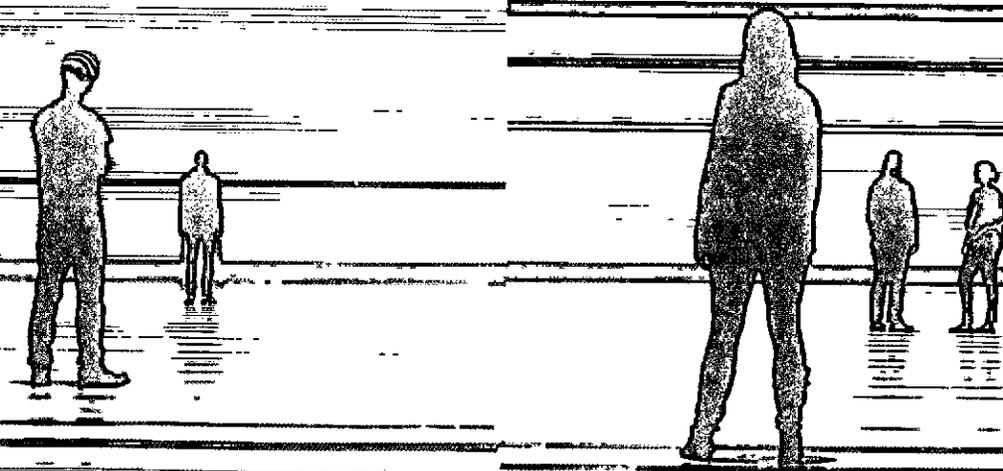


# ABSTRACT VIDEO

THE MOVING IMAGE IN CONTEMPORARY ART



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FOREWORD BY KATE MONDLOCH

## REAL TIME, SCREEN TIME

Lumi Tan

For visitors to any major museum in the past two decades, the process of viewing contemporary video art is one that is familiar. You round a corner or step through a curtain into a darkened space, starkly separated from the white cube of the galleries exhibiting objects. Temporarily displaced as your eyes adjust, you follow the light until you're faced with one or more large-scale, projected, high definition moving images. The wall label before entering has stated the running time of the video work, but you decide the length of your stay. You settle in and take a seat on a bench or the floor, but most viewers linger on the sidelines only long enough to get a general impression of what they are watching. The allotment of attention for many is akin to looking at a painting or a sculpture for a few seconds, whether the video lasts a few minutes or over an hour. The choice of many artists to show videos in a seamless loop, with no marked beginning or ending, accedes to the viewer in that it affirms there is no correct entry point; it is an invitation to enter at any time. This strategy has become so expected that to have to endure thirty seconds of credits or to have to return for a prescribed start time can seem burdensome. Classics of the genre such as Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) seem to be custom-made for this viewership, where even the iconic violent shower scene of the original film is slowed down enough to appear no more or less captivating to a viewer than any other. The blockbuster reception of Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010) gestures to the same convenience but with the benefit of speed; viewers stayed for hours, at all times of day, to see what film clip would come next, knowing the video would deliver minute-by-minute change.

In the contemporary moment, time is more malleable and self-determined than ever before. This can be attributed to a multitude of reasons, from the demands of a late capitalist society as described by Jonathan Crary—"One of these [normative] conditions can be characterized as a generalized inscription of human life into duration without breaks, defined by a principle of continuous functioning. It is a time that no longer passes, beyond clock time"<sup>1</sup>—to alternative notions of time set apart from dominant narratives such as Judith Halberstam explores in her influential book *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. This essay will discuss how time functions as an abstract material in recent video art, utilizing temporalities of performance, engaging a contemporary viewer who has already experienced the diversity and evolution of the moving image through film, television, and the Internet, and through individualized and communal viewing experiences. Instead of appearing formally abstract, these works reveal their abstraction *through* time, undermining familiarity by altering the viewer's relationship both behind and in front of the camera. Also under consideration is the current preoccupation with "liveness," perpetually mediated through personal methods of documentation such as smartphones or tablets. As Philip Auslander points out in his extensive writing on the term, this hybridization of performance and film was pursued early on in Sergei Eisenstein's works of the early 1920s, as well as in Erwin Piscator's epic theater of the same period; it is nothing new.<sup>2</sup> However, it is *how* these shifts in time are understood in the present moment, where the mediated or fragmented perception of time is so established and commonplace that not only does it distinguish itself from prior modes of viewership, but indeed it asserts an unprecedented dominance over our lived experience.

