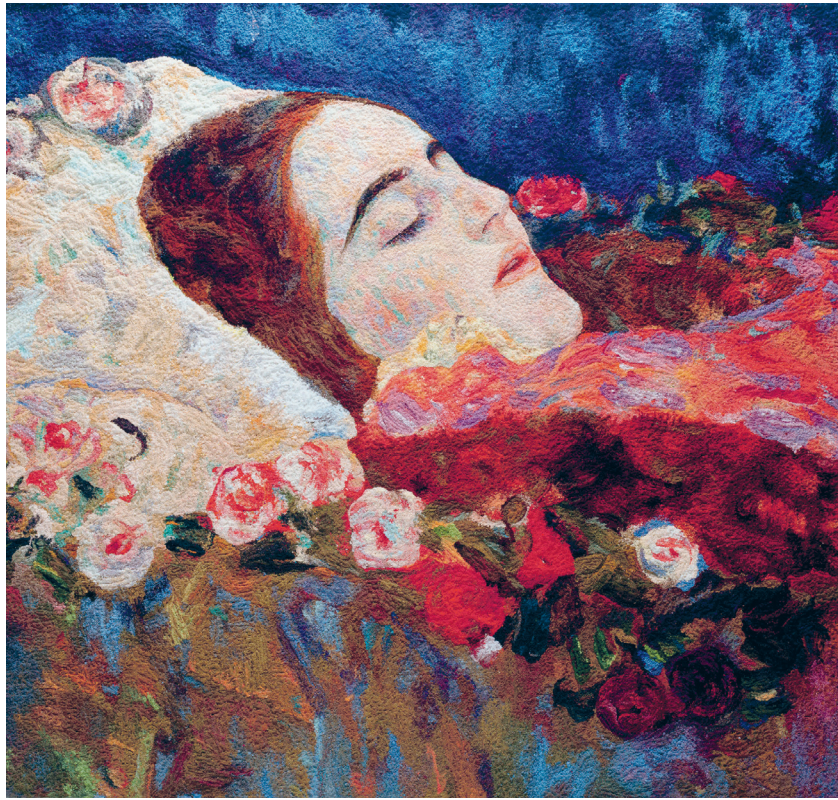


Vik Muniz  
Ria Munk on her Deathbed,  
after Gustave Klimt  
(Pictures of Pigment), 2006  
C-print, 180 x 190 cm (image)  
Courtesy: Galerie Xippas,  
credit of the artist.



Thomas Demand  
Kitchen/ Küche, 2004,  
C-Print/Diasec, 133x165cm  
© Thomas Demand, VG Bild Kunst,  
Bonn/ DACS, London



# The Art of Repetition

*Exploitation or Ethics?*

Parveen Adams

Straightforward documentation of appalling events may be powerful and may have practical effects. But if it doesn't utilise strategies to engage us, if it doesn't offer the viewer the possibility of experiencing anew, then it remains only a representation of the event. My idea of a work of art that has political importance has to do with the production of the space of experience, the space of thought, the space of ethics. This is not to deny that general external conditions may play a part in the complex network of influences that affect the artist. So the fact that Artur Zmijewski belongs to the generation of artists who experienced the transformations in Poland in the 1990's, may tell us something about the appropriateness of his way of sidestepping representation. He produces a present experience not mediated by language, something we may call the testimony of emotions. The fact the Taiwanese artist Chen Chieh-Jen is influenced by the history of Chinese suffering is indeed a substantial part of his theme. But those general conditions do not determine the work.

I am interested in the way in which contemporary artists refuse representation and target the Real. If art is political, it is so because it effects some change in the artist, in the participants in the artwork if there are any, and in the viewer. In contemporary art practice there is a wide-spread use of repetition: from Joel Peter-Witkin through Vik Muniz; Thomas Demand; the Chapmans; Artur Zmijewski; and Santiago Sierra; to Ken Gonzalez-Day and Andrea Geyer. Witkin's raw images with their reference to 17th Century pictures, (for example. his still-lifes composed of fruit, flowers as well as body parts from the New Mexico morgue); Muniz' *Pictures in Pigment*; Demand's





Jake and Dinos Chapman  
 Insult to Injury, 2003  
 Francisco de Goya 'Disasters of War'  
 Portfolio of eighty etchings reworked  
 and improved.  
 14 9/16 x 18 1/2 in.  
 (37 x 47cm(incl. frame)  
 © the artist  
 Courtesy Jay Jopling/  
 White Cube (London)

life-size cardboard rooms; the Chapmans' repetition of Goya directly onto Goya originals; Zmijewski's re-tattooing the number on the wrist of a 92 year old Auschwitz survivor; Sierra's payment for meaningless work in an art gallery; Gonzalez-Day's contemporary images of lynching trees; Andrea Geyer's use of Brecht's conversations between exiles. My argument is that the space created through repetition can become the space of reflection, a space that makes the spectator think, or indeed serve as witness.

