

A R T D E P A R T M E N T

SPRING 1964

Walkers

Hollywood Afterlives
in Art and Artifact

Written and Directed by
Robert M. Rubin

Produced by Nicole Jedinak



texts and contexts

Robert M. Rubin

If the twentieth century was the century of the moving image, and the twenty-first century is the century of the digital image, what happens to all those celluloid signs in a virtual world?

The golden age of the movies is over. Celluloid is obsolete. Everything is digital.

TV landed the first blow. The picture got small.

The videocassette, and then the DVD, let you watch the same thing, or part of a thing, over and over again. Whenever you want. Software lets you make your own subtitles for *Downfall*, so you can cue Bruno Ganz' Hitler to scream about your own little life at the office, or last night's sporting event. The web. Streaming on demand. The spectator calls the shots.

Multiplexes are rat mazes not movie palaces. Digital 3-D comic book blockbusters are the cheese. It's all about product placement, merchandising, and infinitely replicating franchises. Sequels. Prequels. Spinoffs.

And yet, the icons of Hollywood have

richly circulating afterlives which belie the alleged obsolescence of the medium. It's a goddam zombie apocalypse. Except you can't shoot 'em in the head and be done with them, like you can a walker. They're everywhere.

Walkers is about the oneiric pull of "the movies," however they are sliced, diced, and *detourné* by modern technology. The visual icons and behavioral conventions of celluloid cinema circulate permanently in our unconscious even as the technologies that spawned them yield to the digital. Nowhere is this more evident than in contemporary art, within whose porous borders walk Orson Welles, Fred MacMurray, James Dean, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, Bill Holden and Ernest Borgnine, Bob Hope, Melvin Van Peebles, Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway, John Ford, Fritz Lang, and Louise Brooks. New technologies just make it easier to manipulate the signs already in circulation. They make the centrifuge go faster.

In addition, a lot of this art is being made, literally, out of the paper *ephemera* of movie-making: set photographs, story boards, pub-

1. Charlotte Rampling (cut scene)
Vanishing Point, 1971
2. Maurizio Cattelan
Hollywood, 2001
3. Ed Ruscha
The Back of Hollywood, 1976–77

* A master copy of a screenplay, sometimes called the master stencil, is a pre-digital stage of pre-production, usually prepared by the director's secretary from the final markup, from which all authorized and numbered copies of a screenplay are made.

* A treatment in Hollywood parlance is a synopsis of a movie being pitched, followed by a dialogued screenplay—yes, dialogue is a verb in tinseltown—if the pitch is successful.



licity stills, lobby cards, posters, title cards, pressbooks, promotional gimmicks and props. Cinema Paper, as it is called by those who collect it, is redolent of obsolete technologies. It has its own afterlives, as both artifact and autonomous object—accreting deepening, unintended meanings over time. In some cases, Cinema Paper can stand alone as Art with only the most minimal of artistic intervention—or in some cases, none at all.

Walkers attacks the Hollywood imaginary and its contemporary contexts in a classic pincer movement. We highlight the double obsolescence in progress: the death of celluloid and the death of paper. Mixing art and artifact, *Walkers* demonstrates how image trumps technology and makes it a servant.

Texts and Contexts

To spare you an undue amount of art-critical blah blah spread thinly over so many artists, we have instead made parallel appropriations from literary texts in which Hollywood ghosts circulate freely. In the same spirit in which we avoid tackling the impossibly broad question of how contemporary art may be “cinematic”—opting instead to consider how celluloid detritus can accrue meanings in a digital age—we have also eschewed literature that is merely “cinematic” in style. *Under the Volcano* interests us because Lowry uses the recurring image of a torn movie poster. Don de Lillo sets *Point Omega* at the Museum of Modern Art installation of Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*. John Ford tells the young protagonist of *A Way of Life, Like Any Other* to read Swift, Dr. Johnson, Sterne, and Fielding. Frederick Exley's fictional narrator meets Steve McQueen in a bar.

Complementing the literary cameos are facsimile pages of certain key screenplays which attest to the fits and starts of movie-making: Raymond Chandler's suppressed ending for *Double Indemnity*, in which Fred MacMurray was to have gone to the gas chamber; the pie fight ending for *Dr. Strangelove*, which Kubrick thought better of; and the last page of the draft master copy* of *The Searchers*, on which someone has typed after the last mention of Ethan: “Ride away?” Much contemporary art is concerned, after all with

