

9-25-2013

Dossier: Cinema as Timepiece: Critical Perspectives on The Clock

Catherine Russell

Concordia University, Montreal

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/framework>

Recommended Citation

Russell, Catherine (2013) "Dossier: Cinema as Timepiece: Critical Perspectives on The Clock," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*: Vol. 54: Iss. 2, Article 8.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/framework/vol54/iss2/8>

This Introduction is brought to you for free and open access by the WSU Press at DigitalCommons@WayneState. It has been accepted for inclusion in Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@WayneState. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@wayne.edu.

DOSSIER

**Cinema as Timepiece:
Critical Perspectives on *The Clock***

Introduction

Catherine Russell

The Clock has been travelling to different museums and galleries around the world since it opened in London in 2010, challenging many conventions of film practice and spectatorship. Christian Marclay's impressive, entertaining, and philosophical work engages tropes of found-footage film and video in a gallery installation to create a monumental form of digital cinema. It exists in the form of a hard drive and a tandem computer program that synchronizes the projection to the real time of the audience, such that the work itself literally tells time over a twenty-four hour period using close to a hundred thousand extracts from feature films. The installation also includes a specific seating arrangement of white sofas placed in a darkened room, evoking a home theater in a public space. *The Clock* has generated a great deal of discussion in the art world, the film world, and in the popular press. The articles presented here aim to situate the piece and the buzz it has generated in a critical perspective, contextualizing it within museum culture, moving image history, and theoretical paradigms of spectatorship, temporality, and the archive.

A common theme in the critical discourse around *The Clock* is the lament, even among those who are critical, that they didn't think of it first. It seems so easy and so obvious; and in fact, as Eli Horwatt points out, it's possible that another filmmaker—Christophe Girardet—did think of it first.¹ As digital tools have made found-footage filmmaking into a practice accessible and available to all computer-users, the mash-up and the video essay have become popular forms of experimental media. From the YouTube fan tributes to favorite stars, to Oscar night homages, to sophisticated video essays in web journals such as *Frames* and *Vectors*, ripping clips from films for reassembly is now standard practice, even if

it often remains legally circumspect. That Marclay was able to borrow fragments from thousands of films under fair use guidelines within the rarified auspices of the art world tends to ruffle feathers, even while it contributes to the awesome statement that the work has made.

Although one critic has suggested that “this whole assembly could have been made by a computer program,”² in fact it was a huge expenditure of manual labour. Marclay’s six assistants collected the material over a course of three years, while Marclay edited the segments together. The soundtrack, for which Marclay collaborated with Quentin Chiappetta, is a tour de force of mixing, remastering, and counterpoint. Whatever one may think of its blockbuster appeal, *The Clock* is a technically and formally accomplished work of picture and sound editing.³ The montage is at many points highly expressive, while at others subtly invisible, and Marclay fully exploits devices of suspense, comedy, and contrast. On these levels, the piece sustains a rhythmic pace that varies, constantly, with irregular timings and shifts in mood and tempo. There is no question that it has a seductive appeal, due in part to the extensive use of suspense effects and the proliferation of movie stars.

Many descriptions of *The Clock* suggest that a clock face is seen in every shot, but in fact Marclay has used a variety of techniques for telling time. The time of day may be mentioned verbally, along with periods of time that may or may not be accurately measured by the compilation, as in: “I’ll wait for just five minutes!” He also includes scenes in which characters discuss time more abstractly, as in multiple clips from *The Time Machine* (George Pal, US, 1960), and people asking “what time is it?” or people looking at their watch with no specific time mentioned, or clocks on which the time is slightly illegible. Marclay weaves series of scenes from a given film into the collage, not all of which feature timepieces. *The Clock*, in fact, includes many shots with no mention of time whatsoever, and no clock or watch-face either. These sequences are important means by which the work incorporates another sense of time besides clock time, which we might nevertheless say is produced by clock time by being outside it: the time of boredom and inactivity.

