Romantics and Modernists in British Cinema

John Orr

'John Orr's book gives the most ambitious single-author overview of British cinema since Raymond Durgnat's ground-breaking *A Mirror for England* 40 years ago. Not only does Orr offer much that is fresh and illuminating on film-makers ranging from Lean and Reed, through outsiders like Losey and Polanski, to Bill Douglas and Terence Davies, but he places them in a convincing overall perspective. Anyone interested in the riches of Britain's film history will gain from reading it.'

Charles Barr, Emeritus Professor, University of East Anglia

In a fresh and invigorating look at British cinema, John Orr examines the neglected relationship between romanticism and modernism from 1929 to the present day. Encompassing a broad selection of films, film-makers and debates, this book brings a new perspective to how scholars might understand and interrogate the major traditions that have shaped British cinema history.

Orr identifies two prominent genres in the British template that often go unrecognised, the *fugitive film* and the *trauma film*, whose narratives have bridged the gap between romantic and modern forms. Here Hitchcock, Lean, Powell, Reed and Robert Hamer are identified as key romantics, Roeg, Losey, Antonioni, Kubrick and Skolimowski as later modernists. The book goes on to assess the narrowing divide through the films of Terence Davies and Bill Douglas and concludes by analysing its persistence in the new century, in the prize-winning features *Control* and *Hunger*.

John Orr is Emeritus Professor at the University of Edinburgh and has published widely in the areas of cinema, theatre and literature. He is the author of *Hitchcock and 20th Century Cinema*. 

---

**ISBN**: 978 0 7486 4014 0

**Edinburgh University Press**

22 George Square

Edinburgh

EH8 9LF

www.euppublishing.com
Framing Pictures
Edinburgh Studies in Film
Series editors: Martine Beugnet and Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli
Founding editor: John Orr

Advisory board
Duncan Petrie (University of Auckland)
John Caughie (University of Glasgow)
Dina Iordanova (University of St Andrews)
Elizabeth Ezra (University of Stirling)
Gina Marchetti (University of Hong Kong)
Jolyon Mitchell (University of Edinburgh)
Judith Mayne (The Ohio State University)
Dominique Bluher (Harvard University)

Titles in the series include:

Romantics and Modernists in British Cinema
John Orr

Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts
Steven Jacobs

The Sense of Film Narration
Ian Garwood

Visit the Edinburgh Studies in Film website at
www.euppublishing.com/series/ESIF
Framing Pictures
Film and the Visual Arts

Steven Jacobs

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS
Contents

List of Illustrations vi
Preface ix
Acknowledgements xiii

1. Camera and Canvas: Emmer, Storck, Resnais and the Post-war Art Film 1
2. Vasari in Hollywood: Artists and Biopics 38
4. Tableaux Vivants 1: Painting, Film, Death and Passion Plays in Pasolini and Godard 88
5. Tableaux Vivants 2: Film Stills and Contemporary Photography 121
6. The Video That Knew Too Much: Hitchcock, Contemporary Art and Post-Cinema 149

Appendix to Chapter 2: Artist Biopics 180
Bibliography 183
Index 200
List of Illustrations

1.1 André Malraux with the photographic plates for *Le Musée imaginaire*, Paris, 1947. Courtesy of Maurice Jarnoux/Paris Match/Scoop. 5


1.3 Henri Storck and Paul Haesaerts, *Rubens* (1948). Produced by CEP. Still: Royal Film Archive Brussels. 15

1.4 Paul Haesaerts, *De Renoir à Picasso* (1950). Produced by Société Art et Cinéma. Still: Royal Film Archive Brussels. 17

1.5 Paul Haesaerts, *De Renoir à Picasso* (1950). Produced by Société Art et Cinéma. Still: Royal Film Archive Brussels. 17

1.6 Paul Haesaerts, *Visite à Picasso* (1950). Produced by Société Art et Cinéma. Still: Royal Film Archive Brussels. 18


2.2 Charlton Heston as Michelangelo in *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (Carol Reed, 1965). Produced by Twentieth Century Fox. Still: The Kobal Collection. 46

2.3 Kirk Douglas as Vincent Van Gogh in *Lust for Life* (Vincente Minnelli, 1956). Produced by MGM. Still: Royal Film Archive Brussels. 50

2.4 David Hockney, *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)* (1972). Acrylic on canvas, 84 × 120 inches. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Steve Sloman. 58

2.5 Antonio López García in *The Quince Tree Sun* (Víctor Erice, 1993). Produced by Maria Moreno P.C. Still: The Kobal Collection. 61
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Charles-André Van Loo, <em>Architecture</em> (1753). Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco. Oil on canvas, 87.6 x 84.5 cm. The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Hendrik Goltzius, <em>Farnese Hercules</em> (ca 1591). Engraving, 41.8 x 30.4 cm. Published and dated 1617.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Jacopo da Pontormo, <em>Deposition from the Cross</em> (1526–8). Church of Santa Felicita, Florence. Oil on canvas, 313 x 192 cm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


6.5 Hitchcock’s *Foreign Correspondent* cameo meeting his *Stage Fright* cameo in *Double Take* (Johan Grimonprez, 2009). Courtesy of the artist.
Preface

One day . . . art will express itself by statues that are moving.
Modest Mussorgski (1881)

Is it not time to reverse the angle, and look at painting from the vantage point of cinema?
Thomas Elsaesser (1992)

The whole history of art is no more than a massive footnote to the history of film.
Hollis Frampton (1983)

Cinema and the visual arts are closely connected from the start. The Lumière brothers have been presented as the ultimate impressionists and the medium of film corroborated the modern ‘impressionist’ and ‘fragmented’ view of the world, which had been appropriated or developed by modernist painters. In so doing, film contributed to a modern culture of hyperstimulation of the senses, which also was one of the foundations of the idea of modernism and the art of the avant-garde. In light of this, it is incomprehensible that, even still today, film is almost absent in the curriculum or scope of most art historians and art critics. To a large extent, this is simply the result of obstinate institutional traditions. As an academic phenomenon, film studies usually developed within the context of departments of literature or communication studies outside the realm of art historical research. Still today, many art history students are initiated into the visual arts of the twentieth century without any reference to Murnau, Vertov, Godard or Bazin. Many art history textbooks seem to ignore the fact that canonical artists such as Marcel Duchamp, László Moholy-Nagy, Man Ray, Andy Warhol and Robert Smithson have used film as an inherent component of their artistic practices and that leading art historians such as Erwin Panofsky, Rudolph Arnheim, Pierre Francastel or Henri Focillon have written seminal essays on film.

In the present age of a constant contamination between media, however, the thresholds between film and art have been crossed extensively in influential publications by Jacques Aumont, Raymond Bellour, Pascal Bonitzer,
Framing Pictures

Kerry Brougher, Angela Dalle Vacche, Susan Felleman, Philippe-Alain Michaud, Laura Mulvey, Dominique Païni and Brigitte Peucker among many others. Their writings are paralleled by ‘cinematic’ works by leading contemporary artists. In a wide range of forms and formats, the moving image has become ubiquitous in trendsetting exhibitions. These phenomena can be seen as a living proof of film’s continuous metamorphosis. For some, however, the fact that film sought refuge in the museum, is an indication of the ‘end of cinema’ – a slightly premature and certainly a controversial proclamation that generated many debates. Anyhow, cinema has been described as dead. Enter the art historians.

Framing Pictures only addresses some of the encounters between art and cinema and does not comprise discussions of the cinematic experiments of high-modernist art currents such as Dada, Constructivism and Surrealism or the strong interconnections between so-called Experimental Film and post-war neo-avant-garde movements such as Pop Art, Fluxus, Land Art and Conceptual Art, which used film as one of their artistic media. In six chapters, Framing Pictures first and foremost deals with the cinematic visualisation of artworks in art documentaries, biopics of artists and other feature films. It also discusses museum scenes in films and the use of tableau-like compositions in films and publicity stills.

Referring to contemporaneous writings by Kracauer, Bazin and Malraux among others, the first chapter discusses the ‘Golden Age’ of the art documentary in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Supported by international institutions such as UNESCO and FIAF, a film d’art movement developed, which offered experimental filmmakers a platform to reflect on the relations between art and cinema. Focusing on films made by Emmer in Italy, Storck and Haesaerts in Belgium, and Resnais in France, this chapter demonstrates how these filmmakers saw the genre of the art documentary as a means to investigate the boundaries of film by juxtaposing movement versus stasis, narrative versus iconic images, and cinematic space versus pictorial surface.

Many of their concerns are also crucial issues in feature films with artists as main characters, which is the subject of the second chapter. Presenting a survey of the genre of the artist biopic, this chapter investigates which specific artists and art historical eras proved attractive to filmmakers. Favouring the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the one hand and the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the other, artist biopics heavily depend on the Renaissance notion of the artist as an exceptional individual and the Romantic idea of the artist as a misunderstood genius, who not only rejects artistic conventions but also leads a life determined by poverty, alcohol, pangs of love, venereal diseases, fits of insanity, self-mutilation, crime and suicide.
Cinema unmistakably endorses the stereotypical artist’s personality, which is the subject of many myths, legends and anecdotes. In addition, reminiscent of the strategies used in the art documentaries discussed in the first chapter, artist biopics mobilise or animate static paintings and sculptures. As a result, artist biopics favour but often also struggle with scenes involving the act of artistic creation. Specifically, this chapter also examines two films, both hovering between documentary and fiction, which focus on the act of creation of a specific painting: Hazan’s *A Bigger Splash* and Erice’s *Dream of Light* (*The Quince Tree Sun*), featuring David Hockney and Antonio López García, respectively.

The third chapter deals with the museum scenes in Rossellini’s *Viaggio in Italia* and Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*. Both scenes call up associations that museums often evoke in feature films. Famous tourist attractions – the Naples Archaeological Museum and the San Francisco Palace of the Legion of Honor – become uncanny places of fatal encounters, mystery and introspection. Museums are presented as mausoleums, in which spiritual and atavistic powers are confining characters in their memories. Marked by a contemplative rhythm, which matches perfectly the solemn silence of classical museum spaces, both scenes show a remarkably modernist sensibility. The contemplation of artworks and the museum experience enable Rossellini and Hitchcock to investigate the cinematic representation of the act of looking by means of emphatic close-ups of faces, highly unusual juxtapositions of action and reaction shots, and bravura camera movements. The appropriate place for the contemplative gaze, the museum becomes a perfect motif of cinematic self-reflection – a theme that also is introduced by the conscientious confrontation between the medium of film and those of painting or sculpture. In so doing, the museum scenes in *Viaggio in Italia* and *Vertigo* show striking similarities with new trends that appeared in the art documentaries discussed in the first chapter.

Both *Vertigo* and *Viaggio in Italia* present the museum as a place of death, which is also an important issue in the two following chapters. Both Chapters 4 and 5 deal with tableaux vivants, the theatrically lit compositions, often based on famous artworks, of living human bodies that do not move throughout the duration of the display. Chapter 4 presents the fashion for tableaux vivants in nineteenth-century culture as a prefiguration of cinema. Apart from including literal representations of tableaux vivants performed on the stage, the cinema of the early 1900s appropriated the aesthetics of tableaux vivants in its attempts to develop a new model of narrative cinema. Strikingly, these practices were revived in post-war European modernist cinema, which often included tableaux vivants in line with its interest in duration and stillness. By incorporating tableaux vivants into their films,
modernist filmmakers attempted to determine the specificity of their medium – movement was juxtaposed with stasis, pictorial or sculptural space with cinematic space, iconic immediacy with filmic duration, and so forth. These issues are particularly dealt with in the context of a discussion of Pasolini’s *La Ricotta* and Godard’s *Passion*, which are both films about the making of a film. In both works, the self-referential aspect is thus explicit and, strikingly, both films-in-the-film consist of tableaux vivants based on famous paintings.

Chapter 5 reconceptualises the notion of the tableau vivant by focusing on some of the encounters between film and photography, which are also marked by a fascination for bodies arrested in time. Particularly examining the film still of classical Hollywood films, this chapter traces the historical development of this photographic genre through an investigation of the statements made by ‘still men’ in trade journals throughout the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, this chapter discusses the aesthetics of the film still, which implies a specific kind of light, focus, narrative, temporality and the instantaneous. Finally, it investigates how these elements were taken up by prominent art photographers such as Cindy Sherman and Jeff Wall, who have appropriated ‘cinematic’ formulas in their work since the 1970s, as well as by contemporary video artists who developed the ‘still film’.

While all previous chapters discuss *art in film*, the paragraphs dealing with the ‘cinematic’ in contemporary photography and video art invert this relation by focusing on *film in art*. This is also the scope of the sixth and last chapter, which discusses the omnipresence of the filmic image in contemporary art museums and exhibitions. Not by chance, the conquest of the museum by the projected image coincided with the notions of the ‘death of cinema’ and the age of ‘post-cinema’. Such ideas were particularly expressed by Godard in his *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, which presented itself not only as a reflection on the relations between film and history but also as an investigation of the relations between cinema and the other arts, especially the pictorial tradition. This chapter shows how modernist cinema found refuge in the museum, where it metamorphosed into new phenomena such as video art or film installations. In particular, this chapter focuses on the ways artists have appropriated the films of Hitchcock.
Acknowledgements

This book was made possible thanks to the help and support of many individuals and institutions. First of all, I am most grateful for the support I have received at University College Ghent, where I have taught at the Faculty of Fine Arts (KASK) since 2006. This support enabled me to consult several libraries and archives. Consequently, while researching this book, I have benefited greatly from the help offered by film librarians and archivists. I specifically would like to thank staff members of the Motion Pictures and Television Reading Room of the Library of Congress in Washington, DC and, particularly in the context of my research on the aesthetics of the Hollywood film still, the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Los Angeles. I also owe thanks to Mark Quigley at the UCLA Film & Television Archive in Los Angeles, Jennifer Tobias at the MoMA library and Charles Silver at the MoMA Film Study Center in New York. In addition, I want to acknowledge Stefan Franck, Sam De Wilde and Erik Martens of the Brussels Cinematheque. The chapter on 1940s art documentaries has already triggered a future project that will result in more detailed research of Belgian art documentaries of that era. In the preparation of that chapter, I also had the pleasant opportunity to work at the Nederlands Filmmuseum and the Stedelijk Museum, both in Amsterdam. I would like to thank Nico de Klerk and Michiel Nijhoff at these institutions – their FIFA archival materials, no doubt, will be a treasure chamber for future research.

While most of the content of this book is original, some of its issues have been dealt with in earlier publications. Paragraphs on the art documentaries by Resnais and Storck are based on two articles published in Dutch in the art journal De Witte Raaf. For the chapter on museum scenes in Vertigo and Viaggio in Italia, I fell back on an article on Hitchcock’s monuments published in the Journal of Architecture and an essay on cinematic museums in a volume entitled Strange Spaces: Explorations into Mediated Obscurity, edited by André Jansson and Amanda Lagerkvist for Ashgate (2009). Several issues of the chapter on the Hollywood film still have been dealt with earlier in an article published in History of Photography. I explicitly wish to thank the editors.
of these journals and books as well some readers for their comments and suggestions that helped the future course of my study.

I also owe thanks for productive discussions to many friends and colleagues. Talks with Herman Asselberghs, Erika Balsom, Kerry Brougher, Edwin Carels, Hilde D’haeyere, Johan Grimonprez, Anthony Kinik and Sofie Verdoort among others have resulted in ideas that found their expression in this volume. Some of these ideas were elaborated in the context of a master course on film and visual arts that I teach in collaboration with Tom Paulus at the University of Antwerp. I thank Tom for letting me use sessions of the course as an incubator for the formation of some chapters of this book. At the Faculty of Fine Arts (KASK) at University College Ghent, I wish to thank the co-members of the Cameo film research group, who gave me the opportunity to present some chapters in a preliminary form. Also at KASK, several of the topics discussed in this volume have been dealt with in the context of a research project on cinematic representations of art and artists. For their valuable suggestions, I thank research assistants, Lisa Colpaert and Vito Adriaensens. I also owe much gratitude to Susan Felleman, who accepted to co-supervise this project that will result in an ambitious guidebook to an imaginary museum of art and artists in feature films. In addition, I thank Susan as well as Brigitte Peucker for the inspiring discussions in the context of several conference panels, particularly the ‘Place of the Museum’ session at the 2010 Society of Cinema and Media Studies conference in Los Angeles. Several of the writings by both Susan Felleman and Brigitte Peucker had a great influence on me, and their ideas unmistakably echo throughout this volume.

I am also indebted to Bill Straw, Alan Marcus and the anonymous reviewer of my initial book proposal, who contributed with helpful suggestions. At Edinburgh University Press, I would like to thank commissioning editor Vicki Donald and, last but not least, Martine Beugnet and John Orr, the editors of the Edinburgh Studies in Film series. I wish to thank Martine for her thorough and patient reading of this volume. Her criticisms as well as her encouragements guided me through the writing process. In the wake of a 2007 symposium on Hitchcock and the Other Arts, John asked me to contribute to this series. Unfortunately, while I was finishing the manuscript of this book, John sadly died in September 2010. I cherish the memories of our meeting as well as his kind and enthusiastic approval of an almost finished version of this volume. In more than one way, this book would not have been possible without him.
CHAPTER 1

Camera and Canvas: Emmer, Storck, Resnais and the Post-war Art Film

PRE-WAR ART DOCUMENTARIES

Documentary explorations of art and artists can be found early in film history. Already in the late 1910s, German film studios such as Deutsche Lichtbild and Welt-Kinematograph produced documentary shorts on the sights and monuments of historical cities such as Munich and Seville. 1 Strikingly, when visual art started to become the subject of films, it appeared only in the form of architecture and monumental sculpture. Having the advantage that they could be filmed in natural light, churches, palaces and monuments were the pre-eminent subject of early films on art. In spite of the vast majority of films on painting among later art documentaries, it seemed easier to justify filming three-dimensional works, such as sculpture and architecture, as movement of the viewer in space is necessary to see and experience them. Films on art, after all, confront the paradox that art objects are still while films trace movement in space and time. Through editing and camera movements, film added movement to the static artwork. This was the advantage that film was supposed to have over photography. ‘We feel the necessity of movement in order to grasp the statue’s immobility,’ famous French art historian Henri Focillon asserted. ‘When we do not have the work itself, but an image of it, cannot it be imagined that the latter, through a clever artifice, will move at our pleasure before us who remain motionless?’ 2

A way to circumvent the problem of the static artwork was to combine it with movement by showing some sort of activity. Made at the time when museums were supplementing their lantern slide collections with motion pictures, many films on art of the 1920s and 1930s showed, for instance, how to make pottery, how to weave baskets, how Indians made their blankets and so forth. 3 Another possibility to make static artworks interesting for cinema was to show famous artists at work – a motif that, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, would also turn into one of the characteristics of artist biopics. Already in 1915, Sacha Guitry made Ceux de chez nous (Those of Our Land), a twenty-two-minute film on leading French writers and artists including Degas, Monet, Renoir and Rodin. Each artist was shown at work in a
lively mixture of close-ups and long shots. Guitry’s film, however, presented portraits of the artists rather than showing the creation process of paintings or sculptures. More information on the work process and act of creation can be found in the short films Elias Katz produced in the United States in the late 1930s, although these are no more than simple ten-minute glimpses of artists such as Lynd Ward, William Gropper and George Grosz at work.

Undoubtedly, the most fascinating pre-war film project dealing with artists at work originated in the Institut für Kulturforschung (Institute for Cultural Education), which was founded in Berlin in 1919. Under the direction of art historian Hans Cürlis, this Institute was one of the first organisations that favoured film as a mediator for art. In 1922, Cürlis started the film cycle Schaffende Hände (Creating Hands), showing prominent artists such as Liebermann, Corinth, Slevogt, Kollwitz, Pechstein, Kandinsky, Rohlfs, Dix, Grosz, Mataré and Belling at work. Being the first to use the ‘over the shoulder’ shot to give the spectator the same view as the artist, Cürlis showed, in the words of Rudolf Arnheim, ‘the process of a work’s creation and the nature of the technique used – for instance colour mixture, hand positions, and hand motions, et cetera.’ The footage dedicated to Otto Dix, for instance, revealed his technique for modelling in his Three Women (1926), for which he used white paint on the underdrawing. Cürlis, however, filmed not only artists but also artworks. From 1919 onwards, the Institute made several films containing shots of sculptures grouped under titles such as ‘Heads’, ‘Negro Sculpture’, ‘Old-German Madonnas’, ‘German Saints’, ‘Kleinplastik’, ‘Indian Crafts’ or ‘East-Asian Crafts’. Filmed in natural light, each sculpture was put on a pedestal and slowly rotated on its axis. Cürlis, too, considered paintings and drawings unfilmisch. By means of the moving camera, film, in the first place, had to increase the expressive powers of sculptural art – a feature also prominent in the documentary shorts on ‘Nazi sculptors’ Arno Breker and Josef Thorak that Cürlis made together with Arnold Fanck in the 1940s.

Apart from Cürlis’s Institute, smaller studios as well as UFA, Germany’s major studio, produced films on visual arts during the interwar period. UFA even comprised a unit that produced popular educational shorts for both theatrical and non-theatrical release, and listed art subjects in its catalogues as early as 1922. An often noted UFA Kulturfilm was Steinerner Wunder von Naumburg (Stone Wonders of Naumburg) (1935) by Rudolph Bamberger and Curt Oertel, in which the camera gently moved among the sculpted Gothic figures on the façade and in the interior of the Naumburg cathedral. According to Arthur Knight, it was the first film ‘that suggested the possibility of granting an art experience through the medium of motion picture’. A few years later, Oertel realised another impressive film on sculpture with Michelangelo: Das Leben eines Titanen (1940). In several respects, this film announces the
innovations that characterise the art documentaries made by filmmakers such as Storck, Emmer and Resnais shortly after the Second World War. First of all, Oertel turned the contemplation of art into a thrilling cinematic experience. With both his mobile camera and skilful lighting, Oertel succeeded in retaining the plasticity of sculptures and the texture of marble surfaces. On the occasion of the American release of *The Titan*, a critic stated that ‘most people would actually understand the work of Michelangelo better after seeing this movie than they would if they were dropped down in front of the originals. The camera makes you see more than your eyes would even discover.’

In addition, Oertel uses animation techniques. In the sequence on the Sistine Chapel, for instance, Oertel shows us first the ceiling without any paintings. Then one by one they flash into view while the narrator tells the story of the creation of the frescoes. Furthermore, like the art documentaries by Resnais of the late 1940s, *The Titan* is not a film simply showing works of art. In the first place, the film tells the story of the dramatic life of the artist without recourse to living actors, sets or dramatics. By means of light, sound effects and (subjective) camera movements, Oertel carries us along through intrigues of popes, conspiracies against the Medici, the death of Savonarola and civil wars. Critics reacted enthusiastically to the sensation that Michelangelo is ‘moving just beyond camera range and that is tremendously exciting’.

In retrospect, however, this is unmistakably the weakest part of the film. Iris Barry spoke of ‘the rather kittenish fashion in which the camera pretended to be trotting at the heels of the artist’ as a result of which ‘the technique verged on an abuse of the mobile powers of the medium.’ Nonetheless, this experiment in telling a story exclusively by using artworks proved very influential. Its impact was also the result of its wide distribution. Soon after the film was released, the Nazis showed *The Titan* throughout Europe as an example of German culture. At the end of the war, the film was captured in France by the U.S. Army. Recognising the unusual cinematic qualities of the film, famous documentarist Robert Flaherty supervised a re-edit. According to Flaherty, ‘even once in a museum you can’t see what’s there. Only the camera, which catches so much more than the eye, can properly illuminate these subjects.’

**RECONSTRUCTION AND REPRODUCTION**

Despite the fascinating experiments by filmmakers such as Cürlis and Oertel, the art documentary only developed into a specific genre after the Second World War. What is more, preceding the breakthrough of the medium of television, the late 1940s and early 1950s can be considered as the golden age of the art documentary. The importance of this genre in that era can be linked with the conditions of a society recovering from the traumas of the
Second World War. After the barbarism and obscurantism of Nazism and the devastation of war, film, in its capacity of a mass medium, was called in for the accomplishment of a humanist ideal of cultural emancipation through education. This ideal was also at the basis of the foundation of UNESCO in November 1945. International cultural organisations such as UNESCO and the Fédération internationale des Archives du Film (FIAF) played an important role in the support of the production, distribution and critical contextualisation of art documentaries, which were presented as devices for cultural and educational reconstruction.12

Furthermore, the golden age of the art documentary coincides with a politics of popularisation of the fine arts. During the same years, the cultural participation of the middle and lower classes was expanding – a phenomenon resulting in increasing number of visitors to museums as well as in the breakthrough of the art book, which had already undergone some major changes shortly before the war. Kenneth Clark, for instance, who would much later write and present the milestone BBC television art documentary Civilisation (1969), had published One Hundred Details from Pictures in the National Gallery in 1938. The book turned out an instant success and was followed by the publication of More Details from Pictures in the National Gallery in 1941. Inspired by the improvement of photographic reproduction techniques, both books were made for the pleasure of the eye. Although a few details had been selected ‘for historical or iconographical reasons’, most details ‘have been chosen chiefly for their beauty’, Clark emphasised in the introduction. Clark further remarked that the book contained many details that viewers had never noticed. This means that ‘we do not look at pictures carefully’ and that ‘the great value of these photographic details is that they encourage us to look at pictures more attentively, and show us some of the rewards of patient scrutiny’.13 After the war, both the art documentary and new types of art books encouraged this patient scrutiny. The 1940s and 1950s were the heyday of publishers such as Skira and the years in which André Malraux wrote his Musée imaginaire.14 According to Malraux, in an era of globalisation and proliferation of industrial techniques of reproduction, only photography was capable of preserving and making accessible the world’s cultural heritage. The traditional physical museum could be succeeded by a kind of virtual all-encompassing photographic archive, which could be embodied in the phenomenon of the art book. In contrast with the traditional museum, which stimulated the contemplation of unique and isolated masterpieces, the Musée imaginaire was rather based on the juxtaposition of artworks of divergent styles, periods and cultures. Whereas, according to Walter Benjamin, photography and film had a revolutionary potential because they were capable of violating normal perception and destroying the aura of the traditional work of
art, for Malraux, modern techniques of mechanical reproduction had a rather ambivalent role. Photography was unmistakably capable of disconnecting the work of art from its original context but it could also reinforce its aura by revealing a kind of immaterial affinity with the entire world heritage or with human creativity as such. Strikingly, for Malraux, the medium of photography supplies the materials for the art book but it is cinema that provides its organisational model. According to Malraux, the art book was, just like a film, a succession of images arranged on the basis of montage.15

Malraux’s notion of the imaginary museum perfectly coincided with the golden age of the art documentary. Its importance for both the film culture and the art world of the 1940s and 1950s is demonstrated by several phenomena. Leading filmmakers such as Flaherty, Dreyer, Grémillon, Clouzot and Alekan contributed considerably to the development of the genre.16 Art documentaries were a prominent issue at film festivals and several of them won Oscars and other important film awards in these years.17 In addition, prominent critics and film theorists such as Bazin, Francastel, Lemaitre, Kracauer and Arnheim paid attention to the phenomenon of the static artwork registered by the moving film camera.18 Furthermore, the encounter between cinema on the one hand and traditional media such as painting and
Camera and Canvas

sculpture on the other was also discussed extensively at international conferences, in professional film and art journals and in publications of professional associations. Some even mentioned a veritable movement of the film d’art or art film and FIFA (Fédération International du Film sur l’Art) was called into being in 1948. An important subject of discussion popping up regularly in these circles was the question to what extent the art documentary should be considered as an independent phenomenon, which possesses a relative autonomy vis-à-vis the artwork being the subject of the film. Although some stated that the medium of film remained ‘predominantly a machine for seeing better, a remote cousin of the magnifying lens, a periscope, a pair of opera glasses’, leading filmmakers presented their ‘documentaries’ not as mere registrations – something that remained the case in the reproduction of art by still photography, including in the model developed by Malraux. Cinematic reproductions of artworks resulted in new filmic artworks – a strategy that in art photography was only developed much later in the works by Louise Lawler or the museum pictures by Thomas Struth, for instance.

Luciano Emmer

During the years immediately following the Second World War, some filmmakers specialising in the genre of the art documentary made their public appearances. Strikingly, although the post-war era also saw the production of interesting films dealing with sculpture – Visual Variations on Noguchi (Marie Menken, 1945), Thorvaldsen (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1949), L’Enfer de Rodin (Henri Alekan, 1959) – painting replaced sculpture and architecture as the favourite subject of art documentarists. The major figures of the golden age of the art documentary were Luciano Emmer, Henri Storck and Alain Resnais, working in Italy, Belgium and France, respectively – countries with a rich artistic (particularly pictorial) past. Emmer, Storck and Resnais, each of them having close contacts with the avant-garde in one way or another, developed new formulas for the genre of the art documentary that remained customary for decades. All three of them, albeit in divergent ways, set the tone by using a more analytical approach instead of glorifying the artwork as an expression of a divine or human soul.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the painter Luciano Emmer joined forces with Enrico Gras, an early experimentalist in the cartoon film, to produce a series of experiments in surrealist film, attempting to develop a poetic documentary form. After the Fascist Ministry of Culture condemned these films, Emmer was exiled in Switzerland whereas Gras was forced into the army. Together again after the war, they realised a series of innovative and commercially successful short art documentaries. In the first place, Emmer
and Gras attempted to transpose the narrative aspects of certain paintings into film. In many paintings, after all, within the confines of a single frame or by means of a cycle of paintings, a story is told and the main characters are depicted more than once. Emmer was convinced that cinema had inherited the narrative functions that painting had once exercised. By reviving those popular legends, which were so often recounted in episodic pictures, a new public interest in painting could be created.22 Not coincidentally, most of Emmer’s films deal with the rich tradition of trecento and quattrocento painting, which exchanged the iconic stasis of the medieval and Byzantine tradition for an outspoken narrative character. During the 1940s in particular, Emmer aimed his camera at fourteenth- and fifteenth-century painters studied by the Italian leading art historian and critic Lionello Venturi, whom Emmer befriended after the war. Both Racconto da un affresco (1938) and Il Dramma di Cristo (1948), for instance, deal with Giotto’s frescoes at the Arena chapel in Padua, while Cantico delle creature (1943) has the murals attributed to Giotto in Assisi as its subject. Guerrieri (1943) focuses on battle scenes painted by Simone Martini, Paolo Ucello and Piero della Francesca. Piero’s work, particularly his fresco cycle in Arrezzo, is also the subject of L’Invenzione della croce (1948). In addition, Fratelli miracolosi (1946), La Leggenda di S. Orsola (1948) and L’Allegoria della primavera (1948) deal with works by Fra Angelico, Carpaccio and Botticelli, respectively.

In most of these films, Emmer was no longer satisfied by simply showing works of art, he liked to reveal their narrative and dramatic potentials. To
Emmer, reproducing a painting in its visual entirety by a simple process of camera recording constituted an ignoble use of the cinematic medium. Instead, he transposed only the thematic entirety of the original painting, subjecting it to a re-interpretation through specifically cinematic techniques. Breaking down the frescoes thematically, he analysed and culled each section for the plastic elements that would most eloquently express the strongest values of story content.23 ‘It was no longer simply a question of producing a short film with a series of photographs of a painting because there is a human content, a continuous drama which might come alive in the film,’ Emmer stated in 1945.24 Emmer and Gras therefore exploited the ‘filmic principle’ that determines a certain kind of (narrative) painting. In various films, Emmer extracted dramatic moments of a painting in order to connect them again in a cinematic way. With a sophisticated feeling for concentration, Emmer directs the eye of the spectator to these dramatically significant elements by means of rhythmic editing, pans, tilt shots and close-ups. According to Lauro Venturi, it was simply the purpose of Emmer and Gras ‘to make a short subject by using (for financial reasons) painted images instead of humans, dogs, or landscapes’.25 Impressed by the vivid expressiveness of the paintings as seen by the apparently ubiquitous eye of Emmer’s camera, Francis Koval noted that ‘elaborate camera movements and dramatic editing make the figures almost three-dimensional.’26 In Racconto da un affresco, which deals with Giotto’s murals in Padua, for instance, the scene of the kissing of Christ opens with a long shot of the fresco, establishing the site of action. Then Emmer cuts into the picture with a medium shot on the isolated fragment of a robed man pointing to Judas about to kiss Christ. This is followed by a close-up reaction shot of a soldier; two close-ups of bystanders in the crowd; and a close-up of Judas taken from a different fresco. Emmer subsequently cuts to a reaction close-up of Christ and part of a menacing soldier behind him. This is followed by a dramatic close-up of the kiss itself, with the eyes of the two men meeting. Finally, Emmer cuts to a still of a later fresco showing Christ’s hands bound.

Similarly, the purpose of a film such as La Leggenda di S. Orsola was ‘to tell the legend of St. Ursula seen by Carpaccio, and not to make a short about Carpaccio’s painting. The latter would have been an entirely different film.’27 In the first place, Emmer transforms Carpaccio’s static paintings into a cinematic love story about a young princess who has agreed to marry a foreign prince and is converted to his religion. She leaves with him to his distant country, knowing that she and her escort of eleven thousand virgins will be massacred before they arrive. Rather than giving us information on the art or artist, Emmer’s films narrate the legends, fables or events that the painter himself had illustrated in his paintings, by using camera movements
to point out details, by using editing rhythm to impart action to the static actors, and by working very closely with the musical score (often composed by Roman Vlad) and the commentary. In so doing, most of the shots of an Emmer film focused on narrative elements in the paintings – elements that painters had used themselves in order to create a narrative such as gestures, facial expressions or the positioning of the characters. As in making a feature film, Emmer inserts shots of details from the painting with no narrative function but that help to create an atmosphere and a setting for the story. In a 1950 essay as well as in later interviews, Emmer emphasised that there was no essential difference between his films on art and his first feature film *Domenica d’Agosto* (1950). Both were marked by the same humanism that also marked contemporaneous Italian neorealist cinema. In *Domenica d’Agosto*, Emmer simply looked for the same faces and emotions on the beaches of Ostia as the ones that are depicted in the art of the masters of the Early Renaissance.

In a sense, by breaking down the storytelling paintings into their narrative elements, the filmic storytelling is done through the painter’s own eyes. Emmer simply attempted to give to each element a ‘duration in time’ corresponding to the ‘duration in space’ given to that same element by the painter. However, Emmer quickly realised that it was impossible to respect pictorial composition and space determination because a cinematic logic required these elements to be seen in a narrative sequence. The composition of Carpaccio’s painting of the dream of Saint Ursula, for instance, is such that the eye is led immediately to both the sleeping princess and the angel entering the room. In his film on *La Leggenda di S. Orsola*, however, Emmer first concentrated on Ursula and established her setting before revealing the presence of the angel. The angel’s appearance being unsuspected, the scene gained in the film an element of suspense that is purely cinematographic and anti-pictorial. Strikingly, Emmer did not show the total of the painting before moving in for close-ups (as many art historians criticised him for not doing). As a result, Emmer gives the painted figures a purely cinematic movement instead of a movement derived from the surface composition of the painting. According to Lauro Venturi, for this reason the whole picture is rarely seen in his films. The movement of the composition would destroy the cinematic movement of the details because details from different sections of the paintings are combined to express ideas or emotions which they could not separately express.

According to Herbert Margolis such an ‘isolation of parts from the whole purposely disturbed the equilibrium of the original paintings in order to form a new cinematic equilibrium’. Images, which have no meaning or balance
in themselves, are combined through a shot juxtaposition creating a story continuity that rises to a dramatic climax.

Although unmistakably based on the narrative organisation of the paintings, Emmer’s films presented themselves as translations or transpositions rather than reproductions. Instead of simply showing the original paintings, Emmer revealed their hidden meanings. For Lauro Venturi, the cinematic narration of Emmer’s films is so persuasive that, when we see the painting after having seen the film, we spontaneously look for those hidden details which the camera has revealed, and we are able to understand the painter’s poetry and dramatic construction far better.  

Furthermore, Emmer not only combines otherwise unrelated details, he sometimes even contradicts the original paintings. Two characters, for instance, who are back to back in the painting, are facing each other in the film. In other instances, Emmer mixes faces and actions from different paintings. In Giotto’s depiction of the Dream of Joachim, for instance, he introduced two soldiers that are part of the Resurrection. In Giotto’s fresco showing the mourning of Christ, Emmer selected five progressive phases of angles in motion from different Giotto frescoes. When viewed in rapid succession, one dissolving into another, they create the cinematic illusion of an angel in continuous flight. Referring to *Il Paradiso terrestre* (1946), which deals with Bosch’s triptych of the *Garden of Delights*, Emmer stated that:

> the film [...] is not and must not be a cinematographic translation of the pictorial work. It would have been an absolutely pretentious and arbitrary experience to attempt to violate an autonomous artistic reality. Bosch’s painting is harmony in space. The makers of the film have taken those painted images, freed them form their pictorial bonds, and used them as new objects.

Emmer’s films were carefully planned, as demonstrated by the technical indications for filming that are drawn on photographic reproductions of the artworks. They were also made with very limited means. Dozens of still photographs of an artwork were filmed with an old 1913 Pathé camera on an animation stand in a way similar to the making of an animation film. For his art films, Emmer used photographs by Fratelli Alinari, the Italian photographic studio that already in the nineteenth century had established itself as the leading firm for photographic reproductions of historical monuments and artworks. Published widely, and widespread among connoisseurs all over the world, Alinari pictures played an important part in the development of the discipline of art history and they had become part of the collective memory of art lovers. Creating new connections between individual Alinari photographs,
Luciano Emmer

Emmer situates himself in a project hypostasising the age of mechanical reproduction, not unlike Malraux. Comprising numerous sentimental depictions of love, Destino d’amore (1942) even presents photographic reproductions as such as the subject of the film. This unique satire of a romance between a chambermaid and an Italian soldier at the Front was created through ingenious editing of the couple’s picture-postcard exchanges. It was immediately banned by the Ministry of Popular Culture for being ‘a ridiculous insult to the love life of the heroic fascist soldier’.

Massimo Ferretti sees this film as an instance of the surrealist influences on Emmer, who uses the postcard as a ready-made or an objet trouvé that acquires a new meaning in a way similar to the photographic practices of the avant-garde.

Emmer’s films were widely discussed in the contemporaneous publications of the film d’art movement and they became very influential, particularly in French film circles, where Emmer had close contacts with people such as Henri Langlois, Marc Allégret, Marcel Carné and Jean Cocteau. But Emmer’s films were also widely shown in many other countries. When the Arts Council of Great Britain organised its first Art Film Tour in the autumn of 1950, operating as a mobile unit, its catalogue contained a list of twelve art films, six of them by Luciano Emmer. John Read, who started making television documentaries on art for the BBC in the early 1950s, acknowledged Emmer’s influence. Emmer’s reliance on linear narrative, his focus on the individual and his preference for feeling over analysis also became crucial elements in British television’s framework for the arts.

Emmer’s works, however, were the target of criticism as well. The concentration on the narrative of artworks was both the strength and weakness of Emmer’s films. In some of his later films such as Leonardo da Vinci (1952), Goya (1952) and Picasso (1954), Emmer even abandoned his focus on narrative and dealt with entire oeuvres that were even presented as cultural manifestations of an entire era. Some critics also reproached him for the fact that his camera took charge of the pictorial form and distorted it by its ingenuity, whereas others described the typical Emmer formula already in the early 1950s as tedious and nearing exhaustion.

In 1955, Lotte Eisner wrote that:

> the method of filmmakers with true intuition and sensibility, like Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras – whose films on Giotto and Bosch discovered the possibilities of treating a picture like a scene in the studio without the element of the third dimension – has now become stale with imitation and abuse.

Nonetheless, some of Emmer’s films are characterised by a highly personal and poetic dimension. His account of the Legend of Saint Ursula, for instance, can indeed be interpreted as the simple telling of a story but it is
unmistakably also marked by a surrealist fascination for terror and oneiric elements, which certainly can be found in the original Italian version but which were even more elaborated in the French version of the film that has a voice-over commentary written by Jean Cocteau. As Raymond Durgnat noted, in Emmer’s films, ‘the camera, paradoxically, takes the works of art out of the context of art appreciation, and attempts to give back to them an interest which is not so much literary as a religious holism of eye, mind, and heart.’ First and foremost, Emmer experimented with the narrative potential of the still image in a cinematic context. Consisting of a montage of shots of details of a painting combined with varied camera movements and a soundtrack, his films not only precede similar works by Storck or Resnais, they foreshadow experimental films such as Marker’s *La Jetée* (1962), which is also based on a mechanism of movement or animation of the still image.

**CAUVIN, STORCK, HAESAERTS AND THE BELGIAN SCHOOL**

In the late 1940s, Henri Storck and Paul Haesaerts were carrying out similar experiments that belonged to a rich Belgian tradition of art documentaries including remarkable films by Charles Dekeukeleire and André Cauvin, among others. In one of the contemporaneous books on the phenomenon of the *art film*, published by UNESCO, Paul Davay stated that the Belgian cinema ‘has made relatively few blunders in the domain of the film on art’. In addition, Davay noted that Belgian filmmakers abandoned the ‘traditional sanctimonious contemplation of art and introduced their spectators into an unknown realm, obliged them to see, revealed the secrets of what they before had only looked at mechanically’. In Belgium, the art film had already flourished before the war. Although the genre reached back as early as the mid-twenties with films such as Gaston Schoukens’s *Nos Peintres* (*Our Painters*, 1926) on artists from the Flemish Primitives to Rubens, Belgium in particular produced some seminal and highly original art documentaries in the late 1930s. Dekeukeleire’s *Thèmes d’inspiration* (1938) compared portraits of Old and Modern Masters with footage of real people to demonstrate ‘that throughout the ages the soul of the people had not been changed’. Constantly shifting between the past and the present, *Thèmes d’inspiration* is marked both by the avant-garde (to which Dekeukeleire had contributed earlier with film poems inspired by Germaine Dulac and a series of montage films) and by the new documentary trends of the 1930s. Focusing on the teluric alignment of characters in paintings by Pieter Bruegel, Joachim Patinir, Jacob Jordaens, Constant Permeke and Frits Van den Berghe, among others, Dekeukeleire’s film also comprised images of the countryside and farmers at work, connecting them to the land by means of low camera positions. A
highly lyrical film, *Thèmes d’inspiration* won the Grand Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1938.

The most influential pre-war Belgian art film, however, was André Cauvin’s *L’Agneau mystique* (*The Mystic Lamb*, 1939), which dealt with the famous fifteenth-century altarpiece by Jan and Hubert Van Eyck. In this landmark short film, the verbal narrative was confined to a minimum of fact and description in favour of the sensuality of excellently vibrant lighting and the moving camera, which brought the static painting to life. Entirely shot in the cathedral of Ghent, Cauvin’s film prefigured the camera mobility that characterises many of the post-war documentaries on painting. After an establishing shot of the cathedral, the camera leads us impressively through the gates that guard the chapel in which the Van Eyck polyptych stands. Subsequently, it scans the side-panels shielding the painting, then these swing open and the camera begins to examine the central panels. From a careful overview we are led on to a closer analysis. The camera moves slowly so that there is time to contemplate the many details rendered in close-up. For the first time, an art film draws attention to the aesthetic coherence of a complex piece of art, enabling the viewer to make a formal analysis of a single work. Moreover, the spectator is invited to look for himself. ‘For the first time spectators began to see a living world in a painting,’ Paul Davay stated. ‘No one had ever before seen the city of Ghent through this window. No one had noticed that the angel musicians are little Belgian country girls with bright but rather ugly faces.’ Davay further remarked that the world that Cauvin revealed is not essentially pictorial. ‘The camera always works on a limited field, so the profound structure of the painting constantly escapes us, the play of volumes is only approximately realised, and the colour relationships hardly at all.’ Cauvin’s film is essentially a cinematic exploration of the world depicted by Van Eyck. Light, rhythm, camera movement and sound – all contribute to an all-over poetic effect. Together with a similar film on *Memling* (1939), *The Mystic Lamb* was produced by the Belgian government specifically for showing in its pavilion at the 1939 New York World’s Fair, where it made a lasting impression. Calling it a ‘true art experience on film’, Arthur Knight described *The Mystic Lamb* as ‘probably the first of the new art films on an adult level to be seen by any considerable audience in America’. Writing in 1952, Iris Barry stated that *The Mystic Lamb* ‘has not even now, after so many other cinematic studies of paintings, been surpassed. […] Cauvin was truly exploring unknown country here: his calmness and clear perception made for brilliant pioneering.

Cauvin’s experiments were taken a step further by Henri Storck, who specialised in the genre of the art documentary from 1936 onwards, when he realised *Regards sur la Belgique ancienne* (*Views of Old Belgium*, 1936). Dealing with
the medieval treasures produced by religion or a new emerging civic culture, the film mobilises static imagery by means of forward and backward travels as well as lateral and vertical pan shots. Storck's more important contributions to the development of the genre, however, date from the late 1940s with his landmark films on Delvaux and Rubens. In contrast with Cauvin's film on Van Eyck's *Mystic Lamb* and most of Emmer's films, Storck did not base his films on individual paintings but rather on a collage of details from various works. In so doing, Storck exceeded Emmer's ambitions by putting film at the disposal of an analysis of both the content and the form of the artwork. While Emmer wanted to tell stories that were also the subject of his filmed paintings, Storck rather developed film essays that were aesthetic treatises or studies in the history and theory of art.

As the title suggests, *Le Monde de Paul Delvaux* (*The World of Paul Delvaux*, 1946), which Storck made in collaboration with poet and essayist René Micha, deals with surrealist painter Delvaux's entire oeuvre rather than with his biography or a specific painting. Delvaux's famous nudes and uncanny cityscapes merge with other figures, objects and fragments from various of his canvases, crystallising into an oniric and melancholy universe. Accompanied by the voice of Paul Eluard and music by André Souris, *Le Monde de Paul Delvaux* presented itself as a modern *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Paul Davay called it:

> an almost perfect meeting and fusion of different artistic disciplines subject to a new means of expression – the cinema. Under Storck's direction, the painter Delvaux, the script-writer René Micha, the musician André Souris, and the poet Paul Eluard found a common ground.48

Storck's camera gently and subtly moves over Delvaux's paintings, scrutinising as well as cherishing them. On the one hand, the filmmaker focuses our attention on the material aspects of the paintings. Arthur Knight stated that 'more than any other art film has yet succeeded in doing, Storck creates an awareness of texture, of technique, of how the paint is laid on.'49 On the other hand, Storck manages to evoke the almost immaterial and dream-like world of Delvaux's art. In order to achieve this effect, Storck and Delvaux did away with the frames of the pictures and in some cases lined them up one next to the other so that Storck's camera could pass without interruption from one to another.50 Perfectly fit for black-and-white film, Delvaux's uncanny nudes in haunted nocturnal cityscapes show certain resemblances to films of that era such as late instances of Surrealism, like Cocteau's *La Belle et la bête* (1946) or Hans Richter's *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1946), as well as to contemporaneous Hollywood productions, such as *One Touch of Venus* (William Seiter, 1948), *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* (Albert Lewin, 1949) and several Gothic and noir films featuring haunting portraits.
With *Rubens* (1948), which Storck realised in collaboration with Paul Haesaerts, cinema entered into the realm of art analysis. Rather than dealing with the narrative of a certain painting (as in many of Emmer’s films) or with a fictitious world created in many works of a painter (as in *Le Monde de Paul Delvaux*), *Rubens* attempted to give both an art historical reading and a formal analysis of the work of the baroque painter. In order to analyse the style, composition and iconography of the artist, Storck called in the entire repertory of the film medium – from split screens and multiple exposures to parallel editing and animation techniques. In *Rubens*, Storck frequently isolates a fragment of the painting through the device of an iris. A subsequent shot shows a close-up of that fragment for a more detailed analysis. In other instances, a moving camera and rapidly rotating images reveal Rubens’s predilection for spiral-shaped movements. Animated lines point out the characteristics of Rubens’s compositions – his focal points, divisions and the sweep of his movements. Rubens is presented as a master of ultimate flexibility and movement by means of animated circles and ovals. Dissolves to footage of water, clouds and flames evoke Rubens’s idea of both a universe in motion and a fertile nature. By means of split screens, Storck and Haesaerts compare Rubens with other masters. On the one hand, split screens make clear that Rubens sought and found other solutions to depict the world than the ones used by earlier Flemish painters such as Van der Weyden, Van der Goes, Memling, Van Eyck, Bosch or Bruegel. On the
other hand, split screens are also invoked to demonstrate Rubens’s affinities with other painters or his influence on later artists such as Titian, Veronese, Van Dyck, Jordaens, Delacroix, Wiertz, Watteau and Renoir. Furthermore, Storck and Haesaerts also make comparisons between similar details from a number of works by Rubens himself. A sequence, for instance, juxtaposes a series of hands painted by Rubens and investigates their significance in the construction of a narrative. In this film, in short, Storck does not evoke Rubens through a series of anecdotes but recreates his works before our eyes. According to Paul Davay, Storck and Haesaerts ‘oblige us to remain in front of the picture, to see it, with their eyes, but they give us the right to protest, to disagree, and to join in a discussion which is always open to our intelligence’. While Storck and Haesaerts may be using virtuoso textbook techniques, they also intrude in the stories depicted in the paintings directly by their glorious travelling shots, statically filmed details, and close-ups of characters or their features.

With *Rubens*, Storck clearly demonstrated that the medium of film was suitable for formal analyses of artworks. Moreover, with his large formats and compositions characterised by movements and spatial depth, Rubens is almost presented as a precursor of cinema. This aspect is even made explicit when a view of the interior of a Jesuit church with an altar painted by Rubens is almost transformed into a cinema theatre. Suddenly, the image is underexposed apart from the altar that illuminates as a cinema screen. Rubens’s art, in short, is presented as a proto-cinematic spectacle – an idea that is not absurd, knowing that the proliferation of his prints was particularly important for nineteenth-century academic painting, which, in turn, is echoed in the spectacular and lavish shot compositions of Hollywood directors of the late 1910s and 1920s such as Cecil B. DeMille.

*Rubens* is appropriately described as a landmark art documentary by many commentators. According to Kracauer, ‘*Rubens* combines cinematically brilliant camera penetrations of the painter’s world with an attempt to drive home his predilection for gyrational movements. Note that this film is neither pure cinema nor merely a teaching instrument. It is a glamorous hybrid.’ More explicit than Emmer, Storck presented the art documentary as an autonomous cinematic work. His documentaries on Delvaux and Rubens were not conceived as educational projects but as pure cinema or something in between. As such, they were often criticised by art critics and historians. Storck simply employed artworks as raw material that needed to be transformed in order to become cinematic elements. In this process, he attempted to realise effects that sometimes had little to do with the original work of art. H. W. Janson, author of a well-known and popular survey of art history, wrote that:
ambitious and successful films such as the Belgian-made *Rubens* and *Le Monde de Paul Delvaux* have demonstrated how effectively the moving camera can guide the beholder’s eye so as to focus his attention and heighten his perceptions. There is a strange excitement about viewing paintings thus spread out upon the movie screen. A new dimension, we feel, has been added to our experience, and we find ourselves in a state of visual alertness that makes the forms speak to us with particular eloquence and intensity.54

After *Rubens*, Storck continued making art films such as *La Fenêtre ouverte* (*The Open Window*, 1952), which can be described as a short history of landscape painting in Technicolor. Storck’s collaborator on *Rubens*, the art historian and critic Paul Haesaerts, also realised other art documentaries in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In *De Renoir à Picasso* (1950), Haesaerts adopted the techniques that were used in *Rubens*. Split screens, diagrams and animation help us to analyse the forms and structures of paintings. In this case, these techniques are invoked to make statements about modern art in general since *De Renoir à Picasso* attempts at tracing three inspirational sources of modern art – the so-called sensual or carnal (Renoir), the cerebral (Seurat), and the instinctual or passionate (Picasso). Evoking what Henri Lemaître, in his 1956 book on fine arts and cinema, called film’s power to make a ‘confrontation significative’ between artworks, Haesaerts juxtaposes works in order to demonstrate artistic affinities and contrasts. Decades later, the film looks deadly didactic but Haesaerts certainly still amazes us by his attempts at developing new ways of analysing artworks in cinematic ways. At the time, it made a lasting impression. According to André Thirifays, Haesaerts uses a technique which is perfectly adapted to the film medium, and which, moreover, in this case, is more efficacious than the written word. By using graphs, pointing quick contrasts, or introducing music, he succeeds in giving forceful expression to his critical opinions, whilst at the same time, with a few swift
Camera and Canvas

touches, he indicates various influences and successive trends in the realm of art and dwells on the dramatic aspects of the works mentioned.55

The only master still living in Haesaert’s genealogy of modern art _De Renoir à Picasso_ was also the subject of another landmark documentary that the Belgian art historian-cum-filmmaker realised in 1950. Strikingly, _Visite à Picasso_ opens with a travelling shot showing numerous books on Picasso. In so doing, the film not only evokes Malraux’s imaginary museum, it also contributes as well as refers to the veritable cult of Picasso portraits that emerged after the Second World War. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, Picasso came to embody modern art as such. Both his persona and his work were discussed and reproduced extensively in both art journals and popular media, and they also became the subject of other films such as _Guernica_ (Resnais, 1950), _Picasso_ (Emmer, 1954) and _Le Mystère Picasso_ (Clouzot, 1956). After the opening images of Picasso books, Haesaerts shows us a series of works by Picasso in chronological order. Then the film switches to images of Picasso’s studio in Vallauris. The artist walks outside and enters the studio to work on a piece of sculpture and a drawing. By holding the sculpture, the artist projects its shadows on one of the studio’s walls. In the remarkable following sequence, Picasso paints various forms (a bird, a vase with flowers, various zoomorphic figures) on a sheet of Plexiglass stretched between himself and the camera. Sometimes, the artist looks straight into the lens through the drawing. The effect is striking – certainly because the pane of glass occupies

![Figure 1.6 Paul Haesaerts, Visite à Picasso (1950)](image_url)
the entire frame or covers an entire door opening. Shown against a dark background, it looks as if Picasso draws white lines into the space in which he finds himself.

