POST-MEDIUM LIAISONS

An Inquiry into Christian Marclay's Cinematographic Oeuvre and its Relation to the Language of Cinema

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1. Introduction

This master's dissertation has been developed over two stages. I wrote my bachelor's dissertation about *The Clock* by Christian Marclay: "*For Time's Sake! An Inquiry into Conceptions of Time in* The Clock *(2010) by Christian Marclay.*" This paper is the foundation of this master's dissertation. The subject material is extended: three works by Marclay constitute the focus here. There is more contextual information provided, concerning both the artist and the artistic tendency of the discussed works. However, all in all this dissertation takes the same approach as its predecessor and the main body of "*For Time's Sake!*" is integrated here.

By Christian Marclay's cinematographic works are meant those video installations that bear a close relationship with cinema for several reasons. I have discerned six works in this category, which are all moving image installations containing found footage from cinema: *Telephones* (1995), *Video Quartet* (2002), *The Clock* (2010), *Up and Out* (1998), *The Bell and the Glass* (2003) and *Screen Play* (2005). The first three are elaborated throughout this dissertation, whereas the latter three are only discussed briefly. This is both for practical reasons (access to viewing materials) and because these works are less apt in the approach developed here. The main objective of this paper is threefold: examining the relationship of these works with the language of cinema, defining their individuality and themes, and identifying the common ground and variation of this body of work.

The first chapter (2. Christian Marclay) is devoted to Marclay's oeuvre at large: a short presentation of his career, the different elements of his practice and the reception of his work. There is also some attention for three tendencies, which are characteristic of Marclay's oeuvre: appropriation, the audio-visual interstices and the post-medium condition. They are given ample attention because of their relevance for the cinematographic works. The next chapter (3. The cinematographic works) aims to determine the notion of the cinematographic – the defining idea of this dissertation – and gives a presentation of the different works, concentrating on *Telephones*, *Video Quartet* and *The Clock*.

The next chapter (4. The Post-Cinematic Era) is contextualizing again, attempting to give a concise description the post-cinematic era and its relevance for the cinematographic oeuvre. It is a presentation of different strands in the contemporary art production that bear a relationship to cinema, the scholarly literature concerning the post-cinematic and the relation thereof with the works discussed here. Subsequently the relation of the cinematographic works with the language of cinema is analysed in a more direct way (5. From Auxiliary Role to Thematic Emancipation), elaborating on concrete formal aspects of the works. The works of David Bordwell (and his co-authors) constitute the basis for the analysis of cinema and narrative as a representational system; and the works are discussed in the way they adopt and transform some elements of this representational system. The same chapter also elaborates on how the works take a distance from the language of cinema and constitute idiosyncratic compositions with thematic concerns proper to the works themselves.

The last chapter (6. Marclay's Cinematographic Language) attempts to look beyond the individual works at the cinematographic method developed by Marclay at large. However, in order not to damage the individuality of the different works, this approach sometimes has a comparative aspect rather than proposing comprehensive conclusions. Firstly, attention is devoted to the formal language of the cinematographic, and its ensuing characteristics. The analogy of the cinematographic works with the language of music is elaborated, in part

because of the importance of music in Marclay's practice. Thereupon, the works are analysed as moving image installations, concentrating on the spatial and temporal characteristics of the installations, and their relation with the spectator. Returning to the post-medium condition that was introduced early on, the cinematographic body of works is analysed in relation to Greenberg's ideas of medium-specificity and Rosalind Krauss' reaction with the post-medium condition. This is followed by a diachronic comparison of video art in the sixties and seventies and Christian Marclay's cinematographic works, in an effort to emphasize the specificity of this body of work and further excluding the idea of medium essentialism. The train of thought of this dissertation is concluded with some remarks on how these works stand in close relationship with the reality of the spectator, despite their extensive borrowing from the language and style of narrative fiction film.

The approach towards the analysis of works of art adopted here is not based on discerning the artist's intention in creating the works. Rather than intention, implication is the guiding notion: what is contained in these works after their creation, without pronouncing on the artist's creation. Of course, this is a subjective reading, and I do not pretend to clarify the 'meaning' of these works, but instead hope to offer an anthology of their formal and thematic potential. In order to limit the subjectivity of this dissertation, I attempted to work with concrete formal aspects of the cinematographic works, and to make a clear analysis thereof, rather than elaborating philosophical meditations on the general concepts of the works. I aspired to convey some of the many formal and thematic nuances that the cinematographic works have to offer. However, the artistic universe of the artist is not completely absent, as exemplified by citations of the artist included in this dissertation.

2. Christian Marclay

2.1 Artistic Development

Christian Marclay was born in 1955 in San Rafael, California, from an American mother and a Swiss father.[1] The family moved back to Switzerland and Marclay was raised in the vicinity of Geneva, where he attended a strict catholic boarding school. He started his art school education at the Ecole Supérieure d'Art Visuel in Geneva, but switched to the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston in 1977, with Hans Haacke among his teachers. The following year he participated in a student exchange programme at Cooper Union in New York City. American life, his stay in New York and the different artistic scenes he encountered, in harsh contrast with the Swiss society he grew up in, have had a profound influence on the young Christian Marclay, as he attested himself.[2]

In New York Marclay came into contact with the work of experimental artists and the underground scene of an artistic capital. Many artists were testing the limits of the traditional conception of art by exploring video and performance as media; Dan Graham, Vito Acconci and Laurie Anderson among others were active members of New York's art community at that time and had a liberating influence on Marclay's thinking about art. He was also attracted to the work of older artists, notably Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, whose practices form the main foundation for the body of work that Marclay has realised the last three and a half decades. He has openly expressed his admiration for these two key figures, who changed the direction of avant-garde art, and his works often contain explicit references to these artists and their works. Many of Marclay's projects are almost unimaginable without artistic categories – and destruction thereof – established by Marcel Duchamp and John Cage. During the seventies in New York the crossover between the world of visual art and the music scene was flourishing, and Marclay intensely frequented the city's clubs and the vibrant punk and rock scenes. The difficulty in trying to categorize Marclay's performances, and his oeuvre at large, in either the visual or the performing arts attests to the influence of the experimental scene of New York on the young artist.[3]

Christian Marclay's own artistic output is marked by a diversity that is in tune with the wealth of possibilities offered by the artistic developments to which Marclay was exposed. He has experimented with quasi every medium (painting included), his musical performances vary from the use of classical instruments to fringe sound effects and many of his projects include spectatorial involvement in the form of happenings. Performances, sculptures, installations, environments, happenings, collages, paintings, archival works and video pieces form an inconclusive list. The variety of formal practices employed by Marclay and his constant crossover between visual art and music make it impossible to categorize him in one definite movement or even tendency. His body of work touches upon many aspects of current art practice, but evades categorization by its originality and diversity.

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[1] Jennifer Gonzales, "Overtures," in *Christian Marclay*, (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005), 146.
[2] Douglas Kahn and Christian Marclay, "Christian Marclay's Early Years: An Interview," *Leonardo Music Journal*, 13, 2003, pp. 17-21, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1513444 , 17.
[3] Kahn and Marclay, "Christian Marclay's Early Years", 18.

Together with his fellow student Kurt Henry, Marclay started the performance duo *The Bachelors, even*, playing at small experimental clubs across the USA. The group's name is a clear reference to a work by Duchamp, *The Bride stripped bare by Bachelors, Even*. The performances were experimental, with music extended to include noise. A visual layer was added by including films and projected slides on the stage. Here Marclay started working with LP's on stage as a turntablist using registered music as a working material, a staple throughout his career. This playful performance game between live music and mixing on turning tables lead to the invention of an instrument, the *Phonoguitar* (image 4), something between an electric guitar and a turning table. The instrument enabled Marclay to combine creative sound making and the manipulation of registered music live on stage. He continued his practice with his next band *Mon Ton Son*, and embarked on larger collaborative projects, in which improvisation often played a key role. For *One Hundred Turntables* in 1991 Marclay played together with three other DJ's in a large-scale performance at Panasonic National Hall in Tokyo. Collaborations such as these mediated between prepared performance and free improvisation on stage.[4]

The music record interested Marclay not only as a turntablist utility but also as a thematic concern in itself. Particularly because of its excessive availability in American society, which made it into an easily disposable mass-reproduced readymade.[5] This condition inspired many irreverent explorations of the possibilities of vinyl LP's and plastic CD's as carriers of registered sound and as sculptural objects, sometimes combining both dimensions in one object. Of particular importance in this regard are the aesthetics of chance championed by Duchamp and Cage. In 1985 he released *Record without a Cover*, which was distributed without a protective cover so that the record's surface would become tarnished by accidental scratches by the time it reached the owner's record player and would continue to change over time.[6] In 1989 Marclay created a large installation, *Footsteps* (image 5), in the Shedhalle in Zürich by covering the floor with vinyl discs with the recorded sound of his own footsteps. The public walked around over the records, inscribing new sounds by the scratches of their footsteps, making every LP a unique product of two sets of footsteps.

In his visual works of art, the world of music is never far away. Marclay created a direct sculptural equivalent to his turntable practice with the series *Recycled Records* of 1985-'86. He cut up readymade records with determinate precision and pasted the pieces of different records together, creating material 'mixes', a sculptural metaphor to the habit of sampling as a turntable artist.[7] Besides the records, Marclay often uses their covers too, as visual readymades. He uses the covers as an image arsenal to recombine them into punning new compositions. He aligned the upper part of the body of a classical conductor, energetically swaying his baton, with the lower body of a female dancer, rhythmically moving her limbs to the eyes of potential buyers (image 6). Marclay also made sculptures, often playfully alluding to the history of modern sculpture, as in *Endless Column*. This work is made up of an straight column of vinyl records, a Marclayan remake of Brancusi's *Endless Column*. A particular body of work among his sculptures are the emasculated instruments: instruments that through

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[4] Gonzales, "Overtures," 24-27.
[5] Kahn and Marclay, "Christian Marclay's Early Years", 17.
[6] Gonzales, "Overtures," 33
[7] Gonzales, "Overtures," 34-38.

an intervention by Marclay are no longer fit for musical use. In *Drumkit* from 1999 the different elements of a set of drums are installed at different heights according to pitch, with many elements out of reach of a hypothetical drummer.[8]

In the works described above the artist still clearly operates as creator (or author) of the art pieces, despite the use of readymade materials and pre-recorded sound. However, Christian Marclay also embarked on projects in which he was merely the conductor (or curator, as you like) of the totality of an event. In these happenings the authorship of the work is shared with either the anonymous public or with collaborating experimental artists and performers. In 1993 Christian Marclay organized a large-scale music event in Berlin uniting musicians from an astonishing diversity of backgrounds: *Berlin Mix*. Classical musicians played together with folk musicians playing together with musicians playing music from cultures all over the world. Christian Marclay acts as the conductor managing a delicious cacophony of world sounds. Three years later he launched another project in the German capital, called *Graffiti Composition*, spreading empty music scores as posters through town. Most posters got lost, worn off or pasted over; but the resultant ones – written over by anonymous passers-by – were collected and a selection was published. The sheets show improvised tunes, popular melodies, plain drinking songs, scribbles or short sentences and are used as a experimental music score for varying performers in an on-going project.

A last aspect of Marclay's practice that will be touched upon (in this necessarily inconclusive survey) is the artist's predilection for projects involving the act of 'collecting', projects whose artistic merit resides in the determining of criteria and the consequent accumulation of artefacts. For his 1995 exhibition *Accompagnement Musical* at the Musée d'art et d'histoire in Geneva Marclay delved into the holdings of the city's museums and made a presentation of objects concerning or images presenting music making. A continuous collecting and performance project is *The Sounds of Christmas*, from the nineties onwards, for which Marclay collects only Christmas themed records. The collection not only serves as an archive, but also as resource for turntable performances by different artists.[9]

Christian Marclay has enjoyed considerable approbation since the start of his career, as a musician as well as a visual artist. *The Bachelors, Even* performed together with Bruce Conner at Club Foot, San Francisco. Other performance venues of Marclay include The Kitchen, Mudd Club, Dancetaria, The Pyramid Club, all in New York, among others. Already in the eighties he performed and exhibited in the US, Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands and Japan. He participated at group exhibitions throughout Europe and North America. Retrospective exhibitions include '*Christian Marclay'* at the UCLA Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, '*Christian Marclay: Replay'* at the DHC/ART Foundation for Contemporary Art, Montreal, Canada and '*Christian Marclay: Festival*' at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. He is represented by Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco and White Cube Gallery, London, among others. In 2012 Time Magazine included

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[8] Marianne Massin. "Christian Marclay : "Iconoclasme" musical et interrogation sur l'instrument," *Methodos*, 11 (2011), last consulted on February 16, 2013, http://methodos.revues.org/2579;DOI: 10.4000/methodos.2579 .
[9] Robert Young, "The Sounds of Christmas," in *Festival. Issue 1*, edited by David Kiehl, (New York: Whitney, 2010).

Christian Marclay in their Time 100 List, signalling popular appeal from outside the art world.[10]

2.2 Appropriation

The tendency to appropriate objects not created by the artist is a persistent trend through art of the last century, starting with Marcel Duchamp's readymades. Christian Marclay has stated his interest in the Duchampian readymade or Cage's use of pre-recorded music and has put the idea into practice in the early eighties when he started using records he found lying about the street.[11] Ever since his oeuvre has principally been based on working with appropriated material. As touched upon earlier, the appropriation concerning his use of vinyl LP's and plastic CD's is two-sided. On the one hand he is fascinated by the idea of recording music, so that what was once live music can be played over on later occasions.[12] He uses registered music in his live performances as a turntablist as well as in released albums, made out of fragments of appropriated music. On the other hand the same records interest him as material objects, and he employs them in sculptural ensembles and installations. Here he works with both the formal characteristics of the record as object and the association with the musical apparatus that is embodied by these objects.[13] Most of his other projects involve using appropriated materials in one way or another, as does the body of work that forms the principal subject of this dissertation (cf. infra).

Marclay recognised the importance of appropriation in the art world at the beginning of his artistic career. It was a central issue in the work of many prominent visual artists at that time, such as Louise Lawler, Richard Prince and Sherrie Levine. For them the re-photographing of works of art or media images constituted a legitimate artistic action, which often constituted a critique of authorship, institutions and the media apparatus. In the music scene the same tendency to appropriate existing work existed in a more informal and less stilted manner. Turning tables transformed live music performances into anthologies of pre-recorded music, exploring the creative possibilities of mixing tunes and the expressive potential of turntable practice itself. At the same time the hip-hop scene was emerging, making extensive use of sampling.[14] Marclay was intensely influenced by these contemporary developments, and their artistic predecessors. For him creating art with appropriated materials – handmade or mass-produced – is evidently legitimate, and the creativity therein involved is no longer questioned.

The difference between Marclay's appropriation habits and those of the leading artists of the seventies and eighties is that his are less conceptual and cerebral and more playfully creative. He is not satisfied with reproducing an existent image and presenting it as an artistic or institutional commentary. Instead he prefers to actively intervene, manipulating his source

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[10] Kim Gordon, Jennifer Gonzales, et al., red., *Christian Marclay*, (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005), 146-157.

[11] Kahn and Marclay, "Christian Marclay's Early Years", 17.

[12] Sophie Dulpaix and Marcella Lista, *Sons & Lumières. Une histoire du son dans l'art du XXe siècle*, (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 2004), 360.

[13] Gonzales, "Overtures," 25-38.

[14] Kahn and Marclay, "Christian Marclay's Early Years," 19.

material into a new composition. In his works the original is often easily recognizable – a famous song or tune, a record cover… - but his intervention is equally prominent. In his reassembling of appropriated parts Marclay shows himself as a *homo ludens*, the results often having a light and amusing side apart from more serious implications. His combinations of dynamic conductors with sexy women's legs not only comment on sexual stereotypes, but also offer a sight that is amusing in its simplicity.

Marianne Massin's analysis of Marclay's use of recorded music offers some interesting ideas.[15] She links the artist's fascination for the recording of music with Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's contemplations on the technology of sound recording. Moholy-Nagy wanted to: "*transform the record to make it into an instrument of production instead of an instrument of reproduction.*"[16] For Moholy-Nagy this remained a theoretical consideration, but Marclay's attention for the incidental scratches and imperfections of the record as part of its sound spectre comes close to the notion of a productive record. These imperfections not only make every record unique, but also add a sound layer that is only due to the recording medium. Christian Marclay's fascination for pre-existent material – such as recorded music – is inextricably connected to the creative potential of the material's transformation.

2.3 Audio-visual Interstices

> "*My artistic practice is situated between music and the visual arts.*"[17]
> "*I am very interested in the sensorial confusion between the eyes and the ears.*" [18]
> Christian Marclay

In 1997 Christian Marclay organized a mixed media installation at the Whitney Museum of American Art entitled *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a title, which despite its literal meaning has close connotations with music because of the composer Modest Mussorgsky's likewise named composition.[19] This is a clear reference to cross-fertilization between the visual and the sonic domain, a characteristic of Marclay's oeuvre. Being both a musical performer and a visual artist, those domains of creation are inseparable for him; and most of his works offer visual and aural allusions all at once.

The pioneering role in the cross-over between visual arts and music once again comes to Marcel Duchamp and John Cage. There had been plenty of exchange of inspiration between the two disciplines before, but the freedom of experimentation and the neglect of any boundaries between visual art and music displayed by those two artists was unprecedented.[20]

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[15] Massin, "Christian Marclay," n.p.
[16] Moholy-Nagy, Peinture Photographie Film, et autres écrits sur la photographie, Nîmes, Jacqueline Chambon, 1993, notamment "Production-reproduction", p. 94-95, as cited in Massin, "Christian Marclay," n.p.
[17] Dulpaix and Marcella, *Sons & Lumières*, 360.
[18] Kahn and Marclay, "Christian Marclay's Early Years", 17.
[19] Gonzales, "Overtures," 57.
[20] *The Bride with the Bachelors. Duchamp with Cage, Cunningham, Rauschenberg and Johns*, Curated by Carlos Basualdo, (London: Barbican Art Gallery. 14 February 2013 – 9 June 2013).

They freed the way for a body of work that is no longer to be determined as either music or visual art. Marclay was trained as a sculpture student at the Massachusetts College of Arts, but 'sculpture' was given a wide interpretation. During his stay in New York as a student, he got as much involved in the musical scene as in the arts scene. Since then Marclay has been combining both, emphasizing their common ground rather than their differences.

Synaesthesia has been a personal fascination of Marclay's for evident reasons. The evocation of a sense by means of another sense helped him to show that sound and sight are not unrelated domains of human perception, and that either is often supported by the other. The poetically sober work *The Sound of Silence* (1988) shows only a photograph of Simon and Garfunkel's record with the same title. The work conjures up two mental sound experiences simultaneously: the melody by Simon and Garfunkel and the idea of silence evoked by the band's paradoxical title. The idea of silence is further alluded to by reproducing the record as a photograph, muting what normally is an instrument to produce sound.[21] Another way of visualising sound to which Marclay took recourse is making collages with comic-book fragments showing onomatopoeias, exposing the cultural convention that exists between a certain sound and its linguistic representation.[22]

Marclay's visual work is not limited to evoking sound or music through images, it is also concerned with questioning the world of imagery that surrounds music. His works show how the image culture of records, posters etc.… is not arbitrary but constitutes a heavily codified system of visual communication, with plenty of easily recognizable stereotypes used for marketing purposes in the music industry. *The Sounds of Christmas* is not only a collection of records for performances, but also a testimonial of how the idea of Christmas is visually codified and commodified to fulfil (and create) a demand in music. Similarly the collages with conductors and dancers show how every genre has created its own visual typologies to communicate with an audience. Marclay's work often has the remarkable power – intentionally or not – of exposing the cultural typologies and codes of a cultural system.

2.4 The Post-Medium Condition

Clement Greenberg's notion of medium specificity is a milestone in the rhetoric of modern art. The idea that a valuable artwork should direct its attention to the formal properties of the medium itself has profoundly influenced both artists and critics. Art that does not comply with this rule is dismissed as kitch. However, these ideas have lost much of their authority in the last decades, in part because of the advent of conceptualism and post-modernism. Artists are worrying less about a presumed essentialism of the medium, and instead start using different media with more freedom and irony. This is the terrain of what Rosalind Krauss has labelled the post-medium condition. Krauss refutes Greenberg's dogmatic ideas about art and medium, and instead draws attention to the tendency of mixed media installations – in which the

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[21] Gonzales, "Overtures," 53.
[22] Young, "The Sounds of Christmas," n.p.

plurality of media prohibits a medium specific approach – or alternative interpretations of 'medium' beyond the strict materialism of Greenberg.[23]

Christian Marclay's oeuvre is exemplary for an era in which the dogmatism of medium specificity is no longer valid. Not only does he employ an impressive variety of media, his oeuvre also extends beyond the confines of the visual arts (Greenberg's area of competence), to include music composition and performance. Many works and performances make up a hybrid between different aspects of his practice, or offer different stages of realisation. The LP's in *Footsteps* first act as sculptural objects, susceptible to scratches by the passing visitors; afterwards they become playable records, which witness both to the original recording and the inscribed flaws. His use of readymades, recorded music and other appropriated materials further complicates a hypothetical reading in terms of medium specificity. Where should medium specificity reside when an artist plays recorded music at a live performance, or uses mass-produced record covers to create original collages?

Rosalind Krauss has herself taken Christian Marclay as an example of the post-medium condition on many occasions. However, she does not emphasize the astonishing diversity or hybridity of media employed by Marclay. Rather she draws attention to Marclay's freer way of handling 'medium' and reflexivity. She coined the notion *technical support*, as a way of referring to the means of an artwork without defining it in essentialist terms: "*Technical support (...) welcomes the layered mechanism of new technologies that make a simple unitary identification of the work's physical support impossible (...)*"[24] For her Marclay's oeuvre is a reflection on music and sound at large, with his different practices being alternative strategies touching upon the same persistent preoccupation with music and sound.[25] The materials he choses – records, manipulated instruments etc… - confirm the idea that this preoccupation goes beyond a thematic concern, and enter the domain of the *technical support*. The work that is most original and successful in this regard according to Krauss, *Video Quartet*, will receive due attention in this dissertation. The idea of the post-medium condition will be extended with regard to the body of work elaborated upon here beyond the aspects touched upon by Krauss herself, but not in contradiction with the theoretical framework proposed by her.

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[23] Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and David Joselit, *Art Since 1900. Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 718-720.
[24] Rosalind Krauss, "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition. Lip Synch: Marclay not Nauman," *October*, 116, Spring 2006, pp. 55-62, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40368424 .
[25] Foster, Krauss, Bois, Buchloh, Joselit, *Art Since 1900*, 718-720.

3. CINEMATOGRAPHIC WORKS

3.1 Cinematographic

The notion of the *cinematographic* has been coined here in order to distinguish a body of work from Christian Marclay's larger oeuvre. As the name itself implies, all of the works selected share a close relationship with the world of cinema. This relationship is multifaceted: these works are based on cinema, use cinema as a resource, usurp the language of cinema, comment on cinema and create a cinematic effect. The notion of the cinematographic – writing with and about cinema – seemed the most convenient way of expressing this intense interaction with the apparatus of cinema. All the works in this artificial category are technologically video works; however, the need to label them with a different term imposed itself to separate them from other video-works that do not share the same close relationship with cinema. An example is the work *Guitar Drag* from 2002; this work consists of original footage made by Marclay himself and bears no notable relation to the apparatus of cinema.[26] The cinematographic body of work is a narrower selection than purely medium-based and incorporates source-related and thematic concerns. The different aspects of this cinematographic notion are treated in this and the following chapters.

The most direct relationship with cinema is the use of found footage. For his cinematographic compositions Marclay never used footage he shot himself but selected pre-recorded footage from the world of cinema (or television series), borrowing both image and sound. The appropriated cinematic footage is subsequently employed in new compositions, presented as video installations. However, Marclay has substantially intervened in between the act of appropriation and the final presentation, not so much by manipulating the original material – there are no colour or sound distortions, deformations of the image or other formal interferences – but rather by gluing together film fragments from completely different origins. A modern colour fragment follows an extract from a black and white movie, or an Asian scene can easily be juxtaposed with Hollywood footage. He brings pieces of narrative cinema together according to a new logic, unique for every single work: his way of handling the material and joining the different parts smoothly together. Despite their different themes and structures the works discussed below are united by a common aesthetic sensibility.

The works are made with what irreverently could be called a digital cut-and-paste technique. All cinematic footage, whether celluloid or already in video format, is changed into an archive of digitised video fragments. This is used as a resource for the compilations, which are arranged by means of Final Cut Pro, a computer software program that enables the user to move around existing fragments easily into a new order.[27] Montage has evolved from the manual montage table into a computerized technique available for anyone with the right software. The artistic achievement of Marclay's rearrangements does not reside in the handicraft of the montage – facilitated by computer software – but in his successions and combinations of film fragments, and often in his use of sound to straighten out the

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[26] Gonzales, "Overtures," 75.
[27] Daniel Zalewski, "The Hours. How Christian Marclay created the ultimate digital mosaic," *The Newyorker*, March 12, 2012, n.p. and
Matthew Higgs, "Video Quartet (2002)," In *Christian Marclay*, (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005).

composition into a fluent entity. The resulting works are generally exhibited as digitised video projections in darkened black box installations with large screens, rather than small monitors in white cube exhibition spaces.[28] The resulting spectatorial experience is very cinematic in nature.

