ON THE PROLIFERATION AND COLLAPSE OF THE MOVING IMAGE

From a roundtable discussion at Orchard, New York, NY, March 17, 2006.

SABRINA: Thank you all for coming. My name is Sabrina Gschwandtner; I organized this event and I'll be moderating tonight.

The purpose of tonight's discussion is to create a dialogue that can be published and disseminated. I was inspired by a symposium that happened as part of the New York Film Festival in 1966. That symposium included panelists like Stan Vanderbeek, Ken Dewey, and Robert Whitman, among others. It was transcribed and printed in a special issue of *Film Culture*, edited by Jonas Mekas. I have it here. It's all on the expanded arts. I think it was just for sale at the New York Underground Film Festival.

ANDREW: You can find them at Anthology, we still have plenty of them.

SABRINA: OK. It's really beautiful.

ANDREW: George Maciunas designed it.

SABRINA: Yeah, it's gorgeous. So, the symposium that I referenced, the one in 1966, focused on the work the panelists were making at the time; they were all artists and most of them made work that they called "expanded cinema." I wanted to offer one definition of expanded cinema that comes from the journal. It's a nice definition. "Uses of multiple screens, multiple projectors, multiple images, inter-related screen forms and images, moving slides, kinetic sculptures, hand held projectors, balloon screens, video tape and video projections, light and sound experiments. That is what the new cinema is all about. That is what this phase of new cinema is all about."

This panel tonight, comprised not just of artists but of artists, a critic, writers, a curator, a distributor, et cetera —we'll introduce you all in a minute—will focus on questions about the expansion, integration, and collapse of moving-image categories.

First, I'm going to put forth questions about the relevancy of terms like "avant-garde," "experimental," and "video art." Then we'll move into the role of the moving image in the fine-art world and media today, in relationship to new technologies in the 1960s.

Before we begin, I'd like to thank Matt Keegan and Sara Greenberger Rafferty, the editors of *North Drive Press*. I also want to thank Jeff Preiss and everyone at Orchard for welcoming us into their space. Thank you to Rebecca Cleman; she acted as a content and format advisor to the discussion. And a special thank you to all of the panelists.

Let me introduce everyone. We have here Dara Birnbaum, media and video artist; Jeff Preiss, filmmaker; Rebecca Cleman, distribution coordinator of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI); Ed Halter, *Village Voice* critic and film and video programmer; Henriette Huldisch, assistant curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art; and Andrew Lampert, artist, programmer, and archivist at Anthology Film Archives.

The first question is a multiple-part question. What is the difference between experimental, underground, and avant-garde film today? Do these categories really exist? As a secondary question, is there such a thing as video art? Rebecca, why don't you begin?

REBECCA: I would say that these categories mean something different now, which may sound like an obvious comment. The distinctions between experimental, underground, and avant-garde are in some ways blurring. But the way that those terms are being defined is also changing. I think there's confusion about these terms.

"Avant-garde" has been bandied about as some kind of aesthetic distinction, but its origin is actually more about how things are distributed and how they are presented. "Experimental" could be thought of as a mode of filmmaking. Now it's a category within a film festival, or you can make an experimental commercial film. Often it just means "nonnarrative." "Underground" still, to me, suggests something that's made outside of the studio system, something that's done with a very different financing model.

I think we should definitely address this question of video art and if it exists today and how it exists today. In my opinion, it does refer to a very specific time and a very specific initiative that would probably be the emergence of a medium in the way that "New Media"—capital *N*, capital *M*—is being used today. I would say there is a corollary between those two categories.

ANDREW: I was thinking about the difference between avant-garde film and experimental film, which are usually synonyms—people choose one or the other term to refer to the same thing. A lot of filmmakers would, depending upon the context, refer to themselves as both. The problem with the term "experimental" is that it implies the artist is not in control of what they're doing, that the final work is the end result of some operations that have been set in motion. "Avant-garde" seems to have the connotation that the artist was ahead of their time and fully aware of what they were doing and fashioning.

Video art, I think, was almost always called video art. Video art not being film, and video being tape, it was considered at the beginning a very separate medium. The way that it's discussed, especially among the expanded arts, it's one of the arts. It's not what we are today, which is moving-image makers, where people are shooting on film and finishing on video. And, when they can, going back to film to make prints.

Being the archivist at Anthology, I get to go through the collection—especially the library—a lot, and I find so much material related to the history of both areas.

But, what it comes down to for me, thinking about these terms and what they mean today... For instance, "underground." I don't really know what "underground" means. I don't really know what it ever meant. The term originates in a Manny Farber essay about B movies. Then, Stan Vanderbeek, in around 1959, incorporated the term when talking about the experimental-film movement. At the same time, the experimental-film movement was independent filmmaking. These were independent filmmakers. If you think of early video artists, a lot of people would even cite Ernie Kovacs as a video artist, and he was making work for television. I've never really heard people say "avant-garde video maker," or "avant-garde video artist." They're very different distinctions for me. "Avant-garde" makes us think of France at the turn of the century, in the 1920s. A lot of what we call avant-garde today at that time might have been called experimental in the 1960s. Avant-garde, in a certain sense, is a term that we apply after the fact to things that filmmakers have during the period of creation taken on as an identity to promote themselves. Maybe I don't know. A question for you, Dara, considering the show that you're in right now with all the pioneers of video art—video from 1969 to 1979—would video makers in that era call themselves avant-garde? Was there something that was sort of more beholden to the media that video was already so avant-garde you didn't have to say it?

DARA: I never knew many artists, filmmakers, or video makers who would actually use that term about themselves. I think it's something that comes more from historians, or journalists or critics. I know that there was a kind of repulsion on the side of the video makers toward even using the phase, "I'm a video artist." I think that most video makers, or the avant-garde filmmakers I have known at a distance, actually would not want to use the term about themselves.

