

**TITLE: A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION OF THE TRANSFORMATIVE
PROPERTIES OF EXPERIENCE**

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Dedication Page

To my best friend Dante.

Thesis Abstract

This thesis document serves as a support paper for my exhibition titled, *Selected Work*.

The goal of this document is to present and discuss a set of ideas and interests as they pertain to my studio practice and thesis project in particular, and to contemporary (ie. current) art practices in general. In this document I examine selected works from Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol, Andy Kaufman, Maurizio Cattelan and Richard Prince.

Through the exploration of these artists and their works, I begin by examining the object and the conditions that give it approval as an art object. Using these conditions, I examine the effect that experience has on the object. This support paper will serve as a glossary of terms and theoretical concerns relevant to my thesis exhibition.

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INTRODUCTION

My intention with this paper is not to argue a theoretical standpoint or to defend a position, but rather to present and discuss a set of interrelated ideas and interests as they pertain to my studio practice and thesis project in particular, and to contemporary (ie. current) art practices in general. Therefore, while not exhaustive or encyclopedic, this paper will function as a glossary of terms and theoretical concerns relevant to my thesis exhibition titled *Selected Work*.

The object has long been the basis of the art world. This object can exist as a painting, a sculpture, or can consist of a group of objects such as in installation art. I am interested in the object existing as art and the conditions in which it is accepted as such. Further, I am interested in the various uses of the object and how they are perceived as art. Starting with an examination of Marcel Duchamp's early sculptural work, specifically *Fountain* from 1917, this document will explore the role of the object in contemporary art as framed by the notion of experience.

For the purpose of this paper, my definition of the object will not be strictly limited to the existence of a physical state. Rather, while encompassing notions of the object existing in a physical state such as a couch, a pair of giant flaming wooden X's, or a porcelain urinal, it will also speak to the idea of the object existing as an experience or situation, such as a joke, or the act of watching someone perform. I aim to examine the validity and importance of the art object in relation to the way it is experienced.

How does experience alter the perception and acceptance of the object as art? When a work of art is viewed in a gallery setting, complete with pristine white walls and ideal lighting, it is viewed in a completely different context than if the same work were to

be seen in a California desert or an urban street corner. What are the different methods that artists use experience to enhance the object? How can the artist transform the ordinary object or situation into something more?

OBJECT AS READYMADE

One of the first modern artists to investigate the idea of the object as art was Marcel Duchamp. By placing everyday, recognizable objects within a gallery setting, he initiated new thinking about the object and its consideration and acceptance as an artwork. These objects (which Duchamp labelled readymades) have received their share of hostility within the contemporary art world.

In his writing *Postproduction*, Nicholas Bourriaud provides some insight into this resentment towards the readymade. Bourriaud discusses the readymade in the context of its relationship with the world and culture we live in. He speaks of a “world governed by the Christian ideology of effort (“working by the sweat of your brow”) or that of the worker hero (Stakhanovism).”¹ Bourriaud’s statement talks of a culture where the idea of working hard is looked highly upon. Is the idea of the readymade too easy? Can an object, seemingly untouched by the hand of the artist, simply be placed into the context of an art gallery as art? Perhaps this can help explain why some gallery patrons have a hostile view towards the readymade or found object. Is this type of artwork viewed as demonstrating little or no artistic effort?

On first glance, a porcelain urinal on a plinth in an art gallery next an oil painting appears to be taken out of context. However, once it is understood that you are not looking at a mere porcelain urinal but instead a work of art, a series of questions would undoubtedly arise. When we think about Duchamp’s *Fountain*, one can almost imagine how many times the question has been asked: what makes this art?

¹ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction*. (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2002) 24.

Further, these objects or readymades provoked debates about artistic authorship, originality and creative theft, as well as how the term art itself is and can be defined. In the years after Duchamp, many other artists began to explore and examine these contrasting ideas about art. These artists include Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Maurizio Cattelan, Gabriel Orozco, along with many others.

1 - INT. ART GALLERY, NEW YORK (1917)

The room is dark. Suddenly, light fills the room. Artwork is seen hanging on the walls as well as placed on plinths. Two men, wearing blandly coloured suits, enter the room. They walk around the gallery and begin to examine the artwork. They move from piece to piece when unexpectedly, they stop. In front of them sits an ill-positioned porcelain urinal resting on a plinth.

Man #1
What is this?

Man #2
What does it look like it is?

Man #1
Well obviously it's a toilet. But what is it doing here?

Man #2
That's what I want to know. . .

Man #1
Is this supposed to be in the exhibition? Is this an artwork?

The two men stare at the porcelain urinal in silence. One removes his hat and scratches his head in confusion. The other sighs and folds his arms.

Man #2
Well, is there a name on it?

Man #1
I don't see a label. But there is something written on the toilet. . .

The two men slowly lean over the urinal and look at the black painted writing.

Man #1
It says R. Mutt.

They silently stare at the urinal once again.

Man #2

Who is R. Mutt?

Man #1

Your guess is as good as mine. I don't know an R. Mutt.

Man #2

Neither do I. . .

Man #1

Well we can't leave it here. Even if it is an artwork, just imagine what people would say?

Man #2

We would be the laughing stocks of the art world.

Man #1

And. . . it is our first exhibition. We don't need this trouble.

Man #2

just imagine the controversy we would have on our hands. The things the press would write. . . "A toilet, displayed in an art gallery?"

Man #1

We could never live that down, and we would be viewed as fools.

The two men continue to stare at the urinal until one of the men takes off his jacket and rolls up his sleeves. He approaches the urinal and sternly stares at the other man.

Man #2

Well, do you plan on helping or not?

The other man hesitantly removes his jacket and also approaches the urinal. The two men slowly lift the urinal, removing it from its plinth and exit together with it, into a dark closet.

HOSTILITY AND REFUSAL OF THE READYMADE

The Society of Independent Artists was a New York organization of artists and cultural workers. Founded in 1916, this diverse group held annual open exhibitions showing the work of any interested avant-garde artist. The members of this organization consisted of various art historians, critics and artists. Sitting on the board of directors of this group was the French artist Marcel Duchamp. It was here where Duchamp started to stir the contemporary art world with controversy.

In 1917, Duchamp shocked the art world by attempting to display a urinal (turned 90 degrees) in an art exhibition under the pseudonym of R. Mutt. Titled *Fountain*, this use of an ordinary object caused anger in the art world and opened the door for an ongoing debate about the validity of contemporary art. Upon the first attempted exhibition of *Fountain*, the submission of the work was met with hostility because of the disputation of whether the piece could be considered a work of art or not.

Marcel Duchamp stated that his goal with the readymade was to "carry the mind of the spectator towards other regions, more verbal."² Was he then referring to the viewer's experience of these objects and the dialogue that would result?

The readymade object does not at first glance have any intrinsic artistic qualities. The artist who uses the readymade as artistic expression elevates an ordinary object to a unique position where it can be considered an artwork. This is achieved through the act of choice; the choice of the object itself.

² Duchamp, Marcel. *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996) 802.