the path not taken, the remix, the what if? . . . “exformation”, as artist Agnieszka Kurant calls this stuff. What falls between the cracks in real time. Douglas Gordon expands *Psycho* to 24 hours, then stretches out *The Searchers* to 5 years. Christian Marclay's *The Clock* is the 900 pound gorilla not in the room. Marclay's minions mark time through a hypermontage of movie images of “the time” in 24 hours of real time. It's an exhibition/art event in its own right. In less exhaustive and elaborate ways, the diverse moving image works in this show reflect the impact of digital and postmodern perspectives on the industrial craft of the movies. Guy Maddin finishes fragments of lost silent movies. Agnieszka Kurant goes one step further. Her *Cutaways* does not recycle found footage, or even outtakes. Rather it develops new, vaguely familiar scenes using the original actors whose characters never made it into the final cut. Charlotte Rampling (a hitchhiker in *Vanishing Point*), Abe Vigoda (Gene Hackman's friend in *The Conversation*), and Dick Miller (from *Pulp Fiction*) are still in character, but decades older, crossing paths as if in a purgatory of suppressed movie characters. (For those intrigued by the “lost” seven minutes of Rampling's hitchhiker scene in *Vanishing Point*, that footage is now present in the UK version on Blu-ray—go to 89:26 to see her share a joint with Kowalski).

Even our nonfiction selections are not exactly factual. Nick Tosches is a psychobiographer practicing analysis on Dean Martin without a license. Jonathan Lethem treats his awkward love of *The Searchers* and its untidy meanings like an ideology to be defended against the forces of political correctness. Slavoj Žižek explains why *Notorious* is a precursor to internet art, and Chris Marker offers a “free replay,” as if it were a pinball game, of *Vertigo*. (His own *La jetée* certainly fits that bill. The Criterion DVD version includes a scene-by-scene comparison of the two films.) You will not find anything resembling a movie review in this volume.

To the extent life imitates art, it is a mosaic of quotations from the movies. Alfred Hayes' heroine has no moves except those she lifts from the silver screen, or the gossip magazine backstories of starlets being discovered in Schwab's. Nowadays when Ital-

ians get married, the band is highly likely to play the theme from *The Godfather*. This is the power of the celluloid sign.

Heart of Darkness

Everyone has had a crack at *Heart of Darkness*. Joseph Conrad's much analyzed, adapted, and appropriated novella of colonial atrocities in the Belgian Congo has been venerated by the gatekeepers of high modernism and skewered by post-colonial critics. T.S. Eliot samples it in *The Hollow Men*: “Mistah Kurtz—he dead.”

Onscreen, however, he undead: Boris Karloff, John Malkovich, Marlon Brando. Less well known is Orson Welles' attempt to direct *Heart of Darkness* and, of course, star as Kurtz. He managed a Mercury Theatre radio broadcast of it, but RKO shut down the movie after pre-production costs raged out of control. (To placate studio bosses, he cranked out a cheaper quickie instead: *Citizen Kane*.)

Coming at it from all possible angles, Fiona Banner channels and continues Welles' obsession in a series of works about the greatest film never made. She imagines movie posters in collaboration with various Hollywood graphic designers in the business of creating posters for studio releases. She read Welles' original screenplay aloud while cruising down the Thames on a boat of Conradian vintage. And she pays homage to Coppola via monumental drawings of Brando as Kurtz, based on set photographs by Mary Ellen Mark. Her book *THE NAM* is best described as a reverse treatment*. She transposes *Apocalypse Now* and five other Vietnam war flicks back to text, describing as neutrally as possible what she sees happening on the screen.

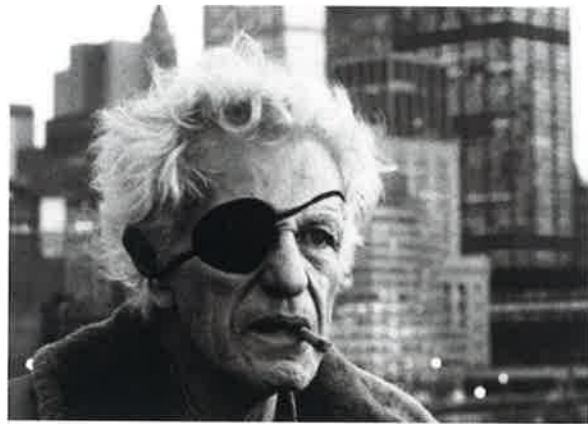
Richard Mosse's images of the Congo could be recolorizations of *Apocalypse Now* (which was shot in the Philippines). Filmed on archaic military infrared 16 millimeter deadstock film, they reflect an accrued visual consciousness of the rape and collapse of Africa. Magically realist in feel, they conjure Conrad, Kurtz, and Colonel Kilgore.

Apocalypse Now art director Dean Tavoularis has been gradually disposing of his archive from the production, including

4. Raoul Walsh
5. Nicholas Ray

* A matte painting is a painted representation of a landscape or set which is filmed and combined with live footage.

* Title cards were generally handpainted backgrounds over which the lettered credits were placed and then filmed.



the “Death from Above” playing cards Robert Duvall tosses on “dead gooks,” and one of the many plastic skulls strewn about the set, each a potential *memento mori* for the office of some Hollywood agent. Of particular interest is the excruciatingly detailed series of costume drawings for the Playboy bunnies who copter in for a little troop relief. French cultural critic Jean Baudrillard goes medieval on Coppola for his “retro megalomania.”