ANDREW: I think of, for instance, of Stan Brakhage, who has a film called *An Avant-Garde Home Movie*.

DARA: I think that kind of self-reflexivity is OK because when you talk about being in control or not being in control, it's a way of labeling yourself, rather than somebody else labeling it for you. Or taking it and doing it almost in a sense of not parody, by owning it in a way. I think "avant-garde" is a primitive term right now. It's used historically, so you can't be active in the moment of using it.

ED: The way in which "experimental," "avant-garde," and "underground" are often used today is very parallel to the way that labels of the art world like Minimalist and Conceptual and Pop, for example, get used. These are all the historical moments, but now we use them as shorthand for a kind of sensibility or style because we want to quickly convey that something has a Pop feel to it. I think what Rebecca brought up is interesting, about how in the '60s, these terms—"independent," "experimental," "avant-garde," "underground"—all became blurred, because it feels like they definitely go in these cycles of separating and blurring again. The word "underground," for a few decades, had connotations of something being subcultural or countercultural. At least at one point historically, in the '70s and '80s, some groups of New York filmmakers preferred the term "underground" in opposition to what they felt was an institutionalized avant-garde. And that carried over into the '90s.

DARA: Can you give an example?

ED: Well, for example the Cinema of Transgression manifesto very explicitly attacks people like Stan Brakhage and Michael Snow. Whether true or not, it expresses a feeling that those names had been institutionalized and the form of filmmaking that had once been radical had been institutionalized and that a new kind of filmmaking was needed that was still radical. Those kinds of fights about "I'm more radical than you are" don't seem to happen anymore. So, the term "underground" has lost its valence because of that. There's not that kind of hard opposition. Also, when you think about it, all artists in a sense kind of

belong to a subculture anyway, so it's redundant to say that. Any avant-garde filmmaker, as the term is used today, in a sense is part of a subculture.

HENRIETTE: I think that Rebecca has teased out some very good distinctions between these sticky terms, yet "underground" to me is the hardest one to wrap your head around or think about in any really meaningful way in the current landscape. Ed, since you were for many years, and perhaps still are, affiliated with the New York Underground Film Festival, I would like to hear your take on this. Can you formulate what that festival thinks of as underground film or what your mission is opposite to other showcases?

ED: Well, Andy can speak to this too because he programmed with me for many years. That was an inherited name. The festival was started in the early '90s. At the time it was started in opposition to mainstream film festivals.

ANDREW: The directors couldn't get their films into mainstream film festivals.

ED: People forget that in the early '90s there were actually very few film festivals. It was still something that generally happened at large institutions, and some of the festivals—like the New York Film Festival, which had been young in 1966—by then had become institutionalized. And this didn't just happen in New York. It kind of was a spontaneous thing that seemed to happen a lot of different places. People started these festivals to counter that and be a bit more open to different to types of filmmaking, et cetera. So, the underground in that sense was a statement.

I've never been particularly happy with the label, but it's a shorthand that kind of works. And it doesn't work. I think sometimes the work can be dismissed, for example, because people say, "oh, it's just underground." As if that label contains everything happening in the festival. The other thing about underground festivals is that they don't just show what's called experimental work. They also show documentaries and features from what might be called some kind of fringe of the independent film community, however you can define that in different ways. So, what I do like about the term "underground" is that it's very flexible as well. "Avant-garde" or "experimental" can sometimes feel limiting, as if people think that you're expecting a certain kind of experience from it, whereas what "underground" means is kind of up for grabs. That lack of definition can work for it.

DARA: I was thinking that "underground" is the only one of those terms that also carries with it a sense of politics or political positioning as well. You may not want that imposed upon you if you're a filmmaker or video maker, but the truth is, if something happened, you went underground or your strategies would come from underground.

ED: Yeah, and in fact the word was not used for anything related to art before it was used for film. It was only used in a political sense. You had an underground press during the French resistance, and since then the term has been used. The most popular place "underground" is used today is in hip-hop. That's the only place where underground activity still seems to happen. In that case, it's very specifically about a mode of distribution. It's like this nonmajor distribution, sometimes semi-illegally or illegally, of tapes and CDs and DVDs. In that sense, it does live on that way.

HENRIETTE: It is interesting that avant-garde or experimental film—terms which I agree are used practically interchangeably—has become associated with a very specific set of aesthetic criteria, which tend to be rather formalist. "Underground," in contrast, simply doesn't have to bear that burden. This is also reflected in the establishment of an experimental sidebar to many larger film festivals that are now addressing this kind of work. But these tend to focus on work that falls into a historical line of the now-classic avant-garde narrative of the 1920s via the '40s and '50s into the present.

ED: The paradox now is that we can talk about having a traditional avant-garde. You can sense that many filmmakers who made experimental work in the 1990s and 2000s have a sense of looking backward rather than forward. In other words, when you're making films now, even though film isn't dead yet, it feels like you're working in an older mode. It's not the most up-to-date mode you can use in 2005. So, the work has a sense of being superannuated. Jennifer Reeves's work, for example, is brand new and it can look very old because she's using techniques that are now beginning to be outdated. I don't mean outdated in a sense that people still aren't making amazing work with it, but that it's no longer cutting-edge technologically.

DARA: But that could at times make for a strong statement as well.

ED: Absolutely.

DARA: Instead of just looking old.

ED: I think it is a statement, too. Those choices are made even for sociopolitical reasons, in a way. If you go to regular

film school, there is a lot of pressure to achieve high production values. It means using the best, biggest budget, and the most up-to-date equipment, et cetera. Refusing to do that is like saying, "I don't really subscribe to those values at all. Whatever is available to me as an artist is useful and I can use that." That in itself is a kind of social statement.

