, namely the square occupied by Flaubert. Flaubert stands in the ideological system of *Alfaville* for a cultural principle of paralysis and immobility. As Roland Barthes informed us in *Degree Zero of Writing,* the model of the cliché emerged in Flaubert's writing when bourgeois ideology lost its claims to universalism. Flaubert no longer represents the *dreams* but rather the rationalized *methods* of the bourgeois—he is doomed, it seems, to an endless rewriting of the same sentence. The *Flaubertization* of literature has come to stand for this process whereby art draws attention to its own artificiality, which is also the process of language's fragmentation into so many fragments of something that has been "already read, seen, done, experienced." *Alfaville,* Bochner's model of the fragmented movie, is like the broken text of Barthes's *S/Z:* a work of commentary that consists of interrupting the ideological totality of the text, denying its naturalness, hearing the voices of the *already written.*

But we are not quite done with Brecht. Beyond Godard, even beyond Warhol, Bochner claims, lies the utterly estranged yet infinitely commercial cinema of Roger Corman: "Unlike Godard, he makes no assessments of the 'contemporary malaise'; his concern is only with appearances and surfaces of things. The *Wild Angels*

motorcyclists are complete fabrications and only tangentially based in fact . . . the audience is distanced by banality and what Brecht refers to as the 'alienation effect.'"[56] Bochner argues in effect that Corman beats Godard at his own game. However, this appraisal of Corman cannot take the form of a negation of Godard, because negation would instate a new set of values. Hence, Bochner not only affirms the *negative* in Corman (i.e., its unreality) but also negates the *affirmative* side of Corman (i.e., unreality as the *nature* of the real).

Corman is symptomatic of the complete assimilation of the alienation device by the advertising and entertainment industry during the sixties. This fact has been noted by several theorists of postmodernity, but it was also clearly understood by Bochner and Graham. To Graham, for instance, Dean Martin became a symbol of the alienation of the alienation device from its former revolutionary project. What Martin expressed by the lassitude of his own performance, as Graham wrote in a brilliant text from 1967, was "an easygoing contempt for the medium of TV."[57] Bochner comes to a similar conclusion in another, equally humorous, piece called *Consumer Testing the Warren Report (Kennedy's Assassination as T.V. Serial)*.[58]

Bochner takes aim at a television program aired in June 1967 that was moderated by Walter Cronkite. ("Moderated is the appropriate word," Bochner quips; "he is almost not there.") The program set out to question the findings of the Warren Report but ended up revealing several contradictions within its own televisual "reality," which suggested "the breakdown of history." The program rolled out a whole battery of testing equipment in order to verify the output of one "scientific" measurement after another. The elaborate circuit of simulations and tests were filmed in a *cinéma verité* style, but the camera's perspective only ended up mirroring itself *ad infinitum*:

> What did all the interviews, charts, graphs, tests and clocks add up to? The effect of this cross-examination of the Warren Report was a mental short circuit. The mind boggled at so many contradictory versions of one six-second period. The tests had no meaning outside their graphic representation. The content of the series was its own smooth technological surface. How can there be any "weight of evidence" when there is no evidence. It is impossible to substantiate the insubstantial. After four years all that remains are memory and fantasy. History has become its own fiction.[59]

And with this assertion Bochner reveals the modernist attitude of critical detachment as disempowered. Distance has become internalized within the media system, and the critical reflections of historical thought threaten to become gripped by a paralysis: Flaubert =

Warhol = Flaubert. How can we start thinking again in terms of their mutual difference? How does B(ochner) differ from B(recht)?

Alias William Burroughs

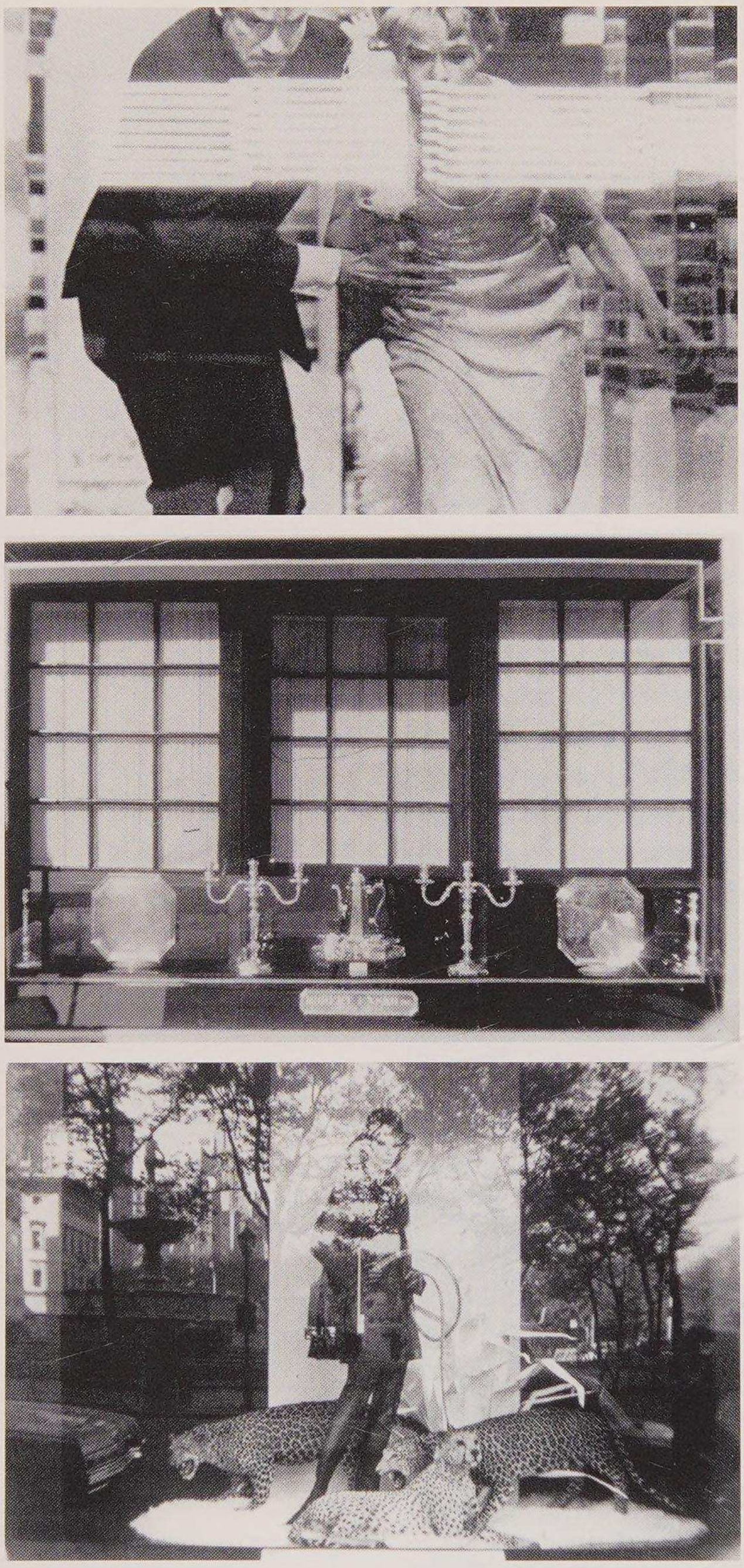
So I'm a public agent and don't know who I work for, get my instructions from street signs, newspapers and pieces of conversation.
—William S. Burroughs[60]

