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An Evidence Horizon

On entering the near-dark room, I could discern a few slab benches arranged in rows in the dim light of the video display. From here, austerity rapidly became plenitude. My attention was drawn to the trial scene that was displayed across several screens, each actor framed within a corresponding video display, each display positioned according to that actor's courtroom role. The visual was dominant until I put on a pair of headphones similar to those worn by the onscreen actors. As I started listening, a former soldier was describing his role in a civilian massacre. I found this performance both disturbing and moving, a feeling magnified by my knowledge that the script was based on actual international court transcripts. My empathy extended even to the court officials. It would be a very difficult case. The defendant was charged with a horrific crime, but he claimed he had acted under extreme duress. Meanwhile, the imagery onscreen wandered from the main drama, ranging in focus from banal object to abstracted form, and from background stage set to dramatic foreground. The video crew and the camera apparatus were made visible at times in such a way as to disturb any illusion of documentary footage or conventional courtroom drama. Once pulled from the narrative flow, I returned to attending the more formal details of the piece, such as the structure of the installation space. The spatial hierarchy of a typical courtroom was effectively recreated in the installation itself.

World Rehearsal Court, as installed at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, featured a seven-channel video installation set up in a pared-down courtroom configuration. Seven video monitors were arranged on the far wall, where the judge would preside and the witnesses would take the stand. Six monitors were suspended from the ceiling at the same height in a row across this wall, while the seventh sat on the floor, sometimes showing a front view of the witness. The installation simulated the spatial structure of the

courtroom, where each participant's role has a specific metonymically loaded place, such as the bench, the bar, and the stand. In this case, each actor not only had a place related to a specific role, but each actor at times had the focus of a dedicated camera. Informed by Judy Radul's background in performance and video art, *World Rehearsal Court* uses technology not only to record a given performance, but also to reveal the peculiarities of the medium of video itself. A custom camera apparatus was devised to hold multiple cameras arranged around a circle facing outward to focus on separate actors or to pan 360 degrees through a scene while providing multiple camera views. I wondered how such specific scopic technology functioned in this case, and how it distorted or enhanced the reading or interpretation of the situation.

In the installation, we can watch all the actors at once from a physical position similar to that of a courtroom audience—a spatial setting that also makes visible the latent presenter/viewer hierarchy in gallery presentation, particularly with video installation, where the presenter controls the work's duration. The installation also conveys an excess of simultaneity that does not exist for audiences viewing the conventionally edited material of television but that does exist for audiences of live theatre or live courtroom trials. In other words, the video installation simulates a sense of the simultaneity of a live event. Visitors can see the reaction of one actor to another actor's testimony while also glimpsing the equipment and the areas off set. Unlike in conventional video media, with *World Rehearsal Court* the viewer must choose where to focus attention at any given moment. Occasionally the camera apparatus pans over and beyond the scene, providing a view that spans across several monitors and revealing the set location to be a school gymnasium. Props ranging from black robes to a music stand come into view, providing a peculiar visual backdrop for the continuing audio of the performance of the trial script. Over time it becomes clear that the set location itself has been disguised with decoys of objects typically found in a high school gym. The props shift between nested theatrical sets—black robes could just as easily be choir uniforms as costumes

number		out	in
D-232	one page document (confidential) photograph of persons unknown		
D-233	one page document photograph of Ramachandran mirror box for relieving phantom limb pain.		
D-234	snare drum, orange (from Japan or Japanese)		
D-235	one page document, a photocopy, home, white plaster construction		
D-236	one page document, a photocopy, home, East Braintree, Manitoba		
D-237	one page document, small photo, window, snow, Winnipeg, Canada		
D-238:	one page document, photograph, said to be skull (de cranis) of John the Baptist, in reliquarium, Residenz, Munich.		
D-239	one page document, photograph, St. John the Baptist, carved head, 1500's ?, Bode Museum, Berlin		
D-240	Marcel Broodthaers: "Fémur d'homme belge" and "Fémur de la femme française" (1964/65)		
P-241A, 27B	a one page document with three photographs A shows a large crowd of people, C shows a young male person, an amputee in the street. B has been excised.		
D-241	one (1) page document showing glass factory, before, then and after		
D-241	four page document, photocopies, one colour, Elmo court house		
D-242	Two images on a page, photocopy, top, Noguchi set for <i>Appalachian Spring</i> , for Martha Graham, 1944. Music by Aaron Copland, bottom, motivational team building office performance, date unknown		
P-360	Production photograph from Jean Luc Godard's <i>Contempt</i> showing Bridgit Bardot looking in a hand held mirror		
P-362 A, B	photocopy wheelbarrow with sewing machine Wheelbarrow with Sewing Machine		
P-363	stills from Kurosawa's <i>Rashomon</i> , 1950		
P-364	one page document, photocopy, photo of damaged building		
P-242	eight page document which I think I may have incorrectly said was seven pages headed "National Institute on Drug Abuse"		
P-243	one page document, a photocopy of a photograph. It shows a house with some young persons in the front of that house as marked by the witness. (Confidential).		
P-233	a CD with a single 12 second clip from a radio transmission, three speakers as identified by the witness.		
P-234	Video tape, outtakes from BBC Broadcast, Oct. 9, 1996		
P-235	20 floppy discs, backups from map layout, black and white, 1993		

