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**UNDER CONSTRUCTION:
RECOLLECTING THE MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE**

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by
Andrée Elise Comiskey Betancourt
B.A., Smith College, 1999
M.A., University College Dublin, 2002
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To John Egil Betancourt

- a) For promoting the art of outlining
- b) For the sweet, steady sunshine that nurtures my work
- c) For serving as my personal Olivier Castro-Staal

And in memory of my little brother Joel Richard Jackson Labbé
Expertologist, creative genius, free spirit, collector and fixer of broken things
Loved since November 26, 1983 – missed since July 12, 2006

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PREFACE

FAMILIAL (RE)COLLECTIONS: MOVING IMAGE RELATED SOUVENIRS AND RELICS

“Things tend to be preserved not because they are the best or most significant, unique, typical, or beautiful, but because they are what is left . . . One constructs one’s life from such touchstones. Some of my own souvenirs are literally that—stones often touched, on and off site. Though I cannot remember where they came from, it doesn’t matter, for they are now part of my present life.”

– Lucy Lippard, *On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art, and Place*.

“. . . the collecting I have done, is a reflection of the path my heart has taken. Each and every item is my close companion, and at the same time, my great teacher.”

– Sōetsu Yanagi, translated by Mimura Kyoko, “About Collecting.”

I have moved more than thirty times, and have lived on two continents, in four countries, in nine of the United States, and in a total of fourteen cities. Home has always moved, yet my roots keep me tied to the homes in the Deep South where I grew up and where my family still lives. Along with three of my brothers and one of my sisters, I was primarily raised by my mother, with the help of my maternal grandparents, and also by my second stepfather who my mother married during my tween years. In distinguishing between the concepts of households and homes in *Television and Everyday Life*, Roger Silverstone suggests that homes “are more than just houses” (45). He continues with the assertion that “Home is what is produced or not (we feel or do not feel at home in the spaces we occupy and create); it is produced as the result of productive and reproductive work by its members, and also by a whole range of other activities, principally consumption activities, that have as their end product a more or less powerful statement of identity, ownership, and belonging.” My childhood was heavily marked by the production and consumption of still and moving images, some of which I have grown to depend on when recollecting myself, family members, and former homes.

New modes of mechanical and electronic reproduction debuted during our familial celebrations, and became integrated into our everyday lives. My family slowly appeared on

Polaroid film. We were snapped onto 110mm film; later we were fast-forwarded or rewound on videotape. These days we are digitized. As the eldest child with six siblings, the youngest born when I was sixteen, I was often trusted with the duty of documenting my brothers and sisters. I still have the 35mm Kodak camera that I was given one birthday during my elementary school years, though I believe it is broken.

My mother bought our first VCR in celebration of my spelling bee victory, and Santa gifted my brothers a Nintendo Entertainment System and Game Boys. These days Santa surprises us with Nintendo Wii games, Apple iPhones, and engraved Microsoft Zunes. When my siblings and I behaved properly, our grandmother took us to the dollar movies which, along with numerous other theatres we frequented, has since gone out of business. My mother took us to Movie Gallery to rent *Tron*, *Labyrinth*, *Ghost Busters*, or another of our favorite videotapes or videogame cartridges. She is a professor, so we were introduced to home computers earlier than many of our peers. Before computers arrived in our public schools classrooms, my oldest brother and I participated in the first local computer summer camp where we learned to create digital moving images.

My oldest brother and I share the same biological parents, and we were raised in part by our father and stepmother during holiday and summer visits to Louisiana, our birth state. One of my early childhood memories is watching Stephen King's *Firestarter* in the movie theatre with my father. I doubt my mother would have taken me to a horror movie, but visits with my father were charged with freedom. My father lived on Banks Street in Mid-City New Orleans in the right side of a double shotgun house that was originally a corner store owned by his grandparents. The left side of the house, the former storefront, was rented by a man who repaired video games and pinball machines. My brother and I would stand on our tip toes in order to peer

between the bars on the door and windows in an attempt to gaze at the graveyard of amusements. We longed to break in and spend the sweaty days of our summer vacation playing the dusty yet enticing games that were locked beyond our reach. Instead, we hungrily feasted on cable television, something we did not have at our other home.

My father's television set was at the foot of his bed on a shelf that he constructed out of old cypress recycled from the historic renovations that make up much of his carpentry work. He sleeps with the TV on. If we accidentally turned it off, he would wake up; television was his lullaby. It was in his bed that we were first introduced to MTV and Nickelodeon in the 1980s. We delighted in the old shows featured on Nick at Nite and stayed up until the wee hours watching them as he slept soundly, exhausted after a day of sun and splinters. We wondered what it was like to grow up in black and white on *The Donna Reed Show* or *Mister Ed*. My father remarried, and my stepmother gave birth to my brother and sister. This part of my family moved across Lake Pontchartrain to the Northshore, the Honey Island Swamp area of Slidell to be exact, as they were able to buy a small house on a large piece of property – a carpenter's dream.

My introduction to the film industry was through my father. He has worked as a construction gang boss, foreman, and carpenter/prop maker. For over two decades, he has belonged to the International Alliance of Theatre and Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 478 which, as explained on their website, provides “crew members for the production of commercials, feature films, television and other film projects in Louisiana and Southern Mississippi.” When movies are in town, my father has to commute to the production location since he lives close enough to New Orleans that he does not qualify as an out of town crew member whose lodging expenses are covered. Shoots involve long work days, sometimes

fourteen or more hours per day, seven days a week. Unionized productions cap the number of hours in the work day and enforce breaks.

Manual labor in the Deep South heat and humidity can be particularly exhausting. In order to save money and time otherwise spent commuting, my father sometimes drives an old prison bus to the movie set and spends the night on the bus. My brother Justin recently began working on moving image productions with my father, and is being courted by IATSE. Perhaps Justin will wind up another member of the steadily growing industry of local crew members. Many Louisiana residents wait for glamorous Hollywood VIPs to whisk into town with another film and sweet promises of one's name scrolling up the sultry silver screen at the end of the credits. I have also worked on productions along the Gulf Coast, and relatives, including my stepmom and oldest sister, have appeared as extras or talent in movies shot locally. Several of my extended family members are part of the Los Angeles moving image industry. During childhood, a relative mentioned at my great-grandmother's Christmas party that Charlie Chaplin was our distant cousin; however, I have not yet been able to trace his connection to our roots. The only family member with whom I have had an opportunity to work with is my mother's first cousin, a gaffer or chief electrician. We worked together on a feature film shot on a crumbling plantation estate on the Mississippi River to a soundtrack of mosquitoes and boats.

In college I studied abroad; a Spanish cinema course I took in Madrid sparked my interest in international film and inspired me to pursue a Master of Arts in Film Studies in Ireland. My father was unable to visit me when I lived in Europe; however, he eagerly awaited screening the film shorts I worked on at Ardmore Studios as part of my studies. Always proud of my work, he enjoyed the films, and was impressed as Gregory Peck and Martin Scorsese's names glided up the credits as patrons of my film school. The VHS tapes of my films are displayed in a prized

place on my father's cypress shelf, between my siblings' Disney movies and video recordings of his band. Upon return to the United States, I gave my film production textbook to my father; in exchange, he gave me the *Motion Picture, TV, and Theatre Directory* that his union sends him semi-annually.

During a summer break from film school I worked in Manhattan and lived in Queens. My father visited me when his sister and brother-in-law flew him and his assistant to New Jersey to renovate their home. As part of the home renovation deal, they gave him their pale yellow Mustang convertible; it would become part of the collection of automobiles – some drivable, some not - that decorates his property. He pulled up to my apartment in Queens with the Mustang's top down, and we drove all over Manhattan snapping photographs of the bright lights and big city. Years later, when I first visited the nearby Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria, Queens, I wished I would have known to take him there as part of our New York City adventure. My father shares his birthday with the museum. It opened to the public on September 10, 1988, and is filled with treasures that would be at home alongside the leftovers he collects.

As my father drove, he pitched his film to me. Like many of the members of film crews I have worked with, he has a screenplay brewing and understands, better than most, what it takes to transform one's dream to the silver screen. The main character, played by my father, finds a miniature bottle in an old Pontiac GTO that he has purchased to restore. Out of curiosity, he takes a sip of the liquid inside. The bottle contains a potion that takes the character back in time where he is introduced to Marie Laveau, Jean Lafitte, and other historical figures featured in the bedtime stories of my father's childhood on City Park Avenue in New Orleans.

I will not reveal the entire plot, but I should mention that for one of the special effects scenes my father is willing to blow up the two story dilapidated workshop behind his home. After cruising around New York City and dreaming about movie making, we returned to my aunt's home where we spent the night. In the morning I awoke to the sound of hammers and power tools. During my childhood, construction noise was comforting because it was the sound of my father building a home around me. Listening to the familiar lullaby, I slipped back into dreams of voodoo queens and pirate treasure.

When my father returned home, the Mustang was given a prized parking spot next to his restored Pontiac GTO. The GTO, a hot rod that will one day be featured in my father's film, has already starred in a Jimmy Buffet music video. After the productions my father works on wrap, the unwanted props and set pieces are divided among the crew. Reflecting on the role of souvenirs, Lucy Lippard writes "We worship fragments as though they were the relics of saints" (164). The souvenirs of my father's labor have always remained magical to me. He transformed his tiny one-story house on the Northshore into a rambling, three-story sacred space through his carpentry and eclectic collection of objects. The objects themselves are often more than decoration; some have become the very bones of the house as it slowly grows upward, sometimes faster than the cypress and magnolia trees surrounding it, sometimes more slowly.

The door leading to the octagon shaped staircase is from the film *Casino*, as is the bathroom door. As you walk up the stairs, you will notice a collection of old, miniature glass bottles displayed on the walls. My father collects discarded bottles from places he has renovated, and the glass plays with the sunlight that streams into the stairwell. Baths are taken downstairs in a clawfoot tub in the presence of a pelican statue almost as large as one of the walls; this statue adorned a Louisiana government building in the film *JFK*. As you walk around

the yard, be careful not to trip over large marble slabs, too heavy for a single person to move. These were gravestones in *Interview with a Vampire*. When my brother Joel died we thought about using one of these for his headstone, but it wasn't as thick as the ones the cemetery recommended.

As I neared completion of the thesis that I wrote during my graduate studies in Ireland, my mother and maternal grandmother regularly sent me local newspaper clippings related to Gulf Coast filmmaking in an attempt to draw me back home. I missed my family dearly and was ready to return home, at least until the wanderlust surfaced again. For my graduation from film school, my father gave me a beautiful, old film projector from his collection of moving image related artifacts. I had already begun my own collection with scraps of 35 mm nitrate film, flammable objects that are deteriorating, disappearing as I type. The collection of ideas that inspired this study began with flickering memories of a cinematic pilgrimage that I made alone in 2004 to the Museum of the Moving Image. I wanted to know what continues to draw me back to this site in New York City so far from home, yet so very close.

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ABSTRACT

On February 27, 2008 the Museum of the Moving Image launched its \$65 million renovation and expansion with a digital groundbreaking. Since opening its doors in Astoria, New York in 1988, the museum, originally devoted to film and television, has embraced digital media. From its “Hollywood East” Astoria Studio historic landmark site to its popular website, the Museum of the Moving Image provides a unique setting for studying the museumification of moving image culture, particularly the production and consumption of moving images. In response to the Museum of the Moving Image’s domestication of moving image culture in its core exhibition, *Behind the Screen*, this study recollects the museum and in doing so performs an alternative domestication. The alternative domestication modeled by this study involves critically touring and detouring the core exhibition in an effort to reframe notions such as home, family, work, and play in relation to moving image culture in a manner that extends beyond the walls of the museum and problematizes particular practices of display. In response to specific instances of domestication in *Behind the Screen*, the major stops on the tour are: the interactive Video Flipbook experience; the movie palace installation *Tut’s Fever*, a commissioned art work by Red Grooms in collaboration with Lysiane Luong; and the artifact “Martin’s First Haircut,” a home movie produced in 1947 by Irving Shaw, the father of Rochelle Slovin, the museum’s founding director. Poised at a critical point in the museum’s development, this study is attentive to the transitory nature of museums, and it demonstrates ways in which we recollect our memories and ourselves through museum-going and technologies of reproduction.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION: BLUEPRINTS

1.1 FROM PRODUCTION TO CONSUMPTION: THE MUSEUMIZATION OF MOVING IMAGE CULTURE



Fig. 1.1. Display case near the museum’s entrance. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

“I think of the museum as a rose . . . It is revealing itself slowly as people begin to understand that the museum encompasses everything from the very early silent films to the very latest applications of video.”

- Rochelle Slovin, founding director of the Museum of the Moving Image, *New York Times*.

“The museum owns important antique movie equipment, including . . . a Pickford letter; a Chaplin pencil box; one woman’s teenage accumulation of every fan magazine published between 1939 and 1950; silent-era magic-lantern slides with such messages as ‘Don’t spit on the floor’ . . . ; and the yellow-brick road used in *The Wiz* which, alas, turns out to be a roll of kitchen linoleum.”

- Helen Dudar on the Museum of the Moving Image, “Those Golden Years When Hollywood Was Way Back East.”

Opening its doors in Astoria, New York to the public on September 10, 1988 as the American Museum of the Moving Image, the museum embraced the term “moving image” for its inclusiveness of a range of mediums and was among the first cultural institutions to do so.¹ The museum’s website emphasizes that it “does not collect film or television footage of any kind.”

Its collection of moving image artifacts was formally born in 1981 with the inception of the

¹ The museum’s Senior Deputy Director, Carl Goodman, has served as Curator of Digital Media since 1991, and is believed to be the first person to hold this title (Slovin 150; Wisniewski 4 June 2008; Goodman 13 Feb. 2009).

museum; currently featuring more than 130,000 objects, it is the largest collection of this kind in the nation.² A division in moving image museums, libraries, and archives exists between those concerned primarily with moving image preservation and those to whom the preservation of related cultural artifacts is of equal or primary significance (Roud; Jakovljevic; Trope). The Museum of the Moving Image promotes itself in its June 16, 2009 press release as “the only institution in the United States that deals comprehensively with the art, technology and social impact of film, television and digital media,” and it frames moving image related artifacts as worthy of collection, preservation, and exhibition.³ Its incorporation of screenings alongside and even through various artifacts demonstrates the value of moving image preservation as well as the potential of moving images to animate exhibitions.⁴

In May 1993 the museum’s mission statement was updated with the addition of digital media alongside its initial devotion to film and television. Its mission statement asserts that it “advances the public understanding and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media.”⁵ The term “American” was dropped from its name in 2005 as the museum’s performance of nationalism marked its negotiation of the

² Branislav Jakovljevic’s references Richard Koszarski (former Head of Collections and Exhibitions at the Museum of the Moving Image) on the topic of collecting in a November 1995 personal interview: “. . . the institution of private donation in the field of film and painting are completely different because ‘people who collect things like movie posters don’t have the philanthropic tradition, their parents and grandparents did not donate paintings to art museums.’ . . . At the beginning, studios were giving their materials to museums . . . ‘our big competition now to get a new costume is not another museum, it’s not the George Eastman House or the Library of Congress. It is Planet Hollywood! It’s a restaurant!’” (366).

³ In earlier literature, such as the February 27, 2008 press release, the Museum of the Moving Image described itself: “Admired and enjoyed as the only American institution that presents screen culture in all its forms—motion pictures, television, and digital media—the Museum addresses its subject through a dynamic schedule of screenings, exhibitions, education programs, and widely used on-line resources.”