Whether or not Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view – created a new thought for that object.³

By choosing the urinal and placing it in the gallery, Duchamp had developed a new way in which artists can create. In *Postproduction*, Nicolas Bourriaud states, “Duchamp thereby completes the definition of the term *creation*: to create is to insert an object into a new scenario, to consider it a character in a narrative.”⁴

Duchamp placed an untouched object, usually found in hardware stores, into a new scenario: the context of the art gallery. By doing this, Duchamp forced not only the art world, but also the viewer to look at and think about the work of art in a new way. Perhaps his love of the game of chess influenced his choice to place the urinal into the gallery setting? Just as a chess player sets up the pieces on the board, could Duchamp’s gesture be thought of as setting up his pieces in the gallery to evoke a new way of looking and thinking about the experience of art? Kristine Stiles writes, “Duchamp’s impact on the experimental and ideational direction of art became decisive.”⁵ With the placement of a urinal in the context of a gallery setting, Duchamp had changed how art could be viewed and considered.

³ A quote from an un-named source in the May, 1917 issue of the *Blind Man* publication regarding the removal of Duchamp’s *Fountain* from the gallery.

⁴ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction*. 12.

⁵ Stiles, Kristine. *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*. 804.

COPYING AND THEFT

The idea of using or copying objects or other artist works is not a new phenomenon. Before Duchamp placed the un-altered urinal in a gallery and proclaimed it art, the use of the copy was utilized for early art educational practices. The 18th century French Art Academy used the act of copying to teach their students. These students learned how to draw by copying originals, either done by master artists or by the educators themselves.⁶ The students were graded on their lack of creativity when making these works. Making a true copy of the original was one of the main goals when thinking about how art was taught in the 18th century.

When considering how contemporary artists use the copy or appropriation (or the readymade) as a way of creating new works of art, the Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan gives us an interesting example. Titled *76,000,000* (1992), Cattelan appropriates a reclaimed bank safe as a readymade. This bank safe, however, was in an actual bank in which it was broken into during a robbery. The title of the Cattelan's piece suggests how much money was stolen during the theft (in this case, 76 million Italian lire).

Here, Cattelan literally ties the ideas of real world theft (a bank robbery) with what can be considered art world theft or appropriation. Cattelan's use of a safe involved in a robbery pushes the idea of the readymade into new territory, as he highlights the criminal nature of the robbery and relates it into his art practice. Can the readymade or perhaps more aptly, the appropriated object, be considered theft?

Is this perhaps one reason for the hostility towards the readymade? Do viewers think it is just a form of theft? Nicolas Bourriaud writes, "It's true, citation, recycling,

⁶ Elkins, James. *Why Art Cannot Be Taught: A Handbook for Students*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001) 17-18.

and détournement were not born yesterday.”⁷ There is a history of using or copying others work or objects. By using others work as source material, artists are commenting on them in context with their own interests, whether it is based on the used object itself or the critical dialogue which results from this use of the copy.

Bourriaud continues, “artists who insert their own work into that of others contribute to the eradication of the traditional distinction between production and consumption, creation and copy, readymade and original work.”⁸

⁷ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction*. 9.

⁸ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction*. 13.

AUTHORSHIP

Examining the role of authorship can help to define the significance of the art object. When considering notions of authorship as well as the responsibilities and roles of an author (or in regards to this support paper: the artist), the writings of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault present two useful arguments.

In *What is an Author?*, Foucault explores another way of thinking about authorship. Foucault looks at both the existence and the definition of an author. He believes an author exists as not only the product of their written text but also should hold an amount of responsibility for it.

We can think about Foucault's argument in the context of visual art and its creation. Does the artist hold all the responsibility in their work? By placing a work in a gallery does the artist need to provide everything? Where does the viewer of the work come into this equation?

In *The Death of the Author*, Barthes argues that the author and their work go through a transition of departure. Therefore this departure gives the reader the responsibility to decipher the meaning of the text. Barthes believes that the work can be justified only when the author's experiences and beliefs are taken into consideration.

Barthes argues that it is the responsibility of the viewer to develop his or her own meaning and relevance from the work. He states that ownership and responsibility should belong to the viewer, empowering the viewer with a sense of authorship. Barthes believes it is still up to this viewer to deconstruct the problem (or the question that the work poses or comments on) that the author has presented but it is also this author's responsibility to establish a base from which one can decipher meaning or problem solve. The author must

give the viewer a starting point. Thus, the responsibility falls on the author, the viewer, and on the ideas or work presented.

Barthes writings then declare that there should be a collaborative space for understanding the meaning of a work while incorporating the viewer and making them equally as important as the artist. Duchamp also agrees with this point. In his writing, *The Creative Act*, he states; “the artist may shout from all the rooftops that he is a genius: he will have to wait for the verdict of the spectator in order that his declarations take a social value.”⁹

⁹ Duchamp, Marcel. *Theories and Documents in Contemporary Art*. 818.

2 - EXT. NIGHT, NEW YORK (EARLY 1960S)

CRANE DOWN from a view of downtown New York on a clear night. Cool, dimly lit and beautiful.

A man walks through the dusty city streets. All around there is activity; cars and people are everywhere. In his mid twenties, this man wears a pair of old blue coveralls that are covered in flecks of silver paint. He turns the corner and stops. In front of him sits, on the curbside, a couch. The couch itself is red with beige piping and beige seat cushions.

Looking at the building in front of the couch, the man sees the entrance to a coffee shop and the entrance to a shady second floor apartment block. He sits on the curb next to the couch, lights a cigarette, stares at the apartment door, and waits.

One hour passes.

The man is still sitting on the curb next to the couch. Next to his feet are numerous cigarette butts. Suddenly the door to the apartment building opens. The man jumps to his feet and stares at the woman in her late 40's exiting the door. She sees him staring at her and smiles. The man cautiously and slowly approaches the woman.

Man

Good night ma'am. Do you live here?

Woman

Yes, I do. Can I help you?

Man

Do you know whose couch this is?

Woman

I don't actually. Why?

Man

Well, if I must say this couch is completely fantastic.

Woman

Really?

Man

Well look at it. The shape, the colour, the whole feel of this piece of furniture is just something.

Woman

It looks like a dirty couch to me.

Man

Excuse me?

Woman

It's a dirty old street couch. Look at it. It's sitting on the streets of New York City.

Man

Well. . .

The man folds his arms and looks at the couch. He lights another cigarette.

Man

Well ma'am. I know someone who would love this couch.

The woman shrugs her shoulders and walks away. The man continues to stare at the couch. He tosses his cigarette into the gutter and rolls up his sleeves. He grabs one end of the couch and pulls it down the street.

FADE TO BLACK

THE COUCH

Andy Warhol is an individual who needs no introduction. Not only did he establish himself as an art star, but also helped to further the careers and fame of others, a by-product of Warhol's 15 minutes of fame theory. In the early 1960s he formed a group known as the Warhol Superstars.¹⁰ Included in this clique was a man known as Billy Name. Billy Name is a filmmaker, photographer and lighting designer. Famous for his own work (and for being part of Warhol's clique), Name was instrumental for discovering a relatively unknown object, which could be found within Warhol's studio, the Factory.