for actors playing court officials. It also becomes apparent that the dialogue contains scripted adjustments to the transcripts. A role sometimes switches actors, or a boom slides into view, disrupting the viewer's immersion, once again suspending the suspension of disbelief and calling attention to how the interpretation of a role changes with a change in actor—for example, how feelings about the power of the judge may shift when the role is performed by a black woman instead of a white man. The trial scenes themselves play out as so many frustrated attempts at protocol in the face of a discrediting barrage of revelations. The stark white-on-black titles between scenes telling us the page and case numbers serve to highlight the perversity of a juridical apparatus bogged down with overwhelming volumes of bureaucratic detail and case material. This is the framework for the retelling and judging of moments of extreme crisis.

A visitor to *World Rehearsal Court* experiences a regime of multiple focal points, technological filters, and repeated disruptions to narratives that refuse him or her any confidence in determining what is fiction and what is documentary. But there is some coherence and a sort of truth to what unfolds. Apart from the courtroom narrative or the revelation of the multilayered set as backdrop, a massive formal experiment unfolds, testing the limits of the conventional relationships among camera, actor, set, script, display, presentation, and audience. Where conventional video presents a single perspective camera view, *World Rehearsal Court* offers numerous simultaneous perspectives. Where a fiction would normally be made persuasive, *World Rehearsal Court* provides multiple playful disruptions. The video presents layers of stories within stories with varying degrees of authenticity and play. A dizzying array of potential meanings and their negation is set into effect, often humorously in contrast to the serious tone of the trial; the resulting experience calls to mind what Fredric Jameson famously termed the “waning of affect,”¹ a replacement of deep feeling by the fleeting “intensities” that he identified as a characteristic of the postmodern. In *World Rehearsal Court*, the testimony that first appears as an excessively disturbing retelling of a truly horrific event becomes less affecting as the whole scene dissolves into

tangled layers of fiction. My potential empathy for the protagonists flagged with each revelatory trick. Ultimately, the multi-perspective view is still a far cry from being present as an eyewitness to the live proceedings where one could witness the slip-ups, see the sidelines, experience unedited time, and so on.

The question remains whether Radul's bleak picture of a technologically mediated and imperfect judicial system—a system with the power to assign responsibility for horrific events—leaves room for any idea of justice. Does it leave an opening for possibility when faced with the impossible? Perhaps *World Rehearsal Court*—through its provisional quality, its “rehearsal” feel, and its “behind the scenes” glimpses of its own construction—provides a thorough critique of seamless technological mediation, while suggesting an opening for discovery in the gaps between representation and reality. Radul's source material itself was largely drawn from an ad hoc provisional court established by the United Nations Security Council to fill a gap in time when the new International Criminal Court (ICC) based on the Rome Statute that was passed in 2002 could not extend its jurisdiction to events that had occurred prior to its inception; the script was developed from transcripts of the International Tribunal Courts for the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Using this source material as well as drawing on time spent observing actual trials in The Hague, Radul poignantly—and with humour—highlights the malfunctions of the contemporary court. The resulting work marks the contingency of experience and the difficulties of discerning truth where technological mediation exacerbates the uneven distribution of power within modern institutions such as international law. How is the integrity of digital video or audio protected and how is such media handled as evidence? What does the introduction of new media mean for modern institutions that rely on evidence and that require faith in the possibility of truth discovery?

Having watched a quarter of the four-hour video, I made my way into an adjacent gallery only to find myself on camera. Four servo-controlled video cameras were trained on the space,

capturing views of the installation and generally providing a feel of constant surveillance. The mechanical noise of a rail system that allowed one of the cameras to traverse the entire length of a wall drew my attention to the bank of video monitors that showed live views of the gallery and its visitors. A live camera position playback system connected to twelve monitors brought live images into an installation that was rich with clues for the visitor, suggesting that much more than a courtroom Brechtian reveal was in play. Pieces of the courtroom set, research materials, photographs, and assorted production souvenirs all served as “evidence” that could be viewed multiple times in various contexts and through different technological lenses and representational filters. In an elaborate weaving of representation and reality, an object seen first on a video display could be found sitting on a shelf around the corner. In one example, a crow featured in a photographic print proved to be much more convincing than its source material, later found to be a tattered stuffed creature standing on a shelf on the other side of the dividing wall. As in some of the socio-psychological installations of Dan Graham, visitors would catch glimpses of themselves in the monitors along with others wandering through the deliberate spatial organization of the gallery, providing a peculiar way to observe oneself and other visitors sharing the space. A glass divider was used to divide the gallery hallway into two smaller video viewing rooms, each of which displayed a live feed from the cameras. Each room offered a sort of mirror view of the other—two identical coffee cups sat on the floor, one on each side of the glass, providing a fleeting impression of a mirror image reflection that evaporated as the differences in the rest of the view disrupted the illusion. For example, distinctly different chairs visible from one side of the glass to the other side of the glass negated the impression of mirror reflection. Such vignettes suggest that architecture and the material world itself could prove deceptive as well, but in a different way than video.

