

On *The Clock* and Christian Marclay's Instrumental Logic of Appropriation

Eli Horwatt

After a century of creating the basis for an audio-visual technical memory, a new cultural practice of mnemonic immediacy is about to emerge: the recycling and feedback of the media archive (a new archival economy of memory). With new options of measuring, naming, describing and addressing digitally stored images, this ocean needs to be navigated (cybernetics, literally) in different ways and no longer merely ordered by classification (the encyclopedic enlightenment paradigm). Such a media-archaeology is the opposite of iconographic history: What is being digitally “excavated” by the computer is a genuinely media-mediated gaze on a well-defined number of (what we still call) images.

—Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst,
“Towards an Archive of Visual Concepts”

How many stories have I seen on the screen? All those “characters” carrying out dumb tasks. Actors doing exciting things. It’s enough to put one into a permanent coma.

—Robert Smithson, “A Cinematic Atopia”

When Christian Marclay accepted the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2011, he thanked the jury for giving *The Clock* its fifteen minutes. His joke will ultimately be unsubstantiated. It will be considered a monumental work of art in the twenty-first century due to its scale, labor intensity, and aspirations towards a total reflection of time in narrative cinema.

It seems incontrovertible that *The Clock* does not provide an exploration of the dynamic expressions of duration in cinema, due to its rigid parameters and structures. This is because its constitutive materials are split between shots of time-keepers and numerous motif clusters—that is, alarm clocks waking disgruntled workers, rushing travelers narrowly missing train departures, school bells ringing and emptying classrooms, angry housewives waiting for husbands to arrive at dinner, and so on. While this certainly conveys the hailing function of the clock, the administrative functions it serves modernity, and the many dramaturgical devices of narrative cinema itself, in the nearly twelve hours of *The Clock* I was able to watch time appears organized only in the terms of task-orientation. One finds oneself focused on *The Clock*'s obsessive assemblage of iconography, daily routines, dramatic exposition, and what appears to be an index of the gestures of narrative cinema.

These themes offer some of the most interesting entry points to *The Clock* and help to map the present landscape of found footage work and a move towards the atlas, the encyclopedic or archival ordering of cinema's constituent motifs, gestures, and iconography. The last two decades of found footage have increasingly moved from the refuse of cinematic materials (leader, production discards, B movies, ephemeral cinema) towards the film canon itself. Iterations of such work have been referred to both in the terms of Lev Manovich's *database*, online as the *supercut*, and in cinema-encyclopedia projects.¹ The found footage films discussed in this essay harmonize with what Christa Blümlinger has elsewhere called "cataloguing, iconographic-serial work."² *The Clock* is the most monumental cinematic contribution to this mode of filmmaking to date.

In broader art practice, iconographic seriality reflects an approach to the archive as a "system of discursivity"³ engaged with the logics and structures of taxonomy and classification. Frequently employed to present intertextual interpretations of art and mass-cultural objects, this archival discourse interrogates how art history might produce cultural memory and how media archives become "centres for interpretation."⁴ These priorities and drives form the crux of a broader crisis in the landscape of found footage today and a move towards a database aesthetic where film fragments are serialized through an archival discourse according to iconography and narrative motifs. The central question of digital platforms in relation to the digital archive for Lev Manovich is: "how can our new abilities to store vast amounts of data, to automatically classify, index, link, search and instantly retrieve it lead to new kinds of narratives?"⁵ It goes without saying that the expedited opportunities for the cataloguing, classifying, and ordering native to digital technologies have advanced the database strategies we see in found footage work today. Rembert Hüser uses the term QWERTY cinema (the typewriter's statistically determined spatial logic which must be internalized by

the typist for efficacious use) to demonstrate the reciprocal nature of the interface upon the artist.⁶ But a number of important questions must be raised when the opportunities afforded by new technologies become instrumentalized rather than interrogated.

Many of the concerns of found footage filmmakers and the ethical-political contours distinct to the appropriation of film and video seem to be lost in the understandable excitement over opportunities afforded by these digital tools. It would be wise to repeat what Clint Enns has elsewhere argued, that to suggest that digital tools restrict creativity is as ridiculous as making the same argument for the optical printer or Bolex.⁷ Having said that, database cinema does *not* merely borrow digital tools for filmmaking but takes up certain principles of digital storage as an aesthetic prerogative.

