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**Pop Cinema: Aesthetic
Conversations between Art and the
Moving-Image**

By
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Requirements for the Degree of
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Thomas Day

December 2019

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to recover a seemingly lost story in the history of experimental cinema: its relationship to Pop Art. Although both Pop Art and non-narrative filmmaking have received significant scholarly attention, there has not been a sustained attempt to probe theoretically the link between these two areas of cultural production. This work is the first study to attempt to understand historically and theoretically the relationship between the fine art practice of Pop and the production of non-narrative experimental cinema. It posits that works of experimental cinema exist that not only bear resemblances to central examples of fine art Pop but may be labelled works of Pop Art in their own right.

To make the case for such works, this dissertation is split into four main chapters. The first offers an overview of the history of the phrase 'Pop Cinema' and traces its usage in a variety of discourses in critical, journalistic and academic discussions of mainstream and experimental film practice throughout the second half of the 20th century. In the subsequent chapters, case study films are presented as works of Pop Cinema, observed in relation to discourses on Pop Art found in art historical scholarship. Each work is shown to be a Pop Film not only because of its engagement with a subject of mass and consumer culture, but also the way in which such material is rendered on screen through medium-specific manipulation of film language and the foregrounding of cinematic technologies and techniques.

In Chapter Two, I uncover the Pop aesthetic beginning in the 1950s with William Klein's 'city symphony' film *Broadway by Light* (1958), arguing that the film is the urtext of Pop Cinema, fusing an intermedial exploration of stillness and movement with an ambivalence towards its subject: the advertising light signs of Manhattan's Times Square. Following this, I discuss artworks and films created by the British artist

Jeff Keen. Here the notion of collage as both an artistic methodology and formative medium for the dissemination of Pop Art are examined in relation to Keen's 1966 film *Flik Flak*. Through in-depth analysis of Keen's work, I draw attention to his distinct mode of collage filmmaking, arguing that it seeks to intervene and comment on the media-saturated environment of the 1960s in both humorous and political ways. Finally, I look towards Pop Art's interaction with Minimalism using the work of German artist Peter Roehr. Taking Roehr's *Film Montages (I-III)* (1965) as my central object of focus I explore how Roehr developed strategies of seriality and repetition that can be seen in concert with Pop artists like Andy Warhol. Ultimately, through these examples and through my wide contextualising discussion, I illuminate ways of seeing a variety of filmmaking from the 1950s onward as Pop Art and I offer new dimensions of intermedial understanding to the practice of non-narrative cinema in relation to Art History.

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Introduction: Cinema and its Art Movements

This dissertation seeks to recover a seemingly lost story in the history of experimental cinema: its relationship to Pop Art. Although both Pop Art and non-narrative filmmaking have received significant scholarly attention, there has not been a sustained attempt to theoretically probe the link between these two areas of cultural production. Many filmmakers and artists turned to mass and advertising culture as both a stylistic and thematic area of investigation in their practice from the late 1950s onwards, from figures such as Andy Warhol (1928-1987) to lesser-known artists like the animator and advertising creative Fred Mogubgub (1928-1989). This thesis argues that artists and filmmakers have consistently sought to create a cinematic version of Pop Art, with artists like Warhol and Mogubgub marrying imagery from consumer culture with tactics of avant-garde filmmaking such as extreme shot lengths and fast-paced montage editing, while some artists like Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997) simply re-purposed visual motifs from their painting practice and adapted them for filmmaking, as he did in his only film *Three Landscapes* (1971). Scores of films from conventional cinema, narrative and feature length, to short, non-narrative and commercial works can be aligned with Pop Art and this thesis will address the complex ways in which some of them have interacted with the art movement.¹

¹ I have compiled an indicative filmography that attempts to account for the variety of cinema that could be labelled Pop in an appendix to this thesis.

The lack of academic commentary on this fecund area of activity is noteworthy for several reasons. Chief among these is that cinema and film culture was a deeply prevalent and persistent influence on the aesthetics of Pop Art as rendered in the more traditional fine art mediums of painting and sculpture—although this fact has also received surprisingly scant attention from art historians as I will explore in Chapter One. Another key factor that adds to the notion of surprise is that many of the most notable Pop artists active around the globe produced moving-image artworks, from the aforementioned Warhol and Lichtenstein to Claes Oldenburg (b.1929), Martial Raysse (b.1936) and Ed Ruscha (b.1937). Each of these artists have received extended commentaries on their static artwork but other than the voluminous bibliography amassed on Warhol's filmic output (most of which is not about Pop), little has been written on their own experiments with cinema as a medium used to make Pop Art. In addition to these major figures there exists a broad array of artists who have deployed cinema as a tool through which to communicate their ideas on mass and popular culture, often with recourse to the very styles and references often identified as central to the definition of Pop Art: bright, sharp and contrasting colour palettes; direct address to the spectator; the incorporation of signs, symbols, objects and images from mass culture and the use of popular music as a soundtrack and point of reference. As will be demonstrated in Chapter One, the loosely grouped filmmakers of the American underground were often discussed in relation to Pop Art, Hollywood cinema and mainstream conventional filmmaking often registered as a formal and thematic subject matter to be interrogated in their practice. Yet

beyond this group and their work many more films exist which concern themselves with Pop that have yet to receive any sustained attention.

Film in Art Movements

I am not alone in suggesting that the production of cinema bears significantly on art movements of the 20th century. The history of 20th century cinema needs to be told, in part, through the relationship between major modernist art movements and film production (both mainstream and otherwise). There has been a large amount of academic research devoted to cinema made in relation to pre-war avant-garde Modernist movements. The earliest Modernist art movement to interact in a significant way with cinema was the predominantly Italian movement of Futurism. Its founder Filippo Marinetti (1876-1944) championed cinema as his favourite artistic medium and saw the dawn of the film age as a central part of the permeation of technologies of science and industry into all realms of human life and endeavour. Although a common reference in the manifestos and speeches associated with the movement, very few Futurist films were successfully produced (Marinetti himself only got as far as writing a screenplay entitled *Velocità* (1917-1918)). The only well-preserved example of a Futurist Film is *Thaïs* (1916) by Anton Giulio Bragaglia (1890-1960). As such, discussions of Futurism in relation to film often rely on ephemeral and contingent materials related to works that either no longer exist or were not produced. Consequently, scholarship on Futurist Cinema promotes an expanded view in which literary, theatrical and filmic works

intermingle in intermedial discourses. Such perspectives can be found in the most comprehensive work on the subject, Rosella Catanese's *Futurist Cinema: Studies on Italian Avant-Garde Film* (2018).

The most commented upon faction of Modernist artists' film related to the movements of Dada and Surrealism. This commentary includes an anthology of essays that take film works produced by canonical figures of the movement (Salvador Dalí (1904-1989), Germaine Dulac (1882-1942) and Man Ray (1890-1976)) as their focus (see Kuenzli 1996), and edited collections that expand the view of Surrealist cinema to incorporate works produced after the decline of the movement in the 1930s and into the new millennium. In *The Unsilvered Screen: Surrealism on Film* (2007), works by narrative filmmakers like David Cronenberg (b.1943), animator Jan Švankmajer (b.1934) and the poet and conceptual artist Marcel Broodthaers (1924-1976) are shown to exist in the shadow of their 1920s and 1930s Surrealist antecedents (see Harper and Stone 2007). I am particularly drawn to Harper and Stone's collection of essays as they are keen to extend the chronological reach of Surrealist aesthetic and stylistic concerns in the cinema and stress the sheer variety of types of cinema that can be aligned with Surrealism. While my case studies focus on artists and works from the decade most associated with Pop Art, the 1960s, in Chapter One and the conclusion of this thesis I suggest a wider temporal net that can be cast over Pop and Pop Cinema.

As I have alluded to, this research sits at the intersection of film studies and art history. As such, many of the theorists and writers I draw upon here are located in the world of art historical scholarship. Beyond the edited collections

I have just mentioned, there have been a number of monographs published in the last thirty years authored by scholars who sit between the disciplines of film studies and art history that take as their subject the relationship between cinema and the other arts. Texts by Brigitte Peucker (1995, 2019), Angela Dalle Vacche (1996), Susan Felleman (2005) and Steven Jacobs (2011) all probe the relationship between cinema and fine art practice but they do so by prioritising art, classical Hollywood and documentary cinema, in order to use these modes as lenses through which to explore the representation of the plastic arts *on screen*; they do not, in Jacobs' words, explore the 'interconnections between experimental film and art movements' (2011:X). These works, though each path-breaking in their own way, discuss 'how art is used in film' to quote the subtitle of Dalle Vacche's book *Cinema and Painting* (1996), not how film is used as a medium by artists. Here I am more concerned with bringing the methodologies and critical positions of art history to bear on works of cinema that are not so much displaying works of Pop Art as a part of their diegesis but are films which can be considered works of Pop Art in their own right.

One of the most common subjects in Pop Art was cinema— its stars, scenes and iconography. Some of the most widely reproduced works of Pop Art—Ray Johnson's (1927-1995) collages of Elvis and James Dean, Warhol's *Marilyns*, Ruscha's "widescreen" Californian landscapes, for example—are each concerned with film culture in one way or another. Despite this, there is a notable absence of any comprehensive study of Pop Art's relationship to cinema. Although this thesis is in fact concerned with exploring the inverted

version of this question, namely determining if there is such a thing as a Pop-influenced experimental cinema, it is worth dwelling on this topic briefly as it can indicate why such an analysis of Pop and cinema has not been forthcoming.

In a 2009 editorial accompanying a special issue of the journal *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* devoted to the topic of 'absconding', the art historian Thomas Crow offers the, to-date, only academic engagement with the relationship between Pop and cinema (other curatorial and critical attempts to outline a body of Pop films since 2000 are discussed in Chapter One). In his article, 'The Absconded Subject of Pop', Crow argues that referents from popular culture that appear in Pop Art 'may be in the habit of absconding just when they might appear most firmly under the artist's control' (2009:5). According to Crow, by the end of the 1960s, the popular referent in Pop Art heads '[b]ack to the industries and media where it originated...altered and intensified by its passage through the crucible of self-consciousness that the sphere of fine art provides' (ibid). For Crow, this traversing of popular images, objects and motifs between the realm of high art and mass culture posed a threat to Pop artists whose fine art practices of painting and sculpture could be easily trumped by the popular mediums of film and music. It has always been assumed, Crow argues, that the makers of Pop Art 'occupied a safely superior position to their subject matter' (ibid) but the absconding of the Pop referent meant that the same vernacular cultures of design, movies and music were reabsorbed into the popular culture that inspired Pop Art, now bolstered by

the addition of a critical consciousness of their own. Ultimately for Crow, this absconding was the death knell of Pop painting. He writes:

The art public was swiftly schooled to regard a painting by Roy Lichtenstein or a James Rosenquist, even an Andy Warhol, through a redemptive lens whereby traditional values of formal probity and creative singularity maintained pride of place. Indeed it could be argued that the artists, by retaining an allegiance to stretched canvases and handcraft procedures, made this argument themselves. The cost of this attachment was that younger cohorts of fine artists had, by the close of the 1960s, moved on to other things, leaving Pop behind as an apparently closed art historical episode and its pioneers as admired but faintly irrelevant holdovers (ibid).

While much of Crow's focus in the rest of his article is on the deployment of the avant-garde self-awareness of Pop Art in pop music acts like The Who, he also briefly examines what he terms the 'mother lode of cinema' (2009:6). The reader is given an example of an absconding pop referent in the guise of John Schlesinger's 1963 film *Billy Liar*. Crow hones in on a particular sequence from the film that introduces the character of Liz (Julie Christie). She is shown, through verité-style camera work, walking on a recently refurbished high street where she is juxtaposed against an array of brand-new consumer goods, products and objects displayed in shop windows. While ambling along the road she witnesses the opening of a new grocery store. The shiny new world of consumerism is depicted in sharp contrast to the dilapidated northern English town (the film was shot in Bradford) which frames both her and the spectacle of consumption surrounding her body. Crow writes of this sequence: 'It would be difficult to adduce a more consummate contemporaneous work of Pop in any medium, one that combines with such economy the seduction of the new

affluence with its crass regimentation and, what is more, accomplish this within the actual popular medium that Pop art was supposed to filter' (2009:7). Crow's comments are in service to his overall argument that Pop Art declined in the 1960s precisely because its concerns (stylistic and aesthetic) migrated back to the common culture that had served as its foundations. The film, *Billy Liar*, is seen to be borrowing from Pop Art and is not a work of Pop Art in its own right.

A similar argument to Crow's was made in 1969 by the Pop Art theorist and curator Lawrence Alloway (1926-1990) who suggested that Pop Art went through three phases from the late 1950s to the late 1960s. In an essay for the British art periodical *Studio International* he proffered that Pop's first stage involved an expansion of the definition of aesthetics, which led to art being more fully related to its environment: 'In place of an hierarchic aesthetics keyed to define greatness, and separate high from low art, a continuum was assumed which could accommodate all forms of art, permanent and expendable, personal and collective, autographic and anonymous' (1969:21). This line of understanding was developed by Alloway himself in essays such as 'The Long Front of Culture' (see Alloway [1959] 2006). From the early 1960s onwards, Alloway claims that the definition of Pop Art narrowed 'to mean paintings that included a reference to a mass medium source' (ibid). Only a short time later, by 1965, Alloway claims that the status and definition of Pop Art shifts once more, a move that pre-empts its decline: 'It was returned', he writes, 'to the continuous and non-exclusive culture which it was originally supposed to cover

[...] Pop Art was de-aestheticized and re-anthropologised' (ibid). It had by the end of the decade, in other words, essentially left the realm of fine art entirely.

Alloway's argument is taken up by Crow in his editorial, stating that this re-anthropologising, or in his phrasing 'absconding of the Pop referent' can actually lead to a much richer and more self-aware popular culture, one that has taken on the teachings of Pop Art painting and sculpture. For Crow, *Billy Liar* is one such example of this. While I do not broadly disagree with any of these suggestions and appreciate Crow's logic, which allows for a much more democratic engagement with Pop that locates it in all arenas of cultural production, I believe that it is a narrow assessment to suggest that the Pop referent absconds to the world of mass culture *only to appear in narrative filmmaking*, amongst other sites of artistic production.² It is my argument in this thesis that a body of cinema exists, concurrent to and beyond the 1960s Pop years, which can be directly aligned with the concerns of Pop Art: works that constitute themselves as examples of Pop Art *tout court*.

What I will explore overall in this dissertation is the temporal and geographic elasticity of Pop Cinema. Evidenced by the range of films listed in this thesis' appendix, the dextrous nature of Pop Cinema is something with which this present work alone could not come to terms. This thesis opens the door to a more long-term project that could begin to account for the myriad interactions

² Crow expands his argument in the 2014 publication *The Long March of Pop*. Along with Schlesinger's film he also singles out Godard's *Le Mépris (Contempt)* (1963) seeing the film's central sequence in which Bridget Bardot alternates between wearing blonde and brunette wigs as an absconding metacommentary on Warhol's portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor (see Crow 2015:224-325).

between Pop Art and the moving-image from the late 1950s to our own contemporary moment, and which includes work by artists originating from Canada, France and Germany to Japan, Poland and Spain. Three case studies of Pop Cinema are examined from America/France, Britain and Germany; they are used as indicative artworks to explore the potential of seeing Pop Art through a cinematic lens.

Chapter One 'Pop Cinema: A History of a Concept' explores the history of the curation of films and other moving-image artworks in Pop exhibitions and gallery shows and then delves into the rich use of the phrases 'Pop Cinema' and 'Pop Film'. Locating the deployment of these terms in sources as varied as critical discourses on mainstream genre filmmaking and in advertising copy used to promote and understand North American experimental filmmaking in the 1960s. This dive into the critical and promotional discourses of film culture is furthered by an exploration of how the phrase 'Pop Cinema' has come to be used in the past fifteen years in relation to a series of programmes of film works, often designed to complement major survey exhibitions of Pop Art.

In the subsequent chapters I give examples of how certain films can be categorised as Pop Cinema, observing them in relation to discourses on Pop Art found in art historical scholarship. The overview of Chapter One is accompanied by three case studies, each focusing on a single artist and a work of Pop Cinema produced by them. In Chapter Two, titled '*Broadway by Light: William Klein's Pop between Stillness and Movement*', I present an examination of Klein's (b.1928) 1958 titular experimental documentary on the spectacle of Times Square's illuminated light signs. Klein himself has

described the work as the 'first Pop Film'. I test Klein's claim and I examine the work as an urtext of Pop Cinema, bringing the film into conversation with his Pop-tinged photography and situating it in debates around abstraction in Pop aesthetics. I also highlight the role ambivalence plays in critical understandings of Pop Art, noting how the film articulates a vision of the space that accounts for both its seductive and disconcerting aesthetic effect. I also examine the history of Times Square and its spectacles against such claims with reference to cultural history and advertisement trade publications. I conclude that the film should be read as a City Symphony for the Pop age, which uses the lights and advertisement hoardings of Times Square as readymade works of Pop Art.

In Chapter Three I return to the country that originated Pop Art, Britain, through an illumination of the work of Jeff Keen (1923-2012). I place Keen's work, and especially his film *Flik Flak* (1966) into a discussion about intermediality and collage by drawing on histories of Pop that figure collage as an important aesthetic underpinning to the movement. I illuminate Keen's broad art practice which took in filmmaking, painting, sculpture, writing and drawing, uncovering significant links between his art and the Pop Art being produced concurrently in America. I also offer a frame-by-frame breakdown of portions of Keen's dense and playful work. Revealing more than a simple, affirmative deluge of mass cultural ephemera from comic books and magazines, I find in Keen's montage a playful commentary on the overwhelming presence of mass media in everyday life, that concerns itself with the autobiographical and the deeply political.

Finally, in Chapter Four, 'Pop's Raw Material: Repetition, Advertising and Television in Peter Roehr's *Film Montages I-III* (1965)' I examine another artist who trades in appropriation but whose work has much more in common with techniques and tactics of Pop as filtered through the concurrent movement of Minimalism. I offer an in-depth exploration of Roehr's (1944-1968) short career and place his work in relation to the serial and minimalist Art that he saw himself as being in dialogue with. I place Roehr within the context of German Pop Art, which was much more overtly critical than its British forebears. Lastly, I argue that Roehr deploys strategies of repetition and erroneous editing of sound and image in his moving-image work, which results in a critique of the conventions of television spot advertising. This argument is foregrounded by an account of Pop Art moving-image works that are concerned with television and by debates on failure in relation to his own work and that of Warhol.

The works under scrutiny here emerge from a tradition of experimental and artists' filmmaking that chimes with that associated with the preceding movements of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism. Although it would be possible to develop a thesis that only looks at mainstream and conventional narrative films that play with the dynamics, style and concerns of Pop Art, I wish here to explore a register of filmmaking that occurred *in line with* Pop Art as it was being produced. Importantly, as will be elucidated by my examples, these Pop films pursue tactics and engagements with popular and mass cultural content while at the same time exploring these topics through the language of cinema itself. They are the cinematic contribution to Pop Art, a movement which

already claims painting, sculpture, architecture (see Foster 2004) and design (see Massey and Seago 2018) as part of its constitutional media. As such, the three case studies I will highlight each contain within their stylistic concerns a certain degree of rigour in terms of the formal exploration of film language—it is this that is used as a lens through which to explore images, symbols and media ecologies of mass and consumer culture and what makes them ideal test cases to argue for the existence of a Pop Cinema.

In the case of *Broadway by Light*, Klein uses camera movement and a variety of frame rates to communicate his ambivalent feelings towards the spectacle of Times Square at night, a space he argued contained the potential for both 'beauty' and 'brainwashing'. In Keen's work, an intermedial combination of rapid montage editing and stop-motion animation are employed to simulate the effect of being overwhelmed by a mass media-saturated environment. In Roehr's *Film-Montages*, the German artist relies on repetition and deliberately erroneous sound dubbing to create an absurd riff on TV ads for shampoo and gasoline. I contend that each of these examples are specimens of a neglected body of film practice. Not simply borrowing from the themes and ideas of Pop as they emerged in Pop painting and sculpture, these works are in and of themselves works of Pop Art, contending, often concurrently, with issues pertaining to the emergence and dominance of mass and consumer culture in the middle of the Twentieth century. The fact that cinema itself was a medium of such inspiration to other Pop artists complicates this matter and is a reason that a Pop Cinema has not been theorised or examined academically in any substantial way. This thesis will rectify that omission.

Chapter One: Pop Cinema: A History of a Concept

In 2008, curator and gallerist Tanya Leighton assembled a short programme of films for a touring exhibition organised by the UK exhibition advisory body The Independent Cinema Office. The programme, simply titled 'Pop' was one of six subsections (the others were 'Dreams', 'Expression', 'Play', 'Modernity', and 'Protest') compiled under the banner 'Essentials: Secret Masterpieces of Cinema'. The project's mission statement called the show 'a tour of classic works that have blazed a trail through the visual arts, fashion, music and design, influencing countless artists and films' (Independent Cinema Office 2008: online). It ran in multiple venues across the UK from January 2008 to October 2009 including the Tate Modern, the National Media Museum in Bradford and the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol. In a text which accompanied the listing of the films to be shown, Leighton asked the following: 'What is pop cinema? There is no consensus as to what constitutes pop cinema; the notion that there might be a pop cinema has not been theorised [...] Pop cinema is a particularly strange and difficult cinema to classify' (Leighton 2008: online). Leighton's answer to her own question positions Pop Cinema as a rather omnivorous category of filmmaking. Her own selection is rooted in the complex web of pan-continental underground and avant-garde film movements from the late 1950s onwards. 'On the one hand', she writes, 'aspects of pop can be seen in many strands of avant-garde film and artist's experiments with the moving-image, from independent, underground or experimental cinema, expanded cinema, structuralist or structuralist materialist cinema, Fluxus film, minimal film, and so on' (ibid). On the other hand, she notes at the end of her

short exegesis, '[a] pop cinema could also be understood in relation to the Free Cinema movement of the fifties' (ibid). Leighton's selection (in chronological order) is as follows:

- *Broadway by Light* (William Klein, 1957)
- *Film Montage I* (Peter Roehr, 1965)
- *When I Was Young* (Peter Whitehead, 1965)
- *----- (aka The Rock and Roll Film)* (Thom Andersen, Malcolm Brodwick, 1966-67)
- *Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (Ronald Nameth, 1967-2005)
- *Link* (Derek Boshier, 1970)
- *Marvo Movie* (Jeff Keen, 1967)
- *The Selling Of New York* (Nam June Paik, 1972)
- *I'm Not The Girl Who Misses Much* (Pipilotti Rist, 1986).

This programme represents a cornucopia of differing styles and modes of filmmaking. The films chosen certainly emphasise the broad categorisation of Pop Cinema as it is described by Leighton. Amongst these works are two films which will be explored in-depth as case studies for this thesis (Klein and Roehr), and which will be taken as definitive examples of Pop Cinema. But also in the listing are examples of proto-music videos (Whitehead), documentation of a performance/happening (Nameth), and a seminal work of feminist video art (Rist). Can the label Pop Cinema really be productive as a designation of certain traits, styles and themes in experimental film practice when the examples which appear to form it are so disparate? And what, if any, are the relationships (aesthetic, thematic, authorial) between such works and more traditional expressions of Pop art in the mediums of painting and sculpture?

To begin to answer these questions I will turn to some other conceptualisations of Pop Cinema which have emerged in the wake of Leighton's. In the past ten years, since the distribution of the Independent Cinema Office's programme, there has been a raft of exhibitions of Pop Art which have included large and oftentimes equally varied programmes of films defined by their curators as 'Pop Cinema'³. The majority of these shows, like Leighton's, have consisted of an array of non-narrative films with many works (such as *Broadway by Light*) appearing repeatedly. The exception here is the programme associated with *Pop to Popism* (2014) which had an equally large number of mainstream, narrative films. For the most part, however, each selection presents a wide array of very different works, with examples of Japanese animation, American underground cinema and Disney movies all falling under a series of diversely defined rubrics. This is not to critique these attempts at outlining a corpus of Pop Cinema as vague (two of the shows are accompanied by quite prescriptive catalogue essays as will be shown below), but it highlights the sheer variety of what could constitute Pop Cinema, and illuminates some of the methodological problems when thinking of the moving-image in relation to Pop Art. Is cinema in itself a Pop Art? Can Hollywood genre filmmaking ever be considered Pop? Is Hollywood a raw ingredient for Pop Art and Pop Films? What is the relationship between Pop Art and underground filmmaking? Is Pop Cinema an international phenomenon? Does Pop Cinema share the same aesthetic and thematic concerns with its static counterparts? What are the historical boundaries of a Pop cinema? Does it need to be made

³ The shows are listed in an appendix to this thesis.

at the same time as the flourishing of the art movement? This thesis will address some of these issues. I will begin by offering some definitions of Pop Art as a movement. Then, responding to some of the problems posed by Leighton, I will give an account of the history of the relationship between cinema and Pop Art, assessing how this interaction has been theorised by a number of writers and how cinema has become less marginalised in exhibitions and writings concentrating on the history of Pop Art. My own conceptualisation of Pop Cinema will rely on discourses around underground film practice and the wider culture of film reception in the 1960s, and the role of Hollywood as a point of reference to Pop filmmakers.

Pop Art: From Britain to America, From Celebration to Ambivalence

Pop Art—fine art practice which is modelled after or makes significant reference to artefacts of popular and mass culture—has been the subject of a large body of scholarly discourse since the late 1950s. This makes specific definitions and accurate histories of the movement quite challenging to pin down. In order to place Pop Art under a lens of scrutiny, to determine what it is, where it came from and what it is about, it is perhaps most instructive to first examine the movement in relation to what it was reacting to. This is a complex negotiation as Pop itself could be said to have a number of origin stories. It is outside of the scope of this present chapter to offer a meticulous exploration of the competing narratives which claim to illuminate the first articulations of Pop Art. For the sake of brevity and of focusing on some of the main ideas

which are pertinent to the later discussion of Pop Cinema, I will here tether my history of Pop to its origins in Britain in the immediate post-WWII period and in America in the early 1960s.⁴

The primal scene of Pop Art in the United Kingdom can be related quite appropriately to a quasi-cinematic context. In 1952 the Scottish-born artist Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005) gave a lecture at the nascent Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Accompanying his talk to a gathering of artists, architects and intellectuals, who would soon after group themselves under the moniker the Independent Group, Paolozzi, using an epidiascope, projected a series of collages onto a wall. Today this proto-Pop Cinema moment is known as the 'Bunk Lecture'. The images displayed on that April evening were part of a scrapbook portfolio which Paolozzi had been assembling since 1947. Contained within each page of the portfolio was an assortment of pictorial fragments cut and torn from mass-marketed American magazines which the artist had obtained through various sources (including from American soldiers) while living in Paris after the war. Paolozzi's collages featured elements including cartoons, sci-fi robots, *Time* magazine covers, celebrity gossip mastheads and softcore pornography (for a fuller breakdown of the contents

⁴ For progenitors and prototypes of Pop before this date, it is common to look to the work of American painter Stuart Davis (1892-1964), who often took consumer products as his subject. In his research on Pop sensibilities preceding the twentieth century, Thomas Crow (2005) has argued for viewing the sign paintings, posters and graphic designs of artists such as Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), Jules Chéret (1836-1932) and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) as foundational of the Pop lineage. Of course the French movement of *Nouveau Réalisme* in the 1960s is also deeply tied to and concurrent with Anglo-American Pop. This internationalisation of Pop in the context of recent exhibitions will be further attended to below.

of the works see Stonard 2008). These collage compositions were seen by many of the attendees in the room as a blueprint and inspiration for an art which was forward-looking, unafraid to encroach on and take mass-cultural objects and artefacts as its subject, and willing to leave behind a dreary, post-war landscape of visual culture. The Bunk Lecture was a celebratory and affirmative appropriation of popular culture material. In a letter to the architects and members of the Independent Group, Alison Smithson (1928-1993) and Peter Smithson (1923-2003), Richard Hamilton (1922-2011), Paolozzi's friend and equally-important progenitor of Pop, summarised his own definition of the movement which sprang to life in the wake of Paolozzi's intervention. His letter contained a list which could easily be an assessment of the *Bunk!* collages:

Pop Art is: Popular (designed for a mass audience).

Transient (short-term solution).

Expendable (easily forgotten).

Low cost.

Mass produced.

Young (aimed at youth).

Witty.

Sexy.

Gimmicky.

Glamorous.

Big Business.

This is just the beginning. (Hamilton [1957] 2005).

In alignment with Hamilton's semi-manifesto outlining the qualities of the movement, later critical understandings of Pop saw its treatment of popular culture in a similarly affirmative vein. This perspective is emblematised in the

British anthology *Pop Art Redefined* (1969), an important collection of writing on Pop which aligned itself with Hamilton's sympathies for the democratic and direct nature of the movement. Take for example the opinion of one of the book's editors John Russell: 'Pop is not a satirical art...it is an affirmative art, and affection plays a great part in it... [it possesses] a robust and natural enjoyment of the things in life that are open to everyone' (Russell 1969:22). Russell's commentary, Hamilton's list and Paolozzi's *Bunk!* collages cast Pop in Britain as relishing in the explosion of consumer goods, technologies, leisure products and their attendant advertisements in newspapers and magazines. Cold War politics and the Americanisation of mass culture in Britain were important contexts for the production of this work and will be more fully explored in Chapter Three in my discussion of Jeff Keen's work.

Beyond the appeal of imagery derived from popular and consumer culture as a form of distraction and an aesthetic marker of the potential escape from wartime austerity, there was another layer of meaning to be extrapolated from this shift towards a consideration of the ephemeral and quotidian mass media in fine art practice. Another Independent Group member, Lawrence Alloway (1926-1990) was a champion of Pop Art and popular culture, and moreover, was a key transatlantic link between the two sites of Pop's germination, as he left England to take up a curatorial position at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1961. Before leaving for America, Alloway penned one of the most influential accounts of the new Pop sensibility in art and culture. Crucially, for Alloway this movement was the manifestation not only of positive attitudes

towards cultural forms like popular music, cinema and comic books, but was an important weapon in the war against what he saw as the pretensions and shortcomings of Modernism—or at least a specific theory of Modernism espoused by the American art critic Clement Greenberg (1909-1994).

Greenberg's theory of Modernism is multifaceted, but its core idea hinges on a conceptualisation of fine art which views painting and sculpture especially as being apart from other works of culture. In one of his most influential essays, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' ([1939]1986), Greenberg refers to anything which is not fine art (folk art, utilitarian crafts and popular culture) as 'kitsch', a term which is employed derisively. Kitsch is not serious, it does not have the capacity to move art forward or to purify art, it is frivolous and vulgar—in short, it is not worthy of extended examination. This line of thought is developed in his 1960 essay 'Modernist Painting', in which Greenberg holds that the best artworks are ones which embark on a rigorous exploration of the specificities of their medium. For Greenberg this meant, for example, that a great painter creates paintings dependent on gesture, colour, form, and flatness, all of which are qualities specific to the medium of painting. Importantly Greenberg insisted that any reference to other works outside of the medium at hand—any comingling of aesthetic forms—would render the artwork redundant and a failure of pure modernist expression. For Greenberg modernist art could be traced as a lineage back to the late nineteenth century French paintings of Édouard Manet (1832-1883), but the most abiding expression of the modernist aesthetic was to be found in the work of American Abstract Expressionist painters such as Jackson Pollock (1912-1956), Mark Rothko (1903-1970) and

Franz Kline (1910-1962). The renunciation of figuration and dive into gestural, often volumetric, expressions of pure colour and form by these artists represented the epitome of modernist art for Greenberg. Writing in between the publication of Greenberg's two essays, Alloway struck back at the Greenbergian line and the coterie of cultural elitists for which he was a standard bearer:

These 'keepers of the flame' masters of a central (not too large) body of cultural knowledge, meditate on it, and pass it on intact (possibly a little enlarged) to the children of the elite. However, mass production techniques, applied to accurately repeatable words, pictures, and music, have resulted in an expendable multitude of signs and symbols. To approach this exploding field with Renaissance-based ideas of the uniqueness of art is crippling ([1959] 2006: 62)

Alloway saw mass cultural forms which would become allied with Pop—forms which Greenberg would label 'kitsch'—as being an antidote to the rarefied and pretentious conceptualisation of Modernism proffered by his American colleague. In the post-war age, popular culture was burgeoning on both sides of the Atlantic. The circulation of images in the form of colourful photographs in advertisements and features in glossy magazines like *Vogue* (1892-) and popular weekly photo journals like *Life* (1936-1972) in America, and *Picture-Post* (1938-1957) in Britain became much more prevalent in the post-war years. Both visual and verbal discourses became 'endlessly repeatable' to borrow Alloway's phrasing. The dissemination of music, another example of pop culture which Alloway draws on, was now cheaper, of a higher quality and much more user friendly than at any other point in history thanks to the manufacturing of seven-inch 45rpm vinyl records (mass production of which began in 1949), which proved more durable and more popular than their

shellac predecessor. For Alloway, though talking about popular culture more generally and not fine art *per se*, this kind of cultural activity would inevitably be reflected in art. Greenbergian understandings of the arts as 'unique', 'pure' and separate from one another give way in this context to a continuation of the pre-war avant-garde project so central to Dada and Surrealism: art was now again concerned with cross-modal and interdisciplinary imbrications of high and low culture. Figuration also made a return to art in this post-war period. Following on from their Independent Group antecedents, American artists such as Jasper Johns (b.1930) and Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008), began to create works which included everyday products, signs and symbols both as subjects and objects placed onto the very fabric of their canvases. They were soon followed by a raft of painters who rigorously reproduced the look of consumer goods and mass cultural products, from food packaging to Hollywood heartthrobs. By the early 1960s artists such as Thomas Wesselman (1931-2004), James Rosenquist (1933-2017) and Wayne Thiebaud (b.1920) took to employing clean lines and bright primary colours to articulate this vision in a manner not dissimilar from industrially fabricated designs.

While Alloway championed the liberating potential of popular culture as a democratic and unpretentious good, the same enthusiastic reception was not forthcoming in early critical responses to Pop Art in America. Although, as I have shown, Pop has its symbolic and practical roots in the affirmative atmosphere of Post-war Britain, its solidification occurred in early 1960s New York. Examining some of the critical reception of early Pop exhibitions can

illuminate an understanding of Pop as a divisive phenomenon. This also sets the stage for viewing the movement's potential to be considered subversive and critical of consumer culture or, conversely, as complicit with and celebratory of a world in which surface meaning and reference to mass culture have become the *de rigeur* response to high Modernism. This binary view has come to be questioned by scholars of Pop Art in the years since its most important decade, a shift which has led to the movement being viewed on a continuum defined neither wholly by critique or complicity but by a cold and detached ambivalence. Some critics have even put forward the idea that Pop represents a final iteration of Modernism.

In its abandoning of the ideals associated with Greenberg's criticism, Pop Art set about attempting to 'rediscover the world through the common object' (Woods, et al 1972:12). This re-emergence of the consideration of everyday objects proved to be extremely divisive in Anglo-American critical circles. The perception of Pop as a vulgar proposition was immediate. Max Kozloff (b.1933), writing on a clutch of New York gallery shows held during late winter of 1962 (including work by Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997), James Rosenquist, Claes Oldenburg (b.1929) and Jim Dine (b.1935)), was acerbic in his distaste for the subject matter chosen by Pop artists, but also equally disparaging of the popular culture which Alloway championed. Kozloff is worth quoting at length as he finds Pop suspect both in its affirmative guise, and its potentially radical or critical one. He speaks first of some of Rosenquist's paintings modelled after billboard signs:

Are we supposed to regard our popular sign board culture with greater fondness or insight now that we have Rosenquist? Or is he exhorting us to revile it, that is, to do what has come naturally to every sane and sensitive person in this country for years. If the first, the intent is pathological, and if the second, dull. The truth is, the art galleries are being invaded by the pin-headed and contemptible style of gum chewers, bobby soxers, and worst, delinquents. Not only can I not get romantic about this, I see as little reason to find it appealing as I would an hour of rock and roll into which has been inserted a few notes of modern music ([1962] 1997:32)

Kozloff's severe critical account of the salad days of Pop is not only disparaging of the choice of subject matter of these artists, which he refers to throughout his review as 'kitsch', but also sees the influx of mass culture representing a juvenilization of fine art practice which has 'bobby soxers' in its sights as a potential audience, or better still fan base. In a similarly indignant appraisal of the movement, the art critic Alan Solomon (1920-1970) is equally suspicious of this turn towards the subjects of quotidian consumer culture. In his essay 'The New Art' from 1963, Solomon furthers Kozloff's line of snobbery in which a perceived elite of taste-makers knows better than a group of artists who have

turned with relish and excitement to what those of us who know better regard as the wasteland of television commercials, comic strips, hotdog stands, billboards...jukeboxes and supermarkets. They have done so not in the spirit of contempt or social criticism or self-conscious snobbery, but out of an affirmative and unqualified commitment to the present circumstances and to a fantastic new wonderland, or, more properly, Disneyland [...] We cannot help but be anxious or cynical about the activities of these artists in the face of what we know to be 'true' about Disneyland as a source of esthetic meaning ([1963]1966: 71-72).

Terms such as 'wasteland' point towards an inherent disregard for not only objects of mass culture but also entire media and genres, such as television,

comic books, and advertising. Solomon goes further than Kozloff however; for him it is not enough that these kinds of subjects have become the concern of fine art. His assumption is that the artists allow such culture to encroach into the worlds of high culture without interrogation or criticism. Such artists without a sense of 'contempt or social criticism' are transforming the world of fine art into a hollow, and again juvenile, Disneyland. Kozloff and Solomon's views appear reactionary from the vantage point of our own contemporary moment, but their stick-in-the-mud attitudes were also challenged by their peers. Another prevailing understanding at the time counteracts them, which is a reading of Pop as a form of realism, reflecting the heightened consumer culture of post-war America.

The sense of Pop being a form of realism, that is, an art movement concerned with investigating the visual culture common to the contemporary world, is reflected in the titles of early group exhibitions of the movement such as 'New Painting of Common Objects' (Pasadena Art Museum, 1962) and phrases used to describe the movement before the name Pop stuck, including 'New Realism'. In a rare artist's statement, Andy Warhol (1928-1987) conflated Pop's potentials for both affirmation and critique while also presenting his art's subjects as a matter of fact, as products of a consumer society ready to be interpolated by and become worthy of artistic interpretation: 'I adore America and these are comments on it. My image is a statement of the symbols of the harsh, impersonal products and brash materialistic objects on which America is built today. It is a projection of everything that can be bought and sold, the practical and impermanent symbols that sustain us' (Warhol 1962:42). Warhol

would tread a much more ambivalent line when engaging in public discourse about his work as he became more established as a Pop artist (for more on Warhol's crafting of his public persona see Kresap 2004). But his contention that many of the symbols and products of American consumer culture are 'harsh' and 'impersonal' and that his art may reflect them as they are, is in common with more progressive critical accounts of Pop in the early 1960s.

Reviewing the Alloway-curated Guggenheim exhibition 'Six Painters and the Object' from 1963, Stuart Preston wrote in the *New York Times* that Pop Art was a form of biting satirical commentary, with the 'monstrous solemnities' of American culture in its cross-hairs. 'We can only be grateful', Preston concludes, 'for these genial jesters and for their pointfulness [*sic*] in deflating balloons. The deep, dark secret of Pop art is that it is anti-popular with a vengeance' (Preston 1963:8). Many of the works included in the Guggenheim show took as their subject common signs and products of American mass culture. Jasper Johns' *Three Flags* (1958) and Roy Lichtenstein's *Ice Cream Soda* (1962) deal with and represent ubiquitous objects. Marshall McLuhan wrote of how the very ubiquity of Pop by the mid-1960s could highlight the artifice and emptiness of its commercial and mass cultural subject matter. Pop could make us aware of the shallowness of our hyper-mediated modern environment, which serves only to propagate aggressive consumerism:

Pop art serves to remind us [...] that we have fashioned for ourselves a world of artefacts and images that are intended not to train perception or awareness but to insist that we merge with them as the primitive man merges with his environment. The world of modern advertising is a magical environment constructed to produce effects for the total economy but not designed to increase human awareness [...] Pop Art

is the product of drawing attention to some object in our own daily environment as if it were anti-environmental (2005: 7-8)

These positive views of Pop align it with what would later be termed the 'Neo Avant-Garde' (Foster 1996:1-34)—artists who concern themselves with a political critique in line with Peter Burger's conceptualisation of the pre-war avant-garde (1984). One can witness the continued valence of this progressive view of Pop in more recent literature; it is also possible still to see the converse view of Pop as affirmative of commercial imagery.

In her 2005 book *Pop art and the Contest over American Culture* Sara Doris comes down emphatically on the side of Pop as critical of consumer culture by arguing that the movement amounted to an expression of 'resistant cultural practice' (2005:62). In contrast, in a statement opening his guest-edited issue of *Artforum* on Pop, Jack Bankowsky summarised what remained, for many, Pop's almost odious character: 'Pop art is a nasty bit of work. It toadies to the powers that be *and* plays to the peanut gallery; broadcasts our dirty secrets but never lets us in on its own. Pop art is pushy, unapologetic, expedient—and amnesiac. It glories in the way things are and doesn't worry much about the way they should be' (2004:39, original emphasis). Hal Foster's recent comments on Pop seem to accept that such disparities exist, but he argues that this does not and should not preclude us from seeing a productive critical worth, or moments of 'criticality' (2012:250), in Pop: 'Here the very ambivalence of Pop toward high and low cultures becomes double: often, rather than having it both ways, Pop values the two cultures even as it injects

a modicum of doubt into our relations to each'; 'at times', he surmises, 'I want to insist, Pop highlights cultural contradictions in ways that do produce critical consciousness' (ibid). Foster's comments offer a combination of previous outlooks on the critical validity or lack thereof of Pop; but ultimately, in his view, its critical potential wins out. Pop, it could be said, has throughout the history of its reception existed between these two poles: as a set of potent subversions, or as a crass and hollow pandering to the status quo of mass culture.

Published in the same year as Foster's book, Bradford Collins' study also wishes to re-orientate the field, stating that his own history of Pop will be an attempt to lay to rest the debate of whether or not Pop was 'for' or 'against' popular and mass culture. 'To be sure', he writes, 'the focus of much Pop art was popular culture. Some of this was critical, some complicit, some ambiguous. But Pop artists also dealt with an extraordinary range of other individual, artistic and historical issues — from sex, love, and death to aesthetics, from the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War to feminism' (2012:12).

Pop's reception, like the movement itself, is complex and multifaceted. One of the most illuminating shifts in the constantly dynamic interpretations of Pop is its relationship to Modernism. Following the arguments of Greenberg and Alloway, one could argue for Pop's status as a quintessentially postmodern art movement which incorporates imagery from a world of 'kitsch' which would have no place in proper Greenbergian Modernism. Moreover, the often cold

and detached nature of Pop, its direct simulation and hard-edged style, can be understood as a deadpan aesthetic, which refuses commentary. Pop, it could be argued, employs what Frederick Jameson—one of the seminal diagnosticians of postmodernism—astutely labelled ‘blank parody’ (1983:114), a cornerstone tactic of postmodernist art strategy. Recent views of Pop, however, have wished to re-interpret some of the key artists of the movement along modernist lines. Such an interpretation allows us to see more fully the exploded sense of Pop alluded to by Collins—that popular culture was simply the prism through which a myriad of themes and ideas were explored and that the categories of ‘for’ and ‘against’ could sometimes exist concurrently. This expanded view of Pop is the one I shall bring to bear on Pop Cinema in the next part of this chapter.

The common view of Roy Lichtenstein’s paintings is that they represent direct copies, or simulations of the comic book panels and newspaper advertisements which they took as their models. In Douglas McClellan’s review of an early Lichtenstein show, the critic claims accordingly that the artist has ‘rearranged nothing’ (1963:47). This perspective has been complicated by writers like Michael Lobel, who asserts that Lichtenstein’s process of creation was much more complex than previously thought. Whereas one might assume that Lichtenstein simply scaled up his source images and projected them onto his canvases before diligently tracing them by hand, Lobel explores in his book *Image Duplicator* (2002) a more complex practice in which Lichtenstein would actually hand-draw a copy of a comic book panel and then blow up his image

and use it as the source from which to be traced. Lobel's revelation has several consequences, including placing Lichtenstein into conversations about the medium specificity of painting in the early 1960s. The tension in these works between the handmade, gestural act of the artist and the mechanical reproduction of the image feeds into debates central to Modernism, regarding mechanisation and artistic subjectivity in the wake of Abstract Expressionism. For Lobel, Lichtenstein takes images from mass culture not in order to create a pure commentary on pop culture but instead to use such material to intervene in and complicate the history of Modernist painting.

Lobel's vision of Lichtenstein's intervention casts the artist as a positive force of a certain type of self-aware Modernism. Latterly, however, there have been engagements with Lichtenstein's appropriations of comic book and other forms of mass-marketed imagery which paint the artist as being regressive and misguided in his failure to recognise the progressive content of some of the images he copied. This debate regarding Lichtenstein's attitude towards mass culture heightened after Lobel's book. Bart Beaty assessed the painter's reputation amongst comic book fans, amongst whom Lichtenstein is dismissed as a propagator of the long-held opinion that comic books are a lowly art form, a source that he simply uses for his own gain (Beaty 2004). Lichtenstein has also been received as a critic of popular culture, in the wake of the publishing of a previously un-transcribed interview with the artist held at the Archives of American Art. In this conversation with John Jones, Lichtenstein assumes a position on pop culture which seeks to use it for the kind of modernist

experiments in painting which Lobel posits, while at the same time being deeply dismissive of its legitimacy as a form of cultural expression. In a tone not unlike Kozloff or Solomon, Lichtenstein speaks of the 'vulgarity' (in Jones 2009:21) of this culture: 'I certainly don't think that popular life has a good social effect. In fact, I think it is just the opposite... it's not a society that I would really like to live in' (in Jones 2009:27).

Thanks to the Lichtenstein Foundation's efforts in producing an archive of original sources for a wide array of the artist's works, scholars have been able to contextualise many of his paintings and witness some of the significant transformations that were made to both the images themselves, and the repression of what were often quite progressive narratives in the comic books he plundered. Here Lichtenstein's potential to be read as a modernist is not as a radical aesthete of painting but as the gate keeper of high culture. Anthony Grudin has done more than any other scholar to engage Lichtenstein on this front. In his book on Warhol, Pop and class, Grudin writes that Lichtenstein was engaged in 'a consistent and concerted effort, not just to make beautiful or elegant paintings, but to rid those paintings of what [he] saw as the overbearing vulgarity that characterised their sources' (2017:21). To evidence this claim Grudin makes a systematic comparison of several Lichtenstein works, including one of his most well-known, *Drowning Girl* (1963). Within the narrative content of the pulp comic books from which Lichtenstein's sources were wrested, Grudin finds palpable moments of progressive politics which are undermined by Lichtenstein's isolation of individual frames. For

instance, regarding *Drowning Girl*, which is based on an issue of DC Comics' *Secret Hearts* from November 1962, he writes: '*Drowning Girl* captures the moment in the story when Vickie's role shifts from hero to helpless victim [...] through their selective borrowings, Lichtenstein's paintings work to elide the story's subtext of feminine competence and valour' (2017:25). Grudin's intervention into the archival context of Lichtenstein's art complicates the artist's relationship to Modernism yet again. Here he is aligned with a more conservative Modernism that casts the *Secret Hearts* comic book as a vulgar, bad object, but one that can become a vital ingredient in a much more "serious" project of challenging the condition of painting at the end of Modernism.

As this brief exploration of Pop and Modernism in relation to one artist demonstrates, Pop is never clear-cut in its meanings or intentions. Its complexity as an object of scholarly enquiry has led to its examination under a myriad of interpretative lenses. It is pertinent to the wider subject of this thesis—that is to say, the relationship between Pop Art and Cinema—that much more work has been done in the past fifteen years to nuance our comprehension of Pop Art, in which the moving image has also come into sharper view in a Pop Art context.

The Expansion of Pop

Since the turn of the new millennium there have been a spate of events in the world of Pop curation and dissemination which have begun to highlight the sheer diversity of Pop as a mode of geographically and temporally disparate

art making, incorporating mediums beyond painting and sculpture. It is within this context that the growing attention being paid to Pop Cinema can be recognised.

Two of these events came through the work of curator Mark Francis. The first was a landmark show at the Centre Pompidou entitled 'Les Années Pop' (The Pop Years, 2001), a densely-crammed exhibition which acted as a survey of both Pop Art and pop culture from the years 1956-1968. Importantly, alongside the traditional and expected works of Pop (paintings, prints and sculptures) from the canon, were an array of items taking in popular design and architectural plans, poetry, photography, piped-in pop records and films. Even to glance casually through the catalogue (Francis 2001) is to be overwhelmed by a plethora of art objects and cultural artefacts from the era. The show's disjointed, pin board aesthetic was at once criticised for its uneven tone and the sheer surfeit of material on display (Berrebi 2001) and if not exactly the object of rhapsodic praise, seen as a step in the right direction towards a vision of Pop which accounts for its diversity. Marco Livingstone (2001), thought it appropriate for such iconic works of Pop Art to be seen on a continuum with the popular culture at large with which it co-existed and to which it responded. Four years after the show at the Pompidou, Francis condensed and streamlined his mammoth selection into an edited survey of the movement for Phaidon Press (2005). With this work, Francis began laying the foundation for a divided vision of Pop Cinema, between popular films invested in surface aesthetics, and those that are more politically ambivalent, complex examples

of Pop rooted in experimental film practice. This split can be seen in Francis' inclusion of films such as Michael Gordon's *Pillow Talk* (1959), doubtless included because of the film's comic book panel aesthetic, and Bruce Connor's *A Movie* (1958), a touchstone of found footage filmmaking, celebrated for its artful and playful collaging of disparate mass film forms, from softcore pornography to newsreels.

By the mid-2010s there was a veritable glut of Pop retrospectives across three continents. Four massive shows - 'Pop to Popism' at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2014-2015); 'Post Pop: East Meets West' at Saatchi Gallery, London (2014-2015); 'International Pop' at The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2015); and 'The World goes Pop' at Tate Modern, London (2015-2016) - all placed a significant emphasis on Pop from around the globe, with work from countries including China, Japan, Russia, Ukraine, Brazil and Argentina displayed alongside their traditional Anglo-American and Western European counterparts. This radical geographic expansion of the pop idiom was matched by a stretching of Pop's timeline; it ended not in the late 1960s as Francis' work had done, but rather reached beyond even what Collins (2012) had identified as 'Neo-Pop'—work from the Pictures Generation (Jack Goldstein (1945-2003), Dara Birnbaum (b.1946) and Richard Prince (b.1949)—to include our own contemporary 'post pop' moment, with current work by global artists channelling the themes and aesthetics of the movement. As Marco Livingstone writes in one of the catalogue essays for 'Post Pop: East Meets West': 'Pop principles are now insinuated into the work of a high

percentage of contemporary artists who might not even see themselves as direct heirs to Pop'. He continues: '[T]he sheer force of Pop's legacy is such that a truly global exhibition could be mounted on the subject' (2014:55). The four major shows were staged almost concurrently, a testament to the volume of work now absorbed under the Pop umbrella. The final and most important unifying factor (at least for this research) is that all four exhibitions contained moving-image works; what was an outlier before the year 2000 has now become a key ingredient for any Pop show wishing to expand the contours of the movement. Unlike Leighton's Pop programme encountered above, the moving-image component of these shows (minus 'Post Pop: East Meets West', which only incorporated a handful of video works within the gallery space itself) was conceived of as a sidebar programme to play separately from and complement the gallery shows. With the timeline of Pop now fully stretched beyond the 1960s and the places of origin diversified, the moment had come for film curators to attempt to form a consensus as to what constitutes Pop Cinema. It is to these efforts that I now turn my attention.

Towards A Pop Cinema

As early as 1962 Lawrence Alloway had begun to conflate what he called 'Pop Art' with film. In a BBC radio lecture, he spoke of the centrality of film as a reference point for Pop Art. In his assessment, which appears unusual today given the artist's reputation as one of the foremost Expressionist painters of the 20th century, Alloway was resolute that Francis Bacon should be

considered a formative Pop artist purely because of the intermedial reference to cinema in his painting:

Pop art begins in London about 1949 with work by Francis Bacon. He used, in screaming heads that he painted at this time, a still from an old movie, *The Battleship Potemkin* [1925]. This image, of the nurse wounded in the eye in the Odessa-steps sequence, though mixed with other elements, of course, was central to the meaning of the work ([1962] 2004:57)

The centrality of the cinema as a reference point within Pop Art - and as Alloway notes, within Pop's potential to generate meaning - is a curiously under-researched element in the history of Pop Art history and criticism. In the accompanying catalogue essays to their respective Pop cinema programmes, both William Kaizen ('Notes on Pop Cinema' (2011)) and Ed Halter ('Pop and Cinema: Three Tendencies' (2015a)), speak of, in Halter's words, 'the movies' foundational influence on the development of Pop and its visual vocabulary' (2015a:182). Kaizen opens his essay by stating that this influence is 'acknowledged in histories of Pop Art' (2011:11), though he neglects to reference any such historical writing which highlights this connection explicitly. Although Halter takes us on a brief tour of examples where the aesthetics of the cinema and its iconography (of stars and advertising as well as the semantic codes of film language) mix with those of Pop painting, like Kaizen he neglects to point us in the direction of where to find such scholarship on the nature of the relationship and influence between cinema and Pop art ⁵. This is

⁵ Halter highlights the importance of film culture to London's Independent Group, and further brings to light examples of the Californian Ed Ruscha, and the East Coast painter Rosalyn Drexler, both of whom use the aesthetics of cinematic frames, perspectives and screen ratios throughout their work. Further research on this is extant. Drexler is especially noteworthy in this regard (see Minioudaki 2007). For a consideration of Ruscha's relationship to cinema see

a problem of a scale and complexity whose exploration falls outside of this research, but it is still important to highlight as it remains worthy of more academic engagement. If the two critics are united in their acknowledgement of a preceding discourse detailing the influence of film culture on Pop Art, they diverge significantly in their versions of the history of the production of cinema itself in relation to Pop art. In what follows I trace this history of the interrelation of Pop Art and cinema as it has been considered by critics and curators. I take in accounts contemporaneous to the emergence and dominance of Pop in the art world and then move on to discuss the recent surge in curatorial and critical activity associated with the expansionist view of Pop which has come about in the past fifteen years or so, and which has sought to encompass the moving-image.

In his catalogue essay, which accompanies a standalone screening programme of films collected under the title 'Pop Cinema: Film and Art in the US and UK, 1950s-1970s', the academic and curator William Kaizen opens with a bold statement: 'From the outset I should be clear that "Pop Cinema" is a category of my own invention. There has never been a movement called Pop Cinema, and few artists declared themselves makers of Pop films' (ibid). Kaizen's statement is unusual. He thanks Tanya Leighton in the acknowledgements to the short piece, crediting her programme as the inspiration for his own, a programme which Leighton herself refers to

Mary Richards (2008). I discuss one of the only explicit attempts to account for Pop's relationship to cinema in this thesis' Introduction.

consistently as an attempt to outline a body of work which could be called Pop Cinema (Leighton 2008: online). Kaizen repeats Leighton's own acknowledgement of a lack of any formative debates around Pop Cinema ('There is no consensus as to what constitutes pop cinema; the notion that there might be a pop cinema has not been theorised'); there is thus a simultaneous recognition and non-recognition of Leighton's own endeavour to map the field. In the absence of a dialogue with any forbearers, Kaizen offers a quick definition which could equally stand as a simple understanding of Pop more broadly: 'All of these works share a focus on the entanglement of the mass media and everyday life during a time when the daily presence of media, and particularly mass-produced entertainment, was increasing' (2011:11).

While Kaizen's definition is vague, his broad church understanding of Pop Cinema acts as an ideal elastic cover-all which can host the variety of discourses attempting to articulate Pop Cinema from the late 1950s onwards. I offer an overview here of some of the more significant of these accounts, tracing Pop Cinema through discourses attached to popular, mainstream and narrative film and experimental/underground cinema. In concluding this chapter, I provide various ways in which Pop Cinema can be categorised and understood, with examples from throughout post-war film history.

The first wave of discourse considering cinema in relationship to Pop focused very much on narrative film and television, and on works which were often popular in terms of their appeal to and success amongst mass audiences.

Lawrence Alloway wrote several pieces for various magazines and journals throughout the 1950s and 1960s in which he outlined his theories of cinema as a Pop Art (see Stanfield 2008). The culmination of this project was a selection of films co-curated with artists Toby Mussman (b.1940) and Robert Smithson (1938-1973) and a catalogue for The Museum of Modern Art in New York entitled *Violent America: The Movies 1946-1964*. Alloway's sole-authored catalogue contained five essays which covered topics of 'Iconography', 'Expendability', 'Realism', 'Violence' and the industrial context of filmmaking in Hollywood (Alloway 1971). The selection of films which he considered Pop are decidedly popular and may be viewed from the vantage point of today as genre films. Alloway's list included what are now considered works by major auteurs of American cinema such as Samuel Fuller (1912-1997), Douglas Sirk (1896-1987) and Anthony Mann (1906-1967). His curatorial and catalogue project was to take film on its own terms, a position he thought was not being taken up sufficiently by mainstream newspaper critics, whom he saw as beholden to a small number of internationally recognised arthouse filmmakers. As he remarked in 1964 in an essay entitled 'Critics in the Dark': 'Few critics reveal the slightest interest in the cinema's specific kind of communication (high impact, strong participation, hard to remember), or in the technology and organisation through which movies reach us' (1964:55). Alloway's understanding of Pop Cinema is attuned to Richard Hamilton's letter listing the attributes which constitute Pop Art. The ephemeral quality of the film-going experience is emphasised along with the industrial context in which mass cultural products, like film, are produced. Most importantly, the popularity of

this cultural experience with a large audience ('strong participation' as Alloway has it) is paramount. All of these are key ingredients in Hamilton's conception of Pop, which underscores its paradoxically impactful yet fleeting nature.

A bitter fallout occurred after the publication of Alloway's 'Critics in the Dark' essay. Both Pauline Kael (1919-2001) and Andrew Sarris (1928-2012) were deeply dismissive of Alloway's call for critics to abandon their snobbish affection for serious art films and embrace what he called Pop Cinema. In the closing remarks of the introduction to her first book, Kael wrote that Alloway's position amounted to a 'condescending approach to the movies as a pop art' (1965:27). Sarris went further: 'This is not the attitude of the true movie addict who is too experienced to like everything he sees, but more the rationale of condescending content awareness without any deep commitment to formal excellence' (1972:69). Sarris saw a pandering shallowness in Alloway's argument, which only considered certain movies worthy of the label Pop: 'even if movies have finally made the scene', he argued, 'their constituencies are still much too large to be adequately represented in the rotten boroughs of pop art' (1972:69). The charge against Alloway was that because he was limiting the Pop label to a certain coterie of genre films, he was unable to take the rest of cinema seriously. In an ironic riposte to the curator, Sarris closed his essay by stating: 'I like pop films as well as anyone. Some of the best ones I know are directed by Jean Renoir and Carl Dreyer' (1972:80).

