Trailer Time: Cinematic Expectations and Contemporary Art

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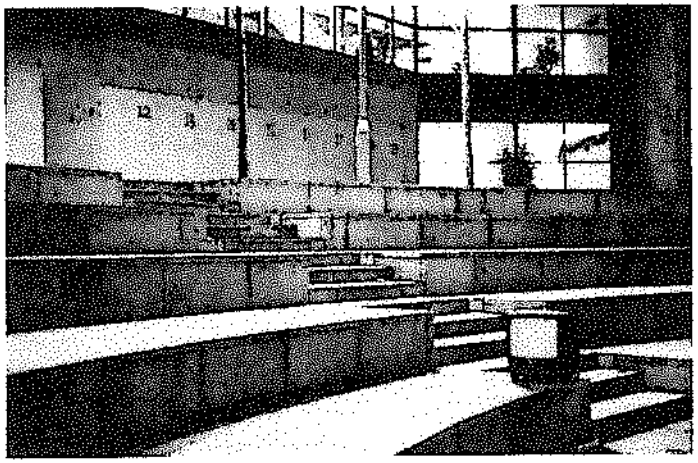

work-seth/tallentire, *trailer*, 1998

It is nighttime, early in December 1998. A small audience has gathered to view a video in the conference room of a Dublin city center library, located on the upper floor of a shopping mall. The space is flexible, fitted with curtains and a suspended ceiling, and a projector stands in the central aisle, facing a screen lowered for the occasion. Projected onto the screen is a static shot of an exterior wall, the surface of which has crumbled slightly so as to leave a scattering of chalk-like debris on the pavement. Both the setting and content of the screening seem pointedly and resolutely anti-cinematic. Yet this video presentation event formed part of a larger project—titled *trailer*—that generated, in my view, a pronounced sense of cinematic expectation or anticipation, in which the experience of view is preceded by a period of waiting. Curated by Valerie Connor and commissioned by Project Arts Centre within the context of a

program of "off-site" public projects, *trailer* was the work of artists John Seth and Anne Tallentire, collaborating as work-seth/tallentire. It was realized over a period of two weeks as a series of actions performed on ten days, recorded on video, with each day's rapidly edited video exhibited that night at a different (non-gallery) Dublin site.

The state of expectation that I associate with *trailer* can be produced in many different ways; by seeing a poster or a trailer for a film, on the street, online, on television, or in the cinema itself, or reading previews, advance publicity, or even published reviews of current releases. While most readers of a review will not need to wait for long for their expectation of viewing to be realized, the circulation of a trailer (or the short "teaser" clip) may precede the film's release date by many months, even longer in some distribution territories. Although never specific or limited to encounters with trailers, this heightened and attenuated state of cinematic expectation was, in the era before YouTube and the "trailer gallery" of the Internet Movie Database, most likely to be produced in the film theater as the primary setting for the filmic promotion of coming attractions. The affective intensity of anticipation and expectation might also have been more pronounced at an even earlier moment, when the opportunity to view a film was limited to its theatrical run. It could be argued that a sense of anticipation is *also* produced by hearing fragments of a soundtrack, or by learning that a familiar novel is to be adapted for the screen, suggesting that memory may at times be intertwined with expectation.[1] This intertwining is implied in Victor Burgin's concept of the "cinematic heterotopia," an expanded space that encompasses "advertisements, such as trailers and clips seen on television or the Internet [...] Newspaper reviews and theoretical articles [...] Production photographs, frame enlargements, memorabilia, and so on."[2]

In recalling my own experience of viewing elements of *trailer*, at the Central Library and elsewhere, I am also reminded of a phrase by Claire Bishop, in an essay from 2002 about the work of commissioning organization Artangel, which reflects upon the rituals that shape the experience of art outside the gallery. Bishop likens the journey toward an Artangel project to a "pilgrimage," but also proposes a

less loaded—and more secular—framework for thinking about expectations and experiences of site-specific art; she suggests that the process of making advance preparations, such as sourcing directions and maps, produces a "quasi-cinematic charge."[3] Bishop seems to use term quasi-cinematic, as opposed to cinematic, because she is not referring specifically to the experience of publicly viewing, or exhibiting, moving image works. By this point, Artangel had already articulated an interest in the film theater as exhibition site,[4] but for Bishop the "quasi-cinematic" quality of this experience is not a function of the form or location of the commissioned work; instead it seems to reside within the journey toward a site, in the imaginative and cognitive processes that constitute advance preparation, when temporal and spatial coordinates are known only abstractly.

In the case of *trailer*, these preparations were purposefully attenuated over the duration of the work's production and exhibition. The location of each night's exhibition venue could only be secured by calling the Project Arts Centre box office. A modest "trailer" for each screening event, consisting of a single image drawn from that day's video, was also posted on the institution's website. This type of promotion (fairly mundane in the era of Web 2.0) was both novel and logistically challenging in 1998, and integral to *trailer*'s logic of withholding and revealing information over time. Seth and Tallentire clearly disavow the conventional form of the theatrical film trailer; their slow moving videos, characterized by static camerawork and minimal editing, bear no relation to promotional sequences encountered in cinemas now or during the 1990s. They do not seek to create expectation by offering tantalizing glimpses of something as yet unavailable, and it would also be somewhat misleading to describe *trailer* simply as a multi-part video work, since the videos form just one element of a larger project of performing, recording, and exhibiting. Instead, it is the temporally and spatially dispersed form of *trailer*, encompassing the interactions with the box office, the website, and other audience members, that produced a heightened and, I would argue, cinematic sense of anticipation and expectation.