In the early 1960s, Name, the man responsible for turning Andy Warhol's infamous studio silver, found a beat up red couch. This street couch was found sitting on an urban downtown corner in front of a New York City YMCA.¹¹ Name dragged this couch back to the Factory and placed it in the centre of the now silver studio. Over the next few years this couch became a fixture in both Warhol's studio and in his work.

At studio parties, this multi-purpose couch would serve as a place for photographs, a place for people to come down off of drugs or simply be a place to just hang out. Also, for the patrons and visitors of Warhol's factory, it perhaps became a place to become noticed. Noticed, that is, by Andy Warhol. Although the couch was used for seating at various studio parties and a place for said party-goers to experience drug-induced trips, the couch was in a few of his films, most notably *Blowjob* (1964) and

¹⁰ Gaither, Ross. *Warhol, Andy*. N.p. Web. 5 May 2011.

¹¹ Hackett, Pat and Andy Warhol. *Popism: The Warhol Sixties*. (Boston: Mariner Books, 1990) 63-64

Couch (1964). For Warhol, the couch became a film set of sorts, a place for his art to manifest.

What is it that makes this couch something more than just a couch? Is it the history behind it? Was it the fact that it was used in Warhol's films? Or was it simply because Warhol had possession of the couch? Although Warhol did not make the couch (in fact, he rarely made any of his work), he did have it in his possession at for a number of years and used it in his work.

When the couch was taken from the street during Warhol's studio relocation, the couch became just a couch again. Perhaps the person (or persons) responsible for taking the couch knew of its significance; or perhaps for them it was just a beautiful couch that they wanted for their own use. The same can be said for the couch when Billy Name took it from the street. Upon finding the couch it was just that, a red couch. When it was placed in the Factory, Warhol's fame and elite status was transferred to the couch, making this object (the couch) something more, something special. This is my primary interest in this couch: the transfer of status onto an object.

THE AURA

What is it about the object as art that makes it desirable to the viewer, or perhaps more importantly, to the artist himself/herself? In his 1935 essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin compares the stage actor to the movie actor. Benjamin states the technology of reproduction (lens based technology) has created a distance between art and viewer. The film camera separates the spectator from the actor while, in the case of the stage actor, the spectator is there in the same physical space; this enables a first-hand experience to take place. When Benjamin talks about artworks, he claims they obtain something he refers to as an aura. He goes on to define the aura, “as the unique phenomenon of distance.”¹² Can this aura then also be referred to as the unique phenomenon of experience? As the experience of the object as art?

Benjamin goes on to claim that there is a “contemporary decay of the aura.”¹³ Here the term contemporary refers to the 1930s, a time when lens based technology was just gaining popularity as a tool in art making. In the present however, where our art making and manufacturing technologies have increased and become more sophisticated and affordable, the artist is now enabled with the power and choice to create endless copies or editions of their work. In an age where artists create ‘multiples’, it is interesting to consider the contemporary notion of Benjamin’s term aura. This notion of reproducibility has only grown as our contemporary technology advances. Is ‘more’ considered better? Perhaps our desires to be unique, and also to be the owners of something unique, have created this contemporary decay of the aura, which Benjamin

¹² Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. *Illuminations*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc, 1968) 222.

¹³ Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. *Illuminations*. 223.

talks about. Is Benjamin's decay of the aura also the decay of uniqueness? In spite of the difficulty of firmly defining "aura" conclusively, for the purposes of this discussion I will take it to mean the quality of uniqueness and value that surrounds an object deemed to be art.

WHAT CAUSES AURA?

Can the aura of the object be directly related to the experience of it? Andy Warhol took ordinary people and turned them into overnight superstars and gave them elite and extraordinary social status and fame. Warhol used his celebrity status to alter and enhance their aura. Here he took the idea of ordinary status and transformed it. Not only did the aura of the people he surrounded himself with change, but so did the aura or special status of objects which were around him as well.

The Canadian pianist Glen Gould also offers us useful insight when considering the placed importance on an object. In his 1963 paper titled, *Forgery and Imitation in the Creative Process*, Gould writes of the story of the Dutch artist Han Van Meegeren.¹⁴

Born in 1889, Van Meegeren was a painter who created a large number of works and passed them off as original works by Johannes Vermeer, the famous 17th century Dutch artist. These copies were verified and accepted as original Vermeer works by local Dutch art historians. Local collectors quickly purchased these paintings and Van Meegeren developed the reputation of being “one of the shrewdest art detectives of his time.”¹⁵ These copies continued to sell into the war and Van Meegeren continued to see great profits. When the news of these paintings being sold to the German occupying forces came to surface, Van Meegeren quickly became public enemy number one. The Dutch people became outraged that national treasures were being sold away to the enemy and Van Meegeren was brought to trial on the grounds of collaborationist activities. To save himself from prosecution, Van Meegeren quickly admitted that the paintings were

¹⁴ Gould, Glenn. “Forgery and Imitation in the Creative Process”. *Models*. Autumn 1994: No. 50. 53.

¹⁵ Gould, Glenn. “Forgery and Imitation in the Creative Process”. *Models*. Autumn 1994: No. 50. 53.

not original Vermeer works but were, in fact, worthless copies. With this news coming to light, he quickly became regarded as a national hero by the general public and as someone who had duped the enemy. The art historians however, who had verified these copies as originals became justifiably outraged and brought the painter back to court. Van Meegeren was tried and found guilty of fraud and was sent to prison, where he subsequently died of a heart attack.

In this case, the aura or romanticization was placed on the artist and not on the actual work itself (as it was a forgery). The aura is placed onto Vermeer's name and reputation. As to a name having aura itself, Andy Warhol had the same effect on objects.

WHAT CAN BE CONSIDERED A WORK?

In his paper *What is an Author?*, Foucault explores what should be included and excluded when considering the whole body of the authors work. For instance, Foucault asks if a shopping list created by a published author should be viewed as a work in itself.¹⁶ In terms of visual art/artists and their library of work, we can examine the work and artistic practice of Andy Warhol.

During the time he was alive, Warhol created a long term body of work called *Time Capsules*. Starting in the early 1970s, until his untimely death in 1987, Warhol created 612 finished *Time Capsules*. These works simply involved Warhol taking the contents of his desk (usually containing items such as newspapers, magazines, photographs, business records, receipts, etc) and placing them into a cardboard box. In the book, *The Warhol Diaries*, Warhol writes:

Took a few time capsule boxes to the office. They are fun—when you go through them there are things you really don't want to give up. Someday I'll sell them for \$4,000 or \$5,000 apiece. I used to think \$100, but now I think that's my new price.¹⁷

Warhol knew that these everyday objects were to be considered part of his body of work. Some however, could easily disagree and state that a magazine owned by Warhol or a receipt from a restaurant should be considered just that: an ordinary magazine or receipt.

This clarification of authorship leads me to believe that Warhol would have considered the red couch within his studio something more than what it was: a found object nonetheless, but still an object to be considered to be a work of art and the name of

¹⁶ Foucault, Michael. "What is an Author?". *Truth and Method*. (New York: Seabury Press, 1975) 107.