Of course I need to clarify what repetition is, and how this distances artistic work from representation. My argument is that it operates at the psychological level, opens onto the Real event and allows us space for thought. My framework is a

psychoanalytic one, and I take Freud's idea of deferred action as a model. Deleuze has a phrase, 'the inter-subjective', which really is the idea of an inter-subjective unconscious. At the very least we can take this to be about deeply-rooted ideas and associations that shield us from the experience of an event. Art can break through these ideas to touch the real event and re-root it in language. In this way, psychoanalysis helps to explain the efficacy of the artistic work. Nothing serves my purpose better than to quote what may, at first, seem a fairly dry definition of the Freudian idea of *Nachträglichkeit*. It comes from Laplanche and Pontalis' *The Language of Psychoanalysis*:<sup>1</sup>

*Term frequently used by Freud in connection with his view of psychical temporality and causality: experiences, impressions and memory-traces may be revised at a later date to fit in with the attainment of a new stage of development. They may in that event be endowed not only with a new meaning but also with psychical effectiveness. (my emphasis.)*

What is at stake here, despite Freud's lack of formalisation of this idea, is something fundamental to psychoanalysis – a new view of time and causality. This is strikingly illustrated with an example from Freud's *Project for a Scientific Psychology*.<sup>2</sup> He has a patient, Emma, who could not go into shops alone.<sup>3</sup> Emma produced a memory in relation to this: At the age of twelve she had gone into a shop where there were two laughing assistants, and she had rushed out in a fright. She thought they might have been laughing at her clothes and she remembered that one of them had "pleased her sexually". This did resolve the puzzle and she produced another, earlier memory of going into a shop alone. There were the two laughing assistants, and one of them "had grabbed at her genitals through her clothes".

How does Freud make use of the similarities between the two events? He posits a *retrospective* conferral of meaning between the first and second events. He argues that at the second moment Emma was sexual, whereas at the first moment she was not. Accession to sexuality retrospectively imbued the first event with sexual meaning. Through this newly created meaning, the innocent laughing shopkeepers of the second moment became the object of anxiety. Emma had noted that one of them had pleased her sexually, and Freud sees this as a sexual release in relation to the *first* event. The memory aroused the affect which the original experience had failed to arouse. Freud claims that this is typical of repression in hysteria. "We invariably find that a memory is repressed which has only become a trauma by deferred action."<sup>4</sup>

We could say that the operation of *Nachträglichkeit* is found throughout Freud's clinical practice. In his *Papers on Technique*<sup>5</sup> Freud makes clear that what is produced in the patient through transference is 'a present-day neurosis'. The patient projects all his early relationships onto the figure of the analyst. This gives Freud, the analyst, access to the neurosis. What is this if it is not the space of deferred action? Furthermore, a large part of the *work* of psychoanalysis involves the reconstruction of the past in the present, and in this process, past meanings change. It is a question of psychical effectiveness.

I will show that art can be psychically effective, and that one of the ways in which this is done is through the production of two moments through which affect is produced and a space of work is opened up. If the centrality of sexuality

1. J. Laplanche , and J-B Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1973), 111.
2. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (hereafter SE) : vol 1 (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1966), 283-397.
3. Ibid., 353-56.
4. Ibid., 356.
5. Sigmund Freud, "Papers on Technique" in SE: vol XII.





Ken Gonzales-Day  
Lynching Trees  
Courtesy of the artist.

in Freudian theory and practice is brought up as an objection to such a move, the answer is that in his exploration of sexuality Freud created a new theory of memory. Fundamentally, there is no such thing as the real event, which is to say we can never know it directly. Retrospective traumas need not necessarily be sexual. In contemporary art they are often 'political'. The psychoanalytic point is that the way in which art can be political is not through documentation or sloganeering, but rather, through the opening up of a space in which change takes place.