⁴ Simon Knell asserts, “The reason we create collections is because objects retain a multidimensional aspect in a way that no other recording medium does” (12). The Museum of the Moving Image challenges notions of collection that privilege objects over what Knell terms “recording mediums,” through its demonstration of the multi-dimensionality of the relationship between the two.

⁵ The full mission statement as featured on the museum’s website reads: “Museum of the Moving Image advances the public understanding and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media. It does so by collecting, preserving, and providing access to moving-image related artifacts; screening significant films and other moving-image works; presenting exhibitions of artifacts, artworks, and interactive experiences; and offering educational and interpretive programs to students, teachers, and the general public.”

globalization of moving image industries (see figs. 1.2 and 1.3).⁶ On February 27, 2008, the Museum of the Moving Image celebrated the digital groundbreaking of its \$65 million expansion and renovation project. According to its April 23, 2009 press release, the project is scheduled to be completed in 2010, and involves “a complete renovation of the existing first floor and construction of a three-story addition housing a new theater, screening room, galleries, and a multi-classroom education center.” The official website boldly claims: “the new Museum building will be ideal for showcasing the moving image in all its forms, ensuring the Museum's place—creatively, intellectually, and physically—as one of the great moving-image institutions of the world.” From its historic “Hollywood East” site to its popular website, the Museum of the Moving Image provides a unique setting for studying the museumification of moving image culture, particularly the production and consumption of moving images.

The Museum of the Moving Image currently centers itself around *Behind the Screen*, its core or permanent exhibition. It opened with the museum in 1988, and reopened after an expansion to the third floor in April 1996. Mandated by the museum being under construction, *Behind the Screen* was temporarily closed to the public on March 23, 2008.⁷ As founding director Rochelle Slovin explained before construction commenced, “The back wall of the building has to be demolished, and in order to do that, there's a huge amount of vibration and noise. It would not be a good idea to have the public in the building at that time” (qtd. in “Reconstruction at Museum of the Moving Image”). Once it became apparent that the

⁶ Initially the museum used the acronym AMMI, and its logo substituted the letter “I” with an image of an eye. Chief Curator David Schwartz stated that the museum no longer uses an acronym and that the renovation will replace all outdated AMMI signage; in keeping with the museum’s preference, I will not use an acronym when referring to it unless directly quoting a source that employs one (May 2008). When asked about the name change in an interview by *Gothamist.com* on February 23, 2005, Schwartz stated: “The name change came about for a few reasons. First, the Museum of the Moving Image in London closed for good. The change was really long overdue. The old name was too long, and it implied that our subject matter was limited to American film. In fact, our programming is increasingly international.”

⁷ During this period, scheduled tours for schools and other groups continued.

construction would not interfere as much as expected, *Behind the Screen* reopened to the public on July 9, 2008 and has remained open until further notice. Chief Curator David Schwartz explained in a March 18, 2008 interview that though *Behind the Screen* will be updated during the museum's renovation, it will not undergo major changes. According to Schwartz, the curation of the core exhibition is a collaborative process and the specifics regarding its updating were still under discussion during my research visits. The most explicit emphasis in *Behind the Screen* is the production of moving images, yet the core exhibition is as much, if not more, about the consumption of moving image culture.



Fig. 1.2. The American Museum of the Moving Image main entrance sign featuring the eye that appears in the logo designed by Alexander Isley, Inc. Photograph by author, 16 Mar. 2008.

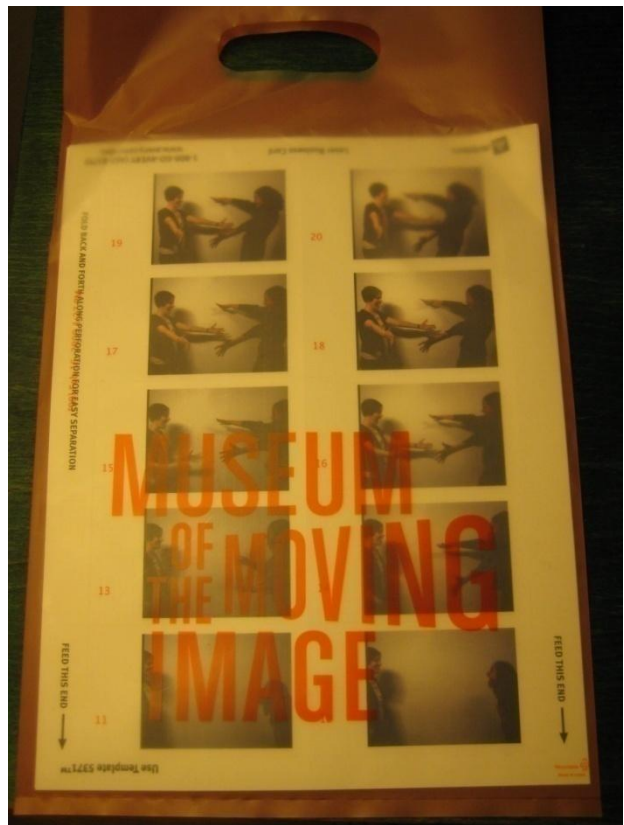


Fig. 1.3. A Museum of the Moving Image bag (containing an unassembled video flipbook) that features its current logo designed by 2x4, Inc. Photograph by author, 29 Mar. 2009.

“Magical” is a term commonly employed to describe the experience of moving image spectatorship. According to a souvenir calendar from my initial visit to the museum in January 2004, *Behind the Screen* “reveals how moving images are made while preserving their magic.”⁸ What the museum terms “magic” becomes that which exceeds museum-goers understanding with regard to the production of moving images. In other words, production as exhibited in *Behind the Screen* might be understood as a teaser – just enough to introduce one to the major roles in feature film production. A celebration of consumption, however – from costumes to licensed merchandise to fan magazines to film - is the heart of the exhibition.

The museum’s organizational logic gradually becomes apparent in *Behind the Screen* as visitors are presented with a mix of the three modalities listed in its mission statement, “artifacts, artworks, and interactive experiences.” Richard Koszarski, former Head of Collections and Exhibitions, provides examples of the three kinds of display found in the core exhibition: “objects in the case such as old cameras; interactive experiences, where visitors can actually do things; and finally, pieces commissioned from various artists” (qtd. in Jakovljevic: 360).⁹ *Behind the Screen* is organized into chapters that roughly correspond with the seventeen sections featured in the online study guide that introduces the exhibition as follows:

If we could see beyond the borders of movie and television screens-if the camera pulled back to reveal the director just outside the frame; the roofless set on a soundstage where tons of equipment are tended by dozens of technicians; the film lab and the cutting room or control room with its banks of video monitors; even the offices where the deals are set, the budgets approved, and the posters

⁸ That my souvenir is an actual calendar is notable in light of Susan Stewart’s assertion that “Temporally, the souvenir moves history into private time. Hence the absolute appropriateness of the souvenir as *calendar*” (138).

⁹ Branislav Jakovljevic’s highlights this organization as “roughly delimiting the three basic ways of exploring the [permanent] exhibition: through history, production and entertainment . . . These three keys—and there are many more—are not always clearly distinguished” (361). In examining the “performative path” of the core exhibition, Jakovljevic argues that in the Museum of the Moving Image “the past-present alignment is replaced by the text-display-performance process” which “museumises the present of the industry and art of the moving image instead of its past” (364). I would argue, however, that the museumization of the past, particularly in the chapter From Still to Moving Images, is actually an instrumental part of *Behind the Screen*’s museumization of “the present of the industry and the art of the moving image.”

designed-we would find a complex, collaborative business that manufactures a product-films and television shows- in an industrial system different from, but no less elaborate than, those that bring us cars, airplanes, and corn flakes.¹⁰

The narrative of the museum's core exhibition, *Behind the Screen*, boasts access to "the world of work behind the screen." Certain museum programs, such as screenings, feature special guest moving image professionals who share their industry experiences. A variety of demonstrations and workshops offer "behind the screen" access to additional industry performances.

In *Behind the Screen*, however, the actual professionals are replaced with products of, or related to, their labor. For example: in the Acting chapter, actors are represented by studio portraits; in Production Design, designers are represented by miniature set models; in Recording Image and Sound, cinematographers are represented by cameras. Though the museum is located on the historic landmark site of the Astoria Studio, a site shared by the working Kaufman Astoria Studios, it typically buzzes with the activity of school children, families, film buffs, gamers, and other visitors, rather than that of the moving image professionals who make up the industrial system described in the above passage. Absent to me in the Museum of the Moving Image were echoes of my own experiences of film industry labor: the fast paced rhythm juxtaposed with long, tedious stretches of waiting out thunderstorms; the star-struck extras; the wardrobe trailer gossip; the sweat; the muddy boots; the communitas; the exhilaration and exhaustion . . . none of this lingered within the walls of the climate controlled museum.¹¹

Though the museum shares the historic site with Kaufman Astoria Studios (KAS), it is not a resurrected film studio; however, *Behind the Screen* museumises particular elements of

¹⁰ The seventeen sections are: The Illusion of Motion, Recording Image and Sound, Editing Image and Sound, Special Effects, Performing, Production Design. Costume Design, Makeup, Hair and Wigs, Directing, Producing, The Script, Music, Promotion, Licensed Merchandise, The Moving Image in the Theater, The Moving Image in the Home.

¹¹ I have worked on a number of films and videos in a variety of positions ranging from director to production assistant.

studio production.¹² The core exhibition promises the visitor special access to the process of moving image production through select interactive displays which provide opportunities to perform the labor of industry professionals. Using the museum's term, the "interactive experiences" are exhibits that invite visitors to participate hands-on in the production of moving images; the exhibit titles include Digital Animation, Automated Dialogue Replacement, Sound Effects, and Music Supervision.

The exhibits are not introduced to the visitors by actual moving image professionals, but by instructions displayed on panels or computer screens.¹³ In other words, the interactivity of these displays replaces interactivity with actual industry professionals, and explicitly situates visitors in production roles. Moving image production and consumption are processes that do not necessarily fit neatly into a binary system.¹⁴ Even the exhibits that are grounded in production practices involve consumption, as fellow visitors often serve as spectators of the moving images produced. Producers in turn become consumers of their own and other's productions.

Several of the museum's interactive displays are modeled on generic workspaces of film and television industry professionals. They typically involve a computer which the visitor sits in front of and performs tasks based on step by step instructions that allow for a limited degree of choice and experimentation. These spaces are clean, quiet, and free of personal artifacts, and the buzz of activity familiar to those who have worked in the industry. Though the museum

¹² Kaufman Astoria Studios does not offer tours to the general public.

¹³ Museum of the Moving Image educators lead programming such as tours, workshops, and demonstrations, and many of them have completed course work or degrees in moving image studies or boast some degree of amateur or professional moving image production experience. They are employed, however, primarily as educators rather than to serve as representatives of particular positions within the moving image industry. The museum does not have docents. See *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser* for artist Andrea Fraser's performance of Jane Castleton, a docent who led unsuspecting museum visitors on surprising tours.

¹⁴ As discussed later in this chapter, in Michel de Certeau's terms, consumption can be understood as a mode of production.

emphasizes its use of authentic equipment, the processes it facilitates are streamlined and condensed in a straightforward user-friendly manner. Visitors do not, for example, experience reels of film being dropped off at the display with cryptic instructions attached and are not provided sewing machines and instructed to alter costumes for extras. In other words, the performances the museum frames as authentic are explicitly pedagogical and removed from studio or on-location contexts in ways that domesticate moving image labor as sterile, quiet, solitary, free from ambiguity, and highly methodical. Success in creating seamless media is framed as the performance of a successful magic trick. The message that surfaces is that if the visitor follows instructions and masters relatively simple technology, she too instantly becomes part of the magic machine.¹⁵

Many of the interactive displays are enclosed in intimate areas, often separated by heavy velvet curtains reminiscent of those used in movie theatres that “magically” open to reveal the screen.¹⁶ The offices and areas off limits to the public are also separated from the exhibitions by heavy curtains. As visitors tour exhibitions they are made aware of their exclusion from these “behind the screen” museum spaces accessible only to museum personnel who freely move between these marked boundaries. The museum invites visitors to work and play with the wizardry behind the screen, yet holds enough of the magic just beyond reach so that it marks itself as magical. Like the moving images it celebrates, the museum itself is a production that requires visitors’ work and play to make the “magic” happen.

¹⁵ A number of Museum of Moving Image events provide an interesting contrast to these displays. The museum’s New York on Location, billed as an “All Day Street Fair and Celebration,” co-sponsored by the Theatrical Teamsters Local 817 I.B.T., Kaufman Astoria Studios, and the Mayor’s Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting, allows the public to interact with film industry professions, explore their trailers, and attend a range of programs (e.g. stunt performances, electric and grip displays, special effects demonstrations).

¹⁶ The traditional “theatre” spelling is used throughout this study, unless directly quoting a source that uses the “theater” spelling.

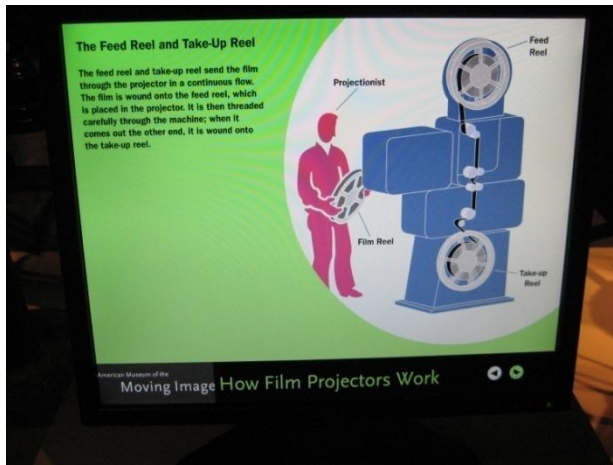


Fig. 1.4. How Film Projectors Work, a Museum of the Moving Image digital slide show. Photograph by author, 16 Feb. 2009.



Fig. 1.5. A display of licensed merchandise adjacent to the Selling the Product chapter introductory caption. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

Security guards and museum educators are expected to assist visitors with the operation of interactive displays, and this requirement can lead to instances in which museum staff and visitors work and play together. Vivian Patraka reminds us in her essay on U.S. Holocaust museums that: “The museum is a complicated, crowded stage, always soliciting a certain spectatorial gaze through very skilled presentations. Everything one sees in a museum is a production by somebody” (99). Among the productions seen in the Museum of the Moving Image are those created in part by visitors during interactive experiences. The museum takes great care to conceal its “behind the screen” museum labor, yet the seams of its core exhibition are regularly exposed through interactions among employees and visitors, material wear and tear of exhibitions, and the malfunctioning of displays. On occasions when the technology in *Behind the Screen* fails, visitors encounter blank screens (or ones that display cryptic messages), which are sometimes accompanied by “out of order” signs. During my research visits exhibits malfunctioned while in use by museum educators or visitors, and staff members performed

repairs as visitors toured. In these situations, the focus of the core exhibition on behind the screen labor unintentionally shifts to the labor of the museum staff.



Fig. 1.6. A display of *Star Trek* licensed merchandise. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.



Fig. 1.7. A display of *Star Trek* licensed merchandise. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

Many of the interactive experiences involve technologies of reproduction such as video cameras and computers. Hands-off exhibits featuring technologies of reproduction shift their context from instruments of production to consumable objects. The captions that introduce each chapter of the exhibition as well as those that correspond to specific artifacts offer varying degrees of information regarding the role of objects in moving image production. Some displays, such as *How Film Projectors Work*, are accompanied by video shorts or digital slide shows meant to explain how artifacts work (see fig. 1.4). Products such as *Hair* and *Endless Love* videodiscs are displayed inside of a glass case because they are no longer commonly used; their value inside the museum is historical and artifactual. In other words, instead of being played, the videodiscs are displayed. The exhibits featuring licensed merchandise artfully displayed inside glass cases do not reveal the production of these objects, but frame their creation as important to the moving image industry and their consumption as culturally significant (see fig. 1.5). In displaying products such as lunchboxes, dolls, board-games, puzzles, figurines, and

even housewares in protective cases, the museum domesticates these objects within its walls by removing the context of everyday home use (see figs. 1.6 and 1.7). In doing so, the museum problematically elides narratives concerning the relationship between moving image culture and home-making.

