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1 Exhibition as Film

MIEKE BAL

Photography as Storyboard, Exhibition as Film

If taken at all seriously either as art form or as a predominantly visual discourse, exhibitions are usually interpreted or framed in terms borrowed from other art practices. This transfer between disciplines and practices is quite useful; it helps museologists conceive of their practices artistically and coherently, while providing critics with conceptual tools to illuminate exhibitions as meaningful wholes in relation to their visitors. For example, in my book *Double Exposures* (1996), I conducted a mostly critical examination of a few famous exhibition sites in museums of worldwide reputation. The key metaphor in that analysis was narrative, conceived as a meaning-producing sequentiality emerging from the viewer's walk through an exhibition. Putting one thing next to another, in other words, produces a time-bound relationship between the two, one that moves from the first to the second.

In that study I used this metaphor as a tool for a critical reading of exhibitions. Here, by contrast, I don't want to elaborate on what bothers me in many displays, but, in the opposite spirit, offer some thoughts about this and other metaphors as tools for enhancing the aesthetic and political efficacy of exhibitions. Thus my goal is not criticism but rather theorizing by means of a careful analysis of actual displays. I will do this through a close look at an exhibition I found the best – the most effective, gripping, and powerful – I have ever seen. I am talking about the award-winning exhibition *Partners*, curated by Canadian art collector and curator Ydessa Hendeles.

This exhibition does important political work in that, without in the least universalizing art, it both addresses a transnational world and

refrains from endorsing the neonationalism that is presently rampant in Europe and the United States. It also establishes long-repressed albeit ambivalent links, expressed in the exhibition's title, as history has forged them between the Jewish and the German peoples, as well as between the two sides of the Atlantic. This political efficacy is wrought by means of what is the primary thrust of the show – namely, a profoundly effective, indeed thrilling, aesthetic. I seek to understand how, far from being opposite or even distinct domains, political work and aesthetic work operate together in an inextricable merging that strengthens both.

But I elaborate this general point in a more specific way than that. For this aesthetic is intimately linked with the predominant medium of the exhibition, which is photography, aligned with sculpture and video. In light of my earlier insight that exhibitions, by virtue of the spectator's movement through the space and the temporal sequentiality involved in the visit, are always to some extent narrative, the medium of photography in the exhibition tends to take on cinematic effects. This effect has been enhanced in *Partners*, so much so that a tension between photography and film is the primary aesthetic at play. In this respect, *Partners* is exemplary – indeed, a meta-exhibition.

Therefore, for an understanding of the artistic *work* that *Partners* does, I find it most productive to deploy the metaphor of *film*. Specifically, since many of the works exhibited here are, or are derived from, photography, I submit understanding *Partners* as a proposal to consider photography – the medium, the art – as a *storyboard* or visual scenario for a cinematic vision of art presentation. As we shall see later, photography's allegedly privileged connection to reality is part of that function. Hence, so is its connection to, or engagement with, the transworld conceptions of nation and display that we are studying in this book. It is this inextricable bond between aesthetics and politics that makes this exhibition not only astonishingly effective but also, specifically, emblematic for the topic at issue in the conference from which this volume emanated.

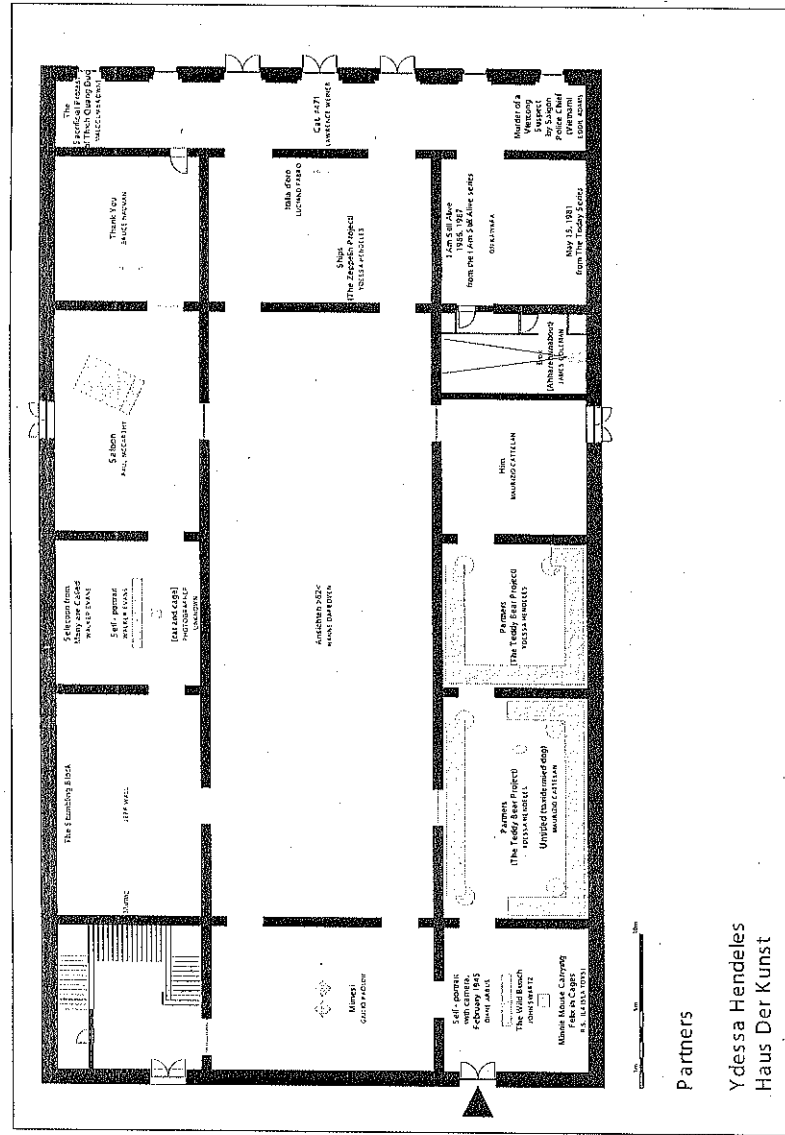
I contend that this relationship between art and the politics of nationhood is brought in according to a particular aesthetic vision that binds the contemplation of art with a repositioning of the subject in relation to the world. This works as follows. The thrust of the cinematic vision I see in this exhibition is to establish, or at least encourage, an *affective* relationship not only between the art and the viewer but also among the artworks themselves. These relationships

among the artworks constitute the exhibition's *syntax*, which is *affective* in nature. Between a *perception* that troubles us and an *action* we hesitate over, *affect* emerges. Photography, the key element in *Partners*, projects this relationship of affect as the possibility of *translating* heterogeneous *emotions* into one another. The common foundation on which such translation can work is the notion that through art, it is possible to identify with other people's pasts as they lived them; in other words, to 'have' other people's memories. And in such cases, where memories travel as much across the Atlantic as through time, I propose to discuss the affective syntax in terms of *world memories*. This term, then, suggests how I would like to attempt to move, with Ydessa Hendeles's *Partners* as my partner, from neonationalism to postnational thinking.

Exhibition as ... Competing Models

Partners occupied fourteen exhibition rooms in the Haus der Kunst (House of Art) in Munich. Thirteen of these rooms were medium or small and surrounded the fourteenth, a large central space (see fig. 1.1). The different rooms were devoted to objects ranging from early photographs to contemporary sculpture. Neither strictly sequential nor circular, the exhibition had a single entrance, leading into an exhibit of three very different objects, none of which belonged to canonical art: an early self-portrait of Diane Arbus, made before she became an artist and for a private purpose; an antique toy of a Minnie Mouse figure carrying Felix the Cat in a suitcase; and a studio photograph of a group of bandits. After this small entrance room, the exhibition offered several possible itineraries.