JEFF: I'm amazed at the longevity of this particular conversation. [*All laugh.*] For *years* it's been going on and it's never been settled. Not being a historian or a writer or a theorist, I can only contribute to this conversation as a filmmaker. I want a term to describe what I do, and I find it personally very awkward to use some of these terms. And of course every term is disappointing and clearly inadequate, but it also seems that almost anyone really using these terms understands their limitations but accepts that there's no better way of saying it. This inadequacy of language is one of the great things about what we do—that despite a concentrated effort, it has managed to escape any encapsulating definition.

I'm also very interested in the films and venues that seem to happen outside of any legitimating institution. These are really without category—for instance, what you see on YouTube.com.

ED: Yeah, YouTube is amazing.

DARA: I don't know what that is.

JEFF: It's a website where you can upload your films and use it as a public venue. It's just thousands of these little film clips all there for different reasons. Home movies have always struck me as being the best shorthand to describe what I do and what I think many of my peers do—a kind of ordinary idea about recording that becomes a loop of including the process as part of the object's meaning. The generation that I belong to recognizes our home movies as a kind of schematic of memory. My own curiosity of "how does that thing work?" or "what is this looping back and forth in time?" is what I continue to be interested in as a filmmaker. Now video art, experimental filmmaking, and new media seem to have dovetailed, becoming in some ways one category. But I am also personally interested in movies that just seem to happen naturally, for no other reason than the seductive force of this home-movie loop. Not necessarily from artists, but from people who are caught up with this device that can record duration.

DARA: I wish that was true, but that would create an argument for *America's Funniest Home Videos* being art. [*Laughs.*]

JEFF: But that's so mediated. I'm looking at things coming directly from their sources.

REBECCA: What about blogging then? I can never believe how much content is available online on places like Undergroundfilm.org. Great—so everybody can make a film and everybody has the resources to post it online and vlog it. That doesn't necessarily mean it's good. Something else has to happen. What I'm more interested in is not talking about what they mean today but what they will mean in a few years as digital technologies become even more pervasive when people don't have analog television sets. I think these categories will mean even less.

DARA: I was just down at DiVA, the Digital and Video Art Fair. I didn't think I would go to this fair. I think it shows a very good example, in the present tense, of the parameters of video art. This year they had a tribute to Warhol. I might have missed some of the fair—I'm sure I did—but the tribute seemed to be that on one floor, in the corridor, where you would get to see the Empire State Building film by Warhol as transferred to DVD. I went there with two people from the industry who very quickly caught onto how the DVD was made, that it had an added texture of its own. It was wonderful watching them look at these nuances and details that you would usually watch in experimental film and sometimes say how ingenious it was that they painted the frame or used the dust—I'm not putting down experimental film at all. This is just a few decades later when you get a tribute but you're stuck in a hallway. It was three hallways worth of transferred and therefore translated mediums' of Warhol classics we've already known.

I think that for me the important thing is to find art in this kind of implosion. I can't remember if it was Eisenstein or Godard actually, referencing Eisenstein, who stated that you can't make revolution when you can already *call* it revolution. That was the whole problem with the SDS: the media was so hyperfast—now it's even more so—it named the SDS before it could almost name itself and then all of a sudden we have a constructed image. That image resides outside ourselves, so, how do we remain active within the image? Therefore, I'm going to be a little reluctant to call blogging and this and that art forms or art-making practices. I'm curious: in this kind of society, where everything's occurring so fast, how do we retain a set of ethics or principles among ourselves? For example, as artists, to do what is *art* no matter what form it takes?

REBECCA: My concern is that with the pervasiveness of media and the size of the art world—it's so huge right now—what people crave is a filtering device. People

crave something that says to them, "this is good," so art can become a kind of elitist designation. This isn't just someone's blog, this is art. I just wonder... It's inverting what you're saying, Dara, but I'm just wondering, as these distinctions dissolve...

JEFF: Perhaps this is the distinction between the idea of video art and something that I recognize from the culture of experimental filmmaking.

SABRINA: I think this is a good juncture to throw out the next question. As the mythology goes, in the 1960s, the integration of media—specifically video, film, and some computer experimentation—into the art world offered an alternative to the fine arts of painting and sculpture, possibly to the art world itself. In the current art world, this vision has been replaced by a stabilizing of the market for fine arts, and a desire of media artists to sell works on a comparable scale. However, painting and sculpture remain the most salable. Here comes the question: With the waning of the earlier utopia and the increased commercialism of the art world, does media have a future in the art world? Considering the pervasiveness of media and creative media work, the question could be inverted: Does the art world have a future in media?

DARA: We've got great times ahead of us; as soon as we get rid of Bush, we'll be fine. [*Laughs.*]

ED: There is one interesting trend that we've seen in the last few years. It's that, for media artists, there's this pressure to make it into an object. Martha Colburn, for example, who is an experimental filmmaker, recently had a gallery show. She's an animator, and she exhibited elements that she used in her animations. I can't speak for them, obviously, but I wonder if those artists would have gone in that direction if there were no pressure to make an object for a gallery. To me, it's almost like they're being asked to make not-exactly-necessary steps for their art in making these objects because there's nothing salable about a 16-mm print at this point.

HENRIETTE: There is, though. Institutions and even some private collectors buy 16-mm prints. And if films are editioned and sold, it represents a kind of objectification of the moving image, whether it is video or film. You construct a relatively stable projection environment that can be remade according to a specific set of instructions. This is in fact not so different from selling Conceptual artwork of any kind, and there is a market for that. But yes, galleries do exert pressure on artists to produce salable work. As a result, stills from films are being sold as objects, as are all of those things you were just mentioning. But I don't think that's actually necessarily so different from the pressure facing artists who make huge site-specific installations, for example, which is also work that explodes the traditional gallery space.