The use of a glass pane in order to show the creation process itself proved very successful and it was adopted by several other landmark art documentaries of the 1950s. Haesaerts himself fell back on this procedure in his *Quatre peintres belges au travail* (*Four Belgian Painters at Work*, 1952) dealing with Edgar Tytgat, Albert Dasnoy, Jean Brusselmans and Paul Delvaux. However, the process led to better results in the American production of *Jackson Pollock* (Paul Falkenberg and Hans Namuth, 1951) simply because Pollock’s action painting involved a more physical dimension and also implied a new relation between the painting and its creation process. In the often-quoted voice-over, Pollock himself emphasised the importance of being physically part of his paintings. Similarly, *The Reality of Karel Appel* (Jan Vrijman, 1962) features the artist flicking paint at a glass screen in a frenzy of apparent creativity accompanied by a Dizzy Gillespie soundtrack. The use of filming through glass sheets, in short, proved very useful for documenting painters with a heavy brush technique and an outspoken physical way of applying paint on their canvas (as in Pollock’s drippings). Since their paintings present themselves as almost seismographic registrations of their bodily movements, they became favourite subjects of filmmakers who endorsed what Philip Hayward described as an ‘extreme fetishisation of the actual moment of creation’. The most famous variation on Haesaerts’s technique, however, was also used in a film dedicated to Picasso. In the feature-length film *Le Mystère Picasso* (*The Mystery of Picasso*, 1956), established French fiction film director Henri-Georges Clouzot showed Picasso at work in a film studio. Shot in noirish black-and-white, this footage was altered by long takes in colour of a porous white screen on which Picasso made nineteen paintings or drawings. The screen was filmed frontally from behind so that Picasso himself remains invisible. As a result, the screen is transformed into a kind of automatic painting – an effect particularly suited for Picasso’s working process since as he works on a painting, he changes his mind about its central subject. The initial image of a flower becomes a fish, which in turn becomes a hen, before being transformed into a human face and finally the head of a faun. More than in Haesaerts’s *Visite à Picasso*, Clouzot’s long takes reproduce the duration of the painting process.

**RESNAIS’S EARLY STUDIO VISITS AND ARTIST PORTRAITS**

Clouzot’s film on Picasso is an indication of the high level that the art film had reached in France by the mid-1950s. Besides Italy and Belgium, France
contributed largely to the development of the art documentary between 1945 and 1955. Undoubtedly, the production of such films was encouraged by a decree that obliged film exhibitioners to include short features in their programmes during the late 1940s. After the introduction in 1955 of a new system of grants, France continued to experience an era of flourishing of short filmmaking which, together with the work of such sympathetic producers as Anatole Dauman (Argos Films) and Pierre Braunberger (Les films de la Pléiade), favoured the production of art documentaries by experimental filmmakers.

A key figure in the development of the post-war French art documentary was Alain Resnais, who later became one of the major auteurs of French post-war cinema with films such as *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) and *L’Année dernièrè à Marienbad* (1961). Resnais even started his career as a filmmaker with some remarkable art documentaries, which were heavily influenced by ‘Robert Hessens and the Belgian School of Paul Haesaerts’. Already in 1946–7, more or less during the same years in which Malraux – who later was to become Resnais’s father-in-law – was working on the first versions of his *Musée imaginaire*, Resnais made, at the age of twenty-five, a series of film portraits of painters such as Henri Goetz, Hans Hartung, César Doméla, Lucien Coutaud, Christine Boumeester, Félix Labisse, Óscar Domínguez (unfinished) and Max Ernst. Since these films, each of them shot in 16 mm, were not meant for commercial distribution, they fell into oblivion and they are often lacking in Resnais filmographies. At the most, they can be considered as modest finger exercises. With the exception of the film on Ernst, which was shot in colour, they all are black-and-white films without synchronised sound. A soundtrack with music was later added to the Goetz film to be shown in museums and exhibitions. For the film on Hartung, a soundtrack with music by Antoine Duhamel and a voice-over commentary by Madeleine Rousseau was planned but only realised much later, when the film was saved from oblivion in 2000.

The selection of subjects in Resnais’s early films is striking. In a 1960 interview, Resnais described his pictorial preferences, like his taste in other artistic disciplines, as highly eclectic. ‘I like what I call theatrical painting – Piero della Francesca, Félix Labisse, Paul Delvaux, etcetera. But then I also like Hartung. My favourite modern painter is Ernst; he satisfies me on both the theatrical and abstract levels.’ For his first film portraits, Resnais invariably chose painters representing the various trends within the so-called *école de Paris*: post-cubism (Goetz), geometric abstraction (Doméla), figuration inspired by Surrealism (Labisse, Coutaud, Domínguez) and expressive, lyrical or organic abstraction (Hartung, Ernst, Boumeester). The fact that Resnais based his career as a filmmaker on a preference for modern abstract painting
already prefigures his future outspoken modernist commitment – during the following decades, after all, Resnais not only became one of the protagonist of European modernist art house cinema but also collaborated with prominent modernist writers such as Cayrol, Duras, Semprun and Robbe-Grillet and composers such as Milhaud, Eisler, Fusco, Henze and Penderecki.

These at first sight rather modest films can be described as studio visits comprising images of the artist at work. Given this perspective, Resnais’s early film experiments on the one hand connect to an old tradition reaching back to the origins of the genre of the art documentary. On the other hand, they foreshadow an important trend that would flourish in the following years with films already mentioned in the previous paragraph such as Haesaerts’s *Visite à Picasso* and *Quatre peintres belges au travail* as well as Falkenberg and Namuth’s *Jackson Pollock* and Clouzot’s *Le Mystère Picasso*. In the sequences showing artists in their studio, Resnais often used a succession of shots characterised by a fixed framing, and some sequences are marked by striking camera positions.

Resnais’s early artist films also contain a sequence consisting of a succession of static shots of various paintings, which enables the filmmaker to show the stylistic evolution of a painter’s oeuvre as well as to emphasise the specific obsessions of the artist. In the film on Goetz, for instance, Resnais evokes an almost tormented and haunted atmosphere that is caused more by the montage than by the registration of individual works as such. In addition, Resnais succeeded in immersing himself and the viewer in the pictorial universe of a certain artist by means of various cinematic techniques. In particular, in the film portraits of Goetz and Hartung, Resnais extensively used the tracking shots that later would become the trademark of films such as *Nuit et brouillard*, *Hiroshima mon amour* and *L’Année dernière à Marienbad*. As François Thomas has noted, in the films on Goetz and Hartung, two different kinds of use of travelling shots can be found. In the film on Goetz, camera movements were deployed to suggest a continuity between shots showing fragments of several works considered to be the most representative of the painter. Camera movements facilitate, as it were, the selection of specific elements in these paintings and they give meaning to an entire series of works. In the film on Hartung, by contrast, camera movements guide us within a single painting. The camera follows axes in the composition and helps us to ‘read’ the painting. According to Resnais,

there is nothing like looking at a painter’s work through a camera viewfinder to judge the cohesiveness of his painting as such. That was how I came to see through Gauguin, for example – he just didn’t stand up – but it’s also how I came to appreciate the formal values of Ernst.\(^{63}\)
In Resnais’s early film essays, static paintings are animated or brought to life by montage and camera movements. According to Resnais, these early films ‘had the intention to remove the paintings from the dusty rooms of museums’ and they were experiments
to find out if painted trees, painted houses, and painted characters could, by way of montage, fulfil the roles of real objects and if, in this case, it was possible to substitute for the observer the interior world of an artist for the word that photography revealed.64

Labelled as ‘important and invaluable experiments in the crucial relationship between montage and mise-en-scène’, these early artist portraits present themselves as autonomous artworks, which translate rather than merely register the formal language and universe of the painter in question.65

**Van Gogh**

This aspect is even more crucial in Resnais’s art documentaries made during the following years, which were made for commercial distribution in contrast with the early studio films. In films such as *Van Gogh* (1948), *Guernica* (1950), *Gauguin* (1950) and *Les Statues meurent aussi* (with Chris Marker, 1953), a shift in the selection of the art and artists can be noted.66 Whereas the early film portraits were dedicated to artists who had come to the fore in the 1930s and 1940s and who, as a whole, embodied the most important currents in post-war European painting, Resnais now harked back to prominent artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and African art. Nonetheless, this preference for artists and art forms that, a few years earlier under the Nazi occupation were considered still *entartet* or degenerated, indicates Resnais’s modernist commitment.

The rediscovery of Vincent Van Gogh perfectly tallies with the artistic and intellectual climate shortly after the liberation. Both the art and the figure of Van Gogh seemed perfectly reconcilable with the then leading existentialist art discourse – the shoes of Van Gogh, which turn up a few times in Resnais’s film, were at the core, for instance, of Heidegger’s famous essay on the *Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*. During his military service in Germany in 1945–6, Resnais had visited Heidegger.67 On the occasion of the big Van Gogh exhibition at the Orangerie in Paris in 1947, several books were published, some containing fragments of the correspondence between Vincent and his brother Theo, which was also used in Resnais’s short feature.68 *Van Gogh* was originally shot in 1947, commissioned by the Amis de l’Art, a circle founded at the end of 1944 with the purpose of stimulating the proliferation of modern art by means of lectures and didactic exhibitions as well as films. This
Van Gogh

society was presided over by the renowned art historian Gaston Diehl, who also founded the Festival international du film d’art in 1948 and rendered his assistance as a screenwriter to films such as Les Fêtes galantes (Watteau) (1950) by Jean Aurel. Diehl spoke to Resnais about the Van Gogh exhibition and asked the young filmmaker if he was interested in making a film ‘in the style of Luciano Emmer’ for the Amis de l’art. Diehl also wrote the commentary for Van Gogh and also for Resnais’s film on Gauguin. Also involved in the project was Robert Hessens, who developed into a maker of art documentaries as well as films on Malfroy (1948), Toulouse-Lautrec (1950) and Chagall (1953). Resnais would also collaborate with Hessens on his film on Guernica and both were also involved in the production of Pictura (1951), in which famous actors such as Henry Fonda, Gregory Peck and Vincent Price spoke the voice-over in episodes dedicated to Bosch, Goya, Carpaccio and Toulouse-Lautrec.

Initially, Van Gogh was shot in 16 mm. Moreover, the budget was originally inadequate to provide for the soundtrack, comprising Diehl’s text read by Claude Dauphin and music by Jacques Besse. Resnais, however, showed the unfinished film to producer Pierre Braunberger. Impressed by it, Braunberger, who was the driving force behind Panthéon Production (later Les films de la Pléiade), gave Resnais the assignment as well as the financial means to reshoot the film in 35 mm with sound. Eventually, the new version of Van Gogh, which was made on the basis of photographic reproductions instead of the original paintings used in the 16 mm version, premiered in May 1948. That year, it won the Grand Prize at the Venice Film Festival and the CIDALC Award. In 1950, the film won an Oscar for best documentary short. It is striking that Resnais’s twenty-minute film was conceived and eventually also shot in black-and-white, whereas Van Gogh is usually considered as a great colourist. The film, however, should be situated in a context in which the vast majority of art reproductions were in black-and-white. Moreover, Resnais succeeded in turning this restriction into an advantage. The use of black-and-white makes the graphic and even graphological element in Van Gogh’s works more visible – the painting is presented as an embodiment of a highly personal signature. Furthermore, the use of black-and-white film enabled Resnais to create, in his own words, links between completely different works as well as to focus more on the ‘architecture tragique de la peinture de Van Gogh’.

The tragic nature of Van Gogh is indeed the crucial topic of the film. Already before the opening credits, we are assured that Van Gogh, in spite of his universally recognised talent, struggled desperately against misery and indifference. Van Gogh is not so much a visual essay analysing the content or pictorial system of a certain painter – as is the case in some of the films by Emmer. Resnais, in the first place, tells the story of the life of the artist. The
opening image stipulates that ‘ce film tente de retracer, uniquement à l’aide
de ses oeuvres, la vie et l’aventure spirituelle de l’un des plus grands peintres
modernes.’ This life and spiritual adventure are unmistakably tragic. Already
in the 1940s, among the public at large, Van Gogh was the ultimate embodi-
ment of the misunderstood artist – an aspect fully developed in Lust for Life,
the popular novel published by Irving Stone in 1934 that became the basis
for the 1956 film directed by Minnelli. As will be demonstrated in the next
chapter, both Stone and Minnelli as well as later filmmakers presented Van
Gogh as an unrecognised loner, who was almost biologically determined to
deviant behaviour. Lust for Life is completely built on Van Gogh’s desperate
and futile attempts to become a respectable artist. The fact that he remains a
failure in the eyes of the community breaks his vulnerable and self-destructive
personality. As Griselda Pollock has demonstrated in several of her writings,
Van Gogh is the perfect embodiment of the romantic myth of the artist as an
unrecognised, vulnerable, tormented, self-destructive and tragic individual.75

It is precisely this myth that Resnais used as a point of departure for his
film essay. ‘We voluntary sacrificed the historical accuracy for the benefit of
the myth of Van Gogh,’ Resnais stated.76 Van Gogh is immediately presented
as a restless soul who is at home nowhere by means of a quote from the cor-
respondence with his brother Theo: ‘It seems that I am always a traveller who
always goes somewhere at some destination.’ It is this restless geographic as
well as artistic and mental journey that determines the structure of the film.
Van Gogh, after all, can be divided into four sequences coinciding with the
four places that played an important part in the painter’s life and that repre-
sent the four stages of his artistic development: Holland, Paris, Provence and
Auvers-sur-Oise. Strikingly, Resnais tells the story of Van Gogh’s life, which
remains part of a familiar discourse on the mental and social alienation of the
artist, exclusively by means of a cinematic manipulation of his paintings. On
the whole, the film consists of a masterful succession of 207 shots of paint-
ings, which suggest a continuity that is comparable with a feature film. Just
like a filmmaker constructs a scene with shots and an entire film with scenes,
Resnais composed Van Gogh by means of images of static paintings that are
animated in a certain way. In order to tell the story of the painter’s life, Resnais
rearranged dozens of paintings into a kind of storyboard or comic strip – later
in his career, Resnais touched on the relation between film and comics more
than once and, for his art documentaries, he recognised his debt to Emmer
on the one hand, and to Dick Tracey on the other.77 In order to construct a
link between the individual images, Resnais appealed to all kinds of montage
devices. He used several speeds and forms of transitions (from straight cuts
to slow overlap dissolves) between the individual images. In addition, static
images were brought to life by means of several camera movements – from
right to left, from bottom to top, and from forward to backward (optical) tracks. In *Van Gogh*, Resnais used an entire repertory of camera movements, which he had tested earlier, in the films on Goetz and Hartung for instance, in a more isolated context. Furthermore, rather than juxtaposing shots of paintings, Resnais confronted parts of paintings to one another. Consequently, Resnais destroyed the integrity of the individual artwork in two ways: by focusing on isolated details on the one hand, and by jumping through an entire oeuvre on the other. In Resnais’s film, *Van Gogh*’s complete oeuvre is seen as a single vast painting.

Resnais not only employed these cinematic devices to enable us to get acquainted with *Van Gogh*’s work in a ‘smooth’ way. In no way is his film like a kind of art history slide show adorned by various image transitions. In the first place, Resnais used cinematic devices to construct a drama. Given this perspective, his film is more in line with the biopics by Minnelli and other filmmakers than with most of the many art documentaries that were later dedicated to the painter. Resnais only told his stories without actors and locations but only by means of paintings and their details. ‘What interested me in *Van Gogh* was the possibility to treat a painting as if it was a real space with real characters,’ Resnais stated.78

The film’s first images can simply be interpreted as a conventional establishing sequence. A series of overlap dissolves of the Dutch landscape take us to a certain location in a conventional way: a panoramic landscape is followed by sights of country roads bordered by trees, which in their turn are succeeded by the exterior and eventually interior of a house. From the very first, it is clear that Resnais employs paintings as components of a classical découpage, which constructs a narrative and even dramatic relation between the images. When the voice-over tells us that other horizons are calling and that *Van Gogh* leaves Holland on a November evening, we get to see a painting of
a landscape including a dorsal figure that we interpret as Van Gogh himself. ‘Van Gogh, solitaire, s'engage vers son destin.’ A dissolve to black is followed by an iris on a painting representing Paris – ‘Paris l’accueille. Un Paris immense, peuplé d’espoir et de promesses . . .’ – and, subsequently, by a conventional montage sequence of the French capital. Unmistakably, Resnais’s camera work draws our attention to all kinds of plastic details but also results in the construction of a plot, which violates the original works of art. The camera, for instance, approaches a door of a building in a painting and suddenly enters its interior by means of another painting – an almost magical effect used by Resnais at several instances in the film. Paintings are thus linked in a way a director would use real locations. A forward track to the window in the painting of La Maison jaune is for instance followed by a backward tracking shot, which starts from a window and gradually reveals the entire interior of La Chambre à coucher de l’artiste à Arles. This cinematic logic can also be found in the sequence in which an old Dutch farmer’s wife enters a house and Resnais even creates the equivalent of a reverse shot.

Supported by the ‘special effects’ of Henry Ferrand, Resnais also created more dramatic moments. A super-fast succession of backward tracks of trees, the flashing shift of landscapes, the restless use of the out-of-focus, the reframing of a painting or the agitated alternation between sunflowers and close-ups of eyes in self-portraits evoke both the insanity and the nervous brush strokes and loud colour contrasts of the painter. In this perspective, Resnais combines the innovations of both Emmer and Storck. Like Emmer, Resnais constructs a story by means of several details of paintings. Simultaneously, however, like in Storck’s films, a mobile camera and an eye-catching montage reveal the essence of the formal language of the artist. The emphatic effects also indicate that Resnais did not have the ambition to tell only Van Gogh’s biography by means of his paintings. At the most, the film deals with a kind of imaginary life of the artist. The story is rather told from within the painter’s mind and the world is seen through the eyes of Van Gogh. This interest in the construction of narrative links between images of an internal and mental world is also at the basis of Resnais’s feature films, such as Hiroshima mon amour, L’Année dernière à Marienbad or Providence, in which both characters and the spectator are immersed in the labyrinth of memory by means of shock-like successions and seamless transitions of images.

**GAUGUIN**

After the success of *Van Gogh*, Resnais also dedicated an eleven-minute film to the painter’s mate *Gauguin* (1950). For this purpose, Resnais collaborated again with Diehl (but without Hessens). The voice-over, again based on
the artist’s writings, was spoken by Jean Servais. Henry Ferrand again took care of the ‘special effects’ and this time the music was composed by Darius Milhaud. With *Gauguin*, Resnais once more told the story of a tormented and alienated artist by means of a montage of details of paintings. Even the structure and the important narrative elements of *Gauguin* remind one of the film about Van Gogh that Resnais created two years earlier. Again, the film deals with an artist who breaks with his environment and family to start a journey (with Paris as first stop-over) to discover himself. Again, the artist retires from society and this time he ends up in the timeless peace and quiet of the Breton countryside and eventually in the paradisiacal environment of Tahiti. To Gauguin, the Polynesian landscape is an almost magical world embodying a strange combination of voluptuousness and fear. Gauguin, too, therefore, answers perfectly to the mythic image of the artist as a self-destructive eccentric – not coincidentally, as will be noted in the next chapter, Gauguin was the model for one of the first Hollywood biopics dedicated to a modern visual artist: *The Moon and Sixpence* (Albert Lewin, 1942), based on a novel by Somerset Maugham.

Self-portraits of the painter were used in *Van Gogh* as well but in *Gauguin* they receive more attention. By means of dissolves, Resnais shows us the slow changes in the artist’s face. A vague self-assuredness makes room for tormented pride and eventually mistrust and agony. Even the cinematic form shows unmistakable resemblances to the film on Van Gogh. The camera movements, according to Henri Agel, characterised by ‘a sobriety that is always efficient and sometimes poetic’, already herald feature films such as *Hiroshima mon amour* and *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* with which Resnais developed into a master of the mobile camera. For the succession of the 117 shots of paintings or some of their details, Resnais again used a whole spectrum of image transitions. The beginning of the film, for instance, shows a little inspired series of wipes between a succession of paintings. At other moments, Resnais uses editing effects more emphatically. By means of an overlap dissolve, the painter’s self-portrait in the painting *Bonjour Mr. Gauguin* (1889) is introduced in the landscape of another painting. As in *Van Gogh*, at the end of the film we find a swirling montage comprising people, animals and plants. The hectic rhythm has to evoke both the insanity and the death of the artist. The perception of the world is disturbed but, at the same time, the subject is immersed in it. On the one hand, the rhythmic editing evokes the exaltation of sensuous forms and, on the other hand, the ways in which the lonely individual loses himself in it. At the abrupt end of the film, after the paradisiacal images of the Pacific, Resnais suddenly shows us a painting of a snowy European landscape. Gauguin dies with the memory of the ‘distant shores of France and a Breton village in the snow’ – an effect that is
highly relevant for the artistic development of Resnais, who investigated the functioning of memory in relation to cinematic time and the (film) image in his following documentaries, such as *Nuit et brûlant* and *Toute la Mémoire du monde*, as well as in most of his feature films.

Probably precisely because of the strong resemblances to *Van Gogh*, the film was rather poorly received by both the public and critics. Resnais himself later dissociated himself from this film. ‘To be of interest to me, a film must have an experimental aspect – and this was precisely what *Gauguin* was lacking and because of that it is a bad film.’81 Several critics noted that the subject was much less suited to black-and-white than Van Gogh, who always remained a draughtsman, whereas Gauguin manifested himself as a colourist in the first place. ‘Shooting *Gauguin* in black-and-white was a terrible thing,’ Resnais admitted, ‘and it contributed largely to its failure because I could conceive this film only in colour and I shot it in black-and-white only for economical reasons.’82

**GUERNICA**

The restrictions of black-and-white were less problematic in *Guernica* (1950), which Resnais made in collaboration with Robert Hessens in the same year as *Gauguin*.83 This is not only the case because Picasso’s painting with the same name is more or less monochromatic – after all, the twelve-minute film also comprises images of many other Picasso paintings and it deals with the subject of the painting rather than with the painting itself. In the first place, the film evokes the destruction of the Basque town of Guernica by German bombers in April 1937. As is generally known, this horrific event from the Spanish civil war inspired Picasso to create the famous painting that was put on display in the Spanish pavilion at the World Fair in Paris later that year. After the fall of the Spanish Republic and Franco’s victory, Picasso entrusted the painting to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. During and immediately after the Second World War, it was exhibited in various American and European cities, turning into a universal anti-war symbol. In the middle of the Cold War, these associations were taken up by Resnais, who also dealt with the traumas of war in *Nuit et brûlant* and *Hiroshima mon amour*. Moreover, *Guernica* is a passionate meditation not only on the barbarism of war and human hope and resilience, but also on the struggle against fascism, which had to be continued after the Second World War in Spain; in *La Guerre est finie* (1966), Resnais also dealt with this theme.

After the films on Van Gogh and Gauguin, who are at the basis of the myth of the modern artist as an alienated and tormented individual, Resnais focused his attention on the figure of Picasso, whose work, as mentioned in
the previous paragraph, was a favourite subject in the early 1950s in art films by Haesaerts, Emmer and Clouzot among others. Guernica, too, elicited the attention of several documentary filmmakers: Danish filmmaker Helge Ernst made a six-minute film on the painting in 1949 and even Robert Flaherty had similar plans in 1948. As in Van Gogh and Gauguin, Resnais used countless details from the oeuvre of a single artist – in this case from the period 1902–49 – in order to tell a story or to construct a drama. In contrast with his two previous documentaries, this time Resnais did not tell the story of the artist’s life but commented on a historical event that was the subject of a single specific work. Consequently, in Guernica, the commentary was not based on autobiographical writings but on a lyrical poem by Paul Eluard, which is recited off-screen by Jacques Pruvost and María Casarès. The film even opens with a still of the ravaged city and by means of an overlap dissolve, Resnais suggests that some figures are emerging from the ruins. The figures are the characters from the painting La Famille de saltimbanques (1905), who are followed by more images of the vulnerable and melancholy figures of Picasso’s pre-cubist paintings.

In a second series of images, Resnais deals more with the bombing itself. A montage sequence of 1937 newspaper headlines is followed by a series of special effects (again executed by Henry Ferrand) suggesting a devastating rain of bullets hitting wall drawings and various Picasso paintings. Supported by the mesmerising voice-over, Guy Bernard’s inflammatory music and diverse sound effects, this part of the film is characterised by hectic editing and nervous camera movements that are much more agitated than comparable passages in Van Gogh and Gauguin. The famous painting from the title only appears after about seven minutes, in the third part of the film. It is introduced by a close-up of the lamp, which is situated in the middle of the top of the composition. Resnais links the image of this lamp to flashing light effects letting several figures emerge from darkness. In a rapid montage, stirred up by the rhythm of the music, the distorted bodies of humans and animals from the painting and from other post-cubist works by Picasso are presented as victims of the bombing. In the film’s closing scene, which opens with total darkness, the camera slides over sombre Picasso sculptures. The lighting is dramatic and by means of a noirish effect, Resnais uses the restrictions of black-and-white film to advantage. By partially obscuring or closing the image, hectic editing of fragmented image layers and restless tracks scanning pictorial surfaces, Resnais created, as it were, a cinematic equivalent of cubism. Picasso’s painting, which according to Rudolph Arnheim is characterised by a principle of montage and can be considered ‘cinematic’ in various ways, was resolutely transformed into an autonomous film consisting of 178 shots.
PAINTING IN FILM

In *Guernica*, this autonomy vis-à-vis the original artworks is much stronger than in *Van Gogh* and *Gauguin*. More than in the previous films, images are disconnected from their original context and charged with completely new meanings. By means of techniques reminiscent of Soviet montage, the original artwork is fragmented and even politicised – given this perspective, *Guernica* is an exercise in active and self-conscious art reception perfectly tallying with Benjamin’s film aesthetics. This autonomisation in relation to the original artwork was an important subject for debate among the critical reflections on the art documentaries by Resnais, Emmer, Storck and Haesaerts. The autonomisation also makes clear that these filmmakers refused to make a clear-cut distinction between the film on art on the one hand and the art film on the other. Writing in a 1950 issue of *Sight and Sound*, Jean Queval explicitly denied the need for rigid delineations of type, arguing that at ‘present, there is little to be gained from introducing rigid categories into a genre that is still searching for principles’. Paradoxically, Siegfried Kracauer situated the autonomy of the new experimental art documentaries in an art historical tradition. Referring to the use of pieces of antique architecture in Piranesi’s engravings or the presence of French and Italian fountain sculptures in Watteau’s *fêtes champêtres*, Kracauer stated that objections against these art films usually fail ‘to take into account the fact that within the traditional arts themselves, transfers of works of art from their own medium to another are fairly frequent and are considered quite legitimate’. According to Beatrice Farwell, however, art documentaries are confronted by a dilemma by definition. ‘The more a film on art succeeds as a film, the less likely it is to increase one’s understanding of painting.’ Alluding to the film by Storck and Haesaerts, Farwell deals with the example of the art of Rubens, which, at first sight, seems like a natural for film treatment because his art is full of movement. The point, however, is that Rubens was capable of creating this movement in a static medium. When a painting is set into motion by means of cinematic devices, the illusion Rubens skilfully created is lost. A new filmic illusion is constructed, which, according to Farwell, falsifies Rubens’s art and which can even lead to a misinterpretation of the art of painting in general.

In addition, the medium of film was often denounced by art historians because films did not show the entire work in a single shot or at a single glance – at the third FIFA conference in Amsterdam in 1950, an art critic even argued for the obligation for filmmakers to show the artwork entirely and in colour at the beginning of their films. Such demands, of course, completely ignored the essence of the film medium, which exceeds or at least questions the dichotomy based on Lessing between spatial and temporal arts.
The complexity of film as both a spatial and temporal discipline is brought up by the art film. This is already clear from the Emmer films in which various stages of a narrative painting (such as The Legend of Saint Ursula by Carpaccio), which are seen simultaneously by the beholder of the original artwork and which are part of a single pictorial composition, are unfolded in time by means of camera movements and editing techniques.

However, on a more fundamental level, the maker of an art film faces other problems. Even when a shot attempts to record a painting entirely, the artwork as a *Gestalt* is lost by definition because, almost always, the proportion of the painting does not completely coincide with the aspect ratio of the film camera and film screen. The filmmaker, consequently, has to crop the image or his frame comprises a part of the world that falls outside the painting. Strikingly, in the most interesting art films, filmmakers deal in a highly conscious way with their framings and create new visual balances and tensions within them. In the films by Emmer, Storck and Resnais, this even becomes a *conditio sine qua non*. In this perspective, one should also notice that not only the vast majority of art documentaries but also the most interesting and innovating ones have painting as their subject, whereas the film medium seems more appropriate for the registration of sculpture and architecture, which imply a mobilised beholder. Resnais, too, almost completely concentrated on painting – only in the end sequence of *Guernica* sculptures appear in his oeuvre for the very first time, visualised emphatically plastically by means of a gliding camera and chiaroscuro lighting. His series of pictorial explorations concluded in 1955 with *Les Statues meurent aussi* (with Chris Marker), his only film dedicated to sculpture dealing with completely different topics (such as the decay of African art as a result of colonisation).

This pronounced focus on painting cannot entirely be explained by referring to the prominent position the medium of painting has occupied since the Renaissance. It is precisely the confrontation between the frame of the painting and that of the camera as well as the interference of two kinds of two-dimensionality that turn the film of a painting into an interesting artistic challenge. Exactly at the moment when the avant-garde emphasises the integrity of the pictorial surface (for example, the insistence on *flatness* throughout Clement Greenberg’s writings of the 1940s and 1950s), filmmakers play on the ambivalence of the film image, which, according to Arnheim, presents each object ‘in two entirely different frames of reference, namely the two-dimensional and three-dimensional’.

By focusing on painting, Emmer, Storck and Resnais presented the genre of the art documentary as a means to investigate the boundaries of film by juxtaposing movement versus stasis, narrative versus iconic images, and cinematic space versus pictorial surface.

The juxtaposition between two frames also determines the scope of one of
the major essays André Bazin dedicated to the relation between painting and cinema. According to Bazin, the fixed frame of painting enclosed a world that entirely exists by and for itself; it draws the attention in a centripetal way to a static composition. The frame of the film camera, by contrast, is mobile and implies a centrifugal space extending beyond the frame into the smallest and most remote corners of everyday life. When we show a part of a painting on a film screen, the space of the painting loses its orientation and it is presented as something borderless and hence as something that extends beyond the frame. Apart from the (educational or democratising) fact that cinema is capable of bringing a painting closer to a wider audience, film presents a painting as part of the world. According to Bazin, Resnais precisely succeeded in introducing this centrifugal space of film into the centripetal space of painting. By switching between paintings and by letting the camera glide over surfaces the limits of which remain invisible, Resnais breaks through the spatial restraints of painting. According to Bazin, Resnais’s art documentaries are therefore hybrid or symbiotic works. On the one hand, they cannot simply be considered as documentary registrations of another art form because the material provided by the other medium is transformed. On the other hand, they are not autonomous films since they remain dependent on other arts.

It is striking that Bazin, who usually dismissed a montage aesthetics in favour of mise-en-scène, long take and deep focus, expressed himself favourably on the art documentaries by Resnais. It is clear that, for Bazin and Resnais, paintings are intriguing and obstinate themes and motifs which lend themselves only with great difficulty to a Bazinian realism celebrating the indeterminism of everyday reality. Confronted with two-dimensional, flat entities that create their own spatial illusions, both a deep focus technique and a notion such as mise-en-scène become quite meaningless. As spatial and static objects suggesting a kind of immobility and timelessness, paintings become attractive topics for the film medium, which precisely in that era exchanges, in Gilles Deleuze’s terminology, the paradigm of the *movement-image* for that of the *time-image*. Contributing importantly to the development of modernist cinema that presents duration rather than movement as its essence, Resnais as well as Emmer, Storek and Haesaerts experimented with new relations between stasis and movement. In an era of increasing camera mobility in both American and European cinema, these filmmakers embarked on a private cinematic project aimed at animating static images. Resnais would later transform the tension between stasis and movement, which he explores in *Van Gogh, Gauguin* and *Guernica*, into the use of tableaux vivants and ingenious manipulations with time in *L’Année dernière à Marienbad* – a film that screenwriter Alain Robbe-Grillet described as a ‘documentary of a statue’.93
The revolutionary experiments with camera movements, montage and animation in the art documentaries by Emmer, Storck, Resnais and others in the late 1940s and early 1950s soon turned into conventions of the genre. In recent decades, interesting and innovative documentary films on painting such as *Une Visite au Louvre* (2004) by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet precisely ignored these conventions in an emphatic way. Moreover, the techniques to bring static images to life by means of camera movements, montage and music, which were self-consciously developed within the *film d’art* movement, were also extensively used in contemporaneous feature films. Several noir films and gothic melodramas of the late 1940s and early 1950s, for instance, contain scenes in which a ‘haunted portrait’ plays an important role. With the help of comparable montage effects, pans, tilts, and forward and backward tracking shots, the painted portrait marks the presence of an important absentee. In films such as *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940), *Laura* (Otto Preminger, 1944), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Albert Lewin, 1945), *Scarlet Street* (Fritz Lang, 1945), *Portrait of Jennie* (William Dieterle, 1948) and many others, a painted portrait functions as a memento mori of a deceased person, invoking a restless sense of fate. Through camera positions, camera movements, and editing, a close relationship between the portrayed person and the characters looking at the portrait is established. Often, the illusion is thereby created that the portrait reflects the gaze of the characters and the spectator. A similar situation can be found in scenes situated in a museum, which will be further discussed in one of the following chapters.

**Notes**

2. Focillon, ‘The cinema and the teaching of the arts’, p. 3.
12. See the volumes published by UNESCO such as Films on Art (1949); Films on Art (1951); and Bolen, Films on Art: Panorama 1953. See also Guermann, ‘Le film sur l’art’, p. 27; and Lemaître, Beaux-arts et cinéma, pp. 139–40.
14. Le Musée imaginaire was originally published in 1947 as the first volume of Psychologie de l’art and was later adapted to become a part of Les Voix du silence (1951). In 1965, the text was republished as Le Musée imaginaire. The three volumes of Le Musée imaginaire de la sculpture mondiale were published in 1952–4. In 1947–50, publisher Albert Skira and filmmaker Luciano Emmer published a series of luxury art books the square format of which evoked a 16 mm film can. The idea was to sell the book together with a documentary.
15. See Smith, ‘Moving pictures’.
17. In 1950, Resnais received an Oscar for ‘Best Short Subject’ for Van Gogh, whereas Flaherty won the Academy Award for ‘Best Documentary Feature’ for The Titan. 1848 (Marguerite de la Mure and Victoria Mercanton) and Rembrandt: A Self-Portrait (Morrie Roizman) were nominated in 1949 and 1954, respectively, as best documentary shorts. For the importance of art documentaries for the Venice Film Festival, see D’Alessandro, La Mostra del cinema di Venezia e la fortuna del documentario d’arte in Italia.
18. The two most important texts by Bazin on this topic are ‘Peinture et cinéma’ (written between 1943 and 1951) and ‘Un film Bergsonien: Le Mystère Picasso’ (1956), which are both included in Qu’est-ce que le cinéma?, pp. 187–92, 193–202. See also Arnheim, ‘Painting and film’, pp. 86–92; Kracauer, Theory of Film, pp. 195–201; Francastel, ‘A teacher’s point of view’; and Lemaître, Beaux-arts et cinéma.
19. See, for instance, Burton Cumming et al., ‘Motion pictures for the history of art’; Bowie, ‘About films on art’; ‘Editorial: the film on art’; Venturi, ‘Films on art’; Chapman, Films on Art; and Queval, ‘Film and fine arts’, p. 35. The August–September 1950 (XI, 8–9) issue of Bianco e nero contains several articles on art documentaries. The first International Art Film Congress took place in 1949 at the Louvre in Paris; the second was held in 1950 at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels and the third in 1951 at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.
24. Emmer, ‘Pour une nouvelle avant-garde’.
30. Venturi, ‘Italian films on art’, p. 34.
32. Venturi, ‘Italian films on art’, p. 36.
36. Loukopoulou, ‘Films bring art to the people’.
37. See Wyver, ‘Representing art or reproducing culture?’, pp. 29–30.
40. See Agel, Rédertoire analytique de 80 courts-métrages (en 16mm), pp. 184–5.
42. Davay, ‘Compelled to see’, pp. 10–11.
43. Jungblut et al., Une Encyclopédie des cinémas de Belgique, pp. 31–2; Sojcher, La Kermesse héroïque du cinéma belge, p. 38.
44. On Dekeukeleire’s earlier work, see Thompson, ‘(Re)Discovering Charles Dekeukeleire’.
48. Davay, ‘Compelled to see’, p. 16.
51. Ibid. p. 17.
53. Kracauer, Theory of Film, p. 198.
56. For Picasso and film, see Hagebölling, Pablo Picasso in Documentary Films; Bernadac and Breteau Skira, Picasso à l’écran; and Scremin, ‘Picasso e il film sull’arte’. Biopics dedicated to Picasso are The Adventures of Picasso (Tage Danielsson, 1978) and Surviving Picasso (James Ivory, 1996). He also appears as a character in biopics of other artists such as Modigliani (Mick Davis, 2004).
57. Hayward, ‘Introduction’.
58. On Clouzot's *Le Mystère Picasso*, see Smith, ‘Moving pictures’; and Fauvel, ‘*Le Mystère Picasso*’.
64. Resnais, ‘Une expérience’.
66. For a detailed description and analysis of *Van Gogh, Gauguin and Guernica*, see Cieutat, ‘La “caméra-pinceau” d’Alain Resnais’.
67. The visit is described in Towarnicki, *À la Rencontre de Heidegger*. See also Liandrat-Guigues and Leutrat, *Alain Resnais*, p. 41.
69. See Liandrat-Guigues and Leutrat, *Alain Resnais*, p. 212. In the interview included in this volume, Resnais mentions that he started *Van Gogh* before having seen a film by Emmer. He recognises the latter’s influence though on *Guernica*.
70. The opening credits of *Van Gogh* mention ‘un film de Gaston Diehl et Robert Hessens’ and ‘réalisation: Alain Resnais’. Resnais also did the montage of *Malfay* by Hessens.
71. *Pictura* (also released as *Pictura: Adventure in Art*) was an American production directed by Ewald André Dupont, Luciano Emmer and Robert Hessens. Enrico Gras, Lauro Venturi, Alain Resnais and Marc Sorkin are mentioned as co-directors of specific parts. Resnais contributed to the part on Goya. Gaston Diehl was one of the screenwriters.
72. See Porcile, ‘Commandes avouées, commandes masquées’, p. 16.
73. See Liandrat-Guigues and Leutrat, *Alain Resnais*, p. 213.
75. See Pollock, ‘Artists mythologies and media genius’; and Pollock, ‘Crows, blossoms, and lust for death’.
79. See the appendix to Chapter 2.
80. Agel, *Répertoire analytique de 80 courts-métrages (en 16mm)*, p. 147.
82. Martin, ‘Voix off’.
83. The chronological order is unclear. In most filmographies, both Gauguin and Guernica are dated 1950. Guernica, however, premiered in Paris in June 1950 whereas Gauguin had its first Paris screening only a year later.
85. The poem La Victoire de Guernica by Paul Eluard is part of the collection of poems entitled Cours naturel (Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire, 1938). It was adapted for the Resnais film.
87. Queval, ‘Film and fine arts’, p. 35.
88. Kracauer, Theory of Film, p. 197.
89. Farwell, ‘Films on art in education’.
91. Arnheim, Film As Art, p. 59.
CHAPTER 2

Vasari in Hollywood: Artists and Biopics

CELLULOID ART HISTORY

The previous chapter demonstrates that seminal art documentaries made during the aftermath of the Second World War sought to animate static artworks not only by editing and camera movements but also through storytelling devices in order to create a narrative dynamic. One way of achieving this was linking pieces of art to the life of the artist who created them. Directors such as Oertel and Resnais, for instance, presented artworks as components of the biography of Michelangelo or Van Gogh. Given this perspective, their films show unmistakable similarities with cinematic biographies in the form of feature films, the so-called biopics (a contraction of biography and picture) dedicated to the lives of famous artists.

Jorge Luis Borges once recounted that Oscar Wilde attributed the following joke to Carlyle:

a biography that failed to mention any of Michelangelo’s works. Reality is so complex and fragmentary, history so simplified that an omniscient observer would be able to make an indefinite and almost infinite number of biographies of any person, biographies that would throw light on unrelated facts that would require us to read many of them before we would understand that the protagonist is one and the same person. Let us simplify a life to an extreme degree: suppose it comprises a total of 3000 facts. One of these hypothetical biographies would record facts 11, 22, 33 . . . ; another one the series 9, 13, 17, 21; and yet another the facts numbered 3, 12, 21, 30, 39 . . . .

The joking Carlyle, of course, had literary biographies in mind but his idea of a biography as an arithmetic simplification of facts would be even more relevant for the way most biopics are conceived. The subdivision of a famous person’s life into a number of facts probably suits even better the organisation of scenes in a screenplay than that of chapters in a book. Moreover, Carlyle’s suggestion of a biography of Michelangelo that failed to mention any of his works is particularly relevant for biopics of visual artists since
most often these hardly pay any attention to specific works but instead focus almost entirely on artists’ lives.

Given this perspective, biopics of artists answer to the generic conventions of biopics in general. In his standard book on the genre, George Custen notes that biopics had existed since cinema’s early years but they became particularly popular in the 1930s, after the coming of sound – historians have linked this to the genre’s predilection for public speeches and declarations, particularly in court rooms. First and foremost a product of Hollywood’s classical era, almost 300 biopics were released between 1927 and 1960 by the major Hollywood studios. During the same era, the genre also developed in other countries. The international success of a 1933 British production, Alexander Korda’s *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, proved even important for the rise of an entire cycle of Hollywood biopics such as the famous series of films directed by William Dieterle for Warner Brothers throughout the 1930s. Nicknamed ‘the Plutarch of Hollywood’, Dieterle directed *The Story of Louis Pasteur* (1935), *Juarez* (1939), *Dr. Ehrlich’s Magic Bullet* (1940) and *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937), in which Paul Cézanne is also a major character. All Dieterle’s main characters are depicted as strong personalities fighting against suppression, prejudice and bigotry – a battle that also many visual artists would have to fight in their biopics.

As Custen and other critics have demonstrated, the phenomenon of the biopic is heavily determined by a series of generic conventions and recurring characteristics and motifs: the use of written or spoken declarations
asserting historical accuracy; the intertwining of important historical events with the protagonist’s life; the reduction of causality to individual identifiable factors; the importance of a scene in which the first signs of a character’s unique talents become apparent; the trope of a sudden or dramatic success visualised in a big breakthrough scene; the hero’s antagonistic relations with members of a given community that eventually makes way for public acceptance and recognition; the emphasis on the link between fame and misfortune; the importance of the conflict between the protagonist’s vocation and the obligatory love interest; and so on. Often prestigious productions with high production values and starring famous actors, biopics seem to refer more to each other than to the lives of the original characters they are dealing with.

Self-evidently, the vast majority of the protagonists of Hollywood biopics were white American men of the twentieth and nineteenth centuries — women, who made up to a third of the genre’s output, were almost always royalty, entertainers or paramours. Custen further noticed two evolutions that are also relevant for the biopics of artists. First, throughout the 1930s, a shift from (mainly) European historical figures to more recent American characters can be detected. Second, statesmen, political leaders, kings and inventors were the favourite subjects in the 1930s whereas, after the war, particularly entertainers and sportsmen were considered to be appropriate subjects for cinematic biographies. This tallies with Leo Lowenthal’s 1944 landmark study on magazine biographies, which discerned a shift in American values and morality lessons from ‘idols of production’ to ‘idols of consumption’. Strikingly, entertainers and artists comprised more than a third of all biopics created in the classical era (with a percentage that increased from the 1930s to the 1950s). ‘With an explanation of life centred on entertainment and self-invention, the biopic created a self-reflexive world in which the lives and values of the men who created movie entertainment became a paradigm for all fame,’ Custen noted. Consequently, when art became the subject of a Hollywood biopic, it almost never involved ‘official’ high culture but nearly always the popular arts. Moreover, with their singing and dancing contract personnel, the Hollywood studios favoured biopics on performing artists rather than creative artists. Performing artists, after all, can be shown easily and credibly at work in contrast to creative artists such as writers and composers as well as painters and sculptors — for that matter, showing a visual artist at work would become an indispensable but difficult issue in many artist biopics.

As a result of all this, biopics of visual artists constitute only a small minority of the genre’s general output. During the 1930s and 1940s, for instance, Hollywood studios only produced a cinematic portrait of Benvenuto Cellini.
– Gregory LaCava’s *The Affairs of Cellini* (1934) – and a film vaguely based on the life of Paul Gauguin, Albert Lewin’s *The Moon and Sixpence* (1942). Most Hollywood biopics on artists date from the 1950s and 1960s, at the very end of the classical era, with films on Toulouse Lautrec (John Huston’s *Moulin Rouge*, 1952), Van Gogh (Vincente Minnelli’s *Lust for Life*, 1956), Goya (Henry Koster’s *The Naked Maya*, 1958), Michelangelo (Carol Reed’s *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, 1965) and El Greco (Luciano Salce’s *El Greco*, 1966). All of them starring American actors, most of these films were international co-productions, mainly produced and shot in Europe and thus reflecting the disintegration of the classical studio system rather than its heyday.

Tellingly, in contrast to biopics on celebrities of other professions, artist biopics are a post-classical era and a European phenomenon. During the 1930s and 1940s, a few European films were made on seventeenth-century artists: *Un’ Avventura di Salvator Rosa* (Alessandro Blasetti, 1939), *Caravaggio: il pittore maledetto* (Goffredo Alessandrini, 1941), *Andreas Schlüter* (Herbert Maisch, 1942) and two films on the most famous Dutch painter of that era, Alexander Korda’s *Rembrandt* (1936) and Hans Steinhoff’s *Ewiger Rembrandt* (1942). The 1950s and 1960s saw the production of films on the lives of Amadeo Modigliani (*Les Amants de Montparnasse*, Jacques Becker, 1958) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (*Dante’s Inferno: The Private Life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, Ken Russell, 1967). The vast majority of artist biopics, however, are European productions made after 1970 – many of them theatrically released but coproduced by and for television.

Since the early 1970s, cinematic portraits have been made of a great number of famous artists – the appendix to this chapter gives an overview of the genre’s output. Some artists’ lives have even been the subjects of more than one feature film, such as those of Leonardo da Vinci (three films), Cellini (three), Gauguin (three), Modigliani (three), and particularly Goya (five), Rembrandt (five) and Van Gogh (no fewer than ten films). In addition to the films on these world-famous artists, national cinemas have produced biopics on minor artists who are only known nationally or locally (Swedish films on Swedish artists, for instance). Strikingly, producers of biopics have distinct preferences for artistic styles and specific art historical periods. An art historical survey based on cinematic depictions of artists would differ clearly from any art historical reference book. Cinema’s distorted picture of art history shows a slight preference for the Italian Renaissance with biopics of the three paramount artists of the Roman High Renaissance (Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo) as well as films based on the lives of sixteenth-century masters such as Pontormo, Cellini and El Greco. Seventeenth-century baroque painting is also well represented with five films on Rembrandt, two on Caravaggio, and one each with as their main character Murillo, Salvador
Rosa, Artemisia Gentileschi and Vermeer. Apart from a little-known film on Fragonard, the eighteenth century, in contrast, is almost completely absent in cinema’s art history, whereas early nineteenth-century Romantic artists such as Friedrich, Géricault, Turner and particularly Goya have been picked up by filmmakers. The bulk of the genre’s output, however, consists of films on characters of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – something that tallies with the production, as Custen noticed, of biopics in general. In particular, Post-impressionist and Symbolist artists (Gauguin, Van Gogh, Munch, Seurat, Toulouse-Lautrec, Burne-Jones, Klimt) are popular subjects among filmmakers, as are artists working in the early twentieth century such as Picasso, Modigliani, Utrillo, Gaudier-Brzeska, Schiele, Dalí, Kahlo and Orozco. Strikingly, the ‘radical’ avant-gardes of the first decades of the twentieth century did not inspire film producers. No, or hardly any, biopics have been made on the leading pioneers of abstraction (Kandinsky, Mondrian, Malevich) or on members of avant-garde currents such as Futurism, Dada and Constructivism. In cinema’s art history, there is no mention of the Bauhaus or artists such as Duchamp or Lissitzky. Biopics on Pollock, Bacon, Warhol and Basquiat cover the second half of the twentieth century. A separate and not unimportant category of nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists, finally, is formed by so-called primitive or folk artists such as Christy Brown, Nikifor Krynocki, Antonio Ligabue or Pirosmani.

Why some aspects of the history of art are explored extensively while others have been completely neglected is a question that is difficult to answer. Undoubtedly, the reputation of the artists themselves, the personal preferences of filmmakers and producers, the interests of national cinemas and television networks, copyright issues and the availability of literary precedents played a part in the selection of the subjects of an artist biopic. Popular appeal can certainly not always give an explanation. Manet’s love life has been the subject of a film but other major Impressionists such as Monet or Renoir, who have guaranteed blockbuster exhibitions in leading museums for decades, have not been portrayed on the big screen. Furthermore, it comes as a surprise that no biopics have been made on, let us say, Bosch, Titian, Rubens, Claude Lorrain, David or Delacroix – artists who not only created spectacular works but also had lives filled with adventurous travels, political intrigue or mystery. Last but not least, although several critics have stated that the medium of film is better suited to the representation of sculpture than painting, cinema’s version of art history contains almost only painters. Camille Claudel, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Andreas Schlüter, Benvenuto Cellini and Michelangelo are the only exceptions – and even in some of these cases, sculpture is not a topic since there is not a single statue to be found in Gregory LaCava’s biopic on Cellini, while Carol Reed’s cinematic biography
of Michelangelo focuses on his frescoes in the Sistine Chapel and virtually ignores his achievements as a sculptor.

**HIGH RENAISSANCE, BAROQUE AND THE CULT OF THE INDIVIDUAL**

A quick survey of artist biopics demonstrates that a vast majority of the genre’s output deals with artists having their careers in two specific historical eras: the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the one hand, and the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the other. Although the selection of an artist as the subject for a biopic is often the result of accidental factors, the focus on these specific historical eras is certainly not a coincidence. First of all, the narrative of the biopic is inherently linked to the notion of the exceptional individual. Biopics of artists consequently tend to focus on eras in which historical conditions made possible the formation of the identity of the (proto-)modern artist as an independent individual. Given this perspective, a biopic dealing with an anonymous Ancient-Egyptian or medieval craftsman is a contradiction in terms.