What does it mean when someone of the stature of Mary Ellen Mark is hired as the set photographer on a movie? Are those photos merely publicity and continuity stills of a moving image artwork; documentary evidence of the making of the film and the working practices of its director; or “fine art” (sic) photography that can stand on its own two feet (or at least hang above the couch)? How about when Dennis Hopper takes pictures on the set of *Rio Bravo* and goes on to become a certified art photographer? Does that make his pictures of movie process retroactively “fine art”?

Take the case of Weegee, whom Stanley Kubrick brought in as set photographer on *Dr. Strangelove*. By Kubrick’s own admission, the veteran news shutterbug (now anointed a “street” photographer along with card-carrying “fine artists” like Gary Winogrand) was to have helped impart a certain “look” to the film. Did he coach the lighting cameraman—or just take pictures? Weegee’s photos and Terry Southern’s scripts are the only evidence we have of the legendary pie-throwing contest that was to have been *Strangelove*’s original ending. Weegee’s an artist, for sure. These photos? Posed stills of outtakes? Banner’s outsourced posters are certainly as comfortable in art galleries as they are on the walls of Hollywood executive offices, but what about Saul Bass’s privately printed versions of his movie poster designs? They’re limited editions of what Bass thought was his best stuff, stripped of the marketing department’s subsequent desecrations.

Revenant Riders

The Hollywood Western is an exhausted, if not to say extinct, genre. Mined out in the post-war boom, it peaked—and imploded—

with *Heaven’s Gate*. The genre vaporized into horror Westerns, acid Westerns, and, in the low moment of Harrison Ford’s career, alien Westerns. Forget television. Even HBO’s *Deadwood* couldn’t make it to the end of its story arc. So why is John Ford, who nobody except John Wayne ever really liked, so present?

First, a bonus question: Who are the five one-eyed directors of Hollywood? Answer below

Why is this interesting? Because, as Aurélien Froment wrote me, “they didn’t need a viewfinder to be in a two-dimensional world. They were already in the image.”¹ So Froment titled the work which graces this book’s cover *Pour en finir avec la profondeur du champ* (*Enough already about depth of field*). Turns out, though, that at least some of the old-time directors favored the eyepatch as a handy way to block vision in the eye they weren’t using when scoping out camera angles through the viewfinder. They weren’t really half blind. Ford’s patch was always moving around: left eye, right eye, left eye, no patch. But I’m here to praise Ford, not to bury him. Who cares whether his eyepatch was a viewfinder or a fashion accessory. Bear in mind that Ford was famous for not wearing underwear.

Avedon’s photographs are the antithesis of the Hollywood treatment. Every wrinkle and blemish is visible, every sign of decay foregrounded. Yet the image somehow prints the legend. (I’m referring to the newspaperman’s line from Ford’s *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*: “When the legend becomes fact, print the legend.”) So much so that Godard appropriates Avedon’s image in *Histoire(s) du Cinema*, among images of D.W. Griffith and other foundational figures of celluloid. Somehow the projection of Avedon’s own fears of death and decline onto his subjects underscores the immortality we seek in those on whom we confer fame.

The Wild Bunch’s famous finale is the basis of Hans Schabus’ *Heimat*. The Austrian artist uses the soundtrack of the last 7½

Answer: Raoul Walsh, John Ford, Fritz Lang, André de Toth, and Nicholas Ray.

minutes of Sam Peckinpah’s gamechanging depiction of violence intercut with images of his studio and neighborhood. The storyboards presented here show the precision with which the cuts are made. The tag line from the folded over poster for the film transcends movie genres:

Unchanged men in a changing land
Out of step, out of place, and desperately
out of time

Indeed, it could serve as the cerebral Schabus’ own artistic credo. Along with this Austrian Western, we have the first Polish Western by Piotr Uklański, which of course is a misrepresentation because what about all those Charles Bronson (née Buchinsky) westerns, Spaghetti and otherwise? Finally, Calexico gives us a reverse treatment to music of Peckinpah’s *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*.

That Western “big sky,” by the way? Could be a matte painting*. Alex Israel uses Hollywood set painters to make his cloud paintings, the way Donald Judd used Bernstein Brothers to fabricate his metal sculptures.

Title cards* had a major Hollywood art historical moment when in 1982 Ed Ruscha initiated his series of riffs on “The End.” Larry Johnson, and, more recently, Leanne Shapton, have also appropriated the format. Johnson’s Natalie Wood is part of *Movie Stars on Clouds*, a series of dead movie stars’ names on clouds, as if they were starring in Eternity. I get that. But what was Pacific Title Company thinking when they chose hand-rendered brick backgrounds for the title cards of *The Searchers*? They don’t look like the adobe bricks of my imaginary West. Perhaps they were elongated and flattened to play better against the Victorian verticality of the lettering. They went to the trouble of making different brick backgrounds *FOR EACH TITLE CARD*. John Wayne and John Ford each has his own. Natalie Wood shares one with Ward Bond. It’s a lot of artisanal effort to produce a pretty generic result. The Hollywood Full Employment Act? Nonetheless, “Directed by John Ford,” superimposed on those bricks, is as potent a signifier as any image of the man himself.