In light of this organization, my favourite conceptual metaphor of narrative, while never irrelevant for exhibitions where visitors move through time, is perhaps not the most obviously operative one. Thus, already at this very basic level of the floor plan, the exhibition raises the question of the metaphors that can be brought to bear on it. Most frequently, one speaks of exhibitions in terms of either theatre or narrative. Theatre recalls the *mise-en-scène* that all exhibitions imply, narrative invokes the walking tour the visitor makes through it. In museums devoted to national collections, it is the nation itself that either gets staged or is narrated in nationalism's favourite genre, the epic. The relevance of the conceptual metaphor of *theatre* as a frame of reference is easy to grasp. In exhibiting a number of artworks under the best possible viewing



1.1 Floor plan of Partners, exhibition catalogue.

conditions, curators need to develop a *scenography*. They arrange objects in a space that, by virtue of those objects' status as art, becomes more or less fictional. The gallery suspends everyday concerns and isolates the viewer *with* the art.

But the gallery space also isolates the viewer *from* the art. The objects can be approached, but only to a limited degree and most often without being touched. This turns the gallery space into a stage separated from the spectator sitting in the dark. To make a convincing exhibition, the curator arranges the objects like still personages, as a *tableau vivant*. The distancing this entails constitutes the limit of the usefulness of the metaphor of theatre. Partners deploys this metaphor but does not restrict itself to it.¹

To be sure, an exhibition is necessarily the result of a *mise-en-scène*, and Partners is no exception. But what does this mean? In theatre, *mise-en-scène* is the materialization of text (word and score) in a form accessible for public, collective reception; a mediation between a play and the multiple public, that is, each individual in it; an artistic organization of the space in which the play is set; and an arranging of a limited and delimited section of real time and space. As a result of all this arranging, a differently delimited section of fictional time and space accommodates the fictional activities of the actors, who perform their roles in order to build a plot. In the case of exhibitions, it is important to realize that the role of actor is not limited to the objects on display; both the visitors and the objects are the actors, and it is the interaction between them that constitutes the play.

The subject of this activity – the (stage) director – makes a work of art. Her tools are time, space, actors, props, and light. Her activities are the projection of dramatic and musical writing into a particular time-space, or *chronotopos*; specifically spatial co-ordination; the highlighting of some meanings over others; and the keying of text and score in between performers and public. This is sometimes 'totalizing,' and always – to use a term I prefer – *mise-en-pièce(s)*.²

To speak with Hans-Thiess Lehmann, *mise-en-scène* is a mediation from logos to landscape.³ The activity of *mise-en-scène* makes for an intervention that turns words – in the case of exhibitions, the conceptual understanding by the curator of the artworks – leading to the formation of abstract meanings, into a spectacle receptive to the turmoil of liberated meanings variously attached to concrete, visible, and audible phenomena and signs. Borrowed from theatre, *mise-en-scène* indicates the overall artistic activity whose results will shelter and foster the performance of the concrete realization of the art. In its mobility,

and in the change over time that it entails, *mise-en-scène* fits nicely as a metaphor for the experience of an exhibition, because theatrical *mise-en-scène* creates an affective relationship with the spectators on the basis of, among other things, spatial arrangements. It is also a metaphor that theatre shares with film.

The *narrative* conception of exhibitions has been discussed in the catalogue for *Partners* – explicitly by Ernst van Alphen in his essay ‘Exhibition as Narrative Work of Art’ (2003), and implicitly by Ydessa Hendeles in her ‘Notes on the Exhibition’ (2003). This idea is based on the visitor’s journey through the exhibition as constitutive of a series of events constituting a ‘plot.’ Narrative and theatre share the element of plot, but there is also a major difference between them. Instead of standing still *in front of* an imaginary stage, as in theatre, the viewer now walks *through* a forest of objects. And instead of being a spectator of the play, she is now a co-narrator, fulfilling in her own way the script that predetermines the parameters within which the story can be told. This temporal dimension of exhibitions is the guiding principle of narratological analysis. As in reading a novel, where the reader accumulates an understanding and affective relationship with the events and characters, walking through an exhibition creates, in the experience of the visitor, an accumulative relationship with the art on display.

In the catalogue, Van Alphen offers a narrative model for exhibitions as an alternative to the three traditional principles of coherence, derived from (1) the centrality of the individual artist, (2) a chronological unfolding of an artist’s or a group of artists’ ‘development,’ and (3) thematic unification. These principles are unsurprising, and hence unchallenging. By contrast, a narrative exhibition asks of the viewer that she establish connections as she moves through the exhibition, building up a ‘story,’ which has, as its outcome, or *dénouement*, an *effect*. This effect is an impression that binds together the different experiences evolving from the confrontation with the artworks.

Such shows need not have the typical coherence of traditional exhibitions. On the contrary, since they activate the viewer, compelling her to create rather than consume the exhibition-as-narrative, such shows can harbour heterogeneous objects that only cohere because of the narrative constantly ‘under construction.’ As Van Alphen argues, Hendeles’s series of ground-breaking exhibitions at her Art Foundation in Toronto bear the hallmark of narrativity in this sense. *Partners* brings this art of storytelling, by means of a particular installation of objects, to a hitherto unsurpassed level of intensity.

In Van Alphen’s analysis of this exhibition, the narrativity is conceptualized primarily through Peter Brooks’s theory of plot and repetition. Harking back to a structuralist model, according to which a plot is constructed from building blocks arranged in a tension between similarity and difference or in an ongoing transformation, Brooks sees narrative as a constant postponement that frustrates but also maintains a desire for the ending. This desire is the basis of the activity of the reader, who performs what Brooks (1984) calls ‘reading for the plot,’ to cite the title of his major book on this topic.

But as with novels, exhibition narrative also achieves this effect by means of a specifically narrative *rhetoric*. In her straightforward, ostensibly descriptive ‘Notes’ in the catalogue, Hendeles hints at some particular *poetical* figures that articulate this narrative. It is in these figures that the unique effectivity of this exhibition can be perceived. One such figure is *contrast*. This figure is at work, for example, between the quietness of the gallery in which On Kawara’s work from the *Today* series (1966–present) and elements from his *I Am Still Alive* series (1969–present) is installed, and the loud, pounding sounds of the adjacent gallery where James Coleman’s *Box (Ahhareturnabout)* from 1977 is staged (Hendeles 2003, 223). The contrast is effective because the soundproof door between the two rooms turns the loudness of *Box* into an unexpected shock. The equally noisy ragtime music of Paul McCarthy’s *Saloon* (1995–6) works differently, because this noise reaches the visitor earlier on, creeping up on her, from soft and unclear to loud and bizarrely out of date.