The history of video art stands as a record of how its contemporaneous public adapted to the consumption of time-based art and entertainment. In Paul Sharits's 1974 manifesto "Statement regarding Multiple Screen/Sound 'Locational' Film Environments—Installations," he stated that one provision for the development of his locational film works would be to not "prescribe a definite duration of respondent's observation (i.e., the respondent may enter and leave at any time)."<sup>3</sup> Sharits, a key figure in American Structuralist film, was one of the first to create film *as* space in the types of installations that are now commonplace (almost to the point of cliché), showing projections in an exhibition context. This was a call for a certain independence from the defined start and end times of the movie theater or performance hall, which infer that the viewer is at a disadvantage if entering late. The audience, referred to by Sharits as an active "respondent" rather than an implicitly passive "viewer," is privileged and autonomous in this new paradigm. This line of thinking corresponded to the audience's role in Minimalism and Conceptual Art, in which the viewer is required to "complete" the work. This breaking down of the traditional audience-performer dichotomy was also well-established in performance by this time. Whether these performances took place in a formal gallery setting or the myriad of informal loft spaces, they allowed the audience to be autonomous, moving freely rather than being tied to a seat, and to determine the beginning

and end of the experience. Already in the 1960s, the Judson Dance Theater had removed theatricality and spectacle from the downtown New York dance scene; Allan Kaprow had started his Happenings; and Vito Acconci, Joan Jonas, Carolee Schneeman, and Jack Smith (to name a few artists among many) had debuted now-canonical live works. Viewers could choose to interact with durational performances as they would an object, a concept that has continued well into the present with the museum's embrace of both video installation and performance (best exemplified in the incredible success of Marina Abramovic's *The Artist Is Present* retrospective at MoMA in 2010). Bruce Nauman, in describing his work *Mapping the Studio I (Fat Chance John Cage)* (2001), which clocked in at forty hours and fifteen minutes when counting all seven video channels, explained, "I wanted the feeling that the piece was just there, almost like an object, just there, ongoing, being itself."<sup>4</sup>

The histories of performance art and video art are inextricably tied—early performance works were disseminated only because of the then-nascent technology, resulting in their tremendous influence over younger generations. Nauman was a seminal figure in the crossover between video installation and performance; whereas artists such as Acconci and Jonas began with live performance and then incorporated film or video or edited documentation of performances to be shown as stand-alone works, Nauman's early works existed only on video (or 16mm film, in some cases) and his audience was found only on the other side of the screen. As a genre, early video art was well-positioned, in Christine Ross's words, to "disrupt dominant conventionalities of time, notably acceleration and temporal linearity."<sup>5</sup> However, the viewers' experience of the work in the gallery setting has not changed much in the past few decades; it is still shown on monitors where, again, viewers have the choice to leave when they want. Due to the prevalence of television as a form of entertainment in the 1970s, this passive mode of watching moving images became habitual to the general public. The one-to-one relationship with a television, rather than the communal relationship of the movie theater, in addition to the technical and physical limitations of the appliance itself made television monitors a natural venue for experimental video art. Television also provided generative material for artists such as Dara Birnbaum and Mike Smith, and artists were often commissioned to make work specifically for television, as Nam June Paik and Stan VanDerBeek did for WGBH in Boston. With broadcast television, the viewer had a few, limited options—when to turn it off and on, what channel to watch and when. The advent of the VCR in the early 1980s radically changed the viewers' control over their time. The cinema was brought into the home, enabling viewers to watch and rewatch programming at any time, regardless of the networks' schedules. Currently, the Internet is the site of entertainment in which the viewer is the programmer, consuming unlimited video content, wherever and whenever, with the additional possibility of creating that content and sharing it at an increasingly accelerated rate. Not only is the content accessible, but so are the modes of production. Wipes, cuts, compositing, special filters—these strategies of controlling time in the moving image are available to anyone

with a computer or a smartphone. Apps like Vine and Instagram offer portable collections of six- or fifteen-second videos; this brevity has bred a new culture of performers who use these constraints to their advantage. The scroll is the new loop, an endless feed of content that extends infinitesimally.