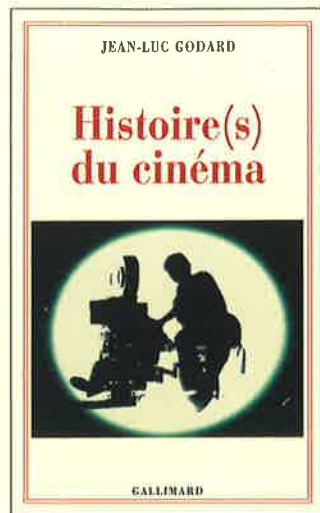
6. Jean-Luc Godard
Histoire(s) du Cinéma
(Paris: Gallimard, 1998) (cover)

7. Lobby card
The Caddy, 1953

* Lobby cards were "coming attractions" based on publicity stills, printed on cardboard and encircled by information and additional graphics. They were slightly larger than 8 x 10-inch publicity stills and were displayed in glass cases in the lobbies of theatres.

* A "Sweded" film is an amateur low budget "home movie" remake of a recent commercial movie. It is normally 2-8 minutes long, special effects limited to camera tricks and arts "n" crafts, and sound effects limited to human made sounds.² The term "swede" comes from *Be Kind Rewind*. When Jack Black and Mos Def accidentally erase all the videocassettes in the rental store where they work, they cover up their misdeed by remaking all the missing films. When customers notice a more than slight difference, they explain that these are special versions "from Sweden."

* A screen grab is a photograph of a projected or broadcast image.



Infinite Jest(s)

The labyrinthine plot of David Foster Wallace's *magnum opus* turns on the ultimate snuff film—a movie which kills anyone who watches it. *Walkers'* cast of comic characters is experiencing a slower fade. Charles Laughton's Hollywood sojourn was tragic at many levels. Although he directed the brilliant *Night of the Hunter*, he could find no more directorial work after it bombed commercially. He was closeted in a sham marriage with Elsa Lanchester. Seeing him sandwiched in between her and drag icon Carmen Miranda, one can only wonder what he was thinking as he went through the necessary public motions. These press-used photos were found on eBay, where digitizing newspapers deaccession their photo files, pouring grist into the post-celluloid mill.

Infinite Jest also schools us in the Boston iterations of cockney rhyming slang. Thus "Bob Hope" is slang for "dope" (as in "narcotics"), which seems fitting enough. Hope the icon makes many appearances in the territory between art and artifact. Type in "Bob Hope" on eBay and you get 8,410 items for sale, of which 2,404 are "Entertainment Memorabilia." (June 15, 2015). Öyvind Fahlström paired him with Mao in his 16mm movie *Mao-Bob Hope—March* (1966). Jeff Koons' bobblehead Oscar-scale statue could be the Academy Award Hope never got. Or it could be something you find on eBay along with other Bob Hope bobbleheads and figurines for sale.

Richard Prince was a caddy in his youth. In "Bird Talk," his self-invented writing genre that prefigures Twitter, he recalls being faced with the choice of reform school or caddy camp. He ended up in a caddy yard straight outta *Lord of the Flies*. When it came time to make a large-format golf joke, he made the background grid out of lobby cards* from Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis' *The Caddy*.

Dr. Strangelove started life as a drama. Kubrick's masterstroke was to switch pre-production gears and make it a comedy. We present here an early version of the script which contains the pie throwing finale. Slim Pickens riding into a nuclear sunset is a better outcome, but the stills Weegee has left us look as much like the ending of *Zabriskie Point* as a Keystone comedy. And if I told you that the Israeli poster for the film was an

artwork riffing on Israel's game of nuclear chicken with Iran, you'd believe me. It's just a poster I found on eBay. As Matthew Spector says, "life is full of wormholes." Happy Groundhog Day.

Thrift Shop (I Found it at the Movies)

It starts with *Flaming Creatures*, the first celluloid rummage sale and ends with *Wall-e*. All that's left on earth is a videocassette of *Hello Dolly*, from which the little robot learns to go through the motions of Hollywood love. Forget black, gay, trans... Jack Smith's "scum of Bagdad," as he lovingly referred to his constituents. *Wall-e* is way past that. He is the ultimate marginal cultural figure—a culture of one, with only a virtual heart. In a *reductio ad absurdum* of thrift shopping, he is left with the garbage of an abandoned earth. Imagine if *Wall-e* had found Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*, or Jack Smith had iMovie. Or what if the movies is literally all you have? In *The Wolfpack*, a creepy parallel to *Wall-e*, with echoes of *Be Kind, Rewind*, a budding documentary filmmaker recently chanced upon five brothers who were kept locked up in an East Village apartment until their teenhood. Their contact with the outside world consisted entirely of VHS and DVD. Within the confines of their four bedroom New York Housing Authority subsidized apartment, they "sweded"* their favorite films using basic materials at hand like yoga mats (their parents are followers of Krishnamurti) and cereal boxes.

