



Post-Print
POST-PRINT

THE MOMENT OF COMPRESSION AS EVENT

Adrian Ranger
By **ADRIAN RANGER**

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

Post-Print

The Moment of Compression as Event

Adrian Ranger

RNGADR001

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Masters of Fine Art

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

2021



COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Signed by candidate

Date: 20 . 07. 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project could not possibly exist without the support and assistance from a great deal of people.

First and foremost I thank the University of Cape Town for all the assistance I have received over the past two and a half years. I feel incredibly fortunate to have been the recipient of the following awards, UCT Master's Research Scholarship, Maclver Scholarship, VC Research Scholarship, Jules Kramer Mus & Fine Art Int, UCT Master's Financial Aid and the Katrine Harries Memorial Bursary.

I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Fritha Langerman. Thank you for your incredible hard work, knowledge, patience, and humour. Thank you for the valuable guidance throughout my studies.

I would like to thank my parents Sean and Nanette, my brother Dylan and my 'sistra' Aimee for their unwavering support in all that I do. Thank you for believing in me and always pushing me to grow.

I could not have completed this dissertation without the support of my partner, Ryan. Thank you for looking after me, feeding me and keeping me going through all the highs and lows. Thank you for your patience and love.

To my studio partner, Liz, who provided stimulating discussions as well as happy distractions to rest my mind outside of my research. Thank you for seven years of beautiful objects and coffee refills.

To everyone who proofread my work, participated in crits, and conceptualised with me. I am extremely grateful for your presence in my life. A special thanks to Cameron Peters for the work he put into polishing this paper. To Mieke, Demi and Rich, The Barnacle and all the people who helped me through this time, thank you for all your support. I would lastly like to thank Nancy for all the encouraging words and warm meals, you provided a home away from home.





FOR

Ryan

CITY SIGHTSEEING BUS STOP 13



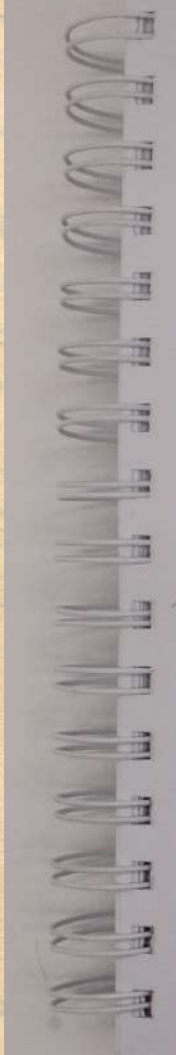
A S

INDEX

INDEX :

ABSTRACT	2
Assemblage Thinking	3
THE IMAGE AS REPRODUCTION	7
THE MOMENT OF COMPRESSION	10
THE PRESS AS TIMELINE	13
FRAGMENTATION	15
THE IMAGE AS EVENT	21
THE DIGITAL-MULTIPLE	22
THE DEVICE AS TIMELINE	23
REFRAME	27
THE IMAGE AS SPECTACLE	31
THE SPECTACLE	32
DÉTOURNEMENT	33
THE VIDEO AS TIMELINE	37
Fragmentation Thinking	39
REFERENCES	42

I .



Handwritten blue ink scribbles, possibly the letters 'A' and 'B', in the top right corner.



ABSTRACT

Post-Print' is a practice-led project that seeks to situate the emergence of the printmaking tradition - and the notion of the print as 'reproduction' - as a pivotal Event which once shaped a past era's perception of reality, just as the 'digital-multiple' template today functions as a contemporary reproduction of our Being. For this project, I will draw on Slavoj Žižek's philosophical reading of the notion of 'Event' as a framework for my central thesis: I want to expand on how the *moment of compression* for a *technology for looking* (i.e., the introduction of the printing press and the digital device) may be considered a veritable Event.

In the process, I will inevitably rely on Walter Benjamin's observations in his essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' as an inspiration for my discussion of the print as reproduction and the image as Event. Finally, I happily acknowledge the influence of Guy Debord's 'The Society of the Spectacle' (1967), to which I will bring a particular focus on the notion of 'the mediation of being through the image' in relation to my video installation, entitled 'Image-Machine'.

The progression of creative discourse - the transition from the 'print' to the 'post' as the means of infinite reproduction - is the core of my project, as this shift of mediums contextualises my own retrospective mediations of the avalanche of images that characterise the present Event. Rather than mere diversions, I consider historical thinking and anachronism to be practical methodologies in my work. These retroactive interventions are themselves closely informed for me by the philosophical strategies of fragmentation, reframing and *détournement* variously proposed by Benjamin, Žižek and Debord. Thus, I will discuss here how these philosophical ideas have shaped the critical processes and curatorial choices within my final exhibition, 'Post - Print', whilst also referencing and cross-examining my video installation, 'Image Machine', and an installation of press-like object works, titled 'Fragmented Studio'.

3.

INTRODUCTION

Let us peer for a moment into the printing studio. As our eyes adjust to its jarring artificial light, we become aware of an energy slowly dissipating around us. The hot plate crackles as it cools and the smell of solvents thins in the air. The studio itself manifests a sort of static, as if the mechanisms on display are poised on the brink of either rising or falling. From tense stillness, a feeling of anticipation emerges. Soon, the repetitive tempo of the studio will crescendo up the walls to fill the empty ceiling with the sound of making. Once more, 'the image machine' will be put into motion.

Assumblaxe Thinking



This project found its origin, quite aptly, in the casual act of pressing a pin through a reproduction of Francisco Goya's 'Disparates Femenino' (1816), thereby fixing it to a board behind. Reflecting on that instant now, nearly two and a half years later, I can name it as the first *moment of compression* to take place in my project. Like many other artists, I usually begin my visual research for a piece by collecting and collating various reproduced images on my studio wall. Gradually, by observing this regular process, I realised the potential for creative narrative-building within the medium of reproduction itself. Subsequently, I began to experiment with double-sided images and the quasi-Hegelian implications of settling on which image to face up and which to cast down. With every new configuration of images on the board, the overall meaning was simultaneously extracted and obscured, and my attempts to weave together narrative often just left me with a sense of loss for that which I knew had once existed, but which I could no longer witness. This ability to arrange and re-arrange the board lead me to explore a new methodology of how to fragment the *moment of*

compression through a kind of re-fixature. The non-linear strategies employed in this early phase of my project can be seen in the rejection of a fixed chronology throughout the fragments of my final exhibition, 'Post-Print'.

As of this writing, I have never experienced such an overwhelming sense of the historicity of the now. The covid-19 corona virus pandemic has eclipsed life as I knew it. Its silhouette currently casts a long shadow across the globe and, through the epochal lens of our devices, we bear witness to it as an Event suffused with unprecedented challenges. We watch as images stream into our brains of empty cities, masked figures, monuments rising and falling, modern plagues, desperate protests, absurd wars, Orwellian hazmat suits and populist authoritarianism, people lining up to vote, breadlines and queues for tests and shots, lines for welfare and lines across the faces of doctors and nurses; and then the picket line, the party line, the poverty line, the lines for hospital beds, and all the lines which snake down the streets and round the corners of our consciousness. And through my own device, I am forced to confront such an Event as no generation ever has before.



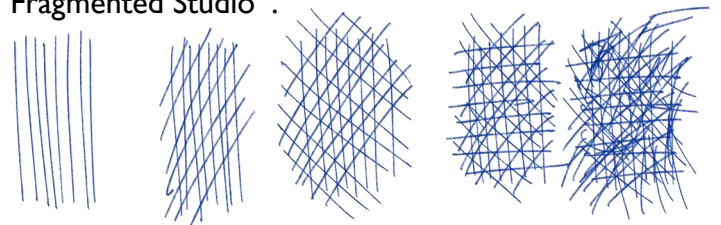
In his short book 'Event: A Philosophical Journey through a Concept' (2014), philosopher and psychoanalyst Slavoj Žižek argues that: "[An] Event is not something that occurs within the world but is a change of the very frame through which we perceive the world and engage in it" (2014:10). More than ever, society relies on a Debordian spectacle orchestrated by technological devices in order to frame the reality of this Event (ibid., 2014:7). From my immediate state of isolation, I continue to mediate my social and emotional distance from the world through the image. This device, just like the printing press before it, has now become the dominant *technology for looking*. Like the print in centuries past, the 'digital-multiple' – the copy-pasted duplication of an original encoded image – provides the visual language with which the individual viewer begins to articulate the historicity inherent to the catastrophe of their time. Thus, in my work, I attempt to consider how this framing of the present through the mediation of the digital-multiple has already altered my perception of the world, and how it may constitute (as Žižek argues an Event should) a reframing of my ordinary experience (2014:10). I draw parallels between the post¹ and the print as a means of exploring how the reproduction allows for a retroactive re-ordering of an Event through its *moment of compression*. This 'compression' represents the momentary fixture of a multitude of subjectivities into the image of an Event (an image that is itself an Event), through the *technology for looking*. Therefore, in this project in

particular, I consider the immediate historicification of the present through the device and the potential role of the digital-multiple in formulating historical narratives.