Of course, stories situated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries offered filmmakers ample opportunities for exotic spectacle. It is no coincidence that the earliest biopics of the sound era – LaCava’s *The Affairs of Cellini* (1934), Blasetti’s *Un’ Avventura di Salvator Rosa* (1939) and Alessandrini’s *Caravaggio: il pittore maledetto* (1941) – are lusty and action-filled adventure films set in sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Italy in both its squalor and glory. LaCava opens his film with an intertitle stating that ‘it is the Sixteenth Century – Florence, fairest of all Italian cities, the hotbed of intrigue, passion, despotism and murder. Yet, in this poisoned, perfumed atmosphere, Art and Romance flourished.’ Remarkably, in this film with an artist as protagonist, hardly a single work of art is to be seen. None of the famous, often copied bronze sculptures by Benvenuto Cellini (Fredric March) are part of the film’s production design and we only learn through dialogue that he is a famous artist and goldsmith. Forced to execute the recalcitrant artist, Allessandro de Medici (Frank Morgan), the Duke of Tuscany, states that it is ‘too bad, he makes such pretty things’. The Duchess (Constance Bennett) even remarks that ‘first, he should finish the plates, then we will hang him.’ The title of *The Affairs of Cellini* clearly indicates that not his art and craft but the artist’s licentiousness and love affairs are the subject of the film. This also applies to Blasetti’s *Un’Avventura di Salvator Rosa*, which presents the seventeenth-century Neapolitan painter of proto-romantic landscapes as a notorious masked hero, *Il Formica* (*The Ant*), who is a friend and defender of the people in the tradition and style of Robin Hood, Zorro and other masked heroes. The film joins a long tradition of fictionalisations of Rosa’s life, of whom it
was told that he participated in a revolt against the Spanish rulers of Naples and that he was a member of the secret *Compagnia della Morte*, whose mission it was to hunt down Spaniards in the streets. Other tales tell that he joined with brigands in the Abruzzi. These swashbuckling adventures took shape earlier in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s novella *Signor Formica* (1819) and even in a famous romantic ballet titled *Catarina* (1846), among other things. In LaCava’s film, the Cellini character, too, is sort of a hybrid of Robin Hood and Don Juan, who is more based on later fictionalisations than on the actual artist, such as the opera *Benvenuto Cellini* (1838) by Hector Berlioz or the novel *Ascanio* (1843) by Alexandre Dumas père. These stories, no doubt, were inspired by Cellini’s own autobiographical memoirs, which he dictated to his studio boy between 1558 and 1566. Only published for the first time in 1728, Cellini’s *Autobiography* gives a detailed account of his artistic career but first and foremost of his extensive love life, his frequent summons to appear in court because of brawls (sometimes resulting in manslaughter) or immoral behaviour, and his supernatural visions and apparitions. Written in an energetic, direct and racy style and larded with dramatic episodes full of his self-importance, Cellini’s *Autobiography* clearly differs from the technical treatises that made up the majority of earlier artists’ writings. Written for a new public of enlightened amateurs and displaying a great self-regard and self-assertion, Cellini’s autobiography as well as biographies of artists such as Dante and Leon Battista Alberti played an important part in the emergence of the conception of the modern artist. What is more, the biographies of these artists contributed extensively to the formation of the modern notion of the individual. These men, for instance, became central figures in Burckhardt’s interpretation of Renaissance man in general and in his formulation of Renaissance individualism, which he expounded in his influential *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860). The culmination of the Renaissance cult of the individual artist, the artist’s biography proved an important model for filmmakers who produced an artist’s biopic. The choice for Cellini as the first Hollywood feature-length artist biopic is therefore telling. The figure of Cellini not only entailed an entire history of earlier literary, theatrical and musical fictionalisations, he also stood for the emergence of the concept of the artist as a self-conscious individual – a notion that went hand in hand with the self-image of the artist as a *pictor-doctus* or painter-scholar (instead of a mere craftsman) and the cult of the artist as a genius with almost divine capabilities.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, the ultimate artists of the High Renaissance, also attracted the attention of filmmakers. While Leonardo had been the subject of some Franco–Italian productions of the 1910s and a 1972 film directed by Renato Castellani, Michelangelo’s life, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was transferred to
the screen in Oertel’s 1940 landmark documentary. Although Oertel made a
documentary without actors, his film tells first and foremost the story of the
dramatic life of the artist with the help of a voice-over, editing and spectacular
camera movements. This was also the subject of Carol Reed’s The Agony and
the Ecstasy (1965), one of the most lavish artist biopics released by Twentieth
Century Fox as a CinemaScope spectacular with major stars. Based on Irving
Stone’s 1961 eponymous best-selling novel, the film deals with the period
between 1508 and 1512, the years in which Michelangelo painted the fresco
ceilings of the Sistine chapel, which was recreated in the Dino de Laurentiis
Studios near Rome.

The film focuses on the conflict between the neurotically working artist
(Charlton Heston) and Pope Julius II (Rex Harrison), who asks throughout
the entire film when the fresco ceilings will be finished. However, this focus
on the relation between artist and patron hardly provokes a meditation on the
social position of the artist but is only used as a pretext to present the artist
as a suffering and lonely individual. Carol Reed had the intention to depict
Michelangelo as an artist ‘tormented by self-criticism’ and as ‘a man who
thought of his art as an act of self-confession’. Although a human being
burdened with worries, Reed’s Michelangelo is a larger-than-life
character and an epic hero, who would not have been out of place among other heroic
characters impersonated by Heston such as Moses, El Cid, John the Baptist,
Buffalo Bill or Cardinal Richelieu. In The Agony and the Ecstasy, the artist is
presented as a Biblical prophet, who experiences divine revelations during
his seclusion in the wilderness. While Cellini’s persona as an elegant loafer
was certainly inspired by his autobiography, Michelangelo’s association with
supernatural powers was based on contemporaneous biographies. In his
Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects (Florence, 1550 and
1568), Vasari described Michelangelo’s birth as a divine event. In Reed’s
biopic, Michelangelo’s divine qualities are particularly evoked in a vintage
Hollywood kitsch scene, in which the artist has hidden himself in the marble
quarries in Carrara. Chased by soldiers of the Pope, Michelangelo escapes to
the higher mountains. The following morning at sunrise, high above civil-
sation and dwarfed by the vast expanses of nature, he sees in the colourful
cloud formations the features of God as He will be represented in the famous
fragment of the Creation of Adam in the Sistine Chapel fresco ceilings.

Vasari’s account of the life of Michelangelo contains maybe the first
explicit expression of the notion of the artist as a superhuman demiurge.
Several of its details, such as his discussion of Michelangelo’s birth under a
lucky star, would turn into recurring topics in the biographies of artistic gen-
iiuses to which divine characteristics have been attributed. The Renaissance
artist’s biography as well as the artist’s biopic are characterised by a series
of recurrent topoi, rhetorical or literary conventions rather than historical truths. In their landmark 1934 book *Die Legende vom Künstler*, Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz demonstrated how, since classical antiquity, the same motifs keep surfacing in artists’ biographies. Time and again, particular anecdotes have been integrated into other biographies to illustrate the characteristics held to typify a particular type of artist. Recurrent topoi have been connected to the lives of different artists and these can be interpreted as society’s reactions to the mystery and enchantment that were often evoked by artists.\(^\text{13}\) Notions such as the artist as a hero, a divine creator, a magician capable of making deceptive images or an unworldly individual are often connected to similar and often identical anecdotes: the artist as a young (shepherd’s) boy who is coincidentally discovered by a passing older master or connoisseur, the artist making an exceptionally small or big work, the artist falling in love with his model, the artist competing with rivals, the artist carrying on with his work undisturbed by hunger, sleep or war, and so on. According to Kris and Kurz, stories about artists are determined by stereotypes that often hark back to the Hellenistic era, although each epoch has created new archetypal artists.

**Figure 2.2** Charlton Heston as Michelangelo in *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (Carol Reed, 1965)
such as the celebrated favourite of a king, the revolutionary innovator, the academic headmaster, the universal genius, the bohemian, the misunderstood loner, and so on. To Kris and Kurz, the persona of the artist answers to a sort of ‘biographical formula’. The artist impersonates or plays the main part in his own biography, as it were – the story of his life becomes an ‘enacted biography’. The reliance on anecdotes in these biographies is telling. Vasari’s *Vite*, too, is in the first place a series of snappy anecdotes, which have to illustrate the outstanding craftsmanship, the exceptional genius and the almost superhuman traits of his artistic heroes. Because they are important factors of dramatisation, anecdotes proved useful for biopics as well, which also deal with artists rather than with art. This emphasis on the artist’s life and the role of anecdotes hark back to classical examples (Plutarch, for instance) but they played an important part in art historiographical writing as well. The Viennese art historian Julius von Schlosser, author of the influential anthology of source texts *Die Kunstliteratur* (1924), considered the artist’s anecdote as one of the pillars of modern art history. Art history’s origins, in other words, are connected to a narrative form – an echo of early nineteenth-century historian Leopold von Ranke’s famous statement that history writing involves objective fact telling but also a narrative connection between these facts. Heavily determined by recurring anecdotes, and hovering between the real and the imaginary and between history and myth, the artist’s biography in general produced a typical ‘personality’ of the artist, which was the subject of Rudolf and Margot Wittkower’s *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists* (1963). The table of contents of their book is telling. The often melodious-sounding titles of some of its chapters (‘Eccentric behaviour and noble manners’; ‘Genius, madness, and melancholy’; ‘Suicides of artists’; ‘Celibacy, love, and licentiousness’; ‘Artists and the law’; ‘Misers and wastrels’; ‘Between famine and fame’) almost reads as a survey of the plots of artist biopics. It is as if the screenwriters of biopics had a copy of the Wittkowers’ book on their desks and were not able to write about art and artists without faithfully following hints from every chapter.

**Modern Artists’ Mythologies**

Unmistakably inspired by the Renaissance notion of the artist as a self-conscious individual, films focusing on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists such as Michelangelo, El Greco, Caravaggio or Rembrandt almost invariably present their protagonists as eccentrics who are at odds with society. However, several historians have demonstrated that the representation of Renaissance or baroque artists as romantic bohemians is largely based on an anachronism. Although the rise of the artist as a self-willed and
independent individual coincided with changes in the structure of patronage, social and cultural conditions of that era did not imply the notion of the alienated artist that became prototypical of the age of modern, industrial and metropolitan capitalism and *l’art pour l’art*. Biopics of pre-industrial artists often suggest that their main characters became too advanced and independent for their patrons, and that their social and financial problems stemmed from this situation. This was already the case in Korda’s trendsetting 1936 biopic on Rembrandt, an artist who had already inspired leading filmmakers and cinematographers of the 1910s and 1920s with his particular depiction of light. Working in the secular art market of the Dutch bourgeois society of early capitalism, Rembrandt was often thought of as an alienated artist and his large number of self-portraits were often interpreted as a quest for self-understanding. It came as no surprise then that, after Korda’s early biopic, Rembrandt became a popular character for other feature filmmakers such as Steinhoff, Stelling, Matton and Greenaway. However, art historical research had meanwhile destroyed the myth of Rembrandt as an artist who was too advanced for his patrons. Rembrandt’s fortunes fluctuated not because he was too original but because the fortunes of his patrons fluctuated. In addition, most of his self-portraits were sold and probably even served conveniently as a form of self-publicity.

Unmistakably, in biopics, Renaissance and baroque artists are fashioned after prototypes that are rather typical of the nineteenth-century – an era that saw the emergence of modernist art but that also created the conception of the artist as Romantic genius. From their inception, these notions went hand in hand with a peculiar artist’s mythology that became a foundation for the formula of the artist biopic. The nineteenth century, which became the favourite epoch for filmmakers of artist biopics, was also the golden age of the artist novel. Leading writers such as Balzac, Zola, Poe, Wilde, James, Mörike, Keller and Hoffmann among many others wrote novels, short stories or plays that have an artist as one of their main characters. According to Herbert Marcuse, the artist novel or *Künstlerroman* only became possible when the unity between art and life had been broken’ by the process of modernisation and the rise of a bourgeois society. To Marcuse, the artist novel was the product of the alienation of the artist in the modern, industrial and capitalist world, which entailed the emergence of the artist as a specific profession different from that of artisans and craftsmen. Paradoxically, however, the genre of the artist novel presupposes a kind of golden age when art was fully integrated into society and the distinct profession of the artist did not exist. In artist novels, the protagonist suffers from alienation and longs to achieve a new kind of community which will recapture the former harmony. The goal of the artist novel thus becomes the struggle of the artist to over-
come alienation. Artist novels express this longing for a new unity of ‘spirit and sensuality, art and life, artistic calling and environment’.21

Consequently, both artist novels and artist biopics are based on narratives emphasising tropes that mark the social isolation of the artist. As the fascinating collection of fictitious artist characters in novels and plays reassembled by Koen Brams illustrates, the figure of the artist is invariably connected to some kind of non-conformist behaviour entailing insanity, suicide, (self-) destructive impulses and/or criminal propensities.22 Similarly, Carrie Rickey stated that a composite portrait of the artist in the feature film would look something like this:

He is humbly self-employed, yet haunts the corridors of power seeking patronage. He is penniless, yet his work is priceless. He is a sexual libertine, yet celibate for long periods, faithful only to his work. He is ostracised by a culture that places value on the cash his canvases fetch but not on the artworks themselves. He is a madman, yet extraordinarily lucid on the matters of art and soul.23

On the one hand, these characteristics tally with biopics in general. By focusing on exceptional individuals who are different from ordinary people, artist biopics can simply be interpreted as a hyperbolical form of the genre’s traditional formula. On the other hand, biopics on artists tellingly differ from cinematic portraits of famous practitioners of other professions. Usually, biopics present their famous protagonists as ordinary mortals who only distinguish themselves on a single specific field from other human beings. As Custen noted, the attempt to ‘normalise’ genius is ‘a critical part of the construction of the well-adjusted, successful biopic hero’.24 Artists, by contrast, are often presented as completely odd characters and outcasts. Custen, for instance, demonstrated that the importance of a close friend of the famous person is a recurrent topic in most of the biopics. Creative artists, however, are usually portrayed without family companionship and close friends, thus suggesting that ‘the myth of the artist as outsider is strengthened by the biopic.’25 In light of this, Custen refers to Minnelli’s Last for Life (1956), in which Van Gogh is shown ‘so different in every way that the gift that made him special is his only salvation in a world where he is an outcast’.26

The ultimate embodiment of the isolated artist as an alienated, misunderstood and tragic figure, Van Gogh ranks high in the list of biopics of artists. No fewer than ten feature films have been dedicated to this artist, some of them made by famous auteur directors such as Minnelli, Kurosawa, Cox, Altman and Pialat. This interest in Van Gogh among filmmakers and spectators should be situated in a wider context of blockbuster exhibitions, posters, postcards and calendar illustrations as well as novels and theatre
plays. In particular, Van Gogh’s continuous struggle against poverty and the fact that he did not succeed in selling his work despite the dizzying sums it fetches at auction today appeal to the popular imagination. Robert Altman’s *Vincent and Theo* (1990) emphasises this in a remarkable way. On the one hand, completely in line with Hollywood clichés, the film presents art dealers as unpleasant individuals whose only interest in art is the profit they can extract from it. On the other hand, Altman opens his film with news footage of an auction at which Van Gogh paintings are sold. In so doing, Altman links art to the realm of money, profit and consumption – an exceptional statement in the context of biopics with artists as struggling heroes. However, the auction footage also emphasises Van Gogh’s paltry existence, which both biographies and biopics have eagerly connected to stories about alcoholism, pangs of love, venereal diseases and bursts of insanity. His self-mutilation and eventual suicide turned Van Gogh into the martyr of modern art. Furthermore, these elements were often invoked to clarify or interpret his delirious style, which is characterised by loud contrasts of primary colour and heavy brushwork. These connections were certainly made in Minnelli’s *Lust for Life* (1956), the first and unmistakably most spectacular Van Gogh biopic. Minnelli’s film, which is the only Van Gogh biopic of the classical era (most
other cinematic fictionalisations of the artist’s life were produced in the 1980s and early 1990s), was based on the 1934 eponymous novel by Irving Stone, who also wrote *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1961), the novelistic biography of Michelangelo. *Lust for Life* concentrates on Van Gogh’s desperate attempts to become a respectable artist. In the eyes of conventional society, however, he remains a loser — something that rankles his vulnerable and self-destructive personality. In the film, actor Kirk Douglas expresses this growing desperation by rubbing his face and head with his hands. Ignoring fellow action star John Wayne’s warning against playing such a ‘weakling’ as Van Gogh, Douglas read the painter’s letters, studied his work and took painting lessons. ‘I felt myself going over the line, into the skin of van Gogh,’ Douglas stated. Conveying an impression of suppressed violent emotion, Douglas, whose persona was earlier connected to athletic, self-confident and virile characters, prefigures the rather psychologically unstable and complex characters of his later films such as *Two Weeks in Another Town* (Vincente Minnelli, 1962) or *The Arrangement* (Elia Kazan, 1969). Douglas’s impersonation of the tormented Van Gogh was perfectly in line with what John Berger, in a 1959 essay, called the ‘cult of the disoriented personality’ that presented Van Gogh as a ‘kind of problem-child-cum-gangster’. Berger particularly criticised the notion that the artist of genius must be a wild outsider divorced from the everyday social community. He further emphasised that the artist’s suffering and sense of alienation was largely the result of social circumstances associated with the capitalist mode of production rather than of a supposed defective psyche of the artist. Ironically, Berger’s criticism can be applied to most artist biopics. Although the notion of the artist as a lonely and alienated individual is an inherent generic convention, the social alienation of the artist as such is hardly an issue in these films – Peter Watkins’s film on the life of Edvard Munch (1973) is an interesting exception in the sense that Watkins questions the biopic formula by thwarting the narrative through the injection of information on historical facts and statistical data. Rejecting the idea that Van Gogh was a madman, critics such as Berger or Griselda Pollock conversely emphasise that Van Gogh was an intellectual who spoke several languages, had an extensive knowledge of culture and history and was aware of new scientific theories of colour. According to Berger, Van Gogh’s suicide was a rational act in the sense that he killed himself in order to avoid succumbing to the illness that threatened his sanity and his work. In an influential 1980 essay on ‘Artists mythologies’, Pollock stated that a form of epilepsy caused the artist’s fits but that it is impossible to link this with the iconography and style of most of his paintings. To Pollock, *Lust for Life* simply breathes new life into the ancient connection between creativity and mania. She also made it clear that it would be incorrect to put the blame on Hollywood for the
mythologisation of Van Gogh since the biopic’s focus on the individual is simply repetition of what happens in most art history texts, whereas interpretations of some paintings in *Lust for Life* correspond to the way many critics and art historians have written about it. With its outspoken predilection for melodramatic rather than mundane incidents, *Lust for Life* is a kind of *ur-biopic*, which probably triggered other filmmakers to deal with the life and death of the famous and popular painter. With his 1991 *Van Gogh*, Maurice Pialat self-consciously took the opposite path of Minnelli’s spectacle by opting for an explicitly anti-melodramatic and unsensationalistic approach to the artist’s life. Focusing on Van Gogh’s difficult personal relationships and declining mental state, the film omits any references to many of the most famous incidents in his life (including his attempt to cut off his ear) in favour of concentrating on the social dynamics of the late nineteenth century. Instead of the familiar highlights, *Van Gogh* shows the quotidian stuff in between with the artist carrying canvases out or lugging them back in – their famous images often intentionally out of sight.31

**The Pictorial and Cinematic Real**

Pialat’s late-modernist sense of dedramatisation also marks his cinematography, which in no way attempts to imitate the loud colours of Van Gogh’s palette. Minnelli, by contrast, appealed to CinemaScope and the MetroColor process to develop a cinematic equivalent of Van Gogh’s paintings. This is in keeping with the pictorial sensibility in other Minnelli films such as *An American in Paris* (1951), in which the stylised sets and dazzling colour photography are inspired by French impressionist and post-impressionist painting.32 Moreover, Minnelli’s decision to base the cinematography of *Lust for Life* on the style of the works by its main character is a recurrent process in biopics of artists. Another impressive 1950s artist biopic, John Huston’s *Moulin Rouge* (1952), which tells the life of Toulouse-Lautrec, also emulated the kind of hues its protagonist had achieved on canvas and paper. For this purpose, Huston used fog filters on the camera and gelatin filters placed in front on the lights and he modified the Technicolor process ‘to flatten the colour, render it in planes of solid hues, do away with highlights and the illusion of the third dimension’.33 Similarly, the cinematography of Watkins’s *Edvard Munch* (1973) is characterised by a spatial flatness through the use of zoom lenses as well as pale colours and blue shades acquired by using stock for artificial light in daylight without corrective filters. In addition, Derek Jarman’s *Caravaggio* (1986) is marked by the use of chiaroscuro whereas Raúl Ruiz’s *Klimt* (2006) is characterised by a golden shine, Peter Webber’s *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (2003) by the colours and spatial organisation reminiscent of Vermeer, and Peter
Greenaway’s \textit{Nightwatching} (2007) by lighting and compositional structures in the style of Rembrandt. An artist biopic shot in a mode visually echoing the style of the painter even became an obligatory component of the film’s marketing and it became an indispensable issue in the criticism of these films. On the one hand, this correlation between the style of the film’s photography and that of its protagonist is self-evident and, in most cases, an interesting artistic challenge for directors, cinematographers, art directors and costume designers. On the other hand, this device, which reverses the artist’s original process by turning his two-dimensional images back into a three-dimensional realm, generates, as John Walker noted, a sense of the uncanny.\footnote{34} While, usually, artists transform motifs into pictures, ‘film-makers reverse the process by turning pictures into motifs. The resulting screen image is a more illusionistic version of the painting; the painting stripped, as it were, of the medium of oil painting.’\footnote{35}

In so doing, these filmmakers, probably unintentionally, ascribe a rather simple naturalist aesthetic to the artists they are dealing with. By emphasising visual correspondences between the artists’ works and the world around them, such biopics imply that these artists represent the world as they are perceiving it. The artist’s vision may be distorted but his art remains firmly based on his perception of the world and is not presented as the result of an artificial construction. Non-naturalist styles are thus conceptualised within a naturalist framework. To a certain extent, this could be an explanation for the popularity of specific artists as subjects for biopics: their art self-consciously does not aim at an objective correspondence with the world but remains heavily dependent on it. On the one hand, artworks are clearly presented as results of a highly subjective artistic process involving mental and often also physical suffering, which implies the isolation of the artist from his surroundings. On the other hand, many biopics clearly love to emphasise the visual continuity between the artworks and the world in which they were created. In Minnelli’s \textit{Lust for Life}, for instance, the motifs of some of Van Gogh’s most famous pictures were recreated for the camera. On entering a little Dutch farm, Kirk Douglas’s character encounters \textit{The Potato Eaters}, a poor peasant family at their evening meal. Later in the film, he steps into the cornfield with black crows represented in Van Gogh’s supposedly last painting, the long horizontal format of which answers perfectly to the CinemaScope aspect ratio. Artists, as it were, find themselves in a world shaped according to their paintings – an issue that was taken literally by Akira Kurosawa in his \textit{Dreams} (1990), which comprises an episode in which a Japanese art student, thanks to special effects, physically enters some of Van Gogh’s paintings and ends up in characteristically colourful landscapes in which he meets the artist, impersonated by Martin Scorsese. Given this perspective, Kurosawa’s film can be
seen as the opposite of Paul Cox’s *Vincent: The Life and Death of Vincent Van Gogh* (1987), which shows neither the artist nor his paintings. Only the words of the artist (read by John Hurt) are heard on the soundtrack and only the landscapes Van Gogh looked at are depicted. The film’s static images aspire to the stillness of a canvas but they paradoxically also point to the importance of Van Gogh’s expressive transformation of these landscapes and nature’s movement evoked by the painter’s nervous brushstrokes. Other films also abandon showing artworks but yet manage to evoke a painter’s style. In Peter Schamoni’s *Caspar David Friedrich: Grenzen der Zeit* (1986), which is not strictly a biopic since the story is situated after the death of the artist and in particular involves his widow, children and acquaintances, Friedrich’s paintings are first and foremost evoked by footage of the natural scenery Friedrich took as his subject. While Schamoni’s location shots are characterised by a pictorial quality reminiscent of Friedrich, they also surprisingly demonstrate how Friedrich relied on his observations of the German landscape. Similarly, in John Maybury’s *Love is the Devil* (1998), not a single painting by Francis Bacon is to be seen since the painter’s estate had refused the filmmakers permission to use his works. Instead of including facsimiles of paintings, Maybury preferred to concentrate on flashes of Bacon’s visual obsessions. Rather than focusing on the relation between the artist and his paintings, both Schamoni and Maybury presented or turned the world into a painterly universe by means of the film camera.

**Hockney, López and Acts of Creation**

The cinematic emulation of a painter’s style is not only used to evoke the world in which the artist finds himself, but it is also particularly evoked in scenes in which the artist creates specific paintings. Instead of showing these actual paintings, for instance, Korda, in his Rembrandt biopic, presents us with tableaux vivants that re-enact them. Similarly, Jarman’s film on Caravaggio comprises several scenes set in the artist’s studio, which show us models posing for a Caravaggio composition like a tableau vivant – a phenomenon that will be elaborately discussed in Chapter 4. Simulating the effect of a split screen, Jarman even includes simultaneously the model and a part of the painting in the same shot, thus hypostasising the confrontation between reality and image, flesh and oil, the three- and two-dimensional, and the living and the inanimate.

The motif of the artist and his model is a recurrent device of narrativisation in biopics of both real and fictitious artists. Scenes with artists and their models usually involve a laborious act of creation and therefore a kind of action that mobilises the still image of a painting or sculpture. Furthermore,
these scenes unmistakably resonate with ancient and mythic stories such as Pygmalion, pictorial and graphical representations by artists themselves (Velázquez, Picasso), as well as novels and short stories such as Poe’s *The Oval Portrait* (1850), Wilde’s *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) or Balzac’s *Chef d’œuvre inconnu* (1831) containing protagonists haunted by the mysteries of creation and by the impossibility of possessing or fixing their models. Frenhofer, the main character in Balzac’s story, has been called the ‘archetypal modern artist, existing in a constant state of anxiety, plagued by metaphysical doubt’. He never wanted to show his masterpiece, a nude study of the *grande courtisane* Catherine Lescaut called *La Belle Noiseuse*, before it was entirely finished. When eventually his fellow artists looked at his masterpiece, they saw nothing but ‘colours daubed one on top of the other and contained by a mass of strange lines forming a wall of paint’. In *La Belle Noiseuse* (1991), Jacques Rivette’s film version of the story, we never see the finished painting apart from a glimpse of carmine red, when the covering sheet is lifted for an instant by accident. We have learned, however, that the artist has inflicted a brutal regime on his model during the sittings, which involved not only intensive scratching of the pen on paper but also the bone-crushing and limb-twisting postures the model is subjected to. As in biopics of artists such as Camille Claudel (1988) or Artemisia Gentileschi (1997), Rivette presents art as the product of physical action and as the progeny of sexual passion. According to Susan Felleman, these films constantly collapse ‘artistic sensuality and human sexuality through scenes in which models become sexual objects, artistic compositions become sexual dramas, and visceral responses to artistic images slip into images of pornographic titillation’.

The act of artistic creation is also attractive to filmmakers of both artist biopics and, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, art documentaries because it is simply a form of animation involving the transformation of one (still) image into another. Static images become part of a visual drama. The same applies to the frequent scenes of destruction of works of art – another important trope in literary and cinematic constructions of the life of an artist with self-destructive and suicidal inclinations. Moreover, the creation of a work of art also implies physical action, which involves a typical pattern of montage that juxtaposes a shot of the artist’s subject or model with a close-up of the pencil on the canvas followed by a shot showing the artist at work. In many instances, kinetic cinematography mimics the movement of the artist’s anxious eye.

Scenes of the artist at work, usually featuring someone else’s hands, are often described as embarrassing by critics. This is not the case when the artist himself is shown at work – this is precisely why documentaries such as Haesaerts’s *Visite à Picasso*, Falkenberg and Namuth’s *Jackson Pollock* and
Clouzot’s *Le Mystère Picasso* are so fascinating. Over the years, an interesting intermediary genre developed that combines elements of the art documentary focusing on the artist at work on the one hand and elements of drama and narrativisation of the feature film on the other. Films such as Jack Hazan’s *A Bigger Splash* (1974) and Víctor Erice’s *El Sol del membrillo* (1992), which deal with painters David Hockney and Antonio López García, respectively, are probably the most important and famous examples of this hybrid genre, in which the artist’s life and work are strongly interwoven. Despite a certain affinity, these films are clearly different from other intermediary forms that have combined documentary strategies and elements of the feature film in order to tell the story of the life of an artist. Many recent television art documentaries, for instance, rely on the hybrid format of the docudrama, in which a voice-over gives us information about artworks while actors impersonate their illustrious creators. Simon Schama’s much-acclaimed BBC series *Power of Art* (2006) is a series of artist portraits weaving historical context and biography with the help of forms, techniques and spectacle that are usually employed in artist biopics. Another and different experiment combining narrative and documentary film is Watkins’s *Edvard Munch* (1974), which is unique among biopics in that it presents some previously unknown facts about Munch’s life which the director culled from the artist’s unpublished diaries.40 Rejecting the Hollywood artist biopic that falsifies facts in order to emphasise drama, soften character faults or allow for moments of inspirational creation, Watkins attempted to create a historically accurate description. In order to do so, Watkins constantly interrupts the narrative with a voice-over giving us information on the sociological and political context. In addition, while simultaneously evoking Munch’s palette and spatial compositions, Watkins self-consciously and emphatically employs documentary conventions such as a handheld camera, zooms, interview techniques, people looking at the camera, background noise, and so on. Sometimes, Watkins creates the illusion that a television crew was present at the opening of Munch’s exhibitions or his visits to bars in Oslo or Berlin.

The aforementioned films on David Hockney and Antonio López García also combine documentary and narrative film techniques but they differ from these examples by their attention to work and the process of creation and hence to the passing of time. Since his art has a strong autobiographical bias, Hockney proved a perfect topic for such a film. He often depicted incidents from his own life. He has made portraits of his family and close friends and he has recorded the places where he lived. All of these are dealt with in *A Bigger Splash*, which was directed by Jack Hazan, who had previously made films for television.41 His earlier work included a film on artist Keith Grant as well as *Especially at My Time of Life* (1966), which contrasted the work and
life-styles of a group of artists painting and sculpting in adjoining London studios. For his film on Hockney, who had already developed into a key media figure in 1960s swinging London, Hazan shot footage over three years of the artist and his circle whenever the opportunity arose and finance permitted. The controversial film was widely seen and appreciated although it met with censorship because of its erotic nude scenes and its uncomplicated acceptance of gayness especially in its vivid picture of the Californian homosexual subculture, which Hockney had started to paint from magazines before going there. At the time the film was made, Hockney’s long-term affair with his lover Peter Schlesinger came to an end. This event acquires a specific meaning since the film also focuses on a half-finished portrait of Schlesinger that Hockney destroyed after failing to complete it following the break-up of their romance. Eventually, after a chance meeting between artist and model at a party, Schlesinger agrees to pose for some photographs that can be used to complete a new painting depicting a figure standing beside a swimming pool.

Some scenes, such as Hockney attending a fashion show or a mock Miss World competition, are marked by documentary conventions but usually Hazan exchanges the ciné vérité style for a more stylised approach. According to Philip French, the film resembles Hockney’s paintings ‘in its combination of apparent naïve simplicity of surface and elaborate formality of organisation’. Instead of following his subjects, Hazan rather directed his principals to act out their lives. Except for an extended dream sequence, in which several naked young men are frolicking in a swimming pool, it is difficult to discern what is actual reality and what is being fabricated for the camera. Moreover, all the characters define their relationships with Hockney through the way he has painted them. On several occasions, Hazan shows members of Hockney’s circle together with the paintings he did of them. By recreating tableaux vivants on which paintings are based, he films his characters while sitting in the frozen poses they adopted for Hockney’s portrait. In addition, several scenes reveal Hockney’s photographic and painting procedures. Repeatedly, we see him struggling to resolve a large poolside picture which includes the standing figure of his ex-lover in a pink jacket staring down at a submerged swimmer. With its episodic structure, fragmented narrative, slow pace and focus on the rhythms of the artist’s everyday life, *A Bigger Splash* unmistakably resembles modernist art house cinema – some scenes, such as the one in which Hockney takes photographs of his friend in the park, are reminiscent of Antonioni’s *Blow-up* (1966).

With its slow rhythm, focus on the mundane and struggle of finishing a single painting, *A Bigger Splash* can be presented as a meditation on the passing of time – an issue that is even more central in Erice’s *El Sol del membrillo* (1992), which is also a film about a painter that hovers between documentary
and fiction. Its title, which was translated into English as *Dream of Light (The Quince Tree Sun)*, refers to the sunny period in the autumn that coincides with the ripening of quinces. Both the filmmaker and his painter character attempt to capture the shifting light as it changes with the passing days. An intense interest in light had already characterised Erice’s earlier films *El Espíritu de la colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive*, 1973) and *El Sur* (*The South*, 1983), which has been described as ‘the story of a child’s suspension before the magic of light’. Moreover, Erice’s earlier films contain figures who emerge from the light in the manner of paintings by Velázquez, Zurbarán and Murillo. Moreover, a few years before *El Sol del membrillo*, Erice started working on a film based on Velázquez’s *Las Meninas* but he abandoned the project after the release of Jaime Camino’s film *Luces y sombras* (1988), which also deals with the famous Velázquez painting. Ultimately, *Dream of Light* focuses on a contemporary artist. It features realist painter Antonio López García, who is particularly famed for his hyperrealist cityscapes of Madrid. López’s work is pervaded with the same sense of contemplation that characterises Erice’s cinema itself. Shortly before filming *Dream of Light*, in the summer of 1990, Erice had accompanied and recorded López on video during various work sessions in different places in Madrid. Later, he went back and set up the camera alone at the same viewpoints at the same times of day. With the help of these images, some of which were later put on DVD as *Notes* (1993–2003), Erice explicitly focused on the ways both painting and cinema deal with the fleeting passage of people and things. Confronting painting with video or

*Figure 2.4*  
*David Hockney, Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures) (1972)*
film, both Notes and Dream of Light consequently deal with movement and time – two issues that are highly important for López, whose urban landscapes seem to suppress all that moves, as well as for Erice’s earlier feature films, which comprise painterly and tableau-like compositions, filmed photographs and other motifs and visual characteristics playing on the tension between movement and stasis.

Dream of Light was born of an image from a dream about rotting quinces under a strange light, both bright and sombre, which is told by the painter to the filmmaker, and which López also tells in voice-over at the end of the film. The film almost exclusively focuses on López’s attempts to make a painting of a quince tree in the small walled garden of his Madrid studio house. Linda Ehrlich has linked the film to the humble tradition of the Spanish bodegón, a term that was initially used in Spain for a rustic eating place but that later was applied to works combining genre and still life. One of the famous masterpieces of the bodegón tradition even includes the representation of a quince. Juan Sánchez Cotán’s Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber (1602), which is part of the collection of the San Diego Fine Arts Gallery, enables the seemingly mundane to appear in a transfigured light. As in Cotán’s painting, everyday and familiar objects acquire a sense of mystery, eternity and monumentality in Dream of Light.

López starts working on the painting on 29 September 1990, when the sun shines the honey-gold light that was already so striking in The Spirit of the Beehive. He aborts the painting process on 10 December. In addition, the film also comprises footage that was shot on four days in the spring of 1991 when Erice found a quince on the ground carrying traces of paint that were still visible after six months of rain and snow. During the film, several visitors come to the courtyard: López’s daughters and his wife María Moreno who is also an artist, artist and old school friend Enrique Gran, a young painter who is a tenant, a Chinese visitor and her translator, and a few Polish construction workers who are renovating a part of the studio building. To critic Alain Bergala, it has become ‘impossible to distinguish between the real people (who play themselves) and the fictional aspect that turns them, despite everything, into film characters’. Their conversations on everyday events emphasise the thoroughly undramatic nature of Antonio López’s private life. In so doing, Dream of Light pointedly differs from most feature films about painters, such as the Van Gogh biopics discussed in the previous paragraphs. Dream of Light shows none of the flamboyant drama that should give the artworks a transcendental value and none of the psychological dynamics and clear contrasts that characterises the conventional artist biopic. Several critics have compared Erice’s film to Rivette’s La Belle Noiseuse, released a year earlier and which had already explored the limits of
the genre’s conventions by emphasising the painter’s preparations. Rivette, for instance, elaborately shows how his painter protagonist assembles materials, makes preliminary sketches, experiments with different poses and struggles through false starts and changes of mind. However, Rivette’s film is still characterised by a sense of drama and romantic assumptions such as the painter’s reclusiveness, the pervasive sexual tension and the implication that the painting is too disturbing to display. Erice, by contrast, resolutely focuses on López’s both painstaking and mundane preparations. We see the painter positioning his easel with great care, measuring the distance between it and the tree and deliberating over the exact angle of the canvas. We see López setting up two posts, running a cord between them and hanging a plumb line midway. In addition, Erice shows the artist tapping long nails into the ground in front of his shoes. He also lowers his viewpoint by scraping away some earth with a little shovel. Each day, he stands in exactly the same position. Later, during long periods of rain that interrupt the meticulous painting process, López installs with the help of the Polish workers a large plastic-sheeted frame that covers both the tree and his easel. In addition, Erice elaborately shows us how López traces a horizontal line with white paint along the wall behind the tree and how he puts dabs of white paint on several leaves on the trunk and, later, similar dabs on the fruit. Sometimes, it seems as if the artist has put more paint on the tree itself than on the canvas. Arousing the viewer’s curiosity, Erice gives no explanation by means of titles or a voice-over about these actions, which are initially incomprehensible to most spectators. Are they mystical signs or are they part of a strange ritual? Or is López experimenting with a form of garden-sized Land Art? The simple explanation arrives in due course, however. As the quinces ripen, their increasing weight drags the branches down from their original marked positions as a result of which López has to adapt his viewpoint. López’s serenely meticulous procedure and careful attention to viewpoint and framing parallels Erice’s extremely reticent style, which is characterised by an insistence on a stationary camera and minimal use of the zoom lens. Erice frames his work much in the way that a painter never moves the brush beyond the edges of the canvas. What is more, Erice places his camera with equal care often in the same relationship to the painter that Antonio López assumes towards the tree. His meditative appraisal of López’s work generates a sense of wonder.

After weeks of work or days of waiting due to rain, López finds a quince fallen on the ground and shortly afterwards he simply puts the painting and his materials away. Unclear whether he considers the painting completed or unfinished, López is forced to abandon it after a month of intense labour. According to López,
the process of undertaking and abandoning work is inevitable in paint-
ing from life where you can only paint for a few hours each day and a few
weeks a year, because the light changes and that changes the character of the
landscape.50

Painting, Erice demonstrates, does not necessarily imply the spontaneous
action and physical grandeur that filmmakers love to register when they are
focusing on the artistic act of creation. On the contrary, painting can be
a process that involves elaborate preparations, mental concentration and
mundane, undramatic moments. In some instances, Erice unmistakably com-
pares the work of López to that of the Polish plasterers working in the house.
López’s painting process is first and foremost time consuming. Furthermore,
López’s oeuvre itself deals with time. According to Robert Hughes, the
essential subject of Antonio López García’s work is ‘time – how to use it,
how to slow its passage, how to testify about a fugitive world that changes
as he looks’.51 To Erice, López’s favourite theme is the expansion of time,
and that is something that can be captured by the language of cinema. In an
essay on ‘the approximation of cinema and painting’, Erice stated that paint-
ing and cinema are two different languages with common elements: painting
can express or represent time, but cannot contain it. This power to contain
time is reserved for the cinema.52 This Bazinian dimension in Erice’s film is
also emphasised by the theme of death that pervades in *Dream of Light*.53 The
film tells the story of the decay of the fruit, changing from mellow gold to
wrinkled residue, but also refers to the warnings of winter. In addition, politi-
cal situations reported on the radio evoke deaths while López himself, lying
in a heavy winter coat on a bed, takes a death-like pose on the painted canvas
by his wife Maria Moreno. Last but not least, the film ends with the symbolic death of the painting of the quince tree itself. With his attention to the painter’s extensive preparations, the passing of time and a melancholy notion of death and decay, Erice creates an odd state of suspense, which charges the film with a strange tension as the viewer is forced to acknowledge the very limitations of both pictorial and cinematic representation. Reminiscent of the evocations of the cinema machine in his earlier films – the faces of children staring at the film screen in *The Spirit of the Beehive* or the line of light striking the eye of a little girl through a keyhole in *El Sur* – one of the film’s final images shows an abandoned camera and an arc light looming over the tiny tree and fallen quinces. First, we only get to see the shadow of the camera and tree projected on a wall. Next, we see the camera on a tripod connected to a timer that also switches on the light – we wonder if perhaps the artificial lights used for filming have caused the fruit to go rotten before the painter was able to finish his picture. As the film process moves on, the subject of the image is changed because the camera, according to Erice, ‘rots the natural’.54 Given this perspective, *Dream of Light* is not only a film that deals with the media of painting and cinema, it also juxtaposes the act of pictorial creation and the act of cinematic creation and is therefore related to films such as Haesaerts’s *Visite à Picasso*, Namuth and Falkenberg’s *Jackson Pollock* or Clouzot’s *Le Mystère Picasso*, which were discussed in the previous chapter. Erice even emphasises this parallelism by using video in the film to document López’s work, making it analogous to the painter’s use of drawing.55 López is thus captured by a wide range of media. Apart from Erice’s film as well as his video ‘sketches’, there is the evocation of an old photograph (which we do not actually see) and the painting by López’s wife, which shows the artist sleeping and gradually moving towards death. As will be discussed in several of the following chapters, death often plays an important role in the encounters between cinema and painting.

**Notes**


6. Custen, Bio/Pics, p. 149; see also pp. 86–9, 169.

7. On biopics of artists, see Rickey, ‘Celluloid portraits’; Walker, Art and Artists on Screen; and Guieu, ‘Les biographies de peintres’. See also Korte, ‘Kunstwissenschaft – Medienwissenschaft’; and Bovey, ‘Unruly, devious and queer’.


11. See Ascanio Condivi’s ‘authorised’ Michelangelo biography, Vita di Michelagnolo Buonarroti, which was published in Rome in 1553, and Francisco de Hollanda’s 1548 On Ancient Painting (Da Pintura Antiga), the second part of which contains four dialogues with Michelangelo.


15. Artists’ anecdotes have been compiled by several authors in several languages. Classics are Bayard, L’Art en anecdotes; and Scheffler, Das lachende Atelier. More recent publications are Hall and Wykes, Anecdotes of Modern Art; Lucie-Smith, The Faber Book of Art Anecdotes; and Erftemeijer, De aap van Rembrandt.


17. Wittkower and Wittkower, Born Under Saturn.


21. Ibid. p. 16. On artist novels, see also Seret, Voyage Into Creativity; and Zima, Der europäische Künstlerroman.


25. Ibid. p. 162.

26. Ibid. p. 146.

27. See Walker, Art and Artists on Screen, pp. 147–8.
28. Ibid. p. 41.
31. See Amiel, ‘La peinture absente’.
32. See Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting*, pp. 13–42.
34. Walker, *Art and Artists on Screen*, p. 34.
35. Ibid. p. 25.
37. See Elsaesser, ‘Around painting and the “end of cinema”’.
40. See Gomez, *Peter Watkins*.
42. French, ‘*A Bigger Splash*’, p. 120.
43. Smith, ‘Whispers and rapture’, p. 29.
44. A detailed description of the Velázquez project can be found in Shigehiko, ‘From Velázquez’s Mirror to *Dream of Light*’.
51. Hughes, ‘The truth in the details’.
CHAPTER 3

**Galleries of the Gaze: The Museum in Rossellini’s Viaggio in Italia and Hitchcock’s Vertigo**

**FARNESI MARBLES**

Both Roberto Rossellini’s *Viaggio in Italia* (*Journey to Italy*, 1954) and Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958) contain key scenes that are situated in museums. In Rossellini’s film, an uptight English couple, Katherine and Alexander Joyce (Ingrid Bergman and George Sanders), travel to Naples in order to dispose of property inherited from their uncle. Their confrontation with an alien Mediterranean culture makes them realise that they have become strangers to one another. Their reactions drive them to the brink of a divorce and the film’s loose plot is built on a number of excursions Katherine takes in the surrounding area. While Alex prefers having ‘fun’ in Capri over visiting museums (‘museums bore me’), Katherine’s first trip is to the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, which hosts extensive collections of Greek and Roman antiquities. These are situated in an impressive building, which originally had been erected as a cavalry barracks. In the 1770s

*Figure 3.1 Katherine (Ingrid Bergman) looking at statues in the Naples Archaeological Museum in Viaggio in Italia (Roberto Rossellini, 1954)*
and 1780s, the premises were transformed into a royal art gallery by the Bourbons, the Spanish rulers of Naples. On their return to the city after the fall of Napoleon, the Bourbons made it quite clear that the collection was theirs by naming it Museo Borbonico in 1816. In 1860, it became the Museo Nazionale.

During her visit, Katherine is accompanied by a museum guide who kills her with all sorts of obligatory pieces of information on the masterpieces of the collection such as the famous Farnese marbles that had been excavated in the Baths of Caracalla in Rome in the sixteenth century. The most renowned piece of this collection, no doubt, is the giant marble statue of a muscular Farnese Hercules, which is probably an enlarged third-century copy made by Glycon for the Baths of Caracalla of a bronze statue of the same hero produced by Lysippos or his school in the fourth century BC. One of the most famous and frequently copied statues of antiquity, it has been discussed by Addison, Bernini, Goethe, Hogarth, Montesquieu, Napoleon, Schiller and Winckelmann among many other of its illustrious admirers. The famous statue depicts a weary Hercules leaning on his club, which has his lion-skin draped over it. He is performing one of the last of The Twelve Labours, which is suggested by the apples of the Hesperides he holds behind his back. The guide also brings Katherine to the famous and just as frequently reproduced Farnese Bull, a massive Roman copy of an equally giant Hellenistic sculpture attributed to the Rhodian artists Apollonius and Tauriskos of Tralles, which was described by Pliny the Elder. Carved from just one whole block of marble, the grandiose pyramid of figures represents the myth of Dirce. She was tied to a wild bull by the sons of Antiope, Amphion and Zethus, who wanted to punish her for the ill-treatment inflicted on their mother, who was the first wife of Lykos, King of Thebes.

Also included in Katherine’s guided tour are the busts of Roman emperors Caracalla, Nero and Tiberius as well as a statue of Venus and a series of famous bronze statues from the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum, such as a satyr, a group of dancers, a young athlete and a life-size drunken faun, which was especially admired in the eighteenth century. By visiting the museum and admiring the classical sculptures, Katherine situates herself in a long tradition of the Grand Tour—the educational rite of passage undertaken by mainly upper-class British travellers, which flourished from the late seventeenth century until the 1840s, when the advent of large-scale rail transit made travel possible for the middle classes. Especially since the start of the excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii in the middle of the eighteenth century, Naples had become an obligatory stop on the Grand Tour.

For Rossellini, the entire film was almost a pretext for making this museum scene. In an interview, Ingrid Bergman stated that Rossellini
was only looking for a story into which he could put Pompeii and the
museums and Naples and all that Naples stands for, which he always was
fascinated with. [. . ] He wanted to show all those grottoes with the relics and
the bones and the museums and the laziness of all the statues.5

When the film eventually went into production, Rossellini started with
the museum scene – the first two weeks of shooting consisted of Bergman
‘staring at ancient statues in the Naples Museum while an equally ancient
guide bumbled on about the glories of Greece and Rome’.6 Several com-
mentators have drawn attention to this scene. Peter Bondanella calls it ‘one of
the most important sequences in the film’ because it made apparent the ‘de-
ciencies’ of Rossellini’s work when compared with conventional film prac-
tices.7 For actor George Sanders, for instance, the scene was simply boring
because it did not exploit the emotional potential of a Hollywood star and
it did not seem to fit into the larger, dramatic construction that a traditional
script would entail. Other commentators, notably Cahiers critics Rohmer and
Rivette, praised the film precisely because of its seemingly aleatory plot.8 The
museum scene emphasises these issues because it suggests a dramatic tension
(it is the first scene that is accompanied by music and characterised by a highly
mobile camera), which is immediately suppressed.

**PORTRAIT OF CARLOTTA**

In Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*, retired police detective Scottie (James Stewart)
follows Madeleine (Kim Novak) through the streets and surroundings of
San Francisco. Madeleine appears to be haunted by the ghost of Carlotta
Valdes, a local nineteenth-century beauty who danced and sang in a cabaret
where she was found by a rich and powerful man. She bore him a child,
after which he abandoned her, keeping the child to raise himself. As a result,
she became insane and, eventually, she took her own life. While shadow-
ing Madeleine, Scottie ends up at Carlotta’s painted portrait, which is put
on display in the galleries of the San Francisco Palace of the Legion of
Honor. Opened as a museum in 1924, this building is a permanent recon-
struction of the French pavilion at the 1915 Panama–Pacific International
Exposition – in its turn a replica of the Palais de la Légion d’Honneur in
Paris. According to Dan Auiler, the museum scene was shot on location in
October 1957.9 During the shooting, the museum was turned topsy-turvy
as Hitchcock waited for the right light. The museum was not closed and
people watched the moviemaking more than the paintings. A ‘real’ senior
guard played the role of the guard who identifies the painting and hands
Scottie the museum’s catalogue.
In the film, Scottie enters a room in which a remarkable mixture of paintings is on display. Some of them can easily be identified, such as a *Portrait of a Gentleman* (1710) by Nicolas de Laviglière and *Flowers before a Window* (1789) by Jan-Frans van Dael, paintings that still are exhibited in the very same room of the museum today. In particular, just for a moment, Scottie’s attention is drawn to an allegorical representation of architecture painted in 1753 by Charles-André Van Loo. It shows three children presenting to the beholder a drawing of the façade of Madame de Pompadour’s *Château de Bellevue* – a strikingly emblematic image in a film dealing entirely with the illusions of
appearances, staged realities and mistaken identities. The painting, which associates architecture with a kind of childlike innocence, appears at odds in a film in which people mysteriously fall from rooftops or church towers.

The nineteenth-century painted portrait of Carlotta Valdes dominates the opposite wall. When Scottie enters the room, he finds Madeleine sitting in front of it as is she is mesmerised by the painting. The life-size portrait shows a young woman with tightly pinned-up blonde hair with a chignon, which is clearly visible on the left side of her neck. Looking straight at the spectator with dark eyes, she wears an impressive light blue crinoline which is trimmed with gold-coloured brocade on top and a band of lace at knee level. She also wears a gold necklace, which holds an impressive ruby at her chest. She holds her hands together but they are obscured by a bouquet of flowers including pink roses, the colours of which are in perfect harmony with the rest of the painting. Standing on a portico of a Colonial mansion, a fluted column of which is clearly visible on the right, Carlotta’s image is confronted with a landscape on the left, which consists of a water surface and a spectacular clouded sky at sunset – the lavender-coloured clouds, so typical for the Bay area, throw a gloss on the dress and the column. The painting unmistakably refers to the tradition of the English aristocratic portrait inspired by Gainsborough, which, in its turn, reaches back to Van Dyck’s seventeenth-century portraits of Genoese noblemen. As in Gainsborough, Carlotta’s portrait is painted with thin oil colour to achieve the shimmering effect of an eye-catching costume and includes an elaborate background setting for its subject. A note in the film’s production files demanded that the portrait’s frame should be ‘matched to the frames already hanging’, which were ‘dull gold’.

The portrait of Carlotta Valdes was especially made for the film by modernist painter John Ferren, who had worked with Hitchcock on The Trouble with Harry (1955) and Vertigo’s dream sequence. On the audio commentary of the 1999 DVD release of the film, Ferren’s authorship is confirmed by associate producer Herbert Coleman, who stated that ‘this portrait caused us more trouble than any other prop in the whole picture.’ Anyhow, production files in the Margaret Herrick Library indicate that the filmmakers first commissioned Manlio Sarra, an Italian painter, to make a ‘portrait of Pauline’ (as Madeleine’s character was originally called). Luigi Zaccardi, who worked at the Paramount office in Rome, spotted this artist whom he described as a well-known typical and real Italian artist. In keeping with the authentic tradition of his profession, he is also a poor man. He started out in his career as a copy artist and a restorer and that is the main reason why I got him to do
the job. He is quite a creative artist too, however, and specialises in very picturesque paintings depicting scenes from the region of Italy where he comes from and which have always received good reviews from the critics. Zaccardi further noted that ‘this copy job is more difficult than normal ones wherein a painting is used as a model, because in the case of the “Portrait of Pauline,” Mr. Sarra has to paint the portrait from a transparency.’ Moreover, Coleman stipulated that the painting should look old (as if painted in 1854) and be done in the style of the ‘Italian school’, and that the background ‘should be straight’ and in ‘a deep burgundy colour’. Tellingly, the correspondence between Coleman and Zaccardi is accompanied by little cards mentioning the names of both European and American painters, which were probably used as references for the style of the portrait: Wilkie, Phillips, Winterhalter, Magnus, Kroger, Ingres, Corot, Courbet, Couture, Stieler, Inman, Sully, Neagle, Elliott, Hicks, Harding and Healy. Sarra’s painting, which was shipped to Hollywood in February 1957, as well as another version executed in England were never used in the film because they were considered to be inadequate. Subsequently, another version was made by an unidentified Hollywood painter, who, according to Coleman ‘was in his late sixties’ and, almost echoing a film plot, ‘fell in love with the model’. However, this version was never used either because eventually actress Vera Miles became pregnant and was replaced by Kim Novak. The whereabouts of the final painting are unknown and it may no longer exist but the version with Vera Miles’s features hangs in the office of film restorers Harris and Katz.

MENTAL LANDSCAPES FOR FLÂNEURS AND TOURISTS

Although made by two directors using an almost incompatible style in diverging production contexts, both museum scenes show striking similarities. Apart from the fact that Rossellini’s film features Ingrid Bergman, who was Hitchcock’s fetish actress in the previous decade, both films have in common a structure that is marked by long, contemplative car drives through an uncanny urban landscape. In both films, the city is largely constructed through the gaze of the protagonists. In Rossellini’s film, Katherine Joyce is confronted with the city of Naples and its surroundings. On the one hand, the confrontation with this exotic environment enables her to realise that her previous Romantic and spiritualist preconceptions of Italy and classical antiquity were incorrect. It also makes her aware of her own situation, in particular of her unhappy marriage. On the other hand, she cannot fail to see the environment as something that resonates with her own thoughts and feelings. Several commentators have noted, for instance, that when confronted with
her own sterile and childless marriage, Katherine drives through the Naples streets populated by pregnant women or young mothers. According to Bazin, the urban surroundings in *Viaggio in Italia* evoke a Naples as ‘filtered’ through the consciousness of the heroine. If the landscape is bare and confined, it is because the consciousness of an ordinary bourgeoise itself suffers from great spiritual poverty. Nevertheless, the Naples of the film is not false. […] It is rather a mental landscape at once as objective as a straight photograph and as subjective as pure personal consciousness.16

In *Vertigo*, too, the city of San Francisco is transformed into a mental landscape at once objective and subjective. Scottie wanders through the city, which is transformed into a dizzy maze. It turns out, however, that his itinerary through this landscape, which encompasses many of San Francisco’s landmarks, is staged and constructed by others – in particular by his old friend Gavin Elster (Tom Helmore), who is hiring actress Judy to pose as Madeleine, his wife committing suicide.