But how does this heightened moment of individualized production and consumption translate to video art in the institutional exhibition space? The museum remains a communal site intended to draw in the general public by offering a distinct alternative to quotidian ways of processing media—and simultaneously, to display and narrate a linear history. How does the presence of the apparatuses of production shift the perception of time in an institutional space? Mika Tajima, *New Humans*, and Charles Atlas explored this question in two recent projects: *Today Is Not a Dress Rehearsal* (fig. 11.1) at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 2009 and *The Pedestrians* (fig. 11.2) at South London Gallery in 2011. Tajima, a multidisciplinary artist with a solo practice, started *New Humans* in 2003 as a collaboration with a rotating group of artists, musicians, and designers; in these installations, the group comprised Howie Chen and Eric Tsai. Atlas is celebrated for his seminal videos with dancers and performers including Leigh Bowery, Michael Clark, Yvonne Rainer, and most famously Merce Cunningham, with whom he worked for over thirty years and exuberantly transformed the genre of contemporary dance for video. The live-editing process that was featured during these collaborations with Tajima and *New Humans* was the latest iteration of his subjective approach to documenting performance. Atlas first brought it into his practice in a 2003 exhibition, *Instant Fame*, at the New York non-profit Participant Inc, in which he live-edited video portraits during short interviews, updating the concept of the portrait studio. He has since brought the process into large-scale performance such as concerts with Antony and the Johnsons and *MC9*, an exhibition and series of performances at the Tate Modern Tanks in 2013.

In *Today Is Not a Dress Rehearsal*, Tajima's sculptures doubled as scenery flats, a strategy seen in earlier exhibitions such as *Disassociate*, at Elizabeth Dee Gallery in 2007, where the panels' positions were changed during the run of the exhibition to delineate private working space such as that seen in a recording studio or cubicle office. This resistance to static positions endowed the objects with performative roles, which she further examined in her 2009 exhibition at X Initiative in New York, which opened during the global recession. Tajima emptied her studio and storage space and placed all her works on view under the title *The Extras*, grouping them in scenarios as if they were performers waiting for their moment in the spotlight next to seamless backdrops, or leaving them in storage racks to be pulled out at a later time. In *Today Is Not a Dress Rehearsal*, the sculptures did finally get their time on stage; silkscreened with graphic images inspired by SFMOMA's architecture, they formed a film set in which Tajima, *New Humans*, and Atlas shot for three days. The installation was programmed as part of the museum's Live Art performance series under the theme of speech as the most basic performative act; invited speakers included the philosopher and theorist Judith Butler (well-known for her work on subject formation through speech) and members of the

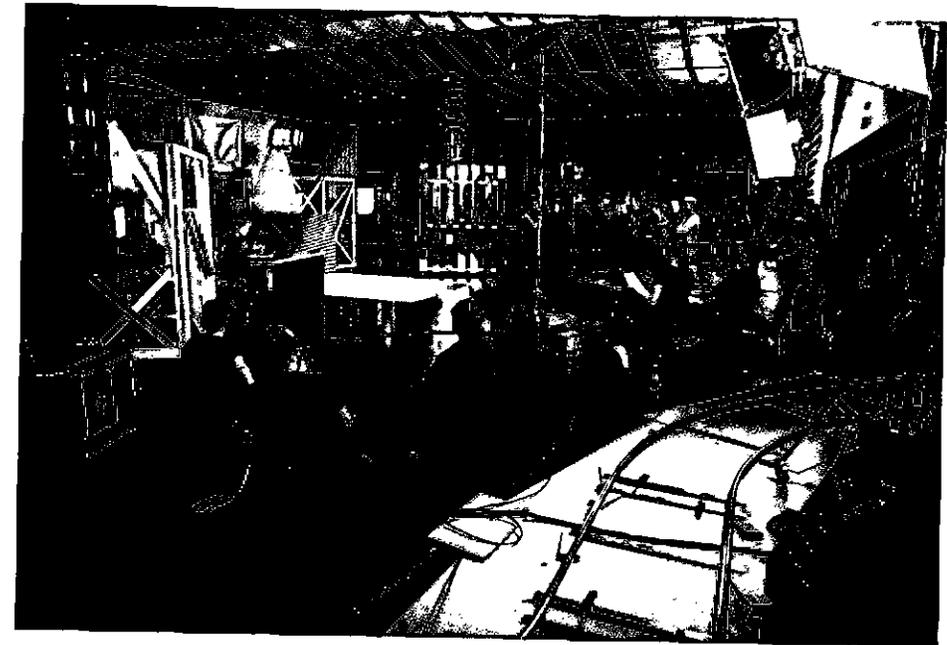


FIGURE 11.1

Mika Tajima/*New Humans* and Charles Atlas, *Today Is Not a Dress Rehearsal*, 2009. Multimedia performance installation. Courtesy of the artist and SFMOMA.