What precisely is a trauma? What precisely is being repeated when we speak of repetition. The answer to the second question will give us the answer to the first one. Is repetition really about an earlier and a later event? Is it about an event that is represented in a chain of signifiers that repeats? Or is it the insistence of something outside representation which is nonetheless captured in chains of signifiers? Here Deleuze is of help. He does not find the problem of deferral well-put by Freud. He agrees that the two scenes are being infantile and adult, but he insists that these are two presents, "at a variable distance apart in the series of reals, in fact they form... *two real series which coexist in relation to a virtual object of another kind*, one which constantly circulates and is displaced in them... Repetition is constituted not from one present to another, but between the two coexistent series that these presents form in function of the virtual object". The "virtual object... can be 'identified' with the phallus... only to the extent that the latter, in Lacan's terms, is always missing from its place, from its own identity and from its representation." It is this object, that can appear only in disguise, that explains repression. "The displacement of the virtual object is... the principle from which, in reality, repetition follows in the form of disguised repetition".<sup>6</sup> This, of course, is to emphasise the centrality of repetition in psychological life. The trauma here is the event that escapes direct representation: it is Deleuze's 'virtual object'.

With this restatement of what repeats, it is possible to see the repetition as belonging to the symbolic and what is repeated as belonging to the Real. The artists I will speak about create the conditions of repetition while at the same time as they minimise the essential displacement of the object in the disguise that language makes possible.

How this is done might become clear if we explore the idea of two series, one infantile and the other adult, which nonetheless both operate in the present. The example comes from Lacan's commentary on Freud's 'Rat Man'. The two series here concern the father and the son. Freud identified very clearly the role of debt, friend, and the choice between rich and poor woman in the two series that both revolve around debt. Deleuze's own example comes from Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, where the infantile love of the mother is the agent of communication of two adult series: that of Swann with Odette; and that of the hero become adult with Albertine.<sup>7</sup> The childhood event is what, via the love for the mother, establishes the communication between the two series. Deleuze names what is implied in these examples '*the inter-subjective unconscious*'. It is now possible to see that we have not abandoned Freud's 'sexual', but have drawn attention to the importance of relations between humans.

This idea helps us to think about how series might be elicited by artists in the social. The artists we are considering conjure up a series. In the work of Gonzalez-Day, for example, the visual series; old photographs of lynching (which will of course be accompanied by the viewer's word series), revolves around the virtual object, lynching. But at the same time, this series is itself in

6. G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Athlone Press, London 1994 (1968), pp104-5.

7. *Ibid*, 124.

the process of displacement, because of the presence of new photographs of those same old lynching trees as they stand today. It must be said that the old photographs have been altered so that the image of the hanged man is never shown, though we may see the spectators gathered around the foot of the tree. This absence, combined with the absence of any physical trace of lynching in the newer photographs, makes the virtual object almost palpable. The lynching is like the childhood event, known only through the displacement and repetition. In disturbing the series through which repetition operates, new repetitions of the object, a new series, is made possible. The work allows the viewer to construct a different relation to the object at the level of the symbolic. The political interests of the artist engage us through the work that we are called upon to do.

It must be made clear that Freud did not use any such model in his analysis of works of art. Neither is it the standard Lacanian position on art. For Lacan, painting opens onto the real through the bringing forth of the gaze and that allows 'the taming of the gaze.' The picture opens onto a space of desire. The picture creates desire through the function of the decoy, the promise that there is something to be seen beyond what is seen. By isolating the gaze, by bringing it into view through art, castration in the field of the scopic is effected. Something of the threat of the evil eye is brought under control. A little bit of the Real is brought within signification.

My argument is quite different; it concerns a major political tendency across much seemingly diverse contemporary art which does not work by isolating the gaze but rather by abolishing it. My claim is that the work opens onto the Real directly. I will discuss the work of Chen Chieh-Jen, Artur Zmijewski and Andrea Geyer, artists whose work reveals the structure of repetition quite clearly. They are all concerned with the gap between two repetitions, which I call the gap of the Real. This is not the gap between two series. It is the gap between event and representation that the disturbance of the series reveals

For Lacan the split between event and representation coincides with the birth of the split subject on the one hand and *jouissance* on the other. That is to say the subject of language on the one hand and something utterly heterogeneous to it, on the other. This is the moment when the body is formed. That may seem a strange thing to say, but of course I am not talking about the biological body. What is at stake is the body in the social. My argument is that the artists I am speaking of effect change at the level of the body.

This change takes place in the body already marked by *jouissance*, split into erogenous zones, moulded by social relations. In late Lacanian theory this body is preceded by something Lacan calls the organism. Animals have organisms but they do not have bodies. My idea is that the change wrought by art on the body would come from such a de-familiarisation of this social body as might expose some of the conditions of its construction, and leave a little room for something of the subject to momentarily come up against the organism. The quickest way to show you this is to tell you about Thomas Demand's own response to the life-size cardboard and paper rooms he makes. His aim is to photograph these rooms, but of course they remain there, in his studio, for some time.