For Sarris and Kael, Alloway's attempts to align a certain brand of genre cinema with an established art movement was tantamount to a betrayal of the auteur cinema which was perceived as just as worthy, in their eyes, of comparison to fine art practice. Sarris was playful in the final lines of his essay, and his attempt to undermine Alloway's argument, but he does not present an alternative definition of Pop Cinema. This is odd because Sarris actually often invokes Pop Art in his reviews of some of the most lauded examples of European art cinema.

Often in reviews and accounts throughout the 1960s of popular musicals (Melly [1972] 2013: 178), TV serials (Adams 1966:79) and arthouse films (Sarris 1965a:14, 1965b:15) references are made by a variety of writers to Pop. But rarely is it obvious if writers are making explicit connections to Pop Art in the sense of painting and sculpture. Pop was used regularly in the 1960s as an adjective in all kinds of journalistic and everyday discussions of cultural objects, from fashion to cinema. This overuse of the word prevented clear-cut understandings of what the word meant. As the British cultural theorist Dick Hebdige wrote in 1988, Pop became a byword in the 1960s for that which was hip and of the moment, but, at the same time, the word was un-moored from any working and universally accepted definition:

By the mid-1960s, the word "pop", like its sister words "mod", "beat" and "permissive" had become so thoroughly devalued by over-usage that it tended to serve as a kind of loose, linguistic genuflexion made ritualistically by members of the press towards work which was vaguely contemporary in tone and/or figurative in manner, which leant heavily

towards the primary end of the colour range and which could be linked—however tenuously—to the “swinging” *milieu* (1988:121)⁶

Although Hebdige is speaking about static fine art practice in this context, his words are easily applicable to writing about moving-image works in the 1960s. Pop is invoked to express, loosely, a certain attitude towards the presentation of images in film and television. Aesthetic considerations of Pop Cinema in this way are closely aligned to the surface of the image. Surface here isn't necessarily to be bracketed with the formal qualities of frontality, flatness and direct address which contemporaneous critics like Michael Compton (1970: 36) saw as the key elements in the composition of Pop painting; rather it has to do with a certain lightness and preference for immediacy. Such qualities find their expression in films like *Barbarella* (1968, Rodger Vadim), with its bright and primary coloured *mise-en-scène*, high-key lighting, loud and often garish costumes and the tone of its gender politics, which positions the mainstreaming of the countercultural sexual revolution as a vehicle for risqué titillation. The film was championed as a Pop masterpiece by the Independent Group critic Reyner Banham (1922-1988) ([1968] 1981), who noted its particular chromatic intensity. Colour is often a crucial point of reference for critics, including the use of 'Pop firehouse red' (Sarris 1965a) which pervades Michelangelo Antonioni's (1912-2007) *Il Deserto Rosso* (*The Red Desert*, 1964) or the bright, garish colour palettes deployed in adaptations of popular

⁶ For a great example of the mutable and multi-disciplinary use of Pop as a descriptive term see the cover story of the April 25, 1966 issue of *Newsweek* entitled 'The Story of Pop: What is it and How it Came to be' (Benchley 1966). Many newspapers and magazine had large feature stories on Pop which employed long lists of the variety of cultural objects which could be described as such. See for instance Steinem (1965) and Kramer (1966).

comic books in feature film and television narratives (see recent studies of Mario Bava's work: Coacci (2005) and Hunt (2018)). Often in the context of journalistic explorations of Pop and Cinema in a mainstream context, Pop is not taken as a serious endeavour, at least not in the way that some critics were reacting to its fine art counterparts. It is instead a way to describe the *look* of something, a way of communicating a work's basic style and accessibility. Rarely in criticism of narrative filmmaking is Pop explored in any depth, let alone aligned with a distinct critical position.

An exception to this surface rendering of Pop in narrative cinema can be found in later writings on the films of Jean-Luc Godard. Since the early 2000s there has been a trickle of articles and essays which read the French New Wave director as being in conversation with Pop. Often these works concentrate on the intermedial, reflexive and intertextual nature of Godard's *mise en scène*: framing devices which align his images with the look of comic book page layouts (as seen in *Tout Va Bien* (1972)) and with direct visual quotations from pre-existing comic book sources (*Made in the U.S.A* (1966)) (see Yacavone 2005 and Morton 2009). The recent 2013 New York Film Festival revival of trailers authored by Godard, both for his own works and Robert Bresson's (1901-1999) *Mouchette* (1967), have seen the filmmaker touted as a Pop artist not only because of the intermedial references to Pop source material in his films but also because of the authorial control he had over their advertising to the cinema-going public. The trailers themselves are often composed of quicksilver montages accompanied by an aural bombardment of post-bop jazz

combos, resulting in a Pop Art version of the spectacles associated with the Cinema of Attractions, or as J. Hoberman terms Godard's efforts, a 'cinema of coming attractions' (Hoberman 2014:57).

In the lineage of narrative Pop Cinema Godard is an outlier. His vision of an intermedial cinema practice, which references other works drawn from the mass media is also somewhat of a rarity in art cinema of the 1960s. For a more consistent understanding of Pop Cinema one must look to the other territory of moving-image practice with which Pop was often aligned: experimental and underground filmmaking. A link may be forged between these two Pop Cinema modalities if one follows Hal Foster's logic that Godard, in his 1960s films, apes established genres of Hollywood (musical, gangster film, prestige literary adaptation, etc.) using them as 'ready-mades in a critical montage' (Foster 1996:247). Much the same could be said of the filmmakers which will be encountered below, although their working method is not one of dialectical montage, but a kind of anarchically camp appropriation of themes and motifs found in dominant filmmaking practices.

Accounts of Pop Cinema: Underground Camp from Surface to Satire

The underground's opposition to Hollywood was accompanied by dialogues with it, which make clear that while the underground may have been inspired and stylistically nourished by extra-industrial priorities, by other art forms, and pre-eminently by social developments, the most significant determinant upon it was Hollywood itself.

—David James (1989:141)

The use of the term Pop as a descriptor for non-narrative filmmaking is particularly associated with American underground filmmaking, a country-wide cinematic practice which emerged in the late 1950s particularly around the urban centres of New York and San Francisco. Underground films were extremely low budget and formally inventive. A heterogeneous and loosely-tied movement, underground cinema was characterised by style and content that varied extensively, from the impressionistic, phenomenologically-informed lyricism of Stan Brakhage (1933-2003), to the poverty-row-aping, ruin lust of Jack Smith (1932-1989). The content of underground films was often satirical, confrontational or both. Transgression, of expectations of competency, of style and of socially acceptable content with regard to the display of sexual activity and gender presentation were themes of exploration that linked works of the American underground. As the impresario of the underground film movement, a filmmaker himself, and long-time champion of the cinematic avant-garde, Jonas Mekas (1922-2019) wrote in 1959: 'Every breaking away from the conventional, dead, official cinema is a healthy sign [...] There is no other way to break the frozen cinematic conventions than through a complete derangement of the official cinematic senses' (1959:9).⁷

Unlike their European forebears of the 1920s and 1930s, Underground filmmakers were (for the most part) not aligned with specific art movements.

⁷ For more on American underground film see Renan (1967), Tyler ([1969] 1995) and J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum's account of the phenomenon in *Midnight Movies* (1983). For studies which probe the link between decadence and transgression in the movement see Rowe (1982) and Osterweil (2014).

Mekas, along with a raft of fellow filmmakers attempted to group this disparate array of artists under a broad umbrella: The New American Cinema (see Mekas [1961] 1970). Broadly speaking however there has conventionally been a split perceived in this group of filmmakers between the modernist wing and what I will dub the Pop wing of the movement. In the former practitioners like Brakhage, Harry Smith (1923-1991), Tony Conrad (1940-2016) and Mekas himself are found. On the other side are figures such as Ron Rice (1935-1964), Andy Warhol, Jack Smith, Bruce Conner (1933-2008), the brothers George Kuchar (1942-2011) and Mike Kuchar (b.1942) and Kenneth Anger (b.1927). The former group have been identified as enacting an exploration of personal narratives which rely on a poetic exploration of film form and with engaging destabilising and exploratory examinations of the medium specificity of cinema. Janet Staiger has referred to members of this grouping as representing the underground's 'highbrow' contingent (Staiger 1999:52). Juan Suárez has noted that this camp of the New American cinema cultivated a 'difficult art for art's sake cinema in stark opposition to commercial Hollywood product' (1996: *xvi-xvii*). The latter grouping is less oppositional towards Hollywood; it actually incorporates explicit references to mainstream filmmaking, revelling, according to Staiger's assessment, in a combination of 'camp satire and popular culture' (Staiger 1999:52). Suárez goes further, to suggest that such filmmakers 'flaunted their immersion in Hollywood myths and showed little preoccupation with the poetry of dreams or the intricacies of subjectivity' (1996:95). These directors freely borrowed from Hollywood films and moreover, as Suárez notes, from commercial culture more generally, 'turning their productions into a

mixture of parody and of homage to popular icons and myths' (1996: xvii). The negotiation of references to Hollywood and mainstream genre filmmaking led many critics at the time to see this second grouping of underground filmmakers as Pop artists. This was first apparent in the marketing of underground films in alternative newspapers and then in the critical discourse on the underground film as the 1960s wore on.

The mainstream and alternative press of the 1960s often conflated Pop Art with underground filmmaking, with the films of Andy Warhol and Jack Smith repeatedly singled out. Mekas was the first to use the word Pop to describe an underground film, calling Warhol's *Sleep* (1963) a potentially ultimate 'extension of Pop Art' (1964:17). A part of a suite of minimal, durational works, *Sleep* along with *Eat* (1964), *Empire* (1964) and *Drink (aka Drunk)* (1965) have been considered works of Pop Art because of their immediacy—their ability to be conveyed conceptually as an idea which is completely accessible to viewers without said viewers even having to see the film itself (see Angell 1994:14-15). Like Warhol's *Soup Cans* (1962) or packaging sculptures, they conform to the definition of Pop laid out by Hamilton and Alloway, in that they are easy to comprehend, accessible and perhaps if one was to be cynical about Warhol's project 'Gimmicky' (Hamilton [1957] 2005:15).

The notion of such works of canonical and difficult avant-garde filmmaking being accessible to a wider audience is reflected in the deployment of the word 'Pop' in a variety of advertisements for screenings of films by Warhol, Conner

and the Kuchar brothers. The recourse to using the word Pop links it to Hebdige's understanding of the term as a mutable signifier, which is employed to connote a cultural object's timeliness, or relative 'hipness'. In advertisements in the *Village Voice* from the mid-1960s the term is used to lure viewers to showings of Conner's *Cosmic Ray* (1961), with the Bridge Theater on St Mark's Place describing the collage film as a 'Pop Art Masterpiece' (Anon 1965a:15). The Mekas-operated Film-maker's Cinematheque often advertised Warhol's films using Pop as a descriptor. Here the logic would seem to be to use Pop as a selling point for what are, even by experimental film standards, difficult works. An ad in a June 1965 issue of the *Voice* described a programme of 'Andy Warhol "Shorties": *Vinyl* [(1965)] and *Poor Little Rich Girl* [(1965)]' which are dubbed 'Pop style experiments in *cinema verité*, only about 70 mins each!' (Anon 1965b:15). The running time of these two Edie Sedgwick vehicles is an obvious selling point for the Cinematheque, perhaps an attempt to attract audiences put off by the lengthy running time of Warhol's earlier films. The use of the word Pop is also telling in another way, implying that Warhol has carried over his concerns as a fine artist into the arena of cinematic production.

Pop was also a selling point in the copy of adverts for film magazines. The wording for a genre movie magazine advertisement, 'find out which fantasy films are Pop Art Art [*sic*], or just lousy by reading *Castle of Frankenstein Magazine*' (Anon 1965c), was created in direct response to the publication of Warhol's favourite films of 1964 which ran in Mekas' 'Movie Journal' column

on January 14, 1965. By 1966, Pop was being used as a tent under which to gather a wide variety of underground filmmakers. The first and only P.U.F.F. or Pop Underground Film Festival was held in Los Angeles in the summer of that year. The festival collected a disparate array of underground filmmakers, as the organisers slipped between the groupings of modernist and Pop practitioners, abutting the works of Conner, Warhol and the Kuchars with formalist experiments in abstraction by West Coast filmmakers such as Hy Hirsh (1911-1961) and New Yorker Storm de Hirsch (1912-2000). Works such as Hy Hirsh's *Come Closer* (1951) and Storm de Hirsch's *Peyote Queen* (1965) were also emblematic of the selection's bias towards animation, with a number of films from Robert Breer (1926-2011), Stan VanDerBeek (1927-1984) and Larry Jordan (b. 1943) featured in the programme. Overall the selection represented another example of the vague deployment of Pop as a term which seemed stitched into the moment. Within a West Coast context this meant mingling Pop with a dose of psychedelia. Such an intermingling of Pop with the aesthetics of hippiedom can be seen in the placement of films like *Peyote Queen*, a piece of visual music in the vein of Len Lye's (1901-1980) *Free Radicals* (1958), with the beat-caper *Babo 73* (1964, Robert Downey). In the copy for the *Los Angeles Free Press* advertisements of August 5, which promoted the show, the correlation between Pop and the popularity of recreational drug use is made explicit, as the ad leads with the question 'Are you ready to try the first P.U.F.F.?' (Anon 1966).

Expanding on Mekas' vague deployment of the term and shifting us away from the usage of Pop in advertising contexts, Parker Tyler proposed that Pop Art, 'came on the scene almost in step with the reawakening of the avant-garde film in the late fifties' (Tyler 1995: 13). Tyler's point that the rise of Pop is almost simultaneous with that of a reinvigorated avant-garde is preceded by a recognition of the Pop aesthetic within mainstream cinema, which he sees the underground as a response to:

Pop Art, with its reliance on photographic processes for its plastic effects, has been very close in spirit to the popular fiction films according to that film type's own ambiguous yet deep affinity with the comic strip. This kinship, in the shape of the rough, robust satire which is more and more prevalent, has come to the fore during the same decade—the sixties—that the avant-garde film has acquired its underground personality (ibid).

Within a small passage of prose Tyler identifies both currents of Pop Cinema which have so far been encountered: popular genre filmmaking—reflecting the surface of Pop—and its more multifarious and critically engaged experimental iteration. Tyler places his emphasis on underground American cinema, which he sees as a reaction to the Pop-infiltrated works of campy satire and comic book adaptations becoming prevalent in mainstream filmmaking of the same period. Tyler is not alone here. In a short essay entitled 'The Camera as a God' written for *Film Culture* in 1963, Charles Boultenhouse, with more than a suggestion of irony, wrote of his disgust at Hollywood cinema ever being considered authentic by invoking Pop as a marker of its inauthenticity, to which the underground responds: 'Hollywood is the Original Pop Art and is *GREAT* because *IT IS* what *IT IS*. Gorgeous flesh and mostly terrible acting! Divine!

Campy dialogue and preposterous plots! Divine! Sexy fantasy and unorgasmic [*sic*] tedium! Divine!' (2000:137, emphasis in original). I will return to Boultenhouse's gloss on Hollywood below when considering Pop in relation to camp.⁸

Tyler's definition of the Pop Film being an Underground response to the popular fiction film's indulgence of the art movement is echoed throughout histories of experimental and Underground Film. In the second of a two-part survey of experimental filmmaking the British historian A.L. Rees notes that the 'Underground had a distinctly American flavour, close to Pop art in its use of mass imaging' (2009:52). The mass imaging of most appeal to Underground filmmakers was, it seems, images, archetypes and genres lifted from mainstream Hollywood entertainment. Ronald Tavel (1936-2009), a key collaborator and screenwriter on Warhol's middle-period films, argued in 1966 that Hollywood was the 'background and material for the *art* of the New American Cinema, much as', he continues, 'Greek mythology was the subject matter-at-hand for the art of Homer and Sophocles' ([1966] 1989:76). Tavel's comparison is lofty, perhaps even a touch camp in its arch-seriousness, but it

⁸ There are several other references to Pop art within and in relation to underground film culture, though they are far from substantial and do not elucidate any formal system against which their claims can be tested. Influential chronicler of the 1960s underground, Susan Sontag (1933-2004) used Pop in conjunction with underground filmmaking as a way to categorise Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* (1963) (Sontag 1964). Beyond an account of Warhol's *Sleep*, several pieces from Mekas' 'Movie Journal' column in the *Village Voice* concerning films by Warhol and the Kuchar brothers make reference to 'Pop filmmaking' (Mekas 2016: 115-116, 122-123, 129-132). Likewise, Amos Vogel uses the term Pop as a descriptor in his 1974 book *Film as a Subversive Art*. In this text Pop is joined by Dada and is categorised as an 'anti-art' form, though Vogel does not give much space to how this status is reflected in films themselves (1974:48-50).

alludes to the central point that underground films were a conscious reaction to the domination of Hollywood cinema. These films were not simply 'home movies of the pop underworld' (Anon 1966d) as a commentator in *Life* magazine once dismissively assessed them; they were wrestling with the iconography and generic expectations handed down to them by Hollywood and its affiliates in B and poverty-row pictures. Pop underground filmmakers were taking these conventions and making something different, something that could potentially stand in opposition to the Hollywood norm of 'Debbie Reynolds or Doris Day, sailing into a saccharine sunset' (Hamill 1963:84).

The question becomes then, what exactly did the Pop underground do with its complex relationship to Hollywood and how or why should one call the resulting experiments Pop Films? To explore this question, this chapter will have to look at the reception of mainstream filmmaking amongst these filmmakers and their peers and observe how their own works parasitically fed on Hollywood cinema to create satirical Pop visions.

Many of the most prevalent figures associated with the Pop wing of American underground filmmaking invoked or made direct reference to Hollywood productions and various off-shoots like B and poverty row pictures in their films. Warhol was famously obsessed with a litany of fading Hollywood stars. His Tavel-scripted films starring the drag artist Mario Montez (1935-2013) such as *Harlot* (1964) heavily coded Montez as a dead ringer for Jean Harlow, a Howard Hughes-cultivated star who had been dead for nearly thirty years by

the time Warhol shot his tribute. Montez's drag persona was self-consciously modelled after the Dominican actress María Montez (1912-1951). She was a cult figure who was a life-long obsession for Jack Smith, who authored a manifesto about her (Smith 1962) and made several references to her in his films, especially *Flaming Creatures* (1963). Warhol also created films which self-consciously invoked and deconstructed the tropes and iconography of popular film genres, like the Tavel-penned *Horse* (1965), a blunt parody of the western. Following the commercial success of his 1966 film *The Chelsea Girls*, Warhol made a cycle of sexploitation films which invoked many popular variants of the genre including *I, A Man* (1967), a direct response to the popular Danish/Swedish softcore film *I, A Woman* (1965, Mac Ahllberg), and *Bike Boy* (1967) an obliquely sexless and bike-less film which would leave connoisseurs of either erotic cinema or biker movies severely wanting (see Davis 2013). Hollywood and genre film parody arguably finds its ultimate expression in the work of George and Mike Kuchar whose dime-store re-interpretations of richly evocative melodrama and social problem pictures approximate the lush worlds of Douglas Sirk and Nicholas Ray (1911-1979) and filter them through a burlesque lens of hyperbole and queer performativity, complete with grainy orchestral library music. Titles included *A Tub Named Desire* (1956), *The Naked and the Nude* (1958), *I was a Teenage Rumpot* (1960), *Lust for Ecstasy* (1963), and *Pussy on a Hot Tin Roof* (1963). The clear parodic intent of these titles mimics the popular teen pics of the era produced by American International Pictures such as *I was a Teenage Werewolf* (1957, Gene Fowler) whose story of a hormonal teenage werewolf is transformed in *I was a teenage*

Rumpot into a soapy morality tale of a teen's descent into alcoholism. In *Pussy on a Hot Tin Roof*, the brothers lampoon the serious and popular, though clearly melodramatic Tennessee Williams play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955).

It is important to establish a context for this outpouring of fascination for Hollywood and its shadow product by the avant-garde. One factor is a lineage which can be traced to Surrealist interactions with cinema; the other is very much a product of the way in which Hollywood films were seen in the late 1950s and beyond, when the Pop underground began to incubate and realise their ideas. As Suárez pointedly reminds us in his study of the Pop wing of the underground, the historical avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s were enthusiastic consumers of popular culture. He highlights in particular the early found footage film *Rose Hobart* (1936) by the noted American artist and reluctant surrealist Joseph Cornell (1903-1972) as a prominent antecedent for the proclivity of appropriating cinema by the underground filmmakers of the 1960s. Suárez goes as far as to label the work 'a pop film *avant-la-lettre*' (1996:121). Importantly, as in the work of Smith, Warhol and the Kuchars, the film which was appropriated by Cornell was not a prestigious or lauded classic of Hollywood filmmaking, but a largely forgotten B-movie, in this case George Melford's *East of Borneo* (1931). Cornell's truncated version radically shrinks the film's running time from over seventy to less than twenty minutes, discarding much of the narrative content to focus instead on his film's namesake, the actress Rose Hobart (1906-2000). Cornell found the print of *East of Borneo*, which he used to create *Rose Hobart*, in a rubbish bin— a

literal piece of trash cinema which was reworked into a work of Pop fandom. The circumstances of Cornell's discovery underline a significant aspect of this type of camp appropriation of the leftovers of dominant mass culture: the act of creation in these works is always anchored in a strategy of reception. For Cornell and for his later compatriots of Pop cinema, movies were not, in the words of Greg Taylor, 'complete, rounded works', but rather were 'grab bags of images, sounds and emotions'. That these films were often of poor quality or marginal status only boosted their appeal in this context of reception; the trashiest films were the ones that were 'unable to master their meanings' which in turn 'heightened their suggestive power' (Taylor 1999:53). This type of camp appropriation, evidenced in Cornell's film and later in the works of Warhol, Smith and the Kuchars speaks to an articulation of Pop camp, a type of over-identification with historical modes and genres of popular culture, which is filtered and reinterpreted by artists through, as Andrew Ross suggests, 'a rediscovery of history's waste' and 'the re-creation of surplus value from forgotten forms of labour' (1989:151).

The subject of Pop and camp was first commented upon explicitly by the British cultural commentator and singer George Melly in his 1972 book *Revolt into Style: The Pop Arts*. By the time Melly published his account Susan Sontag had already (1964) written her pioneering taxonomical account of camp, seeing it as a sophisticated set of aesthetic and stylistic positions and gestures in the arts and popular culture (Sontag 2009). Melly bypasses Sontag to place what he calls 'Pop Films' in a space between Christopher Isherwood's 'high'

(Mozart, the Baroque) and 'low' (drag, burlesque) camp axis, briefly elucidated in his 1954 novel *The World in the Evening* (Isherwood 1999). For Melly, camp helped Pop to 'make a forced march around good taste'; ultimately, he sees the sensibility as aiding Pop in its mission to bring 'vulgarity back into popular culture' ([1972] 2013:178). Sontag's article raids the history of twentieth century culture to present an aesthetic archaeology of camp. In her essay, camp can be seen in locales as disparate as the writings of Jean Genet (1910-1986), the aesthetics of Art Nouveau and the Japanese monster movie *Rodan* (1956, Ishirô Honda). Melly's invocation of the term strikes a one note tone. Any critical potency or aesthetic dexterity gifted to camp by Sontag is left to one side. Melly communicates a monolithic conception of camp as bad taste writ large for a knowing and inviting audience.

It is possible to connect Melly's vision of Pop camp to a mode of reception which is unavoidable in contemporary film culture; the so-bad-it-is-good ironic viewing practice, perhaps most fully realised by the cult television show *Mystery Science Theatre 3000* (1988-).⁹ Films like the quasi-beat musical *The Golden Record* aka *The Golden Disk* (1958, Don Sharp) and Cliff Richard's sophomore cinema outing *Expresso Bongo* (1959, Val Guest) led Melly to speculate that on 'the same camp grounds I suppose in the not too distant future there'll be a season of early British pop films at the National Film Theatre' (ibid). His prediction would not happen; however, the curated seasons of Pop

⁹ In an echo of the ascendancy of this view, Andrew Sarris presented his own portmanteau of Pop and camp. 'How about PAMP, or Pop and camp in perspective', he wrote, 'Putting camp in a pamp perspective enables you to accept the co-existence of good and bad in the same work of art, even in the same performer, without drawing the conclusion that it is the badness that is actually good' (1965:15).

Cinema discussed earlier in this chapter can be seen as one articulation of such a vision.

Melly's conflation of Pop and camp with taste has been fleshed out by Andrew Ross who remarked in the late 1980s that 'Pop arose out of the problematizing of *taste* itself, and in its purist forms, was addressed directly to the media processes through which cultural taste is defined and communicated' (1989:149). In Ross' sense of Pop being about taste—about what is admissible and appropriate subject matter for fine art—and additionally presenting this argument in a language comparable to that of mass media, the Pop wing of the underground qualify fully as explorers of Pop camp. This can be witnessed in the affectionate but satirical visions presented by the Pop underground, which play with Hollywood as a ready-made—a set of cultural conventions to be manipulated -- and as an arena for the display and exploration of non-heteronormative sexuality and gender identity.

Camp re-formulations of Hollywood by the Pop underground were based on specific reception strategies. Hollywood products, the 'grab bags of images and emotions' as Taylor labels them, were widely available through television broadcast as Ross (1989:137) and Suárez (1996:123-124) have noted. By 1956 there was an estimated 5,212 hours' worth of Hollywood material broadcast on TV annually. That same year, in New York City, the epicentre of the underground cinema, 90.1 percent of respondents to a poll indicated that they often watched films on television (Segrave 1999:45-46). While many of these products may have been produced by the prestigious major studios (Columbia, MGM, RKO, Warner all had major TV deals at this time), more

recent scholarship by Blair Davis has shown that B-films were also an integral part of programming for television stations throughout the 1950s (Davis 2008). The reporter J.P. Shanley remarked on the quality of the majority of the films show on TV: 'Almost any time one can tune into programs offering films that were regarded as inferior even when they were first shown in theatres, as long as twenty-five years ago. Most of these products are painfully inept' (in Segrave 1999:46). This could lead us to link the emergence of the Pop underground and its camp viewing and re-framing strategies to the newly-available domestic consumption of mass cultural Hollywood and Hollywood-adjacent product, but the camp reception of such material was also a widely observed practice within the institutions and screening spaces of the underground.

It has become fairly common to refer to mainstream television programmes of the 1960s like *Gilligan's Island* (1964-1967), *My Mother the Car* (1965-1966), *Batman* (1966-1968) and *Rowen and Martin's Laugh-In* (1968-1973) as self-consciously producing camp (for an overview of this see Phillips and Pinedo 2018; for an in-depth analysis of the political ambivalence of camp in *Laugh-In* see Feil 2014). The retrospective viewing of Hollywood entertainment through a camp lens is not something generally associated with television viewing at the time.¹⁰ Andrew Ross writes, in an echo of Hebdige, that in the 1960s camp

¹⁰ An exception to this would be the comedy compilation show *Fractured Flickers* (1963-1964), a spoof of the aesthetic conventions and, in particular, the acting styles of silent films. Produced by Jay Ward (1920-1989), the show featured a cast of comedians overdubbing a variety of silent movies. In a move which aligns the work with Pop, these segments were often intercut with false advertisements created in the format of contemporaneous TV commercials.

became a popular discourse among writers, thinkers and cultural commentators. This shift moved the phenomenon away from its origins as a coded and clandestine language of communication amongst repressed queer subjects and morphed it into, 'a category of cultural taste which shaped, defined and negotiated the way in which sixties intellectuals were able to "pass" as subscribers to the throwaway Pop aesthetic, and thus as patrons of the attractive world of immediacy and disposability created by the culture industry in the post-war boom years' (1989:136). What seems to be amiss with Ross' conception of camp however is that camp is always a strategy of reading, or of interpretation. For the filmmakers and artists of the Pop underground the camp mode of reading was intimately linked to creative impulses; their camp understanding of the films of the 1930s and 1940s was umbilically connected to their impetus to revisit such works in their own films.

Within the Pop underground milieu there was a proclivity for camp reception. Doyen of independent film culture Amos Vogel commented derisively on the lack of seriousness and 'camp atmosphere' (Vogel 1964:9) which pervaded underground film screenings. Turning such a view on its head Mekas' Film-maker's Cinematheque hosted programmes which saw the work of the Kuchars abutting Frank Stephani's thirteen-part serial *Flash Gordon* (1936). In advertisements for the shows the phrase 'Pop Humour' (Anon 1965e) is deployed to describe the work of the Kuchars. This was a rare screening instance where a direct comparison between works of the Pop underground and their source material could be made by discerning audience members. An even more explicit tie between the underground and camp viewership can be

glimpsed in an advertisement for a mammoth screening of Columbia Pictures' fifteen-part *Batman* (1943, Lambert Hillyer) serial. The ad's copy invites the potential viewer to see 'The greatest serial ever filmed' which was 'made in '43 but discovered in '65', a gap in reception between release and re-discovery that clearly aligns the screening with a form of camp reception. This much is made abundantly clear by the tagline found at the bottom right-hand corner of the image: 'Come to jeer-stay to cheer...and vice versa!' (Anon 1965f).

Filmmakers like the Kuchars, Rice, Smith and Warhol clearly ingested these shoddy works of genre cinema in domestic (televisual) and public (cinematic) contexts and used such experiences as their raw material. The same 'camp atmosphere' which was actively encouraged at marathon viewings of the *Batman* serial was observable in screenings of the Pop underground. As David McReynolds wrote in a letter to the *Village Voice* describing his experience of seeing Rice's film *The Flower Thief* (1962) at the Downtown Charles Theatre: 'One really delightful aspect of the Charles Theatre is that booing, hissing, and applause are all permitted equally, so that one can express one's feelings on the spot—a feature of which I took full advantage! Long live the Charles Theatre! And may its experimental films dare to experiment!' (1962:13). Accounts such as McReynolds' point towards significant and strong links between the Pop underground and camp as a reception practice. But by looking at the works themselves one can see that this mode of reading was translated into the production of works of underground film. From the Kuchars' self-consciously ridiculous channelling of the melodramatic, to Warhol's

deconstruction of fringe and mainstream genres, the Pop underground was in a camp dialogue with mass film culture.

Pop underground films, along with narrative surface Pop films, are two distinct types of Pop Cinema. They are the only ones to be discussed in any detail contemporaneously by critics. The conclusion of the 1960s saw many shifts which can help us to account for the significant lack of commentary on Pop cinema after the close of this decade. One factor is the lack of films produced by the Pop wing of the underground cinema. Ron Rice died in 1964, leaving his magnum opus and most Pop-inflected film *Queen of Sheba Meets the Atom Man* (1963/1982) to be completed by his friend and underground compatriot Taylor Mead (1924-2013). Warhol abandoned his filmmaking practice (as a director) following the release of *Blue Movie* (1969), handing over the authorial reins to his associate Paul Morrissey (b.1938). Smith never officially completed another film after *Flaming Creatures* but continued to work sporadically on projects which often mirrored the style and tone of his most infamous achievement. The one exception was the Kuchar brothers who continued to create anarchic riffs on Hollywood studio product and 1950s genre pictures throughout their careers. Through the 1970s Pop as a discourse in popular criticism waned, although many of the torchbearers of the movement's fine art contingent continued to practice successfully (including Warhol, Lichtenstein and Rosenquist). Many artists, however, shifted their stylistic register away from dealing purely with mass cultural objects and consumer culture.

An understanding of certain American underground films as constituting a distinct grouping, which could be described as Pop in its relationship to the

mass culture of Hollywood, has been historicized. By the 1980s film critic and noted underground film expert J. Hoberman was labelling the underground 'the political wing of Pop Art', a perspective which is taken up by William Kaizen and Ed Halter in their respective catalogue essays. As already seen, work by Suárez (1996) and Staiger (1999) further gestured towards seeing the Pop underground as a distinct grouping within experimental film practice. The 1970s, 1980s and 1990s are very quiet decades in relation to Pop Cinema. There were no retrospective screenings and no museum or gallery showcases purporting to describe or articulate a body of moving-image works which could be called Pop Cinema. It is only since the expansion of Pop Art's temporal, geographic and generic frame in the last fifteen years, as discussed above, that the moving-image has become a site of significant discourse.

Pop Cinema: Recent Conceptualisations

There are two main thinkers who have attempted to outline a taxonomy of Pop Cinema in recent years. Both of these efforts were curatorial. One was a programme of stand-alone films exhibited at International House Philadelphia (2011) entitled 'Pop Cinema: Film and Art in the US and UK, 1950s-1970s' organized by William Kaizen, a figure already encountered in this chapter. The second was a film selection curated by Ed Halter to accompany a major museum show at the Walker Art Center called 'International Pop' (2015).

In a short book accompanying his International House show, Kaizen's central essay is invested in staking a claim for the cinema as an important medium at the disposal of the Pop artist. He sees the cinematic image as possessing a power to confront and account for the mass-cultural mediatisation of life, equal to or even more potent than that of the painted image. It is clear from Kaizen's tone that his selection will be falling in with the Pop-as-critical camp. If one is left in any doubt of this, he makes his allegiance plain when introducing his typology of Pop Films: 'There are three main types of Pop Cinema, all of them aligned with the avant-garde' (2011:16).

Kaizen's eagerness to place Pop Cinema within traditions of the avant-garde is reflective of the sources he claims were the inspiration for his project. Alloway's work on the cinema as a popular art and the discussions which occur in its wake are overlooked. In place of these historical understandings of Pop Cinema, Kaizen makes reference to two seminal works of experimental film criticism (David E. James' *Allegories of Cinema: American cinema in the 1960s* (1989) and William C. Wees' *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (1993)) (Kaizen 2011:29 N1). Kaizen formulates three types of Pop film which push conceptualisations beyond the dual understandings of popular narrative films or Pop underground films encountered above: 'documentary films on the consumption of popular culture and the effects of this consumption on everyday life, shot using avant-garde techniques'; 'collage films made of readymade images taken from the world of pop culture'; and 'sub-z movies that take the genres of commercial film as ready-mades and

then recast them in ultra-low-budget deviant forms, using non-professional actors and semi-narrative storytelling' (2011:16).

For Halter, unlike Alloway and Melly, there is not a Pop Cinema which emanates from the mainstream, at least not one worth considering in the context of his *International Pop* programme. The aesthetics of Hollywood are not Pop in and of themselves; they only serve to act as 'inspiration for Pop artists' (2015:184)—a sentiment which echoes Parker Tyler. Halter states that around the time of Pop's looming dominance 'a new generation of international filmmakers was vehemently rejecting the notion of film as a mere commercial entertainment and attempting to reshape it through more visionary and personal terms' (ibid). It is from this vantage point that Halter sees a deep affinity between Pop Art and international underground and avant-garde film movements which both Leighton and Kaizen had gestured towards in their writings.

Unlike Kaizen's more prescriptive mapping of the Pop Cinema terrain, Halter's essay, simply titled 'Pop Cinema: Three Tendencies', allows for a much looser framework of definition. It is split into three rough sections whose boundaries all blur. These are, first, 'Film as a Pop Art', which offers the historical overview of film's influence on Pop and vice versa, similar to that outlined above. Second is 'Pop Artists Onscreen' (2015:184), taken in two senses: Pop artists who produce moving-image work, and profiles or portraits of artists producing Pop in the more traditional mediums of painting and sculpture. Third, and also split

in two, 'The Pop Image and its Politics' (2015:190), a much looser grouping which charts the movement from the Pop Cinema of Melly and Alloway—'films which played with a Pop aesthetic' to produce 'mere entertainments' (ibid)—to more complex negations of the Pop style in support of the radical politics emerging from the atmosphere of the 1960s (including Jean-Luc Godard's late 1960s work and the agit-prop documentaries of Cuban experimentalist Santiago Álvarez (1919-1998)). Equally, this section is also represented by examples, already mentioned, of US underground filmmaking: 'Kenneth Anger, Jack Smith, Ken Jacobs, George and Mike Kuchar, and of course, Conner and Warhol [who all] simultaneously parodied and celebrated mass culture's "maximal forms" through a camp sensibility' (ibid).

Halter's Pop Cinema narrative, although more sophisticated and judiciously researched, follows the trajectory of both Leighton and Kaizen's own Pop Film programmes. Both Halter and Kaizen acknowledge the popular sixties critics' conflation of Pop and cinema as evincing a two-pronged obsession with surface commercialism and camp parody. But, for their part, Kaizen and Halter encourage a much subtler reading of Pop cinema. This is, no doubt, due in part to their own selections of much more artistically self-conscious examples of the form and the fact that theorists of Pop at the time of the devising of their shows were advocating for an expanded view.

This expanded view is accounted for in Kaizen's inclusion of several nonfiction works in his selection. I will speak to the concept of the nonfiction Pop Film in

Chapter Two in an account of William Klein's *Broadway by Light*. Kaizen's further categories are much more easily mapped into considerations of underground and experimental film practice. His idea of a 'sub-z movie' seems to be very much in concert with my discussion of camp and Pop in relation to underground movies. Kaizen's final category, the collage Pop film is something which will be remarked upon in-depth in Chapter Three as I place the work of Jeff Keen in relation to this phenomenon. Halter's expansionist view is less concerned with widening the array of genres or types which could be associated with the Pop Film, but keener to attend to the problem of location. His list expands the notion of Pop films beyond Anglo-American and Western European confines, in line with the remit of the wider exhibition for which his film selection was a part. Here works from Cuba, Eastern Europe, India and Japan can be found, cementing the broader shift in understandings of Pop Art as a truly global art movement.

Halter's lack of commitment to more specific typologies and genealogies of Pop Cinema is a careful sidestep of a very complex issue. As it is clear from his choices, some of Halter's films would be difficult to categorise into Kaizen's three different types. The performance-art-inflected *Consumer Art* (Natalia LL, Poland, 1972-1974) in which a group of models provocatively eat a selection of prohibitively expensive foodstuffs—everyday goods considered luxuries in the Soviet Bloc at the time—like ice cream, bananas and frankfurters, would prove hard to pigeonhole. As would *AB/D* (Pramod Pati, India, 1970), a lightning-fast montage depicting an artist gradually decorating an all-white

room. The film collapses distinctions between performance and animation, as the room dramatically changes from frame to frame through stop-motion effects. Examples such as these trouble the notion that Pop cinema can be split into neat categorisations. My research into other film programmes and in film archives has led me to develop my own filmography of Pop films, many of which would also problematize any attempts at holistic categorisation (see appendix II of this thesis).

Conclusion

Pop Cinema should be conceived of broadly. This wide-angle view of the phenomenon should include any work of moving-image art which takes mass culture as its subject or comments upon consumer culture in a sustained manner. This includes work made during the 1960s, the decade which has so far yielded the most discourse around the idea of what constitutes a Pop Film, but it may also be stretched before and beyond that period. Moreover, it is important to stress the international dimension of Pop Cinema—a fact underlined by the recent expansionist discourses adopted by a range of Pop exhibitions which are global in their outlook. As with any large listing of films grouped under a particularly wide banner, it is tempting to try, as Kaizen does, to break Pop Cinema down into more constituent parts. This is something I am wary of doing, on account of the inevitable bleeding together of categories (underground/collage; animation/collage; European and American narrative films/collage; underground/animation etc.) that would make the outlining of

specific categories hard to justify and even more difficult to police. To remedy this situation I have split my filmography into four groupings: Nonfiction Films, Nonfiction Films about Pop Artists, Narrative Films and Non-Narrative Films. It is beyond the confines of this thesis to offer a full exploration of each of these poles; as noted at the beginning of this chapter I will examine three films from this filmography as case-studies to discuss some aspects of Pop Cinema in-depth. These include questions of aestheticism vs. criticism in *Broadway by Light*, issues of collage in the work of Jeff Keen; and the relationship between Pop advertising and minimalism in Peter Roehr's *Film-Montages* (1965). A productive reading of Pop Cinema is one that takes each film on its terms, exploring its relation to themes and ideas that can also be located in other forms of Pop Art practice. As I will demonstrate it is key to understanding Pop Cinema to see it as an interdisciplinary conversation with other forms of art-making, a truly intermedial artform.

Furthermore, I think it is appropriate to stress one of the understandings of Pop Art encountered towards the beginning of this chapter. Pop Art's appeal across time, space and media of production lies in its dextrous use of popular and mass culture—its ability, in Bradford Collins' words, to explore an extraordinary range of 'individual, artistic and historical issues' (2012:12). Following Collins' logic, it is most productive to think about Pop as a critical idiom, a way of seeing the world both against and through the popular and mass culture that saturates it. It is for these reasons that in the chapters that follow I have decided to focus

exclusively on experimental, non-narrative works—works that inject mass culture with a pronounced, if oftentimes subtle, criticality.

This chapter's history of differing accounts has shown that there is a strong split in understandings of what Pop cinema is. Works which embrace a critical (commonly satirical) view of mass and popular culture, located in experimental and art cinema, are pitched against a branch of (often) mainstream narrative films, which play Pop as an empty style, a pastiche of the look and immediacy of Pop Art. The expansion of understandings of Pop in the past fifteen years or so has given privilege to the former position, shifting Pop Cinema away from the latter grouping. In the case of Kaizen however this emphasis on experimental film seems to emerge from a distinct lack of acknowledgement that mainstream narrative Pop Films even existed. Halter appears more than aware of their existence but wishes not to champion their cause.

Finally, I would like to circle back to the issue of Pop's relationship to Modernism, explored earlier in this chapter, and note the broader ramifications of considering Pop Cinema. Recent writing by Anthony Grudin (2017) and Jonathan Flatley (2017) has re-awakened core debates on Pop Art's relationship to Modernism. Through the prism of Andy Warhol's work, both authors challenge assumptions that Warhol and Pop could or should be read exclusively as progenitors of Postmodernism—ushering in the first Pop age, in which hierarchies between high and low culture are obliterated and medium specificity is cast aside. Instead, the authors argue that because of Warhol's democratising impulse—the use of subject matter and style understood by and comprehensible to a large majority—and deployment of affective strategies of

art-making, Warhol's Pop forms a kind of egalitarianism amongst subjects; an equality in which people from working class (Grudin), and queer (Flatley) subject positions can be spoken to. This view of Warhol can be opened out onto Pop more widely.

In a co-authored introduction to their co-edited special journal issue on Warhol, Flatley and Grudin (2014) connect their understanding of Warhol to the philosopher Jacques Rancière's re-calibration of Modernism. Here one does not have Pop as good or bad Modernism—using popular culture to comment upon art or derisively attack forms of mass communication, as I have shown with the example of Lichtenstein. Rancière does not see medium specificity or artistic purification as central goals of modernist art making. Instead, he wishes to see a kind of art that is 'attuned to all the vibrations of life: an art capable both of matching the accelerated rhythms of industry, society and urban life, and of giving infinite resonance to the most ordinary minutes of everyday life' (Rancière 2013:262). Pop Art is this kind of art. Opened out beyond the binaries, good or bad/for or against popular culture, one can view Pop as a form of democratic art practice able to contain within its parameters a myriad of disparate perspectives. Pop Cinema represents Pop's democratisation across media types and forms. The time has come to recognise and attempt to understand this moving-image component of Pop. It has been dormant for over fifty years, spoken of in the past but subsequently forgotten; it is only now through its recognition as a heterogeneous and global form that Pop Cinema comes into view. In the following case studies, I bring this view into sharp focus, exploring specific examples of how Pop Cinema operates.

Chapter Two: *Broadway by Light* (1958): William Klein's Pop Between Stillness and Movement

Outdoor advertising has felt and shown the effects of the artistic spirit of the people in this country.

– O.J Gude (1912: 3)

You read the handbills, the catalogues, and the bill-boards that are singing aloud, and there is your morning poetry!

– Guillaume Apollinaire, *Zone* (1913)

In early 1957, the American born artist William Klein (b.1928) was in the offices of his Parisian publisher Éditions du Seuil. The house had recently printed Klein's first book of street photography, an experimental, Pop-inflected vision of the artist's home city, entitled *Life is Good and Good for You in New York: Trance, Witness, Revels* (1956) (hereafter *New York*) (Fig 2.1). The work was published at the behest of Klein's friend Chris Marker (1921-2012) who worked at the publishers from the early 1950s until the late 1960s. While at Seuil, Marker had begun spearheading *Petite Planète* (1954-1964) a popular series of travel books which contained evocative photography and idiosyncratic approaches to book layout and design. Klein had turned to his friend following *New York's* rejection from every American publisher he had approached. Because of the popularity of his travel books, Marker held a significant amount of clout at the publisher and upon seeing Klein's photographs promised: 'We'll

do a book... We'll do a book, or I'll quit!' (quoted in Dillon 2012:62). Standing in Marker's office after the publication of the book in 1957, Klein was joined by another famous post-war French filmmaker, and Marker collaborator, Alain Resnais (1922-2014). Resnais had been shown Klein's book by Marker and was deeply enamoured with its gritty realism. During the meeting he turned to Klein and opined, 'Now you've done the book you must do the film!' (ibid).

Later that year Klein returned to New York and rented a 35mm film camera. Over a handful of night-time shoots, he composed *Broadway by Light* (1958), a short, non-narrative documentary study of the light signs of Midtown Manhattan's Times Square. The photobook had been widely dismissed by prospective publishers as being, in Klein's words 'too ugly, too seedy and too one-sided' (Klein in Heilpern 1981:7). The artistic director of *American Vogue*, Alexander Liberman (1912-1999), who in part helped to fund Klein's travels to and from New York and Paris during the 1950s, said that the photographs possessed a 'violence I'd never experienced in anyone's work' (Liberman in Heilpern 1981:15). Klein himself saw *Broadway by Light* as an attempt to present another side of New York. He latter summarised his feelings in an interview with *Aperture* magazine:

[T]he New York photographs were criticised initially because they presented a vision of New York and America that was very harsh, black and white, and grungy. So I thought the next step would be to do a movie; I could do the same thing, but with something as beautiful as Times Square and the incessant ballet of advertising. The first thing people photograph or digest in New York is Broadway and Times Square—it's the most beautiful thing in New York, and in America' (Klein in Schuman 2015:28).

Reflecting on the film in 1995, Klein referred to the work as ‘the first Pop film’ (Klein 1995:11) ever made. Given the timing of the piece’s production and the positive gloss Klein puts on the work in relationship to its subject matter, it could be instructive to place *Broadway by Light* in the lineage of early Pop Art which celebrates and affirms the emblems and artifice of popular and mass culture. But later in the *Aperture* interview Klein contradicts his initial assessment, noting that his conception of the film as an antidote to *New York* could be at best ambivalent about this commercial space:

But what is it? What are people actually seeing? They are seeing the spectacle of advertising; it’s buy this, buy that, it’s beautiful but it’s made up of sales pitches, and people are fascinated and seduced by advertising [...] *Broadway by Light* was a celebration of this whole process of selling—Of taking people by their lapels of their suits and saying, “Buy this! Buy that!” and being immersed in the graphic world of advertising. (Klein in Schuman 2015:28).

Taken together, Klein’s book and film represent significant interventions in the history of Pop Art. They not only stand as two of the first iterations of Pop in their respective mediums of photobook and non-narrative cinema but together the works cut to the heart of the potential of Pop as a site of ambivalence. As shown in Chapter One, the history of Pop Art’s reception can be traced as a journey towards a nuanced understanding expressed by writers like Hal Foster and Bradford Collins, who see the movement on a continuum defined neither wholly by critique or complicity but by ambivalence. Klein’s photographic and book work has revived scant attention in academic writings on Pop Art (the work is mentioned, though not excerpted for examination, in Mark Francis’ landmark *Pop* book from 2005). The majority of assessments of Klein as a Pop

artist are fairly vague and can only be found in photographic monographs devoted to the artist.

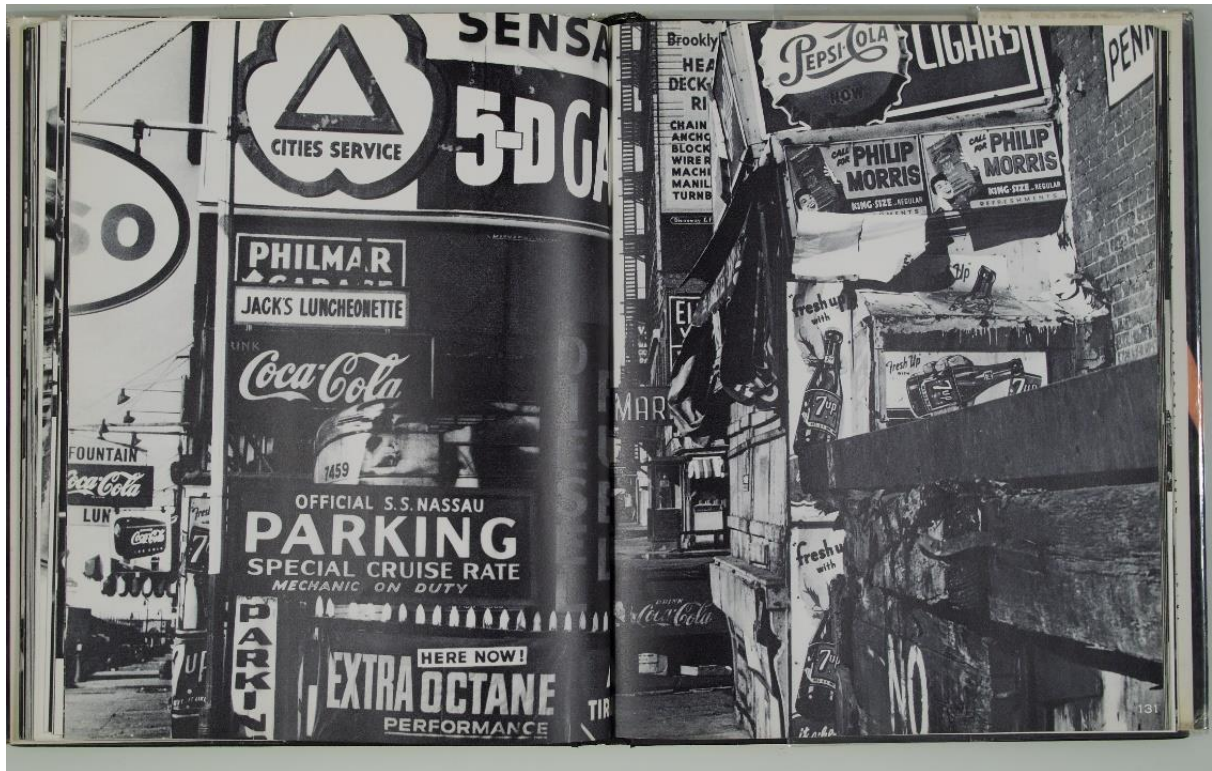


Fig. 2.1. Double page spread from *Life is Good and Good for you in New York: Trance, Witness, Revels* (Klein: 1956).

Several photography historians and critics have alluded to the possibility of reading Klein's work as proto- or even full-blown works of Pop. In a 1981 *Aperture* book of Klein's pictures, John Heilpern summarises the ambiguous placement of Klein's work in relation to the movement:

It is sometimes said that Klein belongs to the surface vitality and flash of the 1960s, or that he really belongs to Pop art. If so, his pictures (which were taken in the mid and late 1950s) anticipated the next generation. Only his films and fashion photography grew out of the mood of the 1960s (1981:13-15).

Here, Heilpern brackets Klein's photography into two distinct periods: a first, comprising the street photography books of the 1950s, which he argues could be read as prefiguring or pre-empting Pop; and his later work in cinema and fashion photography, which Heilpern aligns ambiguously with what is dubbed the 'surface vitality and flash of the 1960s'. Heilpern offers no further analysis of specific photographs by Klein that could be isolated and read directly as Pop; it is ultimately a vague allusion. This stands in contrast to considerations of Klein and Pop by Martin Harrison, who is more prescriptive in his interpretation, arguing that 'Klein's appropriation of symbols of ad/mass consumerism in the introductory booklet to *New York* was already proto-pop, his captions interspersed with newspaper and magazine advertisements for chewing gum, Mercury Cars, body-building, *Mad* magazine and toothpaste' (1994:253). The inclusion of advertisements and elements of the popular press are inflected with 'sarcasm' by Klein, according to Harrison, resulting in a comment on the 'mass brainwashing' (ibid) of consumer culture. Curiously, Harrison does not go beyond the *New York* book's introduction to the photographs within, which contain both spontaneous and rigorously composed scenes where people are juxtaposed against and amongst advertisement hoardings and signs, and where walls of posters assume the position of subjects in urban photographic still lives (see, again, Fig 2.1). In his catalogue, Francis's own interpretation of Klein collates the positions of Heilpern and Harrison; Klein's street photography is fused with typography in an unprecedented way, he argues, 'creating one of the first examples of a sustained "Pop" approach to word and image' (2005:46).

Critical readings, then, of Klein's photographic output in relation to Pop place emphasis on his photo editing and book layout, seemingly leaving his actual photography to one side. This disservice to the image is not found in the critical reception of *Broadway by Light*. Perhaps definitively because of Klein's own assessment of the film, as an *urtext* of Pop Cinema, *Broadway by Light* has been featured on nearly every single programme of Pop cinema in recent museum and gallery shows (see Appendix I). The film is a foundational and influential example of Pop Art aesthetics applied to the moving-image. Combined, the book and film were labelled foundational 'alphabets' and 'manifestos' (Anon 2000: online) of Pop Art by *The Guardian* at the turn of the new millennium. In this chapter I argue that the film represents the culmination of Klein's early New York period. For four years (from the conception of *New York* in 1954 to the release of *Broadway by Light* in 1958) Klein created a Pop vision of his home city. It is a vision defined by a shift from stillness to movement. This shift is not only represented by Klein's graduation from still photography to moving pictures but is present in a constant *shifting*: a restless attitude which refuses to uphold photography and photobook display as emblematic of stillness, or completely give the early filmmaking practice over to conventional style. Klein's experimentations with both photo and book form are attempts to infuse their inherent stillness with a latent movement, staging mobility within the confines of the still image through blur and shudder and weaving a cinematic montage into the page layout of the *New York* book. These cine-interventions into his photography and design work anticipate *Broadway by Light*. Klein's work from this New York period has a Pop subject

matter, observing life amongst the advertisement signage of a bustling metropolis. The through-line which guides and underpins this Pop vision of the city is, however, a deep commitment to the aesthetics of cinema. This is played out finally in *Broadway by Light*, a text indebted as much to the street photography which preceded it as to the cinematic language of rapid editing, superimposition and speed which define it as the example *par excellence* of the City Symphony.

By way of introduction to Klein as an artist, this chapter will give an account of different strands of his art-making and assess how the various and intersecting aspects of Klein's work engender a way of thinking about the blurred boundaries between stillness and motion in his photographic and moving-image output. This complication of the medium-specific distinctions between photography and film will form the basis for a theoretical investigation of the dichotomous nature of photography as it relates to Pop art. This assessment will make use of recent discussions of the subject by Hal Foster and link his conception of photography as being a 'primary source and structure' (2015) for Pop images, to debates around the gap between abstraction and figuration which Pop occupies in the view of Foster as well as the art historians Suzi Gablik and John Russell, writing some thirty years earlier. It is here, I argue, that one can situate Klein's very particular brand of Pop: between the actuality of documentary and the non-representative strategies of abstraction. This will be demonstrated by analysis of two areas of Klein's practice: firstly, the negotiation of stillness and movement within his *New York* book, both at the

level of the semantic content of the photographs themselves and the radical layout design of the photobook object; secondly, *Broadway by Light*, which will be understood in relation to ideas of documentary formalism and the film's attachment to modes of City Symphony filmmaking. Klein's manipulation of the image becomes defined by simulation and abstraction, resulting in blur, noise and radical layout in his photography; and temporal dissonance (jump cuts, superimpositions and speed) in *Broadway by Light*. This is made palpable by his engaging with and representing areas of New York City wherein the senses are dizzied by competing visual discourses—with spaces at once fully comprehensible and deeply abstruse. It is within Klein's aesthetic collision of abstraction and figuration, mobility and immobility, that his work can be aligned with a very particular strain of Pop's criticality: an ambivalence that insists on being read two ways at once.

Klein was born in the southwest corner of East Harlem in New York City at 5th Avenue and 109th Street in 1928. His family were originally from Hungary and ran a clothing business in upper Manhattan. Klein's father had inherited the store from his own father but was forced out of business on account of his playing the stock market in the late 1920s and losing a substantial amount of money in the 1929 Wall Street crash. The family moved shortly after to the Upper West Side, to a decidedly poorer neighbourhood at Amsterdam Avenue and 108th Street.

Klein was a precociously intelligent child, who spent much of his time in the recently opened Museum of Modern Art as a boy. Excelling in school Klein began college at the City University of New York at the age of just fourteen, majoring in sociology. He was drafted by the US army in 1944 but by the time he was deployed for active service, the war had finished. Klein was stationed in France and remained there before being discharged in 1948. Utilising the GI Bill (a set of policies and initiatives which allowed, amongst other benefits, soldiers to pursue schooling and degree-level education programmes for free), Klein enrolled at the Sorbonne, one of France's most venerable academic institutions. He studied painting and for a brief period, along with fellow American expatriates Ellsworth Kelley (1923-2015) and Jack Youngerman (b.1926) was under the tutelage of the French modernist Ferdinand Léger (1881-1955).



Fig. 2.2. William Klein *3 Men in Metro*, 1949. Oil on canvas, 75 x 105cm.