Bochner's axis of Flaubert-Warhol is not indicative of an indifference that reigns across the historical span but indicates that *Alfaville* is situated in the crossing of two divergent, historical moments. Utopic fiction, typically, emerges at such moments of historical crisis. *Alfaville* indicates its positioning within such transitional moments of history through its superimposed figures of the grid and the network. We might take the grid as a figure of modernism in its self-reflective mapping of the surface of the page onto itself. Clinging tightly to the page, *Alfaville*'s grid demarcates its own physical space, like the actress Anna Karina, who we perceive clutching the wall and her own dim reflection with outstretched arms. At the same time the frames of the grid also house the fragments of a reality that was formerly expelled from the purity of modernist art. As the eye of the reader/viewer courses across the page, it becomes entangled in a series of nonconvergent perspectives; these nodal points of attention do not add up. The stationary grid is, as it were, dispersed in the temporal, nontotalizable figure of the network, which, as we know, is the privileged emblem of the space of postmodernity.

Alfaville projects this dual figure of the grid and the network onto two other spaces as well; that is, the fields of architecture and technology. There is ample evidence of *Alfaville*'s investigation of the new dynamic of a postmodern space on the level of architecture. The images of the parking lot, the parking garage, and the expressway manifest a shift from the bounded grids of modernist space into the circulatory flows of postmodern space. These images are not unique in any way; they form but the way stations of a fully mobilized nation. As monuments of postmodernity they can only commemorate the instantaneous moments of dislocation.[61]

While Smithson and Graham were to seek out the "new" monuments of postindustrialism in the suburban landscape, in 1966 Bochner had already installed a principle of serial displacement within the spaces of the urban grid. The work I have in mind is a black-and-white movie called *New York Windows,* which Bochner made with the painter Robert Moskowitz. Although I cannot do full justice to this exceptional work at present, its relevance to our discussion will become evident from even a brief description.

New York Windows is a nine-minute movie consisting of nine



Mel Bochner and Robert Moskowitz. Stills from *New York Windows*, 1966. 16 mm black-and-white film.

separate shots of shop windows that were taken with a fixed frame and projected at silent speed, similar to the practice that Warhol followed in his early silent movies. The lens position alters only slightly from one shot to the next, allowing different possibilities of superimposition and overlap between the camera and window frame to occur. As the window surfaces appear on screen, one after the other, it becomes apparent that there is no narrative coherence to this passage of planes. Bochner does not map out a linear itinerary through the city, nor does he help us to orient ourselves within its urban topography. We are merely displaced from one reflective surface to the next, and the effect of disorientation is intensified by the dizzying superimposition of reflections, which at times make it impossible to gauge spatial relationships within the image. A strikingly similar effect is obtained in *Alfaville* in the photograph that is juxtaposed to the Ruscha and entitled "Barriers of Reflection."

While the architectural blocks of *Alfaville* connect to the spaces of the automobile and thus to slightly older figures of technological mobility, there is one image in *Alfaville* that refers to the newly emergent technologies of communication. This concerns the picture of a television set, which is wedged between the images of Anna Karina, captioned "Catatonia in the Capital of Pain," and William Burroughs. On the television screen a close-up view of a man's head appears within a black frame so that in this image the human figure, mediated by the television screen and diminished in scale, is set back a degree in relation to the surrounding photographs. In this photograph of "network television" it is possible to see the same slippage occur between the terms of the grid and the circuit, that is, as long as the relation between these two terms is understood to involve a displacement beyond a perspectival space of representation. Bochner chose the television photograph because it typified for him a "space-age" notion of design. In other words, the picture amounted to a highly futuristic vision in 1968, but there is a kind of futility or banality ingrained in this image. The image of a television set does

not have the same capacity to represent the relation between technology and the historical present as the mechanomorphic images of Futurism. The glowing surface of the television, with its disembodied "phenomena of consciousness," can only imply and not represent the logic of simulation. The reality of postmodernism is endlessly set back from the modernist distance of Brecht's realism.