ANDREW: I was just going to relate a personal story. A year and a half to two years ago, I did a performance at a gallery in Chelsea. A friend had a show, and we did this thing with live music. I came with a couple of projectors and I was able to do a few different tricks. We did a thirty-minute show. I thought it was one of the worst shows I've ever done in my life. I was very embarrassed. But afterwards the gallerist came up to me to tell me how wonderful it was and offered me a show. [*Laughs.*]

DARA: It was so bad it was good. It was so good it was art.

ANDREW: I tried to explain to him that what I had done was not a reproducible, salable piece, that it was a performance, and that it's not something I want to do in a gallery. I would have to be in the gallery eight hours a day, five days a week doing that, getting paid to do that, and in the end, if someone wanted to buy the piece, they would have to buy me. I swear to God, this person did not get it. "You can just leave the projectors here and I can have somebody else do it for you." We went back and forth. This gallery ended up doing a show a few months later with another, more noted, European experimental filmmaker. And that filmmaker had stills and pieces that I had already seen in group shows or looped in exhibitions of film. So that was really, in the end, what I have a feeling this gallerist wanted.

On the other side of that, as an archivist at Anthology where I preserve films, I deal with curators and gallerists in the art world coming to us wanting pieces. A perfect example is Paul Sharits, who was really one of the first filmmakers using films in gallery settings, multiple projections on loops that ran for hours, days, weeks on end—a very clever filmmaker. Now he's coming back into fashion. A curator came and wanted to do a very large show in Spain and was asking for certain pieces which are double-projection films, very intricately timed, where you have to start them at the exact same time and end at the exact same time. She wanted to show that on a loop. There really is no way to establish the proper sync that would be required to pull that off with the mechanisms that are available to us. So then this curator said, you can just put it on to video. This is something that was composed at twenty-four frames per second and composed as a time-based work. It lasts fifteen minutes. It doesn't last all day

long. He has other works that do last all day long. Those could fit into this category the curator was looking for, but this particular person really liked that piece and thought, well, what's the difference? I find myself in a position, on a regular basis, of having to explain what that difference is. I feel like, at this point, there are some curators and galleries who understand this. What we're talking about here is really educating the curators.

DARA: It's very hard. For example, I was part of the "X-Screen" exhibition in Vienna and Paul Sharits's work was also there. I very much enjoyed that exhibition because they did everything possible to leave works in the original medium in which they were created. At times you would see how much subtlety was involved, even down to the sound of the sprocket holes going through the projector. That's why I've been trying to sit on committees to investigate how we preserve this work for the future, which is a huge thing. The projectors will disappear eventually; or people can walk into a room and if someone chooses to, perhaps in a purist way, retain their projector and film loop, you might start getting people looking more at the projector as an archaic instrument than at the actual film.

ANDREW: At the Whitney Biennial, Rodney Graham has a piece on 35-mm film of a chandelier. I went into the room and I was struck by the crisp image and the clarity and how nice it looked in the room, but I was more struck by the 35-mm loop projector that had been rented for the piece that will be there the entire time. It almost becomes a sculptural element of the work—intentionally, unintentionally, I don't know. We're all hip to this. We're talking here because we're in the know, but I wonder what the average person going to the Biennial thinks of this machine?

HENRIETTE: It is interesting since to me it's obviously an incredibly noticeable machine in the middle of the room—it's absolutely fascinating to see a 35-mm projector that projects something at forty-eight frames per second on its side. But my experience being in that room with "general public" is that it's nearly invisible to most people.

Some people will ask something like, "what's this machine?" But most people don't seem to think about the source of the image at all.

ED: There's an interesting thing about this. In Jerry Saltz's review of the Biennial in the *Village Voice*, he said, "Oh, there's some great videos by X,Y,Z, and G," and half the things he mentioned were films. The projector was right in his face. [*Laughs*.]

ANDREW: But how many videos begin with titles that say, "a film by"?

ED: Yeah, that's true. Well, the word "film," now it's just become... it's like "song." People say, do we call a rap a song? Is it a song if there are no words? So it has become like the word "song"...

DARA: I still think there are important distinctions because of the mode of production, which still can become critical in various ways.

HENRIETTE: But my point, just to be the devil's advocate, was that most people don't particularly care about the specificity of the medium.

DARA: Well, most people don't, but most people don't consciously think on different levels. I hate saying that because that's a very elitist kind of statement. I sometimes think that if you reach four of the right people, that's OK too. But what I want to say is, who becomes the educator of helping or aiding this process along, in a way? Why is it so quickly misrepresented in the press, as in this example by someone who's been writing at least twenty or thirty years, and on and on?

REBECCA: A large part of the problem—it's an aside, but a very important one—is that there is, in the art world, an embrace and return to painting. Painting is so salable. There is moving-image work that's selling, but at EAI, we're constantly having arguments with people about its value. We're not really ever selling work; we're leasing it for public exhibition. We'll sell on a high-video format like Digi Beta, but that sale is for the life of the tape. They're not editioned. People balk at the fees.

HENRIETTE: I think the problem is that you are working with the older distribution model, representing something that is an infinitely reproducible work and licensing it, versus the more recent and very artificial mode of editioning infinitely reproducible works of art. Ironically, the second model proves easier to handle for people in the art world and for art museums.

