RETURN OF THE UNREAL:

Phantasmagoria at the End of the 20th Century

Trevor Mahovsky

We are being revisited (haunted?) by forms of phantasmagoria as the 20th century closes, this time facilitated by film, video and slide projectors. As during the Enlightenment, associations between projected images and the demonic or the irrational remain. But where the spectres of Robertson's 18th century phantasmagoria hovered in the gloomy mise-en-scène of an abandoned Capuchin convent, modern ghosts are more likely to be found in white cubes.

RETURN OF THE UNREAL:
PHANTASMAGORIA AT THE END OF THE 20th CENTURY

1. Introduction: States of Reverie

2. A Conscious Kaleidoscope

3. The Shades Limp By

4. Between Darkness and Light:
Oursler, Viola, Nauman, Gordon and Rist

States of Reverie

The floors of galleries do not moan or creak. Their rooms are clean and evenly lit.

Galleries are public spaces designed for private contemplation. But they are not for wallowing in it. To view work Clement Greenberg often averted his eyes from the object of scrutiny before suddenly setting his gaze upon it. Then he would move on.

Hallucinations have no place here. Galleries are not made for phantasmagoria.

•

Can you stare too long at a work of art? What is the proper distance one must maintain from it, the proper length of time for contemplation before the mind begins to wander, to become distracted, to hallucinate? Like Greenberg, Michael Fried has argued that one's experience of modernist painting and sculpture "has no duration" and that one's "conviction" as to the quality of a great work is instantaneous: "a single infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it"[1]. However, this does not mean that for Fried one cannot or should not be gripped by the work, caught up for extended periods of time in reverie.

We also know the dangers of becoming *lost in reverie* or lost in one's own thoughts. These turns of phrase suggest the mind as psychological labyrinth, as a disjunctive, alien place. This fragmentation poses a threat to Fried's model: the unified whole of an artwork cannot be perceived by a subject constituted by an indeterminate number of discontinuous parts. Hence for Fried the ideal beholder enters a state of "psychological absence", a kind of self-effacement in which they are literally absorbed by the work of art. Reverie can be dangerous. Especially if it is too much, or the wrong kind.

We often speak of being 'haunted' by our own thoughts, by memories and by the visions of lost or desired others. Like Goethe's Werther obsessed by the image of Lotte: "How her figure haunts me!...Here in my head, in my mind's eye, I see her dark eyes the moment I close my own" [2]. Ultimately, young Werther is driven to suicide by a mind that not only transforms external reality to an internal apparition, but turns upon itself as a spectre as well. Similarly, Fried's fear is the turning of *paintings into spectres*, indeterminate and shadowy: absorption as possession.

That one's imagination has the capacity to produce visions independent of external physical stimuli is a sign of the self-containment and creativity of the mind, yet Werther demonstrates how it paradoxically opens up the possibility that one can be haunted and even destroyed by mental spectres. In *The Female Thermometer*, Terry Castle argues that we have naturalized this concept of the 'haunted mind' inherited from the Enlightenment by psychoanalysis. Castle points out that as society becomes increasingly rationalized the notion of 'ghost' is not so much dispelled as displaced, from outside in the real world to inside the mind. Haunted houses become haunted heads.

A concurrent and closely related development, Castle suggests, is a demonization of reverie that also becomes increasingly common with the advent of the Enlightenment: "To prevent thoughts from turning into ghosts, the act of thinking had to be regulated" [3]. One could brood over one's thoughts to a dangerous extent, mourn excessively and even overindulge in reading. In the case of Werther one could love too much. The heritage of this notion is clear in the dictum of Fried that one efface oneself and one's psychological state in front of the work of art.

Castle documents how these ghostly terms for conceptualizing the operations of the mind are not only maintained but extended in the twentieth century by psychoanalysis, through which we increasingly come to see the lamp of the Enlightenment as a magic lantern. The clear light of reason is transformed into a sulphurous emission, a projection that is also a deception, a phantasmagoria where outside is indistinguishable from inside: "a large part of the mythological view of the world is nothing but psychology projected into the external world"[4]. This statement

by Freud from *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* introduces a passage in which Freud likens psychoanalytic treatment to the translation of a "*supernatural reality*" into a "*psychology of the unconscious*"[5]. In terms of psychoanalysis, the ghosts of this supernatural reality inside one's head can be dissipated with therapy, but they can never be completely exorcised. There is always the threat of a return:

> "Freud's hysterical patients were alienated victims of reverie in a new guise. Each one had to be resocialized, reeducated, drawn out of his or her solipsistic and immobilizing involvement with phantoms. The "talking cure" was itself the first step in this process of resocialization: a conversation with a human being instead of a spectre."[6]

This phantasmal psychic life of the subject threatens the very autonomy of the individual of which it holds promise, since one is terrified by and even *alien to* the productions of one's own creative mind[7], and it has ramifications for paradigms of the viewer constructed by twentieth century artists and theorists.