local chapter of Toastmasters, the public speaking association. *New Humans* manipulated the sound during recording and also participated with a noise performance; Atlas live-edited the footage, which was simultaneously projected onto the scenic elements and in a separate theater at the museum.

The installation was billed as “film production as performance,” and the public was invited to see all stages of the production, with or without performances taking place, or to experience time more flatly in the theater. Tajima explained that she wanted to address “anticipation: we’re ready and excited and want to see some kind of action. We want that theatrical experience of a fast, quick spectacle, but the idea of film production itself is actually this elongated, almost mundane activity that happens over extended periods of time. There’s a lot of activity, there’s a lot of people working on projects and moving things back and forth, but it’s that intangible aspect of work itself.”<sup>6</sup> Multiple temporalities were made visible to the audience, who could move between them by choosing which situation to take part in: the inefficiency of film production that is intended to create a finished product that erases the labor put into it; the live speeches that were constantly interrupted by Tajima’s directions to change the set and lights and thus never completed; the instant video mixing; the displacement of that product to another physical space; and the exhibition that is left when the artists and performers are not present. These actions were then repeated at the start of each day—Suzanne

Hudson identified this temporality as “in use, used, to be used again.”<sup>7</sup> Since Atlas’s mixing was live, and each part of the process was no more or less important or essential to the performance as a whole, there was no exhibited “result” or conclusion, no summary of activity. This predilection towards process over product is also referenced in the title, a motivational aphorism to make every moment count. (Edited footage of the performance was shown in a later group exhibition at SFMOMA entitled *Stage Presence*, in 2012; however, both Tajima’s and Atlas’s versions were shown, again addressing the idea of individualized experience even on the part of the makers.) Exposing the “action,” as banal as it may be, allows the audience to feel as though they are witnessing a parallel time, one that is typically left behind in the editing room. In the conception of these productions as performances, Tajima has referenced Jean-Luc Godard’s 1968 film *Sympathy for the Devil*, which combines documentation of the Rolling Stones rehearsing the eponymous song in a recording studio, interspersed with fictionalized scenes of revolutionary actions. The lateral, 360-degree tracking shot used in the film is a strategy to flatten time; a corollary to the video loop; it exaggerates the hulls in time, the redundancy, and the confinement that production entails.

This mise-en-scène was expanded in *The Pedestrians* two years later, where the artists had ten days to film, with the ensuing videos and installation on view for another ten days. Rather than being behind the scenes as in *Today Is Not a Dress Rehearsal*, viewers were instead circulating *within* the scene; the press release termed the walkway that cut through the space as “at once arcade, exhibition, passage, runway, and stage.” Themed around the politics of walking in public space, the installation at South London Gallery included a dolly track that circled the entire gallery, defining the limits of a set/stage inside. Atlas’s live video edits were projected high onto the walls above the set/stage, and the program of performances was broadened to address sound, speech, and movement and included video artist John Smith, choreographer Gaby Agis, and talks by Richard Hornsey and Nina Power. Atlas explained, “The only way for spectators to see it was to walk through it, to traverse the length of the gallery, so that the film set became a stage or a tracking-shot vector. Also, the live mixes being projected into the installation space created a visual feedback loop that heightened awareness of what was being produced from within the action in the space.”<sup>8</sup> Tajima added, “The audience, performers, and technicians were producing and being produced simultaneously, depending on where they were located.”<sup>9</sup> In Smith’s performance, he read excerpts from texts in his past videos (in which he often acts as unreliable narrator controlling the viewer’s perspective), interspersing his narration with his bellowing instructions through a megaphone as *New Humans* provided an ambient sound track. This demonstrated a deliberate disorientation of the audience, who sat on the floor in the center of the room; even though the “action” in this later exhibition was more explicit, it was still unclear where to look or what to do: At Smith playing the role of director (but not directing other performers)? At Tajima being the “actual” director? At Atlas’s videos, or at your fellow audience members? At the musicians? Tajima has often spoken of this absence of a focal