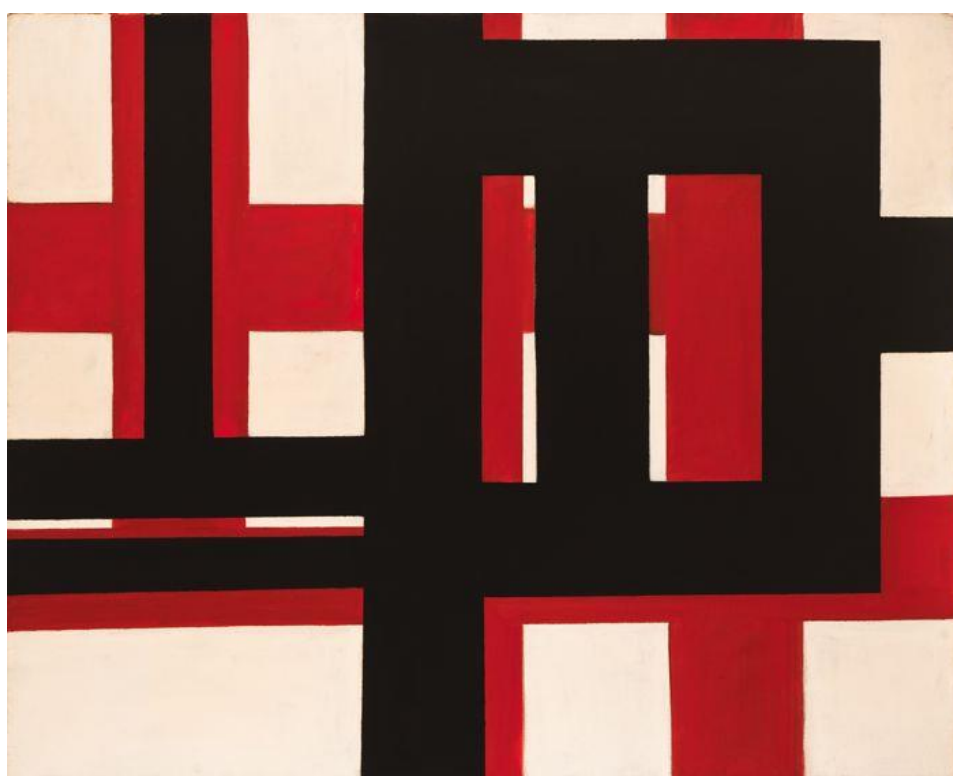


Fig. 2.3. William Klein, *Untitled (Red, Black, White)*, 1949-50. Oil on canvas, 94.5 x 117.4cm.

Shortly after his arrival in Paris, Klein began experimenting with painting. The results yielded a combination of figurative portraits (with echoes of Léger through his deployment of abstracted space and monumental forms) containing jolts of pure formalism, and more decidedly abstract line paintings bearing hallmarks of influence from Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) and Bauhaus painter Max Bill (1908-1994)¹¹ (see Figs 2.2 and 2.3). One can see in Klein's bold and playful use of colour, a preview of the avenues his later film work like *Broadway by Light* and *Mr. Freedom* (1969) would take. As John Heilpern highlights, Klein was deeply influenced by European Dada: its irreverence, its political anarchism and its 'comic-strip vitality' (1981:13). Following a successful showcase of these paintings in Milan, Klein was invited by architect Angelo Mangiarotti (1921-2012) to create a mural of sliding panels to decorate and divide a local apartment he had just finished. The panels consisted of mismatched black stripes on a white background. They could be interchangeably rotated and manipulated, creating an array of possible combinations. While Klein was documenting the installations, his wife Jeanne spun the panels, and they blurred in the camera's long exposure time. This was a major turning point for Klein, forming the basis for his first proper engagement with the medium of photography. David Company describes the possibilities that were opened up: 'Klein grasped straight away how the camera records and expresses, how it inevitably depicts and abstracts at the same

¹¹ Many of these works had remained unseen since their original 1952 exhibition at the Galleria del Milione in Milan, until a noteworthy 2012 exhibition, 'William Klein: Painting Etc.' at the HackellBury Gallery in London, which gave prominence to Klein's early paintings and photogram work.

time. Hard-edged painting could turn into soft edged photography' (2015). From this time, Klein devoted himself almost entirely to experimenting with his new medium of choice (Fig 2.4).



Fig. 2.4. William Klein, *Moving Diamonds, Mural Project, Paris*, early 1950s. Gelatin silver prints, printed later. Mounted to aluminium, 158.4 x 252 cm (edition of 15), HackellBury Fine Art London

The culmination of these early, exploratory sessions with abstract photography were collected in a photo maquette, which was completed in 1952 but not formally published until 2015. To accompany the publishing of these early works a touring exhibition was held, starting at London's HackellBury gallery in the spring of 2015. The show displayed many of the abstract maquette prints for the first time, alongside a looped screening of, and still, large-format prints excerpted from, *Broadway by Light*. This is one of the first instances when

Klein's moving-image work was placed in direct dialogue with his photography. The standard practice in many Klein retrospectives up to this point was to have his feature fiction and non-fiction filmmaking presented as a side programme. This juxtaposition permitted a way of looking at Klein's abstracted works and early film experiments as being reciprocal in nature. Just as Klein had taken the sliding panels of the apartment divider as a "ready-made", which the camera could aestheticize and stylistically manipulate, in *Broadway by Light*, New York's Times Square was taken on similar terms as a "ready-made" space available for manipulation. Through Klein's lens the space is opened out, mediated, abstracted and commented upon. For Klein this process was simple, and thematic comparisons with the *New York* book are completely legitimate: 'New York electric lights and neons were ready-mades—just film the cycles of the ads and I would be saying the same thing I said in the book' (2009: online), he recalled. As will be demonstrated below, while there are thematic similarities, *Broadway by Light* is not that easily deducible. Its complex manipulation of film language and ambivalent approach to subject matter cast it as a cumulative expression of Klein's work up to this point and most significantly as a key meditation on advertising and public space, through the prism of Pop.

'Primary Source and Structure': Pop and Photography

To understand Klein's work as existing within the parameters of Pop, I want first to offer an overview of how Pop and photography have been understood

through art historical paradigms. The inclusion of photography as the source material for many famous works of Pop painting points towards a discussion of how Pop relates to abstraction which can be traced back to the late 1960s. The collision between representation and abstraction found at the heart of this debate will underline my discussion of Klein going forward.

As discussed in Chapter One, it has become an easily dismissed cliché that Pop Art was primarily an American art movement which coalesced around four or five key players in the 1960s. Of course, the history of Pop is a great deal more nuanced and complex, finding its antecedents in Great Britain in the 1940s and 50s, and possessing a geographic reach which expanded well beyond Anglo-American cities. It established itself as a way of making and thinking about art in places as diverse as Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro and names associated with its practices are as varied as Marisol (1930-2016), Martial Raysse (b.1936) and Shinohara Ushio (b.1932). The same myopia is, it would appear, circumstantially present in the types and mediums of art which are taken to constitute Pop. For a long period up until the turn of the twenty-first century, painting and sculpture have predominated in exhibitions, group shows and thematic retrospectives. These medium-specific confines have seen a varied expansion since the turn of the 21st century, with photography and film often playing a pivotal role in Pop shows and catalogues. The Centre Georges Pompidou exhibition entitled 'Les Années Pop' from 2001 is an exemplary case study. In his review of the exhibition, Marco Livingstone commends that beyond painting and sculpture 'The diverse activities of the Pop years are also filled out by the inclusion of poems by Gerard Malanga, filmed documentations

of performances, an installation of Warhol movies, and photographs and films—including some of the urban “Pop” environment dating back as far as the ’30s—by Rudy Burckhardt, Fred W. McDarrah, William Klein, and Billy Name’ (2001). This is one of the first instances of photography being included on equal footing alongside more traditional Pop art mediums at a major show. For Livingstone, placing photography and cinema in dialogue with the more famous paintings and sculptures of Pop acts as a testimony to the processes and contexts of the movement’s formative years. He views this curatorial process as forging a necessary conversation which gets to the very core of what Pop—its form and contents—are all about: ‘Here, for once, is a real sense of dialogue, with attention focused on the uses of photography, cinematic influences, and mechanical procedures as well as on themes of fame and glamour’ (ibid). The conceptualisation of Pop and photography as being inherently linked has influenced shows like ‘The Pop Years’ and most prominently ‘The Painting of Modern Life’ at the Hayward Gallery in London in 2007. It also provides us with a way into thinking about Pop and abstraction, which is important to reading Klein within this context.

In his 1980 essay ‘That old thing Art’, Roland Barthes is quick to recognise the inherent link between Pop art and photography as a radical break in painting’s relationship to the medium. As he writes: ‘photography has long been fascinated by painting, of which it still passes as a poor relation; Pop art overturns this prejudice: the photograph often becomes the origin of the images Pop art presents: neither “art painting” or “art photograph,” but a nameless mixture’ (1980:370). Even from casual observation it is clear to see

that a great many Pop painters created pictures which, in the words of curator and critic Ralph Rugoff, 'translated photographic images taken from newspapers, advertisements, historical archives and snapshots' (2007:10). The processes of translating an image from photography to painting is extremely varied in Pop, from the acute photographic realism of Gerhard Richter (b.1932) to the chance embellishments and ruptures in the photo-canvas surfaces of Warhol's silk screens, to name but two famous examples. Such variety is testament to the scope of Pop and the multiplicity of artist voices and viewpoints found within its parameters. Richter perhaps best testifies to the hold photography had for so many artists associated with the movement with his famous observation that 'photography had to be more relevant to me than art history; it was an image of my, our, present-day reality...I did not take it as a substitute for reality but as a crutch to help me get to reality' (1995:6). It is this use of the photograph as a 'crutch', or the 'translation' of the image from the photographic to the painterly medium which results for Barthes in a 'nameless mixture', a description for the status of an image which appears to exist between photography and painting. It is nameless perhaps because it occupies two poles concurrently: representation and abstraction, an argument which is encapsulated in recent readings of Pop and photography by Hal Foster and historical understandings of Pop in general by Suzi Gablik and John Russell. They can elucidate for us what Barthes seems to be gesturing towards.

One of the largest attempts at a form of Pop revisionism following on from 'The Pop Years' exhibition in Paris was a "blockbuster" show on the history of Pop,

2014's 'From Pop to Popism' at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. Accompanying the exhibition was a series of lectures. The keynote address was a talk by the art historian and critic Hal Foster entitled 'On the Rapport Between Photography and Painting in Pop Art'. Foster takes as his example the work of British Pop pioneer Richard Hamilton (1922-2011).¹² Hamilton's work, Foster argues, takes ephemeral photography as the 'structure and source' for his tableaux-inspired pictures; Hamilton 'seizes on a transitory scene', Foster states, taking the 'snapshot as his source' (2015). Foster eulogises the approach, practice and theoretical commentary which Hamilton gives to Pop as it relates to photography. Hamilton's photo-based paintings are various in subject matter, tone and critique, but are unified by their democratic approach to source material: 'the publicity still, the fashion shoot, the postcard' (Foster: 2015), all are equal in Hamilton's discourse of images. Moreover, Foster notes that Hamilton 'often found painterly effects in these formats' (ibid). And that Hamilton himself saw a collapse in medium specificity: 'the distinction between camera work and painting hardly operates in a good deal of magazine and advertising material', he remarked (Hamilton in Foster: 2015). Foster concludes that Hamilton was 'especially drawn to seductive passages in photographic sources that move from focus to blur' (2015).

¹² Foster often champions Hamilton: 'For me there is no Pop art without Hamilton, in fact I do not think there is even the idea of pop without Hamilton' (2015). This represents not only a cogent reading of Hamilton's importance within the history and development of the movement but is also testament to Foster's belief that Hamilton is a decidedly unknown quantity outside of the UK and Europe, at least in comparison to his American contemporaries (see Foster: 2010, 2011).

One of Hamilton's seminal screen-prints from the 1960s is testament to this. Not unlike Klein's later commentary on the photographic selection process in his film *Contacts*, which will be discussed below, *My Marilyn* (1965, see Fig 2.5) depicts a photographic contact sheet of a Marilyn Monroe fashion shoot, which Hamilton found originally printed in *Town* magazine in 1962. The densely-packed paper is inscribed with layers of pastel pink and blue, each rejected image insistently crossed out with materials ranging from pen to white markers and lipstick. The marks of rejection take on a new meaning in the image's translation from photograph on the page to image on the paper, where the tone and texture of the markings is diversified and highlighted. As Hamilton later commented: 'There is a fortuitous narcissism to be seen for the negating cross is also the childish symbol for a kiss; but the violent obliteration of her own image has a self-destructive implication that made her death all the more poignant' (1982:64). Here, the photographic image is redefined through its translation to the medium of paint and print, and a threshold of abstraction is opened. There is no longer a realistic or traditional index of Monroe on a fashion shoot, but a 'nameless mixture', to use Barthes' phrasing, of photography and mark-making. Now ink takes the form of the marks on the contact sheet, and washes of colour cover what was once a set of black and white images. The images, once tangible and legible as a simple set of photographs are modified and obscured; Monroe is lost and found among attempts to identify an ideal representation of herself.¹³

¹³ Monroe was one of the most enduring subjects for Pop Artists. Many representations of her are haunted by the spectre of her untimely death, such as Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* (1962),



Fig. 2.5. Richard Hamilton, *My Marilyn*, 1965. Screen-print on paper, 51.8 x 63.2cm.

As demonstrated by the quote above, Hamilton was an astute chronicler of his own projects. He speaks of the 1950s, arguably Pop's formative decade, as a visual world saturated with images and understood by artists through 'the great visual matrix that surrounds us; a synthetic, "instant" view. Cinema, television, magazines, newspapers immersed the artist in a total environment and this new visual ambience was Photographic' (Hamilton: 1982:64). Towards the end of his lecture, Foster encapsulates this attitude as an aesthetic environment

Rosalyn Drexler's (b.1926) *Marilyn Pursued by Death* (1963) and Bruce Conner's *Marilyn Times Five* (1973).

and art practice which exists between 'information and noise', a 'capitalist spectacle – an immense space of intimate perception' which exists on 'the threshold between representation and abstraction' (2015). Foster's analysis points us towards some of the foundational arguments concerning the ontology of the photographic image as it is compared to painting which it would be useful to address.

The perception of photography as an automatic capturing and imprinting of reality "out there" in front of the camera led Barthes to famously declare the process of analogue photo-chemical reaction a 'message without a code' (1961:17). Such a declaration offers a direct contrast to painting, in which the hand of the artist is visible, his or her signature legible in the manipulation of paint and other artistic materials onto a canvas or other base, which remains, for the most part, resolutely flat. Painting is introspective, providing an umbilical link back to the hand that created it; displaying the trace, however intuitive, spontaneous or obliquely rendered, of the artist's gestures. The photographic image, as Kaja Silverman has noted, points outward, onto the world—not only in its varying iconicity (or resemblance to objects) but in its basic indexicality. 'The photographic image', she writes,

offers a representation of something else. It generally does so iconically – by providing a "likeness" of the latter. But even when a photograph does not offer us an intelligible image, it points stubbornly outward, since it depends for its existence upon the transmission of light between a material form and camera...the photographic image draws upon the system of perspective in order to project a three- dimensional space. As

a result, it seems to be “transparent” – to open directly onto the world (2007:18).¹⁴

If painting and photography seem so ontologically opposed, one of the key questions asked by Hamilton, Warhol and Richter and others seems to be ‘what can be achieved by recognising their similarities, by fusing the mediums together?’ The results can be said to exist on ‘the threshold between representation and abstraction’ (2015) as Foster has it. Following this logic, one may attempt a definition of Pop paintings which use photographs as their source material as existing in a similarly equivocal space between the two.

Of all the Pop artists mentioned so far, Andy Warhol is perhaps the master of subtly critical ambivalence towards and deadpan reifications of mass consumer imagery. Much like Hamilton, Warhol mined the daily newspapers for sensational tabloid photography on which to further explore the industrial process of screen-print painting. Grainy snapshots of the aftermath of auto-collisions, car burnouts, mass food poisoning, suicides and civil rights protests form the basis of his celebrated ‘Death and Disaster’ series in the early 1960s. He is perhaps the Pop artist most synonymous with the imbrication of painting and photography. Foster refers to this as Warhol’s ‘Death in America Series’ (1996:36) the title under which Warhol exhibited this suite of painting in Paris

¹⁴ Silverman’s recent reconceptualization of the photographic medium (2016), attempts to remove the binary arguments of the photograph as sign and its referent, or as a copy or index of what the camera captures, to argue that the photographic image is in fact an analogy of its referent. I am here, however, more concerned with the traditional arguments which pertain to photography occupying a space in-between indexicality and simulation, or more potently, representation and abstraction.

in 1962. For Foster, the paintings get to the heart not only of Warhol's project, but more broadly to the use of photography in Pop painting *and* Pop art in general. Foster declares that the 'great idiot savant of our times', when attended to correctly, provides us with a way of thinking which

[...] may get us beyond the old opposition that constrains so many approaches to the work: that the images are referents, to iconographic themes or to real things in the world, or, alternatively, that the world is nothing but image, that all Pop images in particular are other images. Most readings not only of Warhol but of post war art based in photography divide somewhere along this line: the image as referential *or* as simulacral. This is a reductive either/or that a notion of traumatic realism can open up productively (1996:36-38).

Foster's argument divides previous perspectives into two camps which find their origins in major tenets of post-structuralist philosophy. The first, that images are referents to things in the real world, is epitomised by the writings of Barthes, especially his 1980 book *Camera Lucida*. 'The photograph', Barthes writes, 'is pure contingency and can be nothing else (it is always *something* that is represented)' (1980:28, original emphasis). With Pop art based in photography, this referential nature allows for a radical critique of the content of the image. Here is Barthes again from 'That Old Thing Art': 'Pop art produces certain *radical images*: by dint of being an image, the thing stripped of any symbol. This is an audacious movement of mind (or of society): it is no longer the fact which is transformed into an image... it is the image itself which becomes fact' (1980:372, original emphasis). According to Barthes' theorisation, the Pop image refers to something in the real world (a car crash found in a tabloid newspaper photograph for instance) but radically collapses

its contents in on itself through the translation onto canvas. Through appropriation and repetition, it becomes a cypher of an image, or in the words of Foster an 'avant-gardist disruption of representation' (1996:38).

This contrasts against the second proposition Foster highlights, 'that the world is nothing but image, that all Pop images in particular are other images' (ibid). Here is the position of Jean Baudrillard, who argues that the world is made up of simulacra, signs with no attachment to the real world. Within the postmodern condition, Baudrillard argues, signs have lost attachment to reality and devolved into hyperreal simulations: everything is just an image of the thing it claims to represent. Pop art, for Baudrillard is the apex of this situation. He sees, to quote Foster, 'an "end of subversion," a "total integration" of the art work into the political economy of the commodity' (ibid). In other words, Pop places itself on a stylistic continuity with the world of advertising and other forms of mass culture, parroting popular forms, and willing the viewer's complicity into a world of 'cool' subversion. For Baudrillard, this strategy amounts to a complete put on: 'Ultimately, in this 'cool' smile, you can no longer distinguish between the smile of humour and that of commercial complicity... [Pop's] smile epitomizes its whole ambiguity: it is not the smile of critical distance, it is the smile of *collusion*' (1989:44, original emphasis). By imbricating these two positions, Foster's interpretation of Warhol advances a vision in which Pop attempts to occupy the space of reference/representation *and* simulation/abstraction. These two binaries can be troubled by the Pop image, which finds itself in a space between figuration (the representation of real-world referents) and a form of abstraction (where signification ceases to

exist). Pop is one of the most fecund arenas in which this balancing act operates. This argument has not only been fleshed out in the realms of contemporary art history and philosophy, but can trace its origins to the curation and discussion of Pop, Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism in the 1960s. An important precursor to Foster's invocation of Barthes and Baudrillard, Suzi Gablik and John Russell's *Pop Art Redefined*, will close this discussion on Pop as it relates to abstraction and photography before we turn to Klein's interventions into the field.

If, as has been seen above, works of Pop art which take photographic sources as their base explore the specific tensions of the medium by existing between reference and simulation, then what could one say of Pop more generally? What is its relationship to the representation/abstraction and reference/simulation dyads? Pre-empting the discussions of Barthes and Baudrillard, *Pop Art Redefined* is the name of a landmark exhibition and edited catalogue from 1968 and 1969 respectively. In what appears to amount to their mission statement for the show and book, Gablik opens her discussion by speaking of their intention to 're-define Pop art as having a more direct relation to Minimal and Hard-edged abstract art than is frequently admitted' (1969:10). For both her and co-editor John Russell, Pop is the illegitimate off-spring of two aspects of the 1950s: the visual culture of Abstract Expressionism and the proliferation of consumerism in everyday life. Their position offers an overhauling of the history encountered in Chapter One where Pop is placed in an antagonistic dialogue with its Abstract Expressionist forebears. As Russell states:

Pop seems to me to have sprung from two distinct situations, neither of which was in existence before 1950. One is an economy of abundance, in which the password is “I consume, therefore I am.” Economies strained by the Second World War could not have produced Pop. The other determinant historical factor was the predominance in both England and the USA of non-referential abstract painting’ (1969:27).

The Pop artist’s exploitation of ready-made consumer imagery and quotidian products is, for the authors, an index of this art’s resolute engagement with an avant-garde aesthetic practice. As Gablik articulates: ‘what I am attempting to suggest here is that the use of *chance techniques*, or of “found” rather than invented images, represents in America what really amounts to a moral strategy... by moral strategy I mean any means used to achieve a tougher art, to avoid tasteful choices, and to set the stakes higher’ (1969:18, my emphasis).¹⁵ If this leads us to an understanding that this merely amounts to a form of aggressive championing of Pop as a tough, critical modernism, one need only to look at one of the key essays anthologised in the collection, ‘Pop Art and Non- Pop Art’ by Robert Rosenblum as emblematic of such a stance. He is unequivocal in his evaluation that Pop shares a stylistic, and even

¹⁵ The debates surrounding pop art’s relationship to modernism, postmodernism and theories of the Avant-Garde are incredibly muddy. Sylvia Harrison (2001) and Sara Doris (2007) could lay claim to the ‘Pop is postmodern’ camp, while writers like Foster strike a more nuanced understanding, seeing Pop as existing in-between modernism and postmodernism and promoting avant-garde tactics (see especially 2012). Interestingly, we need not even look to historical overviews to locate this tension. In 1963 the Museum of Modern Art in New York organised a panel discussion where the general view on display from nearly all the panellists (minus Henry Geldzahler) cast Pop as an affront to both Modernism and the achievements of Greenbergian formalism (see Selz: 1963). Compare this to a mere six years later and the publication of *Pop Art Redefined* (1969), considered here, where Suzi Gablik and John Russel argue that there is an inherent link between Pop and the formalism which preceded it; a transplantation of the aesthetic concerns of abstraction to the world of everyday consumerism and mass culture.

thematic, approach with its Abstract Expressionist forebears: the 'boundary between Pop and abstract art is an illusory one' (1969 [1964]:56) he declares.

The most inventive of the Pop artists, Rosenblum contends

share with their abstract contemporaries a sensibility to bold magnifications of simple, regularised forms – rows of dots, stripes, chevrons, concentric circles; to taut, brushless surfaces that often reject traditional oil techniques in favour of new industrial media of metallic, plastic, enamel quality; to expansive areas of flat, unmodulated colour. In this light, the boundaries between Pop and abstract keep fading (ibid).

Rosenblum's argument is compelling; it invites us to think, for example, of the compositional ben-day dots of paintings by Roy Lichtenstein as both a multiplicity of tiny abstractions, and simultaneously as a series of painterly elements aligned into a unified representative form.¹⁶

Under these auspices, Pop has it both ways, "pure" painted form and translated photographic expression, and thus takes ownership of two realms of the image; it is at once representative and abstract. I would like to take these conceptualisations of Pop and carry them into a thorough reading of Klein's *New York* book, and his film *Broadway by Light*.

¹⁶ In a 1963 interview with Gene Swenson, Lichtenstein comments on his relationship to formalism, which chimes with the dichotomous relationship between representation and abstraction found in Pop: 'I think my work is different from comic-strips... what I do is form, whereas the comic strip is not formed in the sense I'm using the word; the comics have shapes but there has been no effort to make them intensely unified. The purpose is different, one intends to depict and I intend to unify. And my work is different from comic strips in that every mark is really in a different place, however slight the difference seems to some. The difference is often not great, but it is crucial. People also consider my work to be anti-art in the same way they consider it pure depiction' (1969 [1963]:93).

Blurred Lines: Projections on a Wall/ Cinema in a Book/ Photography on the Television

The work of William Klein exists in-between different types of images and different approaches to image-making. In his sixty-plus years as a practising artist, Klein has created and come to define a unique approach to street photography, fashion photography, photobooks, fiction and non-fiction films, posters and paintings. He has rendered the world into what his friend and collaborator Chris Marker dubbed 'slices of Klein' (quoted in Harrison 1994:249). Klein's aesthetic wanderings and versatility to move across mediums—forging connections and defying traditions—can be traced to his days as a student of painting under Léger in the 1940s. Léger was himself a pioneer in the field of multidisciplinary art-making. As Klein later commented:

Here was a great artist who told us that galleries were dead, easel painting was finished, a socialist who'd been to Russia and America, experimented with film and design, who'd gone out of his way against all the Parisian fads and fashions of the time... He wanted us to get out of the studios and into the streets or link up with architects as he had with Le Corbusier. He wanted us to be monumental (in Heilpern 1981:13).

The collapse of aesthetic hierarchies and expansion of stylistic horizons promoted by Léger had a profound influence on Klein. It fostered in him an artistic world-view which would fuel his consistently restless output for the rest of his career. He would never deliberately attempt to emulate the style of his teacher, but he would, like his mentor, go on to work with a modernist architect (Mangiarotti) and within both film and design. Underpinning Klein's activities was a medium Léger had not fully explored: photography. The final third of this

chapter will be concerned explicitly with Klein's filmmaking, but here I will concentrate on his photography and photobook design, as it is important to underline his thoughts on the two mediums. Klein, I contend, sees little difference between moving and still images. In much the same way that Pop painting has been seen to trouble representational strategies of both painting and photography, Klein, I argue, is similarly colliding two mediums, film and photography, together to create an abstracted vocabulary of Pop. Klein's view in this regard can be demonstrated with an examination of his approach to the display and selection of photography in both his books and self-curated gallery shows, and in a little-seen short film he made as a pilot for French television in 1989 entitled *Contacts*.

While Klein has been considered in-depth by various photography historians and critics (see for example: profiles by John Heilpern (1981) and Martin Harrison (1994) and catalogue essays by David Company (2012a, 2012b, 2014)), attention to him within the world of film studies could be described as patchy at best. Accounts of Klein's work from the perspective of film history and theory are very few and far between. Two famous figures, one from the world of film theory, Raymond Bellour (1990) and from film criticism, Jonathan Rosenbaum (1989) were the first to give serious accounts of Klein's work. There is a considerable gap in any significant scholarship after this point, until the new millennium, with critics Adrian Martin (2008, 2009), Michael Koresky (2008), Ed Halter (2015) and Tony Williams (2016) offering journalistic accounts of the rediscovery of Klein's films. Scholars Alison Smith (2005) and Des O'Rawe (2012, 2016) have also latterly offered more substantial

engagement with Klein's filmmaking practice from the perspectives of post '68 political French cinema, and the confluence of visual art and documentary practice, respectively.

The fusion of film and photography in Klein's still image work has been most pointedly commented upon by Bellour. One of the first things he examines about Klein is his self-conscious occupation of a position which is neither wholly devoted to stillness or movement. Klein's work, Bellour claims, contains both concurrently. Klein is seen as coming 'from between photography and cinema' (2012 [1990]:106). Bellour's comments could be combined with those of Barthes' about Pop painting as it relates to photography: the Pop photography output of Klein could be said to be a 'nameless mixture' (1980:370), that conflates the stillness of photography with the movement of cinema in much the same way that Pop painting's use of photographs gave rise to the indistinct admixture described above. Bellour gives two concrete reasons to support his analysis, and that render this artistic concoction intelligible. The first is Klein's use of blur in his still images; the second concerns the techniques of display employed by Klein in gallery spaces.

For Bellour, 'motion blur condenses for expressive ends proper the drama that all figurative representation presupposes' (2012 [1990]:104). This condensation is furthermore an opening up of a space in-between stillness and motion. Bellour ruminates on Klein's use of the shudder and blur:

An effect like this accentuates, focuses, and develops the invisible shudder that runs more or less through all true photographs and forms, in the very inside of time seized and immobilised, a thin film of time in a pure state. In its own way, motion blur brings out a shudder like that

caught by Klein, something between mobile and immobile, and offers up the perception of visible time – in other words, duration (ibid).

The blur casts upon the image a state of being that troubles distinctions and boundaries between mobility and immobility, and allows the viewer to witness the movement of time within a still frame. A photograph like *Dance in Brooklyn* (1955), found in *New York* (Fig 2.6) demonstrates Bellour's conception. The image is split into three planes of focus, moving from the right to the left of the frame. In the middle-ground of the picture is a lamppost and the left half of an advertising billboard; these objects remain still. Turning our attention to the foreground there are two figures, a girl and a boy (in what appears to be a fake beard). They are in the midst of a dance, performing for Klein's camera. Their faces are obscured. They are abstracted subjects. In the far left of the picture's frame Klein captures a blurred automobile driving off into the distance; the horizon has almost whited out through contrast, with only the vague outline of a single-storey building and a pair of telephone poles visible. Klein seems here to capture the joyful frivolity of children at play, and the motion blur, deliberately inscribed, seeks to aptly reflect their vigorous movements. It makes the spectator see the subjects in their vitality and indexes their liveness. This is a constituent element of the blur for Bellour: 'out of focus images allow us to see better, or rather to see what is clear in a different way. Lack of focus can even serve to illuminate the essence of the photograph, what distinguishes it, its signature – just as the pastoralists of old, faced with the rise of the snapshot, chose lack of focus as a manifest sign and affirmation of art' (2012 [1990]:100).

Bellour offers a view of photography in which representation is placed in the service of rendering the ontology (the unescapable stillness of photography) visible through an attempt to undermine it. Just as Barthes sees the translation of photography onto the painted canvas as demonstrating an avant-gardist proposition on the idea of representation in Pop painting, here Klein troubles distinctions between stillness and movement by inscribing the effect of movement (a quality inherent to cinema) into the stilled frame of his immobile Pop photograph. This quality can be found throughout the *New York* book (other examples being *Candy Store, New York* (1955) and *Ball, NYC* (1955)). Additionally, Klein's collision of these two lens-based forms occurs syntactically at the level of the display of his work in gallery spaces, and in the design and page layout of *New York*.



Fig. 2.6. William Klein, *Dance in Brooklyn*, New York, 1955. Gelatin silver print on baryta, 100 × 150 cm.

If the aspiration to contain movement is a condition of Klein's use of blur in still photography, the opposite condition, in Bellour's theorisation, can be ascribed to the cinema: 'just as the photo can be animated in spite of its apparent immobility, so can the cinema be interrupted and frozen...transforming itself using elements that apparently went against its nature of illusory spectacle founded on continuity and illusion of movement' (2012 [1990]:106). This conception is articulated in some of Klein's methods of display which engage with the cinematic apparatus.

For Bellour the cinematic apparatus and its typical condition of movement can be questioned by photography. Klein achieves this by placing stillness within the conceptual framework of cinema. This is most potently observed in two exhibitions which were overseen by Klein. The first was his major retrospective at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1983. Instead of having photographs placed in frames and hung on walls, Klein 'opted to project his photos on three screens in the dark' (ibid); then at the Palais de Tokyo in 1987 he 'imagined a spiral *dispositif* in which each of his immense photographs could appear as a still frame of a continuous film, with the fashion series, all blurred or ghost images, disturbing the gaze like the point of blur in all photographs' (2012 [1990]:107). It is obvious from these display practices that Klein's concerns for disturbing the limits of stillness and movement expanded well beyond the frame of the process and practice of photography and bled into his conceptualisations for its presentation and eventual consumption by the spectator in the gallery. This same blending of the worlds of stasis and movement can be traced back to his radical layout designs for the city street photography books, beginning with *New York* in 1956. As an aside to his caption description of *Broadway by Light* in *Pop*, Mark Francis notes that Klein laid out the book 'using a state-of-the-art Photostat machine, enabling him to enlarge his street photos and combine them with his own typography' (2005:46). Here again technology clearly has a key role to play in the way Klein presents his photography to the viewer.

The projection apparatus drawn upon in the gallery shows clearly aspires to place photography within the realm of the cinematic, but a book, defined as it

is by printed un-moving materials, could never add movement to the stillness of photography. Klein, never one to toe the line of convention, saw very little difference between projecting on a wall and editing a page. In fact, a very similar operation to his projection of images some thirty years later is at work in his montage-inflected approach to page layout (see figure 2.6), as he reflects in the 1995 edition of the *New York* book:

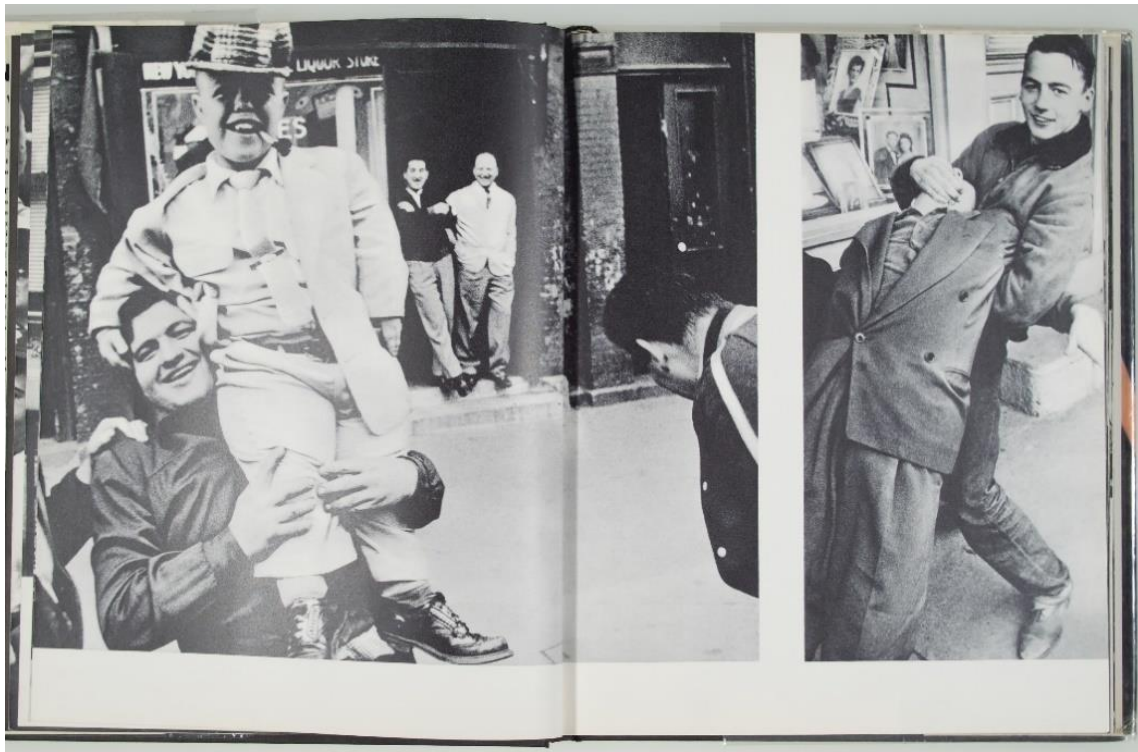


Fig. 2.7. Double page spread from *Life is Good and Good for You in New York: Trans witness revels* (Klein: 1956)

For me, the design, the graphic scenario, the layout was almost as important as the photographs. So I did everything to make it a new visual object. Double pages with twenty images jammed together in comic strip style, colliding facing pages, bleed doubles, catalogue parodies, a dada blast...there is no layout, it's even anti-layout. Just full pages and double pages, only the sequencing counts, like a movie. Like the movie I thought this book should be (1995:5).

There is one passage in this set of observations particularly worthy of further examination. It highlights the paramount importance of understanding Klein first and foremost as a multidisciplinary practitioner who wishes to dismantle the distinction between movement and stasis through the imbrication of photography with cinema: 'the layout was almost as important as the photographs'. It is after all the layout which lends the book its montage effect. It would be incorrect, however, to state that Klein broke the mould by proffering the photobook as a form of proto-cinema. In Martin Parr and Gerry Badger's history of the photobook Klein's *New York* is placed in a subgenre named the 'stream of consciousness photobook' (2004:233). In their assessment, Klein's editing is deemed most important: 'the design and editing', they opine, 'is paramount, and *the* great model for what was to follow' (2004:243, emphasis added). Considering *New York* as *the* 'great model' for subsequent works, many of which are discussed in their book, Parr and Badger identify Klein's attitude towards editing and arranging his pictures as extremely innovative.

There is one obvious antecedent to this proto-cinematic montage style: Alexey Brodovitch's *Ballet* (1945). Although Klein claimed to have been unaware of the book (Parr and Badger: 2004:243) (this is highly likely given the book's extremely limited print run which is estimated to be between three hundred (Parr and Badger: 2004: 240) and five hundred (Easterson: 2011:114) copies)), the montage effect contained within Brodovitch's layout design, clearly foreshadows Klein's project. Figures 2.7 and 2.8 illustrate the full-bleed placement of photographs across the "gutter", or spine, of the books by Klein and Brodovitch, which can elicit a sense of the image as a perpetual

continuation of itself, a single page unable to contain the picture's sprawl. As Parr and Badger comment, in *Ballet*: 'the double-page spread can often be read as a single panorama, and the whole section like a strip of movie film'. This organisation of images amounts, for the authors, to 'one of the most successful attempts at suggesting motion in photography', making the book one of the most 'cinematic' (2004:241) ever published.

A sense of continuous motion and panoramic display are also to be found in the illustration from Klein's *New York*, but the main image of the spread ceases two thirds of the way across the second page. This fragmenting of the image is typical of Klein's practice throughout his city street photography books; they adhere to a visual rhythm which, in the words of Parr and Badger, 'contain as many cadences, breaks and unexpected flights of fancy as a Sonny Rollins sax solo' (2004:243). The musical metaphor is appropriate here: it furthers the conception of Klein as operating across and with reference to other artistic disciplines. Much like the be-bop jazz referenced by Parr and Badger, Klein's work is for them '*supremely* about process. It is about the process of making photographs, and about the further process of editing and sequencing them, playing with them and making a coherent statement' (ibid, original emphasis). Klein, I would argue, is making more than one statement. His work is about the process of creation, but his creations do have a subject; the frenzied, quotidian experience of life in a heaving metropolis. This subject matter is articulated in the sequencing of Klein's pictures. It is at once brash, coherent and playfully abstract.



Fig. 2.8. Double page spread from *Ballet* (Brodovitch: 1945).

Klein, it is clear to see, was not the only artist to mine such a field of photographic play. Klein's aspiration within this methodology is to collapse the distinctions and explore the differences between photography and cinema, precisely by attempting to merge the latter into the aesthetic frame of the former. Klein's film essay, *Contacts*, presents a culmination of his thinking with reference to the ambiguous relationship between the mediums. The film is a short set of ruminations by the artist, in voiceover, on his approach to photography and to the selection of images from a sheet of contacts. The film opens with a master shot of a contact sheet. As Klein assiduously moves from one image to the next, he instructs us on how to 'read' the sheet by showing us the images he has selected for publication in relationship to the ones left behind. As each photograph is selected, we track across the contact sheet to a full-frame image of it. The film essentially amounts to an intimate insight into

what is, for Klein, an equally important part of the artistic process; the selection and editing of photographs. At the same time, *Contacts* is full of aphorisms and one-liners: it is a kind of photographic equivalent to Robert Bresson's celebrated publication *Notes On Cinematography* (1975), though less cryptic and more didactic in its tone of address.

From the outset, Klein is quick to establish photography outside of its usual printed parameters. The film opens in medium shot with a light table filling the entire frame. A sharp dissolve places six strips of developed photographic negative on the table, six frames per strip, closely arranged on top of one another. Klein's narration begins: 'Photographs taken one after the other. You read them from left to right, like a text'. In his short essay on the film, Bellour suggests that we (the viewers) 'find ourselves precisely at the cinema (or in a cinematic situation)' (1990:160) as Klein gradually discusses his selections. One of the most striking things about the film is how self-consciously it animates the inanimate stillness of its subject, the photographs themselves. Klein achieves this by using the camera to track along each strip of film until the contact sheet has ended, then we are given another establishing shot of every photograph at once and on the illuminated surface, before cutting in again to examine each photograph in sequence. The felt tip pen marks, which demarcate the frames of each picture, are clearly visible as we work our way from left to right. As if to spell it out for us, Klein offers several remarks along the way: 'My Leica becomes a camera, shot after shot, as fast as I can', he declares; 'I feel like I'm in an American movie'. We, as spectators, are occupying a space which is between the mediums of cinema and photography,

and thus between stillness and movement. Or as Bellour astutely observes: 'we are in a time which is a little mad, at the same time very constrained (the tracking which looks as if it will never stop) and unsteady, because of all the interruptions, the changes provoked: in short, as close to being *between* photography and cinema as we can get'. '13 minutes of cinema', he concludes 'construct a sort of time which haunts the memory' ([2012]1990:162, original emphasis).

We can go a little further here. Bellour places emphasis on the camerawork (insistent tracking, the movement of the pictures through the film frame), but also on the breaks in narration and cutting. One key aspect of the translation of these still images into the arena of cinematic movement is highlighted by Klein but eludes Bellour's commentary: duration. Before the main body of narration, which speaks directly to the pictures contained within the contact sheet on screen, Klein prefaces the film with a short speech about photographic duration, the time it takes to create a picture:

A picture is taken at one one-hundred-and-twenty-fifth of a second. What do you know of a photographer's work? One hundred pictures, say one hundred and twenty-five? Well, it's a body of work. That comes all told to one second. Let's say more like two-hundred-and-fifty photographs, that would be a rather large body of work. That comes, all told, to two seconds. The life of a photographer, even a great photographer, as they say, two seconds.

This passage accompanies, on a screen, a trio of images, each of the same subject; a Japanese advertisement display. Each picture is framed from a different angle. The camera pans over each photograph, lingering for enough time for the spectator to notice the differences, the choices available to the

editor. This short opening is paradigmatic of the whole of *Contacts*. Klein uses cinematic duration, lingering over the images to communicate the experience of the secondary process of being a photographer, the time it takes to select, to crop and to edit. This process exists in a different form of time to the millisecond instant of capturing the photograph itself; it is something which must be considered through an extended duration, a more thorough engagement with the image. This time is only available after the fact of the picture's creation. By using the film camera to slowly take in the results of a series of split-second instant images, Klein again conflates the worlds of photography and cinema. We are given through the moving-image a view akin to his perspective as an artist, not through the composition of his shots in camera but the resultant frames, which can now be examined with judicious exactitude. The moving camera allows time to unfold on an instant frame, approximating the photo editor's task, and taking us into a fold of time impossible to conceive of without filmic duration.

By placing my consideration of *Contacts* at the end of this section on Klein's interdisciplinary interrogation of the distinctions between mobility and immobility in both photography and cinema, I am positing it as a cumulative example of his approach. It is, in both tone and content, analogous to a manifesto: a manifesto in which form and style are of equal importance to the ideas expressed in the commentary. The film can, no doubt, be understood in this way. However, there is still much more to unpack with Klein: his concerns are much broader than a metacommentary on the status of these mediums. I would like to go on to link his conceptualisation of photography and cinema

bleeding into one another to the role of abstraction in his work, assessing how this interacts with *Broadway By Light* and Pop more generally, and to the genre of the city symphony film specifically, which, I argue, is cast in a Pop mould by Klein.

Avant-Doc, City Symphony: Interrogating and Celebrating Commercial Aesthetics

At the beginning of this chapter and in the last section I placed significant emphasis on a model of reading Klein as first and foremost an interdisciplinary artist. As has been elucidated, many of Klein's practices from the late 1940s onward, bear witness to a conglomeration of styles and aesthetic attitudes, which filter through and bleed across his work. The culmination of these early efforts in painting, abstract photography, street photography and book design find their apotheosis in *Broadway by Light*. The film was shot shortly after the completion of *New York*. As photography historians Colin Westerbeck and Joel Meyerowitz have commented, the shift into the moving-image marks an important transition for Klein: 'he was blurring the boundaries between photographs much as he had earlier motion-blurred the outlines of figures in them. It's not surprising that around the time the book was published, he broke out of photography altogether by making his first movie' (2001:349). Attempting to classify *Broadway by Light* could take us down many avenues of film history. The film could be framed as existing within discourses surrounding the history of American "independent" or European experimental

filmmaking practice¹⁷; against a lineage of films by photographers turned filmmakers¹⁸; within the boundaries of avant-garde documentary; or, as a part of the tradition of the city symphony film. All of these are viable and of importance to our understanding of Klein. I would like to propose the isolation of the final two approaches as being the most productive.

Recently there has been a noticeable upsurge in artists and artist-filmmakers turning towards documentary practice.¹⁹ Discussing this trend, Erika Balsom and Hila Peleg infer a renewed questioning of the limits of the form: ‘there is a palpable need to attend to actuality and interrogate the process by which we transform lived experience into meaning through representational practices while, at the same time, never relinquishing the necessary critique of objectivity and transparency’ (2016:15). The evidence of this practice, they continue, is that artist-filmmakers have ‘turned away from the materialist interrogation of

¹⁷ Because the production of Klein’s films was affiliated to his adopted home of France there is no reference to his work in canonical histories of the American “independent” (the preferred term of many practitioners of the American avant-garde) cinema movement: see for example Renan (1967), Sitney (2002) and Mekas (2016). One way of positioning Klein in the European avant-garde is to frame him as a member of the Left-Bank. Robert Farmer’s account of the Left-Bank group (2009) vaguely alludes to Klein. In many other histories of the French New Wave and its subsections any inclusion of Klein is left wanting (see Marie: 2002, Neupert: 2007, Greene: 2007) or under-explored (Flitterman-Lewis: 1996). One of the only in-depth academic accounts of Klein’s later fiction features (Smith: 2005) plays down his origins as a filmmaker within or around the Nouvelle Vague and contextualises his work within the fall-out from post-1968 politics in France.

¹⁸ We could comfortably place Klein amongst several artists, associated with Pop, who transitioned from photography to filmmaking, practicing both concurrently. These include the aforementioned Rudy Burckhardt, Robert Frank, Ed Ruscha and more latterly figures like Cindy Sherman.

¹⁹ Discussions of the intersection between documentary and the avant-garde have become more visible recently. For an insightful introduction to the topic see Balsom and Peleg (2016), for an overview of filmmakers whose work deliberately straddles this divide see MacDonald (2014). In his recent book on the influence of the visual arts on cinematic documentaries Des O’Rawe has a chapter on Klein’s films but neglects to read *Broadway by Light* in any real detail (2016: 36, 89-109).

the medium, away from the “forest of signs”, and toward the world’ (ibid). It would be a falsehood to argue that Klein is a part of this contemporary moment: he has not made a film since 1999’s *The Messiah (Le Messie)*, however there is something in Balsom and Peleg’s conceptualisation which correlates with *Broadway by Light*. While I do not believe the film is attempting to assert an ethical intervention, or an examination into how and why documentary practice constitutes a view of the world, there is, through the manipulation of film language in *Broadway by Light* an attempt to interrogate the world—of signs and the language of advertising—which the film takes as its subject. Conversely, Klein is clearly concerned with the “forest of signs” which constitute the medium. He is grappling with the techniques and tools available to him in this new venture; dissolves, jump cuts, temporal manipulation, cropping and framing. He combines these with ‘careful attention to the specificity of located experience’ (Balsom and Peleg 2016:16), which Balsom and Peleg see as a cornerstone of this new form of documentary practice. In saying this, I am not suggesting that one should read Klein as a de facto radical documentarian, but, perhaps more incisively, that his practice is seen within a tradition of documentary filmmaking which is less concerned with narrative and ethnographic commitment and more interested in the exploration of the form of filmmaking itself: using a formal manipulation of images to organize the way spectators see and interpret the film’s subject. Here, another champion of the contemporary documentary, Michael Renov, can help us be more specific.

Broadway by Light is essentially a non-narrative documentary. If a narrative trajectory could be hung onto the film it would be the duration of an evening,

with the film beginning at dusk and ending at sunrise (an end it shares with the *New York* book's final image). This sense of an unmediated temporal trajectory is, however, undermined by the fact that the film was shot over several evenings. Furthermore, it is plain to see that Klein is not concerned with forms of documentary practice which privilege modes of realism and actuality (like the then flourishing Direct Cinema movement); his use of speed, abstraction, and reflection lend the film an expressive function. For Michael Renov, the manipulation of images for poetical or aesthetic affect is no afterthought—not simply 'aesthetics as the icing on the cake' (2010:159). They are more broadly evidence of an expressive function; one of the four cornerstones which constitute a poetics of non-fiction cinema (Renov: 1993:12). Renov defines expressivity as one of the many poles of enunciation through which a filmmaker speaks: 'It is important to note that expressivity is always the support of other discursive goals. The greater the expressive power of the piece, that is, the more vividly the film communicates [and] the more likely an audience is to feel persuasion, educative value or revelation' (2010:158). *Broadway by Light* is constant in its twisting of the expectations of documentary, never allowing our perspective to stabilize. Its formalism places the film between the poles of representation and abstraction, often achieving this effect through temporal dissonance. 'The formal regime', Renov argues, 'is the very portal of sense-making: it determines the viewer's access to the expression of ideas, its power to move and transform an audience' (2010:159). Consequently, such moments within this formal regime, 'while never entirely departing from the realm of ethnography', actually allow us to see the world of the film in

'unexpected ways, ways that cause us to reflect upon our preconceptions and move us towards new imaginings' (2010:161). While Renov is commenting more generally on a selection of films contemporaneous to his writing, I think some of his ideas can be transplanted onto Klein's work and the realm of Pop's concerns regarding representation and abstraction. It is true that *Broadway by Light* does offer a representation of Times Square's illuminations as they were in 1958, but it is the 'formal regime' employed by Klein that guides our perception of the space. Such a regime can indeed move us towards 'new imaginings', of the effect of such spaces, where the senses are overwhelmed by a cacophony of light-based and neon signage which demands our attention and participation. I will offer a textual analysis of how these concepts play out in *Broadway by Light*, but first I want to contextualise the film historically as a part of a lineage of New York-specific city symphony films.

The city symphony film is a product of the 1920s, transnational in scope and varied in its ambitions. Experimental film chronicler Scott MacDonald offers a succinct, broad definition of the genre: 'a film that provides a general sense of life in a specific metropolis, by revealing characteristic dimensions of city life from the morning into the evening of a composite day' (2001:151). Alexander Graf has identified that the genre reached its full maturity in the late 1920s with Walther Ruttmann's *Berlin, Symphonie einer Großstadt* (*Berlin, Symphony of a Great City*, 1927, Germany) and Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929, USSR) (see Graf: 2007). These films continue to be considered touchstones, despite the fact that the tradition has itself expanded since the 1920s to, in the words of Erica Stein, 'encompass the mid-century New York

cycle as well as contemporary global entries more closely aligned with an observational documentary tradition' (2013:3). It is this later lineage, particularly the New York city cycle, that I would like to put *Broadway by Light* in conversation with.

Broadway by Light can be aligned with the 1920s mode, but, a certain inversion must take place. Take Graf's explanation of the formal style of the city symphony in its 1920s expression: 'an almost total suppression of intertitles, narrative and plot elements, and a rejection of the documentary form in the traditional sense, in favour of asserting rhythmic and associative montage as formal devices, and a dawn to dusk strategy in the search for a pure film form' (2007:79). This could provide an accurate description of the strategies at play in Klein's film, with a couple of caveats. Klein gives us the temporal frame of an evening not a whole day in *Broadway by Light*. Furthermore, the film is, it seems, less about locating an ideal film form in and of itself (in this way the film is very much a disavowal of modernist tendencies regarding medium specificity which early city symphonies are seen as exploring), and more preoccupied with articulating a certain way of seeing its subject. However, this is not to say that Klein abandons questions of form and medium specificity entirely.

Moreover, New York City symphony films have been viewed as allowing viewers to focus on 'carefully articulated geographic spaces' (Gartenberg: 2014:248) as opposed to sweeping panoramas, which attempt to grasp the feeling of a city in its entirety, as seen in efforts from Europe. This perspective echoes the words of sociologist Robert Park, who in 1925 noted that the city

is a 'mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate' (1925 [1967]:40). For curator and critic Jon Gartenberg, in cinematic terms, New York City symphony films 'represent the articulation of a defined time frame' within specific spaces, be these 'atop skyscrapers, under bridges, through parks, down Broadway [or] in Coney Island' (ibid). In other words, one does not need to comprehend the vastness of New York City to be given a perspective on it – an invitation to see the spaces of the city anew.

Broadway by Light's focus on one specific area of the city serves as a contrast to Klein's previous project, the *New York* book, which takes in all manner of geographical locales across the city. In making *Broadway by Light*, Klein has commented that he had hoped to capture something different from the book, but ended up with similar conclusions: 'In the book I showed a New York which was not the big apple. A New York which was tragic. [I was] filming the electric lights to show the most beautiful thing in New York. A direct contrast to the book. But it said the same thing. The obsession of commercial brainwashing' (2009: online). Klein's choice and treatment of his subject matter is suffused with a formally daring documentary expressivity. These are gestures which tie this locale to Pop, but there remains the question of how this space, Broadway/Times Square, has been represented before. Do any previous efforts or conceptualisations to understand this space on film approximate Klein's play with stillness, movement and abstraction?

Such a question can be linked back to both formative examples of the city symphony genre and to the theoretical debates around modernism as it relates to cinema, spectacle and city life in the 1920s. In his monograph on Times

Square, part memoir of his own interactions with and relationship to the space, and part cultural history of its representation, Marshall Berman reflects on the cacophonous nature of the light-filled crossroads, importantly linking it to both a modernist art movement and a classic text of both the city symphony and avant-garde cinema:

The signs come at us from many directions; they color the people next to us in complex blends, and we become colored, all of us overlaid with the moving lights and shadows. The development of Cubism in the early twentieth century was made for spaces like this, where we occupy many different points of view while standing nearly still. Times Square is a place where Cubism is realism. Being there is like being inside a 1920s Cubist experimental film: "The Man with the Movie Camera" as a home movie. Signs are the essential landmark, yet generally what grips our hearts is less any one sign than the complex, the totality, the superabundance of signs, *too many* signs, a perfect complement for the Square's too many people (2009:6, original emphasis).

Berman's interpretation of Times Square points towards aspects of the space as it is represented in Klein's film. First is the definition of the space as one of surface experience; a fleeting, ethereal, and almost ritualistic 'Bath of light' (2009: xxvi) as Berman names it, recalling his mother's naming of the family strolls they would take there when he was a boy. Second is the abstraction of lights and signs that, for Berman, is already present in the immediate reality of the space, in which a multiplicity of visual discourses vie for attention. Berman connects this abstract visual texture to the disparate fragmentation of George Braque (1882-1963) and Pablo Picasso's (1881-1973) Cubism. This is enhanced by the film's further breaking-up of the Square's architecture of lights through editing. Third is the analogy that Berman sees between Times Square and cinema, with specific reference to Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera*, a

classic of the city symphony form that shares filmmaking stylistics with Klein's project, especially the use of superimposition, fast cutting and a consistent interplay between a fixed and a roving camera. There is an important element present within the Soviet documentary but absent in *Broadway by Light* which Berman also touches upon, the presence of people, which in Klein's film are seen only fleetingly: the '*too many signs*' which Berman speaks of have completely taken over.

This excerpt from Berman can also point us towards a deeper analysis of the surface and spectacle which appear to be so intrinsic to both the space of Times Square itself and its representation in *Broadway by Light*. Often appearing in writing about the city symphony, the German cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer's famous essay 'The Mass Ornament' (1927) describes modernity in terms of its surface; a world in which the crowd has transformed into a spectacle (in Kracauer's conception this included chorus lines, stadium crowds, the throngs of people passing through commercialised spaces like that of Times Square, and the audiences in attendance at packed movie palaces). Kracauer understands the individual subject being subsumed into the mass ornament of spectacle and spectatorship as a paragon for modernity itself, and the capitalist system which underpins its rise to prominence by the 1920s: 'the mass ornament is the aesthetic reflex of the rationality aspired to by the prevailing economic system' (1927:70). The rise of the society of mass ornament had been made possible by the explosion in urban populations and the commercialisation of public space within cities and towns; for Kracauer 'the

electric texture of the urban surface' becomes the definition of the 'modern urban condition' (Bruno 2011:49).

However, unlike a canonical example of the city symphony film such as Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler's *Manhatta* (1921), which has been discussed in relation to Kracauer's essay and which places significant emphasis on the spectacle of crowds throughout the island of Manhattan (see Suárez 2003), *Broadway by Light* is almost completely devoid of human presence. The people who make up Kracauer's mass ornament have been usurped by the surface of signs and lights. This is commensurate with Kracauer's thought; 1950s New York had borne witness to an unprecedented economic boom following the Second World War, and the Eisenhower years saw an explosion in the material wealth of the nation and a vast expansion of the country's middle class.²⁰ This unbridled rise in spending, production and consumption had meant that advertising had graduated from a specialist and narrow interest to become a profession of significant cultural cache, garnering comment from sociologists, novelists and filmmakers and appearing everywhere.²¹ The mass ornament shifts and mutates as capitalism itself transforms, as Kracauer writes:

²⁰ For a general history of this period which places significant emphasis on consumerism and social mobility see Donaldson (1997). For an overview of notable Pop artists, including Warhol, Lichtenstein, Thomas Wesselmann and Claes Oldenburg, in relation to consumer culture see Mamiya (1992).

²¹ Questions as to whether advertising might have been a locus of concern around issues of coercion and underhanded tactics, is reflected by the popularity of Vance Packard's best-selling exposé of the ad industry and media manipulation, *The Hidden Persuaders* (1957). Notable novels such as Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit* (1955) and the writings of Richard Yates and John Cheever concern themselves with the despondency and fallout from the pressures associated with this world of new-found prosperity, material consumption and middleclass conformity. Films like *Will success Spoil Rock Hunter?* (1957, Frank Tashlin, USA) comically skewered the advertising industry for benefiting from the rise of television at the expense of cinema and revelling in vacuity.

'The structure of the mass ornament reflects that of the general contemporary situation' (1927:69). No space in the United States or the rest of the world could claim to be more laden with advertising than Times Squares, a space by then built into both the American and global consciousness as the "crossroads of the world". Such status had been attained by the space some thirty years before Klein filmed there, as William Leach writes in his study of the rise of American consumerism: 'Nowhere else in the world, by the end of the 1920s, was so much commercial color and light to be found concentrated in one place' (1994:343). The forms, structures and shapes that emanated from the Broadway streets could be easily thought of in relation to Kracauer's words: 'The ornament...consists of degrees and circles like those found in textbooks of euclidean [sic] geometry. Waves and spirals, the elementary structures of physics' (ibid). Kracauer's description of the amassed subjects of modernity transformed into spectacle seem to anticipate the neon tubes, truncated and twisted into varying shapes, which came to dominate Broadway and Times Square. This space is, in Kracauer's words an 'aesthetic reflex' to the increasingly centralised position of consumerism and advertising in American life, that had begun to define the mass ornament for the post-war age, where advertisements were appearing on all manner of surfaces, from newspapers and billboards to television screens and building facades.