Seth and Tallentire's project can also, however, be situated in relation to other, very different, explorations of the trailer form within contemporary art and I am

specifically interested in two examples, which precede and follow *trailer*. The first is Philippe Parreno's trailer for the (then unfinished) film *La Nuit des héros/The Night of Heroes*, which forms part of his contribution to the exhibition "Project Unité"[5] curated by Yves Aupetitallot at Unité d'Habitation Le Corbusier in Firminy, near Saint-Etienne, in 1993. My second example is perhaps the most straightforward and prominent; Francesco Vezzoli's *Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula*, which premiered at the Venice Biennale in 2005 and continues to circulate on social media. By drawing these very different works together, I consider how the trailer functions to articulate the changing relationship between art and media economies of production, postproduction and exhibition. It is important to note that my discussion does not attempt to offer an exhaustive survey of the trailer form in contemporary art. Such a survey would most likely include discussion of Charles de Meaux's series of shorts, initiated in 2004 with *You Should Be the Next Astronaut* and collectively titled *Trailer Part 1*, which advertised feature films that did not exist.

A more expansive overview of the trailer form might also encompass later works such as Nathaniel Mellors's *The Seven Ages of Britain Teaser* (2009), commissioned and broadcast by the BBC to introduce the final episode of the cultural history series *The Seven Ages of Britain*. Incorporating an appearance by the series presenter David Dimbleby, whose voice was synchronized at one point to a silicon mask cast from his face, the content of Mellors' teaser subtly references a key moment in the history of British artists' television; David Hall's *This Is a Television Receiver* (1976), devised as the unannounced opening work for a video art-themed edition of the BBC arts programme *Arena*. The face of BBC presenter David Baker was also subject to a process of distortion in Hall's work, resulting in this instance from the continual re-recording of the televised sound and image. While *This Is a Television Receiver* bears no direct relation to Hall's later works, Mellors used *The Seven Ages of Britain Teaser* to introduce a number of characters and actors from his ongoing multi-part work *Ourhouse* (2010–). Consequently, the teaser seems closer in function to a conventional trailer or preview clip, even if it was never intended to function as an advertisement for *Ourhouse*.

Rather than framing the trailer as a distinct genre of artists' moving image, I have chosen instead to explore projects that use the trailer form to explore affective modes of expectation and anticipation, which are rich with cinematic association and yet extend well beyond the bounds of the film theater. This necessitates a more expansive understanding of historical precedent and context, taking account of the many artists who have used publicity as the content of their work. A full elaboration of this history is beyond the scope of this article but would certainly acknowledge the practices of both Andy Warhol and General Idea, and consider specific projects utilising advertising forms by other artists, including Chris Burden's *TV Commercials*, from 1973–1977, and Lynda Benglis's infamous 1974 advertisement in *Artforum*. It would perhaps also consider how anticipation functions in Mark Lewis' *Two Impossible Films* (1995), consisting solely of titles and credits for films that were once imagined (by others) but never actually realized, and perhaps also in his explicitly propositional work *The Pitch* (1998), which introduces and demonstrates the concept of a film entirely cast with extras. While these examples are not equally "cinematic" in form and association, they all deploy rhetorical strategies to generate expectation. My article identifies the trailer as particularly useful framework for artists seeking to explore and intensify experiences of expectation and anticipation, whether produced by preparations for (and journeys toward) viewing, by the temporal disorientation of the exhibition visitor, or by the advertisement of a remake of a film that never existed.

Expectations, Platforms, and Exhibitions

The trailer derives its name from the practice of advertising features *after* the main program, but it can also be situated in relation to the history of "attractions," extending from early cinema into the silent film era. While Tom Gunning evokes a experience of multi-various live and filmed attractions, jostling for attention in the Nickelodeon, the subsequent decade saw the development of more purposeful and cohesive "prologues," such as the combination of lighting effects, live actors, musicians, and even stage sets devised to precede E. A. Dupont's *Variété* (1925), which according to

Frances Guerin lasted between 15 and 20 minutes, providing "just enough time for the spectator to prepare for the coming film."[6] Unlike the prologue, however, the trailer heightens and attenuates expectation over days rather than minutes, so its action of preparation operates differently.

The temporal connection between the commercial trailer and the film it advertises is increasingly attenuated. No longer bound to a specific release and promotional schedule, trailers now be readily located, shared, viewed, and reviewed online, so that the trailer has now acquired the status of a "media-platform" in its own right, integral to the convergent media economy theorized by Thomas Elsaesser:

> Films have also had to perform well on different media-platforms, at least since the 1960s: as theatrical releases, as television reruns, as prerecorded videotapes. Since the 1990s, the marketplace has expanded (it has become global, rather than merely US-domestic, European, Japanese, and Australian) and the platforms have diversified: besides the ones named, one needs to add: a film's internet site, the movie trailer, the video-game, and the DVD.[7]

In Elsaesser's formulation, the trailer is just one among an array of proliferating platforms for exhibition, which operate even in advance of a film's completion. This requirement inevitably serves to shape the process of production, to the extent that—as David Bordwell has argued—many feature films now routinely "play like trailers."[8]

This altered workflow model, in which postproduction determines production, is not specific to the economy of theatrical film production and exhibition. Rather it extends across many different contexts, including contemporary art as evidenced by the careful consideration typically given to the content of e-flux announcements for art events, commissions, and exhibitions, sometimes booked and planned well before the work has been fully realized. Consequently, it is no longer possible to define the trailer as a uniquely and distinctly cinematic form. Instead, as "media-platform," it tends to function—within both contemporary art discourse and media theory—as the site

and sign of a rapidly expanding and evolving convergent media economy. The trailer is also just one of *many* promotional forms to be transposed from commercial film and television into contemporary art, since artists also worked with production stills, screen tests, billboard advertisements, posters, and "behind the scenes" production footage.[9] The film set, with its specialized apparatus and choreographed personnel, has long been a privileged location for the shooting of promotional material, ranging from official interviews with crew and cast members during the filming process to ostensibly unofficial candid images "leaked" precisely in order to generate interest among fans.