With some more exploration of the gallery space, I found that the back wall of the video viewing room was actually a false wall that created a small corridor between the gallery and the

gallery exterior wall—here the wiring and electronics for the video installation were left exposed. At the end of this small hallway, a single utility spotlight was aimed at a framed photograph hung on the wall featuring one of the *World Rehearsal Court* actors. This image's peculiarities signalled another ruse—the actor is found “in repose,” acting the part of an actor relaxing off set. The actor's pants have a strange sheen, suggesting that they are soaking wet or made of vinyl. A playful array of references and illusions provides a series of amusing “aha” moments and ambiguities, but there is also a serious side. Technology, representation, institutional framing, architectural space, and material properties could be seen to conspire to disrupt any possibility of truth discovery as a potential outcome, conjuring a postmodern subject prone to a sort of paralysis in the face of the impossibility of access to valid information. Doubts multiplied and trust in perception faltered—the old adage “seeing is believing” clearly does not apply here. The surveillance aspect of the installation doubles the visitor, so one can see oneself discovering and correcting—or maybe just plain struggling and giving up; I saw several visitors fail to connect with the overwhelming evidence presented in the exhibition. But given enough time and attention, through a series of recognitions, misrecognitions, discoveries, and reformulations, the feeling of being overwhelmed by endless evidence eased into an absorbing engagement in solving puzzles involving the visual, the spatial, and the historical. On a larger scale, I found myself confronted with the problem of my own position, performance, and proximity to the truth, urged to consider the specific nature and temporality of that truth: “What actor am I?” and “What histories do I play out?”

Playing the role of art critic, I acknowledge my debt to traditions involving *ekphrasis*, hermeneutics, and critical theory of various kinds. But the toolkit required seems to be much larger today than ever before, as the references of much contemporary art are amazingly wide and varied. Perhaps this is required for the complexity of our times. This is a whole discussion in itself, but I raise the point because *World Rehearsal Court* plays on the challenges of gathering, presenting,

and weighing evidence. I found that the main video component of *World Rehearsal Court* could well stand on its own, apart from the elaborate installation in the adjacent rooms, as a rich and complex work in its own right. But the extensions of the exhibition into the areas surrounding the main video component of the work serve to take the act of deconstruction to often absurd and humorous extremes, with props from the making of the video presented as evidence and the project's research materials offered for examination, while the system of closed-circuit cameras and displays present ever-changing installation scenes on a dozen monitors. It became apparent that I would be able to adequately describe only a very small portion of the exhibition here. Radul has said that she wanted to make a document with the idea that "it could critique itself,"² and *World Rehearsal Court* comes a long way toward that idea and even enforces it. What would it mean for the project to critique itself?

Perhaps the pinnacle of self-criticality is reached in an exhibition that exposes the difficulties and conventions of various modes of criticality. One limitation of critique is that evidence is inevitably incomplete and open to interpretation. But in court, a judgment must occur nonetheless. According to Jacques Derrida, it is precisely this impossibility of justice in the present that makes the concept possible.³ Urgency requires immediate judgment, but once the judgment has been made, there is no longer justice in it—the past judgment is always based on incomplete information, the judge failed to allow for the unique circumstances of the case, key evidence was missing, the context wasn't fully taken into account, and so on. Derrida suggests there also must be *undecidability* for a unique and free judgment to be possible. However, once made, a judgment is always fraught with violence and injustice because of aporias between the rule of law and the ideal of justice. Derrida notes that to uphold justice, the judge must be more than a calculating machine—the rules must be applied, and therefore reinstated, but laws must also be placed under suspension as the particulars of each case requires. Derrida argues that it is the concept of *épochè*, or the suspension of the law, that makes both deconstruction and justice

possible. The law is applied but also set aside as the case comes under consideration. As Derrida describes it, the law must be made new, adapted, adjusted, and reinstated each time. The artistic process—as a series of judgments, decisions, or turning points, of which the artist is more or less aware—can also involve moments of *épochè*. But to identify moments where the rules are suspended it is necessary to first identify the laws in effect.