If advertising signage as it appears in Times Square can be defined as being representative of the mass ornament, a reactionary aesthetic to an increasingly bloated modernity, then our next task is to understand how it has been interpreted. In his chronological study of the New York City symphony

film Jon Gartenberg observes a shift in the approach to filmmaking and the manipulation of the filmic image by directors in the wake of World War Two. Following the war, Gartenberg argues that a 'vast repertoire of techniques' was employed to 'represent subjective awareness, including the use of distorting lenses, multiple exposures, and a movement from representational images toward abstraction' (2014:260). Such an assessment of the stylistic shift in post-war New York City symphonies is cogent. Major examples from this period which Gartenberg uses to illustrate his argument include *3rd Ave. El* (1954, Carson Davidson, USA), *Jazz of Lights* (1954, Ian Hugo, USA), *The Wonder Ring* (1955, Stan Brakhage, USA), *NY, NY* (1957, Francis Thompson, USA) *Bridges-Go-Round* (1958, Shirley Clarke, USA), *Fire* (1963, Beryl Sokoloff, USA) and *Empire* (1963, Andy Warhol, USA). These are but a few of the myriad films that fall under the fairly loose definition ascribed to the city symphony film by historians and critics. *Jazz of Lights* is particularly enlightening to view in tandem with *Broadway by Light*. Along with another film, not mentioned by Gartenberg, *Weegee's New York* (1948, Arthur "Weegee" Fellig, USA), *Jazz of Lights* offers one of the first sustained attempts to construct a city symphony from the geographic locale of Broadway/Times Square, taking the cacophonous display of electric light signage as its main focus.²² All three films could be more specifically defined, and viewed as

²² The 'electric lights city symphony' could name a traceable lineage of films that take the lights of New York as their subject. Further antecedents can be found in the filming of Coney Island's amusement park by night in Edwin S. Porter's *Coney Island at Night* (1905, USA) and Paul Fejo's *Lonesome* (1928, USA). Such a concept would have to be attended to as an issue separate to my concerns here. For an overview of experimental film and video works that take Manhattan as their subject after the 1970s, see Suárez (2010).

examples of Pop Cinema where abstraction and representation collide, arguably an appropriate mode of viewing for the mass surface ornament of Times Square.

All the examples in this grouping of Times Square light films feature significant amounts of stylisation which distort, reframe and challenge conventional perspectives of the space in question. We cannot be sure if Klein was aware of these preceding examples. It is unlikely, as their production and distribution was limited to New York, a place that by that time, Klein had ceased to call home. *Weegee's New York* was made in collaboration with Amos Vogel (1921-2012) at the infamous Cinema 16 film club, where it found a warm reception, and became, according to Macdonald, 'the most popular and influential' (2001:160) of the many projects Vogel helped to create and distribute. (MacDonald further adds that the film is now one of the most sadly unrecognized independent films of the 1950s (2001: 161)). The film is split into two parts, the first of which contains a two and half minute exploration of Times Square. The scene is consistently shifting focus from representation to abstraction, utilizing focus, superimposition, reflection and time-lapse photography to create a heightened perceptual experience of this frenzied space. These are almost, like for like, the exact technical approaches adopted by Klein for his film. Comparing sequences from both films reveals startling affinities in style and approach.

Figs 2.9 and 2.10 both depict the reflection of fragmented lights and signage in street puddles. Both of these moments orientate our vision of the space of Times Square in a non-holistic way. The viewer is invited to view the space as

if one were walking through it with our heads turned to the ground. Such images suggest that the advertising above our heads fills every inch of our vision, whichever direction we look in. This notion is compounded further by figures 2.11 and 2.12. Both show wide space, shot from above; the cityscape beyond has its middle and foreground crowded with dense superimpositions of advertising light signs. A place such as Times Square, these images seem to suggest, is overwhelmed by advertising, so much so that the hoardings and signs themselves have bled into the very fabric of the city and our senses. In Klein's film this wide shot acts almost as a primer, as we go on to be offered juxtaposed versions of these ads in the shots that follow. Macdonald has commented that Weegee's film operates at once as a 'documentary exploration of the physical world and the avant-garde expression of inner realities' (2001:163). Following the argument of Suzi Gablik, set out above, we could easily frame this from the standpoint of Pop as it relates to abstraction. The "readymade", or in Gablik's phrasing "'found" rather than invented' space of Times Square is documented by both filmmakers, but, as is obvious from the results, the space is subject to cinematic gestures and manipulations, 'chance techniques', as Gablik has it. Such techniques are not purely the realm of abstract painting: they can, when conceived of cinematically, re-vision the world in front of the camera. The formal regime of documentary in these works is bolstered by avant-garde tactics. Such images have a hallucinatory and abstract quality, as if the space of Times Square has been un-moored from sense and entered the realm of the sensory.



Fig. 2.9. Frame from *Weegee's New York* (1948, Arthur "Weegee" Felig).

Fig. 2.10. Frame from *Broadway by Light* (1958, William Klein).



Fig. 2.11. Frame from *Weegee's New York* (1948, Arthur "Weegee" Felig).

Fig. 2.12. Frame from *Broadway by Light* (1958, William Klein).

Contrary to *Weegee's New York*, little is known about the production and distribution of *Jazz of Lights*. One of the only accounts, which functions as an insight into both the film's production and the nature of its contents, comes in

the form of a diary entry of Cuban-American writer, and Hugo's wife at the time, Anaïs Nin (1903-1977). Her comments also speak to the notion of seeing these works through a Pop paradigm. Nin's assessment reads Hugo's film as enacting a detached reverence for the images it captures. This is not a space to be critical of, but one that can be removed from its function, from its obligation to consumerism, and celebrated at the level of pure form, as she writes:

When we become familiar with certain street scenes we no longer see them... Ian Hugo photographs the rhythms and interplays of billboard lights without the words which prevent us from seeing their abstract beauty...by shooting the lights of Broadway from oblique angles, or upside down or in counterpoint motions, or in superimposition, he reveals their rhythm and pulsations obscured by references to Kleenex or Planter's nuts. Divorced from their function of selling, they create intricate patterns of form and color with a beauty of their own (1974:253).

The language employed by Nin to discuss *Jazz of Lights* shifts the Times Square light symphony film into a lyrical register. Stripped of their visual intention and filtered through Hugo's cinematic techniques, signs become 'form and colour' (ibid), suspended in a state of purity. Nin names Hugo's approach as 'imaginative realism', that is, 'a realism transmitted into fugitive impressions, an ephemeral flow of sensations' (ibid). Such a sense of flow is difficult to articulate within a frame grab, but figures 2.13 and 2.14 give an impression of the film's dynamic *mise-en-scène*, in which the image is crammed with a multiplicity of dissolves and bleeds, lights emanating from all angles and directions. In contrast to the evocation of the senses as being overwhelmed by such a space in *Weegee's New York* and *Broadway by Light*, with Hugo's film we find liberation. Nin describes the shots captured by him as

'fugitive impressions', as if they have snuck in unannounced and recalibrated our sensory perception of the space. Klein's film also contains within it such fugitive moments of pure abstract formalism, and I would argue his film comes even closer than Hugo's to Nin's evocative term 'imaginative realism'.



Figures 2.13 & 2.14. Frames from *Jazz of Lights* (1954, Ian Hugo).

When looked at in comparison with *Weegee's New York* examples from Klein's film can be said to occupy Pop's critical tendencies, as a subversion and reinvention of space appropriate to the effect of the advertising which colonises the city streets. However, we can also read this from the other side of the coin, as an example of the 'imaginative realism' which Nin sees in operation in Hugo's film. Klein is quoted as saying that in filming the illuminations of Times Square, he had hoped to capture the most 'beautiful thing in New York' (2009: online). His initial intention was then an aesthetic one. Like Foster's reading of Warhol and Pop in general, illuminated above, I think we must take this ambivalence between formal aestheticism and critical perceptual intervention seriously. A reading of *Broadway by Light* will be most productive if the film's critical *and* aesthetic potential is embraced simultaneously. Such a position is further bolstered by an understanding of Klein's playful shift between stillness and movement.

This conceit can be realised by attending to Klein's depiction of the many signs, light illuminations and, most interestingly in this context, news tickers, of Times Square. Akin to his stylised documentation of the murals in Milan and effective use of blur in his street photography, Klein locates abstraction within movement in the second half of the film, while also still insisting on quiet aesthetic stillness in its opening and closing moments. From its opening until around six and a half minutes in, the film focuses its attentions on the larger advertisement hoardings, often juxtaposed together in a still life mode echoing many compositions in the *New York* book (see figure 2.1 and examples such as *Hamburger, 40 Cents* (1955) and *Office Girls Outing* (1955)). Such shots

are bold in their geometric, angular design, evidencing a further influence of the architectural documentation sessions in Milan.

What is most striking and exemplary about these images, is their ability to perceptually remove themselves from the frame of movement. In contrast to the second half of the film, which offers copious amounts of mobility within the frame, in the form of time lapse photography, quick pans and fast tracking shots, this first section offers composition then zoom: a sequence of signs becoming more and more obscured and abstracted as we move towards the dividing point of the news tracker sequence. Figures 2.15 and 2.16 offer us examples of this first half's compositional strategy. Both images are low angle tilted shots, gazing up at the hoardings above. The fact that they are shot from street level crops our view. The signs are cut off, half seen from behind one another, competing against each other in a space where vision is constricted. The movement of the actual lights flicking on and off in sequence notwithstanding, such images offer a stark contrast to the film's latter half. There is a resolute stillness to them when seen in conjuncture with the frenetic pace and disorientating speed of what is to come.



Figures 2.15 & 2.16. Frames from *Broadway by Light* (1958, William Klein).

In excerpting images from *Broadway by Light* to illustrate this chapter, I have, of course, drawn attention to their ability to be viewed outside of the continuation of a moving picture. This method of display is not dissimilar to the

way in which the film was exhibited at the HackellBury Gallery in London in 2015. There the film was displayed on a flat screen television monitor hung onto one of the gallery walls. Opposite the film, the wall was adorned with various prints from Klein's abstract photograms and architectural images, as well as four framed prints of celluloid strips from the film itself. These strips had been blown up, not unlike the sets of contact sheets encountered earlier in *Contacts*. The images can be read as isolated from the continuum of the film itself. Even within the curation of Klein's work without his own input, it would seem the dislocation of stillness and movement persists. The twenty-four frames a second which constitute cinematic movement are isolated and distilled when modified by such a setting. This condition not only emerges from exhibition practices, but, as Chris Marker observed of Klein's film work in general: '[Stop a Klein film anywhere and you will see] a Klein photograph with the same apparent disorder, the same glut of information, gestures and looks pointing in all directions, and yet, at the same time governed by an organised, rigorous perspective' (in Company 2008:77). Klein approaches the moving-image with a still photographer's eye, in Marker's assessment. This is true for the film's first half: many of the images within the first six minutes of *Broadway by Light* give us a mediated Pop environment writ large for critical contemplation, in what are, at least when viewed against the rest of the film, comparably still frames.

Although they may be fractured through composition and framing, the signage in the film's early sequences remains legible, even if it is only one or two letters that can be glimpsed. From just after six and a half minutes, this legibility is

undone; the overwhelming macro images transform into a formally abstract set of micro images. The camera zooms in, isolating one of Times Square's many news trackers (side-scrolling information signs, usually containing news headlines, stocks and shares); there is an abrupt jump cut to show the tracker in full frame as the word 'Tuesday' glides across from right to left. The camera becomes unhinged from its static tripod. We cut to a handheld camera, frantically gesturing left and right, swishing across the trackers, cutting twice during these left-right pans (see Fig 2.17), then cutting twice more before we witness the refracted movement of the trackers, reflected in onto themselves. The lights become formally un-tethered from their role as communicators of information. This sequence of abstraction lasts for eighteen seconds and contains four shots; the shortest is barely one second long, the longest eleven seconds. It seems to formally undo the deliberate pace by which we have just seen this world of lights. The originating function of the signs and hoardings is not halted by the early compositions. They are fractured and complicated and a sense of being overwhelmed accompanies their juxtapositions, but they remain representational. Within this middle sequence, the news trackers become divested of their function. Such a critical view of this space promoted by the film's first half fits with what Klein has told us about his own feelings towards Times Square, and New York in general, as a place of 'commercial brain washing' (2009: online). It is odd then, that in the middle of the film we are confronted with a sequence which manipulates a piece of Times Square signage in order to, in the words of Nin, 'create intricate patterns of form and color with a beauty of their own' (1974:253). It is almost as if, for a very brief

moment, Klein honoured his original mission, to 'capture the most beautiful thing in New York' (Klein 2009: online). As an isolated moment of pure formal play, this short moment in the middle of the film can be read on the surface as Klein harking back to his formative experiments with abstract photography. The tracking, when filtered through the prism of avant-garde documentary tactics, becomes a way to see the pure movement he was grasping towards in the early architectural panel documentation sessions.



Figures 2.17 & 2.18. Frames from *Broadway by Light* (1958, William Klein).

Is such a simple reading adequate? Is the abstract tracker a 'fugitive moment' (Nin 1974: 253)? An element of beauty in an otherwise didactically critical work of Pop cinema? No. I do not think so. The film does have it both ways, so to speak. The film's vision of Times Square is sensual, but it is also removed from reverence; its vision of the space is one of both beauty and brainwashing, so to speak. Following this brief moment, movement takes over the film in a visceral way. The space and our vision of it becomes unhinged from sense itself, through the rapidity of temporal manipulation. Cinematic velocity assumes centre stage, opening out onto a rich lineage of modernist aesthetics.

Pop and The Meaning of Times Square

A significant aspect of both Klein's film and his book of New York photography is that Klein was approaching the space of the city with a stranger's eyes, seeing the space anew as a, now foreign, observer. It would be quite conceptually feasible to cast Klein as a tourist in his former home town. In doing so a dialectic may be opened up, which productively perceives the aesthetical/critical mode in operation in *Broadway by Light*. In his now canonical book on the subject of travel and tourism, Dean McCannell writes perceptively about the sociological position of city-breakers and holidaymakers:

The act of sightseeing is uniquely well-suited among leisure alternatives to draw the tourist into a relationship with the modern social totality. As a worker, the individual's relationship to his society is partial and limited, secured by a fragile "work ethic", and restricted to a single position among millions in the division of labor. As a tourist, the individual may step out into the universal drama of modernity (1989:7)

For McCannell, there is a clear divide between worktime and free-time's abilities to give one access to the immersive 'drama', or potentials and problems of modernity. Klein's work on New York presents a contradiction to this statement, as his view of New York is at once new, immersive, and touristic, and designates a project of work for him as a practicing and contracted artist. Such a paradox can provide us with an ample theoretical underpinning in moving towards an understanding of the film's insistent dialectical play between aestheticism and criticism. As such, in concluding this analysis of the film and drawing discussion of the film in relation to Pop and medium specificity to a close, I will insist on this dialectical ambivalence as the structuring power of not only Klein's work and of Pop more generally.

Speed, perhaps more so than any other temporal concept encountered thus far, evinces an inherent link to the 'drama' of modernity invoked by McCannell. Moreover, speed speaks to many debates surrounding the politics of life within modernity, possessing an ambiguous role defined by the pleasures of velocity in and of itself and the complex negotiations of representation, advanced commerce/consumption and comprehensibility left in its tracks. In his 1931 essay 'Wanted a New Pleasure' Aldus Huxley writes that 'the nearest approach to...a new drug', within modernity, 'is the drug of speed'; speed, he insists, 'provides the one genuinely modern pleasure' (1931:162). Huxley's statement aligns speed with the pleasures of surface and instant, both qualities found in the Mass ornament of the space of Times Square. Speed is often cast as resolutely anti-depth, possessing as it does the thrill of the quick, mobilising the human subject and consumer desire in ways unthinkable before the late

19th century. For Edna Duffy we need a 'politics of speed', and because, she continues, 'any new pleasure turns out to displace and cast into upheaval the possibilities of acknowledged, existing pleasures...this politics of speed turns out to be closely bound up with the politics of representation itself' (2009:7).

The closing half of *Broadway by Light* is dominated by speed, in the guise of time-lapse photography and a sporadic use of fast editing patterns. The combination of these approaches gives the second half a visual tone distinct from the film's previous sequences, which persists until the climatic sunrise. Directly following the 'fugitive' moment of dense, formally rigorous abstraction outlined above, Klein cuts to a series of shots which privilege the horizontal flow of light and motion. There are scores of shots in this sequence. I will highlight what appear to be the key shifts in temporal and spatial orientation.

Immediately after the news tracker abstraction disappears, with a subtly conceived in-camera frame wipe left, we are in close-up, with six letters of a neon shop window sign at the centre of the image, cropped enough at all edges to resist legibility. As soon as the viewer can begin to orientate themselves within the frame it begins to move. The spectator becomes aware that they are, in fact, viewing this sign through the window of a bus which is on the move. The opening of this passage of the film is shot at a frame rate comparable to the rest of the sequences up until this point. The same tempo continues over into the next two shots, both reflections of signs and marquees in bus windows, as the vehicles travel from left to right, out of the frame. Then, the application of time-lapse moves the film into a temporal register which stands in stark contrast to the rest of the film. Cars and buses now jolt past, zipping through

the frame in a flash of bright movement as Broadway's lights reflect on their windows and mirror-like bodies. There are six shots like this, amounting to just over ten seconds of screen-time. The movement of automobiles is then usurped by the movement of lights, as we observe stationary cars, their reflective surfaces inscribed by the movement of light shows above at the same high tempo velocity with which the previous machines had moved through the street. Nine shots comprise this car-as-canvas moment, before Klein cuts to another equally temporally charged series of reflections of neon lights in puddles. What one loses sense of in these sequences is the very subject of the film itself, the signs of Times Square. When filtered through the paradigm of temporal velocity they become unreadable and unattainable as advertisements and become objects of aesthetic pleasure. Through what Paul Virilio terms the 'primitive dimension of speed' the signs are lost in the bustling hubbub of the city in motion. They cease, to put it bluntly, their *modus operandi*: to be an intelligible place of advertisement. While this sequence can be seen as revelling in a kind of spatial and temporal anarchy, there is a much subtler register of pleasure and commentary at play. *Broadway by Light* articulates less the 'emptiness of the quick' (Virilio 2012:78), than a style of speed which exists on a playful double edge, holding both aestheticism and criticism in balance.

The use of speed in this sequence can highlight again a significant link between Klein's film and some of the theoretical concerns which have become inherently linked with the city symphony as it relates to modernity. This link

allows us to see the film as an articulation of early planners' and entrepreneurs' visions of the space of Times Square itself.

For Kracauer 'Capitalist thinking can be defined by its abstractness' (1927:72). If one takes the signs of Times Square to be an articulation of the wants and desires of consumer capitalism, an updated version of the mass ornament, this abstract quality makes sense. It does not wish to appeal to the subject in any rational way but precisely its appeal is through the senses. Or as Kracauer has it: 'The abstract and general dimensions of meaning... do not render unto reason that which belongs to reason. In this scheme empiricism is neglected; any kind of utilitarian application can be drawn from abstractions devoid of meaning' (ibid). Under the sway of advanced consumer capitalism, the abstract can be grounded in a function other than description: 'Despite the substantiality which is to be demanded from them, abstractions are only concrete in one sense. They are not concrete in the vulgar sense which uses the term to designate those ideas which are rooted in natural life — The abstractness of contemporary thinking is therefore ambivalent' (1927:72-73). In Kracauer's thinking capitalism modifies form, removing abstraction from its roots as a descriptor of geometric forms or natural beauty; it is repackaged as a spectacle which performs a function in capitalist modernity. If abstraction has become ambivalent through capitalism then 'the *Mass Ornament*' defined as it is by a willingness to abstract, 'is just as ambivalent' (1927:73, original emphasis). This is what Klein seems to be tapping into with *Broadway by Light*. his film accentuates the ambivalence at the heart of the spectacle of the mass ornament. Moreover, it seems appropriate that the subject for the film should

be a space which has the ambivalence between sensation and seduction at its very roots.

Our checklist of interpretive schema for *Broadway by Light* has moved us through a variety of fields, from questions of documentary formalism and the city symphony's relationship to the mass ornament; to notions surrounding the delicate balance between representation and abstraction articulated by the film; and finally, to ideas of speed and surface. If the film does capture a significant ambivalence, a snapshot of fascination and simultaneously disdain for the marketization of Manhattan, perhaps this is not only owed to the lineage of Pop in which the film has been placed. It can also be considered as fulfilling the promise of Times Square that was articulated during the process of its invention as home of lights and spectacle in Manhattan at the turn of the 20th century.

Times Square has had a rich history of mutability before assuming its now colloquially expressed role as "Crossroads of the World". Its contemporary incarnation is the result of over a century of legal battles and merchant squabbles, arguments amongst city planners and moral guardians about both the ownership of advertising space and the licentious vice of many of the area's (now former) business operations. "The Great White Way" was intended as a term of both affection and advertisement for the space. It was coined by the entrepreneur O.J. Gude, who was himself responsible for the invention and proliferation of a great many of the sign types found first in Times Square and captured in Klein's film, such as 'electric signs studded with lamps, illuminated signboards, and the floodlighting and outlining of exteriors' (Leach 1991:235).

Gude's own commentaries on the world of the signs he made so much a part of urban life, and how people on the street relate to them are intriguing. They offer an extremely rich complement to Klein's suspicion about and admiration for the space.

Many of Gude's pronouncements were originally published in the trade paper *Signs of the Times* (1874-). Within its pages he outlined a theory that argued for the aesthetic validity of his business while also, at the same time, attempting to account for its success. He believed that his signs offered people more aesthetic pleasure than any other medium. In an article from 1912 entitled 'Art and Advertising Joined by Electricity' he writes that 'Outdoor advertising has... felt and shown the effects of the artistic spirit of the people in this country' (1912a:3). Its spectacle should be considered 'beautiful' as opposed to 'brutally' dominant (ibid). Such a statement is paradoxical to comments made by Gude five months earlier in another article for *Sign of the Times*. Instead of the 'beauty' of the signs, here he offers explicit commentary on Klein's other assessment of the space, as a location for brainwashing:

[Electric sign advertising] ...literally forces its announcement on the vision of the uninterested as well as the interested passer-by... Signboards are so placed that everybody must read them, and absorb them, and absorb the advertiser's lesson willingly or unwillingly... The constant reading of "Buy Blank's Biscuits" ...makes the name part of one's sub-conscious knowledge (1912b:77)

Gude's comments are at a far remove from any aesthetic consideration here: he gives us the hard sell. This is the language of coercion, with signs organised and mapped onto the space of Times Square, announcing their presence and

selling their wares through the unavoidable and literal 'force' of perceptual engagement. Indifference or ambivalence on the part of the spectator is not an option here: 'willingly or unwillingly' the job of public engagement will be done. In *Broadway by Light* this sense of being overwhelmed is furthered and intensified by Klein's manipulation of film language. The space is not left to its own devices. Klein uses the 'chance techniques' and "'found" rather than invented images' as his means; these techniques, used within Abstract and Pop Art-making, are used, in the words of Gablik, to 'achieve a tougher art, to avoid tasteful choices, and to set the stakes higher' (1969:18). The film's interrogation of Times Square's spectacle links back not only to Gude's formative commentary on the space but also taps into a fundamental ambivalence at the heart the culture of mass ornamentation which Kracauer sees as a defining feature of capitalist modernity in the 20th century. Away from the teeming mass of the crowd, one finds the mass ornament relocated to the urban city centre. Here it is not people but advertising which assumes an integral role in capitalist modernity; it is language directed at people. However, interpretations do not seem to be clear-cut. Are we being cynically goaded by such spaces, brainwashed into obeying their demands, or are we willingly experiencing a radiant and heightened experience, a sensuous 'bath' (Berman 2009: xxvi) in the light? Klein's film seems to suggest, through the aesthetic of Pop, that the paradox is unresolvable.

Klein's attitude possesses many affinities to Pop. It is a complex negotiation of Pop aesthetics though, one which gives aesthetic fascination and critical engagement equal footing. Much like Gude's pronouncements, Klein's work

appears to have its feet in two camps consistently. From attempts to collapse distinctions between stillness and movement, to his insistence on the malleability of representations, which flit between the figurative and the abstract, Klein's work is operating through a succinct dialectical understanding of everyday existence within a society predicated on mass consumer culture and mass spectacle. New York is the subject *par excellence* in which to observe the duality of mass culture and modernity playing out. Klein's work casts New York and specifically Times Square within the Pop idiom. I have proffered throughout this chapter that Klein's casting of the city through a Pop lens is a journey which is best viewed as a shift or shifting between stillness and movement. Importantly as I have demonstrated this taps into debates which impinge on the very epicentre of Pop art and its meanings; its conflation of representative and abstracted visuality and its critically potent ability to exude ambivalence. Klein's translation of this attitude is multi-layered and complicated, stretching as it does from photography and photobook design to filmmaking. There is a consistency throughout these works though, a pulse of irreverence which playfully ignores and attempts to collapse distinctions between media, which results in Klein's Pop vision of New York City being tinged with a pulsating drive towards the cinematic as an organising aesthetic principle.

Times Square may at its most basic function be a space in which 'Art and advertising [is] joined by electricity', but here a third ingredient is added: the intervention of an artist who uses the still camera, the contact sheet, the book page, the gallery wall and the film camera to produce a series of images and

experiences that are not hollow, not all pure surface, but which act as, in Foster's summation of Pop images, a 'probe into a given matrix of cultural languages, both high and low – a probe that, far from facile, is complex in its making and viewing alike' (2012:251). If *Broadway by Light* can be said to exemplify moving-image Pop Art, acting as its originating text, it would be instructive to next observe a body of work where Pop Cinema interacts with one of the foundational forms of Pop Art: collage. Here a return to some of the originating works of Pop will form the basis for discussing and discovering the art of Jeff Keen, who never used mass media culture as a readymade but as an endlessly pliable and ludic source material to explore mass culture in both personal and political ways.

Chapter Three: Beyond Found Footage: Pop Collage Film and The Art of Jeff Keen

'The unique significance of Pop art as a movement is that it attempted to embrace the aesthetic standards of the consumer-orientated world with its amalgam of trivia, kitsch and general eclecticism, from the popular media of the movies, TV, comics, newspapers, girly magazines, fashion and "high camp", billboards and supermarket packaging. Pop art became not so much even an art about "life" as the expression of an ad-mass acceptance of a way of living, rather than a revolt against it. This is a world in which media itself became message, and "built in obsolescence" was the real aesthetic standard; a world in which "vogue" is the premium and yesterday's news is today's wrapping paper; an acceptance of "materialism" – perhaps the whole world was just one great big material collage'

— Eddie Wolfman (1975:158)

'We're all collage artists today, switching from one channel to another, flicking through magazines and re-editing as we go'

— Jeff Keen (1983:NP)

Selected and Composite Works Exhibited Inside an Oil Drum

In mid-summer 2012, London's Tate Modern was preparing to unveil its latest venture. Although an integral part of the former power station at Bankside which houses the institution, the basement level *Tanks*—underground, former oil drums more than thirty meters in diameter, along with their adjoining rooms—had never been used as a space in which art could be hung, placed, projected, performed and seen by the public. This changed with the launch of a programme of events to inaugurate the opening of 'the world's first museum galleries permanently dedicated to live art' (The Tanks 2012:NP). From 18 July until 28 October the Tanks played host to what the Tate advertised as 'fifteen weeks of art in action' (ibid). More specifically, then director of Tate

Museums Nicolas Serota summarised this series as ‘a festival of cross-disciplinary work encompassing performance, film and installation’. This major undertaking would, he stated, set ‘an agenda for the future of the museum. The programme will present new ways of linking recent tendencies in art with a rich vein of art history and experiment with new forms of audience engagement, participation and learning’ (Serota 2012:58). The categorisation of content to be found in the Tanks during this three-month period and beyond as ‘live art’ is perhaps misleading. As one can see from a brief perusal of events and installations occupying the Tanks that season, there appears to be a predominance of liveness – projected moving-image works, sound installations – if not live performance itself. This mislabelling notwithstanding, there was clearly a broad diversity of multimedia artwork contained within the programme and the re-enactment or re-display of works by significant experimental filmmakers was consistent throughout.

Major figures from the history of non-narrative filmmaking were found in this grouping of events, which showed work rarely seen since its original screening and/or performance. These artists included the collective Filmaktion, Anthony McCall (b.1946), Lis Rhodes (b.1942), Aldo Tambellini (b.1930) and Jeff Keen (1923-2012). Curators presented discreet and distinct works from each of these artists either as one-off installations, which lasted a number of days, or as part of a screening programme presented over several sessions²³. There

²³ A cursory overview of the Tanks opening events can be seen in the Tate Programme, *The Tanks: Fifteen Weeks of Art in Action, 18 July – 28 October* (2012). The experimental and expanded cinema events and performances took place as follows: 18 July- 28 October: *Light Music* (1975, Lis Rhodes); 22 July: *The Complete Cone Films* (1974, Anthony McCall), 18 September- 23 September: *Gazapocalypse* (Various works 1961-1993, and one live

was a consistency among the works that were on show at the Tanks: all the artists had been, and in many cases continue to be, strongly associated with the subgenre or form of experimental filmmaking known as Expanded Cinema.

Expanded Cinema is a label which describes works of film practice looking to engage audiences through the disruption and undermining of conventional cinematic viewing procedures. Commonly, such aesthetic tactics are realised through the deployment of multiple screens and/or projectors; props and objects situated within the exhibition space; or the live presence of performers alongside the cinematic text itself. Typically, the adjective 'expanded' seeks to draw attention to the fact that the focal point of this type of filmmaking is to be found outside or apart from conventional screen space; the film is expanded beyond the traditional cinematic frame as such. Though I will provide a fuller explication of such practices shortly, as they informed a significant part of Keen's output, I would like to emphasise here a distinction between the exhibition of Keen's work and that of his programme cohort in the Tanks' ceremonial opening season.

Unlike the works of Anthony McCall and Filmaktion which were presented in a regimented schedule, one after another, or the installation and performance of works as a singular re-enactment, as with Rhodes and Tambellini, the presentation of Keen's show *Gazapocalypse-Return to the Golden Age* (2012) (hereafter *Gazapocalypse*), offered audiences the chance to absorb fifteen of

performance (21st) 2012, Jeff Keen); 9 October – 14 October: *Black Gate London* (consisting of three works: *Black Zero* (1965), *Moondial* (1966), and *Retracing Black* (2012), Aldo Tambellini); 16 October – 21 October: *Various Works* (1965-2012, Filmaktion (Gill Eatherley, Malcolm Le Grice, Anabel Nicolson, and William Raban)).

Keen's films in a single sitting.²⁴ The films were presented on a huge dioramic screen which hung inside of Tank number two. The circular screen was adorned with continuous frames, often switching and varying in size, and playing host to the projection of several films at once, often side by side or overlapping on top of one another, frames beside frames and frames within frames (Fig. 3.1). Already presented with an overloaded field of vision, the viewer of this spectacle was also confronted with an aural assault of cut-up sounds ranging from the hiss and wash of white noise to the guttural organic incantations of a disembodied human voice. The sensory onslaught of this expanded cinema presentation was given further potency through a one-off live event which, in the words of curator Stuart Comer, featured 'projections, live music and actions performed by Keen's daughter, Stella Starr with a range of his collaborators, including Alan Baker, Chris Blackburn, Rob Gawthrop, Michael Paysden as 'Mike Movie' and Jason Williams as 'Silverhead'" (Comer 2012:NP). The actions of Keen's daughter and many of his collaborators (a kind of rag-tag stable of actors and performers, Keen's equivalent to Andy Warhol's superstars) included: spray-painting and tearing at sheets draped in front of the film projections; the effusive dispersal of sparks onto the screen via angle-grinders; the performance of avant-garde, seemingly formless music

²⁴ The installation offered spectators a cross-section of Keen's practice as a film and video maker, and included the following works: *Like The Time is Now* aka *Time is Now* (1961), *The Pink Auto* (1964), *Meatdaze* (1968), *Rayday Film* (1968-1970 + 1976), *Day of the Arcane Light* (1969), *Diary Films: Stolen Moments* (1971-1972), *Lone Star* (1974-1975), *Godzilla – Last of the Creatures* (1976), *Rose Canina* (1970s), *Spontaneous Combustion* (1980s), *Art War Loop 1* (1990s), *Art War Loop 2* (1990s), *Blatzomatika* (1990s) and *Kino Pulveriso* (1993).

through electric guitar, the theremin, and heavily distorted, modulated and reverberated vocals.

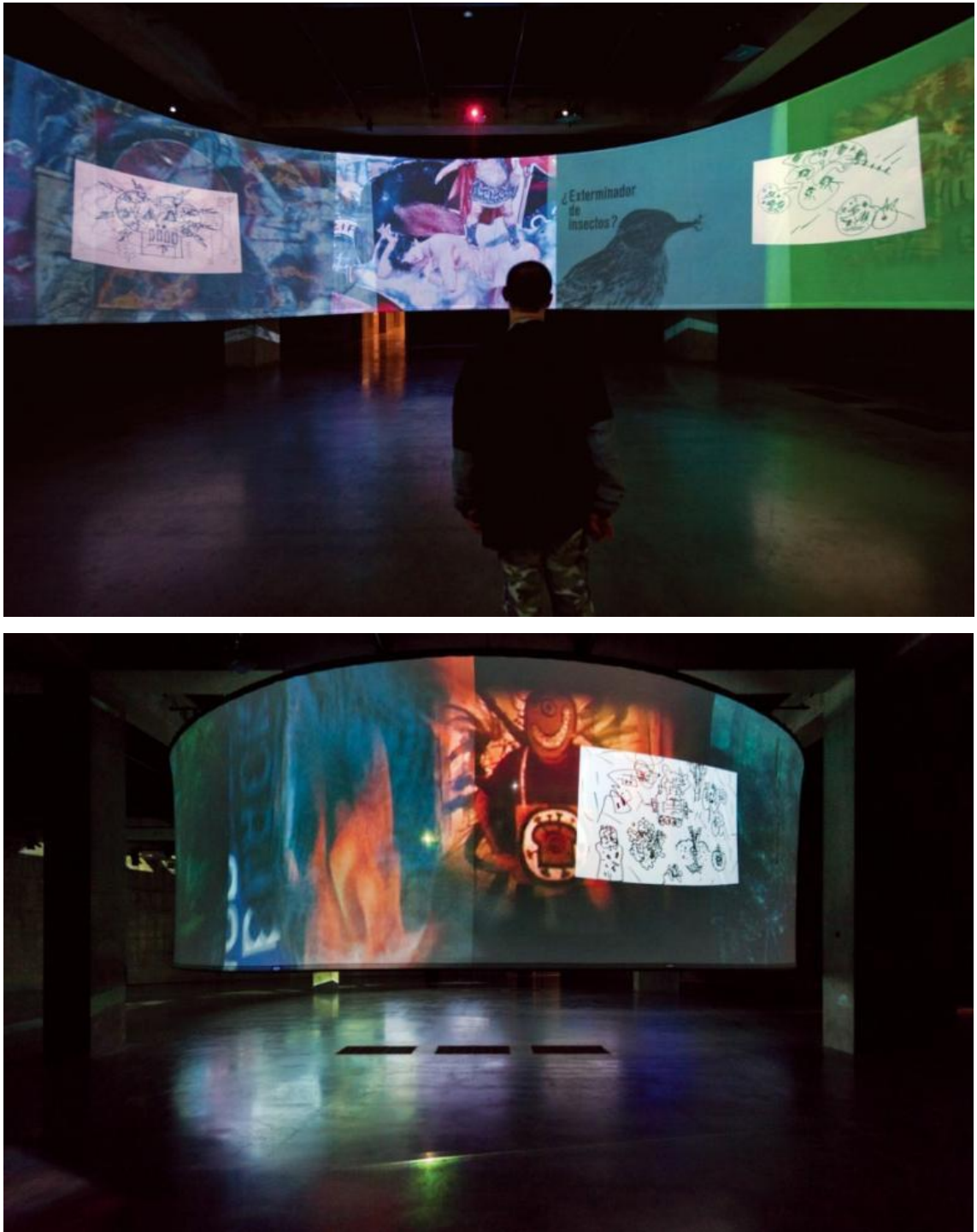


Fig. 3.1. Jeff Keen, *Gazpocalypse - Return to the Golden Age*, 2012, simultaneous projection of 8mm, super 8mm, 16mm films and slides transferred to video, colour and b&w, sound and silent, The Tanks, Tate Modern London, installation view.

This dense, overwhelming spectacle recalled the happenings of the 1960s in its seeming spontaneity and in the conflation of several performative idioms and modes of artistic production. The performative bricolage accurately represented Keen's output as an artist, given that his career encompassed filmmaking, painting, drawing, poetry, noise music and *Musique concrète*. The only area of creativity missing from the show was a display of Keen's found sculptures and assemblages – often fashioned from children's toys and dolls which had been burnt and mutilated by the artist. Although Keen passed away shortly before the unveiling of *Gazapocalypse*, he played a central role in the show's conception and design prior to his death. Because of its immersive nature and the sheer number of artistic objects on display within the work, I understand *Gazapocalypse* as a totalised collage or a collage *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), which aimed to display in as cohesive a way as possible the sum of Keen's practice across the media in which he operated. This would have been a significant project for Keen not only in scale and in the technical complexities of installation, but as a final mission statement of how the artist saw his own works in relation to one another. In a short interview with the curator William Fowler in 2008, Keen lamented that his films had defined his reception as an artist, a medium he had engaged with less and less as he grew older:

I seem to have exhausted film, but the other stuff [drawing, painting] is continuous... perhaps in my case there should be more emphasis on drawings and things, you know the graphic stuff. I don't know how to present it, but the films have taken over somehow. The drawings can't be pinned down like movies (Keen:2008 NP).

In *Gazapocalypse*, Keen found a way to present his vision of an expanded cinema encompassing the performative and gestural acts of his art through live displays alongside his own graphic work. Images of his drawings would sporadically occupy the many frames of the dioramic installation screens, functioning as a collage of his own work and totalised display of his project as an artist. *Gazapocalypse* can be read as the apotheosis of Keen's work as a multidisciplinary artist concerned with collage.

I open this chapter, which situates Keen as a Pop film collagist, with an account of his work and its exhibition at the Tate Modern in the late-summer of 2012 in order to emphasise collage as the epitome of Keen's approach as an artist. I also wish to suggest that this tendency, though most evidently legible in the Tanks installation, has been a fundamental part of Keen's artistic output since the late 1950s. My focus here will ultimately fall on to one of Keen's films, *Flik Flak* (1966).²⁵ This early 8mm work contains an acute distillation of Keen's filmmaking tactics combining as it does animation, montage, performance, and a distinctive use of *Musique concrète* and popular jazz music. The content of Keen's film is also hung together through the aesthetic of collage. At break-neck speed the spectator of this work is greeted with a myriad of cultural signs, images and ephemera from film stills and cut outs from Marvel Comic books, to magazine advertisements and pornography. Keen presents a delirious vision of the media-saturated environment in which he toiled. It is a vision

²⁵ The film has been given a variety of dates by various sources, some as early as 1963 (Fowler 2014: online), but most commonly 1964-1965 as in the British Film Institute release of Keen's films. I have chosen to date the work later to 1966. Close examination of the film shows that Keen was using sources such as issues of *Life* magazine in the film that had cover dates as late as 9 September of that year.

indebted to the tradition of Pop Art collage which had successfully cemented itself in the cultural landscape of Europe and America by the late 1960s. Through a historical contextualising of this work within the narratives of British underground culture, Pop Art, and collage, I will show Keen to be an astute and pioneering maker of a highly personal and idiosyncratic Pop Art. Keen's intermedial approach is underpinned by a collage aesthetic, and influences which range from American popular culture, to the history of experimental cinema and Surrealism.

There are several conceptual frameworks which will need to be introduced and unpacked before I can begin a more thorough engagement with Keen and his art. Accordingly, I will offer an account of the role and place of collage in relation to Pop. I will then expand this overview to encompass a history of collage film and the Pop collage film. I then return to Keen and offer a fuller explication of his work through an artistic biography, viewing his work in relation to Pop, collage and the cinema. I will highlight significant aspects of *Flik Flak*, arguing that it can be read as form of intermedia collage filmmaking, a subcategory of the collage film which is uniquely equipped to deal with the aesthetics and thematic questions of Pop Art and the bloated media landscape of the post-war era.

Pop and Collage

Collage describes works of art and objects which are composite forms, made up of varying, often heterogenous elements. The history of collage is long,

extending to various examples of folk art and hobbyist ephemera including the process of extra-illustrating (or Grangerising) books and the popular pastime of scrapbooking—displaying a multitude of images and texts, which have been lifted from their original contexts and juxtaposed into new spatial relations. There is not space here to elucidate on this history and its various digressions from fine art practice. As the Pop Art iteration of collage is of most concern to us, a brief engagement with the modernist conception of collage, its immediate predecessor, is appropriate. The modernist collage's birth is usually attributed to Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque's (1882-1963) *papier collés* which the artists had begun to assemble in 1912 (Poggi 1992). In this traditional iteration quotidian materials such as string, fabric and paper encroached on the traditional supports of oil painting and drawing, intermingling with markings created by the artist's hand, and testing the representational limits of the image. As Modernism progressed, the 1920s Dadaists began to affix pictures onto canvas, creating what is now commonly referred to as photo-montage, their humorous and often absurd juxtapositions casting an equivalence between disparate media, and bringing not only vastly differing materials but widely differing semantic content into relation with one another.

The idea of collage representing an intrusion of the everyday into the hallowed space of the canvas frame is a critical point of entry for art historian Brandon Taylor. His assessment points us towards the further developments of the form in Dada and Surrealism, and in turn, illuminates the ramifications these practices have for the birth of the Pop collage. Like Poggi, Taylor sees collage

as the invasion of the realm of painting by quotidian material: the very stuff of printed modernity—hand-bills, posters, political campaigning messages—becomes the material with which collage artists adorn their work. This shift is significant not only in its opposition to and complication of the representative strategies of painting (Poggi 1991:21) but offers a recalibration of the relationship between art and life, as Taylor has it: '[a] new relationship is enacted between the "low" culture of stamps and two-penny songs, and the "high culture" of professional art...that relationship is felt inappropriate, jarring or wrong—yet interestingly so. For who in the frenetic avant-garde would want to deny—or could—the frisson of excitement at the sight of a coupling which is illicit, discontinuous and at the very limits of aesthetic decency?' (Taylor 2004:9). The troubling of the limits of aesthetic decency to which Taylor refers would find their expression most potently not in the work of Picasso or Braque, but in the later Dada and Surrealist movements, which took collage beyond the realm of a representational muddling of signification and into much more plainly absurd places.

Two elements which are variously present in the Dada and Surrealist collages of artists including John Heartfield (1891-1968), Raoul Hausmann (1886-1971), Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) and Hannah Höch (1889-1978) are trash and advertising material. Often, they are equated, or at least given an equality of presence with one another, and any other matter utilized in the work. Absurdity in the Dada movement was originally employed by practitioners in response to the inhumane viciousness of World War I. By the late 1910s and early 1920s, this absurdity took onboard the ephemeral material experience of city life – its

detritus and the sloganeering impermanent world of printed signs – as raw material for the basis of its collages.

Accounts of Pop Art which began to appear in the 1960s often identify British artist Richard Hamilton's (1922-2011) small-scale collage *Just What is it that Makes Today's Homes so Different, so Appealing?* (1956), an image bustling with the fat of the consumer land, as one of the first major Pop works. The collage shows a veritable panoply of desirable consumer goods including a television, mid-century modern furniture, a vacuum cleaner, tinned foods and a reel-to-reel tape deck. It is often referred to as the first true work of Pop Art (Richardt 1963:43 and Amaya 1965:32).

The image was created for the catalogue of the landmark *This is Tomorrow* exhibition which was held the same year at London's Whitechapel Gallery. The show played host to and was curated by a collective calling themselves the International Group (IG), already mentioned in Chapter One. The exhibition was pioneering in its cross-disciplinary approach to the creation and display of art, with architects and designers collaborating with painters and sculptors to create a vision of the future where science, technology, art and popular culture all existed on an equal footing. The group counted among its members figures who were deeply influential in the naming, creation and dissemination of Pop Art in Britain. They included the critic and curator Lawrence Alloway (1926-1990) (the man responsible for coining the phrase Pop Art, already discussed in Chapter One), and prominent figures Hamilton and the Scottish-born Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005).

Created during a stay in Paris, Paolozzi's *Bunk* collages, made between 1947 and 1952, can be seen as offering a direct link to the collages of Dada and Surrealism that precede the Pop movement. Like Hamilton's later work, Paolozzi's collages are composites of colourful American magazines, source material purportedly given to Paolozzi by American GIs stationed in the city. Viewed by scholars as 'prototypical works of Pop Art' (Stonard 2008:238), Paolozzi himself saw them as inherently linked to other, more explicitly, Surrealist collages he was also working on during his stay in the French capital. As he commented later in 1986, the creation of the *Bunk* collages was a way of 'looking at another kind of culture in a rather direct way'. Such a perspective, he argues, was 'due to Max Ernst and the example of the surrealists. I would rather be known as a surrealist than a pop artist' (Paolozzi 2000 [1986]:315). Later in the same interview, Alvin Boyarsky begins a question, and is interrupted by the artist: '[Boyarsky]: So, the collage technique...' [Paolozzi]: '—came straight out of all that—the surrealists' (ibid). I emphasise the framing of Paolozzi as a Pop collagist here, precisely because his example underlines the impurity of Pop Art as a movement, which borrows heavily from the movements of Dada, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism (see for example Rosenblum 1969 [1964]:53-56, Gablik 1969:9-20, Haskell 1984, Nahas and Klein 1999 and Deitch 2012). As will be seen below, Surrealism plays an equally important role in the artistic formation of and influences upon Jeff Keen, while Chapter Four will engage with a significant practitioner of minimalist Pop Art, Peter Roehr (1944-1968).

The idea of Hamilton's *Just What is it...* and Paolozzi's *Bunk* collages being foundational in the formation of Pop Art cannot be overstated. Their transformation of the collage form from a site of heterogeneous absurdity into a lens through which to comprehend, and satirise, the seemingly more rationally-minded post-war consumer boom, opened the floodgates for an art concerned with what their IG compatriot Lawrence Alloway would shortly label the 'aesthetics of plenty' (Alloway 1969 [1959]:41). Alloway had originally intended this phrase to communicate the protean reach of the mass media, but it is also easily translated into an apt description of the bountiful plenty which was to be found in all areas of mass-communication, from television and radio to food packaging and fitness magazines. The uptake of collage by Pop artists, beginning in Britain but soon migrating to Europe and the United States, is noted by Taylor: 'the folding of popular culture into art through the collaging of previously unrelated consumer categories – ironically or not...was a process of some complexity and originality' (Taylor 2004:163). Taylor's comments are made in reference only to British Pop Collage in the 1950s, but serves as an accurate assessment of the wider picture concerning collage's relationship to Pop Art. To underscore further the case for collage being of fundamental importance to the aesthetics of Pop art, it would be helpful to present a group of artists who have engaged with the form within the context of Pop to varying ends, so that the sheer diversity and importance of Pop collage can be glimpsed.

Paolozzi and Hamilton can be seen, especially in the early works mentioned above, to be enacting a celebration of popular culture within their collages, a

celebration that is perhaps tinged with a longing; for as it was noted in Chapter One, several of the products, fashions and foods depicted in these works would have been unattainable in post-war Britain.²⁶ Other artists also adopted this celebratory aesthetic. Present as an antecedent to this form, and not known primarily as a maker of collages, was the English photographer Cecil Beaton (1904-1980). Beaton has been recently reappraised (see Danziger 2010 and Janes 2015) as a significant contributor to the celebratory aesthetic of Pop collage, especially in relation to the body and queer desire. Another British artist, Peter Blake (b.1932), demonstrated a fascination with celebrity culture, often cramming his collages with a host of famous faces from the worlds of culture, politics, comics, music and the cinema. Blake's fellow student at the Royal Academy in London, Pauline Boty (1938-1966), is known for her adulation of the pin-board aesthetic; she turned the walls of her studio into a vast panoply of luminaries from pop culture, from whom she drew inspiration for her paintings of iconic 1950s and 1960s visages, with subjects such as Jean-Paul Belmondo, Marilyn Monroe and Derek Marlowe. On the West coast of America this unbridled passion for the collection and display of popular culture imagery, culled from newspapers and magazines, can be found in the work of Bruce Conner (1933-2008), a figure more than tangentially associated with the Pop movement mainly thanks to his cinematic output. His *Untitled* (1954-1961) unveils a passion for the collecting and collaging of material as disparate as softcore pornography, warning signs, military memos

²⁶ For a reading of Paolozzi's *Bunk!* Collages which emphasises their relationship to trauma and the logic of fetishism which governs their composition see Myers (2000)

and monster movie stills. This delirious display of the contents of a prototypical heterosexual teenage boy's bedroom wall remains somewhat hidden, because it is found at the rear of the work, on the opposite side of what has become one of Conner's famed assemblages of wood, paper, plastic and feathers. While the front of this work—an assemblage of wood and metal, mounted on Masonite—is an example commonly associated with Conner's practice, its rear reveals the omnivorous desires and passions of the artist.

Joyful celebration morphs into playful satire when considering the work of another artist widely considered to be a proto, or auxiliary, Pop artist. The New York-based Ray Johnson's (1927-1995) small, witty collages place Hollywood stars like James Dean and Elvis in situations where they become just another sign in the cosmos of cultural symbols. In his "portrait" of James Dean (*James Dean* (1957)) a publicity shot of the young star has been affixed with two bright-red circular *Lucky Strike* cigarette brandings. The two symbols occupy the left and right side of Dean's head, covering his ears. The star has been transformed, via the medium of collage, into an assembled surrogate for Mickey Mouse. The sly subversion of branding, and treatment of Hollywood stars as interchangeable icons, were familiar motifs of Pop painters from Hamilton to Warhol in the movement's 1960s heyday but Johnson's collage prefigured their inclusion of Hollywood stars in their works by several years.

Apart from the celebration and the subversion of the aesthetics of plenty it is also noteworthy that some artists have engaged with Pop collage in an explicitly political way. Taking influence equally from both the Dada collages of the 1920s and Hamilton's *Just What is it...* American feminist artist Martha

Rosler's (b.1943) *House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home* (1967-1972) is a series of ten collages which merge, through photo-montage, documentary photography of the then raging Vietnam War with the sanitised and idealised interiors of American homes. Crucially, unlike her forebears, Rosler does not accrue her collage materials from a disparate range of sources; her works are assembled purely from the pages of *Life* magazine, a prominent American glossy which ran from 1883-1972. Rosler upended conventional publishing divisions between advertisements and features in this work, colliding content from both sections to 're-connect', in the words of Laura Cottingham, 'two sides of human experience, the war in Vietnam, and the living rooms in Amerika [sic], which have been falsely separated' (1991:NP).

The artists and works discussed here as examples of the Pop collage exemplify the range and wide variety of approaches which can be witnessed when Pop coalesces with the artistic modality of collage. Space limits a full accounting of the myriad other ways in which Pop and collage have interacted; it is worth briefly noting the use of collage as a preparatory aid in the work of Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997) or as a foundation upon which much larger scale works of Pop sculpture are built, as in the work of Claes Oldenburg (1929-2009) (see Waldman 1992:277-290 on these points). Further key examples of the marriage of these impulses include the "combine" and assemblage paintings of Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) and Jasper Johns (1930-), and the collage effect of James Rosenquist's (1933-2017) monumental paintings modelled after billboard hoardings. All such figures were elemental in the

articulation and popularisation of Pop Art and stand as further testament to the central role which collage plays within its aesthetic.

The diversity of Pop collage within the fine art tradition finds its equal in the subsection of Pop Cinema which employs techniques and strategies of collage and montage. Before significant space can be given to an exploration of the Pop collage film, we first need to better understand what is meant by the term 'film collage', and how it relates to and is significantly different from its traditionally static forebears.

Collage Film

Cinema can be considered as collage in two senses. First, and perhaps most obviously, the process of filmmaking is, itself, analogous to that of collage: *film is collage*. The word collage comes from the French *coller*, to stick or glue; literally to apply something to a surface. Cinema is the articulation of a series of static photographic frames into movement. This illusion of movement is achieved by attaching discreet lengths of film together with cement (and more commonly now, using computer editing software to process digital footage). Previously framed, exposed and then subsequently developed photo-chemical film is gifted the pretence of continuity, of consistent movement within the mind's eye and of real-time comprehension for the viewer. In this sense it is arguable that reels of film are most fundamentally a collection of collaged, previously existing images. This idea coheres with the proliferation of the word montage, which is often used to describe the adhering of shots together in the

process of editing a film. This is especially pronounced in classical film theory. As Andre Bazin (1918-1958) wrote in his landmark text 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema', montage by its very definition is the 'creation of sense or meaning not objectively contained in the images themselves but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition' (1967:25). The idea of montage as the very centre of meaning-making in cinema is a perspective championed in 1924 by the Soviet filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) who viewed the cinema as consisting of a composite of 'attractional schemas' (1988:44) which are placed in relation to one another:

I should call cinema "the art of comparisons" because it shows not facts but conventional photographic representations [...] for the exposition of even the simplest of phenomena cinema needs comparison (by means of separate, consecutive presentation) between the elements which constitute it: montage (in the technical, cinematic sense of the word) is fundamental to cinema, deeply grounded in the conventions of cinema and the responding characteristic of perception (1988:41).

Eisenstein's observation that montage, the act of juxtaposing discreet shots for comparative consumption by the spectator, is analogous to human perception links to a common argument which is appropriate to both film and collage. As he argues, this time using theatre as a point of departure:

Whereas in theatre an effect is achieved primarily through the psychological perception of an actually occurring fact (e.g. a murder), in the cinema it is made up of the juxtaposition and accumulation, in the audience's psyche, of associations that the film's purpose requires, associations that are aroused by the separate elements of the stated (in practical terms, in "montage fragments") fact, associations that produce, albeit tangentially, a similar (and often stronger) effect only when taken as a whole (ibid).

The notion inherent in Eisenstein's theorisation is that montage is at the heart of the art and effect of cinema precisely because it makes sense through the cohesive splicing together of disparate elements. Only through cohesion can sense be made. This can also be said of collage in its static modality. Taking Martha Rosler's *House Beautiful* series, mentioned above, one may understand what Eisenstein is pointing us towards. On their own the images which make up Rosler's collages possess their own meanings: on the one hand as photo-journalistic representations of the Vietnam War and, on the other, as pictures of consumer goods used to sell household appliances. By bringing these two incongruent sets of images together Rosler creates a third idea or image in the mind of the viewer; the images through juxtaposition yield a new metaphorical insight. By 'bringing the war home', as Rosler's subtitle of her work has it, the viewer is led to question the separation of a comfortable life of idyllic suburban quietude and the barbaric and hellish experiences of soldiers engaged in a faraway jungle-based conflict. In this sense Rosler's work attests to the principle of montage which Eisenstein argues is 'the essential, meaningful, and sole possible language of cinema' (1988:46). This is an intellectual montage in which the presentation of materials is grounded in 'the immediacy and economy of the resources expanded in the cause of associative effect' (ibid).

In his commentary on Eisenstein's writings, the film scholar Jacques Aumont both furthers and troubles our ability to view film as a medium of collage. He argues that films made up of Eisensteinian attractions or fragments 'pull

cinema towards an inherently odd model, that of collage' (2013:41). For Aumont, the basic character of collage is heterogeneity and thus this potential comparison is rendered problematic:

Comparing a film to a collage is paradoxical [...] apart from a few exceptional cases (the paragon is Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight* (1963)), the filmic material is always materially homogeneous. It can only be heterogeneous in its origin in cases where the film is made up of pieces of film taken from "elsewhere"—found footage. In the same way, its relation with a "whole" is not the same: I can always add to a film as much as I like. Nevertheless, even though speaking about film "collage" is metaphorical, it is well suited to that kind of montage in which only the relation between the film's shots (or its fragments) is established by and for the film, as they have no relation with reality (2013:41-42).

Aumont says much in this excerpt that is worth unpacking. Firstly, he moves us away from the idea of filmic montage in the classical sense outlined by Bazin and Eisenstein. In Aumont's conception of collage, footage has not been shot first hand but has been 'found'. The concept of found footage is central to understandings of the collage film and the terms are often used interchangeably, as will be seen below. Secondly, Aumont asserts that because film is materially homogeneous the idea of calling a film a collage is paradoxical. Aumont's point here stands up if we are to remain in the realm of thinking of *film as collage*. Aumont's argument is, however, far from watertight if we consider more contemporary works of moving-image bricolage which encompass footage existing on video and digital platforms which would undo his claims of material homogeneity. Furthermore, as we will see, amongst the key understandings of cinema in relation to collage is the idea that it presents material which is the same (i.e. celluloid) but that the *content contained within the image base is itself radically diverse*. We need only think of the works of Bruce Conner (whose *A Movie* (1958) Aumont himself declares 'a masterpiece')

which takes us to the ‘proximity of the collage aesthetic’ (2013:42)) which contains a plethora of anonymous material from all manner of filmic genres intercutting such footage with a wide array of what Jeffrey Sconce famously described as ‘paracinema’ (Sconce 1995).²⁷ Lastly, Aumont’s assumption that collage may only ever act as a metaphor—that the collage film can only ever speak to itself and not to a reality outside of the realm of the image —can be undermined by other conceptions of the collage film. To progress in our discussion, we have to move away from the idea of cinema itself as a form of collage—a result of its compositional building blocks—and begin to think about it in a second, and more productive, way: *film as a type of collage practice*.

If it is possible to describe some experimental and artist’s filmmaking as a type of collage practice, it must be underscored immediately that such an understanding is not clear-cut or simple. This assumption is supported by the limited and often quite dated scholarly literature on the subject which never agrees or presents a cohesive view. First, I would like to close the engagement with Aumont by refuting his claim that the collage film can be seen as somehow apart from the praxis of life itself. In the only monographic study explicitly engaged with the found footage film, William Wees (drawing heavily on theorizations of the avant-garde by Peter Bürger (1984)) argues that found footage filmmakers use a vast array of moving-image material (film leader, pornography, educational lectures, hygiene pictures, institutional instructional

²⁷ Recent work by Louis Pelletier (2019) has done much to uncover the actual source materials for Conner’s film.

films, genre films, trailers, and so on). The use of such images by these artists, Wees states, is akin to the inclusion of the quotidian visual material and “real world” objects found on the canvas of canonical modernist collagists such as Hannah Hoch and Kurt Schwitters:

To apply this argument to film, one must recognize that "the real world" for found footage filmmakers is the mass media with their endless supply of images waiting to be ripped from their context and reinserted in collage films where they will be recognized as fragments still bearing the marks of their media reality (1993:46).