Two of these models are of interest here. In the modernist model of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried the prototypical viewer aspires to the condition of a mirror: a *reflector*. This is also true for its early modern precedents, the Baudelairean *flâneur* and the Diderotian beholder. In an alternate model, operating in work by artists such as Tony Oursler, Bill Viola, Bruce Nauman, Douglas Gordon, and Pipilotti Rist that same viewer is better described as a lantern: a *projector*. This second model I term phantasmagoric. However, I will further argue that while the phantasmagoric model touches upon many of the principles operating within both psychoanalysis and the original phantasmagoria of the eighteenth century, it does not merely extend those principles but functions as a critique of them as well. I shall demonstrate that the phantasmagoric model is not simply the 'projective' obverse of the modernist 'reflective' model, but the elimination of the distinction between the two terms. It is where reflection and projection merge into the figure of our shadowy double, both self and other: the *doppelganger*.

A Conscious Kaleidoscope

The key to defining the proper state of reverie for modernism's 'beholder' is Fried's paradoxical construction "infinitely brief". In his paradigm of painting and beholder, though one may stare at a great work for hours the experience is as if time has stopped. In *Absorption and Theatricality*, Fried develops this idea in relation to French painting of the second half of the eighteenth century; however, he presents the beholder-painting model first elucidated by Diderot in the 1750s and 1760s as an incunabula of the relationship between beholder and twentieth century modernist works of art as well.

The basic premise of this model is that one immediately senses the pictorial unity of a great work of art and becomes enthralled, or absorbed, by it. In this state of absorption "at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest" [8]; in other words, the work is immediately sensible as a self-contained and unified whole, autonomous and indifferent to both the viewer and the environment in which it is placed. By very definition one's experience of the work does not change over time, this despite the physiological changes that occur in one's body over time. For Fried and Greenberg the shapes and colours of an abstract painting are composed into a particular visual experience that is not only temporally transcendent but, at least in theory, universally accessible and understandable as long as one is able to enter this absorptive condition. The age, race, sex and social station of the beholder are irrelevant; on the contrary, the state of absorption one enters causes a "self-forgetting" [9], even a state of "psychological absence" [10]. This obliviousness to one's self and one's surroundings is what renders the experience timeless. Greenberg characterised this state as "at-oneness", defined as follows: "You become all attention,

which means that you become, for the moment, selfless and in a sense entirely identified with the object of your attention"[11].

It is as if the viewer has become a *mirror* held to the artwork, reflecting it instantly and totally. No traces remain of previous reflections. The state of transcendent grace achieved in front of a work of art happens through the mirroring of its qualities of autonomy and self-containment in the viewer. Self-effacement paradoxically leads to a confirmation of selfhood.

Baudelaire's *flâneur* is likewise a "mirror as vast as the crowd itself", even a "kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness" [12]. Of course, as the visages of the crowd slide across the glazed surface of the mirror they leave no permanent trace. A mirror can not wear out by reflecting too much. It continues on, unchanged; the reflections themselves are forever new.

In "The Painter of Modern Life", Baudelaire states that the body "mirrors…the spiritual reality from which it derives"[13]. Following this logic, he further argues that a great work of art brings to the viewer "a clear-cut image of the impression produced by the external world"[14] upon the mind of the artist: art, then, is a mirror of the soul of the artist-mirror. Since our view of the surface of the world is our only means to ascertain its fundamental underlying structure, one must constantly strive to see that surface afresh, with as pure and unmediated a vision as possible. In this model genius is the ability to recover and sustain a state of innocence associated with childhood; Constantin Guys, the subject of "The Painter of Modern Life", is a "man-child, a man who is never for a moment without the genius of childhood"[15]. One must be a clean and unblemished mirror; the scuffs and warping caused by time and experience threaten the integrity of the image, turning the world into a funhouse.

One can see in the *flâneur* the image of Diderot's beholder, only now the beholder stands not before an artwork, but before the world itself as a "passionate spectator"[16]. Similarly, the ideal is self-effacement: "to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world…the spectator is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito"[17].

As Fried argues in *Absorption and Theatricality*, for Diderot the incognito of the beholder before a canvas was of paramount concern. Great pains were to be taken to neutralize the beholder's presence by maintaining the "perfect obliviousness of a figure or group of figures to everything but the objects of their absorption"[18]; this did not include the beholder, who was a "potential agent of distraction"[19]. To maintain the self-containment of the image, all of the figures needed to be arranged into a single, forceful *tableau*. In this arrangement each figure would be engrossed in a central event or figure. The whole group thus composed told an immediately understandable story in pantomime.

The term pantomime is deceptive, because the presentation is meant to be the opposite of *theatrical*, whereby a performer overtly 'plays' or addresses him or herself to an audience. "And the actor, what will become of him if you have concerned yourself with the beholder?" asks Diderot:

> "Do you think he will not feel that what you have placed here or there was not imagined for him? You thought of the spectator, he will address himself to him. You wanted to be applauded, he will wish to be applauded. And I no longer know what will become of the illusion."[20]

Ignoring the viewer was necessary for the maintenance of the self-containment and unity of the space within the image. To achieve a state of absorption in the beholder, the work needed to turn their attention away from the distractions of the gallery space and the various bodies, including their own, passing through it.