According to the *Times* the *Wolfpack* brothers displayed "the kind of tape-and-spit creativity that's a hallmark of movie-crazed youngsters and real independent filmmakers everywhere." Not to mention contemporary artists like Tom Sachs. Sachs' *Barry Lyndon* logo is at several removes from Kubrick (whose film is itself a distant iteration of Fielding, Watteau, and other eighteenth-century sources). It's not even the primary ad campaign artwork. I can find it only on a soundtrack LP, a pinback, and a few miscellaneous posters. But it still "nails" Kubrick.

The lo-fi *avant garde* of *Flaming Creatures* is precursor to Brice Dellsberger's post-modern rummaging through Brian de

Palma's closets (which themselves contain a lot of castoffs from Hitchcock), but Godard is still the fountainhead. As J. Hoberman wrote recently of him, "As the first filmmaker to fully recognize not only that the classic period of movies was over but also that pre-existing movies were a text that he was free to quote, rework, and otherwise, pillage, he may also be considered cinema's first postmodernist. . ."³

Contemporary artists have taken this pillaging one step further, to encompass Cinema Paper as well as cinema itself. Bernard Rancillac collages a line from *noir* to punk by putting the poster for *Made in USA* together with monocular director Fritz Lang's *While the City Sleeps* (in French, *La 5ème victime*). As poster aficionado Paul Rennie has written, the *Made in USA* poster "combines the visual signifiers of girl and gun to express something unstable. . . the stencil shaped letterforms of the title anticipate the rough and ready style of resistance used in the posters of (May) 1968 and, later, the punk graphics of the '70s."⁴ Rancillac enhances this instability by turning the Godard poster on an angle while leaving the familiar signposts of *noir* (Dana Andrews, Ida Lupino) squarely horizontal. Throw in Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine's sci-fi detective in *Alphaville*) hanging on for dear life, along with some gratuitous sex, and you create a trajectory from girl-as-victim to *femme fatale* as protagonist, towering over the men.

Still Lives

Film stills are many things. First there is the distinction between the "photogramme"—what we would call today a screen grab*—and the photograph.

Until digital, a screen grab was inferior to a photograph. To obtain the best possible quality stills, "still men" were employed to shoot, in parallel with a film production, images of the film in progress. In the early history of film, these were often *hors d'oeuvres* of unmade movies, photographed on spec, to help raise financing. This practice declined under the studio system but remains an intriguing literal precedent to Cindy Sherman's seminal conceptual untitled film stills—stills for films that don't exist—and

* A keybook assembles in book length format continuity stills, pictures of the stars, action stills, and informal images of the cast and crew at work.

* Screenworn indicates that a costume is clearly identifiable in the final film.



the “constructed” photographic images of Gregory Crewdson and Jeff Wall.

Still men took photographs of empty sets for the purposes of continuity—so from shot to shot each set would look the same. Publicity stills were taken of the actors and actresses in costume. Additional photographers who specialized in portraits were often called in to shoot the stars out of character. Then the still men, set up right next to the camera operators, shot some action stills, usually after the director finished the various takes of a particular scene. These *tableaux vivant* were in effect a final take of the same scene. Many have the feel of a silent film still, as the actors strive to get emotion and action across in a frozen moment.

The work of the still men came together in a keybook*. The ultra rare keybook for *The 39 Steps* collages small format, 3 x 5, photographs, four to a page, with vertical images laid on their side. Other keybooks are composed of one 8 x 10 image per page. These books are gold mines of “exformation.”

Digital bridged the gap between a photograph and a photogramme and drained much of the exformational from the archival record of a film, but not before contemporary artists got a hold of the raw material. John Stezaker recalls the closing of small independent cinemas beginning in the late seventies and the resulting dumps into British flea markets of their inventories of publicity stills and lobby cards.⁵

In his ongoing body of work using this material, Stezaker plays with photo as image and photo as artifact in his collaging of two different film stills to make one. John Divola assembles series of continuity shots of the same kind of set. *Evidence of Aggression* is a series of twelve continuity stills from eight different movies of sets on which some kind of altercation has just taken place. As Edward Dimendberg wrote in the catalog for *Continuities*: “If we conceive of film as an artificial unity of space and time, these images are temporal outtakes, documents of excluded moments and possibilities. They are scenes from movies never made. . . rich with interstitial information.”

Jean-Jacques Lebel conflates the deaccessioning of stills and the preservation of reels of celluloid in his homage to Cinémathèque Française founder Henri Langlois.