Thomas Demand experiences his body differently when he inhabits his life-size cardboard rooms. He feels intrusive and clumsy and out of place and, at the same time, he feels completely himself, in the right place. He said "You feel like not existing but only as long as you are extremely careful in your movements:





Room/ Zimmer, 1996,  
C-Print/ Diasec, 172 x 232cm  
© Thomas Demand,  
VG Bild Kunst, Bonn/DACS,London

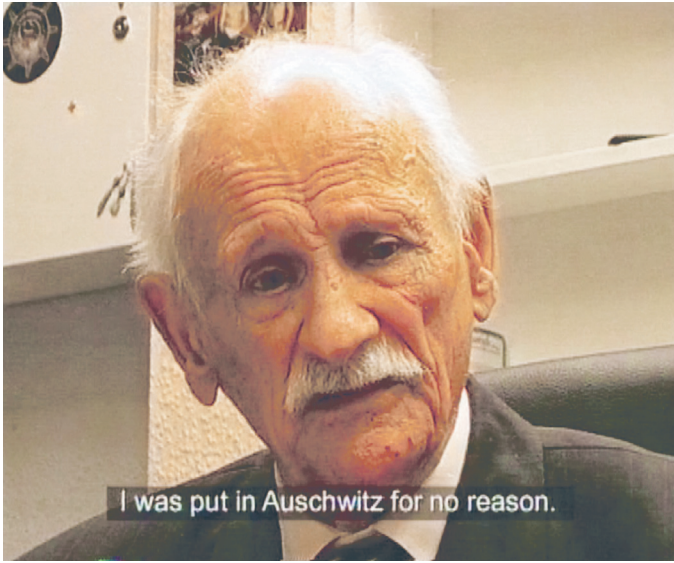
that means very existing. Does that make sense?” Yes indeed it does. It seems to me that his structures break the identification of the body with its usual surroundings and through this, open out onto a new relation of the body to space. There is a similar effect on those who view Demand’s pictures.

Thomas Demand does not relate directly to bodies although the body is affected. But Artur Zmijewski works both directly and indirectly with bodies. Zmijewski persuaded a ninety-two year old man who had been tattooed in Auschwitz, to have the fading numbers re-inscribed on his wrist. He hoped that this would revive repressed memories of the price of survival in the camp, and create the space for testimony to that which had happened – the real, unrepresentable event. This work is disturbing, placing itself as it does, on the edge of what is considered permissible in the relation between humans. But it does create a space of testimony for the viewer as well, and thus alters our relation to past events. As we have already seen, Gonzalez-Day does this in relation to the lynching of *Latinos* in California. This space of testimony is the space that allows the reworking of series in works that use repetition. The title of a book on Zmijewski’s work is not irrelevant, *If it Happened Only Once it’s As if It Never happened: Einmal ist Keinmal*.<sup>8</sup>

The works of Zmijewski most directly about the body achieve the de-familiarisation of the body. At first they do not lend themselves to any explanatory account of their effects. *Out For A Walk* (2001) involves the able-bodied lifting two paraplegics from their beds and moving them around as a substitution for walking. They lift their paraplegic bodies, carry them around on their legs, taking steps with them, they balance their motionless limbs. Zmijewski says that the film is about failure. The paraplegics are lonely and will do anything for company. But at the end of the day it is painful for them and they return to their inertness. The failure he refers to is also the failure to bridge the gap between the normal and the deformed; Zmijewski makes us confront the truth of this difference. The power of the piece comes from the interference it produces in our systems of co-ordination and movement. ‘Our’ assimilates the viewer to the strong men who work with the paraplegics. The feature of using one man’s limbs to help another recurs in *Eye For An Eye* (1998) where the able bodied help the limbless by using their own limbs to complete an action. They have even been allowed to touch the scars of amputation, a great intimacy. And yet this exercise ends in fatigue and a sense of violated privacy on both sides. Many people worry about the rights of the disabled in this context. Zmijewski has said that in fact it was against the will of the healthy, and he adds ‘*It is the healthy who are reduced to the role of a limb storehouse in the film*’.