Alfaville, as noted before, does not pass moral judgment on its historical moment; it thinks both progress and catastrophe at once.[62] So we might expect that it will juxtapose the dystopic model of Godard's Alpha 60 with an alternative, utopian model. Exactly such a prophetic vision is found in M.L. Minsky's model of a cybernetic machine, as quoted in *Alfaville*:[63] "As the machine improves both itself and its model of itself, we shall begin to see all the phenomena associated with the terms 'consciousness,' 'intuition' and 'intelligence' . . . it is unreasonable to think machines . . ." The cut in the text is made by Bochner himself, and it overlays the passage with a significance that is other than the original intention of the author. Minsky's sentence continues in the next block of *Alfaville*'s grid, but the interruption underscores the ambivalence of the negative term "unreasonable" within its rather euphoric context. Indeed, the initial "protocol" of an intelligent, self-realizing machine descends into a radically different scenario of control in the remainder of the sentence: ". . . could become nearly as intelligent as we are and then stop, or to suppose we will always be able to compete with them."

This forms the proper moment to introduce the rather surprising source of Bochner's cut-up technique: William Burroughs. Little of Burroughs's more delirious effects are visible in *Alfaville,* yet it is worthwhile to briefly investigate the theory behind Burroughs's method.[64] The writer developed the cut-up device as a mode of resistance to the mediation of the everyday in a consumer society, which as he puts it, lives in addiction to images. Befitting this overall thematic of the work, Burroughs's worldview assumes an outspoken character of paranoia. He likens the channels of the media to the carriers of a viral information code against which the spectator is virtually powerless. The virus-image infects its host, the consumer, in order to form the subject into a replica of itself. The cut-up forms, in other words, a kind of inoculation device against this replication of the code. The spatial figure of this fragmentation and restructuring of the code is Burroughs's literary invention of the so-called interzone, which we might compare to Marin's figure of the neutral, nonplace of utopics. The function of the interzone in Burroughs's writing is not to establish a fictive region where all hierarchies and incongruities between disparate systems of representation are to be annulled, but where they might clash and collide.[65] "Systems of tentative paralysis," explains one of the captions in *Alfaville.* Yet the staging of such points of rupture, of blockage and overloading

of the network of information, always remains a "mythological" exercise, as Burroughs himself would quickly admit. The conditioning of subjects cannot be canceled altogether; in fact, it is possible to argue, that such moments of momentary breakdown are essential to the recursive, self-regulating system of a global communications network.[66]

The hyperproductive imagination of conspiracy theories in Burroughs's fiction can be explained as a compensatory mechanism, which stems from the author's incapacity to encompass the global network of power and control, to form an adequate representation of the present-day totality of multinational capitalism. His work, in other words, may be taken as emblematic of the kind of schizoid consciousness, which Jameson has identified as a dominant feature of postmodern existence. It is precisely the incapacity of a writer's imagination to represent this global network of power and control that belongs to present-day multinational capitalism that produces conspiracy theories.[67] Particularly in the so-called New Wave science fiction of the sixties, which was influenced by Burroughs, such paranoia would reach a fevered pitch, whereby the "circuits and networks of some putative computer network are narratively mobilized by labyrinthine conspiracies of autonomous but deadly interlocking and competing information agencies in a complexity often beyond the capacity of the normal reading mind."[68] Such manic fictions obviously remain far from the more placid surfaces of Bochner's work. *Consumer Testing the Warren Report* presented a more benign form of the schizoid state of mind induced by the mediascape of the midsixties. And when in *Alfaville* Bochner assumes the alias of Burroughs, he plays the role of the secret agent who struggles with an amused nonchalance within and against the fragmented discourses of reality. What holds between the methods of Bochner and Burroughs, however, is that their undercover operations, or strategies of indirection, will remain interminable because, as another subversive agent of the printed media liked to say, we are forever placed in-formation.[69]

Postscript: The Writing on the Wall

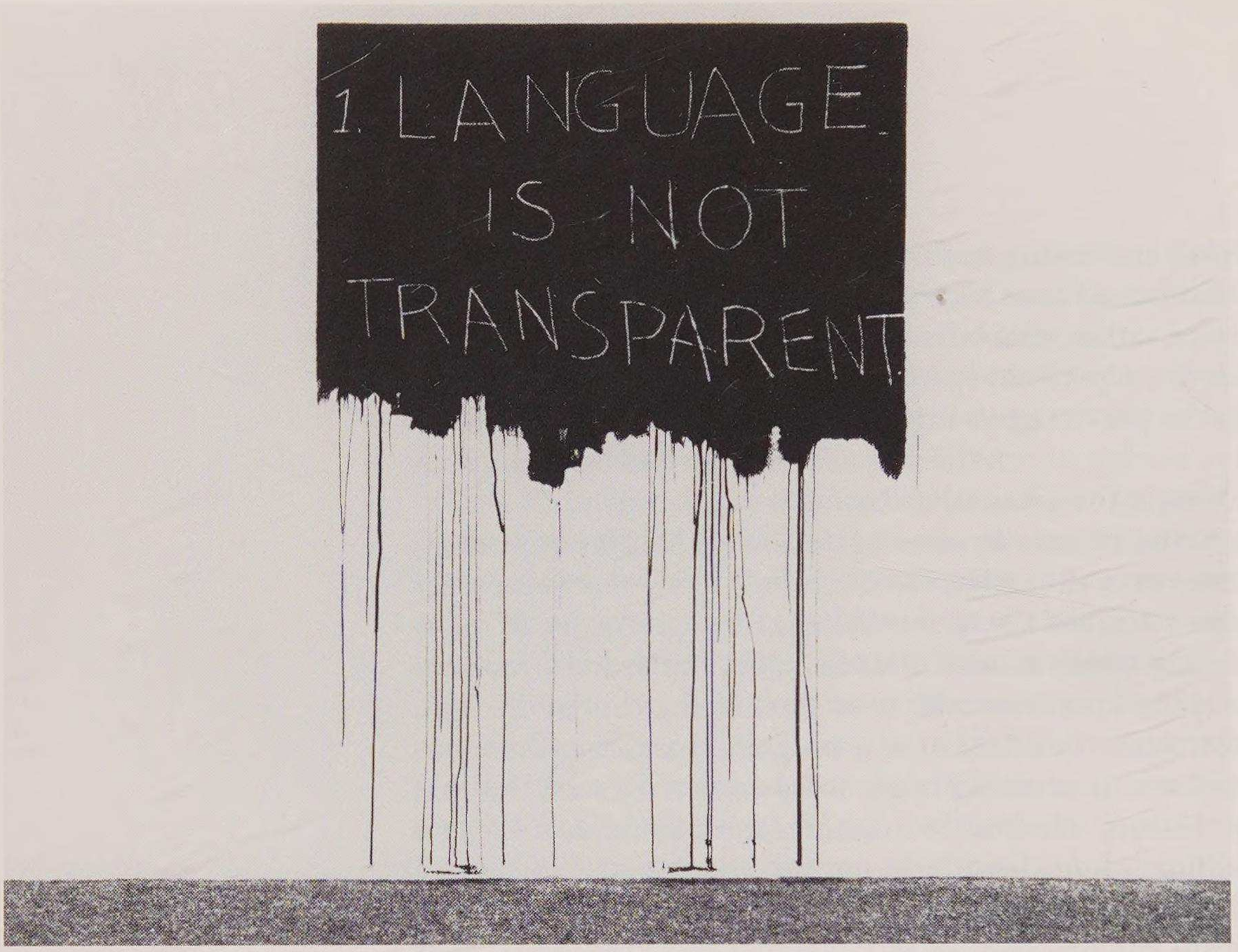
The time has drawn near for me to extract a lesson from *Alfaville*. Perhaps it seems contradictory in light of the previous discussion to suggest there is a pedagogic aspect to Bochner's work, but we need not confuse the situation of a lesson with the moral of a lesson. Furthermore, I have established Bochner's interest in the didactic methods of Brecht and therefore it is to the example of the German playwright that I shall once more turn.