For Wees found footage filmmaking should be championed for its avant-gardist tendencies which seek to undermine or overtly attack ideologically suspect conventions of representation found in mainstream filmmaking. Thus, they are not apart from reality but actively engage in the mediated world which constitutes lived experience in the modern world. We could take Wees' argument further here and align it more explicitly with the critical project of Pop, as famously stated by Alloway: 'The communications system of the 20th century, is, in a special sense Pop's subject' (1969:24).

Wees' arguments refute Aumont's and are helpful in their championing of the potential of found footage filmmaking to be classed as a type of collage practice, with their recourse to divergent content and their ability to engage with mediated experience; however, his wider project—an attempt to provide a taxonomy of the differing strands and types of found footage filmmaking—is based less on providing a historically accurate overview of the form and more on his biases regarding his examples' differing political potentials. His

approach is telegraphed by the subtitle of his book *Recycled Film: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Filmmaking*.²⁸

Wees places three types of filmmaking (compilation, collage and appropriation) under the heading of found footage. This distinction allows Wees to separate three different types of found footage filmmaking and argue that each represents varying abilities to provide a critique and commentary on the nature of the filmic image and cinematic representation. The best of these films, and we are to assume most critically potent, 'are not only composed of found footage, but highlight that fact and make it one of the film's principal points of interest' (Wees 1993:4). Wees' tripartite hierarchy of critical efficacy contains the compilation film which is seen as decidedly apolitical in its illustrative use of found film materials (1993: 35-38); collage films, which are championed for their avant-gardist tendencies to undermine and overtly attack ideologically suspect conventions of representation found in mainstream filmmaking (1993:38-40); and finally, the appropriation found footage film, which, in Wees' view, falls foul of the more negative aspects of postmodern mediation, leaving the viewer adrift in a sea of meaningless simulacrum. The appropriation film ultimately lacks, Wees argues, 'the deconstructive tendencies and critical point of view which characterise collage films' (1993:40).

²⁸ I am in no way in disagreement with Wees' political conception of found footage filmmaking. His championing of diverse artists, especially the feminist practices of Leslie Thornton (b.1951) and Abigail Child (b.1948) is commendable. I do believe however that his approach blinds us to the wider ways in which the collage film can be theorised.

Wess' list is compelling and assured in its political convictions. However, there are significant gaps which need to be accounted for. Broadly speaking I see that there are six distinct types of collage filmmaking: compilation films, found-footage collage films, found-footage *décollage* films, appropriation films, art cinema collage and intermedia collage films. I have overridden here Wees' use of the phrase found footage as an umbrella term for this type of filmmaking practice. There is not space here to give an in-depth account of each of these subtypes of collage filmmaking. The obvious evolution which moves away from Wees' original triplet of found footage filmmaking (compilation, collage and appropriation) is that two facets within this listing (art cinema collage and intermedia collage) describe works which do not rely on found footage.

In the case of art cinema collage we witness a reliance on two techniques: (1) in-frame composition which is used to complicate and fill a film's *mise en scène* with advertisements, posters and consumer products; and (2) the use of quick cutting as a montage effect to bring short inserts in relation to the action of the film (such as Jean-Luc Godard's famous comic book action panels ('Bing!') in *Made in the U.S.A* (1966)).²⁹

The intermedia collage film is the most appropriate lens through which to view Keen's work. Some of Keen's Pop collage films incorporated found footage, most prominently *Diary Films* and *Spontaneous Combustion* (1980s), in the

²⁹ Undoubtedly the obvious candidate for this type of collage filmmaking is Godard, who has already been discussed in relationship to Pop Art in Chapter One. On the incorporation of Pop aesthetics in his work at the level of *mise en scène* and montage see Yacavone (2005), Morton (2009) and Smith (2014). The French New Wave's relationship to Pop and collage can also be witnessed in the work of Agnes Varda as Horner (2017) and Giraud (2019) attest.

form of images captured from live television (such images were recorded directly from the screen in a way similar to the pre-video recording technology of the kinescope). But, as already gestured to above, Keen's project as an artist and a filmmaker involved a democratic attitude towards all of the arts. Keen's sympathy towards intermediality is writ large in his collage films, which are distinctly interdisciplinary in their methods, encompassing animation, montage, performance, assemblage sculptures, painting and drawing. All these aspects are secondary to his inconsistent and peripheral use of found footage. Keen's intermedia collage aesthetic is comprised of aspects which we find in three other areas of the more found footage-orientated subtypes of collage filmmaking (Compilation, found footage collage, found-footage décollage). I will give a brief account of each of these here as they will be subsequently mapped onto conceptions of the Pop collage film and *Flik Flak*.

Most definitively outlined by historian of Russian cinema Jay Leyda in his 1964 book *Films Beget Films*, compilation films are usually non-fiction works which rely heavily on the re-presentation of previously edited and/or distributed newsreels and general archival footage. Leyda asserts that this type of filmmaking practice is as old as cinema itself, writing that "[o]nce the cautious Lumières allowed their first films to go out into the commercial world, other sharp wits found profitable uses to make of them, usually re-arranging and combining them as "new product"" (Leyda 1964:13). This form of collage film is the most common and can be observed in films which are aligned with the Soviet avant-garde (Esfir Shub (1894-1959)) and canonical works of documentary history (*The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969, Max Ophüls) and the

films of Emile de Antonio (1919-1989)). It is most immediately associated, however, with television—countless history series and shows rely on the trope of compilation to offer visual illustration, often giving such footage an evidentiary status.

The found footage collage film traces its antecedents to the early 1920s, but Joseph Cornell's (1903-1972) truncated fan tribute to its titular b-movie star *Rose Hobart* (1936) is commonly read as the style's originating text and as an important precursor to the Pop Film as was illuminated in Chapter One. The majority of work collected under the found footage banner was produced from the 1950s onwards. These films are associated with avant-garde filmmaking, with the key films that cemented the style coming out of North America in the 1950s and 1960s. I am sympathetic to William Wees' view on this subsection, which he simply titles the 'collage film' (1993:38) in his own taxonomy. For our purposes we can be more specific than Wees' very general understanding of this subcategory. Adrian Danks has specified that such works can be organised into two groupings: films which use 'rapid-fire editing that simulates the distracted viewing encouraged by the television remote control or the point-and-click hyperlinking of the internet', and films which alter films by offering a 'radical slowing down and repetition of images', to 'explore the visual subtexts of found scenes and snippets of footage' (2006: 244). I would argue that the Pop collage film and the work of Keen fall somewhere between Dank's duality of found footage collage. Within the corpus of Pop cinema, collage films both

variously mimic and ape the conventions of media spectacle *and* hold them up for scrutiny via methodologies of seriality and repetition.

Found footage *décollage* describes films in which images have been removed, replaced, obscured or re-juxtaposed. Often this process renders the footage illegible or incoherent to the viewer. Though related these works are distinct from examples of what might be called “imageless cinema”. I am thinking here of films which lack any visual field whatsoever: Walter Ruttmann’s (1887-1941) *Weekend* (1930) which uses only the soundtrack and not the image track of a reel of Tri-Ergon optical film sound celluloid, amounting to what Ruttmann calls a “blind film”; or Nam June Paik’s (1932-2006) Fluxus film anthology contribution *Zen for Film* (1962-1964) which consists of a single reel of unexposed film projected in full, a work which Paik saw as analogous to John Cage’s (1912-1992) infamous (non)musical composition *4’33* (1952). There is also a subset of the imageless film that still contains a visual field but no discernible or conventionally recognisable images *per se*. Here we may place the *Roman Numeral* (1979-1980) and *Arabic Numeral* (1981-1982) cycles by Stan Brakhage (1933-2003), whose visual tracks are clouded by formless apparitions of colourful abstractions.

There are two main schools which can be observed in the creation of works of moving-image *décollage*: inorganic and organic. Inorganic processes are much more common and varied than organic. Within this grouping, the intervention of the artist is of central importance to the process by which the work comes to be *décollaged*. Organic found footage *décollage* films have

been left exposed to the elements, to the ravages of time, or to the volatility of meteorological phenomena. Often these works have been buried, discarded, stored underwater or have been found rotting. They are discovered, uncovered or rescued and re-presented as they were found by the artist. For the case of the argument here, we are concerned primarily with the inorganic method of filmic *décollage*. In the realm of Pop collage filmmaking this description is appropriate to Keen thanks to his Art Brut-influenced penchant for burning and destroying children's toys, which cast him as an artist equally fascinated with the language and relics of popular culture, and the aesthetic strategies of the modernist avant-garde. In *Flik Flak* Keen's association with *décollage* extends to his painting and drawing on images, often deforming and transmogrifying their contents.

With this series of articulations regarding both Pop collage and collage film in place, we are now in an appropriate position to think about the idea of a Pop collage film and Keen's work in relation to it.

Pop Collage Film

As we have already seen in Chapter One, the scholar and curator William Kaizen devoted one of the strands of his Pop Cinema programme to Pop collage films. In this grouping, Kaizen lists works which could sit easily as examples of found footage collage films, but also, and most important for our

concerns here, Kaizen gives many examples which do not conform to such strictures.³⁰

Kaizen states that Pop collage films simply use 'readymade images taken from the world of pop culture' (Kaizen 2011:16). Importantly, according to Kaizen, collage not only appears in the guise of previously shot footage latterly adhered together but may also be 'shot first-hand by the filmmaker' (ibid). Kaizen's citations of this type of Pop collage filmmaking are the animations of Robert Breer (1926-2011) and Stan VanDerBeek (1927-1984). Kaizen takes collage here to rely heavily on a cut-up technique of animation in which still images culled from magazines and newspapers are given life through the process of stop-motion. Tiny movements of the material are made, and subsequently photographed frame-by-frame after each subtle change to create the illusion of coherent mobility. These works are often also edited to be extremely fast, linking us back to Dank's idea of the found footage collage film as a representation of the distracted viewing encouraged by mass media technologies. I would go further than Kaizen to suggest that there is a further type of Pop collage film not touched upon at all which is exemplified in the aesthetics and mode of production of Keen's films. These works display a penchant for rapid-fire animation, alongside the inclusion of his own static and

³⁰ A film already mentioned here, *Rose Hobart*, is not included in Kaizen's programme proper, but is taken as an earlier indicator of the direction of the Pop collage film and Pop in general. Kaizen reads the film as an early example of film star-based fandom, what today is found popularly expressed in "fanvids", shared across social media sites. Such a reading places the film as an important precursor to the iconographic studies of film stars later made by many Pop artists, most notably, Andy Warhol.

performative artworks. While applauding the expansion of form which Kaizen's taxonomy offers, I disagree with his analysis of the function and critical role that the collage technique plays in Pop Cinema. This analysis is undermined by the work of several other Pop filmmakers and artists, especially Keen.

Kaizen argues that the Pop collage film functions through an upending of the surrealistic logic of paradigmatic substitution in which disparate images and ideas are forced into relation with one another (*à la* the game of 'exquisite corpse'). Within the Pop collage film, Kaizen argues, we witness a succession of *similar* images forced together:

One similar commodity follows the next, as in the endless substitution of more of the same in the mass media. Radical heterogeneity gives way to radical homogeneity in a critique of the sameness of the mass marketplace. These films become the visual equivalent of the pin board where one quoted pop image bumps up against the next, creating a portrait of marketplace mass-manufactured amusements (2011: 20-21).

Kaizen's assessment here is somewhat vague and does not account for certain foundational texts, especially in relation to Conner and VanDerBeek. There does not appear to be any homogeneity to the images of Conner's or VanDerBeek's films. (In addition to Conner's *A Movie* and *Cosmic Ray*, Kaizen mentions the following VanDerBeek animations: *What, Who, How* (1957), *A La Mode* (1959) and *Achoo Mr. Kerrooshev* (1960)). I would argue that the distinctly playful discontinuity presented in Conner's montage and VanDerBeek's animations is in fact the source of much of their irreverent humour. This can be seen in a statement of fact from VanDerBeek who places

a title card in *A La Mode*, a film lampooning the fashion world, which labels the work an 'attire satire'.

Moreover, we could easily expand Kaizen's modest listing of VanDerBeek's works to include the artist's own experiments with expanded cinema. VanDerBeek had been creating multiscreen presentations from a range of different sources since 1961 with his so-called "assembly film" *Visioniii*, which was first shown at the AG Gallery in Manhattan. (VanDerBeek's other multiscreen shows included *Feedback No.1* (1965), *Feedback* (1966) *Move-Movies* (1965), *Pastorale et al.* (1965), *Movie Mural* (1968), *Newsreel of Dream* (1971) and *Cine Dreams: Future Cinema of the Mind* (1972)). Not unlike Keen, VanDerBeek often included static graphic work alongside moving images in his expanded cinema works, including live drawing, displayed on the wall using an overhead projector. The art historian Gloria Sutton has described the expanded cinema practice of VanDerBeek and others (and I would include Keen here) as a 'new means for absorbing and processing culture' (2015:44).

³¹ The visual culture on display throughout VanDerBeek's shows chimes with the popular and consumer cultural artefacts seen throughout Keen's work.

³¹ For Sutton, VanDerBeek's interlocutors include the multiscreen architectural installations of Ray and Charles Eames (we may think here especially of *Glimpses of the USA* (1959) and *THINK* (1964)), the light show performances of the Californian collective Single Winged Turquoise Bird, and Warhol's multimedia touring spectacle *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (1966-1967). The last two examples on this list were associated with live performance and music, which were present at the events alongside numerous projections, coloured lights, slides and stroboscopic effects. On the Eameses' work see Colomina (2001), on Warhol see Joseph (2002), and on lightshows and psychedelia in 1960s see Pouncey (2005). For an excellent overview of the shifts and the similarities in American multimedia art between the end of the Second World War and the 1960s see Turner (2014).

VanDerBeek's most ambitious multiscreen project was *Moviedrome* (1966), a thirty-one-foot-high dome structure (designed by Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983)) built on the grounds of an artist's commune in Stony Point, NY. In her description of the content of *Moviedrome*—which viewers absorbed while laying on their backs, eyes gazing skywards—Sutton attests to the variety and voluminous array of media flickering on the dome's ceiling:

An eclectic range of visuals, including 35mm images of billboards advertising consumer goods from the 1950s, faded anthropological and art historical slides showing statues and architectural sites in close up, an 8mm film loop shot in Central Park, abstract patterns created in pressed-glass slides, and outtakes from VanDerBeek's own animated 16mm films, filled the space (2015:31).

VanDerBeek only performed the *Moviedrome* twice: once for an audience of invited critics and members of the public as a part of the 1966 New York Film Festival and again the year after, when the structure was transferred to Manhattan's Central Park. A similarly ambitious project was again proposed with 1972's *Cine Dreams: Future of the Mind*. The image of this work installed in Milan's Planetarium included here (Fig. 3.2) can gesture towards the scale and multiplicity of images which would have overwhelmed the audience at VanDerBeek's expanded cinema events. Furthermore, VanDerBeek's epic collage of images complicate traditional viewing procedures associated with conventional cinematic screening spaces, encouraging a form of distracted viewing in which eyes are consistently darting around the room, constantly being pulled in different directions by the spectacle of media. It is also, conclusively, in no way a musing on the nature of the supposed homogeneity found within the mass market place, as Kaizen states, but a discontinuous

display of the delirium of media spectacle, as all manner of apparatuses and image-types compete for the spectator's attention.³² To view such a mismatch of images in VanDerBeek's films or in his expanded cinema environments as eliciting a feeling or sense of sameness would be tantamount to absurdity.



Fig. 3.2. Stan VanDerBeek, *Cine Dreams: Future Cinema of The Mind*, 1972/2014. Simultaneous projection of 16mm film, 35mm film transferred to video, colour and b&w, silent and sound, 35mm slides transferred to digital, handmade slides transferred to digital, dimensions variable, Civico Planetario Ulrico Hoepli, Milan. Installation view.

³² In the accompanying catalogue essay for her exhibition 'Delirious: Art at the limits of Reason, 1950-1980', curator Kelly Baum describes what she believes is a palpable shift in the aesthetic and thematic concerns of Post-War art. Many examples of art from sculpture and painting, to film and video from this time are, she argues 'haunted by irrationality'. The artists of this period, she continues, 'challenged good form, disobeyed the rules of grammar, performed bizarre tasks for the camera, indulged in excessive repetition, destabilized space and perception, and generally embraced all things ludicrous, nonsensical and eccentric' (2017: 19). All of these are adequate descriptors for the Pop-fuelled expanded cinema acts of both VanDerBeek and Keen, which engaged in their own way with the delirium-baiting cornucopia of mass media imagery.

Further absurd juxtapositions yield humour and delirium in Conner's films, which give the viewer a similarly frantically paced perceptual ride through the everyday mass-media environment. Conner himself expressed a desire for his debut film, *A Movie*, to reflect the random combination of images which linger in the mind's eye when channel surfing through television, or taking in the discombobulating array of effects generated by viewing pre-feature previews at the cinema (Wees 1993:77-86). These kinds of ephemeral images, related to the consumption of media works and paratextual elements of the cinema, are also engaged with by Keen, for whom such sources are not only inspirational, but are imitated by his own production and incorporation of paracinematic elements such as lobby cards and tie-in books linked explicitly to the production of his own films, as we will see shortly.

Kaizen is incorrect to see all Pop collage films as initiating a critique of the sameness and apparent banality of mass-market consumerism. It is more accurate in fact to state that humour, absurdity and delirium are driving effects and themes found throughout the Pop collage film. Often this humour is complex, evincing a lacerating, political edge as in the works of Santiago Alvarez (1919-1998), The Dziga Vertov Group, Dara Birnbaum (b.1946), Gorilla Tapes and George Barber (b.1958). Absurd, humorous and sometimes politically-engaged filmmaking always takes some element of mass culture – an actual piece of the media, such as a moving-image clip or newspaper or magazine clipping – and, via appropriation, either comments specifically on the socio-economic and political effects of mass communications, or it invents

using such material an idiomatic language through which to opine on a multitude of varying other topics. This is true both of Conner's rapid-fire montages and the animations and installations of VanDerBeek, but also of artists who assemble their work from more specific elements of the media.

As was discussed in Chapter One, it has become somewhat of a narrow take to read Pop Art only in relation to the mass-media, advertising and consumer culture in and of themselves. Artists have used the idiom and language of the Pop style to comment on, and think through, a myriad of subjects and topics. The Pop collage film is no different, as evidenced in VanDerBeek's subversions of fashion images laid out for consumption in *A La Mode*, and in Conner's *A Movie*, in which he reflects on his experiences as a spectator. The same can be said for the uses of found footage in the work of more explicitly political Pop film collagists, from Dara Birnbaum's psychoanalytically-informed critique of the presentation of the female body as spectacle in *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978), to the scratch video pioneers Gorilla Tapes' subversive skewering of the dawning age of geo-political neo-liberalism at the beginning of the 1980s in *Death Valley Days* (1984). Both works use and re-purpose television footage recorded from live broadcasts and re-edit the footage in order to *détourn* it, rearranging and subverting its original intentions. This subversion of material from television will be explored more in Chapter Four.

The Pop collage film is the most rich and varied strain within Pop Cinema. It encompasses both the found footage collage film and the intermedia collage film. A constant within this modality of Pop Cinema is its use of mass visual culture to comment upon facets of dominant communications media, but additionally, it uses the same material as a universally understood language for tackling issues both political and personal.

Keen's work is both drastically different and disarmingly similar to the definition of the Pop collage film found above. His work is deeply personal in its use of artefacts and ephemera transposed from the world of mass media, yet at the same time his collage films and the various para-textual elements he assembles beside them reveal a significant affinity to some of the dominant theorisations of Pop as an art movement. We will see that Keen's Pop collage aesthetic is much more in line with VanDerBeek's expanded vision of the collage film. However, whereas VanDerBeek's vision takes in the entirety of mass communication, contesting its overbearing weight with its utopian potentials, Keen's is much more hinged on his own critical and ambivalent view of such material. I will now offer a potted artistic biography of Keen followed by an exploration of his exhibition and reception history. This section is vital as there is a distinct lack of scholarly commentary on Keen, and no significant biographical works on which to hang my own analysis. The biographical analysis here has been constructed using art and film criticism ranging from the mid-1960s to the present day; it also emerges from scrutiny of various primary source materials, including gallery invitations and ephemera found in

the British Film and Video Arts Study Collection held at Central St Martins Art School in London.

Jeff Keen's Surreal Pop

Keen was born in 1923 in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, a mainly rural county in the southwest of England. Keen was a precocious child and a talented artist from a young age, sketching, drawing and painting watercolours from around the age of sixteen. Keen would later state that the surreal comic book hero persona 'Dr Gaz,' which he adopted on and off from the early 1960s as both performer and master of ceremonies at his expanded cinema events, was simply the 'alter-ego of a mild-mannered English water colourist' (Keen 1983:NP). A promising young scholar with an interest in animals, Keen had won a place to study zoology at the University of Oxford. Any potential within this field was curtailed by the outbreak of World War II. Keen was drafted into the Army's Intelligence Corps in 1942, working on designs for new types of weaponry. During this time Keen absorbed the first half of the cultural diet which would feed his imagination and inspire his mature style, taking in gallery shows (especially works of Dada, Surrealism, Picasso and Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985)) and absorbing classics of both modern and historical literature, which led to a fascination with heroic archetypes. After being released from the army in 1947, Keen briefly attended Chelsea College of Arts, studying for a degree in commercial art. He never completed this course but was seemingly spurred by it. The late 1940s saw the artist complete a large number of works, including his first surviving attempts at collage, which bear a striking affinity to the work

of Independent Group member Nigel Henderson (1917-1985) in their black and white Art Brut aesthetic. Following his time in London, Keen moved in the early 1950s to the East Sussex coastal town of Brighton (now the City of Brighton and Hove) which Keen would make his home until his death in 2012. It was here that Keen consumed the second course of his cultural education becoming an ardent fan of comic books, animation and b-movie culture. It is also here where he expanded his own art practice, discovering filmmaking. He took a job with the local council, keeping his day job for the Brighton Parks and Gardens team until retirement.

Keen was part of a burgeoning subculture which pored over imported comics and magazines from North America. Among his most cherished titles and figures were *Life* magazine, *Mad* magazine (1952-) (especially for the work of cartoonist Don Martin (1931-2000)), the Marvel comic book artist Jack Kirby (1917-1994) and Forrest J Ackerman's (1916-2008) *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine (1958-1983). Keen's unbridled enthusiasm for such material stood in contrast to more institutionalised perspectives on what was termed the 'vulgarity' of popular American culture which hung as a 'shadow' of influence over 'British tastes and everyday life' (Chambers 1986:33; see also Dick Hebdige 1982, especially 199-217). Hebdige is particularly attuned to locating this suspicion of American mass culture beyond the realm of reactionary conservative commentary, finding complaints lodged in the writings of George Orwell as well as in the pages of middle-brow newspapers such as *The Daily Mail*. For Hebdige, many of the items on the receiving end

of Keen's fandom were being used by such commentators to explain all manner of societal ills and maladies:

Once they had been defined as signs of the perfidious "American influence", the mere mention of commodities like comic strips and gangster films or of an "artificial" environment like Orwell's streamlined milk bar could summon any combination of the following themes: the rebellion of youth, the "feminisation" of British culture, the collapse of authority, the loss of the Empire, the break down of the family, the growth in crime, the decline in church attendance etc. (1982:204)

Keen would soon develop a further taste for cinema to complement his love of printed matter. At the behest of his new wife Jacqueline ('Jackie', née Foulds), whom Keen had met in one of Brighton's bohemian coffee bars (the now closed Black Cat Café), Keen was asked to help run a film club at the Brighton Art College, where Jackie was studying. Keen began by programming films for the cine-club. Keen's taste in film was omnivorous, taking in B-pictures such as monster movies and westerns (especially those directed by Budd Boetticher (1916-2001)), the melodramas of Douglas Sirk (1897-1987) and the montage experiments of Slavko Vorkapić (1894-1976). Eventually, he began to produce his own films on 8mm. By 1959 with his first film *Wail*, Keen enacted a translation of his collage concerns into the language of cinema. *Wail* was followed by more collage experiments in 8mm: *Instant Cinema* (1965) and *Flik Flak* (1966). Following *Wail*, Keen produced a beat-inflected film, *Like, The Time is Now* (1961) which could sit comfortably in the company of his transatlantic compatriots Robert Frank (1924-2019) and Ken Jacobs (b.1933). *Like, The Time is Now* and 1962's *Breakout* can be categorised as Keen's equivalent of *Pull My Daisy* (Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie, 1959, USA) or Jacobs' films featuring the pioneering performance artist and fellow filmmaker

Jack Smith (1932-1989): *Little Stabs at Happiness* (1960, USA) and *Blond Cobra* (1963, USA). All of these works are semi-narrative, rambunctiously humorous and revel in the spontaneity of performance. One of the most significant works completed by Keen in this period is his only explicit collaboration with another artist: 1961's *The Autumn Feast* was made in conjunction with the Italian-born poet and filmmaker Piero Heliczer (1937-1993). As stated in the film's opening title, the project was an adaptation of one of Heliczer's poems. Like all of Keen's 8mm films, *The Autumn Feast* was shot silently. To compensate for the lack of sound, as in the conventions of silent cinema, Keen and Heliczer added dialogue to the film in the guise of titles. Unlike in silent cinema, however, these did not appear as intertitles but as speech bubbles collaged onto the film frame during postproduction. This is one of the only effects present in the film which tie it to the world of Pop and mass culture about which Keen's collage films of this period are more strikingly concerned. The film features Heliczer reading from his poem in voiceover. Accompanied by the bucolic woodwind of a recorder, a surrogate for the poem's protagonist appears on screen, wondering around Brighton and its environs.

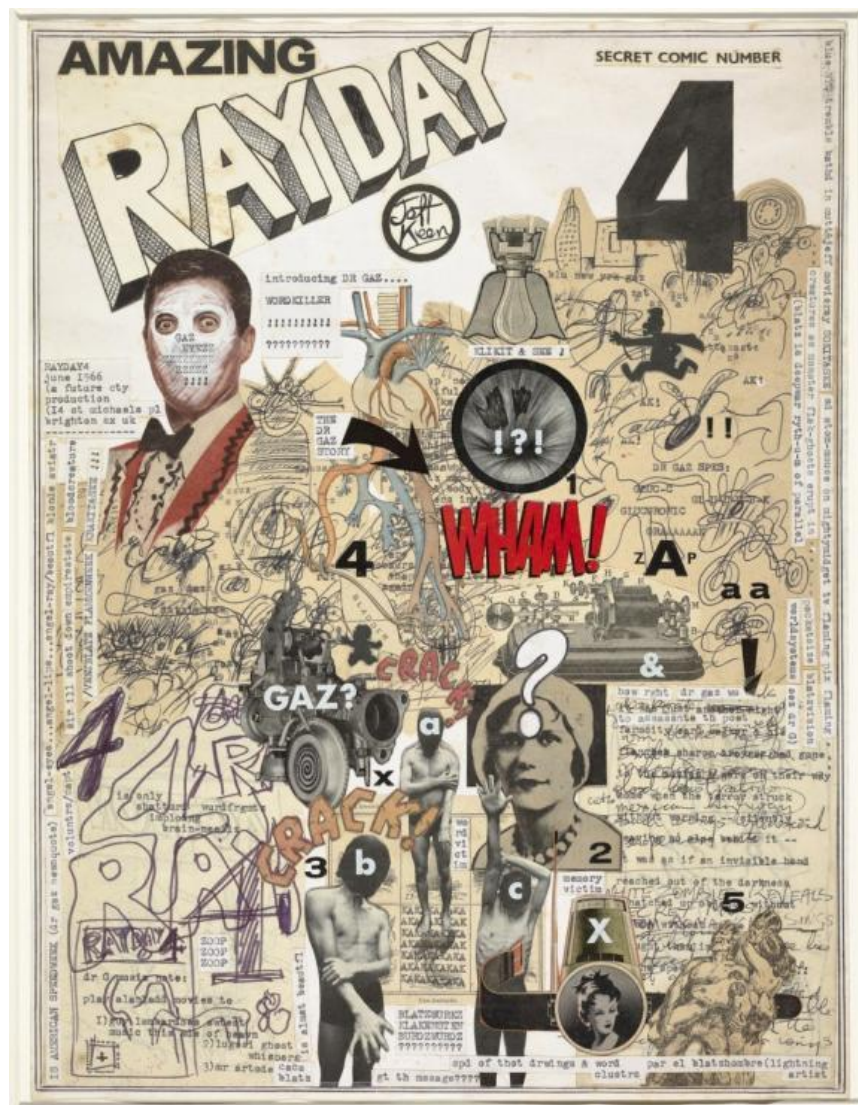


Fig. 3.3. Jeff Keen, *Amazing Rayday* (Secret Comic #4), 1962. Colour paper, collage, pen, 42 x 32cm. Estate of the Artist/Kate MacGarry Gallery.

I note Keen's collaboration with Heliczer to emphasise the circles in which Keen was moving in the 1960s. Heliczer was to become a prominent star in East Coast Underground cinema, acting in Jack Smith's infamous *Flaming Creatures* (1963) and Warhol's *Couch* (1964). In 1962 Keen began the irregular publication of his self-designed magazine entitled *Amazing Rayday* (Fig. 3.3), which often featured copious collages and was sold in both Great Britain and the USA. The publication showcased poems, drawings and writings

from Keen and such literary luminaries as the American author William S. Burroughs (1914-1997).

At the less dazzling end of the celebrity spectrum, also in 1962, Keen met with Tony Wiggins of the now defunct and largely forgotten *Cine Camera* magazine. Essentially a journalistic periodical concerned with amateur filmmaking, the publication sold itself with the by-line: "The International 8mm Magazine". Wiggins was the author of the magazine's column on experimental film. He reviewed *Wail* in the December 1961 issue of *Cine Camera* and was clearly impressed by Keen's ability to assemble such a dense filmic collage. The first piece of critical writing to appear on Keen, Wiggins' prose comprehends the sheer variety of material contained within Keen's work and the artistic dexterity possessed by the artist to assemble these disparate parts. His appreciation is worth quoting at length:

Wail hits you like a Tommy Gun, and in fact those two modern death symbols, guns and motor bikes, dominate the film with rockets in third place [...] Such cinematograph collage calls for immense patience to film on a titling rostrum using single frames almost throughout, and calls for great artistic ability in the selection and juxtaposition of drawings, photographs and snippets of film. Raw material for *Wail* includes shots of animals and a rocket filmed from the TV screen, broken glass and running ink, photographs stuck onto drawings, scores of woodcuts from an old medical Handbook, horror comics, plus a hammer, scissors, mirror and so on and so on. I love *Wail* and I believe that it has a meaning. In time some of you may argue about this (Wiggins 1961:NP)

The rhapsodic praise which Wiggins pours over Keen's debut comes from a place of shock—at the film's absurd juxtapositions and inclusions of material from beyond the world of profilmic photography—as much as from a state of admiration at Keen's apparent cutting-room skill. Wiggins also points us

towards the significant role relics from popular culture play in Keen's collage films, as well as his clear early enthusiasm for genre comics, and the bombastic iconography of American gangsters (Tommy Guns) and leather-glad bike gangs (motorcycles). Though Wiggins claims to see meaning in the film and pontificates about it, his conclusions are lacking in exactitude. I would see *Wail* as a blueprint that allows the contemporary viewer to take stock of many of the defining motifs of Keen's collage work. These include a predilection for smashing together mass and popular culture through witty editing and quicksilver animations, and a deeply-felt admiration for the traits and archetypes of mass and popular culture, particularly in their American guise and idiom (from b-movie gangsters and rubber-suited monsters to comic book villains). The presentation of these elements is filtered through a surrealist lens, and they are yoked together in gestures of absurd chance and humour. Alongside these impulses Keen also includes on screen examples of his own work outside of the realm of the moving-image including painting, paper-based collages and free-hand graffiti-esque drawings.

Wiggins offered to blow up copies of the artist's 8mm negatives into exhibition-ready 16mm prints. These prints were distributed and seen across the amateur film circuit in London. In a serendipitous event, the head projectionist at London's National Film Theatre saw the films and was so enthused by them, he projected them in the foyer of the nation's foremost cinema on the Southbank. This event would prove to be momentous in Keen's rise and sealed a reputation for him as one of Britain's most cutting-edge artists working with

film. The foyer projections lead to a euphoric notice from the distinguished British film critic Raymond Durgnat in which Keen was hailed as the 'first 8mm poet to operate in Britain' (1965:61).

By 1967 Keen had been able to attract funding for his film experiments and entered his most mature phase of collage film practice. With backing from the British Film Institute's experimental film fund, Keen was able to upgrade to 16mm film stock for his next productions, completing a suite of works: *Cineblatz* (1967), *Marvo Movie* (1967), *Meatdaze* (1968) and *White Lite* (1968). All of these works apart from the Ed Wood inspired b-movie tribute *White Lite*, calcify around Keen's ambitious approach to collage, which sees montage, animation, painting, drawing, assemblage and live performance all indiscriminately mixed together. These collage works represent a significant shift in Keen's practice as a filmmaker, amplifying his earlier work, which had relied on rapid-fire montage and stop motion animation alone, and had rarely incorporated other elements. The incorporation of work from a range of media reflects the vast amount of interdisciplinary art-making Keen was involved in from the early 1960s onwards. Also significant is the inclusion of a cast of characters and personas inspired by the creaky archetypes found in superhero comics. Personas inhabited by Keen included the aforementioned 'Dr Gaz', alongside 'Mothman' and later in his career 'Blatzom' and 'Omozap'. Roles of other characters were often taken up by the Keen family and close friends including Jackie Keen who would play variously the *femme fatale* 'Vulvana', 'Nadine', 'The Catwoman' and 'the RayMan' (see Fig. 3.4). The sound poet

and writer Jas H Duke (1939-1992) would play the word-killing 'Motler'. Fellow traveller in the experimental film community and noted expanded cinema practitioner Tony Sinden (1943-2009) would often show up as a part of Keen's coterie. Steve Wynter a long-time friend of the Keens was more often than not the person behind the mask of 'Silverhead', one of Keen's frequently recurring characters. Though the closely-named Marvel Comics character 'Copperhead' is sometimes attributed as an inspiration, Keen's 'Silverhead' actually predates the debut of Marvel's 'Copperhead' by five years.



Fig 3.4. Jeff Keen, *Jackie Keen as The Rayman*, 1968-1976/2016.
Chromogenic print, 95 x 95cm.

It is important to emphasize that Keen never turned fully to filmmaking at any point in his career. He constantly created works in other media concurrent to his film practice. In relation to Pop Art, some of this work is extremely prescient.

Paintings such as *ZAP* from 1958 (Fig. 3.5) attest to this, as Keen distils the expressive language of comic books down into a vivid and bold word painting which pre-figures the canonical word paintings of Californian Ed Ruscha (b.1937) by some years. Similarly unknown synergies can be seen in the work *Laff* (1966) (Fig. 3.6) which overlays a Ruscha-style word painting with a grotesque semi-human figure sweating and bulging in the centre of the image. *Laff* seems a palpable dead-ringer for the work of the then-bourgeoning Chicago Imagists group (also known as the Hairy Who), especially two of its founding members Jim Nutt (b.1938) and Karl Wirsum (b.1939). Like Keen, the Chicago Imagists took inspiration from Surrealism and popular culture, particularly comic books and strips. The most admired figure from this world for the Imagists and a favourite of Keen's was Chester Gould (1900-1985), creator of the *Dick Tracy* (1931-) comicstrip and character. Existing on the outer-reaches of conventional Pop, *Laff* fuses Gould's hard-boiled cartoon subject matter with an abstracted form of Surrealist grotesquery, then marries it with the vivid colours of more mainstream Pop artists such as Patrick Caulfield (1936-2005), Roy Lichtenstein and the viscerally aberrant semi-figurative style of the Imagists.



Fig. 3.5. Jeff Keen, *ZAP*, 1958. Enamel Paint on hardboard, 61 x 61cm.
Estate of the Artist/Hales Gallery.



Fig. 3.6. Jeff Keen, *Laff*, 1966. Oil on wood, 122 x 122cm. Estate of the Artist.

Beyond his paintings and the publication of his self-designed *Amazing Rayday* magazine, Keen produced several movie tie-in books that can be read as paracinematic pieces of Pop Art film memorabilia, often containing pages of Keen's inimitable black and white line-drawings intermittently splashed garishly with colour. Keen's pulp fiction-infused titles for these small artists books often riffed on potential comic book-style situations dreamt up for the characters of his films. Such titles included: *The Thrills and Mysteries of Dr Gaz*, *Blastout*, *The Blatz Art Museum Story, 1957-1973*, *Gazfictoblatz*, *Further Adventures of the*

Breathless Investigator and *The Knife* (Fig. 3.7). They were conceived of as a way to expand the movies he was making beyond the frame in a distinctly non-filmic way. As he put it simply: '[T]he story continues with the books of the film, and the memorabilia' (Keen 1983: NP).



Fig. 3.7. Jeff Keen, *The Knife*, undated. Pen on paper. British Film and Video Arts Study Collection, Central St Martins, London.

In the same year Keen completed *Laff*, he entered into a celebrated partnership with the concrete poet Bob Cobbing. Keen used the basement of the Better Books bookshop, in which Cobbing (1920-2002) was working at the time, as a gallery space to exhibit his paintings, assemblages (often made in collaboration with another doyen of the British Underground Jeff Nuttall (1933-

2004)) and his films, which by this point had developed a much more expanded cinema dimension. As briefly noted at the beginning of this chapter, Keen was considered a pioneer and significant proponent of expanded cinema. One of the most common methods deployed by expanded cinema filmmakers is the projection of a film on more than one screen. For Keen, this had, by 1966, become a somewhat regular practice. Beginning with 1964's *Pink Auto*, a two-screen 8mm work, Keen became a de-facto figure within the expanded cinema scene and one of the most important practitioners of this sub-type of experimental filmmaking in the world (White 2011:32).

The major works of Keen's expanded cinema practice can be split into two: films using multiple screens and films whose display was accompanied by a live performance element. The former is best exemplified by works like *Pink Auto*, *Family Star* (consisting of *The Mutt & Jeff Icecream Sundae* and *Mothman* (1968-1969)) and Keen's *Diary Films* (1972-1976). A project shot over four years, capturing the domestic life of work and play in the Keen household, the *Diary Films* were made using two cameras and multiple exposures (often up to three times on one roll of film), offering a kaleidoscopic collage vision of life in his Brighton home. When shown in public, the films (individually titled: *Stolen Moments* (1971-1972), *Lone Star* (1974-1975), *Godzilla- Last of the Creatures* (1976) and *Rose Canina* (1970s)) would be projected on four screens adding to their dizzying chance arrangement of editing and superimposition. Keen wrote about this process of composition and display in the catalogue for the Hayward Gallery's 1977 show 'Perspective on

British Avant-Garde Film', noting how this approach to filmmaking affects the way in which the subjects in the film are seen. The influence of comic book aesthetics here is plain to see, especially when thought about in relation to the cell by cell presentation of the films across four screens, arranged in a square.

Keen muses poetically:

Strictly speaking the films are not true diaries. They do contain a lot of day-to-day shooting, but since two cameras were used, and the films exposed two or three times from camera to camera, whole sequences have been automatically re-edited and subjected to chance superimpositions and action overlap. Over the years a dramatis personae has crystallised out of the film-making activity itself [...] These personages now suggest a comic strip of life, a theatre of the brain and the creation of a secret cinema of tableaux, jokes, and mysteries ([2009]1977:26-27).

It is as much the process of display as the process of creation which gives Keen's diary films their collage and comic strip effect. Keen was determined to find within this cinema a correlation to the comic strip, both within and beyond the image contained in the cinematic frame. He achieves not only an expansion of the viewer's field of vision by creating collaged superimpositions, but embraces film's spectatorial potential through the production of several frames, which are to be viewed concurrently. We need not just think about the characters exuding comic book personas in life beyond the frame, as Keen suggests, but consider the film itself analogous to a comic strip, a result of Keen's arrangement of filmic frames which here achieve a comic-book-esque seriality.

The second aspect of Keen's expanded cinema, already encountered in his Tanks show *Gazapocalypse*, involves the inclusion of live performance (such

as music and poetry readings). This variant first appeared in an early example of one of Keen's most well-known moving-image works, the 16mm *Rayday Film*. The film now exists in a full thirteen-minute version, edited together from the version of the film which existed from its premiere showing at the first International Underground Film Festival, held at the National Film Theatre in 1970. The film was presented through an array of projectors and slide shows and accompanied by live performances and poetry readings. This event-presentation of Keen's work would continue throughout the 1970s, featuring further live actions such as graffiti-like calligraphy painting onto sheets draped in front of film projections, and the incorporation of live noise-art presentations. These activities mirrored the film's content, in which Keen and his troupe are seen playfully dressing up, graffitiing, and melting/burning books, toys and various ephemera. When screened, Keen's earlier films *Wail* and *The Autumn Feast* both featured live elements in the form of jazz records spun to soundtrack the film's silent projection. *Rayday Film* took the idea of liveness and para-textual presentation to a further level: Tony Rayns, writing in 1976, recalls that the spectacle of a *Rayday Film* performance was: 'sometimes a full-scale performance piece with four actors, sometimes a one-man show, sometimes a multi-screen barrage of 16mm, 8mm and colour slide images set against multi-source soundtracks'. Keen himself, present with the film and inhabiting his 'Dr Gaz' persona evoked 'the archetype of [an] English artisan, unperturbably stencilling graffiti onto the screens, erasing them with silver spray guns, cobbling projectors and other bits of apparatus into spasmodic life, shambling round in overalls' (Rayns 1976:22). Such presentations typified

Keen's output in the 1970s, often performing alongside film screenings nationally and internationally at art galleries, theatres, performance spaces and even in shops.³³ Keen's vision of expanded cinema was significantly different from his British contemporaries in its recourse to absurd playfulness and artistic spontaneity. His works are distinctly different in their tone to those of fellow London Filmmaker's Co-op members Malcolm Le Grice (b.1940) and Peter Gidal (b.1946), and the rigour of films like William Raban's (b.1948) *2'45"* (1972). Raban's film seeks to investigate the ontological status of the apparatuses of cinema itself, through reflexive engagement with the technologies of capture and projection, by re-presenting and simultaneously recording an audience watching a recording of a previous presentation of the

³³ During his lifetime Keen had much more success exhibiting his filmic works and giving expanded cinema performances than he did exhibiting his paintings, drawing and assemblages. Noteworthy British institutions where Keen had his films shown included: Bristol's Arnolfini (1976); London's Arts Lab (1970,1972), Better Books (throughout the 1960s), Filmmaker's Co-op (throughout the 1970s), Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) (1979), National Film Theatre (1965, 1970, 2009), Tate (1998); Northampton's Arts Centre (1983); Brighton's Phoenix Gallery (1994, 2006) and Komedia Theatre (1996). Keen was also part of significant group shows/programmes including the Hayward Gallery's 'Perspectives on British Avant-Garde Film' in 1977. In the same year a major survey of English art at the Royal Palace of Milan entitled 'English Art Today 1960-1976 (itself a radical exhibition which placed cinema alongside traditional fine art media, a practice virtually unheard of at the time); the ICA's 'Surrealist Film: Between Logic and Desire' (1980); and in the UK Art Council's touring show 'The Elusive Sign: British Avant-garde Film and Video: 1977-1987' (1987). Beyond these more prestigious showings Keen regularly screened work in his home of Brighton, with the now closed, formally seafront-based artists' space the Brighton Open Studio (1981), the town's historic Duke of York's cinema (1991) and now closed Brighton Cinematheque (1996-2005, see Rivers 2010) hosting semi-retrospectives. Moreover, Keen's work was supported by a network of local galleries and spaces, with shows at the now defunct Brighton Media Centre (1993) and BMC Gallery (2002,2005), along with the still operating Contact (1999), Lighthouse (1997) and Maze (1991) galleries. Over the years Keen has also had his work shown in non-specialist and non-artistic spaces, including shopfronts on Brighton's Trafalgar Street (2004) and even in the foyer of the local radio station (1976). The exhibition landscape for Keen's work becomes decidedly different towards the end of the artist's life and after his death. He was taken up by a commercial gallerist (Kate MacGarry, first show 2013) and became a subject of art world machinations and discourses, as we will see below.

film. The recording of the current presentation of the film becomes the film screened for the creation of the next film, creating a cinematic *mise en abyme*. Conversely, Keen wrote in 1975 that he was never interested in 'defining cinema as automatous art form' (1975:NP)

Keen continued to make films that can be seen as apart from the multi-screen and performatively inflected expanded cinema works. There were more impressionistic and densely layered diary films, including *24 Films* (1970-1975) and *The Return of Silverhead* (early 1980s). In addition to these, Keen produced a series of cine-literate films that nodded to the underside of genre film history, and were playfully grandiose in their style: *White Dust* (1970-1972) and *Mad Love* (1972-1978). These works rely less heavily on quick cutting or animation techniques; there is in fact a languor to the way in which Keen's superimpositions often sit casually, floating in the frame for much longer than in his earlier more aggressively collaged work. Much longer than his previous efforts, these works were also much more sexually explicit than Keen's earlier films and in part resemble a hangover of 1960s sexual liberalism, which by this time was beginning to jar with the Second-wave Feminist movement.

24 Films, *White Dust* and *Mad Love* had been funded, for the most part, by grants Keen had obtained from the Arts Council of Great Britain, a level of institutional support which would elude him throughout the 1980s. Keen produced less and less moving-image work from this point onwards, though he continued to draw every day. Both his daughter Stella (also director of the

Jeff Keen archive), writing in 2013, and the curator William Fowler, writing in 2009, note that from 1980 onward there is a significant shift in his filmmaking, which becomes more melancholic and inward-looking. Keen's films become concerned with self-portraiture as he steps away from collaborations. The archetype of the lone artist comes to replace the multiple hero and villain characters which populated his 1960s and 1970s output. Keen's major work in this period, *Artwar* (1993), was also the last which would be funded by grant money, made possible via investment from both the Arts Council of Great Britain and the broadcaster Channel 4.³⁴ The work is the culmination of a decade of experimenting with the form of video. From the 1980s onwards Keen produced many of his works with the medium of VHS, often collaborating with video editor Damien Toal. References to war and life in the age of potential nuclear annihilation, or what Jeff Nuttall termed the 'Bomb Culture' (1968), were metaphorical within Keen's work in the 1960s and 1970s, and often viewed through the prism of popular culture; by the 1980s, however, Keen's work became more explicit in his creation of an equivalence between art and war. In *Artwar*, drawing the image of a gun on paper, and *drawing a gun* (out of a holster) are cast as one and the same actions. In the video, a cacophonous barrage of sound and colour assault the viewer. Images of war from newspapers are bracingly collaged together. The whole film is dyed in bright red and blue filters, while a soundtrack of human cries, machine guns and aeroplane bombers are heard, colliding into one another. While images of

³⁴ Unlike other terrestrial channels in the UK, Channel 4 had a noteworthy relationship to experimental artists' film and video throughout the 1980s and 1990s, both producing (Rees 2007) and broadcasting (Andrews 2011) such work.

destruction and violence were common in Keen's earlier practice, they were often displayed with a playful nod to comic book and genre film culture. Here they stand for themselves, divested of any ludic engagement.

The more pessimistic and confrontational tone of Keen's late period work is further reflected in his painting, where he seemingly leaves engagements with pop culture to one side, and embraces further his youthful affiliation with the *Art Brut* of Jean Dubuffet. His art-making as a whole became decidedly less prolific through the 1990s. Keen's final moving-image work, *Joy Thru Film*, from around 2000, typifies the subjective melancholy which the works of the previous two decades had been mining. It closes with the words 'the end' written on a piece of paper which burns into nothing to reveal beneath it Keen's own headshot from the *Artwar* period.

Keen's Reception and Posthumous Exhibition

Although I have alluded to it briefly above, it is particularly germane to this chapter to provide a more thorough account of Keen's reception as an artist. This overview will shed further light onto why it is that Keen was such a marginal figure throughout his career, and how he has come to be celebrated, in the words of curator Andrew Wilson, as 'a missing link in British art history, between Surrealism, Neo-Romanticism, Bomb Culture and Pop' through his fusing of 'film collage, assemblage, paintings and happenings' (Wilson in Keen 2013:1).

Keen had very limited interaction with the conventional art world during his lifetime. Many of Keen's gallery and museum showings consisted primarily of his moving-image works. In 1962, before his transformative interaction with Tony Wogens, Keen had a show of his static art at the Gimpel Fils gallery in London. By 1966, Keen, along with fellow artist Nutall, was garnering short recommendations for their group shows in the London listings magazine *What's On In London*. An early summer show of Keen's assemblages and paintings at Better Books was praised by Oswald Blakeston of the weekly publication; the artist, in his opinion, gifted magic to items 'which should have gone into the dustbin: crumbled bits of cellophane, burnt coloured cartoons, sinister lengths of piping' (Blakeston 1966:NP). Through their association, these things are transformed into a pithy commentary on 'our sex habits, our routine, our victimisation' (ibid). Blakeston's review is a rare piece of writing which focuses on Keen in a purely art gallery context (it is also of interest precisely because the author does not bracket Keen in with a particular style or movement); such writing is not seen again until the early 2010s. This lack of commentary from the art world can be attributed to Keen's own lack of enthusiasm for taking part in its customs and expectations. As Stella Keen recalls of her father, he was 'utterly uninterested in joining any art establishment, for most of his life Jeff worked in a kind of self-imposed obscurity' (2013:1). This self-imposed removal from the art world almost matched the degree of marginality of Keen's status in the world of experimental film.

Although far from an unknown quantity, Keen kept a sporadic production and performance schedule, never took a job teaching art (as so many of his fellow London Filmmaker's Co-op cohort had) and insisted on residing and working away from the cultural capital of London. These factors meant that he was featured little in articles and books on the subject of artist's filmmaking. In an article in the British periodical *Films and Filming*, published some ten years into Keen's filmmaking career, the author cites Keen as 'an underground movie-artist whose light has been hidden under a bushel in Brighton. He lives and works there, emerging too infrequently with his individual brand of cinema which can look at first sight like part of the trendy pop-scene – and welcome as such' (Unknown author 1970:76). Such an assessment is emblematic of the coverage Keen did get during his lifetime. When he was spoken of, he was often on the receiving end of enthusiastic praise.

Though cited briefly in historical studies of avant-garde filmmaking (Curtis 1971:149 and 2007:121-123, Dwoskin 1975:194) Keen has never been the subject of extended scholarly scrutiny. There has, however, in recent years been a significant uptake in the volume of journalistic material published on Keen. This is because of the publication of a DVD boxset of Keen's films by the British Film Institute (2009) and Keen's arrival in the commercial art world. Keen's first solo show of paintings was held at the Galerie du Centre in Paris in 2011 and was quickly followed by another at the Elizabeth Dee Gallery in New York in 2012. Timed to coincide with the debut of *Gazapocalypse*, a retrospective co-curated by the artist's daughter Stella, entitled 'Shoot the Wrx:

Artist and Film-maker Jeff Keen' was held at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery 2012-2013 (note that the word artist is placed in front of filmmaker here). These events sought to emphasise his work outside of moving-image practice, a trend which has continued with the Keen estate becoming represented by both the Hales (first show 2016) and Kate MacGarry (first show 2013) Galleries, who have continued to exhibit his paintings, sculpture, collages, drawings, and ephemera alongside individual film works³⁵. The BFI set and subsequent exhibitions were treated as a long-deserved rediscovery of the artist by a variety of cultural commentators and critics from outlets including *The Guardian* (Dunning 2009), *Frieze* (Fox 2010) and *Huck* (White 2016). Within these various notices and reviews Keen was, for the first time, consistently and adequately assessed as a multifaceted artist who worked across an expansive array of media. There are two key continuities locatable in contemporary discourse on Keen which chime with previous critical reception of his work. One is the constant reference to Keen's use of popular culture, or as Kate MacGarry has it, his unique creation of 'Pop Art films' (2013:NP). The other is the absolute centrality of collage to Keen's artistic

³⁵ Recent exhibitions of Keen's work at the Hales ('*Rayday Film*', 2016) and Kate MacGarry ('*Cartoon Theatre of Dr Gaz*' (2016), '*Wail*' (2018)) Galleries have made one of Keen's films the focal point of the gallery space in order to further showcase his interdisciplinary practice. Typically, this involves screening a single film work on a loop and presenting alongside it works from other media that were made concurrent to its production. These included discreet artworks but also vitrines containing various ephemera, photographs and props which help to present 'Keen's film[s] within the context of his vision of an expanded multimedia cinema' (Hales Press Release 2016). The layout of these shows thus presented a doubling of collage in Keen's work, showing us both his collage films in full but also, alongside these moving-image works, the props from their production and photographs documenting their creation.

output, which is deemed by the gallery's same press release as 'fundamental to understanding Keen's radical approach to the artistic process' (2013:NP).

***Flik Flak*, or Jeff Keen, Pop Film Collagist**

The two areas of thematic and stylistic concern which continually crop up in relation to Keen—those of collage and Pop— which I have attended to more generally in my overview of his prolific art-making, can be isolated in one of Keen's earliest experiments with filmic collage. *Flik Flak* is a short 8mm film collage which exemplifies Keen's use of tactics found in the collage film described earlier, including compilation, décollage and intermediality. Unlike many of the works which traditionally fall into the realm of collage filmmaking Keen does not employ found footage in any way in *Flik Flak*. Instead he relies on found static objects and print media which are presented in an overwhelmingly cacophonous display. It is my contention that much like the Pop collage more generally, Keen's use of iconography and imagery from mass and vernacular culture is part of a toolkit deployed to express a series of subjective viewpoints which co-mingle with some of the concerns of the Pop collage film but also go beyond them. These are (1) a sense of delirium and absurdity at the media saturated environment of the early 1960s, (2) an irreverent and playful satirical intervention in that environment through intermedial gestures and (3) the insertion of personal narratives into this environment through the use of comic book archetypes and characterisations. As will be demonstrated the language of Pop underscores each of these

aspects, as Keen engages with the wealth of objects and pictures which comprise the pop-image eco-system.³⁶

The film is split into three sections. It begins and ends with animated sequences that incorporate Keen's own paintings and drawings, both as distinct works in their own right and as additions to pre-existing images. The film is broken up by a live action interval given the intertitle 'The 5,000 Desires of Dr Gaz'. This middle sequence consists of a lightning-fast montage depicting Keen's wife Jackie as 'The Catwoman' cavorting around their Brighton home. (This section's style and content is uncannily similar to Bruce Conner's 1966 proto-music video *Breakaway*: an experimental kinetic frenzy of pulsating zooms, and handheld camera work depicting the then twenty-three-year-old Toni Basil manically jiving to her eponymous pop song).

The first section of the film runs for one minute and five seconds. It contains a myriad of cultural signs and symbols from the mid-20th century mixed with Keen's surrealistic free-form line drawings. The pace of the film is breathtakingly fast, so much so that upon first viewing, the content of the film

³⁶ Although space limits a more thorough investigation here, an examination of Keen as an artist-ecologist, exploring the ramifications of the mass media environment as a type of ecological system, could be productive. The notion of the artist as ecologist in this context was first proffered by Gene Youngblood in his canonical study *Expanded Cinema* (1970: 346-351). Keen would, I suspect, not fit comfortably in perspectives on media ecology that have emanated in the years after Youngblood's originating of the concept. For Susan Sontag we need a conservationist remedy to the proliferation of the consumerist waste of images, 'an ecology', she writes, 'not only of real things but of images as well' (1977:180). Sontag's perspective is reflected in the techno-utopianism of artists like VanDerBeek (see Sutton 2015) and Nam June Paik (see Joselit 2007, especially 44-63). Keen's mission in intervening into the pop-image-eco system is decidedly more ambiguous, fraught with absurdity and playful criticality.

somewhat washes over you. This sense of being overwhelmed by the spectacle of visual culture only adds to the sense of deliriousness which is further engendered by the soundtrack in this portion of the film. Over the visual track of the film Keen overlays a caustic and oftentimes piercing melange of sculpted radio static. Its effect is jarring—reminiscent of someone tuning a radio, searching in vain for a station but locating only white noise. Notwithstanding the effect of aural alienation, on screen Keen provides us with a series of witty juxtapositions and irreverent combinations of images, critic Martin Herbert observed that re-watching Keen's films on DVD invites an 'athletic use of the pause button' (2013:232)

The film opens on the title 'FLIK', which has clearly been created by a stencil and black paint (the stencilling of text onto walls around Brighton, a form of quasi-graffiti, is a common trope found in Keen's work, especially from the 1980s onwards). We then cut quickly, via a flicker effect (in which every other frame is black) to another stencilled title card, this time reading '/R/R/R'. This should be read a corollary for the flicker effect we are witnessing; it literally interrupts the second half of the film's title from coming on screen. This withholding is extended as the next title card appears bearing the phrase 'Blat-' and then immediately thereafter '-z-z-z-z'; taken as a whole this second title seemingly replaces the word 'Flak' with 'Blatzzzz'. This may seem completely nonsensical to the casual interloper in Keen's world, but a more seasoned traveller would no doubt recognise 'Blatzzzz', which is more commonly rendered as 'Blatz' throughout Keen's art. Keen uses the term throughout his

practice as an interchangeable phrase to mark his artistic territory. Critic Morgan Quaintance has speculated that the word can be viewed as a catchall term for Keen's 'attitude, aesthetic or approach', but more importantly it may be understood specifically as another word for 'collage' (2012:27). We can see 'Blatz' then as Keen's surrogate descriptor, a label for his own version of collage practice. By placing this telling phrase at the beginning of his film Keen is, in his own cryptic way, branding his work, slyly informing us that what we are about to see will be a deeply personal and idiosyncratic vision of film collage, caked in its own symbolism and codified language.

After these opening titles Keen presents a brief section which apes the conventions of the countdown leader usually found on celluloid film. Instead of counting down from five and then beginning the film proper, Keen gives us an inversion. First, we are given the letter 'A' in black on a white background, in a typographical style similar to the 'Flik' and 'Blatzzzz' which precede it. This is an indication that the following footage represents the film's first section. Next, we cut to a very brief credits title card, hand-drawn by Keen. Appearing for a split second the paper page bares the credit 'A Jeff Keen Movie' written in cursive in four places, dotted indiscriminately around the frame. On top of the credit Keen has overlaid the numbers one, two and four, which are presented in green and yellow coloured circles. This fleeting shot is the film's only blatant acknowledgement of authorship, though by the end of Keen's brief count-up, hand-drawn leader (one, two, three) we are launched into a rapid-fire series of montages and animation which are unmistakably the work of the artist.