Up and Out (1998) is a cinematographic work that is deceptively simple in its arrangement: the imagery of Michelangelo's Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966) is combined with Brian De Palma's soundtrack for *Blow Out* (1981). The former source comments on the unstable nature of the image while the latter does the same with regard to sound. The unreliability of both sight and hearing is fittingly combined by juxtaposing Antonioni's images and De Palma's soundtrack, and is emphasized by the discontinuity between visual and sonic material.[29]

The double screen video piece *The Bell and the Glass*, currently in the Kramlich Collection in California, was originally created as part of a wider installation and happening organised by Marclay in collaboration with the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The work plays on two icons of the city of Philadelphia: the Liberty Bell and the glass sculpture *The Bride stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* by Marcel Duchamp – nicknamed *The Large Glass*. Unsurprisingly, a special musical score was composed by Marclay for the happening / installation. The two screens of the video projection are arranged according to the template of Duchamp's work: two conventional horizontal screens juxtaposed vertically, creating two registers that can be perceived together by the viewer. The moving images used – found footage exclusively – relate either directly to the masterpiece by Duchamp or the Liberty Bell, or are sourced out of narrative cinema. There is documentary footage concerning the tourist industry creating Philadelphia gadgets, such as chocolate Liberty Bells, and archival material of the presentation of *The Large Glass*, its transportation and restoration etc… The cinematic material concentrates on sensual scenes – mainly persistent close-ups of beautiful women – in tune with the erotic theme of Duchamp's work. Breaks are evidently a defining motif in the composition, since both the Liberty Bell and The Large Glass are preserved in their broken condition.[30]

Christoph Cox argues: ""*the breaks" signifies the connection and disconnection between those two objects, the conjunction and disjunction between the visual and the sonic, and, by extension, between the visual cuts of cinematic montage and the auditory cuts of the turntablist's art.*"[31] The resulting video work – and larger installation – is a tribute to Philadelphia, full of allusions to a modernist masterpiece punctuated with cinematic footage in an idiosyncratic ensemble arranged according to Marclay's vision.

In 2005 Marclay conceived *Screen Play* (image 7), a found footage composition based on a wide variety of film sources, such as home movies, documentaries, narrative film, educational films. For this work only black and white footage was selected, lending a grisaille unity to the composition.[32] The succession of images is based on visual analogy, rather than on any

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[28] Gonzales, "Overtures," 61-63.
[29] Gonzales, "Overtures," 61.
[30] Marclay, Christian. *The Bell and the Glass*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art and Relâche, 2003. And Gonzales, "Overtures," 61-63.
[31] Christoph Cox, "The Breaks," in *Festival. Issue 3*, edited by David Kiehl, (New York: Whitney, 2010), n.p.
[32] Ibidem.

narrative link between the fragments. The resulting effect is one of false continuity, as Noam M. Elcott suggests. Over the layer of the original appropriated footage there is superposed another layer by Marclay himself, consisting of graphic visuals that enliven the images. The contrast between the old footage in enumerable varieties of grey and the graphic additions in unified colours is striking.[33] The resultant *Screen Play* is used as a visual background and support for musical performances. Here the relation between image and sound is at its freest among the cinematographic works. Performers are given complete freedom to interpret the visuals as they wish or to ignore them, rather than that Marclay determined a fixed soundtrack to accompany the images.

3.2 Telephones (1995)

Telephones (images 8 and 9) is a seminal work in Marclay's cinematographic practice, created as early as 1995. It does not lack in quality, but is still modest in ambitions. It is a single screen installation that lasts seven minutes. This is his first experiment with connecting a series of film fragments according to an imposed structure, in this case a telephone conversation. Fragments of completely different films, without connection to each other, succeed one another to form a structure that is easily recognisable by any modern spectator as a commonplace aspect of society. Short extracts of people using a telephone are mended together to form a complete, but abstract telephone conversation.

The work begins with an old black and white film in which a man enters a telephone booth. He takes the receiver, puts in a coin and starts dialling a number on an old fashion telephone. The screen changes to another fragment, again of someone dialling a number, followed by a few other old fragments. Every new extract concentrates more on the circular dialling, omitting all circumstantial footage. After a while some more recent examples are included, with people tapping modern keyboards to dial a number. The succeeding series of fragments shows other people waiting for the telephone to ring, followed by a series of ringing telephones: the shrill sound of old phones or modern tunes. Eventually someone grasps the receiver, followed by a succession of identical movements.

The first human voice answering a call marks the beginning of the middle section of *Telephones*, concerned with dialogue. Endless *hello's* are occasionally alternated by a more original answer. The fragments are kept short, most often just a few words, and never exceeding a sentence. The phrases are stereotyped and due to the constant switching between disconnected fragments the spectator can never make up an idea about the subject of conversation. Staple expressions sound all too familiar to modern visitors accustomed to film and television series: "*How is she?*" and the like. Often generic situations are evoked by just a few words: "*What makes you think it was me?*", a perilous voice asks trembling. Inquisitive intonation, anger, seductive voicing... - all the generic topoi of cinematic situations pass the screen, as long as the message is directed to someone at the other end of the receiver.

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[33] Alan Licht, "What sound does a conductor make?" in *Festival. Issue 3*, edited by David Kiehl, (New York: Whitney, 2010), n.p.
And Elcott M. Noam, "Screen Play," in *Festival. Issue 3*, edited by David Kiehl, (New York: Whitney, 2010), n.p.

Sometimes the impression of a dialogue is created, by someone asking a question followed by another person answering the question in a plausible way. But the different qualities of the footage remind us that the two fragments are unconnected, and that the created dialogue isn't as plausible as we first thought it was. Other effects have little to do with conversational realism, but are merely intended for the delight of the spectator. A series of affirmative yesses is followed by a different fragment with equally assertive no's; fragments in entertaining opposition. A remarkable caesura is created by halting the verbal utterances of the characters on screen, pausing to hear to what the person at the other side of the line has to say, which creates a sense of calm that is unique in the otherwise frenetic composition. The end of the middle section is devoted to concluding dialogues with a series of goodbyes, again in every intonation imaginable.

The last part of the composition has again been directed to the technical device of the telephone, as receiver after receiver is placed back in its sleeping position, waiting for the next call. The delicate handling of this instrument is contrasted with the rough smashing in anger by someone else. At a certain moment we hear a human voice shouting "*Get Lost*", after which the succession of 'hanging up the phone' continues. The piece ends in an elegiac tone, when we see a woman in a phone booth again, as we saw already at the beginning. With a tremble in her voice she asks "*Hello? Hello?*", before realising the person on the other side of the line has left. Overpowered by sadness she puts down the receiver and leaves the booth.

The means and technique employed by Marclay in *Telephones* are still fairly simple; however this does not mean the works shows shortcomings or makes a feeble impression. It last only seven minutes and is installed as a simple single screen black box installation. The short duration, the lack of installational complexity and the straight-forwardness of the composition's structure – a telephone conversation from the dialling of the number until the receiver is put down – make the work charming in its simplicity, certainly compared to the more ambitious installations that follow. In *Telephones* sound mostly rigidly follows image, which results in a clear demarcation of the separate fragments. This strictness is deserted in the following works, creating a different kind of transitions. Despite the isolated character of the extracts, and the clear differences technically and stylistically between them, the work still creates an impression of continuity. The leading principle of the telephone conversation is easily recognised by the spectator as the thrusting motor of the composition and creates sufficient unity for the work to be perceived as coherent and balanced.

Telephones was made with the support of the Media Arts Department, Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University and The Kitchen, New York City.[34]

3.3 Video Quartet (2002)

In *Video Quartet* (images 10 and 11) the simplicity of *Telephones* is abandoned in favour of increased complexity. The single screen is replaced by an arrangement of four screens,

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[34] Description of *Telephones* based on "Telephones, 1995 – Christian Marclay", last consulted on May 14, 2013. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH5HTPjPvyE

juxtaposed horizontally like a freeze. The room is a darkened black box with four sofas facing the four screens directly. As a consequence of this more complex multi-screen installation, the sonic accompaniment is less straightforward than with *Telephones*. The four screens are devoted to different film fragments. Marclay did not chose to play all four soundtracks simultaneously and neither to play only the soundtrack of one screen at a time. Instead he decided to vary between these two options and their intermediary variations, creating a hybrid soundscape. Sometimes it is possible to connect a sound with an image; at other times it is easier to go with the flow of intermingled images and sounds. The power of *Video Quartet* resides in the simultaneity of different images, the simultaneity of different soundtracks, and the simultaneity of sound and image, but most of all in Marclay's ability to create juxtapositions that are pleasurable to navigate through as a spectator.

The binding factor of this work is music. Again all footage is sourced from narrative cinema, which offers an ample spectrum of music making on screen. Music can be extended to sound at large, since some fragments offer a soundscape that is not conventionally considered as music. Of course for an artist working with the heritage of John Cage, every sonic event is of interest by its own. Evidently, in a montage based on music in film, consideration of sound is as decisive as consideration of image for the selection of fragments. In *Telephones* dialogue played a key role in the composition; in *Video Quartet*, however, fragments are based on the sonorous qualities of the soundtrack, rather than the meaning of verbal utterances. The human voice plays only a minor role in general, restricted to a few sung notes, shouts and hummed tunes. Despite the absence of an action being ran through from beginning to ending – the dominant principle of Telephones – in *Video Quartet*, there is a strong sense of development. Different passages are developed, punctuated by either visual or sonic means, creating a varied promenade through cinematic music making.

The piece starts in a timid manner, with only a few shy sounds. A boy steps forward nervously and tentatively starts striking the keys of a piano. A room stands deserted with an arrangement of music scores for an orchestra. Single notes are stricken softly, kids try their hands on instruments, tunes are composed and instruments are tuned. A solemn calm reigns the passing of different film fragments over the four screens. The first more dynamic movement comes into play with a more agitated piano tune, succeeded by an orchestra replacing the earlier empty orchestra room. The composition now gives room to a series of musical passages based on idiosyncratic criteria, but not unlike the developments of different themes in musical composition. A female singer fills one screen, performing with the allures of a prima donna, subsequently gracing the other three screens with her appearance. Gradually the composition develops towards a climax point. The sound mixing becomes thicker and louder, creating an effect of sonic fullness permeating the installation space. Musical fireworks are performed on the screen stage when a grand symphonic orchestra transforms into a loud parade, subsequently morphing into a frenetic electric guitar solo. The allegro furioso is followed by a calmer adagio with guitar and violin, bringing the brio back to rest. A variety of fragments juxtapose and succeed one another, creating an equally diversified range of musical moods. Towards the end of the piece an elegiac tone becomes more pervasive, as the volume decreases and the mood becomes less cheerful. A set of melancholic scenes are aligned. Soloists playing sorrowful melodies are juxtaposed with images of musical scores floating in the water. The piece ends with a trumpeter playing the blues on a city rooftop.

In the second half an iconoclastic passage is inserted, in which the composition diverts most extreme from the conventional idea of music. A series of filmic passages are assembled without sounds that are intended as music in the original film. The iconoclasm is further heightened by the prevalence of destruction and noise in this passage. Instruments are smashed, glass is broken, people are punched; the whistling of steam engines, breaking plaits and exploding cars are accompanied by cymbals. All these sounds are blended, while their equally spectacular images are juxtaposed on the four screens. This minute of 'noise music' forms a dramatic passage in *Video Quartet*'s alternation between calm and agitated parts, navigating between the extremes of chaos and silence.

Another deviant chapter in *Video Quart* is the part that is devoted to the human voice, with instruments merely acting as accompaniment. It starts with Marilyn Monroe rejecting her suitors: "*No no no no no.*" This *no* develops in a series of no-utterances varying from an affirmative no-shout to melismatic *no-no-no* by an opera singer. Voice exercises in *Amadeus* are juxtaposed with Janet Leigh's scream in *Psycho*, the starting shot for a cacophony of female screams taking the composition to the extremes of dissonance. The apogee of human emotions is blended with the shouting through the microphone at rock concerts. Loud and extravagant singing gradually transforms into softer variants until we see and hear Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music* and Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* mark a calm passage. The human voice, which plays an overall subordinated role in *Video Quartet*, is only selected when it expresses an extremer register of life: freight, anger, ecstasy, bliss and the singing in outbursts and higher keys. Contrary to *Telephones*, which provides us with the more profane aspects of daily life, *Video Quartet* offers life's ecstatic side.

Another aspect that becomes more prominent compared to Telephones is the issue of cinematic recognisability. Musical performances, admiring serenades, seductive dances or sudden screams often play climax roles in cinema, punctuating the narrative. Many of the fragments in *Video Quartet* are instantly identifiable: *Psycho*, *Amadeus*, *West Side Story*, *The Sound of Music*, *Cabaret* and Marilyn Monroe, Billy Holiday, Elvis Presley, Audrey Hepburn, Lisa Minley… are an incomprehensive list of films and actors that provoke instant recognition when they pass the screen. Apart from particular films we also recognise the typical clichés involving music in cinema, seduction being a prime example. Curtains are closed, and legs start moving in scenes evoking both rhythm and love. Music is a major means for creating mood in film, and an anthology of its expressive possibilities is presented by *Video Quartet*.

This description could give the impression that *Video Quartet* is mainly a sound piece, in which the visual footage consists of those images that happen to accompany the musical extracts selected by Marclay to make a composition. However, this piece devotes plenty of attention to the visualisation of music, to the evocation of sound through image and to visual effects in their own right. Aspects which are typically part of the attraction of a musical performance are brought to close-up on screen, such as the hyperkinetic feet of a tap dance or the synchronous ballet of an orchestra's strings. The images of the four juxtaposed screens can be brought in alignment or contrast; oppositions between black and white and colour footage or symmetrical arrangements are explored. An astonishing visual sequence, accompanied by equally vibrant soundtrack, is devoted to the virtuosity of piano music. Three

different film fragments of piano soloists in concert are combined and alternated to make a delightful arrangement of image and sound, in which it is impossible to verify whose hands correspond to which soundtrack. The melancholic mood in which the piece ends is visually announced in the second half by the aesthetic of falling. A trumpet is thrown into the water, a waitress drops a tray. A fourfold juxtaposition of a falling violin, a car falling of a bridge in the water, a man being shut down and the throwing away of a guitar at a concert marks the visual mineur. *Video Quartet* is a symphony of the visual as well as of the sonic.

Video Quartet was commissioned by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco, California and the Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg and was realised in collaboration with Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.[35]

3.4 The Clock (2010)

The Clock (image 12 and 13) is Christian Marclay's latest grand video work. The piece is devoted to time in cinema. Marclay's earlier cinematographic works were not modest, but in *The Clock* the dimensions are of an unprecedented scale. The work lasts for 24 hours and is to be played in a loop creating a hypothetical perpetual cycle. The duration of the work is no coincidence, since it corresponds exactly with the time a clock needs to come full circle (once, in the case of most digital clocks, twice in the case of an analogue clock that needs two rounds to describe a full daytime).[36]

The main source for the material used in *The Clock* is narrative cinema, which is occasionally supplemented with fragments from television series. The sole requirement is that every fragment has to bear a time indication; in most cases this is the visual presence of a clock, but sporadically time is mentioned in the dialogue. Marclay gives us a cross-section of how time is communicated in narrative film. However, the sequence of these fragments is by no means arbitrary: the artist, raised and educated in Switzerland, shows himself to be an excellent clockmaker. Every fragment is meticulously placed in the logical and rigid structure of a clock.[37] The video is divided into 24 hours, which are sub-divided into 60 minutes; every single minute is appropriately filled with time references indicating that exact minute. Sometimes even seconds are incorporated in the larger framework. So *The Clock* not only celebrates clockwork in film, but it actually is a clock.

Christian Marclay is, however, not yet satisfied with his clock. Despite the intricate nature and meticulous construction, the piece can still be played at random in any museum hall, with the screened clock having as much involvement with reality as a mediocre sculpture on an isolating pedestal. He instead chooses to make *The Clock* enter the spectator's reality by perfectly aligning the clockwork inside his composition with the standard time of the viewer's

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[35] Description of *Video Quartet* based on *Video Quartet*, Stanford: Cantor Arts Centre, Stanford University, 14 November 2012 – 10 February 2013.
[36] David Bordwell, "Time Piece," last consulted May 12, 2012. http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/02/21/time-piece/ .
[37] Roberta Smith, "As in Life, Timing is Everything in the Movies," *New York Times*, February 3, 2011.

time zone.[38] The video work is accompanied by strict instructions given by the artist, determining that it should start at exactly the right hour – the loop starts with fragments illustrating 1 O'clock in the morning – as well as that it should be played at the right speed and that is not to be interrupted, to guarantee the time correspondence between the timepiece and reality. Thereby *The Clock* not only is a clock, it also functions as a clock in that time can be accurately read from it.

The work is a cross-section of the presence of time and timepieces in cinema. It witnesses both the diversity and repetition involved in the occurrence of clocks in films. We see digital and analogue clocks, watches and alarm clocks, wall clocks, and clock towers, cell phones and computer monitors, all displaying time. The artist takes us on a journey past the most common and repetitive clock views and occasionally past more quirky and unusual scenes, as a lonely clock floating on his own little raft, or what seems to be a *Wunderkammer* devoted to clocks alone. In this sequence of ever-changing clocks, there is nonetheless one protagonist: the Big Ben comes into frame over and over again. *The Clock*'s central motif is a timepiece and its source material is narrative film. Evidently the famous London landmark, the clock that has dominated cinema for decades, was to play a leading role in Marclay's cinematic anthology of clocks. Time is indicated in long takes as part of establishing scenes, or only briefly mentioned in a dialogue. These fragments seen one after another hours on end could give us the impression that time indications are proliferating throughout cinema and that narrative film is only about getting the time right.

Hearing about the principles according to which *The Clock* is constructed, one might easily have the impression of a harsh and tedious viewing experience. An everlasting sequence of fragments that are completely disconnected on a narrative level that offers us nothing more than a time indication gives associations of a discontinuous viewing experience marked by breaches – far more than in *Telephones* of *Video Quartet* because of the work's endless duration. It might also suggest that a longer viewing experience would contribute nothing more, so that any sensible viewer would leave after a short while, contrary to *Telephones* and *Video Quartet* which have a more prominent sense of development. The opposite is true, *The Clock* has a mesmerising quality that makes one want to watch the passing of time for hours. Marclay knows how to captivate his audience by inserting a high amount of continuity on a formal level, and offers an entertaining succession of fragments.

To achieve this continuity, his approach to the transition from one fragment to another is quintessential. When the film switches over to the next scene, there seems to be a flow rather than a cut; he connects the fragments by auditory as well as visual means. On a visual level, a transition is often marked by a motif encompassed in both scenes. Examples, such as a telephone answered in one scene and someone hanging up in the next or a door opening and closing, recall similar practices in *Telephones* (1995). But Marclay keeps our fascination with his inventiveness in his choice of motifs, e.g. when he shows two prominently framed moustaches subsequently employed in the same minute. The sound transitions are even more complex; it is an intricate composition of overlapping and merging sounds made with Pro Tools.[39] The soundtrack belonging to one fragment is extended to the next, or the arrival of a

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38 Ibidem.
[39] Zalewski, "The Hours," n.p.

new scene is announced by an emerging sound. The ticking of a clock smoothens the transition between timepieces.[40] In *Video Quartet* the blending of sounds was evidently a striking feature, but this was a logical implication of the use of four juxtaposed screens, accompanied by one soundtrack. *The Clock* has taken recourse again to a single screen arrangement, but his manipulation of soundtrack has transformed the succession of single fragments into an organic whole.

To describe the succession of film fragments following each other in The Clock, two terms by Michel Foucault are useful: heterotopy and heterochrony; used, however, in a different meaning than he intended them.[41] Here, heterochrony and heterotopy are used to indicate temporal and spatial shifts respectively, marking discontinuity. On the spatial level, *The Clock* is easily determinable as a heterotopia. The changing of scenes is rapid, the video jumps from one location to another, ignoring the high degree of spatial discontinuity. On a temporal level, however, things are less clear. At first sight, we think of a homochronic heterotopia: while jumping from one location to another, the minutes of the day follow one another in logical continuity. But the viewer rapidly observes that beyond the leading principle of one day's time, the chronology is disrespected. The work surpasses the abstract limit of twenty-four hours constantly. As soon as this happens, homochrony changes into heterochrony. Black and white and colour footage alternate frequently and decades are mixed up. This temporal ambiguity, the tension between rigid logic and arbitrary mix-up, between continuity and discontinuity, is a central characteristic of *The Clock*.

The making of *The Clock* was a tour de force, even for an artist who has considerable experience working with found footage. The work was even preceded by a "feasibility study".[42] An astonishing amount of material had to be collected, an assignment more challenging for some hours of the day than others. Every hour is abundantly furnished, with several different scenes assigned per minute. A studio-team of nine assistants was occupied with gathering the required footage, while Marclay independently answered for the editing and montage of the footage into his masterpiece of continuous time experience.[43] Three specialist assistants collaborated too: cinophile Paul Anton Smith, sound designer Quitin Chiappetta and professor Mick Grierson, who devised the computer program on which the work runs. Given the vast scale the task took three years to be completed.[44]

The Clock was first exhibited at White Cube – the gallery representing Christian Marclay in London – at the Mason's Yard location from October 14 to November 13 2012.[45] Paula Cooper gallery in New York presented it first to the American public in February 2011.[46] Due to the success and popularity of the work, it has travelled excessively through the western art

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[40] Bordwell, "Time Piece," 2012.
[41] Mary Ann Duane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 5.
[42] Zalewski, "The Hours," n.p.
[43] Jackie Wullschlager, "You have tob e a showman," *Financial Times*, March 3 and 4, 2012, Life&Arts 3.
[43] "Christian Marclay The Clock", last consulted on May 17, 2012.
[44] Zalewski, "The Hours," n.p.
[45] "Christian Marclay The Clock", last consulted on May 17, 2012.
http://whitecube.com/exhibitions/christian_marclay_the_clock/
[46] "Christian Marclay The Clock", last consulted on May 17, 2012.
http://www.paulacoopergallery.com/exhibitions/497

world. *The Clock* was also present on the 52nd Venice Biennale as part of the main exhibition *Illuminations* curated by Bice Curiger. At the Biennale, Christian Marclay was rewarded the Golden Lion for best artist.[47] The number of exhibition venues and the media attention the work has gathered in the two years since its release witness both popular success and critical acclaim. Five copies of the work have been acquired by major museums worldwide; private collector Steven A. Cohen bought a sixth copy.[48] The success of *The Clock* marks the recognition by the contemporary art world of the cinematographic formula devised by Marclay over more than a decade.[49]

[47] "News", last consulted on May 17, 2012.
http://www.paulacoopergallery.com/news
[48] Zalewski, "The Hours," n.p.
[49] Description of The Clock based on viewint at *Illuminations. 54th Art Biennale.* Curated by Bice Curriger. Venice: Arsenale. 4 June 2011 – 27 November 2011.

4. The Post-Cinematic Era

In an era in which art is no longer to be understood in artistic styles that succeed one another chronologically or movements that are held together by a close group of artists working according to a certain dogmatism, art historians are constantly looking to discern tendencies, to understand common interests and practices among a landscape of artists that shows little unity. The *cinematic turn* is one of those tendencies, grouping a series of artists, which are occupied with the world of cinema, both generically and stylistically.[50] The tendency is labelled as post-cinematic, since the inquiry into the world of cinema is mainly seen as engaging with a medium that dominated the recent past and less concerned with the contemporary cinematic production. Many exhibitions witness to the importance that is granted to the cinematic turn in the contemporary art scene, among which '*Cinéma Cinéma: Contemporary Art and the Cinematic Experience*' at the Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in 1999[51], '*Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video*' at the Milwaukee Art Museum in 2005[52], featuring Marclay's *Telephones* and *Video Quartet* and '*Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*' at EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam[53]. Art scholars have engaged with interpreting and contextualizing this domain of contemporary art. Maeve Connelly, for example, coined the term *artists's cinema* to describe the moving image installations produced by visual artists rather than directors, but extensively using cinematic effects.[54]

The post-cinematic art production is mainly read as an artistic phenomenon of the last two decades. However, it is important to point out that it has a history almost as old as cinema itself. People in the entourage of film makers deployed found footage early on for commercial and documentary purposes. Old fragments were recycled into new arrangements and brought to the public again as early as the first decade of the twentieth century.[55] The first artist to consciously source material from the world of cinema into an artistic ensemble was Joseph Cornell, with his found footage work *Rose Hobart* of 1936. The source of this work was one film, *East of Borneo* (1931), with Rose Hobart in the star role. Cornell focused on scenes featuring Hobart prominently, omitting plenty of fragments that are essential to the narrative. The resulting footage, concentrating on the presence of Rose Hobart, is slowed down to create a mesmerizing portraiture effect.[56] *Rose Hobart* is not unrelated to Marclay's cinematographic works, as an early instance of rearranging cinematic footage to create a new artistic whole and its manifest disruption of the original narrative in favour of idiosyncratic structures.

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[50] Jacobs, Steven, "Fundamenten van de Moderne en Actuele Beeldende Kunst II," lectures at Ghent University, September 2012 – January 2013.

[51] Marente Bloemheuvel and Jaap Guldemond, *Cinéma Cinéma. Contemporary Art and the Cinematic Experience*, Eindhoven: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 1999.

[52] Stefano Basilico, ed. *Cut. Film as Found Object in Contempory Video*, (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Museum of Art, 2004).

[53] Marente Bloemheuvel, Giovanna Fossati and Jaap Guldemond, eds., *Found Footage. Cinema Exposed*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press and EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012).

[54] Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists' Cinema. Space, Site and Screen*, (Bristol: Intellect Books and Chicago: Intellect Books, The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[55] Rob Yeo, "Cutting through History. Found Footage in Avant-garde Filmmaking," in *Cut. Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video*, edited by Stefano Basilico, (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2004), 13-14.

[56] Rob Yeo, "Cutting through History. Found Footage in Avant-garde Filmmaking," in *Cut. Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video*, edited by Stefano Basilico, (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2004), 13-16.

There is undeniably a proliferation of art forms concerned with cinema in the contemporary art scene. A wide variety of artists is occupied with processing the cultural heritage of cinema and many different strategies are applied. Found Footage collages, remakes and photography are not a comprehensive categorization of the cinematic turn, but nonetheless they exemplify the diversity of approaches towards cinema in contemporary art. Many photographers have taken stylistic inspiration from the long history of narrative film. Cindy Sherman, Jeff Wall and Gregory Crewdson are some well-known examples. They stage scenes in the same highly artificial manner of film directors in order to shoot photographic tableaux in which posture, decor, lighting etc… are precisely controlled and resemble the very mannered images of some cinematic styles. The use of a static medium to make art with relation to cinema may seem odd, but one must consider both the tradition of film stills as an important genre in itself and the more recent possibility to pause a film to capture a pregnant moment in freeze frame.[57]

Two moving image variants of the cinematic turn are the found footage work and the remake. The first method appropriates the original material; the latter substitutes the original by newly created footage using the original as a template. Found footage is a form of appropriation, in which both the previously existing material and the newly created context need to be considered.[58] Tom Gunning emphasis this double aspect:

> "*Thus found art, and especially found footage films, exists within a gamut of techniques, purposes, and degrees of intervention. But in all cases (...) the original object/material remains evident through any transformation. This sense of the original object is essential to the form.*"[59]

With his digital collages of fragments taken from the large spectrum of narrative films, Marclay is evidently an explorer of the creative potential of found footage. However, other kinds of intervention with regard to the extracted footage are possible too. Douglas Gordon uses a different set of manipulations, not intervening in the arrangement of fragments but directly treating the fragments themselves. In *24hour Psycho* of 1993, his best-known work, he decelerates the speed of the unreeling frames substantially in order that Hitchcock's masterpiece acquires a duration of twenty four hours.[60] In another work, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* of 1996 (image 14), he doubles the images in a symmetrical two screen arrangement, increasing the physical impact by extending the original footage's duration and turning one side negative.[61] Pierre Huyghe is a good exponent of the remake strategy,

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[57] Jacobs, Steven, "Onderzoeksseminarie Moderne en Actuele Beeldende Kunst," lectures at Ghent University, September 2012 – January 2013.