In the late 1920s, the German art historian Aby Warburg created the 'Atlas of Memory' (Warburg, 1929) – a work made in response to the cultural fragmentation he experienced as he grappled with the historicity of his tumultuous present (Forster, 1976). Warburg's visual collection – a series of forty panels consisting of over 1000 found images² – served to articulate the overwhelming torrent of images he endured and absorbed during his own period of immense instability and change (one we usually just reduce to the word 'Weimar'). From the rubble of a fragmented society, Warburg looked to the classical ruins of Antiquity, turning his curatorial gaze towards the polythematic recurrences of the past so as to counteract his sense of cultural loss in the present (Forster, 1976). Consumed by the systematic assemblage and fragmentation of his image constellations, Warburg began to lay the foundations for a new kind of historical thinking. It was, in short, a strategy for historical subversion through the manipulation of the reproduction. His arcade of images asserts that whilst one is trapped within the flux of the historical present, it becomes increasingly more challenging to view the images of the past as belonging to the time in which they were produced. In this way, the 'Atlas of Memory' corresponds with the early methodology of my project as it manifested on the wall of my studio.

Like Warburg, I sought to create a visual system that could reckon my experience of the present through intuitive parallels with the chronology of the past (Schwendener, 2020). I responded to what Warburg identified as ‘the Illusion of images as solidified moments’ – fixed realities captured amidst the variability of historical records (Forster, 1976, p. 171). I attempted to explore this illusion of fixture through an investigation of what I term the *moment of compression*, the image as Event, brought about through the event of its own making. Throughout my creative process, I sought to situate this compression within various iterations of my *technology for looking*. My work explores gestures of anachronistic fragmentation and splicing as a methodology for putting the fixed image into motion. Sadly, this paper has to retain some chronology and is therefore sectioned into three parts, each contextualised within the theoretical framework of the printmaking tradition. In Part I, ‘**The Image as Reproduction**’, I reference Walter Benjamin’s observations in ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ (1935) in my discussion of the print as reproduction. I then expand to delve into the ‘image as Event’, with reference to Slavoj Žižek’s philosophical reading of Event, as the frame of Part II, ‘**The Image as Event**’. Through linking these ideas, I hope to develop my thesis that the *moment of compression* through the *technology for looking*, as located on the metaphoric timeline of the device, may be considered to be an Event. Finally, in Part III, ‘**The Image as Spectacle**’, I draw on Guy Debord’s concept of ‘The Society of the

Spectacle’ (1967), with a particular emphasis placed on the image’s capacity to mediate and shape narrative, in relation to my video piece ‘Image-Machine’. Throughout though, the formal discursive progression of ‘the print’ to ‘the post’ remains the epicentre of my project, as it frames my endeavour as an artistic mediation of images during the present Event through a retroactive gaze. And, as stated in my abstract, these retroactive interventions are informed by the philosophical strategies of fragmentation, reframing and détournement as proposed by Benjamin, Žižek and Debord. I acknowledge the eurocentricity of these philosophers within the history and legacy of print (1450s-1900s). I imagine this project as a methodologically inclusive space in which a multitude of subjectivities may become incorporated through the processes suggested by these philosophers. I will henceforth discuss how these philosophical ideas have shaped the critical processes and curatorial choices within my final exhibition. ‘Post – Print’, with reference to a video installation entitled ‘Image Machine’, and an installation of press-like object works entitled ‘Fragmented Studio’.



1. That is, a digital-multiple unit, which succeeds the print as a *technology for looking*. I consider the word ‘post’ as an interplay between the digital post as well as the ‘post’ as an art prefix.

2..The images were collected from books, magazines, newspapers and other visual sources.

Image as Reproduction

1) THE IMAGE AS REPRODUCTION

Through his work, Aby Warburg attempted to create a visual dialogue between his experience of the present and the numinous depictions of the past he collected, through what he called a 'comparative view' of visual perspectives (Schwendener, 2020). Warburg relied on the 'syntax of reproduced images' recorded in the visual library of history to structure his own pictorial narratives. He did this by inserting his favourite reproduced images into the cultural, historical, and political reality of his own time. With each new configuration of these image constellations, Warburg sought to illustrate how each reproduced image draws its significance not only from the society in which it was produced but also from the perception of its repeated reproduction in the present. The 'Atlas of Memory' thus represents far more than a mere documentation of the "historical transformation [of] pictorial records" (Forster, 1976). It is a concerted response to the transformation of the function of the image as such through the history of its particular reproductions.



In this section, 'The Image as Reproduction', I will ground my project through discussions of the print as reproduction, the nature of the *moment of compression* and the tradition of the printing press as a *technology for looking*, all within the framing of Walter Benjamin's philosophical reading of creative reproduction. At the time Benjamin wrote 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1935), the world was still reeling from the wounds of war and plague.³ Benjamin, like Warburg, would be prodigally responsive to the implications of these events on the psyche of popular culture. Thus, Benjamin posed a prescient question about prescience: 'How do we begin to historicise the present?' In attempting to provide an answer, Benjamin considers not only the printed reproduction, but the reproduction of images through photography and film, as revolutionary representations of reality. Benjamin's discursive progression from print to film highlights the essence of the modern *technology for looking* as such. The mediated experience of reality that we know through our devices meets its mirror-image here in the bygone tradition of printmaking as a form of popular history and the most immediate means of turning the present into history. The enormous rupture in understanding that the digital-multiple represents to us is then somewhat akin to the early innovations of the print as instant reproduction: both technologies mark a pivotal Event in human development and the purpose of our *technology for looking* (Benjamin, 1935). However, this original advance in Benjamin's time had the added effect of fundamentally shifting the process of image-making itself. This industrial shift – what we can call the introduction of the *moment of compression* - continues to frame our experience of the world. But here I am not merely concerned with the technological capacity to instantly reproduce the image, but rather in examining the context and content that is reproduced with these images, and how these conditions continue to frame our engagements as viewers.

3 On the most personal level, Benjamin, as a German Jew living in exile, was newly subject to the Nuremberg Laws that Stripped Jews of their German citizenship– an event which pre-empted the unfolding of ww2 a mere year later.

In a series of works entitled 'Systems Pieces' (2005), the contemporary artist Nina Katchadourian manipulates our engagement with popular images by utilising the visual language of Historical epistemology. In 'The Genealogy of the Supermarket', Katchadourian cuts out portraits from everyday supermarket products and schematically places them in a fantastical family tree. She thus establishes faux-genetic resemblances between these otherwise unrelated faces and then playfully legitimises these connections through the use of a recognisable visual system for portraying familial genealogy. By reframing these consumerist mascots with such syntactical authority, Katchadourian encourages an alternative, lovably absurd reading of these reproduced images, and then in turn raises conspicuously complex questions surrounding the traditions of portraiture, race representation and cultural consumerism, all by redeploying the inherited images of the past within the 'reformed' discourse of the present. Katchadourian's creative methodology shows how the image can remain in service, not just to the time in which it is produced, but to the context in which it is reproduced and, furthermore, viewed. The cultural-political significance of the printing press in enframing the narratives of the past can be extended to the rise of the creative individual, now newly possessing the tools with which to frame and reframe the present through reproduction. In this way, the mass production of the image also allows artists the opportunity to explore alternative readings of the past, within the present, through a kind of Esperanto of popular imagery.

Although the work of art has a long tradition of commercial reproducibility⁴, Benjamin argues in his essay that the modern phenomenon of mechanical reproduction represents a (literally) stunning break from the *technology for looking* which preceded it (Benjamin, 1935). Over the past 600 years of visual history, the printing press has served as an invaluable tool with which to shape the narratives of the past through the easy reproduction of the significant image. But as the history of this device shows, the *technology for looking* of a particular era has never been neutral and always represents the exclusionary hegemony of the reproduction process through the intention of the maker. To have access to the press as a *technology for looking* is always to have a biased perspective of the world brought into focus. From politics to protest, propaganda to publicity, the press has always been an intellectually malleable mechanism in the hands of the printmaker .

4 The 'copy' or 'replica' through analogue reproduction. From text to sculpture, the rate of reproducibility used to rest on the efficiency of an individual's skill and talent, rather than on the mechanical tools, such as the press, we take for granted.