In *Absorption and Theatricality*, Fried characterizes mid eighteenth-century French painting's emphasis on states of absorption as a "reaction against the Rococo"[21]. Criticism of Rococo painting centered on its sensuous qualities, fantastical scenes and on the uncertain expression of its figures, who were often completely disconnected from one another: "most of the figures did not appear to be paying attention to the actions taking place before them"[22]. The nereids of François Boucher's *Le Lever du Coucher* ignore the momentous arrival of Apollo, preoccupied

by their own frivolous activities and idle chatter. These beholders represented within the painting only distract the beholder standing outside the painting with insignificant detail and decoration. 'Lost' in reverie, they are not transfixed by great events nor can they be brought together into a purposeful, composed *tableau* that would transfix the viewer. They are uncontrolled, and through their frivolous distractions serve to induce a similar undisciplined state in the viewer.

The perceived danger of this type of reverie, as I noted in the introduction to this essay, is that as the outside world becomes increasingly irrelevant to the beholder it increasingly appears to him or her as a fantasy, coloured with the overlay of imaginative projection. This solipsistic state not only opens the mind to delusions or hauntings, but eventually renders the subject asocial and out of control.

The basic premise of The Social Contract is Rousseau's assertion that "each citizen can do nothing whatever except through cooperation with others"[23]. In Jurgen Habermas' account of the twentieth-century disintegration of the type of effective public sphere he perceived to mature in eighteenth-century Europe, the agent of that disintegration is self-interest. Diderot's model for the beholder opened the citizen to cooperation within the public sphere, while securing the ultimate private sphere, the mind, against the torment of self-generated spectres that began to appear in force by the eighteenth century.

Thus we depart the secure warmth of the Salon, and head to the banks of the Seine, where "there was not one quai...which did not offer you a little phantom at the end of a dark corridor or at the top of a dark staircase"[24]. We are looking for spectres. Lights sink and lanterns are lit.

The Shades Limp By

The earliest known projected image depicted a macabre spectacle based on Hans Holbein's *Dance of Death*. One evening in 1659, visitors to the home of astronomer and mathematician Christiaan Huygens were given a demonstration of his "Lantern", which projected slides of a skeleton animated by the manipulation of levers attached to the painted glass. As lantern technology spread so did its association with nightmarish visions: Athanasius Kircher's *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* (1671) was the first publication to include illustrations of lantern images, one a devil rising from flames and the second a scythe-wielding death. The uncanny, frightening quality of lantern images soon helped earn Huygens' device the moniker "magic lantern".

It also garnered a reputation as the "terror lantern" or "lantern of fear" by many concerned about its use by "those applied to serve the lowest purpose"[25]. Debate ensued as to the proper use for the lantern: scientific demonstration or macabre spectacle? Writers and scientists such as Johannes Zahn, in *Oculus artificialis telediopticus sive telescopium* (1685), and Benjamin Martin, in *The Young Gentleman and Lady's Philosophy* (1755), argued firmly on the side of reason with extended accounts of the potential for the lantern to educate. Microscopic preparations, plants, living insects, even small statuary and other opaque objects could all be projected through various modifications to the original lantern design. Martin, following the lead of earlier writer Johann Christoph Sturm, further redeemed the "magic lantern" by re-christening it the "lanterna magalographica". This term, as Martin explains, signifies "nothing more than the *producing of a very large and magnified Picture of a Small Object*" (original italics)[26].

By the end of the eighteenth century thousands were being terrified by the now-legendary phantasmagorias of entrepreneurial Parisian showmen such as Philidor and Robertson, who nightly visited demons and deathly apparitions upon willing audiences. Disingenuously, these

terrifying shows were often touted as exercises in the demystification of superstition and the exposure of charlatanry. Ghosts would be revealed to be mere tricks, the products of deception and an overactive imagination. But, as Terry Castle notes in her analysis of phantasmagoria: "Everything was done, quite shamelessly, to intensify the supernatural effect" [27].

In these sophisticated spectacles, lanterns would be either strapped to the chests of the projectionists or set upon rollers to move them varying distances from the projection screen, causing the images to apparently recede from or rush towards the audience. The wax or water treated muslin screen separated audience from projectionist who worked behind it, carefully hidden from view; smoke could also be used in lieu of a screen. In conjunction with moving the lantern itself, the projectionist often animated the slides through lever systems similar to those used by Huygens. One standard effect produced in many phantasmagoria shows was that of a giant Medusa head careening towards the audience, eyes and tongue writhing. Pointing two lanterns at the same spot and fading one out as the other fades in enabled projectionists to create cross dissolves, another classic effect: the flesh of the Muses fell from their bones, a clear day turned to inky night.