¹⁷ Warhol, Andy. *The Warhol Diaries*. (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1991) 762.

the artist that would be attached to that couch would be Warhol. Were the couch not lost when his studio was moving locations, the couch would have no doubt ended up in the Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and would be on permanent display as part of his legacy.

GALLERY SPACE

“Space now is not just where things happen; things make space happen.”¹⁸ This statement by writer and artist Brian O’Doherty can help to further my exploration of the relationships between gallery space, artwork, and viewer. For a time, without the gallery space artwork could be exhibited to the public or placed in a context for critical discussion. Moreover, it can be said, that without artwork, the concept of the gallery cannot be examined or critiqued. These two elements, art and gallery space, share a symbiotic relationship.

The context in which the viewer looks at and experiences artwork is one way to explore the space of the gallery as a whole. How the viewer approaches the artwork as well as how the viewer develops relationships with both this artwork and the space itself determines the fate of the perception and critique. Walter Benjamin states that artwork has an aura and defines this aura as, “the unique phenomenon of distance.”¹⁹ It is interesting to think about the relevance of not only the artwork having an aura, but also the possibility of the gallery space itself having one. Can the gallery space exist as its own experienced object?

In describing the visual space of the gallery, O’Doherty states: “The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically.”²⁰ O’Doherty’s use of the word “clinical” to describe the traditional white

¹⁸ O’Doherty, Brian. “The Eye and the Spectator”. *Inside the White Cube*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999) 39.

¹⁹ Benjamin, Walter. “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”. *Illuminations*. 222.

²⁰ O’Doherty, Brian. “Notes on the Gallery Space”. *Inside the White Cube*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999) 21.

cubed gallery space is a description of an environment established on the notion of a system burdened by regulations. Immediately, this gives the impression of a space very difficult to enter; a space where not only can one observe, but one where they can be observed. In Michel Foucault's essay *Panopticon* he states that power resides in those who observe.²¹ Taking both of these statements under consideration, the gallery viewer has the power to observe (the artwork) and must surrender to being observed.

O'Doherty continues to describe the gallery as having "a limbolike status; one has to have died already to be there."²² His use of the term "limbolike status" suggests an environment resembling a type of purgatory: a space that exists between two worlds. Is he referring to the duality of the gallery space? A space where objects are to be looked at? Or a place where objects engage the space? Walter Benjamin's definition of aura is thus relevant when considering O'Doherty's description of the gallery space. This "distance" Benjamin talks about shares relevance with O'Doherty's description of the gallery space. The distance he refers to can relate to the viewer and their relationship with the gallery space and the artwork within it.

When talking about Duchamp's installation work the *Mile of String* (1942)²³, O'Doherty describes its perceptions as being "at a level so obvious our sophistication immediately disallows it." The same can be said for Duchamp's work *Fountain*, where the viewer sees a plain urinal untouched by the artist's hand, as if it had just been purchased from a hardware store and transplanted to the gallery. It was something very

²¹ Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism". *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975) 202.

²² O'Doherty, Brian. "Notes on the Gallery Space". *Inside the White Cube*. 21.

²³ O'Doherty, Brian. "Context as Content". *Inside the White Cube*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999) 71.

obvious for the viewer to comprehend. However, its placement in the galley caused viewers to question it. Does this confusion about certain artworks make the viewer weary and cautious of art? And if placed into the context of a gallery, do these negative connotations regarding artwork transfer over to the gallery space itself?

MAURIZIO CATTELAN'S ESCAPE

Not only did Maurizio Cattelan play with the contextualization of the object as art and appropriation, he also explored the gallery as a space and as subject matter. When asked to create a new work for an exhibition, Cattelan waited until the last minute and asked the gallery if he could work through the night to install his work in the second floor exhibition space. As the gallery staff arrived in the morning, they were witness to a sight that in all likelihood confused and baffled them. From the open window of the second floor, was a rope made of bed sheets blowing in the wind next to open shutters. Cattelan had fashioned the rope, securely attached it and escaped from the gallery.²⁴

Titled *Untitled* (2002), this work speaks to the viewer on many levels. It not only raises questions like the obvious one of why a bed sheet rope is hanging from an open second floor window, but also questions of how Cattelan felt about the gallery system. In this work, Cattelan perhaps talks about his feelings of desperation and fear when considering the gallery. Cattelan, in an interview with Michele Robecchi, spoke of this work and states that this was a work fuelled by fear.²⁵ This fear he talks about could be fear of many things, fear of personal artistic pressure, fear of exhibiting work or the fear and pressure that the traditional gallery space can evoke in others.

The absence of the artist is a strong theme in Cattelan's *Untitled* (2002). This sense of absence bears strong resemblance to Duchamp's readymades. Considering his work *Fountain*, the viewer at first glance sees only a porcelain urinal, with no obvious or apparent artist-made alterations or additions (other than a fake signature). It is what it is;

²⁴ Morton, Tom. *Infinite Jester*. N.p. Web. 1 June 2011.

²⁵ Robecchi, Michele. *Maurizio Cattelan and Massimiliano Gioni*. N.p. Web. 16 June. 2011.

a urinal. This is similar to Cattelan's bed sheet rope: all the viewer is left with is a sense of absence.

RELATIONAL AESTHETICS AND GALLERY SPACE

In *Relational Aesthetics*, Nicolas Bourriaud talks about a type of art that leaves the context of the gallery environment and instead exists in a variety of other places. In this type of art practice, labelled Relational Aesthetics, the constraints of the gallery walls are no longer and art objects and practices can exist in a new context. Bourriaud's discussion of artwork becoming more socially and publicly engaging sees contemporary art move away from the gallery.²⁶ A new way of experiencing artworks takes place.

The idea of experiencing art as a social encounter in the public realm existed long before Bourriaud's writings. Brian O'Doherty's essay, *The Gallery as Gesture*, discusses the work of Armand P. Arman and his 1960 installation *Le Plein*. In this exhibition, Arman transformed the storefront window of a commercial business by filling it with garbage and debris.²⁷ Viewers of this exhibition were forced to stand on the front street looking into the window to witness the work. O'Doherty states, "For the first time in the brief history of gallery gestures, the visitor is outside the gallery".²⁸ Here, the artist modified the social act of window-shopping and transformed it into an art viewing experience. Furthermore, he took an everyday non-descript experience and altered its perception so that it became something more introspective. Whether this experience was a memorable one or one that perhaps angered or confused people is not relevant. The fact that an experience was had is the part that is most important.

²⁶ Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Relational Aesthetics*. (France: Les Presse Du Reel, 1998) 14.

²⁷ O'Doherty, Brian. "Galley as Gesture". *Inside the White Cube*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999) 90.

²⁸ O'Doherty, Brian. "Galley as Gesture". *Inside the White Cube*. 92.

3 - INT. POLICE STATION, SOMEWHERE IN NORTHERN ITALY
(2002)

The room is clinically lit and full of people. There are police everywhere.

PAN ACROSS - A man in his mid forties approaches the front desk where a young officer sits. The man, wearing a white tucked in dress shirt and black suit blazer places his hands on the counter and looks at the policeman.