DARA: But not for the artists. At DiVA—where by and large it's an emerging group of artists, the galleries are younger, and the artists are younger—these people in the industry are questioning why a disc, a DVD that's three minutes long, would sell for six thousand dollars. The reason being that they made it into a limited edition because that young gallery wants to get going, wants to

get started, and they're trying to do media work that they can't readily sell. If you're selling at twenty-five bucks or fifty bucks a shot, it's more for mass marketing, and you get the money that way.

They're building a different market. I wonder what happens to the artist in between—that young artists, again, feel this pressure to limit their work if they enter the gallery space. In some cases, the same exact work might have been put out for mass distribution as its marketplace.

I brought this article with me to show you because I love it very much [*shows newspaper to panelists and audience*]. This was in *The New York Times* Arts and Leisure section of Sunday, June 26, 2005. It was an article basically on the first collecting of video art. I don't know how many of you saw it. It's one of my favorite articles of all time. "Collectors are discovering video art, but buying it is one thing, living with it is quite another." It's titled "Art That Has to Sleep in the Garage." OK? So this is a serious paper showing a Doug Aitken piece in a garage, and as my friend picked up, he said, "and they even got their Porsche in the shot." I don't think it's part of the installation. [*Laughs*.] So, you start to wonder, did we make it or lose it at this point?

HENRIETTE: To be fair, the Kramlichs, the couple in the *Times* article, are collectors who have basically turned their house into a museum for video art and have made a very serious effort to construct the projection spaces that the artists require. I hear what you're saying but I don't know if this is necessarily the best case supporting the marginalization of video art.

DARA: I don't know who chose that it ended up in the garage. This is [*shows a picture in the paper*], as an example, *Tiananmen Square*, in the Kramlich home—that's my installation. The Kramlichs originally wanted me down in the basement, which is their entertainment center. I said, I can't do it. Thankfully, you have some educated collectors, like them and the Stones, and an option was offered elsewhere. So at least we've got that much control. I would be curious to know if Doug Aitken had picked the garage or not. What I'm amazed by is that a so-called intellectual paper, in finally announcing a story, about two decades late, about collecting video art and how we live with it, takes as its prime shot on the Arts and Leisure page a fuckin' picture of video projected on a rear wall of a garage.

ANDREW: That's really fucked up. [*Laughs*.]

DARA: I don't know! Doug Aitken could love it! I don't know!

ANDREW: But whose problem is this? If you sell a work to a collector and they want to put it in the bathroom, this is their choice. If you have a problem with it, then don't sell them the work. Don't play the game. I saw a Jean Dubuffet retrospective at the Pompidou a few years ago, which contained 400-something pieces, and I like to look at the attributions to see where the works come from, collectors or museums. I saw sixty-something pieces that were lent by MoMA. But in all the years I've been going to MoMA, I only concretely remember ever seeing one Dubuffet piece. So, it's not just the collectors we are talking about here. When museums or other entities acquire work, where do they keep it? How is access to it made available?

HENRIETTE: And to go back to the question of placement: how is this different from hanging someone's painting in somebody's bathroom? That stuff just happens when your work is sold to a private collector, painting or video.

JEFF: The problem is they're coming from the point of view of the collector rather than from the point of view of the work. This is where I am curious about Anthology—how you feel, Andrew?—because it is kind of the anchor venue to see things within this realm, still within the context of a simultaneous screening, of seeing the work as part of a collective and synchronized audience mindset. This is very particular to film, and is obviously very different from the installation loops that have become the norm for exhibiting film as art.

ANDREW: I think I can try and answer your question. Anthology's mission—the shortened version of our mission statement—is to promote, present, and preserve experimental, avant-garde, and independent cinema. We actually use all those words to mean one grand thing that's called cinema. When we get funding to preserve of a film—which means, in general, making new negatives and new prints—we screen those at Anthology. There is a library at Anthology that can be accessed by our viewers and scholars, and there are also publications for sale. The library has ten thousand books; eleven thousand files on individuals, institutions, and subjects; and 250 complete sets of periodicals. The context is there to hopefully promote the understanding of the film better. The other thing that happens at Anthology, and in terms of preservation and the makings of new prints, is that a film is not preserved or considered accessible just because it's sitting on a shelf. It's through screenings, both in-house and by placing prints with distributors or lending to festivals and museums, that a film is spread. We're talking about time—

it's not a painting you're just going to hang up; you have to have the time to sit and look at it.

REBECCA: I don't mean to interrupt, but I think what you're addressing or bringing up is the idea that there's time-based media in the art world, and then there's time-based media in other contexts. Hopefully time-based media will become more pervasive and the argument won't have to be about whether or not it's placed in the garage. EAI's collection, for example, is *very* eclectic. There are a lot of people who didn't give a shit about art. They wanted to do something outside of art. Then there were some people who were very interested in making art, who were very interested in doing something new within the art context. It's very eclectic, and I think, Ed, this idea of an artist trying to fit what they do into a commercial setting is troubling in some cases. There is this pressure that doesn't come from the artist but that comes from outside. But then an important aspect of art making now is to think about context and criticism—it's avant-gardism—to embrace the way in which art is received and dispersed. It's exciting, but it has be more expansive then the old-school collector model, which doesn't seem to be working for media work.

ED: Henriette brought up the idea that artists are editioning 16-mm prints. It's true that some artists are doing that; however, bear in mind that there is a wall between people who are cinematic filmmakers, who make work on 16-mm or other kinds of film, and people who are considered gallery artists, who make films and edition them. There are many, to my mind, far superior artists who work in the cinematic form, who screen in things like the Biennial and so forth, and who could not sell their work editioned because it's felt that, well, you have distribution at the co-op or something like that. There are these kind of walls between their practices. So, if someone like Martha Colburn—and I hate to bring her up again just as an example—feels this pressure to have a gallery show, that may be because she is already very established as a theatrical filmmaker and therefore her 16-mm prints are therefore not "editionable" in the same way, unless she produces some kind of new work that's only for editions. There are other types of barriers too, like, for example at the Biennial, between which 16-mm filmmakers receive a room of their own versus which 16-mm filmmakers get their work shown in the gallery space maybe one or two times? There seems to be some kind of invisible system of apartheid or something. [*Laughs.*] Seriously, if you somehow emerged as a gallery artist, you can get the room. If you're a filmmaker, you get a couple of screenings and no one writes about you except me.