Both *Vertigo* and *Viaggio in Italia* deal first and foremost with the perception and experience of surroundings – something which is perfectly visualised in the emphatic close-ups of the protagonists’ faces while they are driving through the streets of San Francisco and Naples, respectively. Both melancholy protagonists move through uncanny cities. Hitchcock’s dreamy San Francisco is presented as a labyrinth governed by the past and death, whereas Katherine Joyce, in *Viaggio in Italia*, sees Naples as a sediment of an alien, semi-pagan and semi-Catholic culture with an incomprehensible attitude vis-à-vis bodily existence and death. Accompanied by the slow rhythm of Bernard Herrmann’s music (in *Vertigo*) or the humming sound of the car and muffled street sounds (in *Viaggio in Italia*), cars have become the viewing devices through which the characters perceive the city. Both directors unmis-takably present the car drive as a form of cinematic self-reflection. Identifying the windscreen with the movie screen, these scenes illustrate the optic evaporation of the city by the cinematic act of driving. By privileging mobile perception and changing viewpoints, the urban experience is reduced to a visual spectacle. As a result, the cinematic representation of car driving can be interpreted as an intensification of *flânerie*, which has been identified with a scopophilic operation from the very first. The car, furthermore, enlarges the necessary distance between the *flâneur* and the urban environment. The *flâneur* has become a *chauffeur*.17

Not coincidentally, in both films, a car drive dissolves almost seamlessly into a scene situated in a museum, an institution specially built for the gaze. Obviously, both the Naples and San Francisco museums are presented as
tourist sites. In *Vertigo*, the museum is part of a collection of landmarks also comprising the Golden Gate Bridge, the Palace of Fine Arts, the redwood forest, the Mission Dolores and the Mission of San Juan Bautista. In *Viaggio in Italia*, the museum is part of a travelogue that also includes the cave of the Sybil in Cumae, the Phlegraean Fields, the Church of the Fontanelle with its skulls and skeletons, and the excavations in Pompeii. In so doing, both films simply follow a conventional formula that was particularly popular in films of the 1950s that used a museum as a token to emphasise the exotic or adventurous character of a certain environment. In films such as *On the Town* (Kelly and Donen, 1949), *Three Coins in the Fountain* (Negulesco, 1954), *Born Yesterday* (Cukor, 1951) or *Funny Face* (Donen, 1957), main characters visit museums as part of a sightseeing tour including the monuments of New York, Rome, Washington DC or Paris, respectively. In such a cinematic narrative, museums contribute to the construction of a visually glorious but topographically nonsensical sequence. As famous tourist attractions, museums are often part of establishing shots as well as montage sequences, which situate the story in a particular city. Museums therefore contribute to the construction of a cinematic space, answering to what John Urry has called the ‘tourist gaze’, which reduces the city to a series of postcard images. This postcard-like succession of urban monuments and museums, which mimics the superficiality of the tourist visit, is precisely what modernist directors of the 1950s and 1960s have ridiculed or criticised. Godard, who prefigured the age of mass tourism and the appropriation of the world through industrially produced images in the famous postcard sequence in *Les Carabiniers* (1963), created the ultimate cinematic museum visit in his *Bande à part* (1964). In this film, three protagonists kill some time by breaking the record, as a voice-over indicates, of tourist Jimmy Johnson from San Francisco who visited the entire Louvre in nine minutes and forty-five seconds. The scene opens with a panning shot of the museum’s exterior followed by shots showing the trio running through the museum rooms – the entire sequence was reshot and intercut with images from Godard’s original version in Bertolucci’s *The Dreamers* (2003).

**Sinister Visitors**

Famous tourist attractions, the museums in *Viaggio in Italia* and *Vertigo* also resonate with other conventional associations that cinema connects to art galleries. In feature films, museums are not visited by art lovers but seem rather to be favourite places of other categories of sinister characters. First of all, cinema seems to endorse Bourdieu’s critique of the modern art gallery as an instrument of social distinction. Since art and museums seem to be
created as means of social prestige in the first place, cinema loves to present museums as perfect places to strike a sophisticated pose. In films such as On the Town (Kelly and Donen, 1949), Born to Be Bad (Ray, 1950), The Dark Corner (Hathaway, 1946), Three Coins in the Fountain (Negulesco, 1954), Play It Again, Sam (Allen, 1972), Manhattan (Allen, 1979) or L.A. Story (Jackson, 1991) among others, the museum is frequented by unworldly, snotty, neurotic or decadent dandies who turn it into a stage for artificial poses and idle talk. Both temples of high culture and posh party venues, museums consequently are also perfect victims of mayhem and blasphemy. Particularly popular comedies such as The Return of the Pink Panther (Edwards, 1975), L.A. Story (Jackson, 1991) or Bean (Smith, 1997) have their main characters wreaking havoc on the exhibits in art galleries.

In addition, treasure chambers stuffed with strange and precious objects, cinematic museums are not only favourite attractions for tourists, snobs, dandies and iconoclasts but also for thieves. Skeptical of the ethical and edifying ambitions of museums, philosopher Nelson Goodman once stated that ‘the only moral effect a museum has on [him] is a temptation to rob the place.’ In films, too, museums represent big money and one of their main functions is to serve as targets for burglary. Pearls (The Pearl of Death, Neil, 1944), diamonds (The Hot Rock, Yates, 1972), Amazon figurines (L’Homme de Rio, de Broca, 1964), Rembrandt portraits (Stealing Rembrandt, Johansen, 2003) and El Greco triptychs (L’Incorrigible, de Broca, 1975) have been stolen from cinematic museums. The sensational 1911 theft of the Mona Lisa from the Louvre immediately unleashed a swarm of comic silent films such as Gribouille a volé la Joconde (Capellani, 1911) and it also inspired filmmakers later to produce Der Raub der Mona Lisa (von Bolvary, 1931) and On a volé la Joconde (Deville, 1966). Self-evidently, in films, museum robberies are invariably spectacular, such as in Dassin’s classic caper movie Topkapi (1964) or McTiernan’s remake of The Thomas Crown Affair (1999). In particular, the motif of intruding museums as thieves in the night proved a very powerful cinematic formula that transcends the genre of caper films. Sneaking into the strange territory of uncannily empty, silent and.unlit museum rooms can be found in a wide variety of films ranging from a French auteur film such as Les Amants du Pont-Neuf (Carax, 1991), a Hollywood blockbuster such as The Da Vinci Code (Howard, 2006), a poetic documentary such as La Ville Louvre (Philibert, 1990) and an arthouse experiment such as Sokurov’s Elegy of a Voyage (2002). In all these titles, the filmmakers were clearly fascinated by the play of flashlights in nocturnal museum spaces – a phenomenon that unmistakably evokes the nocturnal visits to museums and archaeological excavations so popular in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the play of flashlights transforms the appearance of the masterpieces in the darkness.
Restless shadows create the illusion that some of the characters in the paintings come to life. As a result, the museum is presented as a strange and mysterious place filled with secrets and uncanny powers. Public institutions, museums are turned into sinister places of privacy and intimacy.

Given this perspective, museums become convenient hiding places for criminals on the run, spies and secret agents. Since they operate in secret, spies are attracted by the contemplative silence associated with museum spaces. However, in spy thrillers, the silence of museum galleries becomes strange, mysterious and sinister. In Hitchcock’s *Torn Curtain* (1966), Paul Newman walks through the uncannily empty and silent rooms of the Alte Nationalgallerie in Berlin, the classicist architecture of which is mirrored by the sculptures on display. The museum functions as a labyrinth in which Newman tries to get rid of his invisible pursuer. The menacing silence in the museum is emphasised by the sound of Newman’s and his pursuer’s echoing footsteps. A similar uncanny silence in a context of political intrigues characterises the sequence in Francesco Rosi’s *Cadaveri eccellenti* (1976), set in the Archaeological Museum in Naples, which is also the locale of the museum scene in Rossellini’s *Viaggio in Italia* – some statues even feature in both films. In this climactic scene, we follow a police inspector (Lino Ventura) during his long walk through the museum’s classical sculpture collection. We see him walking past busts and heads of ancient emperors, rhetoricians and statesmen – an appropriate focus since the film’s narrative presents the museum as a place where the future of the corrupt state is at stake. The museum, after all, is the place where the protagonist meets a politician who has information on the mafia connections of some of his opponents. Both characters, however, are shot by an off-screen sniper. Both in *Torn Curtain* and *Cadaveri eccellenti*, the silence and emptiness of the galleries turn the museum – one of the public spaces of urban modernity – into a site of paranoia. A realm designed for the cultivation of sophisticated sensory perceptions, the museum becomes an environment of excessive anxiety. Temples of visual culture and training areas for the look, museums become suffocating labyrinths where characters are chased by invisible adversaries and unrevealed pursuers. Just as for thieves, criminals on the run and illegal intruders, for spies, too, the museum turns out to be a place of a fatal encounter.

**Museum as Mausoleum**

This is perfectly in line with another recurring cliché in cinematic museums – the museum as a place of death. In films, museums are often produced as treasure chambers dominated by spiritual and atavist powers. In the *Indiana Jones* series, for instance, museums are dark and musty houses of mystery,
full of strange and exotic objects. According to Andrea Witcomb, ‘this association suggests that despite their role within hegemonic discourses, museums are also associated with danger, the irrational, the uncontrollable.’ Consequently, museums are often presented as places of witchcraft. Accommodating magical artefacts, museums become realms of occult reincarnations – an item crucial to the numerous horror films featuring waxworks and mummies, which foster the popular association of museums with death. Archaeological museums, after all, display artefacts of extinct cultures, which are represented by objects that relate to complex death rituals and life in the hereafter: tombs, mummies, death masks, funeral monuments, sarcophagi, sacrificial objects, and so on. Furthermore, in the popular imagination, museums themselves are like tombs characterised by a sepulchral silence and solemnity. Films, consequently, present museums as fatal places or as environments where characters are confined in a mysterious past. In films, museums become tombs. Popular culture and films illustrate philosopher Theodor W. Adorno’s famous statement that ‘museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association.’ ‘Museums’, Adorno wrote, ‘are like the family sepulchres of works of art.’

The association between the museum and death is further encouraged by the fact that museums present themselves as sites where connections with the past and with death are established. Products of modernity and the Enlightenment, and even important tools in the formation of the bourgeois public sphere, museums are buildings where the past is confined. Museums not only contain objects and images of the dead but are also monuments to entire nations and their histories. Storing national treasures and embodying collective memories, museums encompass entire histories. According to Louvre curator Germain Bazin, an art museum is ‘a temple where Time seems suspended’. Furthermore, it has been repeatedly stated that museums freeze, suffocate, sterilise or bury artworks. Both a building type and an institution of modernity (a kind of stone equivalent of the Encyclopédie, as it were), the museum petrifies or kills art. Although, from the very first, museums were criticised for tearing art apart from its so-called natural surroundings, the museum only originated when art’s original context (that of the church and the palace) was destroyed by the process of modernisation. Of the Louvre, Paul Valéry famously said that ‘neither a hedonistic nor a rationalistic civilization could have constructed a house of such disparities. Dead visions are entombed here.’ Rossellini called Beaubourg, to which he dedicated his last film in 1977, ‘the tomb of a civilization . . . Everything is useful in Saint Peter’s, whereas here at Beaubourg everything is useless.’ Given this perspective, all museum scenes in film relate to the mummy films since in a museum, everything gets mummified.
The funerary associations of the museum are enhanced by its architectural
typology. National or civic monuments that commemorate and conserve
the past, museum buildings are destined to last for eternity. In that sense,
traditional museum buildings express eternity and grandeur, and both direc-
tors and film characters are simply fascinated by their spectacular aspects.
Monumentality and enduring grandeur are values that were attached to the
very first museum buildings. Its classical building type goes back to late eight-
teenth- and early nineteenth-century designs by architects such as Durand,
Von Klenze, Schinkel and Soane, and it remained the dominant model for
a long time. It is characterised by long rows of rooms, the presence of over-
head light and elements borrowed from classical temple architecture, such
as a colonnade, a monumental staircase and a rotunda topped by a dome.30
These elements refer to the presupposed sacral origins of art; they isolate the
museum and its treasures from everyday life and they turn the museum visit
into a ritual experience. This dimension is enhanced by the architectural refer-
cences to sacral and sepulchral architecture, which are emphatically visualised
in films with museums as locations. In popular culture, however, this associa-
tion remained intact when classical forms were exchanged for the modernist
‘white cube’, which combines the solemn character and sacral silence of the
Greek temple with the smooth floors, white walls and big glass surfaces of the
clinic.31 Popular culture embraces the clinical and sterile image of the museum
as much as that of the museum as a tomb. Strikingly, in Manhunter (Michael
Mann, 1986), Richard Meier’s High Museum of Art in Atlanta stands for the
mental ward, in which serial killer Hannibal Lecter is placed under restraint.
Because of Lecter’s haunting presence (or is it because of Meier’s dazzling
white architecture?), the detective visiting the killer feels anxious and he runs
off the many ramps that turned the building into one of the paradigmatic
museums of the postmodern 1980s – an era in which museums are no longer
presented as temples to contemplate art but also as tourist destinations where
visitors can stroll, talk, drink, eat and shop as well. An era, in short, in which
frenetic attempts are made to deny that the museum is a place of death.32

These associations between museum and death play an important part
in films featuring art galleries. This is particularly the case in Hitchcock’s
museum sequences.33 In Blackmail (1929), Hitchcock chose the British
Museum, a prominent example of the first generation of museum buildings
built by Smirke between 1823 and 1847, as one of the first employments of
his typical climax at a famous or bizarre location that is entertaining itself.
Because the museum did not allow a full cast and crew to occupy its premises,
the famous backdrops were photographed first with half-hour exposures and
made into backlighted transparencies. The actors were integrated into the
museum interior by means of the famous Schüfftan process. Unmistakably,
Hitchcock played on the associations between museums and death since the blackmailer tries to evade the police by sneaking into the rooms with ancient Egyptian statues, products of an extinct culture fascinated by death, tombs and life in the hereafter. In a striking shot, the fugitive climbs a rope next to the huge stone face of an Egyptian colossus. Eventually, the museum also becomes literally a tomb since the man falls through the skylight of the museum’s dome. In Strangers on a Train (1951), a museum is used as one of the monumental places where a murderer haunts the protagonist. The sinister character of Bruno Anthony turns up from behind the columns of the monumental rotunda of the National Gallery in Washington DC, which is constructed by means of rear projections. A messenger of fate, Giambologna’s sculpture of Mercurio is visible above the heads of the protagonist and his girlfriend.

In Vertigo, finally, death is connected to the museum in various ways. First of all, the museum is part of a collection of landmarks associated with death or eternal life: the Golden Gate Bridge (which is the most popular place to commit suicide in the entire world), the redwood forest with its timeless trees, the Mission Dolores and its graveyard with the burial place of Carlotta, the uncanny McKittrick Hotel, the Palace of Fine Arts that looks like a Romantic ruin, and the Mission of San Juan Bautista. Moreover, Scottie ends up in a museum that is even literally a memorial since the Palace of the Legion of Honor was conceived as a shrine for soldiers who fell in the First World War. Furthermore, the building forms the shrine for the portrait of Carlotta Valdes, a deceased woman, who is contemplated by Madeleine, a woman possessed by the dead, who, in her turn, keeps Scottie in her grasp. Given this perspective, Hitchcock tails an entire tradition of films made throughout the 1940s in which haunted painted portraits of the dead play a significant role.
The mysterious presence of an important absentee through a painting was a key motif, for instance, in prominent examples of film noir and also in some films directed by Hitchcock himself such as *Rebecca* (1940), *Suspicion* (1941) and *The Paradine Case* (1947). In each case, cinematic elements such as framing, editing, lighting, camera positions and camera movements are used to bring into being the person portrayed. Haunting the characters, the deceased Carlotta seems to look back at the beholders. Apparently, when cinema deals with paintings, such as in museum scenes, it almost always shows instances of what Kris and Kurz have called ‘effigy magic’, that is, the primitive belief that a person’s soul resides in their image or effigy. The mesmerising effect of a painting and the idea that a portrayed person is looking back is a recurring trope in cinema, which certainly marks many scenes situated in museums. In line with this, filmmakers love to create a spatial and narrative continuum between the characters and the figures depicted in artworks: Madeleine seems to belong to the same distant realm as Carlotta in Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* just as Ingrid Bergman’s character finds her own body amidst the sensual nudes in Rossellini’s *Viaggio in Italia*.

In *Viaggio in Italia*, too, the museum is a place of mortification. As in *Vertigo*, the Archaeological Museum is part of a collection of landmarks connected with death such as the Fontanella cemetery with its huge pile of skulls, the ruin of the Temple of Apollo and Pompeii with its buried bodies. With its recurrent allusions to Joyce’s short story *The Dead*, Rossellini’s film has been described as a ‘journey into the realm of the dead’ or as ‘a story of the living and the dead in which, as in Joyce’s story, the dead are more alive than the living’.

According to Sandro Bernardi, ‘it is death that Katherine continually encounters on her path, or rather the cohabitation of life and death, by which one germinates the other and vice versa.’ Rossellini himself stated that he wanted to show ‘Naples, this strange atmosphere in which a very real, direct and profound feeling is fused with a sentiment of eternal life.’ In the museum scene, which is accompanied by the first appearance of Renzo Rossellini’s eerie musical theme, the guide tells gruesome stories about Roman emperors killing their own family members, while the Farnese Bull features violence and death. Moreover, through Katherine’s physical confrontation with the ancient sculptures, Rossellini demonstrates that statues, with their fixity and ‘strange opacity making them seem at once so ghostly and so familiar’, as Kenneth Gross reminds us in his *Dream of the Moving Statue*, turn out to be ‘so well fitted to our mourning’.

Tellingly, Rossellini concentrates on Hellenistic sculpture, which aspired to create the illusion of frozen movement. Living movement is turned into stone. The sculptures convey movement in stillness. They are images of life in inanimate stone. The sensual and hedonistic nudes make Katherine aware of her own unhappy and
cold marriage, and Rossellini compares them to the excavated and fossilised bodies of Pompeii in a scene later in the film: the bronze statues of perfect bodies in the museum are echoed by the scene in which dirt is scraped from the hardened plaster in a hollow in the ground, which archaeologists have discovered in Pompeii. Bodies buried by lava had disintegrated, leaving behind a void, which archaeologists carefully filled with liquid plaster. When hardened, the mould is uncovered, revealing the imprint of the dead. In the penultimate scene of the film, slowly and gradually, a man and a woman are revealed while Katherine and Alex are watching. The great eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 has instantly killed them and caught them while making love or at least wrapped tightly in each other’s arms. Suddenly, the museum and other sites such as the catacombs come together in one startling image: ‘the physicality and rawness of the ancient world, the ubiquity of death in life, and love, however inadequate and flawed, as the only possible solution’. The medium of film adds yet another dimension. For Bazin, who considered the death mask as the origin of images made from direct imprint such as photography and film, even the elusive medium of film snatches bodily appearances from the flow of time. In the museum scenes in both *Viaggio in Italia* and *Vertigo*, the confrontation between cinema on the one hand and sculpture and painting on the other invokes the interconnectedness between life and death. On the one hand, the museum is presented as a place where movement has come to a standstill and where life is fossilised. In the San Francisco Palace of the Legion of Honor, Madeleine is mesmerised and paralysed by Carlotta’s portrait. In the Naples Archaeological Museum, most of the statues are poised in mid-gesture. It is as though, in the words of Laura Mulvey, ‘the gaze of the Medusa, or some other malign magician, has turned living movement into stone.’ With his restlessly moving camera, Rossellini situates the immobile statues of the Naples museum in a long tradition of fantasies in which living beings are turned into stone whether through love, grief, terror or jealousy – including such figures as Niobe, Aghauros, Echo and Atlas. On the other hand, both Rossellini and Hitchcock present the art gallery as spaces where inanimate matter comes to life, where paintings and sculptures are animated. It is as though Rossellini imagined that his mobile camera would be the magic means of bringing life to those blocks of stone and shapes of bronze, whereas Hitchcock uses camera movements to animate the portrait of Carlotta, who seems to looking back at Madeleine and Scottie. Facing a painted portrait or classical sculptures, both Hitchcock and Rossellini thus reconcile two opposing myths: the dream of the moving statue or living portrait resulting from the artist’s (or filmmaker’s) demiurgic power to create autonomous life in what seems inanimate matter on the one hand, and the metamorphosis of a living being into an immobile image on the other.
Finally, both museum scenes relate death to desire. As a result, the museums become sites of necrophilia. In *Vertigo*, Scottie falls in love with Madeleine who is mesmerised by the rather sterile portrait of the dead Carlotta. In the art gallery, Madeleine appears as lifeless as Carlotta. It is as if a statue is placed in front of the painted portrait. When, later in the film, Madeleine dies, Scottie compels Judy to transform herself, as if she were a statue, into the dead Madeleine. In *Viaggio in Italia*, Katherine’s encounter with the statues is turned into a series of profound, almost physical confrontations with them. Katherine is almost literally dwarfed by the Farnese marbles – Rancière speaks of their ‘shameless’ gigantic proportions. Rossellini emphasises this by the elevated camera positions in the passage dedicated to the Farnese Hercules – its rear view evoking the famous 1591 engraving by Hendrik Goltzius, which also includes two onlookers, giving scale to the statue.

Moreover, her desire is roused by the powerful rawness of the stone and bronze statuary and she is deeply moved by this encounter with the overtly physical, sexual presence of the past – in the 1780s, when it was sent to Naples, the Farnese Hercules was already notorious for disconcerting many ladies with his ‘large brawny limbs’. Katherine’s tourist guide loves to dilate on the sensuality of the nudes. ‘This is the Venus I like most, she is not as young as the others, she is more . . . mature. Don’t you agree, lady?’ Clearly, the museum guide’s comments help to emphasise the contrast between classical civilisation’s acceptance of the nude body and Katherine’s puritanical sexual repression. Tellingly, the guide starts his tour by referring to the so-called secret cabinet, the collection of erotic or sexually explicit finds from
Pompeii, which were locked away, from 1819 onwards, in separate galleries in the Naples Archaeological Museum. However, Rossellini links the classical nudes to the excavated bodies of Pompeii and they make Katherine aware of her own unhappy and cold marriage. In front of the statues, she discovers her true self, as it were, like several women travellers in the eighteenth century did before her. As Brian Dolan has demonstrated, for women of the eighteenth century, the Grand Tour offered opportunities denied to them at home: freedom from a narrowly defined femininity, the chance to develop and exercise their intelligence, an escape from an abusive marriage or, occasionally, a career as a travel writer or political correspondent.

Circling the statues with his mobile camera, Rossellini animates them and he also expresses Katherine’s physical attraction to them. In so doing, Rossellini joins a long tradition of humans falling in love with statues. In the eighteenth century, for instance, as Haskell and Penny have demonstrated by referring to some outlandish examples, Venus sculptures, such as the ‘more mature’ one mentioned by the museum guide in *Viaggio in Italia*, became the object of the most impassioned statue love. The act of falling in love with statues, however, harks back to the Hellenistic era, in which Greek figure sculpture first began to embody a divine beauty by means of a heightened sensuousness and evocation of tactility. Hellenistic sculptures, such as the ones admired by Katherine in *Viaggio in Italia*, represent human bodies caught in the midst of a sudden motion and they seem to be animated by a surge of life that goes well beyond the stately traditions of earlier cult-statue sculpture. As George Hersey demonstrated in his fascinating book on the topic, the love of statues in the Hellenistic era also resulted in a rich tradition of ekphrastic writing, in which the description of a work of visual art often aimed at showing that the work is so masterful that it seems truly alive. According to Philostratus the Younger, for instance, a statue of a god, when it is a masterpiece, is tactile. Blood flows beneath that marble, ivory or bronze skin. As a result, physical sensations seem to fill the work of art itself but also its creator or beholder. Moreover, Hellenistic writers even wrote stories involving the act of physical love with statues. Atheneaus of Naucratis, for instance, advised philosophers in love with unresponsive women to make love to statues whereas Pseudo-Lucian tells the story of a sperm-stain on the buttocks of Praxiteles’s Knidian Aphrodite left by the unfortunate Makarios of Perinthos in a failed attempt at anal intercourse with the famous sculpture.

Repressed sexuality and cool eroticism seem to be recurrent elements in film scenes situated in museums. Clearly, many filmmakers have been attracted by the telling contrast between the burning passion of secret lovers and the solemn silence of museum spaces. Passion and desire are subtly hidden under the veneer of love of high culture. The restrained coolness
of the art gallery and the repressed desire needed to perceive the desire expressed in artworks give the mind opportunities to open up to extraordinary encounters. Films such as *The Kiss* (Feyder, 1929), *The Single Standard* (Robertson, 1929), *The Clock* (Minnelli, 1945), *Le Plaisir* (Ophuls, 1952), *Dressed to Kill* (De Palma, 1980), *All the Vermeers in New York* (Jost, 1990), *The Age of Innocence* (Scorsese, 1993) or *Far from Heaven* (Haynes, 2002) show us lovers meeting in a museum. Invariably, their encounter seems always to lead to a doomed romance.

**GALLERIES OF THE GAZE**

Unmistakably, both Rossellini and Hitchcock play on the associations of the museums as uncanny places of fatal encounters, mystery, introspection, death and doomed romance. However, the motif of the museum, an environment dedicated to the sophisticated look, enables these filmmakers to reflect on the nature of images and the medium of cinema as well. In completely different but comparable ways, both Rossellini and Hitchcock investigate the mechanisms of the look and the ways these can be evoked in cinema. The contemplation of artworks and the museum experience enable Rossellini, for instance, to investigate the cinematic representation of the act of looking by means of virtuoso camera movements. Much later, he would use comparably elaborate tracks and zooms in *Beaubourg* (1977). In this documentary on the then recently opened Paris museum, the camera never pauses or slows to contemplate an individual painting while floating through the galleries. In *Viaggio in Italia*, Rossellini uses the mobile camera to scrutinise specific sculptures and the reactions on Bergman’s face. Often, camera movements start at an artwork and end up, without intercutting, at Bergman’s subdued facial expressions, taking in both objective and subjective viewpoints in one single, sliding whole. In so doing, these obviously foregrounded camera movements are opposed to the previous point-of-view shots that have kept her visually, and thus psychologically, dissociated from what she is seeing and experiencing. By employing a single long take, Bondanella notes, ‘Rossellini forces the spectator into an active, rather than a passive, role because the audience must search in the photographic image of the art work for clues to the character’s reaction.’ Moreover, Rossellini’s mobile long takes situate statues and human beings in the same spatial continuum. Pedestals are abolished, flesh and bronze occupy the same space. Whereas, in the case of the Farnese marbles, the extremely mobile camera is necessary to film in proportion to the enormous sculptures, in the case of the bronze statues, Rossellini’s crane and tracking shots create a bond between sculpture and beholder. Similarly, in his 1977 documentary on the Centre Pompidou, Rossellini reduces the
high-tech, late-modernist museum building to a human scale. In his exploration of the galleries, the restless camera follows someone, then pans back to discover someone else, very casually, exactly as another spectator would see things.\textsuperscript{52}

The museum as a motif of cinematic self-reflection has also been used in \textit{Vertigo}. The visit to the painting collection at the Palace of the Legion of Honor is a perfect illustration of Hitchcock’s concept of a ‘pure cinema’ firmly based on point-of-view cutting. At first sight, Hitchcock complies with the traditional Hollywood editing logic of shot–reaction shot: we see a character that is looking, then what he or she sees, and, finally, the character’s reactions. In \textit{Vertigo}’s museum scene, however, this convention is followed very emphatically, too emphatically. The camera switches between the real and the realm of representation: between the bouquet on the museum bench and the identical flower piece in the painting, between Madeleine’s curl of hair and the identical one in the painted portrait. This curl is one of the many spiral motifs in \textit{Vertigo}, in which the characters wander through a labyrinthine city. However, the vertiginous feeling is first and foremost the result of the confrontation and contamination of a ‘real’ and a ‘fictitious’ world. On the one hand, Madeleine turns out to be just as much an artificial construction (created by Gavin Elster) as the painted portrait of Carlotta. On the other hand, Scottie, as a modern Pygmalion, transforms Judy into a kind of Madeleine who answers to his idealised image. In the sacral and doomed space of the museum, ‘real’ characters are as artificial and immobile as the characters in the paintings on the wall. Next to visiting old mission churches, a graveyard, and other dreamlike settings of the city (the McKittrick Hotel, the Palace of Fine Arts and the Golden Gate Bridge), the characters end up in the museum, which, in the words of Brigitte Peucker, is ‘the cultural edifice in which the exchange between “real” body and image is finalized’.\textsuperscript{53}

This confl ation between reality and representation is further complicated in the famous dream sequence, in which the flower piece is recreated through a filmic cartoon and in which the figure of Carlotta comes to life by means of an impersonation by an actress filmed in the precise pose and costume of the painting. In addition, another character (Midge, hoping to become the object of Scottie’s desire), impersonates the painting. Hitchcock thus evokes the impact of the portrait on the beholder-in-the-film by all possible means. Scottie, after all, is mesmerised not only by Madeleine but also by the painting she is looking at.

What is more, this cinematic self-reflection is also achieved by the conscientious confrontation between the media of cinema and painting (in the case of \textit{Vertigo}) or sculpture (in the case of \textit{Viaggio in Italia}). In so doing, both museum scenes show striking similarities with the innovative
art documentaries made in that era, which have been discussed in Chapter 1. Just as in the art documentaries made by Emmer, Storck, Haesaerts and Resnais, both Rossellini and Hitchcock use a highly mobile camera, a remarkable editing technique and musical effects to explore as well as to animate the artworks on display. Although the artworks in their feature films play a part in the narrative or have symbolical meanings, the spectator’s attention is also focused on plastic details. Like the filmmakers who created innovative art documentaries in the 1940s and 1950s, both Rossellini and Hitchcock investigate the boundaries of film by confronting it with other media and by juxtaposing movement versus stasis, narrative versus iconic images, and cinematic space versus pictorial surface. Given this perspective, the difference between Hitchcock’s and Rossellini’s museum scene is not only caused by their diverging styles or aesthetic preferences but also by the fact that Katherine is confronted with life-size sculptures while Scottie’s attention is directed towards a painted portrait. Some commentators have emphasised the differences between the museum scene in *Viaggio in Italia* and the conventions of art documentaries. According to Bondanella, Rossellini even ‘reverses the typical documentary techniques of museum photography’ by ‘focusing on Katherine’s shocked reactions to the nude statues of the Farnese collection rather than upon the works of art themselves’. By including the classical nudes and Katherine’s facial expressions in a single shot, Rossellini’s extremely mobile camera not only avoids the usual Hollywood shot–reaction shot, it also differs from ‘the traditional, objective documentary of conventional art films’. Nonetheless, as in contemporaneous art documentaries on sculpture such as Dreyer’s *Thorvaldsen* (1949) or Alekan’s *L’Enfer de Rodin* (1956), Rossellini uses mobile long takes that remind us of the fact that it is easier to justify filming three-dimensional works, such as sculpture or architecture, as movement of the viewer in space is necessary to see and experience them (as opposed to two-dimensional paintings). Like Dreyer and Alekan, Rossellini uses a highly mobile camera to animate the sculptures. According to Laura Mulvey, ‘the camera brings the cinema’s movement to the statues and attempts to revitalise their stillness, reaching a crescendo with the gigantic Farnese bull group. Here, movement stilled finds an even more complex relation with camera mobility.’ The encompassing theme of the film, the relation between the living and the dead, is thus translated into the relation between movement and stillness, and between cinema and sculpture.

Hitchcock, by contrast, only uses mobile long takes at the beginning of the museum scene when Scottie’s gaze is fixed on Madeleine (who can be interpreted as a static though ‘living sculpture’) instead of on the painting. As soon as Stewart’s character looks at the portrait, Hitchcock uses a hectic combination of aggressive dolly-ins that fragment the painting. As in
Resnais’s art documentaries, the film sequence breaks a canvas down into a series of details, that is, a series of compositions in time. Moreover, as Resnais attempted to break up the two-dimensionality of the painting, Hitchcock’s camera seems to sink into the space of the painting thereby confusing the space of observer and painting, of representation and reality. However, as Tom Gunning noted, ‘the closer we get, the more the flatness of the painting, a barrier to our penetration, asserts itself.’

Madeleine in the hands of Elster and Judy in the hands of Scottie, by contrast, are sculptural constructions that can be compared to ‘living sculptures’ or waxworks or mummies, which may evoke other distant realities beyond death but which exist in the corporeal world in which Scottie finds himself. By juxtaposing the two- and three-dimensional, stasis and movement, life and death, and human flesh and paint or stone, both Viaggio in Italia and Vertigo evoke in their museum sequences the tensions that mark tableaux vivants.

Notes

4. See Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour*, and Black, *The British Abroad*.
8. Rivette, ‘Lettre sur Rossellini’. See also the Rossellini interview by Maurice Schérer (Eric Rohmer) and François Truffaut, ‘Entretien avec Roberto Rossellini’.
10. Feature Commentary with Associate Producer Herbert Coleman and Restoration Team Robert A. Harris and James Katz on the 1999 Universal DVD release of *Vertigo*.
11. Letter (19 December 1956) from Luigi Zaccardi to Mr Russell Holman (Paramount New York), *Vertigo* Production File #11, Paramount Files, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, CA.
12. Ibid.
13. Letter (4 December 1956) from Herbert Coleman to Luigi Zaccardi, *Vertigo* Production File #11, Paramount Files, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, CA.
14. ‘Folder 997: *Vertigo* (Production)’, Alfred Hitchcock Collection, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, CA.
15. Herbert Coleman in the Audio Feature Commentary on the 1999 Universal DVD release of Vertigo.
17. See Jacobs, ‘From flâneur to chauffeur’.
20. See Baecque, ‘Godard in the museum’.
23. Goodman, ‘The end of the museum?’.
31. The notion of the gallery space as a ‘white cube’ refers to a famous text by Brian O’Doherty originally published in Arforum in 1976. See O’Doherty, Inside the White Cube.
32. See Davis, The Museum Transformed.
33. Jacobs, ‘Sightseeing fright’.
34. See Felleman, Art in the Cinematic Imagination, pp. 25–55; Peucker, Incorporating Images, pp. 130–7; and Walker, Hitchcock’s Motifs, pp. 319–34.
38. Roberto Rossellini in an interview with Maurice Scherer and François Truffaut, originally published in Cahiers du cinéma 37 (July 1954) and included in Bergala, Rossellini, p. 68.
40. Brunette, Roberto Rossellini, p. 166.
43. See Gross, The Dream of the Moving Statue, p. 75.
44. Rancière, Film Fables, p. 138.
50. See Brunette, *Roberto Rossellini*, p. 163.
CHAPTER 4

Tableaux Vivants 1: Painting, Film, Death and Passion
Plays in Pasolini and Godard

TABLEAUX VIVANTS AND LIVING SCULPTURES

In Chapter 2 on artist biopics, it was noted that the conversion of a painting into a staged scene is a recurring topic in this genre. Instead of showing us Rembrandt’s actual paintings, for instance, Korda, in his biopic on the Dutch painter, presents us with scenes based on them. Similarly, Jarman’s film on Caravaggio comprises several scenes set in the artist’s studio, which show us models posing for a Caravaggio composition like a tableau of waxworks at Madame Tussaud’s. Three-dimensional scenes, which are based on two-dimensional pictorial compositions, are thus created in the film studio. These two-dimensional compositions, in turn, were based on three-dimensional forms and bodies once arranged in the artist’s studio.

This uncanny inversion of the artistic process is reminiscent of tableaux vivants or Lebende Bilder – the theatrically lit compositions, often based on famous artworks or literary passages, of living human bodies that do not move throughout the duration of the display. Although the practice of the tableau vivant reaches back to medieval pageants and open-air festivities during the Renaissance, it became particularly popular in the second half of the eighteenth century, when leading intellectuals such as Diderot and Goethe dealt with some of its manifestations.¹ In his writings on the theatre of the 1750s and 1760s, for instance, Diderot advocated a new kind of dramaturgy that dismissed the coup de théâtre, the sudden turn of the plot.² Instead, in order to create emotional and moral effect, stage productions should orient themselves towards the best painting of the day to find inspiration for the inclusion of deliberate tableaux at crucial moments in the drama. Tableaux thus represent fixed moments that halt the narrative development of the story and introduce stasis into the movement of the play. During a short period of suspended time, the action is frozen at a point of heightened meaning, a point at which the actor’s gestures are especially capable of expressing the full significance and all the implications of the story. For Diderot, who combined his talents as a philosopher and writer with those of the critic of painting and the theatre man, the tableau is the culmination of the drame. Conversely, Diderot
claimed that prominent painters such as Chardin or Greuze had told him that his literary images could be transferred onto canvas almost without change. Not coincidentally, their paintings, too, are marked by a preference for stasis and stillness. As Michael Fried has demonstrated in his famous book on *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (1980), an important tendency in eighteenth-century painting presented human beings as self-contained figures who can be mentally active (thinking, meditating, reading, listening to music, daydreaming) but physically quite passive, finding themselves in a state of absorption.³

Diderot’s ponderings not only make clear the hybrid and heterogeneous nature of tableaux, combining theatre with aspects of painting and sculpture. They also emphasise the dialectic between movement and immobility as well as the play upon the relation of the living body to the depicted or sculpted one. These considerations and interests can also be found in several other popular cultural expressions of the late eighteenth century. In Naples, Emma Hart, the future Lady Hamilton, famously assumed frozen ‘attitudes’ after figures on Greek vases and classical statuary. In a passage dated 16 March 1787 in his *Italian Journey*, Goethe, at that time staying in Naples and Caserta, writes that

Sir William Hamilton, who still resides here as the ambassador from England, has at length, after his long love of art and long study, discovered the most perfect example of nature and art in a beautiful young woman. She lives with him – an English woman about twenty years old. She is very handsome and of a beautiful figure. The old knight has made for her a Greek costume which becomes her extremely. Dressed in this and letting her hair loose, and taking a couple of shawls, she exhibits every possible variety of posture, expression and look, so that at the last the spectator almost fancies it is a dream. One beholds here in perfection, in movement, in ravishing variety, all that the greatest of artists have rejoiced to be able to reproduce. Standing, kneeling, sitting, lying down, grave or sad, playful, exulting, repentant, wanton, menacing, anxious – all mental states following rapidly one after another. With wonderful taste she suits the folding of her veil to each expression, and with the same handkerchief makes every kind of head-dress. The old knight holds the light for her and enters into the exhibition with his whole soul. He thinks that he can discern in her a resemblance to all the most famous antiques, all the beautiful profiles on the Sicilian coins – ay, of the Apollo Belvedere itself. Thus much at any rate is certain – the entertainment is unique. We spent two evenings on it with thorough enjoyment. Today Tischbein is engaged in painting her.⁴

In Goethe’s famous description, which inspired Susan Sontag’s novel *The Volcano Lover*, we can already find the double structure of the tableau
Tableaux Vivants

vivant that would become so attractive to filmmakers. On the one hand, Lady Hamilton’s 'attitudes' are based on artistic precedents such as 'the most famous antiques'. On the other hand, her embodiment of these artworks becomes the basis of a new series of depictions such as Tischbein's paintings. Unmistakably, Goethe, who prominently featured the phenomenon in his 1808 novel Wahlverwantschaften (Elective Affinities), contributed largely to the development of a veritable fashion for tableaux vivants in early nineteenth-century European culture. In many domestic settings, tableaux vivants developed into a parlour game involving the embodiment of famous paintings by costumed actors who posed in stillness. Apart from this amateur venture in a drawing room, it also developed into more professional variants on the theatre stage. On the one hand, Lady Hamilton's attitudes were echoed in the music hall entertainment of the pose plastique, in which partially dressed figures assumed positions evoking ancient statues – a practice that was often considered a 'debased art form'. Since English stage censorship often strictly forbade actresses to move when nude or semi-nude on stage, tableaux vivants also had a place in presenting risqué entertainment at special shows. Similarly, in the early years of the twentieth century, the German dancer Olga Desmond, who had earned her living as a model for artists and painters in Berlin, caused scandals with her Schönheitsabende (Evenings of Beauty) in which she posed nude (or wearing only bodypaint) as a living statue imitating classical works of art. On the other hand, nineteenth-century staged melodramas were marked by isolated tableau moments or comprised series of succeeding tableaux, one following another in order to tell a story. By the end of the nineteenth century, complicated machines were even introduced to transport motionless groups or to organise the transitional intervals between tableaux. Tableaux vivants became especially popular in Great Britain, where they were enjoyed among the highest classes, including the royal family. Having witnessed in a German theatre a tableau after a painting by Teniers, the Scottish painter Sir David Wilkie, for instance, arranged figures after famous paintings and literary works. In his most famous examples, based on the stories of Sir Walter Scott, Wilkie constructed elaborate scenes requiring weeks' preparation, all for a brief performance. In their most elaborate form, carefully posed and lit tableaux were often staged behind large gilt frames with a layer of gauze that imitated the effect of the varnish of an old painting.5

The practice of the tableau vivant also survived in nineteenth-century staged photography.6 On the one hand, because of the relatively long exposures in the photographic process, figures holding still in a tableau lend themselves to being photographed. On the other hand, photographers who had the ambition to make artistic or pictorial photographs with figures in effect
had first to construct a tableau. Leading nineteenth-century photographers, particularly in Great Britain, made numerous photographs with the help of tableaux vivants. Whether or not made after old masters, and whether referring to historical or allegorical themes or simply representing recognizable moments of everyday life, their pictures were often characterised by an elaborate mise-en-scène.

**Cinematic Tableaux**

Last but not least, the nineteenth-century fashion for tableaux vivants can also be found in cinema. Combining elements of the theatre with the visual arts, the medium of film answered perfectly to Diderot’s conception of the theatre, in which the spectator should be ‘thought of as before a canvas, on which a series of such tableaux follow one another as if by magic’.7 Not surprisingly, film pioneers saw in tableaux vivants interesting subjects. In the late 1890s, the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, for instance, produced numerous films of living pictures with titles pointing towards actual paintings by Gustave Moreau or Pierre-Paul Prud’hon among others. These films, however, merely joined the craze for living pictures, which dominated the American popular stage in the mid-1890s, when stage directors and impresarios such as Kilanyi and Hammerstein had become popular with their tableaux vivants based on European paintings and sculptures. Such films showing tableaux vivants were intended for vaudeville houses, where spectators could compare living pictures on film either with living pictures as performed on stage or with the artwork that was evoked (or more likely a reproduction of it). According to Charles Musser, at the end of the nineteenth century, both living pictures and Edison’s motion pictures ‘offered their respective spectators similar kinds of pleasure as each produced a cultural work (painting, sculpture or performance) in another medium, encouraging comparison between the “original” and its reproduction’.8 Moreover, early cinema’s fascination for tableaux vivants and the effect of frozen movement goes hand in hand with a predilection for its opposite – the picture or statue coming to life. Numerous early trick or transformation films such as *The Mysterious Portrait* (Méliès, 1899), *The Devil in the Studio* (Paul, 1901), *An Artist’s Dream* (Edison, 1900), *The Artist’s Dilemma* (Edison, 1901), *Artist’s Studio* (American Mutoscope and Biograph, 1903), *Animated Picture Studio* (American Mutoscope and Biograph, 1903), *The Animated Painting* (Edison, 1904) or *The Living Playing Cards* (Méliès, 1904) create spectacular visions of enchanted paintings that come to life.9

Early film did not only include literal representations of tableaux vivants performed on the stage. After the turn of the century, it also appropriated
the aesthetics of tableaux vivants in its attempts to develop new models of narrative cinema. Borrowed from the stage melodrama, tableaux enabled early filmmakers to punctuate the action, to emphasise or prolong a dramatic situation, or to give a scene an abstract or quasi-allegorical significance. From almost as early as films began to include narrative, it was customary, for instance, to begin or end a film with an ‘emblematic’ shot epitomising or summarising the film’s subject. However, although early film borrowed from the nineteenth-century stage a performance style that has been described as a ‘histrionic’ mode of acting, cinematic tableaux were not simply carried over wholesale from the theatre. Whereas performers on the stage used tableaux to convey intense emotions in non-verbal form, freezing in place with broad gestures at a climactic moment in the narrative, film actors of the early 1900s (such as those playing in Griffith’s Biograph films) rather eschewed the fully extended gestures of the histrionic code. Keeping their arms close to their bodies, they expressed emotional intensity through a comparative lack of movement rather than absolute stillness. In early film tableaux, limited forms of figure movement within the picture were therefore accepted. One actor could move, for instance, while others maintained a pose. In other instances, movement of human figures could be minimised by the scale and apparent depth of the shot, resulting in a strong pictorial effect by the use of big sets organised in perspective. As Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs have demonstrated, early film actors rarely held a pose for a prolonged period and tableaux most frequently appeared in films with strong ties to the theatre or the graphic arts, such as in religious films. Another way early film modified the use of tableaux was by truncating them: groupings and poses like the stage tableaux were immediately broken and followed by a resumption of the scene or a cut to an intertitle introducing the next scene.

The presence of tableaux in early cinema is a complex issue that is beyond the scope of this chapter. The hybrid nature of the stage tableau – combining drama and the visual arts in itself – acquired a new complexity when transposed to the film screen. Paradoxically, pictorial effects in early cinema were not suppressed but rather encouraged by its reliance on theatrical precedents. First of all, in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, acting was largely conceived along pictorial lines as demonstrated by the consistent use of illustrative drawings in manuals on acting. Actors were encouraged to practise poses and to study statues and paintings. Furthermore, rather than simply copying theatre, the cinema seized precisely on those aspects of spectacular staging that can be called ‘pictorial’. In the 1910s, both European and American cinema turned to the pictorial tradition of the theatre to establish new models of film-making that included staging in depth, complex and expressive light-
ing, and various immersive techniques that facilitated the introduction and involvement of the spectator into cinematic space. Early cinema also relied largely on what is usually referred to as the ‘tableau shot’, a long shot in which the frame of the image resembles the proscenium arch of the stage. This tableau shot does not relate directly to the tableau vivant but it is inherently connected with a kind of slowness that was seen as antagonistic to the increasing pace created by the development of continuity editing. Whereas, broadly speaking, American cinema of the 1910s tended to increase cutting rate, European films were characterised by a slower cutting rate and thus by a reliance on tableau shots comprising more complicated settings and a more complicated staging in depth of the action.12

Consequently, the use of tableaux diminished or even disappeared with the proliferation of a classical film style based on continuity editing. It only survived in alternative models of cinema, such as Expressionist film, for instance, in which pictorial references were highly important. However, the fascination for tableaux vivants remained an important issue throughout film history and it became in particular a major issue in European modernist cinema of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Several explanations can be proposed for the abundant use of tableau-like compositions or the insertion of literal tableaux vivants in modernist cinema. First of all, this fascination for tableaux vivants is in keeping with other preoccupations of modernist cinema, such as the interest in duration, time and stillness, which characterises works by prominent modernist directors such as Dreyer, Bresson, Antonioni, Resnais, Tarkovsky or Akerman among many others. Their preference for slowness and dedramatisation as well as their experiments with extended long takes, which show (almost) immobile figures, are in line with avant-garde films by Warhol, Snow or Huillet and Straub, which are also characterised by a resistance to speed.

Furthermore, tableaux vivants, which transform characters into living sculptures, also resonate with the ways in which modernist cinema dealt extensively with statues and sculptures of the human figure. Referring to films such as La Jetée (Marker), Une Femme mariée (Godard), Shadows (Cassavetes), Le Mépris (Godard), Hiroshima mon amour (Resnais), L’année dernière à Marienbad (Resnais), Vaghe stelle dell’orsa (Visconti), Viaggio in Italia (Rossellini), Méditerranée (Pollet), Gertrud (Dreyer) and Il Gattopardo (Visconti), Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues has demonstrated that, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, modernist cinema comprises many key scenes with statues.13 In these films, characters are often shown in static poses besides statues and their co-presence or approximation result in a kind of an enigma. It is not even an exaggeration to state that, in modernist cinema, characters themselves often acquire a kind of sculptural presence – an aspect that is certainly at stake
in Akerman’s work of the 1970s, for instance. Ivone Margulies has linked Akerman’s *Jeanne Dielman* (1975) to the ‘literalist’ tendencies in the visual arts of the late 1960s and early 1970s such as Minimalism and hyperrealism. Hyperrealist artists such as Estes or Hanson created over-detailed reproductions of reality, which showed striking similarities to tableaux vivants, and thus constructed a second nature in order to question ‘unmediated reality’. The uncannily hyperreal aspect of Akerman’s films is also achieved by the extended duration of several scenes as well as by the emphasis on the physical presence of the actors – in the case of Akerman’s cinema, Diderot’s notion of absorption is almost exchanged for the late-modernist notion of theatricality, which was also conceptualised by Fried in an influential 1967 article. Fried particularly pointed to the importance of the relation between the artwork and the (body of the) beholder for minimalist sculpture, denouncing these sculptures as ‘theatrical’.

Ignoring Fried’s opposition between theatricality and absorption, modernist cinema’s characters shown in a state of absorption thus become ‘theatrical’ in the sense that they acquire a kind of material or sculptural presence reminiscent of minimalist sculpture. Given this perspective, it is striking that, in the realm of film, precisely so-called modernist cinema rediscovered the tableau vivant – something that sounds like a paradox. On the one hand, references to tableaux vivants in films can be interpreted as part of a modernist tendency towards self-reflexivity. By including tableaux vivants in their films, modernist filmmakers attempted to determine the specificity of their medium – movement was juxtaposed with stasis, pictorial or sculptural space with cinematic space, iconic immediacy with filmic duration, and so forth. On the other hand, because of their hybrid and heterogeneous nature, both cinema and tableaux vivants were difficult to reconcile with a modernist aesthetic of self-investigation based on the idea of the essence and purity of a specific medium. At the nodal point that joins painting, sculpture and theatre, tableaux vivants are impure by definition. When they are evoked in a film, they create, in the words of Brigitte Peucker, ‘a moment of intensified intermediality’. Tableaux vivants are thus rather fitting as an artistic strategy answering to a post-modern aesthetic. Not by chance, the re-emergence of the tableau vivant in art cinema also coincided with its rediscovery in photography and video art – an issue discussed in the following chapter. As a consequence, the artistic interest in tableaux vivants marks a moment in contemporary art and film history that saw the return of representation, depiction and use of appropriation without completely removing the self-referential attitudes of modernism.

Dealing with the presence of tableaux vivants in film in several of her writings, Peucker calls the tableau vivant
a meeting point of several modes of representation, constituting a palimpsest or textual overlay simultaneously evocative of painting, drama, and sculpture. As the stagings of well-known paintings by human performers who hold a pose, it involves the ‘embodiment’ of the inanimate image. A tableau vivant, in other words, translates painting’s flatness, its two-dimensionality, into the three-dimensional. By this means it figures the introduction of the real into the image – the living body into painting – thus attempting to collapse the distance between signifier and signified. Film is a medium in which different representational systems may collide, may replace, but generally supplement one another, suggesting that those moments in films that evoke tableaux vivants are moments especially focused on film’s heterogeneity.18

Because of their heterogeneity, tableaux vivants in film can acquire a mysterious density. Because of their aesthetisation of immobility, they create blockages in the flow of a narrative film that result in a kind of enigma.19 This aspect is particularly developed in Raúl Ruiz’s *L’Hypothèse du tableau volé* (*The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting*, 1978), which precisely deals with the meaning and interpretation of images. Inspired by Klossowski’s writings, which often deal with the ways immobility highlights a disjunction between bodies and their gestures, Ruiz used tableaux vivants to give his film an arcane and cryptic aura, resulting in a bizarre combination of an art documentary and a detective story. The inherent complexity of tableaux vivants is further complicated because they do not imitate famous masterpieces but fictitious paintings by the fictitious nineteenth-century *pompier* artist Tonnerre. In the film, an art collector (Jean Rougeul) attempts to solve the mystery of a missing painting in Tonnerre’s oeuvre by reconstructing the known paintings in tableaux vivants. In the process, he discovers that the paintings are linked to each other by minor details and recurring poses. Eventually, the relations between the paintings and their recreations by means of tableaux vivants trace the contours of an occult ceremony, which involved the sacrifice of an androgynous youth. Shot in black-and-white, the film mixes different levels of reality by juxtaposing the paintings to the tableaux vivants but also to sketches, little puppets assuming the poses of the characters, as well as photographs of these puppets. The final shot of the film is an impressively mobile long take, which shows the collector walking through his mansion between the isolated and disconnected figures from the tableaux. In his *Poetics of Cinema*, Ruiz writes how he was fascinated by the ‘slight, almost imperceptible movements’ that are inevitably made by the tableau vivant models, who must continually strain to maintain their pose.