Though it may have started as an apparent boon for the democratisation of imagery, it has since been shown again and again to be a less than egalitarian factory floor. Nonetheless, the reproduction of images and text through the printing press has fundamentally shaped the discursive structure of our present society by providing an expanded means to create and critique historical narratives and, in turn, the structures of power they represent.

In amongst the rhythmic routines of the creative process in an artist's studio, there is usually some distinct moment in which 'the image' emerges. This is the *moment of compression*, in which the multitude of subjectivities from beyond the studio are compressed into the single 'being' of the work. This is the process of the print - the copy without an 'original' - becoming visible for the first time. The gradual epiphany this moment represents may appear in stark contrast to the relentless onslaught of the historical present, but, as the world slows momentarily⁵ and the structure of society becomes more visible, a deep dependence on the *technology for looking*, as mediated through the digital-multiple, should become far more apparent.

By making this project, I primarily seek to observe the lineage of the reproduced print within the mediation of our present Event (a mediation that also constitutes the Event itself). By attempting to make sense of the inflection points of monumental change through the course of this project, I have become acutely aware as well of the way in which human experience is framed by the degree of historicity that typifies the present. The *moment of compression* is then the final framing of a multitude of subjectivities into a single appropriation of reality within my own studio practice. In this project, I have tried to extend this fundamental metaphor so as to summarize the incessant creative reproduction which occurs beyond the studio.

The Moment of Compression

⁵ Due to the lockdowns.

Time is the curious companion of a printmaker.

It is with the measuring of seconds that the rich tonal variation of an aquatint is incised into the surface of a plate. Minutes differentiate a light speckled grey from a velvety black.

Once a process has begun, it cannot be arrested.

*The cranking of the aquatint box,
allowing for the periodic sweeping up
and drifting down of rosin.*

*while waiting for the fine particles to drift down
and settle on the surface of a metal plate.*

The tempo of making rises and falls.


With one eye on a clock face - the matrix is placed into a corrosive bath, a screen is exposed, the etching needle makes rhythmic marks, the woodcutting tool slowly drags, every resource is methodically wiped up and rolled out...

This is the tempo of the printing studio.


*At the centre of the studio,
we locate the printing press:*

a mechanical metronome attempting to keep a set time to the pace of the world beyond the studio. It is an anachronistic device which moves forwards and backwards through the past, present, and future. Around it, the printmaker too mirrors its repetitive cyclical motions, interplaying between routine and ritual. From the washing of hands to the tearing of paper, every element of the studio is assembled into a mechanism for making. My project gravitates around a moment of compression - the Event of making in which a multitude of subjectivities are momentarily fixed. This moment of compression is characterised by its apparent finality. The illusion I receive and project of the image belonging to the moment in which it was made. On a printing press, this compression signifies just the slick transference of heterogeneous meaning from one surface to another.

A pause,



On the press, the meeting of two rollers here represents the present moment of the prints' arrival in the real. In his conceptual work 'Sentences on Print' (1994), Richard S. Field suggests that: "[P]rints layer information, embodying traces of the past through acts; they are metaphors for the way in which memory traces impose themselves on all perceptions and thought" (Field, 1994). In this way, the print as a reproduction is just the condensation and accumulation of a multitude of subjectivities, created through the mass duplication of the image. For his part, Warburg attempted to mediate the experience of his reproduced reality by exploring the "collective historical memory embedded in images" (Schwendener, 2020). Through these means, he hoped to comprehend reproduced images as patient witnesses to the otherwise irretrievable realities of the past. Warburg's concept of 'the reproduced witness' thus has profound implications for how we may conceive of the reproduced image as an Event, vis-à-vis its varying depictions of moments of history (Forster, 1976). The illusion of the print as a fixed depiction is shattered by the survival of its own image, as "[beyond] the image, however old it may be, the present never ceases to reshape, [and] the past never ceases to reshape"⁶ (Didi-Huberman, 2003).

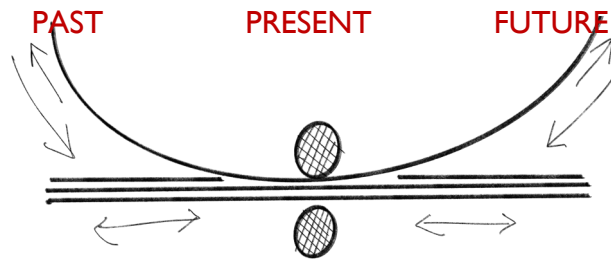


The image remains discursively present ad infinitum and represents for an opportunity to reframe the past via the *moment of compression*. The reproduction always encapsulates the agency of its maker and thereby imbues its image with the agendas and societal constraints that its *technology for looking* can never transcend. Warburg called attention to the limitations of collective historical memory by emphasising the role played by communal experience in generating the social function of the reproduced image. Thus, 'raw' culture is never totally socially mediated through the image. In brief, the reproduction continually bears witness to a multitude of heterogeneous happenings, each a reiteration of the past within the ever-changing context of the present.

The matrix,
which holds the memory
of processes on one
hand
and then,
on the
other,
the paper,
which translates
these past actions into
the Event of the
image.

⁶ In this regard, for Walter Benjamin, the "original (work of art) possesses all experience that has converged before it." (Benjamin, 1935) Like an old tree rooted firmly in the soil of the past, it bears witness to the history it has experienced. Its 'presence' is drawn from the experience of the world as it unfolds before it. Benjamin considers that the "process of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition (and) substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence." (Benjamin, 1935) The reproduction not only marks this shattering of tradition, but it "emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual." (Benjamin, 1935) The reproduction, uprooted from the spatial confines of the original, 'bears witness' to the multitude of subjective experiences through which it travels.

PRESS AS TIMELINE



My project offers an allegorical reading of 'the timeline' as a hierarchical construct within the tradition of print. I first reimagined the *technology for looking* as a timeline when I conceived of the printing press as an anachronistic device. Its oscillating motion evoked for me images of Hegel's dialectical pendulum, ceaselessly moving from the highest pitch of one extreme to another. The theme of the timeline here provides the discursive framework for an exploration of the image as Event. I consider the reproduction and the production of prints as such, each as eventual moments along 'the timeline of the press'. The motion of the printing press - barrelling from the past, through the present and into the future - allows for the practical making and remaking of the visual narratives on display in a particular reproduction. This thematic of the timeline is therefore incorporated into my exhibition through a series of structural choices. In the 'Fragmented Studio' piece, the timeline is presented as a series of dispersed objects and structures which lack a defining chronological function in the fragmented space. In this way, the exhibition timeline functions to confuse rather than bring order to the installation as a whole. Following on from the convoluted exhibition 'map' - the obsolete reference-list of images as they were used in the 'Image Machine' - all of the objects on display serve to add to the fragmentation, reframing and process of détournement embedded within my project.



To 'press' is the violent act of fixture.

In framing Historical narrative,

it obscures alternative stories of the past.

It can represent an attempt to carefully conserve,

the pressing of a flower,

the preservation of the present

as a memento of the past.

It conveys persistence -

a seeking of the truth.

A word in service of intention,

to be wielded in the hands of the maker.

Warburg felt that reproductions were 'viral' avant la lettre, for they could not be contained historically. Thus, the reproduced image as 'anachronism' provides the theoretical framework with which to rethink the obscured narratives of the real-existing past (Schwendener, 2020). In a sense, the reproduced image diverges from the timeline of its original; its trajectory is always initiated by the forceful act of retelling, reproducing, and reconfiguring an image through the continuous fragmentation of its context, thereby liberating the perpetual rereading of the image's renewed content (Forster, 1976, p. 171). The explosion of the image's temporality through its endless potential-to-be-viewed also allows the reproduction to serve as a facilitator of an infinite number of unique communal experiences. By permitting the image to meet its beholder in their own individual environment, the reproduction reactivates it not only in the context of its production but also against the background of the moment in which it is reproduced. Thus, the image is perennially renewed by the context and content of the new environments it discovers.