FIGURE 11.2

Charles Atlas, Mika Tajima, and New Humans, *The Pedestrians*, 2011. Multimedia performance installation. Courtesy of the artist and South London Gallery.

point: “There’s a constant shifting of where you should actually look. If you’re watching one of the videos, you can easily get distracted by the other video or the sculptures.”<sup>10</sup> One could read these multiple viewpoints as their own type of abstraction, where each viewing experience becomes disjunctive, removed from any linear trajectory or proper viewing etiquette. Moving the audience onstage, surrounded by a dolly track that acts as a significant barrier between the set and the “real” world, allows another level of direction not integrated into *Today Is Not a Dress Rehearsal*. These two installations are works-in-progress that revel in the lack of finality, instilling an abstracted timeline into the presupposed linear narratives of institutions.

Tajima, *New Humans*, and Atlas’s installations made explicit the idea of the film set as an isolated environment where time does not exist, where it is instead produced and reproduced by a set of technical controls like lighting and editing. In his essay “Toward a Non-Bourgeois Camera Style,” Brian Henderson writes that “Cinema, like painting, is a two-dimensional art which creates the illusion of a third dimension. . . . Cinema escapes the limits of two dimensions through its own third dimension, time. . . . Cinema overcomes two-dimensionality through its ‘walk-around capability,’ which is also a prime feature of ordinary human perception.”<sup>11</sup> Published in *Film Quarterly* in 1970, the text analyzes Godard’s use of the lateral tracking shot in *Sympathy for the Devil* and *Weekend* (1967).



FIGURE 11.3  
Alix Pearlstein, *Moves in the Field*, 2012. Single-channel, HD video, color, sound; 20 minutes.  
Courtesy of the artist and On Stellar Rays, NYC.

Alix Pearlstein's work is unparalleled in its "walk-around" capability; her camera is liberated from the established rules of illusion in regard to the objectivity of the camera or the person holding it. Although the camera moves in a space, that space often remains undefined, even if the set may be entirely specific to the institution where the videos are shown. For Pearlstein's 2008 exhibition at The Kitchen, she shot three video works—*After the Fall*, *Goldrush* (both 2008), and *Two Women 2* (2007–2008)—in the black box theater to be shown in the white cube gallery (painted black in this instance). While this particular site is charged with a history of experimental theater, one could argue that to the general public, it is a void like any other empty set. For *The Dark Pavement*, her 2013 exhibition at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, she shot in the institution's cellar, parking lot, and gallery space; yet, even for a viewer watching these videos inside the exhibition space, the sites can still remain anonymous or foreign. Pearlstein's videos usually refute any immediate references to the outside world but can draw upon other historical video or film works; many writing on her work have observed that the videos feel like laboratories for human experimentation, a sealed world of her own design. Even though artifice, in the expected theatrical or cinematic sense, is removed from the work, this affective tension between her performers is what keeps the viewer fully engaged in Pearlstein's world and convinced by the abstracted time depicted within.



FIGURE 11.4  
Alix Pearlstein, installation view: *Moves in the Field*, 2012 (single-channel, HD video, color, sound; 20 minutes), and *The Drawing Lesson*, 2012 (single-channel, HD video, color, sound; 7 minutes, 13 seconds). Courtesy of the artist and On Stellar Rays, NYC.

In *The Drawing Lesson*, Pearlstein's 2012 exhibition at On Stellar Rays gallery, two videos with shared sensibilities, *The Drawing Lesson* and *Moves in the Field* (both 2012) (figs. 11.3 and 11.4), were shown in one space. Both pieces share casts diverse in age, race, and gender, dressed in white tops and black pants; both were filmed against a white cyclorama typically used for commercial photography shoots. There is a complete absence of mise-en-scène in these spaces, and when any hint of a physical space is revealed, it comes as a relief to the viewer that these characters are in a "real" space. In *Moves in the Field*, there is no soundtrack, only the diegetic sound of footsteps, the actors' breathing, or the air against the microphone as it accompanies a fast-moving camera. The term "moves in the field" is from figure skating and refers to basic skating skills and edge control—essentially, the smoothest and fastest way to travel around the rink. This motion is reflected in the freehand camera work and delivers the perspective from eye level, mimicking a human manner of observation. This human quality is enhanced in moments when the camera pans too quickly from side to side, so that the field of vision blurs, or when it moves uncommonly close to an actor's face so that light bounces off skin, or when it is allowed to shake. Responding to instructions by Pearlstein, the actors shift from facing each other in pairs to gathering in seemingly random groups, to moving off camera and suddenly appearing in another, unexpected spatial plane.