Hendeles also hints at subtle *counterpoints*, such as between the themes of murder and suicide that are found in Darboven’s *Ansichten* >82< and that are reiterated in the photojournalist narratives of Malcolm Browne and Eddie Adams (Hendeles 2003, 220), on display at opposite ends of the long, narrow gallery. But after Darboven’s work, these two embedded themes are no longer clear opposites. Rather, they are complex entanglements with the real world, in which perpetrator and victim positions are not always in crystal-clear opposition, partly because the individual does not act alone. But whereas the contrast between Kawara and Coleman proceeds in a forward movement of linear time, the resonance between Darboven’s work and the two photojournalistic series emerges retrospectively. This difference – between prospective and retrospective resonance – is of a narratological nature.⁴

A third figure Hendeles mentions is *reiteration*. This figure is at work, for example, in the continuation – in *Partners* (The Teddy Bear Project)

from 2002–2003 – of a duality proposed in a preceding gallery. The duality between comfort and danger, affection and hostility, established as early as the entrance gallery by the toy called Minnie Mouse Carrying Felix in Cages, continues in the later, overwhelming installation of thousands of pictures of teddy bears. Whereas Hendeles focuses on the repetition of these dualities, Van Alphen places the narrativity effect in the subtle transformations in the differences within the similarities. Perhaps Hendeles's focus is as distinct from Van Alphen's as poetry is from prose narrative. Hendeles establishes a version of what Dutch curator Rudi Fuchs has called *couplets* – often unexpected analogies and resonances produced by means of juxtapositions.⁵

Theatre, narrative, poetry: these genres, I contend, help us understand how exhibitions, not the particular artworks in them, *work*. How they produce effects that imprint themselves on us and make us leave the galleries different from when we entered them. By means of this transformative work, these genres elude the facile discourse of admiration. In this sense they are much more productive than nationalist display or epic narrative and in combination can contribute to overcoming an outdated and dangerous nationalism. These three models are operative in *Partners*. But what makes them exceptionally effective is the overarching model of *cinema*.

Exhibition as Film, after Photography

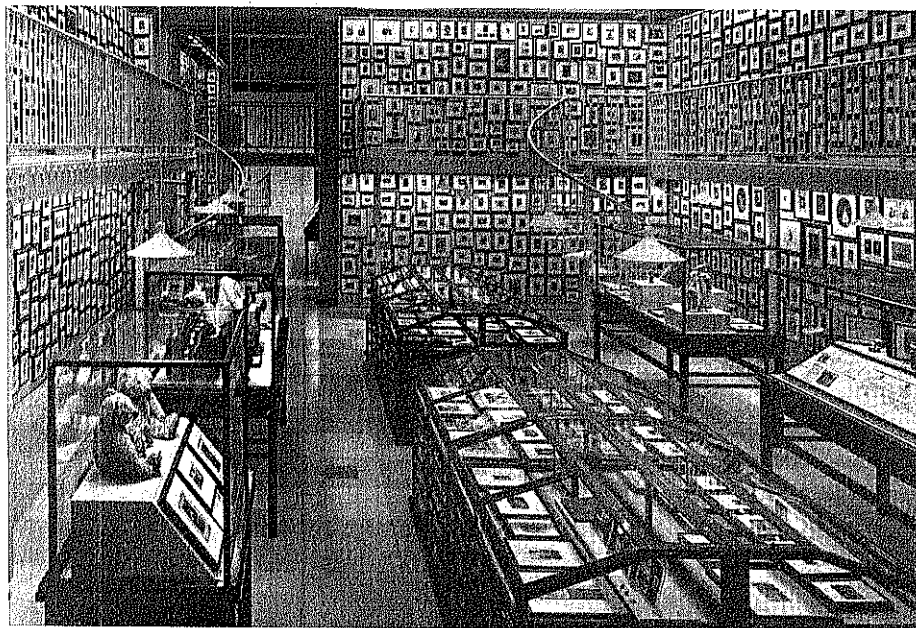
Cinema, as the new art of the twentieth century – the century of this exhibition – is specifically relevant here for three reasons. First, it encompasses the three models I have just mentioned and binds them together: film requires *mise-en-scène*, unfolds narratives, and deploys poetic strategies to enforce its affective impact, slowing down the forward thrust of the plot. Second, cinema is the art of the masses. Thus it was highly invested in becoming an effective tool for political activism both in the Soviet politics of an Eisenstein – who used a montage of dialectical contrast as his primary tool – and in the early Hollywood tradition of Griffith, whose organicist montage of oppositions produced its own mass politics. Third, and most importantly for my analysis, cinema is not simply a continuation of photography. Rather, this new medium of the early twentieth century *responds* to photography, critically and ambivalently. This response concerns not only movement and time but also, more subtly, the insistence on the limits of visibility *inherent* in time, which cinema inscribes in the black intervals in and between frames.⁶

Cinema, then, takes off where photography reaches its literal limits: the frame. Thus photography serves as cinema's scenario or storyboard, and cinema is photography's commentary: a metaphotography. This is emphatically – but as we shall see, not exclusively – the case in *Partners*. With photography as its storyboard, this exhibition animates that visual scenario by means of cinematic strategies. These strategies include the obvious ones, such as the construction of a space that is proper to the exhibition and that offers connections to the outside world without coinciding with it; the tension between movement and time, each possessed by its own rhythm; and the deployment of stylistic figures such as those of montage (e.g., dissolves) and framing (e.g., close-ups) that thicken the narrative and change its pace. The cinematic that, I contend, is the soul of this exhibition – its beating heart that makes our hearts beat – comes to operate most powerfully at a few key junctures.

One such moment or juncture is the transition towards an artwork that the curator-collector has herself contributed as an artist, called *Partners* (The Teddy Bear Project). This immense photo archive of thousands of snapshots, studio pictures, and other inconspicuous forms of photography – all uniformly matted and framed – is the heart of the exhibition, next to the entrance gallery if one elects to move forward ahead instead of turning left (see fig. 1.2). Here, the collector has ordered the wall-covering photographs according to taxonomies that repeat, and thus mock, nineteenth-century models of exhibiting; in the process, she slows down the narrative to the extreme. All of the photographs have one element in common, whose importance the artist – as I must now call her – has not found but rather created through her acts of collecting: in each a toy teddy bear is visible.

The categories established centre on these toys. One child, two children, twins with teddy bears; soldiers, sailors, hunters with teddy bears; women, dressed or naked, with teddy bears; children aiming sometimes adult-size rifles at small teddy bears. Bears in strollers or baby carriages, group portraits with a teddy bear, babies competing with teddy bears in size and cuteness. Two galleries, with winding staircases in them, so that two floors of walls covered from ceiling to floor confine and hold the visitor in a necessarily time-consuming act of voyeurism, intimacy with unknown people, most but not all of whom must be dead by now. After these two crowded galleries, a near-empty third one beckons.