Since the 1990s, several artists, curators, and theorists have sought to frame or stage the exhibition itself as "film set," a designation that seems to rely—at least tacitly—upon images of film production generated for a promotional purpose. Noting the significance of the exhibition as a stage or film set, particularly in the work of artists such as Liam Gillick, Philippe Parreno, and Rirkrit Tiravanija, Nicolas Bourriaud envisages the scene of film production in fairly ideal terms:

> The exhibition becomes one big film set (a "film without a camera," Philippe Parreno puts it), a set in which we can mount our own sequences of meanings. Rirkrit Tiravanija always includes the words "lots of people," indicating that they are an integral part of it all. The forms that he presents to the public do not constitute an artwork until they are actually used and occupied by the people who thus become both the walk-ons and passengers of the exhibition.[10]

This account conjures up a scene of fluid social interaction, as opposed to the regimented control of space and personnel that is typical of commercial film production. Bourriaud also specifically identifies the film set as a potential site for the formation of "temporary subject-groups, or micro-communities," which are privileged in his account for their "alternative modes of sociality."[11] In addition, for Bourriaud (and perhaps some of the artists referenced in his discussion) the "film set" is a particularly attractive and useful model because it elevates *process* over completion.

Claire Bishop, however, explicitly critiques the "open-endedness" and "authorial renunciation"[12] sometimes associated with the curatorial framing and staging of an exhibition as film or film set. She identifies these qualities in *No Man's Time* (1991), curated by Eric Troncy at the Villa Arson in Nice. This show consisted of projects created or performed specifically for this context, several of which were developed by the exhibiting artists during a month-long residency in advance of the opening. Although not explicitly framed by the curator "as a film," *No Man's Time* nonetheless incorporated various references to filmic and mediatic time, most notably in works such as Parreno's performance *No More Reality*, a staged demonstration by children holding banners and a billboard work alluding to *Twin Peaks* (1990–1991).[13]

According to Bishop, the deliberate incompleteness of exhibitions such as *No Man's Time* rendered them *ineffective* as places of "assembly," in which viewers might be compelled to "reflect upon their own positions and perspectives."[14] In fact, she argues that the production of "an open space for participants [...] is frequently experienced by the viewing public as a loss, since the process [of interaction between artists and curators] that forms the central meaning of this work is rarely made visible and explicit."[15] Here Bishop is, to some extent, reiterating an earlier critique of open-endedness, which she developed in relation to the practices of Gillick and Tiravanija, within a discussion of Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics.[16] Gillick's forceful response to her critique usefully contextualizes his own particular interest in open-endedness as a critical strategy, while also framing Bishop's concern for the viewing public as "neopopulist."[17] He also persuasively defends the importance of opacity as a counterpoint to demands for transparency and visibility often issued by and associated with dominant cultures.[18]

Jörn Schafaff offers a different approach to Bishop, arguing that references to the exhibition as film set are important primarily because they serve to frame it "as a production site."[19] He also points out, citing Bourriaud, that the designation of the exhibition as "set" differentiates it from the exhibition as "store" so that, instead of an assembly of separate "noteworthy objects," the exhibition

is experienced as "the unitary mise-en-scène of objects."[20] Schafaff discusses *Les Ateliers du Paradise: Un film en temps réel* (*The Studios of Paradise: A Film in Real Time*), which was realized in 1990 by Parreno with Pierre Joseph and Philippe Perrin, and involved the use of Galerie Air de Paris in Nice as filming location. Significantly, in this instance, the gallery was framed "not only as a set for a possible film or one already shot but rather as the film itself."[21] This was precisely in order to engage the visitor's knowledge of cinema, so that walking through the exhibition would resemble "breaking a scene down into individual shots," enabling visitors to "step out of ordinary reality for a while [...] but also observe in the process."[22]

Even though Galerie Air de Paris is a commercial organization (which relocated from Nice to Paris in 1994 and currently represents Parreno), Schafaff positions *Les Ateliers du Paradise* and the exhibition as film in relation to Debord's critique of the spectacle. He emphasizes that this critique was developed not in relation to theater, but to the "structural power of the mass media," with film and television standing for "a generally alienated relationship to the world, for perception that is allegedly one's own, for the false impression of an immediate participation in the events of the world."[23] In this account, the exhibition is not the occasion for an assembly or gathering of visitors who reflect critically upon their positions from a distance. Instead the exhibition visitor is cast as a filmgoer, and presented with a "mise-en-scène" to occupy and move through. Clearly there is a difference between framing the exhibition as a "film set" and "as film." In the latter instance, the visitor is *not* confronted with a process of production that is ongoing and explicitly incomplete. Instead, in Schafaff's example at least, the visitor to the exhibition as film is addressed as knowledgeable and invited to deploy their own understanding (and memory) of cinematic convention and form.

What would it mean for an exhibition visitor to move (imaginatively) through the mise-en-scène of a trailer rather than a film or film set? In my view, an exhibition framed as a "trailer" would present a provisionally complete—rather than explicitly unfinished—form, yet also emphasize qualities of expectation and speculation. Cinema trailers certainly address filmgoers as knowledgeable in relation to

the conventions of storytelling, characterization and genre. They can also frequently be categorized according to tried and tested modes of promotion, to the extent that it is even possible to identify various "genres" of trailer.[24] Yet even though they certainly aim to mobilize memories and knowledge of cinema, trailers are always oriented toward a future moment, emphasizing that which is yet to come. This orientation is assumed in Gavin Butt and Jon Cairns' response to Seth and Tallentire's *trailer*:

> Even in the cinematic register, in which the trailer comes *before*, there is a suggestion that it is secondary to that which it precedes. It anticipates something greater, more powerful still yet to come (even if such a promise often turns out to be hollow as any viewer of Hollywood's cycle of blockbusters might attest).[25]

The trailer's status as "secondary" also confirms its separateness from the film set, which seems to occupy a more "primary" position. Even if these demands may actually dictate certain aspects of production, the trailer as form does not generally signify "production." Instead, it represents the convergence of formerly distinct processes of pre- and postproduction, across the film and television industries.[26]

trailer, by work-seth/tallentire

In the project realized by John Seth and Anne Tallentire, the activity of "trailing" evidently carries multiple associations, not necessarily all bound up with cinema. As already noted, on each of the ten working days, the artists performed a series of actions in undisclosed locations, which were often unrecognizable even to those with an intimate knowledge of Dublin. The coordinates of the shooting locations were established through a predefined principle of selection, involving the contents of the daily newspaper. Although these performed actions were only accessible to the exhibition's public(s) in mediated form, the artists were at times observed by passersby—fleetingly visible in the videos—and also by invited collaborators, whose presence can be inferred occasionally.