[58] Jaap Guldemond, "Found Footage: Cinema Exposed," in *Found Footage. Cinema Exposed*, edited by Bloemheuvel, Marente, Giovanna Fossati and Jaap Guldemond, eds., (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press and EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012), 10.

[59] Tom Gunning, "Finding the Way. Films Found on a Scrap Heap," in *Found Footage. Cinema Exposed*, edited by Marente Bloemheuvel, Giovanna Fossati and Jaap Guldemond, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press and EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012), 51.

[60] Basilico, *Cut. Film as Found Object* , 66-78.

[61] Guldemond, "Found Footage", 13.

restaging old narratives to create new footage modelled on the earlier original. His video work *Remake* of 1995 is a literal remake of Hitchcock's classic *Rear Window*, 1954.[62]

The origin of this sudden and pervasive interest in cinema by contemporary artists is complex. There is a widespread belief that cinema, invented at the end of the nineteenth century by the Lumière brothers, had become the dominant medium of the twentieth century. Hence, it is often considered the most prominent cultural representative of that age. However, the uniform format of watching films at the movie theatres did not last for the whole century. More hybrid forms emerged, such as television in the family living rooms, interrupting films with sequences of advertising and programmed together with series. From the sixties onwards, cinema got increasing competition from the electronic medium of video, which put the creation of moving image within the reach of the common man. And finally, the nineties saw the dawning of the digital age – with the spread of the computer, the Internet and mobile technology – whose profound implications for society permanently terminated cinema's claim to cultural hegemony.[63] More then ever we live in a world dominated by screens, but it is a diversified landscape of interfaces. Contemporary produced screen-reliant art often tries to deal with this situation in meaningful ways.[64]

The conviction that the prominence of Cinema is lost in contemporary society brings about a sense of nostalgia around the medium, evidenced in abundant cinephilia, but also a sense of historic past-ness, expressed in the post-cinematic. As characteristic of a *post*-theory, it is a nuanced and versatile discourse. There is the typical 'death' notion, paralleled in media such as painting and literature, emphasizing the medium's belonging to the past. An elegiac tone is often present in the discourse, giving a commemorative aspect to the post-cinematic works of art. Then there is 'post' as in 'béyond', which not only implicates a next phase but also the incorporation of the former into the next (e.g. post-structuralism): the term post-cinema is evidently meaningless without cinema. Appropriation is characteristic of the post in formalist post-modernism; in the case of the post-cinematic this is reflected in the found footage practice, appropriating from the vast archives of cinema's history. Post is often closely associated with 'meta' as well, emphasizing a self-reflective dimension on a medium. These post-cinematic notions are both present in scholarly theory and artistic practice and are useful to analyse Marclay's cinematographic body of work.

The British film theorist Laura Mulvey began writing on film in the seventies. Talking about cinema when it was still mainly a movie theatre affair, she focused on notions of spectatorship, and more specifically on the aura of the star. Recently, she has published a new work *Death 24x a Second*, in which she commences by emphasizing the temporal distance between the seventies and now, and thereby marking her writings as the results of two different conditions of spectatorship.[65] The beginning still belongs to *classical* cinema, while

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[62] Jean-Christophe Royoux, "Remaking Cinema," in *Cinéma Cinéma. Contemporary Art and the Cinematic Experience*, edited by Marente Bloemheuvel and Jaap Guldemond, (Eindhoven: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 1999), 22-23.

[63] The sequence of emerging technologies ennumerated here is a common trait of most authors' discourses mentioned in this chapter e.g. L. Mulvey et altri.

[64] Kate Mondloch, *Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 1-5.

[65] Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 7-8.

the latter clearly is a product of the post-cinematic era. As a scholar who was already involved in film studies before the arrival of the digital revolution and the wave of artists embracing cinema, and who is today still writing on film while incorporating these phenomena, she is to be considered an emblematic author on the post-cinematic shift. The tone she currently uses when talking about cinema indicates that we are in a phase beyond the cinema she used to know. There is a clear sense of cinema's belonging to the past in notions such as *cinematic excavation*, endowing cinema with an archaeological quality.[66]

Mulvey argues that the conditions of cinematic spectatorship have profoundly changed because of the technological transformations that our society has witnessed the last decades. There is a transition from a passive to an active spectator, whose power is facilitated through the emergence of devices such as the DVD. Now we have the possibility of actively interfering in the viewing process instead of passively witnessing the unreeling of 24 frames a second. She labels this transformed spectatorship *delayed cinema*, referring to the possibility of slowing down the viewing process, and thereby enabling a more extended contemplation of the material.[67] There is an *interactive spectatorship*, in which the original cohesion of the film – which was previously experienced by everyone more or less the same – is disrupted, at least in terms of duration. The viewer now has more autonomy and can determine tempo and duration.[68] As a result independent tableaux can now be detached from the whole, previously totally immersed in the flow of narrative and standard duration and barely visible. These tableaux can gain a new autonomy differing significantly from the status they had in classical film duration. They can be slowed down or even frozen, so that the duration of our observation is expanded to a degree of contemplation. It is also possible to cut the fragment out completely, consolidating its independence from the original whole. Subsequently, it can be placed in a new entity, made by the juxtaposition of fragments based on the inherent qualities of these tableaux rather than provenance. Contemporary found footage practices have much in common with techniques of modernism, such as collage. Mulvey draws a parallel with the surrealist practice of seeking for unexpected analogies between disconnected scenes by arbitrarily navigating between movie theatres without watching the entire film. Nowadays this arbitrary promenade is made much easier by the possibilities of digital technology.[69]

> *"I don't mind seeing a lot of fragments of a film."*
> Christian Marclay[70]

An author who has written extensively about re-using pre-existing film material, the found footage practice, is Christa Blümlinger. In her *Kino aus zweiter Hand*, she discussed the variety of ways in which found footage is employed in artistic practice, including some of Marclay's earlier cinematographic works. For Blümlinger, film has an inherent potential for reproduction and therefore reconfiguration. This trait is exemplified in the practices of the Structural Film. Found footage is not only a contemporary phenomenon: film has a long

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[66] Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, 26.
[67] Ibidem, 21-23.
[68] Ibidem, 28.
[69] Ibidem, 28-30.
[70] Ibidem, 28-30.

history of re-using existing material, dating back to the early decades of the medium. She also draws parallels between on the one hand the technique of re-using found footage in cinema and avant-garde film and on the other hand the notion of appropriation in the theory and practice of the visual arts.[71]

Even though she argues that the reproducibility of the filmic medium from the very beginning facilitates ways of rearranging pre-existing material, she does distinguish a shift in the last decades. In the technological climate we now live in these possibilities are accelerated in a way that accounts for the proliferation of found footage practices in contemporary art, a new wave of creative cinephilia with a strong aspect of historicity.[72] Notable is how Laura Mulvey and Christa Blümlinger both stress the technological circumstances as the conditio sine qua non for the strong presence of found footage nowadays.

Blümlinger also stresses the importance of the archive in the context of found footage. When working with pre-existent materials, one needs a proper source that provides sufficient resources to work with. Logically, in the case of cinema, whose history stretches over a century with endless hours of viewing materials, this aspect is especially pertinent. Evidently, the accessibility is a determining factor as well. The technological developments of the last decades enabled faster and smoother access to the vast holdings of film history, which results in a democratization in archive accessibility. A second concern with regard to the archive is what Blümlinger calls *double reflexivity*. If artists work with found footage, this often involves reflections on the used film fragments; but it is also possible that the artist extents this reflection to the archive conditions of the found materials. In that sense, she states, the act of appropriating film material not only implicates a re-presentation of that material, but also an inquiry into the organization of film and its archiving.[73]

It should be remarked that in the post-cinematic discourse it is impossible to stay within the confines of a sole medium or institutional context. Evidently, the foundation of the phenomenon lies in cinema: classical narrative film. The characteristics of the original medium got transformed by the emergence of new media: television, video, DVD, digital technology. A high emphasis within the discourse is put on how these transformations lead to a new creative élan. The resulting cultural products are mainly exhibited within the context of the visual arts, no longer in the context of narrative film. Meaningful in this regard is the term coined by Jean-Christophe Royoux, *cinéma d'exposition*, to describe the products in the visual arts that have a profound input from the world of cinema. These are not necessarily found footage works, but could also be remakes made with new footage. Royaux argues that cinema is so closely connected with the social and cultural issues of an era that for many artists it is the most evident source for information and sensations to work with.[74] *Cinéma d'exposition* both emphasises the new institutional context – art exhibitions – and hints at mediation between the old context and the new – the domain of the *black box*. The black box

[71] Christa Blümlinger, *Kino aus zweiter Hand. Zur Ästhethik materieller Aneignung im Film und in der Medienkunst* (Berlin: Vorwerk 8, 2009), 14-16.
[72] Blümlinger, *Kino aus zweiter Hand*, 18-19.
[73] Ibidem, 24-26.
[74] Jean-Christophe Royoux, "Remaking Cinema," in *Cinéma Cinéma. Contemporary Art and the Cinematic Experience*, edited by Marente Bloemheuvel and Jaap Guldemond, (Eindhoven: Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, 1999), 21.

exhibiting situation is a mediation between the viewing conditions of cinema – a large darkened auditorium arranged with fixed seats and directed towards a towering screen – and those of modern art galleries – light, clear spaces in which works of art are lined up and which the visitor is free to enter and leave at wish. In a black box we have the same darkened atmosphere directed towards screen(s), but the spectator is afforded the liberty of the art gallery to roam around and leave the space.

Another aspect imposes itself in a consideration of the artistic production regarding cinema, and the use of found footage more specifically: copyright infringement. Even though the arts are typically considered as free, discussion over the unlawful borrowing of creative work arises as soon as appropriation is involved. Lawrence Lessig observes a contradiction between the legal structures of intellectual property on the one hand, and the creative possibilities enabled by digital technologies on the other hand:

> "*An explosion of digital technologies, linked by a free digital network, has produced an unprecedented opportunity for creative work to be remixed and shared. It has therefore also created an extraordinary pressure on businesses that were built upon an economy of scarcity.*"[75]

An enormous corpus of creative work has become easily available and employable for creative purposes through digital technologies; however, intellectual property law, which prohibits any use without permission, bans this use. He perceives a creative potential in the new digital environment that is a priori prohibited by copyright law, produced by analog culture and no longer in conformity with the technological climate. For him, found footage art defies this outmoded legal structure, exposing the new possibilities of digital technology rather than stealing property.[76]

The aspects of the post-cinematic both as a theoretical discourse and as an artistic practice are apt to analyse Christian Marclay's cinematographic oeuvre, which in many ways is an exquisite example of the creative potential that the post-cinematic embodies. Primarily, the source material for the works is made up almost exclusively of narrative film, evidencing the strong connection with cinema from the start. This use of found footage as a working material clearly parallels earlier appropriation practices by the artist, such as the sampling of existing music or making collages with record covers. What Marclay previously did with music and photographic images, he now projects to cinema, choosing to borrow existing material instead of creating from the scratch. The choice of working with found footage corresponds to the post cinematic in the formalist sense: he re-uses the material of the cinema's history, and makes new configurations with these fragments. With his choice of found footage material from narrative film, he displays his fascination for the genre and its characteristics, an interest that will be elaborated in the next chapter.

A large time-share of the creation process of the works is taken up by collecting the right materials to work with. Criteria are set for the work and subsequently those fragments that

[75] Lawrence Lessig, "The Failures of Fair Use and the Future of Free Culture," in *Cut. Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video*, edited by Stefano Basilico, (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2004), 48.
[76] Lessig, "The Failures of Fair Use", 47-53.

conform to the perceived structure need to be selected, out of the cinema's entire history. For *Telephones* a series of fragments containing telephone conversations needs to be collected, placed in order from dialling until placing the receiver back, to be re-arranged in a new composition. *Video Quartet* required a browsing of film history for apt fragments of music making or other interesting instances of 'sound production' in order to produce the great variety evidenced in the works course. In *The Clock* this use of found footage takes place on a larger scale than with other artists or even with Marclay's previous works. To assemble twenty-four hours of viewing materials without tampering with duration, while shifting several times per minute, requires a great many sources. The vast scale of this project is reflected in the long working period and the studio of nine people that was necessary to collect the appropriate materials, subject to Marclay's narrow selection principle of time references. The creation of *The Clock* is what Laura Mulvey called *cinematic excavation* with a considerable number of people digging through the holding of past cinema, passing through the different strata of film history. This brings to mind Christa Blümlinger's emphasis on the archive and its accessibility. Taking in consideration the time and people the undertaking still demands in an advanced digitised context, it seems impossible to imagine the project feasible in a time before the technological democratization and accessibility typical of the post-cinematic era. Marclay's co-workers must have had fast access to their materials; and digital computer technology must have enabled to process it relatively easy.

But the accessibility of the archive is not only relevant in the creation of the work; it also plays a role in the viewing experience. The fact that we are confronted with a wide array of film sources during screenings of *Telephones*, *Video Quartet* and *The Clock* and the accessibility of historic cinema nowadays go hand in hand. The spectator's erudition in film history is a determining factor in the viewing experience; even without precisely identifying every fragment, the cinephile feels at home and does not experience this diversity as unsettling. In any other age this rapid succession of visual materials from many different periods would seem chaotic and very non-aesthetic, but today we are accustomed to this kind of experience. In this sense these works are a meditation on the easy access to a high quantity of films we have today. We can use the archive as a versatile notion. An archive can be both literal – a tangible or digital collection of fragments; or it can be abstract – the idea of the totality of film material available. An archive can be personal – the databases managed by a single person or entity; or it can be collective – society's cultural resources concerning cinema's history as preserved in libraries, film institutes, research and preservation centres and online databases. The literal, personal archive is the concrete resource that is used for the realization of the works: the collection of fragments that is assembled and used in rearranged configurations. The abstract, collective archive, however, is not without relevance with regard to Marclay's cinematographic works. It is a category that is hinted at during the perception of those works: the collective archive of society's cultural memory with regard to cinema.

Doubtless Christian Marclay and his team made good use of the techniques – or watching habits – Laura Mulvey labels as *interactive spectatorship*: slowing the tempo to watch more careful, freezing the frame as soon as they catch a glimpse of a telephone conversation, music performance or clock; or rewinding when they think they have missed such an occasion. But regardless of how these motifs were collected, their subsequent fate was sealed. To continue in Mulvey's terminology, they are regarded as individual tableaux in their own right and cut

out of their original context. A telephone conversation is no longer part of a narrative, connecting different characters and conveying essential information. It has become a fragment that stands in its own right *as* a telephone conversation. Subsequently these scraps are re-arranged in a new continuity, whose structure is based solely on Marclay's principles set out for each work. The motifs inside these tableaux, irrespective of their place in the original entity, are what matters in Marclay's syntaxis. The creation of these wayward reconfigurations is facilitated by the easy almost cut-and-paste techniques of digitised film processing in Final Cut Pro, making it easy to rearrange all these unconnected excerpts in a new continuity.

On the exhibition character and the transformation from cinema to works of visual art corresponding to the logic of the installation, the last chapter will provide more elaboration. Here it suffices to say that Marclay has detached his material from the normal viewing context of cinema, and the diversity of media nowadays associated with narrative film, such as television, DVD-rental and more recently digital TV and online streaming. Instead he places them in carefully designed installations in fine art galleries, from where they move to exhibitions and museums. It is evident that the black box is more apt to describe the formal context of Marclay's cinematographic works than the movie theatre, and that the work is exemplary for the post-cinematic shift between institutional contexts that often occurs from the world of cinema to that of the visual arts. The works are projected on large screens in darkened spaces, alluding to their original cinematic context, but in a more emancipated environment. The specific temporal and spatial spectator dynamics of *Telephones*, *Video Quartet* and *The Clock* will be discussed in chapter 6.

Marclay's cinematographic practice implies a series of copyright infringement equal to the amount film fragments used in his works. No legal battles have emerged from this massive appropriation. He himself refutes the idea of intellectual property theft, arguing that his uses of appropriated materials are sufficiently distanced from the original to constitute an independent instance of expression as well as stressing the readily available character of most materials he uses, being common cultural property:

"I respect the notion of intellectual property, but I don't consider that I am stealing from anyone. I use recorded music in such a way that it really becomes my own music. Sometimes there may be quotes that people might recognize, but I find that perfectly acceptable, because we hear recorded music everywhere; it is imposed on us, and so in a sense it is part of the public domain."[77]

Christian Marclay clearly asserts here that working with appropriated material – music in this case – constitutes a valid act of creation. One can easily extend this line of thought to the use of found footage, which merely is a change to a different category of appropriated material. Since the cinematographic works clearly propose a proper artistic idea, neither directors are inclined to take offence at his borrowings. Sofia Coppola even called it an honour to see one of her films included in *The Clock*. Ironically, Marclay's finalized works are at their turn protected again against too free circulation, to protect the optimal viewing conditions that only the original installations can offer. The assistants collaborating at *The Clock* are legally

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[77] The artist as cited in Gonzales, "Overtures," 63.

bound to their discretion, obstructing the production of counterfeits or derivatives.[78] This recalls the economy of scarcity Lawrence Lessig mentioned, being undermined by a new digital culture of easy borrowing. This results in the double circulation of polished, high-value installation editions meant for museums and private collectors on the one hand, and unofficial viewing copies for art historians, low quality recordings on YouTube and the like on the other hand. Sven Lütticken indicates this double circulation as a consequence of high economic value of moving image art installations and the economy of scarcity created around them. The works are marketed as rare editions – maintaining the aura of the artwork – and simultaneously low quality derives disperse among the wider public.[79]

This chapter emphasised the influence cinema played on the field of contemporary art, how the media climate of the moving image evolved over the course of the last century and how the theoretical consideration of media and their relation to art making evolved likewise, and most importantly, how this all relates to Marclay's cinematographic works. The relation with cinema is drawn out in general term. The next chapter will attempt to more directly analyse some of the formal aspects of cinema as a representational system and how these aspects are transformed in Marclay's works. To paraphrase Tom Gunning: a good understanding of the original material is essential to understanding the form.[80]

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[78] Zalewski, "The Hours," n.p.
[79] Sven Lütticken, "Viewing Copies: On the Mobility of Moving Images," *E-Flux*, 2009, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/viewing-copies-on-the-mobility-of-moving-images/ .
[80] Gunning, "Finding the Way", 51.

5. From auxiliary role to thematic emancipation

5.1 Cinema as a representational system

The source material for Marclay's cinematographic works consists principally out of found footage of narrative films, and consequently this forms the main point of departure for analysing the works. Christian Marclay is looking closer to the syntax of cinema and its underlying structures, with an emphatic preference for different aspects of this syntax according to the different works and their varying structures. In order to analyse how Christian Marclay's cinematographic syntaxis relates to the language of cinema as a whole, it is essential to look into what is meant by *cinema* in abstract terms. Cinema is not just a collection of moving image recordings, which only have coincidental similarities. Rather it is a body of work that closely resemble one another by a series of formal and structural characteristics and thereby constitute a representational system. Cinema is defined here as entire apparatus that acts as a coherent formal system. By a representational system is meant a body of codes that guarantee that the visitor is given easy access to the content that is mediated. In concreto, this signifies that cinema is a genre that rarely deviates too far from its conventions in order for the public to feel comfortable and parts of the story left uncomprehended remain limited. Deviances are uncommon and most often are meant as a witty play with conventions, understood by the audience as such.

In this dissertation cinema is used as narrative film, defined in terms of genre. Narrative film consists of two parts. Narrative is what embeds the genre in a longer cultural tradition, developed over a period of more than two millennia: the art of telling a story. By film is meant moving image media; first this was predominantly visual, only optionally accompanied by a separately performed music score, later these moving images were in a standard way connected with an attached soundtrack. Film is not restricted to moving images recorded on celluloid, since this technological limitation does not convene to the reality of cinema as a genre. Those elements combined – the moving image and storytelling – is what shapes narrative film or cinema, a format to which very wide audiences are familiar.

The narrative tradition as we know it starts in ancient Greece, with the culture of theatre. Emerging from religious ceremonies, theatre developed into performance that enacted mythological tales to the people. A stock of stories as collective culture was brought in a standard format, with a combination of a narrator and direct dialogue. Over time a conventional system was created, transforming theatre into a narrative genre conceived according to certain laws. The first time this narrative system was eloquently formulated as an abstract body of rules governing the creation of new works with restricted liberty was Aristotle's *Poetica*.[81] He singles out five elements, which are essential to constructing a good narrative: the plot, the characters, thought, language and music. Plot and characters are the two elements that are decisive and receive most attention. The plot is driven by human action. It is considered more successful and convincing if all separate events form a coherent whole. The plot needs to be a development from a beginning to a logical ending, steered by events

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[81] Aristoteles, *Poëtica*, translated to Dutch by N. van der Ben and J. M. Bremer, (Amsterdam: Athenaeum – Polak & Van Gennep, 2010).

resulting from one another. The episodic plot – with actions by the same protagonist but without direct causal links – is granted nothing but disdain by Aristotle.[82]

In the modern western tradition narrative thrived both as written form in epic and as performed form in theatre. During the eighteenth century a new form emerged: the novel. Written in prose and often substantially longer, this form would dominate narrative literature from the nineteenth century onwards. Some of the limitations of theatre were compensated by this new form: the freedom of the author to elaborate considerably beyond dialogue made room for meditations on the mental universes of the characters or descriptions of setting with far more detail than possible on stage. Film emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and developed into a mainly narrative genre at the beginning of the twentieth century.[83] In its use of narrative it is mainly indebted to theatre, with its limited number of scenes and duration (90 minutes is considered to be a standard duration for full-length films), and the primacy of spoken dialogue. However, cinema also has affinities with the tradition of the novel, for example the ease with which a film can change the setting, or film's ability to draw an impression of the scene (through establishing shots, roaming long takes etc…) Despite cinema's debt to the earlier narrative forms its generic independence needs to be stressed too. Film directors have explored the possibilities of storytelling through moving images and thus created a genre modus that is proper to cinema. Christian Merz famously characterized film as a voyeuristic art.[84] While in theatre actors generally act towards the audience, film actors tend to disregard the camera, creating the impression of a self-enclosed environment and assisting the reality effect.

The film theorist David Bordwell, who attaches a lot of importance to the role of narrative in cinema, defines narrative as follows:

> "*We can consider a narrative to be a chain of events linked by cause and effect and occurring in time and space. A narrative is what we usually mean by the term story, (…). Typically, a narrative begins with one situation; a series of changes occurs according to a pattern of cause and effect; finally, a new situation arises that brings about the end of the narrative. Our engagement with the story depends on our understanding of the pattern of change and stability, cause and effect, time and space.*"[85]

It is important to emphasize that in this definition of narrative logical thought occupies a central place. The connection between the different events narrated is constituted by cause and effect, thus embedding narration in western rational thinking. Generally events are explicable through other advents in the story, and not through metaphysics or an arbitrary accumulation of events. Narrative is supposed to be a logically watertight succession of events connected to one another, as it was already defined with Aristotle. Bordwell isolates

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[82] Aristoteles, *Poëtica*, 39-45.

[83] Steven Jacobs, "Fundamenten van de Moderne en Actuele Beeldende Kunst II," lectures at Ghent University, September 2012 – January 2013.

[84] Christian Merz, The Imaginary Signifier, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 18, as cited in Marc Furstenau, ed., *The Film Theory Reader. Debates and Arguments*, (Oxon, Routledge, 2010), 13.

[85] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art. An Introduction*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 2001), 79.

three parameters that are quintessential to the construction of the narrative structure: causality, time and space.

These abstract principles are maintained in the new context of the moving image by a complex formal system of filmmaking that is known as continuity editing:

"Around 1900-1910, as filmmakers started to use editing, they sought to arrange their shots so as to tell a story coherently and clearly. Thus editing, supported by specific strategies of cinematography and mise-en-scene, was used to ensure narrative continuity. So powerful is this style that, even today, anyone working in narrative filmmaking around the world is expected to be familiar with it."[86]

The result of continuity editing is that the different sequences, which succeed one another rapidly in narrative film, are experienced as a natural flow. Every shot and scene has its logical place in the larger framework of the narrative. A separate shot will often seem out of place and unanswered for, but because of its position in a larger whole – governed by continuity editing – it acquires meaning in consonance with the abstract laws of narrative: causality, time and space.

David Bordwell distinguishes two main approaches towards analysing narrative film, derived from the long tradition of literary studies: the notions of mimesis en diegesis dating back to respectively Aristotle and Plato. On the one hand the concept of mimesis emphasizes the representation as showing, and has been influential in literature, the performing as well as visual arts in both theory and practise. The concept of diegesis, on the other hand, stresses the narrated character of a story – acknowledging the intermediate position between the represented and the representation – and is consequently more restricted to theatre, literature and film – as story based genres. These are useful models of analysis, not definite concepts for categorization. It may nonetheless be interesting to oppose them to one another to shed a light on what Christian Marclay does to narrative film.