People in *The Clock* are frequently seen waiting, sleeping, eating, smoking, or even watching a movie or a performance. By including this order of image, Marclay creates a rhythm of temporalities which implies that just about anything might have been included, but these are not empty scenes or random images, as they are always populated by people (actors) spending time. The inclusion of these shots contributes to the sense of duration that the piece invokes and aligns it with the realist aesthetics of Wenders, Tarkovsky, Antonioni, Ozu, and Akerman. It should be stressed that there are no empty landscapes or cityscapes; almost every shot features either a clock face or a person’s face, including a series of clips from Claude Chabrol’s *This Man Must Die* (FR, 1969) featuring a smoldering cigarette in an



Figure 1. Claude Chabrol, *This Man Must Die* (1969).

ashtray perched before a table clock. In fact the waiting and sleeping clips come from all manner of sources, but it is another way in which *The Clock* incorporates a form of clock time that is as inactive as the time spent watching *The Clock*.

Marclay's compilation of pieces of time cannot be confused with slow cinema, however. The pace remains fairly quick throughout the work, slowing somewhat in the wee hours when Marclay faced a relative paucity of material to work with. Despite its harnessing of tropes of suspense and its comic juxtapositions, *The Clock* is frequently described as "boring," perhaps because its narrative devices repeatedly fail to conclude; but also because, as with boredom, you can literally feel *The Clock* tick. Cinematic time is portrayed here as a phenomenon that is at once entertaining and dreadful. For this reason, its philosophical weight is precariously balanced with the industrialized commodity capitalism from which so much of the piece has been appropriated.

Any discussion of *The Clock* has to take into account its institutional context. As Erika Balsom argues in her essay in this dossier, the work has been promoted in many cities as an event, or a phenomenon, with a huge public profile. In this sense it is very much consistent with the tendency towards accessibility and pleasure that museums around the world have embraced. Balsom suggests that the use of projected video since the late 1980s finally coincides, in Marclay's work, with the blockbuster museum shows that draw long lineups in major cities around the world. She situates *The Clock* not only in relation to Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* (UK, 1993), but also *The Art of the Motorcycle* (1998)

at the Guggenheim. Major galleries have also showcased fashion designers from Alexander McQueen to Jean Paul Gauthier to attract sectors of the public that might otherwise be intimidated by traditional fine art exhibitions. Needless to say, the entertainment value of *The Clock* has made it a somewhat controversial piece for film and art critics.

Balsom's point is not simply to link *The Clock* to other so-called crossover exhibitions, but to indicate the implications for moving image art. The market value of experimental film and video has never been as high as Marclay's half-million-dollar price tag. Film has long been associated with museum culture, but more often as a side show, as for example with MOMA's long-standing archive and film programming. *The Clock* is exemplary, furthermore, of a mode of artist's cinema that is collectively produced in an artist's studio with paid assistants—a far cry from the personal craftsmanship and independence of the experimental filmmaker working on a shoestring budget. Nevertheless, *The Clock* engages with many tropes of the smaller-scale experimental practice of found footage film and video.

Several authors in this dossier contextualize *The Clock* within the long and varied tradition of archival practices of the moving image. Martine Beugnet draws out the comparison between *The Clock* and a number of other filmmakers, including Gustav Deutsch, Thom Andersen, Claudio Pazienza, Matthias Muller, Tracy Moffatt, and Agnès Varda. Compared to the work of these filmmakers, she argues that *The Clock* is a “closed formal system” that “runs itself.” For her, it is symptomatic of the museumification of cinema, which is tied in turn to the death of the medium. Ripe for preservation, its afterlife is perhaps in the art gallery. Like early cinema, *The Clock* is promoted as a novelty event, but one which, Beugnet argues, lacks any critique of the commodity culture in which it participates.

For Beugnet, the serialization and strict taxonomy of *The Clock*, with its regulated formal structure and theme, aligns it closely with advertising practices. Compared, for example, to the more aleatory movement of Varda's *The Gleaners and I* (FR, 2000), *The Clock* embraces the distracted gaze of the museum-goer as shopper, consuming images. *The Clock*'s emphasis on western film clips (i.e., Euro-American) constitutes a kind of western time, which Beugnet is critical of as well. She points out that resistance and subversion depend substantially on the way that archival art investigates the production context of the images that are appropriated. However, Beugnet's critique is balanced with an appreciation for the ways in which *The Clock* engages the spectator on a level that is at once passive and active, absorbed and distracted, a theme that is taken up in my own essay in the dossier.