To my mind, Zmijewski’s great work is *The Singing Lesson I and II* (2001). Deaf-mute children are taught to ‘sing’, first *Polish Mass* by a modern Polish composer and then Bach cantatas. The children ‘sing’ first in a Warsaw church and then in Bach’s church in Leipzig. It is impossible to describe the sound that ensues. The sound is unearthly. Which doesn’t make it like the sound of angels, but these are not animal sounds either. It is unutterably awful; we are full of awe. We cannot locate this sound within any known parameters. Occasionally we glimpse the effort at music, when a group of children translate high and low (in response to a conductor) through some dark and distant analogy with something in their world, unknown to us. The tall girl with blond hair, perhaps the ‘soprano’, lets out a sound which is a cross between a wail, a scream, a shout but whatever it is, it is in fact devoid of human expression. These are sounds miraculously arranged in some unknowing mockery of the unknown Bach. It

8. Artur Zmijewski, (Germany: Hatje Cantz verlag, 2005).



I was put in Auschwitz for no reason.



Sure it looks nicer now.  
It's more visible, more eye-catching.

Artur Zmijewski  
80064, 2004  
Courtesy Foksal Gallery Foundation



Artur Zmijewski  
Singing Lesson 2, 2003  
courtesy Foksal Gallery  
Foundation



is a completely different world from ours, a point Zmijewski emphasises. If there is such a thing as a singing body we do not find it here. Here are the bodies of deaf children trying to play a game whose rules they do not know. We dimly perceive that they are enjoying their bodies which become strange to us. This is an effect that Zmijewski wants. He aims to underline the difference between the deaf and the hearing and he does so in an almost brutal way. But the appreciation of that very difference is, once again, a disturbance of the representational series we have of those with and those without hearing. The difference of normal and disabled bodies captures us in the wordless space in-between and makes us think. The unrepresentable event, that which is heterogenous to language, surfaces to allow different thoughts and different series at the level of the symbolic.

We find Ken Gonzalez-Day erasing the image<sup>9</sup> of the lynched Latinos from past images, and juxtaposing them with his own contemporary photographs, of the very same oaks that were once used for the purpose of lynching. One oak is now adorned with green leaves and bereft of any evident sign of its dubious past. The purpose here would also be to affect the viewer, to seize her/him in a way that makes for a change in relation to the original event.

How is that achieved? It is a question of finding oneself in a different world, one where everyday fantasy is put on hold so that everyday associations, the effortless domination of images, and the satisfactions of *jouissance*, fall away. Metaphorically speaking, we see anew. The pain of the past is stilled as we register the (hi)story precisely as a substitute for the missing images. The *jouissance* that is, as it were, with-held from us in no way lessens the impact of the work. Indeed, it is usually that *jouissance* of the image that obstructs and resists transformation. Imagine being at a major exhibition of photographs of lynching. Might you not just 'enjoy' at the same time as being appalled at the evidence of the crime repeated over and over again? You already know that lynching happened and you already know pretty much what kind of image you are going to see. You already disapprove, not noticing the undercurrent of enjoyment. But in the Gonzalez-Day images, the erasure of the victims in one old photograph after another, the absence of the victims from the new photographs of the same old trees, build a space that puts you right in the picture. Where were you then? Where are you now? You are no longer in your comfortable body. You lose yourself momentarily, transported out of a world organised by past/present/future. Now in this second moment after the first, the scene of the crime that you did not witness, you can touch something of the reality of what was done. You can now be a witness because, confronted with the event, you go beyond the shared narrative of the original event.

Andrea Geyer organises her film *Reference Over Time: An Exercise* quite explicitly around a repetition with a difference. What is at stake here is what it means not to have a passport. Much of the dialogue is based on a fictional conversation in Berthold Brecht's journal of 1940. It is set in Helsinki, in Finland, where two men arrive after losing their passports. By this time Brecht had been deprived of his German passport and he had gone into exile. Geyer made the film at a time of much discussion in America concerning the possibility that citizens might be deprived of their passports after 9/11. It employs both writing and a sound-track with Brecht's words spoken by an actress. She speaks the words as though she did not understand them, although it is amply clear that she tries to think about them in advance of speaking them. The difficulty with the words is not that they belong to another time but that they themselves

9. Mary Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* dispensed with the representation of human bodies. It is an early example of conceptual art that, at the same time, was explicit about the psychological dimension of the work.



Ken Gonzales-Day  
Lynching Trees  
Courtesy of the artist.



Andrea Geyer  
Reference over Time  
Courtesy of the artist



bear a strange relation to the idea of a passport. The beer can be no beer and the cigarettes no cigarettes, but the passport has to be a passport. There follows a series of hilarious reflections on social order that are, nonetheless, no laughing matter. They reference Charlie Chaplin throwing things into a suitcase, closing the lid, finding that all sorts of bits and pieces are hanging out, and solving the problem of orderly packing by using a large pair of scissors to snip off the exposed collars, sleeves and so on. The logic of the nonsense, about the nature of order that ensues, constitutes a sharp satirical take on the totalitarian State.