Man

Excuse me; I'd like to report a crime.

Police Officer

What kind of crime sir?

Man

A theft.

Police Officer

What was stolen?

Man

A piece of art I made for an upcoming exhibition at an art gallery. I'm an artist.

Police Officer

What exactly was stolen?

Man

A sculpture.

Police Officer

When did this happen?

Man

Last night. It was in the back seat of my car. I stopped for a quick drink with some friends and when I returned to my car the back window was smashed and the sculpture was gone.

Police Officer

Was anything else taken?

Man

No, just the sculpture.

Police Officer
Was the sculpture expensive?

Man
Oh yes, I'm a very famous artist. I was supposed to put it in an exhibition that opens tomorrow. Is there anything we can do to get it back as soon as possible? This is very important.

Police Officer
We will see what we can do. First we will need to fill out a police report.

Man
Thank you. Oh. . . May I possibly have a copy of the police report? To take home with me?

Police Officer
Yes sir, of course.

Man
Excellent. Thank you so much.

The police officer reaches into the desk and pulls out a blank incident report from. Grabbing a pen from the desktop he looks to the man.

Police Officer
First off, does the sculpture have a name?

Man
It is titled "Invisible". . .

FADE TO BLACK

TRICKSTERS AND JOKESTERS

The use of trickery in art making and its exhibition forces the viewer to navigate the work in front of them in a challenging way. The viewer is not given easy answers as to what lies in front of them. Instead they are forced to navigate the work and struggle to find the true meanings behind it. They are left with no choice but to ask questions about why the work is presented in the way that it is. This form of making, where the questions about the work are forefront, is a way of thinking about how varied experiences can alter the perception of the object.

In a 1977 episode of the television special, *The Midnight Special*, Andy Kaufman went on stage and performed a musical number. In the four-minute performance, Kaufman performs his song titled, "I Trusted You". In this song he repeats only the title of the song for four minutes. In the footage from the show, the live audience in attendance laughs hysterically for the entire performance. Not only do they laugh non-stop, but they applaud, cheer and encourage the comedian.

Could Andy Kaufman have truly thought this was a smart and funny work of comedy? Did he think this performance would go down as one of the funniest acts ever seen on live TV? Or was he perhaps more interested in seeing what he could get away with? Kaufman, as he had done most of his career, purposefully set out to be an irritant or trickster.

Kaufman's exploration of comedy as a culture is similar to Maurizio Cattelan's exploration of the culture of contemporary art. These two have garnered a reputation as jokesters and tricksters in their respective fields.

Maurizio Cattelan also used elements of trickery in both his physical art practice and in dealing with the press. When having to do interviews or public appearances, he had others (usually his friends or colleagues) go and play the role of Cattelan. His stand-ins were instructed to be difficult and were equipped with evasive answers and nonsensical explanations.²⁹

In his 2002 work *Untitled*, Maurizio Cattelan was in need of a work for an upcoming exhibition and, pressed for time, could not make his deadline. He went to the local police station the day before the opening and reported that an unknown suspect had stolen a sculpture, titled *Invisible*, from his car. This sculpture had not and still does not exist. Receiving a copy of this police report, Cattelan framed it and hung it in the gallery the next day.³⁰ Here Cattelan uses both trickery and the notion of an object to create his work. Conceptual in nature, this work has the potential to frustrate the viewer.

²⁹ “Maurizio Cattelan”. *Art Safari*. Dir. Ben Lewis. 2005. Icarus Films. DVD.

³⁰ Bonami, Francesco. “Static on the Line: The Impossible Work of Maurizio Cattelan”. *Maurizio Cattelan*. (London: Phaidon Press, 2000) 73.

4 - INT. NIGHT, NEW YORK (EARLY 1970S)

PAN ACROSS - A low lit, smoke filled nightclub. Various people sit huddled at small tables with all eyes directed towards a small stage in the corner of the room.

On the stage sits a table and chair. A cardboard box sits next to the table.

A man walks up to the stage and approaches the lone microphone stand on the centre of the stage. He wears a blue turtleneck sweater and appears to be in his mid twenties. The crowd quietly applauds his arrival.

The man looks awkward in nature. He approaches the microphone. He waits for the very few claps to stop. The room is filled with silence: the silence matches the man: awkward.

Beads of sweat roll off of the forehead of this man. The man opens his mouth, but no words come out. He quickly turns around and sits at the table behind him. He reaches into the cardboard box and grabs a spoon and a bowl filled with mashed potatoes. Placing the spoon in the bowl, he begins to eat.

PAN ACROSS - We see the audience of the comedy club. There is no laughter. Only stone like faces staring at the stage. The noise of the silent crowd is deafening.

ZOOM IN - The man on stage finishes the bowl of potatoes and again reaches into the box. This time he pulls out an alarm clock. He winds it and sets a timer for 20 minutes. Reaching again into the box he pulls out a sleeping bag.

Leaving his chair, with the sleeping bag under his arm, he approaches the microphone. Grabbing the microphone he stares at the audience. Silence. He moves the microphone off to the side of the stage and unrolls the sleeping bag in the centre. Reaching over to the alarm clock, he turns it on. He then crawls into the sleeping bag and closes his eyes.

20 minutes pass. About a quarter of the audience has left. The remaining members of the audience remains quiet, all looking very confused and hopelessly bored.

The alarm clock goes off as the man slowly yawns and stretches. He stands up and turns off the alarm clock. He slowly rolls up the sleeping bag and places it in the box. He approaches the centre of the stage and stares at the audience.

He bows, and leaves the stage. A huge grin is seen on his face as he heads to the back of the room.

The audience is quiet; somehow quieter than before.

END SCENE

KAUFMAN AND ANTI-COMEDY

Andy Kaufman was a man of many talents. Born in 1949, he was an American entertainer, actor, comedian, musician, and a performance artist. He is perhaps most well known for his role on the 1970s American sitcom *Taxi* and his portrayal of the character, Latka, the Eastern European mechanic.³¹ While a majority of the public considered him to be strictly a comedian, Kaufman himself disagreed. In an interview with the New York Times he states:

I am not a comic, I have never told a joke...The comedian's promise is that he will go out there and make you laugh with him...My only promise is that I will try to entertain you as best I can. I can manipulate people's reactions. There are different kinds of laughter. Gut laughter is where you don't have a choice, you've got to laugh. Gut laughter doesn't come from the intellect. And it's much harder for me to evoke now, because I'm known. They say, 'Oh wow, Andy Kaufman, he's a really funny guy.' But I'm not trying to be funny. I just want to play with their heads.³²

In the New York City comedy club, *Catch a Rising Star*, Kaufman would begin to perfect his bizarre performances, including his sleeping bag routine.³³ Club founder Rick Newman talks about the performance and resultant audience reaction: "He would eat potatoes on stage. When he did the sleeping bag, people would get up and walk out of the room. When I would see him setting up the sleeping bag, I'd think, shit there goes twenty-five percent of the audience."³⁴

When Kaufman chose to get on stage at a comedy club and eat mashed potatoes and take a nap in a sleeping bag, he was playing with the audience. When he didn't give

³¹ Zehme, Bill. *Lost in the Funhouse: The Life and Mind of Andy Kaufman*. (New York: Delacorte Press, 1999) 185.