This essay juxtaposes Marclay's art with archival art projects by Marcel Broodthaers and Annette Messager and found footage projects by Harun Farocki, Wolfgang Ernst, Matthias Müller, and Christoph Girardet. By comparing the database grammar of collection in *The Clock* with other archival practices in art, the essay will allow competing approaches to archival discursivity and the hermeneutic properties of serializing and ordering motifs and gestures to emerge. Accounting for these tendencies in Marclay's work and *situating The Clock* within a continuity of archival art projects produces important clues to understanding Marclay's logic of appropriation and the database itself as an aesthetic engine.

On May 16th, 1972, Marcel Broodthaers completed his four-year "museum fiction" known as the *Department of Eagles*, with its Figures Section at the Kunsthalle in Dusseldorf.⁸ Comprising paintings, photographic reproductions of art works, antiquities, ornaments, furniture, national symbols, patches, flags, natural and scientific objects, as well as slide-projected images from comic strips, advertising, logos, currency, book covers, and other mass media, it was hung parlor-style, in vitrines, and using other formal exhibition props.

While *Department of Eagles* is largely understood as a critique and investigation of the institutionalization of art, the framing mechanisms of exhibition and the discursive authority of the museum, the assembled iterations of eagles, were also central to Broodthaers's critique of the bureaucratic aesthetics of the Conceptual art movement. Benjamin Buchloh argues that this critique parodied conceptual art's positivist instrumentality, its miming of "the operating logic of late capitalism" and its "aesthetics of administration."⁹ Buchloh frames *Department of Eagles* as a travesty of "the totally administered world," an idea that dominated the post-war cautionary philosophy of Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer. In point of fact, the phrase "totally administered world" was written by Adorno in correspondence with Marcuse, in response to the German student uprisings of 1969, themselves echoes of the events of May 1968.¹⁰ It is not

incidental that these events were the catalytic moment of Broodthaers' *Department of Eagles*, conceived just months after the events of May '68 in Belgium, when Broodthaers joined students to occupy the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels to force its director to resign. The political critique of the storage houses of culture was not in this moment an abstract notion; it was literalized in the struggle by students of the arts to place themselves into positions of power in the museum.¹¹

While critical of their prospects for success, Adorno praised the student movement as a rebel yell against the increasing administration of society. This was characterized by the homogenization of perception and the increasing skepticism over the concept of choice embedded in mass production and consumption, both of which he read as a radical force of social conformity and the leveling of culture.¹² Adorno's critique was characterized by an anti-positivist philosophy critical of the rise of instrumental logic. Here I borrow from Max Horkheimer's description of instrumental reason:

Concepts have been reduced to summaries of the characteristics that several specimens have in common. By denoting a similarity, concepts eliminate the bother of enumerating qualities and thus serve better to organize the material of knowledge. They are thought of as mere abbreviations of the items to which they refer. Any use transcending auxiliary, technical summarization of factual data has been eliminated . . . Concepts have become "streamlined," rationalized, labor-saving devices. It is as if thinking itself had been reduced to the level of industrial processes. . . .¹³

In the wake of systems analysis by think tanks like the RAND Corporation, used to determine the fate of thousands in South East Asia, or in the emerging use of psychology in public relations and marketing firms, it is clear why the 1960s set the stage for archival projects where data, artifacts, and cultural detritus are assembled in architectures that mock official culture and the administrated, top-down collection.

Christian Marclay's *Arranged and Conducted* (1997), also a permutative installation within the museum, presents a shocking visual parallel to *Department of Eagles*, while reversing its ideological premises. Jennifer Gonzales explains *Accompagnement Musical*, one permutation of the *Arranged and Conducted* series:

For *Accompagnement Musical* (1995) . . . the artist re-installed more than 400 art objects and artifacts, each tied to the history of sound-making and its representation. To prepare for the project, the artist selected items from the museum's extensive holdings in drawings, prints, coins, photographs, furniture, musical instruments and ancient arms . . . Marclay's *Accompagnement Musical*

turned the normally staid setting of the traditional period galleries into a visual cacophony that more closely resembled a storage space or antique shop than a museum display. . . .¹⁴