While attending the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Bochner witnessed the performance of one of Brecht's "learning pieces," which form a kind of play in process, a continuous rehearsal that is subject

to role swapping and audience interaction. All the notes, comments, and records that issued from each performance compounded the play in its entirety or, rather, embodied the play in its practical transformation. There is no perfect representation of such a play (whether on stage or in the playwright's mind). The play is in the actual staging of the play during which the sets are built up and broken down again only to begin the same cycle the next day.

A utopic model of artistic practice follows a similar approach, and during the years after *Alfaville* Bochner's work was to increasingly resemble a kind of Brechtian theater through its use of movable props and the application of texts to floors, walls, and windows. Of course, it is the spectator who now stars in the role of the epic actor. In short, *Alfaville*'s acts of mapping and narrating the ideological contradictions of reality begin to take place *for real*. But this sketch of the "lesson" of *Alfaville*'s remains too generalized. We can be more specific.

Bochner has provided two answers to the question how *Alfaville* might feed into the present. First, the artist felt vindicated that Godard's political transformation after May 1968 only confirmed his original view of the French film director as a humanist. We might agree with this appraisal of the "Dziga Vertov" episode in Godard's career or not, but we will still remain at the moral level of the lesson. The second answer, in my opinion, is more interesting: no lesson ever exceeds its situation. In retrospect, Bochner considered it highly felicitous that *Alfaville* was published in May 1968, and if I kept this historical circumstance in the background of my previous account, it has informed my approach from the outset. The confluence of historical events around May 1968 was unforeseeable, yet *Alphaville*'s accidental date of publication nonetheless dramatized for Bochner the immanent character of his critical strategy. Likewise, I find it significant that the critical method I have adopted, namely Marin's model of a utopic practice, was itself the by-product of May 1968. In other words, Marin's *Utopics* not only offers us an effective instrument of historical analysis, but the text also understands *itself* as a product of its own historical situation. Marin's first investigation into the semiological play of utopic spaces was conducted in the framework of a seminar at Nanterre during the "revolutionary festival" of May 1968. Marin's introduction to his book describes these circumstances in a vivid manner: "For a few weeks historical time was suspended, all institutions and laws were again challenged in and by discourse, and networks of communication were opened among those immersed in one way or another in the experience"; yet this discourse, he adds, "brought those who spoke to such a point of excess that they could do nothing but misjudge the discourse that animated them."[70] And just as suddenly as this extratemporal moment exploded into being, it came to an end—