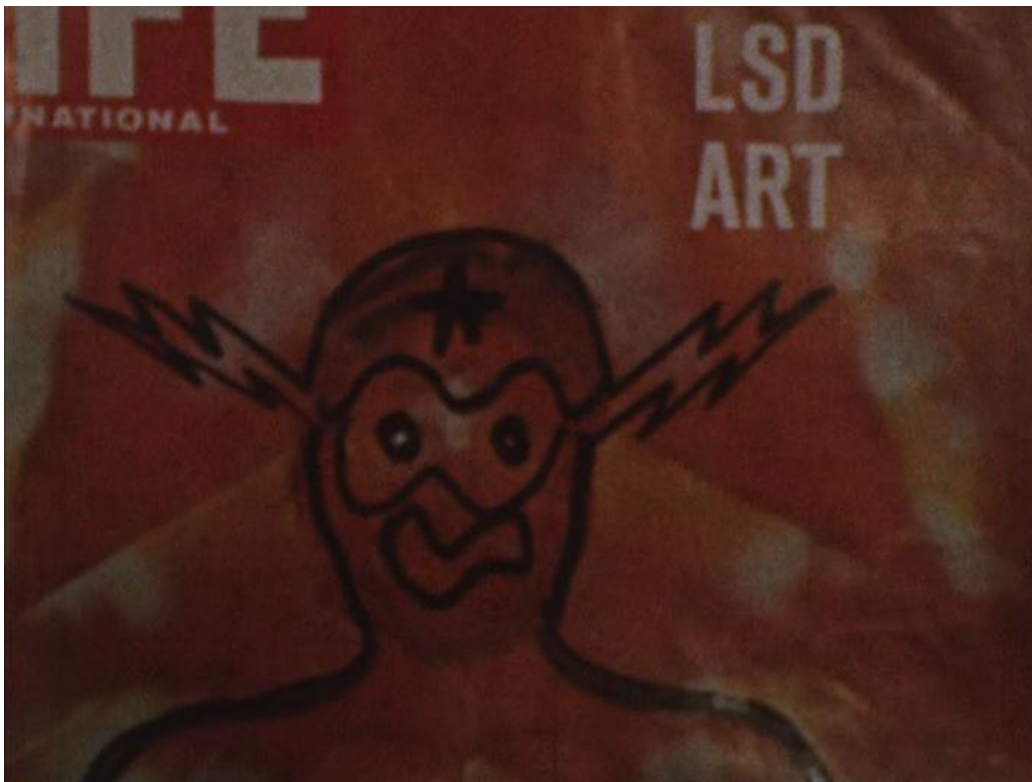


Fig. 3.8. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.

The film's first and third part contain a multitude of pop cultural and mass media symbols, icons, publications and ephemera including unidentifiable paintings and photographs. Alongside these elements are various drawings and paintings by Keen, often in the form of interventions on the various media, which he obscures, *décollages* and comments upon through the application of such materials. Items and elements include (and it must be stressed this is not an exhaustive list), in part one: pages from a publication on fonts and typography; lingerie and underwear catalogues; a group portrait of bootlegger Charles Birger's gang brandishing rifles; a photographic portrait of a black man; the front cover of an issue of *Life* magazine (9 September, 1966) carrying a story headlined 'LSD and Art: New Experience that Bombards the Senses'

(this image of the artist Richard Alcroft using his *Infinity Projector* (1966) goggles which prevent binocular vision and utilise kaleidoscope lenses, is drawn over in a sequence of stop motion animation by Keen (Fig. 3.8)); several single frame shots of various comic book panels and magazine advertisements (including one where the words 'Shelf Life' can be read inverted by reflection in a circular mirror); the cover of an unidentifiable magazine with a full-frame photograph of Elizabeth Taylor's head (Keen animates white paint tears trickling down the actor's cheeks); an obscured title and cut outs from a *Popeye* comic book; the word 'Eye' written in the same white paint which adorned Taylor's face across an indiscriminate background; a stop motion drawing of a house which a toy plane then travels across; the subsequent tearing at the sheets containing the house drawings, revealing more surrealist graphics, authored by Keen, underneath; a soldier throwing a grenade; a man's head, screaming; bomber planes; various food stuffs, dishes from glossy magazines, including meatballs and tomato sauce; a toy car; a drawing of a ray gun; a drawing of a car; a plastic toy 'Atomic Space Gun'; a photograph of Allen Ginsberg (Keen quickly superimposes a cut-out of a reel-to-reel tape deck and a pair of outsized bright-red lips onto Ginsberg's face); a separate shot of Ginsberg (this time quickly obscured with pink and white paint in stop motion); photographs of astronauts; pages from women's clothing catalogues; a news picture of a space rocket launching; a man wearing a t-shirt which Keen has emblazoned with the phrase 'I am Brian Donlevy' (Donlevy (1901-1972) was an American actor famous for his appearances in genre films produced by major Hollywood studios in the 1940s and 1950s); a photograph of a man

being led in handcuffs by a plain-clothes policeman, in which the man's chest has been adorned with a stylized 'G' in a style analogous to that of a superhero insignia (this 'G' is a symbol for Keen's Dr Gaz persona); a final photograph of a man in a short-sleeved shirt, which Keen paints in green and white then cuts to black.

The above list can give some indication of the fraught task of creating an inventory of the images and icons which Keen places in front of his camera for capture. Of course, to comprehend each of these images individually, in a sequence that lasts just over one minute, one necessarily has to relinquish the effect generated by viewing the film at full-speed. This is something Keen has admitted to, hoping that viewers would watch his films more than once to get more out of them (Keen 1983:NP). The sheer diversity of images offered in arrangement by Keen is suggestive not only of Pop collage more generally, but specifically of a particularly British version of the idiom (most prominently found in the work of Paolozzi and Blake), which raids a history of vernacular imagery, indiscriminately mixing visual cues from Victorian illustration to clothing catalogues, brightly-coloured food photography to superheroes. This mixing of imagery means that Keen is able to make some of his most pointed critical interventions amongst the shiny advertisements for consumables. Often these critical juxtapositions are subtle only because of brevity. Keen's films are a world in which disparate elements are held together not in harmony, but in chaos. Their critiques often appear for a fraction of time.

For all of its absurdity and recourse to out and out defacement of the image there is, early on in the first part of *Flik Flak*, a trenchant moment of “reality” which slips through the cracks of Keen’s surrealist penmanship and glossy-mag ballyhoo. One of the first shots of the film which is given any form of duration (i.e. a second or more) is a group photographic portrait of white men holding firearms (Fig. 3.9). This is the Charlie Birger gang, a notorious criminal gang of bootleggers who operated out of southern Illinois in the 1920s. The gang had a long running feud with the local Klu Klux Klan membership who were deputised by county law enforcement to assist in the enforcement of the prohibition of alcohol. It is unclear if Keen knew who was in the picture he was using, but it is clear that the group was taken by Keen to be a kind of stereotype or icon. This iconography lies in the fact of them being a gang, but more specifically a gang of white men. This becomes obvious when put in the context of the next shot of the film: a picture of a black man who is framed as viewed down the right-hand barrel of a shotgun (Fig. 3.10). Keen suggests here that the person in the sights of this group’s collective gun barrel is an anonymous black man. The group picture has been cropped by Keen for inclusion in his film, and the gang’s leader himself is absent (Fig. 3.11). This editing should lead us to believe that he wanted to associate the men in the picture not with the figure of Charlie Birger or his gang but as a nameless conduit for the violent racism which has haunted the American 20th century.



Fig. 3.9. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.



Fig. 3.10. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.



Fig. 3.11. Charlie Birger and his Gang (Birger top middle in black vest), c.1920s, Whitechapel Press.

More importantly for our consideration here, this somewhat complex relay of cropping and juxtaposition is given a total screen time of around one and a half seconds. These images, and their relation to one another would be very difficult to discern in a single viewing; they are inserted into the film on an almost subliminal level. Their transience is compounded by the imagery which surrounds them. Keen's plain-view critique of white racism against black bodies is drowned in a sea of advertising and mass cultural imagery. Keen suggests that this is a culture of plenty and glut, yes, but also more importantly a visual culture of distraction which absurdly loses sight of the violent realities of the 20th century.

The second part of the film is distinct from the first and third. It contains no collage material from the world of mass culture. Instead, it presents a frantic montage of Keen's wife Jackie in character as 'The Catwoman'. The

Catwoman's costume is, in this instance, the application of face paint like that found at fetes and carnivals. There are no media-world referents contained within this middle section; instead we are given the intermedia presence of performative action. Keen's insertion of a portrait of his spouse, dancing with unbridled frivolity around their Brighton home, is, however, suffused with the iconography of comic books. This is clear from the intertitle which introduces the section, announcing its title 'The 5,000 Desires of Dr Gaz' (Fig. 3.12) in primary colours and comic book font; and moreover, by the paratextual presence of Jackie Keen as Catwoman, a character who would go on to feature on consistent rotation in Keen's films and books. In a bursary application from 1975 Keen expressed his desire to be viewed as an artist 'less concerned with defining cinema as an automatous artform or relating it to the other arts than with the creation of personal lyric language film' (1975: NP). It is with brief sequences such as this one in Keen's intermedia collage practice that we actually glimpse a commingling of cinema with another art form (the comic book) which is filtered through a personal/lyrical vision of desire for his wife. Keen would later describe comic books to Jack Sargeant as a medium possessed by 'rawness', a 'hermetic' art form, obeying 'a law unto themselves' (Keen in Sargeant 1999). This self-contained episode of *Flik Flak* could be described in the exact same terms, as a hermetically sealed lyrical and personal Pop vision of fleeting joy and desire, a moment which is closed off, a punctuating pause between two frantic onslaughts of collaged visual culture.

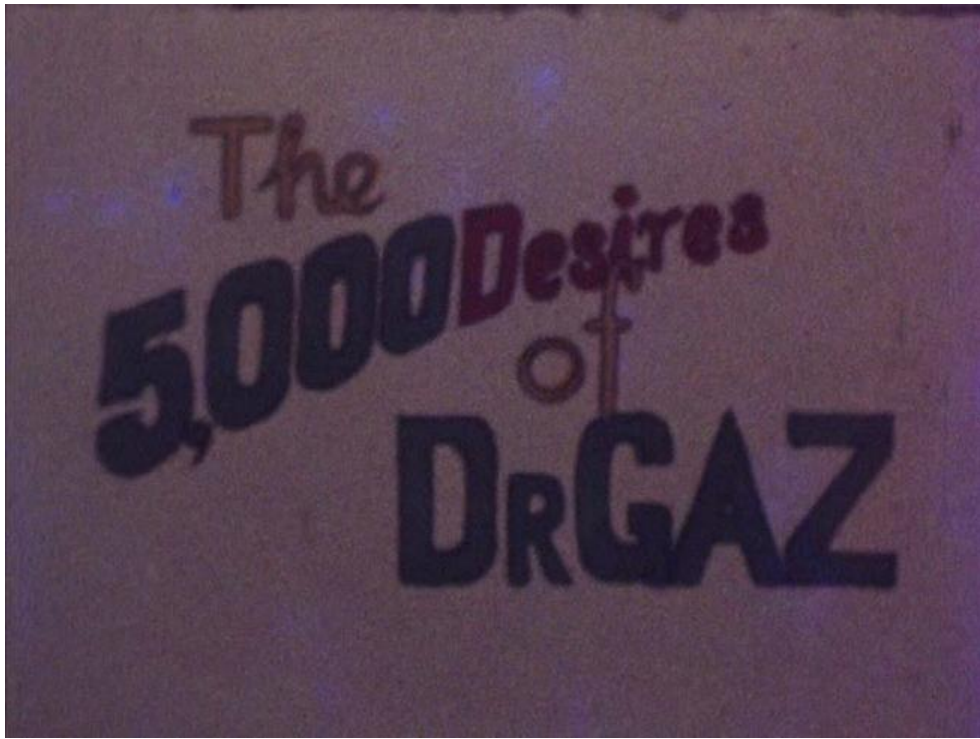


Fig. 3.12. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.

The final section of *Flik Flak* is in many ways a return to the concerns of its first part, with absurd juxtapositions and a delirium-inducing cavalcade of images which flash up on the screen at an almost incomprehensible speed. In this final minute and fifty seconds Keen ups the ante by processing a much larger range of mass cultural and historical print materials, feeding them through his camera at greater speed.³⁷ This sense of speed is enhanced further by a switch in the film's soundtrack to a pulsating piece of big band swing jazz, which carries

³⁷ In addition to the items listed in part one Keen includes further cultural and historical figures both real and fictitious including (in order of appearance): The Creature from the Black Lagoon, Lyndon B. Johnson, Jean Paul Sartre, Superman, Daredevil, Batman, Mr Hyde, The Flash, Green Lantern, Lassie the dog, Wonder Woman, Clark Gable, Mae West, John Wayne, John F. Kennedy, Alfred Hitchcock, Frankenstein's monster, The Wolfman and Supergirl. In addition to these there are also many kitsch paintings of animals and children, advertisements for products including VistaVision, and panels from *Heart Throbs* (1949-1972) and *First Love* comic books.

along with its rhythm the images on screen. Other than the increase in velocity, this final part includes direct intervention onto the celluloid of the film itself by Keen, not only in the presence of drawing or painting over images within the film, as in part one, but also in the application of small coloured globules, sprinkled around the frame. These coloured dots proliferate throughout this section, so much so that Keen provides a metacommentary on their presence, utilising a serendipitous *Superman* comic book panel to self-consciously evaluate these surrealistically large Ben-Day dots (Fig. 3.13).

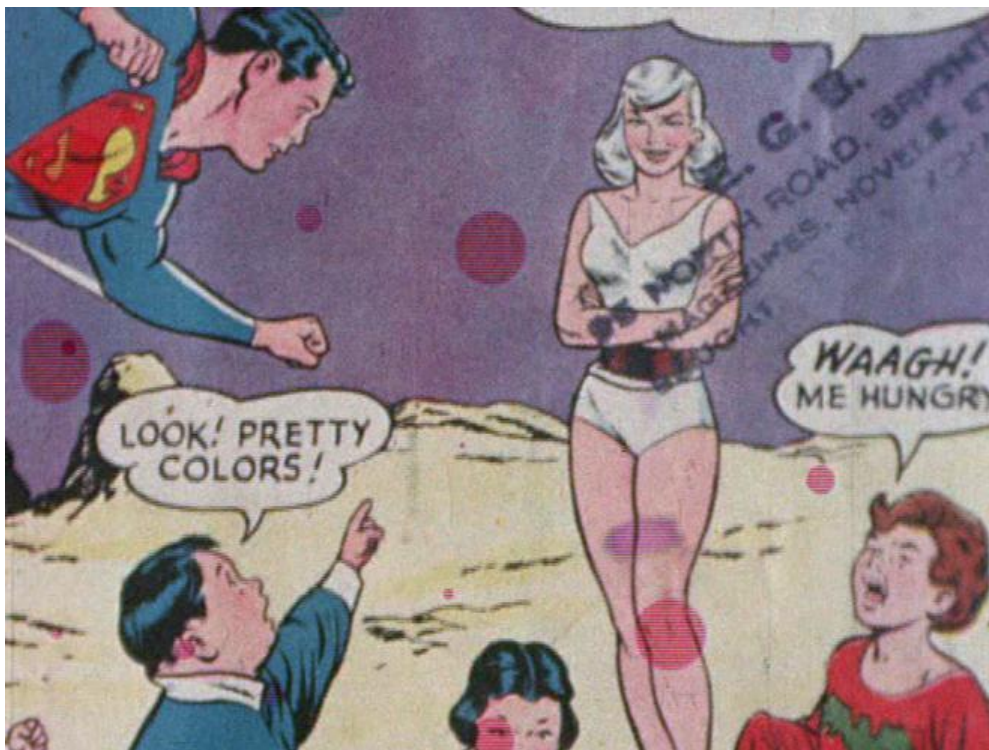


Fig. 3.13. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.

Keen's playful tone in this section is still undercut by a marked presence of violence. But unlike the subliminal suggestion of racial violence occluded by consumer imagery in part one, here we are given violence as reality in

comparison to its representation. This comparative juxtaposition is achieved through an extremely quick intercutting of documentary photographs from crime scenes with scenes of fighting and conflict in comic books (Figs. 3.14 and 3.15). Here Keen seems to suggest that the reality of violence has become indistinguishable from its representation—or if not indistinguishable then as a kind of stand in for one another: a regime of representation in which violence has become both casual to see and a casual form of entertainment within the mass media environment. Such a perspective is supported by Keen's introduction of a third type of image where the two forms, documentary and comic book, meet via the intrusion of his own version of comic book word art, first glimpsed in his 1958 painting *Zap* (Fig. 3.16).



Fig. 3.14. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.

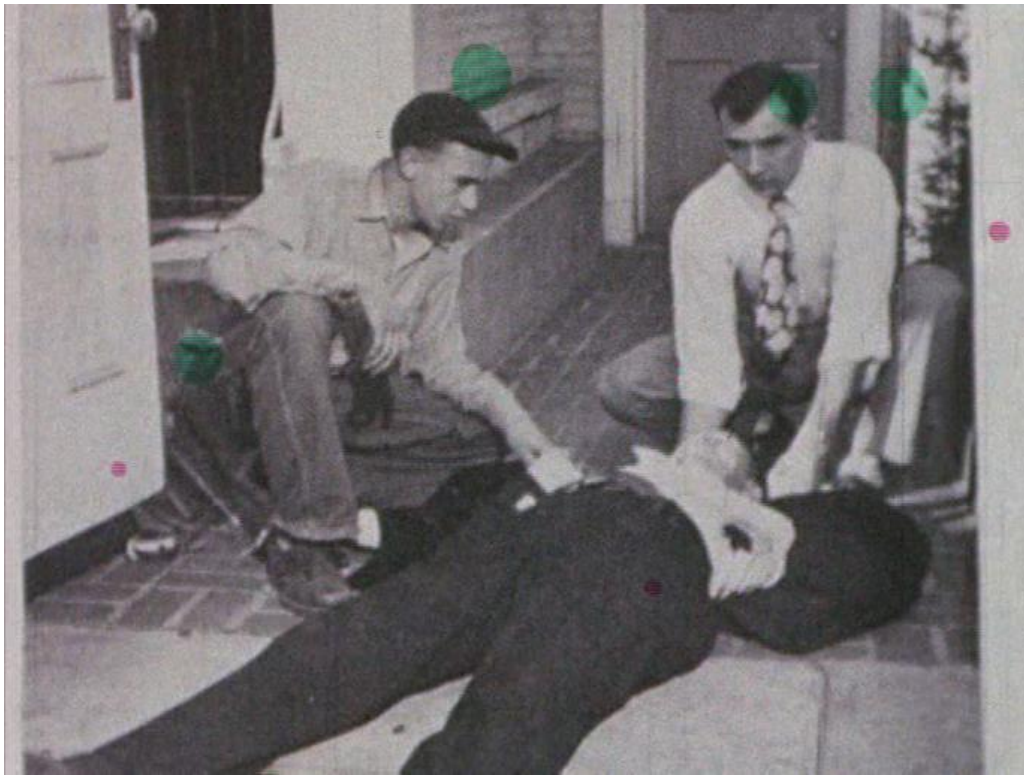


Fig. 3.15. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.



Fig. 3.16. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.

The varying functions of collage employed by Keen, including his own intervention into the image through painting and drawing, continually underline that we are within the realm of intermedial collage practice. It is by artistic materials alongside the language of film animation and montage that Keen is able to infuse *Flik Flak* with such subtle layers of commentary, visual discourse and discordance. It is important to emphasise that Keen is constantly shifting gears in this and other of his Pop collage film works between the political, the playful and the personal. Sometimes, in a feat of absolute collage Keen is employing all three tendencies at the same time.

Towards the very end of part three of *Flik Flak* Keen presents the spectator with a very brief glimpse of an unedited portrait photograph of John F. Kennedy

(Fig. 3.17). Almost immediately, via the illusion of stop motion animation, he begins to draw frantically all over Kennedy's visage. Within three seconds the ex-president's face has been transmogrified into a monstrously deformed spectacle of melancholy anguish (Fig. 3.18). This is not, however, Keen's attempt to create a monster out of Kennedy but an associative piece of Pop surrealism and *décollage*. The image of Kennedy here has been reworked by Keen, obscured and remixed to resemble one of his favourite movie monsters, the eponymous antagonist from the 1957 B-movie *The Cyclops* (directed by Bert I. Gordon) (Fig. 3.19). If we need further proof that Keen's opinion of Kennedy is one of support or sympathy, we need look no further than another intermedia reworking of a photograph of Kennedy which occurs some forty seconds later.



Fig. 3.17. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.



Fig. 3.185. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.

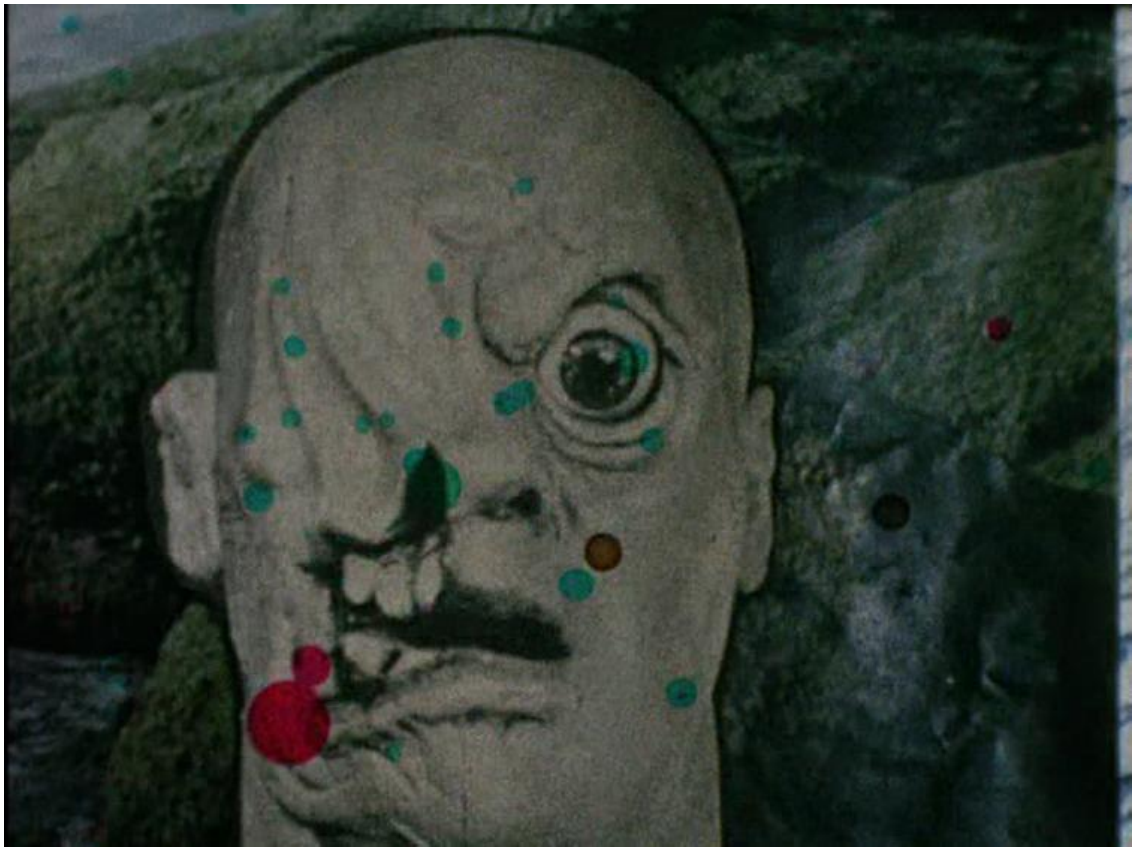


Fig. 3.19. Jeff Keen, Flik Flak, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.

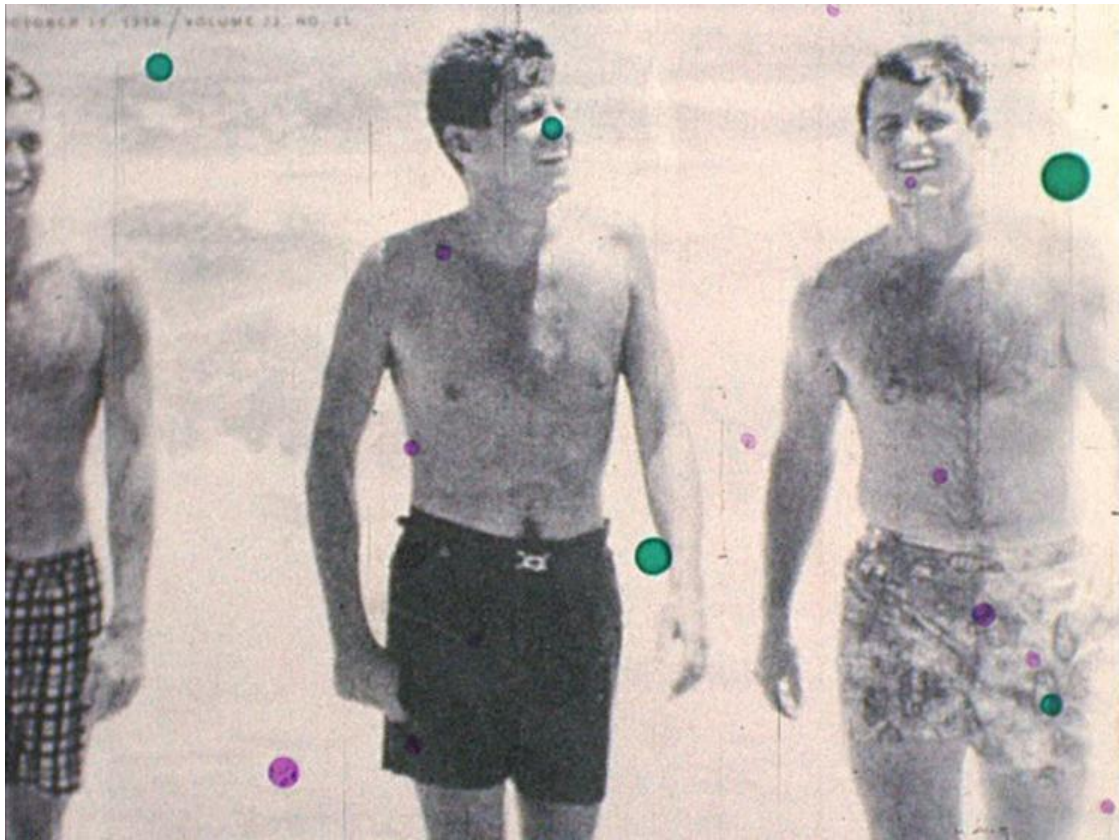


Fig. 3.20. Jeff Keen, Flik Flak, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.



Fig. 3.21. Jeff Keen, Flik Flak, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.



Fig. 3.226. Jeff Keen, *Flik Flak*, 1966, 8mm, Sound, Colour, British Film Institute.

In this sequence Keen displays a full-frame image of Kennedy alongside his younger brother Robert at a beach location (Fig. 3.20). Again, as soon as this image can be comprehended Keen begins to draw over the top of it in blue and red pen. He transforms a half-naked Kennedy into a superhero, adhering to him the iconic blue leotard and red cape of Superman (Fig. 3.21). Here we witness a reversal of the monstrous to that of the heroic, as Keen presents a popular and mythic vision of Kennedy as hero, a reality which never came to pass as a result of his assassination in June 1963. In a poignant reflection of this fact, Keen abruptly cuts from the newly adorned Kennedy to a cut-out of Superman from a comic book (Fig. 2.22). Kennedy has now fully transformed;

the broad frame of his alter-ego dominates the centre of the image. No longer static and tethered to earthly ground the figure of Kennedy/Superman is shown ascending up and out of the frame. A trite reading may suggest that this figure is floating up to a celestial place, a restful peace. An interpretation which places collage as central to Keen's practice would argue that the transformation of a fallible figure into a mythic and impossible one is possible through the conflation of imagination with the techniques and tools of intermedia Pop Cinema collage. It is through the playful repertoire of image, composition and artistic intervention that Keen can meld the political and the playful with the personal and Pop.

Conclusion

In engaging with Jeff Keen, Pop and collage this chapter has presented a series of original and interrelated arguments. In order to properly understand the complexity of Keen's project as a collage artist it has been necessary to engage with the multifaceted and oftentimes dense history which comprises and is suggested by the word collage. I have demonstrated that the idea of a Pop cinema collage tests and expands the boundaries of what has been traditionally and conventionally understood as filmic collage. As is more than plain to see from the avenues opened by this discussion there still remains significant work to be done in the arena of cinematic collage, especially in the exploration of forms which lie beyond the world of found footage filmmaking.

One such avenue has hopefully been travelled down here through the example of Keen and his intermedia Pop collage practice.

As we have seen through an overview of Keen's practice as an artist, both collage and Pop have never been far from his thematic and aesthetic concerns. The subject of Keen's work is affiliated with that of Pop art, what the artist has himself identified as the 'landscape of signs, images, posters and TV imagery...that is common to everyone' (1983:NP). Keen has argued, however, that the popular images he uses function as windows into the work itself (ibid). Keen is vague as to what exactly he means by this, but I take it as a gesture towards his project of creating a totalised vision of collage. Keen's total vision of collage is perhaps best expressed in the spectacle of *Gazapocalypse*, a work which was compiled and planned just before the artist's death in 2012. But a more intimate political, personal and playful rendition of this vision can be found equally within Keen's much smaller-scale works, as we have seen in the example of *Flik Flak*. Here popular culture is read and re-interpreted as spectacle at much closer quarters. We witness Keen codifying and re-arranging the language and idiom of the mass media for playful, personal and critical ends.

It should be without question that the door opened here on Keen's prolific multimedia practice as a visual artist is only a small gesture toward what could be said about him. There are a multitude of possibilities which could be engaged in future studies of Keen which have not been touched upon here. These include Keen's relationship and collaboration with artists, from those mentioned within these pages to other seminal figures of the arts and

underground cultural scene of Britain in the 1960s and 1970s. These would perhaps most significantly include Keen's participation in the Destruction in Art Symposium and his association with its main proponent and organizer Gustav Metzger (1926-2017). Furthermore, other channels of study could be opened up by engaging more fully with Keen's predilection for incorporating children's toys and other plastic ephemera into his art. Such work would be spurred by discourses on the role of toys and plastics in the art of Claes Oldenburg (especially his museum-like collection installation *Mouse Museum/Ray Gun Wing* (1972-1977)), and by Jonathan Flatley's seminal accounts of 'collecting and collectively' in *Warhol and Pop* (2010). There remains much to be unveiled about Keen's art. This chapter has illuminated some of the subtle tensions and playful sophistications that mark his idiosyncratic take on the modalities of collage, film and Pop, and his gestures and interventions into the material and media world of Post-war culture. Such an intermedial perspective is also found in the work of Peter Roehr, the subject of this thesis' final case study, as discussion moves from questions of collage and Pop to issues surrounding the movement's relationship with another key area of aesthetic exploration: repetition. With the example of Roehr and his minimalist-inflected Pop Art, one finds a kind of opposite to the sensual overload of Keen's practice. Instead of encountering the broad brushstrokes of myriad types of media, in Roehr's output the viewer is presented only with advertising in both its print and televisual guises. But Roehr's simple re-presentation of advertising materials belies his complex interventions into the rhetoric of this mode of address and his deconstruction of its seductive seriality.

Chapter Four: Pop's Raw Material: Repetition, Advertising and Television in Peter Roehr's *Film Montages (I-III)* (1965)

'For us it would be the objects on the beaches, the piece of paper blowing about the street, the throwaway object and the pop-package.

For today we collect ads'

— Alison and Peter Smithson ([1956] 1997:4, emphasis in original)

Introduction: Peter Roehr, Pop-Minimalist

Between precisely 19:45 and 21:55 on the evening of September 9th 1967 at the Galerie Dorothea Loehr in Frankfurt, the advertising creative, curator and soon to be prominent gallerist Paul Maenz (b.1939) staged a prescient group exhibition named after its opening hours: *19:45-21:55*. Various works displayed on that early autumn evening would eventually be recognised as significant bellwethers in the emergence of conceptual art, land art and post-minimalist sculpture (see Boettger 2003). Contributors included such storied and influential figures as Jan Dibbets (b.1941), Richard Long (b.1945) and Charlotte Posenenske (1930-1985). An outlier in this group was a 23-year-old German artist named Peter Roehr (1944-1968). Roehr's contribution, unlike that of his fellow invitees, was not ephemeral, sculptural or conceptual. Roehr's short film-work *Ringer (Wrestlers)* (1965) was deployed in two parts, both of which were shown away from the Galerie's rooms. The film was projected outside on the façade of the Galerie and accompanied by a large illustrated billboard that advertised the work in a manner not dissimilar to that of a major Hollywood film (Fig.4.1). Such a reference to the American film industry was

both deeply incongruous in the context of the wider exhibition and illuminating of some of the main themes that underpinned Roehr's artistic practice.

The juxtaposition of such a conventional form of advertising with the actual content of Roehr's film is jarring. *Ringer* represents a radical departure from any of the norms of Hollywood product. It depicts, in grainy appropriated footage, two men, dressed only in trunks, engaged in a match of Greco-Roman wrestling. Shot from a low angle, their bodies are framed by intense sunlight as it peeks through an intermittently clouded sky. The footage is in slow motion, which further enhances the balletic qualities of the men's tangled embraces. In its entirety the sequence lasts for five seconds, but the film *Ringer* itself has a duration of fifty-six seconds. This is because the film consists of the scene repeated in sequence nine times. It is obvious from viewing the film that *Ringer* has very little to do with mainstream narrative filmmaking; it is plotless and guided by a conceptual conceit, one based around the principle of serial repetition, in which sequences are seen over and over again without change or variation. Some weeks after showing *Ringer* at 19:45-21:55, Roehr wrote in a journal entry:

in commercial or conventional film the meaning of the content arises in large part through the stringing together and comparison of different facts...in my films a simple sentence represents the narrative. Either: a woman is drying her hair. Or: 2 Cars drive into a tunnel. Through the

repetition of this element, something that was initially only noticeable, begins to resolve and expand' (1967b: NP)³⁸

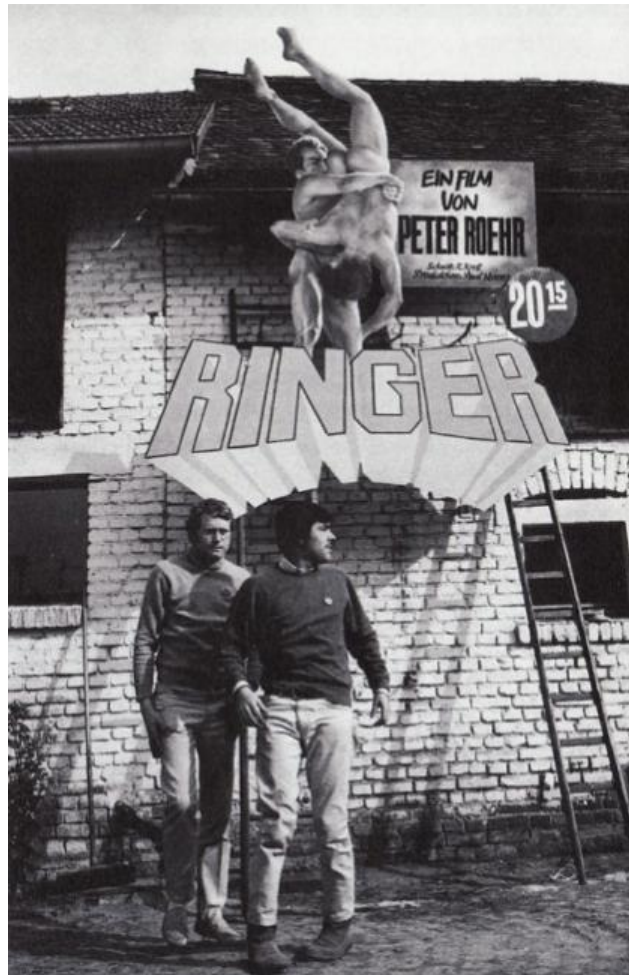


Fig. 4.1. Paul Maenz (left) and Peter Roehr (right) installing a billboard-style advertisement for Roehr's film *Ringer* (1965) in preparation for the exhibition 19:45-21:55 at the Galerie Dorothea Loehr, Frankfurt, September 1967.

What are we to take from this? Is Roehr's radical deconstruction of expected narrative syntax some kind of affectation? We could be forgiven for thinking so, especially when looking at *Ringer* in relation to its advertising hoarding, which announces the film with the kind of bold typography expected of a sword and

³⁸ All translations from the Roehr archive are by the author.

sandal epic. This promise is dismantled by the film itself: a truncated and tantalising incomplete moment from a film trailer. However, the two elements of this work seem to be more than a simple ruse or parody; they speak in a complex way to Roehr's position as an art-maker who bridges both Pop Art and Minimalism, through his exploration of both content *and* form.

Roehr was sincere when he stated that his work was simple—that its purpose was not to look outside itself or be hindered by complex narratives. He outlined his working methodology as a basic strategy of collection (or what could more accurately be termed appropriation) and display, with two statements: 'I assemble things of the same kind together... I use no organic objects, but only constructed, preferably industrially-produced things' (1978a:4) and 'I alter material by organising it unchanged. Each work is an organised area of identical elements. Neither successive or additive, there is no result or sum' (1978b:8). He called the art objects that resulted out of this process 'Montages'. *Ringer* was amongst the first films made by Roehr. He understood *Ringer*, and the twenty-one other moving-image works he would complete between 1965 and 1966 as a continuation of his wider montage project, which as we will see encompassed works made with a wide variety of materials. Roehr's comments on his technical approach to art-making link directly into the emergent genre of Minimalism.

Roehr was keenly aware of other artists ploughing this field of seriality and repetition, especially those of the Minimalist school anchored around Frank Stella (b.1936), Robert Morris (b.1931), Donald Judd (1928-1994) and Carl Andre (b.1935) (on this point see Roehr's short taxonomic piece 'Kategorien')

in which he places himself in relation to various artists concerned with questions of 'seriality' (Roehr ND)). Stella, a painter, possessed a firm belief that Minimalism was anti-illusionist and self-referential—essentially a cold, idea-generating machine that took its own objecthood as its subject matter. Stella's assessment is most famously reflected in an interview with Bruce Glaser: 'All I want anyone to get out of my paintings, and all I ever get out of them, is the fact that you can see the whole idea without any confusion... what you see is what you see' (Glaser 1968:158). This simplicity and directness echoed comments made some three years earlier by Stella's colleague Donald Judd, who stated that 'order' in minimalism is 'not rationalistic and underlying but is simply order, like that of continuity, one thing after another' (2016 [1965]:141). These deceptively simple comments have allowed minimalism to become wrapped in a cloak of phenomenological criticism over the years that looks to comprehend the effect that the minimalist art object's form and structure has on the viewing subject—especially the ways in which the subject's relationship to space is redefined by an encounter with the object (see Fried 1968). The significant difference between works of what James Meyer calls 'High Minimalism' (2000a:74)—works which rely on simple geometric forms, industrial materials and do not 'allude to anything beyond [their] literal presence' (Meyer 2000b:15)—and the *Montages* of Peter Roehr is that almost all Roehr's artworks have a pronounced figurative content as well as form. Moreover, a great number of them contained content that was common to Pop art. All of Roehr's films and the vast majority of his photo-montages drew on promotional materials in the form of television commercials

and print outs from the production of print advertising. The notion of Minimalism and Pop as competing facets in Roehr's work is underlined by the absurdity of a billboard being used to advertise *Ringer*. Upon initial comparison the two works which make up *Ringer* seemingly have very little to do with one another, aside from subject matter, the film being a minimalist, conceptual conceit about repetition, and the poster being a dead-ringer for the kind of promotional material associated with a major, mainstream film. These two elements are, however, not as separate as one may think. The film content for *Ringer* was itself lifted from a film trailer, or advert, and thus links the minimalist concerns of *Ringer* (the film) with those of the Pop impetus of the film's gaudy advertisement billboard.

The tension exemplified by Roehr's insistence on a simple organisation of materials predicated on repetition and his choice of sources associated with Pop opens up a rich terrain, allowing us to see yet another facet of interaction between Pop and the moving-image. Questions of abstraction and ambivalence encountered through the work of William Klein in Chapter Two, and notions of collage, Pop and the saturation of the media environment in the 1960s in Chapter Three, will be complemented and augmented by this final case study, which examines Pop Cinema through debates on repetition, seriality and advertising aesthetics. In particular, there will be a focus on these aesthetics as they pertain to television, since the vast majority of source material for the *Film-Montages* were television adverts for consumer products. Underpinning all of this will be an understanding that Roehr's work occupies

an ambiguous position in German Pop Art, which is often cast as being much more openly political than its Anglo-American counterparts. Roehr created, presented and discussed his work in ways that parrot the aloof, apolitical, and seemingly disinterested approach of Andy Warhol. Both artists were keen to stress the automatic processes of their art, and the machinic factory context in which it was created. Following an account of Roehr's life and art practice and a contextualisation of Pop in relation to television and advertising aesthetics and intentions, I will discuss how both Roehr and Warhol transformed this machine logic into a deliberate mimicking of failure. By re-presenting advertisements as Pop's raw material and submitting them to the viewer altered by the removal of context and by the amount of times they appear, Roehr taps into a rationale of consumption based on seriality. Logic in these works gives way to delirium as the same content is repeated again and again. Through replaying and repeating Roehr renders the sensible senseless and un-anchors meaning from media messages.

A Biographical Sketch: The Emergence, Content and Context of Roehr's Work

Roehr was born on September 1st, 1944 in the town of Lauenburg (Pomerania, now Poland). Later that year his parents moved to Leipzig, where they divorced, and Roehr stayed with his mother. He and his mother moved frequently during his primary school days. Roehr attended school in Leipzig from 1951-1955 then moved to Langen, Hessen. Finally, in 1955 they moved to Frankfurt (am

Main) where he finished school in 1959. Paul Maenz would later comment that 'Roehr, like many other young people who had suffered the same rather disturbed childhood, had a very disrupted school education' (in Kunz 1978:10). In 1959, at the age of fourteen Roehr took a position as an apprentice neon sign producer and sign painter in Frankfurt, staying in training until 1962.

Following his apprenticeship Roehr enrolled in the *Werkkunstschule* (School of Design) in Wiesbaden. Within a short period of beginning his studies, Roehr began making what are now referred to as the *Frühe Arbeiten* (Early Works). These consisted of material montages composed by the random chance of throwing foodstuffs (dried lentils and rice) and other everyday objects (string, pieces of a sawed-off broomstick) onto a surface and affixing them with paint. At the end of 1962 and into early 1963 Roehr began to produce his first serial montages, the so-called *Streifen* pieces. These works are based on principles of repetition not of objects or pictures but printed marks on paper. The first of these works were produced, according to Roehr, 'by leaving my finger on a certain key on an electric calculator, which simply repeated the last sum given. The strips this produced were often more than two yards long' (1978c:3). Even in this early work the alignment of mechanical production to the artistic object was an important undergirding for Roehr. He quickly moved onto the creation of more elaborate type and text montages (Fig. 4.2). Commenting upon their creation Roehr stated a further ingrained affinity with the effectiveness of appliance-produced art: 'The works designated type-montages were made with typewriters. At the beginning the strokes covered the surface like a

structure, later they were limited to a distinct number, and irregularities were obliterated by the precision of electric machines' (1977:57).

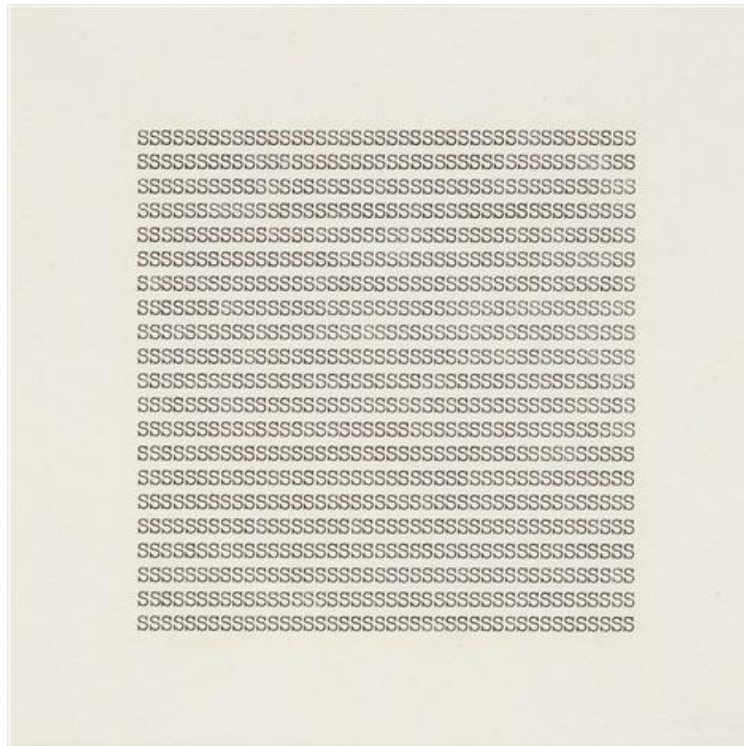


Fig. 4.2. Peter Roehr, *Ohne Titel (TY - 100)*, 1965, typewriter ink on paper, 9 x 9cm.

Roehr had said he was inspired to begin his montage works because of his readings on the topic of Zen Buddhism in 1963. From his brief study of the doctrine Roehr recalled two years later that he had begun 'immediately attaching great importance to the idea of simple, precise, unpretentious serialization' (1978c:3). Seeing such works outside the purview of Eastern Philosophy, the curator and writer Florian Illies has recently provided an account of how Roehr came to make the type montages. According to Illies, in Spring of 1963 Roehr used one of the first electronic typewriters in Germany

to create the pieces. The apparatus was installed in the IBM headquarters in Frankfurt, and the artist was given occasional permission to use the machine during staff lunch hours. In Illies' telling Roehr would type out the same word or letter over and over, for forty-five minutes at a time. Contrary to Roehr's account of a practice informed by the tranquillity of Zen Buddhism which he believed made him 'free' (Roehr 1978b:8), Illies states that the works were a site of radical critique:

The IBM employees returning from their lunch break thought he was deranged, a lunatic tapping out an incomprehensible distress call. They would have never imagined that Roehr had exposed the purported individualism of their work as an inclusion through the reiteration of letters. TTTTTTTTTT. NNNNNNNNN. Or: WWWWWWWWWW' (2016:5)

Illies' statement is perhaps a generous interpretation of Roehr's activities in the IBM office building; we may not exactly know how employees reacted to Roehr's presence at their place of work. While certainly his typographic pieces rendered individual figures, letters and markings as just one part of an overall system of representation in which they find themselves, it would be quite a leap to suggest that Roehr's formations contained an implicit critique of the hierarchies and bureaucracies of an international corporation. But these works again stress and underline the significance of automatic technologies of recording and display for Roehr in his early conceptualisation of the montage project. Illies' interpretation is however worth bearing in mind as it gestures towards some of the interests of Roehr's later montage work that interacts explicitly with advertising. Throughout 1963 Roehr's practice had been limited. Still a student and lacking funds he was constrained in his use of materials. As

he noted in a short essay about the beginning of his working life: 'I had no money to buy materials... (I asked sales girls in cafes, for instance, to collect milk cans for me). Much time was consumed in obtaining necessary things, and I restricted myself in the meantime to producing small-format works with the typewriter' (1978c:3).



Fig. 4.3. Peter Roehr, *Ohne Titel (FO-08)*, 1964, paper on cardboard, 45 x 44cm.

Following this period of low productivity, Roehr began temporarily working at the advertising agency Young and Rubicam where he met Paul Maenz, who was also working there at the time. Through the influence and encouragement of Maenz, and through the soon-to-be dealer's connections at the firm, Roehr

began to make what would eventually amount, over the next two years, to one-hundred and twenty-four *Foto-Montagen* (Photo-Montages). Maenz helped source for Roehr all manner of prototypes, brochures and leaflets from the offices of Young and Rubicam. Through Maenz, Roehr began to collect ads, becoming the prototypical example of what Alison and Peter Smithson ([1956] 1997:4) famously described as a Pop artist—a person engaging with and harvesting from the visual culture of mass communication and consumerism.³⁹ From these collections of hundreds of identical images Roehr would insist on imposing on himself ‘[a] limitation of choice and concentration on a system or pattern’ (Roehr 1978b:8) of presentation. The resulting works were starkly austere, repeating the same image between twenty and forty times in a rigid, grid-like pattern (Fig. 4.3). These photo-montages have become the most identifiable works produced by Roehr. Their employment of a recognisable language, lifted from print media culture, made them the purest expression of his montage aesthetic. As Illies has commented, this pure montage may be viewed, much like Minimalist art, as an effacement of the artist as author or skilled practitioner:

The principle of montage, the arrangement of a series of identical individual elements, which might seem to have been a compulsion, was for him a means of liberation from the problems and pressing questions of concept, composition, the cult of genius and the creative spirit. He wanted to disappear as an artist. He didn’t want his “signature” to appear beneath the work. Rather it should dissolve in the juxtaposition of forms (2016:5).

³⁹ Alison Smithson also acquired many advertisements for her ‘collection’ from American sources. These included magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal* (1883-) and *Women’s Home Companion* (1873-1957) which were sent to her by relatives living in the United States (see Sachs 2010:20).

Illies' account of Roehr's montages as being a form of liberation chimes with Roehr's own comments that the montages made him feel 'free' (Roehr 1978b:8). Going further, Rudi Fuchs noted in a 1977 exhibition catalogue that '[t]he art of Peter Roehr is an attempt to escape from the metaphysical conception of art...[I]n order to escape the metaphysical (deep inspiration as the formal and semantic source and context of the work) the art became by necessity strongly axiomatic' (1977:7).

These interpretations foreshadow what I will account for later in a discussion of Roehr's montages in relation to artistic production as a machinic operation. What Illies', Fuchs', and Roehr's own comments fail to address in relation to the montages is their content. Roehr may have wished to explore the pure form of repetition through his combination of mass-produced things, but it is telling that almost all of his Photo-Montages and the majority of Film-Montages (the two most well-known types in his wider montage practice) employed materials taken directly from the field of advertising, literally making their way from the offices of an advertising firm to Roehr's studio. Roehr himself has noted the impact he felt upon seeing 'a large construction fence regularly pasted with identical posters in several rows' in Milan in September 1963. Maenz later confirmed this, claiming that seeing advertisements placed in this way made a 'tremendous impression on him. In those days it was an unusual and striking technique' (in Kunz 1978:15). Earlier in this interview Maenz underlines Roehr's debt to mass and consumer culture, saying simply: 'commercialism certainly influenced him for he quite consciously understood it to be a modern popular aesthetic' (in Kunz 1978:13). These moments of reflection and

recalling of instances that shaped Roehr's artistic world-view place him in firm alignment with the concerns of Pop Art, in addition to certain Minimalists' interest in expunging from his practice the trace of artistic intervention.

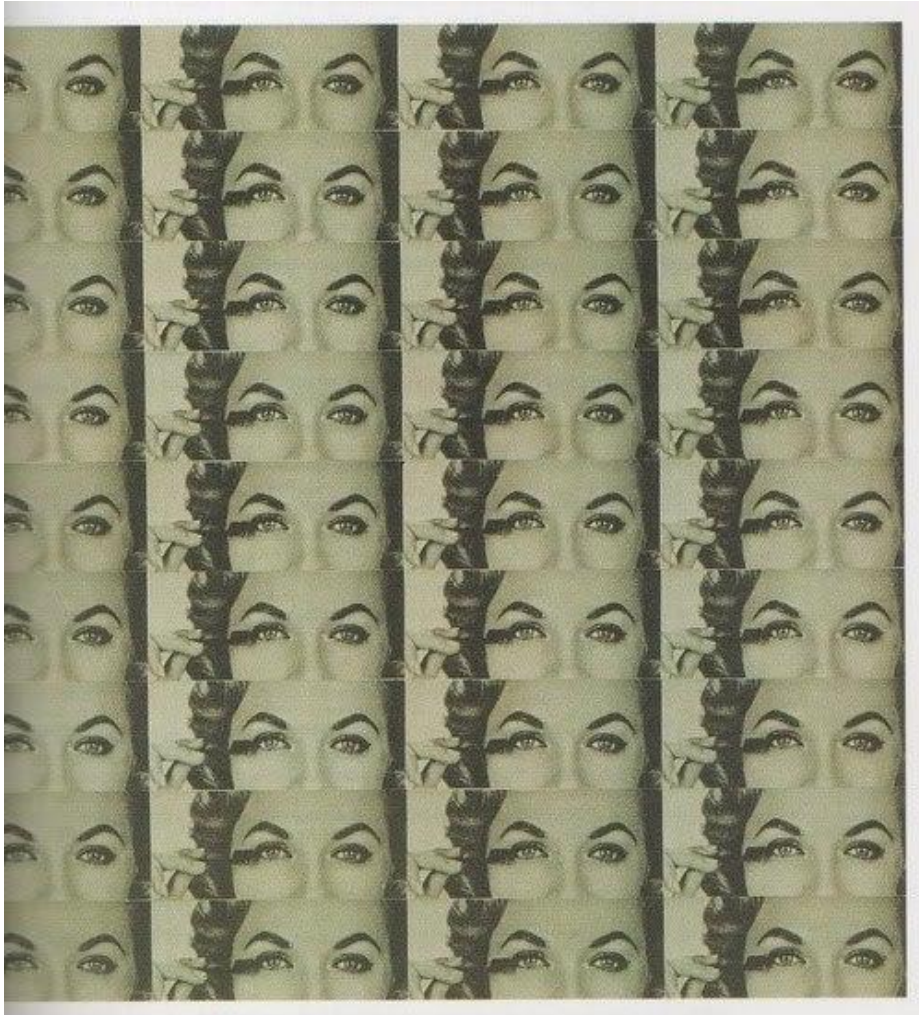


Fig. 4.4. Peter Roehr, *Ohne Titel (FO-28)*, 1965, paper on cardboard, 23 x 24cm.

The idea that advertising strategy predicated on the notion of seriality was a foundational influence on Roehr can be seen by a comparison of two images from 1965. One is a photo-montage by Roehr, the other a print advertisement for the Revlon Cosmetics Company (Fig. 4.4 and Fig. 4.5). There are obvious parallels between the two; both contain a woman applying makeup. The

models' faces are soft, adorned in a wash of high-key lighting. In each image the woman's face appears a multitude of times within the pictorial frame. In the Revlon commercial the face is overlaid, and four of the six visages are partially obscured by the technique of superimposition. The deployment of this technique, associated with both photomontage, cinema and children's kaleidoscope toys, is in concert with the ad's tag line: that this blusher product is made with a 'sprinkling of lights'. The refracted face, then, is trying to simulate the disorientating effect of a ghost image where the human eye sees several versions of something, normally as a result of looking directly into a bright light. In Roehr's image the face has been made multiple by the artist. He has simply cut out the top half of a woman's face from thirty-six copies of the same single one-sheet of promotional material.



Fig. 4.5. Advertisement for Revlon Cosmetics, 1965.

Roehr's photo-montage does not allude to a tagline, brand slogan or product-associated jingle; it is austere and rigidly de-contextualised from its original source. Such a brief comparison might add fuel to the argument that Roehr was simply interested in 'disappearing as an artist', eradicating creative gesture and replacing it with the functional repetition of serial forms. As Roehr had claimed to be influenced by the arrangement of a set of posters on a wall in Milan— struck by the effect of their serial presentation— it would not be such a leap to presume that Roehr was also equally inspired by adverts such this one for a Frosted Blush-On Compact. For Alison and Peter Smithson, the

notion of artists being influenced by the mass culture of advertising was an unassailable truth of cultural production from the late 1950s onwards, in part because advertising itself had pretensions to be artistic. As they write in one of Pop Art's foundational texts: '[a]dvertising has caused a revolution in the popular art field. Advertising has become respectable in its own right and is beating the fine arts at their own game' (1997 [1956]:3). Although the Smithsons were speaking of a broader design culture, and the pair were architects by trade, their diagnosis is relevant to our discussion of Roehr.⁴⁰ He was as much influenced by the artistic ambition and design imperatives of advertising at the height of its golden age in the mid-1960s, as he was invested in producing a body of work which referenced the modes of machinic creation, reproduction and consumption of images, by creating a mimetically exacerbated mirror image of the machine in his art.

The photo-montage works, which are almost all based on appropriated advertising imagery, have led to his consistent casting as a Pop artist in his native Germany and abroad. This is especially true in recent years with Roehr included in significant group shows in Britain, America and Germany (for instance, the presence of a number of works by Roehr in 'German Pop' (2015) at the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Tate Modern's 'The World Goes Pop' (2015) and The Walker Art Center's 'International Pop' (2015)).

⁴⁰The relationship between Pop art, architecture and design has historically been rather neglected by critics and historians. This is a noteworthy and surprising omission, as iconic works of architectural criticism which bookend the 1960s, Reyner Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1960) and Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972), make frequent reference to Pop and popular imagery. For more on this see Foster (2004).

Beyond the comprehension of the content of Roehr's montages, or his presence in a spate of recent shows that have widened significantly the geographic framing of Pop Art, Roehr's affiliation to Pop is specific in two further and interconnected senses: first, as alluded to above, his Pop draws on aesthetic principles that are common to serial and minimalist art. Roehr's own vision of himself as an artist was concerned, primarily, with these issues. This reveals itself not only in the artist's work (with its recourse to simple image-elements arranged into grid-like patterns) and unpublished writings (where he places his own practice in a continuum with others working with questions of seriality and repetition (Roehr, 'Kategorien', ND)) but can also be evidenced by his work, alongside Paul Maenz, curating the first-ever gallery show devoted to the subject in Europe. Entitled 'Serielle Formationen' ('Serial Formations') the show took place in early summer 1967 at the Studio Gallery of the University of Frankfurt. The exhibition contained 62 artworks by 48 artists and included such pivotal figures as Agnes Martin (1912-2004), Bridget Riley (b. 1931), Dan Flavin (1933-1996) and Andy Warhol, many of whom were being exhibited for the first time in Germany. Crucially, Roehr and Maenz's collaboration occurred before any other group shows taking seriality as their unifying theme, such as Elayne Varian and Mel Bochner's 'The Serial Attitude' at Finch College Museum of Art in New York City (November 1967) or John Coplans' 'Serial Imagery' at the Pasadena Art Museum (September 17-October 27, 1968). Both of these exhibitions and their associated publications would present differing visions of seriality in art. In an essay in *Artforum* published at the same time as the exhibition, Bochner devised a definition of

serial art that claimed that such works were rigidly prescribed, pre-determined and based on strict, sequential logics. Coplans also also focused on the logic of sequence and repetition in the conception of an artwork, but in contrast, understood this as a system of order falling away when the artwork was created, so that a series of works could become variations on a theme (see Bochner (1967: 28-33) and Coplans (1996 [1968]:77-93)).