An important feature of Étienne-Gaspard Robertson's *fantasmagorie* of 1799 was its setting, an abandoned Capuchin convent near place Vendôme, Paris. Here the spectacle surrounded the viewer in a mise-en-scène, an *installation*: "a long corridor plunged in darkness, black cloth draping the walls, sepulchral lamp, a tomb placed in the middle of the room" [28]. Accounts exist of audience members attempting to physically ward off the projected devils and ghosts[29]. Far from his contemporary Diderot's demand that the work of art disregard the beholder, Robertson contrived for his apparitions to lunge at spectators literally surrounded by ghoulish props[30].

•

Yet Diderot and Robertson are not so far apart, perhaps just the distance between two sides of a screen. I have chosen this pairing not only because they stand in for reasoned 'reflection' and irrational 'projection' respectively, but also because they play equally important roles in what Castle terms the "invention of the uncanny" in eighteenth-century culture.

Freud defines the uncanny as something familiar made unfamiliar through repression, returning in a frightful guise[31]: "an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced"[32]. The uncanny relative to our discussion is, of course, those alien thoughts that somehow come from within to haunt the mind. In Freud's words it is an "over-accentuation of psychical reality in comparison with material reality"[33], a state to be avoided by the mirror-subject of Diderot, Baudelaire, Fried and Greenberg. In fact, the discipline of the Diderotian subject is predicated upon the repression of the phantasmagoric. I further suggest that the enormously popular exhibitions of phantasmagoria were means of displacing, or finding an acceptable screen to accept, the projected phantoms of the reasoned mind: a way to let them out.

Moreover, there can be no 'uncanny' without repression:

> "Let us take the uncanny associated with the omnipotence of thoughts, with the prompt fulfillment of wishes, with secret injurious powers and with the return of the dead... We – or our primitive forefathers – once believed that these possibilities were realities, and were convinced that they actually happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them, we have *surmounted* these modes of thought; but we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs, and old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation."[34]

Animistic beliefs in the mind of a 'primitive' person, according the Freud, are not uncanny. It is only once the mind has attained faculties of reason and discarded belief in the workings of magic or occult forces, that the uncanny becomes possible. It arises from secret uncertainty in our new

beliefs, when the workings of magic seem to be confirmed and the old beliefs reappear as strange and alien. The uncanny itself is a historical phenomenon, a spectre of the enlightened mind.

Spectral projections merge with specular reflections as the mirror is revealed to be a screen. On one side of the screen is the terrified viewer of phantasmagoria, on the other, the piously absorbed Diderotian beholder. This image conjures up a work by Scottish artist Douglas Gordon, entitled *Between Darkness and Light*, installed in a pedestrian underpass in Münster in 1997. In it two films are shown simultaneously, projected onto opposite sides of the same screen; each is visible from either side, one lain over the other in a palimpsest. Gordon characterizes the passage back and forth between the states represented by the two films as "purgatory"[35].

One film is *The Song of Bernadette* by Henry King. The other is *The Exorcist* by William Friedkin.

Between Darkness and Light

We are being revisited (haunted?) by forms of phantasmagoria as the 20th century closes, this time facilitated by film, video and slide projectors. As during the Enlightenment, associations between projected images and the demonic or the irrational remain. But where Robertson's spectres hovered in the gloomy mise-en-scène of an abandoned Capuchin convent, modern ghosts are likely to be found in white cubes. Like the Whitney, where a giant eyeball projected onto a sphere on the floor of a darkened room glared at passers-by, simultaneously administering a verbal assault to all within earshot. Or the Stedelijk, in a room empty except for a black-and-white monitor set upon a wooden chest. On the monitor is shown video footage of a person sleeping. Intermittently, the lights cut out and in the blackness projected images move across the

bare walls: owls and fierce dogs lunge forth, fires burn out of control. Just as suddenly the lights return and the room is again calm.

These works by Tony Oursler and Bill Viola are the first apparitions in our spectacle, as they present phantasmagoric models of both spectator and gallery, respectively. Thus is lain out the framework for our macabre mise-en-scène, our phantasmagoric scenario of viewing.

Oursler's giant eyeball, projected onto a fibreglass sphere from a colour video of a human eye in extreme closeup, is a perverse version of Greenberg's (literally) disembodied viewer turned scatological. It stares not at the paintings but bluntly at us: an eye for an eye . The orb provokes us despite being left on the floor, pathetic and helpless. Bereft of agency, of a body to situate itself within and defend itself with, the eye spews forth a barrage of insults, using language to mark itself off from others: WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

Stumbling upon this monocular monster on the floor of a dark room invites an interesting comparison with Michael Fried's response to minimal sculpture:

> "... being distanced by such objects is not, I suggest, entirely unlike being distanced, or crowded, by the silent presence of another person; the experience of coming upon literalist objects unexpectedly – for example in somewhat darkened rooms – can be strongly, if momentarily, disquieting in just this way."[36]

The similarities are clear: the sense that the artwork is "another person" and the disquieting, even threatening, effect this produces for the viewer. The theatrical "stage presence" of the work Fried characterizes as an "obtrusiveness", even an "aggressiveness" [37]. However in our encounter with this cyclopean nightmare the roles have been reversed. We are the threatening presence, the indeterminate object unyielding to the viewer's gaze. Object and subject have switched places.