A certain physical tension results from this, the same that the original models must have felt. This shared intensity is like a bridge between the two groups of models. The tiny movements of the first group, frozen in the painting,
are reproduced by the models in the tableau vivant. The first models are in a sense reincarnated – or at least their tension is reincarnated.\textsuperscript{20}

According to Kerry Brougher, Ruiz plays with the tensions between static and moving images, between the many possible scenarios elicited by a painting against the pre-determined narrative line of a film. Bringing the two art forms together, Ruiz creates a situation in which different rules are overlaid and the truth can thus never be found.\textsuperscript{21}

Other filmmakers have also played on this uncanny aspect of the tableau vivant, which is unmistakably connected to its relation to death. Tableaux vivants have a melancholy and spectral character resulting in a curious deathliness. Not unlike Barthes’s famous description of the photograph, tableaux present bodies or poses arrested in time – though the tableau vivant realises this arrest with the help of real but seemingly lifeless bodies. The tableau’s inherent oscillation between movement and stillness is therefore often used as a metaphor for the tension between life and death. Tableaux vivants invert (and therefore hypostasise) the age-old fascination for the inanimate statue, like Pygmalion’s Galatea, coming magically to life – it is no coincidence that the Pygmalion motif became important in the arts of the eighteenth century, which also saw the rise of tableaux vivants as a popular art form.\textsuperscript{22} Inserted or appropriated in a film, these morbid associations acquire a new dimension. Film, after all, has been connected to both animation and mortification. On the one hand, in the context of the Bazinian theory that had a major influence on modernist cinema, film has been interpreted as a process of mummification, petrification or crystallisation. On the other hand, film has always been welcomed as a medium bringing movement and life in stagnant and dead forms. In the words of Brigitte Peucker,

film, too, has an abiding interest in tableau vivant, for the tableau vivant moments in film – moments of arrested motion, by and large – remind us by contrast that the ‘motion picture’ is the first medium able to animate visual representation, to make painting ‘come to life’.\textsuperscript{23}

**PASOLINI’S LA RICOTTA**

Apart from tableau vivant-like compositions in key modernist films such as Dreyer’s *Gertrud*, Resnais’s *L’Année dernière à Marienbad*, Rohmer’s *La Marquise d’O* or Akerman’s *Jeanne Dielman*, European modernist cinema also comprises films that include literal tableaux vivants. Famous examples are several films by Syberberg, Jarman’s biopic of *Caravaggio* (1986), Ferreri’s *Ciao maschio* (1978) and the aforementioned *L’Hypothèse du tableau volé* by Ruiz. The following section focuses on Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *La Ricotta* (1963) and Jean-Luc...
Godard’s *Passion* (1982), both of which are films about the making of a film. In both works, the self-referential aspect is explicit and, strikingly, both films-in-the-film consist of (or are evoked by) tableaux vivants based on famous paintings. Both *La Ricotta* and *Passion* also deal with death and, directly or indirectly, with the story of the Passion of Christ, which had been a favourite subject of tableaux vivants on the stage. Many if not all of the earliest cinematic representations of Christ of the late 1890s are often straightforward representations of passion plays, such as the famous ones at Oberammergau in Bavaria or Horitz in Austria, one of which was shot by a Lumière cameraman. These European passion plays were even re-enacted for the occasion – a restaging of the Oberammergau passion play, for instance, was filmed on the roof of the Grand Central Palace in New York in 1898. In addition, cinematic passion plays of the early 1900s by Ferdinand Zecca or Alice Guy are unmistakably based on pictorial sources. Consisting of tableau shots, these films are further characterised by actors holding poses for an extended length of time at significant moments. This reliance on tableaux vivants in religious films is no coincidence since these subjects had strong ties to an age-old iconographic tradition in the theatre and visual arts. In many cases, it seems to have been sufficient to make vague references – the spectator simply had to be aware that the shot compositions were based on paintings without the need to recognise them. In other cases, references were specific and the educated viewer could certainly identify the film’s pictorial sources. In his 1916 film *Christus*, Giulio Antamoro told the story of Christ by simply staging tableaux vivants successively based on Fra Angelico’s *Annunciation*, Correggio’s *Nativity*, Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper*, Mantegna’s *Crucifixion*, Rembrandt’s *Descent from the Cross*, Michelangelo’s *Pieta* and Raphael’s *Transfiguration*.

One of the most remarkable passion tableaux in film history was created much later by Italian director Pasolini in *La Ricotta*, a thirty-five-minute episode of *RoGoPAG* (1963), which also had contributions by Rossellini, Godard and Gregoretti. Unmistakably, *La Ricotta* is an instance of Pasolini’s familiar strategy to make holiness an issue through acts of desecration. However, first and foremost, the film criticises the neocapitalist commodification or reification of just about everything including religion. As in several of his other films, Pasolini uses the theme of the Passion and its depiction in art history to ask the question whether an artist is able to create authentic culture in a consumer society that renders everything profane and grotesque. Nonetheless, although *La Ricotta* deals less with religion per se than with the degraded position it occupies in contemporary society and, especially, with the ways it is usually represented, Pasolini was charged with blasphemy. Banned as an ‘attack upon religion’, *La Ricotta* resulted first in a trial and then in a four-month suspended prison sentence for Pasolini.
Tableaux Vivants 1

La Ricotta tells the story of an American film director who is making a movie about Christ. During a shooting session on location in Rome’s periphery, the cynical director is interviewed by a journalist. His somewhat obligatory questions elicit venomous answers from the director, who states that ‘Italy has the most illiterate people and the most ignorant bourgeoisie of Europe.’ Finally, the journalist is dismissed by the director as an ‘average man’ and ‘a monster, a dangerous criminal, a conformist, a colonialist, a racist’. The main character of the story, however, is Stracci (Mario Cipriani), the extra playing the good thief. Since he has a big family to support, he gives them his lunch box. Disguised in one of the costumes that are on hand on the set, he gets another lunch basket but he cannot eat it because the director calls him on the set for the scene of Christ’s Deposition from the Cross, which is shot in colour after a painting by Rosso Fiorentino. The Deposition scene is staged as a tableau vivant with the Cross, two ladders and all the characters in period costumes in positions based on Rosso’s painting. Upon returning to his lunch, he finds that the little dog of the female star ate it. Weeping over his stolen lunch basket, Stracci sells the dog to the journalist and with the money, he buys a wheel of ricotta cheese. However, he cannot eat it because he is

Figure 4.1 Orson Welles and Pier Paolo Pasolini during the filming of La Ricotta, Pasolini’s contribution to RoGoPAG (1962)
Pasolini’s La Ricotta

summoned again to the set for another take of the deposition from the cross, which is equally shot in colour, this time after a painting by Jacopo Pontormo. Again, the Deposition scene is constructed as a tableau vivant imitating the unstable positions of Pontormo’s Biblical characters. Eventually, he manages to eat his ricotta but cast and crew members tease him and they shower him with food used on the set. Unaware that he donated his lunch bag to his family or that the star’s dog ate his food, they treat him like a hopeless glutton or an animal to be fed. Nailed to the cross again, for the crucifixion scene, Stracci fails to recite his lines. It turns out that he died of indigestion on the cross. In the astonished silence following this discovery, the director remarks ‘Poor Stracci! He had to die to show us that he was alive.’

A subproletarian reminiscent of the characters in Accatone (1961) and Mamma Roma (1962) and ignored or mocked by everyone, Stracci is a seemingly vulgar man with a gargantuan appetite. However, the mocked Stracci – the Italian word for rags – is in fact a Christ figure and he turns out to be the true inheritor of the Cross. The real Passion of La Ricotta is not the one being filmed but that lived by Stracci. La Ricotta is thus a film about the way appearances conceal a quite opposite truth and Pasolini links this theme with that of a film about filmmaking. Tellingly, the director in La Ricotta is played by a ‘real’ director. Pasolini had cast for this part no one less than Orson Welles, who can be interpreted as a parody of both Pasolini and Welles himself. On the one hand, the protagonist of La Ricotta resonates with Welles’s persona of a Hollywood maudit who worked within yet also against the Hollywood machine – just before he appeared in La Ricotta, Welles was the narrator in King of Kings (1961), Nicholas Ray’s biblical epic on the life of Christ. On the other hand, the character of the director recites lines of Pasolini’s poetry when interviewed by the journalist and the film-within-the-film being made by Welles is the foretaste of the film Pasolini would actually make on the Passion, his Il Vangelo secondo Matteo (The Gospel according to St Matthew, 1964). Both films are closely interconnected. ‘I thought of doing The Gospel before I started shooting La Ricotta and when I actually shot La Ricotta I’d already written the treatment for The Gospel, and the initial ideas,’ Pasolini stated.26 In the words of Sam Rohdie, La Ricotta can be seen as ‘ridicule in a future tense’.27

Both films heavily rely on painting, a medium that pervades Pasolini’s entire filmography. One of the main characters in Teorema (1968) is an avant-garde painter, who first urinates on the canvas and then paints with his eyes covered. In Il Decamerone (1971), Pasolini himself played the part of a pupil of Giotto who goes to Naples to paint a fresco on the walls of the Santa Chiara church, and who has a visionary dream in which a Madonna with child supervises a scene where some reprobate sex offenders are being pushed down a
hill by demons. Furthermore, Pasolini included numerous visual references to the history of painting in many of his shot compositions and the noting of the filmmaker’s deep connection to art history has become a critical commonplace in Pasolini studies. The simple yet magnificent compositions by Mantegna and Caravaggio resonate in his early films; Giotto, Bruegel and Vermeer are echoed in Il Decamerone; Bruegel and Bosch in I Racconti di Canterbury; and the Rajput and Persian miniatures in Il Fiore delle mille e una notte.

Concerning Il Vangelo secondo Matteo, Pasolini himself mentioned several pictorial sources such as Piero della Francesca (the Pharisees’ clothes), Byzantine painting (Christ’s face like Rouault) as well as artists such as Masaccio and Giotto, the work of which was already important for the style of Pasolini’s first film Accatone. Many commentators and critics have linked the films of Pasolini to the history of Italian painting and some of them have mentioned the importance of the filmmaker’s debt to the prominent Italian art historian Roberto Longhi, to whom Mamma Roma is dedicated. In the early 1940s, Pasolini had studied art history at the University of Bologna with Longhi, who was already an established specialist of early-Renaissance art. According to Marc Weis, Pasolini even ‘seems to have caught the film bug, or the bug for directing films, not in a cinema, but rather through Roberto Longhi’s art history slide lectures’. Unmistakably, Pasolini’s reading of Longhi’s study of trecento and quattrocento painting led to pictorial frame compositions borrowed from artists of that era but also to a veritable theology of the cinematic image. Longhi, after all, emphasised that paintings by artists such as Giotto, Masaccio and Piero della Francesca are dramatic narrative representations on the one hand but also devotional images on the other. In their works, therefore, a ‘modern’ realist claim goes hand in hand with a reverential archaism. Their paintings are still iconic images, which means that they are not simply ‘symbolic’ in relation to their divine content but also instances of a visual or material evidence for the incarnation of the sacred in the world. Like relics, icons have the properties of what they represent. Likewise, contradicting semiotic theories by Christian Metz or Umberto Eco, Pasolini developed a complex theology of the film image based on the notion that the world itself consists of signs and in which everything, from written or spoken language to objects and appearances, is already semiotic. Like Giotto or Masaccio, Pasolini, in his version of the Gospel, combined the archaic and the modern by alternating static, frontal and ceremonial compositions with instances of the realism of cinéma vérité. The use of the telephoto lens even served both purposes by combining the casual effect of the immediacy of a news documentary with a flattening effect, which renders a pictorial character to the film image. Several of his later films, too, particularly The
Decameron and I Racconti di Canterbury, are marked by shots characterised by an ‘amazing degree of iconicity’ reminiscent of the maestros of the late medieval and Renaissance visual arts.\textsuperscript{32}

According to Patrick Rumble, Pasolini uses such shot compositions based on painterly models in order to stage ‘a conflict between the transnational language of cinema and those “particular” cultural models, taken from tradition, that resist, on a metaphorical level, the processes of transnationalisation’.\textsuperscript{33} Pasolini thus subverts, without completely disabling it, the dominant language of film by introducing alien and archaic visual models and traditions – András Bálint Kovács presented Pasolini as the pre-eminent example of the ‘ornamental style’ of modernist cinema.\textsuperscript{34} On the one hand, this contamination of cinematic and painterly codes can be interpreted as a function of a formalist ethic of defamiliarisation. On the other hand, the inclusion of pictorial models can be seen as an evocation of the repressed memory of cinema. To Rumble, Pasolini’s re-animation of pre-modern visual sources ‘presents the origins of the cinematic image – pre-technological origins that cinema must repress in order to assert itself as the most objective and unbiased technique of audiovisual reproduction’. Pasolini thus contaminates the transparency of the cinematic image with the stains of other styles and hence establishes a break with the neorealist tradition. By referring to these pre-cinematic and pictorial sources, Pasolini’s films can be considered as, in the words of Rumble, ‘stylistic oxymorons’.

In light of this, Pasolini would include tableaux vivants as extradiegetic in-between sequences in The Decameron and I Racconti di Canterbury, which indicate an authorial signature that is confirmed by Pasolini’s physical presence in both movies.\textsuperscript{35} Similarly, with its film-in-a-film structure, La Ricotta can be interpreted as a meta-Pasolini film emphasising its heterogeneity. Strikingly, in its literal art historical references, the film-in-the film of La Ricotta does not appeal to trecento or quattrocento paintings but, as mentioned before, to depictions of the Deposition from the Cross by two artists of the sixteenth century, Jacopo da Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino. Both artists are considered to be responsible for the emergence of a new style in Florence around 1520 that was later, in retrospect, recognised as Mannerism. Characterised by gyrating rhythms, unnatural colours that modulate a sort of expressionist dissonance and by the renunciation of a perspectively definable space, Mannerism marked a revolution in the history of art; according to Marxist art historian Arnold Hauser, this revolution lay in the fact that ‘for the first time art deliberately diverged from nature.’\textsuperscript{36} Writing his book on Mannerism in the years in which Pasolini directed La Ricotta, Hauser connected this artistic style to a ‘crisis of the Renaissance’ created by drastic economic, social, scientific and religious transformations. For Hauser, alienation was a key concept
for analysing and comprehending Mannerism, which coincided with a process of social institutionalisation. Mannerist artists such as Pontormo and Rosso, who are within and yet against the tradition, became therefore logical as a source of inspiration for Pasolini in his attempt at making a film that reflects both on the status of image making and religion in the post-war era of consumerism. Struggling with the heritage of neorealism, Pasolini appears to value these two Mannerist painters to the extent that they express the crisis in classical Renaissance models.

Furthermore, Pasolini’s tableaux vivants refer specifically to two highly important paintings. According to Walter Friedlaender, the 1521 representation of the Deposition is the work in which Rosso took ‘the decisive step away from the balanced and classical towards the spiritual and subjective’. Calling the painting ‘a return to a kind of primitivism’, Friedlaender notes that its space is unreal throughout; the figures hardly fill it up but stand in front of it like ghosts. The sharp light, the peculiarly shining colours, the curves of their long outstretched limbs, bestow on these figures something unreal, far removed from any ideal canon.
Pasolini, we dare to claim, must have been attracted by both the ‘cinematic’ qualities of Rosso’s painting and by characteristics that would become typical of tableaux vivants. Another eminent scholar noted that the ‘shapes and planes are set into movement and then petrified’ and he spoke of an intense optical experience, but the experience is not of a visual reality but of an apparition. In it, beings of a disquieting spidery elegance and singular emotions are transfixed as they act in an abstracted world – the persons of the drama seem possessed automata.38

Pasolini based his second tableau vivant depicting the Deposition on the interpretation of the scene by Pontormo, whom Friedlaender labelled ‘the true reformer of that artistic period’.39 Marking the emergence of Pontormo’s artistic maturity, the 1526–8 altar of the Deposition combines a classical clarity of forms and surfaces with his earlier anti-classical paintings that favoured the evocation of a psychic energy at the expense of the perspective logic of the Renaissance and the physicality of the characters’ bodies. Pontormo’s paintings are usually marked by swift and slender arabesques attenuating substance and physicality. In the case of The Descent from the Cross, this takes the form of a kind of acrobatic performance. As Hauser remarked, ‘the bodies tower on top of one another with no visible support in a state of precarious, momentary equilibrium, expressing the keen sense of impermanence that becomes such an important theme of mannerism.’40 Pontormo’s Deposition is a complex structure of kinetic fragments that are held together in a precarious equilibrium. According to S. J. Freedberg, the painting moves ‘in a counter-clockwise interlacing like a visual polyphony, unfolding the narrative and commenting on its emotions as it proceeds. Simultaneously, the forms communicate their beauty of artifice and express the anguish of the beings whom they describe.’41

In a film about film-as-artifice, Pasolini must have been attracted by the artificiality cherished by these Mannerist painters rather than by their ‘slightly neurotic sensibility of expression’ which made the style so attractive to a modern audience – it has frequently been remarked that the ‘discovery’ of Mannerism in the 1910s and 1920s by prominent art historians such as Dvořák or Friedlaender coincided with the development of expressionist and abstract modes in modern art. Although it would be an anachronism to equate Mannerism with the idea of l’art pour l’art that is inherently linked to a modern industrial society, its appreciation of artifice prepared a modern conception of art based on purely autonomous artistic motives. This conception coincided with changes in the nature of patronage. John Shearman noted that from the 1520s onwards, artworks were commissioned exclusively because a donor wanted to own a Michelangelo, for instance, while subject, size and
even medium became irrelevant.\textsuperscript{42} For Shearman, this is the moment when the idea originated that an artwork was primarily made for an art collection. Paintings depicting religious scenes, in short, were no longer seen as icons embodying the sacred but first and foremost as evidence of the mastership of the artist. Rather than an expression of an inner or social conflict, Mannerist paintings are first and foremost products of an \textit{ostentatio artis}. In light of this, the fact that Pasolini shows us two versions of the same scene, Christ’s Deposition from the Cross, is telling. As both paintings portray the same subject, we are invited to think less about what they represent than how they do it – a strategy that tallies perfectly with the Mannerist preference of form over content. Moreover, the specific subject of the Descent from the Cross itself is not without significance. The depiction of the Deposition, after all, borrows its theological significance from its presentation of the dead body of Christ, that is, the demonstration of the incarnation of the Son of God. This idea of God’s materialisation in Jesus or, in the jargon of 1960s semiotics, the perfect correspondence between sign and thing, is the basis for the Catholic doctrine of the devotional image. By referring to Mannerist painters, however, Pasolini thus introduces paragons of artificiality rather than devotional images into his narrative. Consequently, the effect of the tableaux vivants in \textit{La Ricotta} is clearly different than that of the hieratic and ceremonial one vaguely based on Giotto in \textit{Il Decamerone}, which evokes a dream (instead of a commercial film production). In \textit{La Ricotta}, the suffering of Christ is presented as a spectacle, quite literally as colour inserts in a black-and-white film that attempt to render the remarkable intensity of the colours in both Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino’s paintings. With his carefully constructed tableaux, Pasolini unmistakably had in mind the Hollywood biblical films that were in vogue in the 1950s and early 1960s and baffled the audiences with glorious Technicolor and breathtaking Cinemascope. According to Pasolini, one can see \textit{La Ricotta} as a ‘collage.’ The film’s ‘pictorial’ passages are quotations that have a highly precise function: to quote the two Mannerists painters Rosso Fiorentino and Pontormo. I have perfectly recreated their pictures in detail. Not because they share my point of view or because I love them – it’s not about my representation in the first person – but rather just to show the inner state of the protagonist of \textit{La Ricotta}, who is a director conceiving a film on the Passion. This conception is the exact opposite of the one I have used before to make \textit{Il Vangelo secondo Matteo}. The quotations also have something exorcistic about them. They are reconstructions of extreme precision, sophistication and formality: precisely what I did not want to do in \textit{Il Vangelo}, and what I therefore foisted polemically onto the character of the film director. Not that I have something against directors of Bible films; it was not a polemic against bad taste but rather against an excess of good taste.\textsuperscript{43}
Moreover, Pasolini himself too has been connected to Mannerism by critics like Naomi Greene, Pascal Bonitzer and Achille Bonito Oliva among others. Moravia called Pasolini ‘a great Mannerist, perhaps the greatest Mannerist of our literature after D’Annunzio’. In her monograph on the Italian filmmaker, Greene refers to a discussion on the notion of cinematic Mannerism in a 1985 issue of _Cahiers du cinéma_. Greene noted that virtually all _Cahiers_ critics who analysed this phenomenon have repeatedly referred to Pasolini films. One of these critics, Bonitzer, presents Pasolini’s preference for so-called ‘tableau shots’ (that is, a carefully composed, static shot resembling a painting or tableau) as an instance of cinematic Mannerism. Preferring mise-en-scène and plastic values to narrative, Pasolini’s tableau shots, in Bonitzer’s view, are emblematic of the unease and play of oppositions characterising Mannerism itself. Being harshly criticised for an aesthetic of the stationary in early films such as _Accatone_, Pasolini paradoxically understood film as a moving medium in the first place as a demonstration of the static. For Pasolini, consequently, the medium of film meant motion conceived in stills and a world made up of many individual poses. Early films such as _Accatone_ and _Mamma Roma_ comprise numerous deliberately naïve frontal shots and unconnected tableaux. These shots may depict nothing more than isolated fragments of reality that caught Pasolini’s painterly and fetishist imagination. Such shots enabled the director to invoke timeless images that predated or existed outside language. They evoke images of myth and ritual – the kind of images that particularly pervade later films like _Edipe Re_ (1967), _Medea_ (1969) and _Salò_ (1975). According to Bonitzer, tableau shots play upon the difference between painting and cinema. They also emphasise the difference between the movement of the shot and the immobility of the tableau. With its tableaux vivants inserts, _La Ricotta_ thus doubles the conflation of movement and stasis (or cinema and painting), which is already inherent in Pasolini’s film style based on tableau shots.

The Deposition tableaux are quite heterogeneous themselves, however. On the one hand, they refer to a divine realm completely at odds with the mundane and even vulgar worlds of both the Roman subproletarian slums and bourgeois filmmaking. In order to emphasise this difference, Pasolini refers to high art and resorts to the vivid and somewhat uncannily garish and anaemic colours as found in the original works. His close-ups of the Deposition scenes even suggest the enlarged details found in art books. In contrast with the location of the Roman periphery’s bare and miserable hills and the brutal skyline of post-war apartment blocks, the tableaux vivants are composed of shots of motionless figures carefully poised against a depthless space. But the fact that we know that they are staged, that they are just a fiction in a fiction, undermines their ceremonial capacities. Until they fall
silent in the quotation from sacred art, we know that the characters are ordinary and even venal people and that even this holy image is part of a commercial story. We cannot fail to see these embodiments of holy figures as nothing more than a Felliniesque acting troupe dressed in Biblical costumes and dancing to pop music. As a result, the tableaux vivants create the impression of a gaudy imitation of the original, remote from the divine. As spectators who are joining the crew, we are aware that we are watching a pastiche and that Pasolini exaggerates and hence parodies his ‘Mannerist’ taste for hieratic poses, cultural echoes, and a deeply aesthetised and stylised reconstruction of reality. Furthermore, the solemnity of the Passion scene is even undermined during the filming of the tableaux. All kinds of things seem to go wrong. Someone starts the wrong music. A bearded man picks his nose and other characters are distracted, find it difficult to remain motionless, fluff their lines or break into laughter. On the soundtrack, we hear the frustrated voice of the production assistant as he tries to get all the actors into their proper positions, with the correct facial expressions and gestures.

The frustration of the filmmakers, of course, stems from the incompatibility of these two or even three systems of representation – film, painting and tableau vivant. Pasolini emphasises these differences, particularly those between movement and stasis, in several ways. There is not only a difference between the static tableaux in colour and the film in black-and-white, movement and stillness are also confronted in the main character. Stracci is full of life. His actions are feverish and restless and he is represented, in the words of Pasolini himself, as a ‘mechanical character’.

He is not only reminiscent of Chaplin because he is a ‘passionate human being’ but also because Pasolini shows Stracci in fast motion, evoking slapstick undercranking, which disrupts narrative realism in a way similar to the tableaux vivants. Eventually, Stracci is nailed down in a lifeless position and yet asked to move. The film, moreover, ends with the death of the Christ-like figure, echoing the theme of the paintings by Pontormo and Rosso. Turning a human being into a piece of art thus implies killing him. In light of this, tableaux vivants can be interpreted as an inversion of the Pygmalion myth of the statue coming to life – it is no coincidence that the food and wine in the opening and closing shots of the film are beautiful still-life compositions, *natura morta* (dead nature) in Italian, which echo the Mannerist tableaux vivants. Moreover, selecting Pontormo as a source of inspiration for one of the tableaux vivants is telling in this case. First of all, Pontormo often has statues within his paintings and, like Pasolini, his kind of image-within-the-image leads to a questioning of reality. In addition, in the early 1530s, Pontormo created the only Renaissance painting devoted to the theme of Pygmalion to predate the blossoming of the theme
in the eighteenth century – the era that also saw the rise of tableaux vivants as a form of popular entertainment.\textsuperscript{50} As Pasolini juxtaposes painting and life through the medium of cinema, Pontormo blurs the limits between the sculptural and the living through painting. Last but not least, Pontormo’s fascination with the creation of a living statue resonates with one of the many stories in Pontormo’s life, that of the creation of a \textit{figura viva} which the painter was meant to include in the decoration of a triumphal allegorical chariot for the carnival in Florence held in 1515. According to Vasari in his \textit{Vite}, the affair ended badly because the son of a baker who was transformed into a gilt putto died shortly thereafter. Like Stracci in the film by Orson Welles’s character, the baker’s little boy is transformed into a piece of art and finds death in the process. Like painting in the hands of Pontormo, cinema becomes an act of mortification. The tableau vivant becomes part of a horror film, so to speak. By choosing Pontormo’s Deposition, Pasolini thus emphasised in several ways the tableau vivant’s associations with death, a theme that he had stressed already in \textit{Accatone} and \textit{Mamma Roma}. Echoing Vasari’s macabre anecdote on Pontormo, Pasolini, no doubt, also invoked the usual mortal connotations that tableaux vivants have through their connections with wax figures. Mark Sandberg has noted the evident parallels between the tableau vivant and the wax tableau as well as between the narrativisation of early cinema and the development of the wax tableau, which all rely heavily on the staging of ‘frozen moments’. Referring to the long tradition of wax-museum horror films, Sandberg notes that such films exploit for terror effects the wax museum’s tenuous boundaries between corpses, mannequins, and spectators’ bodies. At the same time, they explore the relationship between film, still photography, and wax, playing with differences in dimensionality and motion to create surprises, morbid jokes, and shock effects along the way. [. . .] The tableau’s power of illusion is no longer marvellous but sinister.\textsuperscript{51}

**GODARD’S PASSION**

Pasolini’s \textit{La Ricotta} is part of the episode film \textit{RoGoPAG}, which also includes a contribution by Godard, who used tableaux vivants only much later, in his 1981 film \textit{Passion}. Like Pasolini in \textit{La Ricotta}, Godard in \textit{Passion} employed tableaux vivants to deal with the theme of a movie director struggling with his medium, collaborators and sponsors. Furthermore, \textit{Passion} marks Godard’s return to (relatively) mainstream cinema in the early 1980s, which coincided with a shift from the political militancy of his earlier works to a preoccupation with religious themes. Godard’s embrace of a spiritual cinema, which
Tableaux Vivants deals with metaphysics and mysticism, even implied an appeal to Christian imagery and biblical references – issues that would become more prominent in subsequent works such as Je vous salue, Marie (1985), Nouvelle vague (1990) and Histoire(s) du cinéma (1989–98). Passion, Je vous salue, Marie and Nouvelle vague have been interpreted as a ‘trilogy of Protestant theology’ dealing with big theological issues such as the crucifixion, the annunciation and the resurrection, respectively. Like Pasolini’s works of the 1960s and 1970s, Godard’s films of the 1980s can be interpreted as semi-religious parables about the spiritual bankruptcy of modern materialism. The title Passion unmistakably invokes the notion of romantic love but it certainly also refers to the spiritual meaning of the term and to early films depicting the Passion of Christ, which consisted primarily as a succession of tableaux vivants that evoked a centuries-old iconographic tradition. In Passion, Godard juxtaposes scenes of ordinary life situated in and around a factory and a hotel on the one hand with a self-contained artistic world formed by reconstructions through tableaux vivants of famous paintings on the other. In line with some of his earlier works, Godard thus points to Adorno’s famous remark that all autonomous art is paradoxically characterised by the concealment of the labour that went into it. In Passion, both counterposed realms – the realm of the political and its passion for social justice versus the realm of the aesthetic and its passion for painting – can be interpreted as modern equivalents of the sacred and the secular. On the one hand, Godard emphasises the differences between both realms. His cinematic explorations of the individual paintings, for instance, have an emotional density (supported by camera movements and music) which the other scenes generally do not have. Godard also juxtaposes the static character of his tableaux vivants with chaotic movements, such as those in scenes set in a factory or a hotel characterised by Keystone Kops-like chases. On the other hand, at many moments in the film, Godard links both realms visually or thematically to each another.

Passion tells the story of Jerzy (Radziwillowicz), a Polish expatriate film director who tries to make a film entitled Passion in a studio in a small Swiss border town. During the shooting, Jerzy stays in a hotel run by Hanna (Schygulla), who becomes interested in the director and persuades him to do a screen test. In the hotel, Jerzy also meets Isabelle (Huppert), a worker in a small nearby factory owned by Michel (Piccoli), Hanna’s husband. The production of Jerzy’s film, however, is going badly. Although he has a large crew and an army of extras working on setting up scenes, he films very little. He merely erects and dismantles sets, and stages and restages tableaux vivants based on famous paintings. He rides the impressive crane that holds a heavy television camera but hardly shoots at all. In so doing, Jerzy’s film mirrors Godard’s own project that also started from these two ingredients. On the
one hand, while playing with the idea of making a film on the making of a film, Godard visited Coppola’s Zoetrope Studio, where the American director was filming One from the Heart (1982), in which new video technology was used to create a fantasy Las Vegas. The film Godard had in mind would have been a visual study of the crew’s activities to analyse the gestures of work, which became a crucial element of Passion. The study of gestures is an important element in the making of tableaux vivants, which, like narrative paintings, attempt to convey the significant or ‘pregnant’ moment of a story through the ‘frozen’ gestures of the characters. As Godard states in front of a projection of a Tintoretto painting in his video essay Scénario du film Passion (1982), which was commissioned by Channel 4 as a compliment to the theatrical release of Passion, his aim was to see if gestures in a factory had some connection with gestures of love in painting. On the other hand, Godard used Coppola’s studio, sets and crew to film several tableaux vivants based on works by Rubens and Georges de la Tour. Although this footage was not used in the film, Passion eventually incorporated the staging of vast historical and religious scenes from classic paintings which relate metaphorically to the lives of the characters, thus bringing together ‘work and love, politics and personal relations, reality and symbolic life and art’.

Like Pasolini, Godard, without having an orthodox Christian faith, attempted to create a spiritual work dealing with the notion of images in the age of late-capitalism. Furthermore, Godard deals with the notion of the image in Christianity. For Godard, who has been considered an iconoclast on many occasions, the Bible makes a perfect scenario. Although raised as a Protestant, Godard had always been interested in Catholicism and its cult of the devotional image. Godard’s theory of film is unmistakably indebted to Bazin’s brand of humanistic and existentialist Catholicism with its reverential attitude towards reality as the manifestation of a divine presence. In Histoire(s) du cinéma, his melancholy video compilation on the history of the twentieth century, which, for Godard, is inherently linked with the history of the film image, Godard even speaks of the redeeming or messianic powers of film in a way that is reminiscent of Bazin’s writings. What is more, cinema is even described with the help of Christian metaphors: the film screen is Veronica’s veil or the shroud of the Good Samaritan, the film image offers redemption, and so on. In the age of post-cinema, for Godard, cinema can only be an act of faith: ‘Le cinéma comme le christianisme ne se fonde pas sur une vérité historique, il nous donne un récit, une histoire, et nous dit maintenant: crois.’ In other passages of Histoire(s) du cinéma, Godard even suggests that the horrors of the twentieth century can be answered by the redemptive powers of the film image. Godard, for instance, refers to Le Mystère des roches de Kador, a 1912 film by Léonce Perret in which the failing memory of a woman is
recovered by looking at the staging of a traumatic experience on the advice of a scientist who uses ‘cinematic psychotherapy’. Perret’s striking image of a woman swooning in front of a blank film screen is reminiscent of a recurring image in Scénario du film Passion. This video essay presents the director in a video editing room in front of a white screen, which he compares to both the blank page of Mallarmé and Veronica’s veil. Aided by the simple means of the video editing process, Godard even suggests that images gradually appear miraculously on the white screen, which is also compared to the blank canvas of modernist painting. Commenting on the pre-production of Passion, Godard states that he ‘didn’t want to write the script’ but that he ‘wanted to see it’. Referring to the Bible, Godard asks if ‘the Law was first read or was it first seen and then written by Moses on his tablets?’, and he answers, ‘I think you see the world first and then write. So to film the world of Passion it had to be seen, to see if it existed.’ This primacy of seeing over writing precisely marks the production process of both Godard’s film and Jerzy’s film-in-the-film. Refusing to rely on a script and to make explicit a narrative, they both assemble cast and crew to make a film that starts from images. These images, furthermore, are pre-existing images from the tradition of European painting that appear in Passion as ‘found objects’ in the sense that the spectator recognises that some film images are derived from famous paintings. They are juxtaposed against the mundane stories of cast and crew and against the world of the factory. In a way, the tableaux vivants, which consist of elaborately constructed movie sets with actors in period costumes adopting poses mimicking the compositions of famous paintings, serve as inserts comparable to the shots of loud billboards and comic strips in Godard’s 1960s movies. Heterogeneous in themselves, tableaux vivants enable Godard to reflect on the interrelations between several media. Apart from the combination of painting and film, Passion also includes scenes that confront film and video – such as the scene with the video screen tests of Hanna. In light of this, the tableaux vivants in Passion are not so much intertextual quotations from a vast art historical repertory of images, but rather intermediary constructions that thematise the hybrid nature of cinema and the impossibility of a cinematic narrative.56

The first painting reproduced by a tableau vivant in Passion is Rembrandt’s The Night Watch (1642), a masterpiece of seventeenth-century Dutch art which implied a mode of painting that has been called proto-cinematic. According to Anne Hollander, ‘Caravaggio’s theatrical effects were made cinematic in Holland.’57 Tellingly, rather than presenting a proper tableau vivant based on The Night Watch, Godard shows us the preparations for the staging. Characters are in motion and are looking for correct attitudes and gestures. According to Elena del Río,
rather than representing static wholes aspiring to reproduce the original painting with exactitude, Godard’s tableaux act upon our senses as moving fragments that reintroduce the body and the notion of temporality into the acts of perception and expression. Implying a shift from representation to performance, these tableaux constitute unique and original events of perceptual interrogation in their own right.\textsuperscript{58}

As soon as they have assumed their static positions, Godard abruptly cuts away to the realm of labour by showing us shots of the factory. Subsequently, Godard shows us the tableau vivant in fragments in a way that evokes photographic details in an art book – or, for that matter, in a way reminiscent of the art documentaries discussed in Chapter 1.\textsuperscript{59} As Resnais entered the oeuvre of Van Gogh through the painted window of his room in Arles, Godard penetrates the space of the paintings of the masters by turning them into three-dimensional tableaux. Furthermore, by fragmenting the characters’ bodies, Godard puts the tension between (pictorial) stasis and (cinematic) movement in a new perspective. Instead of giving us a full-length view of Rembrandt’s large painting, he presents us hip-length views or medium close-ups of the characters – a mode of representation that is typical of Dutch genre painting (\textit{The Night Watch} is therefore an exceptional work) and which Hollander calls ‘cinematic framing’. Just as in Dutch seventeenth-century genre painting, Godard, in a deliberate attempt to draw the viewer closer, also immobilises the characters’ bodies in this way. In addition, he follows the conventions of the cinematic representation of a work of art in documentaries by giving an overall (although ‘unfinished’) view of the scene that is followed by a series of close-ups. Meanwhile, a voice-over quoting Eugène Fromentin states that ‘this composition is full of holes and badly filled spaces.’\textsuperscript{60} Pointing to the tension between the medium of film and the medium of painting, Godard mobilises space and time by the movement of the characters and changing camera positions and framings.

Last but not least, Godard animates the painting by the changing lighting set-ups. Large areas of the composition are in darkness, obscuring members of the military company, while unseen sources of light illuminate, as if by spotlight, other individual members. Director of photography Raoul Coutard says off-screen that ‘there is no story. Everything is properly lit from left to right, top to bottom, and front to back. It’s not a \textit{Nightwatch} but a \textit{Daywatch} lit by a sun already low on the horizon.’ In an interview, Coutard stated that ‘you really have to analyse the painting carefully to notice that Rembrandt cheated.’\textsuperscript{61} Jerzy’s project can be interpreted as a search for the right light – a quest that has both religious and cinematic overtones. Later in the film, producer László (Szabó) invites Jerzy to come to California with him to find Sternberg and Boris Kaufman’s light again.
This emphasis on light is evident for several reasons. In the words of Elena del Rio, ‘the tableaux vivants in Passion conduct their investigation of appearance by stressing the shared reliance on lighting of both painting and the cinema.’ In particular, Godard employs light in a way reminiscent of Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro. Furthermore, the changing of the lighting set-ups in Passion evokes the way Rembrandt changed the light in different states of some of his etchings. According to Hollander, Rembrandt changed the light and played with the mood and texture of the same scene, recasting it again and again ‘as if recording on film the emotional effect of deepening shadow and ebbing light’. ‘Light and shade, the essential components of photographic and cinematographic art,’ Hollander continues, ‘were first given their true freedom by Rembrandt. [. . .] Moving-camera poetry was made possible for future generations by him.’ It comes as no surprise, then, that Rembrandt had become an important pictorial model for directors and cameramen, resulting in the so-called ‘Rembrandt lighting’ developed and favoured by directors such as DeMille in the late 1910s. What is more, as Alain Bergala and Douglas Morrey noted, Godard’s fascination with lighting goes hand in hand with his interest in religious themes in his films of the 1980s. In so doing, Godard not only referred to a theological tradition equating light with spirituality but he was also particularly influenced by Simone Weil, who often associated divine grace with light. Weil, for instance, lamented the fact that human beings were incapable of nourishment by light. Godard, too, presents light as a kind of pure energy or spiritual nourishment, and he described
Passion as a film with characters who are in need of light. In Éloge de l'amour (2001), Godard even paid an extended homage to Weil, while in Passion, the figure of Weil unmistakably reverberates in the character of Isabelle, who is a militant in the Catholic Workers’ Union and who is trying to organise a strike in the local factory. Last but not least, Rembrandt’s melancholic light recurs in many other images of the film such as in the sequence of a union meeting. In a scene in which Isabelle carries a lamp into the room, Godard cuts suddenly to a large spotlight on the set of Jerzy’s movie and, while continuing the downward movement of the camera, tilts to frame a third lamp in the staged version of Goya’s The Third of May (1814), the second tableau vivant in Passion. In contrast with the tableau of The Night Watch, Godard’s camera penetrates the space of Goya’s painting. Although, in the Night Watch scene, Godard switched between different camera positions and used a moving camera, he more or less respects Rembrandt’s viewpoint. As Bergala has noted, Godard ‘never crosses behind the imaginary window that separates the space of the viewer from that of the painting, where his camera could see from the back what the painter portrayed from the front’. In the Goya scene, by contrast, Godard’s camera turns the angle of vision by thrusting itself between the executioners and the victims, thereby creating a shot–reverse shot structure. In so doing, the medium of film offers Godard the possibility of getting inside the paintings. Completely submerged in Goya’s world, Godard’s camera even picks up, almost casually, images from other famous Goya paintings such as The Nude Maya, the portrait of a noble woman with a parasol and a little dog, and the family portrait of King Charles IV.

By recreating Rembrandt’s militia in the Dutch city-state and Goya’s depiction of the execution of Spanish rebels by a firing squad of Napoleon’s troops, Godard engages with European history in the form of historical narrative. According to Ien Ang, Passion displays a specifically European nostalgic melancholy, part of a general longing for the impossible in European idealist thought which has resulted historically in failed Utopias. This matter is also raised in the tableau vivant of The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople (1840) by Delacroix, in which four crusaders on horseback ride through the scale model streets of Constantinople – the horses’ hooves resound on the wooden planking of the studio set. Delacroix’s painting answers to the aspirations of European Romanticism with its delusions of grandeur. Godard even mimics the grandes machines of nineteenth-century painting, with their reliance on contrivances and tricks, with a shot of Jerzy scanning the studio recreation of Constantinople from a spectacular crane. In light of this, his reconstitution of the famous Delacroix painting also bears a likeness to Hollywood historical epics, with their spectacular crowd scenes rendered in Technicolor and CinemaScope – Godard himself linked Delacroix’s painting
Figure 4.5 Jean-Luc Godard, Passion (1982)

Figure 4.6 Eugène Delacroix, The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople in 1204 (1841)

Figure 4.7 El Greco, The Immaculate Conception, aka The Assumption of the Virgin (1607–14)
to DeMille. Delacroix’s orientalist fascination for the lure of the exotic also recurs in Godard’s treatment of the tableau vivant of Ingres’s *Turkish Bath* (1862) depicting a typical harem scene – Godard’s re-enactment also includes references to *La Petite baigneuse* (1808), one of Ingres’s earlier depictions of a similar theme. Nude women of different races languish by a tiled pool, at the disposition of their lord and master. Both the painting by Ingres and that of Delacroix – Godard was particularly fascinated by the women in the lower right of Delacroix’s composition and especially the nude back of one of them – connect Orientalism with the appropriation of the nude female body by the masculine gaze, which has been a recurring topic throughout Godard’s entire career and which, in *Passion*, is also touched upon by a brief shot of a tableau vivant of Manet’s *Le Dejeuner sur l’herbe* (1863). Moreover, some tableaux vivants become the site of fictional scenes in which Jerzy and other fully clothed men interact (always in a power position) with the nude women who have been hired as ‘extras’, whereas Godard also liberally sprinkled nude women throughout the fictional ‘story’ sequences in *Passion*.

The climactic tableau vivant in the film is the only one with an explicitly religious theme. It is based on El Greco’s 1607–14 version of the *Immaculate Conception*, also known as *The Assumption of the Virgin*. Like Rosso and Pontormo, who inspired Pasolini for his tableaux vivants in *La Ricotta*, El Greco is a Mannerist painter. In a sense, El Greco’s painting is completely unqualified to translate into a tableau vivant since it presents itself as a pure expression of a pictorial space in which all that is solid melts into colour and flux. Philip Troutman described the painting as an infinity of colour and light, an infinity of movement and of space. This expression of the spiritual reality of the universe was only possible to attain by the uncompromising disengagement of his art from the material and transitory of this World.

As a result, Godard had to deviate considerably from the original. He attempted to translate El Greco’s suggestion of pervasive movement into a mobility of his camera, which glides over the figures in two upward and one downward vertical movements. While El Greco’s characters are dissolving into space, Godard had to place his highlighted and static figures against a dark background reminiscent more of Caravaggio than El Greco. In particular, this El Greco tableau emphasises the paradox of cinema’s engagement with painting. Although the tableau vivant is anti-cinematic in the sense that it prefers stasis over movement, Godard’s translation of the El Greco painting into another medium shows the imperfection or impossibility of such a conversion. In so doing, cinematic tableaux vivants are confronted by a dilemma by definition in a way that is reminiscent of some art documentaries.
discussed elsewhere in this book. ‘The more a film on art succeeds as a film, the less likely it is to increase one’s understanding of painting,’ Beatrice Farwell noted. Alluding to the 1948 film by Storck and Haesaerts, Farwell deals with the example of the art of Rubens, which, like that of El Greco, seems like a natural for film treatment because his art is full of movement. The point, however, is that Rubens and El Greco were capable of creating this movement in a static medium. When a painting is set into motion by means of cinematic devices, the illusion Rubens or El Greco skilfully created is lost. Instead of animating the painting, tableaux vivants in cinema petrify or mortify it.

Strikingly, Godard’s tableau of El Greco’s *Immaculate Conception* is intercut with a conversation between Jerzy and Isabelle, which leads to Jerzy’s ‘defloration’ of Isabelle. Here, the film’s two distinct elements, the story of a director making a film based on paintings in a small factory town on the one hand and the filming of tableaux vivants based on these classic paintings on the other, have their greatest overlap. Although structurally and metaphorically more closely connected to the film’s main narrative than the other tableaux, the El Greco tableau is the most fragmented as a result of the intercutting and the three camera movements, which, separated from each other, scan the bodies, clothes and props of the characters impersonating the religious scene. In so doing, the El Greco tableau exemplifies the entire film, which creates the impression of consisting of fragments that are stuck together loosely and roughly. It is as if many of these individual fragments have been ripped out of other Godard films, or, as if, at some later date, they might be reutilised in some other combination. Some other famous paintings, moreover, are only evoked almost casually: Jerzy struggling with an extra dressed as an angel and thus evoking Delacroix’s fresco of *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* (1861), or, at the end of the film, Hanna walking in the woods and stumbling upon a couple of lovers and a ship plucked out from Watteau’s *Embarkation to Cythera* (1717).

The fragmentary character of the tableaux vivants based on paintings in *Passion* is completely in line with Godard’s aesthetic. Already his 1960s films had become famous for the quotations in them and they included many pop art-like shot compositions with loud colours. Moreover, Godard’s cinema has presented itself as an exercise in browsing through (a mediated) art history – from the encyclopaedia or catalogue of postcards in *Les Carabiniers* (1963), the run through the Louvre in *Bande à part* (1964) or the protagonist of *Pierrot le fou* (1965) reading Faure’s *Histoire de l’art* (which is also quoted in *Passion*) to his more recent explorations of art history in video works such as *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1998) or *The Old Place* (1998). Like Malraux in his *Musée imaginaire*, Godard’s cinema presents itself as an all-encompassing
image archive producing new meanings by the juxtapositions of artworks of divergent styles, periods and cultures. Fredric Jameson reads *Passion* as an essay film characterised by an aesthetics of quotation in which the medium of film is considered as one of the fine arts but also as a rival to elegant art book publishing and high-quality photographic production. To Godard, it seems as if the ‘classics’ can be reached only through the most advanced reproductive technology – a situation which leads to the melancholy relationship of humans to images, which characterises *Passion* and many of Godard’s other works since the 1980s. With their capacity as image archive, Godard presents his films as parts of a media-archaeological project that enables him to reflect on the history of cinema. In 1980, just a year before the release of *Passion*, Godard had published a book entitled *Introduction to a True History of Cinema*, which can be interpreted as a first version of his *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, his monumental video essay, which deals with the complex relations between history and cinema – the history of film versus film as a witness of world history. In his *Histoire(s)*, as in many interviews during the 1980s and 1990s, Godard repeatedly expressed the idea that cinema in itself was a thing of the past, not in the least as a result of the proliferation of new video technologies, which are also dealt with in *Passion*. Falling back on paintings of the old masters implied presenting himself as an artist of the memory of culture not unlike the Orson Welles character in *La Ricotta*, who recites lines from Pasolini’s own poetry:

"I am a force of the Past. Only tradition is my love. I come from the ruins, from the churches, from the altarpieces, […] I look at the twilights, the mornings over Rome, Ciociaria, the world, like the first acts of post-history, which I witness, thanks to my date of birth, from the far edge of some buried age."

Consequently, in the hands of Godard, the tableau vivant, which is inherently connected to death and mortification, is now connected to the death of cinema itself. It comes as no surprise, then, that the tableau vivant has become such a popular phenomenon among the many instances of what has been called ‘post-cinema’. On the one hand, we can find references to tableaux vivants in the staged photography of contemporary artists such as Jeff Wall or Cindy Sherman, who have introduced ‘cinematic’ elements into their photographic works. On the other hand, characterised by a tension between stillness and movement, the tableau vivant also became a model for video artists such as Bill Viola, Stan Douglas, James Coleman and David Claerbout among others, who continuously play on the boundaries between photographic, pictorial and cinematic forms of imagery. Both phenomena will be discussed in the following chapter.
Notes

1. On tableaux vivants, see Holmström, Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants; Meisel, Realizations; Hoff and Meise, ‘Tableaux vivants’; Chapman, ‘Living pictures’; Jooss, Lebende Bilder; Folie, Glasmeier and Reissberger, Tableaux Vivants; Vouilloux, Le Tableau vivant; and Nead, The Haunted Gallery, pp. 69–82.


3. Fried, Absorption and Theatricality.


5. Stevenson, ‘Tableaux, attitudes and photography’.

6. See Bajac, Tableaux vivants; Weaver, British Photography in the Nineteenth Century; Daniel, ‘Darkroom vs greenroom’; and Petersen, ‘Tableaux’.

7. Fried, Absorption and Theatricality, p. 78.


15. Michael Fried’s essay ‘Art and objecthood’ was originally published in the June 1967 issue of Artforum and has been anthologised repeatedly.


25. See Schwartz, Pasolini Requiem, p. 77; and Greene, Pier Paolo Pasolini, pp. 60–1.


31. See, for instance, Pasolini’s essays ‘The written language of reality’ (1966) or ‘Res
32. Blandeau, Pasolini, Chaucer and Boccaccio, p. 52.
34. Kovács, Screening Modernism, pp. 175–91.
35. Blandeau, Pasolini, Chaucer and Boccaccio, p. 130.
36. Hauser, Mannerism, p. 4.
38. Freedberg, Painting in Italy 1500–1600, p. 194.
40. Hauser, Mannerism, p. 189.
41. Freedberg, Painting in Italy 1500–1600, p. 188.
42. Shearman, Mannerism, p. 50.
44. Alberto Moravia, quoted in Rumble, Allegories of Contamination, p. 30.
45. Greene, Pier Paolo Pasolini, p. 143. See also Assayas et al., ‘Le cinéma à l’heure de maniérisme’; and Bonito Oliva, ‘Pier Paolo Pasolini und die Tradition des italienischen Manierismus’.
47. See Schwenk, ‘The chosen image’.
49. See Gordon, Pasolini: Forms of Subjectivity, p. 258.
52. See Loshitzky, The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci, p. 96.
55. Ibid. p. 436.
56. See Müller, ‘Jean-Luc Godard und die Zwischen-Spiele des Films’.
57. Hollander, Moving Pictures, p. 117.
59. See Vancheri, Cinéma et peinture, p. 118.
60. Fromentin, Les Maîtres d’autrefois, pp. 317, 324.
61. See the interview with Raoul Coutard at www.kinok.com.
63. Hollander, Moving Pictures, p. 179.
64. Ibid. p. 180.
67. See Bergala, Nul mieux que Godard, pp. 113–14; and Morrey, Jean-Luc Godard, pp. 142–6.
71. See MacBean, ‘Filming the inside of his own head’, p. 22.
72. Troutman, *El Greco*, p. 34.
73. Farwell, ‘Films on art in education’.
75. See Leutrat and Cresci, ‘Traces that resemble us’.
76. Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*.
77. The lines are from Pasolini’s poem *10 Giugno 1962*, which was part of the published screenplay of *Mamma Roma*. It was later included in *Poesia in forma di rosa*, p. 26. See also Zamour, ‘Un Instant qui tremble’, pp. 105–6.
Tableaux Vivants 2: Film Stills and Contemporary Photography

Cameras for Killing Bad People

The previous chapter showed how modernist directors used tableaux vivants to create blockages in the flow of the film that result in a kind of enigma. A similar effect is also often achieved by the presence of still photographs in a film. Referring to a wide range of films including Blade Runner, Memento, One Hour Photo, Beyond a Reasonable Doubt, Road to Perdition, Don’t Look Now, Himmel über Berlin, The Truman Show, Rear Window and Blow-Up, David Campany noted that

cinema tends to dwell on the photograph as mute and intransigent object from the past. Not surprisingly, the types of photograph to which cinema is attracted are those that already emphasise these qualities on some level. Police, forensic, news and family-album pictures are the most obviously cinegetic.¹

Campany further states that ‘whether in mainstream or avant-garde, modern or post-modern film, the “proof” of photography as memory or history is nearly always at stake.’² Photographs in film seem always to give rise to a mystery and a very particular kind of trouble – Antonioni’s Blow-Up (1966) is both a famous and perfect example of this phenomenon. Marking moments of stillness in the narrative flow, photographs in film open up another time and they subtract us from the fiction of the film even if they are part of it. Evoking a kind of double fiction, photographs in film address themselves to what Raymond Bellour calls the spectateur pensif.³ The hurried spectator of cinema is turned into a pensive one, an effect also achieved by the presence of other kinds of immobile imagery in films such as painted portraits or tableaux vivants.

When related to film, however, photography evokes the uncanny stillness of tableaux vivants in many ways. This is already clear from a film that can be interpreted as a parable on photography: Roberto Rossellini’s La Macchina ammazzacattivi (The Machine for Killing Bad People), which was shot in 1949 but only released in 1952.⁴ The film tells the story of Celestino Esposito, a
photographer in a small town on the Amalfi coast. One day, he is visited by an old man who grants him the ability to kill bad people with his camera. Turned into a killing device, his camera petrifies everyone it photographs – turning his victims not into living pictures but dead statues. Immediately, Celestino sets out to rid the town of its evildoers. He begins by eliminating those he is convinced are evil but soon finds that he is unable to judge. The man who gave him the camera, moreover, turns out to be no saint but a demon doing the Devil’s work.