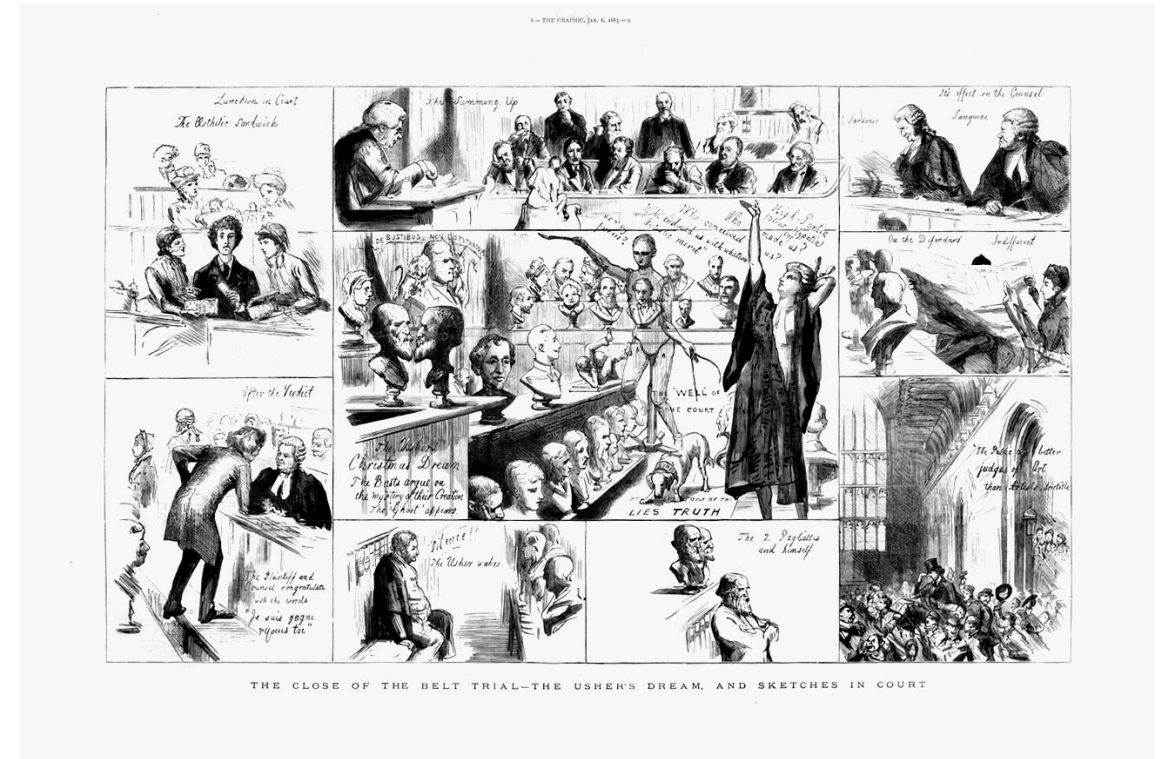
While the court and the judgment of evidence are the main thematic threads through the exhibition, there are several layers at work, from a self-critical examination of theatricality and the medium of video to a broader institutional critique that extends beyond the art gallery to the modern institution of law. The results raise pointed questions about representation in all its meanings, from the symbolic to the political and from the aesthetic to the juridical. While the main video work in the exhibition ostensibly highlights challenges to courtroom traditions posed by the introduction of new technologies and architectural devices, the exhibition also makes a familiar allusion to the role of judgment in the field of art by juxtaposing legal and art systems. In another proximation of legal system/art system, Radul's recent collaboration with Geoffrey Farmer, *Room 302* (2005), features a video set within an old courtroom at the Vancouver Art Gallery—the gallery itself is housed in a former law court building. Courtroom props used in the video could also be found in the gallery installation. The *Room 302* video resembles the *World Rehearsal Court* video in some ways, specifically in that the script includes quotes from real trial transcripts, along with found texts and texts written by the artists. But the parallel fields—art and law—are most clearly brought into confrontation with each other in the *World Rehearsal Court* installation where Radul has displayed a reproduction from the January 6, 1883 issue of the *Graphic*, an illustrated weekly newspaper. The broadsheet features a satirical illustration about the *Belt v. Lawes* case where a sculptor was charged with being an impostor who relied upon his assistants to make all his artwork. The two-year trial included a test where the purported artist was to sculpt a portrait bust live before the court officials as evidence of his abilities. In a key scene in the

illustration, the portrait busts in the evidence room come to life in a nightmare—the title of the illustration is "The Usher's Dream." What evidence would be brought forward today if an artist were to be charged with being a fraud? A humorous response is provided in a couple of representations of Khan Lee, one of Radul's assistants for *World Rehearsal Court* and an artist in his own right, who is featured in the installation-cum-evidence-room. This is one of the ways the exhibition wryly raises questions about the shifting norms in the evaluation and the credibility of art alongside the reenactments of courtroom scenes from high-profile international trials. At the same time, the taint of European colonialism that disturbs modern institutions such as art and law is brought to the fore with another story from the same newspaper. "British Residences in Zululand" is the lead story on the reverse side of the broadsheet where "The Usher's Dream" is featured—Radul placed the reproduction of the *Graphic* vertically in a transparent case so that both sides were on display.

Something interesting results when art gallery and courtroom are forced into confrontation. A comparison is invited between two modern institutions, and we see that each territory has its own peculiar system of judgment, along with the shared contradiction of having been underwritten and undermined by imperial violence. Whereas modern art underwent the destructive force of avant-garde transgression in which each judgment negated the past, modern law developed through the preservation of the law and through a process of reinstatement and adjustment with each judgment. Both disciplines involve tradition, ceremony, props, and sets. Both areas continue to be affected by jurisdiction in the sense that boundaries may be contested and may be articulated as national or as disciplinary. The art world is hardly singular and bound; it has gone towards being global and seemingly lawless in its expanded field. But there remain other not-entirely-separate jurisdictions, such as public institutions, semi-independent activities, and academia. Law has also taken a global turn, as attempts have been made since the end of the Cold War to revive the concept of universal jurisdiction. In an attempt to provide universal justice—an ideal always fraught

with ideological violence—the rule of law extends its reach to include an expanded citizenry, promising justice to more subjects, regardless of nationality, race, or gender. But the ideal of international justice has been marred by politics and by the difficulties of attaining the necessary distance; the challenge of attaining the proper separation of powers is accompanied by the related problem of avoiding double standards when attempting to provide for international justice in a world where powerful nations, in protecting their own interests, refuse to answer to an international judiciary system.⁴ Both disciplines are controlled by laws, explicit ones for the legal system and largely unspoken ones for the art world. Both systems face immense difficulties in handling evidence. On the one hand, justice is perverted by imperfect conditions; on the other hand, the law has all but disappeared, mostly replaced by the workings of an art system often argued to be mostly industrialized and largely expanded in concert with the workings of market forces. This context makes up a substantial part of the backdrop for *World Rehearsal Court*.