³² Brennan, Sandra. Biography: Andy Kaufman. N.p. Web. 10 May 2011.

³³ Zehme, Bill. *Lost in the Funhouse: The Life and Mind of Andy Kaufman*. 139.

³⁴ Steinberg, Don. *Andy Kaufman Oral History*. N.p. Web. 16 July 2011.

the audience what they expected, he opened new avenues of dialogue with them. Notions of reversal and transformation are apparent in Kaufman's approach to performing. He used irony and manipulated the audience's feelings and expectations to explore his art and to make his own standing within the world of show business.

In his quote above, when Kaufman states he wants to *play with their heads*, he can be perceived as entering into dialogue with visual artists such as Marcel Duchamp and Maurizio Cattelan and aspects of their work. All three of these individuals utilized the tools of trickery and expectation when creating their work.

5 - INT. A SMALL, SECOND FLOOR ROOM, LATE AFTERNOON, NEW YORK (MID 1980s)

On one side of the room, there sits neatly on shelves: paint tubes, brushes, canvases and easels. The other side of the room is full of magazines, camera equipment and boxes of photographs. We are inside an artist's studio. In the middle of the room, there is a small couch next to a chair and a lamp. A man in his mid thirties sits.

The man looks distraught and throws down a section of the newspaper in disgust. The paper falls everywhere.

ZOOM - The newspaper falls open on the ground as we see the title of the section he was reading. It is the Art section of the New York Times.

PAN ACROSS - The man looks at the newspaper on the floor. Something catches his eye as he stands up and moves towards it. He picks it up and stares at the paper. This time he looks at the daily comics. After a few minutes he quickly moves to a table and frantically searches for something. He pulls out a black piece of paper and a pencil. Putting the newspaper down next to the blank paper he begins to write.

PAN ACROSS - The man takes the paper and pins it up on the closest wall. He grabs a chair and sits in front of this hand marked paper and stares at it. Minutes go by in silence, only hearing the sounds of the New York streets. Suddenly he speaks out loud to himself.

MAN

If I saw this in a gallery. . . I would be quite jealous. . .

PAN ACROSS - He frantically runs back to the table and reaches for a stack of old newspapers, piled on the floor. He pulls out more blank paper and continue to write, the whole time flipping the pages of the newspaper, looking for more comic strips.

FADE TO BLACK

RICHARD PRINCE'S JOKE PAINTINGS

Richard Prince is a master of cultural and consumer appropriation. His varied art practice consists of using other's imagery to create something unique and his own. Re-photographing magazine ads and images and painting 1950s and '60s jokes from newspaper comic strips has enabled Prince to develop a very successful art career based on appropriation and transformation.

These old jokes suddenly entered a new terrain upon Richard Prince's appropriation of them. No longer were these jokes heard in stand-up comedy clubs or in conversation at parties and bars; they were now thrust into the world of contemporary art. Prince used appropriation and reversal to remove these jokes from their original context and to force them to be considered in a new light: as visual art. These paintings featured nothing more than the text of the joke (sometimes awkwardly written) with monochromatic backgrounds.

At first glance his series of "Joke" paintings can be considered a social commentary of class and gender politics of the 1950s and 1960s. Eleanor Heartney, in the March 2008 *Art in America* article, *The Strategist*, looks deeper into these works and states that these criticisms, "have long since faded."³⁵ She discusses the progression of the visual quality of the works over the years, and comments how the painting of the works themselves have evolved to the point where the work has become more about the paintings as paintings, rather than solely about the subject matter.

After selling one of his joke paintings for \$700,000 USD, Prince discusses the sale in an interview with the New York Magazine website. Describing the joke paintings,

³⁵ Heartney, Eleanor. "The Strategist". *Art in America*. March 2008. 148.

he states: “They’re just paint, stretchers, and canvas; it’s the subject that’s radical.”³⁶ In this moment, Prince makes it clear that, to him, the consideration of the subject matter supersedes the material and painterly qualities of the work. It is the subject that transforms the painting into an object. Thus, the joke becomes the integral part of the work and so too does Prince’s choices behind its inclusion as subject matter. In this case the experience of the object (the jokes Prince appropriates) are more important than the object itself (the painting).

³⁶ Rosenberg, Karen. *Artist: Richard Prince*. N.p. Web. 5 May 2011.

ARTAUD, BRECHT AND EXPERIENCE

Playwright and Surrealist Antonin Artaud, was concerned with notions of false realities as well. In his 1938 manifesto, *The Theatre of Cruelty*, Artaud writes of a system of theatre that should enhance the experience of the real. In this writing, he asserts his belief regarding the deconstruction of simulation: that aspects of the real should not only be considered but also strongly enforced. *The Theatre of Cruelty* speaks to a system of beliefs developing a form of theatre where nothing is portrayed but an honest truth; there is no masquerade or concealing experience. Artaud wanted to give to the viewer an experience based in reality. He opens his manifesto by stating, “We cannot go on prostituting the idea of a theatre whose only value is in its excruciating, magical relation to reality and danger.”³⁷

Although he chose to use the word cruelty in the title of his manifesto, he never appeared to want to cause physical harm to anyone. He was more interested in the notion of waking the viewer up to direct experience. Perhaps fuelled by his own creative distresses, Artaud was frustrated with the theatre existing as a place of escapism and fictional storytelling. He proposed to change the system of the shared experience of theatre by raising awareness of a false reality and desired to give the viewer an eye opening experience, enabling them to be aware of the actual reality around them.

In the conclusion of his manifesto he states; “What is important is that by positive means the sensitivity is put in a state of deepened and keener perception and this is the very object of the magic and the rites of which the theatre is only a reflection.”³⁸ In this

³⁷ Artuad, Antonin. The Theater of Cruelty. N.p. Web. 19 June 2011.

³⁸ Artuad, Antonin. The Theater of Cruelty. N.p. Web. 19 June 2011.

passage he is relating sensitivity with the viewer's experience, and the phrase 'magic and rites' refers to a direct experience based in reality. Although Artaud was widely known as a mad man, his writings and reasoning are pertinent within my own ideas concerning art and its exhibition.

Bertolt Brecht, on the other hand, abandoned the surrealism and irrationality of Artaud. Brecht developed his own theories behind the creation of theatre and resultant audience experience. He developed the idea of the Distancing Effect and a type of theatre known as Epic Theatre.³⁹ The Distancing Effect enabled actors to eliminate the fourth wall,⁴⁰ and to relate directly to the audience as both an actor and a character. In this way escapism is completely removed and a new experience for the audience is created, one based in reality.

Referring to Epic Theatre, Barthes states: "The responsibility of a dramatic art is not so much to express reality as to signify it."⁴¹ The same can be said about the responsibilities of the visual artist. The artist has a responsibility to create avenues of discourse.