Bordwell describes narration as the transmittance of story information according to the guidelines of causality. Although the authority of narration is rarely determinable with certitude, it is often tempting to identify it with the camera, for the camera usually gives us the right view on the relevant events and stands between us and the pro-filmic events.[87] The narration is characterized by three factors: self-consciousness, being knowledgeable and communicativeness. The self-consciousness of the narration is usually stressed at the beginning of the film, soon to disappear almost completely to make the narration nearly invisible despite its prominent presence. The narrator is knowledgeable in that he is expected to be aware of everything that has happened and is happening – sometimes even what will happen. The degree of communicativeness fluctuates according to how much information is supposed to be known by the spectator at a certain moment: sometimes we are left in the dark, other times we can fill up gaps.[88]

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[86] Bordwell and Thompson, Film Art, 236.
[87] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction* Film, (Madison: University of Wiscosin Press, 19885), 24.
[88] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson. *The Classical Hollywood cinema: film style and mode or production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1994), 25 – 28.

The role of the knowledgeable narrator and his communicativeness is fairly evident. If the narrator would not be knowledgeable, the narration would be rather pointless – if there even is narration. The narration is communicative in a lower or higher degree to regulate our experience of the plot, to create suspense, anticipation, surprise etc. The contribution of this regulated communicativeness to the spectator's experience of the narration goes without saying. More conspicuous, however, is the narration's self-consciousness, or more precisely the lack thereof during most of the film. Filmmakers seem to be obsessed with hiding the narrated character of cinema, with making it invisible. Great efforts are made to make the fictional realm appear as a closed off autonomous reality: "*an enclosed story world*" not created or mediated by a narrator but pre-existent.[89] This suppressed self-consciousness of the narration is a clear mark of the mimetic discourse: nothing but showing. But Bordwell asks you not to be misled, and to see the fictional realm as a construction.[90] A suppressed narration is a narration nonetheless: what appears to be the case in classical cinema is a peculiar phenomenon in which diegesis is disguised as mimesis.

Typical of this lack of self-consciousness and emphasis on an independent fictional world is the transmittance of information through intra-diegetic elements. At the beginning of a film or scene the spectator is often granted orientation by situating the scene on a spatial and temporal level: where and when does the story take place. The expository phase – labelled establishing shot – often conveys this information subduing the narration by integrating these indications firmly into the intra-diegetic world.[91] More specifically in the case of time, we are often permitted a short glance at a clock in the room. Like this, we are informed of the time without the use of explicit narration. However, despite its subdued nature, this is an instance of narration nonetheless: after all, the camera needs to adapt its angle to grant us a legible look at a time-piece or a central position for the clock needs to be guaranteed. These clocks as embedded indications of story-time are salient illustrations of diegesis disguised as mimesis.

Fiction film is an intricate and contrived genre, built out of a diversity of means. Nonetheless cinema is often characterized as primarily a visual form, stressing the importance of the image, for which camerawork plays a primordial role. The camera is responsible for the transformation of the profilmic (too often treated as a given, which it is not), utilizing the full potential of the latter.[92] The camera angle will answer for the film's spatial dimension, the duration of a shot for the temporal; montage and editing enable subsequent manipulation, interfering with spatial and temporal continuities.

Mary Ann Duane argues that montage and editing mark a break with continuity. This may generate anxiety about discontinuity (compared to the continuity of the profilmic), but it also composes the initial potential of cinema as a genre. By means of editing, the director can depart from spatial and temporal continuity, and start to create something else which is of more interest: cinematic signification. Meaning is inserted into cinema by means of articulation, emphasizing certain aspects over others deemed irrelevant to the cinematic

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[89] Ibidem, 29.
[90] Ibidem, 30.
[91] Ibidem, 63-64.
[92] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison, University of Wiscosin Press, 1985), 14.

experience.[93] With regard to the conception of time this means the abandonment of the temporal continuity of the single shot. Here Mary Ann Duane draws on Gilles Deleuze with his theoretical perspective of *Image-Mouvement* and *Image-Temps* citing:

> "*The essence of the cinematic is not visible until time can be disengaged from the movement of bodies within the diegesis and articulated through montage.*"[94]

The message is clear: the true potential of the cinematic lies not in reproducing the temporal continuity of the profilmic – a rather documentary approach – but in breaking it to create something more meaningful with regard to diegesis. It is through cuts that cinema generates narrative meaning, the "*semiotic imperative of the cinema.*"[95] The same train of thought can be extended to space. Film directors make ample use of the possibilities of cuts and montage to break with spatial continuity and bending spatiality to the exigencies of the narrative. The transformation of temporal and spatial continuity into discontinuity with an auxiliary role to narrative is exemplary of how continuity editing succeeds in mobilizing filmic means to mediate the narrative. The remarkable fact that these discontinuities do not disturb our experience when watching a film, but instead feel as a continuous and logical flow of storytelling, is proof of the success of continuity editing.

The procedure of creating articulation by means of editing, of inserting cuts into the original bare footage material, to create something more significant in relation to the narrative, resonates widely in the cinematic discourse. Mary Ann Duane's notion of articulation is in many ways parallel to what Laura Mulvey called *punctuation*.[96] But we can go far back in time, to one of the founding fathers of the cinematic, to find similar utterances. Serge Eisenstein writes in '*Montage is conflict*' (1929):

> "*As in that 'prehistoric' period in films (although there are plenty of instances in the present, as well), when entire scenes would be photographed in a single, uncut shot.*"[97]

By labelling un-edited footage as prehistoric, Eisenstein implies that the emergence of editing is as quintessential in cinema as the emergence of writing was to mankind, comparing films without editing to a form of illiteracy. It might be clear by now that cinema as a genre is far removed from documentary presentation, instead preferring a more salient representation realised with editing, in which the narrated character becomes apparent. The cut is the brick stone of narrative film.

One could arguably say that montage and the use of the cut is the primary aspect of cinema that is adopted by Christian Marclay in his cinematographic works and brought to significant use in its deviance from cinema. After all, he neglects to impose any manipulations on the footage itself. Instead the artist restricts himself to intervening in the arrangements of film

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[93] Duane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 185.
[94] Ibidem, 184.
[95] Ibidem, 184.
[96] Mulvey, *Death*, 29.
[97] Sergei Eisenstein, "Montage is Conflict," In *The Cinematic*, edited by David Campany, (London: Whitechapel Gallery Ventures Limited, 2007), 31.

fragments. The fragments are disjoined out of their original context and placed in a new sequence. Marclay's method is one of montage; or rather re-montage, to emphasize two instances of montage – the first by the film director, the second by the artist. The guideline for the first montage were causality and continuity editing as directed by narrative; the guidelines for the re-montage are idiosyncratic structures conceived by Marclay for each individual work. The semantic imperative remains the same: the cut. Montage implies that meaning is generated not through the fragments themselves, but rather through their mutual connections. Christoph Cox drew a connection between the use of montage in film and the explicit thematising of the break in *The Bell in the Glass*. *""the breaks" signifies the connection and disconnection between (...) the visual cuts of cinematic montage and the auditory cuts of the turntablist's art.*"[98]

Another interesting aspect of Cox's analysis is that is aligns the logic of montage with that of sound remixing: *"the visual cuts of cinematic montage and the auditory cuts of the turntablist's art.*"[99] However, these need not to be separate, as suggested by Cox. Sound remixing is not only present in Marclay's turntable performances; it also has a place in his cinematographic works. The same logic of rearranging visual fragments is applied to the organization of sound. In *Telephones* the different soundtracks generally still follow the visuals closely, but in *Video Quartet* and *The Clock* treatment of sound becomes more complex and independent. Different soundtracks are fused, and transitions are softened by sonic means. The artist also creates independent effects with sound. The equivalence of visual and sonic montage evidently is most conspicuous in *Video Quartet*. In Marclay's cinematographic practice image and sound go hand in hand, and montage happens on both levels.

This inclination towards montage for his rearrangements is the basis for the subsequent undermining of causality of the original narrative. The isolated fragments are used as independent tableaux and placed in new contexts. But before considering the implications of the newly created sequence, it is important to recognise that this isolation also implies the deconstruction of an earlier structure: that of the original narrative. If causality is based on the existence of logical cause and effect relations between different events or scenes in a larger whole, the isolation of singular events as film fragments means the eroding of the original narrative. The relations are broken and the singular film fragments become meaningless from a narrative point of view. This effect is aggravated because of the short durations of most of the fragments: Marclay generally uses only a few seconds of every extract. This means that the fragment even becomes uprooted in relation to the larger scene. Instead of a series of scenes that stand in meaningful relation to each other we get a sequence of absolutely disconnected fragments, not even extracted from the same narrative. Logic is abandoned in the succession of events, surrendered to an entertaining sequence that makes no sense from a narrative point of view in the compositions by Marclay. There is a tension between the rigid logic of the new structure that is imposed (for example: a telephone conversation or clockwork) on the one hand, and the arbitrary logic of a succession of disconnected fragments in view of their narrative transfer of meaning. Marclay's cinematographic suites are even more odious than an episodic structure, in Aristotle's point of view. Not only they bring a

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[98] Christoph Cox, "The Breaks," n.p.
[99] Ibidem.

sequence of events which are not connected by cause and effect relations, but the characters which drive these events are not even the same. It is an arbitrary and utterly incomprehensive catalogue of events.

In this sense, these cinematographic sequences make up a form of anti-narrative, in their dismissal of logic. Western logic came into being in ancient Greece, together with the origin of narrative in the form of theatre. However, western culture also often showed a tendency towards the absurd, the renunciation of logic; this is most prevalent in surrealism, but is present as an undercurrent throughout history. A friction resides in the cinematographic works between the rigid schemes of cause and event which dictated the narratives from which the used footage originates, and the non-causal connections which guide Marclay in his mending of fragments from different origins. This friction becomes all the more clear because of the dexterity with which Marclay succeeded in linking up, resulting in an almost natural flow of moving images. At first spectators may experience some difficulties with the rapid succession of technically diverse footage, but the structuring principles of the works quickly take over and take the spectator on a journey that is governed by a motif selected by Marclay. Here the works emancipate themselves from the narrative in which they were originally embedded. From uprooted isolation the disjoined fragments acquire a new meaning by means of the development of a common motif. This motif has thematic importance that goes beyond their auxiliary role in narrative and touches upon some basic human themes. It is the basis of the meaning acquired by the cinematographic works beyond their relation to cinema. A new logic has taken hold of the footage, but it is not the logic of causality.

5.2 Telephones

The choice for telephone conversations as a first experiment with joining together disconnected fragments of film may seem odd or arbitrary. A whole set of other actions might as easily be appropriated for the same purpose. There are, however, some aspects, which endow more meaning to the relation between cinema and telephones. Firstly, both technologies find their origins in the modernity of western civilization. They do not differ substantially in age and have both developed considerably in the course of the twentieth century. This is revealed immediately in *Telephones*, being purposefully exerted by Marclay. The piece starts with a series of old fashion circular dialling phones in old black and white movies. We almost forgot about modern phones and their numeral keyboard when after a minute we see a movie character for the first time pressing his fingers down to dial a number. The technological development of both media, telephones and cinema, is quite parallel en we experience a vintage effect with regard to both cinema and telephones in the opening sequence of *Telephones*. Another aspect, which is pertinent in the relation with cinema, is the use of telephones in the visual language of film. The close up is a common device throughout the piece, both with regard to the telephone itself as with regard to the human face. During telephone conversations it is often quite irrelevant to show anything else than the face of the character talking or listening, which facilitates expressive sequences, which zoom in on the emotional expressions of the characters face. The telephone conversation gives occasions galore to the cinema's anthropocentric obsession with the human face.

The foremost reason why the new telephonic technology is so popular with film directors is its ability to transcendent space. With the advent of telecommunication unity of space has become undesirable. Far more exciting effects can be created when different locales come into play, especially since here resides one of the main advantages of cinema in relation to theatre. Theatre has great difficulties switching locales on stage; as a result this generally only happens in between scenes. Cinema, however, presents a virtual reality on screen, and the spectator will take in any clue the images offer, enabling spatial variation. The cinematic apparatus has early on developed its own means to communicate these spatial shifts. Here we can hark back to Mary Ann Duane's ideas about cinematic signification created through montage. Through editing a departure from spatial continuity is possible, that offers a new range of formal possibilities that are only available to the cinematic apparatus. An example is parallel editing, in which a singular moment in time is related several times on screen, seen from different points of view or different locations.[100] *"Temporal repetition seems to compensate for spatial dislocation"*, according to Duane.[101] Here simultaneity is opposed to succession: different shots do not take place after each other, but at the same time; this temporal simultaneity is however communicated through a succession of images. Duane sees parallel editing as the fulfilment of cinematic discourse, cutting alternately between two scenes that are assumed to have some relation with each other and are usually understood as taking place simultaneously or nearly simultaneous.

Observe how once again the meaningful relation between different shots or scenes is emphasized, embedding it clearly in the logic of western narrative despite the formal exploration of spatial discontinuity. It is here that the telephone comes in. Duane states that the spatial shifts provided by parallel editing imply a degree of denaturalization of the filmic discourse, because of the spatial discontinuity. She draws on Tom Gunning to argue that the recent emergence of telecommunication and transportation made it possible to *"naturalize film's power to move through space and time"*.[102] The telephone can play a key role here rationalizing the moving in between two remote locations, as there is established a link between those locations. After an instance of contact between two remote spaces, events can develop parallel in the wake of the communicated information. It is because of this formal potential that telephones become such a prominent device in early cinema.[103]

Parallel editing, or crosscutting as it is alternatively labelled, became a staple of the film director's tools to enliven the plot. The American film director D. W. Griffith (1875-1948) first developed it to its full potential.[104] Not coincidentally, Griffith is often acclaimed to be the founding father of narrative cinema, applying the formal devices of cinema to the exigencies of western narrative. He deployed the device to heighten the suspense in last-minute rescue scenes, moving back and forth between different relevant locales.[105]

David Bordwell defines the device as follows: *"Crosscutting gives us an unrestricted knowledge of causal, temporal, or spatial information by alternating shots from one*

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[100] Duane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 184-189.
[101] Ibidem, 188.
[102] Tom Gunning as cited in Duane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 194.
[103] Duane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 194.
[104] Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*, 246.
[105] Ibidem, 248.

line of action in one place with shots of other events in other places. Crosscutting thus creates some spatial discontinuity, but it binds the action together by creating a sense of cause and effect and simultaneous time."[106]

The embedding of crosscutting or parallel editing into the logic of narrative could not be formulated any clearer. The different locales offered to the spectator in alternating succession are bound together by logical links, placing them in the logic of causality governing narrative. The sacrifice of spatial continuity does not go at the cost of cause and effect; on the contrary, it extends the potential of making dynamic plots while respecting causality. Continuity editing succeeds in smoothing out discontinuity, creating a fluent and linear experience. Bordwell also mentions that through crosscutting the audience is granted a wider range of knowledge, going beyond the restricted knowledge of the characters.[107] The omniscience of the narrator is confirmed, and here he is manifested as communicative, sharing extensive information with the captivated audience.

The principles of causality are clearly disrupted in *Telephones*. Marclay draws on continuity editing, and in the case of *Telephones* on crosscutting more specifically, to create a viewing experience that makes a continuous impression. A whole series of different points of view is mended together, succeeding each other fluently as they trace out the gradual progress of a telephone conversation. After the dialling of numbers the sequence goes to telephones ringing; from answering phones it goes to alternations of speaking and listening, finally ending with a series of receivers being placed back. However, the reality effect is immediately undercut by the sheer accumulation of deployed fragments. In one telephone conversation twenty different numbers are not dialled by twenty different people, and likewise for the other parts of the composition. The impression of a continuous development goes in pair with the impression of an unnatural accumulation, in contrast to the natural experience normally created by continuity editing. We do not witness the conversation of two characters, but instead perceive a hybrid succession of fragments united by a common motif.

The different spaces on screen seem to be aligned by telephone technology, not in the least because a telephone conversation has this basic association with regular film watcher. We immediately infer one person on one side of the line in contact with someone else on the other side of the line, establishing a link that binds the two together, with the evident assumption of simultaneity. However, in *Telephones* the fragments do not alternate between characters communicating with each other; rather the fragments alternate between characters communicating, but not with each other. By offering only one part of what conventionally is a diptych, the link of cause and event is interrupted. Fragments do not stand in a meaningful relation to each other, but form an arbitrary succession of acts of communication.

Nonetheless, continuity editing is not given up completely by Marclay. This is most clear during the part of the dialogue sequence that almost gives the impression of a valid conversation. Utterances are made and reactions are given; questions are asked, which are followed by answers. Correspondents are convinced, threatened, seduced etc.… By this stage every viewer has properly understood that *Telephones* consists of a series of disconnected

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[106] Ibidem.
[107] Ibidem.

footage; however, as a cinematic audience we are conditioned to tie shots together. As a matter of course we start mending together the different fragments not only as a succession but as a relation too. "*Are you sure, you've got a positive idea?*" a man in a colour movie asks; "*No, not exactly…*" is the answer in a black and white film. The two fuse perfectly, although there is no connection. The utterances are vague and generic enough to mend into a dialogue. It is here, at the level of these micro-conversations – consisting of two fragments which are placed in a non-existent relation – that the friction between the logical system of narrative and the arbitrary logic of accumulation is most powerful. The illusion of simultaneity and cause and effect relations conventionally constructed by narrative is undermined by the overtly apparent joining together of disconnected footage. But at the same time we start reconstructing a fictive continuity in an act of willing suspension of disbelief, stitching the scenes in meaningful relations of which we know they are not there. *Telephones* undermines the codes of crosscutting, but at the same time the work is dependent on crosscutting for part of its effect.

Concerning the information that is communicated by the narrator using crosscutting, we must observe that in *Telephones* this is very little. Instead of mediating more information by showing different locations involved, we completely lose track. In part because of the very short duration of the selected fragments: only small amounts of information are communicated. There are no establishing shots and no spatial coordinates are given. Crosscutting offers the possibility of orientating the narrative (and the spectator) between different locales, but the pace of spatial switching is too rapid. The work offers a spatial rollercoaster, in which all orientation is left to the imagination or even made impossible. Crosscutting conventionally integrates spatial discontinuity into the logical universe of narrative, but here logic is surrendered to frenetic succession.

It is only through the destruction of this previous structures – governed by the laws of causality – that it is possible to construct an independent new structure – governed by the identification of a motif. Marclay has replaced the series of particular telephone conversations in auxiliary roles to the narrative by *a* telephone conversation in abstract terms. The spotlighted motif becomes the theme of the works: telephone conversations, or communication in general. What *Telephones* shows us is a series of people making contact with one another, or at least trying to do so. It is an anthology of people separated by long distances trying to convey a message; sometimes it is pressing business, other times just loneliness that urges them to grasp the telephone. One thing is constant: they all need the reassuring presence of the person at the other end of the line.

It is not the first time that Marclay has worked with the motif of the telephone, and neither is the theme of human communication unprecedented in his oeuvre. For him, many of his happenings are not only about music making, but about people getting into contact with one another too.[108] This implies that every form of music making together or in front of an audience has an important communicative aspect. Apart from real forms of communication through music, Marclay also made poetic artworks that suggest communication without establishing a real line of contact between two people. In 1993 he made a small readymade sculpture entitled *Cage* (1993, image 15). The work consists a telephone locked into a little

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[108] Gonzales, "Overtures," 79.

birdcage. Of course this work clearly references the two artists that have most profoundly influenced Marclay's thinking about and creation of art: John Cage and Marcel Duchamp. The title of the work is an explicit reference to John Cage. The telephone locked into a cage, were it does not belong, recalls the work *Why not sneeze, Rrose Selavy?*, for which Duchamp locked marble 'sugar' cubes into a cage.[109] Besides the playful aspect of the art-historical puns the work also has a more serious vein, when we look more closely at the two objects combined. The telephone is an utility object, used by one person to contact another. Conventionally, it only acquires significance when it is ready for use, either to call or to be called. Here both functions have been silently done away with: the receiver is out of our reach. If the telephone rings, we will not be able to answer it. Just like he did with instruments by deforming them, Marclay succeeded in emasculating the telephone by disconnecting object and function. *Cage* becomes a powerful metaphor for the impossibility of communication, or impotent communication.

In a way, *Telephones* is like an epic relating human communication. It starts energetically with swift attempts to constitute a line of contact with another person. Optimistically numbers are dialled and telephones start ringing with vigour. They are mostly answered with the same sense of hope of establishing a link between two individuals. But as soon as the dialogue starts things become more complicated. Every party tries to convey a message, to bring the one on the other side of the line to hearing them. However, somewhere things go awry, things seem not to go as planned. Utterances seem not be tuned in to each other, messages are not as hoped. "*So... you think it was me?*" a scared voice asks. Statements are refuted by affirmative *nononono*'s. Receivers are put down with anger or disappointment. When in the end the last lady places back the horn in a phone booth the message is clear: disappointment prevails, communication has failed. The impression at the end of *Telephones* is the same as with *Cage*: one of impotent communication.

If one analyses the dialogic fragments in Telephones more closely, it is easy to observe that one category of utterances dominates the piece. Most things that are said do not really convey a messages, instead they are part of the many little conventions we use in spoken language, that are just part of conversation. They keep the interaction going, without adding meaning, and are the footing of human communication. "*Hello*" "*How are you?*" and the like are not used to transfer information, rather they make us feel more at ease in a conversation.

The aspect of communication that dominates *Telephones* can be brought in coherence with the functions of language as defined by the linguist Roman Jakobson. He devised a scheme of six communication functions to categorize verbal utterances: the referential function, the expressive function, the conative function, the poetic function, the phatic function and the metalingual function.[110] Of concern here is mainly the phatic function, which comprises all utterances that are connected to the communication itself. In a way, they are communication for the sake of communication and smoothen out much of our dialogue.

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[109] Gonzales, "Overtures," 75.
[110] Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style in Language*, edited by Thomas A. Sebeok, (Cambridge, Massachussets: MIT Press, 1960).

Telephones is a good demonstration of how pervasive the phatic function of communication is in our daily conversational language. Through the accumulation of small, basically meaningless utterances that do not convey a message we notice just how much of what we say is intended purely for the sake of the communication itself, to maintain it and to remould it into a comfortable domain. "*Hello*" merely marks the beginning of the conversation. It is a greeting to the other person, of whom we do not even know the identity when we pick up the phone. It denotes that we have received a call and are ready to listen. The firm voices of the first *hello's* are followed by some more *hello's* which are more questioning in tone: "*Hello? ... Hello?*", "*Hello, Felix?*", "*Hellooo Dave…?*" The line seems to fail, is the other person still hearing us. *Hello's* are often just intended to check if the line still working, if communication is not interrupted. Or there is confusion on this end of the line. The character is not sure whom he or she is talking to, trying to verify the name of the caller: "*Who? ... Who? ... Jeff!*", "*Darling, it's me…*". The body of the conversation is filled with little expressions, almost automatically and without paying much attention to, that denote listening to the person on the other end of the line: "*I see…*", as well as the many *yes's*. As many utterances urge the other person to listen more attentively: "*Listen!*", "*You don't listen, do you?*", "*Now listen very carefully.*" If the line is not interrupted in the middle of thing, the end of the conversation is generally marked by goodbyes in all their human variations: "*Goodbye!*", "*Byebye…*", "*Get lost!*" *Telephones* offers an anthology of the aspects, not only of telephonic conversation, but of human communication in general. It shows all the little things we constantly say without noticing, but which form an indispensable part of our conversations. They are not only part of *a* conversation, they are communication itself.

The emphasis on the phatic function of communication in *Telephones* recalls the play in monologue by Jean Cocteau entitled *La Voix Humaine*, from 1930. The piece has only one character that is having a telephone conversation. By hearing only one side of the conversation, and letting a lot of interference occur during, the play emphasizes the same phatic function as the dialogue in Telephones. "*Allô! ... Allô!*" is the Leitmotif of the piece, coming back time after time. Dialogue is most of the time devoted to either verifying the connection – "*Oui… J'entends très mal…. Tu est très loin, très loin…. Allô!.....*" – or to confirming the conversation and showing that one listens – "*Oui.....*", "*Je comprends….*"[111] *Telephones* and *La Voix Humaine* are next of kin in their insistence on the phatic layer, and thereby communication in abstracto. Through the small aspects of human dialogue, the little utterances, they show the human need of communication and the fragility thereof, the ease with which meaning gets lost.

Furthermore both pieces emphasize the shortcomings of telephonic conversations and the flawed nature of technology as a simulation of 'natural' communication. A telephone conversation is a human endeavour to get into contact with someone else; sometimes communication is clear and efficient, but often it is not. Interferences occur, there is noise and the message has difficulties getting through. We want to say something, to explain ourselves, but somehow all goes not as planned. Meaning gets lost in technological translation. We desperately want to interact with someone that is not there, and the telephone is the closest we can get to human contact. *Telephones* shows how tight the receiver is grasped and how full of longing facial expressions get. At a certain point a woman says "*If I could just see you, just*

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[111] Jean Cocteau, *La Voix Humaine*, (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1930).

talk to you." Of course she cannot see the person on the other end of the line, but while she says "*just talk to you*" she is actually talking to him. Her cry for contact, however, shows how insufficient conversing over the telephone can feel, how empty and incomplete compared to talking face to face. "*If I could just talk to you*" unmasks the telephone as a technological simulacrum of natural communication that does not succeed in replacing the 'real thing'. The telephone remains a refuge for human communication, which often leaves much to desire.

5.3 Video Quartet

Video Quartet moves to another domain, that of making music in film. Of course, musical performances are also a form of communication, but one whose coded form is more complex in nature compared to the more straightforward verbal communication. As described earlier, the human voice only plays a minor role in this piece compared to instrumental music. The instances when voices do feature, they occur in stylized manner – such as opera singing – or in expressive register – such as screaming. Music is a form of communication that works with feeling, to which mostly no verbal meaning can be ascribed. Every attempt to describing and analysing artistic creation involving music remains more tentative than other forms. Another difference with *Telephones* is the remarkable diversity that is exhibited in *Video Quartet*. Despite the variety in telephones and generic situations the former remains a fairly strict formula. The latter on the other hand shows the astonishing range of possibilities that has been explored through music in film. The many ways of enlivening a plot – and the cinematic experience – by means of music have been (incomprehensively) assembled in *Video Quartet*.

Analysing the role and function of music and sound in general, in film is a complex affair. Different points of view impose themselves. Attention to how sound stands in relation to the narrative is important, but it needs to be completed by some technological considerations. Evidently, the development of music in film is strongly dependent on the evolution of the pair sound and film. As a modern audience, we experience sound as part of film as self-evident. But sound has not always been an integral part of film; and now that it is generally considered to be so, we must remind ourselves that it is not as self-evident as it experiences.