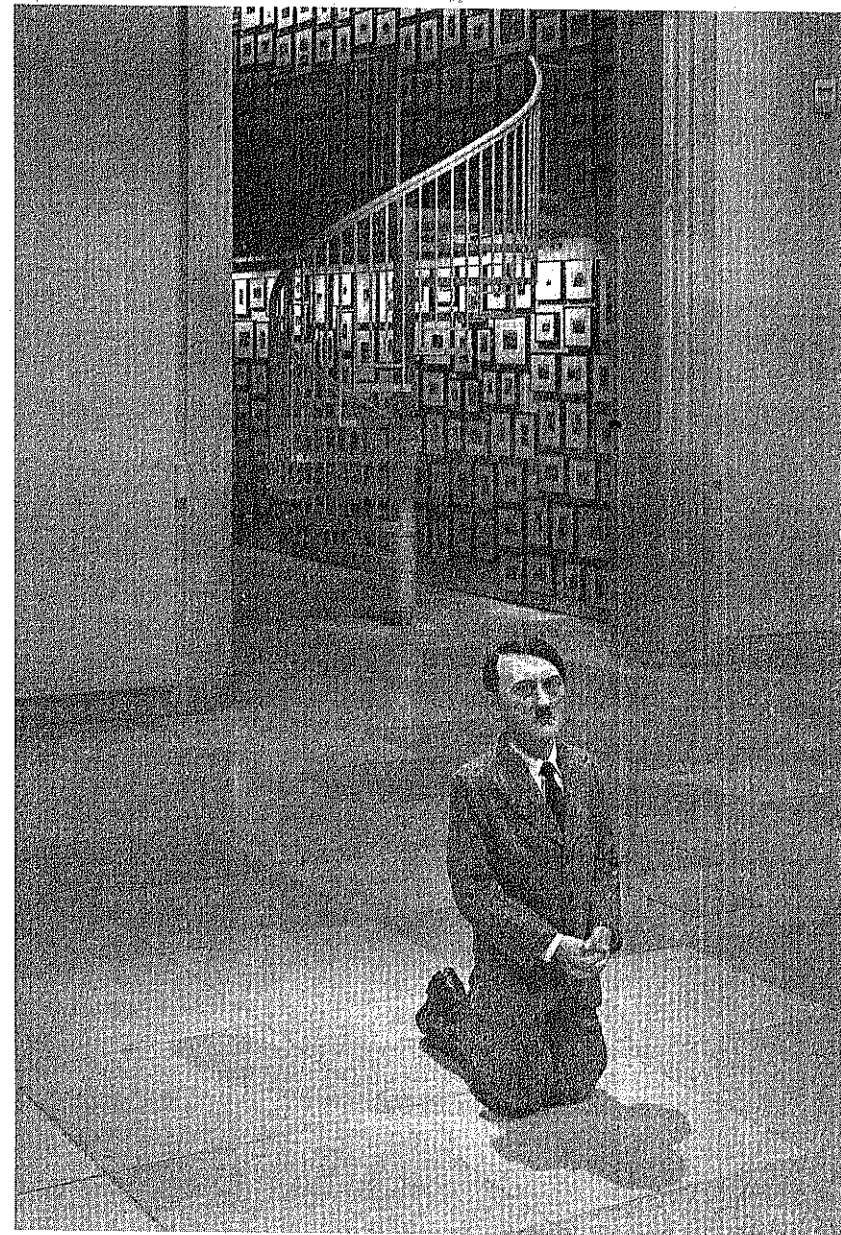
In this next gallery, a sculpture of a young adolescent boy kneeling in a pose of prayer is all there is. It turns its back to those who exit the photo galleries. Slowed down by the time-consuming, indeed time-stopping photo



1.2 Overview of Ydessa Hendeles's *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)*, photo installation 2002–3.

galleries, one is not too rushed to see the boy's face. Eventually, though, this moment becomes inevitable. A moment of total shock occurs when one walks through that third gallery to see the boy's face. The face is Hitler's. The sculpture, *Him*, is by Maurizio Cattelan, from 2001 (fig. 1.3).

Indeed, it is when Cattelan's sculpture *Him* enters the picture that, for me, the narrative model suddenly yields to the altogether different cinematic one. We encounter this sculpture when exiting the two crowded rooms of *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)*. The contrast between the intimate installation of the photo archive, which invites us to dwell, explore, and remain in this installation-within-the-installation, and the lone figure seen from the back in an otherwise empty gallery, produces the estranging sense of a sharp cut between one episode and the next, set in a completely different space. The visual contrast is comparable to the auditory contrast between the quiet Kawara and the loud Coleman installations. The contrast between quiet and loud is here one between multitude and singularity, between overwhelming



1.3 Maurizio Cattelan, *Him*, 2001.

and meditative, between welcoming warmth and cold loneliness. The lone figure kneeling on the cold stone floor is cut out – literally.⁷

This contrast sets up an expectation of contrast at the level of content as well. Indeed, a sometimes convincing, sometimes deceptive sense of comfort and safety is created by means of an old-fashioned, homey living room, illuminated by domestic lamps and overwritten by the even more old-fashioned nineteenth-century museum of natural history, with its odd classificatory drive and crowded showcases. This cozy ambience contrasts with the danger to which this child-size kneeling doll seems to be exposed. But the doll turns its back to us. This has the effect of pulling us closer, compelling us to approach, to walk to the other side, to see its face, bend over in the typical physical condescension with which we approach children, people in wheelchairs, small people. Perhaps we seek to keep it company.

The movement performed by the viewer is the kinetic equivalent of a zoom-in, from a long shot to a close-up. And after we turn around and zoom in, the face we finally come to see – against the backdrop of the Teddy Bear galleries that continue to beckon us – destroys any sense of safety, warmth, or comfort that may linger.

A Canadian Jewish curator showing us Hitler in one of Germany's most history-laden buildings – how does this gesture address the dangers of nationalism by means of a specifically cinematic aesthetic? The tension between expecting a face we do not know and seeing one we do – but that half a century of taboo building has taught us we must not look into – generates a suspenseful sense of fear, if only for a split second. This face, so low that we have to mentally or even physically crouch down to look it in the eyes, is cinematic, symbolically and physically at the same time, in that it is the close-up isolated, abstracted from Hendeles's photo installation *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)* where it was visually absent but constantly if implicitly evoked. It thus stands for cinema as a commentary on photography. Close-ups *exaggerate* photography; they push realism to its limits, and sometimes beyond, when the view comes so close that the image ceases to be legible, that the grain of the photograph and the grain of the skin become one, whereby the object recedes behind its representation. The close-up in cinema re-becomes photography, but 'beyond' cinema: it stops time, undermining the linearity of temporality that the cinematic has just instored. This is the primary function of the close-up in film: it imposes a qualitative leap that is indifferent to linear time. And since time and space are intricately in the same move, close-ups undermine spatial continuity as well.

They are not aggrandizements of a segment of the image. Rather, they are *abstractions* that isolate the object from the time-space coordinates in which we were moving as if 'naturally.' Close-ups immediately cancel the whole that precedes them, leaving us alone, thrown out of linear time, alone with a relationship to the image that is pure *affect*.⁸

Exhibition as Film 'before' Photography

In its function as cinematic close-up, Cattelan's sculpture *Him*, technically not a photograph, does three things to the relationship between photography and cinema and to the complementary relationship between the exhibition space and the outside world. And it does so in exemplary fashion. First, it instils the sense in us that incredibly, this excessively realistic sculpture is more photographic than all of the thousands of photographs in the gallery just exited: it is more precise, more readable, because larger in scale. At the same time, and second, the *object* of the photorealistic representation is shocking enough to stop us in our tracks. Here, physical and psychic stopping coincide, aggrandizing each other's effect. Finally, as with Diane Arbus's tiny self-portrait, which opens the show and programs our mode of being in it, the eyes can be looked into but don't look back. If Arbus's miniature is a model for the kind of photographic look that this show mobilizes, then Hitler's glassy eyes are mercifully out of reach. Rather, his large eyes which are looking, but not at us, must be looking into a mirror – the mirror of history that we have just left. It can be said that this sculpture is 'mirroring evil.'⁹

Close-ups are cinematic images that counter the linearity of time; thus the deployment of this form here to (re?)present a figure who orchestrated the greatest catastrophe in history is a way of protesting against a certain conception of nation, history, and time. The conception against which this sculpture as exhibited after *Partners (The Teddy Bear Project)* militates in a way it might not in a different exhibition context, is the historical conception that construes time as inevitably linear and unstoppable and that simultaneously relegates the past to a distance. Producing a close-up of Hitler is a way of bringing him, and everything he stands for, *into the present tense*.

Here, the relation between photography and cinema as its successor and commentator changes gears, to become a relationship of preposterous reversal, in which photography comments on cinema as *its* (surviving) successor. It is from the retrospective vantage point of the present tense that the temporality of the thousands of photographs in

Partners receives its multilayered density – a density that is, I contend, the aesthetic point of this ‘affective syntax.’ We look back, and the coziness becomes impenetrable. I, personally, had to go back, physically, thus becoming aware of the way this exhibition *counters* narrative linearity while at the same time remaining a multilayered narrative. Compared to Hitler’s overreadable face, the snapshots, already caught in the long shot of multitude, were even harder to read yet in greater need of reading. Thus I spent more time with them on this second visit, even though reading them all was both impossible and pointless.