FRAGMENTATION

Throughout his work, Warburg methodically pursues the ‘fragmentation’ of the reproduction from its original content and context, thereby releasing the image from the societal constructs of its avowed function. In this way, Warburg begins to incise a telling of the present Event through a retroactive intervention against the reproduction. Through this strategy of brief chaos, visual temporality may become unstuck from the narrow vision of ‘homogeneous’ time and the presumed ‘hierarchical progress’ of a western teleological worldview (Chambers, 2016). Warburg envisions the disentanglement of the reproduction as occurring through the very process by which it was first generated; in a sense, utilizing this *technology for looking* (once a handservant of coloniality) to subvert the legacy of the colonial project. This process might then finally “permit the retrieval of other histories, [or] of the histories of ‘others’” (Chambers, 2016). The *moment of compression* as such necessarily implies an action preceded by an intention, as it refers to a moment of making or fixing. But the print as reproduction is not only the result of this event of making, but is in itself an Event - a multitude made of multitudes. Through my own work, I explore another practical method of fragmenting the image as Event, primarily so I can release fragments of visual documents to contribute to a present telling of the past. I consider the fragmentation procedure of an Event, through the *moment of compression*, fundamental to gaining a new reckoning of the historicity of my personal experience of the present. The subversive potential of this procedure for fragmenting visual narratives is due to how it dialectically varies the trajectory of ‘the multiple’. In other words, within the very processes of producing and reproducing the image through the printing press, there lies the opportunity to make and unmake the image itself. Etched lines can be burnished, metal flattened, wood cut away, a screen can be washed out, and stone sanded down. The matrix which once held the image can be used again via adding a renewed meaning to the print. The layering of various hybrid techniques upon the matrix, as well as in the print itself, allows for the kind of infinite telling and retelling of visual narratives that Warburg envisions. The collage-like methodologies preserved within the tradition of printmaking can also be noticed throughout my project and my exhibition. From the fragmentation of the printing studio, to the incisive imagery of the video installation, I have attempted to incorporate assemblage thinking⁸ into the most basic structure of my project. The alienation of elements from the original printing studio precedes the process of splicing them back together.

⁸ The fragmented elements of my studio as an installation of discontinuous objects.

Printing press

Felt - Laser cut felt print?

STUDIO AS MACHINERY....

} Printing press

This is then echoed by the chronology of the video, the curation of the studio objects, and the arranging of image sequences within the print. In this way, the fragmentation process is followed inevitably by the amalgamation of dispersed events into the Event that is my exhibition 'Post - Print'.

Aqua

Rosin

Metal grate - Acid

Brush

Gas mask - Acid

Plastic

Fan - Dropper

Paper - Cotton

Perspex

Acetate } Alignment

Newsprint

Metal frame - Metal

Wooden frame - St

Gutter } Acid

Acid

Ink

Bitumen } printing

Stone - Drawings on

Filing cabinet - Vide

Solvents - Smell

Safety box - size

Sponges

Screen - Colours, sign

Drying rack.

Miss prints

Off cuts

Solvents

Gloves

Rubber

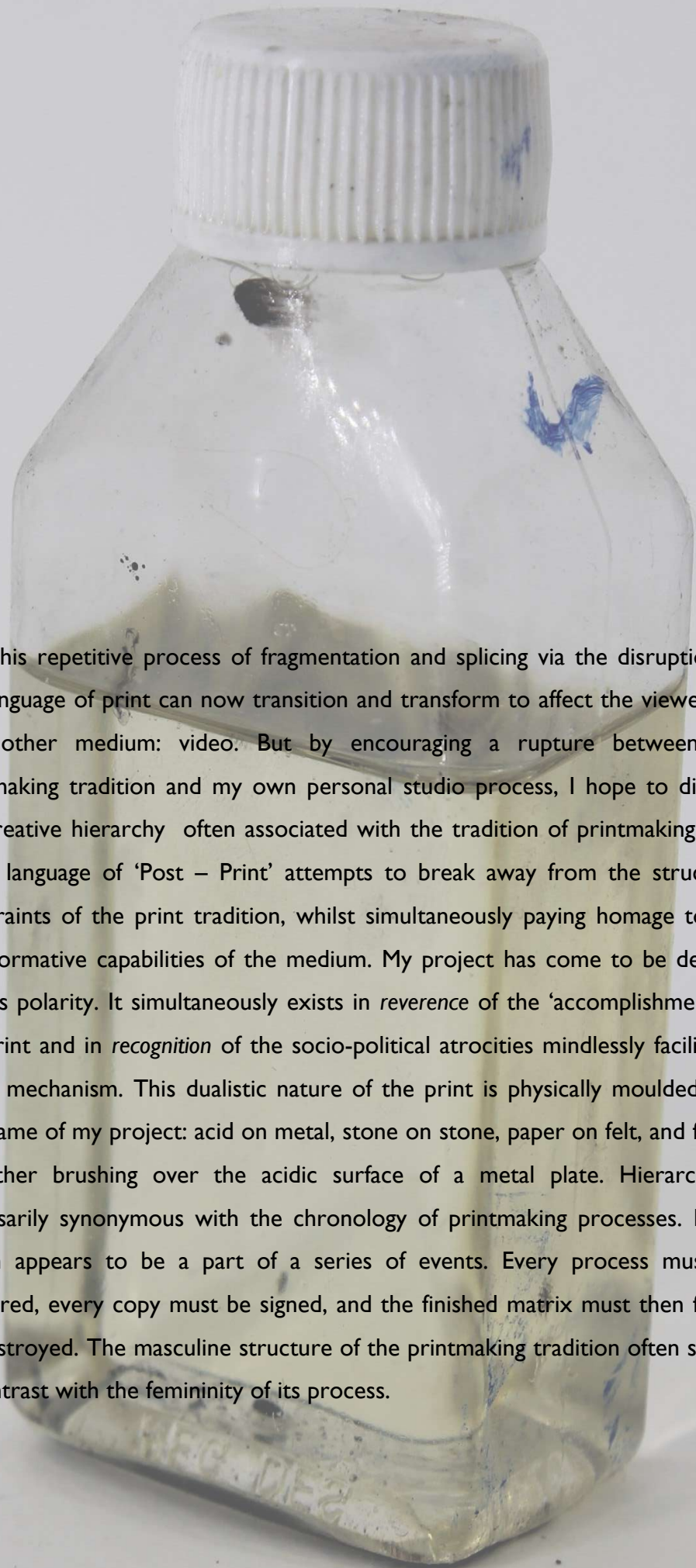
Lino lenum

ROOM I:

The fragmented studio installation is an imagined assemblage space, poised moments before, or after, the Event of making. The bright clinical light of the printing studio is substituted for an ominous glow. Elongated skeletal structures loom over the viewer, casting long shadows across the floor and walls. Objects appear scattered, almost but not quite crawling, across the wooden surface. Each structure is positioned so as to frame another. Vertical and horizontal lines meet to accentuate the already charged atmosphere. The materiality of the studio is raw - metal, cotton, paper, wood before you. The almost abrasive coldness of these structures is warmed by small touches of brass and ink. The distant sound of Room II fills the negative spaces, imbuing the room with the anticipation of Event. I set out to create an ambience of autonomy - the studio suspended mid-motion, about to perform the act of making or unmaking. The fragmented space is itself a mournful illusion of the function of the printing press; now just a conceptual tool. For it is not in the political act of compression that the print finds its function today, but only in the metaphorical fragmentation of historical institutions. The fragmented studio is here void of the processes which bring it meaning. It possesses only the obscure fragments of its own anachronism.

The 'Fragmented Studio' is an installation of objects and structures made to imitate the mechanisms of the printing studio via a complete reimagining of their mechanical function. By detaching the object from the process of making, and then removing it from the familiarity of the studio, I seek to fragment the press object as a *technology for looking*. The 'Fragmented Studio' is paused moments before compression, allowing for an infinite instant of reflection. By this gesture, I explore the very anticipation of creative pressure at the centre of the studio. I consider all elements of the printing process as part of the mechanical metronome the press represents. Thus, the whole studio comprises the parts of the mechanism for making. The mechanisms of the press are dispersed throughout the exhibition space. Analogous to the press's own ambiguity, the deconstruction of the studio is simultaneously the violent acts of forcefully separating and conjoining elements as well as the gesture of sentimental preservation. Sheets of paper, cloth and wood are juxtaposed with metal, stone and rubber. As such, the viewer encounters both the modernism of the industrial aesthetic necessary to the studio's functionality and the antique mainstays of the printing tradition. The printing press as an object offers a glimpse into the chronology of its own past - the brown paste enveloping its gears, the wood nearly petrified by the annual application of varnish, the manufacturer's mark embossed into the blackened cast-iron frame. The process of making using such a bygone object is then immediately contrasted with the cheap wood panels and neon yellow signs of the printing studio.

Amidst this visual contradiction, I want to share a necessary sense of discomfort. The fragmentation of the elements of the printing studio offers an opportunity for a nostalgic intervention into the present, spitting in the face of innovation. Here the printing press is "a pre-cinematic device, which takes an element of how we see, removes it from the world of naturalised, invisible vision, turning it into a material object, producing at the end a reconfigured seeing, changing both our sense of the world and our sense of self" (Kentrige 2014:112).