Rossellini, clearly, is concerned with the symbolic importance of the camera and, by extension, the nature of photography itself. In good neorealist fashion, Celestino views the camera as a means of separating reality from illusion, good from evil. It enables him, so he believes, to penetrate the surface of events and to fulfil a God-like role in his small village (not unlike that of a film director on the set). Strikingly, Celestino can only ‘kill’ people not by photographing them directly but by re-photographing photographs of them. At the instant the photographer takes the picture, the victims freeze in the pose they strike in their photograph, as if changed into stone sculptures. This, of course, leads to comic effects such as the bullying policeman stiffening into the Fascist salute or the mayor assuming the pose of his baby picture, and so on. But it also emphasises the self-reflexive nature of the entire film, which opens with a large hand and arm placing all the elements of the story before us in the form of paper cutouts. Consequently, Celestino – like Rossellini – is engaged in the essentially self-reflexive act of producing a work of art from another work of art. In this comic parable, Rossellini is telling us that photography and cinema are incapable not only of separating good from evil but also of distinguishing reality from appearance. The camera becomes a fallible instrument which reflects not reality but human subjectivity and error.

In addition, La Macchina ammazzacattivi is also a meditation on the differing accounts of time and mortality at work in the moving and still image. Both film and photography have been associated with death and processes of mortification. Championing Rossellini’s work, Bazin wrote his famous essay on ‘The ontology of the photographic image’ in 1949 when Rossellini was making La Macchina ammazzacattivi. In that essay, Bazin argues that what distinguishes the photographic image is its status as a direct trace of life, like a death mask. Roland Barthes and, more recently, Laura Mulvey have connected photography to death as well. As the French term for nature morte is translated into still life, the tableau vivant – and especially its cinematic representation – can be thought of as ‘dead sculptures’. La Macchina ammazzacattivi perfectly illustrates that when cinema intermingles with photography, we immediately start talking about painting, sculpture, and even theatre as well. The film makes clear that the encounter between film and photography inevi-
tably involves references to a whole series of other media and combinations of artistic disciplines. This is also the case in the works by leading contemporary art photographers such as Cindy Sherman and Jeff Wall, whose works include references to an established photographic genre that is inherently linked to cinema: the film still. The following section traces the historical development of this genre through an investigation of statements made by ‘stillmen’ throughout the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, this chapter discusses the aesthetics of the film still, which implies a specific kind of dealing with light, focus, narrative, time, temporality and the instantaneous. Finally, this chapter investigates how these elements were taken up by some prominent contemporary art photographers.

**FRAME AND PHOTOGRAWM**

There seems to be an obstinate confusion of ideas on the nature of film stills – not only among the general public but also among art critics and even some film scholars. In several languages, the English term ‘film still’ refers to images taken on the set with a still camera and to an extraction of one of the sixteen or twenty-four single frames that together make up a one-second piece of film. In film publications using a more accurate terminology, the reproduction of a film frame, which Barthes called a *photogram*, is usually labelled as a *frame enlargement*. These frame enlargements often show a somewhat coarse-grained quality because they are magnifications of a single frame from an often battered celluloid 35 mm film strip. In addition, frame enlargements are often blurred because the movie camera operates at a shutter speed that is not always fast enough to freeze movement. On the cinema screen, the picture does not appear blurred because twenty-four separate frames of it – each one pushing along the action, each one with its own individual grain pattern – pass through the projector every second. Hence film frames that work perfectly on screen are often unsatisfactory as still pictures.

For Barthes, photograms had a particular appeal. When watching an individual frame, which is essentially invisible during a screening, our attention is drawn towards new details and ambivalences. Barthes provocatively illustrates his statements with frames of films by Eisenstein, a filmmaker who was convinced of the possibility of conveying a specific meaning through the montage of succeeding shots. Operating within a dialectical logic, Eisenstein saw meaning as something fixed: shots of the quashing of a workers’ insurrection, for instance, acquired a new, symbolical meaning when they were combined with a shot of the slaughter of an ox. To Barthes, however, photograms demonstrate that still images also contain several layers of meaning. Apart from their informational and symbolic meaning, photograms have a ‘third
meaning’ or an ‘obtuse meaning’ that arises almost accidentally. Reminiscent
of his concept of the photographic punctum, this ‘third meaning’ is already
included in the single shot and even at the level of the single frame, which
escapes the control of the filmmaker. Looking at single frames from films
by Eisenstein, Barthes found new meanings, many of them non-specific and
incomplete. Watching a film, however, we do not see this excess since the
individual images are not there long enough for us to contemplate them.
Precisely because this ‘third meaning’ only became visible when the film was
disconnected from movement, Barthes saw the photogram as the essence of
the film medium. Ironically, what was truly filmic about a film revealed itself
only once the movie was deprived of movement – an idea that became enor-
mously appealing to recent artists and photographers who have integrated
some of the technical and aesthetic features of the film still into their staged
photographs.

STILLS, STILLMEN AND THE STUDIO SYSTEM

A similar but nonetheless different kind of ambivalence characterises film
stills, which are photographs – still photographs – taken by a still photogra-
pher, the so-called stillman, with a large-format (usually 8 × 10 inch) camera.
The stillman was a typical product of the Taylorised organisation of the
studios during the classical era, which involved standardised production as
well as a division and specialisation of labour. In the early days, film cam-

eramen had to shoot stills, too, but during the 1920s, a standardised practice
developed in most major studios, which meant that the responsibility for still
photography would be divided between a portrait photographer, who would
take the more prestigious and artistically posed portraits of the leading stars,
and the unit stillman, who worked on the set.8 The origins of the specialised
task of the stillman should be situated in the late 1920s. The September
1927 issue of American Cinematographer announced the inauguration of a ‘Still
Picture Department’.9 In 1928, a separate section of stillmen was established
as part of a union of still and motion picture photographers. This union was
especially active throughout the 1930s and its trade journal, The International
Photographer, regularly paid attention to the technique and the aesthetics of the
film still.10

Apart from numerous shots of sets and costumes from many different
angles for continuity and reference purposes, stillmen took photographs that
usually depict a specific scene of a film.11 These stills were taken on the set
and they often (but not always) adopt the viewpoint and vanishing point of
the film camera. Furthermore, the still photographer sometimes (and cer-
tainly not always, as the following paragraphs will show) rewardingly uses the
sets, props, costumes, make-up and lighting utilised in the film. After a successful take, actors are often asked ‘to do things once more for stills’, thereby retaining the fictional illusion of the film by staying in character and respecting the so-called ‘fourth wall’ of the narrative film by ignoring the camera and the fact that they are actually being photographed.\textsuperscript{12}

However, the story of movie stills photography had already started in the early 1910s, coinciding with the rise of the star system and the drastic expansion of movie audiences. As a result, newspapers, periodicals and the new breed of illustrated fan magazines and trade journals were in great demand for pictorial materials.\textsuperscript{13} Because the average person looks at the pictures with their captions before reading the printed text, ‘the Still Department is one of the most important departments in a motion picture studio; it is really the right arm of the Publicity Department,’ Harry Cottrell concluded.\textsuperscript{14} In addition, stills were also used as lobby cards decorating the glass showcases at the cinema entrances and they provided the basis for posters and billboard advertising. Last but not least, the financial success of a picture often depended on stills, stillman Don MacKenzie asserted in a 1934 article on his profession.

The salesman who sells the film carries a complete set of stills, which not only tells the story to the exhibitor, but also show him the cast, sets and costumes. In fact, the exhibitor is rarely interested in the film unless he is first impressed by the stills.\textsuperscript{15}

Motion pictures, in short, were often sold with still pictures alone – such is ‘the importance of the stillman and his 8\times10 camera in the cinema industry,’ George Barr Brown noted in 1929.\textsuperscript{16} Stills were called ‘the most highly valued and internationally effective form of publicity, advertising and exploitation. They are the one and only medium which requires no translation. Stills tell their own story regardless of all limitations of language.’\textsuperscript{17}

The crucial role of uncredited stillmen in the success of a motion picture was emphasised in several articles in \textit{International Photographer} and \textit{American Photographer} published throughout the late 1920s and 1930s. As early as 1929, Frederic Colburn Clarke, who had been in charge of the stills departments of the Goldwyn and Metro studios, noted that the stillman was accorded a trifle more respect than he used to be because ‘the producers are realising that on his efforts depend largely the advertising and publicity necessary to the exploiting of the moving picture film.’\textsuperscript{18} According to James Doolittle, ‘a good story, well directed, adequately cast and properly staged, will sell despite ordinary photography, but you cannot give away ordinary stills.’\textsuperscript{19} Other writers stated that the task of studio still photographers ‘was probably the greatest job of photographic salesmanship in history’ and that ‘there could be no “gag” about the real commercial importance of the Hollywood still.’\textsuperscript{20}
This striking emphasis on the importance of stills for the commercial success of a film, no doubt, was inspired by the many difficulties and lack of respect and cooperation stillmen faced on the set – issues addressed in almost all of the articles that *International Photographer* and *American Cinematographer* dedicated to the art of film still photography during the 1920s and 1930s. First of all, stillmen hardly received any credit for their work. According to the head of the MGM still photography department in the late 1920s, ‘the still man is the real unsung hero of the movies.’ This lack of credit was partly caused by the assumption that the still photographer simply had to enter the scene and find at his disposal the light and composition created by the cinematographer – something that was only rarely the case. ‘The cinematographer creates the ground work for the still photographer, who in turn must be capable to take advantage of it and create his own requirements’ an editorial note in the November 1927 issue of *American Cinematographer* stipulated. Apart from receiving no credit for his work and being the ‘forgotten feller of the industry’, the stillman had to perform an almost impossible task. On the one hand, studio executives, producers, directors and stars demanded as much of stills as possible. On the other hand, however, stillmen were constantly thwarted on the set. In an essay entitled ‘The life of a stillman’, Don MacKenzie gives an impression of some of the difficulties still photographers had to cope with:

The director and the actors have had a hard time shooting the scene. However, after eight or ten minutes the director is satisfied. It is now twelve-thirty and everyone is hungry. The stillman hollers: ‘Hold it for a still!’ The director goes to lunch, the actors give the stillman disgusted looks. The gaffer, and in fact all the electricians, give him a dirty look and the assistant director glances uncertainly from stillman to actors and finally ‘compromises’ by promising the stillman that he can have the desired shot right after lunch. After lunch the stillman discovers that the lighting line-up has been changed from an individual close-up and that it is impossible to shoot the original scene. He grumbles to the assistant director, who shrugs – and thus another opportunity is lost.

Constantly being accused of holding up production, stillmen saw themselves as the most hated men on the set. In their writings, assistant directors in particular got the blame. John LeRoy Johnston, who had worked as a publicity director for several studios, wrote that ‘it seems as if many assistant directors feel that their principal function is to keep the stillmen from making pictures.’ In a cartoon-like staged photograph published in the March 1930 issue of *International Photographer*, still photographer Bert Longworth holds an actor by the hair with one hand while he snaps the shot with the other. ‘His method is somewhat drastic but very effective,’ the caption concludes. According to LeRoy Johnston, the stillman’s task was so unrewarding because
he was expected ‘to accomplish in a few moments what the movie cameraman planned carefully, aided by a director, a script, an art director, electricians and the production department’. The conflicting interests of the publicity department on the one hand and the film crew on the other resulted in a lot of frustration among stillmen. Already in 1928, Oliver Sigurdson pleaded for the removal of still pictures ‘from all authority connected with production and put in the publicity department where they truly belong’. Perhaps the still photographer’s job was more appreciated by producer–directors such as DeMille, Von Sternberg or Hitchcock, who were also concerned with the post-production and publicity of their films. In any case, the general quality of the stills of the films of these producer–directors is quite high – something that was noted early in the trade press. Stills made by William Thomas of DeMille’s production of *The King of Kings* (1927), for instance, were applauded in the pages of *American Cinematographer* for their ‘pictorial expression’ based on ‘good composition’.

Self-evidently, studios were interested in the development of alternatives to the laborious, time-consuming and expensive procedure of film stills. As early as 1928, in an article in the journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, Fred Archer and Elmer Fryer mention that it was suggested that the stillman shoot his stills ‘in action’. The photographer had to put his camera as close to the motion picture camera as was possible and try to get the same angle of view. When a scene came close to the ‘best story-telling stage’, he could shoot his still. Archer and Fryer showed, however, that this approach did not prove effective. In order to set up near the film camera and get approximately the same view on the 8×10 still camera, the focal length of the lens had to be increased, which implied a loss in speed. Meanwhile, however, motion picture engineers had developed incandescent lights, panchromatic film stock and motion picture cameras with faster lenses as a result of which cinematographers could keep their quality and depth at remarkably high speeds. Still cameras, however, could not keep pace with the rapid improvement in cinema technology.

We know that the cinematographer does not have to absolutely stop action, that if he did, his resulting film would be jerky on the screen, but who will look at a still picture with a moved arm, leg or head and say that it is good? What editor will publish it, and who will give it a second glance? A still picture to demand a second look must be capable of holding attention and if it does not do this, its value is nil.

‘In the advancement of cinematography, still photography stood still,’ Archer and Fryer concluded. In the end, the suspension of the action and posing for stills guaranteed more satisfying results.
This practice of suspending the action and posing determined the specificity of film stills. Although it is of course difficult to generalise, it is striking that for decades hardly any important stylistic evolution can be determined. Certainly in the case of the so-called classical Hollywood era (ca 1920–60) but also, to a large extent, in the case of other national cinemas and more recent productions, stills answer to generic conventions. Many of their technical and formal elements – use of lenses, lighting, depth of field, composition, positioning of characters within the frame, gestures, characters ignoring the camera – show a remarkable uniformity. Although the conventions of stills were already established in the silent era, Hollywood publicity departments throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s continued to prefer similar stills full of well-lit detail, which would reproduce well in newspapers and cheaper magazines. Nonetheless, some new developments in cinematography also found their way into the style of stills. From the late 1930s onwards, for instance, a marked preference can be detected for shadow effects echoing or rather prefiguring noirish cinematography. The September 1938 issue of *International Photographer*, for instance, dedicated an article to the ‘mystery and macabre effect type of shots’ by Jack Koffman, made for Larry Darmour Productions, which were released by Columbia. Shot in an improvised gallery near the actual set, Koffman’s pictures are characterised by ‘unorthodox lighting’ (mostly based on the use of a single light source placed low) and the use of props set up between the light and actors in order to achieve ‘jail and stair effects’.

Deep focus, the other major change that occurred in the Hollywood cinematography of the late 1930s and early 1940s, also found its way into the composition of stills. At least, stillmen and critics started to support the introduction of more depth in the usually rather two-dimensional organisation of stills. United Artists stillman Bob Coburn, who was John Ford’s favourite still photographer for many years, for instance, experimented with various lenses and laboratory handlings to ensure as much as depth of field as possible. According to Ed Gibbons, Coburn’s stills are characterised by ‘the best composition, the most dramatic effect and a general roundness and third-dimensional effect’. ‘That is why Coburn’s stills stand out,’ Gibbons continued. ‘They are not composed on the routine flat plane that marks so much still and newspaper photography.’ In a 1944 article, Hal McAlprin wrote that ‘we must shoot our production stills sharp. By that I mean not just the actors but everything in the picture must be in focus all the way back to the pictures on the wall of the set regarding the distance.’ McAlprin further complained that

we see too many pictures in which the foreground objects are wire sharp and the background has been entirely forgotten, which was not what the
photographer actually saw when he decided to photograph it. The human eye actually re-focuses itself to every distance, but the illusion we get is that everything within its range is sharp, so why not apply this to photography whenever possible? Remember that the closer the foreground object is to the camera, the greater the illusion of depth will be, providing that the entire picture is in focus.\textsuperscript{35}

Finally, another new tendency in filmmaking that left its traces on still photography was the trend towards more location filming in the 1950s. During that decade, scene stills increasingly deviated from what was seen on the screen, but the large number and great variety of behind-the-scenes shots and candid views of the stars at home or at work certainly reflected the new predilection for location shooting.\textsuperscript{36}

However, compared with the far-reaching developments in cinematography, the experiments with shadow effects, deep focus and location shooting had only minor effects on the practice of film still photography. Not coincidentally, the stylistic homogeneity that characterised still production during the classical era was closely connected to a technical consistency. Already in a 1937 article, John LeRoy Johnston complained about the lack of innovation in the field of film still technology.

While movie cameras changed completely (bearings and gears have been silenced; the entire system of studio lighting has changed and film made faster), the actual improvements in still cameras hasn’t amounted to a generous 25 per cent. We mean the routine $8 \times 10$ camera equipment which must turn out a bulk of the pictures which sell a billion dollar industry to the purchasing public the world over.

LeRoy Johnston further stated that he knew ‘of several studios which give present day stillmen 1915 and 1920 still camera equipment’.\textsuperscript{37} Other commentators noted how the introduction of super-sensitive motion picture film made the stillman’s task more difficult since the latter found himself ‘compelled to double or treble’ his normal exposure in front of nervous stars. ‘But then, even with this increased exposure, the difference in sensitivity characteristics of the two emulsions is such that you will not get the same lighting effects and contrasts that the cinematographer gets in his picture.’\textsuperscript{58} Writing in the mid- and late 1930s, after the proliferation of a snapshot aesthetics made possible by the Leica camera and during the heyday of photojournalism and the illustrated press, LeRoy Johnston was amazed at the persistent use of large-format cameras for film stills.

The Leica camera, the Contax and other ‘candid cameras’ have been accepted and rejected a half dozen times and are now enjoying their greatest vogue but no serious minded publicity director, photographic director or editor will tell
you that enlargements from these small films offer the equal of the 8x10s for a hundred different reasons.39

To LeRoy Johnston, this was incomprehensible because people started to demand ‘more than formula pictures’ – a fact the sponsors of Life, Look, Pic and Click and newspaper editors had realised, whereas

sponsors of motion pictures never thought to analyse the situation; few realised that these popular pictorial magazines were catering to exactly the same clientele motion pictures cater to. Magazines and newspaper editors created new techniques, new methods of picture presentation, they eliminated static, posy art; they demanded pictures that moved and lived and had feeling. Natural beauty replaced statuesque beauty perfection. Health, vigour and action supplanted precise, mechanical artificiality in still art.40

Paradoxically, as we shall see in the following paragraphs, this ‘statuesque beauty’ and ‘mechanical artificiality’ came to be seen as intrinsic to the aesthetics of the film still – the German word Standbild not only means statue but is also used for still (and frame enlargement). Although ‘statuesque beauty’ and ‘mechanical artificiality, which precisely defined the essence of the film still, were already considered old-fashioned in the 1930s, they also survived in the following decades. Many of the 1940s film stills look as posed and artificial as earlier ones. This is particularly noticeable in some of the interior and dialogue scenes shot in the studio on films otherwise known as early examples of Hollywood’s attraction to location shooting such as The Lost Weekend (Billy Wilder, 1945) or The Naked City (Jules Dassin, 1948).41

Not surprisingly, as a well-defined photographic genre, the film still disappeared together with the institutional system it had created. The demise of the classical Hollywood system in the 1950s implied a decline in practices of photography closely connected to the Hollywood studios. The decline of the large studios led to a cutback in the glamour photography previously associated with Hollywood’s golden age. With fewer films being made and leading stars only appearing in only one or two pictures a year, there was less work for stillmen, who no longer had long-term contracts. Budget cuts became a part of the Hollywood landscape in the 1950s as movie attendance dwindled with the initial impact of television. Still photographers, like contract players and full-time crew members, were among the first to go. Soon, they were replaced by independent photographers assigned to cover movies on a day-by-day basis. After that, ‘the death of upscale movie magazines and the birth of paparazzi further changed the landscape forever.’42

In the end, the snapshot aesthetics of photojournalism and the use of the 35 mm camera started to sneak into the practice of Hollywood stillmen. A leaflet of a 1966 exhibition dedicated to this new paradigm of film still pho-
tography stated that ‘in recent years these photographers have abandoned large tripod-mounted cameras, which demanded that the actors assume static poses, in favour of lightweight hand-held equipment, and have captured the feeling of spontaneous action that was lacking in most early stills.’ This new practice, however, undermined the specificity of the genre. Tellingly, rather than depending on the stills supplied by the studios, magazines such as *Life* preferred to send its own photographers to cover the life of film stars, combining candid shots at home with on-set or off-set views of them in costume or make-up, working on their latest picture. Unmistakably, in the 1950s, the most interesting still photography related to Hollywood were no longer studio film stills but the so-called ‘specials’ by leading photographers sent by a magazine or a photo agency to concentrate on photographing a particular star or focus on some other aspect of the film – Magnum’s celebrated coverage of the making of John Huston’s *The Misfits* (1960) is a perfect example of this. Meanwhile, the 1950s stands as the last decade of high-standard stills. Most critics agree that the general still quality deteriorated in the 1960s, coinciding with the widespread adoption of 35 mm equipment by the stills photographers and the greater demand for colour material by magazines and newspapers.

**STAGING AND DETAILS**

For the purpose of the shooting of a still, the actors had to convert their acting into a pose for the stillman, who had to try to condense something of the scene into a single, comprehensible shot. Movements were necessarily converted into stillness. Instead of acting, actors were made to pose. Since the art of film acting is above all the art of movement, stills could deprive the actors of their métier. Because the stillman had to condense, distil and translate a filmic scenario into a readable image, stills have a relative autonomy vis-à-vis the film to which they are referring. A still photographer therefore operated like a director: he had to arrange his pictures himself since he had to fix the expression in the actor’s face and eyes and arrange physical distances between the persons or arrange the light in a way that differed from the film.

Given this perspective, stills show strong similarities with studio portraits of actors as well as with production shots, production photographs or production stills, with which they are often confused. These labels refer to the pre-history of the film still in early cinema where their function was to advertise a film to potential sponsors. Some of these prospectively staged pictures thus refer to scenes or even entire films never shot. Apart from the fact that stills can also refer to scenes actually filmed but eventually erased during post-production, they often show scenes that differ to a lesser or greater
degree from the film. Sometimes, the gestures and positions of the actors differ from the way they are shown in the film. Although stillmen most often tried to match their photos to the scenes as staged in the films, there are innumerable examples of variations in composition, camera angle and lighting. Sometimes, the alterations are limited, moving in closer, for instance, thereby creating the still photo equivalent of a movie close-up, or the use of slightly different framings. In other instances, stills are staged entirely independently. The famous publicity still of Marilyn Monroe, for instance, with her dress billowing around her atop a New York subway grate clearly differs from the corresponding scene in *The Seven Year Itch* (Billy Wilder, 1955).\(^4\) Similarly, a widespread still of Hitchcock’s *Strangers on a Train* (1951) shows both protagonists (impersonated by Farley Granger and Robert Walker) on the landing of a majestic staircase. In the film, however, the two main characters never meet on this spot. Farley Granger’s character discovers the huge dog when he climbs the staircase but the confrontation of both protagonists takes place in the bedroom of the father of one of them. Moreover, a producer–director heavily concerned with the advertisement of his films, Hitchcock clearly preferred the staging of stills completely independently of the films. Striking publicity photographs accompanying films such as *The Wrong Man* (1957), *Vertigo* (1958) or *Psycho* (1960) do not attempt to convert a specific scene but rather try to summarise the atmosphere of the entire movie in a single still.\(^4\)

A still’s deviation from the film image, however, is not always determined by aesthetic choices but can simply be the result of technical problems.
First of all, since many stills were made for reproduction in magazines and newspapers, they needed clarity. The stillman therefore could not ‘go in too much for delicate gradations, nor for extreme high-key or low-key effects,’ Fox still photographer Frank Powolny warned in 1930. Since stills ‘are destined for reproduction, which debases all these delicate gradations, they must be quite snappy, with reasonably well-defined contrasts.’ According to Emmett Schoenbaum, stills thus needed to maintain ‘a certain boldness of outline (for the newspapers and poorer magazines) without loss of the detail gradations and quality which the better magazines and studio use demand’. Consequently, stills demanded different lighting schedules and rules of composition. ‘A good stillman,’ Don MacKenzie noted, ‘must know how to group his subjects so as to avoid blank spaces and feature the leading players without making it too obvious. This grouping sometimes necessitates changing a light or two, all of which take time.’ James Doolittle even states that right off, motion picture lighting is all wrong for stills. It has been arranged for a certain continuity of action where the individuals move about and must at no time run into dark spots or find with a turn of the head an unfavourable shadow where shadow has no right to be. In short, light must be everywhere. There’s too much light.

Furthermore, Doolittle notes, stars may like dramatic lighting on screen but in stills ‘dramatic lighting has a way of bringing out wrinkles and accentuating features that gives retouchers a livelihood.’ Indeed, like studio portraits of stars, stills are often heavily retouched, adding to their unreal quality. However, it is not necessarily their retouches but precisely their excessive amount of visual details that gives film stills their enigmatic and uncanny qualities. Produced with a large-format camera and consistently preferring hard edges to soft focus, still images register meticulously and make us aware of the concrete materiality, which is usually neglected in the ephemeral film image. In the static image of the photograph, the texture of costumes, the materiality of objects’ surfaces, little irregularities in facial make-up or instances of limited negligence in the periphery of the set hold our attention. Within this logic of the photographic punctum, the still puts these insignificant details on equal footing with other parts of the image that are crucial to the narrative. The meticulous rendering of details seems almost to give an inventory of props that escape the viewer’s gaze in the swim of the movie. Stills testify to a ponderous and clinical nineteenth-century aesthetic of scrutiny, which, in the words of Max Kozloff, ‘is quite at odds with the quickness of the modern cinematic pan or track shot’. At the same time, combined with remarkable lighting schedules, the sharpness
of film stills creates an illusory space which looks hyperrealistic rather than naturalistic.

Furthermore, the dizzying sharpness of the image is often a specifically photographic (instead of cinematic) kind of sharpness. Many stills, for instance, show images with some significant parts (a character’s face and hands, for instance) rendered absolutely sharp while others are out of focus – an effect that can only be achieved with a large-format still camera with adjustable lens and film planes. Inherently connected to the format of the film still, this excess of detail was nonetheless rejected by some commentators. ‘Too many stills are spoiled by too much light; too much distracting detail in the background,’ LeRoy Johnston wrote in 1939. Concurring with this, James Doolittle warned of the risk that details in the background could become an interference to the principals rather than accessories.

**Narrative, Theatricality and Absorption**

Since film stills refer to films and since feature films tell stories, film stills themselves were often seen as photographs that could implement narrative functions. According to Fox still photographer Frank Powolny, who had been engaged in famous productions such as Borzage’s *Seventh Heaven* (1927), Murnau’s *Four Devils* (1928) and *City Girl* (1930), and Walsh’s *The Big Trail* (1930), ‘the really important part of the stillman’s job [. . .], is to make his stills pictorially attractive, and at the same time tell a story with them. Every still must have a definite meaning.’ Whether the stills are ‘directed’ by the director or the stillman himself, ‘in any case,’ Powolny asserts, ‘the stillman’s business is to know what the story is to be told by each still, and then to tell it, as effectively and as artistically as he possibly can.’ Newspapers and magazines today ‘want pictures that tell a story,’ *International Photographer* stated in 1937. According to LeRoy Johnston, ‘today still pictures must “talk” through action as motion pictures talk through a sound track.’ This comparison with the sound track is telling because, in the early 1930s, some commentators had seen the coming of sound as the end of the use of stills in film advertisement. An anonymous ‘Tripod Man in London Bioscope’, for instance, asked himself:

how can [a film still] sell a film to an exhibitor when the chief attractions of the film are not photographable? How in all the world can you expect the still photograph to make a snappy selling still of a modern talking picture? [. . .] From the still-taker’s point of view, nothing ever seems to happen.

Nonetheless, the author admitted, ‘stills today are, oddly enough, not less important, but more so, than in the old silent days’ because of ‘the very
impossibility of conveying any vivid impression of the talking elements.’ The only precondition is that stills ‘do tell a story’ and that they ‘have a suggestion of an intense situation’ and ‘suggest amusing or exciting developments and sequences’. According to MGM stillman Laszlo Willinger, this implies

that the photographer not only makes the photos but must know the script backwards, and must be familiar with the advertising campaign in order to have his photos used for advertising stills. He must know what characters are important and which can be left out, keep his backgrounds in the spirit of the production.64

In this respect, John LeRoy Johnston wrote that

it’s the stillman’s job to anticipate stills and be ready and mentally prepared to get them when a break comes. I have known stillmen who weren’t interested enough in their assignments to read a script. This is no business for such men.65

Film stills, however, balance their narrative dynamics with iconic stillness. Their uncanny character, no doubt, is not only the result of their excess of visual details but first and foremost from their particular compromise between movement and stasis. This tension between movement and standstill (and between cinematic and photographic elements) also determines the nature of photograms and freeze-frames but in the case of stills, it definitely causes other effects. Dealing with movement was certainly one of the biggest challenges for stillmen and the topic was amply discussed in trade journals throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Articles were published on new types of cameras especially adapted to the making of ‘action stills’ or on camera positions better fit for conveying movement.66 Special attention was given to photographs of mob scenes featuring hundreds of extras in costly sets, which did not allow retakes for the still photographer, and all types of dance routines, skating numbers, fights and other kinds of fast action.67

However, all the attempts to turn film stills into some kind of action photography did not prove successful. Film stills remained a ‘static, posy art’ characterised by a ‘mechanical artificiality’. Strikingly, stills seem to acquire their uncannily mechanical aspect not just by the absence of movement, but also by the emphatic absence of movement. Stills, consequently, are not just mere still photographs, they also explicitly display a marked quality of stillness in their representations of movement. Moreover, when characters are depicted in a state of movement, a rigid stability determines the image since these pictures seem to compensate for this stillness with slight exaggerations of gesture and facial expressions. ‘Inasmuch as it cannot talk, a good still should show some exaggeration in action,’ Don MacKenzie wrote.68
Filmmaker Michael Powell, who started his career as a still photographer (for Hitchcock, among others), said that ‘you need to overact in a still.’69 For that reason, still photographer James Doolittle, in the late 1930s, looked with some nostalgia back to the silent days when ‘actors knew at least some rudiments of pantomime’.70

Furthermore, it is striking that motion blur, a common denominator of movement in both documentary and art photography, is mostly absent in film stills whereas it occurs regularly in film frames or photograms as a result of the slower speed of the motion picture camera. Instead of the suggestion of a halted movement, which often marks the film frame, the still rather evokes a kind of frozen time. This freezing of the action was also performed literally on the set, especially in the early days of film still photography. Karl Brown, who worked on western dramas for the Selig company in the early 1910s, recalled that when he ‘called “Still!” they froze in place until I said “Okay” and released them from their immobility’.71 Similarly, Madison Lacy stated that he’d ‘grab a couple of glass plates and take the picture on orthochromatic film, a slow process that demanded at least a full second of exposure, freezing the actors in mid-action poses.’72

With characters in stilled or frozen poses, stills in no way refer to Henri Cartier-Bresson’s concept of le moment décisif, which is celebrated in snapshot photography and presented as a stylistic hallmark that evokes the transcription of flux into standstill. Because of their static figures, film stills rather show similarities to painting, in particular nineteenth-century academic painting that harks back to artists such as Jean-Baptiste Greuze or Jacques-Louis David, working at the end of the eighteenth century. David’s historical paintings, for instance, were characterised by similar stilled and sculptural figures in clear positions and poses. With their mechanical character, stills therefore paradoxically evoke pictorial associations. With their hyperreal attention to detail and theatrical lighting, stills, in the words of Gertrud Koch,

are often aesthetically more interesting than the films from which they have been taken. In them, the fetishistic look turns to plasticity. A plasticity which has more to do with plastic art, just as the still picture is plastic art.73

As a staged photograph, the still falls back on the formulas of academic painting, which attempted to combine standstill with a narrative dimension and dramatic intensity. To a large extent, stills answer to the pictorial model of the tableau. Although the concept of the ‘tableau’ can be applied to all kinds of figurative painting, the term is particularly apt to indicate the narrative painting of the late eighteenth century that reacted to the decorative and spatial ambivalence of rococo painting. The tableaux by artists such as David and, later, Géricault or the pompiers, show dramatic and emotionally charged
moments by means of theatrical effects. Stills, as a result, show more similarities to painting of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than to contemporaneous pictorial experiments. At the end of the nineteenth century, after all, painting abandoned its narrative ambitions – coinciding with the development of impressionism, which dealt with movement in a completely other way, and the birth of cinema.

Stills also have more in common with painting than photography in another way. Instead of suggesting the ‘decisive moment’ of snapshot photography, stills rather evoke what critic Raymond Bellour, after Lessing, called the ‘significant moment’ or ‘pregnant moment’ of narrative painting. Following Aristotle, this moment is also often referred to as *peripeteia*: that instant in the story when all hangs in the balance, a moment that represents both the average and the climax of a dramatic action. In a painting, the meaningful instant does not refer to anything real. In contrast with the film frame, which is drawn from a succession of moments, both a painting and a still are a constructed or fictitious moment, a kind of image synthesis of an entire action. In a film still, there is the reality before the lens, of course, but this reality is staged and can be compared to the line-up of models in a painter’s studio. The definition of the pregnant moment and the search for the most effective way to render a story by means of the static medium of painting were important topics in the art of the eighteenth century. This is not only demonstrated through the paintings by David and Greuze or in the popular art form of the tableau vivant, which has been discussed in the previous chapter, but also in the aesthetics of prominent authors such as Diderot and Lessing. In *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766), Lessing precisely distinguished the visual arts from literature on the basis of the essentially different ways they deal with the moment. While a reader can picture in his or her mind a series of successive positions and gestures, the beholder of a painting or sculpture is confronted with a single and stable action. When this is the moment – as is the case with the Trojan priest Laocoön – when someone shouts, the character is forever frozen with his mouth wide open. As a result, the statue acquires something strange, uncannily mechanic and sometimes grotesque – precisely what happens in film stills capturing characters in the midst of an action.

Such images, however, make up only a small minority of the Hollywood studios’ still output. Stills only rarely show the grand gestures characteristic of history painting. Even stills of films that address the very same subjects as those of historical paintings usually avoid the grand gestures of the actors and focus on the aesthetic coherence of scenic imagination. Mythical heroines such as Cleopatra and Salome that made silent film stars like Theda Bara famous acquire their aesthetic power from the lavish décors, which
Tableaux Vivants 2

turn the human figures into an ornamental detail. At the most, the role played by excessive body language, which can be seen in some of the older stage-influenced silent films, is taken over by a kind of histrionic lighting, which is often much more emphasised in stills than in the more ephemeral films.

Rather than visualising the pregnant moment of a particular action and converting actions in theatrical tableaux featuring grand gestures, stills instead show characters in immobile poses. In the vast majority of film stills, characters are shown in static positions with almost neutral faces, very limited in their expression. While film trailers give a hectic impression of a film, through a sampling of physical action only, stills only give emblematical value to action and therefore necessarily underplay the kinetic impact of the film. According to Kozloff, ‘the staple of dramaturgy in these pictures is conversation and the meaningful glances that ricochet among its participants.’ Answering to an uncanny immobility, the characters in stills are shown in a condition of introspection or absorption. From this perspective as well, stills can be linked to a pictorial tradition, which developed in the eighteenth century and that was discussed by Michael Fried in his famous book on Absorption and Theatricality. Elaborating on Diderot’s aesthetics, Fried interprets absorption as a way in which human figures are engrossed in a certain activity as if in denial of an audience. People are presented as self-contained figures who can be mentally active (thinking, meditating, praying, reading, listening to music, daydreaming) but physically quite passive. A state of absorption such as depicted in the paintings by Chardin consequently implies a purely contemplative relation between painting and beholder since there is no suggestion of an interaction between the depicted figures and the viewer. Absorptive paintings are thus the reverse of paintings showing characters who in one way or another emphatically claim the beholder’s attention: portraits of characters who are looking to establish a connection with the viewer by their gaze and gestures, or altarpieces, historical paintings or tableaux displaying figures in poses and compositions that only become significant in function of their relation vis-à-vis a beholder.

Fried’s distinction between absorptive and theatrical effects in painting is relevant for the analysis of film stills. In fact, Fried recently applied his analysis to contemporary art photographers such as Cindy Sherman and Jeff Wall, who, as will be shown in the following paragraph, engaged with the question of cinema and the conventions of the film still. According to Fried, the works by Sherman and Wall are ‘consistent with the crucial principle of the Diderotian tableau – the use of absorptive motifs and structures to establish the ontological illusion that the beholder does not exist’. In order to compensate for the conversion from film to photography and from
kinesis to stasis, stills, too, often display characters in a state of absorption. Although stills invariably show human figures, they are clearly no portraits. Their characters do not look at the beholder but at a point outside the frame or at each other – thereby often restricting the interaction between characters to eye contact. Furthermore, most characters are shown in medium shot. Their immobility, as it were, is emphasised by their truncation at the hip or legs. Stills also often show characters that are waiting, meditating or gazing. Instead of obscuring their physical immobility, stills emphasise and even enhance it.

This preference for stasis is not necessarily non-cinematic or anti-cinematic. In their dialectic and even paradoxical handling of the tensions between movement and stasis, stills reveal one of the main principles of the classical feature film. In several of her writings, Laura Mulvey has demonstrated that the mechanism of the classical Hollywood film is not only based on optical movement and narrative dynamics. In the model of classical cinema that is largely dependent on the seductiveness of film stars, these dynamic elements are regularly interrupted by moments of standstill, which serve a penchant for exhibitionism. The dynamics of a film is for instance regularly halted for the purpose of a close-up of the star. Such close-ups answer a voyeuristic or fetishist beholder who is more interested in images than in plot and narrative development. Although close-ups often mark moments of psychological and emotional intensity, they usually imply a deceleration in the plot, montage and mise-en-scène. While close-ups are included in a film for the purpose of the glorification of the star, they suppress action and hence also the acting. In close-ups, the star is not acting; the photogenic star merely is. Close-ups, consequently, are often connected to moments of reaction or contemplation and they constitute a kind of pause in the narrative and visual flux. While early examples of close-ups almost literally adopted the conventions of the studio portrait, close-ups in general are characterised by a kind of photographic stability. A close-up of a star in a film, moreover, unmistakably refers to the numerous publicity pictures that made the actor’s or actress’s face already famous. For similar reasons, kiss scenes are favourite motifs for stills. The kiss, after all, often marks a reversal, interruption or even a completion of the plot. Frequently used in publicity campaigns, the image of a kiss scene implies the transformation from film to photograph, from movement to stasis. Close-ups and kiss scenes are moments of spectacle that seem to relate to another spatial and temporal logic than the narrative. They mark a moment at which the viewer transforms from an observer into a contemplator. Stills preserve and favour such moments. As Gertrud Koch noted, ‘when we face a photo, we can end up day-dreaming. But in the case of a film, we are forced to follow the action.’
STILLS IN ART AND POST-CINEMA

The art and craft of the film still waned with the demise of the classical Hollywood system and yet, from the 1960s onwards, artists brought them back to life. Of course, already in the 1930s and 1940s, many stillmen and publicity directors were aware of the specific technical as well as artistic conventions that determined the genre. A trade journal such as *International Photographer* not only included technical and aesthetic discussions on the phenomenon, it also contained articles on and by leading still photographers. In addition, the journal included many reproductions of stills within the context of regular features such as *Cream o’ th’ Stills*, the *Still of the Month Competition* or spreads showing series of stills from a single film accompanied by captions explaining the story. Furthermore, in the late 1930s and 1940s, several exhibitions of film stills were organised. In August 1939, *International Photographer* announced that its new quarters at Sunset Boulevard ‘provided facilities for the setting up of a rotating salon of original prints of such outstanding shots by studio stillmen’.

In April 1941, May 1942, November 1943 and September 1947, major film still exhibitions with venues in several cities were organised under the auspices of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The openings of these successful exhibitions, which had become ‘America’s foremost display of photographic art’, were staged as big events and the presentation of the awards were something of a junior ‘Oscar’ affair, with a turnout of stars due for the occasion. Browsing through a catalogue of one of these exhibitions, James Doolittle said that it looked ‘funny to see a still photographer getting top billing with the stars’ names in teeny-weeny letters! Meanwhile, as Paul Rotha noted, some art galleries, film societies and museums on both sides of the Atlantic had started organising exhibitions of film stills in the 1930s.

In the mid-1950s, however, critics like Rotha already spoke of ‘old film stills’. ‘Their fascination is immense,’ Rotha wrote, but his statement was already coloured by a feeling of nostalgia. As movie memorabilia, stills turned into some kind of after-images of a bygone film industry and mode of spectatorship. Already images that lived long after a specific film, now they started to outlive ‘cinema’ on the whole. In the early 1970s, when many cinema chains and distribution companies off-loaded their holdings of publicity photographs onto the second-hand market, stills were discovered by new audiences of collectors, film fans, historians, dealers and, last but not least, artists. Conceptual artists in particular were attracted to stills as a mass cultural and lowbrow kind of imagery, which could be taken from its original context. In their collages and juxtapositions, artists such as John Baldessari and John Stezaker, for instance, invented poetic and allegorical uses of film
stills touching upon their ambivalent meanings, enigmatic associations and unspoken subtexts. Because of its implication of a series of dialectical tensions – film versus photography, movement versus stasis, rest versus dramatic intensity, acting versus posing, narrative dynamics versus iconic stillness – the film still also became particularly attractive among post-conceptual artists such as Cindy Sherman.

Sherman’s highly influential series of *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–80), in which the artist herself – bewigged, costumed and heavily made up – is the sole protagonist, became a paradigm for artists working self-consciously with conventionalised and stereotypical forms of (female) representation.88 Strikingly, Sherman’s pictures do not refer to contemporaneous films of the late 1970s but they imitate the iconography of both American and European cinema of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Although they never refer explicitly to a particular film or a specific actress, their allusions certainly strike chords with moviegoers, who find reminiscences of, let us say, directors such as Antonioni or Hitchcock, stars such as Marilyn Monroe or Sophia Loren, and genres such as film noir and melodrama. Posing or acting (or posing as if she is acting), Sherman refers to the stock femininities familiar from cinema. In so doing, she makes us aware of the fact that stills themselves are heavily dependent on the practice of the female cultural techniques of masquerades and fancy dress as well as of their artificiality. ‘Until Cindy Sherman alienated the genre for her own alarmed, artistic purposes,’ Kozloff noted, ‘no one had heard of a film still generated independently of a movie.’89 As in the typical film still, most of the photographs show a figure with minimal expression at a moment of stasis or, in Fried’s terminology, in a state of absorption. Whether she is reading a letter, looking out of a window, waiting for a bus, spilling the shopping or leaving the house, the images suggest a narrative flow: something
has just happened or seems about to happen. In many of Sherman’s stills, there is the suggestion of a moment of psychological uncertainty resulting in a feeling of disquiet or melancholy – elements that are also emphasised by the unmistakably voyeuristic aspects of the series that tallies them with feminist and psychoanalyst film theories of the 1970s.

Most of Sherman’s critics, however, failed to mention that her *Untitled Film Stills* series consist of 35 mm pictures, which necessarily lack the sharpness and richness of texture of many ‘real’ film stills. On the other hand, they never display the arrested movement characteristic of frame enlargements or stills taken with a small-format camera. According to David Campany, Sherman’s stills ‘seem to encompass the staged photograph and the extracted frame. Sometimes they resemble publicity shots, sometimes grabbed moments, while many belong somewhere between the two.’90 The use of the 35 mm camera to imitate the staged and posed imagery of the large-format camera emphasises the element of pastiche and therefore the artificiality of Sherman’s work. Furthermore, evoking specific but unknown narratives, Sherman paved the way for a veritable wave of staged photography as a critical practice in contemporary art. To Sherman and artists such as Jeff Wall, James Coleman, Victor Burgin, Nic Nicosia, Gregory Crewdson, Susanne Lafont and Ana Torfs among many others, the film still became an important source of inspiration, motif, strategy or frame of reference. Jeff Wall even goes as far as to state that ‘no picture could exist today without having a trace of the film still in it, at least no photograph, but that could also be true of drawings and paintings maybe.’91

Both influenced by modernist cinema – in particular Bergman, Bresson, Buñuel, Eustache, Fassbinder, Pasolini, Rohmer and Straub – and photo-conceptualist practices of the 1960s and 1970s, Wall’s photographs can be called ‘cinematic’ in many respects. Rather than borrowing images from films, Wall’s works are cinematic in the way they deal with lighting, aspect ratio, mise-en-scène, and so forth. Presented as large-format transparencies on light boxes, adding to their cinematic effect, Wall’s photographs are unmistakably constructed instead of being extensions of the world outside the frame (as in documentary photography, for instance). Instead of a snapshot, the work is made with a view camera, sets, props and actors who, following the principles of mainstream cinema, act as if they are not aware of the presence of the bulky view camera. Some of Wall’s pictures are the result of a scene staged with actors in the studio, which is digitally integrated in a location shot. In so doing, their construction resembles the making of a movie, in which dozens of stylists and technicians and assistants might spend a whole day in the studio or on location for the sake of a single shot. Photographer Gregory Crewdson even went beyond this, casting Hollywood film stars in elaborate sets. The
formal and iconographic properties of Crewdson’s images have become inseparable from his adoption of the cinema’s specific mode of production, which involves the mobilisation of skilled labour and professional expertise as well as the deployment of substantial economic resources. Instead of making a still for the publicity of a motion picture, an entire cinematic construction has been deployed in order to make a single still photograph.

Furthermore, in the photographs by Wall, Crewdson and many other contemporary practitioners of staged photography, the instantaneous or the fleeting, which have been long-standing hallmarks of street photography, are tempered by something frozen. Given this perspective, Wall not only refers to film stills but also to the tableau and its problem of finding the most convincing positions, gestures and facial expressions to convey a significant moment in the narrative. Thus, Sherman, Wall and their many followers not only bring cinema and photography together, they also resurrect the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tableaux depicting charged dramatic moments in theatrically staged scenes.

The attention to the still among artists since the 1970s coincided not only with the revalorisation of photography as an artistic medium but also with the development of new ways of understanding the nature of film. Like in American post-war avant-garde film (Warhol, Snow), European modernism (Rossellini, Bresson, Antonioni, Tarkovsky, Straub, Akerman) and in more recent Asian cinema, not movement so much as the passing of time and duration came to be seen as the essence of film. Many of these films, which were produced in completely different conditions, frequently and emphatically employ the extended long take. Characterised by a resistance to speed, these
films, consequently, bring the film image to a standstill. In this perspective, in which the paradigm of the *Image-Mouvement* is replaced by that of the *Image-Temps* (Deleuze), the film image evokes a photographic modus. By means of strategies of de-dramatisation and operations of deceleration, entire film scenes present themselves as tableaux vivants that possess the mechanical, theatrical, sculptural and pictorial character of the film still.

Since the late 1980s, such strategies have even become dominant in the way the moving image (video art, film installation, and so on) has exchanged the black box of the cinema theatre for the white cube of the museum room – an evolution that also implies the physical mobilisation of the beholder. In the works of artists such as Bill Viola, Douglas Gordon, Sharon Lockhart, Gillian Wearing, Sam Taylor-Wood, Tacita Dean, David Claerbout or Nancy Davenport, the logic of the film still is answered by a kind of still film, which plays on the aforementioned ambivalences from an opposite point of departure.

Several scholars have interpreted these phenomena by situating them in the context of the so-called era of post-cinema – a notion that will be discussed in the next chapter. Both the still film and the artistic appropriation of the film still are indications of the thorough transformations that marked the production, distribution and consumption of films during the last decades. Stills were often cherished as relics of a bygone era in which the cinema was the most important if not the sole form of visual entertainment. Moreover, the replacement of celluloid by digital media has made the distinction between film still and frame enlargement irrelevant – many of the photographs circulating today were made with a video camera. In addition, new viewing devices (video and DVD players, personal computers) and the possibilities they offer to isolate, repeat, accelerate and decelerate film fragments incited artists to manipulate film images and turn them into instances of photographic standstill. Given this perspective, filmmakers and video artists can be considered as the perfect examples of what Laura Mulvey has called the ‘possessive spectator’ – a spectator sacrificing the coherence of the narrative in favour of the (fetishist) possession and admiration of a cinematic and therefore principally ephemeral image. Given this perspective, the film still became a model not only for the staged photography of Sherman and Wall but also for new artistic approaches of the moving image.

**Notes**

2. Ibid. p. 95.


10. *The International Photographer* was subtitled *A Journal of Motion Picture Arts and Crafts* and presented as the ‘monthly official publication of Local 659, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United States and Canada’. Its first issue was published in February 1929.

11. See Archer, ‘Stills move the movies’.


18. Clarke, ‘Stills still move the movies’.


23. ‘Hold it for a still’, p. 5.


26. ‘Grabbing the stills’.


30. Archer and Fryer, ‘Still photography in motion picture work’.

31. Ibid.

32. Aller, ‘Koffman’s mystery effect stills’.


34. McAlprin, ‘Let’s shoot ’em sharp’.

35. Ibid., p. 7.


37. Johnston, ‘Stillman forgets his tools’, p. 6. It should be noted here that, in the
meantime, the fragile glass plates were replaced by celluloid negatives that were a lot lighter and easier to handle.

45. See Finler, *Hollywood Movie Stills*, pp. 174–5. It should be noted here that also 35 mm still photographs often produced better results than frame enlargements from the 35 mm film. This is not only because the stillman can use faster shutter speeds than the film camera but also because in a movie camera, the long side of the rectangular frame runs across the film whereas, in a still camera, it runs along the film (resulting in a much bigger size). See Meadows, *Set Pieces*, p. 14.
48. See Smith, ‘The subway grate scene in *The Seven Year Itch*’.
54. Ibid. p. 16.
58. Doolittle, ‘They mustn’t stand still’, p. 18. Doolittle also notes that ‘long shots, unless there be some scenic phenomenon that is startling, have little publicity value because the “merchandise” is lost on the shelves.’
60. Ibid. p. 27.
61. ‘Hold it for a still’, p. 5.
63. ‘Stills are not affected by talkers’, p. 18.
64. Willinger, ‘Still, please’.
66. See, for instance, ‘Largest still camera of its type again to be operated by
147

Notes

Harburger'; 'Fast action with a Graflex'; and H. A., 'Movement caught by camera'.

67. See, for instance, Aller, 'Shooting mob scenes stills'; Maupin, 'Back shutter for speed'; Hendrickson, 'Tom Brown's school days'; and 'Fast action with a Graflex'.

68. MacKenzie, 'The life of a stillman'.

69. Powell, A Life in Movies, p. 186.

70. Doolittle, 'They mustn't stand still', p. 18.


73. Koch, 'Stay now! You are so beautiful', p. 28.

74. See Bellour, 'The film stilled'.

75. Koch, 'Stay now! You are so beautiful', p. 28.

76. See Kozloff, 'The dream mill in the history of photography', p. 36.

77. Ibid. p. 35.

78. Fried, Absorption and Theatricality.

79. Fried, Why Photography Matters as Art As Never Before, p. 34.

80. Mulvey, 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema'; and Mulvey, Death 24x a Second.

81. See the issues of March 1941, April 1941, May 1941, April 1942, May 1942, October 1943, December 1943 and September 1947 of International Photographer.

82. 'Still salon'.

83. See Doane, 'The close-up: scale and detail in the cinema'.

84. See Campany, Photography and Cinema, pp. 126–45; and Huber, 'The big sleep and the awakening'.

85. Doolittle, 'Necessary evil gets his first break'.

86. Paul Rotha mentions the first International Exhibition of Film Stills held at Zwemmer Gallery in London in 1931 and various similar exhibitions organised by film societies in Edinburgh and Southampton as well as the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1937. See Rotha, 'Old film stills'. Rotha wrote this article on the occasion of the Sixty Years of Cinema exhibition, which was organised by The Observer newspaper in London in 1956 and included many stills.

87. See Campany, Photography and Cinema, pp. 126–45; and Huber, 'The big sleep and the awakening'.

88. Sherman, Untitled Film Stills. See also Durand, 'Melancholic mutations in Cindy Sherman's film stills'; Grundberg, Crisis of the Real, pp. 119–24; Krauss, 'A note on photography and the simulacral'; and Mulvey, 'Cosmetics and abjection'.

89. Kozloff, 'The dream mill in the history of photography', p. 35.


91. Wall, 'Interview/Lecture'. For the relation between the work of Wall and cinema, see Wall, 'Frames of reference'; and King, 'The long goodbye'.

92. See Green and Lowry, 'Photography, cinema and medium as social practice'.

94. Deleuze, *Cinéma 1: L’Image-mouvement* and *Cinéma 2: L’Image-temps*.
95. See Lowry, ‘Portraits, still video portraits and the account of the soul’; and Baker, ‘Photography’s expanded field’.
CHAPTER 6

The Video That Knew Too Much: Hitchcock, Contemporary Art and Post-Cinema

POST-CINEMA AND GODARD’S HISTOIRE(S)

During the last decades, new relations between film and the visual arts have been established, some of them incited by a wide range of phenomena that have been labelled by critics and theorists with the umbrella term ‘post-cinema’. At the end of the twentieth century, theorists, artists and filmmakers came to realise that cinema had a history, that it had become a medium of the past. In spite of the huge quantity and diversity of films still being made, some even spoke of the ‘death of cinema’ and film’s centenary celebration in the mid-1990s often went hand in hand with a feeling of nostalgia.¹

The idea that cinema had come to an end was triggered by various factors. From a macro-historical perspective, it is beyond question that cinema was the paradigm medium of the first half of the twentieth century. Textbook film history teaches us that the classical Hollywood system, for instance, had reached its apex in 1946 – the year that saw the highest number of film productions as well as an unsurpassed box-office record. That era was also marked by the breakthrough of alternative modes such as Italian neorealism and thus the beginning of a modernist cinéma d’auteur or the so-called art house cinema. In the late twentieth century, however, after the breakthrough of television and the rise of so-called new media, cinema was no longer the most important, let alone an exclusive visual medium both in terms of information and entertainment. Moreover, digitalisation disconnected film from the specific material of celluloid. Taking an altered position vis-à-vis reality, the digital image has been closely linked to the post-modern logic of the simulacrum. By dying, cinema simply joins the celebratory or melancholy diagnoses of the death of ideologies (Lyotard), industrial society (Bell), the real (Baudrillard), authorship (Barthes), history (Kojève, Fukuyama), man (Foucault) and, last but not least, modernism. The launch of a term combining the post-prefix with cinema was written in the stars.