The pace of the film I am now watching is slowing down. Strikingly, Agnès Varda’s 2004 film about Partners interprets the installation cinematically in precisely this way. In her film, the face of Hitler is superimposed retrospectively on the photographs, colouring them a sickly green. The mannequin’s eyes sometimes seem to be a lens through which one looks at the snapshots. Seeing, after the fact, a literally cinematic representation of my personal sense of unease, which I experienced as cinematically produced, was a rather unnerving experience indeed.

At an earlier moment, the sheer number of photographs had the same uncanny effect that mass graves can have. Their tense is the past, rigorously, so that we don’t know whether the people in them are still alive. But now, ‘after’ Hitler, I want to know whether and when they died, and how many of them survived the dead man in the next room. Now I see them through the face that overlays them. Cinema has a technique for this. Hitler’s face, then, is edited in, like a *dissolve*. The superposition of two images, one singular, one massively multiple, is a dissolve that creates memory space. In form, it is no different from Leni Riefenstahl’s dissolve in *Triumph of the Will* (1935), in which an image of a crowd of soldiers melts into an image of Hitler speaking, thus ‘creating a third image where Hitler is made up of all the small men that represent Germany,’ a composite image that quotes ‘the depiction of power and the ‘body of society’ in the cover illustration of *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes from 1651’ (Iversen 2003, 3).

I tend to see in this backward movement – in the flashback constructed by the contrast between *Him* and Partners (The Teddy Bear Project), which all but imposes a return to the latter *through Him* – a quotation as critical commentary on political visions such as those both Hobbes and Riefenstahl ‘imaged.’ This quotation compels us to do two things that cinema has taught us are possible, albeit difficult. First, it makes us reflect *from within* – from within the formerly cosy galleries and from within the composite image produced by the dissolve and

now inevitably surrounding us – on the tension inherent in Partners (The Teddy Bear Project) between safety, comfort, and childhood innocence, on the one hand, and the dangers of conformism, its bond with commerce, and the serious, formative potential of play, fantasy, and fiction, on the other hand. The phantom of ‘the nation’ is inherent in those dangers.

Second, this tension is compounded by the tension on which this work thrives – between the value of each singular person, a value embodied in the sometimes elaborate stories that accompany the pictures in the display cases, and the absorption of each person in multitudes, the multitude of Hitler’s soldiers, of those who went along with his soothing discourse for so long, for too long, until it was too late and the Hobbesian social body was formed, so that the multitude of victims could arise. And through the transitional object of the teddy bear, the question of emotional complicity peeps in from around the corner.

But since this dissolve specifically involves a close-up and a long shot, it produces a memory space that binds both the past to the present, and this exhibition-visit to tragedy. For each of us visitors, that past tense has different connotations, inflections, but its affect cannot be held at bay. And for each of us, the memories which that affect yields are composite – not our own, but translated through innumerable stories and images. They are, as film theorist Kaja Silverman (1996) has argued, *heteropathic* memories – that is, the memories of others felt in a strong affect-image as a gift to those who perished.¹⁰

It is in this respect that the *worldwide* provenance of the snapshots becomes an important element of this Teddy Bear work. In her ‘Notes’ (2003), Hendeles mentions the many countries all over the world from which the photographs came. The act of clutching a teddy bear is presented here as a worldwide act of conforming to that awkward partnership between the two nations that share this history in this act of exhibiting today, Germany and North America. Symbolically, the history of the teddy bear itself, with its dual, staggered ‘invention’ and implementation as a globally popular toy, testifies to that ambiguity. Like the American Indian according to Karl May, the toy was invented, copyrighted, mass-produced and sold, named and cherished, in an episodic history in which now Germany, then the United States, took the leading role.

Thus wherever we rest our gaze when we return to Partners (The Teddy Bear Project) after, with, and through Cattelan’s *Him*, the innumerable memories – each of which is individual, irretrievable, but for

this single snapshot – imprint themselves in our present tense, in our visit to that current exhibition space, in the former Haus der Deutsche Kunst (House of German Art), which Hitler had ordered built to house purely German art in isolation from the ‘degenerate art.’ This enables a *translation* of all those emotions into *world memories*.

At this point, in order to give more substance to the conceptual metaphor of cinema as a way of understanding the power of this exhibition, I would like to discuss a number of cinematic devices that respond to photography.

A first device is the recomposition of movement out of instants. In this, cinema is rigorously *metaphotography*. Obviously, the fact that the teddy bear pictures are more often than not *posed* photographs makes them stand in *opposition* to cinema’s movement-images. From the vantage point of today, such a contrast turns photography inevitably into a meta-cinema. But even so, at the same time their installation itself is still cinematic. Cinema, according to Gilles Deleuze, is essentially dependent not on photography in general but rather on the snapshot that freezes the instant. As a ‘post-photographic’ form of photography, cinema decomposes and recomposes movement in relation to equidistant instants.¹¹

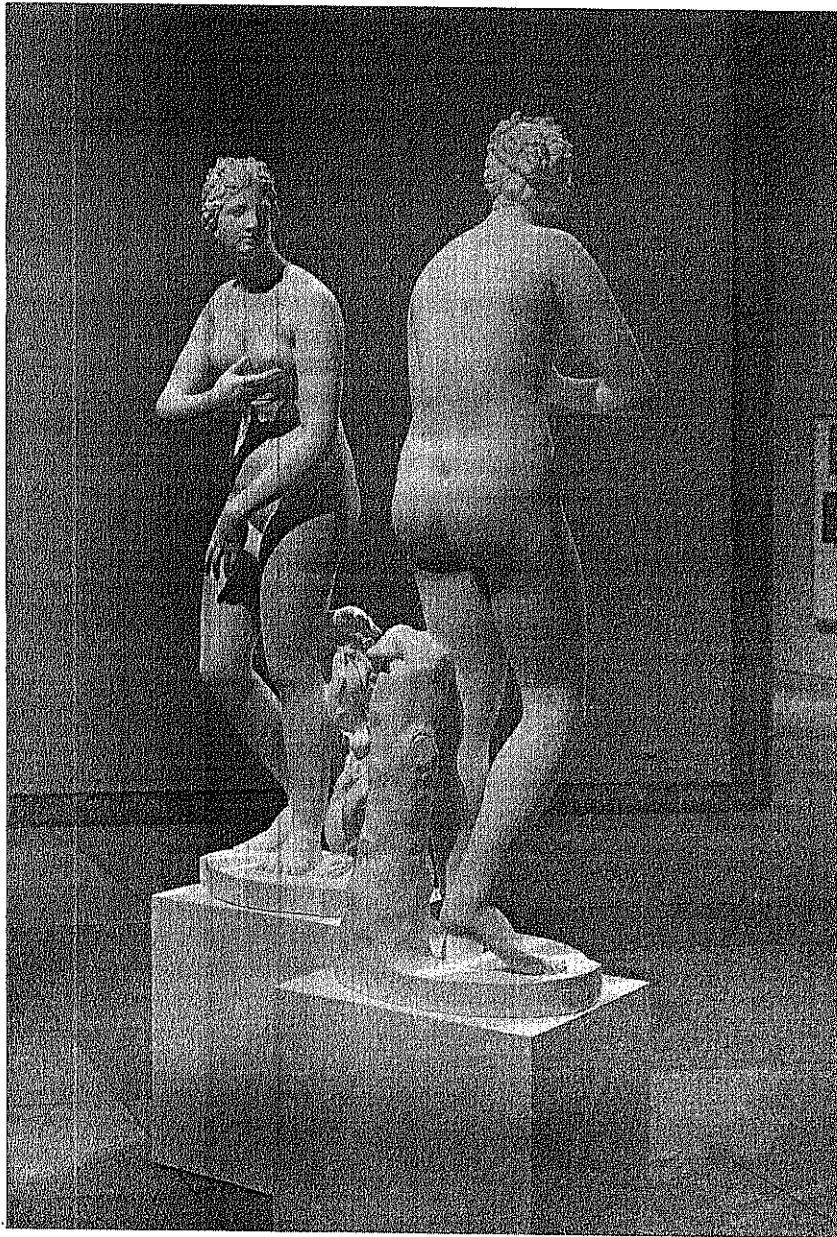
In this respect, as a commentary on photography, *Partners* (The Teddy Bear Project) makes two interventions that inflect our experience of cinema. First, the posed production quality of many of the photographs recedes in favour of their informal, amateurish quality, which delimits the pose in time and inscribes its brief duration so that they become snapshots in Deleuze’s sense of *instantanéés*. The ambiguous category here is the *posed* snapshot. Second, the uniform matting and framing along with the equidistant hanging (metaphorically?) reintroduce the equidistant instants of cinema’s recomposition of movement. Closely in line with Deleuze’s view of cinema, the installation offers a precarious and provisional stability that is, as this philosopher’s great predecessor Henri Bergson would have it, ‘a slice of becoming.’ Thus, Hendeles’s installation harks back to photography, its ‘storyboard’ from the vantage point of cinema.