Crucial to Pearlstein's videos, the performers are professional theater actors or other performers who are able to express psychological intensity without any narrative framework; they are neither actors playing a part or amateurs being natural. In a 2012 interview in *BOMB* magazine, Pearlstein quotes another of Henderson's observations in reference to *Moves in the Field*: "His [Godard's] camera serves no individual and prefers none to another. It never initiates movement to follow a character, and if it picks one up as it moves, it leaves him behind haphazardly."<sup>12</sup> At first encounter, the movements feel improvisatory or random, but repetition and pattern slowly become apparent. The performers often look directly into the camera, reciprocating the careful observation by the viewer. Halfway through the video, a performer jogs through the set as if he missed his cue and is trying to hit his mark; this seems to indicate a point when the action diversifies. Hand gestures and expressions of smiles or disappointment begin to occur, and performers even make physical contact—an act that feels radical in this scenario. Other small actions become monumental: a female performer has a costume change into a black dress, runs towards the camera barefoot, repeats this action minutes later, and then eventually appears back in her white shirt and pants. A fog emitted from a noisy machine rolls into the scene and then disappears without affecting the performers. The effect here is highly theatrical; the tight framing of the camera allows the viewer to imagine that the actors move off stage, exiting and entering the scene as directed. However, this effect is disturbed by Pearlstein's seamless editing, in which the video appears as one single continuous take. In each of her works, this tension between the expectations of theatrical and cinematic constructions of time are complicated by the illusion of real time. Pearlstein has remarked, "As soon as you're working with duration, you're working with contingency. Working with longer durations allows the sense of the immediacy of a live performance (that it's never the same from one performance to the next) to be translated into a mediated situation."<sup>13</sup> The viewer has a trust that the camera is capturing what we are supposed to see, even when the camera's point of view is completely disorienting in terms of space and depth.

In *The Drawing Lesson*, the action is far more simple, consistent, and repetitive. The camera begins by circling around a female performer sitting in a white folding chair, who at first looks straight ahead, ignoring the camera. On subsequent tours around her, her look follows the camera, swiveling quickly to catch it, similar to a dancer "spotting" while turning. Although the camera here is also freehand, the movement is significantly smoother, simulating a camera on a track, with a calming rhythm to how it negotiates the room. As the camera captures the off-stage areas, it exposes the edges of the cyclorama, rooting the action in the physical space and hinting that the set is on a proscenium stage. The camera returns to find a different configuration, adding one performer at a time until the group reaches four, then removing an actor until only two remain. The effect is not theatrical here as in *Moves in the Field*; the viewer does not imagine that there is a stagehand scrambling to reset the chairs before each cycle, and there is no sound of footsteps to denote this off-stage action (which is especially notice-

able since this video also features diegetic sound). Additionally, the viewer can predict the action in a way not possible in *Moves in the Field*. The camera approaches the group with a long shot and then zooms in as it approaches the performers; by establishing this set trajectory, the camera differentiates itself from the viewer's perspective. Thus, the piece is more illusionistic and establishes itself in the realm of cinema. When taking *The Drawing Lesson*'s reference point into consideration, Pearlstein can be seen as literalizing Henderson's idea of cinema's third dimension of time; the video is based on a sculpture based on a painting. Giulio Paolini's *Tre per tre (ognuno è l'altro o nessuno)* (Three by three [each is the other or no one]; 1999) is a life-sized sculpture that thrice replicates the artist figure depicted in Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's *The Drawing Lesson* (1734). However, in Paolini's work, only one of these figures actually functions in the role of the artist with pencil and paper in hand. One figure is the model being observed by this artist, and the third merely observes the two others, off to the side. This unusual configuration of artist, model, and viewer was somewhat mirrored in the installation of *Moves in the Field* and *The Drawing Lesson* at On Stellar Rays; the viewer was physically caught between inclusion and exclusion and the structural differences within each scenario, which, at first encounter, seem extremely similar.