Langlois, who saved hundreds of films from extinction, stored many of them in his bathtub at the expense of his personal hygiene.

Gregory Crewdson inverts his own longstanding practice of constructed photography “phantom movie stills,” as A.O. Scott calls them, and goes natural with his images of the exterior sets of Italian film studio Cinecittà. No artificial lighting, no set prep, just a little dust control and digital deep focus on disused movie sets that are vaguely familiar at some deep level of the collective unconscious: “what is left of the dream after we awaken.”⁶ Whereas for Stezaker the materiality of the artwork is the physical still or its fragment, for Crewdson it is the set itself which is the artifact—a clean and simple take on a convoluted site of memory. The choice of title is interesting. *Sanctuary* from what? History? These are after all ruins, or even ruins of ruins. HBO’s *Rome* was filmed there. A few years later, Rome burned. Really. The sets burned down. Was someone fiddling? As is often the case in the history of studios, the architecture of imagination gives way to the commodification of real estate. Cinecittà is suffering a particularly odious demise as this hallowed turf of the celluloid realm is transformed into a theme park, full of Walkers. In a classic bait-and-switch, the white knight developer turns out to have always intended to let the studios go down in favor of a more lucrative attraction.

No exhibition on art and cinema is complete without Cindy Sherman. In the interest of changing things up we have included her work inside a work by Richard Prince. Prince starts with an actual 8 x 10 that she gave him. It’s *Untitled Film Still #57*. Prince signs it from her to himself, as if it were a stock publicity photo rather than an “artwork” then pairs it with a actual publicity photo of Chase Masterson from *Battlestar Galactica*, which is really autographed to him (does it matter?). Cindy is in character, Chase is out of character. Cindy stars in imagined movies, Chase in actual science fiction television. Cindy and Richard had broken up by the time he made this. Their relative career arcs at the time were very Barbara Streisand and Kris Kristoferson in *A Star is Born*. One last thing: Richard’s “Cindy Sherman” is not from the edition.

It’s an unused variant of the editioned work. In other words. . . an outtake of what?

Waxworks

The term “waxworks” is used by narrator/protagonist William Holden to refer to the collection of silent era has-beens at Norma Desmond’s (Gloria Swanson’s) card table in *Sunset Boulevard*. We remember Buster Keaton in particular (the other “dim figures” are Anna Q. Nilsson and H.B. Warner). Keaton has long been at the top of the compost heap. Samuel Beckett used him in *Film*. The other Steve McQueen made his art world bones with his short film *Deadpan*, a reprise of Keaton’s *One Week* that netted him the Turner prize. Avedon shot Keaton in the studio and on location in Paris for the *ciné-roman* “Paris Pursuit” in *Harpers Bazaar*. Most recently, Jerry Stahl gives us a highly sympathetic portrait of Arbuckle best friend Buster in *I Fatty*.

In wax museums, movie stars are often recreated in their signature roles. This is helpful in situating the star in the firmament, especially when the facial likeness is none too accurate in wax (like other “exformation”, this has been corrected in the digital era by 3-D printing). Norma Shearer is Marie Antoinette—I defy you to name one other movie she’s been in. The extra layer of irony here is that, as Mrs. Irving Thalberg, she was Marie Antoinette to Monroe Stahr’s King Louis in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Last Tycoon*. Wax dummies are also used to display Hollywood costumes, which are actively collected alongside Cinema Paper. The concept of “screenworn”^{*} adds provenance and therefore uniqueness value to an object of clothing. Like the pieces of film leader containing “China girls” in Rachel Kushner’s *The Flame Throwers*, they can be traded “like baseball cards.”

Isaac Julien raises the ante in *Baltimore* when he has Melvin Van Peebles co-star with his own wax dummy from the local museum, “Blacks in Wax.” Adam McEwen’s obituaries are another type of *détournement* of the idea that fame is timeless—and fixed—by writing imaginary obits of stars who are still very much alive. In doing so he examines how we might freeze the frame on someone famous if they fell under a bus today. Peter Boyle’s



obituary (that is, Hugh Mendes' painting) on the other hand gives us a kind of purified image of an actor who really is dead. Only one image—his signature role—from an entire career, and no text.

Sunset Boulevard's waxworks also stand in for the roadkill of television. Avedon's Groucho was shot a decade after his television show "You Bet Your Life" ended its successful run, and many decades after his greatest Hollywood musical comedies. It evokes both periods while betraying fear of the passage of time, from which even the funniest of gags offer only momentary respite. Prince finds the Malevich in Marx in his homage to "You Bet Your Life," and gives us a spooky silkscreen of a fragment of *TV Guide*. What the small screen was to the big screen, *TV Guide* was to a real magazine; a weak but useful miniaturization.