Of the five essays included here, Eli Horwatt's is perhaps the most critical, as he situates *The Clock* within a history of art practice that goes well beyond the moving image. He places Marclay's project of serialized taxonomy within the



Figure 2. Christian Marclay, installation view of *The Clock* (2010). Single-channel video with sound; 24 hours. White Cube Mason's Yard, London (October 15–November 13, 2010) © Christian Marclay. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York and White Cube, London. Photo: Todd-White Photography.

context of other art practices that display a more critical intervention into the instrumental logic of iconographic serialism. For example, Marcel Broodthaers' critique of the "administered world" and Annette Messager's collection of consumer-culture imagery are staged as critical interventions into the visual archive. From the perspective of a politics of representation, Horwatt finds that Marclay's aesthetics, including several other installations in addition to *The Clock*, fail to attain a critical perspective on the disciplinary logic of the archive.

Horwatt's inquiry into database art opens up a fascinating set of questions regarding the visual archive, one of which is the extent to which Marclay's film clips are drained of historicity: does the smooth flow of his editing remove the rough edges of material history, as Beugnet also suggests? Horwatt explores these questions in reference to Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst's exploration of an "archive for visual concepts" and Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*. The art of assemblage, collage, and reassembly arguably entered the realm of popular culture with Michael Jackson's *Man in the Mirror* video of 1987, which Bill Wees described as exemplary of simulacral postmodern pastiche without access to the truth of history.⁴ Marclay has taken this tendency even further in his montage of

fictional images; we are in the realm of media with no escape. For Horwatt, *The Clock* lacks a critique of the archival practices of memory and historicity upon which it draws, and so he aligns it with a memory crisis of contemporary culture. Although Marclay has indexed the gestures of narrative cinema, all that it adds up to, in the end, is the time of day. Horwatt argues that there is no new knowledge produced.

In her essay, Catherine Fowler looks more closely at the language of gesture that becomes visible in *The Clock*. She links it to the work of a very different group of found-footage filmmakers: Joseph Cornell, Ken Jacobs, and Martin Arnold. Each of these filmmakers, she argues, extracts a sense of “the moment” as it is inscribed in human gesture. Extracted from narrative purpose and “replayed” in fragmentary form, the movement of a head or hand becomes a temporal sign. The film fragments in *The Clock*, likewise, feature familiar gestures that are repeated over and over again, particularly the movement of a hand turning to view a wristwatch, reaching for a phone, or reaching to turn off an alarm clock. Fowler links the specific gestures of reaching for a phone, a repeated theme in *The Clock*, as well as in Marclay’s 1995 video collage *Telephones* (UK/US), to his deejay practice in terms of the hand gestures of hand-to-ear and hand-to-disk or dial. Marclay’s art practice includes sound art as well as visual art, using his techniques of sampling and replaying in both.

Once we consider the art of collage and appropriation as a practice of replaying, Fowler suggests that the films in question, including *The Clock* and *Rose Hobart* (Cornell, US, 1936), for example, enact a form of presence “in the present.” Gestures take time, and according to Vilém Flusser, should therefore be considered a unique form of representation that links thoughts to hands. Fowler points out that Godard invokes a parallel observation towards the end of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (FR, 1997–98) in a montage of hands and gestures borrowed from feature films. For Godard, Fowler argues, the cinema constitutes a means of acting, doing, and intervening in history. It is not outside history, but an integral part of historical thought.