This analogy can also be extended to the transposing of performative roles within the works of both Pearlstein and Tajima-New Humans-Atlas. Tajima said of *The Pedestrians*, "Charlie [Atlas] has a seminal film, *Hail the New Puritan*. It has a lot of elements that I wanted to translate for the new situation: the director as actor, viewers as performers, musicians as extras, artworks as props."<sup>14</sup> Pearlstein has said, "The focus is on the actor, and that's a focus on us—they stand in for us, for the viewer, for everyone. That focus animates the relationship between performance, theater, and film. These forms all trade places in my work: film acts like theater, performance acts like film."<sup>15</sup> Each of these shifts between the roles of artist/director, performers, audience, and setting is echoed in the perception and production of time as well and points to the instability of any of these positions in contemporary art or even culture at large.

No longer is it as simple as believing that performance is live and anything on a screen is edited or mediated, as it may have been at the start of the intersection between video and performance. Even the "live feed" is almost never as labeled; even though the Internet makes a live feed relatively simple to achieve, audiences expect regular minor or major delays in the transfer of the image or the buffering of video. These delays are thus delays in communication, clarity, and comprehension. An act like Atlas's live mixing complicates this dynamic further; this act is quite performative in itself (his presence on stage is akin to a DJ at a club, a conductor who is slightly removed from the center of attention), and these effects are overtly synthetic, making a live experience less realistic, more processed, while adding another layer of temporality that is as instantaneous to the audience as the live performance. Is either experience more "live" than the other? Although these effects are more common now with digital imaging, that these viewing experiences can overlap without conflict speaks to a common expectation of

immediacy. More often than not, at least one mediated image is apparent in our field of vision, and we're able to differentiate between these multiple temporalities with ease—think of how effortless it has become to absorb an automatically updating feed of words or images on a phone while holding a conversation with a person sitting in front of you. Pearlstein's use of professional actors or performers has the same effect as Atlas's act but with opposing means, subtlety heightening the degree of reality or liveness in her performers' behavior. The performances are able to capture the tension between natural and affected, improvised and directed, announcing their own mediation the longer one watches. The artificial environment of the cyclorama (or the black box theater or the white cube gallery) limits the conception of time; the artist's camera further delineates it. Both performers and viewers are made exceptionally aware of the camera's presence as a simultaneous interloper and enabler. Time truly unfolds in these works, only to be collapsed back onto itself as the video loop starts again with no warning.

In Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville's *The Old Place* (1998), a video essay on the history of art commissioned by the Museum of Modern Art, Miéville states, "Art was not sheltered from time. It was the shelter of time." As has been demonstrated over the last forty years, video art has generated more fluid perceptions of time but has also absorbed more dominant forms of media in order to reflect them back to the viewer. Whereas the audience for early video art could effortlessly understand their intimate rapport with the television monitor, the contemporary audience has become increasingly removed from the immediacy of the experiences depicted in the works discussed in this essay. Though we as a culture are more invested in the moving image than ever before, we are more accustomed to the portable small screen than the wall-sized projection, to handheld cameras in lieu of camera crews and dollies, to abbreviated videos instead of ones of long duration, to viewing alone instead of among a crowd.

We can now coerce time into being accessible; it stops and starts to fit the contours of our daily lives, leading to an adaptation of time that has become absolutely quotidian and automatic. The works by Pearlstein, Tajima, and Atlas disturb this ease, putting forth individualized versions of abstraction formed through their gestures towards a sense of reality but never settling there. This reality is not subverted through narrative or illusory images seeking to deceive, but rather through our relationship to time and its production—particularly through the use of the camera. These works do not ask us for a suspension of disbelief but grant a deeper investigation of how temporal abstraction has become the new standard. Bringing about this awareness has been the priority of video artists since the origins of the genre, concurrently debunking the chronological tropes of film and television while providing innovation in the conception and reception of time. It may be the case now that in order to be displaced, to remove ourselves from our present tense, we need the elements particular to video installation: the darkened room or the contained set, the physicality of an installation where other bodies, real or projected, look back at us, move next to us. Ultimately, it remains the viewer's choice to

exit the gallery at any point, leaving the work to be "just there, ongoing, as itself," existing in its own particular temporality.

#### NOTES

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15. Pearlstein and Pilson, "Alix Pearlstein," 126.