1.2 THE MUSEUM'S DOMESTICATION OF MOVING IMAGE CULTURE



Fig. 1.8. Photographs of the Astoria Studio displayed in the Kaufman Studios Starbucks that neighbors the Museum of the Moving Image. Photograph by author, 21 May 2008.



Fig. 1.9. Construction, Museum of the Moving Image. Photograph by author, 20 May 2008.

In its exhibition of production and consumption in *Behind the Screen* the museum domesticates moving image culture. The term domestication is used here to describe a mode of home-making identified in the core exhibition involving the taming of moving image culture through the museum's practices of display. In other words, the museumification of moving image culture in *Behind the Screen* makes neat what is messy, taxonomizes that which resists strict organizational categories, and elides or erases that which exceeds its narrative. The museum's practices of domestication in the core exhibition do not explicitly address ways in which moving image culture resonates in the home, as familial ritual, and in relation to traditionally feminine spaces and domestic duties. In other words, the museum's domestication

of moving image culture as a mode of home-making is problematic in that its integration of home and family in *Behind the Screen* is limited to representations that fail to directly engage the complex cultural narratives surrounding them. The museum's domestication of moving image culture is especially evident in its origin stories and in the ways in which it markets itself.

The trope of domestication runs through origin stories of the Museum of the Moving Image, and it is particularly evident in discourses about the site that it calls home. Film historian Richard Koszarski was a member of the museum's predecessor organization beginning in 1978 and its Head of Collections and Exhibitions through 1999. An email from Koszarski in response to my inquiry about the museum opened with the statement: "This is a very large story." Having heard numerous bits and pieces, some contradictory, about the museum's origins from a number of people, I determined that a genealogy of the museum was beyond the scope of this project. Since this study is grounded in processes of domestication, however, it is important to consider briefly how the museum's origin stories mark it as a unique site of historic preservation.

Founding director Rochelle Slovin is typically characterized as the heroine responsible for the museum's birth and its successful domestication despite the challenge of its geographic distance from Hollywood and location in Queens versus Manhattan.¹⁷ P. Llanor Alleyne profiles Slovin in an article that begins with the museum director's assertion: "I grew up in a conventional period. Had I not been a woman I would be directing and producing." A video, approximately three minutes in duration, appears at the top of General Information page of the museum's website. In the first scene Slovin states: "In the beginning, Museum of the Moving Image was just an idea, plus the boarded up, rubble strewn, old shell of an industrial building." The building Slovin speaks of was part of the abandoned Astoria Studio originally built by

¹⁷ Slovin is referred to as "Shelly" by fellow museum employees and in literature about the museum including Helen Dudar's essay "Those Golden Years When Hollywood Was Way Back East."

Famous Players-Lasky Corporation under the leadership of film mogul Adolph Zukor.¹⁸ Helen Dudar describes the abandoned studio site upon which the museum was built: “the floors were occupied by pools of rainwater, small dead birds, shards of fallen plaster. The five acres of buildings with a colorful past were crumbling, having reached a condition that, one observer recalls, ‘resembled a bombed-out city’” (112).

The museum was created in part as a means to preserve the Astoria Studio national historic landmark site. In this respect, the museum was brought about by the efforts of community members who were invested in a material site made important by memories of its historic role in moving image production. In addition, the resurrection of the Astoria Studio site was credited with improving the neighborhood and creating jobs (Shapiro). According to Helen Dudar, “the community, a stable, largely Greek-immigrant population, was happy to see the rebirth of property that had become a neighborhood eyesore.”

Squeezed between the Education and Funding sections on the General Information webpage, a two paragraph Museum History section chronologically tracks the past identities of its landmark site: it was born as Paramount's East Coast production facility in 1920, it was taken over by the U.S. Army and renamed the Signal Corps Photographic Center in 1943, and it “fell into disrepair” after the Army left in 1971. The Astoria Motion Picture and Television Center Foundation is introduced as a nonprofit organization founded to rescue the site through various bureaucratic maneuvers.¹⁹ It did so by “successfully returning the studio to feature film production” in the late 1970s, and also through its 1981 appointment of Rochelle Slovin as its

¹⁸ Perhaps because Paramount is more recognizable, most references attribute the museum's origin to Paramount and fail to specify that the studio was built in 1920 for approximately \$2 million by the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation (“Two Million Dollar Studio in Long Island City,” “New Million-Dollar Moving-Picture Studio”). Paramount came about in 1927 (*Museum of the Moving Image*).

¹⁹ The Museum of the Moving Image's website previously featured an individual page devoted to its history. Online visitors are currently offered only an abbreviated version of the museum's history; the historic black and white photographs that previously accompanied the text on the former history page are not included on the General Information page.

Executive Director; “At her recommendation . . . The creation of a museum about motion pictures and television was established as the organization's new directive.”

The story continues by explaining that in 1982 the City of New York received ownership of the entire studio site (from the U.S. General Services Administration), and “in recognition of the Foundation's key role in saving the site, the City set aside one of the original studio buildings for the Museum.” In discussing the fate of the landmark studio site, Larry Barr, a member of the Museum of the Moving Image’s predecessor foundation, emphasizes that “In the beginning the museum was a vehicle to keep the studio. We had to come up with an excuse, an educational purpose to give the government a legal reason to transfer the property” (qtd. in Dudar: 120). Under Slovin’s leadership, the museum was transformed from a bureaucratic “excuse” into a respected institution. In an interview with Robin Finn, Slovin suggests the motivation for her commitment to the museum: “It's not given to many people, outside of having children, to make something that will live on after them.” Slovin, referred to by Finn as the “maestro” behind the museum, is credited with the domestication of an important yet unruly site that, as we are led to believe, may have otherwise remained in shambles.

The museum’s domestication of moving image culture extends to the ways in which it struggles with its location in Queens, versus glamorous Hollywood or even neighboring Manhattan. In her article “Those Golden Years When Hollywood Was Way Back East,” Helen Dudar pieces together an origin story of the museum and recounts that the need for “demystification” of the Astoria Studio site was of chief importance to Slovin who employed exhibitions and screenings as tools in this process before the museum was even built. Demystification might be understood here as a mode of domestication that attempts to overturn geographical stigmatization. In other words, this instance of home-making, the making of the

Astoria Studio site into the museum's home, involved house-work, specifically the cleaning up of the site's reputation through demystification and glamorization. According to Dudar:

In the foundation's temporary quarters, she [Slovin] also organized a small exhibition area and a regular program of films aimed at "demystifying the site." This is a polite way of acknowledging that Queens has an image problem or, as one museum staff member bluntly put it, "Archie Bunker did us in." . . . Movies are shown in the main building's theater where once such legendary figures as Adolph Zukor and Walter Wanger sat to watch the rushes of the day's work.

New York Magazine quoted Slovin's response to the growing cultural capital of Long Island City (LIC) in 2002 when the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) joined the neighborhood, "This is not Archie Bunker land, . . . MOMA moving to LIC proves that Queens is cultural" (Lange).²⁰

Slovin's statement along with the Archie Bunker (of *All in the Family*) reference by an anonymous museum staff member indicate a consciousness of how a geographic association with a fictional, bigoted, working class, television sitcom character can lead to a negative stereotyping of an actual borough. Dudar's reference to well-known film studio executives and Slovin's association of Queens with a prestigious megamuseum reveal attempts to override the Bunker association through a glamorization of the Museum of the Moving Image's historic landmark site.²¹

In these museum narratives, film is emphasized as an elite art capable of removing, or at least artfully covering up, stains left by the vulgar world of television.²² Now that the museum is well established, Slovin shares the stage with the glamorous celebrities that it honors each year at

²⁰ Slovin is referencing MoMA's "temporary" quarters in Queens (Lange). In response to a question regarding the Museum of the Moving Image's location in Astoria, David Schwartz replied: "We were originally going to be located in Trenton. Queens turned out to be a much better choice. But not everyone can survive here. Why, just a few months ago, MoMA slinked back into Manhattan" (*Gothamist.com*).

²¹ A bit of irony here is that the Bunkers' chairs are part of the collection of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History (NMAH), and are listed as one of its most popular exhibits. "The Bunkers' Chairs" fact sheet on the NMAH website explains that *All in the Family* was a sitcom responsible for demystifying traditionally utopic sitcom families: "Creative in many respects, it shattered a long tradition in television comedies of portraying only happy families living in a world without social strife."

²² Boasting a number of famous friends, the Museum of the Moving Image board members includes well connected individuals such as Linda LeRoy Janklow, whose father, Mervyn LeRoy, produced *The Wizard of Oz* (Finn).

its annual gala, and with those who contribute to the museum in various ways such as donations of artifacts or through involvement with museum programs. In 2005, when asked about the museum's screening series, Chief Curator David Schwartz responded: "We have a highbrow audience that's not really interested in looking at lowbrow movies . . . Also, we don't get an audience for historic television shows. So we stick to film" (*Gothamist.com*). The Museum of the Moving Image's expansion involves greater incorporation of new media, and will require renegotiations of the tension between high and low culture. Its attempts to attract a diverse audience will remain challenged by its problematic processes of domestication. In other words, currently under construction, the museum is growing at an unusually rapid pace; yet, its visitors, especially those raised on the moving images of MTV and *YouTube* versus classic or art house film, may quickly outgrow it unless made to feel more at home regardless of their "lowbrow" preferences.

1.3 METHODOLOGY: PRODUCING HOME AS A MODEL OF CRITICAL TOURISM

In response to the Museum of the Moving Image's domestication of moving image culture in *Behind the Screen*, this study recollects the museum and in doing so performs an alternative domestication. The alternative domestication modeled by this study involves critically touring and detouring the core exhibition in an effort to reframe notions such as home, family, work, and play in relation to moving image culture in a manner that extends beyond the walls of the museum and problematizes particular practices of display. Whereas the museum's domestication involves house-work, specifically cleaning up the messiness that threatens its tidy display of moving image culture, my alternative domestication involves embracing discourses surrounding moving image culture that betray the messiness marginalized by the museum's narrative. Finding limited engagement with particular discourses in *Behind the Screen*, I detour

beyond the walls of the museum, and often back home, to perform the “homework” required to bring elements that I found missing from the core exhibition into the frame.

In her book *Domestic Cultures* Joanne Hollows traces the introduction of radio, television, and computers into the home, the ways in which families organize their individual and collective use of them, and the ways in which the technologies and their texts (e.g., radio and television programs, computer software and the Internet) in turn organize family in terms of generation, gender, and cultural identity. She employs the concept of domestication for “understanding how media technologies undergo processes of enculturation within the home . . . and how [they] are used to transform domestic culture” (111). Following Hollows, I critique ways in which *Behind the Screen* frames our domestication of moving image technologies as well as their domestication of us. In response to specific instances of domestication in *Behind the Screen*, each of the following three chapters is dedicated to a major stop on a tour of the core exhibition: the interactive Video Flipbook experience; *Tut’s Fever*, the commissioned art work by Red Grooms in collaboration with Lysiane Luong; and the artifact “Martin’s First Haircut,” a home movie created in 1947 by Irving Shaw, the father of the museum’s director Rochelle Slovin, that stars her alongside her brother and mother.²³

As a technical strategy, re-collection of existing museum collections “has been an important aspect of collection management and use for more than 200 years” (Knell 7). Re-

²³ The term “flipbook” is sometimes written as two separate words. In keeping with the museum’s spelling of its Video Flipbook, the term will be written here as a capitalized single word unless directly quoting a source that uses an alternate spelling. The term “Video Flipbook” when capitalized will be used here in reference to the exhibit, whereas the lower case “video flipbook” will refer to the video it produces, as well as the paper flipbook produced from the video. *Tut’s Fever* is referred to at times by the Museum of the Moving Image and various other sources as *Tut’s Fever Movie Palace*. The title *Tut’s Fever* (abbreviated as *Tut’s*) will be used here since it appears on the museum’s official caption of the installation; variations on this title will be used only when quoted directly from a source. The museum credits *Tut’s* to Grooms and Luong, listing him first; however, *Red Grooms*, a book copyrighted by Grooms, credits him as the artist “in collaboration” with Luong. The names of additional individuals involved in the creation of *Tut’s* are integrated into the “sidewalk” entrance of the installation stylistically parodying the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

collection, however, is a term that I have chosen to describe the choices made by museum-goers concerning which elements of the collection they engage. In other words, what they collect while touring a museum's collection; examples include: captions; personal and shared memories; souvenir merchandise; interactions with objects, employees, and fellow visitors; pamphlets; and ticket stubs. The concepts of recollection and domestication as employed here are not interchangeable. Recollection can be understood as a framework for museum-going useful for tracking visitors' engagement with exhibitions; whereas domestication, as a mode of museum-going, is used to describe a particular type of engagement with exhibitions, one concerned with home-making. This study responds to the museum's domestication of moving image culture in *Behind the Screen* by modeling an alternative domestication, one that uses the framework of recollection in order to contextualize the relationship between home and memory in museum-going.

The majority of the *Oxford English Dictionary's* (*OED*) numerous definitions of "remember" and "recollect" relate to memory; certain definitions such as "to recall" are synonymous. Both terms are used throughout this study; however, an emphasis is placed on "recollect" because its various meanings, including some now considered rare or obsolete, inform the practice of recollection offered here. The *OED* features two entries for the verb "recollect." I am most interested in the definitions of recollect *verb*¹: "1. collect again. 2. (*refl.*) recover control of (oneself)", and the definitions of "recollect" *verb*²: "1. *trans.* To call or bring back (something) to one's mind; to recall the knowledge of (a thing, person, etc.); to remember."

The *OED's* definition of "recollect" v.² includes the clarification: "*Recollect*, when distinguished from *remember*, implies a conscious or express effort of memory to recall something which does not spontaneously rise in the mind." "Re-collect" is the spelling

sometimes used for the first *OED* entry, and it is used here to highlight the repetitive work and play of recollection.²⁴ Also considered is the repetition involved with studying a long distance site, and the ways in which recollections of individual visits easily blend: I leave and return; leaveand return; leaveandreturn.²⁵ In order to recover an intersection of earlier meanings of the term recollect relating to the process of retracing and to emphasize the repetition built into memory work and play, I draw upon various meanings, particularly: to “collect again,” to “recover control of (oneself),” and to effortfully “call or bring back (something) to one’s mind.”²⁶

Toni Morrison’s concept of “re-memory,” introduced in her novel *Beloved*, differs from my use of “re-collect,” yet is useful for understanding memories whose sources resist our recollection. As explained by Divya Tolia-Kelly in her study of artifacts in the British Asian home: “Re-memory is memory that is encountered in the everyday, but is not always a recall or reflection of actual experience” (316).²⁷ Museum-going is framed here as the repetitive process of recollection. The museum collects and recollects, visitors in turn recollect as they tour the exhibited collection. Visitors recollect the elements of the museum that hail them, and through

²⁴ According to the *OED* recollect v.¹ is “sometimes written *re-collect*” and the earlier pron[unciation] was prob[ably] as in [recollect] v.², from which it is now distinguished by the vowel of the prefix. In some senses the distinction between this and v.² is not clearly maintained, and the pron[unciation] may vary accordingly.”