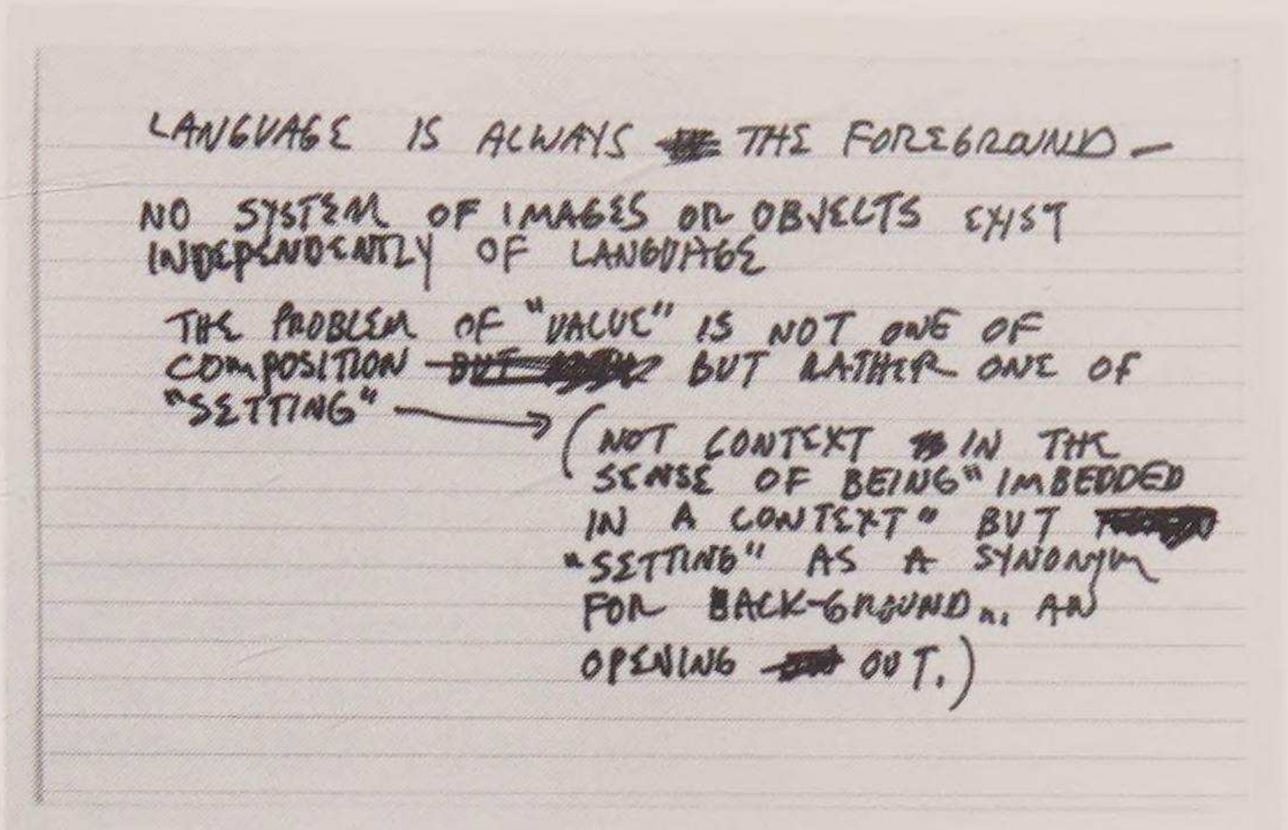


Mel Bochner. *Language Is Not Transparent,* 1970. Chalk and paint on wall, 72 x 48". Installation in the Virginia Dwan Gallery, New York, 1970.

its neutral spaces of disputation reoccupied by the former institutions and authorities of "neutrality."[71]

Around 1970 Bochner came to sense that the dispute Conceptual art maintained with its own discursive and institutional spaces of exhibition often concealed its own authoritarian stance of neutrality.[72] Bochner was particularly suspicious of certain claims that linguistic and social theory could function in the art world as a nonmediated and universal language of communication. This zero degree of language, which appeared in some quarters of Conceptual art, passes itself off as "a hideout for data"—a phrase that Barthes coined for Alain Robbe-Grillet but that is appropriated by Bochner in *Alfaville.* Such a model of a neutral language shuns the utopic practice of disputation, not to mention some of those other "problems of language" that are enumerated in *Alfaville:* "tautology, conundrum, diffusion, paradox, ambiguity, contradiction, vicious circle."

The antagonistic speech of May 1968 overran the reality of Paris in a way that *Alfaville* could only intimate, in a negative and indirect manner, from its place within the mass media. But once the public dispute was stilled, Bochner would commemorate the event within the transformed setting of the art world. In June 1970, during the last of a series of celebrated exhibitions of conceptual art called *Language* at the Virginia Dwan Gallery in New York, Bochner wrote a sentence in chalk on a section of wall painted black: *1. Language Is Not Transparent* . . . As if written on a school board, the letters were slightly smudged, and one could imagine that the lesson was to be erased at the end of the day. Even the blackboard seemed improvised. The bottom edge gave way to rivulets of paint running down the wall as if imitating the hastily scrawled messages from two years before.[73]



Mel Bochner. *Notecards (Excerpts from Speculation)*, 1969. Pen and ink on notecard, 5 x 8".

Bochner's intervention in the space of the exhibition presented a comment *on* a situation (i.e., the language of conceptualism) in a situation (i.e., the gallery space).[74] The comment itself was culled from his own notebook jottings recording the twists and turns of thought, developing maze-like patterns that are overlain with deletions and additions. The note cards are written black on white, but the text written on the wall appeared in reverse, white on black. As affirmative statement written in the negative, it points once more to the empty place of the neutral. The utterance turns as much on its own formal content as it does on its enunciative setting.

"Everything has been said before," Alpha 60 declared, but what truly *counts* is where and when something is said, in what setting and under what conditions. If language is not transparent, then it is because discourse cannot detach itself from ideology, whether as the zero degree of conceptual art or the excessive speech of May 1968. Both occurrences misjudge the nature of the discourse that is spoken, but Bochner's writing brings the latter into play against the former. His marking of the space, which mimics both the positions of spontaneity and authority, performs an *ideological critique of ideology*—the true mark, as Marin observes, of a utopic practice. His writing is set in the present tense, yet it commemorates a spent desire as much as it seems to anticipate a possible future. The counting might be suspended, but the inventory is incomplete, for the future will have to be spoken in the event and not in its advance.

Notes

1. Unless noted otherwise, all citations are from Mel Bochner, "Alfaville, Godard's Apocalypse," *Arts Magazine* 41 (Summer 1967): 14–17.

2. Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," in *The Semiotic Challenge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 128.

3. The misspelled title *Alfaville,* which now serves to distinguish Bochner's work from Godard's film, was the result of a typesetting mistake.

4. For an overview of Bochner's work, see Brenda Richardson's survey in *Mel Bochner: Number and Shape* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1976); and the catalog *Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1995), which contains a number of excellent essays on the artist.

5. See Dan Graham, "My Works for Magazine Pages: 'A History of Conceptual Art,'" in *Rock My Religion* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), xviii–xx.

6. For a general inventory of such works, see Anne Rorimer, "Siting the Page: Exhibiting Works in Publications—Some Examples of Conceptual Art in the USA," in *Rewriting Conceptual Art,* ed. Michael Newman and Jon Bird (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 11–26.

7. Louis Marin, *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1984), 10.

8. A slightly revised version of the text, without the images or the grid, was published in an anthology on Godard. See Toby Mussman, ed., *Jean-Luc Godard* (New York: Dutton and Co., 1968), 206–212. The artist considers all other appearances of the work to be illustrations of the original *event* of publication.