In its first stage film was a purely visual affair, which was based on the photographic technique of light inscribed on celluloid in in a succession of images, creating the impression of movement. No sonic information of the pro-filmic was registered in the process. Of course every presentation of filmic material can be accompanied by a music performance, or a musical recording; but an (implied) relation with pro-filmic still lacks. Narrative was adapted to film-technology in the silent era, and consequently the first narrative films do not have sound that originates from the pro-filmic. However, often soundtracks were written for a film, which were then performed live at the cinematic presentation, varying from orchestras to a one-instrument accompaniment according to the size of the theatre. A famous example is Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* of 1927.[112]

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[112] Thomas Elsaesser, *Metropolis*, (London, British Film Institute, 2005), 29.

It is only in the late 1920's that the technology to incorporate sound into the recorded apparatus of film was developed. The new evolution was launched by the companies Warner Bros and Fox, gradually forcing the rest of the film industry to follow suit. Technical equipment requirements became more demanding, and consequently expansion of the industrial apparatus and cooperation followed the introduction of sound. [113] Another consequence of sound film was a series of stylistic changes of the films themselves, although much effort was made to model the form of sound film as closely as possible on silent film. The microphone was modelled on the camera, now combining vision and sound; if the camera was mobile, the microphone was supposed to be so too. Volume was adapted to create the right impression of distance, conform the visual image. In the early stages of sound film, sound recording was mainly concentrated on the human voice, in tune with the camera's insistence on the human face. The recording technology was adapted to this vocal preference, emphasizing vocal timbre, pitch and loudness. What concerns montage, sound followed suit too: visual cuts were supposed to be accompanied by equivalent auditory shifts. There were also aspects in which the emergence of sound changed stylistic devises, such as shot length, cutting rhythm and camera mobility. However, according to Bordwell, all in all the advent of sound film was a continuation of the abstract laws of narrative film in technologically altered medium.[114]

This is how the development of sound film was received in the classical Hollywood system. However, it is important to acknowledge that not everyone was as happy with the sonic addition to what was thought to be a principally visual medium. Neither did all think the same about how sound should be employed. Many film directors were opposed to the use of sound in film, experiencing it as a breach of the inner qualities of visual film. More importantly, among Russian film directors, such as Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov, there was the idea that sound should be used differently than as a sonic translation of the pro-filmic. In Hollywood sound meant synchrony: the sound and image should translate the same event. The voices we hear are those of the characters on screen, the sounds we hear have their origin in something on screen or the space around it. In Soviet cinema film directors wished to use sound in a more stylized manner, stressing "*only a contrapuntal use of sound*" and the "*non-synchronization with the visual images.*"[115] Of course, a very different potential of sound was sought for than the synchronous sound culture of Hollywood, which would dominate the subsequent development of narrative film.

It is important to note that synchronous sound implies an experience of synchrony with the audience, rather than a synchrony in the pro-filmic or the production of the material. In narrative film, sounds often simply seem the sonic equivalent of what we see on screen. It is as if the visual and the auditive are just two sensory aspects of the same reality. However, we must remain conscious that this is a contrived impression, produced by the artificial apparatus of cinema. Early on, the sound layers of films were the result of extensive post-production rather than the 'pure' microphone recording at the shooting of the film. Unwanted sounds

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[113] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film style and mode of production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1994), 298.
[114] Idem, 301-304.
[115] English translation by Jay Leyda, "Appendix A: A Statement," in S. M. Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 258, as cited in Michel Dion, *Film. A Sound Art*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 201.

were removed, while wanted parts were highlighted. Not all material is recorded during the filming of a scene, and earlier sounds are often added. Michel Dion characterized the construction of sound in film as *rendering*. Sound rendering mediates between code – borrowing meaning from cultural convention – and simulacrum – deriving meaning from fidelity to the original. The result is a soundtrack that sometimes has very little to do with the microphone recording, but is the artificial construct that best suits the narrative. Synchronous sound is not the sonic manifestation of the framed events, but rather a sonic composition.

The second point of interest is the relative position of sound and music to the narrative. Music has a special place in the language of cinema. The recording of the voice, the central aspect of sound film in Hollywood cinema, followed the visual template closely. Music, on the other hand, occupied a peculiar position in relation to the images early on. The use of music as an accompaniment to narrative dates back earlier than the emergence of sound film. Instead of following the logic of cut-up fragments as a consequence of the visual montage, the use of music added substantial continuity to the narrative. Wagner's opera music and the idea of a continuous flowing sound backing a narrative found their popular extension in the new discipline of film music.[116] Music is different than other sound categories in film, because of its function to mend the different parts of narrative together in a continuous flow of music; it is not interrupted by the logic of scenes and montage, but is the glue that holds them together.

An important distinction that has to be made is the difference between music and sounds that belong to the story itself on the one hand, and those that do not on the other hand; these two categories are often labelled as diegetic sound (having their origin in the narrative itself) and nondiegetic sound (being added to the narrative for augmented effect). The distinction is most relevant with regard to music, which is often used as an external element. In the silent film era the separately performed music does not act as sound originating from the story, but instead as an added stylized layer enhancing the audience's experience. This tradition is continued in the sound film era, remaining popular to this day. Film scholar Michel Chion extended this distinction into a tri-partite system, distinguishing between on-screen sound and music – whose origin is visualized in the films imagery – off-screen sound and music – originating from the story events, but not visible on screen – and non-diegetic music – acting as an external layer without provenance in the story.[117]

Non-diegetic music has been granted ample attention because of its special status as non-diegetic sound in the narrative film, because of its profound effect on the audience and because of the popularity of the genre. Film music, despite being external to the narrative, fits well into the continuity editing system, because it blends unnoticed with the diegetic material and provides continuity. Film music has a considerable influence on the audience, although it does not pays active attention to the music, which accompanies the story. It has a pervading power, and controls the audience by non-verbal means. Music succeeds in shaping the emotions, enhancing the intended effect, as well as directing the spectator's interpretation of

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[116] Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 33-34.
[117] Michel Chion, Film. A Sound Art, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 249-252.

certain events. External music not only serves as a decorative background, it is also a powerful instrument of manipulation, touching upon the spectator's affect. [118]

Marclay's *Video Quartet* can be situated in the schemes explained above. The source material for the work came from narrative film dated after the transition to sound film. The footage convenes largely to the Hollywood conventions of synchronous sound, despite the more varied origins of the fragments. Excerpts in which sound is used in more stylized or contrapuntal effect, as advocated by Soviet cinema, lack in *Video Quartet*. The sound effects of the footage stand in a logical and synchronous relationship with the imagery, convening to the predominantly realist aesthetic of western narrative. The logical system of synchronous sound is what Rosalind Krauss determined as *Video Quartet*'s technical support:

> "*Marclay's focus on his technical support manifests itself early on in Video Quartet when the leftmost screen shows a clip of cockroaches running soundlessly across the keys of a piano, returning us thereby to silent film. In so doing, we have the sensation of looking at the projection on this field winding backward into the history of the movies to the onset of sound itself. The sensation is one of actually* seeing *the silence as well as the gridlike layering of the cinematic medium's additive condition of the soundtrack's audio edge running along the celluloid strip of the images.*"[119]

Of the three different sonic categories of film – voice, various sounds and music – it is evidently music that dominates *Video Quartet*. As elaborated earlier, narrative film has an extensive tradition of using non-diegetic music, a category every film audience is accustomed to. However, *Video Quartet* is not a remix of fragments with spectacular soundtracks added. Instead, Marclay restricted himself to music originating from the narrative proper. Diegetic music is a category in narrative film that is far more rare than non-diegetic music, with the latter often occurring throughout films. Diegetic music mostly remains limited to genres – the musical, of course – and emphatic scenes – seductions, agitated mass scenes, and festive celebrations. Such scenes thus mark a key point in the narrative, embroidered by the affective power of music. In this way, Marclay shows us that diegetic music has much the same effect on the audience as non-diegetic music: it strengthens our involvement with the narrative. Diegetic music has the power of dragging along the audience, and perhaps even more so than non-diegetic music, since the music itself is deeply embedded in the narrative, rather than an added rhetoric device (as is the case with non-diegetic music).

Most of the footage is on-screen too, since we see where the music originates: orchestra's, soloists, tap dancers among many others populate the four screens. The direct link of music making between images and sounds makes that the music is firmly embedded in the narrative: the music making is not only inferred, but we actually see the sounds being produced. *Video Quartet* offers a wonderful anthology of how film directors have used scenes full of music to create sequences that are equally virtuoso from a visual point of view. The music is not only firmly grounded in the narrative by means of images, but also by what Michel Chion calls *material sound indices*. These indices are sound effects that show that the music is not a

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[118] K. J. Donnelly, *The Spectre of Sound. Music in Film and Television*, (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2005), 1-7.

[119] Rosalind Kraus, "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition. Lip Synch: Marclay not Nauman," (*October*, 116, Spring 2006), pp. 57-58, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40368424 .

added layer of sonic perfection, but rather the earthly music produced by real people of flesh and blood in the narratives.[120] *Video Quartet* is full of these little flaws, accidental noises and the sort that keep the music fixed to our material world. For example, the work starts with the tuning of instruments. It is not a composition that starts as a perfect recording with the first note of a score, showing no imperfections. Rather it embarks on a sonic voyage, starting with the ritual of a live music performance: tuning. The music is presented as the work of flesh and blood musicians. *Video Quartet* shows the joy of music and rhythm, rather than inscribing itself in the Wagnerian tradition of music accompanying narrative as a metaphysical, atmospheric or rhetorical presence.

Despite this insistence on the diegetic status of the music in the original footage deployed by Marclay, it must be observed that this status does not remain as straightforward in the new composition. Music that is diegetic for one fragment cannot be so for the other juxtaposed fragments. For those images the music acquires an external, non-diegetic status. The distance between footage and sound is even wider than in the conventional case of non-diegetic music, since these images were never intended to be combined with these sounds. But Marclay has kept tight control of the combination of different fragments, creating playful effects of either synergy or contrast between different soundtracks, between different images and between different soundtracks and images. In this way, Marclay's *Video Quartet* creates effects that resemble those intended by Soviet film directors – such as non-synchronization and contrapuntal uses – but by means of footage complying with Hollywood synchronism. He makes ingenious constellations by means of combining sound and images beyond the original intend, sometimes creating spectacular effect. In the piano sequence one soon loses track of which thrumming belongs to which screen, while sound and image dissolve in one synesthetic experience. It is here, at the fading of the connection between sound and narrative, that the fragments of music become emancipated. As such an independent music composition emerges, in which the excerpts do not derive their meaning any more from the narratives they were featured in, but instead are experienced as the notes that constitute a musical piece in its own right. In *Video Quartet*, we are not watching a film anymore, but rather we attend a virtual concert mediated by digital video projection.

By emancipating from the original context, Marclay places the fragments in a new constellation constituting an original composition. This is reminiscent of Moholy-Nagy's ideas about deploying reproductive technologies for productive ends. In his cinematographic works Marclay only used reproductive technologies as bricks to make new compositions: moving image technology and sound reproduction. These are two of the major breakthroughs in communication technology that marked the twentieth century. Both were developed at the turn of the century. The advent of sound film signified the merging of these two reproductive technologies on a single track: image and sound were no longer separately performed or presented but were aligned in one technological apparatus. This is the beginning of audio-visual media: treating both vision and hearing, and often creating synaesthetic effects. *Video Quartet* thematizes this pair of reproductive technologies more explicitly because of its ample attention to sound and image as both independent and interdependent used media. The work is a hymn to the technological union of sound and image in one system. But Marclay not only copies, he also creates. The many little fragments of reproductive technology are assembled

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[120] Chion, *Film. A Sound Art*, 239-241.

according to a new logic, creating a musical composition. Again reproduction has been turned productive, using material that normally is destined to mass-reproduction to produce an original composition.

This new composition is also an exploration of the link between sound and image, liberated of its auxiliary role in narrative film. It is an anthology of the visual side of the sonic, showing all the many formal possibilities of visualizing sound. The camera thrusts through orchestra's, dives into trumpets and follows the fingers on the keyboard of a piano. The result sometimes is a frenetic synaesthesia, in which we feel like we are seeing sound or listening to images. *Video Quartet* makes us poignantly aware that sound and image are not separate realms, but that movements bring along sounds and that sounds have their visual counterparts. Vision and sound are no longer comprehended as separate domains, but rather as interdependent and permanently interacting parameters.

The twentieth century has seen many artists exploring the relationship of sound and image or playing with the idea of audio-visual synaesthesia. In 2005 the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles devoted an exhibition to these explorations, entitled "*Visual Music*". It concentrated on the audio-visual synaesthesia in visual images. The chronology starts with modernist painters who were inspired by the formal characteristics of music for their painterly languages, such as Wassily Kandinsky and Frantisek Kupka, marking a founding stone of abstraction.[121] Piet Mondrian too, developed a visual language in painting that is much indebted to music, sometimes with explicit references to musical notions in the titles of his works.[122] Since music is a time-based art, artists have attempted to parallel this with time-based visual media. Makers of abstract film in the first half of the twentieth century, such as Viking Eggeling and Oskar Fischinger, were often occupied with making visual music by means of different abstract shapes moving. More recently, the emergence of installation art meant the possibility of conceiving visual music as immersive installation enveloping the audience with light and colour, referring to the ambient qualities of music.[123] The interaction of sound and image in modern art is much more complex, as the exhibition "*Sons & Lumières. Une Histoire du son dans l'art du XXe siècle*" (2004) at the Centre Pompidou in Paris attests, devoting attention to painters, performers, musicians, makers of structural film and so on, with of course Marcel Duchamp and John Cage among them. This exhibition covered a broader field of interaction between sound image, including sound art and experimental music that is linked to the visual arts.[124]

What is remarkable about much of the visual experiments evoking or paralleling sound and music is that they are predominantly abstract. Of course, music is commonly perceived as an abstract art, since neither duration nor pitch are tactile and music seems to be thinner than the air. Consequently, there is a widespread conviction that visual music must also be an abstract art, consisting of coloured shapes and light effects without relation to the material world. The

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[121] Jeremy Strick, "Visual Music," in *Visual Music. Synaesthesia in Art and Music since 1900*, (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005), 16.
[122] Peter Vergo, *The Music of Painting. Music, Modernism and the Visual Arts from the Romantics to John Cage*, (London: Phaidon, 2010), 314-317.
[123] Strick, "Visual Music," 19.
[124] Sophie Dulpaix and Marcella Lista, *Sons & Lumières. Une histoire du son dans l'art du XXe siècle*, (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 2004).

more the formal vocabulary evokes the free-floating impression of music, the more apt it seemed. However, the visualization of music in *Video Quartet* is emphatically not abstract. All the footage deployed is immediately recognizable as figurative in nature. It is shot in the material world surrounding us and is read as such. What Marclay shows us in this quadriptych of screens is the irrefutable physical nature of music. It might sound as originating from the heavens or mystical abysses, but in reality its provenance is the material world surrounding us. In *Video Quartet*, music is physical, using manmade material objects, which have been conceived to produce sounds. As we listen to the amalgam of tunes, we see men and women striking their violins, blowing their trumpets, strumming guitars and using their voices. We are not confronted with an abstract visual rendering of how music sounds when we close our eyes and imagine vague shapes. Instead it shows us how music really looks like: when we make it, when we experience it, when we dance on it. There is one sequence that comes close to visual abstraction, but only as far as we let it. In the piano passage the hypnotizing sounds of virtuoso piano play are combined with views of the soloist behind his keyboard. Framing the play of the fingers on the keyboard in aligned screens, punning on the similarities between the different fragments, the combination of screens almost acquires an abstract character. But this is willing suspension of disbelief, since the images never oblige us to be read as abstract.

The visual dimension of *Video Quartet* is made up of musicians, instruments, music scores, dance performances, orchestra's and so on. Every material aspect of music constitutes a motif in the composition at some point. But in some cases it is tempting to grant some more meaning to these motifs. These associations are often supported by the cultural significance these motifs have in the wider history of art. Music was a theme in art long before modernists started to explore the interstices of image and music. The popularity of the theme can be ascribed in part to the philosophical connotations of music, in part to music's enjoyable qualities. The mathematical relations of music's tonal system were compared to the balanced proportions that governed the universe. Thereby, music was a symbol of the harmony in god's creation.[125] Furthermore, music has always been a principal part of human leisure, while also being present at every important occasion to grant significance and enjoyment. Musical performances do not last like paintings do, but paintings often witness of the importance music held in the past.

Violins and other stringed instruments often play principal roles in a painting's iconography, since strings a the most conventional symbol of the universe's harmony. Girls in the paintings by Vermeer exercise their play, and in the meantime exercise in virtuousness. In Caravaggio's paintings lutes can be both associated with religious symbolism and convivial atmosphere.[126] Watteau is the master of creating convivial tableaus, not infrequently by grace of musician's presence.[127] Whereas with old masters the emphasis was still on the symbolic meaning derived from musical instruments used as motif, in the nineteenth century artists enjoyed portraying musical performances for their own sake. Edgar Degas is impressionism's master in depicting music and dance performances in the heart of French society. Lustrous evening

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[125] Ibidem, 63.
[126] *Caravaggio*, curated by Rossella Vodret and Francesco Buranelli, (Rome: Scuderie del Quirinale, 20 February 2010 – 13 June 2010).
[127] *Antoine Watteau (1684-1721). The Music Lesson*, curated by William Christie, (Brussels: Bozar, 8 February 2013 – 12 May 2013).

ceremonies, attended by the Parisian bourgeois, are depicted in tableaus that convey the festive atmosphere, the human enjoyment of music and the surrounding social games. In modernism, musical instruments remained a stock motif. Formal systems were deconstructed, but still-lifes bore instruments, and little boys can be found behind their pianos. The guitar was one of the principal motifs of cubism, and Picasso would hold on to it throughout his development. In post-war avant-gardes the playful iconoclasm of Fluxus, and the more brute destruction of instruments by Arman pay homage to music too.

Much of this iconographic tradition is implicitly present in *Video Quartet*, intentionally or unintentionally. Of course, Marclay did not try to constitute a post-modern anthology of the meanings of music in art history. Rather, the imagery of *Video Quartet* shows how persistent certain motifs are in visual culture, endowed with centuries-old cultural associations. Children and adolescents are still schooled in the art of music and playing instruments. Associations with the virtue of making music might not be as emphatic anymore, although they still resist, but ideas about self-perfection are undeniably present in the resoluteness of the players with regard to their instruments. The little joys of listening to music in a small company, the convivial atmosphere and the soothing power of playing music are all present in the different moods of the selected fragments. The baroque display of opera and grand orchestras still testifies to the social importance that is granted to music in high society. All the different associations and meanings granted to instruments, musicians and vocalists, pass the screen either emotionally or symbolically, either imposed by the mood of the scene or read by the spectator's sensibilities.

Video Quartet is an ode to music, but is at the same time full of playful iconoclasm. The same motif of the violin, that in many scenes stood for harmony and human accomplishment is smashed to pieces or stamped upon in other scenes; Marclay seems to cite Arman almost literally. This iconoclasm manifests itself not only visually, but on all levels of the composition. A grand orchestra sets in a monumental symphony, directed by the same macho conductor that populated Marclay's record cover collages. But before the melody can develop, Marclay has irreverently muted the symphony by letting more lowbrow tunes take over. The confidence of the nineteenth century classical tradition is ironically deserted in favour of a more relaxed and diversified view of music. *Video Quartet* is an anthology of the significance of music to mankind; but luckily for us, Marclay never takes things too serious.

5.4 The Clock

Clocks are of course Christian Marclay's principal motif in *The Clock*. In this 24-hour lasting composition, they appear abundantly in every variation and give a clear illustration of the employment of clocks in narrative film. They play a principal role in providing the necessary orientation and structure to understand the narrative. The intra-diegetic time indication with clocks embedded as internal elements of the closed-off fictional world are repeated in such endless sequences that we are under the impression that films are more occupied with communicating time than story (cf. supra). We see how clocks are continually framed in close-ups – leaving no doubt about the shot's intention – in oblique camera-angles – barely explicable by any other explanation than integrating a time-piece in view.

Somewhere in the endless succession of clocks we become aware of how these framed clocks are contrived devices employed by the narrative authority. We see how these intra-diegetic elements contribute to the hiding away of narrative film's true nature as diegesis – storytelling – and not mimesis – pure showing. The fictional world as an autonomous reality on which we are granted a glimpse from the outside becomes questioned. Instead we become profoundly aware of the fictional account as mediated by an intermediate position: the narrative authority. Through his emphatic insistence on the motif of clocks in narrative film, Marclay reveals how this mediating position is hidden away in name of the illusionistic continuity of mimetic perception. We see how the view of the camera – disguised as an evident view on a separate pre-existent reality – really is a very contrived means of transmitting narrative information. The view of the camera acts very much like a proscenium arch or picture frame in its disguise as a window on a separate world. Through Marclays insistence on these framing devices as artificial means, he unmasks diegesis disguised as mimesis. Even more than *Telephones* or *Video Quartet*, *The Clock* succeeds in exposing the system behind narration, revealing it as an artificial apparatus working with unnoticed conventions.

Marclay's exploration of time in narrative film goes further, and the composition's rearrangement is more radical than showing the abundance of clocks as hidden time indications. The motif of the clock needs not only to be discussed in isolation; instead in *The Clock*, time is taken as a larger framework that underlies the fictional entity as a founding structure. As in all Marclay's cinematographic works the new composition is a reconfiguration of narrative material: here temporal structures are re-arranged according to his own principles. In order to analyse this, a closer look to the conventional syntax of time in narrative film is necessary. As narrative film is a time-based art, the conception of time is of great importance to every film's structure. Three main concepts are essential to analyse the temporal composition, again derived from literary studies: order, duration and frequency.

To talk about order, one must first distinguish between two orders: that of the recounted events (fabula) and that of the recounting (syuzhet). We can only reconstruct the fabula through the mediation of the syuzhet. The order of the fabula is chronological (the succession of events through time), but the syuzhet does not have to be. It is possible to shuffle the events of the fabula in the syuzhet, as is the case in the flashback and the flash-forward. In the flashback we see events that took place earlier only at a later point in the recounting; with a flash-forward – more rare – we witness events that have not yet taken place. Temporal frequency indicates the number of times one event of the fabula is either recounted or enacted in the syuzhet. This can be never (as happens in the case of redundant information), once (the most conventional mode) or more times (usually only the case with events central to the narrative). The last category, duration, indicates the relation between duration in fabula and duration in syuzhet and is expressed in equivalence (both durations correspond), reduction (the duration of the fabula is abbreviated in the syuzhet), and expansion (the fabula duration is stretched to take more time in the syuzhet). Reduction commonly happens by means of the ellipsis of redundant events; expansion can be realised by the insertion of 'padding' or by dilation with slow motion.[128]

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[128] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, (Madison: University of Wiscosin Press), 79-84.

These concepts make up a very apt schema for the analysis of time structures in narrative film; however, when one tries to apply it to *The Clock*, one is confronted with a series of deviations. As explained earlier Christian Marclay imposed the idiosyncratic principle of 24 hours clock time on this composition. Since we only have access to isolated fragments, our comparison is not between fabula and syuzhet, but between the temporality of the original footage and that of the footage's insertion in *The Clock*. Marclay's intervention is most simple with regard to frequency: a single instance can occur only once in a 24h cycle, and consequently can be used only once in the composition of *The Clock*. There is a faint possibility of using the indication of a mechanical clock twice in the case am or pm cannot be discerned from the fragment. However, this seems highly unlikely since this would severely undermine the rigidity of the concept, which is essential to the work's poignancy. Most footage contains enough information to discern easily in which half of the day it needs to be situated. We can resume that the correspondence of frequency between original footage and *The Clock* is one to one (1:1).

> *"It's condensed in the actual film. I put all of that back into real time."*
> Christian Marclay[129]

When it comes to duration, he intervenes more radically. Narrative film normally uses equivalence (or the impression of equivalence) within a scene, and reduction on the scale of the whole film. Events over a long duration in the fabula are recounted in less than two hours in the syuzhet: ninety minutes is a standard duration for narrative film. All the time between events is elated by means of ellipsis, destroying the time continuum of the fabula. But since fragments in *The Clock* always have to be screened at exactly the right time (in fictional terms), the redundant time in between significant events cannot be eliminated. Two fragments out of one film with time indications within a period of twenty-four hours will be separated by exactly as much time as the duration of the fabula dictates, despite their rapid succession in the syuzhet of the original footage. Narrative duration has been converted into real-time. In a narrative sequence that is contained within twenty-four hours, one can observe how frequently the motif of a clock is used as an intra-diegetic indication of ellipsis. Scene A is introduced by a clock indicating 3pm and the next scene presents us with the same clock indicating 6pm: we are subtly informed that three hours have passed. In *The Clock* we are frequently confronted with the re-emergence of a previous clock after a whole sequence of clocks from a different origin. This moment of recognition gives a pleasant and playful aspect to our viewing experience – Aha, two hours have past since the previous scene! – as well as a kind of realism. By converting the conventional narrative time – with more ellipses than equivalence – into real-time, we become strangely aware of the real duration of the time in between significant moments. Of course this creation of real-time can only be realised by means of the insertion of considerable amounts of external materials. We are confronted with hours of disconnected footage before the next scene can take place. The conversion of durational reduction into real-time duration fits logically into Marclay's rigid structure in the case of 24 hour fabula duration, but becomes strange to the degree of absurdity in a longer fabula duration: the intermediate time in *The Clock* is completely disproportional and since chronology and position in a day's time do not necessarily have the same order, we might see

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[129] Zalewski, "The Hours," n.p.

things arbitrarily shuffled. It is difficult to assess to what extent Marclay elaborated this possibility, but it would endow the rigid logic with a counteracting absurdity.

Without a broad knowledge of film history and a thorough scrutiny of *The Clock*, aimed at that purpose, the analysis of order must necessarily remain in the field of conjecture. Order was touched upon above, mentioning the destabilizing effect Marclay's interference could have to the narrative order if fragments are ordered solely to the time of day, instead of their position in a larger chronology. But in order as much as in duration, if we remain within twenty-four hours, the effect is completely logical. The same principle that put syuzhet fragments in fabula duration would now take fragments of flashback footage and place it back in fabula order. If by the end of a day, a film takes us back to a moment earlier that day, to fill in gaps of causality and complete the narration, we notice that *The Clock* shows the events in their original chronology. The shuffled structure of the narrative is placed back in chronological order.