The state of the contemporary subject who would be the audience for *World Rehearsal Court* brings us to another contextual condition: the disappearance of the unified subject as credible idea—although this subject still exists as a sort of phantom. To perform the role of art critic I must also perform some sort of unified subjectivity, and we acknowledge Radul's authority as the artist who created *World Rehearsal Court*. Radul raises the question of the phantom unified subject with an interesting inclusion in the installation. In a central position in a cluttered part of the installation, presented on a tabletop, there it sat: a box with an open top plane, circular openings on one face, and a mirror dividing the inner space in half. The Ramachandran mirror box is a device invented by neurologist Vilayanur Subramanian Ramachandran in the early 1990s to treat phantom limb syndrome. In some cases, an amputee experiences a sensation of paralysis in the missing limb and feels persistent pain associated with the perception that the limb cannot be moved. The open top plane allows the patient a view inside the box while the two circular openings in the front



side allows the patient's arms to enter the box. The mirrored divider reflects the activity of one arm, creating the illusion that there are two complete arms in motion. The mirror box provides the illusion that the phantom arm is physically present and that this arm moves in accordance with the patient's will to move it. The illusion can be convincing enough to ease the phantom limb pain caused by "learned paralysis" through a resolution of the patient's conflict between attempts to move the limb and the lack of visual feedback confirming motion, thus easing the contradiction between desire and action. In this way Dr. Ramachandran helped his patients to unlearn what he called "learned paralysis"—a paralysis that existed in the mind only, just like the phantom limb itself.⁵ If a phantom limb could be *paralyzed*, it could just as easily be *mobilized*, simply by rigging a convincing way of seeing things differently. Once mobilized in the mind's eye, the symptoms of the phantom limb would usually subside. While the patient in some ways *believes* what is seen in the mirror box, it is also understood that what is experienced as *real* is not true in the real world outside the mirror box. But the temporary truth of the illusion has proved effective in easing the symptoms of "learned paralysis." Situated in the art gallery, a Ramachandran mirror box could suggest a model of the gallery itself. Is the gallery recast in *World Rehearsal Court* as a therapeutic device to treat the phantom unified subject of modernity?

If the current overwhelming flow of postmodern "hyperspace"⁶ famously theorized by Jameson could be described as inducing a sort of "learned paralysis" or helpless euphoria, we must consider early responses to the conditions of postmodernity. The main features of postmodern art have been described as having been derived in negation of Michael Fried's proscriptions in *Art and Objecthood*, published in 1967.⁷ In comparing the then-new Minimal art with the type of unified modern art object Fried preferred, he listed what he considered to be the new art's deficiencies, summing up the effect with his odd use of the term "theatricality." For Fried, theatricality indicated a certain relationship of viewer to viewed, subject to object. In a work that he classified as theatrical, the subject is no longer distinct from the art

object. Fried described theatrical art as somehow assaulting the viewer's integrity and wholeness. He was specifically critiquing the environments created by Minimal art for having no specific viewing angle, and for creating a spatially changing relationship to the viewer over time. Fried went so far as to describe the Minimal art object as becoming like another body in proximity to the viewer, an aggressive object that looks back at the audience and demands a response. He expressed great anxiety about this development in art. How does theatricality—in Fried's pejorative sense of a quality that forces audience implication while refusing autonomy—function under highly mediated contemporary conditions? Radul has discussed Fried's sense of the term theatricality as being pivotal in the shifting relationship between modern art and the postmodern, and she has explained her interest in dealing with this notion of theatricality in a deeper way than have earlier postmodern works.⁸ An interesting aspect of *World Rehearsal Court* is that it takes a certain idea of theatricality as defined by Fried to an extreme end.

Radul's intent has been expressed in part as a project to put theatricality through a self-critical investigation. As the dominant term that emerged out of the critical struggles of the late 1960s, theatricality is understood to be central to most art since. In Fried's formulation, the sort of situation he saw in Minimal art would be opposed to the "instantaneousness" of the experience of the type of modern art that he championed—a unified art object apart from its surroundings and distinct from the autonomous viewer. In critiques of modernism, the autonomous viewer of Fried's ideal was charged to be biased and exclusive—an ideological subject restricted to conditions of being white, male, and of the dominant class. But with *World Rehearsal Court*, the subject is not exactly the one that followed that moment, later described by Rosalind Krauss as a subject beset by the imposing industrialized spatial organization of Minimal art—one where the surrounding building becomes the object⁹—nor is the subject the unified autonomous receiver of the "instantaneousness" described by Fried. How would we describe the subject of *World Rehearsal Court*? In this case, is there something that allows the

subject some distance and a sense of coherency in a potentially overwhelming context? Persistence here is rewarded with possible models that emerge in a shifting set of coordinates: the subject in this scenario can map paths through a constellation of points. One vector through the installation recalls recent struggles for relevance in the art world, for example.