This repetitive process of fragmentation and splicing via the disruption of the language of print can now transition and transform to affect the viewership of another medium: video. But by encouraging a rupture between the printmaking tradition and my own personal studio process, I hope to disrupt the creative hierarchy often associated with the tradition of printmaking. The visual language of 'Post – Print' attempts to break away from the structural constraints of the print tradition, whilst simultaneously paying homage to the transformative capabilities of the medium. My project has come to be defined by this polarity. It simultaneously exists in *reverence* of the 'accomplishment' of the print and in *recognition* of the socio-political atrocities mindlessly facilitated by its mechanism. This dualistic nature of the print is physically moulded into the frame of my project: acid on metal, stone on stone, paper on felt, and finally a feather brushing over the acidic surface of a metal plate. Hierarchy is necessarily synonymous with the chronology of printmaking processes. Every action appears to be a part of a series of events. Every process must be mastered, every copy must be signed, and the finished matrix must then finally be destroyed. The masculine structure of the printmaking tradition often seems in contrast with the femininity of its process.



Studio Map





THE FRAGMENTED STUDIO



IMAGE AS EVENT

The discursive progression from print to film in Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' now serves as the departure-point for my discussion of the digital-multiple Event in the present section. In his aforementioned book, Slavoj Žižek argues that because reality continues more than ever to be mediated through the broadcast image, an ontological understanding of the image as Event is crucial to interrogating our present reliance on the *technology for looking*. The epochal creative capacity of the old print reproduction can today be located in the palm of an individual's hand. By this breakthrough, the digital-multiple continues the legacy of the print – it brings communities together by mediating their collective experience. As an Event, it highlights the integral role of the reproduction in allowing us to pursue interactive experiences within contemporary cultural, political and societal constructs. The dual legacy of the print as the creator and critic of Historical narrative can also be seen in the disseminative ease afforded by the digital-multiple in the present media moment.

While the historical significance of the print as reproduction is totally replaced and supplanted by the 'digital-multiple', the concept of the reproduction as a tool with which to shape and redefine the parameters of experience, via the technologically-enhanced freedom of expression and socio-political critique, remains. With the digital-multiple, events can be shared, downloaded, and reproduced instantaneously and on repeat, allowing for a broader distribution of socio-politically and culturally transformative images. With the advent of the digitally multiplied reproduction, the individual is granted total creative freedom over the reappropriation of content and context. This change from a local to a global means of reproduction frees the image from any last vestige of ownership or authority in its conception, as the *technology for looking* is now readily available to all. In this way, the reproduction is followed instantaneously by its variation: where the printed reproduction could be possessed by the many, the digital-multiple is owned ubiquitously.



"Digital-Multiple" DIGITAL-MULTIPLE

The Event, as such, simply represents an accumulation of a multitude of subjectivities handed down to us as a scattering of collectively-lived experiences. These heterogeneous happenings are more than mere moments in history - they offer a polysemic heterogeneity of the present moment. Just as the *moment of compression* is always present through the reproduction, the Event must remain 'alive' in discourse, for it is within the present that the past is perpetually reconstructed. The "event is an Event because it is disputed in its elements but never in its whole" (Žižek, 2014). Although it may present itself as one variant in a glut of multiple trajectories, the reproduction still represents the many facets of its original image. It depicts a series of appropriated happenings as an Event, which then serves to reconfigure the constructs of human sense-making by framing the past through the lens of the present. The image thus redefines the production and reproduction of human 'being'¹⁰ as such. More than just a moment in history, experienced as part of the cyclical recurrence of the past, the Event is 'being' itself "*understood as history*" (Žižek, 2014).

¹⁰ 'Being' understood here as Heidegger's 'gestell'.

DEVICE AS TIMELINE

As I endeavour to navigate the sheer density of visual narratives in the technologically-mediated present, I attempt to find iterations of the same *technology for looking* in the past. Begun by shattering the traditions which preceded it, printmaking and the instant reproduction still represent a profound historical change in society. Like the printed reproduction, the digital-multiple too marks a newly intimate connection between 'Being' and Event on the technological timeline.

Today, the readily available *technology for looking* affords any individual the opportunity to become a part of the process of reproducing images. Then, as consumers of this technology, we are constantly encouraged to engage in an endlessly repetitive, up-to-the-minute process of telling and retelling. Warburg's concerns about our collective capacity to hold societal memory, as mediated through the reproduction, resonates with our total dependency on this new narrative technology today. The collective mediation of the historical present through the image continues (in a manner akin to the tradition of printmaking) to imbue the *technology for looking* with the agency to shape intersubjective narratives instantaneously, thus inevitably allowing the ceaseless manipulation of experiences of reality through the reproduction as variation. In this way, to consider the digital-multiple as an Event is to acknowledge how the parameters of the *technology for looking* have exploded in our society.

Comparable to the meeting of two rollers on the printing press, the device as timeline affords us a horizontal, as well as a vertical chronology of past occurrences, within the present. This flattening of the temporal landscape offers an understanding of 'being' as being something always discursively present. More than a tool for recounting past Events, the device functions as a mechanism for totalized inquiry, allowing for the anachronistic telling and retelling of nearly all events. The device reframes our world view, not thanks to any particular occurrence, but because it allows us to retroactively intervene into the arrangement of events within an Event.





Through the repetitive retrieval of the post, as digital-multiple, there is always a simultaneous curation of the past. The past is reconfigured in the present, in the moment it is witnessed, the *moment of compression*, through the very frame of the device it streams through. Akin to the motion of the printing press, the habit of mechanically scrolling back and forth through a timeline reflects the action of producing and reproducing the Image. However, it should be asked here whether the public forum of the mass medium of the device as timeline represents a true rupture with the past or whether it shares a fundamental inheritance with the social genesis of print media. Today, the reproduction is replaced by the variation. As such, the *technology for looking* has become democratized. But within this democracy, I have personally observed both the total politicisation of the image and the aestheticization of politics.¹¹

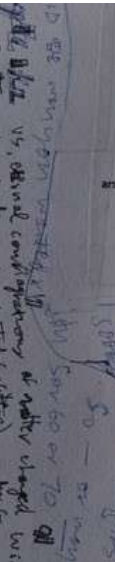
The communal experience of the digital-multiple has shifted the lens of history towards a sense of ubiquity, perhaps as a sequel to the global village. The agency afforded by the printing press is now extended into the most private spheres of societies' social, cultural and political lives. The experience of the public appropriation and re-appropriation of the image echoes the 'viral' historical survival of the reproduction, as illustrated by Warburg (Schwendener, 2020). The syntax of his original image constellations has echoed down the decades to the digital image-boards now found on all image-based social-media platforms. The new bebop tempo with which images afford new meanings within the constantly evolving context of the device and its platforms, reflects the exponential pace of the production and reproduction of recorded experience in the present media moment. The image fatigue so commonly noted in the present also seems comparable to the influx of images experienced by Warburg and Benjamin. A reliance on the device to roll out the digital-multiple is still somewhat similar to their dependence on the printing press. But the capacity of image reproduction has increased exponentially.

¹¹ Resulting in the aestheticization of our social lives, our sense of self, relationships, violence etc.

The Event of the image frames the “religious, political [and] philosophical dimensions that define the culturally conditioned epochs of human history” (Žižek, 2014). Žižek here suggests a larger framing - what Heidegger refers to as *gestell* – in order to comprehend the way in which this transcendental horizon frames and reframes the experience of being. As society continues to mediate its experience of the past and present through the Image, a reframing of the Event of ‘being’, becomes more and more urgent.

Through my work, I seek to explore a practical reframing of the Event of ‘being’ via the visual production and reproduction of events, using the means afforded to me by the *technology for looking*. During the process of producing prints, I am always aware of the *moment of compression* which brings the print into existence and which gives rise to the incisive gaze of historical framing. In this moment, to frame something is to simultaneously exclude so much else. Therefore, I seek to consider how this subjective agency might manifest creatively and be made self-conscious on the device. Whether by the pressure of the thumb or the swipe of an index finger, there is a huge mass of countless small opportunities to participate in and facilitate the trajectory of the digital-multiple reproduction and, by doing so, begin to enframe the past and present.

In a work titled ‘Grosse Fatigue’ (2013), the artist Camille Henrot performs what she calls an “intuitive unfolding of knowledge” through a series of images and video-pieces unveiling the archival treasures of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.. The work consists of a collection of archival photos and films that have been reworked in conjunction with found (public-access) images and on-location footage. Henrot explores this collection of video pieces, images and spoken-word audio files, through a rhythmic reading of intuitive narrative-building, while the images appear and disappear before the viewer in the form of desktop pop-ups. Henrot’s response to this overwhelming influx of imagery is to follow the formal and conceptual leaps between the digital ‘artifacts’ in a manner in keeping with the spontaneous framing the device itself seems to encourage.