Dial M for Meta

Alfred Hitchcock is the director most widely "sampled" by artists, and for good reason. To the extent contemporary art is meant to trick, disorient, etc. it cannot but learn from Hitchcock, who imbued middlebrow cinema with richly subversive meanings. Manuel Saiz hacks videocassettes of *Robocop* and *Terminator*, but he prefers to hack films with "an author in a classical sense," like *North by Northwest*. He rents a video and making a small tweak to a single scene in it, he returns it to the store shelves. In *North by Northwest* he foregrounds the forest. What will a forester, or special effects person, think of that in the future, he asks in *Video Hacking?* What he doesn't mention in his voiceover is that the forest is not real to begin with. It's a set, with a fake Mount Rushmore in the distance. Perhaps that explains its strange attraction for Cindy Bernard, who uses stills of the set as a point of departure for her *Location Proposal*. Using After Effects software, Jeff Desom's Hitch dissects *Rear Window* and puts it back together as a single, static shot. Stabilizing the shots with camera movement in them, he creates a panoramic view of the entire backyard and keeps the order of events true to the movie's plot. Christophe Draeger overlays Gus Van Sant's faithful remake over the original *Psycho*. Jim Campbell gives

us a fixed lightbox image of the cumulative visual "average" of *Psycho*. In *Vertigo@home*, Grégory Chatonsky reconstructs the geography of the film using Google Street View, allowing him to reshoot the film without leaving his desk. Urs Fischer's overpainted motif on Tippi Hedren evokes *The Birds*, as well as Hitchcock's sexual obsession with the actress.

The Big House

"Old Sparky" is one of many colorful terms for the electric chair. At the other end of the linguistic spectrum, it's just "the chair." The latter terms covers the gas chamber as well. Apart from the odd tabloid photo, such as Warhol borrowed for his *Electric Chair* series, everything we know about capital punishment we have learned from the movies. Even in this age of botched lethal injections, capital punishment is something one takes sitting down.

For those of us who watched Fred MacMurray in "My Three Sons" before we saw *Double Indemnity*, it's tough to imagine him taking the gas, but he did. It was deemed too tough for the public though. The gas chamber execution went the way of the pie fight in *Strangelove*. Instead, Fred takes a bullet from femme fatale Barbara Stanwyck and dies in the arms of his pursuer, Keyes (Edward G. Robinson). Do read Raymond Chandler's original ending, reproduced here from Chandler's own copy of the script he wrote for Billy Wilder from the James M. Cain novel of the same name, and then look at the still of Keyes looking into the gas chamber at Fred. Mark Flood did. He certainly wasn't thinking "My Three Sons" when he made *Fred in Darkness*.

Did Irgun freedom fighters look to Jewish gangsters for inspiration as the tribe recoiled from the Holocaust? This is the tentative thesis of *Tough Jews* (from which we learn that Robert Lowell and Lepke Buchalter were in the slammer together.) Or do we owe Robert De Niro's "Noodles" in *Once Upon a Time in America* to an implied threat to Sergio Leone to lay off the *paisans*, as Mickey Knox suggests? It is nonetheless the Italians who keep the celluloid tropes of capital crime fresh: Martin Scorsese and Robert De Niro with *Casino* and *Goodfellas* and Brian de Palma and Al Pacino with *Scarface*. These

films have become a rich source of material for rappers as well. *Taxi Driver* (Xzibit, "At the Speed of Life"; Juggaknots, "Loosifah"), *Scarface* (Ice-T "Money, Power & Women"; Mobb Depp feat. Nas, "It's Mine"; Raekwon feat. Ghostface Killah, "Criminology"), *Goodfellas* (Compton's Most Wanted, who take it to the next level sampling *Scarface* and *Goodfellas* in the same song, "Def Wish II," while lifting its title from a Charles Bronson film).⁶

Good to be McQueen

It's good to be the king, says Mel Brooks as King Louie in *History of the World Part I*, but it's even better to be McQueen. Think of all those cool cars he owned and drove down Mulholland at racing speeds. Like most quick drivers, he preferred the company of women. Who wouldn't? But with speed comes a whiff of mortality and vehicular manslaughter. Monty Clift was horribly disfigured in a car accident. As for James Dean, one look at his crashed Porsche Spyder tells you there were no survivors. Paul Newman was a quicker driver than McQueen but he aged too gracefully. Whatever their respective lap times, McQueen will always be our greatest ladykiller gearhead: *Le Mans*, *The Great Escape*, *The Getaway*, *Bullitt*. He was supposed to star in Walter Hill's *The Driver* but by then he was too fat to get behind the wheel of the getaway car. The part went to Ryan O'Neal instead. Never mind. For Richard Prince, like the rest of us, he will be forever airborne in his Mustang, a true Spiritual American.

For Prince's sometime wingman, Martin Kippenberger, it's all about James Dean. As Kippy ate and drank himself to death, he must have envied Dean his Big Bang. Mark Flood understands what it's all about: *Swow Death*. Forget about a slow death and go out with a bang.