Interestingly, the meditation on cinema’s decline or end also became a topic for some filmmakers, who can therefore be interpreted as both mourners and resurrectors of cinema.² Cinema’s centenary, for instance, coincided
with a new wave of found-footage filmmaking characterised by the reshuffling of the image archive of film history. Breathing new life into the rich tradition of found-footage filmmaking that reached back to illustrious artists such as Shub, Ruttmann, Storck, Cornell, Conner and Jacobs, a new generation of filmmakers including Martin Arnold, Craig Baldwin, Peter Delpeut, Gustav Deutsch, Harun Farocki and Peter Tscherkassky gave new meanings to already existing film images by disconnecting them from their original contexts and creating new combinations and juxtapositions. On the one hand, their found-footage films answered to a modernist practice favouring collage, fragmentation and the revelation of the materiality of film and its apparatus. On the other hand, these films are in keeping with a post-modern strategy of appropriation preferring citation, pastiche and parody. In addition, some of these filmmakers used the strategy of found footage to investigate film history as well as the material or ideological meaning of the disconnected film image. Around the turn of the century, a number of interesting compilation films were released that looked back at film history: Peter Delpeut’s *Lyrical Nitrate* (1991) and *Diva Dolorosa* (1999), Martin Scorsese’s *Personal Journey through American Movies* (1995), Sarah Moon’s *Lumière & Co* (1995), Godard’s *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–98), Bill Morrison’s *Decasia* (2002) and Gustav Deutsch’s *Film Ist* (2004) among others.

Many of these films were marked by the melancholy notion of cinema as a medium of a bygone era – this theme was particularly elaborated in Delpeut’s and Morrison’s films, both of which are also meditations on the physical decay of nitrate film stock and its sublime beauty. The notion of cinema’s death, however, was first and foremost expressed by Godard in several of his works, writings and interviews. It was particularly addressed in his *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, which deals with the interrelations between film images, memory and history. Cinema, of course, operates as a memory machine in many ways. On a mere mechanical level, film is based on the principle of persistence of vision, as a result of which we cannot forget a still image before it is replaced by a succeeding one. In addition, with its structures of parallel editing, crosscutting and shot–reverse shot patterns, classical cinema is fundamentally based on a duality between memory and vision, as one image is ‘stored’ while the following one is seen. However, Godard’s monumental video essay particularly deals with the complex relations between cinema and history. It juxtaposes the ‘history of film’ with film as a medium that registers world history – both ‘histories’ intertwine because, according to Godard, the twentieth century is inconceivable without the film image. Moreover, the *Histoire(s)* endorse Godard’s opinion that cinema itself is a thing of the past. Whereas Godard had seen montage during the 1960s and 1970s as a dialectical tool in the service of class struggle, it had now become a convenient
tool for an idiosyncratic reshuffling and re-examination of both political and film history. For Godard, after all, history itself is dissolving into disparate images that can at most be tied together in a montage of multiple histories. According to Jacques Rancière, Godard’s *Histoire(s)* precisely demonstrate that ‘cinema misunderstood the power of its images, its inheritance from the pictorial tradition, which it agreed to subject to scripted “stories,” heirs of the literary tradition of plot and characters.’ In so doing, the *Histoire(s)* are also an investigation of cinema’s relation to the other arts. Not unlike Jerzy in *Passion* (see Chapter 4), Godard confronts cinema with the primacy of the image by disconnecting film images from their original narrative context but also by mixing them, with the help of video editing equipment, with the images of traditional Western representation, which denied movement in favour of static poses. Godard’s entire oeuvre abounds in paintings but their presence is overwhelming in the *Histoire(s)*, which can be compared to Malraux’s imaginary museum. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Malraux himself observed a parallel between an art book and a film, and Godard elaborates and continues on this theme. In the *Histoire(s)*, paintings are used in various ways. Sometimes they highlight the spoken word on the soundtrack but, on other occasions, Godard creates a visual rhyme between a painting and a filmic shot, thus creating new meanings and insights through the juxtaposition of the images. In episode 3A of the *Histoire(s)*, Godard explicitly links the histories of painting and cinema by situating the origins of the cinématographe in the work of Manet. This statement unmistakably invokes the ideas of Clement Greenberg, who traced the origins of modern art to Manet, when painting began to liberate itself from representation in order to concentrate on form, colour and brush technique – a title-card appearing during a series of Manet paintings specifies that this painter was creating silent films: ‘C’était du cinéma muet.’ However, while Greenberg situated the acme of modernist painting, which started with Manet, with American post-war abstract painting, Godard presents the cinema as its culmination. Rewriting cinema’s history is therefore redefining its relation to painting.

**White Cubes and Black Boxes**

Paradoxically, the alleged death of cinema went hand in hand with a proliferation of the filmic image. The digital age did not end but certainly has reoriented the nature of cinephilia. Broadcast on television and rereleased on video and DVD, film images became disconnected from their narrative context and they became intermingled, by each one of us, with personal memories – Victor Burgin attempted to describe this process in *The Remembered Film*. Not only did films become easily available on video and DVD, nowadays they
are also being watched abundantly in all kinds of private and public spaces. The moving image ended up in streets and squares, on buses and airplanes, on computer screens and cell phones.

Last but not least, the moving image also conquered (or was confined to) the museum and the art gallery. Coinciding with a reassertion of narrative in the work of both artists and experimental filmmakers, the moving image became a paradigm artistic tool. Apart from an increasing number of artists who injected cinema’s iconography or technique into other media (such as the practitioners of staged photography discussed in the previous chapter), the projected moving image itself became ubiquitous in contemporary art exhibitions\(^1\) – Godard’s *Histoire(s)*, too, was not only screened at film festivals, it was also a key work at the 1997 edition of the leading contemporary art show *Documenta*, while *Voyage(s) en utopie*, his 2006 installation at the Centre Pompidou, is inherently linked to the central thesis of the *Histoire(s)*.

It should be noted that the presence of film in the art gallery space as such is not a new phenomenon. Both film and video were already important artistic tools for neo-avant-garde artists and currents of the 1960s and 1970s (Andy Warhol, Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman, Fluxus, performance, land art, and so on), which also coincided with experimental film installations by filmmakers such as Michael Snow or Anthony McCall and phenomena such as ‘expanded’ or ‘extended cinema’.\(^1\) In contrast with the film and video installations of the late 1960s and 1970s, however, the space is not part of the conceptual structure of most of the more recent film installations. Contemporary film installations also differ from the sculptural multi-screen video installations of the 1980s, which have been exchanged for a single large-scale projected image, which often implies an illusory dissolution of the boundary between the beholder and the projection screen, thus creating a more ‘filmic’ rather than a tangible space.\(^1\) The phenomenological use of film and video, which was inherently connected to real-time bodily experience, was replaced by a ‘cinematic’ use, which refers to phantasmic modes of imagery provoking imaginary identifications in the viewer.\(^1\) Facilitated by the availability of smaller and cheaper portable data-projectors in the early 1990s, contemporary art exhibitions started to comprise numerous wall-sized or even roomsized projections of epic scale. As a result, the museum itself underwent a metamorphosis. The paradigm modern exhibition space of the ‘white cube’ was turned into a ‘black box’.\(^1\) Mega-exhibitions of contemporary art often became mazes of darkened cubicles.

The ubiquitous black-box format reveals contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, it indicates that video art and film installations had been assimilated back into traditional filmic forms of spectatorship. On the other hand, it enables artists and filmmakers to present their films as part of a new mobile
and ongoing – rather than stationary and event-based – form of spectatorship. The emergence of a moving spectator, who can leave and re-enter the room and who is often immersed in a multi-screen installation, contributed to a new spatialisation of the moving image. These altered notions of cinematic space went hand in hand with new modes of cinematic time. In contrast to most of the experimental films of the 1960s and 1970s, the spectator is not watching the film all the way through like a narrative film but is used to seeing things in loop and/or is confronted with a structural impossibility of viewing a video work in its entirety. In many recent mega-exhibitions, different modes of presentation for moving pictures exist side by side. Feature-length documentaries and essay films are sometimes shown on a monitor or projected onto a wall of a white cube without seats, whereas short art films are screened in provisional cinemas.

Since the 1990s, when film and projection have become dominant aesthetic modes for contemporary art institutions, other new relations between the moving image and visual art were also established. The emergence of digital technology, for instance, has paradoxically led to an interest in the ‘old’ technology of film – witness artists using obscure film stocks and film loopers. More importantly, the art world created new ways of film production and exhibition. Both museums and private galleries became producing entities financing the production of film and video. As a result, on the one hand prominent feature film directors such as Chantal Akerman, Pedro Costa, Atom Egoyan, Peter Greenaway, Abbas Kiarostami or Chris Marker started making film installations. On the other hand, video artists switched over to the production of theatrically released feature films such as *Hunger* (2008) by Steve McQueen or *Nowhere Boy* (2009) by Sam Taylor-Wood, while other leading artists such as Stan Douglas, Isaac Julien or Mathew Barney created films intended to be screened in gallery spaces but characterised by high production values and a vast cast and crew reminiscent of Hollywood productions. Still other artists using the medium of film or video appropriated techniques and discourses from visual anthropology and ethnography, resulting in a new documentary mode that became prominent in the early years of this century – *Documenta 11* (2002) curated by Okwui Enwezor marked this tendency clearly.

The historical simultaneity of the notion of cinema’s death and the omnipresence of the projected image in the museum, which meanwhile has already been the topic of several exhibitions on a meta-level, corroborates the traditional and popular idea of the museum as a place of death (see Chapter 3). When cinema died, it was buried or mummified in the museum, so to speak. The museum became film’s mausoleum. However, one could object that the museum precisely enabled cinema to survive. Video and film
installations can be interpreted as reincarnations or resurrections of cinema. According to critics such as Raymond Bellour and museum curators as Chris Dercon, modernist cinema found its refuge in the museum and its legitimate heirs in a new generation of video artists. In the museum, Bellour states, cinema becomes an art but it also metamorphoses in new devices or dispositifs. Cinema goes undercover in the art gallery, as it were, to reinvent itself constantly under other names and formats. For Bellour, we find ourselves in a ‘post-cinema’ landscape, in which film can no longer be seen (and discussed) disconnected from other media and their discourses. We are confronted with entre-images (in-between-images) or ‘passages’ between images that have accumulated at the convergence of photography, video and cinema. To say that ‘cinema is dead’ may be the same as saying that the distinctions between these media (or those between the filmic and the televisual, between the printed and the projected image, between the analogue and the digital) are no longer aesthetically relevant in what Rosalind Krauss has called ‘the age of the post-medium condition’. Connecting cinema’s post-history with its pre-history, Bellour even stated that film installations are simply cinema’s ‘natural’ format. ‘By both duplicating cinema and differentiating itself from it, the installations thus also make cinema enter into a history that exceeds it,’ Bellour writes:

The history of installations begins with the invention of the camera obscura and projection, and unfolds through its many different devices (from phantasmagoria to the diorama) throughout the nineteenth century. Cinema can thus be viewed [. . .] as an installation that succeeded in capturing for itself alone the energy appropriated to the animated image, dominating it for half a century.

Last but not least, the conquest of the museum space by the moving and the projected image also invoked new ways of dealing with film history. Contemporary art’s ‘cinematic turn’ not only included the use of film and video technology, it also invoked the appropriation of canonical or popular images of film history. It is striking that contemporary artists referring to film are particularly interested in specific moments in film history. Rather than relying on contemporaneous film or the tradition of avant-garde cinema, these artists rather prefer early film, the masterpieces of silent cinema, classical Hollywood, European modernism and the New Hollywood cinema of the 1970s. George Baker noticed ‘an incredible nostalgia for the last moment of the auteur’ among the video artists who became prominent in the 1990s – something that, according to Chrissie Iles, ‘is partly to do with wanting to engage with, and perhaps influence, the connective tissue that film creates, and participate in a common language of communication’.


Among many of the contemporary artists using film, there is an outspoken fascination with the work of Alfred Hitchcock. Apart from the implicit but nonetheless clear references to Hitchcock in works by artists such as Cindy Sherman or Gregory Crewdson and countless others, explicit references to the 'master of suspense' can easily be found by browsing through leading contemporary art journals and websites. Hitchcock imagery has been appropriated in works by artists such as Sam Ainslie, J. Tobias Anderson, John Baldessari, Judith Barry, Cindy Bernard, Pierre Bismuth, Victor Burgin, Jim Campbell, Steven Campbell, Gregory Chatonsky, Brendan Dawes, Stan Douglas, Christoph Draeger, Tina Gillen, Christoph Girardet and Matthias Müller, Douglas Gordon, Johan Grimonprez, Martijn Hendriks, Peter Howson, Pierre Huyghe, Svea Josephy, Wago Kreider, Diego Lama, Birgit Lehmann, Les LeVeque, Christian Marclay, Marcel Odenbach, Nicolas Provost, David Reed, Geoffrey Alan Rhodes, Ray Richardson, Manuel Saiz, Stephanie Smith, Rea Tajiri, Salla Tykkä and Adrian Wiszniewski among many others. The following pages of this chapter precisely deal with some leading contemporary artists’ engagement with Hitchcock imagery.

Several reasons can be invoked to explain Hitchcock’s omnipresence in the visual arts since the late 1980s. First of all, Hitchcock’s work has been equated with cinema as such. Comprising more than fifty films made between 1925 and 1976, Hitchcock’s oeuvre has been considered as a condensed version of the history of film in its entirety. John Orr, for instance, presented Hitchcock as a matrix-figure absorbing the first decades of film history and in turn greatly influencing the later evolution of cinema. The identification of Hitchcock with film history on the whole is further encouraged by the fact that authors such as Douchet, Rothman, Sharff and Stam among others have interpreted Hitchcock’s work as a meditation on the medium of cinema as such. Several Hitchcock films, after all, are built on characters that are looking, gazing, contemplating and peeping. The gaze itself is the pre-eminent subject of a Hitchcock film. Given this perspective, Deleuze considered Hitchcock as the culmination of (classical) cinema. ‘Including the spectator in the film and the film in the mental image, Hitchcock accomplishes cinema,’ Deleuze wrote. The protagonist of Rear Window, for instance, embodies perfectly Deleuze’s ‘mental image’ not only because he is a photographer but also because he finds himself, like the spectator in the film theatre, in a state of immobility. He is completely reduced to a purely ‘optical situation’. The theme of films such as Rear Window or Vertigo, after all, is looking itself and the ways in which the gaze finds connections and constructs meanings. More than stimulating character identification by the spectator, the
The Video That Knew Too Much

protagonist is transformed into a beholder. *Rear Window* and *Vertigo* are examples of a cinema that is about someone who looks instead of someone who acts. Of course, there is still diegetic support for the protagonist’s immobility in the narrative: in both films, Stewart’s characters have to watch, they simply cannot intervene in the action. As a result, Deleuze situates Hitchcock ‘at the juncture of the two cinemas, the classical that he perfects and the modern that he prepares’. Moreover, in *Rear Window, Vertigo, Psycho, The Birds and Marnie*, we can find the static figures, the elaborate scenes without dialogue that are marked by a slow and contemplative rhythm, and the tendency towards dedramatisation, which also characterise the films by Bresson, Rossellini, Antonioni, Resnais or Tarkovsky.

In retrospect, Hitchcock’s work has also developed into a true test case for almost all film historiographical and film theoretical paradigms that have become fashionable in academia since the 1970s. Hitchcock criticism already played an important role in the politique des auteurs, which was developed in the circles of *Cabiers du cinéma* in the 1950s, and it reached full revs during the 1970s and 1980s when Marxist, structuralist, semiotic, feminist and (both Lacanian and non-Lacanian) psychoanalytic interpretations of Hitchcock happened in rapid succession. A few years later, Hitchcock’s films were submitted to various deconstructivist forms of analysis and they were scrutinised from the perspective of gender and queer studies. Leading theorists and critics such as Cavell, Deleuze, Edelman, Jameson, Mulvey, Paglia, Wollen and Žižek among many others got their teeth into Hitchcock’s films, which have been attacked as well as defended from the most diverse theoretical and ideological positions – often with arguments contradicting each other in the most strange and surprising ways. The cinephile, film historian, film theorist and, last but not least, the artist who wants to bury himself in Hitchcock’s oeuvre is confronted with both the most brilliant and most ludicrous applications of the paradigms produced by academic film studies of the last decades. Continuously reconceptualised by film theory, Hitchcock was also constantly rediscovered by filmmakers. In the first place, this resulted in many films explicitly referring to Hitchcock: Mel Brooks’s parody *High Anxiety* (1977), the clever but somewhat academic and baroque Hitchcockian exercises by De Palma from the 1970s and early 1980s, and the two uninspired sequels as well as Van Sant’s intriguing remake (1998) of *Psycho*.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Hitchcock was also resuscitated by visual artists. His attraction for artists, no doubt, is also inspired by his affinities with key themes and motifs of artistic currents such as Expressionism, Symbolism and Surrealism. The 2000–1 exhibition *Fatal Coincidences* illustrated the art historical references of Hitchcock’s fascination with fetish
objects, icy blondes, uncanny houses, ominous shadows, enigmatic doubles, mysterious dreams and haunted portraits. An art lover, connoisseur and collector of modern art himself, Hitchcock’s oeuvre comprises some interesting artist characters, such as Crewe in *Blackmail* or Sam Marlowe in *The Trouble with Harry*. Films such as *Blackmail, Rebecca, Suspicion, The Paradine Case, Strangers on a Train, The Trouble with Harry, Vertigo, Psycho* and *The Birds* also contain paintings or sculptures depicting scenes or persons that relate, whether or not symbolically, to the narrative. In particular, the painted portrait is a recurrent motif in Hitchcock films, often evoking the haunting presence of an important absentee. This is perfectly illustrated by the scenes involving the portrait of Carlotta in *Vertigo*, which, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, enabled Hitchcock to investigate self-consciously the theme of the look. Several critics have demonstrated that Hitchcock’s camerawork creates a complicity that makes us guilty as voyeurs. As a result, situations, characters and objects are presented as gratifications of our own voyeuristic desires.

Inspired by influential psychoanalytical and feminist film theories, several artists brought Hitchcock’s voyeuristic dimension or his fascination for the ‘scopic drive’ to light. For instance, Hitchcock had already become a central reference point for Marcel Odenbach’s videos of the early 1980s, which dealt with the problems of vision and perception, using the camera as a metaphor for the human eye on the lookout for clues to self-understanding. Examining the self as viewer and voyeur, Odenbach included footage from *Strangers on a Train, Dial M for Murder* and *Frenzy* in *Vorurteile* (*Prejudices*, 1984) whereas *Der Widerspruch der Erinnerungen* (*The Contradiction of Memories*, 1982) comprises shots from *Psycho* showing Janet

![Figure 6.1 Jean-Luc Godard, Histoire(s) du cinéma (1998)](image-url)
Leigh blinded by the headlights of oncoming traffic during a rain storm. These shots are almost seamlessly interwoven with those of Odenbach’s protagonist voyeur-driver-dreamer and they contribute to the recurrent strip-shaped organisation of the frame, which is characteristic of several Odenbach videos. Both Judith Barry and Stan Douglas referred to *Marnie* (1964), one of Hitchcock’s most explicit ‘psychoanalytical’ films, to deal with the manipulation of the gaze and the construction of desire. Barry cuts to *Marnie* in the middle of her video *Casual Shopper* (1981), which is set in a Californian shopping mall and which deals with the ways shopping and fashion contribute to self-construction and self-identification. In Stan Douglas’s film installation *Subject to a Film: Marnie* (1989), a film loop projector continuously repeats a black-and-white, six-minute remake of the robbery scene in *Marnie*, which is set in a modern office. The loop structure underscores Marnie’s inability to escape her mental illness while it also calls attention to the watchful gaze of the spectator. Similarly, inspired by Freud’s and Lacan’s theories of male desire and the scopic drive, Victor Burgin combined Marnie, *Vertigo’s* Madeleine and Ophelia (from Millais’s famous Pre-Raphaelite painting) in his photo-and-text sequence *The Bridge* (1984). This self-reflexive attention to the gaze proved attractive to contemporary artists who employed, assimilated or processed Hitchcock images in their works. In the following section, works by several of these artists will be discussed on the basis of three interrelated themes: (1) the appropriation of Hitchcock images as a tool to reflect on film history and memory; (2) the Hitchcock image cherished as a fetish by a ‘possessive’ spectator; and (3) the Hitchcockian theme of the double.
HITCHCOCK HISTOIRE(S) AND MEMORY MARKERS

Hitchcock’s equation with film history makes him a central figure in Godard’s aforementioned *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Already in 1957, in a review of *The Wrong Man* – a film that is also prominently present in the *Histoire(s)* – Godard had said that Hitchcock proves that ‘the cinema today is better fitted than either philosophy or the novel to convey the basic data of consciousness.’ For Godard, Hitchcock epitomised the narrative cinema of *auteurs*, which had performed its swansong before the end of the twentieth century. When Godard presented his *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* at Cannes in April 1980, his remarks about the film were coloured by the death of Hitchcock, just days before. ‘The death of Hitchcock,’ Godard stated with bitterness, marks the passage from one era to another. [. . .] I believe we are entering an era defined by the suspension of the visual. Our age represses the visual. [. . .] Moreover, I found the cinema very dislocated. [. . .] I felt as if I were making my first film, but at the same time, it’s all sort of discouraging. I don’t think we’ll have the strength to make cinema much longer.

Emblematic of cinema and its lost power, a Hitchcock image opens the *Histoire(s)* – it is the image of James Stewart and his camera, as it were the quintessential cinematic man. Footage and stills from Hitchcock films pop up throughout all the parts of the *Histoire(s)* but Hitchcock is the specific theme of episode 4A. Godard draws specifically attention to Hitchcock in a passage entitled *Introduction à la méthode d’Alfred Hitchcock*, the title of which is a reference to Paul Valéry’s *Introduction to the method of Leonardo da Vinci*. In that passage, Godard introduces Hitchcock through his easily recognisable voice. During a series of photographs of directors such as Bresson, Lang, Cocteau, Rivette, Visconti, Garrel and Fassbinder, we can hear Hitchcock say that ‘any art form is there for the artist to interpret it in its own way’ and that an artist can create emotions in a proper way. ‘Literature can do it by the way language is used or the way words are put together’ but film, Hitchcock continues, is sometimes looked at ‘solely for its content without attention for the style in which the story is told.’ At this stage, Godard’s own voice overlaps that of Hitchcock by stating ‘d’abord les images’ – images first. Given this perspective, Hitchcock plays a crucial and an exemplary role in the *Histoire(s)* because his films have a peculiar effect on our memory and the way we remember images. Godard (in voice-over on the soundtrack) notes that we have often forgotten the stories of Hitchcock films. We no longer remember, for instance, why Joan Fontaine leans over the precipice in *Suspicion* and what exactly Joel McCrea went to do in Holland. We’ve forgotten why Janet Leigh stops at the Bates Motel and why Teresa Wright is still crazy about her Uncle
Charlie. We’ve forgotten what it is that Henry Fonda is not exactly guilty of and to what end the American government employed the services of Ingrid Bergman. But we do remember a purse, a bus in the desert, a glass of milk, the sails of a windmill, a hairbrush. We remember a row of bottles, a pair of glasses, a musical score, a bunch of keys.

Strikingly, Godard’s words do not coincide with the images, which comprise a similar catalogue of Hitchcock icons: the rear-view mirror from *Psycho*, the murder scene in *Dial M for Murder*, the burning tanker in *North by Northwest*, the glass of milk in *Suspicion*, the key in the manhole cover in *Marnie*, Madeleine’s chignon in *Vertigo*, and so on. Hitchcock’s images, particularly images of emotionally or symbolically charged objects, Godard asserts, linger and make lasting impressions. It is precisely these images that turn Hitchcock into a crucial point of reference in the *Histoire(s)*, which precisely questions the importance of images for recollections, collective memory and history. According to Godard, Hitchcock is ‘the greatest creator of forms of the twentieth century’, and he succeeded where Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon and Hitler have failed, notably in taking control of the universe. ‘Perhaps ten thousand people have not forgotten Cézanne’s apples,’ Godard continues, ‘but a billion spectators will recall the cigarette lighter in *Strangers on a Train*, and if Alfred Hitchcock has been the only poète maudit to achieve success, it is because he was the greatest creator of forms of the twentieth century.’ In addition, Godard calls Hitchcock the only one, with the exception of Dreyer, who knew how to film a miracle.

To Godard, Hitchcock, like Jerzy in *Passion*, celebrates the primacy of images over plot. As Rancière noted, Godard’s suggestion that Hitchcock’s cinema is made of images whose power is indifferent to the stories into which they have been arranged, should at least be nuanced since it is precisely the narrative situation that lends importance to the Hitchcockian object. But Hitchcock, Rancière admits, was able to present his images as little visual puzzles. The Hitchcock image includes the viewer in the play of the author by distancing her or him from the affect of the character. Creating a cathartic effect, a Hitchcock image is, in the words of Rancière, ‘an element in an Aristotelian dramaturgy’. By manipulating them – separating them by blacked-out screens, juxtaposing them with a text discussing images from another film, and so on – Godard thus reveals the power of Hitchcock images and transforms them into isolated icons. But these icons, Rancière remarked, become part of an ‘originary sensorium’ vaguely reminiscent of Elie Faure’s ‘spirit of the forms’ or, we could add, of other taxonomies favouring non-linear and non-hierarchic systems of montage such as Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1929) or Malraux’s *Musée imaginaire.* Isolating, aestheticising
or fetishising emotionally or symbolically charged objects (the glass of milk that might contain the poison, the key giving access to the locked room), the Hitchcock image, in short, is a crucial element in Godard's idiosyncratic historiographic project.

The Hitchcock image is also presented as a token of history, the past and memory by Chris Marker, whose entire oeuvre is a meditation on the relation between time and the (cinematic) image. Marker already alluded to Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) in his avant-garde classic *La Jetée* (1962), which deals both with the compression of time and the authenticity of (the images of) memories. Entirely consisting of still images, *La Jetée* contains a sequence situated in the Jardin des Plantes that unmistakably refers to the scene in which Madeleine touches the dated annual rings in the section of a redwood tree pointing to the moments when she was born and when she died. Marker also refers to *Vertigo* in *Sans soleil* (Sunless, 1982), which adopts the form of a travel report of a fictitious cameraman who asks himself how people can have memories without filming or photographing. *Sans soleil* also comprises a sequence in which a Japanese video artist visits San Francisco to search for the locations of *Vertigo*. According to the protagonist (in voice-over), *Vertigo* is the only film 'capable of representing the impossible and insane memory'. His voyage through the city repeats the obsessive journeys of Scottie through a labyrinth San Francisco. Later in his career, too, Marker regularly harked back to *Vertigo*. In his CD-ROM *Immemory* (1998) and the essay *A Free Replay: Notes sur Vertigo* (1994), for instance, Marker interprets the plot of Hitchcock's film in an original way. For Marker, *Vertigo* is a film of double-entendres. At a certain point, the spectator realises that everything that happened before was staged. Marker, however, asks himself what if, in the second part of the film, the characters were lying to us as well? It could be perfectly possible that the second part of the film is no more than a dream or an illusion of Scottie. Nothing, at least, could provide proof to the contrary. During the film, the spectator realises that the first part of the film was an illusion. ‘But what,’ Marker notes, ‘if the first part really were the truth and the second part the product of a sick mind?’

With characters haunted by memories based on images, *Vertigo* is a key film for Marker, whose entire oeuvre is a reflection on the interaction between cinema, time, history and memory. In a film such as *Vertigo*, Hitchcock created, in Deleuzian terminology, ‘crystal images’ in which time has been coagulated and in which present, past and future can no longer be distinguished. According to Deleuze, *Vertigo* is, together with *Zvenigora* (Dovzhenko, 1928) and *Je t’aime je t’aime* (Resnais, 1968), one of the few films that show ‘how we live in time’. Dealing with the visualisation of memory and history by means of cinema in several of his works, Marker does not rely
on Hitchcock’s crystal images by accident. Precisely those film images that succeeded in condensing time in themselves became the building blocks of a new post-cinematic visual language, which constantly honours the memory of cinema. Commenting on Hitchcock’s dominant position in both film scholarship and art praxis, Thomas Elsaesser noted that ‘it seems a battle is on about the reality status of each: the world of Hitchcock/Hollywood and the world of history/memory, and it is not always certain which will win.’

Populated by characters haunted by their past, Hitchcock’s films, in their turn, became part of collective memory. Marker could only see the Golden Gate Bridge as an artefact from *Vertigo* – a gesture repeated by Cindy Bernard, who included, in her series of photographs *Ask the Dust* (1989–92), a view of the Golden Gate Bridge as well as a picture of the landscape where Cary Grant is attacked by a crop duster in *North by Northwest*. Respecting the viewpoint, atmospheric conditions and the aspect ratio of twenty movies that originally were made between 1954 and 1974, Bernard photographed their famous locations and presented them together with a parallel set of twenty family snapshots. In Bernard’s pictures, the neutral and mute landscapes, which are devoid of actors, willingly or otherwise remain signifiers of the films that constitute our collective memory. Reminiscent of the conceptual framework of rephotography practices that have emerged since the late 1970s, Bernard’s pictures evoke lost places, ‘now frozen and caught for contemplation in a way that was not necessarily part of the initial reason for choosing the location’.

Feelings of memory, loss and nostalgia are even emphasised by the selection of the film locations. In light of this, *Vertigo*’s Golden Gate Bridge and *North by Northwest*’s dusty cornfield are even emblematic for the entire series, which focuses on deserts, mountain passes, bridges, rivers and roads – ‘emblems of trial, crossing, transformation’, in the words of Martha Langford. French artist Gregory Chatonsky took this another step further, right into the digital age, in his *Vertigo@home* (2007), which is a recreation of the original places of the movie with the help of Google Street View.

**The Fragment, the Fetish and the Possessive Spectator**

Cindy Bernard’s pictures are not only acts of remembrance, they are also attempts to hold the cinematic moment in another medium. Bernard, like many of the other contemporary artists appropriating Hitchcock images, is a perfect example of what Laura Mulvey has called the ‘possessive spectator’ who yields to the desire to possess and hold the elusive image. As Hal Foster noted, this fetishist appropriation of the film fragment can be interpreted as an equivalent of evolutions in filmmaking practices. Whereas the so-called ‘film school’ directors like Scorsese, De Palma and Coppola attempted to revitalise...
traditional Hollywood genres, video-store jockeys such as Tarantino instead fetishised isolated scenes that they could replay obsessively on the VCR. It has often been noted that the film-related works by a generation of artists that came to prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s are intertwined with the moment when VHS video technology first became widely available. Douglas Gordon has pointed out repeatedly that anyone who wants his 24 Hour Psycho (1993) can create it at home. Video technology not only made possible a new artistic medium, it also provided easy access to film history. Video players and DVD players now enabled the spectator to consult rather than to watch a film, and they created new forms of aesthetic apprehension. According to Laura Mulvey, new technologies are strangely able to reveal the beauty of cinema but through a displacement that breaks the bond of specificity, which was so important to an earlier generation of filmmakers, artists and theorists.

Paradoxically, the so-called ‘death of cinema’ made it easier to study films and it created new opportunities to have highly idiosyncratic encounters with privileged moments of film history. In his Video Hacking (1999), Spanish artist Manuel Saiz ironically commented on this. This fictional documentary shows a masked video-art activist who manipulates rented tapes before returning them to the video store. In Video Hacking, he skilfully manipulates one of the scenes in Hitchcock’s North by Northwest.

When it became easy to isolate and freeze a single image, Godard’s notion of the primacy of images over plot in Hitchcock became the point of departure for several artists, who emphasised the disconnection from the narrative. Pierre Bismuth’s series Respect the Dead (2001), for instance, comprises re-edited versions of famous films, ending after the first murder takes place in the narrative. Respect the Dead (Vertigo) presents the first four minutes and forty-two seconds of Vertigo. J. Tobias Anderson’s animation film 879 Colour (2002) is based on 879 drawn images from Hitchcock’s North by Northwest – the number of shots is determined by a version of the film that Anderson taped from Swedish television. Anderson only included the scenes that have dialogue and thus precisely omitted the sequences in which the primacy of the image is evident. These sequences (the crop duster scene, the climb on the modernist villa on top of Mount Rushmore) are, of course, the most famous of the film. Apart from an interesting reflection on genre conventions, Anderson’s film makes us clear that the isolated image nonetheless reminds us of the narrative of the film – the speed of 879 Colour, in which each image only has two frames, emphasises this aspect of cinema as a memory machine.

Nonetheless, when VCR and DVD made it easy to isolate as well as to accelerate, decelerate and compare film scenes at home in an instant, a new generation of artists also presented themselves as fetishistic spectators more fascinated by image than by plot. Since Hitchcock’s oeuvre, as Godard
elaborately demonstrated in his *Histoire(s)*, already comprised this fetishistic dimension, Hitchcock became a favourite theme and motif of such artists. Hitchcock’s film images were converted not only into photographs by Cindy Bernard but also into paintings by Tina Gillen and into all kinds of media by numerous artists. Experimental filmmakers and video artists unravelled, decomposed, dismantled and deconstructed Hitchcock films, reassembling their shots or frames into new combinations. In *2 Spellbound* (1999) and *4 Vertigo* (2000), Les LeVeque re-edited and accelerated original shots of these Hitchcock films and reversed some of the frames along their horizontal or vertical axis, thus producing a kaleidoscopic effect reminiscent of the so-called flicker films of 1970s structural cinema. References to the stroboscopic flicker film pattern also mark Nicolas Provost’s film *Gravity* (2007), which consists of a complex montage and image processing of kissing scenes drawn from various films. As noted in the chapter on stills, a kiss often marks a reversal, interruption or even a completion of the plot. A favourite motif for stills, a kiss scene implies the transformation from film to photograph, from movement to stasis. Kiss scenes mark a moment at which the viewer transforms from an observer into a contemplator – not coincidentally, Andy Warhol chose the kiss as a ‘subject’ for one of his first films that are characterised by stasis. Provost did not exclusively use Hitchcock material in *Gravity* but Hitchcock is certainly the director who is most prominently present, with kisses from *Spellbound*, *Notorious*, *To Catch a Thief*, *North by Northwest* and *Vertigo*. Critics have noted Hitchcock’s specific way of dealing with the kiss, which he often staged in a way similar to his murders. Furthermore, by letting several kiss scenes dissolve into one another, Provost enhances the ecstatic transcendence that Hitchcock often connected to his kiss scenes, which involve actors turning in the manner of a waltz. Hitchcock’s kissing scenes also often include rear projection, which he used in a very specific way. Rather than blending actors and spatial context, the rear-projection technique outlines them and sets them apart. The space behind the characters dissolves in a maelstrom. The landscape is presented as a distant unreachable realm. When used to maximum poetic effect, rear projections mimic the effect of a (day)dream or a kind of orgiastic experience that separates the kissing characters from their surroundings.

The most comprehensive artistic reassemblage of Hitchcock footage can be found in *The Phoenix Tapes* (1999) by Matthias Müller and Christoph Girardet, who re-edited fragments of more than forty Hitchcock films. Whereas LeVeque uses the frame as the basic material for his work, Müller and Girardet depart from the shot or even the scene in order to make an idiosyncratic taxonomy of Hitchcock themes and motifs. Consisting of six parts, *The Phoenix Tapes* illustrate Hitchcockian space, Hitchcock’s fetish objects,
recurring behavioural tics and gestures of actors, Hitchcockian dream states and anxieties, Hitchcock heroes and their mothers, and Hitchcock women in their private moments and spaces. Some parts, like the one entitled Burden of Proof, can be considered as a rhythmically edited version of Godard’s remark on the primacy of images in Hitchcock’s work. Other parts perfectly illustrate the themes and motifs discussed by Hitchcock scholars. Developing analogies, parallels, and rhymes through audio-visual montage, Müller and Girardet discern Hitchcock’s stylistic tendencies and capture his excitements and obsessions.

**Suspending Suspense**

The last part of Müller and Girardet’s Phoenix Tapes, entitled Necrologue, shows a close-up of Ingrid Bergman’s face from Under Capricorn, in which a tear drops from her eye. Müller and Girardet slowed it down and loop it over and over so that it seems to last forever. The resulting image is neither a film nor a still but, in the words of Kerry Brougher,

somewhere in between the two, a strange state hovering between the fiction of the story and the reality of the physical presence of the medium, the grain of the film stock, the nearly visible film frames rising to the surface.47

This sequence, which shows similarities with the ‘still films’ discussed in the previous chapter, is a perfect example of the art of Mulvey’s ‘possessive spectator’ who attempts to hold the elusive image. Since Hitchcock’s images tend to linger, his films became a popular source of inspiration for artists appropriating cinematic images. Isolating, fragmenting, slowing down, freezing and recontextualising Hitchcock images are operations that endorse the already inherent iconic and self-reflexive qualities of Hitchcock’s art. Hitchcock’s characteristic suspense (from the Latin suspendere) was restored to its literal meaning. Douglas Gordon’s 24 Hour Psycho (1993), which is probably the most discussed contemporary artwork containing Hitchcock imagery, is therefore a case in point. According to Russell Ferguson, it even ‘ratchets up the idea of suspense to a level approaching absurdity’.48 In 24 Hours Psycho, Gordon slowed down Hitchcock’s film to about two frames per second so that its length is extended to an entire twenty-four hour period. As a result, the film is disconnected from its narrative, while the emphasis is shifted to the passing of time as well as to the presence of isolated actions, gestures and poses – some of them becoming noticeable and memorable thanks to the deceleration. In so doing, Gordon’s slow motion can be situated in the tradition of the French and Soviet avant-garde of the 1920s, which presented the film camera as a kind of truth machine, which could reveal the
physical aspects of gesture and movement imperceptible to the naked eye. 'There were these beautiful details that Hitchcock couldn’t have been conscious of and couldn’t have controlled. It was as if the slow motion revealed the unconscious of the film,' Douglas Gordon stated.49

Rooted in the practices of video art that had investigated the body’s relationship to space and time since the 1970s, 24 Hour Psycho also relates to the tradition of the American post-war avant-garde film, particularly the work of Andy Warhol and Ken Jacobs, who used the cinematic apparatus to evoke the elasticity of time as a subjective experience.50 Gordon’s use of slow motion, which he obtained with an obsolete industrial Panasonic VHS desk with a jog mechanism, shows similarities with Jacobs’s use of an analytic projector to show a film at different speeds in order to re-film the projected images from different angles. By stretching Hitchcock’s haunting thriller, Gordon’s intervention results in a complete dedramatisation and in a deadpan image reminiscent of Warhol’s early films – in 2006, Gordon created New Color Empire as a homage to Warhol’s Empire (1963). According to Michael Newman, 24 Hour Psycho effectively combines

the avant-garde’s interest in reworking Hollywood with experimental cinema’s use of devices to force the audience to become aware of the film’s materiality. In displacing the medium to video, Gordon shifts the emphasis from the avant-garde’s privileging of production to consumption.51

With this Warholian dilution of dynamics and the stretching of time, Gordon drags Psycho completely into the realm of Deleuze’s ‘time-image’. While Deleuze situated Hitchcock at the crossroads of the ‘movement-image’ and the ‘time-image’, Gordon’s version of Psycho is transformed into a pure image that makes time (or rather a Bergsonian duration) perceptible in its heterogeneous flow. Acquiring rather quickly a canonical but controversial status in contemporary video art, Gordon’s 24 Hour Psycho inspired, in its turn, other artists to deal with time and duration. Whereas Gordon stretched the time of Hitchcock’s famous film, Jim Campbell compressed it into a single image that looks like a grey monochrome photograph presented in a translucent lightbox. His Illuminated Average #1 Hitchcock’s Psycho (2000) is generated by a superimposition of every single frame of Hitchcock’s film. Placing all of the frames on top of each other, he translated the original film into an image consisting of averaged brightness and contrast values – strikingly, the edges of the image are darker whereas towards the centre a light appears. These schematic traces of the spaces and the action of the original film appropriately create a ghostly image, which is vaguely reminiscent of both the ghost images in nineteenth-century photography and the experiments by futurist painters who attempted to capture the passage of time on a piece of canvas.
As a result of Gordon’s stretching of time, the famous shower scene, the epitome of montage, is in *24 Hour Psycho* no more significant than any other moment – ‘montage is the first victim’ of Gordon’s slow motion. The causal links between the shots are suspended whereas every image becomes in a permanent state of transition. In so doing, Gordon increased the potency of the image. Each image, after all, does not only allow the viewer to imagine any number of possible subsequent images before the next one actually appears, it also evokes a kind of remembrance of the story. ‘What interests me about *24 Hour Psycho,*’ Gordon stated,

is that it runs so slowly that you can never know what’s going to happen next. The past is a confusion of memory. The images follow each other too slowly for you to remember. The past goes on and the future never happens, so everything stays in the present. And the present is a constant convergence of future and past. [. . . ] I was concerned above all with the role of memory. While the viewer remembers the original film, he is drawn into the past, but on the other hand also into the future, for he becomes aware that the story, which he already knows, never appears fast enough. In between, there exists a slowly changing present.

Like Godard and Marker, Gordon, too, associates Hitchcock images with memory and the death of cinema. ‘Cinema is dead, going nowhere,’ Gordon said.

Nobody can break out of the narrative structures demanded by mainstream audiences, except avant-garde filmmakers, whose films nobody wants to watch anyway. It could be fun to raise the dead. I’m looking for
Gordon translates his attempt to raise the dead into an act of stopping time – or, is it the other way around, is Gordon animating the still image? According to Philip Monk, ‘24 Hour Psycho fatefully insinuates itself into Psycho as if death moved in the images.’ For Gordon, cinema itself is a memory. He learned about Hitchcock through television and video. ‘Most of the movies that I’ve watched, I’ve watched in bed rather than in a cinema,’ Gordon stated. Moreover, 24 Hour Psycho originated when Gordon saw a video of a TV transmission of Hitchcock’s film and noticed that in the scene where Norman Bates looks through a peep-hole at Marion, she unhooks her bra – something which he didn’t remember seeing in the VCR version. Almost echoing Bates, Gordon himself was fascinated by the illicit image of a woman’s body and used primitive video technology to verify whether or not something was there. Furthermore, the slow motion of 24 Hour Psycho is unmistakably an effect of video technology and even highly uncinematic. It is as if Gordon only wants to cherish the memory of cinema without attempting to recreate a kind of cinematic experience. Without pandering to the public’s need for filmic spectacle, Gordon draws attention to the conditions of the medium itself and shifts the focus of his ‘remake’ to the cinematic dispositif: Gordon’s piece only borrows the darkened room, the screen and the film footage from the cinema experience. But the room has no seats, the film is transferred to video and the screen is placed high, at an angle of 45 degrees and slightly tilted towards the ground, in the middle of the room so that the notion of a reality behind the screen cannot take hold. In light of this, Ursula Frohne situates artists such as Douglas Gordon in a conceptually defined direction in video installation, which clearly differs from video artists who create immersive installations ‘through perfectly matched images and sounds that captivate the viewer in a kind of hypnotizing reality camouflage’ by consciously drawing on ‘professional editing techniques and the entire technological repertoire from MTV to Hollywood production, endeavouring to overwhelm the viewer’. Strikingly, the screen in 24 Hour Psycho is not only free-standing (or suspended) but also semi-transparent so that a mirror image is visible on its other side. This recalls experimental film pieces from the early 1970s, in particular Michael Snow’s Two Sides to Every Story (1970), but it also tallies with Psycho’s main character. The main result, however, is that the double-sided screen splinters the perspective of the viewer and any identification with the camera or actors is hampered. This mirror structure, which characterises the structure of Psycho itself and several of Hitchcock’s other films (see the following paragraph), also recurs
in several of Gordon’s video installations that are based on film classics such as *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1995/6, based on Mamoulian’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), *Between Darkness and Light* (*After William Blake*) (1997, superimposing images from Henry King’s *The Song of Bernadette* and William Friedkin’s *The Exorcist*), *Through a Looking Glass* (1999, using footage from Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver*), *Left is right and right is wrong and left is wrong and right is right* (1999, based on Preminger’s *Whirlpool*) and *Déjà Vu* (2000, appropriating Maté’s *D.O.A.*).

In some of his other works, Douglas Gordon dealt with Hitchcock again. *Psycho Hitchhiker* (1993) is a photograph of Gordon himself as a hitchhiker, holding a placard addressed to passing drivers. Where one would expect to see a destination written, one reads instead ‘Psycho’. *A Souvenir of Non-Existence* (1993) consists of a letter from the artist addressed to Lars Thorwald, the killer in *Rear Window*, and which was returned as undeliverable. *Empire* (1998) is a vertical neon sign, which was installed in a Glasgow street, spelling the word ‘empire’ in a mirrored way. It glows with the same green light of the original sign seen through the window of the San Francisco Empire hotel room in *Vertigo*. *Vertigo* also supplies the material for *Feature Film* (1998), Gordon’s first film not consisting of found footage. Instead, Gordon presents us with new footage especially consisting of tight close-ups of James Conlon conducting Bernard Herrmann’s haunting score but without the orchestra present – Conlon is thus acting more than he is conducting since he is performing to the music, which was recorded earlier. The conductor, who emerges gradually from darkness and whose body, hands or eyes are the only source of light in the room, takes the place of the actors. *Feature Film* has two versions. One version is for theatrical screening with a running time of the music score (about 75 minutes). The other is an installation version, which runs the film’s entire 128 minutes and which is accompanied by a silent video version of *Vertigo*. As soon as the music stops, *Vertigo’s* dialogue is scarcely audible because a monitor version of the film was on stage pacing Conlon during conducting. During these passages, the camera pulls away from the conductor and wanders in long trajectories through the concert hall, over the rows of red velvet seats. In the installation, the simultaneous screenings of *Feature Film* and its source material are so organised that the spectator cannot have both screens together in view. In so doing, image and sound are explicitly disconnected in this ‘adaptation’ of a film that feminist and psychoanalytical film theories have presented as a key example of the subjection of the female image in the male gaze. *Vertigo*, after all, is first and foremost a story of visual deception. Scottie, a private eye, is victim of a visual masquerade. According to Philip Monk, Gordon’s inversion of sight and sound throws new meaning on the story. It ‘brings the background to the
foreground so that the ground of deception, which Scottie cannot recognise because he is captive to the visual, partially becomes evident to us.58

Separating the image from sound, of course, had also characterised the earlier silent 24 Hour Psycho – some critics even interpreted this as an overemphasis of the scopic drive that restores the psychotic state of the protagonist of the film, which is also marked by a ventriloquist displacement of the voice. This separation of the image from sound also determines some other artworks that refer to Hitchcock or, rather, to Bernard Herrmann’s score in films such as Psycho and Vertigo. In The Hitchcock Trilogy (1987), Rea Tajiri, for instance, connected Bernard Herrmann’s haunting music to new minimalist ‘narratives’: the music from Vertigo is used in combination with a textual description of three postcards, music from Psycho accompanies a static two-shot of two women, and Herrmann’s unused score for Torn Curtain can be heard during a montage showing a succession of closing curtains borrowed from a wide range of films. The use of a soundtrack, which unmistakably reminds us of a particular film or a film genre, also characterises the works of Christian Marclay, who investigates the relationship between objects, images, sound and silence. Using fragments from the film’s dialogue and score, Marclay creates a ‘superimposition’ of sounds in his Vertigo (Soundtrack for an Exhibition) (1990). The new ‘soundtrack’ conjures images from the film, but then creates from them a new film of the imagination.

The Trouble with the Double

Another topic that made Hitchcock so attractive to contemporary artists is the theme and motif of the double. As Bettina Rosenblatt and other critics have noted, Hitchcock’s oeuvre itself comprises several doppelgangers or lookalikes.59 In films such as The Lodger, Shadow of a Doubt, Strangers on a Train, The Wrong Man or Vertigo, characters mirror one another. Furthermore, Hitchcock endlessly created his own doubles by playing ‘himself’. He became famous for his cameo appearances and he cultivated his persona by his singular presence in the trailers of his films as well as in the hilarious prologues and epilogues of his television episodes. In various episodes of Alfred Hitchcock Presents, moreover, Hitchcock literally introduces a twin brother, plays with a marionette showing his features, loses a Hitchcock lookalike contest, and so on.

In addition, films such as Psycho and, as Chris Marker emphasised, Vertigo are characterised by a mirror structure. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, both films were ‘reworked’ by Douglas Gordon, whose work has been described as ‘modelled on structures of reversibility and repetition, on mirrorings and doublings’.60 Psycho and Vertigo have become favourite
points of reference for many artists appropriating Hitchcock imagery. David Reed departed from *Vertigo’s* vertiginous mirror structure in his installation *Scottie’s Bedroom* (1994), which consists of a life-size recreation of the set of the protagonist’s bedroom. The walls, however, are decorated with Reed’s own paintings that are vaguely reminiscent of the spirals of *Vertigo’s* credit sequence. Moreover, in the bedroom installation, a TV monitor plays a fragment from *Vertigo* in a continuous loop in which Reed digitally has inserted his own paintings. This confusion of realities also marks Cindy Bernard’s film installation *Location Proposal #2* (1997–9), which comprises screens showing a digital shot-by-shot recreation of the redwood forest, which in itself is a combination of location footage and shots made on the sound stage.

Bringing the celluloid dream into the digital domain, Bernard, like many other of the aforementioned artists, emphasises that the transition from one medium to another is an act of doubling or duplication in itself – a process that resonates with Hitchcock’s own oeuvre since he has been described as ‘a director who was continuously and obsessively remaking his own work’. Hitchcock made two versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, he released both a silent and a sound version of *Blackmail*, he played with the idea of a remake of *The Lodger* during the 1940s, while *North by Northwest* has often been interpreted as an American remake of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Strikingly, in 1998, in an era when artists were abundantly appropriating, exploring, cherishing and/or deconstructing Hitchcock, several remakes of Hitchcock films were released – some of them conventional and uninspiring such as *A Perfect Murder*, Andrew Davis’s remake of *Dial M for Murder*, or Jeff Bleckner’s TV remake of *Rear Window* starring Christopher Reeve. The most controversial and interesting of the 1998 remakes, no doubt, was Gus Van Sant’s shot-by-shot colour remake of *Psycho*, which provoked overwhelmingly negative and even hostile commentary. Precisely because Van Sant attempted to be faithful to his model, the myriad deviations from the original became attractions in themselves. As a result, as James Naremore remarked, the film ‘resembles nothing so much as a museum installation. […] It functions, intentionally or not, as a metafilm.’ As much a copy, replica, repetition or simulacrum as a remake, Van Sant’s *Psycho* should be compared more with the artistic concept of the ready-made, rephotography practices in conceptual art or Douglas Gordon’s *24 Hour Psycho* rather than with the remakes by Davis or Bleckner. Made for theatrical screening and with relatively famous actors, Van Sant’s film nonetheless shared similarities with *Remake* (1995), a low-tech film by Pierre Huyghe intended for screening in an exhibition context. As with Van Sant’s *Psycho*, the spectator is invited to compare the film with her or his mental reconstruction of the original. Shot on 16 mm but screened on video, *Remake* (1995) is a kind of home-made version of *Rear Window*, which
contains deliberate 'errors' such as audible directions for the actors. Although
the film is set in a suburban area of Paris undergoing reconstruction, the film
coincides shot by shot with the original – Huyghe even instructed his actors
‘to repeat, to be doubles, to reproduce’. Designating itself as a copy, Remake
is a film that first and foremost presents a series of situations to replay –
Jean-Christophe Royoux aptly described Huyghe’s film as an ‘audiovisual
karaoke’. The original film becomes a kind of ‘score’ or a new link in a ‘chain
of representations’, as Huyghe calls them. According to Tanya Leighton,
the understanding of representation in practices such as Huyghe’s is that they
are concerned with doubling events with new representations; submitting
historical representations to further repetitions; and disseminating events,
representations and images in certain ways, and in disregard for spectacle’s
alienating spectacle.

The logic of duplication was taken another step further by Christoph
Draeger in Schizo (Redux) (2004), an eighty-nine-minute video consisting of
a digitally overlapped, synchronised projection of both Hitchcock’s and Van
Sant’s versions of Psycho. Sometimes evoking a badly adjusted 3D projec-
tion, this ‘double’ film creates a ‘schizoid’ effect that heightens the intensity
of the thrilling original in this third remake. The remake is haunted by its

Figure 6.4  Christoph Draeger, Schizo (Redux) (2004)
original and both morph into one – not unlike the face of Norman Bates that is superimposed by his skeletal mother’s face in the last scene of Psycho. Furthermore, by mixing black-and-white and colour, and combining the celluloid and the digital era, Schizo (Redux) enhances films’ inherent power to ricochet continually among standpoints in time. Like Huyghe’s Remake or the Van Sant version of Psycho, Schizo (Redux) reminds us of the fact that duplication inevitably evokes the memory of the original and thus a history of film.