In considering the harrowing content of the testimony included in *World Rehearsal Court*, inevitably the nagging question arises of what decision could have the same degree of urgency in contemporary art. Consider the imaginary case of *A Crime Against Art vs. A Crime Against Humanity*. Who cares when it comes to art? Instead of a flippant statement, I mean this to be a legitimate question about who has what at stake now and what shape a crime against art might take. Some wonder if it is an act of bad faith to make art under neoliberal conditions, and this concern has prompted an artist and a curator to recently collaborate to produce a mock trial. *A Crime Against Art* (2007) is the title of a film by Hila Peleg, which documents scenes from a mock trial in which artist Anton Vidokle and curator Tirdad Zolghadr had themselves tried by selected peers "on the fringe of a leading international art fair." They described it as "an opportunity to investigate and clarify whether their activities are providing spaces in the contemporary art field for critical potential and the possibility of art."¹⁰ As to be expected, the drama quickly becomes farce for three reasons: it is recognized that all participants are members of the bourgeois class with which the defendants are accused of colluding; the defendants assembled the court and brought themselves to trial; and, finally, the exact nature of the crime never becomes clear. It is noted that the absence of laws makes it impossible to detect a crime in the first place. After hours of testimony and deliberation, the best line of defence proves to be irrelevance. Taking the role of the defence counsel, curator Charles Esche sums up the fatal flaw in the case against the defendants: "Their agency is so limited that they can cause no harm," and "The only evidence put forward today is that these two are irrelevant, therefore they are not guilty; they can do neither harm nor good." Perhaps the

most informative piece of testimony comes with Vidokle's explanation of how the trial came about: "Nobody was answering my e-mails." He said the lack of response to his request for participation in his United Nations Plaza school-as-exhibition project made him reconsider the format of the panel and led to the mock trial. Why would there have been more response to the mock trial format? The mock trial and the theatrical judgment have come up as forms before, at earlier points in history where the question of what to do in art to be relevant weighed heavily. The trial documented in *A Crime Against Art* was said to be "inspired by the mock trials organized by André Breton in the 1920s and 30s."¹¹

Why is there a resurgence of interest in judgment and trials? From the publication of *Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism*¹² in the journal *October* to the publication of *Judgment and Contemporary Art Criticism* by Fillip Editions and Artspeak, as well as the mock trial organized by Vidokle and Zolghadr, numerous artists, critics, and curators are engaged with the topic, an interest that seems fuelled by a great anxiety about what to do with art, and ultimately about the threat of irrelevance, perhaps one not entirely realized as the threat of dissipation of the field of art altogether with a total dissolution into mainstream culture. The question of judgment is an issue as much for the artist as for the art critic or the curator. Under conditions that allow for an enormous range of responses and justifications, we are all always guilty of some vague crime that is itself impotent and lacking any force as transgression. To counter a "learned paralysis"—one rooted in cynicism or despair in the face of overwhelming conditions—perhaps the best course of action is to set the stage and rehearse some possibilities. Jameson suggests that models are required for mapping the situation: "An aesthetic of cognitive mapping—a pedagogical political culture which seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system—will necessarily have to respect this now enormously complex representational dialectic and invent radically new forms in order to do it justice."¹³ *World Rehearsal Court* presents forms that deal with the complexities of representation

while laying out a set of coordinates that allows for possible vectors to be charted for considering the past and for making meaning in the present with an opening for what is yet to come.

But one more return to the *World Rehearsal Court* evidence room is required to resolve some issues left hanging surrounding the question of evidence and how art is evaluated today. With its numbered objects and a few sculpted portrait heads serving to make the relationship with “The Usher’s Dream” satire in the *Graphic Weekly* clear, the evidence room in *World Rehearsal Court* becomes a satirical commentary on how art is conventionally evaluated these days, which leads me to consider how art might be produced with that same evaluation in mind—the artist goes through a process of generating the necessary evidence to gain value in the eyes of curators, peers, critics, and collectors. But that raises the question of evidence of what? What exactly are the hidden normative criteria in art? The artist as author is still central, but the artist is no longer required to directly form the art. Certainly we can talk about the artist as brand in many cases today, but what makes that brand? If during the 1960s there arose the need to shrug off the gallery, seen by then as the overdetermining container for art—with many artists choosing art merged with everyday life as the alternative site for a new art charged with hope for potential social transformation—then a new mode of identifying art had to develop as a marker in absence of the gallery. Maybe this marker came to be the accumulation of a new kind of evidence used to identify, authenticate, and evaluate the art in question. In turn, this new marker would have been brought back into the gallery system, professionalized, and integrated into an existing bureaucratic model of public relations and marketing that includes grant applications, promotional materials, and exhibition catalogues. Under these circumstances, the evidence threatened to take over, and when in short supply it was increasingly sought from outside fields and arrived in various theoretical guises and marketable forms.