The artist Uriel Orlow was present for several days during the making of trailer, contributing to the visual documentation of the work and also authoring a text titled "Trailing Behind," published in 1999.[27] In addition, Gavin Butt and Jon Cairns were commissioned to write a text about the work, which originally appeared on the Project Arts Centre website, with a revised version published in the journal *Third Text*, as "The Art of Trailing." Cinematic references figure prominently in both written accounts of the work, with Orlow characterizing the trailer "as a series of extracts" that exist as a trace of the work and yet also point ahead, continuing to "announce itself and the work." Orlow's text also draws attention to the ambiguous status of the images posted online, describing them as "the trailer of trailer" and suggesting that they do not occupy the "past tense (of the archive), but belong to an anterior future of memory and anticipation; off-time."[28]

Informed by the writings of Michel de Certeau, who "describes the city as split in two, occurring at two levels," Orlow implicitly frames *trailer* as a corrective to the view of the city conventionally offered by the cinema. He details the split between theoretical and "enacted" or inhabited cities in Michel de Certeau's thinking:

> One [level is] above, the theoretical city of maps and grids, the total city of the panorama or bird's eye postcard, created by urban planners, cartographers, politicians. This is also the city of the cinema. The other, the enacted city, down below, on the contrary is inhabited by practitioners, who live "below the thresholds at which visibility begins" (de Certeau, 1984). This city, which defies a total experience, is fragmented, incoherent, unmastered.[29]

Significantly, *trailer* begins with an image of listening rather than seeing. The very first shot is a close-up of an ear pressed to a surface, which might equally be a pavement or a wall. It is followed by fragmentary details of urban streets, pedestrians, disused ground, pigeons, shafts of sunlight piercing railings, abandoned car parts and bits of wood, a man opening up a scrap yard storage area to reveal a stack of fridges, washing machines, and other "white goods."

The final shot reveals the listening figure as Tallentire, her ear pressed against a wall.

As noted by Orlow, *trailer* is filled with images of objects being touched, handled, and moved, constantly and carefully manipulated in ways that evade the "imaginary totalizations produced by the eye."[30] Some of these manipulations are observed at a distance, performed by workers engaged in functional, recognizable tasks. For example, at one point, the camera is directed toward a man, wearing a high-visibility vest, who holds a wheelbarrow as hot asphalt pours out of truck. He then carefully maneuvers it toward a group of waiting coworkers, who pour and press it into a hole in the road, adding several layers before the barrow is returned to the truck for refilling. At another moment, a roll of cling film is unfurled by an individual who remains partially out of the frame. The action is carried by foot rather than hand, as the figure steps carefully onto a section of film with one foot and unfurls the roll with the other, moving past obstacles and continuing the cardboard interior is revealed, and abandoned on the street. These actions are observed in real-time, without edits to speed the process, or cutaways to create a conventional sense of dramatic tension, or its release. Yet the steady gaze of the camera, in these sequences, nonetheless produces a palpable sense of expectation.

In these instances, something specific appears to "happen"; the action of filling the hole in the road is at least partially completed and the roll of cling film is expended. At other moments, however, *trailer* produces a sense of expectation that is never fully satisfied. For example, at one point Seth and Tallentire purposefully yet awkwardly unwrap a bundle of wood covered in clear tape, reflecting the low winter sunlight. After a few moments, however, it is no longer clear whether they are actually wrapping or unwrapping the tape and the action remains inconclusive. Elsewhere, in one of the few interior sequences, the camera fixes upon the counter of a cafe, silhouetted by the light of a window onto a busy road. Customers and cafe workers come and go, entering and leaving the frame, but the details of their actions are difficult to discern, and the shot ends without an obvious event.

These moments of expectation, satisfied or frustrated, are dispersed across the ten separate videos that

constitute the projected component of *trailer*. Significantly, there is no attempt to produce a sense of continuity from one video to another, or deploy the kind of strategic interruption commonly found in serialized drama, occasionally appropriated by artists working with multipart narrative.[31] Seth and Tallentire never satisfy the desire for a complete picture because, as Orlow points out, the "spectators [who follow] for a few nights in Dublin, or a few clicks on the internet" are never presented with a "whole." It is "never accessible, *always already over*. And thus the image leaves its trail behind, in us, as an image-question."[32] Through the content and form of individual video components and their attenuated presentation in space and time, *trailer* seems to create a heightened awareness of expectation. But this expectant status is not simply shaped by the language and exhibition practices of cinema; instead it speaks to broader practices of imaging and consuming urban space.

Orlow likens Seth and Tallentire to "traveling players whose 'procedure' somewhat resembles that of the Lumière brothers traveling from city to city around the turn of the last century, to film one place and simultaneously screen the footage of another."[33] Rather than simply replicating this tradition, however, Orlow suggests that *trailer* "bears witness to the signs of wear and disillusion with this fascination and obsession of global roaming and urban showcasing." Noting that the audience had to track the work across familiar and unfamiliar parts of the city, Gavin Butt and Jon Cairns claim that *trailer* produces "a defamiliarized relationship to space."[34] They read this defamiliarization as a critical response to the "governmental drive, launched in the early 1990s and backed by both national and European funds, to establish a cultural quarter"[35] in Temple Bar. This area is located on the south bank of the river Liffey and it is home to a number of longstanding cultural institutions, including Project Arts Centre, commissioner of *trailer*.