A second cinematic device that ‘handles’ photography is pro-spective. After starting our visit with Diane Arbus’s self-portrait – so small and thus so large – and immersing ourselves twice in *Partners* (The Teddy Bear Project), after the close-up and dissolve of *Him* and its imposed flashback, the encounter with many of the non-photographic sculptures is *photographically ‘incurred.’* With this verb, I am pointing not only to the tight bond between affect and action, but also, specifically, to a baroque

conception of point of view derived from another of Deleuze’s works, according to which point of view *enfolds* the viewer rather than allowing him to take in a spectacle at a distance, without involvement. The point of view of ‘the fold’ compels the viewer to enter the fabulation of the artwork, to travel inside and out again and emerge transformed by the experience. This principle, one might say, is literalized and aggrandized in the intimate rooms of *Partners*, where immersion, not linear perspective, reigns supreme. With the affect of that experience still with us, the voyeuristic engagement with Paul McCarthy’s *Saloon* that that work imposes is turned on its head: unlike a voyeur, we cannot remain aloof; our subjectivity has been transformed by the earlier moment.

A third cinematic device is a play on the ‘mechanical reproducibility’ of the photograph. An example is the effect of the photo installation on Paolini’s sculpture *Mimesi* from 1975–6 (fig. 1.4), exhibited in the gallery one enters after the confrontation with *Him*. This sculpture of a dual copy of a classical sculpture similarly appeals to the enfolded look I just mentioned. Standing for classical beauty – celebrated as the ultimate confusion between art and sex, between aesthetic and erotic attraction – the Medici Venus so flagrantly copied here as one of innumerable copies is photographic not only in its resemblance to the alleged original, but also in its doubling, in its multiplication in situ, which entices us to look at this sculpture differently from the way its prestigious original would require. The two figures do not offer their bodies to us, nor do they confront our gaze. Instead, self-absorbed, narcissistically gazing into the mirror, they flaunt their indifference, denying us access to both the close-up of their faces and their supposedly attractive bodies. And in the umpteenth reiteration of the fake modesty of the *pudica* gesture, this gesture suddenly comes back to life as ‘real’: their modestly covered genitals are now ‘really’ out of visible reach.

How, then, is *Mimesi* cinematic? Decomposed, doubled, and recomposed as one image of two equidistant instants, this sculpture brings the Venus to a life – of movement and becoming – that it never had. But in the sequence of the film, after the beginning and as an alternative to *Him*, the snow-white, larger-than-life double form confronts us with the issue of beauty in history, the perverted aesthetic of *ethical indifference*. The latter is this exhibition’s antagonist, evoked every time the tight bond between aesthetics and politics is foregrounded, in an ever-subtle manner. It reminds us of the bond between art and politics in the creation of this great exhibition space itself, of the specific moment when the Haus der Kunst was created as much as of the current post-Holocaust need to

1.4 Giulio Paolini, *Mimesi*, 1975–6.

reconnect art and the world. The self-sufficiency of the dual figure is not a given; it is actualized in contrast, resonance, and narrative sequentiality with those images that posit the impossibility of such autarchy.

This brings me to a fourth 'cinematographic' device: precisely because of the *Mimesi* artwork's isolated, venerated position both in the history of art and in this gallery, where it stands alone, the self-duplicating simulacrum of art flaunts its own *framed* position. Like montage, framing is a fundamental element in cinema, one that it shares with its predecessor and partner, photography. The frame determines the whole of what can be seen at any given moment. By delimiting what is present, the frame also stipulates what is absent. White recalls the disappearance of colour from classical sculpture, thereby turning the elimination of colour and of the present into the collapsed, defining feature of the classical in art; in the same way, the frame that isolates this work physically eliminates what it forcefully excludes and thus recalls.

The frame can be *saturated* – as it is in the long shots pulled up close in *Partners* (The Teddy Bear Project) – or it can be *rarefied*, and the two galleries where this is the case are the framing rooms of *Him* and *Mimesi*. With the former, we saw how the depth of the frame reintroduced the saturated background of the photo-installation, which was thus able to reclaim its status as principal scene. In the case of *Mimesi*, the cinematic device is different, for here the saturated images of the teddy bear rooms are not quite so acutely present, either because we retraced our steps or because, after the first gallery, we chose to go to *Mimesi* first. Here, the compelling desire to see makes us walk around the sculpture, surrounding it, as in an inversion of the panoptical gaze of surveillance foregrounded in our cultural awareness by the work of Michel Foucault. Thus we *enact* cinema, we play the starring role, caught up in a scopophilic system of double exposure.

A fifth device is a continuous colour-montage. The example, here, is Hanne Darboven's installation *Ansichten* >82< from 1982, installed in the large central gallery of the museum. While the harsh white still saturates our retinas, the romantic soft focus, the starry-eyed black-and-white sailor, the orange ship, and the rhythmic repetition of Darboven's installation at the centre of the exhibition quite suddenly reverse our physical position. After walking around the sculpture, we are now inside it. Indeed, after *Mimesi*, and possibly also after *Partners* (The Teddy Bear Project), Darboven's *Ansichten* >82< presents itself like the inside of a gigantic sculpture. Unlike The Teddy Bear Project,

this work, in its imposing hall, with (again) equidistant tableaux, is at first so cold that the ship's orange colour beckons with its warmth. Temperature alone suffices to establish a connection between Darboven's ballad of suicide and murder and two tableaux by Jeff Wall, which also use orange.¹² By extension, the themes of suicide and murder, much toned down in these works set in the mood of comedy, remain present as threats, and taint the falling woman in *The Stumbling Block* and the bullying street guy in *Mimic* with the same duality of potential violence. Our 'film' takes on a decidedly postmodern incongruity here. It is for all these reasons that I contend that this exhibition too exemplifies an aspect of exhibition practice that may well be inherent to it: its fundamentally preposterous temporality. In *Partners*, this aspect is more strongly present because it is overdetermined by the reversal of roles between cinema and photography.