DARA: Could you give examples again?

ED: For example, at this year's Biennial, just off the top of my head, this guy Jordan Wolfson has a 16-mm print that is showing in its own little room on a 16-mm projector. Other filmmakers, like, say, Jeanne Liotta are showing maybe one or two times on 16-mm in the Film & Video Gallery. My question is, why in the world couldn't Jeanne Liotta get her own room?

HENRIETTE: Do you think that piece would work in a little room showing continuously?

ED: Why not? The other piece seems to work. I think people who go to galleries and museums now are perfectly used to sitting down and watching a film now. It's no longer the case that people...

DARA: I think the Rodney Graham would be a good example of something on film where the subject matter of the work, the construction of it, et cetera, is maybe based in both conceptual and experimental art. So, as an example, the presence of that chandelier needs its own room.

ED: I'm saying more that, like, Pierre Huyghe can get a looped twenty- or thirty-minute film? With seats and stuff to sit down and watch that, and he gets his own room for it. There are many great filmmakers that deserve the same. I heard that if an artist has gallery representation, their gallery pays for the projection equipment at the Biennial. Is that true?

HENRIETTE: No.

ED: Did someone say yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: That is true.

HENRIETTE: No, it's not true.

ED: I'm just wondering if this is one of the invisible factors.

HENRIETTE: I actually agree with a number of things. First of all, whether or not somebody ends up being in a separate white cube or black box does in fact have a lot to do with whether or not they came out of an art context and became primarily known as a gallery artist. Often it is a matter of context more than content. However, I also think there are certain moving-image works that work in an ongoing way,

that have a consideration of a particular gallery space, that engage with the space. They involve a different mode of reception, perhaps more distracted and frequently interrupted. There are other film works that are simply not structured like that, that have a more traditional structure with a beginning, a middle, and an end. I do agree that the art world is tremendously insensitive to those distinctions and constantly sticks films that would be much better served in a cinema into a white cube. There are certainly people very well-known in the experimental film community who don't manage that transition because people think about them as filmmakers showing in the cinema. There are also films usually shown in a cinema context that translate easily to the gallery space. But that doesn't mean that these things are generally interchangeable.

ED: What I'm saying is that museums—and I hate to pick on the Biennial, but it's something that's happening right now—could be more proactive and put those works in gallery spaces in ways that would get the attention of the art world. It's a catch-22. You're a theatrical filmmaker and you're in that world; therefore you don't belong in this world. Some of those filmmakers would very much like the economic benefit of belonging to that world.

DARA: Another good example, just to take it off of the Whitney, is that the reopening of MoMA was, of course, the reopening of what we could call the film media room, video space, whatever it is. This space—I love these histories—has drifted through the building over time, from the MoMA I knew growing up, where the video-viewing room was down in the basement by the bathrooms. Then the video and media room somehow got to the first floor. With the opening of the new MoMA, people in media, and film and video makers were wondering—I think more the video makers—what would happen with media work, how will it now be shown? And here we are: It's on the contemporary floor, but it's a walkthrough gallery, and the installations and works that were up were very much like moving paintings.

ANDREW: Michael Snow related to me after he had gone to one of the opening parties at the new MoMA that in the media-gallery space the walls can't be moved, and it's the only room in all the floor space there with the electrical capacity to handle showing multimedia. At the Whitney, if Bill Viola were to have a show, for instance, they could arrange their space for it to be on two floors if necessary. You couldn't even begin to do that at MoMA. It's something that, from the conceptual level of what MoMA is as a physical entity, wasn't even considered in the redesign.

HENRIETTE: The new building has sort of re-inscribed the boundaries between traditional painting and sculpture, which have all of the main exhibition floors, and the other media, not just moving-image art, but also photography and prints and drawings. All of these are very separate and have their designated spaces. They do not cross over, which is something that, in our defense, the Whitney has always tried to do. [*Laughs.*]

JEFF: There's a certain irony that we started this conversation with the problematic of an avant-garde becoming institutionalized, but then spent time complaining about whether or not things are being properly presented at the Whitney and at MoMA. If we are looking for the radical, why bother looking in the institution? That was what I was awkwardly getting at in questioning Andrew about Anthology because I do see Anthology as being sort of a beacon, a place that has always represented the no-market-value side of the divide. And it's the gravitational force of the market that can really exacerbate the problems we're discussing.

HENRIETTE: I think it's directly responsible for the fact that a lot of filmmakers who traditionally wouldn't have necessarily wanted to show in a gallery space and whose work probably doesn't have much to do with the gallery are trying to break into that realm. It is very difficult to sustain truly independent filmmaking in a country that has practically zero public funding and very few other avenues for getting your work made.

DARA: I came to New York in '75, and I don't want to make this silly, but I could work three nights a week waitressing and take care of my rent. The rest of the time was when I wanted to find out about art or filmmaking or video making. It was never on my mind to join a gallery or anything. Of course, after a while, I wanted my work to be shown. I do have a belief in that. I wanted to see people's reactions. I remember the Anthology when it was a smaller box. My love was to go there. I remember that they would show films—and probably they still do—like Kubelka's film for Arnulf Rainer. When you would see a film and you had the privilege of being in only a forty-seat theater, basically a black box of about this size, and you see that film for Arnulf Rainer, which is simply patterns of light, black-and-white light, and the whole box is the film—that's what made me want to be in the arts and film. I just think we're under severe pressure during a very conservative political time right now. A lot of things that we really would like to love or experiment with or reflect on are being taken away from us.