Before turning to Parreno's 1993 *La Nuit des héros*, which very explicitly appropriates the form of both the cinema trailer and the film set, it is useful to recall a specific moment in the history of Temple Bar's "renewal" that may be pertinent to the context for *trailer*, even though it did not directly shape the production or reception of this work. In the early 1990s, several streets near Project Arts Centre were

transformed into the set of a big budget Hollywood feature (*Far and Away*, starring Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman). Streets were temporarily cobbled, fake shop fronts were added and gable walls were painted so that the cultural quarter could stand in for the slums, brothels, and saloon bars of 19th-century Boston. Certain elements of *Far and Away*'s production design persisted long after the shoot had ended so that, a fragmentary way, the film set was integrated into the urban fabric and cultural memory of Temple Bar, as both tourist attraction and site of artistic production.[36] But *trailer* explicitly rejects what Orlow calls "wide-angle cinematic views" favored in the promotion of both cinema and tourism, offering instead only "the pieces of a shattered urban panorama."[37]

Philippe Parreno and Project Unité

Project Unité, curated by Yves Aupetitallot, took place in a housing estate designed by Le Corbusier and modeled upon his Unité d'Habitation in Marseille. Analyzing the project's context and development, Claire Bishop notes that the estate in Firminy was then in "a considerable state of disrepair":

> Located at the top of a steep hill on the outskirts of the city (in the traditionally dominant position of the aristocracy), the complex was isolated from the city center and populated by single parents, students, immigrants, and old age pensioners. The kindergarten on the roof was fabricated entirely in concrete and therefore unpopular, while Le Corbusier's plans to have a floor of the Unité dedicated to shops was never realized. Since 1983, half of the building had been empty and boarded up, leaving entire "streets" of apartments empty and uninhabited, separated from the rest of the building by plastic sheeting.[38]

The artist Christian Philipp Müller, collaborating with Aupetitallot on another project in the region, proposed the idea of organizing an exhibition in the disused apartments, following the approach used in the earlier show *Chambres d'Amis* (organized by Jan Hoet in Ghent in 1986).[39]

Bishop explains that it took four years to develop *Project Unité*, with Müller producing a series of three newsletters about the project that were circulated in advance, from November 1992 onward.[40] For the final exhibition, a group of 40 European and American artists, architects, and designers were invited to work on site, with a very small number taking up the opportunity to actually inhabit the apartments.[41] Most of the artists chose instead to transform the apartments into galleries, with many making works about the building and its architecture.[42] Noting the involvement of artists who would later be associated with relational aesthetics (such as Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Parreno), Bishop reads *Project Unité* in terms of a shift in European artistic and curatorial practice and away from the conventional "final exhibition of 'works'" and toward the "totality of the situation (building, residents, artist residencies, installations)."[43]

Parreno's contribution to the group show involved shooting a film based upon a script cowritten with Nicolas Bourriaud, subsequently titled *La Nuit des héros* (1994), in one of the apartments. During the exhibition, elements of the film's set and props, such as a gothic church window and various texts written on cardboard, were displayed along with a trailer for the film.[44] This trailer is no longer accessible and its content is not described in the accounts of the exhibition provided by Bishop or Schafaff. The film it advertised, *La Nuit des héros,* is relatively short, with a running time of approximately 12 minutes 30 seconds, including credits. The narrative centers upon an art historian named Dante (played by Yves Lecoq) living in the deserted Le Corbusier building and working upon a history of modern art. Dante's younger next-door neighbor Beatrice (played by Delphine Grange) is concerned that he has entered into a state of madness, and tries to reengage him with scenes of everyday life shot in the neighborhood, but his hallucinations become contagious and spread through the Le Corbusier building. As the names of the title characters suggest, Parreno's film references the historical relationship between the Italian poet Dante's and his muse Beatrice, whose modern-day counterpart is depicted as an angelic figure dressed in white. In Parreno's film, however, Beatrice is the more active agent and it is she who leaves the apartment to

document her surroundings (supermarkets, children, and older people), interacting with other characters (played by Bourriaud and Charles de Meaux) while the art historian retreats into a world populated by imaginary figures.

For Bishop, who mentions Parreno's contribution to *Project Unité* only in a footnote, many of the responses to the Firminy site articulated a problematically "oblique engagement with context" and failed to address the environment with an appropriate "theoretical or critical framework."[45] According to Schafaff, however, the significance of Parreno's approach, particularly his treatment of the apartment as a film set, lies partly in its potential to make explicit the determining logic of modernist architecture. He reads Parreno's exhibition as a direct response to the fact that "Le Corbusier's building already functioned like a set," noting that Le Corbusier regarded it as the "task of architecture [...] to inform human behavior by determining the everyday environment of social life."[46] Viewed from this perspective, Parreno's project was not a response to the spatial architecture of the apartment and the building, in isolation, but rather an attempt to engage with temporalities of social life, produced in part by architecture.

Crucially, Schafaff's focus is on the exhibition situation, as opposed to the subsequently finished film. He argues that, since visitors to Parreno's exhibition in *Project Unité* encountered (in addition to the set) a trailer announcing "a product yet to be released," they were confronted with the fact that they had arrived "at the wrong place at the wrong time: too late for the activity that preceded them, too early and not in the right place for the announced premiere."[47] As a consequence:

> [The exhibition visitors] were in a kind of interstice, removed in space and time from the events outside. The current situation seemed strangely lifeless, as if frozen (in describing his setups, Parreno speaks of "freeze frames"). At the same time, however, it was precisely this status that revealed a potential that distinguished the exhibition situation from the other components of the work to which the audience was denied access (for example, the production phase and the final film).[48]

There are definite parallels here with Orlow's reading of *trailer* as "never accessible, always already over," but there are also important differences between these two works. As noted earlier, Seth and Tallentire are not interested in preexisting media formats, and make no attempt to borrow from the language of theatrical film promotion. In Schafaff's account of Parreno's work, however, the trailer format plays an important role in producing a specific exhibition situation precisely because of its relationship to conventions of theatrical film promotion, exhibition, and reception.