²⁵ Phaedra Pezzullo, whose critical tourism research influenced this study, offered encouragement in dealing with the challenges of studying a long distance site. She stressed the advantage of immersing oneself in the site during visits, and noted that geographic distance allows one to sift through findings at a different pace. One of the best parts, according to Pezzullo, is that one gets to leave and return.

²⁶ As defined in the *OED* recollect v.¹: “**7.** To retrace (one’s steps). *Obs.*” and recollect v.²: “**3. b.** To go over again. *Obs. rare*.”

²⁷ Tolia-Kelly is specifically concerned with the role of re-memory in diasporic communities. She summarizes Morrison’s conception of re-memory: “It is separate to memories that are stored as site-specific signs linked to experienced events. Re-memory can be the memories of others as told to you by parents, friends, and absorbed through day-to-day living that are about a sense of self beyond a linear narrative of events, encounters and biographical experiences. It is an inscription of time in place, which is touched, accessed or mediated through sensory stimuli. A scent, sound or sight can metonymically transport you to a place where you have never been, but which is recalled through the inscription left in the imagination, lodged there by others’ narratives. This form of social geographical coordinate is not always directly experienced but operates as a significant connective force. Re-memory is a resource for the sustenance of a sense of self that temporally connects to social heritage, genealogy, and acts as a resource for identification with place” (316).

these elements they recollect their memories and themselves and negotiate their membership in a mediatized culture.

In my alternative domestication of the core exhibition of the Museum of the Moving Image I discovered that detours were integral to the process. Rather than clean up, hide, or erase them, the detours were included in an effort to present a model that reflects the messiness of processes of domestication. According to the *OED*, the term “tour” is rooted in the French term “tourner” which means “to turn”; whereas “detour,” then stems from “détourner,” defined as “turn away.” Explaining the rhetoric of walking as “a series of turns (*tours*) and detours,” Michel de Certeau writes: “The art of ‘turning’ phrases finds an equivalent in the art of composing a path (*tourner un parours*)” (100). The detours featured in this study also demonstrate the power and tendency of memories to lead us on a roundabout course as they pull us off direct routes.

In writing about the walker’s negotiation of constructed spatial order, de Certeau asserts that those who create detours and shortcuts increase the number of possibilities. Offering Charlie Chaplin’s cane use as an example, de Certeau explains: “he does other things with the same thing and he goes beyond the limits that the determinant of the object set on its utilization” (98). The use of technologies of reproduction (in particular a digital still camera, a video camera, computers, and a television) in my research both prompted deviations from my intended route and resisted them. My repetitive clicking, zooming, and panning through the museum mandated the disciplining of my body and a resistance to detours. In Chapter Four however, my video recording of the home movie “Martin’s First Haircut” becomes a detour home, where I screened it on my living room television, a familial relic inherited from my brother. Through this souvenir recording, museum space extended into domestic space. In this instance of my

alternative domestication of moving image culture as in several others, recollections of my own family mingle with those of museum-going. The detours that we take while on tour and in our efforts to recollect remind us that “turning away” can be just as generative as “turning.”

The recollector tours (and detours) in an effort to re-collect exhibited collections and herself. Her movement through the museum highlights the subjective nature of museum-going and memory work. The recollector retraces her path and attempts to identify the organization and captioning of the collection by officials, fellow visitors, and herself in order to understand better the discourses that run through it. In addition to carefully retracing the path of my tour, I situate my three major stops within the core exhibition and in doing so theorize ways in which the displays neighboring the Video Flipbook, *Tut's Fever*, and “Martin’s First Haircut” frame them as sites of domestication. Differences among the museum’s practices of captioning are indented in relation to its three major organizational categories: interactive experiences, artwork, and artifacts.

In his introduction to “Looking for Stonewall’s Arm” Michael Bowman maps the terrain of “performance-centered” tourism, and he argues that “*better* tourism” is the best “remedy for ‘bad’ tourism”; following the path he established I attempt here to “reconsider and revalue what it is we do as tourists” (105). In negotiating the somewhat paradoxical space of participant-observation, I have learned from Bowman the importance of a touristic approach that does not fall into the hip post-tourist trap of maintaining ironic detachment. Following his suggestions, I attempt to keep one foot “absorbed” in the enchanting world of tourism with the other “standing back from or outside” through the adoption of “a pose of ambivalence” that fosters this fluid positionality (“Performing Southern History” 155). This pose enables me to stand back at a distance and critically study the Museum of the Moving Image as a production (or even as a

postmodern production of a production), and simultaneously actively engage it through an embodied tourism that welcomes, for example, the aesthetic reflexive “flow” that an interactive museum display potentially allows me (Franklin). In her essay on U.S. Holocaust museums Vivian Patraka explains how museums function as performance sites. Drawing on Michel de Certeau’s spatial practices, Patraka asserts “performance space suggests multiple crisscrossing performances, the possibility of interpretations that foreground the historicity of the individual subject” (100). In my attentiveness to tourist performances, including my own, I address areas that were neglected in past scholarship on the Museum of the Moving Image (Jakovljevic; Trope).

Considering its importance to the preservation of moving image culture, surprisingly very little scholarship has been published on the Museum of the Moving Image. The two scholars who have primarily written about it, Branislav Jakovljevic and Alison Trope, have done so from the disciplines of performance studies and cinema and television studies, respectively.²⁸

Branislav Jakovljevic’s 1996 essay “Picturing the Screen: The American Museum of the Moving Image,” is the only published scholarly text that focuses primarily on the Museum of the Moving Image. A performance studies scholar who studied under Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Richard Schechner at New York University, Jakovljevic draws upon Schechner’s conception of performance as “restored” or “twice-behaved behavior” (36).

Jakovljevic is concerned with how the Museum of the Moving Image operates as a museum “in situ” that “stands on the slippery ground between art museum and industrial

²⁸ Besides the contributory studies of Jakovljevic and Trope, sources on the Museum of the Moving Image include: magazines, newspaper, and website articles and reviews; tour book entries; as well as press releases and other material published by the museum such as calendars and programs. According to David Schwartz, the museum is primarily committed to publishing its material on its website (March 2008). The two books published in print by the museum are: *Behind the Screen: The American Museum of the Moving Image Guide to Who Does What in Motion Pictures and Television*, a companion guide to the core exhibition, the majority of its content is featured on interactive computer displays on both floors of *Behind the Screen*; and *Shigeko Kubota Video Sculpture*, a catalog of the exhibition held at the American Museum of the Moving Image, April 26 through September 15, 1991.

museum, between educational institution and the film theme park” (352).²⁹ He argues that the Museum of the Moving Image is an institution that instead of “restoring ‘lost’ films . . . sets its goal in *restoring behaviour* of the film professionals” (362). Valuable for the ways in which it foregrounds the museum as unique, Jakovljevic’s essay ultimately fails to articulate how the museum performs beyond a meta-museum framework.³⁰ In situating *Behind the Screen* in terms of a performative path Jakovljevic discusses the performance of visitors, moving image professionals, the museum, and its collection. His essay provides a useful performance studies framework for studying museums that is extended here through the modeling of museum-going as a performative practice of alternative domestication.

Alison Trope’s 2001 essay “Le Cinéma Pour le Cinéma: Making a Museum of the Moving Image” is based on a chapter from her dissertation “Mysteries of the Celluloid Museum: Showcasing the Art and Artifacts of Cinema.” Trope’s dissertation has a broad scope, and as the Museum of the Moving Image is only one of many museums discussed in the essay, its coverage lacks depth.³¹ Chronologically structured, Trope’s essay attempts to “trace the cinema (or moving image) museum’s institutional development from its roots in science and art museums to the mystical exhibits of eccentric cinephile-collectors to theme-park-inspired edutainment complexes” (30). She problematizes the Museum of the Moving Image’s pedagogical role and related negotiation of entertainment in what she terms its “holistic” approach to the moving

²⁹ Taking the Cinémathèque Française as his point of departure, Jakovljevic questions the “unique methods of ‘exhibiting time’ in the film museum,” in an attempt to explore the Museum of the Moving Image as “it places itself between established museum genres and approaches the concept of a meta-museum” (352, 364).

³⁰ Jakovljevic concludes that “the museum is challenging the meaning of the term ‘museuming’ as calcifying time,” as it “museumises new technologies” and “examines both the industry” and “the society” influenced by it (369).

³¹ In addition to the Museum of the Moving Image, Trope’s dissertation focuses on several museums including New York’s Museum of Modern Art, the Hollywood Museum, London’s Museum of the Moving Image (MOMI) as well as other sites of screen culture such as amusement parks.

image (55).³² Important primarily for its historical contextualization of the Museum of the Moving Image in relation to a range of other moving image museums, my study resonates with Trope's in so far as I attend to the ways in which the museum's domestication of moving image culture "requires a different (or, at least, revised) mode of spectatorship" (236).

An initial research visit to the Museum of the Moving Image in March 2008 enabled me to document it before its temporary closure to the public, and to introduce myself to David Schwartz, Chief Curator, and Christopher Wisniewski, Director of Education. During additional research trips in May and June 2008 I shadowed tours of *Behind the Screen* led by museum educators during the museum's closure to the general public. I was introduced to several museum employees including Livia Bloom, Assistant Curator; and I conducted follow-up interviews with Schwartz and Wisniewski.³³ I attended three museum events: An Evening with Stanley Tucci and Friends on May 21, 2008 at the TimesCenter; the *Mongol* screening with director Sergei Bodrov on June 3, 2008 at the AMC Loews Lincoln Square 13 multiplex; and Werner Herzog in conversation with Jonathan Demme during the launch of *Moving Image Source*, the museum's new website on June 5, 2008 at the TimesCenter. The events, held at temporary or off-sites, permitted me to study facets of the museum outside of its formal boundaries. Spatially and structurally mapping the museum's exhibitions and programming was a primary purpose of research visits. On-site research allowed for a consideration of the ways in which the museum's landscape changed during the study, especially in light of its renovation and expansion.

³² Employing the Museum of the Moving Image for comparative purposes and juxtaposing it with London's Museum of the Moving Image, Trope targets both museums' shortcomings.

³³ In official Museum of the Moving Image literature Bloom is referred to variously as Assistant Curator and Assistant Curator of Film. She has since left the Museum of the Moving Image, and currently serves as the Programmer of the Nantucket Film Festival.

During a February 2009 research trip to the Museum of the Moving Image I met founding director Rochelle Slovin and Carl Goodman, Senior Deputy Director and Curator of Digital Media; I also followed up with Schwartz and Wisniewski again. I met with Richard Koszarski, the former Head of Collections and Exhibitions who is commonly referred to as the museum's Historian, through email in 2008, and followed up with a phone meeting in February 2009. In addition to maintaining productive relationships established with museum administrators, I interacted with visitors as well as other individuals involved with the Museum of the Moving Image in various capacities ranging from security guards to volunteers. The museum's web presence became increasingly critical during the temporary closure of its 35th Street site, and its renovation and expansion has generated a great deal of on and offline buzz. I studied visitors' videos of the Museum of the Moving Image in order to account for online recollections of it. Through consideration of "official" Museum of the Moving Image perspectives alongside the voices of visitors, this study builds upon what Branislav Jakovljevic and Alison Trope offered over a decade ago in their essays on the museum.³⁴

This study tours the museum from various angles, and it incorporates narratives drawn from three modes of tourism: self-led tours; educator-led tours; and online tours. It was inspired in part by Michel de Certeau's conception of the active consumer whose everyday "trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop" (xviii). In de Certeau's terms, a "place" is "an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability"; whereas a "space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a

³⁴ Jakovljevic cites his 1995 personal interview of Richard Koszarski (former Head of Collections and Exhibitions) and interviews with Rochelle Slovin (founding Director), Carl Goodman (Senior Deputy Director and Curator of Digital Media), Thom Thacker (former Director of Education) quoted from Museum of the Moving Image materials. Trope's essay references Museum of the Moving Image materials, but does not reference personal interviews with its officials or interactions with visitors.

polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities” (117). Offering the example of walkers who “transform” the “place” of the street into “a space,” de Certeau explains “space is a practiced place” (117).

For de Certeau, museographical objects are sites of disappearing stories or “loss of space” (123). In response to de Certeau’s view, the model offered here attempts to demonstrate ways in which museum-going, as a spatial practice that requires memory work, potentially transforms museum collections and in doing so “founds space” (123). Employing the “vocabularies of established languages” including those of “museum sequence,” recollections of museum collections disrupt their constructed order (xviii). The framework of recollection employed here encouraged the retracing of my steps and the mapping of my re-organization and re-captioning of *Behind the Screen*. These processes informed my alternative domestication by revealing the ways in which the museum constructs home and family in relation to moving images in its core exhibition.

De Certeau’s spatial practices are useful; however, instead of neatly reifying space and place as a binary, this study considers the relationship between space and place as one that resists being fixed in dualistic terms. It does so by demonstrating that museum-goers are not the only agents of spatial practices in the museum setting, employees and objects in the collection can also be understood as producers of place and space. In her essay on U. S. Holocaust Museums Vivian Patraka emphasizes that “the museum is a performance site in the sense that the architect, the designers, and the management of the museum produce representations through objects and so produce a space and subjectivity for the spectator” (99). Museum-goers can also be understood as producers of place, especially through acts of placement such as the display of souvenirs in one’s home or in the arrangement of photographs in an album of one’s tour.

A focus on the spatial practices of museum-goers requires a contextualization of the spatial practices of the museum in terms of its collection, exhibitions, programming, and employees in order to avoid creating a sense of stasis where there is ongoing movement. Visiting the museum on a specific date, for example, creates a false sense of stasis in the museum as its movement outpaces even regular museum-going. A limitation of museum-going as critical tourism is that one's recollection of a museum will inherently be partial. The recognition of this partiality, however, reminds the visitor to situate herself temporally as she moves through what she understands to be a continuously moving museum. There is a temptation to document and catalog everything in the Museum of the Moving Image, an urgency to freeze what is moving – to touch it, especially when focusing on exhibition content and context. It is impossible to wrap up every gram and pixel of the museum and fit it all into this study; therefore, throughout this study I acknowledge the partiality that exists in my selection of what is recollected here.

The Museum of the Moving Image, like all museums, continuously revises itself. It changes and moves; it reorganizes its collections and displays. Museums tend to be transitory in nature, “permanent” collections travel, “temporary” exhibitions make themselves at home in foreign museums. As with any industry, employees and volunteers leave and new ones become part of the museum. Local visitors tour the museum along with special guests and tourists from around the world. The Museum of the Moving Image, however, presents the unique challenge of re-collecting a collection whose context is dramatically changing as its site undergoes a major renovation and expansion. Simply stated, the museum is revising itself at an accelerated rate, and its under construction status creates atypical dynamics.³⁵

³⁵ Instead of Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects, the firm responsible for the museum's original renovation, Leiser Architecture was hired as part of the museum's design team. The caption of the first Leiser Architecture



Fig. 1.10. Museum lobby wallpapered in blueprints. Photograph by author, 18 Mar. 2008.

The Museum of the Moving Image celebrated the digital groundbreaking of its \$65 million expansion and renovation project on February 27, 2008 through a mediatized performance.³⁶ As explained in the press release “dignitaries used video game controllers disguised as shovels to manipulate a moving image on a theater screen, in a digital interaction designed specifically for the occasion.”³⁷ According to the press release, as those who wielded

design panel, in the series displayed in the museum and on its website, begins with the reminder: “The existing Museum building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.”

³⁶ My use of the term “mediatized performance” draws on Philip Auslander’s definition, a “performance that is circulated on television, as audio or video recordings, and in other forms based on technologies of reproduction” (5).