9. We might note that the deconstructive play of *Alfaville*'s grid between the terms of narrative and place also determined Bochner's interest in Minimalism. For instance, in a review of Sol LeWitt's show at the Virginia Dwan Gallery in 1966, Bochner observes: "Perceptual phenomena: indeterminate sequence, infinite invention, coordinate disorder. . . . The accumulation of facts collapses perception. The indicated sum of these simple series is irreducible complexity. And impenetrable chaos." "Sol LeWitt," *Arts Magazine* 40 (September/October 1966): 61. It is doubtful, however, whether LeWitt subscribed to the same degree of narrative disorder that Bochner read into his work.

10. Once more I am making a direct reference to Bochner's view of Minimalism: "What these [Minimalist] artists hold in common is the attitude that Art—from the root *artificial*—is unreal, constructed, invented, predetermined, intellectual, make-believe, objective, contrived, useless. . . . It is unlifelike, not spontaneous, exclusive. It does not move." Mel Bochner, "Primary Structures: A Declaration of a New Attitude as Revealed by an Important Current Exhibition," *Arts Magazine* 40 (June 1966): 34.

11. Dan Graham, "The Artist as Bookmaker: The Book as Object," *Arts Magazine* 41 (Summer 1967): 23.

12. Barthes, 109.

13. Epigraph to artist's notebook of 1966. Cited by Richard S. Field, "Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible," in *Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible,* 26.

14. My discussion of *36 Photographs and 12 Diagrams* is indebted to Scott Rothkopf's recent essay, "'Photography Cannot Record Abstract Ideas' and Other Misunderstandings," in *Mel Bochner: Photographs 1966–1969* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

15. "I suddenly knew that the issues of literalism and anti-illusionism that I had been thinking about had disappeared." Bochner as cited in Sasha Newman, "The Photo Pieces," in *Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible,* 118.

16. Camilla Gray, *The Russian Experiment in Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962).

17. The fact that Bochner knew the *Arkhitektonics* in only their mediated—that is, photographic—form would only have strengthened their connection to his own photo works.

18. Mel Bochner, interview by author in the artist's studio, New York, 21 June 2002.

19. See Marin, *Utopics*, passim.

20. For instance, Thomas More feigns not to be the actual narrator of *Utopia,* but only the recorder of a conversation, while the country Utopia represents a barely disguised inversion of his contemporary England.

21. Bochner, interview. I have no room to discuss Bochner's other compilation pieces; however it is significant that Bochner admits to having wittingly falsified certain quotes, thus mobilizing the same utopic ambivalence of fiction and history, author and narrator that is to be found in the works of his beloved author Jorge Luis Borges. On Borges, see Marin's chapter on the "Utopia of the Map" in *Utopics*, 233–237.

22. In his semiological analysis of Thomas More's *Utopia* Marin exposes the so-called "topics of rupture" between the literal, narrative space of More's text and the narrative fiction of Utopian society. Marin concludes that it is impossible to draw a perfect map of the economic and political reality of Utopia, since "utopia as figure within discourse refers to what is not of the discursive realm: it opens onto the finality of discourse." Marin, 197.

23. The following discussion draws loosely on Marin's chapter on "Of Plural Neutrality and Utopia" in *Utopics.* For a more rigorous discussion of the neutral term in relation to semiotic theory, see Fredric Jameson, "Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse" (1977), in *The Ideologies of Theory,* vol. 2 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). Rosalind Krauss, of course, was the first to propose the logic of neutralization as a critical tool of analysis in the field of art history.

24. Mel Bochner, "Seriality and Photography," unpublished catalog statement for *Art in Series* (artist's archive, 1967), n.p.

25. Dan Graham, "Models & Monuments," *Arts Magazine* 41 (March 1967): 34. Graham's phrase derives from Karlheinz Stockhausen.

26. Bochner's interest in Muybridge, which he shared with Graham, has been extensively documented.

27. As cited in Richard Roud, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 54. We might compare Godard's comment to Bochner's own observation that "Traditionally the film has been used in the manner of the 'slice-of-life' novel. The early names for film give clues to this aspiration—vitascope, vitagraph, bioscope, kinetoscope, kinetograph, motion-picture. Although an illusion of motion occurs during the viewing of a film, the actual phenomena itself is [sic] many still photographs. Still photographs are taken of an event or thing in series (one after another) at regular intervals of time." Mel Bochner, *Stills: Notes on Cinema*, 1967 (artist's archive, New York).

28. See, for instance, "Interview with Jean-Luc Godard" (1962), in *Godard on Godard*, trans. Tom Milne (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), 185: "The film is a series of blocks. You just take them and set them side by side."

29. Bochner, *Stills.*

30. Jean-Luc Godard, "Let's Talk about *Pierrot*" (1965), in *Godard on Godard*, 230.

31. One essay by Michel Butor that comes to mind here is "The Book as Object," which "defamiliarizes" the literary text by pointing to such supplementary forms

as the conventions of layout, the use of margins, the function of glosses and notes, besides comparing literature to other textual genres, such as technical manuals, dictionaries, catalogs, inventories, phone books, advertising leaflets, comic books, and so on. Michel Butor, "The Book as Object" (1964), in *Inventory* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968).

32. So, for instance, Godard would come to state in 1962: "I think of myself as an essayist, producing essays in novel form or novels in essay form: only instead of writing, I film them." *Godard on Godard,* 171.

33. Jean-Luc Godard, "Screenplay: Alphaville," in *Alphaville, A Film by Jean-Luc Godard*, trans. Peter Whitehead (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 19.