Or rather they have commingled. While Oursler's piece is ostensibly a sculpture presented for our perusal, clearly it has co-opted the status of beholder as well. In turn, the beholder occupies

both positions, viewer and viewed. But this is not true outside of a metaphorical sense: the eye is of course blind.

One can't be seen by a video; this is clear, yet my own personal experience standing before the eye was one of discomfort. It felt odd. I laughed at the thing, but felt a certain degree of shame for so doing. I'm reminded of the album cover Mike Kelley made for Sonic Youth's *Dirty*, featuring head shots of four torn and soiled stuffed animals and one acne-scarred teenage slacker with greasy hair. Empathy rises quickly for the animals. Kelley and Oursler turn our gaze back at us; the projected eyeball mirrors our reaction to its own delusional rantings (and as we have noted, our potentially inherent cruelty). More importantly, it also mirrors our reactions to those other very real people simultaneously occupying the space of the gallery, especially if they should get too close, look at us too long or do anything otherwise strange. BACK OFF! WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT? At the Whitney, those of us in front of the eye exchanged brief glances and laughed nervously.

The phantasmagoric eye is therefore our own. I above characterized Oursler's eye as a mirror, with all reference to the reflective model of early and high modernism intended, as it does return to the beholder a kind of self-image. Yet this self-image, formed through a palimpsest of mechanical projection by the video camera and subjective projection by the beholder, is haunted: it is irrational, delusional, even pathetic. Paradoxically, it is only so because it characterizes others as so. So is formed the shadow-mirror figure of the doppelganger, an encounter with which sends one into a vertiginous state of simultaneous empathy and revulsion, absorption and repulsion. It is as if this swollen orb forced its way out of our eye socket and rolled to its current position facing us, as we stare back in horror with our one good eye.

As in the original phantasmagoria, strange projected images confront the viewer; the very space of the gallery becomes a shifting, uncertain ground full of threats. "Eventually I felt that I wanted to work much less with the idea of 'site specificity' and much more by engaging in the ambiguities of the 'psychological space' "[38]. This statement by Douglas Gordon is indicative of

the way artists I deem phantasmagoric textualize the physical space of the gallery, literally turning it into a giant screen. Some take this farther than others: Pipilotti Rist floods entire rooms with glowing images, transforming their phenomenological boundaries into saturated optical panoramas. Similarly, in Viola installations such as *Passage* (1987) the viewer is immersed in the world of a video projection that encompasses their entire field of vision. To view Viola's piece one must walk through a corridor into an extremely shallow room, where one is faced with an enormous full-wall projection of video footage of a child's birthday party. Forced so physically close to the image, the beholder cannot get their bearings or achieve any kind of distance from the spectacle; the viewer's body is isolated and immobilized.

One thinks of the absorption of the Diderotian and Friedian subject by the work of art: Viola comes very close to realizing this ideal in a literal way. However, where the beholder of a painting by Greuze or Rothko experiences that work "in all its depth" in an epiphanic moment, the beholder of *Passage* gets much too close: the epiphanic flash blinds and disorients. Cut loose from the body, one's purified vision does not survey from a safe vantage point above the action, it is rather set adrift in a hallucinatory sea of pixels. Viola accentuates this effect by slowing down the video playback until it is nearly still. Just as composition disintegrates into a surge of cathode rays, narrative logic is practically frozen. The events of the 'party' unfold so painfully slowly that the viewer is trapped between endlessly waiting for the next moment to unfold and the near impossible task of remembering what has happened before. Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*, a piece in which Hitchcock's original is played back at the rate of two frames per second, is another example of this strategy at work. In both cases, one moment is no nearly like the next that time slows into an endless and indeterminate present: the future, the conclusion, the ending of the story never arrives. Viola's work achieves added poignancy in choosing as its subject the ubiquitous birthday party, a temporal signpost here uprooted.

This quality of endlessness, of inexhaustible duration is again one Fried pejoratively ascribes to minimal or literalist sculpture [39]. The experience of minimal sculpture is interminable because

the position of one's body relative to the sculptural form determines the meaning of the work, situated as it is on a purely phenomenological level. In Fried's terms we "stand in an indeterminate, open-ended – and unexacting – relation as *subject* to the impassive object on the wall or floor"[40]. Physical effacement of the beholder is impossible, as there is no proper place from which to perceive the entirety of the work. The notion of physical effacement presupposes the existence of a universal position that all viewers can adopt, from which the view is always identical. One cannot stand back from literalist work because one is *inside* it, and therefore not only has an incomplete view but also transforms it by virtue of their presence: one is by definition part of the sculpture.