The comparison of *The Clock* with *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is an important and complex one, as both films engage with decades of film history through monumental collage-based forms. The differences between the two works are significant. Where Marclay’s source material is largely from unremarkable, genre-based Anglo-American films, Godard’s collage is a highly selective curated sampling of European art cinema, Hollywood auteur cinema (Hitchcock, Welles, et al.), and includes newsreels and documentaries. Although both Godard and Marclay use film soundtracks matched with different films, *The Clock* includes no titles, intertitles, or commentary, while Godard overlays his borrowed imagery with voiceover, cryptic and poetic intertitles, classical music, and fragments of

found sound. Within this palimpsest of materials Godard weaves a sophisticated commentary on the cinema as an (American) industry and as an art with global implications for thinking through the catastrophic history of the twentieth century. As Nora Alter argued in a conference presentation on *The Clock*, Godard's film also engages with time at a completely different pace, challenging the viewer to "rethink and re-feel form and experience."⁵

The comparison of these two works is also a difference between a work (Godard's) that looks backward with longing and melancholy and one that looks forward to the unknown afterlife of cinema. They are works of different orders and, arguably, different media. Both Kaja Silverman and Monica Dall'Asta have linked Benjamin's "On the Concept of History" to Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema*. Silverman argues that Benjamin is "the resident spirit" of Godard's found footage epic, insofar as he shares Benjamin's "belief in the capacity of the image to awaken us from the dream of the 19th century." Like *The Arcades Project*, Godard's monumental film "constitutes a compendium of dialectical images."⁶ Dall'Asta makes a similar argument regarding the affinities between these two projects, pointing out that Godard casts the spectator as an agent of history. Viewing a history constructed of film fragments, "the spectator can now tell the story of his/her own history: a story in which s/he is also the only leading character: the history of passivity, of the beginning of history as spectacle, of the end of history as praxis."⁷ Godard embraces cinema as a means of bringing the past into the present, even while he laments a cinema that might have been.

Despite the profound differences between Godard's and Marclay's projects, these references to Benjamin are equally relevant to *The Clock*. Walter Benjamin's name comes up in several of the essays collected here, and he is often associated with practices of found footage filmmaking, for a number of reasons. He himself used a method of quotation and montage in his monumental *Arcades Project*; moreover, he understood historiography itself as a method of quotation, excavation, and fragmentation. These techniques were, for him, important means of circumventing linear narratives of historical thought that were inevitably tied to myths of progress. His directive to "brush history against the grain," written as Europe succumbed to the mid-century horrors of Nazi occupation, entailed a recognition of the wreckage of history—its ruins—and the ongoing catastrophe of modernity. Moreover, Benjamin understood film as a technology that offered great potential for the materialist historian, even if he left the precise strategies somewhat unresolved. The dialectical image in *The Arcades Project* and the "now-time" (in which the past charges the present with a blast of recognition) are provocative concepts for archival film and media practices.

The Clock may always appear hopelessly frivolous and superficial beside Godard's more penetrating analysis of film history. However, where Godard

places himself and his films centrally in his work, Marclay's approach can be a welcome alternative to the omnipresence of the cinematic auteur (even if he relies heavily on the invisibility of labor in his production process). Moreover, Godard has not, in Benjamin's words, rescued his film history from "its enshrinement as heritage."⁸ Godard speaks extensively about affect and the sensual components of cinema, coming back repeatedly to tropes of gender and romantic love, two of the great themes of narrative cinema. In *The Clock*, on the other hand, although it has an equally masculine bent (as I elaborate in my essay), film heritage is cast adrift in favor of a more direct indulgence in the sensual affect of the cinema as color, movement, action, and music. The content of *The Clock*—its sounds and images—demand to be read on the level of historical forms and styles rather than names and dates. The film clips tend to foreground details of fashion, film style, and gesture that take on a newfound legibility. I would argue that Marclay's project belongs within a resurgence of archival art practices after the Cold War that Jan Verwoert has described as a "shock of the unsuspected return of meaning to the arbitrary sign."⁹

As Fowler argues, the isolation of gesture in film clips rescued from the archive is a means of linking the human body with the temporality of "the moment," a discrete point in time. For Benjamin, the now-time [*Jetztzeit*] of the correspondence of past and present, potentially embedded in the dialectical image, has a utopian potential that he associated both with the Marxist revolution and Messianic revelation. The synchronicity of *The Clock* has been described by Rosalind Krauss as an instantiation of the "now effect" theorized by Husserl and critiqued by Derrida. At issue for these theorists is the self-presence or consciousness of self necessary to the ability to conceive of the present as a once-only event. Marclay, according to Krauss, has discovered something new about medium specificity that counters Derrida's suspicions about the capacity of representation to realize the "now-effect" of self-presence.¹⁰ When Krauss writes that a "specific medium" is explored in *The Clock*, we need to pause and ask to which medium she is referring. Is this cinema? In fact, I would argue that it is not cinema but multimedia, combining installation art with digital cinema. What is at stake in *The Clock* is an experience, and it is one that produces a strong sense of the moment as an experience of being in the present. Whether it has revolutionary potential or not probably depends on the viewer and his/her level of engagement with the text as it unfolds.