³⁷ The neighboring Kaufman Astoria Studios has also recently expanded with the addition of Studio K, a \$22 million film and television production studio. Home of *Sesame Street* since the early 1990s, it was only appropriate that the big eyed, furry, red Muppet known as Elmo, along with the help of VIPs including the KAS “Big Cheeses,” Chairman George Kaufman and President Hal Rosenbluth, broke ground on Studio K on October 22, 2008 (Weiss).

the shovels/Wiimote controllers flung dirt, “the expanded and renovated building rose up on the screen.”³⁸ In a February 13, 2009 interview with Carl Goodman, he explained that in planning the event they wanted the shovels to feel like actual shovels versus toys, so they purchased wood and metal shovels from Home Depot and strapped the controllers to them. I was unable to attend the event, but studied *YouTube* videos of it; they can be accessed at <http://www.youtube.com/drebetancourt>. In one of the videos, Astoria City Councilman Peter Vallone, Jr. jokingly shoveled toward the audience, which nevertheless had the same effect on screen as if he had shoveled toward the screen. Virtual dirt flew on screen in the direction opposite Vallone’s shoveling. Guests, alone or in small groups, took turns breaking ground. Their shovels moved in and out of the projected light. The shadows cast by their actual shovels moved rhythmically back and forth over the virtual ground, reminders of pre-cinema technology.

Studying sites under construction involves continuous reminders of their constructedness. During my March 2008 research trip, museum visitors were greeted by blueprints that wallpapered the museum’s lobby from floor to ceiling; they even covered the corridor leading to the first floor restrooms and water fountain (see fig. 1.10). The blueprints detailed the museum’s expansion and renovation. Seven colorful Leeser Architecture presentation boards hung on the wall directly across from the visitor services counter, bits of text caught my wide eyes as I scanned their sensational captions: “thrill of moving images . . . skin of pale blue aluminum panels . . . deep blue felt triangular acoustic panels . . . intimate space for education programs.” When I returned to the museum two months later, the first floor was closed to the public and visitors were required to enter through a temporary side entrance and use a typically off-limits stairwell or freight elevator (see fig. 1.11). During my February 2009 visit to the museum, the

³⁸ The “Progress Photographs” page under the Expansion section of the Museum of the Moving Image’s website notes: “the interactive piece was specially designed for the occasion by artist-engineer Frederick Kirschner.”

Leeser Architecture panels were exhibited on the second floor of *Behind the Screen* in a location that previously provided access to the public stairwell and elevator. There was no trace of the blueprint wallpaper. Damaged by floods in 2007, by its 2010 grand re-opening the museum will have grown significantly, doubling in size, which according to its February 28, 2008 press release will increase its ability to serve audiences “in a strikingly contemporary setting where architecture merges seamlessly with the moving image.”



Fig. 1.11. The first floor under construction, Museum of the Moving Image.
Photograph by author, 29 May 2008.

The Astoria site is not the only Museum of the Moving Image site under construction; the official website is continuously updated and has recently undergone a major expansion. The museum’s professed devotion to digital media marks its website as a critical site of domestication. It features web projects, some of which are referred to as online exhibitions. The

web projects exhibit a range of “objects” such as video games, navigable panoramas, animated interactive tutorials, and conversations with industry professionals. *Moving Image Source*, an international site billed as featuring “information, criticism, and news on all aspects of screen culture” was launched by the museum on June 5, 2008.

A few months later, the museum launched the 2008 edition of *The Living Room Candidate*, an online exhibition; in a September 12, 2008 press release, Rochelle Slovin described it as a “signature program” of the museum that “seamlessly combines the Museum’s key subject areas of film, television, and digital media.” The Museum of the Moving Image website is displayed on monitors in an interactive computer station in the core exhibition near costume and licensed merchandise displays, allowing online and offline visits to the museum to merge as visitors simultaneously navigate both museum sites. Of the museum’s collection of more than 130,000 objects, 3,649 have been added to its publically accessible online Collection Catalog. As this number grows, it is probable that the museum will move further into the spotlight as a valuable resource for online visitors, especially scholars, fans, and collectors of moving image related material culture.

Recollecting as a mode of critical tourism can be understood as memory work and play that involves the placement of particular memories as markers throughout one’s tour and detour of a museum collection. In response to the museum’s domestication of moving image culture, my alternative domestication involves the placement of memories that mark problematic representations of labor, gender, class, and race that I found during my tour and detour. More specifically, a feminist perspective informs my approach and is evident in my attentiveness to the politics of display surrounding issues such as: “behind the scenes” labor in the production of video flipbooks; segregation and movie-going; and movie making, particularly as represented by

Kodak Girls, as a mode of home-making. The organization of my text and my placement of images throughout this study intentionally marks my path of recollection as one fueled by what Georges Lefebvre termed “histories from below.” In Chapter Two I introduce the Video Flipbook by placing a found video flipbook souvenir between my hands, and demonstrating its performance as a family album. As Chapter Two closes, I transition into Chapter Three by placing pages from a video flipbook souvenir onto photographs of the New Orleans Saenger Theatre marquee in an invitation to readers to participate in the creation of a flipbook of recollections. As discussed earlier in this section, in Chapter Four I place a recorded souvenir video of the home move “Martin’s First Haircut” inside my own home, and screen it on a television inherited from my late brother.

The acts of placement featured in this study can be understood as tactics. Drawing on de Certeau, “a tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance” (xix). Museum-going as a tactical practice requires visitors to introduce themselves into the museum collection and “poach” and “create surprises” in them (37). Technologies of reproduction, souvenirs (including products such as photographs and videos created using these technologies), and shared memories present tactical opportunities for museum-goers. Among the “surprises” created in the core exhibition and tactically placed throughout the alternative domestication of moving image culture modeled by this study are: a photograph titled “Group portrait, Astoria Studio, New York, NY, 1927” that foregrounds early moving image laborers; Lori Gomez’s, *Downtown Streetcar*, a sculpture in the Young Leadership Council’s Streetcar Named Desire Project that depicts the New Orleans Saenger movie palace pre-Hurricane Katrina; and a *YouTube* video of an Australian McDonald’s commercial that demonstrates the commodification of a deceased silver screen legend.

In the alternative domestication of moving image culture modeled by this study, I attempt to produce “home” in the doing of my writing. In other words, my writing in the following chapters details my tour and detour of the museum, a process that illuminated my desire to return home.³⁹ The desire was motivated by a search for people, objects, and stories not found inside the museum. I literally returned home to Louisiana, specifically Baton Rouge and New Orleans, between research visits to the museum, and these returns functioned as detours during which I recollected who and what was missing in the museum. My acts of placement involve a claiming of place in an attempt to stabilize a more generative home base within and beyond the walls of the museum.

In a Chapter Two detour, I wait until I am home and surrounded by photographs of my own family in order to flip a stranger’s flipbook into a family album. A pilgrimage to the New Orleans Saenger Theatre in Chapter Three serves as a detour that allowed me to recollect as a flâneuse, and in doing so it created an entry into *Tut’s Fever*.⁴⁰ Having grown up in an era in which movie palaces are scarce, my recollection of the Saenger became a critical detour that led to online recollections by others about the role of New Orleans movie palaces in their lives and Hurricane Katrina’s mark on the community and these historic sites. Chapter Four details my wrangling of a digital video camera, laptop computer, and television in a home screening of “Martin’s First Haircut.” The chapter tracks how my bodily practice of shooting the movie

³⁹ See Lisa Flanagan’s “A House Performs” for a consideration of the relationship between home and memory, particularly in Baton Rouge and surrounding areas where homes have been lost as a result of hurricanes.

⁴⁰ Charles Baudelaire’s conception of the flâneur was useful here in considering how the museum-goer creates detours outside of the museum space when strolling inside of the museum is restricted. As Livia Bloom, former Assistant Curator at the Museum of the Moving Image, writes in her essay on the flâneur film: “Hailed by Baudelaire as ‘the botanist of the sidewalk,’ the flâneur explores new territory, contemplates his or her place in the world, rescues mundane details from the fog of the everyday.” For a discussion of the flâneuse in literature see Janet Wolff’s essay. Anne Friedberg is interested in the origins of the flâneuse, and argues that “the imaginary flâneries of cinema spectatorship offers a spatially mobilized visuality but also, importantly, a temporal mobility” (3).

transformed it into a souvenir marked by my familial identity as an oldest sister as well as by the traces of my own and others' labor.⁴¹

The model offered by this study employs nostalgia as an alternative and political domestication of history. It is inspired by Rachel Hall's essay, "Patty and Me: Performative Encounters between an Historical Body and the History of Images," in which she "animates feminist nostalgia for Patty Hearst in order to demonstrate that encounters between viewers and cultural images are an integral if little understood aspect of subject formation and the ongoing, uneven process of coming into historical consciousness" (347). Hall explains that in privileging the temporality of performance over that of photography, performance studies scholars have stigmatized photography as being the less risky and promising of the two. Photography is "accused of domesticating the past," specifically "political history, thereby banishing contingency and referring the viewer away from the political possibilities of the present" (350). In an attempt to avoid the trap of domesticating "the tension of [her] lived image history," Hall employs "photographs as points of access into the uneven, intimate, and demanding process of the subject's formation into and out of the image archive—a performance that is never finished" (350). Organized around souvenir photographs that disrupt the temporality of museum-going, this study likewise demonstrates becoming as an ongoing process in and outside of the museum. Furthermore, this study employs practices of photography and videography in order to challenge static notions of the temporality and riskiness of photographs and the role of nostalgia in the creation, collection, and display of still and moving images.

⁴¹ Employing Geertzian "thick description" and feminist frameworks, Carol Mavor, Shannon Jackson, and Rachel Hall provide useful models for situating oneself and for creating awareness of research, including archival and museum site research, as a bodily practice. Each of these scholars refuses to skirt around the recognition of the role of desire in one's research, and the ways in which it becomes woven into process.

Museums and moving image industries exist through their trafficking of memories, and nostalgia is their best seller. As Maggie Valentine asserts in her architectural history of the movie theatre, “cinema was an industry that sold an experience and a memory, not a product” (9). Museum and moving image-goers, as both producers and consumers of nostalgia, are capable of finding generative uses for it. Threads of nostalgia stroll unapologetically through the recollections featured in this study in order to demonstrate that the longing that characterizes the nostalgist is not necessarily politically disabling. The desire spurred by nostalgia can be productive if not caught in the “desire desires desire” cycle; it can be instrumental in the identification of the ways in which the nostalgic encounter is problematic and in the generation of creative responses (Taylor and Saarinen). In touring *Behind the Screen*, nostalgia erupted occasionally as homesickness. Detours home were taken in search of answers to questions that surfaced during my tour of the museum such as: Whose voices are missing? What has been excluded? What becomes of video flipbook souvenirs once visitors return home? Why do we screen home movies at home?

In Chapter Two, without family photographs of my great-grandfather, I am left to photograph the New Orleans Saenger Theatre site where he labored. Marianne Hirsch relates the challenge of achieving balance “between nostalgia and critique” in writing about her own family photographs (148). In response to Hirsch, I attempt to recollect nostalgically as a mode of critical tourism. The flipbook that I designed features a souvenir video flipbook (shot in the Museum of the Moving Image) layered upon photographs of one of my visits to the Saenger (shot by my spouse, John Betancourt). My body along with the body of Jael, my sister(-by-choice), performs on the Saenger marquee as I flip the pages. The book becomes a family

album, a souvenir of loss and remembrance, that continuously flips temporal and spatial realities in its alternative domestication of *Behind the Screen*.

Without a direct entry into *Tut's Fever*, in Chapter Three I turn to recollections shared by individuals who keep local New Orleans movie palaces alive through their online memory work on sites such as *Cinema Treasures*, a website that promotes movie theatre related nostalgia. Not all of the shared memories I encountered were pleasurable, some were ambivalent and others were painful; however, they informed my alternative domestication of moving image culture in their voicing of discourses excluded from the captions in *Behind the Screen*. Chapter Three also demonstrates how the nostalgia evoked by Jim Isermann's installation *TV Lounge*, rather than promoting escapism typically associated with nostalgists, actually grounded me in the materiality of the neglected exhibition through foregrounding the behind the scenes labor of both museum and domestic workers. Chapter Four models how a home movie, belonging to a genre of moving images typically discounted for its nostalgic bent, permits subjects including strangers, to in Rachel Hall's terms, "ripen before images of the past" (350).

1.4 MEMORY AND MUSEUM-GOING

"The subjective nature of memory makes it both a sure and a dubious guide to the past."
– David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*.

The alternative domestication of *Behind the Screen* modeled by this study necessarily involves a movement between individual and collective memory. Maurice Halbwachs' distinction between these two memories is useful in defining the way in which these terms are employed here: "the individual memory, in order to corroborate and make precise and even to cover gaps in remembrances, relies upon, relocates itself in, momentarily merges with, the collective memory," whereas "the collective memory . . . encompasses the individual memories while remaining distinct from them. It evolves according to its own laws, and any individual

remembrances that may penetrate are transformed within a totality of having no personal consciousness” (50-51). For Halbwachs, the concepts of individual and collective memory are inseparable. In *Memory and Material Culture* Andrew Jones offers further insight into the relationship between collective and individual memory: “By focusing of the relational structure of mnemonic practice, the division between collective and individual remembering blurs; each is viewed through the lens of the other” (67). Understanding these two modes of memory as intertwined, touring *Behind the Screen* involves a continuous exchange between individual and collective memories surrounding moving image culture.

In her book *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, Alison Landsberg critiques Halbwachs influential account of collective memory as outdated in terms of its failure to account for the “shared social frameworks for people who inhabit, literally and figuratively, different social spaces, practices, and beliefs” made possible by mass cultural technologies” (8). For Landsberg, prosthetic memories, a new form of public cultural memory made possible by modernity: “are neither purely individual nor entirely collective but emerge at the interface of individual and collective experience. They are privately felt public memories that develop after an encounter with a mass cultural representation of the past, when new images and ideas come into contact with a person’s own archive of experience” (19). Considering that museums and moving images are two of Landsberg’s major topics, it is surprising that she does not address moving image museums. Instead, among the sites Landsberg focuses on are two controversial museums, the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.⁴² In its alternative domestication of *Behind the Screen* this study, like *Prosthetic Memory*, “theorizes the production

⁴² On June 10, 2009 a gunman, reportedly associated with white supremacists, fatally shot a U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Guard inside of the museum, and in turn was shot (“US Holocaust Museum Guard Killed”).

and dissemination of memories that have no direct connection to a person's lived past and yet are essential to the production and articulation of subjectivity" (20). It also echoes Landsberg call for educators and intellectuals to find "ways to use the power of these new media to raise the level of public and popular discourse about history, memory, politics, and identity" (21).

Since their creation, museums and moving images have both framed and constructed memories and have invited visitors/spectators to perform their memories collectively and individually through visits/screenings.⁴³ The exchange between individual and collective memory in *Behind the Screen* manifests itself in the interpellation of visitors, a process Louis Althusser explains as the ideological hailing of individuals as subjects. In its alternative domestication of *Behind the Screen* this study demonstrates how material culture prompts idiosyncratic as well as organized practices of recollection. The museum invites recollection by displaying a collection of moving image artifacts, artwork, interactive experiences, and offering related programming that spans a temporal period beginning before the advent of film and ending with present day. There are points of entry for recollection by visitors of all ages, from those born before the introduction of television to those whose baby videos were recorded on mobile phones. The mass produced moving image related material culture offered by the museum calls for collective associations; yet by nature of its role in visitors' everyday lives, the material culture celebrated by the museum also invites the performance of individual memory.