Johan Grimonprez’s Double Take (2009) also connects Hitchcock, the figure of the double, memory, death and the end of cinema. Double Take is a multi-layered film containing, among other things, newsreel footage covering the Cold War in the early 1960s, Folgers coffee commercials, new footage shot by the artist, and clips from Hitchcock films and television episodes. The main plot line, which is particularly conveyed by means of a voice-over, is vaguely based on a story by Jorge Luis Borges about a man meeting his double, who turns out to be his older self. While working on the set of The Birds in the early 1960s, the famous film director meets his older alter ego, the Hitchcock of 1980. ‘If you meet your double, you should kill him. Or he will kill you,’ Grimonprez’s Hitchcock states. Furthermore, Double Take touches on an almost endless series of doubles. First of all, the ‘star’ of the film is ‘professional’ Hitchcock double Ron Burrage, one of the many Hitchcock doubles featuring in Grimonprez’s earlier Looking for Alfred (2005), which dealt with the various affinities between the imagery of Hitchcock and that of surrealist painter René Magritte, another lover of enigmatic mirrors and doubles.66
Double Take is situated in the early 1960s, when Hitchcock himself had contributed to the transition from cinema to television, which can be interpreted as another instance of the process of duplication. From the mid-1950s, Hitchcock produced his Alfred Hitchcock Presents series in which he ridiculed TV formats and TV commercials. The story of Double Take, therefore, takes place in the era of the demise of the classical Hollywood system when television had surpassed film as the most important medium for the distribution of both information and visual entertainment. Grimonprez weaves the story about Hitchcock meeting his double with the theme of television as a device of the culture of the spectacle fascinated by fear, danger and catastrophes—an issue he already tackled in his widely acclaimed Dial History (1997). Double Take explicitly deals with the role of television in the Cold War era and its connection to satellite technology and the arms race. It includes clips from the famous Kitchen Debate between Nixon and Khrushchev, in which colour television and rocket science were juxtaposed. Grimonprez skilfully links these images with shots taken from Hitchcock films from that era such as his Cold War spy thriller Topaz (1969), which deals with the Cuban Missile Crisis, and The Birds, many scenes of which show similarities with the themes and iconography of science fiction films (with close-ups of people staring at the clouds, the fear of a danger coming from the sky, a peaceful place imperceptibly taken over by an alien force, and so on). According to Grimonprez, The Birds also alludes to Hitchcock’s ambivalent relationship to television. Referring to an essay by Angelo Restivo in which he asks the question why nobody switches on the TV set in The Birds, Grimonprez sees the film as a comment on the cannibalisation of cinema by television.67 Grimonprez states:

The model community of Bodega Bay is being invaded by birds in the same way that television invades suburbia, turning the American nuclear family into consumers; in the process (and this was a concern for filmmakers like Hitchcock) displacing people’s relationship with cinema.68

Given this perspective, television is not simply a new communication device but also the ultimate expression of the post-modern condition, which is characterised not only by consumerism and a proliferation of images but also by a culture of disaster and fear. In a sense, Double Take ‘socialises’ Hitchcock’s famous statement that ‘one of television’s greatest contributions is that it brought murder back into the home where it belongs.’69

Just as the 1980 Hitchcock threatens to kill the 1962 Hitchcock and television killed cinema, Double Take presents itself as an experiment in time travel à la Chris Marker. After all, Grimonprez’s fictitious Hitchcock makes a journey through past and future in order to encounter another embodiment of his inner self. Like the protagonist of La Jetée who is haunted by
the memory of a fragment of time that has been lived twice, Grimonprez’s Hitchcock travels through time thanks to juxtapositions of various media. Whereas Marker used still photographs in order to reflect on cinema as a time machine, Grimonprez uses the interaction between cinema and television to reflect on history. *Double Take* deliberately displays its heterogeneous structure and refers to television with its text bars and an editing pattern that evokes zapping rather than film montage.

Grimonprez’s interest in the relation between Hitchcock and television is exceptional among contemporary artists, who are usually attracted by the cinematic spectacle of Hitchcock films – even when their works are driven by iconoclastic impulses or when they are attempting to expose cinema as a constructed spectacle. Hitchcock, after all, was and is first and foremost the epitome of cinema – it has been noted that the cinephilic discovery of Hitchcock as an *auteur* by the *Cahier* critics in the 1950s was a reaction not only against the traditional French cinéma de papa but also against television. Some of the leading video art pioneers of the 1960s and 1970s (Paik, Tambellini, Gillette, Birnbaum) presented their medium as a reaction to commercial television as well. Cinema, however, has proven irresistible to many artists in the age of new media, the ‘post-medium’ age or, paradoxically, the era of post-cinema.

Notes


2. I borrow this metaphor from Yve-Alain Bois, who reads the whole history of abstract painting as a longing for its death. See ‘Painting: the task of mourning’, in *Painting as Model*, pp. 229–44.


4. See Witt, ‘The death(s) of cinema according to Godard’.

5. The critical writing on Godard’s *Histoire(s)* is extensive. Relevant writings by Godard himself include Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*,
Godard, ‘À propos de cinéma et de l’histoire’; and Godard and Ishaghpour, *Archéologie du cinéma et mémoire du siècle*. Book-length volumes dedicated to the work include Scemana, *Histoire(s) du cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard*; and Hardouin, *Le Cinématographe selon Godard*. See also Leutrat, ‘Histoire(s) du cinéma’; Rancière, *Film Fables*, pp. 171–87; the Godard issue of *Screen* 40, 3, Autumn 1999 with a select bibliography on the *Histoire(s)*; and the contributions by Junji Hori, Monica Dall’Asta and Trond Lundemo in Temple, Williams and Witt, *Forever Godard*.


15. The influential notion of ‘the white cube’ as the archetypal image of twentieth-century art was originally expressed by Brian O’Doherty in a series of three articles in *Artforum* in 1976. See O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*.


Recent Film and Video (Tate Modern, London, 2006), Kino wie noch nie (Generali Foundation, Vienna, 2006), Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection (Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, 2006) and The Cinema Effect (Hirschhorn Museum, Washington DC, 2008) among others. Similar notable exhibitions focusing on the relations between contemporary art and more specific moments of film history were Sleuth (Cardiff and London, 2000), which included artists citing film noir as a major influence, and Notorious (Oxford, 1999), which dealt with Hitchcock and contemporary art.

19. See Bellour, L’Entre-Images, p. 9. See also Bellour, ‘Of an other cinema’; and Lyon and Bellour, ‘Unspeakable Images’. Chris Dercon expressed similar ideas in the statements, the catalogue and the film accompanying the exhibition Still/A Novel (Witte De With Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, 1995). On the concept of the dispositif and its relation to contemporary art, see Parente and de Carvalho, ‘Cinema as dispositif’.


26. This phrasing is only used in the preface of the English translation published much later (London: The Athlone Press, 1996). See also Ishii Gonzalès, ‘Hitchcock with Deleuze’.

27. An attempt at inventorying the evolutions within Hitchcock studies can be found in Sloan, Alfred Hitchcock; and in Pisters, Lessen van Hitchcock.

28. On Hitchcock remakes, see Boyd and Palmer, After Hitchcock; and Žižek, ‘Is there a proper way to remake a Hitchcock film?’.


32. Godard, ‘Le cinéma et son double: Alfred Hitchcock, Le faux coupable’, originally published in Cabiers du cinéma, 72, June 1957 and included in Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard. See also Jonathan Rosenbaum, ‘Le vrai coupable’.
34. See the book version of Godard, *Histoire(s) de cinéma*, vol. IV, pp. 76–93.
36. A comparison of Godard’s *Histoire(s)* with Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* has been made earlier by Maurizia Natali in ‘Comment (ne pas) écrire une histoire plastique des images’. See also Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, pp. 289–91. For a comparison of the *Histoire(s)* and Malraux’s *Musée imaginaire*, see Hollier and Paini, ‘André Malraux et la part du feu’; and Baecque, ‘Godard in the museum’.
37. Marker, ‘A free replay (notes on *Vertigo*)’. Marker’s essay was originally published in *Positif*, 400 (June 1994).
41. Langford, ‘Heaven’s gaze’, p. 51.
42. See Mulvey, ‘The possessive spectator’; and Mulvey, *Death 24× a Second*.
43. Turvey et al., ‘Round table’, p. 91.
45. Mulvey, ‘Stillness in the moving image’, p. 81.
46. See Windhausen, ‘Hitchcock and the found footage installation’.
50. See Taubin, ‘Douglas Gordon’. Incorporating whether or not intentional references to both (video) art practices and experimental cinema, Gordon’s *24 Hour Psycho* has been discussed within the context of both art and film criticism. It is striking, however, that almost none of the texts on the work refer to both contexts and their discourses.
52. Philip Monk, *Double Cross*, p. 76.
54. Ibid. p. 78.
62. Naremore, ‘Remaking *Psycho*’, p. 6. See also the 2001–2 issue of *Hitchcock Annual* (particularly the contributions by Paula Marantz Cohen, Steven Jay Schneider and Constantine Verevis); and Leitch, ‘Hitchcock without Hitchcock’.
67. Restivo, ‘The silence of *The Birds*’.
68. Chris Darke, ‘Hitchcock is not himself today’, p. 83.
Appendix to Chapter 2: Artist Biopics

This list gives a survey of feature films having an artist as the main character. Only ‘real’ (but, of course, fictionalised) professional artists and famous amateur and ‘outsider’ artists are included; the list does not contain fictitious or imaginary artist characters. The films are grouped alphabetically by artist.

Caravaggio (1571–1610): Caravaggio: Il Pittore maledotto (Goffredo Alessandrini, 1941), Caravaggio (Derek Jarman, 1986)
Dora Carrington (1893–1932): Carrington (Christopher Hampton, 1995)
Benvenuto Cellini (1500–71): Benvenuto Cellini (Alberto Capellani, 1909), Benvenuto Cellini (Louis Feuillade and Etienne Arnaud, 1910), The Affairs of Cellini (Gregory LaCava, 1934)
Camille Claudel (1864–1943): Camille Claudel (Bruno Nuytten, 1988)
Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833–98): The Beggar Maid (Herbert Blaché, 1921)
Aloise Corbaz (1886–1964): Abuse (Liliane de Kermadec, 1975)
Anselm Feuerbach (1829–80): Das unsterbliche Anlitz (Géza von Cziffra, 1947)
Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840): Caspar David Friedrich: Grenzen der Zeit (Peter Schamoni, 1986)
Paul Gauguin (1848–1903): The Moon and Sixpence (Albert Lewin, 1942), Gauguin the Savage (Felder Cook, 1979), Oviri (aka The Wolf at the Door) (Henning Carlsen, 1986)
Théodore Géricault (1791–1824): Mazeppa (Bartabas, 1992)
Francisco José de Goya (1746–1828): The Naked Maya (Henry Koster, 1958), Historia de una soledad (Nino Quevedo, 1970), Goya (Konrad Wolf, 1971), Goya en Burdeos (Carlos Saura, 1999), Goya’s Ghosts (Milos Forman, 2007)
Carl Samuel Graffman (1802–42): Condemned to the Madhouse (Anders Wahlgren, 1977)
El Greco (1541–1614): Le Greco (Luciano Salce, 1965)
Theofilos Hadjimichalis (1868–1934): Theoﬁlos (Lakis Papastathis, 1987)
David Hockney (1937–): A Bigger Splash (Jack Hazan, 1974)
Ernst Josephson (1851–1906): I Want to Be Sweden’s Rembrandt (Goran Guner, 1990)
Frida Kahlo (1907–54): Frida, naturaleza viva (Paul Leduc, 1983), Frida (Julie Taymor, 2002)
Cornelius Kreighoff (1815–72): Kreighoff (Kevin Sullivan, 1980)
Antonio López García (1936–): El Sol del membrillo (Víctor Erice, 1992)
Michelangelo Buonarotti (1474–1564): The Agony and the Ecstasy (Carol Reed, 1965)
Edvard Munch (1863–1944): Edvard Munch (Peter Watkins, 1973)
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617–82): L’Orgueil (Camille Durnémy and Legrand, 1910)
José Clemente Orozco (1883–1949): En Busca de un muro (Julio Bracho, 1974)
Niko Pirosmanasvili (1862–1928): Pirusmani (Georgy Shengelaya, 1971)
Jackson Pollock (1912–56): Pollock (Ed Harris, 2000)
Jacopo Pontormo (1494–1557): Pontormo un amore erotico (Giovanni Fago, 2004)
Raphael (1483–1520): Raffaello (Anna Zanoli, 1984)
Salvator Rosa (1615–73): Un Amour de Salvator Rosa (Adolfo Re Ricard, 1910), Un’Avventura di Salvator Rosa (Alessandro Blasetti, 1939)
Andrei Rublev (ca 1365–ca 1430): Andrei Rublev (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1966)
Charlotte Salomon (1917–43): Charlotte (Frans Weisz, 1980)
Andreas Schlüter (1664–1714): Andreas Schlüter (Herbert Maisch, 1942)
William Scott (1913–89): Every Picture Tells a Story (James Scott, 1984)
Georges Seurat (1859–91): Sunday in the Park with George (Terry Hughes, 1986)
Kitagawa Utamaro (ca 1753–1806): *Utamaro and His Five Women* (Keni Mizoguchi, 1946)
Johannes Vermeer (1632–75): *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (Peter Webber, 2003)
Pan Yuliang (1902–77): *Hua Hun* (aka *A Soul Haunted by Painting*) (Huang Shuqin and Yimou Zhang, 1994)
Bibliography

Arnheim, Rudolph, Film as Art (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).


Bibliography


Bovey, David, ‘Unruly, devious and queer: a critique of post-war British artists within British artist biopics’, *Pied à terre*, 1, Spring 2010, pp. 18–26.


Bibliography


Bibliography


Dalle Vacche, Angela, Cinema and Painting: How Art is Used in Film (London: Athlone, 1996).


Debackere, Boris and Arie Altena (eds), The Cinematic Experience (Amsterdam: Sonic Acts Press, 2008).

Deleuze, Gilles, Cinéma 1: L’Image-mouvement (Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1983).


Douglas, Stan and Christopher Eamon (eds), Art of Projection (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009).


Bibliography


Elsaesser, Thomas and Kay Hoffmann (eds), *Cinema Futures: Cain, Abel or Cable?* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998).


Erftemeijer, Antoon, *De aap van Rembrandt: kunstenaarsanekdotes van de klassieke oudheid tot heden* (Haarlem: Becht, 2000).


Erice–Kiarostami: Correspondences (Barcelona: Centre de Cultura Contemporània, 2006).


‘First Academy still show opens tonite with 500 prints’, *Variety*, Monday, April 14, 1941, p. 5.

Bibliography


Godard, Jean-Luc, *The Future(s) of Film* (Bern: Gachnang & Springer, 2002).


Bibliography


Gunning, Tom, ‘In and out of the frame: paintings in Hitchcock’, in Will Schmenner and Corinne Granof (eds), Casting a Shadow: Creating the Alfred Hitchcock Film (Evanston, IL: Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, 2007), pp. 29–47.


Hausheer, Cecilia and Christoph Settele (eds), Found Footage Films (Zurich: Viper, 1992).


Bibliography


‘Largest still camera of its type again to be operated by Harburger’, *International Photographer*, February 1933, p. 8.


Leighton, Tanya and Pavel Büchler (eds), *Saving the Image: Art After Film* (Glasgow: Centre for Contemporary Arts, 2003).


Bibliography

MacBean, James Roy, ‘Filming the inside of his own head: Godard’s cerebral passion’, Film Quarterly, 38, 1, Autumn 1984, pp. 16–24.
Malraux, André, Le Musée imaginaire de la sculpture mondiale (Paris: Gallimard, 1952–4).
Merz, Caroline, An Examination of Biography in Film and Television (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 1981).

Morrey, Douglas, Jean-Luc Godard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).


Natali, Maurizia, ‘Comment (ne pas) écrire une histoire plastique des images: De Warburg à Godard, la mise en scène de l’écran’, in Pierre Taminiaux and Claude Murcia (eds), Cinéma/Art(s) plastique(s) (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004), pp. 169–86.


Bibliography


Bibliography


Rumble, Patrick, Allegories of Contamination: Pier Paolo Pasolini’s Trilogy of Life (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).


Scemama, Céline, Histoire(s) du cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard: La Force faible d’un art (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006).


Sherman, Cindy, Untitled Film Stills (New York: Rizzoli, 1990).


Sperlinger, Mike and Ian White (eds), Kinomuseum: Towards an Artists’ Cinema (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008).

Steimatsky, Noa, Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).


Still/A Novel (Rotterdam: Witte De With Center for Contemporary Art, 1995).
‘Stills are not affected by talkers’, *International Photographer*, March 1931, pp. 18–19.
Valek, Marijke de and Malte Hagener (eds), *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005).
Witt, Michael, ‘The death(s) of cinema according to Godard’, *Screen*, 40, 3, Autumn 1999, pp. 331–46.
## Index

Accadone, 99, 100, 105, 107  
Addison, Joseph, 66  
Adorno, Theodor W., 75, 108  
Adventures of Picasso, The, 181  
Affairs of Cellini, The, 41, 42, 43, 44, 180  
Agel, Henri, 27  
Age of Innocence, The, 82  
Agnew and the Ecstasy, The, 41, 45–6, 51, 181  
Ainslie, Sam, 155  
Akerman, Chantal, 93, 94, 96, 143, 153  
Alberri, Leon Battista, 44  
Alekhan, Henri, 5, 6, 84  
Alessandrini, Goffredo, 41, 43, 180  
Alexander the Great, 160  
Altman, Robert, 49, 50, 182  
Amants de Montparnasse, Les, 41, 181  
Amants du Pont-Neuf, Les, 73  
American Cinematographer, 124, 126, 127  
American in Paris, An, 52  
Amis de l’Art, 22, 23  
Amour de Salvator Rosa, Un, 181  
Anderson, J. Tobias, 155, 163  
Andreas Schüler, 41, 42, 181  
André Ruhner, 181  
anecdote, 46–7  
Ang, Ien, 113  
Animated Painting, The, 91  
Animated Picture Studio, 91  
Année dernière à Marienbad, L’, 20, 21, 26, 27, 32, 93, 96  
Antamoro, Giulio, 97  
Antonioni, Michelangelo, 57, 93, 121, 141, 143, 156  
Apollonius of Tralles, 66  
Archer, Fred, 127  
Argos Films, 20  
Aristotle, 137  
Arnaud, Etienne, 180  
Arnheim, Rudolf, 2, 5, 29, 31  
Arnold, Martin, 150  
Arrangement, The, 51  

Art book, 4–5, 18, 105, 111, 117, 151  
art documentary, 1–37, 56, 82, 84, 111, 115–16  
Artemisia, 42, 55, 180  
artist at work, 1, 2, 18–19, 21, 54–62  
artist biopic, 1, 25, 27, 38–62, 88, 180–2  
Artist’s Dilemma, The, 91  
Artist’s Dream, An, 91  
Artist’s Studio, 91  
Arts Council, 11  
Atheneaus of Naucratis, 81  
Aulner, Dan, 67  
Aurel, Jean, 23  
avant-garde film, 12, 93, 143, 152, 165, 166  
Avventura di Salvator Rosa, Un’, 41, 43, 181  

Bacon, Francis, 42, 54, 180  
Baker, George, 154  
Balassari, John, 140, 155  
Baldwin, Craig, 150  
Balzac, Honoré de, 48, 55  
Bambarger, Rudolph, 2  
Bande à part, 72, 116  
Bara, Theda, 137  
Barnett, Alexander, 182  
Barney, Mathew, 153  
Barr Brown, George, 125  
Barry, Iris, 3, 13  
Barry, Judith, 155, 158  
Barthes, Roland, 96, 122, 123–4, 149  
Basquiat, 180  
Basquiat, Jean-Michel, 42, 180  
Baudrillard, Jean, 149  
Bazin, André, 5, 32, 71, 79, 109, 122  
Bazin, Germain, 75  
BBC, 4, 11, 56  
Bean, 73  

Beadon, 75, 82  
Becarle, Jacques, 41, 181  
Beggar Maid, The, 180  
Bell, Daniel, 149  
Belle et la bête, La, 14  
Belle noioosa, La, 55, 59–60  
Belling, Rudolf, 2  
Bellour, Raymond, 121, 137, 154  
Benjamin, Walter, 4, 30
Index

Bennett, Constance, 43
Benson Gyles, Anna, 181
*Benvenuto Cellini*, 180
Bergala, Alain, 59, 112, 113
Berger, John, 51
Bergman, Ingrid, 65, 66, 67, 70, 78, 82, 160, 165
Berioz, Hector, 44
Bernard, Cindy, 155, 162, 164, 171
Bernard, Guy, 29
Bernardi, Sandro, 78
Bernini, Gianlorenzo, 66
Bertolucci, Bernardo, 72
Besse, Jacques, 23
Besuch bei Vincent Van Gogh, 182
Between Darkness and Light (*After William Blake*), 169
Beyond a Reasonable Doubt, 121
Bigger Splash, A, 56–7, 181
*Big Trail*, 134
Birds, 156, 157, 173, 174
Birnbaum, Dara, 175
Bismuth, Pierre, 155, 163
Blaché, Herbert, 180
black box, 144, 152
Blackmail, 76–7, 157, 171
Blade Runner, 121
Blasetti, Alessandro, 41, 43, 181
Bleckner, Jeff, 171
*Blow-Up*, 57, 121
Boccioni, Umberto, 180
Bondanella, Peter, 67, 82, 84
Bonito Oliva, Achille, 105
Bonitzer, Pascal, 105
Borges, Jorge Luis, 38
Born to Be Bad, 73
Born Yesterday, 72
Borzage, Frank, 134
Bosch, Hieronymus, 10, 11, 15, 23, 42, 100
Botticelli, Sandro, 7
Boumeester, Christine, 20
Bourdeau, Pierre, 72
Bracho, Julio, 181
Brams, Koen, 49
Brauner, Pierre, 20, 23
Breker, Arno, 2
Bresson, Robert, 93, 142, 143, 156, 159
Brewster, Ben, 92
Brooks, Mel, 156
Brougher, Kerry, 96, 165
Brown, Christy, 42, 180
Brown, Karl, 136
Bruegel, Pieter, 12, 15, 100
Brusselmans, Jean, 19
Buchel, Luis, 142
Burkhardt, Jacob, 44
Burgin, Victor, 142, 151, 155, 158
Burne-Jones, Edward, 42, 180
Burns, Bonnie, 182
Burrag, Ron, 173
*Bye Bye Monkey* see *Ciao maschio*

Cadaveri eccellenti, 74
Caesar, Julius, 160
Calderone, Gianluigi, 180
*Camille Claudel*, 42, 55, 180
Camino, Jaime, 58, 182
Campany, David, 121, 142
Campbell, Jim, 155, 166–7
Campbell, Steven, 155
Capriccio delle creature, 7
Capellani, Albretto, 73, 180, 181
Carabiniers, Les, 72, 116
Caracalla, 66
*Caravaggio*, 52, 54, 88, 96, 180
*Caravaggio: il pittore maledetto*, 41, 43, 180
*Caravaggio, Michelangelo Merisi da*, 41, 47, 52, 54, 88, 96, 100, 110, 115, 180
Carax, Leos, 73
Carlsen, Henning, 180
Carlyle, Thomas, 38
Carné, Marcel, 11
Carpaccio, Vittore, 7, 8, 9, 23, 31
*Carrington*, 180
Carrington, Dora, 180
Cartier-Bresson, Henri, 136
Casarès, Maria, 29
Casper David Friedrich: Grenzen der Zeit, 54, 180
Cassavetes, John, 93
Cassini-Rizzoto, Giulia, 181
Castellani, Renato, 44, 181
*Casual Shopper*, 158
Cauvin, André, 12, 13, 14
Cavell, Stanley, 156
Cayrol, Jean, 21
Cellini, Benvenuto, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 180
*Ces des che nous, 1*
Cézanne, Paul, 39, 160
Chagall, 23
Chaplin, Charlie, 106
Chardin, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon, 89, 138
Charles IV, 113
Charlotte, 181
Chatonsky, Gregory, 155, 162
Christus, 97
Ciao maschio, 96
*Cinq couleurs de l’arc-en-ciel*, Les, 181
Cipriani, Mario, 98
*City God*, 134
Claerbout, Jean, 117, 144
Clark, Kenneth, 4
Clarke, Frederic Colburn, 125
Claude le Lorrain, 42
Clausel, Camille, 42, 55, 180
Cleopatra, 137
Click, 130
*Clock, The*, 82
*Clouzot, Henri-Georges*, 5, 18, 19, 21, 29, 56, 62
Coburn, Bob, 128
Cocteau, Jean, 11, 12, 14, 159
Coleman, Herbert, 69, 70
Coleman, James, 117, 142
*Colori della giovinezza*, I, 180
*compilation film*, 150
Condemned to the Madhouse, 180
Confessions of a Justified Sinner, 169
Conlon, James, 169
Conner, Bruce, 150
Conrad, Patrick, 181
Cook, Felder, 180
Coppola, Francis Ford, 109, 162
Corbaz, Aloise, 180
Corinth, Lovis, 2
Cornell, Joseph, 150
Corot, Jean-Baptiste-Camille, 70
Correggio, Antonio da, 97
Corsi, Mario, 181
Costa, Pedro, 153
Cotán, Juan Sanchez, 59
Cottrell, Harry, 125
Courbet, Gustave, 70
Coutard, Raoul, 111
Coutaud, Lucien, 20
Couture, Thomas, 70
Cox, Paul, 49, 54, 182
Creating Hands see Schaff ende Hände
Crewdson, Gregory, 142–3, 155
Csontary, Tivadar, 180
Cukor, George, 72
Cürlis, Hans, 2, 3
Custen, George, 39, 40, 42, 49
Dali, 180
Dali, Salvador, 42, 180
Danielsson, Tage, 181
D’Annunzio, Gabriele, 105
Dante Alleghieri, 44
Dante’s Inferno: The Private Life of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 41, 181
Da Vinci see Leonardo da Vinci
De Vinci, 73
Da Vinci Code, The, 73
Davis, Andrew, 171
Davis, Mick, 181
Dawes, Brendan, 155
Dean, Tacita, 144
de Broca, Philippe, 73
Dreamers, The, 72
Dreams, 53, 182
Dreams That Money Can Buy, 14
Dressed to Kill, 82
Dreyer, Carl Theodor, 5, 6, 84, 93, 96, 160
Drunk on Women and Poetry see Stroke on Fire
Duchamp, Marcel, 42
Duhamel, Antoine, 20
Dulac, Germaine, 12
Dumas, Alexandre, 44
Dumény, Camille, 181
Durnand, Jean-Nicolas-Louis, 76
Durand, César, 20
Eco, Umberto, 100
Edelman, Lee, 156
Edison, Thomas Alva, 91
**Index**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Edvard Munch</td>
<td>51, 52, 56, 181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards, Blake</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egon Schiele</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egon Schiele: Excess und Bestrafung</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egoian, Atom</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehrlich, Linda</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>879 Colour</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenstein, Sergei M.</td>
<td>123–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisler, Hans</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisner, Lotte</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elegy of a Voyage</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliott, Charles Loring</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E l e g e de l’amour</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsaesser, Thomas</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eluard, Paul</td>
<td>14, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmer, Luciano</td>
<td>3, 6–12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 23, 24, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empire</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En Busca de un muro</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfe r de Rodin, L’</td>
<td>6, 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enwezor, Okwui</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erice, Vîctor</td>
<td>56, 57–62, 181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernst, Helge</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernst, Max</td>
<td>20, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Especially at My Time of Life</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espíritu de la columna, El</td>
<td>58, 59, 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estes, Richard</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eustache, Jean</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Picture Tells a Story</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E w i g e r Rembrandt</td>
<td>41, 181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exorcist, The</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressionism</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes of Van Gogh, The</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fago, Giovanni</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falkenberg, Paul</td>
<td>19, 21, 55, 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanck, Arnold</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far from Heaven</td>
<td>121–44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farnese Collection</td>
<td>65–6, 78, 80, 82, 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farocki, Harun</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farwell, Beatrice</td>
<td>30, 116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fassbinder, Rainer Werner</td>
<td>142, 159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faure, Elie</td>
<td>116, 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature Film</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felleman, Susan</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Femme mariée, Une</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenêtre ouverte, La</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferguson, Russell</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferrand, Henry</td>
<td>26, 27, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferren, John</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferreri, Marco</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferretti, Massimo</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fêtes galantes (Watteau), Les</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feuerbach, Anselm</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feuillade, Louis</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feyder, Jacques</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLAT</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIFA, 6, 30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Ist, 150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films de la Pèlade, Les</td>
<td>20, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>film still</td>
<td>121–44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiore delle mille e una notte, Il</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flaherty, Robert</td>
<td>3, 5, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focillon, Henri</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fonda, Henry</td>
<td>23, 160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fontaine, Joan</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford, John</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Correspondent</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forman, Milos</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster, Hal</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foucault, Michel</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>four-footage film</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Belgian Painters at Work see Quatre peintres belges au travail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Devils</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Vertigo</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fra Angelico</td>
<td>7, 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragonard, Jean-Honoré</td>
<td>42, 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francastel, Pierre</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fratelli miracolosi, 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedberg, Sydney Joseph</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French, Philip</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frenzy</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freund, Sigmund</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frida</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frida: Naturaleza Viva</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried, Michael</td>
<td>89, 94, 138, 141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedkin, William</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedlaender, Walter</td>
<td>102, 103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedrich, Caspar David</td>
<td>42, 54, 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frohne, Ursula</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fromentin, Eugène</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fryer, Elmer</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fukuyama, Francis</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funny Face</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fusco, Giovanni</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gainsborough, Thomas</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrel, Philippe</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gattopardo, Il</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaudier-Brzeska, Henri</td>
<td>42, 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauguin, 22, 23, 26–8, 29, 30, 32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauguin, Paul</td>
<td>21, 22, 23, 26–8, 41, 42, 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauguin the Savage</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentileschi, Artemisia</td>
<td>42, 55, 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Géricault, Théodore</td>
<td>42, 136, 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertrud</td>
<td>93, 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giaimo bologna, 77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibbons, Ed</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilette, Frank</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillen, Tina</td>
<td>155, 164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillespie, Dizzy</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giotto di Bondone, 7, 8, 10, 11, 99, 100, 104</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giraudet, Christoph</td>
<td>155, 164–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl with a Pearl Earring</td>
<td>52, 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glau, André</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glycon, 66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godard, Jean-Luc</td>
<td>72, 93, 96–7, 107–17, 150–1, 152, 157, 159–61, 163–4, 165, 167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goethe, Johann Wolfgang</td>
<td>66, 88, 89–90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goetz, Henri</td>
<td>20, 21, 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goita: A God for Himself</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goita, Francisco</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldschmidt, John</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Index

Goltzius, Hendrik, 80
Goodman, Nelson, 73
Google, 162
Gordon, Douglas, 144, 155, 163, 165–70, 171
Gospel According to St Matthew, The see Il Vangelo secondo Matteo
Goya (1952), 11
Goya (1971), 180
Goya en Burdeos, 180
Goya, Francisco, 11, 23, 41, 42, 112, 113, 180
Goya’s Ghosts, 180
Graffman, Carl Samuel, 180
Graham, Dan, 152
Grand Tour, 66, 81
Granger, Farley, 132
Grant, Cary, 162
Grant, Keith, 56
Gras, Enrico, 0–12
Gravity, 164
Greco, El, 41, 47, 73, 114, 115–16, 180
Greco, El, 41, 180
Grede, Kjel, 181
Greenaway, Peter, 48, 53, 153, 180
Greenberg, Clement, 31, 151
Greene, Naomi, 105
Greco, El, 41, 180
Greer, Jean-Baptiste, 89, 136, 137
Gribouille a volé la Joconde, 73
Griffith, David Wark, 92
Grimm, H., 181
Gropper, William, 2
Gross, Kenneth, 78
Grosz, George, 2
Guernica, 18, 22, 23, 25, 28–9, 30, 31, 32
Guerre est finis, L’., 28
Guerrieri, 7
Guity, Sacha, 1–2
Guner, Goran, 181
Gunning, Tom, 85
Guy, Alice, 97

Hadjimichalis, Theofilos, 180
Haesaerts, Paul, 12, 15–19, 20, 21, 29, 30, 32, 55, 62, 84, 116
Hamilton, William, 89
Hammerstein, Oscar, 91
Hampton, Christopher, 180
Hanson, Duane, 94
Harding, Chester, 70
Harris, Ed, 181
Harris, Robert A., 70
Harrison, Rex, 45
Harrison, Mary, 182
Hart, Eroma, 89–90
Hartung, Hans, 20, 21, 25
Haskell, Francis, 81
Hathaway, Henry, 73
Hauser, Arnold, 101, 103
Haynes, Todd, 82
Hayward, Philip, 19

Hazan, Jack, 56–7, 181
Healy, George Peter Alexander, 70
Heidegger, Martin, 22
Helmore, Tom, 71
Hendriks, Martijn, 155
Henze, Hans Werner, 21
Herrmann, Bernard, 71, 169, 170
Hershey, George, 81
Hessens, Robert, 20, 23, 26, 28
Heston, Charlton, 45, 46
Ficks, Thomas, 70
High Anxiety, 156
Hill, Carl Fredrik, 181
Himmel über Berlin, 121
Hip Hop Hoorah, 181
Hiroshima mon amour, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28, 93
Histoire(s) du cinéma, 108, 109, 116, 117, 150–1, 152, 157, 158, 159–61, 164
Histoire de una soledad, 180
Hitcockcock, Alfred, 33, 65, 67–72, 74, 76–8, 79, 80, 82–5, 127, 132, 136, 141, 155–75
Hitchcock Trilogy, The, 170
Hitler, Adolf, 160
Hockney, David, 56–8, 181
Hoffmann, E.T.A., 44, 48
Hogarth, William, 66
Hollander, Anne, 110, 111, 112
Homme de Roi, L’, 73
Hot Rock, The, 73
Howard, Ron, 73
Howson, Peter, 155
Hua Hun, 182
Hughes, Robert, 61
Hughes, Terry, 181
Huillet, Danièle, 33, 93
Hunger, 153
Huppert, Isabelle, 108
Hurt, John, 54
Huston, John, 41, 52, 131, 182
Huszarik, Zoltan, 180
Huyghe, Pierre, 155, 171–2, 173
Hypothèse du tableau volé, L’, 95–6

Iles, Chrissie, 154
Immemory, 161
Imman, Henry, 70
Invertigile, L’, 73
Indiana Jones, 74
Ingres, Jean Auguste Dominique, 70, 115
Institut für Kulturforschung, 2
International Photographer, 124, 125, 126, 128, 134, 140
Intimate Lives: The Women of Manet, 181
Invazion della croce, L’, 7
Isbouts, Jean-Pierre, 181
I Shot Andy Warhol, 182
Ivory, James, 181
I Want to Be Sweden’s Rembrandt, 181
Jackson, Mick, 73
Jackson Pollock, 19, 21, 55, 62
Jacobs, Ken, 150, 166
Index

Jacobs, Lea, 92
James, Henry, 48
Jameson, Fredric, 117, 156
Janson, Horst Waldemar, 16
Jarman, Derek, 52, 54, 88, 96, 180
Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles, 94, 96
Je t’aime je t’aime, 161
Jean, La, 12, 93, 161, 174–5
Je vous salue, Marie, 108
Johansen, Jannik, 73
John, Augustus, 181
John, Gwen, 181
Johnston, John LeRoy, 126, 129–30, 134, 135
Jordaens, Jacob, 12, 16
Josephson, Ernst, 181
Kahlo, Frida, 42, 181
Kandinsky, Wassily, 2, 42
Katz, Elias, 2
Katz, James C., 70
Kaufman, Boris, 111
Keller, Gottfried, 48
Kelly, Gene, 72, 73
Khrushchev, Nikita, 174
Kirostami, Abbas, 153
King, Henry, 169
King of Kings (1919), 181
Kino, The, 82
Klint, 52, 181
Klint, Gustav, 42, 52, 181
Klossowski, Pierre, 95
Knight, Arthur, 2, 13, 14
Koch, Gertrud, 136, 139
Koffman, Jack, 128
Kojève, Alexandre, 149
Kohlwitz, Käthe, 2
Korda, Alexander, 39, 41, 48, 54, 88, 181
Koster, Henry, 41, 180
Kovács, András Bálint, 101
Koval, Francis, 8
Kozloff, Max, 133, 138, 141
Kracauer, Siegfried, 5, 16, 30
Krauss, Rosalind, 154
Krause, Krzysztof, 181
Kreider, Wago, 155
Kreighoff, 181
Kreighhoff, Cornelius, 181
Kris, Ernst, 46–7, 78
Kroger, Friedrich, 70
Kroyer, Peter Severin, 181
Krynoch, Nikifor, 42, 181
Kurosawa, Akira, 49, 53, 182
Kurz, Otto, 46–7, 78
Kwon-Tack, Im, 181
Labisse, Félix, 20
Lacan, Jacques, 158
LaCava, Gregory, 41, 42, 43, 44, 180
Lacy, Madison, 136
Lafont, Susanne, 142
Lama, Diego, 155
Langford, Martha, 162
Langlois, Henri, 11
La Story, 73
Last Year at Marienbad see L’Année dernière à Marienbad
Laura, 33
Lautrec, 182
Lavigne, Nicolas de, 68
Lawler, Louise, 6
Lebende Bilder see tableau vivant
Leduc, Paul, 181
Left is right and right is wrong and left is wrong and right is right, 169
Leggenda di S. Orsola, La, 7, 8, 9, 11–12, 31
Legrand, 181
Le Guay, Philippe, 180
Lehmann, Birgit, 155
Leigh, Janet, 157–8, 159
Leighton, Tanya, 172
Lemaître, Henri, 5, 17
Leonardo da Vinci, 11, 41, 44, 97, 159, 181
Leonardo da Vinci (1919), 181
Leonardo da Vinci (1952), 11
Lessing, Goethol Ephraim, 30, 137
LeVéque, Les, 155, 164
Lewin, Albert, 14, 27, 33, 41, 180
Liebrecht, Suzanne, 93
Liebermann, Max, 2
Life, 130
Life of Emile Zola, The, 39
Ligabue, Antonio, 42, 181
Lissitzky, El, 42
Living Playing Cards, The, 91
Lockhart, Sharon, 144
Lodger, The, 170, 171
Longhi, Roberto, 100
Longworth, Bert, 126
Look, 130
Looking for Alfred, 173
Lópe, Diego, 180
López García, Antonio, 56, 58–62, 181
Loren, Sofia, 141
Lorrain see Claude Lorrain
Lost Weekend, The, 130
Love is the Devil, 54, 180
Lowenthal, Leo, 40
Luxury and Sensuality, 58, 182
Lumière, brother, 97
Lumière & Co, 150
Luxur for Life, 24, 41, 49–52, 53, 182
Lytard, Jean-François, 149
Lyrical Nitrate, 150
Lysippos, 66

McAlpin, Hal, 128
McCall, Anthony, 152
Macchina ammazzacattivi, La, 121–2
McConkey, Don, 125, 126, 133, 135
McQueen, Steve, 153
McTiernan, John, 73
Magnus, Eduard, 70
Magritte, René, 173
Maisch, Herbert, 41, 181
Makarios of Perinthos, 81
Malevich, Kazimir, 42

Malfray, 23
Malraux, André, 4–5, 6, 11, 18, 20, 116, 151, 160
Mamma Roma, 59, 99, 100, 105, 107
Mamoulian, Rouben, 169
Manet, Edouard, 42, 115, 151, 181
Manet in Love see Intimate Lives: The Women of Manet
Manhattan, 73
Mansfield, 76
Mann, Michael, 76
Mantegna, Andrea, 97, 100
Man Who Knew Too Much, The
Marcuse, Herbert, 48
Marcuse, Herbert, 48
Margolis, Herbert, 9
Margulies, Ivone, 94
Marker, Christian, 93, 109, 110
March, Fredric, 43
Marchal, Christian, 155, 170
Marcus, Herbert, 48
Margulis, Ivone, 94
Marker, Chris, 12, 22, 31, 93, 153, 161, 162, 167,
Marriner, 156, 158, 160
Marquês d’O, Lu, 96
Martini, Simone, 7
Masaccio, Filippo Tommaso, 100
Mataré, Ewald, 2
Maté, Rudolph, 169
Matton, Charles, 48, 181

Maybury, John, 54, 180
Mephisto, 180
Medusa, 105
Medici, Alessandro de, 43
Mediterranée, 93
Meier, Richard, 76
Méliès, Georges, 91
Memento, 121
Mélodie, 13
Mellesing, Hans, 13, 15
Menken, Marie, 6
Mépris, La, 93
Merlet, Agnès, 180
Mess, Christian, 100
Micha, René, 14
Michelangelo Buonarroti, 2–3, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44–6,
47, 51, 97, 103, 181
Michelangelo: Das Leben eines Titanen, 2–3
Miles, Vera, 70

Mihalits, Darius, 21, 27
Millais, John Everett, 158
Minnelli, Vincente, 24, 25, 41, 49–52, 53, 82, 182
Misfits, The, 131
modernist cinema, 21, 32, 57, 93, 94, 96, 101, 120,
142, 149, 154
modernist painting, 110, 151
Morgue, 181
Modigliani, Amadeo, 41, 42, 181
Mog Nykjev, 181
Monde de Paul Delvaux, Le, 14, 15, 17
Monet, Claude, 168, 169
Mondrian, Piet, 42
Monet, Claude, 1, 42
Mork, Philip, 168, 169
Moreau, Gustave, 91
Moreno, Maria, 59, 62
Morgan, Frank, 43
Morirke, Eduard, 48
Morrey, Douglas, 112
Morrison, Bill, 150
Moulin Rouge, 41, 52, 182
Müller, Matthias, 155, 164–5
Mulvey, Laura, 79, 84, 122, 139, 144, 156, 162, 163,
165
Munch, Edvard, 42, 51, 52, 56, 181
Murillo, Bartolomé Esteban, 41, 58, 181
museum, film in, 144, 149–75
museum in film, 33, 65–85
Musser, Charles, 91
My Left Foot, 180
Mystère des roches de Kador, Le, 109
Mystère Picasso, Le, 18, 19, 21, 56, 62
Mysterious Portrait, The, 91
Mystic Lamb, The see L’Agneau mystique
Nagai, 181
Naked City, The, 130
Naked Maya, The, 41, 180
Namuth, Hans, 19, 21, 55, 62
Napoleon Bonaparte, 66, 113, 160
Naremore, James, 171
Nauman, Bruce, 152
Neagle, John, 70
Neugebo, Jean, 72, 73
Neil, Roy William, 73
Nero, 66
Newman, Michael, 166
Newman, Paul, 74
Nicolaï, Nic, 142
Night and Fog see Nuit et brouillard
Nightwatching, 53, 181
Nimoy, Leonard, 182
Nixon, Richard, 174
Noi, Salvatore, 181
North by Northwest, 160, 162, 163, 164, 171
Nous Peintres, 12

JACOBS PRINT.indd 206 21/04/2011 13:59
Index

Notes, 58–9
Notorious, 164
Novak, Kim, 67, 68, 70
Nowhere Boy, 153
Nuit et brouillard, 21, 28
Nyutter, Bruno, 180

Odenbach, Marcel, 155, 157–8
Oertel, Curt, 2–3, 38, 45
Ohwon, 181

Old Place, The, 116
On a volé la Joconde, 73
One from the Heart, 109

One Hour Photo, 121
One Touch of Venus, 14
On the Town, 72, 73
Open Window, The see La Fenêtre ouverte

Ophuls, Max, 82
Orgueil, L’, 181

Orozco, José Clemente, 42, 181
Orr, John, 155
Our Painters see Nos Peintres

Oviri, 180
Paglia, Camille, 156
Pail, Nam June, 175
Painting in film, 2, 6, 30–3, 52–4, 69–70, 78, 84–5

Pandora and the Flying Dutchman, 14
Panthéon Production, 23
Papasthatis, Lakis, 180
Paradise Cave, The, 78, 157
Paradiso terrestre, Il, 10
Pasolini, Pier Paolo, 96–107, 108, 115, 117, 142
Passion, 97, 107–17, 151, 160
Passion Play, 97, 108
Patinir, Joachim, 12
Paul, Robert, 91
Pearl of Death, The, 73
Peck, Gregory, 23

Pellan, 181
Pellan, Alfred, 181
Penderacki, Krzysztof, 21
Penny, Nicholas, 81
Perfect Murder, A, 171

Permeke, 181
Permeke, Constant, 12, 181
Perret, Léonce, 109–10

Personal Journey through American Movies, 150
Peucker, Brigitte, 83, 94–5, 96
Philibert, Nicolas, 73
Phillip, John, 70
Philosstratus the Younger, 81
Physica Topica, The, 164–5
Photography, 1, 4–5, 6, 10–11, 23, 57, 59, 90–1, 94, 96, 107, 117, 121–44, 152, 154, 162, 166, 175
Pialat, Maurice, 49, 52
Pic, 130
Picasso, 11, 18
Picasso, Pablo, 11, 17, 18–19, 21, 28–9, 42, 55–6, 62, 181

Piccoli, Michel, 108
Pictura, 23
Picture of Dorian Gray, The, 33, 55
Pierro della Francesca, 7, 20, 100
Pierrot le fou, 116
Piranesi, Giambattista, 30
Piromanavili, Niko, 181
Pirès, 42, 181
Plaisir, Le, 82
Planchon, Roger, 182
Play It Again Sam, 73
Pliny the Elder, 66
Plutarch, 47
Poe, Edgar Allen, 48, 55
Pollet, Jean-Daniel, 93
Pollock, 181
Pollock, Griselda, 24, 51
Pollock, Jackson, 19, 21, 42, 55, 62, 181
Pompadour, Madame de, 68

Pontoormo: un amore erotico, 181
Portrait of Jennie, 33
Post-cinema, 109, 117, 144, 149–54
Powell, Michael, 136
Power of Art, 56
Powolny, Frank, 133, 134
Praxiteles, 81
Preminger, Otto, 33, 169
Price, Vincent, 23
Private Life of Henry VIII, The, 39
Providence, 26
Provost, Nicolas, 155, 164
Prud’hon, Pierre-Paul, 91
Pruvost, Jacques, 29
Pseudo-Lucian, 81
Psycho (1998), 156, 171, 172–3
Pygmalion motif, 55, 83, 96, 106

Quatre peintres belges au travail, 19, 21
Queval, Jean, 30
Quevedo, Nino, 180
Racconti di Canterbury, I, 100, 101
Racconto da un affresco, 7, 8
Radziwilowicz, Jerzy, 108
Raffaello, 181
Rancière, Jacques, 80, 151, 160
Raphael, 41, 97, 181
Raub der Mona Lisa, Der, 73
Ray, Nicholas, 73, 99
Read, John, 11
Reality of Karel Appel, The, 19
Rear Window, 121, 155–6, 169, 171
Rebecca, 33, 78, 157
Reed, Carol, 41, 42, 45, 46
Reed, David, 155, 171
Reeve, Christopher, 171
Regards sur la Belgique ancienne, 13–14
Remake, 171–2, 173
### Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>209</td>
<td>South, The, see El Sur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>Spellbound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>Spirit of the Beehive, The, see El Espíritu de la colmena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>Stage Fright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>Stam, Robert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Stein, Robert, see El Sur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>Steinhoff, Hans, 41, 48n 181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Stelling, Jos, 48, 181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Stewart, James, 67, 77, 84, 156, 159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Stezaker, John, 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>Stieler, Joseph Karl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Stone, Irving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Stone Wonders of Naumburg, see Steinerne Wunder von Naumburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Storck, Henri, 3, 12, 13–17, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 84, 116, 150, 181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>Stroehl, Hans-Jürgen, 96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stüsser, André, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>Targi, Rea, 155, 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Tajiri, Rea, 155, 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>Tarkovsky, Andrei, 93, 143, 144, 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>Taruszkos of Tralles, 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Taviani, Franco Brogi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Taylor-Wood, Sam, 144, 153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Teniers, David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Teyn, Rea, 155, 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tischbein, Johann Heinrich Wilhelm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Tischbein, Johann Heinrich Wilhelm, 89, 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>Titian, The, see Michelangelo: Das Leben eines Titanen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>Titian, 16, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>To Catch a Thief, 164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td>Topkapi, 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Torfs, Ana, 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Torn Curtain, 74, 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de, 23, 41, 42, 52, 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Toute la mémoire du monde, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Traité amoure de Mona Lisa, Le, 181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>trick film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>Trouble with Harry, The, 69, 157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>Troutman, Philip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>Truman Show, The, 121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Tschershassky, Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Turner, Joseph Mallord William</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Turner: The Sun Is God, 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Tussaud, Madame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>171</td>
<td>24 Hour Psycho, 163, 165–8, 170, 171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>Two Sides to Every Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Uffizi, 58, 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>Surrealism, 6, 11, 12, 14, 20, 156, 173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181</td>
<td>Surviving Picasso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>Suspicion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Symington, 156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Szabo, Laszló</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>tableau vivant, 54, 57, 59, 88–117, 120, 122, 137, 144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Tajiri, Rea, 155, 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>Tarkovsky, Andrei, 93, 143, 144, 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Buren, Charles-André</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Eyck, Hubert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Gogh, Vincent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Gogh, Theo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Vangogh secondo Matthias, Ul, 99, 100, 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Gogh (1947), 22–6, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Gogh (1989), 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Gogh (1991), 52, 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Van Gogh, Vincent, 22–6, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 38, 41, 42, 49–52, 53–4, 59, 111, 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Van Gogh, Theo, 22, 24, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Gogh, Vincent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Sant, Gus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Sant, Gus, 156, 171, 172–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Van Sant, Gus, 156, 172–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Van Sant, Gus, 156, 171, 172–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Vasari, Giorgio, 47, 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Velázquez, Diego, 55, 58, 182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Venturi, Lauro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Venturi, Lionello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Vermeer, Johannes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Vermonde, Paolo, 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vesely, Herbert, 181
Viaggio in Italia, 65–6, 70–2, 74, 78–85, 93
video, 58, 62, 94, 109, 110, 116, 117, 144, 149–75
Video Hacking, 163
Views of Old Belgium see Regards sur la Belgique ancienne
Villa Louvre, La, 73
Vincent, 182
Vincent and Me, 182
Vincent and Theo, 50, 182
Vincent: The Life and Death of Vincent Van Gogh, 54, 182
Viola, Bill, 117, 144
Visconti, Luchino, 93, 159
Viste a Piazzola, 18–19, 21, 55, 62
Viste au Louvre, Une, 33
Visual Variations on Noguchi, 6
Vita di Leonardo da Vinci, La, 181
Vlad, Roman, 9
von Bolvary, Géza, 73
von Cziffra, Géza, 180
von Kilanyi, Edouard, 91
von Klenze, Leo, 76
von Ranke, Leopold, 47
von Schlosser, Julius, 47
von Sternberg, Josef, 111, 127
Vernet et Vela, 157
Voyage(s) en utopie, 152
Voyage to Italy see Viaggio in Italia
Vrijman, Jan, 19

Wahlgren, Anders, 180, 181
Waller, Adrian, 143
Waller, John, 53
Waller, Robert, 132
Wall, Jeff, 117, 125, 138, 142–3, 144
Wallroth, Werner W., 182
Walsh, Raul, 134
Warburg, Aby, 160
Ward, Lynd, 2
Warhol, Andy, 42, 93, 143, 152, 164, 166, 182
Watkins, Peter, 51, 52, 56, 181
Watteau, Antoine, 16, 23, 30, 116
Wayne, John, 51
Wearing, Gillian, 144
Webber, Peter, 52, 182
Weil, Simone, 112, 113
Weis, Marc, 100
Weisz, Franz, 181
Welles, Orson, 98, 99, 107, 117
Welt-Kinematograph, 1
Whirlpool, 169
white cube, 76, 144, 152–3
Widerspruch der Erinnerungen, Der, 157–8
Wiertz, Antoine, 16
Wilde, Oscar, 38, 48, 55
Wilder, Billy, 130, 132
Wilkie, David, 70, 90
Willing, Laszlo, 135
Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, 66
Winterhalter, Franz Xavier, 70
Wiszniewski, Adrian, 155
Witcomb, Andrea, 75
Wittkower, Margot, 47
Wittkower, Rudolf, 47
Wolf at the Door, The see Oviri
Wolf, Konrad, 180
Wollen, Peter, 156
World of Paul Delvaux, The see Le Monde de Paul Delvaux
Wright, Teresa, 159
Wong Man, The, 132, 159, 170
Yates, Peter, 73
Yuliang, Pan, 182
Zaccardi, Luigi, 69–70
Zanoli, Anna, 181
Zecca, Ferdinand, 97
Zhang, Yimou, 182
Zille, Heinrich, 182
Zille und Ich, 182
Žižek, Slavoj, 156
Zola, Emile, 39, 48
Zorro, 43
Zurbarán, Francisco, 58
Zvenigora, 161