Aspects of these theories are reflected in the work of such artists as Andy Kaufman, Marcel Duchamp and Maurizio Cattelan, in the sense that the work they make is not easy at first to accept as art. The unorthodox methods they use in creating and displaying their work open conversation and allow a place for criticism and dialogue to take place.

³⁹ Bryant-Bertail, Sarah. *Space and Time in Epic Theater*. (Rochester: Camden House, 2000) 2.

⁴⁰ The imaginary wall at the front of a theatre stage which separates the audience and performers.

⁴¹ Barthes, Roland. *Critical Essays*. (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972) 74.

When Kaufman sleeps on stage or Cattelan exhibits a bed sheet rope hanging from a gallery window, we can recall Brecht's Epic Theatre, which "draws our attention to the contradictions within."⁴² Kaufman's performances can be seen as critically observing the culture of comedy just as Cattelan's work critically observes the world of visual art.

⁴² Bryant-Bertail, Sarah. *Space and Time in Epic Theater*. 7.

THE AUDIENCE

To look at the concept of experience and how it alters the art object, we might reflect on what constitutes an audience. In *The Creative Act*, Duchamp declares that there are “two poles to the creation of art: the artist on the one hand, and on the other the spectator who later becomes the posterity”.⁴³ Duchamp posits that an audience is needed to complete the process of making art. The artist creates, while an audience examines.

In 1972, Chris Burden’s outdoor temporary sculpture titled *Dos Equis* (1972), explored the notion of spectatorship. This work consisted of two giant wooden X’s, set ablaze in the dead of night in a California desert. He placed these flaming pieces of wood on a road and left. Burden did not know if anyone would even see them. In his writing about the work he states, “For whoever saw it, it was a kind of really unforgettable experience. Those fiery crosses really must have burned into that guy’s mind.”⁴⁴ Here Burden takes the experience of looking at art and removes it from the gallery setting. He also takes it a step further and eliminates the idea of an audience.

In his book *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity*, Dennis Kennedy examines the role and definition of an audience, or perhaps better phrased, the notion of spectatorship. In this writing he asks, “are spectators passive receptors, merely consuming what is offered, or are they active participants, adding something to the event.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Duchamp, Marcel. *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*. 818.

⁴⁴ Burden, Chris. *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*. 772.

⁴⁵ Kennedy, Dennis. *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity*. (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 5.

Looking further at the audience and what constitutes the definition of one, Kennedy poses the question; “Does the solitary spectator really constitute an audience?”⁴⁶ Chris Burden appears to answer this question in his description of *Dos Equis*. In his words he claims that this work “was just for one person. I don’t know who he is or anything. He was just the first one to come upon those big XX’s burning in the road.”⁴⁷ However, one can imagine that if no one had come across the flaming X’s, and the work remained unseen, Burden would have fully been satisfied in the conceptual nature of the work.

⁴⁶ Kennedy, Dennis. *The Spectator and the Spectacle: Audiences in Modernity and Postmodernity*. 6.

⁴⁷ Burden, Chris. *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*. 772.

SELECTED WORK

My work explores notions of viewer experience and expectation. I am interested in trickery and deception, and aim to challenge the viewer to assess their perceptions of what they think art is or should be. I use elements of storytelling and narrative structures to explore the role of the art object and its positioning within the gallery space.

In my work titled *Couch* (2011), I re-create the red couch found in Andy Warhol's studio in the 1960's. I am interested in exploring how the couch became something more than just a couch. As previously examined, the red couch in Warhol's possession possessed a unique aura. Whether it is because it was owned by the fame driven Warhol or not, the couch is more than just a couch. By rebuilding this couch I am able to explore how an object can be given a special status.

The couch I have created is not the original one that was situated in Warhol's studio. There is no doubt about that. The original couch is most likely piled somewhere with other forgotten and deemed-useless objects in a garbage dump. Presenting the couch as it appears in the photographs of the Factory will not fool anyone or convince them that the couch is the same one that existed in Warhol's era. Rather, taking the couch and re-writing its history in my own words serves my purpose and goal in creating a continued narrative for the couch.

By not re-building the couch as it is originally seen in the old photographs and leaving it unfinished, this object (the couch) takes on a new life and a new story of its own. I can create a story for this object, which I can determine and express in my own words and which reflects my conceptual interests. I can continue the story of this couch and create a fictional tale about the current state of the couch. Placing a couch-sized

gallery stanchion in the gallery enables me to suggest ideas of thievery, the theft or removal of my couch from the gallery space, just as the couch was twice removed from the streets of New York, once in the name of Andy Warhol and once from him.

My version of the couch is not placed on a plinth or within any sort of enclosure. It sits on the gallery floor and is brightly lit. Does this alone make it an art object? There is nothing stopping the viewer from sitting on it, or touching it. To the viewer, all they are witness to is a dirty torn-apart couch.

In my work, I feel that the experience created is as important as the artwork itself. The physical art object is needed to evoke the experience. The experience however, can be dictated by numerous factors; the way the work is made (attention to detail, aesthetic qualities); the way the work is installed (on the wall, a pedestal or plinth, on the floor); what is placed next to the work (other works of art, either by the same artist or different artist); or where the work is primarily installed (an art gallery, an empty dirty warehouse or on the streets).

In my sculptural work titled *Frames* (2011), numerous frames and painting stretchers are placed against the wall on the gallery floor. All of these objects are individually wrapped with plastic and brown wrapping paper. They are stacked in front and on top of each other of each other and sit on wooden blocks.

By leaving the frames and stretchers wrapped and concealed, I am exploring the expectation of the viewer. The objects are easily recognized as something that can only be framed images, something waiting to be hung on the walls of the gallery. Turning an object that is the epitome of the two-dimensional into a three-dimensional object allows me to explore trickery and the transformation of the art object.

Considering the various ideas and theories discussed in this support paper, we can examine my 2011 sculpture titled *Frames*. Foremost we can look to the practice of Andy Kaufman, who used trickery to alter viewer expectation. Just as his various performances were purposefully frustrating for the viewer to watch, my work *Frames* evokes a similar frustration.

We can also look to the practice of Maurizio Cattelan, and his work *Untitled* (2002), wherein he “escapes” from the gallery leaving only a ladder made of bed sheets. My work *Frames* speaks to the gallery space itself as an entity. By not hanging the works as they typically might be seen, I am exploring the viewer’s expectation of the gallery space as well.

By creating a transformative sculpture out of recognizable art objects, the frames and painting stretchers that one would expect to see in a gallery setting, I am able to enter into a dialogue with the viewer. This sight, the wrapped up backs of the objects, is usually reserved for gallery employees and others affiliated with the art gallery- those who experience the gallery during hours when it is closed to the public or in preparation. My placement of these familiar objects is not done in a standard or familiar way, and this forces the viewer to re-examine how they might view them differently in the context in which they are presented. By bringing the viewer into this experience, I am pulling back a curtain in a way, or, if we think of Artaud’s and Brecht’s theories of theatre, I am removing the fourth wall.