The problem with minimalism's critique of the universal modernist beholder is its predication upon universalist notions of the human body. The work may change as we move around or through it, but this change is purely phenomenological and not psychological. This social space within which the meaning of minimal sculpture is produced, a space constructed by the movement of bodies, is implicitly posited as a neutral arena containing bodies that are also neutral. Nowhere is there an acknowledgement of social and psychosexual inscription upon the body of the beholder as theorized in feminist, marxist, psychoanalytic, queer and post-structural critiques. Further, the neutrality of the gallery as public space is never called into question.

As such, I argue that the social space within which minimal sculpture is meant to operate is a manifestation of Jurgen Habermas' bourgeois public sphere, and replicates many of its operating principles as laid out in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*[41]. Simultaneously, this demonstrates that while minimal sculpture was a break with the high modernist model of the 'effaced' beholder, it was an extension of the modernist model of the 'effaced' institution.

The Habermasian public sphere, a neutral arena facilitating rational-critical discourse between citizens for the good of the whole, can only be maintained through the erasure of private concerns within areas of public jurisdiction. As he notes with more than a hint of nostalgia, this pure form of the public sphere "lasted only for one blissful moment in the long history of capitalist

development'"[42], before giving way to the fragmentation that inevitably comes with ever-increasing inclusivity.

Self-effacement paradoxically leads to self-confirmation in Fried's paradigm of absorption; for Habermas, effacement of the interests of the private sphere safeguards that realm from invasion by a corrupted public sphere driven by potentially antagonistic and fragmented concerns. The ghosts to be repressed here include lobby and other interest groups that break down the unity of the public sphere into a nexus of multiple hybrid public/private spheres. Diderot's beholder enters political life and becomes Baudelaire's "mirror as vast as the crowd itself".

The neutral gallery space of both modernism and minimalism maintain, however small, one last vestige of Habermas' idealized public sphere; it is ironic that this universal field of political debate survives in the modernist institution as a (supposedly) apolitical sub-sphere. The ultra-rational ideal of Habermasian public space suits particularly well the ultra-rational logic of minimal art. The body of the spectator and the 'bodies' of the anthropomorphic sculptures meet in an open field of possibility and a physical relationship is negotiated. The integrity of each body is left intact: the cubes of Judd and the units of Morris' gestalts are as indivisible as the body of the viewer amongst them. This body of the minimal subject is a new, mobile centre that replaces the universal, fixed centre of the modernist beholder. There is no absolute body, but each body is an absolute: a tool for measuring out the external world.

But what happens when this mobile centre breaks down? What happens when it replicates the serial logic of minimalism and produces a double, a doppelganger? At the beginning of this section I mentioned two works, one an eyeball projected onto a fibreglass sphere by Tony Oursler[43], the other an installation entitled *The Sleep of Reason* (1988) by Bill Viola in which a gallery is haunted by violent images when the lights periodically cut out. I characterized them as together establishing the phantasmagoric scenario of viewing, which we can now define more fully.

The Sleep of Reason presents the once neutral gallery as screen, textualized through projected imagery. Unlike the Diderotian/Freidian scenario, attention is drawn to the work's setting in a physical space. Unlike the minimalist scenario, that physical space is made subject to a reading that is not only physical but also psychological. As Douglas Gordon notes, site specificity is replaced by site ambiguity. Viola's *The Sleep of Reason* is a particularly good illustration of how this occurs, since the unpredictability of the blackouts makes one uneasy even when the lights are on. The high contrast projections coupled with Viola's signature blaring sound resonate within the viewer for a few moments after the gallery returns to calm. Viola thus ingeniously points to the viewer's own status as projector: afterimages slink across bare walls. Ears ring but all is silent.

Within the gallery-screen, Oursler presents us with a viewer whom is not only addressed by the work of art, but also active within the scenario of viewing as a projector. The work of art, as we have discussed, absorbs certain features of the viewer's gaze and reflects others. It returns to the beholder a self-image constructed through both the projection of a *private* subjectivity onto the work of art and a self-consciousness generated within the viewer by the *public* nature of the gallery space and the conventions of viewing. The eye is a monster of mechanical and psychological projection, but it is also a mirror of our own status as projector. This is the doppelganger for which we feel revulsion and empathy; like us it is both projector and screen.

The doppelganger appears as a theme in many phantasmagoric works. Bruce Nauman's *Anthro/Socio* (1991) features looped tapes of Rinde Eckert chanting "Feed me, eat me, anthropology" and "Help me, hurt me, sociology". *Anthro/Socio*, as does Viola's work, features booming sound and disorienting images. Eckert's head is projected onto the gallery wall, so massive that ceiling and floor cut off the top of his bald head and the bottom of his chin. Pairs of video monitors are stacked about the room, one on top of the other. They present a double-image of Eckert: in the top monitor his face is upside-down, in the bottom monitor it is right side up. This motif is familiar from Nauman's sculptural installations featuring similarly paired bronze or

wax heads. The impulse for self-preservation oscillates with the impulse for self-destruction: HELP ME, HURT ME. Reason tries to make sense of this irrationality: SOCIOLOGY.