We have nothing explicit on the absence of the passport. The scene concludes with one of the two men slightly annoyed at the note of seriousness he detects toward the end. Through all this the actress maintains her puzzled effort to read the text. The effect of this is to make Brecht's text still more strange. But there is something else before she starts to read. Her first appearance is serene; she enters, sits and stares directly at us as words concerning Hitler's Germany move across the screen. But then there are a series of cuts: she gets up to leave; re-enters the frame to sit down; gets up to leave again; enters the frame; and so on. And we feel the weight of her body, dragged toward her task and away from it. You can just see the edge of a sheet of paper in her hand, but she makes no attempt to read aloud. The text clearly causes her mental discomfort and that causes her physical discomfort – she is no longer at ease with the place her *body* occupies. The symbolic burden the body bears makes it sluggish and unwilling. The task of repeating a political text about the revoking of passports and the condition of exile puts both mind and body out of joint. Andrea Geyer herself sees the repeated movement of the body as “a way to situate a body to speak. To try to situate it, to place it, to place oneself into a position from which to speak.”<sup>10</sup> Isn't this the necessity for a moment outside the symbolic body?

The closing lines of the conversation are about what is missing from its place: “Where nothing can be found in its right place, there is disorderliness. Where in the right place one can find nothing, there is order”. “Today order is there where there is nothing. It is a deficiency”. Nothing in the conversation determines the passport's relation to order and disorder. They reduce the idea of all three to nonsense. Nonsense opens up the gap of the Real.

Now I want to discuss a work that does not succeed but which allows me to introduce some of the ideas behind the work of Jean-Luc Godard. This is relevant because, Godard's work does indeed aim to change our relation to the event. Kerry Tribe's *Here and Elsewhere*, with its reference both to Godard's film *Here and Elsewhere*, and to an interview scene from Godard's television series *France/tour/détour/deux/enfants* fuelled expectations that the 'repetition' would perfectly illustrate my argument. I will return to this, but first, the terms in which theorists of his work such as Gilles Deleuze and Jonathan Dronsfield speak about Godard. The vocabulary may be different but the ideas are close to what I am talking about. Jonathan Dronsfield writes:<sup>11</sup>

*By removing or displacing the present, that is to say the givenness of the world decided by the present, Godard creates a space in time in which a decision is asked of the viewer as to what is given. In this sense Godard's films do demand a temporality of the now but without that ever constituting a present [...] the present moment is extended and indeed spatialised...with the effect that the present is refused any kind of sanctity, and the viewer denied refuge in it [...] In having demanded of us a decision as to what is presented on the screen, the viewer is being asked to endure a duration that cannot be grasped or fixed, the radical temporality of things.*<sup>12</sup>

10. Personal communication, November 2006.

11. Jonathan Dronsfield, “The Present never Exists There: The Temporality of Decision in Godard's Later Film and Video Essays” in *The Cinema Alone: Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard 1985-2000*, ed. Michael Temple and James S. Williams (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 61-76.

12. *Ibid* 62.



Kerry Tribe  
 Here & Elsewhere,  
 two-channel video installation with  
 sound, 10:30 minutes (looping), 2002.  
 Courtesy of artist

This disturbance in the temporality of things is very like the psychological temporality of repetition. And the viewer is caught up in and affected by the absence of the present in much the same way as is the analysand.

Godard has said that he is a witness but that this does not imply silence. He also makes us witness, just as the work of Zmijewski and Gonzalez-Day makes us witness. The voice-over to *Comment Ca Va* speaks of 'bringing together in order to think. Simply bringing two images together... Yes, to begin to think as you look' (quoted in Dronsfield). Finally, from Godard's own mouth, 'Me, what I really like, is two images together in order that there be a third which is not an image, which is that which one makes of the two images; precisely that which makes for justice...' (quoted in Dronsfield, my trans.). This third which is not an image is the space of justice, witnessing, thinking - afresh.

Deleuze,<sup>13</sup> writes of 'the interstice' in Godard's work: "that void which is no longer a motor part of the image, and which the image would cross in order to continue"; 'just as there is a silence which is no longer the motor-part or the breathing-space of discourse' but which the discourse would cross in order to continue. Godard opens up gaps in the chains of associations, gaps between images, gaps within sounds and gaps between image and sound. The cut and silence are two important tools for this task. Deleuze makes a distinction between rational and irrational cuts. Where the rational cut belongs to the end of what went before or the beginning of what comes after, the irrational cut constitutes neither. At the level of sound it is silence that produces the gap in discourse.