Most arresting is the inherent paradox inside Marclay's restructuring principle, because it is completely dependent of the twenty-four hour limit. *The Clock* takes exactly one day before it starts repeating itself, without a fixed point of departure or ending. The starting point of the video at 1am is a practical device, not a significant transition. But twenty-four hours is not only the exact duration, it is also the breaking point between firm logic and the arbitrary. As soon as fabula events are added, whose duration exceeds twenty-four hours, saturation occurs. The formal limit is also the intrinsic limit: *The Clock* can only contain twenty-four hours, beyond that time relationships decay into randomness. But as long as this limit is not exceeded, the events are restructured according to an astounding rigidity. Once again, logic and the absurd go hand in hand: *The Clock* is a work that embraces both strands of artistic creation, and demonstrates how vague the limits between them are.

At the beginning of this chapter when introducing narration, editing was denounced the foundation of its syntax. The editing and the cut were considered to be the basic grammar rule to create narrative meaning, by articulating the significant passages, eliminating the redundant and reordering the events to create a more striking order. To intervene in the continuities of the fabula, even to break them, was thought essential to realise interesting narrative film.

In *The Clock* the editing and the cut clearly play a primordial role in the execution as well. In *Telephones* montage was used to create a composition that transformed crosscutting into a hallucinatory ride, which completely deserted unity of time and space. *Video Quartet* used montage to create a musical composition following the same principles of music sampling. In the case of *The Clock*, however, editing is not applied to break the continuities, but instead to restore them. Of course, only a 24 hour temporal continuity is reinstated, spatial continuity remains in the field of heterotopia. For a century the paradigm existed that footage must be breached and reshuffled to create meaningful discontinuity instead of redundant continuity. With *The Clock*, Christian Marclay radically goes into the opposite direction, using the same means of the creators of discontinuity to recreate temporal continuity within twenty-four hours. But the continuity of his making has very little in common with the continuity of pre-editing film, of the actuality. Not only on a spatial level we are left without orientation – shifting between disconnected footage - but also on the level of what we see, the content of

the footage. Causality may not be as present in the actuality as it was in edited cinema, but at least it often had a main action that endured. In *The Clock*, all logic concerning content is omitted. The different actions and characters have absolutely no connection. Time is left isolated as the only protagonist and theme, separated from its original connection with a narrative framework; causality has become contingency.

The result of this isolation is constructive rather than deconstructive in nature, despite one's first associations with fragmentation. Because this footage, which can foremostly be identified as time fragments, is exempted from its subordination to narrative, it gains a new autonomy: emancipated time. Time, as it passes and is experienced, becomes the only object of our observation. We no longer see it in terms of a narrative framework, but start appreciating it for its own sake. Thanks to this autonomy, new experiences concerning time are now within our reach.

The artist Malcolm Le Grice formulates it as follows: *"Disruption of narrative continuity makes new and latent meanings available to the spectator."*[130] In his artistic liberation of mediated time from its narrative subordination, Le Grice might be called a precursor to Christian Marclay. In his writings he explicitly formulates some of the aspects, which to my opinion are implicitly present in *The Clock*. He goes looking for alternative time structures, which can stand independent from narrative and propose new ways of connecting with the spectator. It is this potential of mediated time experience that will be discussed more thoroughly with regard to *The Clock*.

Most conspicuously, time is conceived as an objective given. This conception is deeply embedded in *The Clock* and almost seems self-evident, but one must note that the pragmatic thinking of time as a precisely measured subdivision of units, as we are now accustomed to, is a comparatively recent phenomenon. A relevant evolution is the changed thinking on working, evolving from the late Middle Ages to industrialization. Work becomes less calculated in terms of completed products and more in terms of the duration of labour.[131] This asks for increasingly precise time measurement, which results in an elaborate system of subdivisions to calculate labour. Taylorism is the zenith of this thinking, with its obsessive connection between labour and time calculation.[132] According to E. P. Thomson the emergence of the pocket watch illustrates the calculative handling of time in modernity.[133]

A second evolution is the increased temporal correspondence between spatially dispersed zones, in what before was a patchwork of different local 'time zones'. The developments in communication and transportation technology – the telegraph and railways – partially eliminated the impact of distance. This resulted in the need for corresponding time measurements between places connected by these technologies, so they could adjust their activities to one another. In the course of the nineteenth century railroad time more and more came to replace communal clock towers as standard authority. As railroad networks

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[130] Malcolm Le Crice, "Time and the Spectator in the Experience of Expanded Cinema," in *Expanded Cinema* edited by David Curtis, A. L. Rees, e.a. (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 160-170.
[131] Gerhar Dohrn-van Rossum, *History of the Hour. Clocks and Modern Temporal Orders*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 291.
[132] Duane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 5.
[133] Ibidem, 7.

expanded, so did the scale of the corresponding time zones: from local to regional and finally to a national reach in all industrialized countries.[134] In a 1884 conference in Washington, the world was finally theoretically divided in time zones, based on Greenwich as zero meridian.[135]

The 1970s saw the emergence of the digital clock. Digital time works within the same temporal framework as before, but Hannelore Paflik-Huber argues that the circularity of the analogue clock is replaced by linearity with digital time.[136] Around the same time globalization caused the worldwide dispersion of western time.[137] Standard time acquires an omnipresent validity and efficiency, which is based on the 1884 division of the world into time zones.

The relevance of these developments for *The Clock* is evident. Since video is a time-based art, time divisions make up a prominent part of the medium's composition principles. In *The Clock* the temporal composition is rigid. It takes on the precision of a modern clock. It is divided in twenty-four hours, which are subsequently subdivided in sixty minutes. The representation of every hour lasts for exactly one hour, the representation of every minute lasts for exactly one minute. From time to time even seconds are indicated, of course properly positioned within a minute. Not only the subdivision is so rigid, the timing is also meticulously calculated. The endless unreeling of clocks can only commence at the right moment dictated by the time zone *The Clock* is presented in. Although this may seem evident at first impression, it is by no means so. Not only is this concept unprecedented in art history, it is also a witness to a silent revolution that has taken place in our society. The ordering of time according to a rigid system of time measurement that is universally accepted – corresponds to a time-zone and being easily convertible for the rest of the world – is now taken for granted in our daily lives. This, however, is only a system that has taken mature shape fairly recently.

When watching *The Clock* one is confronted for many hours with a video composed solely according to the laws of modernity's time. Awareness emerges of the degree of influence this rigid time system has on our lives. *The Clock* is a indication of how time in modernity imposes itself and dictates our lives. One also comes closer to this system than ever before, to an almost palpable degree and one becomes profoundly aware of the exact duration of all the units of time society is accustomed to. We watch second after second, minute after minute, hour after hour. While we do so, the main object of our attention is the passing of these hours. Through the passing of time in *The Clock* time measurement is experienced not as a tool but in its absoluteness. *The Clock* is deeply embedded in the scientific and calculated nature of time in our contemporary society. The power of modernity's time is exemplified in the loyal obedience of *The Clock* to its model: western time division.

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[134] Dohrn-van Rossum, *History of the Hour*, 323-325 and 344-350.
[135] Duane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time*, 5.
[136] Paflik-Huber, Hannelore, *Kunst und Zeit: Zeitmodelle in der Gegenwartkunst* (München: Scaneg Verlag, 1997), 26.
[137] Agacinski, Sylviane, "The Western Hour." In *Time Zones*, edited by Jessica Morgan and Gregor Muir (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), 58.

This may give the impression that watching the work is only about experiencing time's exactitude, which would be a gross simplification of its potential. *The Clock* is as much about experiencing subjective time – about feeling dominating measure – as it is about calculated time – measure dominating over feeling. Subjective time is a powerful opposition to objective time in Marclay's work. Within the rigid framework, a whole range of subjective time experiences are contained, which bring us back in touch with the human side to time. Aspects of subjective time are formally deeply connected with narrative film, but here we experience them emancipated from their narrative context as to perceive their independent qualities.

One of those elements is suspense, an important aspect of filmmaking because of its contribution to excitement. The functioning of suspense is deeply connected to time. The high reputation suspense holds in film studies is partly due to Alfred Hitchcock's frequent reliance on it, which yielded him the title of *master of suspense*. Hitchcock defines suspense in opposition to surprise. In the case of suspense the audience is given more knowledge than the character and this awareness generates tension, e.g. the presence of a bomb under a table. In the case of surprise neither audience nor characters is aware of the bomb, we experience a surprise effect at the moment of the explosion. Suspense generates more tension because we experience time melting away before the explosion.[138]

In *The Clock* aspects of suspense are certainly maintained; but they are separated from their purpose in the film's causality. Marclay shows only the signs of suspense, not its reason. We see a clock ticking emphatically, nerve-racking; a character says "*we have only fifteen minutes left*" or "*ten more seconds*". We feel the tension, but are not allowed knowledge of its cause. Suspense is witnessed *in abstracto*. Causality has been omitted, which allows us the formal experience of suspense autonomously: *suspense in se*.

Another element, which can manipulate the time experience of film is pace, regulated by shot length. Our subjective assessment of the time passing is determined by different factors, and the frequency of shot changes is important in this regard. Michael Tarantino writes:

> "*When Hitchcock talks about the viewer's sensation of time passing being conditioned by memory, i.e. the shock of experiencing speed (usually conditioned by montage) or the pleasure of experiencing slowness (the long take, the moving camera), he is really talking about a kind of anticipation. We expect a rhythm based on what we have seen.*"

Tarantino opposes on the one hand the impression of speed that is established by a high degree of editing, with rapid transitions from one shot to the other, and on the other hand the impression of slowness which is realised by means of a long shot. The importance of the long or the short take in narrative film is transmitted into *The Clock*. What in fiction is employed as a means to obtain a result is again used by Marclay for its own sake. As one of Marclay's essential tools, editing plays the key role once again; this time to realise tempo. Throughout *The Clock* different rhythms are established. At one moment clocks succeed each other at a dazzling tempo, accompanied by nervous ticking or a rushing soundtrack pushing us forward. A few minutes later the same ticking of a clock works excruciatingly slow on us, in a

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[138] Smith, Susan, *Hitchcock. Suspense, humour and tone* (London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2000), 16-17.

fragment where the waiting of people never seems to end, with a clock as a silent witness of the slow passing of time. Sometimes fast and slow editing are so abruptly juxtaposed that the contrast in atmosphere that emanates from both techniques is intensely arresting. Pace for the sake of pace.

In *The Clock* rhythm is not only determined by shot length, other mechanisms are in operation too. Throughout the work there are rhythms of anticipation, culmination and then release, which work on different scales and with different degrees of impact. On the smallest scale it is to be found from minute to minute, although not elaborated with the same poignancy every time. As the seconds pass we start to anticipate the transition from one minute to the next. Fragment after fragment is unreeling, indicating the same minute. With analogue clocks, we can predict precisely when the transition will come by tracing the passing seconds. In the case of digital clocks the arrival of a new minute always comes by surprise, because the last minute never feels exactly as long as the one before. Afterwards the next minute quietly advances. Evidently, the impact of this process is fairly limited: anticipation is rather short and the transition for one minute to the other is mostly without consequence.

The succession of anticipation, culmination and release is of more effect on the next level: from hour to hour. Now anticipation has more time to develop and grow. It starts calmly in the first half of the hour, then steadily grows and by the last quarter of the hour takes on a dominant part of our observation. The culminating moment is more poignant too. Visually it is more striking: the hour pointer indicates the hour, while the minute pointer strikes twelve. Digital clocks have the double zero instead of an arbitrary number. In narratives the hour is evidently of more consequence too, which is often still traceable in *The Clock*, both in the anticipation – "*five more minutes before the clock strikes nine*" – as at the culmination – "*it's ten o'clock sharp!*" The next level is the most arresting: midnight is the most exciting point in *The Clock*. The audience anticipates it long ahead and its role in narrative is often important: this naturally results in a powerful building up of anticipation, which culminates in cinematic fireworks at midnight. Orson Welles is thrown of a clock-tower, the Big Ben explodes, succeeded by a thrusting succession of clocks striking midnight, a man being killed on a sword and a woman coming out of a clock.

Apart from aspects here described under the artificial opposition between objective and subjective time experience, *The Clock* also opens up to a vast array of alternative time experiences and conceptions, which can only be briefly discussed.

The impression of experiencing the present is most notable. A certain immediacy and directness is a primary characteristic of the moving image, regardless of its documentary or fictional nature. This immediacy combined with one of the central principles of *The Clock* - perpetual indication of the correct time – gives the spectator the impression of a deep connection with the present. This impression is both justified and misleading: justified in that the footage might heighten the spectator's feeling of the present moment, and misleading in that the footage through which this present is mediated necessarily belongs to the past. This impression of experiencing the present disconnected from a larger time continuum, cyclical or

linear, can be connected to what Manuel Castells has labelled *timeless time*.[139] Castells argues that in the contemporary era the experience has predominantly become one of the now. Because of fast telecommunication technology and the increasing organisation of society in networking structures the present has become emphatic tense, with past and future losing much of their importance. This cultural experience of living the now is a part of *The Clock*, in which we are constantly observing the time: we see how late it is exactly now. Two minutes ago has become irrelevant, two minutes later is not yet important: we are only living through the current minute, sometimes even second, and this time after time.

Another aspect, which also ensues from the experience of watching time advancing, is one of the most classic themes connected to time: transience. Transience of course has a very long iconographic tradition in art history in the form of the *vanitas* theme. Skulls, candles, fruit and flowers populate still lives, signifying the relentless progression of time. But one can equally evoke the same effect, not by showing the perishing effect of time, but time itself. When watching *The Clock* the unreeling of frames becomes palpable, because our observation is constantly redirected to the passing of time. Gradually one becomes aware that there is a temporal paradox present in this work. *The Clock* consists of a loop, which means that the work can continue forever. The unreeling of frames will repeat itself in exactly the same manner the next day. But the footage is not the same as the moments it accompanies: those moments are gone forever, they have been shot years ago and undeniably belong to the past. We watch the time, concentrate on seconds, minutes and hours passing, knowing that those moments will not be repeated and can only escape us. In this regard Marclay's *The Clock* acquires the function of the *vanitas* piece, acting as a reminder of the passing of time and the transient nature of life. Every time we experience the present, we know that it will be irrevocably the past the next second. Time never stops, and in *The Clock* we continually see it slip away.

"The burning cigarette is the twentieth-century symbol of time. As a memento mori, we used to show a candle, but a cigarette is so much more modern. Yet it's the same thing – you see time burning."
Christian Marclay[140]

There is another reason why the vanitas theme is paradoxical in The Clock. Throughout the accumulation of film fragments, we are constantly confronted with Hollywood stars, most often in their prime years. A lot of those actors have died, most of them has aged considerably since the shooting of the footage. But on the screen they still appear as fresh as they were then. Film critic David Thomson put it this way: *"One of the great gifts for movie stardom (denied to stage actors) is that the moment in time can go on forever, or for as long as film stock or digital lasts. Bogart has been dead 55 year, but he's still there on our screens in Casablanca looking as good as Rick."*[141] On the screen youth remains, while their real bodies age. The impression of everlasting youth contrasts harshly with the simultaneous

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[139] Manuel Castells, "Materials for an exploratory theory of the network society," *British Journal of Sociology*, 51, 2000, 13-14.
[140] Zalewski, "The Hours," n.p.
[141] David Thomson, "How old Cary Grant?" *Financial Times*, January 11, 2013.

consciousness of ever-progressing time in *The Clock*. Time is never unequivocal, and certainly not so in human experience, and *The Clock* succeeds in showing some sides of the many-faced nature of time.

6. Marclay's Cinematographic Language

Until now the different cinematographic works were mostly discussed in their individuality: their progression, their relation to the language of cinema and their themes. However, since these works are treated here as one body of work, it is necessary to elaborate on what constitutes their common ground. Of course, one can easily observe that all the discussed works have been made with found footage extracted from narrative film. It would be a simplification to state that this is the only unifying factor holding these works together. The technique by which these collages are made is fairly constant, as is the resulting aesthetic effect. The cinematographic works clearly characterize themselves as a distinct typology within Marclay's oeuvre. The traits of this typology will be discussed here.

Christian Marclay bases new structures on old material. The old material are fragments of narrative film, extracted without consideration for their original context. The fragments are taken isolated, without information about their provenance or clues about the original narrative. The extracts are the bricks for a new moving image composition, that has very little to do with the original narrative, except for one aspect: the motif that has been selected for the new composition, and that is present in every single extracted fragment. Based on this motif, a new structure is conceived that directs the sequence of images. In the case of *Telephones*, the new governing structure is a telephone conversation: all footage holds some instance of a phone call. In the case of *Video Quartet* it is a musical piece, and the selection criteria are wider: they contain either an instance of music making or particular sound effects, such as screams and explosions. The leading structure of *The Clock* is time, and all fragments are required to contain a concrete time indication that enables the fragment to be situated in hours and minutes. The conceived structures take the lead over the original narratives that were communicated through the deployed excerpts.

To successfully realise these new compositions based on motif, Marclay needs a considerable amount of film fragments. The resulting accumulation ranges over almost a century of cinema material. Consequently, the selected fragments show very little coherence technically and stylistically. The resulting effect, however, is not one of a discontinuous fragmentation. On the contrary, watching a cinematographic work by Christian Marclay feels comfortable, despite the lack of narrative that binds the many different shots together. The fragmentary footage of these works actually offers a far more captivating viewing experience than many other moving image works that do not have such a diversity of footage. This is largely due to the dexterity with which Marclay mends his suites of excerpts together, creating an almost natural flow. To join different shots together in a succession that feels comfortable for the audience, rather than confusing or distressing, Marclay developed his own continuity editing. This 'system' is not based on smoothing out the fragmentary montage for the purposes of narrative, but rather straighten out the diversity of footage in a sequence based on the one motif in many different manifestations.

This Marclean continuity editing happens both on the visual and the sonic level. Of course, many fragments are already linked to each another because of their place in a new sequence: for example fragments of people picking up phones. However, on the level of one to one

succession of fragments Marclay tries to add different effects of kinship. In *Telephones*, dialogues are fit in to match, although they clearly have nothing to do with one another. In *Video Quartet* these effects are not only used in succession, but of course also in juxtaposition, creating effects of affinity over the four different screens, despite the heterogeneous provenance of the footage.

Noam M. Elcott uses the term *visual analogy* to describe these effects in *Screen Play*, in which succession is based on a visual affinity between imagery rather than a causal link. But one can easily extend the use of *visual analogy* over the different cinematographic works, since they all display these effects and make the succession of fragments into a continuous flow. The intention to mend all the different pieces together in continuity is equally present on a sonic level. As discussed earlier, over the different works Marclay gives evidence of increasing sophistication in the treatment of sound. Whereas in the seminal work *Telephones* sound is still mostly restricted to the original footage, in the later works he starts melting the images together by means of sound. Marclay fully grasped the potential of sound in montage for building bridges and making shot transitions as soft as possible.

In the cinematographic works sound and image are two layers of the same work. Both aspects receive attention, and have independent effects to offer to the viewer. At many occasions, these effects interact or play along with one another, as in the constant synaesthesia in *Video Quartet*. The combined play is a defining factor of the works, keeping them exciting despite the fact that rarely interesting action is going on. Both sound and image are integrated in the logic of montage with continuous flow. The spectator's experience when watching cinematographic works is endowed to the immersive system of fiction film.

Ensuing from the structures, governing the cinematic works, these compositions often imply serious thematic considerations and conceptual thoughts. Human communication, the harmony of music, the mathematical time of industrialisation, vanitas… are all themes that are difficult to ignore after long perusal of the works. Most of all does the strict framework of *The Clock* provoke manifold conceptual implications with the work's rigid temporality. But as much as these works offer food for thought, they also deliver an enjoyable watching experience. Of course *Video Quartet* offers a good example of this entertaining quality of the cinematographic works, since its major theme - music – is in itself a form of entertainment. Consequently, the resulting composition offers a very enjoyable experience that is based more on feeling than thinking. The ease of the spectator's experience is furthermore due to the continuous flow of the montage and the pleasant pace of the works. This continuity is completed with the many small entertaining effects, humorous puns and playful references for film connoisseurs that are assimilated into the works. In *Video Quartet*'s vocal passage we see and hear Janet Leigh scream in the famous shower scene. Somewhere towards the end of the composition, in the passage with a prevalence of falling objects, we see the shower curtain from *Psycho* being torn down. These fragments are without explicit connection in *Video Quartet*, but a film buff immediately links both together.

Another important distinguishing feature of the cinematographic works is the unexpected merging of logic and absurdity. This is due both to the friction between the logic of western narrative and the refusal of causality in the aesthetic of collage on the one hand; and also

because of the contrast between the succession of disconnected fragments and the rigid logic of structures imposed on Marclay's cinematographic works on the other hand. The narrative tradition and the western preference for logical thinking go hand in hand throughout history, and Marclay uses the formal system of montage to deconstruct this logic into an accumulation of fragments out of joint, making it impossible to draw any well-founded causal relationship between two succeeding fragments. Here the spectator needs to surrender to the experience of constant switches and the montage of the disconnected.

The contrast between arbitrary succession and strict conception perhaps creates the most powerful effect of logic and absurdity. In *Telephones* we watch a telephone conversation enacted in all its logical steps, a familiar action from beginning to end. The film material constantly switches between geographic location, but crosscutting was developed by the cinematic apparatus to integrate these spatial jumps logically, based on simultaneity and causality (through the technological connection of the telephone). But in *Telephones* we only deal with apparent crosscutting: in reality we are on a spatial and temporal rollercoaster that ignores simultaneity and jumps between locations that are utterly disconnected. *Video Quartet* presents a musical piece to the spectator, based on the chaotic accumulation of many different musical performances in cinema. Here we have the fragmentation of unrelated musical excerpts, but at the same time we have a new composition that arises, resting on surprise and unfamiliar combinations. In the case of *The Clock* a saturation-effect occurs at the limit of 24 hours: all effects that occur within the time span of one day can be integrated in the composition with perfect logic. However, as soon as these effects transgress this limit – as they do constantly, as the material is found through the history of film – all logic is deserted, and only the arbitrary and the absurd remain.

6.1 Musical Compositions

As an immediately popular work, the release of *The Clock* was accompanied by many newspaper reviews, all applauding the wonderful effect created by the virtuoso treatment of cinematic footage and the delightful real-time effects. One review, however, stood out due to its originality in approaching *The Clock*: Ben Ratliff's "*The Musical Rhythms in Images Out of Time*."[142] Evidently, in the case of *Video Quartet* one can contemplate the composition in musical terms without much difficulty. In many ways this video-work is a musical composition in its own right. But as Ratliff's article asserts, one can also use categories of musical analysis for the wider cinematographic oeuvre by Marclay. He rightly points to the connection between this compiled oeuvre based on narrative film and his activities as a turntablist:

> "*Time is a kind of music, music is a kind of time, an Mr. Marclay – who's worked with music for much of his career, as a turntablist, conceptual artist and filmmaker – seems to understand this implicitly.*"[143]

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[142] Ben Ratiff, "The Musical Rhythms in Images Out of Time," *New York Times*, February 16, 2011.
[143] Ibidem.

The analogy between music and time is crucial here. In the words of David Toop: "*Music is a function of time.*"[144] Music is an art form that exists by the grace of its extendedness through time. When music acquires this extendedness through time, analogies with musical composition become possible. This is true for most moving image art works. In the case of the cinematographic works these analogies are especially relevant because of Marclay's delicate treatment of sound and his use of rhythm in the succession of fragments. The cinematographic works are easily described in terms of 'passages', because the artist strives for variation in the course of the works duration. This variation does not only take place on the semiotic level what we see: different hours of the day, different parts of an action…; but also on a stylistic level: different rhythms are created through the sequencing of fragments.

The seminal work *Telephones* is the most difficult work to describe in abstract musical terms. Here narrative is still very influential in the works composition, since we have the development of an action from beginning to ending; whereas in the case of *Video Quartet* and *The Clock* one particular action is impossible to discern. However, some of the more abstracting tendencies of the cinematographic works, inclining more in the direction of music, are already present. *Telephones* starts at a slow pace, and gradually accelerates through the dialling of numbers throughout the fragments. This crescendo passage changes into a scherzo as soon as the first telephone starts ringing. The verbal sequence fluctuates rhythmically and after an energetic movement of receivers being placed back the composition finishes in mineur. Acceleration and deceleration establish themselves here as important parameters for the cinematographic style, easily translated into musical term as equivalents of crescendo and decrescendo.

Video Quartet, of course, *is* a musical composition, both in image and sound. It is not only a compilation of fragments of narrative film, but also a sampling of little fragments of soundtrack. Thereby it is as much a music-remix as it is a found footage artwork: one does barely need to abstract the work to enjoy it as a musical experience. One can describe *Video Quartet* as a found footage polyphony, in which Marclay mixes together different tunes found on the silver screen. The composition develops like a symphony in movements, all having their own identity and different musical character but smoothly arranged in a larger ensemble. Stylistic effects are borrowed from music, such as the canon created by placing one fragment at different screens with every time little delay (image 16). After watching *Video Quartet* multiple times, it becomes much like a piece of music one knows very well. You can hum the current tune and instantly feel what sound effects will follow next. The piece explores different registers, a variety of musical genres and a range of moods; treated in a series of sequences all interesting in their own right, blurring the lines between film and music in this installation.

Ben Ratliff touched upon the important link between time and music, and this connection is of primordial importance when trying to read *The Clock* as a musical composition. *The Clock* develops through time just like music. Of course, clocks are as much a function of time as music. Much of the temporal effects explored by Marclay have musical qualities. Quietus and agitation are two effects, which are attained by his treatment of rhythm. *The Clock* is a

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[144] David Toop, "The Art of Noise," last consulted on August 21, 2012, http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/art-noise .

masterpiece of acceleration and deceleration, as elaborated in the discussion of subjective time in this work. Just like many symphonies, *The Clock* is punctuated around concentrated moments – the transitions of the hour most importantly – and then released, bringing a new calm over the piece before the agitation starts again.