ED: I have a corollary to that, which is maybe a little more positive, I don't know. [*Laughs.*] Andy mentioned the next generation of experimental filmmakers. I think another interesting trend with the younger generation of filmmakers or experimental-media makers—and by this I mean the people in their twenties and thirties now—is that people really do lots of different things and don't limit themselves slavishly to one art form. You might call it the hyphenate phenomenon. You can see this with people like Miranda July, for example—she releases work, she releases audio CDs, she does gallery installations, she does performances. She made a feature film. To my mind, all of those things have aesthetic continuity. It's not like she made a feature film just to make some money. Her feature film is a legitimate outgrowth of her other work. This, to me, is a result of this kind of landscape you're talking about. You can't depend on the fact that, "well, I'm going to make short films and they'll show before features at a theater," or "I'm going to make video art and it'll be editioned and forever." It's kind of like putting your cards in lots of different things because that's the way to keep going. I'm not sure how conscious that is as a strategy, but I think it's a realistic strategy in a very volatile and not very economically friendly environment.

That is a way in which the moment now is very much paralleling the explosion of the arts in the '60s and early '70s. In a moment when there are all these different options for making stuff, it's natural that someone would come of age making lots of different types of things.

DARA: But I'm wondering if the strategy, as you said, is slightly different. Not that the results have to be different, but I can say, being the oldest member of this panel I'm sure, going through the '60s and having my friends be one generation before me, I remember someone like Dan Graham saying how, "oh, none of us went to art school, I didn't go to college." People were coming from all different kinds of backgrounds. Maybe it's true of Miranda July, maybe in fact—I don't know her personally—it's her way of experimenting, but if it's driven by a need to stay alive or survive, well then I'm saying the two times are different that way.

ED: I don't think it's so brutal as a need for survival, like someone following with a gun and you've got to keep running.

ANDREW: It's also opportunity.

ED: Yeah, that's what the landscape is like. There's no benefit to being doctrinaire about what you're doing. That said, it also means that this landscape favors a certain type of artist over others. If someone's art is to be doctrinaire about it, like "I only make film, and I only show it in theaters," that artwork may be very valid but it's not going to be rewarded by the economic system as it exists now. That's not a fair thing, but it may be that it's just the context we're living in right now.

JEFF: Since we're here, I'd like to cite Orchard as another example. Orchard is a gallery that also functions as a studio, and specifically a studio for the production of film, generating, among other things, documents of itself. The exhibition then amplifies one of cinema's many symmetries, the symmetry of shooting and projecting. We're sitting in a model of that.

About the panelists:

DARA BIRNBAUM is an artist and independent producer who has achieved international recognition within the arts, spurring some of the most controversial discussions in contemporary media exploration. Her work addresses both the ideological and aesthetic character of mass media imagery. Birnbaum's work has been presented at the Kunsthalle Wien, Austria; Documenta IX, VIII, and VII; the Carnegie International; the Venice Biennale; the Bienal de Valencia; the 74th American Exhibition, Chicago, where she received the Norman Wait Harris Prize; the Chicago International Film Festival; Videonale, Bonn; the San Sebastián Film Festival; the Festival International de la Video at des Arts Electroniques, Locarno; and the Biennial of Seoul, "Media City Seoul 2000," among many others. Her work is part of permanent collections at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Kiasma, Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland; the S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium; the Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy; Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel; Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the National Museum of Art and EMST, Athens, Greece, among many other well-known international institutions. Her newly commissioned installation work *Tapestry for Donna: Eulogy* was exhibited at CONTOUR, 2de biennale voor videokunst, Mechelen 2005, Belgium. Other recent exhibitions include: la Fundación "la Caixa" Barcelona; Lisboa Photo 2005; "States of the Image: Instants and Intervals," Centro Cultural de Belem, Lisbon, Portugal; the 51st International Venice Biennale, within "Marker 5: Poles Apart/ Poles Together;" "Regarding Terror: The RAF—Exhibition," Neu Galerie, Graz, Austria; "Single-Screen Selections of Rare Film and Audio from the Kramlich Collection," at the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia; and "For Presentation and Display: Some Art of the '80s," Princeton University Art Museum, among others. Birnbaum is represented by Marian Goodman Gallery, in New York and Paris. She is currently on the Advisory Council of the New York–based Independent Media Arts Preservation (IMAP), whose function is to ensure the preservation of independent electronic media for cultural and educational use by future generations.

REBECCA CLEMAN graduated in 1997 with a BA in art history from Bard College. She interned with Jordan Crandall at The X-Art Foundation and in the Video/Media Department of MoMA before joining Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) in 2000. She has programmed screenings for Buffalo's Squeaky Wheel, Ocularis in Brooklyn, Rooftop Films in New York, and the New York Underground Film Festival, among others, and co-curated "Multiplex 2," an exhibition of moving-image work from EAI for Smack Mellon, Dumbo, Brooklyn in fall 2005. She has served on the juries of the Canary Island Media Festival in Las Palmas, Spain, and the New York Underground Film Festival.