The discourse of and on Godard is, at times, remarkably close to what I am claiming as the conditions and effects of repetition. No one talks of repetition

13. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (London: The Athlone Press, 1989 [1985]), 180.

in relation to Godard. But of course what he is doing is precisely to undo the effects of repetition as do the other artists I have spoken of.

Kerry Tribe's *Here and Elsewhere* promised to be a 'repetition' of that part of Godard's television series, *France/tour/détour/deux/enfants*, in which a boy and a girl are separately questioned by an off-screen voice. But I just could not see that the 'repetition' worked. In Tribe's video the relation of the off-screen questioner's voice seemed to me less discomfiting than Godard's voice in *Tour/Détour*; the girl had too strong a presence on the screen and her speech was privileged.

There are many points on which Tribe does *not* follow Godard in *Tour/détour* – she does not superimpose words on the images, her camera doesn't follow the daughter outside the flat, there is no additional narrator, there is no slow motion, and there are no jump-cuts. The soundtrack does not use the famous Godardian 'stuttering'.<sup>14</sup> And at the visual level there is none of the variations in speed that are found in *Tour/détour*. Tribe's 'stuttering' has to be sought in her treatment of space, time and movement. If the undoing of language "as an assumption of power making it stammer in the sound-waves, breaking up every set of ideas that claim to be 'correct' ideas, so as to extract from them 'just' some ideas"<sup>15</sup>, is Godard's strategy, it is not Tribe's. So how does she proceed? To what effect does she use her two cameras and the split screen and the gliding together in synchrony or bumping up of the screens against each other?

It turns out that the film is by no means conceived as homage to Godard. We have a narrator without stammer and an interviewee with a small stammer. Tribe herself talks of the daughter in terms of 'plenitude'.<sup>16</sup> Tribe wanted the girl to "hold her own in an authentic way". This was in response to Godard's 'sexualisation' of the girl he interviewed in *Tour/Détour*. The repetition could have been used to explore the representation of the girl, to trouble us in relation to the original scene. Instead, we have the plenitudinousness image that undermines Godard's technique rather than his representation of the young girl. Paradoxically, it is this very technique that could have effected such a troubling. Since Tribe's title also comes from a Godard film, *Here and Elsewhere*, and she uses two cameras and the sliding images of the split screen to 'negotiate here and elsewhere' she confuses us. She wants to 'trouble' the spectator, but she doesn't see that the identification with the daughter that she solicits works against this.

That Kerry Tribe is indeed interested in the relation of event to representation is shown by two films, *Near Miss* and *Episode*, in which she explores that relation through repetition.

Chen Chieh-Jen, has an explicit theory about the effects of repetition, at least in his earlier work around Chinese torture. *The Factory* (2003) would appear to be a perfect example of what I am saying about repetition, but perhaps he is not saying the same thing. When Chen talks about repetition he is talking about extracting the last ounce of *jouissance* out of the repressed horror of past events. His goal is to transcend that horror and emerge on the other side. Perhaps this is what makes *Lingchi – Echoes of a Historical Photograph* problematic from my point of view. When Chen Chieh-Jen stars in his own twenty-five minute film depicting the Chinese torture of death by a thousand cuts (and not one less; the executioner himself would die if the victim's death took place before the full penalty had been extorted), he aims to disturb our sense of time and place. It appears to be the culmination of a large number of

14. Deleuze in an interview with Cahiers du Cinéma talks about Godard's stammer. 'In a certain sense, it's always about being a stammerer. Not a stammer in his speech, but a stammer in language itself... a foreigner in your own language. It is this creative stammering, this solitude, that gives Godard his force' in *Son + Image*, (New York: MOMA, 1992) 35.

15. *Ibid.*, 38.

16. The quotations in this paragraph are from a telephone conversation with Kerry Tribe, October 2006.





Chen Chein- Jen  
Lingchi - Echoes of a Historical  
Photograph  
Courtesy of the artist

previous interventions into photographs and representations of *lingchi*, interventions in which the artist puts himself in the picture. Chen argues that bringing out repressed *jouissance* into the light of day is the first step to 'full-realisation and self-abandonment'. He repeats the suffering by inserting his body into pictures of *lingchi*. How can we argue that that body is transformed for Chen and for the viewer?