Rhythm is one of the determining stylistic features of the cinematographic works, aiding the smooth viewing experience and inserting variation to enliven the pieces. Just like visual alignment, it becomes one of the compositional parameters, which determine the sequencing of fragments and as such take over from the logic of narrative. Musical divertissement is one of the main effects, attained at the cost of story-telling, but helping the fragments to emancipate. The final compositions must be experienced along idiosyncratic criteria, rather than the conventional viewing habits of narrative film. The musical character of the cinematographic works is important in establishing their independent aesthetic.

6.2 Installational Aspects of the Cinematographic Works

Until now the cinematographic works were mostly treated as long successions of fragments, as artworks contained within the projected moving images themselves. However, it is a simplification to assume that these works can fully be understood by analysing what happens on the screen, neglecting their installational aspects. It is necessary to examine what happens beyond the screen, outside the picture frame. When analysing these works as installations one needs to accept that the imaginary *proscenium arch* around the images is not the limit. This needs to be done by taking into consideration space, time and spectator. The cinematographic oeuvre thus goes from image to installation.

A brief account of some art historical developments is in order. Installation art is a comparatively new concept in art history; it is mostly a post-war phenomenon, with a few precocious examples during the interbellum period. In the introduction to her survey on installation art, Claire Bishop attempts to determine the concept, despite the clear hybridity of art forms placed under the hyperonyme.[145] This attempt results in a description, which marks both a *spatial* and a *spectatorial turn*.

> "'*Installation art*' is a term that loosely refers to the type of art into which the viewer physically enters, and which is often described as 'theatrical', 'immersive' and 'experiential' […] desire to heighten the viewer's awareness of how objects are positioned (installed) in space, and of our bodily response to this."[146]

This 'spatial turn' transforms the work of art from an isolated object into an immersive space in which the relation between objects, their position in the room and their relation to the spectator becomes equally or more important than the objects themselves; i.e. the artwork is the total space, and not merely the object.

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[145] Claire Bishop, *Installation art. A Critical History* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 6.
[146] Ibidem.

Telephones, *Video Quartet* and *The Clock* cannot be described as merely flat images on the wall. The movement aspect of moving images already gives a spatially more expanded impression than static images. But more importantly, as projected video installations they are mostly presented in darkened spaces, in order to fully convey the effect of the images projected in light. The *black box* is the common art historical label for this exhibition situation, a reversal of the typical *white cube* of modern art as defined by Brian O'Doherty.[147] The black box is a darkened space, typically used for moving image art, in which the spectator loses himself and the image in light remains the only clearly visible element. This is opposed to the white cube, in which the spectator could assert himself more clearly in relation to the art object. All three works by Marclay are presented at their best in black box spaces, with the images having an overpowering effect on the spectator, almost losing himself in space. The black box creates an immersive environment.

The spatial constellation varies over the different cinematographic works conceived by Marclay. The early *Telephones* is the least complex, with a simple single screen projection in a small darkened space. The spectator and image are intended to be in a frontal face to face relationship. In this sense the conventional cinematic perspective is maintained, in which the audience is seated in front of a towering screen. This set-up is complicated substantially in *Video Quartet*, for the evident reason of the quadrupling of the screen. The spatial set-up is no longer self-evident, and neither is the spectator's implied position. Since the four screens are juxtaposed immediately next to each other, rather than in a square, the unified space becomes segmented: there are more or less four zones, without clear demarcation.

In a way, *The Clock* marks a return to the more conventional cinematic perspective, with the audience facing the screen frontally without much complication. However, Marclay carefully guarded the installation as to create the desired effect for his work. The artist not only assembled a succession of footage, but also designed the accompanying placing. He determines the position of the main element of the screen-reliant installation, but also our viewing condition, even within this deceptively simple single-screen work. The darkened room is conceived as a series of cosy drawing-room couches, which are all positioned facing a vast screen, reminiscent of a movie theatre screen.[148] *The Clock* combines the best of both worlds in a perfect symbiosis. The comfort of a drawing room is combined with the impressive scale of the cinema screen, heightening the experience. In this regard Bishop's distinction between *Installation Art* on the one hand and *installation* on the other hand is quite relevant. In the former case, the whole ensemble is conceived as such by the artist; in the latter case installation refers to the curatorial placing. The setting for *The Clock* can easily be mistaken for a curatorial set-up to facilitate the screening, but one must take into account that everything is part of the artist's deliberate conception of the work.

The second aspect of installation art, the *spectatorial turn*, was already present in the description of the first. The spatial conception of the installation takes into consideration the

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[147] Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
[148] Zalewski, "The Hours," n.p.

position of the viewer. But the spectator is important in his own right, not only as a spatial element. Claire Bishop writes:

> *"Installation art (...) addresses the viewer directly as a literal presence in the space. (...) Installation art presupposes an embodied viewer whose senses of touch, smell and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision."*[149]
> *"The spectator is in some way regarded as integral to the completion of the work."*[150]

Bishop argues that two closely connected notions accompany the importance of the spectator: *activation* and *decentring*. Activation means that the viewer is directly addressed by the artwork. Because of this immediacy the spectator's senses, perception, consciousness etc. are activated to a higher degree compared to a conventional work of art. Installations are decentred in that a principal, centralised access to the work, as was the case in renaissance perspective – is denied to the viewer. The plurality of *looks* to which an installation invites is paralleled in the possibility of an equal plurality of *views* on the work.

In the *black box* condition we find a powerful means of *activation*. Because of the darkened environment and the radiant character of the illuminated image, the latter acquires a substantial strength on a phenomenological level. The spectator is addressed almost to the point of being absorbed by the image. An aesthetic of immersion is an apt formulation of this viewing condition, which is of course profoundly related to of the cinematic viewing condition, with the whole audience directed towards and absorbed by the silver screen. This black box aspect is present in *Telephones*, *Video Quartet* and *The Clock*, which all have a powerful element of immersion because of the impact of the projected images.

The aspect of *decentring* is most notable in *Video Quartet*, because of its four-screen constellation. This multi-screen set-up is a departure of the conventional cinematic condition, as explicitly thematised by Peter Kubelka in his *Invisible Cinema*: all spectator's face the screen directly, with their gazes restrained from straying by means of partitions in between different viewers (image 17). The implied spectator's position is complicated extensively in *Video Quartet*. The spectator cannot face every screen frontally all at once and must chose a position in this segmented field. This new division of the spatial field implies a desertion of the cinematic perspective: there is no longer one screen to watch. In a way, this can be seen as a fragmentation of the renaissance perspective: the spectator cannot concentrate on one coherent perspectival space. One must chose between trying to take all screens at once or just concentrating on one of the fours screens. But even when facing one image directly, the other images continue to interfere because of their closeness. Of course, the diversity of simultaneously juxtaposed images is a part of what constitutes the experience of *Video Quartet*. The cinematic effect of immersion is maintained in this four screen environment; however, the spectator's liberty to walk around this space according to his desire implies a spectatorial condition that is far removed from the fixed position in front of a radiant screen. Instead of the passive viewing condition fixated on the image, the spectator becomes

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[149] Bishop, *Installation Art*, 6.
[150] Julie Reiss, From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation art (1999) as mentioned in Claire Bishop, *Installation Art. A Critical History* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 6.

emancipated spatially and goes his own way, exploring the four juxtaposed screens according to wish.

According to media scholar Kate Mondloch installation art underwent another development: it was infused with time. Many artists started working with screen-reliant sculptures. Installations were not necessarily static before, but with the durational aspect of film and video art, they became emphatically temporalized. The experimental media installations in the sixties and seventies by artist as Dan Graham and the like were an important precedent to the proliferation of screen-reliant installations in the nineties. Artist started to model duration as a main dimension of their works. These works are often presented in continuous loops, but in some cases the length of these loops transcends the time spectators wish to spend in front of a work, which gives rise to what Mondloch calls *exploratory duration*. It describes the situation in which the viewer himself must determine how long he will watch a certain piece. This could be one or several loops in the case of a short piece, or a part of a loop in the case of loops that are excessively long. It must be noted that exploratory duration goes hand in hand with the emergence of the black box. It is a watching condition that wishes to compromise between cinema and art gallery; just as the black box is a space that searches to compromise between both institutional contexts. Exploratory duration is very useful concept for analysing the cinematographic works, given that it combines the importance of the spectator and the infusion of time.[151]

Ursula Frohne too argues that many recent new media works are emphasizing the '*parameter of time*'. She states that: "*The mechanical means of representation increasingly shifted the focus of visual perception from the experience of space to the experience of time.*"[152] The spectator and his experience of time have come to the centre of artists' attention. Ursula Frohne and Kate Mondloch clearly mark the connection with the spectator in artworks that have increased attention to time and duration. The viewer's experience and handling of time become the central focus of these works. As a result of this combination the spectator engages more intensely with time, as is clearly the case in Marclay's pieces.

As moving image projections, installed in the context of art galleries and museums, the cinematographic works are played in loops almost evidently. *Telephones* takes about seven minutes to be completely played. Rather than programming it at certain points in time, it is easier to play it in loops, resulting in an installation that is always accessible for the spectator. *Video Quartet* takes twice that time: fourteen minutes. The duration is still surveyable, and a timed programming does not impose itself. The spectator enters somewhere in course of the loop, and the time needed to await the beginning of the piece in order to watch it in its completeness is reasonable. In the case of moving image installations of limited duration the loop offers a practical option, asking little planning behaviour from the audience. In the case of *Video Quartet* loop-playing offers an extra advantage, or even necessity. Due to the four-fold character of this work, it is impossible to fully grasp the visual (and sonic) plenitude of the work in one single viewing. A loop offers the possibility to the viewer to re-watch the

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[151] Kate Mondloch, *Screens: Viewing Media Installation art* (Minneapolis, University of Mnnesota Press, 2010), 40-45.
[152] Ursula Frohn, "Dissolution of the Frame: Immersion and Participation in Video Installations," in *Art and the Moving Image. A Critical Reader* edited by Tanya Leighton (London, Tate Publishing, 2008), 356.

work shifting his attention to different points of the composition. The loop is a form of *exploratory duration*, since the spectator can decide for himself how much attention he devotes to one moving image work: from watching the moment of entrance until the end of the work, staying for a complete play of the work from beginning to end, watching several loops of the work to more fully comprehend the work… are all possibilities for the visitor in a loop set-up.

Concerning *The Clock* exploratory duration is a peculiarly apt category to describe the watching conditions. The work lasts exactly as long as Douglas Gordon's *24h Psycho*, one of Mondloch's main examples. Both works take twenty-four hours to complete a loop, an intriguing length for a video work. First of all, even though this duration has few practical advantages for the viewer, it certainly has a high symbolic potential, raising it above the arbitrary. In *24h Psycho* Douglas Gordon expands the duration of Hitchcock's Psycho to twenty-four hours, so that we see the movie in extreme slow motion. But in *The Clock* the loop of twenty-four hours has a more meaningful relation to both form and content of the work. The challenging length of the work has the same effect on the spectator nonetheless. Twenty-four hours is long beyond our concentration limit (of about one to two hours), it is beyond our natural rhythm (we would have slept in the meantime), but it stays possible somehow. It is as if the duration poses itself as a challenge to the viewer. However, in reality it probably hardly ever comes to such an intense viewing. This means that the viewer has to decide for himself how long to watch. How long will I stay? Will I watch for just ten minutes and grasp the general concept or do I want to stay for hours? The issue of exploratory duration is more complex, to the point of strategic decision-making. Other questions arise as a result of *The Clock*'s concept. When will I watch? Will I watch in the morning or the afternoon? Do I have the chance to watch midnight? Will I watch for hours on end to see time slowly passing by? Or will I watch with intervals, seeing different times of the day? If I come again tomorrow, will I come at a different time? *Exploratory duration* becomes *strategic duration* because watching *The Clock* implies decision-making beyond the arbitrary.

Exploratory duration can be said to be the temporal equivalent of the spatial emancipation of the viewer because of the open set-up of projected video installations. Just as the viewer can choose his own position, he can also decide his moment of entrance and exit. On a temporal level too Kubelka's *The Invisible Cinema* is refuted by the cinematographic works. Instead of fixed seats, which oblige one to hold ones seat from beginning to ending, the installation becomes a free domain. Black box moving image installations, and more specifically the cinematographic works, resemble the cinematic viewing condition – certainly what is concerned the aesthetic of immersion – but the spectator emancipates with regard to the work, choosing his own path, both with regard to the position from which he watches the work, and to the time when he does so.

6.3 Beyond Medium-Specificity

The ideas of Clement Greenberg were touched upon earlier, as was their fall out of favour in more recent times. In the case of the cinematographic there are some points to be made with

regard to medium-specificity, but one can argue that these works rather refute the idea of medium-specificity than comply with it. To be a successful artwork according to Clement Greenberg, the work must take recourse to the material traits of the medium; referencing these traits provides significance to the work. Taking recourse to illusionary aspects or referencing other media is detrimental to the quality of the work. Following this train of thought, the cinematographic works constitute very poor works of art.[153]

Firstly the material basis of the works must be discerned already quite a challenge. The source material for the cinematographic works is narrative film, a selection criterion that does not constitute medium unity. Cinema has been produced mainly with film: celluloid exposed to light through a camera. But film is not the all-embracing medium of cinema. Technological developments have influenced the production of cinema. Nowadays narrative films can as easily exist in digitised format as on celluloid film. When we look at the resulting works, one can observe that Marclay did not keep the footage in its original format: all fragments are transferred to digitised video, to have a unified working basis. So video technology plays a major role as a material component of the cinematographic works. Considering the final presentation of these moving images, we notice that they are installed as projections on large-scale screens, rather than using television monitors. The projection of the image is more related to the original context of celluloid than to video technology.

Clement Greenberg had mainly painting and sculpture in mind when he formulated his ideas, so when moving to the context of moving image the parameters of his theories must be adapted to the technological conditions of the moving image production. The main question remains nonetheless: to what material basis need these works direct themselves to offer a valuable meta-investigation. The issues of celluloid film as a material basis have been explored by the structural and materialist film-makers in the experimental film scene of the sixties and seventies. They had attention to the material basis of film: the film strip itself, the light cone that projects the image, the darkened room in which the image lights up, and focused on material issues such as the flicker effect.[154] The practices of these experimental filmmakers can to some extent be brought into tune with the ideas of Clement Greenberg. Around the same time video emerged as a medium with possibilities independent of television. Some avant-garde artists directed their attention to this medium, exploring its inherent possibilities such as instant visualization and direct feedback circuits. Rosalind Krauss attempted to project Greenbergian thinking on the immateriality of video in her essay *"Video, the Aesthetics of Narcissism."*[155]

Although it cannot be ignored that Marclay directs his attention to film in the cinematographic works, none of the preoccupations of the structural and materialist filmmakers return in his works. Neither is it possible to discern any other aspect of the technological or material basis of film that is explicitly thematized. Of course the fragments are transferred to the format of video, but no analogies with works of avant-garde video artists can be drawn either. There is

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[153] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," last consulted on May 16, 2011, http://digilander.libero.it/contemporarea/Testi/greenberg_62 .

[154] Jacobs, "Fundamenten van de Moderne en Actuele Beeldende Kunst II."

[155] Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism," October, 1976, pp. 50-64, http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0162-2870%28197621%291%3C50%3AVTAON%3E2.0.CO%3B2-8 .

no instant visualization or direct feedback at play in the cinematographic works. And stating that these installations intend to be a meta-comment on projected moving images in spatial environments would lift one aspects of these works out of proportion and imply an underestimation of the importance of the footage itself: what we see and hear. The semiotic content of the imagery is of crucial importance in these works, rather than the material basis that is deployed to convey them.

It is true however that the cinematographic works essentially comment on a medium: that of cinema. But this medium must not be defined in materialist terms, an approach that provides a dead end. Instead, cinema as Marclay uses it possesses significance in generic terms. Cinema is a narrative genre – as it is conform to the wider tradition of western narrative – and it are the generic characteristics of this art form that are under scrutiny in the cinematographic works, not the technological traits. Some of these principal generic traits of narrative film are the motifs deployed by Marclay to constitute the structures for his compositions: a telephone conversation, music making, and clocks. Hence, a different approach to the concept of 'medium' imposes itself: one that is based on the semantics of an art form, rather than its physical manifestation. Here the notion representational system comes in practice: it is the signifying apparatus and its recognizable generic codes that are the subject of the compositions. Also, an inquiry into 'medium' here no longer implies auto-reflexivity, since the scrutinized medium is that of the borrowed source material, rather than the artworks 'own medium'. As elaborated on earlier, the cinematographic installations are too complex and hybrid for a straightforward determination of the 'own medium'. Also, Marclay abandons the refusal of illusion by Greenberg. The latter was ill-disposed toward the illusion of three-dimensional space in painting. The source material for the cinematographic installations, by contrast, is pure illusion: it is the realm of fiction film. The whole reality transferred by the footage is an artificial ensemble contrived to delight people with a story. The tableaux used by Marclay teem with illusion. These installations rejoice in fiction rather than reality. Here Rosalind Krauss's notion of the *technical support* is relevant, a concept that devotes attention to a conscious approach towards medium, while leaving freedom for an idiosyncratic interpretation. She labelled the synch sound of Hollywood cinema as the technical support of *Video Quartet*.[156] Although one could argue that this is a technical aspect of the medium, I take it to be a generic and formal characteristic of cinema that is taken as medium. One can extend this line of thinking over the cinematographic works: likewise, the technique of crosscutting can be thought to be the technical support of *Telephones*. In general, one can take montage to be the technical support of the cinematographic works, since all these works rest upon the rearrangement of single fragments according to the same technique used in cinema.

A separate aspect in the discourse of medium-specificity that is of special relevance to *The Clock* is the issue of indexicality. All the footage that Marclay uses in this work contains some sort of a time index; and indexicality is exactly the 'essence' theorists have been ascribing to film (following photography). '*Cinema is the art of the index.*'[157] There is a close bond between the filmic index of time – an image of movement inscribed by the exposure of

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[156] Krauss, "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition," 57.
[157] Lev Manovich, 'What is Digital Cinema?' in The Digital Dialectic: New Essays on New Media, ed. Peter Lunenefeld (Cambridge, MA, 2000), p. 175 as mentioned in Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 7-8.

sensitive material to light over a certain duration; and the temporal index of clocks on the other hand – the indication of time within the moving image. It is as if the filmic index captures the movement – a movement consisting of change over time – and the temporal index situates this movement in time. Both indexes emphasize the privileged status of time in the medium film, and this would give the impression of *The Clock* being an artwork celebrating the medium-specificity of film in a way that would have appealed to Greenberg. However, this constitutes a false conclusion that does not correspond to the logic of *The Clock*. First of all, even though a large proportion of his source material was originally film, in *The Clock* it has been transmitted to video, resulting in a more hybrid relationship to 'medium' that defies an interpretation focussed on medium-specificity, as elaborated earlier.[158] Secondly, the source material is made up exclusively of fictional film, and not of documentary footage. This means that the time indices captured correspond most to a staged reality, and have very little to do with the temporal reality of their shooting. It is this fictional time that Marclay has used, and not the time of recording. This confirms that the artist's fascination goes to cinema as a genre, rather than to film as a medium. In line with the synchronism that Krauss appointed as technical support of *Video Quartet*, one can state that the temporal structures of cinema constitute the technical support of *The Clock*.

Christian Marclay is not the only artist that has performed this generic inquiry into fictional film. Other artists working with found footage have made similar works: excerpting one motif out of the language of narrative film and subsequently constituting a moving image anthology of this motif. The artist duo Matthias Müller and Christoph Girardet are experienced in working with found footage and re-rearranging it into new sequences. With their video installation *Kristal* (2006, image 18) they have created a work that conforms to many of the characteristics of Marclay's cinematographic works. The selection criterion of *Kristal* is film characters dwelling in front of mirrors. A whole range of different fragments is arranged in a smooth sequence. As in Marclay's works a development punctuated with focal passages is discernable in *Kristal*. Remarkable is the psychological character of the work: scenes in front of mirrors privilege introspection of the characters: gazes of desire, tormented souls, fright,… are only some of the emotions conveyed visually through the combination of the actor's face and the mirror.[159] Nicolas Provost is another artist using a cinematographic approach. His spectacular video work *Gravity* (2007, image 19) is a frenetic anthology of kisses in narrative film. He cleverly uses the flicker effect of the structuralists to emphasize the climax effect of kisses in narrative film. Different kisses are interrelated with one another by alternating between the different footages with periods smaller than a second. The spectator cannot fully grasp either image, and instead is forced to undergo the combined stroboscopic imagery. This work thematizes the important role of kisses in film, which often mark a turning point or conclusion of the narrative.[160]

These three artists take the syntax of fictional film as a working basis and expose its codified nature. Comparing Marclay with other artists working with the same approach clarifies how

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[158] Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, 26.
[159] Jaap Guldemond, "Found Footage: Cinema Exposed," in *Found Footage. Cinema Exposed*, edited by Bloemheuvel, Marente, Giovanna Fossati and Jaap Guldemond, eds., (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press and EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012), 13-14.
[160] Jacobs, "Onderzoeksseminarie Moderne en Actuele Beeldende Kunst."

the cinematographic works take the generic apparatus of film as their subject, rather than lingering on any material or technological basis in need of scrutiny. *Cinematographic* can here be understood both as writing with cinema – using found footage from narrative film – and writing about cinema – exposing a representational system, of which the codes are all familiar to us without us being aware of them. These works fix their attention on one aspect long enough for the audience to understand how filmmakers use them to convey a story. The cinematographic method is an analysis of the grammar of cinema.

6.4 Retour à l'Ordre

As a fairly recent medium, video evidently only has a short history in the artistic field. However, it is important to stress a shift between the pioneering decades of video art and the uses of video by contemporary artists, such as Christian Marclay. A comparison between some examples by early video artists and Marclay's cinematographic works can help to clarify the specific aesthetic of the latter, and perhaps tentatively place the works in context of wider art historical fluctuations. For each of the three main cinematographic works discussed here, an equivalent was sought in the early years of video that shares some thematic concerns.

Telephones by Christian Marclay and *Hello* (1969, image 20) by Allen Kaprow are both about telecommunication, and communication in general. Both works show people talking to another party, spatially removed from them but connected by technology. Just like *Telephones*, *Hello* too predominantly demonstrates the phatic layer of human communication, establishing and confirming the communication itself. The title *Hello* already indicates the proliferation of *hello's* – a phatic utterance – in the work. However, on some fundamental level the two works diverge radically. In Kaprow's *Hello* on the one hand real lines of contact are established between different parties. The video testifies to real communication that has taken place between human beings, and the accompanying joy of talking to one another even if there is not really a message to convey. *Telephones* on the other hand does not result from real communication that has taken place somewhere in the past. It is a cut-and-paste collage of different dialogues of disconnected narratives. This implies that the fragments not only have nothing to do with each other, but they are not even real: all the utterances in *Telephones* are contrived pieces of acting. Another difference is that whereas *Hello* leaves room for spontaneity and coincidence, *Telephones* is a well-considered composition, in which every piece has its exact position to attain the desired effect. Kaprow conceived the happening and only moderated the resulting work, whereas Marclay stays in control of the stylistic effect of his work, all details included.

Video Quartet, of course, is principally about music and the artist par excellence to reserve a place for music in the newly developed medium of video was Nam June Paik. He often involved the cellist Charlotte Moorman in his projects that usually combined video with performance/happening. *TV Cello* (1971, image 21) is a good example of how he integrated music into the grammar of video. In this piece Moorman plays an electronic cello made out of video screens. These screens show a variety of images, among which live footage of

Moorman playing the cello.[161] Both *Video Quartet* and *TV Cello* offer in some way a musical piece to the audience, and involve aspects of a video installation, but the differences are even more conspicuous than in the case of *Telephones* and *Hello*. The musical piece in *TV Cello* is based fundamentally on live performance: an instrumentalist is present playing the cello live in front of the audience. *Video Quartet*, on the contrary, is based on the logic of recording – both visual and sonic. The video images in *TV Cello* constitute a hybrid of footage of other cellists and live footage of the performance itself; the latter creates a direct bond based on reality between the musical performance on the one hand and the images on the video monitors on the other hand. *Video Quartet* is an installation – not an ephemeral performance – based on archival material of narrative footage including music. Again this footage has the enacted and artificial quality. But more importantly, there is no incontestable link between the images and the sounds of the footage. In narrative film image and sound are supposed to be experiences in synchronism, but are in reality often the result of extensive post-production and the addition of external sound. The sound-image relationship in the footage of *Video Quartet* is based on rhetorical effect and the impression of synchronism, rather than reality.

Representing time is the main concern of *The Clock*. The emergence of video technology signified a major breakthrough in the possibilities of time-image relationships in moving image art making. With video it was no longer necessary to first process the images before they could be screened: instant visualization became one of the most expressive possibilities of the new medium.[162] With his spatial installations incorporating video camera's and monitors, Dan Graham was one of the first artists to explore this direct feedback mechanism. The artist makes time almost tangible by involving the spectator into a witty play with time and space in *Present Continuous Past(s)* (1974, image 22). The camera films the participant in the installation, showing his image on the monitor with a delay of a few seconds.[163] The installation is only fractions of time removed from real-time, and these short moments make time all the more tangible. The spectator in *The Clock* is in comparison only a passive viewer, observing time. Time as live experience with Graham has become a spectacle in *The Clock*. There is an illusionary effect of real-time in Marclay's composition, since the work always shows the exact time. It is almost as if the screen constantly switches between different locations and shows us live footage. However, none of the footage in *The Clock* is live. Instead all is archival material, so there is no real-time at work. Furthermore, the time indication in the fragments has very little to do with the reality of the pro-filmic, as it rarely corresponds to the exact time at the moment of shooting. Whereas Dan Graham works with delayed real time, Marclay gives us an illusionary effect of real-time.