SABRINA GSCHWANDTNER is an artist who works with film, video, and textiles. She received her BA with honors in art/semiotics from Brown University. She also studied film with Vlada Petric at Harvard University, and video with VALIE EXPORT at the Sommerakademie für Bildende Kunst in Salzburg. Her artwork has been exhibited internationally in museums and galleries including the 2001 Venice Biennale, the Baltimore Museum of Art, Sculpture-Center, Socrates Sculpture Park, Anthology Film Archives, Artists Space, and the Austrian Film Museum, among other venues. She has curated art exhibitions, film and video screenings, and events for Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York; Guild & Greyshkul, New York; the Richard F. Brush art gallery at St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York; Ocularis, Brooklyn; Fritz Haeg's Sundown Salon, Los Angeles; and ThreeWalls, Chicago.

ED HALTER is a critic, author, and media programmer. He has been a regular contributor to the *Village Voice* since 2001, and his writings on film, video, art, gaming, and books have appeared in *Kunstforum*, *Sound Collector*, *CinemaScope*, *Filmmaker*, the *New York Press*, *indieWIRE*, *Net Art News*, and other publications. His first book, *From Sun Tzu to Xbox: War and Videogames: A Cultural History of the Medium*, will be published by Avalon/Thunders Mouth Press this June. His writing also appears in *Captured: A Film & Video History of the Lower East Side, the forthcoming Maverick Filmmakers* (edited by Michael Atkinson), *An Alternative to What? Thread Waxing Space and the '90s* (edited by Lia Gangitano), and *The Lime Book*, a collection of drawings by artist James Fotopoulos. He oversaw the operations and programming of the New York Underground Film Festival from 1995 to 2005, and now serves on the Festival's board of directors. He programmed the 2001 Flaherty Film Seminar, and has lectured and curated shows at the Museum of Modern Art, the Aurora Picture Show, the Yale Centre for British Art, the BAM Next Wave Festival, FACT Centre, Lux Centre, Cinematexas, Harvard, the Impakt Festival, Exit Art, the MassArt Film Society, Ocularis, and other fine venues. He has served on juries for the Creative Capital Foundation, the Peripheral Produce Invitationals, and elsewhere, on the board of trustees of the Flaherty Film Seminar, and on advisory

boards for Anthology Film Archives and the MIX Festival. He is currently a visiting assistant professor of film and electronic arts at Bard College. In a recent essay commissioned for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Black Maria Festival, curator Steve Anker cited Halter as one of the important contemporary critics of experimental cinema.

HENRIETTE HULDISCH is assistant curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. She recently curated "My Hand Outstretched: Films by Robert Beavers" and "Small: The Object in Film, Video, and Slide Installation," an exhibition of small-scale installations that included the work of Sol LeWitt, Jonathan Monk, Michael Snow, and Rirkrit Tiravanija, among others. Among her publications are essays in *Artforum*, Phaidon's forthcoming volume *Art and Film*, and *Collecting the New: New Museums and Contemporary Art*, published by Princeton University Press.

ANDREW LAMPERT works in film, video, and performance. He primarily focuses on live, multiple-projector pieces, portraits, short-term installations, and private performances. His work has been presented at the New York Film Festival, the Lux Centre, the Rotterdam Festival, and the Images Festival, as well as at institutions in the United States, Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom, Holland, France, and Russia. *Growth Opportunities*, a performance piece originally staged in 2000, was revived last year at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. His three-screen installation/performance *Varieties of Slow*, a sound work titled *Piano and String Quartet, Piano and String Quartet*, and *Okkyung Duet*, a film performance with cellist Okkyung Lee, can be seen/heard at this year's Whitney Biennial. As an archivist, Lampert works at Anthology Film Archives where he is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance and preservation of the collection. He is currently preserving films by artists including Paul Sharits, Bruce Conner, Harry Smith, Greg Sharits, Marie Menken, Melvin Van Peebles, Robert Breer, Carolee Schneemann, and Wallace Berman. As a programmer, Lampert curates Anthology's regular "Unessential Cinema," "Audio Verite," and "Personal Archive" shows, as well as a variety of series and one-off screenings. Recent events include "Essential Stuart Sherman" (with Jay Sanders) and "Results You Can't Refuse: Celebrating 30 Years of BB Optics," an eight-program tribute to Bill Brand (with accompanying book). Lampert is also Director of Public Opinion Laboratory, whose space opens this spring.

JEFF PREISS is a filmmaker living in New York. He graduated from the Bard College film program in 1979 having studied with Adolfas Mekas, Bruce Baillie, Warren Sonbert, and P. Adams Sitney. During the '80s he became involved in the production of experimental cinema showing works at venues including The Collective for Living Cinema, San Francisco Cinematheque, and P.S. 1. Work from this time was included in "Big as Life: A History of 8mm" at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Through much of the '80s he was co-director of the pioneering Lower East Side Film series "Films Charas" and a board member of The Collective For Living Cinema. In 1984, he traveled to Berlin to shoot the Rosa von Praunheim–produced vampire film *Der Bis*. In 1987, he was invited by photographer Bruce Weber to be director of photography on a series of short films and two feature documentaries, *Broken Noses* and *Let's Get Lost*, the latter winning the Venice Film Festival Critics Award and an Academy Award nomination for best documentary. After three years of collaborating with Weber, Preiss's film career began to include directing television commercials and music videos (clips for Iggy Pop, Malcolm McLaren, REM, the B-52s, and St. Etienne, among others). In 1995, he became a partner in the production company Epoch Films. During this period he continued to shoot experimental projects and completed a series of video installations in venues including Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris; Museum Boijmans, Rotterdam; "Media City 2000" in Seoul, Korea; Centre Pompidou, Paris and Galleria Continua for Museum in Progress. The eight-screen film installation *33 Chronological Sequences Spanning Four Trips to the Site of the Dutch Embassy in Berlin*, commissioned by Rem Koolhaas, is currently traveling with the OMA/AMO retrospective "Content." Preiss is also a founding member of the experimental gallery Orchard in New York City where he exhibits and which he uses as a base of production.