34. The British writer Peter Cheney (1896–1951) invented the character of Lemmy Caution. Constantine had starred in many films based on the Caution figure, such as *Les femmes s'en balancent* (1953), *Ca va barder* (1954), *Je suit un sentimental* (1955), and *Lemmy pour les dames* (1961). Besides Constantine, Godard employed two other character actors on *Alphaville* who were equally at home in the B-movie genre, namely Akim Tamiroff and Howard Vernon. The latter plays the evil Professor von Braun, the inventor of Alpha 60, in Godard's movie, and was previously known as the villain in Fritz Lang's *The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse* (1960) and as the central personage in *The Awful Dr. Orloff* (1961), a movie which kicked off the career of the Spanish horror director Jesse Franco. Godard placed Anna Karina in the role of heroine opposite Constantine. The film critics Jean-André Fieschi and Jean-Louis Comolli make a cameo appearance as the Professors Heckell and Jeckell. Godard himself appeared as a police officer.

35. One of the more significant motifs in the movie is Lemmy Caution's acquisition of Paul Eluard's *The Capital of Pain* from the hands of another secret agent. Caution interprets the poetry collection as a secret message—some passages had been underlined by the former owner--but is unable to "decode" the message. Caution has Natasha read the following lines from the poem: "We live in the void of our metamorphoses/But that echo that runs through all the day . . ./That echo beyond time, despair and the caress . . ./Are we close to, or far away from our conscience." This passage, like the next citation Natasha reads—"Your eyes have returned from an arbitrary land . . . where no one has known the essence of a glance . . ."—provides a literary equivalent for the kind of deterritorialization or *dépaysement* that Caution (and the spectator) undergoes in the course of the movie.

36. The first, systematic attempt to define film noir, by Borde and Chaumeton, emphasized a force of disintegration as the central principle of the genre. "The aim of *film noir* was to create a specific alienation." Raymonde Borde and Étienne Chaumeton, "Towards a Definition of *Film Noir,*" in *Film Noir Reader,* ed. Alain Silver and James Ursini (New York: Limelight Editions, 1996), 25. The notion of film *noir* was an invention of French film criticism during the later forties. Bochner does not make this relationship in his *Alfaville,* but Godard would have associated film noir with a mode of social critique, since that was how the genre was perceived, at first, in France. The morally ambivalent, yet rugged individualism of the detective type was viewed as a redeeming feature of film noir's otherwise bleak and cynical view of a world gone corrupt. By the 1960s the genre of film noir had run its course, and in Godard's *Alphaville* it functions as one more empty cliché.

37. This passage stems from a detective novel and is read aloud as Lemmy enters the seedy hotel where he makes contact with another secret agent. Godard describes this location as "a small suburban hotel dimly lit in contrast to the orgy of light in the city." Godard, "Original Treatment of Alphaville," in *Alphaville* (1968), 87.

38. Alpha 60's seemingly mechanical voice is that of a war veteran whose vocal

chords were destroyed and had to learn to speak anew by using his diaphragm.

39. Jean-Luc Godard, in *Alphaville,* 81–82.

40. *Two or Three Things I Know about Her* (1966) will further develop this theme of the degradation of the utopian model of modernist architecture in the transformed reality of consumer society. Graham has cited this film, among others, as an influence on his *Homes for America.*

41. Godard, "Screenplay: Alphaville," 45.

42. It is through Alpha 60's interrogation of Lemmy Caution that the computer's brain circuits achieve something akin to a phenomenological consciousness of time and begin to self-destruct: "Time is a stream which carries me along . . . but I am Time . . . it is the tiger which tears me apart . . . yet, I, too, am the tiger." Phenomenology, of course, argues that subjectivity in its split existence between an individuality (i.e., "I") and a generality (i.e., "Time") must learn to live both parts together, without falling apart, as in Alpha 60's final, self-destructive episode. Compare Merleau-Ponty on this *ek-stase* of subjectivity: "time is the foundation and measure of our spontaneity, and the power of outrunning and of 'nihilating' which dwells within us and is ourselves, is given to us with temporality and life. . . . We are not in some incomprehensible way an activity joined to a passivity, an automatism surmounted by a will, a perception surmounted by a judgment, but wholly active and wholly passive, because we are the upsurge of life." Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 428.

43. Note the deliberately "bad" special effects of the movie, which also have the historical function of recalling the B-movie genre of fifties science fiction. To Godard's contemporary audience, the relatively crude decors of earlier science fiction movies would seem equally "unbelievable" in their attempt to visualize a technological society of the future as *Alphaville*'s own tongue-in-cheek projection of a cybernetic tomorrow.

44. Alpha 60: "Nor is there in the so-called Capitalist world, or Communist world, any malicious intent to suppress men through the power of ideology or materialism, but only the natural aim of all organizations to increase their rational structure." Godard, "Screenplay: Alphaville," 45.

45. Godard, "Screenplay: Alphaville," 79.

46. "*Alphaville* is the film of *Dis-location*. . . . The 'past-future' tense of which Godard speaks is our *present situation*." Annette Michelson, "Film and the Radical Aspiration," in *The New American Cinema*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: Dutton, 1967), 90–91.

47. Fredric Jameson, "Progress versus Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?" in *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (Boston: Godine, 1984), 239–252.

48. Jameson, "Progress versus Utopia," 245.

49. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

50. I have no space to develop this argument, but Jameson's model of science fiction is indebted to Marin's semiological model of utopics. This essay makes only a first tentative step in the direction of mapping the complexity of this utopic field within the artistic practice of the sixties. Bochner applies the phrase of "fictitious excess" to Roger Corman's *Wild Angels,* but it would seem equally applicable to the language of New Wave science fiction as well. I shall briefly return to this sense of a semiological play of language, or *utopics,* of science fiction in Burroughs's figure of the *interzone.*

51. *Alfaville* incorporates Edward Ruscha's photograph of a parking lot, which forms an obvious precursor of such a dialectic between Pop and Minimalism.

52. Mel Bochner, "Art in Process—Structures," *Arts Magazine* 40 (September/October 1966): 38.

53. James Meyer was the first to address this Brechtian aspect of Bochner's work. See his "The Second Degree: Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art," in *Mel Bochner: Thought Made Visible*, 95–106.