If my task as art critic involves providing a rigorous and thorough inventory of the work, then I’m already in trouble, as I’ve discussed only

a small portion of the exhibition and the issues it might raise. The experience of the impossibility of sufficient depth and rigour in dealing with such an extensive array is important. A “horizon of expectation” is at work when it comes to collecting and presenting evidence. How would my impression have been different if I had approached *World Rehearsal Court* with another set of expectations, or no expectations, if that were possible? How do I justify my art criticism? Returning to some earlier evidence—and to a tradition of criticism that has expanded to allow for forays into philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics, and what have you (for better and for worse)—I’d like to come back briefly to Derrida on justice. Derrida’s third aporia regarding the impossibility of justice is “the urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge.”¹⁴ Derrida continues, “One of the reasons I’m keeping such a distance from all these horizons—from the Kantian regulative idea or from the messianic advent, for example, or at least from their conventional interpretation—is that they are, precisely, *horizons*. As its Greek name suggests, a horizon is both the opening and the limit that defines an infinite progress or a period of waiting.”¹⁵ Derrida goes on to argue that justice cannot wait. Because of its urgency it “has no horizon of expectation (regulative or messianic).” He continues, “But for this very reason, it *may* have an *avenir*, a ‘to-come,’ which I rigorously distinguish from the future that can always reproduce the present.”¹⁶ The temptation today, for many artists and art writers alike, is to draw out the critique endlessly, an *evidence horizon* where at best we earnestly strive for a critical break that risks merely reproducing the present, and at worst we cynically contribute to an affirmative celebration of celebrity and brand. There has been a long shift in the evidence required when it comes to writing about art. Where once the consideration of the formal properties was the dominant concern, now the weight of the task falls heavily to the accumulation and consideration of external references and context. I have tried to do both and of course I have fallen short of the impossible, and maybe the persistence of this feeling of inevitable failure is another characteristic of postmodernity. When the approach to evidence in the case of art

becomes conventionally broad and varied, the evidence takes on a life of its own—the evidence becomes the object and that evidential object is never complete, the case is never closed and the court ceases to function. In the endless search for evidence, we risk missing a moment of possibility upon entering a dimly lit room.

At first I experienced a phenomenological adjustment to the low-light conditions of the darkened video room in *World Rehearsal Court*, but soon after arriving and adjusting to the setting, I found my attention focused on the moving retelling of a horrific event and the nature of the teller’s coerced role in it. But soon all the layers of presentation (and representation) came crashing down, discredited one by one, leaving the testimony hollow. The adjacent rooms presented layer upon layer of possibility and reversal. Is this meant to be the epitome of “hyperspace,” the “hysterical sublime,” and the “waning of affect” that Jameson had identified as characteristics of the postmodern some twenty-five years ago? Certainly the live video image of visitors in the exhibition distances the subject from self, intensifying the sense of distraction and fragmentation of subjectivity. Or could the installation be meant to perform a therapeutic function akin to a mirror box to treat the phantom subject? In any case, Radul has her tongue firmly in cheek throughout in a masterful relay of the active terms in contemporary art production, but I suspect with a serious provocation and proposal attached. The regime of representation at play in *World Rehearsal Court* coalesces into a chaotic collection of objects and pictures, histories and stories, revelations and experiences. A warning against blind faith in technology is at the fore. At a deeper level, the temporal is returned to the spatial, and that spatial theatricality is rendered mnemonic in place of the blank set that was provided by Minimal art. But this magnificent plenitude cumulates without affect. That is, without the sort of affect we started with—but perhaps another cooler, rational sort of affect could take its place, one where the subject is prepared to take on an impossible evidence horizon.

About the Author

Lisa Marshall is a cultural practitioner living in Vancouver. For this issue, she took on the role of art critic.

Cf. *Judy Radul: World Rehearsal Court*, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver, October 9–December 6, 2009

Notes begin on page 112.

cultural forms in the region as a whole. The discussion here is paraphrased from a conversation with Zeina Arida and the author, Beirut, July 19, 2010.

32. In private correspondence, Eid-Sabbagh elaborates on this point: *The project continues and evolves. Photographs are being produced, even though through different approaches. One of the young ladies who collaborated with me over the past nine years is carrying on photographic work with younger boys and girls. She does pinhole cameras with them, and they develop and print in the darkroom. She also works with digital cameras. The workspace also accommodates workshops by others who work with any visual media. The archive is [also] maintained.* Communication with author, August 12, 2010. Reprinted here with kind permission of the artist.

33. Agamben, *Means Without End*, 44.

Pages 74–79

Claire Tancons and Jesse McKee
On Carnival and Contractual Curating

1. Irit Rogoff, "Geo Cultures: Circuits of Arts and Globalizations," *Open* 16 (2009), 109.
2. Charles Esche, "What's the Point of Art Centres Anyway? Possibility, Art and Democratic Deviance," *republicart* (April 2004), http://www.republicart.net/disc/institution/esche01_en.htm.
3. Claire Tancons, "Spring," *The 7th Gwangju Biennale Annual Report: A Year in Exhibitions*, ed. Okwui Enwezor (Gwangju: Gwangju Biennale Foundation, 2008), 334–63.
4. Mas', short for Masquerade, is used to refer to Carnival in Trinidad and part of the English- and French-speaking Caribbean.
5. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Presses du réel, 2002); first published as *Esthétique relationnelle* (Paris: Presses du réel, 1998).