But the continuity remains cinematic – enough, at any rate, to allow readings of Walker Evans's self-portrait, in the next room on the right, as potentially murderous, and of his confined subway riders displayed on the opposite wall as locked up in the tragedy of history. And so we arrive at the back gallery, where suicide and murder are literally, photographically, represented before our eyes, as action-images, in two facing series of journalistic photography. Malcolm Browne's *The Sacrificial Protest of Thich Quang Duc* (11 June 1963) and Eddie Adams's *Murder of a Vietcong Suspect* (1 February 1968) are the twin emblems of that other war.

This exhibition translates emotions into instances of *world memory*. By this term I mean more than the mere provenance of the collection from all over the world. I mean acts of memory that do not encompass the whole world (which is impossible and would be pointless), but that go out into the world, address it, and link up with it on its own terms.¹³ The decisive move in Hendeles's curatorial practice that makes this point that she has is *translated* – literally, carried over – her conceptual work with art from Toronto to Germany, to Munich, to the Haus der Kunst – a building and institution that in itself is a dissolve of past and present images, a visual state foregrounded by the felicitous decision to restore as much as possible of the Troost architecture from 1937. This is, literally, a *transnational move* that raises transhistorical questions – for example, of the meaning of partnership.

Through this displacement, the *Partners* exhibition is no longer the *mise-en-scène* of a fictional, fabulous space, but the arrangement of a segment of the world that is itself syntactically linked to other places it

has affected and touched in the past, and that it continues to touch in the present. This linkage is *Partners*'s alternative to nationalism. Cinema facilitates the absorptive fabulations that fill this real space with the glue of affect.

The Affect-Image of World Memory

This is an appropriate moment to spell out what the concept of *affect* is doing here – why it is so central both to the very possibility of world memory and to the deployment of the cinematic in exhibition practices. I am using the word 'affect' in an effort to make the tripartite connection that leads up to my main thesis, which is, that this exhibition is a paradigm of exhibitions considered in terms of the cinematic. Through the etymological sense of *aesthetics* as binding through the senses, *affect* connects the aesthetic quality of this exhibition and the art it includes, to what I like to see as a new and totally contemporary *politics of looking* – for which cinema offers the tools and photography the conceptual reflection. To understand affect without resorting to psychology, our best resource is Deleuze's first book on cinema. There, he exposes Bergson's vision of *perception*, a vision that Deleuze puts to work in his theory of cinema. Perception, in the Bergsonian/Deleuzian sense, is a *selection* of what, from the universe of visuality, is 'usable' in our lives.¹⁴

Perception makes visible the usable 'face' of things. This is why perception is bound up with framing: both cinema and exhibitions make such a selection for us, proposing a particular perception. This selective perception prepares the possibility for action. 'Action-images,' as Deleuze calls them, show us how to act on what we perceive. Deleuze uses the verb *incurver*: to 'incurve' the visible universe is to measure a virtual relationship of action between us and the things we see. *Mutuality* is key here: images can act on us as much as we can act on them. As I wrote earlier, between a perception that troubles us and an action we hesitate about, *affect* emerges. Affect-images present a temporarily congealed relationship between perception and the action that coincides with subjectivity. In other words, the viewer sees (what is within the frame), and hesitates about what to do; she is thus *trapped in affect*. Affect, writes Charles Altieri (2003, 49), in a remarkably negative definition, comprises the range of mental states in which an agent's activity cannot be adequately handled in terms of either sensations or beliefs but requires attending to how he or she offers expressions of those states.

Affect-images are important because, like the close-ups whose form they often take, they arrest linear time. The specific receptivity that such images entail connects them to aesthetic effect. This is why it matters that Hendeles's filmic exhibition is made mainly out of *art* – a choice that is not indifferent, of course, to the effect of the exhibition-as-film. And those objects – like the Minnie Mouse toy at the beginning, which was used both on the cover of the catalogue and on the advertising posters and banners for the exhibition; and like the teddy bears of Partners (the Teddy Bear Project), the snapshots of which were not originally made to be art – become art in this exhibition. They are treated, displayed and hence turned into artworks. 'Art preserves,' wrote Deleuze and Guattari in *What Is Philosophy?* (1994). This exhibition demonstrates what it is that art preserves and how it does this.

As pointed out by Silverman, Deleuze and Guattari describe the objects of preservation as 'bloc[s] of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects.' These blocs exist independent of the subjects experiencing them. After closing time, the gripping documentary photographs of suicide and murder, the romantic face of Darboven's sailor, and Wall's freeze-framed cinematic image of an act of bullying continue to exist in the dark as blocs of sensations, percepts, and affects, and as syntax: a syntax that 'ascends irresistibly into his [the writer's] work and passes into sensation.' But even if they endure, they do not in themselves have a memory.¹⁵

For us to understand the contribution made to this cinematic exhibition of photographs as artworks and of objects that in the wake of photography take on its primary characteristics, the relationship of complementary contrast between photography and memory is key. Kaja Silverman (1996, 157) formulated this relationship as follows: 'Whereas photography performs its memorial function by lifting an object out of time and immortalizing it forever in a particular form, memory is all about temporality and change.'

The cinematic cut from Partners (The Teddy Bear Project) to *Him*, the zoom-in to a close-up, the flashback that ensues once the close-up has stalled linear time, and the resulting dissolve all constitute a particular instance of a montage that stitches together photography and memory. As a result – and this is, here, what 'art preserves' – the visitor is able to let the installation 'introduce the "not me" into [her] memory reserve' (1996, 185).

This world memory this exhibition produces through its many cinematic devices is not inherent in the art objects themselves. The syntax is

there thanks to the installation, which juxtaposes works to form a sequence that is readable by means of the rhetorical figures mentioned earlier, so as to create narratives. But the heteropathic memories that contribute to creating an affective discourse in the present tense – those memories are virtual, not actual, so long as visitors do not 'perform' the film. Once they do, however, induced by this montage, world memory becomes activated and can become actual – in the present tense, which is not inherent in the image but is one of its potential modes. This makes this exhibition, with all its historical objects, utterly contemporary.

This is the contribution made by the silent, meditative gallery that houses Kawara's date painting and box, his press clipping and its appeal to a media consciousness. In her 'Notes' in the catalogue (2003), Hendeles correctly rejects the notion that the date paintings might be history paintings. The latter genre, like photography, seeks to *commemorate* historical events. Memory, instead, responds to the *images* of events that circulate, and thus constructs these as memorable events. Hendeles writes that instead of commemorating events, Kawara in his work attempts to locate himself in history. In light of Deleuze's concept of the affect-image, one might say that he produces just that: a temporarily congealed hesitation in the face of the images that frame the event for him. He hesitates about whether and how to act, but he is already stretching out, as it were, beyond selective perception alone. In this sense, Kawara's work as installed here is a particularly revealing instance of how photography can be, so to speak, curated beyond itself, to encompass heteropathic – or world – memory. Without *being* photography – it includes only a weak instance of it, in the faded and vulgar press clipping – Kawara's installation becomes a cinematic image that *comments on* photography. The auditive contrast between this gallery and the enclosed dark room staging Coleman's *Box* thus turns out to be more complementary (a partnership of sorts) than contrastive. For there, too, the brief flashes selected from the old footage, made readable rather than visible by the hyperbolic black spaces between them, derive their power from their potential to hold, to not allow time to dominate, to harbour images in the subjectivity 'incurred' by the voice that hesitates between calling and repelling the violence of the punches.