The ideological inversion of the critical premises of Broodthaers' *Figures Section* occurs in a number of important ways. First, Broodthaers wants to show how cultural meanings and definitions of art might be inscribed by the discursive authority of the museum, executed through an insincere and fetishistic proliferation of a single image—one historically tied to authoritarianism and fascism. Marclay's interface with the museum is incidental. It occurs mostly through a mimicking of the same fifteenth century exhibition vernaculars as the *Figures Section*, common to aristocratic galleries.¹⁵ For Broodthaers, the maniacally repeated eagles illustrate the discourses of authority that frame them. This museum's "disciplinary mode of knowledge-production" and its aspirations towards making "the visible *legible*" are assumptions Marclay (mis)takes for the discourse of interpretation itself—or which, at best, he never questions at all.¹⁶ Marclay engages an archival discourse not to interrogate its arbitrary logics and structures, but to cement them. This is symptomatic of much of Marclay's art, which instrumentalizes modes of classification and ordering.

Another powerful visual echo can be seen in Annette Messenger's *Voluntary Tortures* (1972), which appropriates and serializes violent cosmetic procedures undertaken by women. The procedures she documents range from the familiar (facial creams) to the extreme (breast-enlarging vacuum mechanisms). Her sci-fi/horror assemblage reveals the contemporary idealized state of femininity: infantilized, emaciated, antiseptic. Her sources, mostly from magazines and other advertizing materials, while purloined from their contexts, immediately reflect back upon them, bouncing between a parlor style of exhibition and the phenomena of ephemera sprawling across the bedroom walls of adolescents the world over.

While *The Voluntary Tortures* present a critical assemblage of materials highlighting their trafficking from advertisement to art object, Marclay bluntly empties his materials and their status as circulated images, instead emphasizing their iconographic similarity. In *Chorus II*, Marclay crops photographic imagery from unknown sources illustrating singing, speech, and vocal sound. The evisceration of all source contexts and their iconographic criteria once more conveys his instrumental logic, where images serve as a means to an end for the artist. Anything approaching a politics of representation has been erased through contextual conformity.

Negotiating the disjunctions of historicity, contextuality, and appropriation remains a longstanding ethical concern in found footage filmmaking. In a recent



Figure 1. Marcel Broodthaers, *Department of Eagles, Figures Section* (1968).



Figure 2. Installation view, *Wall of Sound*, from Christian Marclay: *Arranged and Conducted*, Kunsthhaus Zurich (September 5–October 26, 1997). ©Christian Marclay. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.



Figure 3. Annette Messenger, *The Voluntary Tortures* (1973).



Figure 4. Christian Marclay *Chorus II*, 1988 black and white photograph, framed 29 parts: various dimensions; overall: 56 x 74 inches (142.2 × 188 cms). © Christian Marclay. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

interview, filmmaker Christoph Girardet unfavorably compares an early Marclay video work called *Telephones* (US/UK, 1995), a film in which Marclay constructs a seemingly cohesive telephone conversation from actors across film history, to German video artist Matthias Müller's *Home Stories* (DE, 1990), a film locating parallel motifs from across Hollywood melodramas. The film illustrates a series of repeated gestures: women staring sadly out of windows, collapsing forlornly onto beds, and rushing down stairs. The film, which Federico Windhausen argues acts as a "critique of the ways in which women have been 'trapped' within narratives shaped by heterosexual masculine fears and desires,"¹⁷ also addresses ways in which images are trafficked through culture. Müller explains, "I used VHS recordings of television broadcasts . . . full of dropouts, deliberately degrading the original aesthetics of the cited films . . . re-filmed them on 16mm and brought them back to the screen. This was meant to say something about the path that had brought these images to my own 'home,' while at the same time, I wanted to guide them back to their former 'home,' the screen, but in an altered, damaged form."¹⁸

This procedure is similarly echoed in Müller's collaboration with Girardet in *The Phoenix Tapes* (UK/DE, 1999), a work often discussed in relation to *The Clock*. Commissioned for the Oxford Museum show "Notorious: Alfred Hitchcock and Contemporary Art," *Phoenix Tapes* assembles motifs from forty Alfred Hitchcock films to point to authorial affinities that border on the fetishization of specific objects, body parts, gestures, camera positions, and lighting setups.¹⁹ Rembert Hüser points out that Müller and Girardet utilized VHS tapes for the source material despite the potential of finding more pristine images in DVDs without "visible data loss."²⁰

Conversely, Marclay erases the path of the images in *The Clock*, reducing thousands of film clips into a single aspect ratio, producing a powerful leveling and homogenizing of materials. Through the use of high quality DVD rips, expertly produced sound bridges (done with the aid of sound designer Quentin Chiappetta), sound folly work,²¹ and a seemingly endless series of shot-reverse-shot one-liners, Marclay replicates hegemonic Hollywood continuity and production practices.