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Lisa Marshall
An Evidence Horizon

1. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 10.
2. Judy Radul, artist's talk at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, October 17, 2009.
3. Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, eds. David Gray Carlson, Drucilla Cornell, and Michel Rosenfeld (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3–67.
4. The United States, China, Russia, and India remain among the non-ICC-member nations.
5. V. S. Ramachandran and W. S. Hirstein, "The perception of phantom limbs: The D. O. Hebb lecture," *Brain* 121, no. 9 (1998), 1603–30.
6. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 44.
7. While Fried's critique of Minimal art certainly provided a list that came to articulate artistic positions in postmodernism, it is important to note that other forces had already been eroding the exalted and separate status of art objects, as these objects came under increasing pressure in serving as props for decor, fashion, and politics.
8. Judy Radul, "What was behind me now faces me: Performance, staging, and technology in the court of law," *Glänta* (January 2007), 86–98. This article can be accessed online via *Eurozine* at <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-05-02-radul-en.html>.
9. Rosalind Krauss, "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," *October* 54 (Fall 1990), 3–17.
10. Hila Peleg, *A Crime Against Art* (Berlin: unitednationsplaza studios, 2007). The film is based on The Trial in Madrid, February 2007, organized by Anton Vidokle and Tirdad Zolghadr. The film of the trial can be viewed at <http://unitednationsplaza.org/video/58/>
11. Ibid.
12. "Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism," *October* 100 (Spring 2002), 201–28.
13. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 54.
14. Derrida, "Force of Law," 16, 22–28.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 27.
17. Derrida made a distinction between the concept of *avenir* as distinct from the notion of the future; for him, *avenir*

was best translated as "yet-to-come" and was different from the idea of the future, which he felt was too closely linked to the present and too likely to be a reinstitution of what already is.

Pages 92–99

Haema Sivanesan
Producing Images in Times of War

1. War rugs are a category of rug that first began to be produced in Afghanistan during the period of the Soviet invasion (1979–80); they incorporate scenes of war or design motifs that depict the machinery of war. They continue to be produced today and often depict scenes of the destruction of the World Trade Center or the current war in Afghanistan. See <http://warrug.com>.
2. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 1977), 104–05.
3. See also Ishaq Mohammadi, "A Profile on Bamyana Civilization," 1999, <http://www.hazara.net/hazara/history/buddha.html>.
4. The motivations for the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas are discussed in further detail below.
5. "Afghan Taliban leader orders destruction of ancient statues," press release, Agence France Press, February 26, 2001, quotes a decree issued by the Taliban militia supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar: *Based on the verdict of the clergymen and the decision of the supreme court of the Islamic Emirate (Taliban) all the statues around Afghanistan must be destroyed.* Available at <http://rawa.org/statues.htm>, accessed August 30, 2010. Pierre Centlivres quotes from the decree: *These statues were and are a sanctuary for unbelievers. These unbelievers continue to worship and to venerate these statues and pictures.* See Pierre Centlivres, "The Controversy over the Buddhas of Bamiyan," in *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 2 (2008), <http://samaj.revues.org/index992.html>.
6. F. B. Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *Art Bulletin* 84 (2002), https://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/faculty/flood_PDFs/Bamiyan.pdf, accessed December 6, 2009. Flood argues that the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas was politically rather than religiously motivated.
7. In *Lives of the Indian Images*, Richard

Davis notes that *Muslim chronicles of the medieval period repeatedly portray the destruction of politically significant images and temples, coupled with the establishment of mosques, as a conversion, a transformation of the land of the heathens into the land of Islam.* He notes that this practice was established by Mahmud of Ghaznavi in what is now modern Afghanistan in the early eleventh century, setting the stage for later Turkic and Central Asian rulers. Davis explains that it was important for Muslim conquerors not only to denounce religious images for theological reasons, but also to act against them as a statement of conquest. Although the Bamiyan Buddhas were not attacked during the period of the Mahmud of Ghaznavi, they were attacked later by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the eighteenth century. See Richard Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 88.

8. The Hadith is a collection of reports concerning the direct actions or statements of the Prophet Muhammed. These reports were gathered together in the eighth or ninth century and are referred to in matters of Islamic law.

9. Retort (Iain Boal, T. J. Clark, Joseph Matthews, Michael Watts), *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (New York: Verso, 2005), 186.

10. See Steven Livingston "Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention," the Joan Shorestein Center (June 1997), <http://genocidewatch.org/images/1997ClarifyingtheCNNEffect-Livingston.pdf>.

11. Retort, *Afflicted Powers*, 187. Retort argues that the image-world has become the terrain of the spectacular dimension of international politics, brought into sharp focus by the events of 9/11.

Clarification

In *Fillip* 12, Keith Wallace's article "Artist-Run Centres in Vancouver: A Reflection on Three Texts," notes, in a parenthetical addendum to a section discussing St. George Marsh, that "the space [later] became Cornershop Projects" (p. 97). In fact, after it was St. George Marsh, the space located at 4393 St. George Street became Storage Gallery and then Cornershop Projects.