Between these frames, so like the layers of a print, we might begin to extract meaning within the context of the present viewing regime. First, there is the device - the edge, the screen, its texture and materiality. Secondly, there is what can be viewed on the screen - the interface, the program, light and pixels. Between these frames there is the content, a link to a world beyond the context of the present. On the device, the future is depicted as something already gone, currently located in the past. While the digital-multiple may 'exist' before it is witnessed, it can only be present to us in the moment of its variation. This digital framing, in fact, continues to affect the world beyond any immediate spatial environment whatsoever. Akin to the *moment of compression* on the printing press, the Event here is framed in the present and remains discursively 'live'.



In the series of etchings inspired by Francisco Goya's 'Los Disperates' (1816) titled 'Modern Folly', I begin to imitate the device. In this series, I try to simulate the framing of reality through meticulous drawings that keep within the frame and format of the digital tablet. I first became interested in this process of reframing my experience due to the familiarity of my printing studio. I saw the act of collecting images as a form of bricolage: using the screenshot, download and crop functions as a catalyst for a digitally mimetic procedure of sorting, fragmenting and splicing. Each print was documented at each stage in the process, allowing for the continuous alteration of the imagery throughout the act of making. I envisioned the plates as tablets themselves, forever fixed on one particular image. This project is meant to consider how the reframing of the image as Event brings alternative perspectives of events into a present telling of the past.

Warburg, likewise, was responsive to the 'dissent of memory', and he playfully considered the variation of memory in the telling and retelling of the past to be a kind of amateur exploration into the fixed and hidden layers of 'being' (Forster, 1976). The digital device, I think, is uniquely situated to continue this exploration. For Žižek, a continual investigation of the gaps between our ideological frames is key to the very process of enframing itself, as it makes visible the essence of 'being' as that which eludes enclosure. Through my work, I utilise the *technology for looking* so as to attempt to reframe my experience of reality by fragmenting the image as Event with a collage-like methodology. In this way, the frame itself provides the conceptual and formal structure of my video installation, 'the Image Machine', as well as the sculptural structures in the "Fragmented Studio".







IMAGE AS SPECTACLE

For section III, 'The Image as Spectacle', I will rely on Žižek's philosophical reading of Event so as to explore the Image of the Spectacle as a reproduction of 'being'.

Although written against the backdrop of the tumultuous late 1960s, Guy Debord's critique of the Image in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) resonates more strongly than ever with the present media moment. The global Covid-19 pandemic has revealed an absolute societal reliance on the visual - on images and appearances over 'being'. As I continue to mediate my social distance through the image, I am confronted by the borders and limitations of my *technology for looking* as I watch this particular round of the Spectacle passing into History. Much like the conceptual framing of Event, the Spectacle commands a worldview through the reproduction and appropriation of reality. More than a mere collection of images, the Spectacle represents the accumulation of Events as mediated through the *moment of compression*, or the image en masse (Debord, 1967). During this current Event of the image, the experience of 'being' is materially invaded by the contemplation of the Spectacle. The device then becomes the double-frame through which I perceive the world, and in turn, myself, as an isolated perceiver. It is simultaneously a reflection of my most private and my public self, a 'selfie' not unlike the vision in the mythical waters of Narcissus's Pond. The image becomes the mirror which reflects society as well as the illusionary trick which captivates it (Vukovic, 2016). As an artist, this tension between facade and 'being', of course, intrigues me. The *technology for looking* reiterates the societal obsession with imitation, as discussed by Debord, as the prime means for simulating the self (1967). In the current media moment, the Spectacle of the individual is perpetuated by the Image. As such, it is not something which is tyrannically imposed upon society, but is, like the Event, entirely sustained by it.



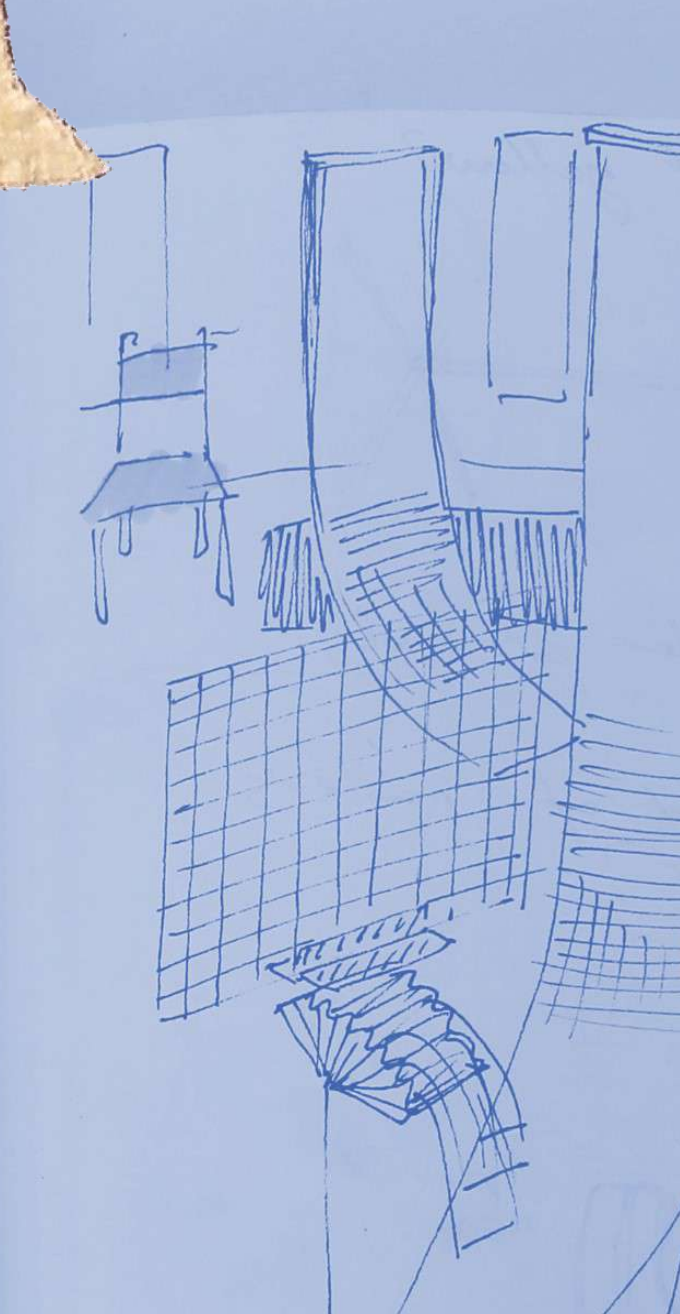
The capacity for visual deception through flawed reproductions can be seen just by the algorithms and programs which so successfully frame our experience of reality. By engaging in a dialogue of digitally-mediated images,¹³ the perspectival framing of a subjective worldview begins to narrow. Through the device, I bear witness to an endless capacity to reproduce culture, to obscure historical memory, to repackage subversive ideologies into consumer-oriented products. Counter-culture too is just as easily reproduced through the Spectacle and the *technology for looking*, resulting in the easeful re-appropriation of its images - the pride-flag, the Palestinian flag, the black square, a fist in the air, #metoo, #BLM and #RMF - all resulting in the aestheticization of these socio-political movements into iPhone chargers and bespoke t-shirts, feminism on a mug, Das Capital-themed Monopoly games for kids . In this way, Benjamin's reproduction becomes the founding image of Debord's Spectacle. In an attempt to bring about change, I find myself too often participating in the semblance of change. In my work I seek to "relinquish [the] illusions of an unmediated appropriation of the world" in order to alter my participation in the hierarchical institutions of the present (Chambers, 2016). As an artist, I feel obliged to question whether the practical strategies of fragmentation and reframing are even applicable to the image of the Spectacle? The *technology for looking* is never neutral and, like the printing press or any other device which facilitates subjective experiences of the world, it inevitably begins to perpetuate the biases of its user. In these pieces, I endeavour to position myself as an historian of the present. Like Warburg, I attempt to formulate the visual narrative with which I may begin to articulate the historicity of the present moment. I adopt anachronistic methodology to aid my strategic navigation of this technologically-haunted present. By first identifying the *technology for looking* within the Event of the image and then, second, adopting the tactic that Debord refers to as *détournement*, I less-than-solemnly attempt to set into motion a Žižekian reframing of my own experience of reality.

¹³ Through memes, GIFs and the curation of image boards and 'stories'.