Richard Prince transplanted jokes from their usual environment of comedy clubs, and conversation between people at bars and parties, and inserted them into the context of the contemporary art world. A notion of reversal and transformation had taken place

when he painted the text of the jokes onto canvases. In my video *Amateur Night* (2011), I take the same jokes Richard Prince used and place them back into their original context: a context in which the spoken joke is more recognizable.

In this video the viewer sees a man walk onto a stage and tell jokes. Because I used the jokes verbatim as they were painted on the canvases, they are awkwardly phrased and sometimes grouped together in pairs. The man in my video tells the jokes into microphone, to an empty room. The silence in the video (or lack of audience) helps to exaggerate the awkwardness of the man telling the jokes as well as the jokes themselves. This work takes the object (the joke) and places it back in its original context.

Looking at Richard Prince's joke paintings in the setting of a gallery can be a solitary experience- think of a viewer with folded arms standing in front of a large painting curiously pondering its meaning. In my presentation of the work, the viewer is forced to wear headphones and have a solitary experience of watching a man tell jokes to only the viewer.

In this work I am appropriating not only the notion of the joke itself but the jokes as they were written by Richard Prince himself. I am appropriating Richard Prince's language and re-contextualizing it for my own purposes and goals: to examine the joke as object and determine how the experience of a new context changes it. In the same way Duchamp took the ordinary (a porcelain urinal) and made it something more, Prince transforms the language of jokes.

CONCLUSION

In my own practice I copy or appropriate, as content and inspiration, specific artists and specific works by them. I am interested in the concept of storytelling. As an artist, I am able to take pre-existing works or ideas and mould them into my own creations. My work is not only a comment on or exploration of these previous artistic endeavours, but an expression on how I perceive these moments/objects. I want to create new experiences for the viewer to navigate. The moments/objects I employ fill me with curiosity and fascination in the same way a landscape painter or portrait photographer is curious about and fascinated by their chosen subject matter.

A common thread connecting the works presented in the exhibition is the aspect of storytelling. Appropriating an object, situation, or experience and making it my own allows me to pull from contemporary art and enables me to re-write the story of the object, situation or experience. Storytelling has always been a part of our culture, and we are constantly trying to find new ways to tell them.

Through a process of appropriation, I am able to explore works that interest and inspire me as an artist and to comment on them by inserting my own aesthetic and theoretical concerns. I am appropriating these works to create something personal and unique. I choose these moments and objects as my subject matter because they interest me and the stories behind them intrigue me.

I want the viewer to explore these objects and ask questions. Although they are specific to the world of art and art history, I give the viewer clues such as narrative descriptions (the factually based but fictional scripts included in this paper are also positioned on the walls the gallery space) or suggestive titles. In this way I hope to offer

an entrance point to my work while at the same time not giving away too much information. I am giving the viewer clues as to what they are looking at, but it is up to them to draw conclusions or to invent possible stories of explanation about the work.

By setting up moments where both experience and questions arise, I am able to enter into dialogue with the viewer. Whether it is a couch, wrapped empty frames and stretchers or a video of someone telling jokes onstage, I am exploring the role of viewer experience in my work.

Using the idea of trickery and the jokester to create these experiences allows me to communicate with the viewer in a way that resembles how I wish to experience artworks myself. Being deceived by artwork or situations forces me to ask questions about the work.

The artists and theorists discussed in this support paper have influenced my ideas, my thinking, and my ways of making artwork. By copying objects or situations and using appropriation, these artists were and are able to invent new forms of experience. This world, where creation can involve a readymade urinal and cause an artistic uproar, where a falsified police report can be considered fine art, or an audience watches a man sleep for 20 minutes in the name of comedy, is a bizarre and curious world. I, for one, am happy to participate in it.

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IMAGES : WORKS BY COLLIN ZIPP IN THESIS EXHIBITION



Couch, 2011, mixed media



untitled, 2011, digital prints



Frames, 2011, mixed media



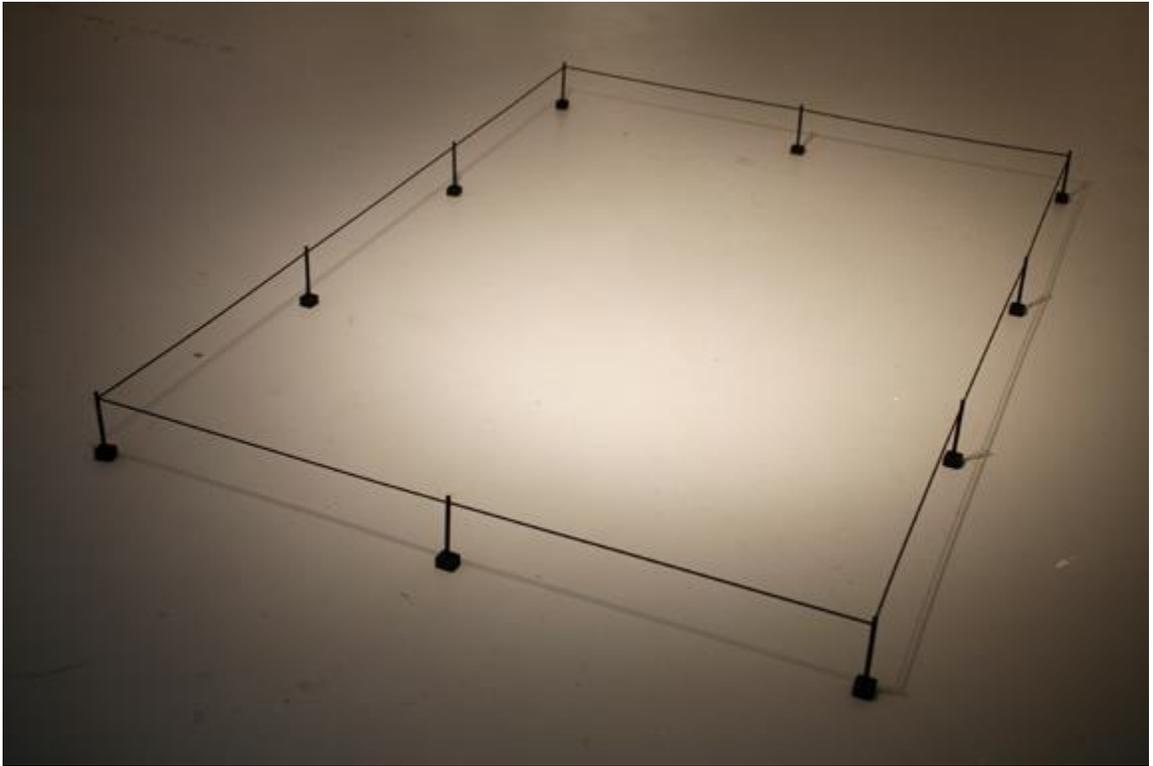
Frames detail, 2011, mixed media



Amateur Night, 2011, 4:50 min video



Amateur Night, 2011, video still



untitled, 2011, wood and paint



Portrait of Chris Burden 1971, 2011, 36 second video



Portrait of Chris Burden 1971, 2011, video still



untitled, 2010, 2 minute video



installation shot of *Selected Work*, 2011



installation shot of *Selected Work*, 2011