54. Godard shot the movie on high-speed black-and-white film, with the aperture opened all the way, so that he could shoot the nighttime streets of Paris without additional illumination. Sometimes the camera was able to register only a few flecks of light, causing the movie to cast the auditorium in utter darkness. See also Bochner's inventory of "Shots" in *Alfaville*.

55. Bochner remembers that Godard was often billed together with Warhol in rerun theaters during the sixties. Bochner, interview.

56. Bochner shares an interest in the work of Roger Corman with Robert Smithson. See Smithson's "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art," in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 74, on the topic of *Wild Angels* and Corman's "sense of dissimulation."

57. Dan Graham, "Dean Martin/Entertainment as Theater," in *Rock My Religion*, 80.

58. Mel Bochner, "Consumer Testing the Warren Report: Kennedy's Assassination as T.V. Serial," *West Side News* (6 July 1967), n.p. The *West Side News* was a magazine that mostly printed political commentaries and was produced by a friend of Bochner. While "Consumer Testing" makes its argument in a fairly analytical fashion, another compilation text exists that follows a more devious strategy of indirection.

59. "The Beach Boys—'100%'" was published in *Arts Magazine* 41 (March 1967): 24. This text reads as a continuous narrative, but was constructed from the press release material of the Beach Boys. Lists of song titles and biographical data (birth date, birthplace, hair, eyes, etc.) are pasted together with excerpts from several interviews. The "essay" carries the subtitle "The World Is Just a Big California." Bochner was interested in the Beach Boys as a kind of "mannerist" phenomenon, with its implementation of the artifices of falsetto voices and the new technique of multitrack mixing. The result is likened to "computerized pop, mechanized music" in the text, but Bochner was not presenting an argument "for" or "against" the Beach Boys. The content functioned as a distraction, which inserts the reader within a discursive space of contradiction; that is, the text dissimulates its own "reality."

59. Bochner, "Consumer Testing the Warren Report."

60. William Burroughs, *The Soft Machine*, as cited by Scott Bukatman in *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Post-Modern Science Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 96.

61. Ed Ruscha's photograph of the parking lot reminds of Robert Smithson's own tour of such "sidereal" spaces, which in addition to Graham's *Homes for America,* forms another subtext of *Alfaville*: "That monumental parking lot divided the city in half, turning it into a mirror and a reflection—there was nothing interesting or even strange about that flat monument, yet it echoed a kind of cliché idea of infinity." Robert Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of the Passaic, New Jersey" (1967), in *Writings*, 56.

62. See Jameson on the imperative to think the "cultural evolution of late capitalism dialectically, as catastrophe and progress all together." Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 47.

63. During the sixties M.L. Minsky worked in the artificial intelligence department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

64. Burroughs's biological metaphor of a viral *intrusion* of the media message within the body forms the antipode to McLuhan's notion of technology as an extrusion of the body's own neural network. See Bukatman, 70–72.

65. See Bukatman, 163.

66. Robert Smithson, for instance, claims in "Entropy and the New Monuments" (1966), in *Writings*, 9, that the great blackout of 1965 in New York created a mood of "euphoria," while Marshall McLuhan in the *Medium Is the Massage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), 148, cites the same event as evidence of how the media alters every instant of our lives.

67. On this point, see Jameson, *Postmodernism.*

68. Jameson, *Postmodernism,* 38.

69. I have lifted the phrase from Dan Graham, "Subject Matter," in *Rock My Religion.*

70. Marin, *Utopics*, 4.

71. Marin differentiates the *neutral* place, which figures as the "path and movement of contradiction," from the authoritarian position of neutrality, which usurps the place of the neutral by acting as the dominant arbiter of social conflict. Against the infinite judgment of the neutral, neutrality sets the final limits of the law.

72. The terms are mine and not Bochner's. For more on this topic see Benjamin Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–69: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105–143.

73. Bochner, interview.

74. Bochner, interview.

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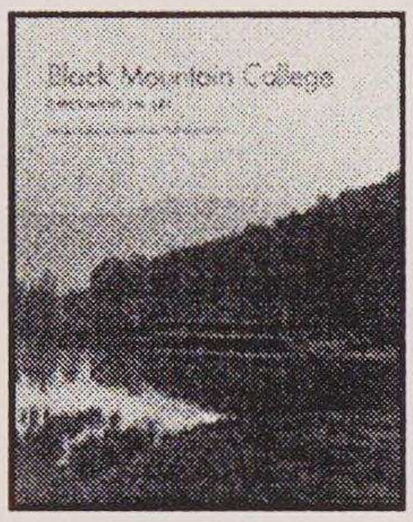
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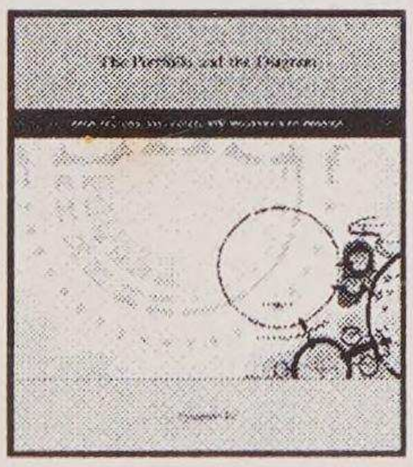


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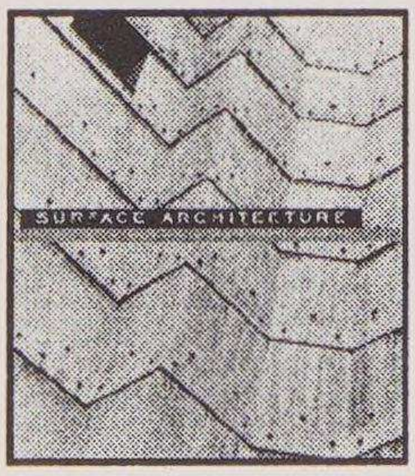
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