In a public conversation between Marclay and artist Michael Snow, Marclay repeatedly reiterated his disinterest (if not disdain) for contemporary Hollywood cinema.²² But in that same talk, when I had the opportunity to ask why *The Clock* remains handcuffed to those rigid editing grammars, he responded by saying, "I wanted to make the work accessible and pleasurable." While this betrays much of Marclay's aesthetic priorities in *The Clock* and the cosmetic facility of his archival-appropriation projects, it is also symptomatic of larger demands upon the *museum of attractions* to create highly legible, accessible and spectacular exhibits.

Chris Petit summarizes *The Clock*'s allure to the museum, saying it "[h]as that marathon & endurance quality that the art world likes, an anti-Internet thing, though you could argue it is YouTube for gallery space. Clever because it does what it says: 1) tells the time 2) can be explained in terms that a child of 6 could grasp 3) you know exactly where you are whenever you drop in 4) it'll generate a raft of writing."²³ Indeed, *The Clock* appears to be preternaturally suited to the museum and the blockbuster exhibition; this is parsed with greater detail and fluency in Erika Balsom's essay in this dossier.

William Wees offers a useful schema for understanding how an appropriated image becomes instrumentalized in a comparison of three different found footage iterations of nuclear bomb blasts and how their signification varies. In the compilation film *Atomic Café* (Jayne Loader et al., US, 1982), atomic bomb blast footage from Operation Crossroads is a direct referent to, and is taken from, the Bikini Atoll nuclear tests in 1946. According to Wees, these images are "presented as straight fact: this is what the explosion looked like, these are signifiers of an event solidly grounded in reality and contextualized by other real, historical events such as the beginning of the Cold War."²⁴ In Bruce Conner's collage film *A Movie* (US, 1958), atomic bomb footage is a pivotal moment in a now infamous sequence: A submarine submerges, a naval officer looks through a periscope, a pin up model provocatively mugs for the camera, the officer reacts by shouting an order, a torpedo is shot from the submarine, a nuclear explosion occurs in the ocean, a surfer rides the ensuing waves. This use of the atomic explosion "produces a series of visual gags and metaphoric links between sexual desire and military aggressiveness, between orgasm and annihilation [and] deconstructs conventional editing strategies that link one shot with the next through implied cause and effect relationships."²⁵

But it is Wees' last example that is most useful here. After canonical images of poverty, racism, and violence are front-loaded in the music video for Michael Jackson's *Man in the Mirror*, a nuclear bomb blast occurs simultaneously with a key change (occurring at the last word of Jackson's bid to "Take a look at yourself and make a *change*") and the entire video shifts tone with images of world leaders shaking hands and malnourished children being fed. Wees argues that the nuclear explosion as signifier of *change*, in the video, expresses how found footage often quotes media, rather than history, not to question its representational character (as in collage film) but towards something he refers to as *appropriation*. While this term may have been appropriate at the time of his writing, today it might be more useful to describe this as a purely "instrumental" appropriation, used for its surface emotional affect, its visual power, its total decontextualization and abolishing of historicity. One might also observe that the database logic of found footage can become a kind of hybridization of the compilation film's pursuit of organizing

the film archive and the music video's exploitation of the emotional power of the surface of the image.