It is also worth noting that Parreno's project owes a certain amount to television, or at least to influential perceptions of this cultural form in French society. Schafaff notes that *La Nuit des héros* takes its title from an early example of the reality TV genre in France, which was critiqued by Serge Daney. In this particular show "everyday heroes commented on their extraordinary deeds and replayed them for the camera,"[49] prompting Daney to lament the assignment and learning of roles by the "excluded." According to Schafaff, the situation created by Parreno—consisting of the film set, the trailer and the exhibition visitors—both referenced and deviated significantly from the original television show because it lacked a final product, resulting only in "a rehearsal or a mental recording of various takes" with no possibility to "resolve the scene"[50] through editing.

Francesco Vezzoli, *Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula*

By comparison with these earlier examples, Vezzoli's five minute *Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula* initially appears conventional in terms of context and form, mirroring many of the strategies found in commercial feature film promotion, particularly in its emphasis on "stars," high production value shots of spectacular locations, and crowd scenes. But the running time of Vezzoli's trailer is longer than the standard feature film promo and this, together with the self-conscious use of hyperbolic voiceover (and frequent allusions to scandal) positions it somewhat closer to a 1950s B-movie trailer. This work was first exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2005, as part of the international selection

curated by Maria de Corral, where it was installed in a small room furnished to suggest a private cinema, complete with red plush raked seating. Although the installation mimicked certain aspects of a cinema auditorium, the work was screened continuously, and the audience was permitted to remain in their seats for successive viewings.

In many ways, Vezzoli's work echoes the broader exploration of remaking and reenactment evident in artists' moving image during the 1990s and 2000s.[51] According to Andrea Tarsia, it "proposes a whole forest of lost referents as a site for action: it is a trailer for an unmade remake of Tinto Brass' infamous 1979 film *Caligula*, itself born of a historically accurate script by Gore Vidal hijacked and transformed by the film's director into a semi-pornographic movie."[52] The various releases and rereleases of Brass' film, disowned by Vidal, have given rise to a proliferation of trailers capitalizing upon and amplifying its notoriety. Vezzoli's *Trailer* takes this hyperbole to comic heights by interspersing an orgy scene with onscreen text in which the story of Caligula is presented as the greatest ever told, promising a visceral experience that is "so passionate in its extremes you can literally feel it coating you in the tableau." The cast of *Trailer*, which features numerous Hollywood actors (including Milla Jovovich, Benicio del Toro, and Gerard Butler), asserts a direct link to the 1979 Tinto Brass film through the presence of Gore Vidal himself, and "the ravishing Helen Mirren as the Empress Tiberius in a triumphant return to the world of Caligula." Vezzoli also appears briefly, and is framed as the creator of "the international smash hit *Le Comizi di Non Amore* (2004)."[53]

According to John Paul Ricco, Vezzoli's work is often dismissed by the contemporary art press as the expression of an "infatuation with the glamorous side of popular media."[54] Yet *Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula* is viewed favorably by Sven Lütticken, who suggests that the presentation of Vezzoli's work at the Venice Biennale "invited parallels between the excesses of the later Roman Empire and the potlatch that is the contemporary art world, in which today's elites engage in another kind of conspicuous consumption."[55] Noting the "increasing integration of the 'real' culture industry and its art-world double," he claims that the work's very site-specificity "signals the erosion

of art's relative autonomy in the spectacle," a comment that seems to anticipate aspects of Isabelle Graw's more account of art and celebrity culture.[56]

For Ricco, who develops a Deleuzian approach to time and the moving image, *Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula* operates as counterpoint to "consensus" images of the future. His analysis is focused primarily on Vezzoli's sustained exploration of "preview genres," which tend to include the pilot as well as the trailer. In particular, he emphasizes that Vezzoli's pilots and trailers "exist without the possibility of a subsequent work [...] that would stand as the fulfillment and completion of their promise and coming attraction."[57] Ricco also identifies a connection between Vezzoli's focus on the trailer and his fascination with "superannuated" actors, whose fame has been surpassed by that of younger stars, to the extent that these previews offer a kind of "melancholic meditation on a future that might have been."[58] In this account, the evident convergence of art and celebrity cultures is less important than Vezzoli's staging of "an incommensurable temporality, a doubling and splitting of pasts and futures that [...] is a rupture in the spectacular fabric of consensus democracy that offers a sense as to the simulacrum's capacity for invention, and not just replication."[59] For Ricco, the trailer is a "cinematographic image of a readymade future" and it forms an integral part of what he terms a "tele-cinematic consensus machine." Here he is referring to the role played by media in creation of a "future of the social [already] consented to, and already made room for."[60] He argues that Vezzoli disrupts this "readymade future" through the conjunction of temporalities of the trailer, as preview, and the remake. The key point here is that because Gore Vidal's version of *Caligula* was never in fact realized, by Brass or anyone else, it cannot now be *re*made.