⁴³ In response to the traditional framing of the tourist as a passive spectator, Michael Bowman describes tourists as "co-performers," and suggests employing instead Augusto Boal's "'spect-actor': an interactive co-creator of the performance that may take a more or less important role in it" (103). In *Window Shopping and the Postmodern* Anne Friedberg is interested in spectatorship in the public as well as the domestic, private sphere, and she argues that "The spectatorial flâneries made possible by new technologies of reception invite revisions to previous conceptions of the differences between cinema and television" (139). Michele White's book *The Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship* is useful for its consideration of spectatorship, specifically in relation to computer use, as an embodied process. Among White's interests are: the doubling, morphing, and temporal folding of bodies into themselves or others through interactive video stations; the intermingling of pleasure and pain of folded bodies; and the folded body's relation to hierarchy and control. Drawing on Gilles Deleuze's theory of the fold and its suggestion "of the critical possibilities of becoming," White calls for a practice that "could productively adopt the fold as its critical model" (177, 197).



Fig. 1.12. *Star Trek* themed McDonald's Happy Meal. Photograph by author, 18 Mar. 2008.

The following anecdote, for example, tracks an exchange between individual and collective memory during a March 2008 tour of *Behind the Screen* in which I recollect an encounter with a museum object and subsequently recollect myself. While it might be a stretch to imagine a 1979 *Star Trek* themed McDonald's Happy Meal box profoundly affecting museum visitors, the display of “disposable” consumer goods in glass cases marks them as valuable, not only as collector items but as containers of memories (see fig. 1.12). The year 1979 marked my transition from only child to big sister. When my brother was a toddler, I remember filling the pockets of my gray Kangaroos tennis shoes with ketchup packets that I collected from my elementary school cafeteria and from McDonald's when my grandmother treated us to Happy Meals. My mother was a first generation college student, and during my childhood we were financially strapped. I thought that my mother and little brother would appreciate me bringing

home free condiments. Unfortunately, one day as I played at school during recess, the ketchup packets burst. Too embarrassed to admit that I was hording ketchup in my shoes, I allowed the teacher to assume that my feet were bleeding and she nervously rushed me to the school nurse.

I cannot recollect what happened next, but the nurse probably called my mother who would have had to leave work early to pick me up from school. I have no photographs of this event nor home movie footage that captures these messy memories. They sloppily surfaced as I gazed hungrily at the *Star Trek* Happy Meal Box and listened to my stomach grumble in the quiet museum gallery. I felt slightly dizzy and shaky as the rush to document the museum before its temporary closure did not permit meal breaks. My morning Kaufman Studios Starbucks tall chai latte only provided so much sustenance. Food is not permitted in the museum, so I retreated to the bathroom and snuck bites of a smuggled granola bar in order to recollect myself. On the way back to the exhibition I studied the museum's blueprints that covered the walls as I thirstily sipped from the water fountain.

In moving between individual and collective memory in my alternative domestication of *Behind the Screen*, I generate diverse, divergent, and oppositional collectives. In other words, in response to finding people “missing” from the official narrative of the core exhibition, I seek out individuals and groups along the way and introduce them into my tour and detour of the museum. The collectives include: family members and friends; museum employees, volunteers, and visitors; moving image professionals and amateurs; and online communities such as *YouTube*, *Cinema Treasures*, *NOLA.com*, and *Songfacts*. The following sections outline the organization of this study and discuss the relationships and tensions among the collectives featured in each chapter.

1.5 A SOUVENIR ALBUM



Fig. 1.13. Yoda puppet. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

Through the inclusion of souvenir images in this study, my alternative domestication of *Behind the Screen* is produced in part by the creation of my own photograph album which functions on occasion as a family album.⁴⁴ In other words, the alternative domestication modeled here involved the making of a particular home, one built with still and moving pixels. This mode of home-making included the incorporation of souvenir images, from within and beyond the museum walls, into my tour and detour of the core exhibition in a manner that problematizes its tidy narrative.

The inclusion of my own souvenir snapshots of the museum in my alternative domestication, versus the slick photographs of the collection by official *Behind the Screen*

⁴⁴ See Melanie Kitchens' "Performing Photographs: Memory, History, and Display" for a consideration of the role of collecting memories in the making of photograph albums and in Constantin Stanislavski's actor training system.

photographer David Sundberg, demonstrates the role of the camera as a home-making tool.⁴⁵ I used my own handheld, amateur equipment because it was light and compact. My photographs situate me as a visitor whose access to the collection is restricted by glass cases and other barriers. Flash photography is prohibited in the museum so the exposure of my images was dependent on the museum lighting. Out of respect for the privacy of other visitors and employees, I avoided including members of these collectives in my images. This sometimes involved photographing from an awkward angle or waiting long periods of time in order to get shots that excluded them. The imperfections of my images were unintentional; some are grainy, under or overexposed, or blurry, yet they are shared here in the spirit of recollecting both process and product.

Photography also led to instances of *communitas*, as fellow visitors often approached me for assistance operating their own photographic equipment and museum guards struck up conversations about the objects I photographed. In touring the museum, I became very aware of the prevalence of reflections on glass cases and screens. These reflections of bodies (my own and those of other visitors and employees) and the collection (including screens featuring moving images) encouraged the surveillance of self and others, created fascinating juxtapositions, and exposed unexpected traces that moved throughout the exhibition depending on the movement of myself, others, and images. A number of my photographs and videos captured reflections, though sometimes they were not visible until I viewed the images on a larger screen. My photographs and video shorts are transformed as souvenirs of my alternative

⁴⁵ In the April/May/June 1995 issue of the Museum of the Moving Image newsletter, a brief article entitled "Photographing the Collection" asserts: "Our objects are not works of art, yet the photographer must be able to suggest why our toys or props, or televisions, or moviolas are so valuable. Sundberg selects the most advantageous of many possible angles, and 'poses' the subjects in a manner that is both historically correct and artistically compelling" (4-6). The article closes by noting that visitors can witness the photographer at work in the temporary exhibition entitled "Creating a Collection."

domestication of the museum. The selection included here reveals the compositional choices that I made and exposes various challenges faced by visitors in shooting museums and moving images.

My use of images was inspired by W. G. Sebald's fictive history, *The Rings of Saturn*. Sebald draws attention to the always partial nature of histories through his fluid movement, which at times becomes stuck - yet refuses to hide the stickiness. He foregrounds the tension that challenges, and ultimately prohibits the narrator from wrapping up history in a pristine package. The images archived in Sebald's book resist sight through their graininess and incompleteness. As they challenge our consumption of them, they problematize our attempts to uncritically consume histories as Truth and emphasize processes through which histories are made.

The Museum of the Moving Image's aesthetic and pedagogical use of moving and still images and their captions, including those meant to provide historical perspectives, are considered for the ways in which they domesticate moving image culture. Questions here include: Who and what is left out of these images and their captions? Who or what is forgotten and remembered? How do the images promote or resist consumption? How do images ask visitors to navigate the museum? How do still images function as "screens" through which moving images are contextualized? How might visitors find ways home through the exhibited images and their own souvenir images?

The album I produce is made up of souvenir images, and the album itself can be understood as a souvenir of my alternative domestication. Souvenirs, both material and virtual, are employed by the recollector as objects that ground recollections and their spatial and temporal movements. My treatment of souvenirs is influenced by Lisa Love and Nathaniel

Kohn's essay on the topic, which argues that souvenirs "inspire resistant narratives, or performances in which an imagined or appropriated Other joins with the Self – a kind of memory morphing that opens up possibilities for tactical maneuvers of liberating performance in the play of everyday life" (47). Using Mardi Gras beads from New Orleans' Bourbon Street as an example, Love and Kohn explain that our favorite souvenirs, like particular photographs Barthes writes about, have punctums that "produce an intimacy between the individual and the thing" (55). Photographs and videos from my tour of the Museum of the Moving Image are recollected here as souvenirs in their own right, that fit Love and Kohn's description: "trinkets, bagatelles, mementos, fragments, remnants; fluid, constructed, active, performative, extending, disturbing, tactical, little things that hold explosive possibilities, when approached anew through theory, touch, production, consumption, and use" (61).

Chapter Two opens with a particular type of souvenir, a found object. Theorizing flipbooks as collections of family photographs, I recollect my siblings through a found flipbook. In considering the aesthetics and function found objects, Margaret Iverson references André Breton's experience:

On a visit to a Paris flea market . . . Breton lit on a curious wooden spoon with a little boot carved under its handle and carried it off. Only when he got the object home did it transform itself into the object of his desire: 'It was clearly changing right under my eyes. From the side, at a certain height, the little wood spoon coming out of its handle, took on, with the help of the curvature of the handle, and aspect of a heel and the whole object presented a silhouette of a slipper on tiptoe like those of dancers.' (49)

Once I brought the found flipbook into my home, the strangers on its pages were transformed by my familial recollections. I demonstrate flipping as a bodily practice, and drawing on Carol Mavor's writing on still photographs I consider flipbooks as sites of in/visibility. In this alternative domestication of a found souvenir, I question the relationships among my body (at

home and at the museum site), the bodies in the found flipbook, and my own and my siblings' childhood bodies. In this instance, the found flipbook performs as a souvenir family album.⁴⁶

1.6 TOURING AND DETOURING *BEHIND THE SCREEN*: STOPS ALONG THE WAY

In maintaining a realistic scope, this study identifies three particularly charged sites of domestication in *Beyond the Screen*: the interactive Video Flipbook experience; the movie palace installation, *Tut's Fever*; and the home movie artifact, "Martin's First Haircut." As established at the beginning of this chapter, the most explicit emphasis in *Behind the Screen* is the production of moving images, yet the core exhibition is as much, if not more, about the consumption of moving image culture. The alternative domestication of the core exhibition, therefore, involves a theorization of the relationship between production and consumption of moving image culture during each of the three major stops on the tour. The following brief summaries preview the major stops and the corresponding chapter organization.

Chapter Two: Recollecting Video Flipbooks considers the role of interactivity in traditional and mediatized flipbooks in relation to modes of domestication. Like Chapters Three and Four, this chapter retraces a path to its major topic, in this case the Video Flipbook, and situates it within *Behind the Screen*. The museum's domestication of moving image culture through the Video Flipbook involves its erasure of "behind the screen" museum and moving image production. In response, my alternative domestication of the Video Flipbook examines video flipbooks in various home-making roles. I demonstrate thematic relationships between video flipbooks and individual and family portraits. A *YouTube* detour identifies ways in which video flipbooks are domesticated online as souvenirs.

⁴⁶ See Melanie Kitchens' "Performing Photographs: Memory, History, and Display" for a comparison of *FOUND Magazine*, an online archive of found objects, and Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed praxis. Kitchens considers the relationship between found objects and the collaborative making of their histories.

As both product and process, video flipbooks allow for a better understanding of the kinesthetic dimensions of recollection. Intended as educational toys, video flipbooks become sites of work and play as they offer entertainment as well as opportunities for the surveillance and disciplining of oneself and others. As a transition into Chapter Three, I invite readers to assemble a paper flipbook from images of the New Orleans Saenger Theatre marquee upon which plays a video flipbook from my February 2009 research visit to the museum. Through this invitation, I question what is at stake for us as scholars in an era of virtual site research and online publication, during which pixels are rapidly replacing paper and virtual tourism is replacing actual travel. The flipbook exercise offers a playful material reminder of the on- and offline bodily labor of research.

Chapter Three: Recollecting *Tut's Fever* demonstrates how *Behind the Screen* domesticates movie-going through its situation of a movie palace installation inside the walls of a museum. Movie palaces are framed by the Museum of the Moving Image as sites of consumption. What the museum does not display is the production that was necessary for their creation (and subsequent preservation), or for the creation of *Tut's* and the production required in its everyday screenings. In other words, as with the Video Flipbook, there is an erasure of “behind the screen” museum and moving image production. In response, the alternative domestication modeled here recollects the in/visible labor of movie theatre and museum employees in relation to architecture and design.

Moving image consumption has historically been linked to the domestication of people in terms of keeping them off of the streets and in front of the big screen where they were less likely to cause trouble. Providing grander environments than that of the homes of many audience members, indoor theatres attracted customers seeking more comfortable, climate controlled

environments. According to David Naylor, in the 1920s “on weekdays mothers could attend film showings without the added expense of hiring a babysitter; many picture palaces operated professionally staffed nurseries and supervised play areas” (16). In his guide to American movie theatres deemed great, Naylor traces the decline of picture palaces as one brought on by the Depression; it was later accelerated by the rise of television and the arrival of urban renewal and movement to the suburbs, “the twin demons of the 1960s” (26). During the Depression era slump, theatres offered incentives such as Dish Night that enabled movie-goers to “accumulate a set of dishes by going to the movie once a week, at a time when most families could not afford real china” (Valentine 90). Lesser-paid “‘pretty girl’” ushers replaced male counterparts and were strategically employed as eye candy “to distract patrons and defray replacement costs” (Valentine 91).

In her architectural history of movie theatres, Maggie Valentine explains that “Movie attendance peaked in the 1940s as the public embraced messages of patriotism and romance, and theater chains responded to the demand. Neighborhood movie houses reflected America’s new emphasis on family by showing up in suburban locations” (6).⁴⁷ As television edged its way into homes in the 1950s, the consumption of moving images literally became a ritual of domestication as families gathered together in front of screens in their homes. As their initial glory days faded, many movie theatres became less appealing as domestic environments. In his recollections of childhood movie-going in Alvin, Texas, David Welling traces the decline of the Alvin Theatre: “The theatre was a rattrap. That was what my brother called it, and even joked of the tug-of-war he had waged with an oversized rat after dropping his Mars bar to the ground. The tug-of-war was dubious; the oversize rats were not” (xiv). Shortly before the theatre closed,

⁴⁷ Maggie Valentine notes that “in 1945, one theatre had experimented with selling frozen foods from vending machines in the lobby, so that the busy housewife could do her shopping after the matinee” (172).

Welling's parents forbade him and his brother from movie-going due to the Alvin's "nasty condition" (xv). The grandest of movie theatres were among those eventually deemed flea pits as their upkeep outpaced their income.⁴⁸

In Chapter Three, I juxtapose souvenir photographs from my pilgrimage to the Saenger Theatre with images that I found while touring The Historic New Orleans Collection online in an effort to understand how movie palaces maintain a hold on our collective and individual memory despite, or perhaps because of, trends toward their extinction.⁴⁹ The role of nostalgia in movie-going is considered as is the domestication of movie stars through fetishization. The relationship between immortality and moving images is discussed through recollections of Hollywood legend James Dean whose remains are symbolically housed in *Tut's Fever*.

Chapter Four: Recollecting "Martin's First Haircut" focuses on the ways in which *Behind the Screen* domesticates a home movie through exhibiting it inside of a glass case. As a familial artifact produced by the father of Rochelle Slovin, the Museum of the Moving Image founding director, and featuring her alongside her mother and little brother, "Martin's" becomes a particularly charged site of recollection. This chapter questions how our own home movies, as well as those of strangers, invite us to recollect family. Plans for the permanent removal of "Martin's" from *Behind the Screen* (as part of an effort to shift the exhibition's focus away from

⁴⁸ In his essay "'Only the screen was silent . . .': Memories of Children's Cinema-Going in London before the First World War," Luke McKernan compiles recollections of early movie theatres that reveal that the term flea pit was employed before their decline: "Cinemas were commonly viewed as unhygienic (hence the term 'flea pit'), with little difference made in the perception of a lack of cleanliness between the cinema and those who patronised it. A common practice was to spray the audiences with perfumed disinfectant, which seems to have aroused surprisingly little protest" (10).