The film, *Echoes of a Historical Photograph*, works between two sets of images of *lingchi*, the original photograph by Louis Carpeaux famously reproduced in Bataille's *Tears of Eros* and his own film. The effects of the work should lie within the space of this gap. We are introduced to unbearable *jouissance*; yet the point is not to yield us up to this strange and paradoxical satisfaction. Rather, it is to confront the history of Chinese violence and liberate the viewer from this *jouissance*. The question is – does he succeed?



Jake and Dinos Chapman  
 Insult to Injury, 2003  
 Francisco de Goya, 'Disasters of War'  
 Portfolio of eighty etchings reworked  
 and improved  
 14 9/16 x 18 1/2 in.  
 (37 x 47 cm (incl. frame))  
 © the artist  
 Courtesy Jay Jopling/ White Cube  
 (London)

An aside - the elicitation of *jouissance* is quite common in art – just think of Jesus on the Cross. Think of Goya's series of etchings *Disasters of War*. These are bathed in *jouissance*, but the Chapmans treatment of these etchings banishes that aspect of enjoyment that undermines the attempt at morality, at the same time that it banishes the idea of morality itself. For Chen it is necessary to go through *jouissance* of the body. How does Chen's repetition scenario of the *jouissance* of *lingchi* help us to experience the history of Chinese suffering in a productive way?

Chen quite consciously talks about the radical nature of the body's involvement:

*The histories I am much concerned about are [...] the histories outside the history [...] I'm even more concerned about the histories survived in the realm of ecstasy, like the lacunae amongst the words, concealed in the midst of aphasia, infiltrated into our language, body, desire and smell. (About the Form of my Works)*

He is introducing the idea of a bodily memory. 'As I painted the historical images, I also fused my body image and my body memories into the mist of images' (in Joyce C. H. Liu, 'The Gaze of Revolt: Chen Chieh-Jen's historical images and his aesthetic of horror'. This takes him beyond suffering, beyond subjectivity and body. On the side of the spectator, he imagines that, faced with castration, wound, abyss, the spectator will come to a sudden realisation that also takes him/her beyond the suffering of his own body. Prof Liu concurs: 'Through looking into the mutilated and castrated, we see the absent, the excluded and the effaced, that is, we are faced with the unsublimated performance of the obscene real, violence and destruction, undecorated and nude'. It is at the point of the beyond of the body that change occurs.

We purge ourselves of the bodily memories that are the inscription of the order of the social. Chen changes and expects us to change through slightly different routes. He undergoes the trial by fire but we too are implicated in the scene. While it is not new for art to transform *jouissance*, what is striking today is the preliminary intensification of that *jouissance* as a means of transformation.

Do we again see here the complex of issues designated by Freud when he speaks of the '*nachträglichkeit*' which has been the focus of this paper? It is not just a concept: it is not so much the idea of memories that may be changed at a later date to correspond to a new development, as a kind of *retrojection* which permits a new causality. It is in its outline psychoanalysis' *general* approach to the issues which have been fundamental since Kant – temporality and causality. We cling to a comforting story in which temporality and causality are the mirror images of each other: what comes before is called a 'cause' and what comes after is 'effect'. Psychoanalysis shows the falsity of this general proposition by showing how as a mechanism, causality too can fall ill, that causality can have its neuroses and psychoses. It also makes it possible to show how art works can intervene to help the viewer establish causality beyond the symbolic brink of philosophy.

*I could not help but gazing at these photographic images of anonymous people being tortured and executed. It seemed that behind these images you could uncover another layer of image and unspoken hidden words. It seemed that there was another face emerging from each of the vague, faint faces, another shaking, unfixed body emerging from and overlapping on the fixed body... As I gazed at these historical images, I found that the past looked back at me.*

I am struck by the doubling over of the bodies. It is another form of repetition through which Chen comes face to face with repressed *jouissance*. Then he has the task of dealing with it. He does so by inserting himself quite literally into the scene. He substitutes his face for those of the figures in the photographs. He undergoes the *lingchi* depicted in his film. Liu: 'Chen described his method of synchronisation of images, fusing his body image with the images in the past, as a state of trance, as if facing the mirror in hell, with the flashback of the imagery of the Karma. He said, "For me it is the re-emergence of the suppressed, repressed, and cancelled memories"'.



Chen (quoted from Mike Chapple's review in Liverpool Daily Post of film *Echoes of a historical photograph* in Liverpool, 2005):

*We are all in the stream of desire to perceive. The multi-layered relationships among all these perceivers and the perceived are the very issues that this work addresses.*

This deliberate scenario – the play of looks – implicates the viewer and jolts him out of the *jouissance* of looking.

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