The Paradox of Trailer Time

While I am not convinced that *Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula* produces the very dramatic political rupture claimed by Ricco, it is interesting to question whether a sense of temporal paradox may also be at work in the other examples discussed here. Schafaff seems to hint at paradox

in his discussion of the "interstice" produced by Parreno's exhibition in 1993. But by the following year his trailer had been supplanted by the film it once advertised and, as a finished work, *La Nuit des héros* retains relatively little trace of the complex temporality that characterized the exhibition situation theorized by Schafaff. The unsettling spatio-temporal coincidence of the apartment and the film set, which was so important in his contribution to *Project Unité*, is not particularly legible in the film, although Parreno does withhold a conventional established shot of the building's exterior until the closing moments. In the case of Seth and Tallentire's work, Orlow suggests that visitors to the *trailer* screenings encountered video extracts that functioned simultaneously as traces and announcements, but this did not produce a doubling or splitting of pasts and futures; instead each extract could be fairly readily understood in relation to a larger series, forming part of an ongoing process, unfolding in a single temporal continuum.

The sense of cinematic expectation that I have emphasized in relation to the works of both Seth and Tallentire, and Parreno should arguably be even more pronounced in the case of *Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula*. But in my view the installation of Vezzoli's work at the Venice Biennale in a dedicated space—rather than, for example, as a preamble to other and more explicitly finished moving image works—actually tended to dissociate it from the temporal context of theatrical film promotion. It is possible that the purpose-built cinema may have been intended to evoke an industry screening room, where a trailer might potentially be viewed by producers or a test audience, but the looped installation also confirmed *Trailer*'s status as a complete work, rather than a preamble to the (impossible) feature length remake it ostensibly advertised.

I have argued that the trailer is just one of *many* promotional forms transposed from commercial film and television into contemporary art, and I have also suggested that the film set has begun to acquire the status of a promotional media form in its own right. Parreno's contribution to *Project Unité* falls readily into the category of exhibition as set or production site, with the trailer serving very explicitly as the substitute for the unfinished film—an advertisement for a product that was (then) unavailable. But the works by

Seth and Tallentire, and by Vezzoli, are more ambiguous in this regard. Seth and Tallentire seem to assert a rigorous separation between the physical and temporal spheres of production and exhibition, while at the same time drawing upon the imagery of production—and perhaps also upon habits of cinema-going—to create a sense of expectation in relation to each successive screening. Vezzoli's replica cinema is formally wholly dissociated from the sphere of production, as it presents no trace of the sets or props visible on screen, yet its small scale potentially calls to mind a preview screening room.

In my view, all three works involve the exploration and mobilization of cinematic expectations, even though they are characterized by very different utilizations of the trailer form. For Seth and Tallentire, the activity of trailing is characterized by duality because it signifies the pursuit of traces and the announcement of future events, and because they oppose the cinematic "wide-angle" to a different mode of looking and listening. Parreno's exhibition, in contrast, stages a conjunction of production and postproduction temporalities through the simultaneous display of film set and trailer, underscoring the fact that sets and props now function as promotional media. Of the three examples, Vezzoli's *Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula*—designed to tease and titillate—seems most likely to generate specific expectations, yet as Ricco's analysis demonstrates it also engages the viewer in a form of temporal projection that is inherently contradictory.

Artists such as John Seth and Anne Tallentire were clearly interested in detouring the concept of the trailer away from its conventional commercial function in relation to film. But their development of a multi-part exhibition, encountered by audiences as a succession of exhibition events, also required a radical rethinking of institutional norms of installation and promotion. Consequently, the framework of the trailer, when transposed to the contemporary art context, allowed for a reconfiguration of institutional convention. It could be argued that the trailer—in its more familiar advertising form—has now been wholly absorbed by the art institutional economy, with museum and gallery websites routinely featuring video clips devised to promote current exhibitions. Even individual artists have been

known to produce trailers for moving image works, for circulation via media sharing websites such as Vimeo or YouTube.

Yet preview materials made by artists do not necessarily work in the same manner as those typically used to promote commercial film. For example, a short trailer for Beatrice's Gibson's film *The Tiger's Mind* (2012) was circulated via an online mail out in advance of her exhibition at The Showroom in London. Realized with numerous collaborators, and co-commissioned by The Showroom and CAC Brétigny, in partnership with Index—the Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation—and Somesuch and Co. London, *The Tiger's Mind* is characterized by notably high production values. Yet the version of the trailer circulated in advance of the London show consists entirely of text, voice, and music, pointedly withholding the film's seductive cinematography, sets, props, and locations. This suggests that, even when fully incorporated into the contemporary art economy, the trailer form may be open to interpretation, potentially operating with or against cinematic expectations.

[1] Victor Burgin, *The Remembered Film*, Reaktion Books, London 2004.

[2] Victor Burgin, "Interactive Cinema and the Uncinematic," Gertrude Koch, Volker Pantenburg, Simon Rothöhler (eds.), *Screen Dynamics: Mapping the Borders of Cinema*, Austrian Film Museum and SYNEMA – Gesellschaft für Film und Medien, Vienna 2012, p. 93.

[3] Claire Bishop, "As if I was lost and someone suddenly came to give me news about myself," James Lingwood, Michael Morris, and Gerrie Van Noord (eds.), *Off Limits. 40 Artangel Projects*, Merrell Publishers, London 2002, p. 25.

[4] *Off Limits* includes discussion of two works exhibited in former cinemas; *Coronet Cinema* by Melanie Counsell (1991) and *Carib's Leap/Western Deep* by Steve McQueen (2002).

[5] Parreno's contribution to the exhibition seems to have been titled *Unité 1* and it took place from June 1 to September 30, 1993. See Christine Macel, Karen Marta (eds.), *Philippe Parreno*, Centre Pompidou/JRP|Ringier, Paris/Zurich 2010, p. 62–66.

[6] Frances Guerin, "Dazzled by the Light: Technological Entertainment and its Social Impact in *Variete*," *Cinema Journal*, 42, no. 4, Summer 2003, p. 105.

[7] Thomas Elsaesser, "The Mind-Game Film," Warren Buckland (ed.), *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2009, p 37.

[8] David Bordwell, "Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film," *Film Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2002, p. 16–28.