⁴⁹ Bernadette Calafell's essay entitled "Pro(re-)claiming Loss: A Performance Pilgrimage in Search of Malintzin Tenépal" frames her pilgrimage as a performance that "enables a re-storied history" (53). "Remembering and Forgetting The 'Final Solution': A Rhetorical Pilgrimage through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum" by Marouf Hasian is useful in its consideration of the rhetorical dimensions of pilgrimages to contested sites of memory. In *Culture on Tour* Edward Bruner explains that the concepts of "home" and "away" in Nelson Graburn's threefold scheme of tourism as a pilgrimage ("travel from the familiar everyday world to another location; temporary residence in the nonordinary place while in a liberated, liminal state; then a return to home, transformed by the ritual experience") have been problematized by scholars; in response Bruner introduces the "touristic borderzone" in an attempt to "reconceptualize tourism space altogether" (13).

amateur filmmaking) sparks questions about the museum's role in individual and collective forgetting.

In recollecting "Martin's" neighboring artifacts, I demonstrate the ways in which two of the images near "Martin's," a poster titled *After the Round-Up* and a September 1982 Walt Disney Home Video advertisement, center television within familial space. I discuss the covers of two issues of *Kodak Movie News* displayed above "Martin's" and suggest ways in which they frame the home movie in terms of gender roles, specifically those concerning family ritual as well as parents' use of technologies of reproduction. I highlight how Kodak advertisements pitched technologies of reproduction to women as products that required little thought, and were easily incorporable into their domestic duties. In other words, home movie making became an additional home-making responsibility expected of women, and particularly of "good" mothers. The use of technologies of reproduction by mothers, specifically cameras, was framed as maternal duty rather than reproductive art. The upcoming removal of "Martin's First Haircut" and the rest of the home movie artifacts from *Behind the Screen* will detract from the exhibition's more explicit discourses on the relationship between domestication and moving image technologies in the home. It will be interesting to learn what discourses are introduced in "Martin's" absence.

My alternative domestication of "Martin's First Haircut" involved screening it within the walls of my home where it functioned as a souvenir and maintained its association with the embodied practice of screening in *Behind the Screen*. In her introduction to the anthology *The Familial Gaze*, Marianne Hirsch reminds us that "The familial gaze is always inflected by numerous other institutional gazes" including "memorial and mourning" and "museological" gazes (xii). Prior to screening "Martin's First Haircut" at home, I recollect the movie through

four still photographs taken during my visit and consider how the stills performed simultaneously as fragments of a home movie, family photographs, and souvenirs of a visit to *Behind the Screen*. I demonstrate how the display of the digital photographs on a home computer screen created spatial and temporal rhythms of recollection through interactive spectatorial techniques such as magnification and miniaturization.

Chapter Five: Conclusion integrates key findings and their implications. I suggest directions and alternate methodologies for future research on the Museum of the Moving Image, discuss challenges, and offer recommendations. Though this dissertation concludes before the expanded museum's grand opening, it is poised at a critical moment that makes it especially valuable for those interested in the transitory nature of museums, the ways in which we recollect our memories and ourselves through museum-going and technologies of reproduction, and the relationship between domestication and the politics of display.

1.7 TRANSITION: DISSOLVE TO *BEHIND THE SCREEN*

“Gradual appearance (fade in) of a picture as a previous one is being taken out (fade out); the two overlap briefly during transmission . . .”

- Desi K. Bognár on “dissolve,” *International Dictionary of Broadcasting and Film*.



Fig. 1.14. Second floor entrance to *Behind the Screen*. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

CHAPTER TWO RECOLLECTING VIDEO FLIPBOOKS

2.1 RETRACING A PATH TO THE VIDEO FLIPBOOK

“The figures may illustrate a prize fight, a cock fight, a wrestling match, a skirt dance, skipping, a drinking bout, or the like, the subjects in this respect being practically unlimited. The respective movements of the figures are represented or imitated to a nicety by the rapid slipping of the leaves through the fingers, which has the effect of producing an optical illusion as perfect as it is amusing and interesting.”

- From British Patent n°8572 by John O'Neill and Robert McNally for Flip Books Now Realized with Photographs, *Flipbook.info*.

“Flip art consists of a sequence, generally of a comical kind, printed in the upper right hand corner of a variety of books or magazines which allow you to experience the sense of time and motion by the simple expedient of flipping the pages rapidly from front to back. The clear purpose of most of these flipbooks is to amuse. I propose that there may be more serious applications for the technique.”

- Andrew Davidhazy, “Flipbooks for a Change!”

The recollections of video flipbooks offered here begin with the retracing of a path to the video flipbook, a path retraceable back to Martha Longenecker, founding director of the Mingei International Museum (MIM) of San Diego. In my role as the Mingei’s first Director of Education and the Art Reference Library, my duties were guided by her vision of museum-going.⁵⁰ In 1952 Longenecker met the Japanese Buddhist philosopher, Dr. Sōetsu Yanagi, who coined the term *mingei* (meaning “art of the people”) and founded the Mingei Association with Shōji Hamada and Kanjoiro Kawai. She subsequently studied pottery under the late Hamada and his apprentice the late Tatsuzo Shimaoka; both were Living National Treasures of Japan. My MIM duties included coordination of the docent led museum tours. In detailing tour guidance instructions, Longenecker explained to me that visitors must be encouraged to experience the objects in the museum *before* consulting the captions. To encourage “pre-captioned” interactions, captions were tiny and unobtrusive, thus requiring visitors to confront objects first

⁵⁰ This position has since been turned into two separate positions: 1) Director of Education; and 2) Library Services Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator. The library has also since been named the Frances Hamilton White Art Reference Library.

rather than jumping immediately to the text that detailed information such as artist name, date of creation, medium, and donor. Like Rochelle Slovin, Longenecker is highly respected, has a powerful presence, and is arguably the auteur of the museum she founded.⁵¹

I followed Longenecker's wishes and to this day, even if captions are readable from across a room, like some found in the Museum of the Moving Image, I resist them as her voice echoes in my memory. Longenecker's introduction to *A Transcultural Mosaic: Selections From the Permanent Collection of Mingei International / Museum of World Folk Art* is immediately followed by an excerpt from Yanagi's "The Way of Tea," a chapter featured in his book, *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty*. Yanagi writes "Those who employ their intellect before they see are denied a real comprehension of beauty. Before all else the devotees of Tea saw. They applied their eyes directly to the objects" (9). Carrying Longenecker's Eastern teachings with me as I returned to the Museum of the Moving Image as a tourist-scholar, I attempted to follow in the footsteps of the devotees of tea and apply my "eyes directly to the objects" before I unpacked my tools of mediation and interpretation through which I would subsequently gaze: still cameras, video cameras, audio recorders, computers, ink, and paper.

The need to document the Museum of the Moving Image quickly before its renovation and expansion, however, forced a hypercaptioning of my tours during research visits. This process heightened my awareness of the ways in which captions, including my own, are integrated into recollection. Drawing on Mieke Bal, Vivian Patraka writes on museums' strategies and their relationship to sight: "Some of these strategies produce the possibility and fascination of 'gawking,' some induce a confirming sense of 'seeing' by covering up what cannot be 'seen,' and some position us to struggle to see at the same time we are conscious of

⁵¹ Longenecker's 27-year tenure as Director ended in 2005, she remains Founding President and Director Emerita. Rob Sidner, who served as her assistant director during my time at the Mingei, is the current director.

our own difficult engagement in ‘seeing’” (“Spectacles” 99).⁵² In an essay that Elin Diamond terms a “eulogy to modernist seeing,” Herbert Blau argues that:

in the atmosphere of recent discourse, the other side of seeing too much, or having too much to see, is that one is almost induced by the critique of the specular – the hegemony of surveillance, its secret archives – to conduct one’s life with lowered eyes. (Or in the now obsessive rhetorics of the body, to reverse the hierarchy of the senses, as if the essential truths were certified by touch or, without the taint of logocentrism, metaphysics came in through the pores.) (180)

During this postmodern era that Blau describes as having created “the symptomatic condition . . . where the *flâneur* memorialized by Benjamin is caught up in the visual orgy deplored by Baudrillard” the seemingly innocent act of museum-going becomes charged with an awareness of “this tactile vertigo of the image” (178).

The following paragraphs offer a raw recollection of what I saw on my March 14, 2008 initial return to the Museum of the Moving Image. The act of “seeing” here is not to be confused with Western practices of visualism. Though sight is arguably the sense primarily associated with the moving image (as well as with museum-going), followed closely by sound, it is important to recognize its capability to stimulate all senses. The concept of “sight” as used by Yanagi and his followers draws on Buddhist tradition aimed at holistic meditative practices of being in the world.⁵³ In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart writes about the “spatial organization of the collection”; she notes that, “left to right, front to back, behind and before, depends on the creation of an individual perceiving and apprehending the collection with eye and hand” (154-

⁵² Patraha is particularly concerned with how these strategies complicate “the usual museum situation (us looking at objects)” in museums of the dead, specifically Holocaust museums, in ways that “mark the ‘goneness’ and the loss instead of simply substituting for them through representation” (“Spectacles” 99).

⁵³ Mingei philosophy is very process oriented, as noted by William Hamilton in Tatsuzo Shimaoka’s obituary, “In an interview with *Clay Times*, a ceramics journal, Mr. Shimaoka said he learned from Hamada that craft ‘is not to be learned by intellect, but with the body.’” This of course is not to say that mingei philosophy is anti-intellectual, a key teaching is unity of body, mind, and spirit through the “making and using [of] handmade objects which express the whole being” (Longenecker 6). We might also question ways in which moving images can be considered hand-made crafts learned with the body; and as discussed in Chapter Four of this study, how home videos, for example, might be conceptualized in terms of being home-made.

55). As Stewart explains, “To ask which principles of organization are used in articulating the collection is to begin to discern what the collection is about” (154). Retracing as a mode of recollection marks my own processes of organizing and captioning as a participant-observer. It offers an initial spatial orientation to the museum and its organization before and during its renovation and expansion, and honors Longenecker’s teachings through an initial resistance to institutional captions. In addition, retracing visits to the museum situates it as a site of return, repetition, and recollection.

Emerging from an underground train station, one walks past shops, restaurants, a movie theatre, and a Starbucks. An urban smell and gummy sidewalk give way to glass doors, crisp climate control, and glossy merchandise; an abundance of blueprints wallpaper the lobby. Video game characters move on screen after screen after screen in the *Digital Play* exhibition. Some screens remain still, blank, broken, neglected. Sound punctuates the shadows. Light pours into the stairwell popping the red paint. Outside of the windows is fresh dirt; someone has been working with heavy machinery, someone has been digging.

Leaving the sunlight, one enters *Behind the Screen*. It is a blur of bright captions and graciously aged artifacts. Black and white moving and still images give way to color ones. The exhibition is sensuously wrapped in red velvet curtains and mysterious spaces peek through, such as doorways to secret places and an alcove of lockers containing unknown content. In a small space the magic audibly whirs; lights flash, a faucet drips, and dishes smash. Two hand cranked devices show still images that move in tune with the visitor’s unsteady rhythm.

Past a station of interactive computers and laminated image cut-outs that offer animated play, is a glass double doorway. It is covered with partially open curtains which reveal a room brightly lit by two walls of windows that provide a view of neighboring buildings. A museum

guard straightens up the laminated image cut-outs that a tour group left in disarray. Next to a dark, cozy, heavily curtained screening alcove is a brightly lit area that invites visitors to move their bodies and to recollect the mediatized bodies of those who once moved in the now empty space.

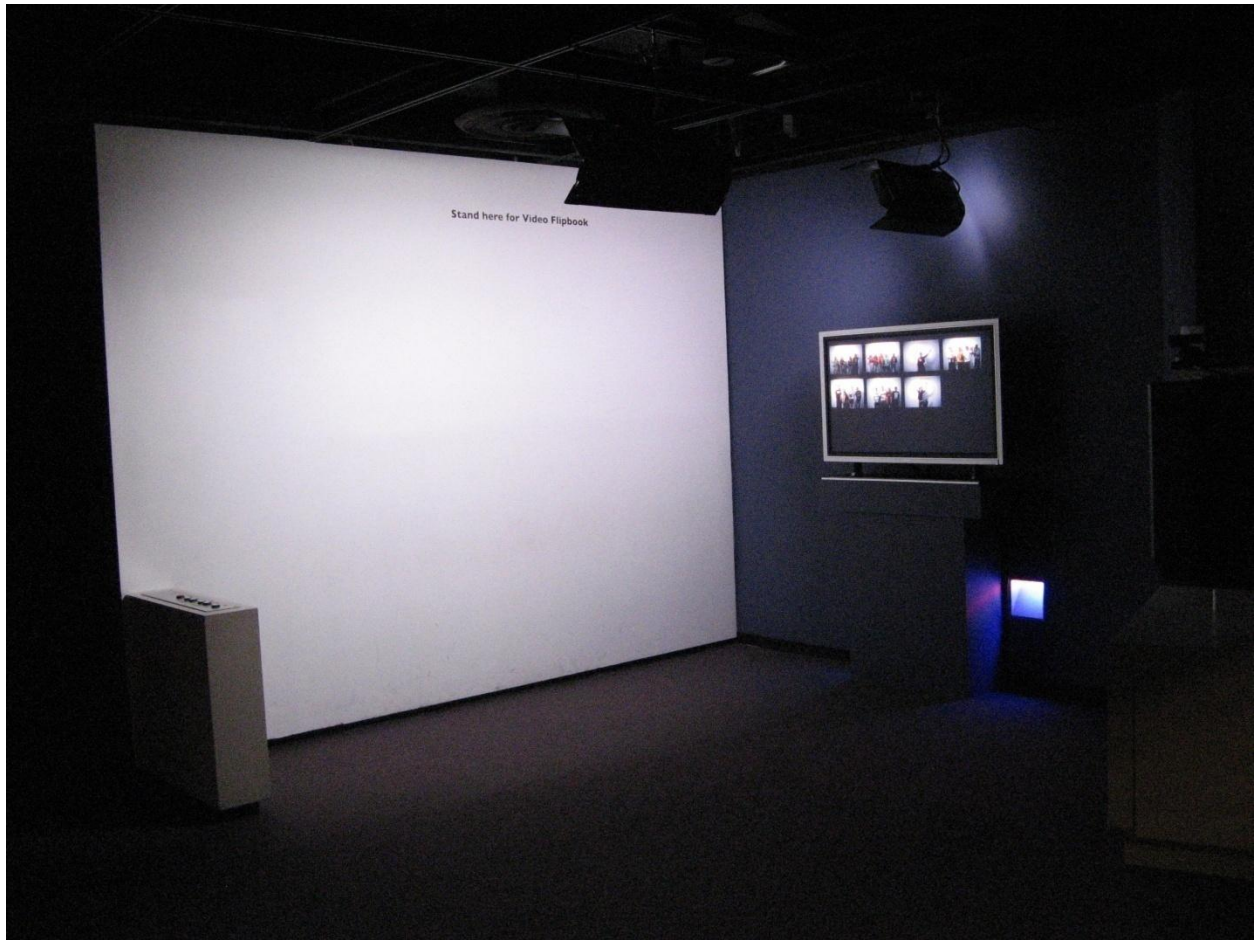


Fig. 2.1. Video Flipbook. Photograph by author, 28 May 2008.

2.2 MUDDY RECOLLECTIONS

I am tempted to track down a long lost friend in Scotland in order to inquire if she still has a box of my uncollected belongings containing the video flipbook that I believe I made on my first visit to the Museum of the Moving Image in 2004. For now, I flip through the two video flipbooks of myself that I purchased for \$7.00 each during my March 2008 research visit to the

museum.⁵⁴ I look many pounds heavier in one of the flipbooks though they were made the same week, perhaps the food I was consuming at nearby eateries in order to get a better taste of the surrounding Astoria neighborhood was not the healthiest. The museum's café was closed in preparation for the upcoming renovation. I wonder what fare its new café will offer, Greta Garbo grande lattes and Pac Man popcorn? I realize the flipbook that features a heavier body was created the day before the other one. Maybe the video distorted my body, or perhaps one of the outfits I wore was less flattering than the other?