This is nothing less than the evisceration of the entire political dimension of found footage appropriation and its graffiti-like seizures of spaces and property to recode meanings. This instrumentality is surely a late-capitalist reflex, a side effect of what happens when found footage is so routinized into an aesthetic discourse that it is emptied and returned to the spectacular realms from whence it came. This is visible in some of the more meretricious iterations of this encyclopedic strategy, which betray the eroded priorities of found footage appropriators and their relationship to historicity and representation. The online supercut, a type of video remixing which serializes clichés and motifs, best exemplifies what this looks like. A supercut might involve something like a mashup of the often repeated trope in police procedurals of enhancing a photographic image to discover some hidden evidence (e.g. *Blade Runner* [Scott, US, 1982] or CSI [US, 2000–]).²⁶ Similar strategies to the supercut can be seen executed with significantly higher production values in media art today. In the Julian Palacz installation *Algorithmic Search for Love* (AT, 2010),²⁷ search terms are checked against a database of spoken dialogue, producing a rapid succession of exemplary clips. In Palacz's video-documentation of the installation, a man approaches a plinth with a mounted computer interface and types "holy shit" into the search engine, producing a rapid fire montage of the expert elocution of Michael J. Fox, Ryan Phillippe, and countless others. While such sequences certainly produce a kind of cross-eyed hypnotic pleasure cloaked in the potential to produce knowledge (a hermeneutic potential I will return to later), these works most often convey a series of readymade clichés, so thoroughly internalized that their rehearsal is meaningless.

Instead of producing memory, we are given a mesmerizing amnesia. Instead of producing *knowledge*, we are given *data*. Here we confront a kind of pornography of the archive, which instrumentalizes the archive's administrative discourse while reducing the film fragment into a visual or auditory surface. The significations, history, and status of the footage as an industrial product are epiphenomena, afterthoughts to the jigsawing of each piece into its appropriate slot. This database model continues the trajectory of appropriation towards the simulacral and the concept of the iconographic as a surface with no inherent "content."

In 2003, Christoph Girardet made an ironic statement on this issue, in a one-minute film meant to play in an infinite loop called *60 Seconds (analog)*. It assembles shots of clocks in an attempt to represent every second of a minute from across sixty films. Girardet describes the piece as illustrating the "interchangeability of the images of industrial cinema"²⁸ while Müller suggests that within it we see "Marclay's extensive future project in a conceptual, minimalist nutshell."²⁹



Figure 5. Christoph Girardet, *60 Seconds (analog)* (2003). Courtesy of Christoph Girardet.



Figure 6. Christian Marclay. Video still from *The Clock* (2010), single-channel video with stereo sound 24 hours, looped © Christian Marclay. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

How can a database be salvaged from this fate? The paradigms that have come to constitute an ethics of appropriation in found footage are not always eviscerated in semantic/iconographic serial works. Prior to Manovich's database essay, Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst were talking about a similar organizational apparatus for the archive, though it is important to note that this "Archive for Visual Concepts" is not framed as an art object itself, but rather as a *tool* or *instrument* which might aid in the creation of found footage work. In *Towards an Archive for Visual Concepts*, Farocki "proposed the project for a kind of visual library of film which would not only classify its images according to directors, place and time of shooting, but beyond that: it would systematize sequences of images according to motifs, *topoi* and narrative statements, thus helping to create a culture of visual thinking with a visual grammar, analogous to our linguistic capacities."³⁰

Farocki's films enact these collecting practices and convey the evolution of narrative motifs in cinema with historical specificity. For example, *Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades* (DE, 1995) assembles eleven channels in an installation outlining iterations of the pivotal moments that comprised the first cinematic images by the Lumière Brothers, and is a decisive threshold for narrative commencement. Farocki writes, "One could even say that most films begin where the identity of the protagonist as a worker ends. They begin at the moment when the protagonist leaves the factory behind, and in this sense, the Lumières' film is a precursor to the rest of cinema, with its inclination to tell the story of life that is left to the individual after work is over, or indeed of the life that one dreams of and wishes for beyond the realm of work."³¹

We are in an age overpopulated with art-historical art and, more recently, film-historical filmmaking. When undertaken, questions of memory and the human architectures of information retrieval—its ideological frameworks and their attendant reinforcement of hierarchies of power, access, ownership, and property—must be scrutinized. The parameters of the crisis in found footage envisioned in this essay could be more concisely summarized as how artists interrogate the photograph's inherent archival ambitions.³² I envisage this as a negotiation of what Alan Sekula calls the "twin ghosts haunting photography . . . the voice of a reifying technocratic objectivism and the redemptive voice of a liberal subjectivism."³³ This tension informs broad practices of photo-conceptualism and archival art. We see it in the typological serial photographs of Bernd and Hilla Becher, the archival works of Broodthaers, Messenger, and in the works of Hanne Darboven and Gerhard Richter. These latter artists engage in a critical and ironic comportment with the discourse of archives, opening up a space for collection, portraiture, and biography as an antidote to the administrative aesthetics critiqued by Buchloh. In such works we see a staging of the ambivalence over archives and museums and their utopian possibilities of ensuring the perpetuity of cultural

history and memory while simultaneously problematizing their self-appointed authority as guardians and gatekeepers of culture.