Fig. 4.6. Thomas Bayrle, *Ein Pils bitte!* 1972 Silkscreen print on cardboard, 88 x 63cm.

The second aspect of Roehr's Pop that underscores its affiliation with minimalism and seriality is the environment in which his work was created.

Roehr lived and practiced as an artist in Frankfurt. The city was home to another, more prominent, Pop artist, Thomas Bayrle (b. 1937), who, along with the minimalist sculptor Charlotte Posenenske (1930-1985) were Roehr's closest friends in the artistic community. Frankfurt was uniquely positioned as a city to incubate the production of Pop art; as Bayrle reflected in 2015, the city, which was extensively destroyed by bombing raids throughout the Second World War, was 'more brutal, more dilapidated and less German' (in Weinhart 2015:240) than other cities in the country. There was a significant American military presence for several decades after the close of the conflict. Because of this, there was also a large influx of American popular culture into the city of Frankfurt. Bayrle remembers that 'whole neighbourhoods were American', including shops selling American foods, a jazz club, 'American playing fields, car lots, and a Hillbilly Guesthouse' (ibid). All of this fed a sense amongst Bayrle and his contemporaries that 'Frankfurt was the most American city in Germany... it was simply an American identity. And that interested me' (ibid).⁴¹ Bayrle used this Americanized environment as inspiration for his own brand of Pop-Minimalism that satirically comments on the notion of uniqueness in a world where mechanised production has made multiplicity and ubiquity the norm. Bayrle's print works, which he began in the middle of the 1960s, lampoon mass production by rendering consumer products and food

⁴¹ For more on this topic and a contextualisation of it in reference to the wider political currents of American culture in Germany during the 1960s, see; Uta G. Poiger's *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (2000). American culture has of course continued to be influential beyond the soft power machinations of the Cold War. For a furthering of this debate within the context of globalisation, see: *German Pop Culture: How "American" is it?* (Mueller 2004).

packaging as bizarre *mise en abymes*; the totality of their image is made from the subtle arrangement of miniature versions of themselves, as in *Ein Pils bitte!* (1972) (Fig. 4.6).

For Bayrle humour plays a significant role in Pop: his work is playful and light-hearted. Roehr's work, although taking inspiration from the same environment and displaying a kinship in formal methodology (the arrangement of discreet images into dense patterns), is direct and at least according to the artist himself, apolitical: 'It expresses no subjective opinion. The message is the object itself: content and form are identical' (1978b:8). As I move into an in-depth discussion of Roehr's *Film-Montages* I will be able to fully parse why this statement rings false and comprehend Roehr's montage project as both an achievement of minimalist form and a deeply politically engaged work of Pop. In subtle ways, Roehr's art can be aligned with the wider understandings of German Pop Art as satirical, and deeply sceptical of a culture of mass media consumption. This perspective is most cogently expressed by the scholar Andreas Huyssen, who aligns the dissemination of Pop Art in Germany—which occurred much later in the 1960s than its exhibition in the UK or America—with the emergence of the anti-authoritarian new-left politics of the student movement. The 'predominantly young art audience' of the Federal Republic of Germany, writes, Huyssen, 'had begun to interpret American Pop Art as protest and criticism rather than affirmation of an affluent society' (1975:78). Roehr's film project represents an antecedent to this post-1968 context.

The *Film-Montages (I-III)* (1965)

In the summer of 1965, the then 20-year-old Roehr began to collect 16mm film reels. Roehr's collection was initially comprised of a selection of what he, in a short account of his filmmaking process entitled 'Kino', refers to as 'Vorspanne' (ND:NP). In English the phrase translates to mean the opening credits/titles of a film or the pre-film promotional trailers for up-coming attractions. Roehr called upon film collector Paul Sauerländer, who maintained a private film archive, for some 16mm film materials, which he would use 'for the purpose of copying' (1965a). An account of what film material Sauerländer sent is not forthcoming, though we may glean from Roehr's unpublished writings that elements from Sauerländer's collections formed the basis of Roehr's *Ringer*. Unlike later *Film-Montages*, all the materials used from Sauerländer's collection were implemented without a soundtrack (See Roehr 1965b). *Ringer* was in fact the first film completed by Roehr to be given a title (see Roehr, 'Kino' ND:NP).

Concurrent to Roehr's correspondence with Sauerländer, Paul Maenz, who was by the spring of 1965 working for Young and Rubicam in New York City, was also sending the young artist a variety of TV advertisements, available to him through his connections to the advertising industry. Roehr notes that Maenz sent him around one hundred rolls of 'TV spots' (see Roehr, 'Kino', ND:NP). These advertisements, mainly for the Gulf oil company and Breck Shampoo, are the foundation on which the majority of the *Film-Montages* were built.

As they are shown and known to audiences today the *Film-Montages* are split into three groupings which have been sutured together to form one twenty-four-minute work known as the *Film-Montages I-III*. Each of the three sections has credits, a full ten-second countdown leader and an epigraph of two phrases by Roehr in German, which are among the most widely known aphorisms about his work: 'I alter material by organising it unchanged' and 'The essence is: relation of the material to the frequency of its repetition'. Group one is comprised of seven films, each based on either a Gulf or Breck TV spot. The individual films are titled as follows: *Tunnel 11x*, *Harre [Hair] 14x*, *Turn 10x*, *Wolkenkratzer [Skyscraper] 12x*, *Verkehr [Traffic] 9x*, *Kämmen [Combing] 10x* and *Gulf I 12x*. Group two differs from the others as it is comprised of fewer works. These works are silent and not all were taken from the cache of ads sent by Maenz. Some are based on the 'Vorspanne' that Roehr had received from Sauerländer, and they are ordered as follows: *Neon 11x*, *Abfluß [Drain] 11x*, *Explosion 6x (Vorspanne)*, *Brücke [Bridge] 15x*, *Sturz [Fall] 13x (Vorspanne)*, *Durchfarht [Passage] 9x*, *Fisheye 10x*, *Autos 14x*, *Ringer 9x (Vorspanne)*. The final selection returns to sound and closes out the suite of works with the following titles: *PVC 12x*, *Scheinwerfer [Spotlights] 14x*, *Haare Trocknen [Hair Drying] 13x*, *Milage [Mileage] 9x*, *Lichter [Lights] 10x* and *Gulf II 9x*. The titles of all the films are tautological, the works containing exactly what the titles describe. The simplicity of Roehr's visual conceit is complicated however by a complex use of sound that consistently overlaps and bleeds across each of the discreet films' visual tracks. Moreover, Roehr often overlays the audio from the Gulf commercials atop the images from the

shampoo ads and vice versa. This deliberate breaking-down of the syntax of ads is something I will explore as we move forward in the analysis; for now, I would like to focus on some further context of the films' production.

The *Film-Montages* adhere to the simple rules of montage that Roehr had up to this point used as the basis for his static art—individual elements presented abutting one another a specific number of times. However, quite a different working methodology was used to make the *Film-Montages*. Roehr would watch a film clip along with friends and colleagues and together they would determine a point at which the film should be cut. Collectively the group, whose members remain largely unknown, would select a start and end point for the short section of film, as Charlotte Posenenske remembered in 1977: 'Roehr also attempted to objectify the decision concerning the number of elements in his film-montages. He produced "inter-subjectivity" by making the termination of the combination process dependent on the agreement of other viewers' (1977:80). This editing process 'resulted', in the words of Roehr, 'in a network of movement' (ND: NP). These brief moments of 'recycled film' (ibid) fascinated Roehr. They were a part of his much larger artistic project, in which he sought to explore what he termed 'the problem of repetition within aesthetic constructs' (1965a).

To create the films as they are seen Roehr used an equally hands-off approach. Unlike many other artist filmmakers who developed and processed their own film materials, Roehr got an industrial film-processing lab to create the works for him. In a letter to Kinnax, a film processing lab (see Roehr 1965c), he asks for a film print repeating a certain sequence twelve times to be produced from

a reel he is sending over to the lab. Roehr would later reflect that the early *Film-Montages* were rarely produced or even screened by him; this task was apparently completed by his friend Roland Krell (see Roehr 1967a), who is listed in the credits to all three of the *Film-Montage* selections as the editor. Unlike all of his other work up to this point, Roehr was the conceptual instigator of the work but not necessarily its executor. As he once remarked of his art more generally: 'in these works the aesthetic object is entirely negated—what counts is the aesthetic method' (in Illies 2016:5), though I would contend that the film's Pop content is equally important.

Roehr was keen for his films to be seen in both the gallery space and beyond. He was also adamant that these works be sold to collectors. After their completion Roehr screened a selection of the *Film-Montages* at Frankfurt's Adam Seide gallery in October 1965. These were films from *Film-Montages II*—the silent, earlier pieces. Not content with the rate at which his films were being seen, and with little success in distributing them on the festival circuit, Roehr, in collaboration with Maenz began a letter-writing campaign to convince galleries to sell the *Film-Montages* as limited editions. In a striking letter from September 1966 they advertise the films being for sale in editions of 25 which have been signed and numbered by the artist. 'You can buy all the films', they write, '[I]ike a picture, a sculpture or some other art object'. Roehr prophesied that in the near-future the owner of the film art work would either be able to sell it on for a profit or that such works could potentially be enjoyed in a domestic setting, as 'every third home would have [a] projector' (Roehr 1966:NP). Roehr is certainly in a minority with his plan for the ideal distribution channel for his

film works. A few artist filmmakers had attempted the limited-edition model before him with very little success. It was not until the 1990s and the so-called 'cinematic turn' of contemporary art practice that the format of selling moving-image works in a limited-edition would become a viable and profit-making endeavour (see Balsom 2017:127-165). It would not be until some forty-one years after Roehr's death that the *Film-Montages* would receive a formal release in a DVD edition by the art book publisher Walter König in 2009.

In one of the few pieces of writing about the *Film-Montages*, Roehr's account is vague about the intention of the films in relation to their content, which plays second string to his concerns about form. The piece is titled 'The Film without a Story', and I will quote it in full in its original layout:

In commercial or conventional [film] the meaning of the content arises in large part through the stringing together and comparison of different facts: - the hero rides into a city that seems to have died out [extinct city].

In the saloon, he starts talking to the barkeep, and finds out that gangsters are expected.

The door opens and the gangsters come into the saloon.

The hero and the gangsters face off.

And so forth.

Through the combination of facts, a situation of conflict arises or resolves itself.

In my films, a simple sentence represents the narrative. Either: a woman is drying her hair. Or: 2 cars drive into a tunnel.

Through the repetition of this element, something that was initially only noticeable, begins to resolve and expand (1967b).

Roehr's vision of his own filmmaking practice is of a non-commercial cinema set against the conventions of mainstream filmmaking, a situation that is not far from the original Pop underground filmmakers discussed in Chapter One. He does not wish to tell a story, but instead, wishes to use elements of moving-image works as a testing ground for his own theories of seriality and repetition. He is extremely vague about what elements of the filmic image ('something that were initially only noticeable') this system of filmmaking was meant to shed light onto. He does not highlight the potential of his methodology of collective 'inter-subjectivity' and repetition as a tool for the analysis and critique of media images. Such a critique is, as I will argue below, the achievement of Roehr's *Film-Montages*; but Roehr was so obsessed with his principles of montage that he could not see the wider, radical potential of this system. The language in 'The Film without a Story' continues Roehr's effusive thinking on problems of seriality and repetition but does not engage in any way with the content of the works. Again, it should be reiterated that Roehr should be taken on his word here: the form is as important as the content in these works. It is only by delving further into his formal links with notions of machine production in Pop art and Minimalism that we may glean an understanding of how these films operate as works of Pop-Minimalism. However, before this it would be proper to illuminate

further some of the issues raised by the *Film-Montages*' content, namely that they are based on the appropriation of television advertisements.

Television and Pop: Tactics of Appropriation and Repetition

Roehr, like many Pop artists from the 1940s onwards, used advertising as the raw material for his work. As we have seen in relation to Pop collage in Chapter Three, print advertising played a formative and central role in the codifying of Pop Art. The use of moving-image advertisements as the basis for works of Pop Cinema is however much more maligned in art historical discourse. As observed in the introductory chapters to this thesis, this is reflective of the generally secondary and often unaccounted-for status of moving-image artwork in discourses around Pop Art.

Because of its major role in the dissemination of mass culture (advertising, news, game shows, sitcoms, etc.) television is a privileged subject and site of interpretation for a multitude of Pop artists. The use of the television monitor (or cathode ray tube set) as a sculptural object to be modified and re-contextualised in gallery space, and the creation of artists' television for broadcast are distinct from most Pop artists' engagements with the medium. There are some examples of Pop which hinge on the presence of television itself: Thomas Wesselmann's (1931-2004) *Still Life #28* (1962) and Bruce Conner's (1933-2008) *Television Assassination* (1963-1964), and of course,

Warhol's stint producing several television shows for the MTV network in the 1980s, which are key examples of artists' TV.⁴²

We can see the interaction of Pop and television in static works of collage, painting and photography and also in moving-image works that take television and television aesthetics as their focus. It should also be highlighted that network television itself produced one of the most iconic renderings of moving-image Pop: ABC's *Batman* (1966-1968). This is perhaps the epitome of surface-level Pop discussed in Chapter One—work that engages with the Pop aesthetic as an empty, passing style—a fad which waned by the end of the 1960s but remains iconic of the era's immediacy, frivolity and reliance on bright colours (see Brooker 2000:171-249 and Hoberman 2015).⁴³

Television as a carrier and communicator of images is the most common subject in static works of Pop. The iconography of famous people and the

⁴² These histories are covered adroitly in 'Television—Art or Anti-art? Conflict and Cooperation Between the Avant-Garde and the Mass Media in the 1960s and 1970s' (2007) by Dieter Daniels. Maeve Connolly's book *TV Museum: Contemporary Art and the Age of Television* (2014) also updates this narrative to art beyond the 1960s and 1970s. There has also been a significant clutch of museum shows dedicated to the phenomenon of artist's television including 'TV/ARTS/TV: The Television Shot by Artists' at Arts Santa Monica in Barcelona (15 October - 5 December 2010) and 'Changing Channels: Art and Television, 1963-1987' at Vienna's Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig (MUMOK) (5 March – 6 June 2010). Each show's respective catalogue provides a wealth of information on the topic (see Valentini, 2010 and Michalka, 2010). Another line of enquiry regarding artist-produced television as Pop Art would be the milieu of New York Downtown collectives such as Collaborative Projects (COLAB) who created a wide variety of satirical send-ups of television genres in the late 1970s and early 1980s. For a general history of the Downtown scene's interactions with television, see Svoboda, 2015 and White, 1982.

⁴³ In an article for the *New York Times*, Hilton Kramer made significant reference to *Batman* in an overview of the far-reaching, in-vogue pop style. He saw it in advertising, fashion, television and repertory film screenings (of serials). See Kramer (1966). For a perspective on Pop as a reaction against Abstract Expressionism and "serious" culture, see: Sidney Tillim's critique 'Further Observations on the Pop Phenomenon' in *Artforum* (1965:17-19).

display of infamous events captured on television and broadcast for a wide audience are often the main purview of such works. Objects like Wesselman's paintings which incorporate photographic reproductions of televisions (*Great American Nude #27* (1962)) and real working sets (*Still Life #28* (1962)), or images by the photographer Bill Owens (b. 1938) (*Ronald Reagan on TV* (1972)) place the physical television set into the wider context and visual field of domestic settings. Such context allows for Owens to create a satirical situation in which Ronald Reagan is presented as one of the fixtures associated with Christmastime at home, as his face is nestled in-between a nativity scene, a large Christmas tree and stacks of presents. Reagan's image glows like a warm fire, bathing the room with light—the hearth of the home in this fabricated and deeply idyllic setting. Conner's *Television Assassination* utilises a television in which the screen has been painted, allowing it to become a canvas for the projection of an 8mm film. The film is a recording of television coverage of the JFK assassination. Conner's recording and re-presentation of this footage creates a mediated Mobius strip that consciously echoes the fact that the only footage of the assassination (the Zapruder film) was shot on 8mm celluloid and repeated again and again. Conner highlights TV as a medium that is ideally suited to the repetition of significant moments—prefiguring our own present broadcast culture of twenty-four-hour news channels and the constant repetition of information pored over by commentators. Moreover, Conner highlights the interactivity of the medium of television, and its openness to manipulation by artists not only as a technology (as had already been experimented with by Nam June Paik (1932-2006) and Wolf Vostell

(1932-1998)) but as a specific mass medium of information and entertainment. Conner's work is an interesting bridge into a discussion of moving-image works of Pop that take television as their subject matter

Moving-image TV Pop can be split into two types: collage works which appropriate broadcast television and re-present it either altered (as in Roehr and Dara Birnbaum (b.1946)), or unaltered and simply re-juxtaposed amongst other television clips (from either shows or advertisements), or other elements made by the artist.

This second type, using unaltered footage finds its origins in Andy Warhol's film *Soap Opera* (1963), a silent fictional narrative that apes the conventions of the titular lovelorn and tryst-filled TV genre. Like a regular television broadcast, Warhol intercuts his domestic scenes with real adverts procured from the New York-based producer Lester Perksy. In between scenes of Gerard Malanga (b. 1943) and Sam Green (1940-2011) pensively smoking, and Jane Holzer (b. 1940) making-out with Green (in her first appearance in a Warhol film), Warhol spliced in lengthy commercials for products including the Roto Broillette Oven Toaster and Beauty Control Shampoo. *Soap Opera* is little remarked upon in the literature on Warhol's cinema. Craig Uhlin has suggested that this is because the film represents an awkward fit amongst Warhol's infamous early silent experiments in duration (*Empire* (1964), *Sleep* (1964), etc.) but argues that it could be seen alongside Warhol's 'parody films', like the unfinished *Batman Dracula* (1964) and the Lana Turner satire *More Milk*

Yvette (1965) (see Uhlin 2010:9-13).⁴⁴ Going further than Uhlin, I would suggest that Warhol's *Soap Opera* should be seen as one of the first examples of moving-image Pop which deals with television, mixing the artist's early observational 'home movie and newsreel' period of handheld roving camera work (see: Davis and Needham 2013:3) with a use of appropriation to create an incongruous satire of one of popular television's mainstay genres. In Warhol's version the advertisements themselves are rendered more fascinating than the narrative scenes which they interrupt, a wry commentary on the origin of the soap opera genre, whose name derives from the fact that when broadcast originally on radio the stories were accompanied exclusively by advertisements for cleaning products, sometimes within the shows themselves.

Warhol's sampling and re-juxtaposition of TV adverts links pertinently to another work of moving-image Pop which not only lifted television programmes and commercials out of their original contexts but simulated and undermined the effect of televisual 'flow' and its potential to be interrupted by disinterested spectators, a concept to which I will return shortly. The work in question, Joe Dante's *Movie Orgy* (1968), is a marathon compilation of clips from films, television programmes, advertisements and newsreels. With a running time of between four and a half and seven and a half hours (depending on whether the filmmaker is present to cut the film live, in front of the audience), Dante's patchwork of clips is a veritable cacophony of popular and mass culture, as

⁴⁴ For an account of the creation and abandonment of *Batman Dracula*, see Angell (2014). The notion of genre being used as a 'ready-made' is discussed in relation to Warhol's cinema, and other filmmakers of the American underground scene in the First Chapter of this thesis.

sequences crash against one another often in ironic and humorous combinations. *Movie Orgy* featured an array of 1950s television including: *Howdy Doody* (1947-1960), *The Lone Ranger* (1949-1957), *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-1966), *The Adventures of Rin-Tin-Tin* (1954-1959), *Lassie* (1954-1973), *Tales of the Texas Rangers* (1955-1958), *Andy's Gang* (1955-1960), and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955-1965) to name but a small selection; and a less broad roll-call of cinematic texts, which seems to focus on b-movies and teen pics: *Earth vs The Flying Saucers* (1956, Fred F. Sears), *The Giant Gilla Monster* (1959, Ray Kellogg), *Speed Crazy* (1959, William Hole), *Teenagers from Outer Space* (1959, Thomas Graeff) and *College Confidential* (1960, Alfred Zugsmith). These works are often spliced together to offer parodic counterpoints. For example, the cosy, hyper-idealised title shot of the sitcom *Ozzie And Harriet* depicts the show's real-life family of Ozzie Nelson, his wife Harriet and their two sons David and Ricky emerging one by one from the family's actual suburban home at the foot of the Hollywood Hills; this heightened, ideologically-suspect image of the Eisenhower-era nuclear family is swiftly followed by a close-up of a screaming African-American man—a clip appropriated from a horror film. Through de-contextualisation and re-juxtaposition of these clips, the spectacle of conformity of white, middle class America, specifically in north Los Angeles, one of the most affluent and exclusive neighbourhoods in the country is recast as a monstrous threat.

Because of the colliding of these various examples of popular film and television, Dante does not create a holistic work that mimics the format of a recognisable television broadcast (as Warhol does). *Movie Orgy* presents a

fragmented form of viewing—an aesthetic tactic that simulates the distracted viewing associated with channel-surfing, as we catch snippets and segments of disparate programmes, whose relation to each other is not one of pre-programmed harmony but of jarring and satirical interruption. Dante’s work disrupts what the Welsh critical theorist Raymond Williams influentially described in 1974 as the ‘flow’ of planned programme sequences that organise the broadcast of television. For Williams, ‘[i]n all developed broadcasting systems the characteristic organisation, and therefore the characteristic experience, is one of sequence or flow. This phenomenon, or planned flow, is then, perhaps, the defining characteristic of broadcasting, simultaneously as a technology and as a cultural form’ ([1974] 2003:86). He goes on to compare the techno-cultural form of television to the discreet ways in which spectators would have consumed artistic and media events before its domination:

In all communications systems before broadcasting the essential items were discrete. A book or a pamphlet was taken and read as a specific item. A meeting occurred at a particular date and place. A play was performed in a particular theatre at a set hour. The difference in broadcasting is not only that these events, or events resembling them, are available inside the home, by the operation of a switch; it is that the real programme that is offered is a *sequence* or a set of alternative sequences of these and other similar events, which are then available in a single dimension and in a single operation ([1974] 2003:86-87, emphasis in original).

Williams’ definition of flow obviously stems from a time in which television could only be consumed in this pre-packaged sequence, decided upon by the broadcasting authority (as opposed to today’s user-generated and “curated” TV culture with its recourse to digital streaming and catch-up platforms). It is striking to think however that even before the composition of Williams’s book

artists and filmmakers were turning the concept of flow back on itself and disrupting the regular parameters and expectations of broadcast television. By using films and television shows as his raw material, Dante achieves a radical mirroring of the aesthetic condition of television viewing which gives way to a satirical skewering of the properties and conservative world-view of mainstream programmes which would 'flow' one after another to become a cohesive evening's entertainment.

Williams's concept of flow is also useful for thinking about how Roehr's *Film-Montages* disrupt the operation of television advertisements. Of course, in Roehr's films, unlike Warhol's *Soap Opera* or Dante's *Movie Orgy*, the television clips have been distinctly altered: organised, cut and looped to form groups of repetitions. Birnbaum is another moving-image Pop artist who takes television shows and adverts and submits them to similar editorial operations.



Fig. 4.7. Dara Birnbaum, *Kiss the Girls: Make Them Cry*, 1979, Video, seven minutes.

Birnbaum refers to a group of single channel video works she made from the late 1970s to the early 1980s as works of Pop Art. She grouped them under the heading 'Popular Image Videos' (see: Birnbaum, 1987) and has spoken of these works alongside her own relationship with Pop (Birnbaum, 2004). The videos in question (*Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978-1979), *Kiss The Girls: Make Them Cry* (1979) (Fig. 4.7), *Pop Pop Video: General Hospital/Olympic Women Speed Skating* (1980), *Pop Pop Video: Kojak/Wang* (1980)) all take moments from television broadcast—a live-action comic book adaptation; the quasi-gameshow *Hollywood Squares* (1965-2004); a soap opera and sporting broadcast; a detective procedural and advertisement for computers, respectively—manipulating them manually using a video editing console. Birnbaum has categorised television as a distinct technological medium, and explains it was paramount to her project to be able to play the medium back on itself through such manipulations. As she writes:

I recognized that TV was the most popular vocabulary of the time, and I used repetition to try to capture an image but without freezing it and translating it into a different medium. I had seen artists like Jack Goldstein take images from popular culture, but they transformed them into other mediums. For me, it was most important to use the medium *on itself* (2004: Online, emphasis in original).

Birnbaum's work came some fifteen years after Roehr's and had different concerns, namely to present an analysis of the construction of female spectacle partly influenced by her reading of Laura Mulvey's seminal work of feminist film theory 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975). However, her videos are predicated very much on the same formal interventions which marked the *Film-Montages*. In both Roehr's and Birnbaum's work, television is

encountered as a machine which needs to be wrested from its normal conditions of reception, manipulated and cast back into the media ecology. Birnbaum writes about 'reconstructing conventions of television, deploying them as "ready-mades" for the late twentieth century' (1987:13). She goes on to be more precise, making explicit reference to Williams' concept of 'flow':

By dislocating the visual imagery and altering the syntax, these images were cut from their original narrative flow and countered with additional musical texts, plunging the viewer headlong into the very experience of TV. Thus, the viewer was to be caught in limbo, perceiving the "gestures" of television not as an opening towards communication, but rather as a form of constraint. The formal devices employed are easily named—repetition, framing, alteration of syntax, all visibly manipulating that medium which is known to be highly manipulative itself, its impact only directed one way—out toward the viewer. I wanted to explore the possibilities of a two-way system of manipulation, an attempt at "talking back" to the media (ibid).

Birnbaum's project shares many formal characteristics with Roehr's, from the use of repetition to 'alter syntax' to the editing and alteration of soundtrack. Her language is telling here of an even bigger concern for Roehr's art more broadly and specifically for our reading of the *Film-Montages* as works of moving-image Pop: the metaphor of television as a machine. Birnbaum speaks in her writing of almost operating on or performing maintenance on the televisual image, re-organizing it so it may operate differently and become a machine that critiques itself. This is a different type of moving-image Pop than the appropriation and re-juxtaposition techniques encountered in Warhol and Dante's work above; it more actively disrupts mass media images, disturbing the workings of apparatuses of dissemination. Roehr had stated throughout his writings that he wished to make art like a machine, a choice of words which

inevitably leads us into a much more in-depth analysis of the relationship between Roehr and Warhol, who famously announced that ‘everybody should be a machine’ (in Swenson [1963] 2004:16) and who Roehr sought to emulate and overtake as an art-producing machine. Much early 20th century modernism, in movements such as Futurism in continental Europe, Vorticism in Britain, and in America through the drawings and oils of Charles Demuth (1883-1935) and the paintings and photographs of Charles Sheeler (1883-1965) took an affirmative view on the encroachment of new technologies and machines into industrial and everyday life. The dynamism and speed of production in factories, and new technologies of transportation and communication fascinated such artists. The Pop artists, while concerned to explore the similar hard-edge aesthetics of commercial and vernacular culture and design were often less in thrall to the idea that these objects and images represented some kind of future-orientated positivity. Roehr is a pertinent example of an artist who wished to interrogate commercial culture by re-invigorating this Modernist aesthetic discourse of the machinic, but one who approaches it as a site for critique not adulation.

Roehr and Warhol: Machines that Fail

Roehr admired and took inspiration from Warhol but also thought that Warhol’s desire to become a machine in art-making was not pushed far enough into the reality of his productions. He encountered Warhol’s serial paintings from the early 1960s, via their description, in an article in *Der Spiegel* magazine (1964).

Roehr's access to actual images of Warhol's serial work is something harder to pin down. In a 1994 magazine article titled 'The Idea Becomes a Machine' Paul Maenz wrote that Roehr 'first saw serial pictures of Andy Warhol in a magazine in 1964, he realised that they were still "illustrations" and, all in all, a "romantic conception of art". He held his own idea in response, namely to become unrecognisable as the author behind the no longer invented images' (1994:33).



Fig. 4.8. Andy Warhol, *Big Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Black Bean)*, 1962. Acrylic paint on canvas, 183 x 136 x 3 cm (72 x 53 ½ x 1 in), Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf.

The 1964 article contained very brief descriptions of some Warhol works, including *Mona Lisa* (1963) and also vaguely referenced the fact that there were multiple Marilyn Monroe portraits and various iterations of *Soup Cans*.

The article was only illustrated by a single Warhol work, however: *Big Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Black Bean)* (1962) (Fig. 4.8). We must assume that Roehr was able to see reproductions of the serial works mentioned and others in a different magazine article from 1964, as Maenz recalls. This much is deducible from the contents of a letter Roehr sent to the Stable Gallery in April 1965 requesting Warhol's contact details so that the two artists could speak about their shared aesthetic concerns (see Roehr 1965d). In the letter Roehr, writing in English, states that Warhol's work can be seen in more and more publications in West Germany.

But the fact that the *Der Spiegel* article was the first venue in which Roehr saw a Warhol work is telling. The one work that Roehr would have *seen*, and not merely comprehended via a written description, *Big Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Black Bean)* (1962) helps us interpret further Maenz's comments that Roehr saw Warhol's work as a form of 'illustration' which communicated a 'romantic conception of art', and one can sense how Roehr's guiding impetus to eliminate gesture and evidence of the artist's hand in the finished image came to the fore. This painting was amongst the last of Warhol's brand image cycle to feature significant traces of brushwork, containing as it does passages on the can's body which could easily be read in the lineage of Abstract Expressionism—the school of painting against which Pop was in many ways reacting, as we saw in Chapter One. That this painting seems to be Roehr's first experience of Warhol's work may have significantly informed his understanding of Warhol as someone who, despite his claims to the contrary, was continually invested in the conception of the artist as an individual—whose

brush work and painterly mark-making can be traced back to the persona behind the image. As Florian Illies has noted on the artist's conception of Warhol, in relation to his slightly later screen-printing practice: 'Roehr considered even Warhol a Romantic, because he utilized screen printing too creatively, resulting in a style that was painterly despite itself and subjected the technology used to an artistic impulse' (2016:5). Roehr's dream was to become a completely anonymous producer, in his words 'unrecognisable as the author behind the image that is no longer an invention' (in: Illies 2016:5).

Roehr would never achieve his goal of making art like an anonymous machine. In fact, Roehr and Warhol both failed at becoming the machine-like artists they both purported to want to become. It is much more accurate to claim that both Warhol and Roehr consciously failed at being machines. This is evident in writings by and about both artists and in vast swathes of Warhol's practice where failure is foregrounded. Within Roehr's output this deliberate or conscious failure of the machine is most evident as a framework within which the *Film-Montages* operate—forming as they do through their repetitious sequences a commentary on the apparatus of television and its images breaking-down. Images in Roehr's films do not adhere to the cold logic of the producing machine but are made delirious and illogical by repetition.

In terms of who first addressed the issue of the machinic, Warhol should be declared the winner. In a now infamous interview with the art critic Gene Swenson in 1963 he claimed that 'everybody should be like a machine' and 'everybody should like everybody' which is 'what Pop Art is all about' (in

Swenson [1963] 2004:16)⁴⁵. This chimes with other statements made by Warhol in interviews around this time such as ‘I’m for mechanical art’ (in Bourdon [1962-1963] 2004:9). Of course, this is reflected in Warhol’s investment in technologies of image production which minimise the necessity of human intervention, such as the automatic process of screen printing, which could be used to create multiple paintings, one after another; and the film camera which had only to be loaded with film and switched on by Warhol to begin the recording process. This preference for automation and machine-production reaches its peak with an “interview” of Warhol conducted by his studio assistant Gerard Malanga. The interview in question was composed entirely (i.e. both the questions and their answers) by Malanga and submitted to Warhol for his approval before publication. In the piece “Warhol” gives his

⁴⁵The recent uncovering of the original tapes of Swenson’s interview with Warhol reveal that several parts of their conversation were heavily edited before going to press, particularly references to queer sexuality. In the tapes Warhol insists that being a machine and liking everything are inherently linked during a conversation about homosexuality:

Swenson: I don’t understand the business about – if all Pop artists are not homosexual, then what does this have to do with being a machine?

Warhol: Well, I think everybody should like everybody.

Swenson: You mean you should like both men and women?

Warhol: Yeah.

Swenson: Yeah? Sexually and in every other way?

Warhol: Yeah.

Swenson: And that’s what Pop art’s about?

Warhol: Yeah, it’s liking things.

Swenson: And liking things is being like a machine?

Warhol: Yeah. Well, because you do the same thing every time. You do the same thing over and over again. And you do the same. . .

Swenson: You mean sex?

Warhol: Yeah, and everything you do (in Sichel 2018a).

For an excellent analysis of Swenson’s career as a queer art critic, see: Sichel, 2018b. Jonathan Flatley has drawn on affect theory to read Warhol’s penchant for ‘liking’ as a form of queer utopia-building, see: his essay ‘Like: Collecting and Collectivity’ (2010).

full-throated support to the idea of automation in the economy and the art world. His potent reflections are underlined further by the meta-authorial game of having Malanga research and write the interview all by himself:

Q. Would you like to replace human effort?

A. Yes.

Q. Why?

A. Because human effort is too hard.

[...]

Q. How will you meet the challenge of Automation?

A. By becoming part of it.

[...]

Q. Dissect the meaning of automation.

A. Automation is a way of making things easy. Automation just gives you something to do (Malanga [1964] 2004:60-62).

This “interview” with Malanga underlines a further divestment of effort by Warhol in the quest to make his production of art machine-like: his reliance on friends and colleagues for ideas. There are many examples of this, including accounts of how Warhol came to paint his early dollar bill works (see Printz 2014). Warhol was very open about his asking colleagues and friends for ideas, writing in his memoirs of the 1960s: ‘I was never embarrassed about asking someone literally, “what should I paint?” because Pop comes from the outside, and how is asking someone for ideas any different from looking for them in a magazine?’ (Warhol and Hackett 1981:16). Warhol’s friend and a long-serving editor of *Interview* magazine, Bob Colacello commented on the artist’s predilection for surveying others as to what his art practice should consist of: ‘It’s always difficult to pinpoint the moment that an idea jells into art in the

artist's mind, and even more so in Andy's case because he was a walking Gallup Poll, asking people for ideas, then asking other people what they thought of the ideas' (1990:342).

The artist's embrace of his hard-edged style that mimicked the look of product packaging emerged through conversations with his associate, the documentarian Emile de Antonio (1918-1989). Warhol presented de Antonio with two versions of his early attempts at a branded product painting: *Coca-Cola* (1962) and *Coca-Cola* (1963). Each image was starkly different. The first was roughly painted, the canvas awash with faint smudges and seemingly unfinished sections of faded brushwork, which Warhol referred to as 'Abstract Expressionist hash marks' (Warhol and Hackett 1981:6). The second was pristine and hard-lined in its execution: a more precise reproduction of the glossy advertisement on which it was modelled. De Antonio expressed a clear preference for the second. Warhol recalled the interaction with his friend later in *POPism*: 'That afternoon was an important one for me...I still wasn't sure if you could completely remove all the hand gesture from art and become noncommittal, anonymous. I knew that I definitely wanted to take away the commentary of the gestures...The works I was most satisfied with were the cold "no comment" paintings' (Warhol and Hackett 1981:6-7).⁴⁶ Warhol's language here betrays a variety of similarities to that of Roehr especially in regard to both artists' wishes to become 'anonymous'. Roehr also, as was

⁴⁶ For more on Warhol's relationship with de Antonio see Joseph (2010).

discussed above, relied on his friends to create a process of 'inter-subjectivity' through which the clips making up the *Film-Montages* were chosen.

Unlike Warhol, however, Roehr never made paintings or prints, and the majority of his montages were produced using pre-existing materials. He thought that this gave him an edge over Warhol in the quest for machine-like productivity and anonymity. As Roehr stated simply 'I use prefabricated elements in order to minimize my participation in the process of production' (1978b:8). In a 1978 interview Paul Maenz opined that 'ideally, Roehr would like to have left everything to a machine but that was not possible' (in Kunz 1978:16). As well as seeing Warhol's serial images in a lineage alongside himself (Roehr, 'Kategorien', ND), Roehr included Warhol's work in the 'Serial Formations' exhibition he co-organised with Maenz. He clearly saw Warhol as a kindred spirit in the drive to make art more like machines, producing work both quickly and in great volume. Their works possess significant similarities both in choice of subject matter and in their formal recourse to organising images in repetitious grids. However, their work fails differently. In Warhol's work, failure is a consistent result of images refusing to repeat properly in order to evince the same level of sameness as the image that precedes it in a sequence. This deliberate failure to produce simultaneous likeness has been perceived by critics such as Hal Foster and Jonathan Flatley as one of the most complex facets of Warhol's art.

Commentators have long marked Warhol as an artist who revels in, and perhaps wills his work to failure. In line with the conception of Warhol as a machine, his former assistant Malanga said of Warhol in 1999 that he ‘wanted to create things with the least amount of effort’ (Malanga 1999:115), implying a reliance on automatic processes of production; often, however, such technological apparatuses would produce “flawed” imagery. Speaking to one of Warhol’s biographers, Victor Bockris, a decade before, Malanga made an explicit link between Warhol’s machinic style in the pace of production of the silkscreen paintings and the resulting mistakes that would arise in the works as a consequence:

Each painting took about four minutes, and we worked as mechanically as we could, trying to get each image right, but we never got it right. By becoming machines, we made the most imperfect works. Andy embraced his mistakes. We never rejected anything. Andy would say “it’s part of the art”. He possessed an almost Zen-like sensibility, but to critics Andy became an existentialist because the accidents were interpreted as being intentional statements (in Bockris 1989:170)

Malanga is referring here to the Death and Disaster series of paintings that Warhol began in 1962. The work’s subjects (car accidents; food-borne illness scandals; suicides etc.) were often lifted from the pages of tabloid newspapers—photographs accompanying news stories were isolated and screen printed across large canvases, painted in bright, often lurid monochromes (see Fig. 4.9). Malanga’s labelling of the resulting paintings as ‘imperfect works’ refers to the irregularities which can be seen in the paintings: gaps in passages of paint, fading and smudging, all results of the incomplete transfer of the paint to canvas as it is pushed through the screen printing stencil. Such areas of sporadic imperfection would of course be anathema to the rigour

of image-making associated with industrial machine printing (such works would be removed from the production line and dubbed faulty), and as such, works in the Death and Disaster series are often seen as the epitome of Warhol's courting of failure. Of course, for Roehr they are evidence of Warhol's membership in the cult of artistic personality, having become signature works.



Fig. 4.9. Andy Warhol, *Suicide (Purple Jumping Man)*, 1963, silkscreen on canvas, 230 cm x 202 cm (90 ½ x 79 1/2 in), Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

The gaps, mistakes and perceived mis-applications of paint in Warhol's screen-printed works have become one of the most important areas of commentary for critics thinking about the artist. For Hal Foster the perception of Warhol as a failure is central to our understandings of his practice. '[A]lthough failure can be the outcome of any test', he writes, 'it often appears

to be the purpose in Warhol' (2012:171). The 'purpose' then of these failures of accurate reproduction or recreation appear linked to the content of the images. In another essay on Warhol, Foster famously reads these slippages as 'pops' in the image schema which uncover further the traumatic reality of the image's subject. 'These pops, such as the slipping of the register of the image and the washing of the whole in colour', he argues, 'serve as visual equivalents of our missed encounters with the real' (1996:43). They simultaneously obscure and expose the reality of the traumatic situation depicted, insisting on a subject-object relation with the viewer which makes one, at once, suppress and comprehend the spectacle of trauma on display. 'Through these pokes or pops we seem almost to touch the real', Foster concludes; 'the repetition of the image at once distances and rushes towards us' leading to a condition he labels 'traumatic realism' (1996:46).

Foster's analysis of Warhol's imperfections or failures to produce exactitude are reflected in the artist's own thoughts on how the machine could perhaps act as a kind of safety valve for such traumas. In a 1970 *Vogue* interview Warhol opined that '[I]f life hurts so much. If we could become more mechanical, we would be hurt less' (in Kent [1970] 2004:190). Under Foster's analysis this reliance on the mechanical as a means of escaping trauma or pain has a double-edged effect: when the mechanical refuses to or is made to not function properly it often exposes more fully the sites of anguish we may wish to expunge.

Warhol's play with failure arises from a complex relationship between the artist and the machinic quality of his image-production. Machines often break down but the defects resulting from these mechanical failures are usually cast aside as one awaits the production of a more complete, accurate or perfect image. Warhol's deliberate insistence on his mistakes 'being part of the art' uncover for us a central aspect of his aping of failure: the approximation of a (broken) machine.

The mixture of media material used in the creation of Warhol's silk-screen paintings has led Jonathan Flatley to observe that '[i]n terms of the standards of the given media, the result is neither a good photograph or a good painting' (2017:113). Flatley does not yoke this perceived failure of competency and execution to a narrative of Warhol as somehow playing at being an amateur or revelling in his – as is often the cliché – role of performing naivety nor does he attempt to understand such works through a psychoanalytical lens like Foster. Instead, he points us towards reading these works, which seem to be not quite painting and not quite photography, as opportunities to exercise 'our capacity for perceiving similarities across difference', through Warhol's 'transposition of idioms, sensations and information from one medium to another' (ibid). In other words, we are confronted in Warhol's silkscreen paintings and his prints with a vision of art in which the once stable categories of photography, painting and printing are no longer separated but have coalesced and become enmeshed together in a web of artistic mediation. 'Trying to make one medium like another often drew out the ways a given medium fails to accurately capture,

store, or transmit information', Flatley argues, and 'Warhol's transpositions were a way to draw attention to those failures as themselves productive of surprising and pleasing correspondences' (2017:114).

In Roehr, failure is employed not as an intentional mistake or as a result of a flawed apparatus of production but as a deliberate simulation of image-machines, i.e. television, breaking down—refusing to adhere to convention and cohere to sense. His is not a confrontation with trauma as in Foster, or a utopian vision of intermediality that embraces affective strategies for producing simultaneity, as in Flatley, but a confrontation with the mediated reality of the world as disciplined through television.

Roehr's montages do not give a pass to imperfection like Warhol's. Roehr's Photo-Montages do not contain gaps, smudges or bleeds. This is because, as has been discussed above, Roehr only ever re-purposed pre-existing images, and adhered them onto a material base (most often cardboard). A blunt comparison between a work by each artist that takes cars and car crashes respectively as their subject matter can illustrate this.



Fig. 4.10. Andy Warhol, *White Disaster (White Car Crash 19 Times)* (detail) 1963. Silkscreen on canvas, 336 x 211 cm.



Fig. 4.11. Peter Roehr, *Ohne Titel (FO-72)*, 1966. Paper on cardboard, 8.3 x 18.7cm, Daimler Art Collection.

In Warhol's *White Disaster (White Car Crash 19 Times)* (1963) (Fig. 4.10), mistakes and imperfections have been left untouched and remain in the finished artwork, making the uneasy subject of the painting more frenzied and intense. In Warhol the disruption of machine-like reproduction has given a distorted form to the work which reflects the twisted and contorted body of the crashed vehicle. In Roehr's *Ohne Titel (FO-72)* (Fig. 4.11) it would appear the repeating, replicating machine of production has produced exactitude repeatedly in a neat grid. Here instead of complimenting and influencing our reading of the work's content, form exists for itself. As Roehr commented, if the number of objects (or pictures) in a work 'exceed a certain flexible limit, they are themselves dissolved and become basic units of structure specific to them' (1978a:4). The precise nature of Roehr's organisation and reliance on

pre-fabricated images means that there is little room for mistakes to arise organically in the production process, except for perhaps a slip of the hand while cutting the images out of their original sheets. His practice is more anonymised. It is devoid of the discrepancies which mark Warhol as an artist concerned with deploying mistakes as deliberate tools, which affect the work's content. This cold, logical aesthetic tactic by Roehr is a central tenet in understanding the artist's relationship to minimalism and serialism. It also marks him out to be a much more successful incorporator of machine-like methods in artistic practice. However, as was stated earlier, readings of Roehr as a pure minimalist do not hold water when we turn our attention to content. In *Ohne Titel (FO-72)* the machine appears healthy, consistent in its replication of the same image over and over again, but in the *Film-Montages* Roehr employs repetition for different ends, purposefully enacting a breaking down of the machine of mass media advertising.

Putting Repetition to Use: Breaking Television Advertising in *Film-Montages (I-III)*

Advertising relies on repetition. It was uncommon until the 1960s, with the dawn of what we could call the minimalist advertisement (a key example of which we saw in the guise of Revlon's Frosted Blush-On campaign (Fig. 5)), for advertisements to contain within their own design repetitious elements. It was and remains much more common to think of the repetition of advertising. In the world of marketing and advertising the appropriate jargon for this

concept is the phrase 'effective frequency'. Effective frequency is not a new concept; in fact, a passage from one of the oldest books on the subject of advertising, *Successful Advertising: Its Secrets Explained* (1885) by Thomas Smith, which is still widely quoted to this day, can boil down its fundamentals quite potently:

The first time a man looks at an advertisement, he does not see it.

The second time he does not notice it.

The third time he is conscious of its existence.

The fourth time he faintly remembers having seen it before.

The fifth time he reads it.

The sixth time he turns up his nose at it.

The seventh time he reads it through and says, "Oh bother!"

The eighth time he says, "Here's that confounded thing again!"

The ninth time he wonders if it amounts to anything.

The tenth time he thinks he will ask his neighbour if he has tried it.

The eleventh time he wonders how the advertiser makes it pay.

The twelfth time he thinks perhaps it may be worth something.

The thirteenth time he thinks it must be a good thing.

The fourteenth time he remembers that he has wanted such a thing for a long time.

The fifteenth time he is tantalized because he cannot afford to buy it.

The sixteenth time he thinks he will buy it some day.

The seventeenth time he makes a memorandum of it.

The eighteenth time he swears at his poverty.

The nineteenth time he counts his money carefully.

The twentieth time he sees it, he buys the article, or instructs his wife to do so (in Bogart 1967:170)

It is remarkable that this principle remained intact *tout court* (along with its gender politics) in the mid-1960s when Roehr was completing and first screened the *Film-Montages*. By this point the principles of repetition had migrated from print advertising to the world of television. In its infancy

television's advertising model in America⁴⁷ had been similar to radio's. Major businesses or corporations would simply sponsor single programmes and thus advertise exclusively around content, usually before and after the show. By the late 1950s television had become much more popular (with some thirty-five million households owning a TV set by 1958 (Edgerton 2009:X)) and networks began to pursue a different advertising model which could capitalize on a captive audience by splitting advertising blocks into much smaller, discrete chunks, and getting agencies to bid for the best time slots. This was dubbed 'spot advertising' (see Boddy 1990:93-131). All of the adverts we see with Roehr's films are spot ads.

With spot advertising the much vaunted and ever-popular methods of effective frequency came into play on the television market. The use of repetition became central to media planners' strategies in placing ads to get an optimum frequency, i.e. an ideal number of times that a potential client needs to be exposed to a product or service's advertisement. As the musicologist and cultural theorist Robert Fink has written 'repetition could be harnessed to create inauthentic desire'. 'The model', he continues, 'dominated

⁴⁷ I am using the American television industry as an example here as Roehr's films rely exclusively on advertising content made in that country and the form of television advertising which Roehr is manipulating has its origins in this context. Advertising on German television in the mid-1960s was extremely restrictive with only twenty minutes of advertising time allowed in broadcast schedules before 8pm on weekdays and a ban on advertising at weekends. There were only two channels available at this time: ARD (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* – Working group of public broadcasters of the Federal Republic of Germany) and ZDF (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, Second German Television). This stands in contrast to America where it was estimated that the average viewer was exposed to around 40,000 commercials annually by the end of the 1960s (see Mamiya 1992:18).

advertising media planning for two decades, practically guaranteeing that all mass media, especially television, would be filled with the endless repetition...that was thought necessary to mass-produce consumer demand' (2005:137). This was the context in which Roehr wrested Gulf and Breck commercials from the airwaves and re-purposed them to create a work of moving-image Pop.

Fink's characterisation of the use of repetition in the effective frequency model as creating 'inauthentic desire' is something which can be viewed in concert with our analysis of Roehr as employing machine-like strategies in the *Film-Montages*. I would argue that Roehr's manipulation of the advertisements contained within the films satirises the protocol of such short-form spot ads by making his films (unlike the rest of his work) a deliberate deployment of form, which is utilised to comment upon the work's content. This then has as much to do with the Pop content—the raw material of advertising—as it does with the minimalist serial and repetitive aesthetic of the work.

Theories of seriality and repetition were briefly touched upon in relation to Roehr and Maenz's 'Serial Formations' exhibition described above, and I would like to return to them again shortly. But it is important, as the work under discussion is a work of moving-image Pop, that we provide an account of how film theory has attempted to account for such notions. There are two key works on this topic. One is a monographic study by the literary theorist Bruce F. Kawin, *Telling it Again and Again: Repetition in Literature and Film* ([1972]

2015). The other is an essay by the film theorist Raymond Bellour: 'Cine Repetitions' (1979). Both considerations focus mainly on feature-length narrative cinema but there are some aspects in both arguments which can serve my closing reading of Roehr's *Film-Montages*.

Kawin's book discusses films that employ repetitions as features in their narrative, particularly films by Alain Resnais. He also briefly speaks about genre in relation to repetition, especially with regard to iconography and generic expectations within horror films and pornography ([1972] 2015: 65-72). Key to Kawin's understanding of repetition in the arts is the difference between what he calls 'Repetitious' and 'Repetitive' modes of repetition. Repetitious is when 'a word, percept, or experience is repeated with less impact at each recurrence; repeated to no particular end, out of a failure of invention or sloppiness of thought' ([1972] 2015:4). Repetitive is when a 'word, percept, or experience is repeated with equal or greater force at each occurrence' (ibid). Both types of repetition are possible in filmmaking. This second definition is the one most applicable to the type of repetition found in the *Film-Montages*. In a discussion of the projection of film, Kawin highlights the specific condition of repetition contained with a looped film (the very methodology deployed by Roehr in the *Film-Montages*); it may not repeat *per se*, he argues, but it generates the effect of repetition:

In the case of a length of film joined at its ends into a loop, the identical frame recurs later in time, and so is a different time-space unit received by a later, aged, audience; it is a later instance of projection even if it is the same piece of film, and completely removed from the art-moment of its earlier appearance. But it can have the *effect* of putting the audience back in that first time (1972 [2015]:106-107, emphasis in original).

Kawin's deconstruction of the ontology of repetition is secondary to our investigation; but his description of the *effect* generated by looped repetition is a precise account of the effect of Roehr's 'repetitious' repeating—the machine-like exactitude of the looping of TV advertisements insists on creating forceful new meanings. They repeat for a reason. Bellour can help us to expand on this idea of repetition generating meaning.

Bellour offers a wider perspective than Kawin and relates repetition to further questions of the production, exhibition and reception of film. He splits his taxonomy of cine-repetitions into two groupings: 'internal' and 'external'. External repetitions pertain to the production and distribution of a film. For example, a film is often rehearsed before it is recorded; several takes of scenes are made before the scene is deemed complete; and a film exists in the world in a multitude of identically repeated prints (copies) (1978:65-66). Internal repetitions are much more aligned with the reception of a film. Here Bellour discusses the paradoxical 'mechanical repetition' of celluloid film being run through a projector, which results in the illusion of a changing spectacle unfolding on the screen for the viewer. He also highlights the grammar of film as being based on repeated shot patterns (shot/reverse shot). This type of syntactical repetition allows films to make narrative sense in Bellour's conception. As he writes, such repetitions represent 'the textual expansion through the interaction of forms specifically linked to the formation of the narrative into images' (1979:68). It is in this example that Bellour explicitly mentions experimental or non-narrative filmmaking. He argues that such a

textual expansion, or understanding, may be given form in non-narrative works by 'serial structuring'. In other words, a film may employ repetition to create a meaning that is not tied to narrative function. This last point is similar in its assessment to Kawin's understanding that effects can be produced by 'repetitive' repetitions. Both feed my claim that Roehr's films use repetition in a deliberate way to generate 'effect' in Kawin's conception, or to 'textually expand' meaning as in Bellour. But what meanings or effects do Roehr's looping, non-narrative repetitions give to the viewer?

As we have seen so far Roehr's films arrived at a time in which the practice of repeat-based spot advertising on television was the norm. I would like to argue in this final analysis that the films represent an exacerbation of this basic concept through their consistent recourse to repetition, which renders the television advertisement itself as absurd and illogical. Earlier I mentioned two key thinkers on serial art, Bochner (1967) and Coplans ([1968] 1996). Although they disagree in their conclusions about serial art, both were convinced of the logical and rational foundation on which it was based. With sets of rules and principles defined for the creation of artworks into series, artists such as Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella were seen by these interlocutors as engineers and scientists as much as aesthetically minded artists. I would be hesitant to add Roehr to this conversation. Initially, his work appears rationally pre-determined and he spoke often and articulately of his wish to explore the purity of repetition as a formal conceit within art-making. But we should be able to see Roehr as, in the words of Kelly Baum, holding 'the rational and the

irrational in a delicate balance, using rational methods to generate irrational effects' (2017:21).

Roehr's *Film-Montages* seemingly act on principles based on sequences and repetitions. These are laid out at the beginning of each film, with an intertitle listing what we are about to see and how many times it will be repeated. Such a conceptual conceit should place us in the realm of the rational machine but the effect of seeing these advertisements repeat again and again promotes a feeling of delirium in the viewer. One loses any sense of anchoring, not only because the work is non-narrative, but because the advertisements disappear into their pre-structuring form. They cannot be separated, and we cannot tell them apart.

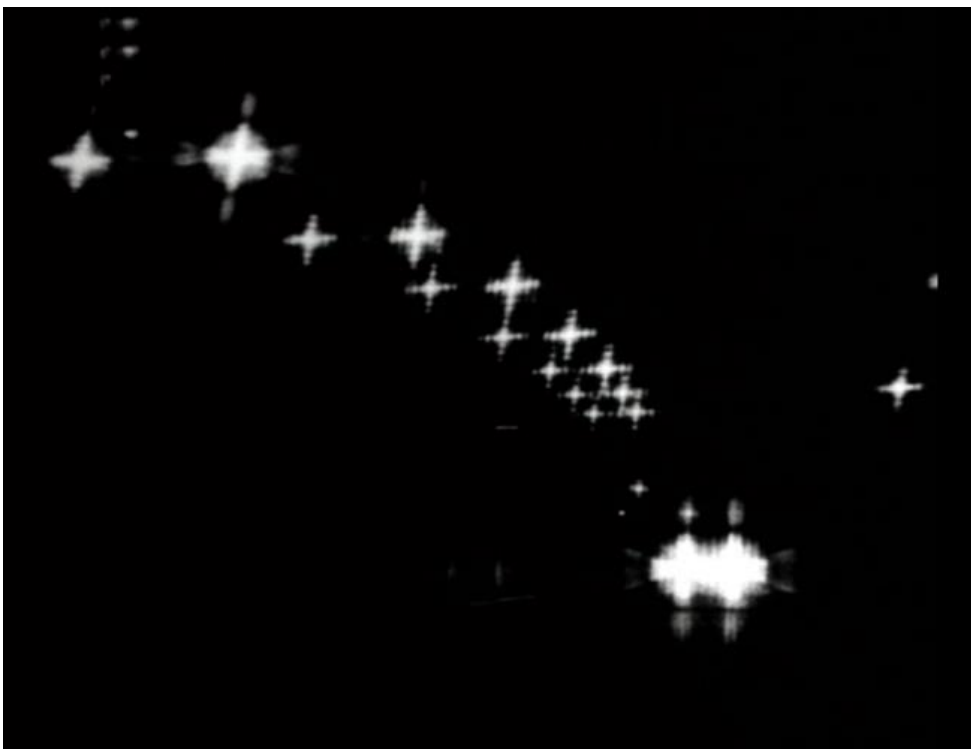


Fig. 4.12. Peter Roehr, *Film-Montages II (Tunnel x10)*.

This capitulation into an exacerbated repetition of the spot advertising form is further underlined by Roehr's manipulation of the soundtrack. Take the first two films, *Tunnel x10* and *Haare x14*, from *Film-Montage I*. *Tunnel x10* (Fig. 4.12) contains ten repetitions of a five second clip from a Gulf advertisement. From a tilted viewpoint, shot from behind a car windshield, we see a set of lights on the roof of a tunnel through which the camera is traveling, and reflections on the cars approaching our field of vision on the opposite side of the road. The clip is disorientating in and of itself, as Roehr, through his hands-off 'intersubjective' process of selection, has had the clip looped at a point that only intensifies its lack of figuration, plunging us over and over into the abstracted forms of blurry lights. This confusion is amplified by Roehr's deliberately erroneous removal and replacement of the advert's soundtrack. Over this spectacle of lights, we hear a male voice which announces the words 'cleans, shines, manages, but never over cleans'. The content of this voiceover is a truncated piece of advertising copy from one of the various Breck shampoo commercials that Roehr also implements in the *Film-Montages*.



Fig. 4.13. Peter Roehr, *Film-Montages II* (*Haare x14*).

The next film in the sequence is *Haare x14* (Fig. 4.13). As the last image of *Tunnel x10* is replaced by black leader, in advance of the intertitle announcing *Haare x14*, the soundtrack of the Breck shampoo announcer continues and bleeds into the next film. Only after the first loop of *Haare x14* does this soundtrack abruptly cut out and get replaced with the jaunty syncopations of a jazz quartet. The saxophone-led band has been lifted from one of the Gulf ads. Over the music we witness the slow-motion twirling of a model showing off her—presumably Breck shampooed—hair, with shots of her at the left and right of the frame overlaid in superimposition (not by Roehr: this technique was commonplace in Breck TV spots of the time). These shots are doubled in their strangeness by Roehr's looping. The jazz (also found regularly underpinning the fast-paced, and often jump-cut-filled Gulf ads of the time) sits uneasily as a soundtrack to such images. It seems almost as if someone has put the wrong

music cue over the visual track; it is asynchronous, further alienating the viewer from the spectacle.