However, it is Douglas Gordon who introduces us to the figure of the doppelganger par excellence: in *A Divided Self* (1996) we are presented with the videotaped image of two arms engaged in a furious struggle, one shaved, the other hairy. Both arms are Gordon's. His projected work *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1995) features footage from the 1931 film adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Formally, the theme of splitting and doubling appears in Gordon's work through his technique of double projection. *Hysterical* (1995) is a double projection of found footage of a woman in the throes of hysteria while two men attempt to calm her, taken as documentation of her symptoms in an Italian clinic in 1908. One projection is a left-right inversion of the other, as if it were a mirror. The films appear on large free-standing scrims, around which the viewer can walk; one is front and the other rear-projected. Each of the two versions of the film is played back at a different speed, their narratives synchronizing and splitting apart in an indefinite series of loops.

The footage of *Hysterical* itself is interesting relative to the phantasmagoric scenario of viewing we have developed here. The hysterical fit seems overwrought, to be in part a performance: a projection by the patient herself, just as any interpretation of her symptoms by the attending doctor or viewer of the footage must be. This type of documentation follows out of the tradition of *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière*, a collection of photographs of hysterics taken to augment the lectures of J.M. Charcot. Joan Copjec discusses Charcot's lectures in "Flavit et Dissipati Sunt", noting (significantly for our discussion) that Charcot "was one of the first to use projection equipment in a classroom"[44]. Wards of the infirmary brought in to illustrate lectures and to be photographed "usually obliged by imitating perfectly the major crises of hysteria. In return for this they were paid attention by the crowds who gathered in the Charcot ampitheatre"[45].

For Diderot, the blind and begging general Belisarius was the classic metaphor for the blindness of the work of art to the observer. The patient, too, is blind: she has been blindfolded for the

filming. But this patient has broken Diderot's injunction against theatricality and directed her performance at the anonymous beholder, who is caught between fascination and shame. If the performance is 'for' us then we are implicated in this person's all to eager willingness to become our screen. Further, Gordon has been sure to contrive that our shadows slide across the image as we walk around the two scrims, a troubling blot in the field of vision. Demonic possession of the body is in the film presented for psychoanalytic study. Convulsions of torso, limbs and face are external, physical proof of an internal state: pictures of ghosts. But in Gordon's phantasmagoric co-opting of the film these ghosts take on a new character, they become apparitions in a phantasmagoric exhibition directed *at* and directed *by* a viewer refused the safe ground of effacement.

The impulse for creating such documentary footage recalls Baudelaire's dictum that the body "mirrors…the spiritual reality from which it derives". Yet here the body has become a theatrical prop, spiritual reality a performance. The hysterical patient lunges at the viewer, eyes and tongue writhing like a Medusa.

Similar to Gordon, Pipilotti Rist produces work that points to the viewer by performing for him or her. In part this quality of 'performance' is accomplished by the sheer hallucinatory glitz of her video production, quoting as it does conventions of MTV music video effects and editing. Ulf Erdmann Ziegler uses the phrase "coyly teasing" to describe Rist's performance in such works as *Sexy Sad I* and *Pimple Porno* (1992)[46]. In all of her works we are implicated as voyeurs: again as in Gordon's work, the silhouettes of viewers are cast across her wall-projection pieces. For *Blue Bodily Letter* (1992) the video camera runs along the length of a naked woman's body, then pulls away. This gesture is repeated as if the camera were 'stroking' the figure. Seen from a distance between strokes, the body appears strewn corpse-like in a forest.

The neutral public space of the modernist gallery becomes a sexually charged theatre of displayed bodies. *Mutaflor* (1996) features a camera that enters the mouth of a naked woman,

whereupon the screen momentarily blacks out. Seconds later the camera pulls away from her anus. There is no inside to haunt: the body *is* the display. It is the projection on the screen.

•

Mouth to anus; outside to inside and back; darkness to light. Absorption to possession. The world of the uncanny: familiar to strange.

Douglas Gordon characterizes this endless oscillation between states as purgatory. The phantasmagoric purgatory is a never-achieved atonement for the voyeuristic sins of the beholder, a standoff with the doppelganger. The show is nightmarish: dead bodies, savage dogs, raving lunatics, giant eyeballs. But something distracts us from the onslaught of demons, destroys the carefully contrived illusion: a shadowy figure that seems to be on the other side of the images. It holds a lantern and has a disconcertingly familiar gait. This familiar, altogether unspectacular figure somehow is the punctum that breaks through the terror-screen. The feeling is nauseating, then thrilling. WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