Implicit in Marclay's iconographic serial works is the assumption that through a mode of iconographic classification and the interplay of difference and repetition, a curator or collagist might collate knowledge and facilitate hermeneutic possibilities.³⁴ Rembert Hüser has perceptively observed a connection between encyclopedic tendencies in found footage works and the image comparisons produced in art-historical slideshow lectures.³⁵ The genesis of these lectures and the dominant methodologies for image comparison emerge in the art historian Aby Warburg's scholarly circle, when his apprentice Fritz Saxl devised dual image projection in the early 1900s.³⁶ Farocki's interest in the evolution of images and the gestural iterations of workers situates him in intellectual dialogue with Warburg, who rejected the dominant art historical models (in which works are examined in relation to periods, styles or formal techniques), through examinations of the shifting meanings of an image's past and its living significations.³⁷ This provisional but altogether novel approach to the study of culture is outlined by Giorgio Agamben:

For Warburg, the significance of images . . . lay in the fact that, being strictly speaking, neither conscious nor unconscious, they constituted the ideal terrain for a unitary approach to culture, one capable of overcoming the opposition between history, as the study of "conscious expressions," and anthropology, as the study of "unconscious conditions," which Lévi-Strauss identified twenty years later as the central problem in the relations between these two disciplines.³⁸

At the root of this project was the horizon of an alarming reality wherein the gestures of the past would become the subject of a "memory crisis."³⁹

Warburg's approach and his attempt to circumvent a memory crisis are enshrined in his *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a series of image constellations meant to provide a historical orientation or interpretive schema for art historians to grasp representations of collective memory. This atlas, along with Warburg's broader project, have been resuscitated because of new relevance they offer to cinema, to the study of film history, and finally to the discourse around cultural memory itself. Philippe-Alain Michaud conveys the overlapping priorities of filmmakers and historians:

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the filmmaker and the historian apply identical procedures in separate fields that reveal a common orientation. Under the intersecting light of texts and films, a shift occurs in the order of discourse that will lead us to see cinema less as a spectacle than as a form of

thought and to see art history as practiced by Warburg as research directed less toward a knowledge of the past than towards its reproduction.⁴⁰

Warburg has become something of a specter haunting texts about an encyclopedic cinema-form. The qualities of media-archaeology, the unitary approach to human gesture through art, and art historical models of image-comparison described by Warburg are exceedingly attractive when apprehended through the prism of twentieth century cinema. While this is an eminently valuable undertaking, it would be wise to note Warburg's concerns over aestheticizing art history, and his insistence that the Atlas was an instrument rather than an art object.⁴¹

When Farocki and Ernst work through technological questions of how an archive of visual concepts might be feasible, words of warning frequently emerge. Farocki senses the potentialities for homogenizing materials that this methodology seems to guarantee when he laments, "I personally would not want my first acquaintance with a film such as Fuller's *Pick Up on South Street* (US, 1953) to be as an appendix in a text on hands in close-ups."⁴² Such renditions invariably fall into the traps of the database, where the privileging of semantic-iconographic content tends towards the evisceration of those pieces of contextual information that instead produce difference, historical reference, political contexts, and a tradition of found footage filmmaking that has tended towards deconstruction of the politics of representation.

I would argue that nothing like "film history" is interrogated in *The Clock*. Similar to how Hal Foster describes neoconservative iterations of history in art, Marclay's return to film history should be questioned:

What, first of all, is this "history" but a reduction of historical periods to ruling-class styles that are then pastiched. A history of victors; a history, moreover, which denies the historicity of forms and materials—an *a*history, in fact. And what, secondly, does this "return" imply if not a flight from the present? . . . sheer post-histoire escapism . . . In this sense, "history" appears reified, fragmented, fabricated—both imploded and depleted . . . The result is a history-surrogate, at once standard and schizoid.⁴³

Foster could be summarizing Marclay's optimization of cinematic materials, his replication of Hollywood continuity, *The Clock*'s pastiche of film history through a novel *a priori* container, and the emptying of historical reference.