In my essay, I argue that *The Clock* is exemplary of Benjamin's notion of the "second nature" created in technological modernity by the image sphere in which we find ourselves immersed. The degree to which the work triggers memories will vary according to the viewer's cinephiliac inclinations, but for all spectators it creates a sense of correspondence between the fictions to which we have devoted so much of our time and the actual, real time of the present moment. In this sense,



Figure 3. Christian Marclay, video still from *The Clock* (2010). Single-channel video with stereo sound; 24 hours, looped. © Christian Marclay. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

I think the inclusion of overlooked genre films and TV extracts is crucial, as they carry intimations of “wasted time,” the *durée* of modernity, or what Benjamin referred to as “spleen.” For Benjamin, kitsch was a key surrealist concept and figure of melancholy, especially when it takes the form of a souvenir, a fragment of memory that intensifies a moment otherwise lost to the past. *The Clock* in this sense constitutes a kind of collection, in which each piece of fiction is a document of another moment in time.

Celeste Olalquiaga has interpreted Benjamin’s conception of kitsch most eloquently. She distinguishes between the fossilized time of nostalgic kitsch (linked to Benjamin’s *mémoire volontaire*) and the souvenirs of unconscious remembrance and melancholy (linked to the *mémoire involontaire*). She says: “The yearning of reminiscence is nostalgic and never really leaves the past, while that of remembrance must be anchored in the present to experience the loss for which it melancholically languishes.”¹¹ The thousands of film clips that are collected in *The Clock* are exemplary, in my view, of kitsch as unconscious remembrance, souvenirs of memories we didn’t know we had. Torn from genre films primarily (but not exclusively), the torrent of images reacquaint us with long lost stars and movies that, like kitschy commodities, are products of industrial commerce and reproductive technologies. They are affective and sensual, and yet we still need to ask: where is the *détournement*? How is this not another incarnation of the “Society of the Spectacle” that Guy Debord so critically dismantled in his own found footage rage against the image-machine of commodity capitalism? My own

answer is simply the ability to leave at any time. *The Clock* addresses the viewer as the hypnotised, entranced spectator of narrative fiction; but equally as the mobile spectator of installation gallery art. We are free to go at any time, and people do come and go constantly from the theater space. This may not be a persuasive form of critique, but it aligns the work with the situationist *derive*, while stressing the experiential dimension of the piece that never lets us forget our own routine that is being interrupted as long as we remain seated in the darkened theater.

The cinephiliac trance created by *The Clock*—its lure—is offset by its discontinuous, heterogeneous style of collage and its predication on “now time” or continuous present tense. We cannot really lose ourselves if we always know what time it is in the real world. For Peter Osborne, the dialectics of duration and distraction are in fact characteristic of film and video in the gallery. The gallery, in his view, constitutes the new “training ground” of distracted reception, which Benjamin identified with film in the 1930s. Osborne points out that the philosophy of time has become a mine of conceptual resources for contemporary art, among which the notion of duration has been revised and rethought. The Bergsonian notion of temporal duration or *durée*, as a dynamic now-time, implies an independence from spatial coordinates and thus seems to apply especially well to the darkened theater of the cinema. As Osborne points out, the “marked spatiality” of the modes of display in museum spaces “undercuts the false absolutism of time to which cinema is prone. Furthermore, it highlights the constructed character of temporal continuity.”¹²