DÉTOURNEMENT

In response to their tumultuous present, the Situationist International movement that Debord founded once sought to construct spontaneous moments of 'being' through the staging of 'happenings', as a means of momentarily freeing themselves from the Spectacle. The wider anti-establishment movement of the 1960s also considered this to be a practical way of replacing the fake with the true, tossing out the reproduction for the real. Debord argues that from within the spectacle it is next to "impossible to imagine a world different from the one created by the spectacle" (1967). For Debord, society can never lastingly free itself: it can only try at strategies to subvert the image of the Spectacle. Just as the Event is made up of a multitude of heterogeneous events, the Spectacle is a polysemic heterogeneity of 'happenings'. So although society can never be entirely free, it can still field attempts to become fragmented into its individual elements. In this way, society is simultaneously influenced by History and, through retroactive interventions, can participate in the grand subversion of its past. While I as an individual can not necessarily change the Event of the past, I can still attempt to better understand how the past has been framed for me through the *technology for looking* and then, as such, work to fragment my own experience of the present through the *moment of compression*.

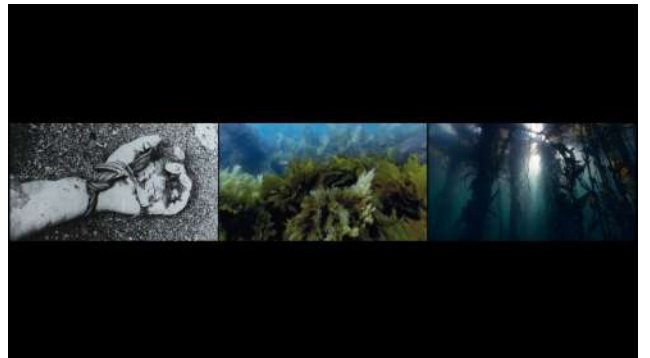
For his part, Debord encourages *détournement* – that is, a strategic retroactive reconstruction of past experience in order to subvert the narrative of events/happenings within the Event/Spectacle. I consider Debord's critical *détournement* as the lost sibling to the retroactive gaze intended by both Hegel and Warburg, as well as a strategy akin to Benjamin's fragmentation method or the act of reframing suggested by Žižek. To set off on a discursive *détour* is to abandon the trajectory of past discourse in favour of finding an alternative theoretical framework. Without a particular arrival in mind, it is a strategy which affords a renewed perspective on an otherwise well-trodden road. *Détournement* implicitly means confronting the current institutions that block our paths to the future through a Hegelian re-examination of the genealogy of societal constructs.



In 'Post-Print', I explore my own capacity to perform this kind of retroactive intervention through the collective experience of film (the great reproduction). Walter Benjamin advocates for the social significance of film as a tool to be used in favour of fragmenting the narrative of the past (Benjamin, 1935) . The consequent transformative capability of film is then best expressed through the reframing of perception. The conditions provided by the innovations of the digital-multiple likewise allow a very similar revolution in historical thinking.



Artist, storyteller and videographer, John Akomfrah employs a philosophy of 'assemblage thinking' while constructing his video works. Two of his recent pieces, titled 'Vertigo Sea' (2015) and 'Four Nocturnes' (2019), comprise a bricolage of historical footage and carefully curated scenes - part autobiographical and part historical narrative. Akomfrah's work is, on the whole, a constantly provocative oscillation between the past, present and future. In contrast with the usually diminished scale of image-viewing on the device, Akomfrah's large projections envelop the viewer. His staging of historical disruptions through the process of *compressing* a montage of the past into the present is also strengthened by the medium of film, used as an anachronistic counter-media to the *technology for looking*. Benjamin anticipated this kind of work when he wrote that through the splicing of frames "film can be cut and reconfigured [and] manipulated: this has revolutionary consequences" (Benjamin, 1935).





Fragmented and spliced sequence images from my video-piece 'Image Machine'.

VIDEO AS TIMELINE

The 'Image-Machine' is a video assemblage showcasing mechanisms which expand and contract as the imagery of the past oscillates within the historicity of the present. The slide-like change in imagery is punctuated by the rhythmic audio-visual recordings of the printing studio. The process of association obliged by these images is constantly interrupted by their relentless and abrupt change (Benjamin, 1935). I envision the 'Image-Machine' as a press-like object which metaphorically and intriguingly begins to make and unmake the past, present, and future by reframing the fragmentation of culture, as defined and experienced by Warburg (Forster, 1976). Like the print and the press, the 'Image-Machine' functions as a timeline in both its process and its infinite form. Both are the amalgamation of creative processes and rely on a single *moment of compression* for their 'being'. Through the timeline of the 'Image-Machine', I seek to reframe my own experience of the Spectacle as Event through a Debordian 'détournement' (Debord, 1967). The infrastructure of the printing studio is here reflected in the elemental action of editing - an aquatint test strip is mirrored in the post-production timeline, the matrix is substituted for the surface of a screen; the reproduction must finally be cropped, compressed, filtered, cut, reconfigured and manipulated. In turn, the experience, like Warburg's telling and retelling of collective memory, can be endlessly re-experienced (Forster, 1976). The fluctuation of images as Events mimics the pace of their own making. Through the variation of tempo - from the repetitive, almost obsessive wiping up and washing out, to the sporadic pauses to reflect, adjust, and repeat - I seek to evoke a sensorial reproduction of my private practice in the printing studio. By flooding the imagined studio with the images of the present that passed me by during the process of editing the 'Image-Machine', I draw parallels between my own studio practice and the relentlessness of the world beyond it. In doing so, I hope to ground my experience of the historicity of the present within the very process and labour of producing and reproducing this video piece. The 'Image-Machine' consists of three circumambient video projections. At the center of the room, in the position of the press, is a hollow box-like bench. From within the bench, the choreographed audio compilation of the studio resonates with a deep vibrato.





The projected 'screens' are divided into three horizontal panels. On either side of the continuously shifting center, the viewer sees the monochromatic mechanisms of the studio, seemingly rotating, compressing and cranking the colorful central images into motion. The images are fragmented vertically and then spliced together in relation to their formal and conceptual elements. The pace of the mechanisms quickens and slows in accompaniment to the tempo of the images' fragmentation. The mechanisms also appear to push inward by simulating the repetitive *moment of compression* of the *technology for looking*.¹⁶ The monotonous movement of mechanisms is sporadically interrupted by the playful introduction of unfamiliar perspectives of very familiar studio objects: footage from below of a soap dispenser cranking to-and-fro, a close-up of the gear chain pulling, the elongated spine of the drying rack rising and falling. By these means, I incorporate fragmenting, reframing and *détournement* through video using the analog assemblage and collage methodologies so often associated with printmaking. The 'Image-Machine' also inevitably contains an element of the absurd - as the estranged structures move across the screen, they gradually become emblematic of my own longing to find meaning in the present and my inability to depict past narratives with any certainty of fixture.

The 'Image-Machine' is a press-like video piece in as much as it is a metaphor for the production and reproduction of images. Images are necessary points here along the visual timeline and thus serve as the milestones of Events. Throughout the piece there is no pause in the assault of images, for the image can not be arrested. No sooner does a scene appear, before it changes. I view this video piece as an ever-growing, ever-expanding, and ever-changing article of process. As Events come and go through the press, through our devices and through this video piece, the work, like the reproduction, ever alters its trajectory. Through the relentless back and forth motion of these various timelines, the images of the present are enveloped by the Events of the past, resulting in a grander flattening of the temporal scape. In the midst of a reality-shifting Event, I hope to achieve an equally holistic framing and reframing of my own present experience.

16 The materiality of the mechanical assemblage in 'Image-Machine' evokes for me the industrial texture of constructivist photography and film, from the factories of Alexander Rodchenko to the machines of Boris Ignatovich .