In a *Sight and Sound* interview, Marclay was asked why he imagines *The Clock* has enjoyed so much success. He replied, "People like numbers—it's 24 hours, and 'How long did it take you?' and 'How many films?' and 'How many hours a day did you work?' It has this marathon aspect."⁴⁴ Agreed. *The Clock* confronts

the spectator with a demonstration of the colossal profusion of cinematic imagery, allowing for the representation of nearly every minute of the day—an impressive feat of research and development. This has carried on into Marclay's current project, in which hundreds of film clips of actors opening, entering, and closing doors are strung together.⁴⁵ The nascent idea for *The Clock* (in Marclay's words, "Wow, wouldn't it be great to find clips with clocks for every minute of all twenty-four hours?"⁴⁶) betrays Marclay's focus on questions of the artwork's possibility, rather than how, or even why it should be undertaken. One fixture of the publicity surrounding *The Clock* is the almost gleeful recounting of the fact that Marclay acquired calluses on his fingers during the editing process. It is appropriate then that *The Clock* should be received as a spectacle of labor, and that the chronometer from which it borrows its formal conceit serves to affirm the same task-oriented administrative embodiment of time. Ultimately, this labor provides a slick, palatable, and mesmerizing confection of cinematic fragments contained in an easily understood logic of cooperative form and content, a marathon movie made for the YouTube era. It is also interesting to observe that, while the creation of *The Clock* and much of its critical reception is steeped in the rhetoric of the creative commons, fair use, and sharing, the work itself is one of the most guarded, proprietary, and expensive pieces of media art in history.

Eli Horwatt is a PhD candidate in the Cinema & Media Studies Department at York University writing on experimental film & video, the impact of conceptual art on filmmaking practices, and piracy. He is a member of the programming collective Pleasure Dome, a nomadic experimental micro-cinema exhibiting artist made sound/image works.

NOTES

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1. Dara Birnbaum and Marlon Riggs present early iterations of this type of work in their approach to television motifs. It appears frequently in the more recent works of Matthias

- Müller, Christoph Girardet, Volker Schreiner, Jesse McLean, Aleesa Cohene, Mike Hoolboom, Mike Olenick, and Oliver Laric.
2. Christa Blümlinger, "On Matthias Müller's Logic of Appropriation," in *The Memo Book*, ed. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2005), 81.
 3. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of Human Sciences* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 145. This idea is expanded upon by Marlene Manoff in "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines," *Libraries and the Academy*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (2004): 18.
 4. Thomas Osborne argues this in "The Ordinarity of the Archive," citing archives as "centres of interpretation." *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (1999): 52. However, Hal Foster has suggested that archival art may "emerge out of a similar sense of a failure in cultural memory" and implicitly then justify the archive as successfully fostering such hermeneutic potentials. Hal Foster "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 21.
 5. Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 208.
 6. Rembert Hüser, "QWERTY Cinema: Christoph Girardet/Matthias Müller's *Phoenix Tapes*," in *After the Avant-Garde: Contemporary German and Austrian Experimental Film*, eds. Randall Halle and Reinhild Steingröver (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 258.
 7. Clint Enns, "Navigating Algorithmic Editing: Algorithmic Editing as an Alternative Approach to Database Cinema," *Millennium Film Journal* (Fall 2012): 70.
 8. Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964–1976* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010), 163.
 9. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October*, Vol. 55 (Winter, 1990): 143.
 10. Theodor Adorno, "Correspondence on the German Student Movement," *New Left Review* 233 (January 1999): 136.
 11. For an extended discussion of this, see Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "The Museum Fictions of Marcel Broodthaers," in *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 54.
 12. This argument is extensively outlined throughout Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum Press, 1989).
 13. Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (London: Continuum, 2004), 15.
 14. Jennifer Gonzales, "Overtures," in *Christian Marclay* (London: Phaidon, 2005), 56–57.
 15. To see visual analogies for these galleries, try a Google image search for *Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Gallery in Brussels* (David Teniers the Younger, 1651), or *Kunst- und Raritätenkammer* (Frans Francken the Younger, 1636).
 16. See Donald Preziosi, "The Art of Art History," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 509. Preziosi conveys the interpolative features of the museum as an ideological site of cultural interpretation.
 17. Federico Windhausen, "Hitchcock and the Found Footage Installation: Müller and Girardet's "The Phoenix Tapes" (*Hitchcock Annual*, no. 12, 2003/2004): 107.
 18. This is derived from Muller's unpublished talk at Centre Pompidou which he was generous enough to share with me. The focus of his speech was on the works of Morgan Fisher with