As several contributors to the dossier indicate, *The Clock* is part of a larger cycle of gallery-based audio-visual works that engage with media archaeology. Through these works, we arguably come to understand cinema in new ways, and Marclay has pushed this practice farther than anyone yet into an exploration of the archive. Given the work’s limited circulation at the time of writing, getting close to the text to analyze its cinephiliac density remains an elusive and formidable task. Many viewers have only seen a few hours in the afternoon and only a small percentage of people have seen the evening sections, and fewer still have seen the full twenty-four hours, because most galleries showing the work only stay open all night a handful of times during the exhibition. Because of the lack of credits or any other identifying cues, including subtitles, *The Clock* makes large demands on audio-visual recognition and legibility. Different viewers will inevitably come away with different conceptions of the cultural scope of the work, depending on their recognition of sources. For the cinephile, it is somewhat overwhelming, like being a kid in a candy shop, even while soliciting many complaints about films that Marclay should have included.

The quest to identify the sources of the film clips is, perhaps, a red herring, even if it is a tempting preoccupation. *The Clock* is definitely not a curated

work in the sense of a collection of key films that reference time, but it engages provocatively with a key tendency of art practices since the 1920s to recast the archive as a series or collection lacking a principle of provenance. Sven Spieker argues that after the surrealists, chance has invaded the archive “where it now wreaks havoc with the archive’s ambition to produce an ordered record of time.”¹³ The chaos and entropy of archival art practices, according to Spieker, comes about as a challenge to the archival order of “the principle of provenance” that governed the nineteenth century archive. In *The Clock* we quite remarkably have a reconstructed chronology from within the contingency of the archive, and it depends to some extent on our willingness not to identify the sources of the clips but to take them on their own terms. If “provenance” encompasses authorship and authenticity, the clips in *The Clock* are only as authentic as their profilmic materials, the most obvious of which is the bodies of actors. Like the collage of fashion and architecture, the aging actors embody a multiplicity of histories, of which the film titles and directors are relegated to afterthoughts.

Spieker describes late twentieth century art practices of artists such as Walid Raad and Gerhard Richter as follows:

Frequently resembling databases more than archives based in the principle of provenance, these archives focus on the signifier over its mythical or monumental signified, and they suggest that the relationship between signifiers in an archive is not determined by chronology alone . . . it is not the linear sequence of moments . . . that takes center stage but the possibility of their combination and concatenation.¹⁴

The Clock may be somewhat aligned with these projects, as it tends to transform the film archive into a database, even if it is one that requires manual searching; but it opens up a difficult return to chronology. Historical chronology remains fragmented and nonlinear, and yet a chronological principle has taken center stage, returning the work to the regimes of bureaucracy and administration that the avant-garde had otherwise jettisoned—as Eli Horwatt points out. Marclay can be said to find order within contingency by bringing clock faces from the background into the foreground of the *mise en scene*, and there is a way in which the familiarity of his sources arguably returns us to an archive based on principles of provenance. Why else would there be so much distaste and discomfort with his use of kitsch and genre films?

The Clock is in this sense a twenty-first century work, responding to the new status of the archive as an infinite and omnipresent feature of everyday life. Spieker suggests that “when an archive has to collect everything, because every object may become useful in the future, it will soon succumb to entropy and chaos.”¹⁵

Marclay's attempt to find order within the chaos of the film archive challenges a certain tendency of the avant-garde, even while it transforms the experimental filmmaker into an international art star. If the order of the twenty-four hour clock is a transparent conceit that harbours within it 100 years of film history, the audio-visual archive with which we have come to remember and store our everyday lives on the internet is likewise a dupe for actual experience of modernity.

We should keep in mind as well that there are other ways of filming time than in the registration of clock time. One BBC presenter introduces a news story on *The Clock* by saying, "A stark reminder of the journey from past to present to future. Christian Marclay's new video installation . . . worries away incessantly at the human perception of time."¹⁶ *The Clock*, however precisely fails to take us on any such journey. We are very much stuck in the present, although we may be able to conceive of that present as an impermanent state that corresponds to other discrete moments in the past and in the future. Moreover, the incessant anxiety about time is produced by industrial modernity and its obsessions with regulation and synchronization, and is not the only means of perceiving time.