The video aesthetics of the sixties and seventies are very rough, and with ample room for coincidence and spontaneity, such as in *Hello*. These works are not produced with the aim of creating a stylistically elegant effect, but rather indulge in experiment and innovative conceptions. The works are often participatory, so that the audience or performers are influential in the final appearance of the work, for example in *TV Cello* and *Present Continuous Past(s)*. The conception of the work is only a starting point, with a lot of liberty in

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[161] John G. Hanhardt, *Nam June Paik*, (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1982), 95.
[162] Jacobs, "Fundamenten van de Moderne en Actuele Beeldende Kunst II."
[163] Barbara London, "Time as Medium: Five Artists' Video Installations," *Leonardo*, Vol. 28, No. 5, 1995, pp. 423-426, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1576228 .

the realization. But most importantly, the working basis for these works is reality: the reality of communication, the reality of making music, the reality of being present in a room and watching yourself with a time delay. In these works nothing is contrived, all is real.

The cinematographic works by Christian Marclay on the contrary are aesthetically polished. They have a fringe side in their use of found footage, but the artist binds the fragments together with such dexterity that the successions run smooth. Every transition is handled with perfect care and the works are full of aesthetic effects. Different parts are carefully balanced with each other. *Telephones* and *Video Quartet* have a beginning, a development and a proper ending, organized with rhetoric effect. *The Clock* has an extensive duration, but nonetheless possesses a rigid structure with considered points of tension and détente. Compared with the free experimentation of the early video years, the cinematographic works almost mean a return to classicism, with their well-balanced organization and stylistic polishing. These works also mark a return to fiction, and as such are less interested in ordinary reality. The cinematographic compositions consist of the artificial micro-scenes extracted from narrative film and as such indulge in the stylistic imperium of cinema.

6.5 The Proscenium Arch Deconstructed

The cinematographic works borrow a lot from the stylistic world of cinema: the darkened viewing condition, the concrete footage and some of the main motifs of cinema. The effect of immersion, so defining for the viewing condition of cinema, persists in these works. The audience surrenders to the screen, losing itself in darkened spaces in which only the moving images are discernable. The spectators indulge in the little fictions that are brought to them one after the other. This is all in tune with the condition of cinema, which aspires the complete suspension of disbelief of the audience with regard to the narrative and the images of the silver screen. However, narrative is deconstructed so that the isolated motifs emancipate. The works become removed from the fiction they conveyed and become a reality in their own right, and sometimes this reality is not disconnected from the reality of the audience. The cinematographic works indulge in fiction, but do construct independent universes that are halfway between fiction and reality.

In *Telephones*, the idea of narrative remains pervasive. The telephone conversation is constructed out of many different excerpts, which makes the composition into a hybrid 'story'; but in the end nothing like a real telephone call emerges. The work remains in the domain of an alternative reality, a fiction. The darkened room and system of immersion helps the spectator to lose himself in that alternative reality. In *Telephones* the cinematic suspension of disbelief supporting the fiction persists the most. Here the imaginary proscenium arch, separating the fictive reality of the screen from the reality of the audience, remains relatively intact.

Video Quartet applies the same logic of cinematographic collage, but the effect is different. This results from the subject of the composition: music. An accumulation of different fragments is mended together, and the same aesthetic of immersion is applied to bring the

spectator as closely as possible to the works. But whereas the telephone conversation screened in *Telephones* remains necessarily fictive, the musical composition in *Video Quartet* acquires the status of reality. The music performed in *Video Quartet* remains music, despite being extracted from fiction, and can thereby be experienced as such. Admittedly, the music is not performed live for the audience, and wasn't originally performed as part of a composition by Christian Marclay. But experiencing music in the twenty-first century does not necessarily mean live performance of music. And the production of a musical composition with found music is in line with Moholy-Nagy's ideas about producing sound with reproductive means. One must not lose out of sight that *Video Quartet* constitutes a completely original music composition, in which the singular parts have lost their original context and acquire meaning through their position in the cinematographic whole. The result is a unique piece of music of which this installation does not constitute a reproduction, but the original itself. This composition is to be experienced primarily through this video installation, while all other forms are derivatives or copies. Hence one can reasonably state that *Video Quartet* no longer proposes a fiction, but rather functions as a full-blown musical performance in its own right.

A similar argument can be made for *The Clock*. The work is evidently not real-time in the literal sense, as argued above : the footage in is not screened live. However, there is a dimension that does endow a real-time aspect to the composition: the correspondence between the temporal indications on screen and the audience's temporal zone. Here the real-time aspect does realise itself. *The Clock* is accurately aligned to the time the audience is living in, and thus it is reality in that time can be read from it without deviation. The unreeling of the fictional footage happens real-time in real sense.

Hence *The Clock* is not only an installation in a spatial sense, but also in an abstract sense. The reality of the artwork is not separated from that of the spectator: the viewer is totally immersed in the reality of the work. Not so much on a spatial level: the sofas in which the audience sits as part of the work do not really suspend the separation between viewer and screen. It happens more on the level of mental awareness: time is a non-tangible given, but we feel it as very real nonetheless.

The connection is realised by aligning the reality of the artwork with that of the viewer. A comparison can be made with Jan Van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* of the fifteenth century. Of course the scenes depicted by Van Eyck on the wooden panels have very little to with the world of the spectator: they belong to sacral or exotic spheres. But the artist uses the painterly means at which he excels to bring the depicted world closer: lighting. In the *Ghent Altarpiece* the incidence of light exactly conforms to the average incidence of light in situ, through the windows of the Vijd Chapel. The reflection painted on every grape is a correct representation of how light would be reflected on a real grape in the Vijd chapel.[164] By these painterly means, the spectator can enter the reality of the picture, or the picture enters the reality of the spectator. This alignment of realities is exactly what happens in *The Clock* too: what Van Eyck does with light, Marclay does with time, in that time of the spectator and time of the artwork exactly conform.

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[164] Ridderbos, Berhard, Anne Van Buren and Henk Van Veen, *Early Netherlandish Paintings. Rediscovery, Reception and Research* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 2005, 47.

The realities of art and spectator converge. The viewer is totally immersed in the reality of the artwork because time in the case of *The Clock* and music in the case of *Video Quartet*, correspond to the reality of the screen. We appreciate the soundtrack of *Video Quartet* for music and take the temporal world in *The Clock* for reality. The picture frame, or *proscenium arch*, has been dismissed on a higher level. The screen and the aesthetic of immersion no longer serve as a separation between two realities, but as means of emphatically mediating determining aspects of our reality. Time as artificial construction, but all the more real, governs our lives as well as it governs the composition of *The Clock*. Music blasts from the speakers in *Video Quartet*. We are not taken away to a new world; we are just confronted with the temporal laws of our own world, because time, viewer and art live in absolute synchrony. Synchrony has replaced the fiction of the proscenium arch. *The Clock* may play with fiction, but it speaks in the language of reality. *Video Quartet* is a quartet and *The Clock* is a clock.

> *"When I first started on this project, I thought it would become a public art piece. I thought, What a great thing, to be in a train station waiting for a train and being able to watch a movie. It would inform you what time it was, and at the same time entertain you."*
> Christian Marclay[165]

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[165] Zalewski, "The Hours," n.p.

7. Conclusion

Christian Marclay has a rich career working with a variety of media on very different projects. He worked both in the visual art scene and in the experimental music scene. Turntabling, collages, installations, paintings, performances, happenings and of course video works are some of his practices. Despite this diversity there are some consistencies throughout his oeuvre. Appropriation is a signature trait of his work, since he often works with found materials, such as recorded music, record covers, instruments, *curiosité*-objects and found footage. His work can often be situated on the interstices between the visual and the sonic. He is keen on using audio-visual materials, but even when he uses purely visual material there is often a sonic associated attached. His work is a good illustration of the post-medium condition, as used by Rosalind Krauss. His works do reflect on medium, but in more varied ways than the dogmatic medium-specificity as advocated by Clement Greenberg. Krauss identified music and sound as a consistent interest of Marclay's art, a very wide category that is often realised with non-sonic materials.

Marclay made a series of works that relate closely to the world of cinema, for which the label *cinematographic* was established here. They write *with* cinema *about* cinema. These video works consist out of found footage borrowed from narrative film. The artist extracted short fragments from full-length films and re-arranged them in new sequences. This dissertation concentrates on three works, which are very consistent in method: *Telephones* (1995), *Video Quartet* (2002) and *The Clock* (2010). The first work, *Telephones*, consists of fragments with telephone conversations; the footage is ordered according to the logical sequence of a telephone conversation from beginning to ending. *Video Quartet* is a four screen video installation devoted to music and sound in film. *The Clock* has a twenty-four hour loop and at every moment one can see the exact time by means of a fragment that has been placed at the hour and minute it represents. Three other works – *Up and Out*, *The Bell and the Glass* and *Screen Play* – are identified as part of the cinematographic body of work by Marclay.

The cinematographic oeuvre can be situated in a wider interest by contemporary artists in the world of cinema, a medium that has been a dominant cultural force in the twentieth century: labelled the Post-Cinematic Era. Photographic and moving image strategies are applied to process the cultural heritage of cinema's dominance over much of the twentieth century. The ideas of the scholars such as Laura Mulvey, Christa Blümlinger and Jean-Christophe Royoux are used as categories to look at this body of work. This found footage works borrow excessively form cinema's history. The vast scale of these projects makes it a good illustration of what Laura Mulvey called *cinematic excavation*, digging through the archives of film, and Christa Blümlinger's ideas on the archive and *double reflexivity*. They involves *interactive spectatorship* in their creation process and illustrates our own relationship with the long history of cinema. The pathway of filmic indexicality and medium-specificity is rejected in favour of an interest in the generic characteristics of cinema. As found footage works, the cinematographic touches on legal issues of intellectual property rights: the idea of theft is no longer conform the creativity involved in the extensive borrowing of digital material according to Lawrence Lessig.

Cinema constitutes a representational system with generic codes easily recognizable by the audience. It evolved out of the long western tradition of narrative, dominated by the logic of causality. Narrative was adapted to the moving image by means of continuity editing, which brought the fragmentary shots in perceived continuity. Montage and the cut are a major formal aspect of cinema, and cinematic significance is often created through the sequence of different shots. Chrisitan Marclay adopts the cut as the formal imperative of montage – rearranging fragments in new sequences – but with radically different results. The logic of causality is interrupted and gives way to alignments of disconnected footage. The different cinematographic works play with several aspects of continuity editing. They undermine the logic of the narrative, the footage emancipates itself and the resultant compositions have independent thematic considerations.

In *Telephones* the formal device of crosscutting is scrutinized and undercut: despite sporadically evoking the impression of simultaneity, *Telephones* does not alternate between synchronous events connected through causality. Instead it imposes the logic of a telephone conversation from beginning to end by means of unrelated footage. Communication emancipates as a theme, as attested by the prevalence of the phatic function of Roman Jakobson's system of communication in the verbal utterances of the piece – the same as in Jean Cocteau's *La Voix Humaine*. *Telephones* is a found footage anthology of the human attempt to get into contact with each other and the difficulties in doing so, especially the flawed nature of telephone technology.

Video Quartet dives into the realm of sound film and diegetic music. After the transition to sound film cinema was conventionally based on synchronous sound adopted by Hollywood. Most films aspire to create the impression of natural sound that belongs to the image, while simultaneously creating maximum rhetoric effect. Marclay borrows the musical material of cinematic footage, but uses it in more variegated way. Sounds are juxtaposed and sequenced in unexpected fashions, and the artist fully applies the potential of sound and image combined. A sound promenade is created with plenty of sound and music effects. *Video Quartet* is also an anthology of the visual sound of music: showing a variety of music making situations, concerts and dances, solo's and exercises… The importance of music is stressed, as the more exuberant side of life, and many of the symbolic associations of long cultural traditions are implicitly present in *Video Quartet*.

Drawing on the idea that narrative is mainly diegesis disguised as mimesis, one can say that in *The Clock* Marclay unmasks this by bringing clocks as an intra-diegetic element of narration to the fore. Besides unmasking Christian Marclay is also involved in some restructuring. Frequency, duration and order are the categories by which the temporal structure of narration is constructed. The resulting temporal discontinuities are undone in *The Clock* and continuity of time is restored at the expense of causality, the leading principle of narrative cinema. In *The Clock* time becomes emancipated, exposing the diversity of experiences that are implied in the notion of time. The logical rigidity by which the work is constructed exists by grace of the conception of objective time western civilization has generated. The ever-increasing precision of time measurement in combination with ameliorated correspondence of geographically dispersed places resulted in the 1884 division of the world in time zones. The precision of objective time has thoroughly infiltrated our lives. Within this framework of

objective time a range of subjective time experiences are embedded. Suspense and the accelerating and decelerating effects of the long and the short take are aspects of cinema, which were discussed in their autonomous potential with regard to time. *The Clock* also contains some time structures characteristic of this work alone, such as the succession of anticipation, culmination and release in different degrees. Other time conceptions are present too, such as the heightened experience of the present, almost to the point of timeless time, and the *vanitas* theme on the passage of time.

There are many consistencies over the different cinematographic works, both in method and in style. For every work a new structuring principle was conceived, to replace the narrative laws of causality that originally governed the footage. These new structures – a telephone conversation, a piece of music, and a clock – become the main parameter of the composition. Marclay intervenes mainly by means of montage: in these works many different extract of found footage are re-arranged in a new sequence using montage. However, the resultant works are not fragmentary in nature. The formal properties of the cinematographic method are principally directed towards the creation of continuity, experienced as a natural flow by the audience. Of course, in part the structuring principles provide unity to the compositions, but on a smaller scale the different fragments are mended together too. This happens by means of visual analogy, playful effects and a sophisticated treatment of sound. Sufficient attention is granted to humour to endow the works with an entertaining quality. The cinematographic works are more *celebratory* than *cerebral* in nature. They rest upon the aesthetic of cinema combined with the limitless possibilities of visual art. Rigid concepts and serious themes go hand in hand with entertaining effects. The cinematographic works are characterized by a coexistence of logic and the absurd: the unrelated nature of the footage stands in contrast with the rigid logic of the structure imposed on the compositions. The cinematographic language has a lot in common with music: both are based on creative developments over time. The pace of these works is analogue to the use of rhythm in music, and acceleration and deceleration play important roles. Of course, *Video Quartet* provides the best example of the musical character of this body of work.

The cinematographic works go beyond the images themselves to constitute installations, with a well-considered set-up. The black box exhibition context provides the cinematic effect of immersion, by which the spectator loses himself with regard to the large illuminated image. *Telephones* and *The Clock* are conventional single screen installations, with the gazes of the audience in one direction. However, *Video Quartet* is more complex with its four-screen set-up: the space of the installation becomes divided and the spectator needs to split his attention or make a selection, as there is no longer one viewing position to experience the installation. The viewer is free to make his own choices with regard to his perspective towards the work. The concept of exploratory duration provides an equally empowering position to the spectator with regard to time: the works are presented in loops, and the audience enters and leaves at wish. *Telephones* and *Video Quartet* have only short loops, but *The Clock* demands strategic viewing behaviour from every viewer because of its extensive duration.

The ideas about *medium-specificity* as formulated by Clement Greenberg have little validity to analyse the cinematographic method. These works do not reflect on the materiality of film or

the technological apparatus of video. A more open approach to medium is necessary, as provided by Rosalind Krauss' notion of *technical support*. I argue that the cinematographic works mainly reflect on the *generic* apparatus of cinema, rather than on any material basis. Different aspects of the language of cinema can be identified that come to the fore in Marclay's composition, with montage playing a major role in all of them. Crosscutting is important in the case of *Telephones*, *Video Quartet* is an anthology of the use of music and sound in film and *The Clock* reflects on the temporal structures that are used in narrative.

Comparing the cinematographic works with early video works one can observe an aesthetic shift: from the rough to polished, from the spontaneous to the controlled, and most importantly from reality to fiction. Marclay's works indulge in the stylized aesthetic of cinema, the realm of the willing suspension of disbelief in favour of the image of fiction. However, *Video Quartet* and *The Clock* are not completely out of contact with the reality of the audience. The former envelops the spectator in sounds just as a musical performance does, and is an original composition composed out of appropriated fragments. The Clock is synchronized with the time zone of its presentation, and is thus connected with the audience at the abstract level of temporal organisation.

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9. Images

Image 1, page 2:
Christian Marclay, *Telephones*, 1995, single-channel video projection, 7' 30".
https://picasaweb.google.com/113187709582519344899/ItSForYouConceptualArtAndTheTel
ephoneSelectedArtworks

Image 2, page 3:
Christian Marclay, *Video Quartet*, 2002, four-channel video projection with sound, 14' 32".
http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/marclay-video-quartet-t11818

Image 3, page 4:
Christian Marclay, Installation view of *The Clock*, 2010, single-channel video projection, 24
hours.
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Image 4:

Christian Marclay, Performance with his *Phonoguitar*, 1982.
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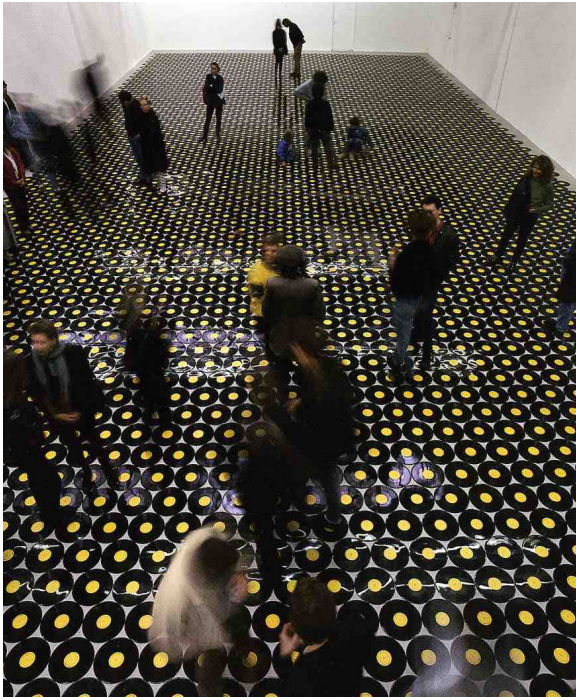
Image 5:

Christian Marclay, *Footsteps*, 1989, installation with vinyl records on the gallery floor, Shedhalle, Zürich.
http://jacindarussellart.blogspot.be/2012/04/national-record-store-day.html

Image 6:

Christian Marclay, *Ein Heldenleben*, 1992, collage with record covers.
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Image 7:

Christian Marclay, *Screen Play*, 2005, single-screen video projection, 29'.
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Image 8:

Christian Marclay, *Telephones*, 1995, single-channel video projection, 7' 30".
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Image 9:

Christian Marclay, *Telephones*, 1995, single-channel video projection, 7' 30".
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Image 10:

Christian Marclay, *Video Quartet*, 2002, four-channel video projection with sound, 14' 32".
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Image 11:

Christian Marclay, *Video Quartet*, 2002, four-channel video projection with sound, 14' 32".
http://arts.stanford.edu/christian-marclays-video-quartet/
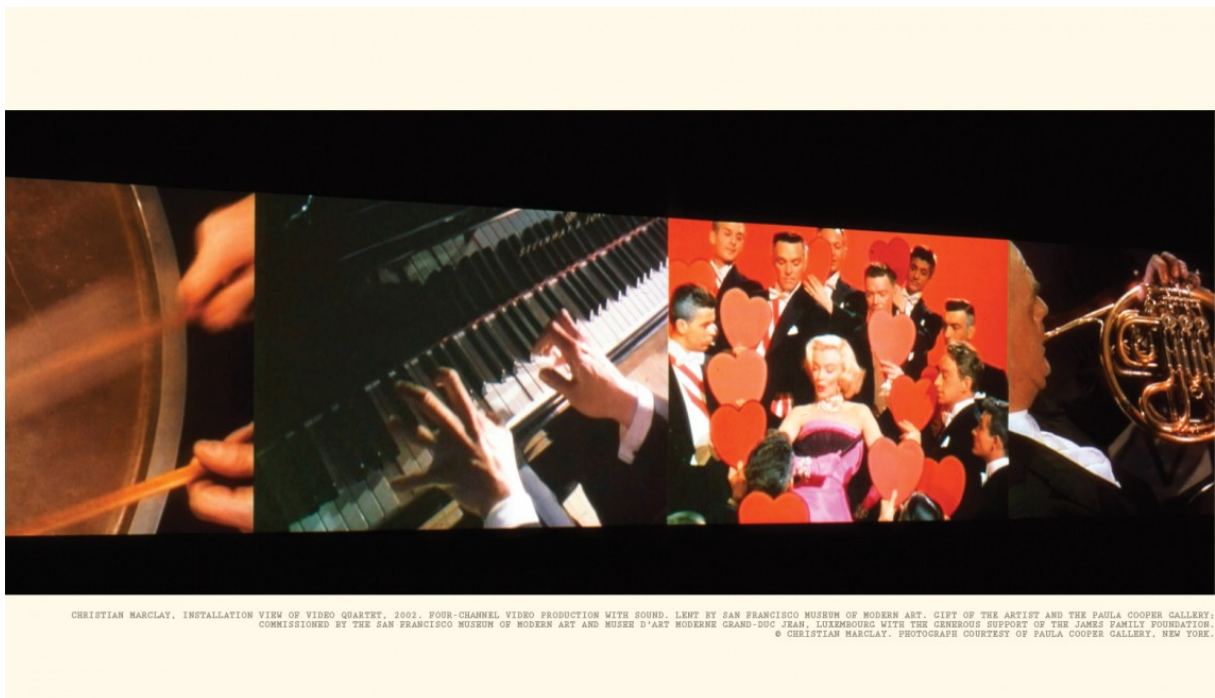
Image 12:

Still from *The Clock*, 2010, Duration: 24 hours, Single-channel video.
© Christian Marclay / Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York and White Cube, London
http://whitecube.com/artists/christian_marclay/

Image 13:

Installation view of *The Clock* at White Cube Mason's Yard, London (Oct. 15 – Nov. 13, 2010).
© Christian Marclay / Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York and White Cube, London;
Installation Photo: Todd-White Art Photography
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Image 14:

Douglas Gordon, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, 1996, double channel video projection, 25' 50".
http://aajpress.wordpress.com/2012/04/17/eye-film-institute-amsterdam-delugan-meissl-associated-architects/

Image 15:

Christian Marclay, *Cage*, 1993, readymade sculpture.
http://marinarichter.net/wp-content/gallery/john-cage/christian-marclay_cage_1993.jpg

Image 16:

Christian Marclay, *Video Quartet*, 2002, four-channel video projection with sound, 14' 32".
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Image 17:

Peter Kubelka, *The Invisible Cinema*, 1970.
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Image 18:

Matthias Muller and Christoph Girardet, *Kristal*, 2006, single-channel video installation, 14'
30".
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Image 19:

Nicolas Provost, *Gravity*, 2007, single channel video, 6'.
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Image 20:

Allen Kaprow, *Hello*, video, 4' 23".
http://cca.org.il/?vz5=electronic-arts-intermix-part-2

Image 21:

Nam June Paik, *TV Cello*, Performance with instrument with video monitors.
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Image 22:
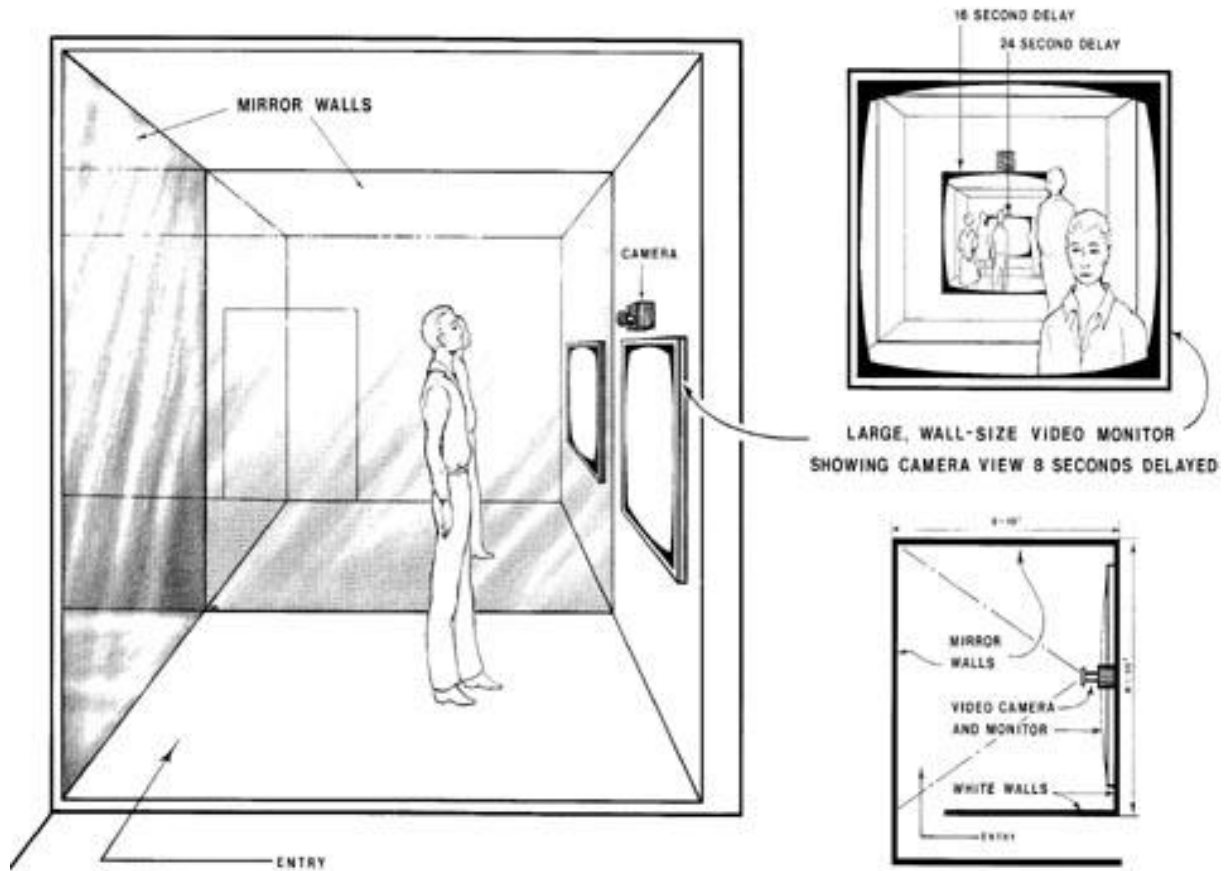
Dan Graham, *Present Continuous Past(s)*, Installation with video camera, mirror and monitor.
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