- some extended discussion of Marclay's *The Clock*.
19. The section *Burden of Proof* presents a more confined collapsing of inserts, where name tags, keys, hand gestures, and monogrammed napkins are serialized. Blümlinger argues that the work is less about "the conventionalizing qualities of narrative cinema that are made visible, than the empathetic style of an author." In this way, *Phoenix Tapes* comes to form a poetic and allegorical approach to Hitchcock's many obsessions and authorial fingerprints, never fully falling into the trap of becoming merely a serial index to his films. Blümlinger, "Matthias Müller's Logic of Appropriation," 77.
 20. Hüser, 258.
 21. Daniel Zalewski writes, "Sometimes, Marclay created new sound effects. A clip, at 6:49 P.M., showing Kevin Spacey shaving, was marred by distracting audio; to redo the soundtrack, Marclay stood in a sound booth and pressed the nozzle of a Noxzema shaving-cream can in sync with the visuals." Zalewski, "The Hours: How Christian Marclay Created the Ultimate Digital Mosaic."
 22. "Christian Marclay in Conversation with Michael Snow," The Power Plant Gallery, Toronto, November 5, 2012.
 23. Iain Sinclair and Chris Petit, "Time Pieces," *Film Comment* (May–June 2011): 51.
 24. William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993), 38.
 25. *Ibid.*, 39–40.
 26. See "Let's Enhance," YouTube video, 1:44, posted by "dunk3d," December 13, 2009, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vxq9yj2pVWk.
 27. This installation video may be viewed here: <http://palacz.at/work/algorithmic-search-for-love/>.
 28. Christoph Girardet interview with Jens Hinrichsen, "Ist Christian Marclay's *The Clock* ein Plagiat?" *Monopol Magazine* (October 10, 2011). www.monopol-magazin.de/artikel/20104023/marclay-the-clock-Christoph-Girardet-interview.html Accessed December 4, 2012. This article was generously translated from German by my colleague Birgit Schneidermueller.
 29. This also derived from Matthias Müller's unpublished talk at the Centre Pompidou.
 30. Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst, "Towards an Archive for Visual Concepts," *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 265.
 31. *Ibid.*, 277.
 32. See Allan Sekula, "Reading an Archive," *The Photography Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), 442–52.
 33. Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," *Art Journal* 41.1 (1981): 20.
 34. See Douglas Khan, "Surround Sound," in *Christian Marclay*, ed. Russell Ferguson (Los Angeles: UCLA Hammer Museum, 2003), 62–3, which argues that *Arranged and Conducted* offers viewer agency through modes of interpretation.

35. See Hüser, 257.
36. Charlotte Schoell-Glass, "Serious Issues: The Last Plates of Warburg's Picture Atlas Mnemosyne," in *Art History as Cultural History: Warburg's Projects* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 2001), 184–85.
37. Richard Woodfield, "Introduction," in *Art History as Cultural History*, 2.
38. Giorgio Agamben, "Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 99.
39. Benjamin Buchloh cites Richard Terdiman for coining "the concept of 'memory crisis' to analyze those historical circumstances that generate an actualization of mnemonic efforts within the cultural practices of modernity, the efforts both to theorize the conditions of memory and to enact new cultural models of the mnemonic." Benjamin Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's 'Atlas': The Anomic Archive," *October* 88 (Spring 1999): 136.
40. See Philippe-Alain Michaud. *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion* (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 39–40.
41. See E.H. Gombrich. *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 88.
42. Farocki and Ernst, 281.
43. Hal Foster, *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (New York: New Press, 1999), 122.
44. Jonathan Romney, "What Time is it Where?," *Sight & Sound* (May 2011): 30.
45. Daniel Zalewski, "The Hours: How Christian Marclay Created the Ultimate Digital Mosaic," *New Yorker* (March 12, 2012): n.p. Accessed January 11, 2013, www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/03/12/120312fa_fact_zalewski?currentPage=all.
46. *Ibid.*