Peter Mettler's experimental documentary *The End of Time* (CA, 2012) collects images of natural phenomena, such as the incremental movement of lava and islands changing shape in the Pacific, the swarming of ants, and the invisible temporalities of particle physics. These are temporal processes that render human time as one among many registers of temporality. The decay of cities, for example, like seasonal, generational, and astronomical times, is a form of time that Mettler renders cinematic in his own footage. Chronology plays no role whatsoever in this film, and neither does it draw on any archives other than Mettler's own store of images. This work makes a nice comparison with *The Clock* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, reminding us that there are many ways in which the cinema, as a time-based medium, can represent time, and many forms of time that lie beyond visual representation.

Clocks and watches come in all shapes and sizes, but most often they are round, in the shape of a face. This is the predominant image of *The Clock*, which itself is a perfect circle, having no ending or beginning. Stories come and go, but no story is told. It is not the history of cinema, or the twentieth century, or even a narrative of the future. It is only the story of everyday life in the movies, a story of storytelling. How boring is that?

The essays in this dossier, in their variety of approaches, indicate the complexity of *The Clock*, even if they lack consensus on its merits. It is a work that challenges film criticism, not only because of its multimedia or hybrid character, but equally due to its inversion of hierarchies of taste. Marclay's desire to please and entertain could not be further from the objectives of the avant-garde (even if Godard himself as a younger man managed to work with genre cinema in a

critical yet entertaining fashion). Most striking about the diversity of perspectives that are collected here is the different contexts and comparable works that *The Clock* evokes, from experimental film practices and documentaries to a range of gallery-based works. Perhaps the work will become more accessible to close analysis eventually, and we can continue to discuss its intervention into audio-visual culture for years to come. Maybe, in a world where copyright holders and proprietary museums relinquish their hold on the image-bank, *The Clock* will migrate out of the gallery and find its true home on the internet. Travellers in airports and train stations (key locales in *The Clock*) will be able to watch it online, while remaining on schedule.

Catherine Russell is Professor of Film Studies at Concordia University, Montreal. She is the author of four books, including *Classical Japanese Cinema Revisited*, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio: Women and Japanese Modernity*, *Narrative Mortality: Death, Closure and New Wave Cinemas*, and *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*. She has published extensively on Japanese Cinema, experimental film, Canadian cinema, and Walter Benjamin. She is presently co-editor of the *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*.

NOTES

I would like to thank Erika Balsom for her help putting this dossier and the original SCMS panel together. I would also like to thank Dominic Leppla for research assistance. This project was supported in part by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

1. The Girardet piece that anticipates *The Clock* is *60 Seconds (analog)* (2003).
2. Iain Sinclair, "Time Pieces," email exchange between Chris Petit and Iain Sinclair, *Film Comment* (May–June 2011).
3. *The Clock* won the Boston Society of Film Critics Award for editing in 2011.
4. William C. Wees, *Recycled Images: The Art and Politics of Found Footage Films* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1993), 45.
5. Nora Alter, "Different Histories of Cinema: Godard and Marclay," Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference, Chicago, March 2013.
6. Kaja Silverman, "The Dream of the Nineteenth Century," *Camera Obscura* 51, Volume 17, no. 3 (2000): 5.
7. Monica Dall'Asta, "The (Im)possible History," in *Forever Godard*, eds. Michael Temple, James S. Williams and Michael Witt (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 360.
8. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 473.

9. Jan Verwoert, "Apropos Appropriation: Why Stealing Images Today Feels Different," *Art & Research* Vol. 1 no. 2 (Summer 2007) www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/verwoert.html, no page. Accessed May 13, 2013.
10. Rosalind Krauss, "Clock Time," *October* 136 (Spring 2011): 213–17.
11. Celeste Olalquiaga, *The Artificial Kingdom: On the Kitsch Experience* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1998), 74.
12. Peter Osborne, "Distracted Reception: Time, Art and Technology," in *Time Zones: Recent Film and Video*, eds. Jessica Morgan and Gregor Muir (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), 72.
13. Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008), 54.
14. *Ibid.*, 136.
15. *Ibid.*, xiii.
16. "Christian Marclay – The Clock," YouTube video, 6:59, from a performance televised by BBC 2 on Nov. 11, 2010, posted by "chriscatilo," May 11, 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB3CgEnxnYY, accessed May 10, 2013.