[9] Clemens von Wedemeyer, for example, has explored the aesthetic of the DVD "making of" extra in a range of works, such as *Object (Leaving) and the Making of Object* (2005), *Big Business and the Making of Big Business* (2002), and *Occupation and the Making of Occupation* (2002).

[10] Nicolas Bourriaud, "Berlin Letter about Relational Aesthetics," Claire Doherty (ed.), *Contemporary Art: From Studio to Situation*, Black Dog Publishing, London 2004, p. 45–46.

[11] Bourriaud, "Berlin Letter about Relational Aesthetics," p. 49.

[12] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Verso, London 2012, p. 207. An earlier version of my discussion of *No Man's Time* was published in "Staging Mobile Spectatorship in the Moving Image Installations of Amanda Beech, Philippe Parreno, and Ryan Trecartin/Lizzie Fitch," Ursula Frohne, Lilian Haberer and Annette Urban (eds), *Display|Dispositif: Aesthetic Modes of Thought*, Wilhelm Fink, Munich 2014.

[13] Bishop, p. 208.

[14] Bishop, p. 217. Bishop draws the term assembly from Boris Groys, *Art Power*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2008, p. 182.

[15] Bishop, p. 271.

[16] Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October*, vol. 114, Fall 2004, p. 51–79.

[17] Liam Gillick, "Letters and Responses: Contingent Factors: A Response to Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October*, vol. 115, Winter, 2006, p. 101.

[18] Ibid., p. 106.

[19] Jörn Schafaff, "On (the Curatorial) Set," Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff, and Thomas Weski (eds), *Cultures of the Curatorial*, Sternberg Press, Berlin 2012, p. 137.

[20] Ibid., p. 138.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., p. 139.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Stephen J. Johansen, "Coming Attractions: An Essay on Movie Trailers & Preliminary Statements," *Legal Communication & Rhetoric: JALWD*, vol. 10, 2013, p. 41–65.

[25] Gavin Butt and Jon Cairns, "The Art of Trading," *Third Text* 48, 1999, p. 81. This text originally appeared on the Project Arts Centre website but my references are to the revised version published in *Third Text*.

[26] For a discussion of these altered industrial workflows, see John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, Duke University Press, Durham/London 2008.

[27] Uriel Orlow, " ... trailer ... " 1999. The essay was originally published on *Home 2* (DVD), ed. Laura Godfrey-Isaacs (London 2000) and subsequently republished by *LUX Online* http://www.luxonline.org.uk/articles/trailer%28i%29.html (last accessed July 2015).

[28] Orlow, " ... trailer ... "

[29] Ibid. The reference here is to Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984, p. 93.

[30] Orlow, " ... trailer ... "

[31] Melanie Gilligan, for example, has produced multi-episode moving image works such as *Popular Unrest* (2010) that create suspense and tension by interrupting the action at key moments. This work is devised for online viewing: http://popularunrest.org/ (last accessed July 2015).

[32] Orlow, " ... trailer ... " Italics added.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Butt and Cairns, "The Art of Trailing," p. 82.

[35] Ibid., p. 83.

[36] This history is referenced in Michael Boran's photographs of Temple Bar, taken during the shooting of *Far and Away*, which featured in the exhibition *False Memory Syndrome*, curated by Rayne Booth at Temple Bar Gallery + Studios (September 5–September 26, 2013) to mark the 30th anniversary of the studio's founding. http://www.templebargallery.com/gallery/exhibition/30-year-anniversary-exhibition (last accessed July 2015).

[37] Orlow, " ... trailer ... "

[38] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," p. 196.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid. Functioning as advance notices for the exhibition, these newsletters might perhaps be considered as "trailers."

[41] Ibid., p. 197.

[42] Ibid., p. 198.

[43] Ibid., p. 199.

[44] Ibid., p. 344, note 20. In addition, Parreno organized a workshop with children who created a reenactment of the film's narrative. See Macel and Marta (eds.), *Philippe Parreno*, p. 66.

[45] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," p. 199.

[46] Schafaff, "On (the Curatorial) Set," p. 145.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Daney, cited by Schafaff, "On (the Curatorial) Set," p. 146. The reference here is to Serge Daney, "Vermarktung des Individuums und Auslöschen der Erfahrung," *Von der Welt ins Bild: Augenzeugenberichte eines Cinephilen*, ed. and trans. Christa Blümlinger, Vorwerk 8, Berlin 2000, p. 219.

[50] Schafaff, "On (the Curatorial) Set," p. 146.

[51] My discussion of *Trailer for a Remake of Gore Vidal's Caligula* incorporates material revised from Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists' Cinema: Space, Site and Screen*, Intellect Books/University of Chicago Press, Bristol/Chicago 2009, p. 172–174.

[52] Andrea Tarsia, "Like Black Holes in a Bright White Space," Andrea Tarsia (ed.), *A Short History of Performance. Part IV: 1–14 April 2006*, Whitechapel, London 2006, p. 27.

[53] This earliet film, also shown in Venice in 2005 at the Prada Foundation, is a fake pilot for a television show featuring Catherine Deneuve, Marianne Faithfull, and Jeanne Moreau.

[54] John Paul Ricco, "Us to-Come: Francesco Vezzoli's Nonconsensual Futures," *Journal of Visual Culture*, April 2010, vol. 9, issue 1, p. 108.

[55] Sven Lutticken, "From One Spectacle to Another," *Grey Room*, no. 32, Summer, 2008, p.63.

[56] Ricco, "Us to-Come: Francesco Vezzoli's Nonconsensual Futures," p. 108.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., p. 111.

[59] Ibid., p. 113. Vezzoli's work, according to Ricco, articulates a process of unmaking in relation to the "previewed or prescribed endpoint–temporality of consensus," which he identifies as a dominant force in relation to contemporary political theory.

[60] Ricco, "Us to-Come: Francesco Vezzoli's Nonconsensual Futures," p. 113.

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