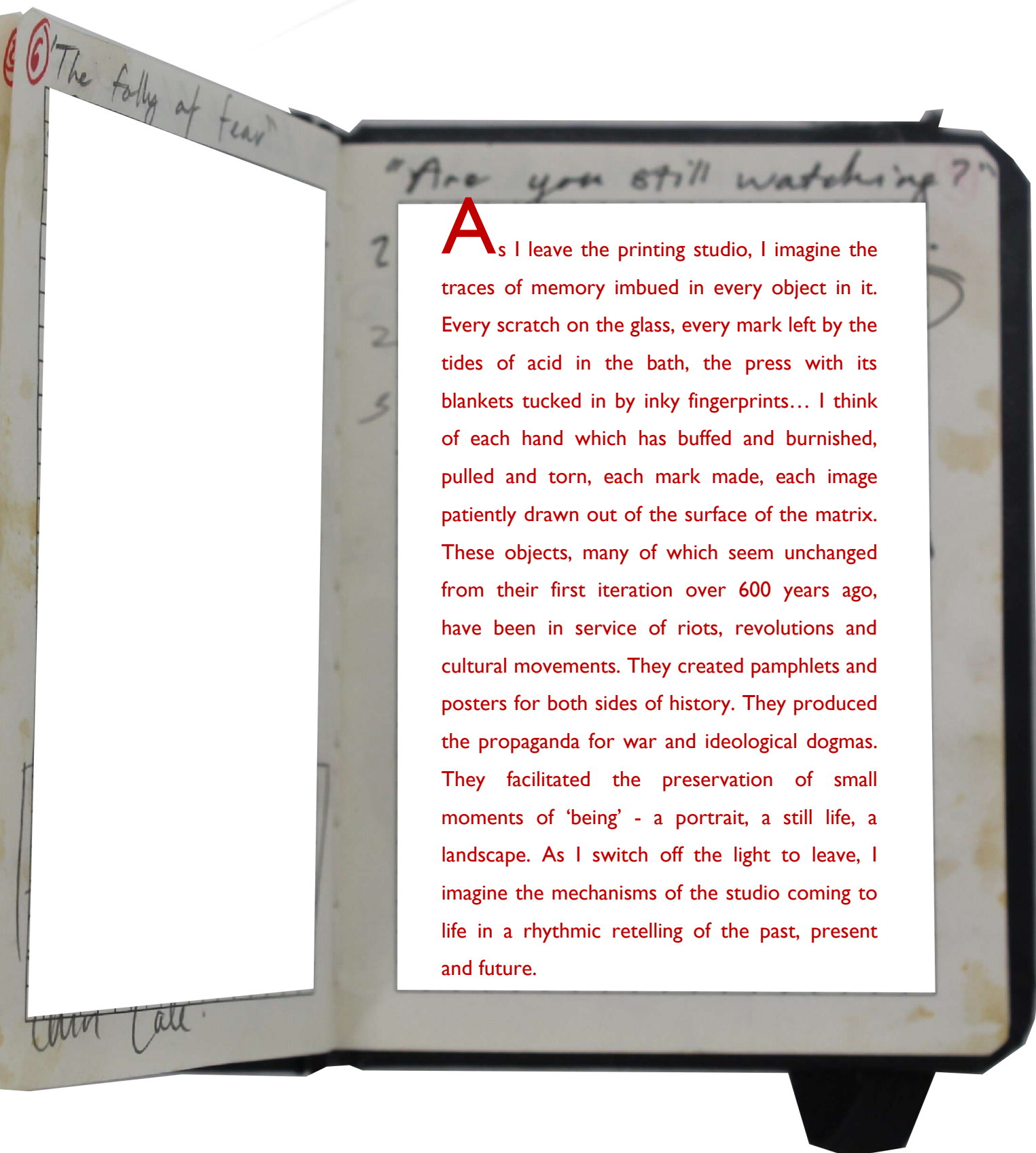


The discursive progression from the print to the post has now become the bookend structure of this entire project. From the microcosmic moment of fixture at the beginning - the reproduction of Francisco Goya's 'Desperates Femenino' being secured to a board with a pin - to the multitude of fizzling reproductions at its end - rhythmically fragmented and spliced together through the process of creating the 'Image-Machine'. This oscillation from one extreme to another, through retroactive interventions, has indeed imbued my practice with a greater understanding of the historicity of my present. By situating the tradition of printmaking within the technological eschatology of our time, I have discovered that the medium has shifted from a disseminative tool to a conceptual one through the exponential capacity and demand for our *technology for looking*. In view of the capacity of the digital-multiple to mediate the experience of Event,

I have sought to consider a historical perspective of this means of reproduction by drawing parallels between the print and post; locating the *moment of compression* within the socio-political and cultural legacy of the printmaking tradition. By reflecting on the historicity of this precise moment in the course of this highly technological present, I have become more aware than ever before of my own dependency on the device to perceive and participate in the world. My project now has to turn to the materiality of the printed reproduction so as to interrogate the role of the image in mediating the historical Event, and to begin to understand the implications of the *technology for looking* as it exists on the device.

The installations in my final exhibition all illustrate, through a vast synecdoche, the process of producing and reproducing the image, by showing off a continuous cycle of fragmentation, reframing and détournement. The 'Fragmented Studio' signifies the transference of the physical mechanisms for making from the functional printing studio into a totally imagined blank space, where all objects on display are considered as equal components of the assembled machine of the studio. The 'Image-Machine' then depicts these mechanisms as components of a mythical machine which appears stuck in an endless cycle of image production and reproduction.

'Post-Print' as a chaotic whole revolves around this continuous *moment of compression* on the device, and thus, through a combination of print and video, I have sought to put the fixed image, as illustrated by Warburg, into motion. By questioning how the technologically-conditioned present is historicized, an ontological comprehension of the image as Event becomes all the more crucial to gaining an understanding of the present as an immediate historical moment. An understanding of History, as a cultural reconstruction of the past in the present, is necessary if we are to truly interrogate the incisive legacy of the *technology for looking*. A bifocal lens of History is also integral to both a theoretical and a practical pursuit for alternative readings of the present. By bringing a historical perspective of the present into focus as a strategy for navigating the legacy of the Event, I hope to bring at least a touch of understanding to my own experience of the present Event, as mediated through the image, by a ceaseless dialogue with the reproductions of the past.



⑥ 'The folly of fear'

"Are you still watching?"

2
2
3

As I leave the printing studio, I imagine the traces of memory imbued in every object in it. Every scratch on the glass, every mark left by the tides of acid in the bath, the press with its blankets tucked in by inky fingerprints... I think of each hand which has buffed and burnished, pulled and torn, each mark made, each image patiently drawn out of the surface of the matrix. These objects, many of which seem unchanged from their first iteration over 600 years ago, have been in service of riots, revolutions and cultural movements. They created pamphlets and posters for both sides of history. They produced the propaganda for war and ideological dogmas. They facilitated the preservation of small moments of 'being' - a portrait, a still life, a landscape. As I switch off the light to leave, I imagine the mechanisms of the studio coming to life in a rhythmic retelling of the past, present and future.

Chris Call

REFERENCES

- Benjamin, W. (1935). *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Chambers, I. (2016). *Art as Anachronism*. Carrol, K.V. Ed. *Third Text*. Retrieved from <http://thirdtext.org/carrol-chambers-review>
- Davis, D. (1995). *The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction*. *Leonardo*, Vol 28, No.5, Third Annual New York Digital Salon , 318-386.
- Debord, G. (1967). *Society of The Spectacle* Knabb, K. (Ed.), Paris: Bureau of Public Secrets.
- Didi-Huberman, G. (2003). *Before the Image, Before Time: The Sovereignty of Anachronism*. In P. Mason, & C. F. Zwijnenberg (Ed.), *Compelling Visuality: The Work of Art in and out of History* (pp. 31-44). University of Minnesota Press.
- Field, R. S. (1994). *Sentences on Printed Art*. *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, 25(5), 171-171. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/24555873
- Hobbs, P. (2011). *South Africa: Artists, Prints, Community: Twenty-five Years at the Caversham Press, Boston University*
- Forster, K. W. (1976). *Aby Warburg's History of Art: Collective Memory and the Social Mediation of Images*. *Daedalus*, 105(1), 169-176. Retrieved May 1, 2021, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20024391>
- Kentridge, W. (2014). *Six Drawing Lessons*. Harvard University Press.
- Krukowski, L. (1986). *Hegel, "Progeress", and the Avant-Garde*. *The Journal for Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.44, No.3, pp. 279-290
- Lawrence, B. S. (1984). *Historical Perspective: Using the Past to Study the Present*. *The Academy of Management Review*, Vol9. No.2, pp.307– 312
- Lijster, T. (2017). *All Reification if Forgetting: Benjamin, Adorno, and the Dialectic of Reification*. In S. G. Hartle, *The Spell of Capitalism* (pp. 24- 101). Amsterdam University Press.
- Lovejoy, M. (1997). *Artists' Books in the Digital Age*. *SiubStance*, Vol.26, No.7, pp. 113-134
- Schwendener, M. (2020, May 15). *This Atlas of Art Is a Modern Wonder*. *The New York Times*, p. 13.
- Shikes, R.E. (1969). *The indignant eye : the artist as social critic in prints and drawings from the fifteenth century to Picasso*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Stewart, S. (1993). *On longing : narratives of the miniature, the gigantic, the souvenir, the collection*. 1st ed. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Vukovic, C. B. (2016). *New Media as Event*. *Synthesis Philosophica* 63 (1/2017) , 139-153.
- Warburg, A. (1929). "The Atlas of Memory".
- Wodiczko, K. (2014). *The Transformative Avant-Garde: A Manifest of the Present*. *Third-Text*, 28 (2), 111-122.
- Žižek, S. (2014). *Event: A Philosophical Journey Through A Concept*. Melville House.

Exhibition Map