Endnotes

[1] Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," Artforum Summer, 1967: 22.
[2] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, The Sorrows of Young Werther, trans Michael Hulse (London: Penguin, 1989) 105.
[3] Terry Castle, "Spectral Politics", The Female Thermometer (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press,1995) 175.
[4] Sigmund Freud, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, ed. James Strachey, trans. Alan Tyson (New York: Norton, 1960) 258.
[5] Freud, 259.
[6] Castle, 186.
[7] Jonathan Crary has written of a similar dilemma exemplified by the 'observer' of 19th century visual culture and its profusion of zootropes, kaleidoscopes and stereoscopes. In Techniques of the Observer (Cambridge: MIT, 1992), Crary argues that Baudelaire's 'philosophical toy' not only inaugurated the era of the modernist subject, but ended it as well. As a tool to study the perfectibility of vision, it opened up the possibility of isolating that single sense independent of the will or instinct of the observer. As we have mentioned in regards to the phantoms of memory, optical toys further demonstrate the ability of the mind to produce images that do not exist outside of it: images that are a kind of side-effect of external triggers. Dr. Paris' Thaumatrope of the 1820's is a good example: a disc with an image of a bird on one side and a cage on the other. When the disc is spun the bird is caged. This complete image produced within the mind of the observer is a result of physical limitations relative to the speed at which we can process visual stimuli. As such optical toys operate from the fundamental acknowledgement that the authority of the subject is not transcendental but physiognomic: unstable, imperfect and subject to the training given it by new technological paradigms. In a sense, one's body haunts one's vision. As I will demonstrate in this essay, the reverse in also true.
[8] Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 22.
[9] Michael Fried, Absorption and Theatricality (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 13.
[10] Fried, "Absorption," 35.
[11] Clement Greenberg, "The Case for Abstract Art," Clement Greenberg: the Collected Essays and Criticism, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 4 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993) 81.
[12] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (Greenwich, Conn.: Phaidon, no date) 9.
[13] Baudelaire, 14.
[14] Baudelaire, 14.
[15] Baudelaire, 8.
[16] Baudelaire, 9.
[17] Baudelaire, 9.
[18] Fried, Absorption, 66.
[19] Fried, Absorption, 69.
[20] Denis Diderot, Discours, quoted in Fried, Absorption , 94.
[21] Fried, Absorption, 35.
[22] Fried, Absorption, 36.
[23] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract (London: Penguin, 1968) 85.
[24] Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, quoted in Terry Castle, "Phantasmagoria and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie", The Female Thermometer, 150.
[25] Benjamin Martin, Dialogue XIV, in The Young Gentleman and Lady's Philosophy (London, 1772) 285. Reproduced in facsimile in Laurent Mannoni et al., eds., Light and Movement: Incunabula of the Motion Picture, 1420-1896 (Gemona: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 1995) 90-95.
[26] Martin, 286.
[27] Castle, 143.
[28] Mannoni, 104.
[29] Castle, 151.

[30] My history of lantern use is indebted to a number of sources. The ur-text of pre-cinematic optical devices is C.W. Ceram, Archaeology of the Cinema (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, no date). Another useful general account is Martin Quigley, Magic Shadows: The Story of the Origin of Motion Pictures (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1948). Facsimile reproductions of many contemporary texts on lantern exhibitions appear in the beautifully illustrated Laurent Mannoni et al., eds., Light and Movement: Incunabula of the Motion Picture, 1420-1896 (Gemona: le Giomate del Cinema Muto, 1995). Finally, an excellent analysis of phantasmagoria appears in Terry Castle, "Phantasmagoria and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie," The Female Thermometer (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 140-67.
[31] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," Penguin Freud Library: Volume 14, Art and Literature, eds. Angela Richards and Albert Dickson (London: Penguin, 1990), 363-4.
[32] Freud, "The Uncanny," 367.
[33] Freud, "The Uncanny," 367.
[34] Freud, "The Uncanny," 370-1.
[35] Douglas Gordon, artist statement reprinted in Contemporary Sculpture: Projects in Münster, 1997, eds. Klaus Bußmann, Kaspar König and Florian Matzner (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1997) 175.
[36] Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 16.
[37] Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 16.
[38] Douglas Gordon, quoted in an interview with Stéphanie Moisdon, "Attraction – Repulsion," ID: an international survey on the notion of identity in contemporary art, exhib. cat., Marente Bloemheuvel and Jaap Guldermond, eds. (Eindhoven: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 1996) 55.
[39] Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 22.
[40] Fried, "Art and Objecthood,"16.
[41] Jurgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT, 1991).
[42] Habermas, 79.
[43] I saw this work in a group show at the Whitney in 1996, and failed to note the title. However, it is part of a larger series of eyeball projections onto fibreglass spheres Oursler produced that year. Other works in the series include *Crying, Atari, Fire, Who's, and The Three Faces of...* .
[44] Joan Copjec, "Flavit et Dissipati Sunt," October:The First Decade, 1976-1986, eds. Annette Michelson et al. (Cambridge: MIT, 1987), 299.
[45] Copjec, 299.
[46] Ulf Erdmann Ziegler, "Rist Factor," Art in America June, 1998: 80.