Goodbye, Dragon Inn

From Vaudeville to Drive-ins, from the silents to streaming, the delivery mechanisms of the moving image, like Cinecittà, morph into sites and artifacts of memory. (*Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is about the last picture show at a decrepit Taipei theatre.) David Foster Wallace may not have been around for the smartphone but his Interlace Grid foreshadows our on-demand

10. Adam Savage
The Overlook Hotel Maze, 2015

11. Jack Nicholson
The Shining, 1980



century, while Gerald Kersh's lament for the good old days of vaudeville sounds pretty much like a cinephile's lament in a digital twenty-first century. *Plus ça change...*

The silent era holds a particular fascination, perhaps because so much of it is lost and can never be retrieved. Its fragments are the basis of Bill Morrison's *Decasia* and Guy Maddin's *Hauntings*. Our memory sites may be overgrown with weeds, or even riddled with bullets, but they remember.

A Plague of Locusts

Nathanael West's *Day of the Locust* is the granddaddy of Hollywood novels (though nothing from Hollywood is ever particularly novel). I like to think that West's own bible, monogrammed "N.W. West" for his given name Nathanael von Wallenstein West, was conveniently marked with a leaf at the Book of Revelations for easy reference during the writing of *Locust*. Or maybe the book dealer who sold it to me added the leaves. West was also inspired by the 1930 opening of *Hell's Angels* at Grauman's Chinese Theatre, which featured "two hundred searchlights, huge advertising balloons, and smoke screens against which the name of the film was projected," and fan mayhem.⁷ Things got out of hand. Today, although everyone is glued to their small screen device, we still have flash mobs. As Daniel Keyes writes in *Flowers For Algernon*, "It wasn't the movies I wanted, it was the audience." Zombies are, after all, a kind of flash mob.

Despite what the title card says, it's never really the end. Ed Ruscha has made nearly a hundred of these images, all different, since 1985. Besides, as per Pierre Bismuth, there's always something "Coming Soon . . ." For my money, the coolest recent artwork in the *Walkers* line of thinking is *The Dark Galleries*, a catalog for an imaginary exhibition of portrait paintings used as props in Hollywood movies—virtual because most of these have long vanished from the warehouses of the Hollywood studios that fabricated them. Reading *The Dark Galleries* we learn, for example, that the portrait of Laura in the eponymously named Otto Preminger film starring Gene Tierney is actually an enlarged still photograph with painterly enhancements

(shades of Warhol!).⁸ I wish I could recreate even a part of Jacobs and Colpaert's exhibition here. Unfortunately, most of the images in the book are tiny screen grabs. But perhaps some enterprising conceptual artist will take it upon himself to create painstaking replicas of these portraits of Laura, Hitchcock's Rebecca, Jennie, and of course Carlotta, from *Vertigo*.

One devotee of *The Shining* did exactly that. Dissatisfied with the crappy replica in the traveling Stanley Kubrick show, Adam Savage decided to rebuild the Overlook Hotel Maze. It's as much a simulacra as a replica. Movie props are generally built to the minimum standard necessary to function in a film scene and survive a few takes. Savage's maze is like the real thing (which, let's not forget, is a movie prop), only better. It's a monument to Kubrick in the form of a literal rendition of an iconic prop.

Movies are such powerful fodder for our imaginations that even props can take over the minds of otherwise apparently sane men and women. Collectors pay ridiculous sums for the Maltese Falcon statuettes and Dorothy's ruby slippers. In the case of the Wolfpack clan, movies—or more precisely, VHS and DVD's, since they never actually went to a movie—have been their lifeline to the real world. For the artists of *Walkers*, the lifeline is to a more sacred place.

¹ Email from Aurélien Froment to author on August 5, 2008.

² <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/sweded-films>

³ J. Hoberman, "Brother from Another Planet," in *The Nation*, March 16, 2015.

⁴ Paul Rennie, "Poster Service: Made In USA," *The Guardian*, August 18, 2008.

⁵ John Stezaker, "The Film-Still and its Double: Reflections on the 'Found'" in *Stillness and Time: Photography and the Moving Image*. Photoworks: Brighton UK, 2006.

⁶ A.O. Scott, introduction to Gregory Crewdson, *Sanctuary*. New York: Gagolian, 2010.

⁷ Otto K. Oleson was the lighting designer responsible for the premiere of *Hell's Angels* as well as the Academy Awards. He also had a hand in lighting the Hollywoodland sign, which—minus its last syllable—has become an icon of Los Angeles. For more on Oleson, see *The Hollywood Sign* by Leo Braudy. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

⁸ Steven Jacobs and Lisa Colpaert, *The Dark Galleries: A Museum Guide to Painted Portraits in Film Noir Gothic Melodramas and Ghost Stories of the 1940s and 1950s*. Ghent, Belgium: ARAMER, 2014.