These moments of heightened disorientation, achieved through repetitious looping and sudden shifts into incorrect-seeming musical cues dominate the entirety of Roehr's *Film-Montages*. They seem on one level to be based in the machinic-logic of Roehr's wider montage project—to isolate mass-produced images and re-present them in repetitive and serial formations. But here one cannot help but seriously consider how these film-works turn this logical system of volumetric presentation and organisation outwards onto the content of the advertisements themselves, not inward towards some innate conceptualism. The *Film-Montages* appear more like failures fashioned as deliberate critiques—mimetically exacerbated manipulations of the component parts of television advertising. Roehr's montage project is predicated on exactitude: in the organisation of pictures onto bases in his photo-montages there is not a deliberate gap employed or left open. Yet in the *Film-Montages* there are abrupt stops and starts in the soundtrack; each film repeats a varying number of times; and no single work contains its original aural component. Here we do not have the cold, hard logic of the rational machine; we feel instead, in Rosalind Krauss' phrasing (speaking of Sol LeWitt (1928-2007)) 'a sense of being suspended before the immense spectacle of the irrational' (1978:60). The effective frequency of spot advertising is here filtered through what Kawin would call a 'repetitive' repetition, where each repetition of the images is felt more intensely each time. The expansive effect

of these loops is to render their raw material, the ads that Roehr so voraciously collected, as absurd and illogical. The *Film-Montages* take the formal device of repetition, a key tactic of minimalist and serial art, and uses it as a tool to give a Pop Art critique, taking the repetitions of TV spot advertising into the realm of the nonsensical.

Conclusion: Roehr's Radicalism After the Fact

From what has been demonstrated in this chapter, Roehr's *Film-Montages* can now be placed in a lineage with other works of moving-image Pop that take television as their subject. The tension in Roehr's work between the prevalence of serial and repetitious form and the clearly Pop-orientated content has been illuminated through a variety of examples from Roehr's art practice. As I have argued, it is with his film-work that the artificial boundary between form and content is ruptured and the two elements of his work may be seen to exist in conversation with one another. Some questions, pertaining to legacy, still stand about Roehr's work and the *Film-Montages* in particular and are worth addressing.

One question is where Roehr fits in the history of German Pop Art. German Pop emerged out of a time of plenty in West Germany, after the solidification of the post-war economic miracle which saw mass consumerism arrive in the country in a guise previously unseen in its history (see: Mehring 2009). At the same time an atmosphere of political radicalism engulfed German youth

culture during the 1960s. This was sparked by the death of student activist Benno Ohnesorg (1940-1967) and an encroaching feeling among younger Germans that the country had yet to deal with their National Socialist past. (This factor was underlined even more in Roehr's home city of Frankfurt, which in the years 1963-1965 held the Auschwitz Trials). Roehr's friend and fellow artist Thomas Bayrle took to the radicalism of the era. Using the printing facilities available to him through his own firm (Bayrle & Kellermann), which he describes as 'a mixture of studio, silkscreen workshop and advertising agency', Bayrle would create advertisements for major European companies by day and for radical political groups by night (Weinhart 2015:240-241).⁴⁸ Roehr's radicalism seemed to lie outside of his connections to Pop and art more generally.

In August 1966 Roehr was diagnosed with lymphoma, the cancer that would kill him two years later. A year after this news and after having failed to attract any buyers for his films, Roehr wrote a polemical piece entitled 'Revolution in the Cinema?' In it Roehr decries the state of the avant-garde art market, complaining that current collectors are 'twenty years behind', 'consuming the (artistic) masters of the 30s or 50s', while clued-in buyers are so few in number that an entire generation of artists is courting only 50-100 collectors (1967c). Because of this Roehr states that from now on he will 'only make films' (ibid) because here the situation seems different. Roehr also bemoans the lack of

⁴⁸ For more on the relationship between Pop art techniques such as silk-screening and the dissemination of political posters in May 1968 see Liam Considine (2015)

sophistication and 'aesthetic understanding of the film public', which he deems 'exactly as behind the times as the art public' (ibid). From this point on in the piece Roehr is vague in his meaning but incendiary in his tone (perhaps deliberately so, or perhaps his ideas were not fully-formed or fleshed-out). He seems to begin aligning his newfound preference to produce films over traditional art objects (or 'pictures' (ibid) as he calls them) to the idea of revolution: 'It seems much more important to me, to make revolution, total revolution – than just to make aesthetic revolution. The aesthetic revolution is only part of the social and political. It could be that the ideal society doesn't need "art" anymore-or that it needs a different type of art' (ibid). Following this statement Roehr held his final exhibition in December 1967. At the beginning of 1968 he withdrew from film and art-making entirely, setting up in January together with Maenz a radical head shop in Frankfurt called Pudding Explosion, the first of its kind in Europe. He died later that year on the 15th of August.

Although the film-montages have very little content which could be read as explicitly radical, their critique is subtle and must be understood in relation to Roehr's wider montage project. An interpretation of explicit radicalism has emerged in their wake. The Californian artist William E. Jones (b. 1962) has written about the *Film-Montages* and made a video artwork in tribute to Roehr which excavates the latent homoerotic coupling found in the bodies of the two male wrestlers at the centre of *Ringer* (1965). Jones' piece, *Film Montages (For Peter Roehr)* (2006) draws on an archive of hardcore gay pornography, manipulating various VHS copies of unnamed films by cutting them into discreet short shots that are repeated and looped by Jones a variety of times.

On two occasions Jones screened *Film Montages (For Peter Roehr)* alongside Roehr's own films. To introduce this dual presentation Jones enacted a lecture-performance which consisted of the reading of a speculative epistolary narrative in which Jones himself writes a letter to Roehr in the present day (2013) and Roehr writes a letter to Paul Maenz while he is still in New York, following the completion of the *Film-Montages*. In Jones' fictionalised account Roehr and Maenz's relationship is underscored as an intimate one, a fact that is usually occluded from writings on Roehr's life.

A last way to consider Roehr is to see him as an artist who predicted art after Pop. I have already discussed Dara Birnbaum in relation to moving-image Pop in this chapter. She was part of a loose grouping of artists who emerged in the mid-1970s called The Pictures Generation. The term was coined by the curator and art historian Douglas Crimp, after an exhibition he organised at Artist's Space in New York City in Autumn 1977. Some of the key concerns of the group, which also included Jack Goldstein (1945-2003) Sherrie Levine (b.1947), Robert Longo (b.1953) and Cindy Sherman (b.1954), amongst many others, seem to have been anticipated by Roehr: appropriation, authorship, form vs. content, artistic anonymity and the artist as machine. In an essay about the group Crimp wrote that the 'Psychological resonance of this work is not of the subject matter of pictures...but of the way those pictures are presented, *staged*; that is, it is a function of their structure' (1979:80). This could equally be written about Roehr's own hybrid Pop-Minimalism and fall in line with the artist's own thinking about his work. Later in the essay Crimp

writes that within this type of work 'we are not in search of sources or origins, but of structures of signification: underneath each picture there is always another picture' (1979:87).

In a letter from his hospital bed in August 1966, Roehr wrote to the gallerist Adam Seide. Vowing not to be put down by his recent bill of ill health, Roehr speaks enthusiastically about his next exhibition. Its proposed title is a summation of his concerns as a Pop artist, a formal conceptualist and seeming bellwether to the future Post-Pop generation to come. 'I would like to call the exhibition', he wrote, 'Pictures of Pictures' (1966b).

Conclusion: Post-Pop Cinema?

The sense that Peter Roehr's work offers a glimpse into the future of art can be pushed further if we examine some of the characteristics of Pop Cinema, as it exists after the 1960s. As established in Chapter One, Pop Art and Pop Cinema are temporally elastic and exist beyond the confines of the decade with which they are most readily associated. Roehr's use of television aesthetics as a Pop subject matter was progressive at the time, but as discussed in the previous chapter it was not until the late 1970s, through artists like Dara Birnbaum, that an artistic interrogation of the televisual through the tactics of Pop Art had truly begun. An examination of some artists making such work, and their milieu after the 1960s, will allow a further expanding of this thesis, in order to witness artists concerned much more with issues of gender, feminism and racial representation—areas of investigation almost non-existent in Pop Cinema from the 1960s and in my example case studies.⁴⁹ This will act as a conclusion to the current argument but will also point towards the significant elements still to be investigated on the subject of the interaction between Pop Art and the moving-image.

In a 1968 essay on James Rosenquist's (1933-2017) monumental painting *F11* (1964-1965), the curator and critic Henry Geldzahler (1935-1994), wrote that 'at its best, pop art is an intelligent response to our environment'

⁴⁹ This issue has also affected the reception and understanding of Pop painting and sculpture, though in recent years the absence of female Pop artists in both exhibitions and the critical literature has begun to be rectified. On this issue see Whiting (1997, especially 187-231), Sachs and Minioudaki (2010) and Stief (2010).

(1968:278). For Geldzahler, the environment to which Rosenquist was responding consisted of images and symbols from mass and communications culture—details of which had been ‘blown up to the scale of Cinema-Scope close-ups’ (1968:280) by the artist across the twenty-three panels of his painting. Future artists, Geldzahler mused, would doubtless be deeply inspired by television as it had gained ascendancy as a dominant medium in visual culture and was central to the everyday media environment by the late 1960s:

the youngest generation of Americans, grown up in front of its television sets, may be relatively illiterate in the old terms (that is, library books and verbally orientated IQ’s), but it has absorbed and stored millions of visual images, many of which are related to form a new and still mysterious fund of knowledge. What this generation will produce as a result of this visual inundation is totally unpredictable. One of the things I am looking forward to is seeing the art and films of these TV kids ten to twenty years from now. I think it likely that some of the attitudes and styles, some of the techniques and types of subject matter that pop art legitimated will figure heavily in the prehistory of this art of the future (1968:278)

Geldzahler’s assessment gestures towards a Post-Pop world of art-making that is decidedly indebted to the radical overhaul of what constitutes legitimate subject matter for fine art, an intervention originally explored by Pop. Pointedly, he also gestures towards the constitution of this new art, influenced by television, being one made up of moving as well as still images. Geldzahler’s comments here are almost clairvoyant in their intuitive foreshadowing of the kind of Pop moving-image work that was to be created in the 1980s. Some of this art continued to explore the Pop underground and camp iterations discussed in Chapter One, while others pursued a line of inquiry much more

forensically analytical in its deconstructive assessment of the mass media. In closing, I offer a brief examination of examples of each type.

This conclusion will act as an expansion of what I have outlined in the previous three chapters that each focused on work by artists who were concerned to explore Pop Art through the medium of cinema. As such, and as I have shown throughout, Klein, Keen and Roehr were each, in their own ways, actively deploying and manipulating film language in specific ways to comment upon and more often than not offer wholesale critiques of mass media and consumer culture, be that in the guise of outdoor advertising (Klein), print media (Keen) or television spot advertising (Roehr). It is important to underline these contributions to the formation of Pop Cinema as they account for how Pop Art can be created with the technologies and conventions of the filmic medium. But it is also important to point towards the limitations of only considering work by white, male European and American artists. I thus gesture here towards the possibility of locating a Pop Cinema that expands out to consider a more diverse array of Pop artists. That these more inclusive narratives can only be located most substantially outside of the confines of the 1960s when Pop in its fine art iteration was at its high point of both activity and popularity is a recognition of the secondary position of many women artists and artists of colour during that time. While many such artists have been rescued from occlusion by dominant narratives, there remains substantial work to be done to communicate the full story of Pop Cinema across its history. Moreover as is discussed below, along with the engagement of identity politics works from this later period of Pop cinema are less concerned with an exploration of the

medium-specificity of cinema and what this may bring to Pop and more eager to use video as a cheaper and more accessible alternative. This progression into new technological realms is bolstered further by the advent of consumer-grade recording equipment and editing consoles, which would have democratised Pop Cinema even further. There was however, even in the early 1980s, strong links between scenes like that found in New York's East Village and earlier underground film culture across the United States, although their cultural inheritance was predicated on TV much more than on old Hollywood and B-movies.

Much of the East Village art scene in Downtown Manhattan from the late 1970s onwards dealt with the aesthetic and cultural inheritance of television as mass media form. In several striking ways the screenings and video works made by members of the clique which amassed around Club 57 (a seminal multidisciplinary arts, music and performance space open on St. Mark's Place in the East Village from 1978-1983) concerned themselves with television as a dominant media form and with the legacy of the Pop underground cinema of the 1960s.

In echoes of the camp viewing strategies employed in the underground cinema scene of the 1960s, discussed in Chapter One, the Club often played host to a range of genre and b-movies under the auspices of the regular Monster Movie Club strand, which was received in similarly camp fashion. Audience members, bolstered by 'joints and mushrooms', punctuated films with 'riotous'

commentary according to Tim Lawrence (2016:31), in much the same way Filmmaker's Cinematheque audiences vocalised their feelings at screenings of Ron Rice and Kuchar brothers films in the 1960s. Although Downtown New York was at the time experiencing a significant new influx of experimental film practice orientated around the distinct but deeply interconnected poles of the No Wave and Cinema of Transgression movements, the Club was ploughing an altogether different field, which according to J. Hoberman was more focused on 'audiences' than on filmmakers themselves (Hoberman 2017:96). Like the camp Pop underground screenings of *Batman* and *Flash Gordon* serials in the early 1960s, whereby "low" cultural artefacts were positioned as objects of satirical affection, the programming team of Susan Hannaford, Ann Magnuson, Tom Scully and Jeffrey Geiger screened a wide variety of b-pictures and drive-in movies at the club. These included the Maria Montez vehicle *Cobra Woman* (1944), a panoply of Roger Corman and American International Pictures films and an array of teen monster movies under the series heading 'Teenage Sex 'n' Violence'. These older works were supplemented by the inclusion of evenings devoted to major figures from the Pop Cinema underground. In association with the Times Square and Forty-Second Street film zine *Sleazoid Express* and the feminist punk publication *Bikini Girl*, the venue organised evening screenings devoted to the work of Kenneth Anger, George Kuchar and Andy Warhol, and hosted performances by Jack Smith.

Beyond the nostalgia-tinged and heckle-laden screenings of older material and the affirmation of the work of the previous generation, the club formed a

distinctive and Pop-inflected relationship to television. In a fulfilling of Geldzahler's prophecy, the curator Marc H. Miller wrote in the catalogue for the 1986 exhibition *Television's Impact on Contemporary Art* that 'Club 57 heralded the arrival of the TV generation into the art world' (1986:24). Shown under the banner Nostomania, Magnuson and Jerry Beck projected a slew of 1950s and 1960s television shows that they obtained from 16mm rental catalogues and collectors based in the city. Notably, beyond the screening of well-known works like *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (1964-1968) and *The Monkees* (1966-1968), they gathered together a series entitled 'Cartoons You Won't See on TV' which featured 'sex, violence and racism' (Lawrence 2016:32) and which were deemed so culturally insensitive that they were contemporaneously banned from TV broadcast. Moreover, as J. Hoberman reminds us, television also proved a veritable iconographic symbol for Club 57, as images of television sets formed integral ingredients in the hieroglyphic lexicon of Club devotee and contributor Keith Haring's (1958-1990) art and that of his friend and fellow School of Visual Arts student Kenny Scharf (b.1951). The two also created many performance works together at the Club, utilizing TV sets (see Hoberman 2017:95). According to Hoberman, 'while movies strove to educate club members' taste ([organiser Tom] Scully typically gave Monster Movie Club screenings a mock scholarly introduction, at times in costume), TV shows confirmed it' (2017:96).



Fig. 5.1. Tom Rubnitz and Ann Magnuson *Made for TV*, 1984. Video, colour, sound, 15 minutes.

This love for and playful disruption of television found its ultimate expression in video works made by Magnuson and the artist and Club habitué Tom Rubnitz (1956-1992). During the summer of 1979 Magnuson had set up initial meetings of a collective called Ladies Auxiliary of the Lower East Side, a feminist group which Lawrence describes as a ‘punk version of the junior league’ (2016:31). The group helped contribute to several events at the Club including, perhaps most infamously, ‘Ladies Wrestling Night”, which parodied the ultra-masculine world of pro-wrestling, and saw the Club descend into

raucous show-boating and play-fighting. A humorous and playful feminist critique also peppers Magnuson and Rubnitz's 1984 video *Made for TV*, in which Magnuson inhabits the personas of dozens of invented broadcast media personalities, from morning show hosts and children's TV presenters, to newsreaders, televangelists and infomercial models. Each of Magnuson's creations, which range from the humorous to the disturbed, are seen in snatches of airtime as the video shifts from channel to channel complete with analogue television static. Writing in *Art in America* in 2006, Sarah Valdez commented that each of the characters which Magnuson presents in the work amount to an outlandish, 'uproariously unfortunate range of female stereotypes' (2005:93). The work acts as a container for a series of performances by Magnuson, which approximate a live action version of Pictures Generation artist Cindy Sherman's (b.1954) *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-1980). Like Sherman's groundbreaking performative photographs, Magnuson populates her video with a series of character types, which can be aligned with specific genres of mainstream moving-image culture. In her series, Sherman mainly focuses on films, including everything from cheap-looking exploitation movies to shots that parrot the look of Italian Modernist films. In Rubnitz and Magnuson's work a wide array of television genres are deployed. The tone of the piece is anarchic as the viewer is taken on a whistle-stop tour of a fictional world of television programming in which every persona is overwrought and over-acts. What Valdez refers to as an 'unfortunate range' of stereotypes are, I would argue, actually examples of mimetic exacerbation, in which the impersonation of a litany of gendered media stereotypes is so over the top in

its register as to render the subject of the piece (conventional and ideologically suspect television programming) absurd. Rubnitz and Magnuson's tactic for the display of these performances wedded *Made for TV* to a lineage of the simulacrum as found in Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills*; however, it is their simulation of the condition of watching television that places their feminist conceit in the lineage of Pop Cinema. Here the spectator is confronted with both the overwhelming cacophony of media as interrogated in Jeff Keen's *Flik Flak*, and the breaking down of the media apparatus as depicted in Roehr's *Film-Montages*. By its conclusion, *Made for TV*'s rate of flicking between channels increases in speed so much that the image is rendered into an incoherent and illegible blur before the video abruptly cuts to reveal a female spectator switching of a television set—the set presumably from which the images have been showing.

If Rubnitz's collaboration with Magnuson can be seen as an example of feminist intervention into Pop Cinema, his own solo work has a much more notable queer edge to it. Remaining in the world of television, Rubnitz's warped, disarmingly humorous video shorts such as *Pickle Surprise* and *Strawberry Shortcut*, both from 1989, take the format of advertisements as recipes. In each video, various mass-produced foodstuffs are highlighted and described in order for viewers to be shown easy dishes that can be assembled from prefabricated products. In *Pickle Surprise*, the eponymous dish consists of a Thomas' English Muffin, Hellmann's Sandwich Spread and Oscar Meyer's Sliced Ham. A mystery fourth ingredient is the pickle of the title, but this remains elusive, with one of the video's performers, drag queen RuPaul

(b.1960), asking at the end, 'Where's the Pickle?' to which fellow drag artist Lady Bunny (aka Bunny Hickory Dickory Dock, b.1962) replies: 'That's the surprise!'. Rubnitz's queer Pop operates in both *Pickle Surprise* and *Strawberry Short-Cut* (whose own dish is a tooth-rotting concoction made by layering doughnuts with Cherry 7Up, Kraft Strawberry Jelly and Reddi-Whip imitation cream topping) in ways that reach back to the pioneering work of figures like Jack Smith and Stephen Varble (1946-1984) and pushes a contemporary aesthetic of queer materiality into the Pop Cinema frame.



Fig. 5.2. Tom Rubnitz, *Pickle Surprise*, 1989. Video, colour, sound, 1 minute
30 seconds



Fig. 5.37. Tom Rubnitz, *Strawberry Short-Cut*, 1989. Video, Colour, Sound, 1 minute 30 seconds.

Much like Smith and Varble (a figure whose significance is only now coming to light, see Getsy 2017 and Werther 2019), Rubnitz performs a queer transformation of trash culture. In Smith's art, both his films and performances, this took the form of his so-called 'mouldy aesthetic' that according to Sean Edgecomb, 'creates art from the abandoned refuse of others, often coating it in glitter' (2012:553). In Rubnitz's videos, the lowly Pop material of the food advertisement is given a dayglow and a darkly humorous makeover. As in much of the work encountered throughout this thesis, the ultimate effect renders the raw material of advertisements an absurd spectacle. However, beyond the aesthetic manipulation of film language found in works by Klein, Keen and Roehr, Rubnitz's work employs the performative spectacle of glitter

drag, a type of drag expression pioneered in New York City's underground queer culture. Such a gesture weds Rubnitz's work to a sensibility of queerness, which can be codified as an aesthetic practice that disrupts or *queers* the conventional paradigms, expectations and heteronormative reception of cultural objects. In both works, the protagonists, both of whom are receiving an unseen narrator's culinary instruction, are assisted in the construction of their respective snacks by characters in full glitter drag garb. Their presence and Rubnitz's manipulation of both videos' soundtracks, which includes muzak and the overdubbing of voices with those of children, give the works a disturbing air of queer Pop Surrealism—a move which links back to some of the foundational works of Pop Collage discussed in Chapter Three.⁵⁰

Outside of the rambunctious milieu of Club 57 television, feminist and queer performance, a much more sober and analytical attack on the ideologically-loaded nature of television advertising can be located in the video *Production Notes: Fast Food for Thought* (1986) by the artist Jason Simon (b.1961). In the video, Simon presents a series of seven advertisement campaigns from the mid-1980s for a range of products including McDonald's, Schlitz Malt Liquor, Mars Bar, Pert Plus Shampoo and Pepsi Cola. First, each advertisement is shown in its entirety without manipulation, as it would be aired on television. The advert is then played again but this time it is significantly slowed down and its soundtrack is removed. Additionally, Simon leaves in the title card of the

⁵⁰ Although I am drawing here on more recent works of 'Post-Pop' Cinema it should be noted that discourses on the relationship between queerness, materiality and Pop have been established in relation to older Pop Films, especially the Kuchar brothers and their relationship to the 'plastic modernity' of the 1960s: see Suárez (2015).

advertisement, censoring the name of the agency responsible, and superimposes on the image the cost of making the spot. In place of the original audio track, Simon himself narrates the oftentimes-lengthy memos dictating the proposed look and content of the ad from the advertising agency to the production company making the commercial. Within these notes, which are deliberately and slowly read aloud by Simon, the ideological desires of the companies behind the products in the advertisements are revealed. Some of the ads are shown to be relatively innocuous, as in the spot for the chocolate Mars Bar. Over shots of an idealised beach the agency has noted that 'the editing of the pictures draws an equation for us between life's best things and Mars'. The look of the ad, the memo continues, aims to capture 'beautiful reality: moments that are life's best' which are 'to look convincingly real, unstaged, spontaneous'. Within the context of the chocolate ad the viewer can discern an ironic and comedic commentary on Simon's part, as the work looks endearingly light and cheesy.



Fig. 5.4. Jason Simon, *Production Notes: Fast Food for Thought*, 1986.

Video, colour, sound, 28 minutes.

As the video progresses, much more insidious marketing tactics are exposed. In the spot for Pepsi Cola, entitled 'Drummer (Spanish)', Simon takes the viewer through the extremely specific requests given by the advertising agency for a commercial aimed directly at Spanish-speaking audiences in the United States. The instructions detail the setting of the ad, which should be a small lower-middle class Hispanic neighbourhood. The memo insists that the company use 'stucco or cement but not brick apartment buildings, small semi-detached houses and bodegas'. 'We will consider' the note goes on, 'using bright, Latin colours on the walls: signs, etc. wherever they would seem natural to be included'. This highly specific language, which seeks to code the presentation of the advertisement in Hispanic-American subculture in a clichéd way, is also problematic, and exposed as such through Simon's analytic

conceit, when the narrative of the advertisement is also considered. The spot briefly shows the rise of a preternaturally talented young drummer who emerges from a modest background to become a famous musician in a popular band. The production notes strictly advise the look of the ad's final sequence, which depicts the now successful young drummer performing at a large concert, his excitable family looking on with gushing pride. There are to be 'no blondes' in the band, the copy states, and the audience should be predominantly made up of 'definitely Hispanic, mum and dad character types' who portray the characteristic fashions of 'blue-collar types'. This mixture of aspiration and immigrant culture looks to position Pepsi as an ideal beverage for working class communities of colour, and represents a broadening of the drink's traditional place as a cheaper alternative to its storied rival Coca-Cola (as Pepsi's price point is both lower and its bottles larger in the US market). A key moment in the history of the so-called 'Cola Wars', by 1986, the time of the ad's production, Coca-Cola was embroiled in a product fiasco having unsuccessfully launched a new formula of its flagship soda in an attempt to stave off encroaching market infraction from its rival. While Coca-Cola has often traded in nostalgia in its own advertisement campaigns, Simon's video indexes a common tactic by the Pepsi Cola Company to tack itself onto emerging markets and socio-political trends. As demonstrated in *Production Notes: Fast Food for Thought*, the company does so through the specific manipulation of clichés and stereotypes, figuring cultural identity as reducible to a parade of cultural signs and symbols, which present race, culture and class as one-dimensional signifiers.

In Simon's deconstruction, the iconographic *mise-en-scène* demarcated along the lines of identity politics can also be witnessed in the Schlitz Malt Liquor campaign, 'Smooth Operator', and is, more broadly, an example of a trend in works of Pop video art, which employ an analytical and deconstructive mode of critique. In concert with Dara Birnbaum, discussed in Chapter Four, Simon's video disrupts the politics of representation in these ads '[b]y dislocating the visual imagery and altering the syntax', as well as removing images from their 'original narrative flow' (Birnbaum 1987:13). Simon counters these politics with additional commentary in the guise of both a slowed tempo and the appropriated memo scripts. As Birnbaum's work explores feminist questions around gender representation, Simon's video brings to the fore issues surrounding racial representation, which is little commented upon in the Pop literature and indicates a further area of exploration which future research should contend with, a point also gestured towards in my analysis of Keen's *Flik Flak* in Chapter Three.⁵¹

Along with works by Magnuson and Rubnitz, Simon's output points towards a particularly noteworthy period of production in Pop Cinema, which comes after its heyday in the 1960s. The wide availability of consumer-grade video technologies and the ability for artists to record and appropriate images directly from televisual broadcast saw a rehabilitation of Pop Cinema from the 1980s onwards. Many works from the 1980s and 1990s (contained within the filmography of this dissertation) rely on the apparatus of video to record, edit

⁵¹ For specific accounts of race in relation to the life and work of Andy Warhol see Jonathan Flatley's chapter 'Skin Problems' in *Like Andy Warhol* (2017:179-252); for an interesting account of the intersection of race and popular music in Pop see Medicov (2014).

and re-present raw material from mass media culture in a manner readily recognisable as Pop. Furthermore, many of these artists continue the analytical processes of artists like Simon in their deconstruction of such media, including figures like Antoni Muntadas (b.1941) and George Barber (b.1958). Artists like the San Francisco-based Anthony Dickey (b.1967) take such analytical conceits into the realm of almost pure abstraction, as in his video *Suspension* (1997), which records and degrades analogue footage of hundreds of celebrities' and models' faces, re-ordering their features into grotesque and disturbing 'exquisite corpse'-like assemblages.

Such an abundance of work from the 1980s and through into the contemporary era suggests that Pop did not cease to exist after the 1960s ended, but continued beyond temporal and geographic borders. Such a perspective is one I fleshed out in Chapter One. As we have seen with a flurry of recent exhibitions on international Pop, the 1980s remain a key era for the production of Pop art in all media, taking inspiration from and continuing to explore the same aesthetic and thematic ideas as Pop Art of the 1960s. If the 1960s saw the widespread emergence of a truly mass consumer and popular culture, then the 1980s saw it reach new, unprecedented heights. Such was the condition of art commenting on consumer and media culture by the 1980s, that the Pictures Generation and Pop-adjacent artist Richard Prince (b.1949) stated that, every artist of his generation started off 'as a pop artist' (2003:8). In a less vague assessment, Marco Livingstone commented in 2014 that 'Pop principles are now insinuated into the work of a high percentage of contemporary artists who might not even see themselves as direct heirs to Pop' (2014:55). In other

words, Pop is in the very bloodstream of global artistic practice. It has been the task of this thesis to suggest that experimental film and video art forms a significant and heretofore under-represented part of this global art practice.

In the opening of a chapter on film and television in his book on the Pop Arts of the 1960s, the British critic George Melly poses the following series of questions: 'what makes a film or television programme "pop"? Is it a style or an attitude? Must it contain a substantial portion of pop music, or is it on the contrary a visual style deriving from the theory and practice of pop painting? Is it a category of its own?' (2008 [1970]:175). To answer these questions he raids the history of mainstream Anglo-American film and television, often relying on the armature of Camp along the way to theorise his examples. Melly's work was the first to systematically (if journalistically) attempt to identify a corpus of Pop Cinema and Television. His chapter does outline some key examples of proto and camp Pop moving-image work but no relationship between examples of Pop film and TV and the wider visual arts of Pop is established in his text. There is preference in Melly's understanding for works that are inspired by and related to music. He charges Frank Tashlin's *The Girl Can't Help It* (1956) with being the 'first truly inventive pop musical' (2008 [1970]:179) and takes Richard Lester's Beatles film, *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), to be 'the most seminal of all pop films' (2008 [1970]:185). In an echo of Lawrence Alloway's understanding of Pop Cinema encountered in Chapter One, Melly champions work like Lester's because of its ephemeral nature; much like a popular song, it only hangs around in the public consciousness for a short while. As he recalls: 'Dick Lester has always said that he neither wants

nor expects his films to last. In this he is an orthodox pop theorist and I believe him to be sincere' (2008 [1970]:185).

The fleeting nature of such work is compounded by the context of the 1960s where there was no home viewing or re-sale market. More pointedly, Melly's reference to Lester's own feelings about his work point towards the temporary nature of popular art forms, determined in their longevity by the mercurial nature of popular taste. The popular films and shows listed by Melly are not '*about pop*. They were pop' (2008 [1970]:187). This is perhaps a reason as to why Melly does not account for any examples of Pop Cinema where there is a significant interaction between the moving-image and the aesthetics of Pop Art, as I have explored in the examples drawn upon throughout this thesis. By moving beyond the conventional and narrative works of film and television that often acted as the subject matter for Pop Art, I have pointed towards the myriad works of moving-image art that may themselves be called Pop Art. To answer Melly's question, "what makes a film or television programme "pop"? is, as I have demonstrated here, a fairly complex undertaking. I would be in agreement with him that its practice, style and attitude shares commonalities with that of Pop painting and sculpture, but I do not believe that Pop Cinema is derived from them. As I have shown, Pop Cinema arrived into the world fully formed, concurrent to its emergence in the fields of the fine arts. Pop Cinema is as concerned with exploring the stylistic limits and effects of its own given media (film, video) as it is in emulating other arts or thinking through questions of intermediality. Pop Cinema is not, however, a category on its own; it is best viewed in the wider expanse of the multi-disciplinary movement of Pop Art. It

is only through further research into this field that future historians of art and cinema will be able to claim a moving-image component to one of the most radically divisive and important episodes in the history of visual culture. There is a Pop Cinema to accompany the long-accepted cinema of Futurism, Dada and Surrealism and this thesis opens the door to further exploration of it.

Appendix I: Significant Pop Art Film Programmes, Exhibitions and Screening Sidebar Presentations

Independent Cinema Office (2008-2009), 'Essentials: The Hidden Masterpieces of Cinema, ICO Essentials: Pop', Curated by Tanya Leighton, UK: Touring Programme, 18/01/2008-19/10/2009, Various Venues, Films Included:

- *Broadway by Light* (William Klein, France, 1957)
- *Jamestown Balloos* (Robert Breer, US, 1957)
- *Film Montage I* (Peter Roehr, Germany, 1965-68)
- *When I Was Young* (Peter Whitehead, UK, 1965),
- --- ----- (*aka The Rock and Roll Film*) (Thom Andersen, Malcolm Brodwick, USA, 1966-67)
- *Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (Ronald Nameth, USA, 1967-2005)
- *Link* (Derek Boshier, UK, 1970)
- *Marvo Movie* (Jeff Keen, UK, 1967)
- *The Selling Of New York* (Nam June Paik, USA, 1972)
- *I'm Not The Girl Who Misses Much* (Pipilotti Rist, Switzerland, 1986)

International House Philadelphia (2011), 'Pop Cinema: Film and Art in the US and UK, 1950s-1970s', curated by William Kaizen, 28/04/2011-30/04/2011, Philadelphia, Films included:

- *O Dreamland* (Lindsay Anderson, UK, 1953)
- *Mama Don't Allow* (Karel Riesz and Tony Richardson, UK, 1956)
- *Broadway by Light* (William Klein, France, 1957)
- *Achooooo Mr. Kerroschev* (Stan VanDerBeek, US, 1960)
- *I was a Teenage Rumpot* (George and Mike Kuchar, US, 1960)
- *Cosmic Ray* (Bruce Conner, US, 1961)

- *Pop Goes the Easel* (Ken Russell, UK, 1962)
- *Wrestling* (Marie Menken, US, 1964)
- *Kustom Kar Kommandos* (Kenneth Anger, US, 1965)
- *Oh Dem Watermelons* (Robert Nelson, US, 1965)
- *When I Was Young* (Peter Whitehead, UK, 1965)
- --- ----- (*aka The Rock and Roll Film*) (Thom Andersen, Malcolm Brodwick, USA, 1966-67)
- *Cineblatz* (Jeff Keen, UK, 1967)
- *Marvo Movie* (Jeff Keen, UK, 1967)
- *Superartist* (Juan Drago, US, 1967)
- *American Time Capsule* (Chuck Braverman, US, 1968)
- *Against the Wall Miss America!* (Newsreel Film Collective, US, 1968)
- *Rockflow* (Bob Cowan, US, 1968)
- *White Lite* (Jeff Keen, UK, 1968)
- *Airborn* (Chas Wyndham, US, 1969)
- *Richard Hamilton* (James Scott, UK, 1969)
- *Link* (Derek Boshier, UK, 1970)
- *Daddy* (Niki de Saint Phalle and Peter Whitehead, UK/France, 1973)

Whitney Museum of American Art (2012-2013), exhibition in conjunction with 'Sinister Pop', 'Dark and Deadpan: Pop in TV and the Movies', Curated Chrissie Iles and Jay Sanders, New York, 15/11/2012-31/03/2013, Moving-Image works included:

- *Breathless (À bout de souffle [Trailer])* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1959)
- *Scorpio Rising* (Kenneth Anger, USA, 1963)
- *Daisy* [Lyndon Johnson Campaign Ad] (US, 1964)
- *Ice Cream* [Lyndon Johnson Campaign Ad] (US, 1964)

- *Hold Me While I'm Naked* (George Kuchar, USA, 1966)
- *The Im-probable Mr. Weegee* (Sherman Price, US, 1966)
- *The Pop Show* (Fred Mogubgub, US, 1966)
- *The Alphabet* (David Lynch, US, 1968)
- *American Youth* [Richard Nixon Campaign Ad] (US, 1968)
- *Underground Sundae* (Andy Warhol, US, 1968)
- *The Well-Shaven Cactus* (Ger Van Elk, US, 1969)
- *Nixon Now* [Richard Nixon Campaign Ad] (US, 1972)
- *66 Scenes form America* [Sequence: *Burger, New York* aka *Andy Warhol Eats a Hamburger*] (Jørgen Leth, Denmark/US, 1982)

Reina Sofia, Madrid, (2014), programmed in conjunction with 'Richard Hamilton', 'Seduction and Resistance. At the Limits of Pop, curated by Juan Suárez, 6/8/2014-28/8/2014, Programme One, 6/8/2014: *The Other England: The Attraction of Popular Culture:*

- *Mama Don't Allow* (Karel Riesz and Tony Richardson, UK, 1956)
- *Nice Time* (Alain Tanner and Claude Goretta, UK, 1957)
- *We are the Lambeth Boys* (Karel Riesz, UK, 1958)

—Programme Two, 7/8/2014: The Collage of the Public Sphere:

- *A La Mode* (Stan VanDerBeek ,1959, USA)
- *A Movie* (Bruce Conner, USA, 1958)
- *Marilyn Times Five* (Bruce conner, USA, 1968-73)
- *21-87* (Arthur Lipsett, 1964, Canada)
- *Free Fall*(Arthur Lipsett, 1964, Canada)

—Programme three, 13/8/2014: A Culture of Abundance:

- *Une Femme Mariée (A Married Women)* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1964, France)
- *Schick Aftershave Commercial* (1971, Dziga Vertov Group)

—Programme Four, 14/8/2014: Stars, Superstars and Everyday Life: The Factory of Andy

Warhol:

- *Andy Warhol* (Marie Menken , USA, 1965)
- *Elvis at Ferus* (Andy Warhol, USA, 1963)
- *Tarzan and Jane Regained...Sort of* (Andy Warhol, USA, 1963)

—Programme Five, 20/8/2014: Recreation of Popular Narrative: the Kuchar Brothers:

- *Sins of the Fleshapoids* (Mike Kuchar , USA, 1965)
- *Corruption of the Damned* (George Kuchar, USA, 1965)

—Programme Six, 21/8/2014: The Other Side of Celebrity:

- *The Rolling Stones Free Concert 1969* (Ira Schneider, USA, 1969)
- *Cocksucker Blues* (Robert Frank, USA, 1972)

—Programme Seven, 27/8/2014: Punk and the Politics of Popular Music:

- *Jubilee* (Dereck Jarman, UK, 1978)
- *T. G. Psychic Rally in Heaven 81* (Dereck Jarmna, UK, 1981)

—Programme Eight, 28/08/2014: Television and the Mediation of Violence:

- *Black TV* (Aldo Tambellini, USA, 1968)
- *No Japs at My Funeral* (James Nares, USA, 1980)

Art Gallery of New South Wales (2014-2015), programmed in conjunction with 'Pop to Popism' (2014-2015), *Pop Cinema: Iconic Stars and Cultural Revolution on Screen*, Sydney: Domain Theatre, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 29/10/14-01/03/15, Films included:

- *The Band Concert* (Wilfred Jackson, USA, 1935)
- *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (Ben Sharpsteen, USA, 1940)
- *Swing Shift Cinderella* (Tex Avery, USA, 1945)
- *Red hot Riding Hood* (Tex Avery, USA, 1946)
- *King-Size Canary* (Tex Avery, USA, 1947)

- *Bad Luck Blackie* (Tex Avery, USA, 1949)
- *Little Rural Riding Hood* (Tex Avery, USA, 1949)
- *Duck Amuck* (Chuck Jones, USA, 1953)
- *Jailhouse Rock* (Richard Thorpe, USA, 1957)
- *Breathless (À bout de Souffle)* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1959)
- *Some Like it Hot* (Billy Wilder, USA, 1959)
- *A Hard Day's Night* (Richard Lester, UK, 1964)
- *Alphaville* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1965)
- *Don't Look Back* (DA Pennebaker, USA, 1967)
- *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, UK, 1968)
- *Blow Up* (Michelangelo Antonioni, UK, 1968)
- *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, USA, 1969)
- *Elvis: That's the Way It Is* (Denis Sanders, USA, 1970)
- *Performance* (Nicolas Roeg, Donald Cammell, UK, 1970)
- *Pink Flamingos* (John Waters, USA, 1972)
- *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, UK, 1975)
- *Full Metal Jacket* (Stanley Kubrick, UK, 1987)
- *JFK* (Oliver Stone, USA, 1991)
- *Malcolm X* (Spike Lee, USA, 1992)
- *Basquiat* (Julian Schnabel, USA, 1996)
- *Boogie Nights* (Paul Thomas Anderson, USA, 1997).

— (2014-2015), *Pop Artists on Screen*, Sydney: Domain Theatre, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 19/11/2014-04/02/2015, Films included:

- *Love's Presentation* (James Scott, UK, 1967)
- *Richard Hamilton* (James Scott, UK, 1969)
- *Andy Warhol* (Lana Jokel, UK, 1973)
- *David Hockney's Diary* (Christian Blackwood, Michael Blackwood, USA, 1978)
- *Jim Dine, London* (Michael Blackwood, USA, 1978)

- *Edward Ruscha* (Geoffrey Hayden, UK, 1979)
- *Roy Lichtenstein* (Geoffrey Haydon, USA, 1979)
- *Ding A Ding Day* (Garry Shead, Australia, 1961-1966)
- *David Perry* (Albie Thomas, Australia, 1968)
- *De Da De Dum* (Gary Shead, Australia, 1968)
- *Album* (David Perry, Australia, 1970).

— (2014-2015), *Pop Saturdays: Direct Cinema, Underground and Experimental Films*, Sydney: Domain Theatre, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 13/12/14-14/02/15, Films included:

- **Ubu Films:**
- *Man and His World* (Albie Thoms, Australia, 1966),
- *Boobs a Lot* (Aggy Read, Australia, 1968)
- *Moon Virility* (Albie Thoms, Australia, 1967)
- *Bolero* (Albie Thoms, Australia, 1967)
- *Bluto* (Albie Thoms, Australia, 1967)
- *Tobias Icarus Age 4* (Clem Weight, Australia, 1968)
- *A Sketch on Abigail's Belly* (David Perry, Australia, 1968)
- *Short Pop Experiments:*
- *A Movie* (Bruce Conner, USA, 1958)
- *Cine Blatz* (Jeff Keen, UK, 1960)
- *Cosmic Ray* (Bruce Conner, USA, 1961)
- *Notes on The Circus* (Jonas Mekas, USA, 1966)
- *Moonblack* (Aldo Tambellini, USA, 1968)
- **The Films of Kenneth Anger:**
- *Magic Lantern Cycle* (Kenneth Anger, USA, 1947-1966)
- **Unclassified Films:**
- *The Chair (aka Paul)* (Richard Leacock, DA Pennebaker, Gregory Shuker, USA, 1962)
- *Crisis: Behind A Presidential Commitment* (Richard Leacock, Gregory Shuker, USA, 1963)

- *The Chelsea Girls* (Andy Warhol, USA, 1966)
- *Far from Vietnam (Loin du Vietnam)* (Joris Ivens, William Klein, Claude Lelouch, Agnès Varda, Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, France, 1967)
- *Tonite Let's All Make Love in London* (Peter Whitehead, UK, 1967)
- *No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger* (David Loeb Weiss, USA, 1968)
- *Pink Narcissus* (James Bidgood, USA, 1971)
- *Town Bloody Hall* (DA Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus, USA 1979)

Walker Art Centre (2015), 'International Pop Cinema', Minneapolis, MN: Perlman Gallery, Walker Art Centre, curated by Ed Halter, 11/04/2015-29/08/2015, Films included:

- *Broadway by Light* (William Klein, France, 1957)
- *Le Chant du Styrene (The Song of Styrene)* (Alain Resnais, France, 1958)
- *A Movie* (Bruce Conner, USA, 1958)
- *Breathless (À bout de souffle [Trailer])* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1959)
- *Cosmic Ray* (Bruce Conner, USA, 1961)
- *Femme est une Femme (A Woman Is a Woman [Trailer])* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1961)
- *Mondo Cane* (Paolo Cavara, Gualtiero Jacopetti, Franco Prosperi, Italy, 1962)
- *Pop Goes the Easel* (Ken Russel, UK, 1962)
- *A-Z* (Manfred Kuttner, Germany, 1963)
- *Le Mépris (Contempt [Trailer])* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1963)
- *Scorpio Rising* (Kenneth Anger, USA, 1963)

- *Report* (Bruce Conner, USA, 1963-1967)
- *Kiss Kiss Kiss* (Tadanori Yokoo, Japan, 1964)
- *Soap Opera* (Andy Warhol, USA, 1964)
- *Tokuten Eizo Anthology No. 1* (Tadanori Yokoo, Japan, 1964)
- *Film-Montagen 1-3* (Peter Roehr, Germany, 1965)
- *Kachi Kachi Yama* (Tadanori Yokoo, Japan, 1965)
- *Now* (Santiago Álvarez, Cuba, 1965)
- *Beatles Electroniques* (Nam Jun Paik, Jud Yalkut, USA, 1966-1972)
- *Hold Me While I'm Naked* (George Kuchar, USA, 1966)
- *Waiting for Commercials* (Nam Jun Paik, Jud Yalkut, USA, 1966-1972)
- *Made in the USA [Trailer]* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1966)
- *Made in the USA* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1966)
- *Two or three Things I Know About Her (2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle [Trailer])* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1966)
- *Band of Ninja* (Oshima Nagisa, Japan, 1967)
- *La Chinoise* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1967)
- *Cineblatz* (Jeff Keen, UK, 1967)
- *Marvo Movie* (Jeff Keen, UK, 1967)
- *Videotape Study No. 3* (Nam Jun Paik, Jud Yalkut, USA, 1967-1969)
- *Meatdaze* (Jeff Keen, UK, 1968)
- *Tonite Let's All Make Love in London* (Peter Whitehead, UK, 1967)
- *Marilyn Times Five* (Bruce Conner, USA, 1968-73)
- *Mr. Freedom* (William Klein, France, 1969)
- *Richard Hamilton* (James Scott, UK, 1969)
- *ABID* (Pramod Pati, India, 1970),
- *Link* (Derek Boshier, UK, 1970)
- *Good-by Elvis* (Tanaami Keiichi, Japan, 1971)

- *Good-by Marilyn* (Tanaami Keiichi, Japan, 1971)
- *Consumer Art* (Natalia LL, Poland, 1972-1974)
- *Change* (Derek Boshier, UK, 1973)
- *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?* (René Viénet, France, 1973)
- *Daddy* (Niki de Saint Phalle, Peter Whitehead, UK, 1973)
- *Oh Yoko!* (Tanaami Keiichi, Japan, 1973)
- *Society of Spectacle* (Guy Debord, France, 1973)

Harvard Art Museum (2015-2016), in conjunction with 'Cortia Kent and the Language of Pop, Harvard, MA, 18/10/2015, Programme One: *Screening the Screen-print*, films included:

- *Warhol* (Marie Menken, US, 1965)
- *Alleluia* (Thomas Conrad, US, 1967)
- *Silkscreens* (Katy Martin, US, 1978)

—15/11/2015, Programme Two: *Salvation at the Supermarket*, films included:

- *Melting* (Thom Andersen, US, 1965)
- *Carrots and Peas* (Hollis Frampton, US, 1969)
- *Lemon* (Hollis Frampton, US, 1969)
- *Premium* (Ed Ruscha, US, 1971)

—06/12/2015, Programme Three: *Television Assassination—Politics and Protest*, films included:

- *Piece Mandala/End War* (Paul Sharits, US, 1965)
- *Television Assassination* (Bruce Conner, US, 1963/1995)
- *Report* (Bruce Conner, US, 1967)
- *Since* (Andy Warhol, US, 1967)

Appendix II: Films Relevant to Understanding Pop Cinema

This listing has been split into broad sections covering nonfiction, narrative fiction and non-narrative works. The list could be split into further groupings i.e. animated films, collage films, film paintings etc. I have left these kinds of speculations to the reader. I offer some examples of possible avenues of categorisation in Chapter One. I indicate ways of reading certain films in each of this thesis' case-study chapters.

Nonfiction Films

- *O Dreamland* (1953, Lindsay Anderson)
- *Jazz of Lights* (1955, Ian Hugo)
- *Mama Don't Allow* (1956, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson)
- *Nice Time* (1957, Alain Tanner & Claude Goretta)
- *La Chant de la Styrene (The Song of Styrene)* (1958, Alain Resnais)
- *Broadway by Light* (1958, William Klein)
- *Where Did Our Love Go?* (1966, Warren Sonbert)
- --- ----- (aka *The Rock and Roll Film*) (Thom Andersen, Malcolm Brodwick, 1966-67)
- *Tonite Let's All Make Love in London* (1967, Peter Whitehead)
- *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?* (1973, Réne Viénet)
- *The Society of Spectacle* (1973, Guy Debord)
- *Get Out of the Car* (2010, Thom Andersen)

Nonfiction Films About pop Artists

- *Pop Goes the Easel* (1962, Ken Russell)
- *Andy Warhol* (1965, Marie Menken)
- *Superartist* (1967, Juan Drago)
- *Love's Presentation* (1967, James Scott)
- *Richard Hamilton* (1969, James Scott and Richard Hamilton)
- *The Great Ice Cream Robbery: Claes Oldenburg* (1970, James Scott and Claes Oldenburg)
- *Andy Warhol* (1973, Lana Jokel)
- *David Hockney's Diary* (1978, Christian Blackwood and Michael Blackwood)
- *Jim Dine, London* (1978, Michael Blackwood)
- *Edward Ruscha* (1979, Geoffrey Hayden)
- *Roy Lichtenstein* (1979, Geoffrey Hayden)

Narrative Fiction Films

- *The Girl Can't Help It* (1956, Frank Tashlin)
- *The Golden Record aka The Golden Disk* (1958, Don Sharp)

- *Expresso Bongo* (1959, Val Guest)
- *Pillow Talk* (1959, Michael Gordon)
- *Breathless (A Bout de Souffle)*, 1960, Jean Luc Godard)
- *A Hard Day's Night* (1964, Richard Lester)
- *Une Femme est Une Femme (A Woman is a Woman)* (1961, Jean-Luc Godard)
- *Blood and Black Lace* (1964, Mario Bava)
- *The Planet of the Vampires* (1965, Mario Bava)
- *Pierrot Le Fou* (1965, Jean-Luc Godard)
- *The 10th Victim (La decima vittima)*, 1965, Elio Petri)
- *Batman* (1966, Leslie H. Martinson)
- *Daisies* (1966, Věra Chytilová)
- *Made in the USA* (1966, Jean-Luc Godard)
- *Modesty Blaise* (1966, Joseph Losey)
- *Qui êtes-vous, Polly Maggoo? (Who are You, Polly Maggoo ?)* (1966, William Klein)
- *Who Wants to Kill Jessie? (Kdo chce zabít Jessii?)*, 1966, Václav Vorlíček)
- *Black Lizard* (1967, Kinji Fukasaku)
- *La Chinoise* (1967, Jean-Luc Godard)
- *Jeu de Massacre (The Killing Game)* (1967, Alan Jessua)
- *Deux ou Trois choses que je sais d'elle (Two or Three Things I know About Her)* (1967, Jean-Luc Godard)
- *Barbarella* (1968, Rodger Vadim)
- *Danger: Diabolik!* (1968, Mario Bava)
- *The Green Slime* (1968, Kinji Fukasaku)
- *Santanik* (1968, Piero Vivareli)
- *Yellow Submarine* (1968, George Dunning)
- *Erotissimo* (1969, Gérard Pirès)
- *The Frightened Woman (Femina Ridens)*, 1969, Piero Schivazappa)
- *Mr. Freedom* (1969, William Klein)
- *Putney Swope* (1969, Robert Downey)
- *Brand X* (1970, Wynn Chamberlain)
- *Personal Search (Rewizja osobista)* (1972, Andrzej Kostenko and Witold Leszczynski)
- *Funeral Parade of Roses* (1971, Toshio Matsumoto)
- *Tout va Bien* (1972, Dziga Vertov Group)
- *Daddy* (1973, Peter Whitehead and Niki de Saint Phalle)
- *Suspiria* (1977, Dario Argento)
- *Pepi, Luci, Bom* (1980, Pedro Almodóvar)
- *Breathless* (1982, Jim McBride)
- *Spring Breakers* (2013, Harmony Korine)
- *The Neon Demon* (2016, Nicolas Winding Refn)

Non-Narrative Films

- *Rose Hobart* (1936, Joseph Cornell)
- *Puce Moment* (1949, Kenneth Anger)
- *A Tub Named Desire* (1956, George and Mike Kuchar)
- *The Naked and the Nude* (1958, George and Mike Kuchar)
- *A Movie* (1958, Bruce Connor)
- *A La Mode* (1959, Stan VanDerBeek)
- *Science Friction* (1959, Stan VanDerBeek)
- *I was a Teenage Rumpot* (1960, George and Mike Kuchar)
- *Very Nice, Very Nice* (1961, Arthur Lipsett)
- *Cosmic Ray* (1962, Bruce Connor)
- *History of Nothing* (1962, Eduardo Paolozzi)
- *A-Z* (1963, Manfred Kuttner)
- *Flaming Creatures* (1963, Jack Smith)
- *Lust for Ecstasy* (1963, George and Mike Kuchar)
- *Pussy on a Hot Tin Roof* (1963, George and Mike Kuchar)
- *Queen of Sheba Meets the Atom Man* (1963-1982, Ron Rice)
- *Report* (Bruce Connor, 1963-1967)
- *Scorpio Rising* (1963, Kenneth Anger)
- *Television Assassination* (Bruce Conner, US, 1963-1964/1995)
- *21-87* (1964, Arthur Lipsett)
- *Empire* (1964, Andy Warhol)
- *Flik Flak* (1966, Jeff Keen)
- *Free Fall* (1964, Arthur Lipsett)
- *Harlot* (1964, Andy Warhol)
- *Kiss Kiss Kiss* (1964, Tadanori Yakoo)
- *Mario Banana (No. 1)* (1964)
- *Soap Opera* (1964, Andy Warhol)
- *Tokuten Eizo Anthology no. 1* (1964, Tadanori Yakoo)
- *Vivian* (1964, Bruce Connor)
- *Cadence Commercial* (1965, Andy Warhol)
- *Corruption of the Damned* (1965, George Kuchar)
- *Film Montag I-III* (1965, Peter Roehr)
- *Kachi Kachi Yama* (1965, Tadanori Yakoo)
- *Kakafon Kakkoon* (1965, Eduardo Paolozzi)
- *Kustom Kar Kommandos* (1965, Kenneth Anger)
- *Melting* (1965, Thom Andersen)
- *Now* (1965, Santiago Alvarez)
- *O Dem Watermelons* (1965, Robert Nelson)
- *Sins of the Fleshapoids* (1965, Mike Kuchar)
- *Achoo Mr. Kerrooshev* (1966, Stan Vanderbeek)
- *All My Life* (1966, Bruce Baillie)

- *Breakaway* (1966, Bruce Connor)
- *Hold Me While I'm Naked* (1966, George Kuchar)
- *The Pop Show* (1966, Fred Mogubgub)
- *Screen Test [ST245]: Nico (Hershey)* (1966, Andy Warhol)
- *Screen Test [ST269]: Lou Reed (Coke)* (1966, Andy Warhol)
- *Screen Test [ST270]: Lou Reed (Hershey)* (1966, Andy Warhol)
- *Cineblatz* (1967, Jeff Keen)
- *The Great Society* (1967, Fred Mogubgub)
- *Jimmy James and The Vagabonds* (1967, Peter Whitehead)
- *Marvo Movie* (1967, Jeff Keen)
- *When I Was Young* (1967, Peter Whitehead)
- *Airborn* (1968, Chas Wyndham)
- *American Time Capsule* (1968, Chuck Braverman)
- *Filmtract no. 1968* (1968, Jean-Luc Godard and Gerrard Fromanger)
- *Meatdaze* (1968, Jeff Keen)
- *The Movie Orgy* (1968, Joe Dante)
- *L.B.J.* (1968, Santiago Alvarez)
- *Marilyn Times Five* (1968-1972, Bruce Connor)
- *Rockflow* (1968, Robert Cowan)
- *Underground Sundae (Schrafft's Commercial)* (1968, Andy Warhol)
- *White Lite* (1968, Jeff Keen)
- *Camembert Martial extra-doux (Extra-Soft Martial Camembert)* (1969, Martial Raysse)
- *Carrots and Peas* (1969, Hollis Frampton)
- *Lemon* (1969, Hollis Frampton)
- *New Left Note* (1969-1982, Saul Levine)
- *ABID* (1970, Pramod Pati)
- *Pravda* (1970, Dziga Vertov Group)
- *Link* (1970, Derek Boshier)
- *Commercial War* (1971, Keiichi Tanami)
- *Good bye Marilyn* (1971, Keiichi Tanami)
- *Good-bye Elvis and USA* (1971, Keiichi Tanami)
- *Metastasis* (1971, Toshio Matsumoto, Video)
- *Schick Aftershave Commercial* (1971, Dziga Vertov Group)
- *Three Landscapes* (1971-1972, Roy Lichtenstein)
- *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971, Dušan Makavejev)
- *The Selling of New York* (1972, Nam June Paik)
- *Frank Film* (1973, Frank and Caroline Mouris)
- *Mona Lisa* (1973, Toshio Matsumoto)
- *Oh Yoko!* (1973, Keiichi Tanami)
- *The Politics of Perception* (1973, Kirk Tougas)
- *Andy Warhol: Re-Production* (1974, Toshio Matsumoto)

- *Bio Dop* (1974, Joan Rabascall and Benet Rossell)
- *Consumer Art* (1974, Natalia LL)
- *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer* (1975, Jack Goldstein)
- *Breakfast (Table-Top Dolly)* (1976, Michael Snow)
- *Rocky* (1976, Paul McCarthy)
- *Boy Meets Girls* (1978, Eugenia Balcells)
- *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978, Dara Birnbaum)
- *Kiss The Girls: Make them Cry* (1979, Dara Birnbaum)
- *PM Magazine/Acid Rock* (1979, Dara Birnbaum)
- *Pop Pop video: Kojak/Wang* (1980, Dara Birnbaum)
- *Pop Pop Video: General Hospital/Olympic Women/Speed Skating* (1980, Dara Birnbaum)
- *Remy/Grand Central Trains and Boats and Planes* (1980, Dara Birnbaum)
- *The Critic Laughs [in Shock of the New: Culture as Nature]* (1980, Richard Hamilton)
- *Watching the Press, Reading the Media* (1981, Antonio Muntadas)
- *Andy Warhol Eating a Hamburger [66 Scenes from America]* (1982, Jørgen Leth)
- *Credits* (1984, Antonio Muntadas)
- *Death Valley Days* (1984, Gorilla Tapes)
- *Made for TV* (1984, Anne Magnuson and Tom Rubnitz)
- *Absence of Satan* (1985, George Barber)
- *Global Taste: A Meal in Three Courses* (1985, Martha Rosler)
- *I'm Not The Girl Who Misses Much* (1986, Pipilotti Rist)
- *Production Notes: Fast Food for Thought* (1986, Jason Simon)
- *Undercover...Me!* (1988, Tom Rubnitz)
- *1001 Colours Andy Never Thought of* (1989, George Barber)
- *Bossy Burger* (1991, Paul McCarthy)
- *Hovis Ad* (1994, George Barber)
- *SCHWEPpeS AD* (1995, George Barber)
- *Altair* (1995, Lewis Klahr)
- *2001 Colours Andy Never Thought of* (1996, George Barber)
- *Suspension* (1997, Anthony Discenza)
- *Pony Glass* (1998, Lewis Klahr)
- *December 3, 1998 – 12:03-01:17 A.M.* (1998, Anthony Dicenza)
- *pulse pharma phantasm* (2002, Les LeVeque)
- *Mouse Heaven* (2004, Kenneth Anger)
- *Light is Waiting* (2007, Michael Robinson)
- *Following Your Heart Can Lead to Wonderful Things* (2008, George Barber)
- *Hold Me Now* (2008, Michael Robinson)
- *The Dark Krystle* (2013, Michael Robinson)

- *The Rapture* (2015, Michael Flemming)
- *Sixty Six* (2015, Lewis Klahr)

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