Exhibiting Photography as Meta-Cinema

In view of my interpretation of exhibitions as meta-cinema, I must now speculate on why photography is so prominent in Hendeles's exhibition,

the way it is also in her collection. Specifically, why is the combination of historical and contemporary photography so effective? At first glance, the common denominator of the works in this exhibition is that they are cinematic because they are *also* photographic. McCarthy's *Saloon* is perhaps the most programmatic work in this respect: it uses hyperbolically large close-ups; it also deploys a photorealistic mode – aggrandized to grotesque proportions – of representing not only the 'real' face of the cowboy but also the 'real' toys of the pussycat, the pig, and the doll. These figures are toys, not animals or people; the realistic mode thus becomes itself grotesque. This is the critical potential of the simulacrum, the copy without original, copy of copy, photo of toy. The artist deploys this inherently contradictory mode to create a literally *moving* image; and he lets period music accompany these images. If this work, which is emphatically placed at the end and which provides a sound edit that functions as an audio dissolve placed over the works on the path leading up to it, is any indication, the relationship between photography and cinema is not only one of historical development but also – in terms that McCarthy's work justifies – 'preposterous.' With that term, already used above but not explained, I wish to usher in my conclusion, which turns the relationship upside down and seeks to understand photography, in Hendeles's hands, as a critical commentary on cinema.

Preposterity is the temporal reversal that inhabits all exhibitions. Situated in the present, they rewrite the past and revise our relation to it as well as its meanings as such (Bal 1999). As we stand in front of the two most clearly cinematic sets of photographs – the press photos of the suicide captured by Browne and the murder displayed for Adams's camera – we almost fall back into the most standard Hollywood action movie. Almost, but not quite. For, stopping short of being action-images, these two mutually rhyming sequences are reined in from their potential Hollywood status by Lawrence Weiner's words. It is in this gallery that Weiner's word-picture *Vis inertiae* (cat. #471) from 1980 – on the materiality of slowing down in temporal close-up – spells out how physical, transformative, and perhaps decisive the affect of affect-images is. The picture says:

A change in inherent quality
(vis inertiae)

La réaction d'un objet au
Contact suffisant a entraîner
Un changement de qualité
Inhérente (vis inertiae)

The two series of photojournalism, Browne's and Adam's – recalling, through their generic background, America's nationalistic *hubris* in Vietnam, the presence of words in newspapers, and the way words connect individuals to the world – inaugurate a reading of this exhibition that turns it into commentary on cinema from the vantage point of photography.

Press photographs, like action movies, come and go. They pass quickly, and their visual overload hampers rather than promotes our connection with the world. Occasionally, this crazy pace of media saturation is stopped in its tracks. These two series, like the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in its time, seem to turn action-images into affect-images. Integrating them with other images of violence, in this space, here and now, not only recalls the events and the changes in the course of the Vietnam War resulting from them, but also – beyond that specific historical world-memory – places into an affect-image the very power of images. That is, if we allow them to exercise that power – harboured in an exhibition that does not lock out the world, in a space that *is* world history – to make us hesitate just long enough to be transformed by them.

In our present, which has embarked on and is entangled in a new episode of that ongoing war of which the Vietnam War was an earlier episode – one from which no nation seems to be able to disentangle itself – an exhibition that thinks through cinema with the aid of a photography that is able to critique its successor from 'before' can be seen as deeply political, precisely *because* it is so profoundly and transformatively aesthetic. I find this aesthetic a major contribution to a cultural philosophy that attempts to bridge the gulf between art and the melancholy powerlessness before, or the insidious complicity with, the politics that threatens both art and all our lives. This politics is powerful and complex – too complex, multiple, and subtle to discuss in this context. If, for example, I have refrained from even mentioning the gender politics that clearly run through this show, from the *Wild Bunch* photo of bandits in the first room to *Saloon* and back to that group portrait of bandits looking like nice guys, it was so that I could invite my readers – now, at the end – to return to the beginning and start all over again. But that will have to be another paper.¹⁶

Meanwhile, this volume will offer fresh insights into how endeavours such as Hendeles's Partnership with history can help museums serve their primary function in a postnational world. Far from confining themselves to reconfirming nationalism, as current exhibitions all too frequently tend to do, thanks to the paradigm of Partners, exhibition

makers can deploy different options. I contend that the primary task of exhibitions should be to encourage visitors to stop, suspend action, let affect invade us, and then, *quietly*, in temporary respite, *think*.

NOTES

- 1 Hendeles herself does consider the metaphor of *mise-en-scène* crucial for her work (oral communication, 2003). The metaphor of exhibits as still personages was foregrounded – literally so – in the exhibition *Louise Bourgeois: Geometria poządania / Geometry of Desire* (Warsaw: Zachęta Państwowa Galeria, 2003, curator Adam Budak). There, Bourgeois's totemic sculptures, referred to as Personages, occupied the centre of the main gallery, casually dispersed as if to represent the visitors.
- 2 Mostly from Pavis (1998, 361-8). This paragraph and the following one come from my book *Travelling Concepts* (2002).
- 3 Lehmann (1997). I prefer to leave undecided – indeed, insist on the undecidedability of – the distinction between phenomenology and semiotics implied in this formulation, which is mine, not Lehmann's.
- 4 For these and other terms of narratology, see Bal (1997), which is partly based on Genette, *Discours du récit* (1972).
- 5 The rhetorical figures mentioned in these paragraphs are analysed in Ydessa Hendeles (2003). For a narrative theory based on rhetorical figures rather than plot, see Genette (1972). Rudi Fuchs has used the poetical rhetoric of couplets consistently throughout his career as curator.
- 6 The fundamental heterogeneity among frames, owing to the black intervals separating each image from the next, turns serial photography into readable rather than visible, images. See Doane (2002).
- 7 This contrast between multitude and singularity resonates with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's reflections on the multitude as site of resistance. See their book *Empire* (2000).
- 8 See Susan Buck-Morss (1994). She points to the fear of early cinema spectators when confronted with close-ups. Sometimes they clamoured to see evidence that the figure whose head only was visible, had not been beheaded.
- 9 I am referring to the exhibition *Mirroring Evil* held at the New York Jewish Museum, curated by Norman Kleeblatt. It is no coincidence that Cattelan's sculpture diminishes the figure of Hitler to the size of a pre-adolescent boy, thus bringing it close to the toys that were so prominent in Kleeblatt's exhibition. See van Alphen, 'Playing the Holocaust' (2002). This is a critical study of the use of toys in relation to historical trauma.

- 10 Varda's film shows some visitors responses that, in all their variety, confirm the affective investment in (other people's) past that the photo exhibit impels.
- 11 Deleuze (1983, 14). The following is greatly indebted to Paola Marrati, *Gilles Deleuze* (2003). An excellent in-depth study of Deleuze's cinema books is David Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine* (1997). Patricia Pisters's, *The Matrix of Visual Culture* (2003) is a wonderfully stimulating 'work-book.' The view of snapshots as frozen moments is challenged in Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence* (2002), who opposes to it the catastrophic reading of the snapshot he borrows from Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (2000).
- 12 Jeff Wall, *The Stumbling Block*, 1991; *Mimic* 1982. Available at <http://by113fd.boy113.hotmail.msn.com/cgi-bin/getmsg?curmbox=00000000%2d0000%2>.
- 13 The term 'acts of memory' is meant to emphasize the active nature of memory. See Bal, Crewe, and Spitzer (1999).
- 14 Bergson (1997, 29). See also Bergson (1998).
- 15 Silverman (1996, 163; 164, emphasis in text; 167).
- 16 In his catalogue essay, Van Alphen reflects in more depth on the gender issue than I can possibly do here.

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