I have a third video flipbook in a Ziploc bag; it is a found one that features strangers. In addition to video flipbooks, my Museum of the Moving Image souvenir collection includes pens, a tote bag, a shirt, a tiny Moleskine journal, postcards, and a fancy keychain among other things. The found flipbook is my favorite souvenir, treasured for its playfulness. On the March 2008 research trip I found the flipbook in a large, muddy puddle on the corner of 35th Avenue and 37th Street as I left the museum for the day. I was headed toward the Steinway Street station to take the train back to Woodside, my old neighborhood where I stayed during March 2008 visits. The found flipbook was sopping wet and dirty; nevertheless, I was excited about studying someone's lost souvenir. I hesitated only briefly at the thought that this act might be captured on the museum's security cameras and tarnish my reputation, before reaching my hand into the puddle to collect the flipbook. I wrapped it up in my white, monogrammed handkerchief, quickly stuck it in my purse, and left the scene of the crime.

⁵⁴ In the days leading up to the museum's temporary closure in March 2008 a visitor services volunteer explained to me the museum had stopped selling memberships to visitors since its reopening date was unknown (admission, along with other benefits, is included in membership; nonmembers, however, were required to pay admission for each visit). The Museum's December 23, 2008 Member Update bulletin noted that the museum "is offering FREE admission six days a week. To help support programs, an optional contribution of \$5 per person is suggested." According to the museum's website, current admission for adults is \$7, and admission for children under eight years old is free.

Back in my Baton Rouge home, I contemplate putting on gloves before I flip through the found video flipbook as there is no telling what was in the murky puddle where I found it floating. When I first found the soggy flipbook I placed it on a windowsill to dry. It was too wet to flip effectively, but I gingerly thumbed through the dirt caked pages inspecting a group of children in seemingly random poses. I am reminded of Carol Mavor's essay "Touching Netherplaces: Invisibility in the Photographs of Hannah Cullwick," which begins with the mandatory slipping on of a pair of white gloves – an action that draws attention to her own bodily practice as a historiographer physically engaging the Munby Box housed in Wren Library, Trinity College, University of Cambridge. The box "holds the photographs of working-class women that were obsessively collected by Arthur Munby (1828-1910)" whom she describes as "a man-about-London-town" (198). Mavor is most concerned with photographs of Hannah Cullwick, Munby's lower servant and wife. In an endnote that compares herself with Griselda Pollock, who also studied the Munby archives, Mavor states: "She too indulges in the oddness of wearing white gloves, in order to inspect the dirty women represented" (228).⁵⁵

Remembering that I became ill toward the end of my research trip I sigh "better safe than sorry," and put on a pair of large American Red Cross powder-free textured latex exam gloves, indulging in the oddness of wearing translucent gloves. Cautious about my severe allergies, I entertain wearing a dust mask but decide that would be too ridiculous. The gloves are much too big for me and bunch baggily around my wrists, but they will do the trick - though they make it especially difficult to open the Ziploc bag. The flipbook features two young boys and a girl who appears even younger; perhaps siblings, their ages probably range from three to six years old. In questioning if sets of young strangers in photographs are siblings, Julia Hirsch reveals the

⁵⁵ In the same endnote, Mavor discusses her choice to include her tale of the gloves in an effort to "perform all of the authority she could muster" after realizing the credibility that explicitly sharing this part of the process afforded her (228).

intrigue of family photographs: “the most haunting aspect of the photographs is not the likeness between these siblings, but the evocations of the image themselves. We wonder as we look at these young faces about the closeness and separateness, about the dependency and rivalry, the love and ambivalence which strike all family relations” (3). The children in the flipbook are moving quickly and wildly and appear to be immensely enjoying themselves.

A tiny fourth body randomly appears at the edge of the frame. Toward the end of the book the fourth child is revealed to be a female toddler. Reminiscent of the fictional animated television series character Maggie Simpson, she sucks on a bottle as she wanders into the frame. The toddler’s body occasionally disappears as the other children’s bodies block it from view. Like Mavor, I am drawn to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s use of “the inside-out, outside-in structure of the glove (its reversibility) as a model of this double open space in which subjects perform” (195). Mavor’s essay “registers her [Cullwick] as invisible, which far from making her disappear, renders her flesh a palpable–palpating specter”; Mavor asserts: “Though you may not see her, she will touch you” (195). The flipbook captures a playfulness of the children’s performance, one that reminds me of childhood photographs of my younger siblings and me.

Family photographs taken after my brother’s death foreground his absence. In her book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* Peggy Phelan’s intimately shared familial experience of her sister’s death describes her and her surviving siblings’ as “especially conscious” of their “sister’s swift escape from skin” (13). In explaining the “substitutional economy of the family,” Phelan writes about her sister’s ghost: “For while we were each reproducing one another’s bodies across an unstable and always redoubled divide of time and gender, her non-corporeality reproduced our bodies as fleshless” (13). Gazing at my own adult body in video flipbooks, I note that my movements are disciplined in contrast to those in the found video flipbook that

recollect the absent, playful childhood bodies of my siblings and me. The bodies featured in all three of the flipbooks cast shadows that dance silently on the white wall behind them.

Though it is only an assumption that the children in the found flipbook are related, it is safe to say that many of the flipbooks produced by the museum are familial photographs. Instead of being shot by a parent, flipbooks are shot by an automated video camera that frees parents to enter the frame or gaze upon the scene from outside of the frame. Marianne Hirsch writes, “As photography immobilizes the flow of family life into a series of snapshots, it perpetuates familial myths while seeming merely to record actual moments in family history” (*Family Frames* 7). Existing in a liminal space between traditional family still photographs and home movies, video flipbooks reveal a touristic ritual that, as a series of snapshots, mobilizes unique family narratives as each image flips into the next. Returning to the found video flipbook, I note that the children, immersed in their own world of play, do not gaze back at me - except for the younger boy whose gaze briefly meets mine. I begin sneezing repeatedly, and worried that perhaps invisible mold on the found video flipbook has triggered my allergies, I hastily return it to the Ziploc bag and recollect myself.

2.3 SITUATING THE VIDEO FLIPBOOK WITHIN *BEHIND THE SCREEN*

In addition to gazing at moving images, artifacts, and artwork in *Behind the Screen*, visitors are invited to perform the labor of moving industry professionals through interactive displays, most of which involve negotiating one’s body within a network of screens and curtains. Often unpredictable instances, such as a visitor’s misunderstanding of instructions or a technological failure, offer insight on moving image culture beyond what is found in the authoritative captions used by the museum to map its physical and ideological territory. The core exhibition is described in the museum’s December 12, 2008 press release: “Spanning two

floors and 14,000 square feet, this innovative blend of more than 1,200 historical artifacts, artwork, video clips, and interactive exhibits shows how moving images are made, marketed, and exhibited.”⁵⁶ *Behind the Screen* variously blurs and enforces boundaries between mediums through its arrangement, ultimately privileging film. Visitors are encouraged to embrace all moving images, yet cinema-going is framed as the most desirable mode of spectatorship which in turn elevates the importance of the artifacts and interactive displays most directly related to filmmaking. Convergence and remediation of old and new technologies in the museum is highlighted through captions and demonstrations.



Fig. 2.2. Elevator and stairwell leading to the beginning of *Behind the Screen*. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.



Fig. 2.3. Opening image panel in *Behind the Screen*. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

Both floors of *Behind the Screen* are designed for visitors to follow a somewhat rectangular pathway. Its opening caption frames the exhibition as a narrative that “tells the story of producing, promoting, and exhibiting motion pictures and television, and of the inventors, artists, and craftspeople who together constitute the world of work behind the screen.” At the beginning of tours, educators sometimes instruct visitors not to lean on caption panels, and

⁵⁶ According to the September 12 – November 30, 1988 museum calendar, the original title of the exhibition was from *Behind the Screen: Producing, Promoting, and Exhibiting Motion Pictures and Television*.

cautiously point out the paper peeling off of one in them as an example of the damage visitors unintentionally cause. Immediately inside the entrance to the third floor/first level of the exhibition is the interactive computer station titled “Who Does What in Movies and Television,” which features an outdated searchable database of professional roles in film and TV industries (see fig. 2.4).⁵⁷

The database is organized into three indexes: alphabetical; departmental; and labor union/guild. Branislav Jakovljevic explains that “visitors are invited to browse through the list of jobs and professions,” and asserts that “At the beginning of the Museum tour, visitors are warned that the glamour and glitter of moving pictures is only the surface of a big and complicated national industry” (358). Following Jakovljevic’s logic, the first stop in *Behind the Screen* is dedicated to demystifying the performance of the moving image through a database that summarizes the types of labor performed through approximately 200 listings.⁵⁸

There is no mention in the database or near the exhibit about the laborers who created the Video Flipbook, leaving the intersection between museum and moving image industries “behind the screen.” In a February 13, 2009 interview with Carl Goodman, he recounted that there was a picture of him dancing around in the attract loop of the Video Flipbook that took a decade to remove. In this instance, Goodman was literally performing on the screen for years. “The exhibits are a product of the staff’s own sweat,” he stated, explaining that the teams that design the museum’s exhibits include museum staff, not just outside contractors. According to

⁵⁷ The companion guide to the core exhibition *Behind the Screen: The American Museum of the Moving Image Guide to Who Does What in Motion Pictures and Television* was written by David Draigh, whose titles at the museum have included Publication Editor, Research Associate, and Associate Curator; published in 1988, the guide features 122 positions in the film and television industries, and its content echoes the database entries. In a March 2008 interview with David Schwartz, he confirmed that the database will be updated during the renovation of *Behind the Screen*.

⁵⁸ Alison Trope asserts that the “limitations and biases” of the Museum of the Moving Image are evident in the moving image professions featured in *Behind the Screen*, that in directly paralleling the Hollywood industry, “cannot be tied to a minor industry or to a more independent mode of production, distribution, or exhibition” (“Le Cinéma” 51).

Goodman, they invest a lot of time and energy into the exhibits and maintain the attitude: “we’re in there, so let’s put on a show!” When questioned in 1996 by Ralph Blumenthal of *The New York Times* if the database accepts résumés, Slovin replied “It will eventually”; yet over a decade later it does not.⁵⁹ It will be interesting, especially considering the current economic recession, if the renovation of *Behind the Screen* includes moving image industry recruitment efforts.



Fig. 2.4. Interactive station featuring Who Does What in Movie and Television. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.



Fig. 2.5. Pre-cinema artifacts including the Magic Lantern, Praxinoscope, Phenakistoscope, and Zoetrope. Photograph by author, 27 May 2008.

There are a number of companies such as FlipClips and Flipbook Empire that create flipbooks using customers’ still or moving images, but they do not offer the experience of recording the images followed by an instantaneous display of them unfolding on screen (as well

⁵⁹ In my March 2008 interview with Davis Schwartz, he stated that he had never heard of any plans regarding the database and résumé submission.

as playing alongside other flipbooks). In a brief article about the museum, William Niederkorn notes: “The Video Flip Book exhibit, created by the museum with a bow to S. H. Pearce & Company software, is unique, said Carl Goodman, curator of digital media. But it may multiply, said Rochelle Slovin . . .” (3). In my interview with Carl Goodman, he said that as far as he knows no other institution boasts anything like the Video Flipbook, and noted that video flipbooks created in the museum function as viral media – they are everywhere.

Later, as I scrolled through my photographs of the second floor, I discovered several close-ups of three plaques located on the wall immediately before Jim Isermann’s installation *TV Lounge*. Each thanks or credits various people and organizations: the donors who made *Behind the Screen* possible; those who gave permission for their audio-visual material to be used in the exhibition; and the director and staff of the museum along with a list of consultants involved in the planning and designing of the exhibition. The third plaque credits Eddie Elliot for Video Flipbook software design and Barry Greenhut for 201 Industry Jobs software design. The museum includes artists’ names in captions that accompany that which is classified as art work, whereas it lists the names of all of the consultants on interactive exhibits together on a single plaque. This practice places “art” on a pedestal, and asks visitors to recollect it in association with the credited artists. The consultants involved in the creation of the interactive exhibits, and even the director and staff (whose individual names are not listed on the plaque) however, retain greater anonymity.

Before the visitor arrives at the Video Flipbook, to her left she will pass pre-cinema artifacts such as Magic Lanterns with slides, a Thaumatrope, a Phenakistoscope, and a Zoetrope (see fig. 2.5).⁶⁰ These artifacts are followed by a small alcove housing *Feral Fount*, a

⁶⁰ Jakovljevic fails to recognize that the searchable computer database is actually the first interactive experience in the exhibition, when he asserts that “two original praxinoscopes . . . are the first interactive experience in the

commissioned kinetic sculpture by Gregory Barsamian, identified as a museum favorite by many visitors and employees (see fig. 2.6). While gazing at *Feral Fount*, one museum educator noted: “You can feel breeze from it spinning, even when it looks like it’s still”; another visitor echoed this comment in a video of his visit that is shared on *YouTube*. Directly next to the Video Flipbook is a small, heavily curtained screening alcove which features a seven minute short titled “The First Movies.”



Fig. 2.6. *Feral Fount* by Gregory Barsamian. Video still by author, 16 Feb. 2009.

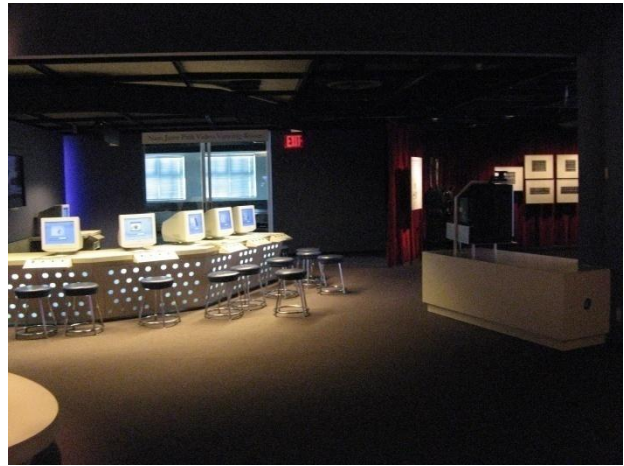


Fig. 2.7. Area surrounding the Video Flipbook. Photograph by author, 28 May 2008.

From the Video Flipbook, one has a view of the Nam June Paik Video Viewing Room, and can watch its occupants through the glass doors of the room if they are not hidden behind by a red curtain sometimes drawn shut for privacy (see fig. 2.7). Also visible in front of the Video Flipbook is a looped animation short by Terry Gilliam which is screened on the wall of an area made up of six Animation Workstations that invite visitors to create their own frame-by-frame animation. The Video Flipbook is positioned directly before the first of two windows that allow visitors and security guards to view the second floor below; this juxtaposition further encourages

exhibition” (360). He goes on to explain that the Praxinoscopes “are a reminder that the early moving images required certain activity from the spectator . . .”; however, through the placement of the computer station *before* the pre-cinematic artifacts, the museum is also, perhaps unintentionally, foregrounding the activity required of contemporary moving image spectators (360).

the surveillance of other visitors (see fig. 2.8). On a wall beside the window, Getting the Picture, the next chapter of the exhibition, is introduced with an image and text; it opens onto a corridor of film and television camera and sound equipment (see fig. 2.9).



Fig. 2.8. Window with view of second floor. Caption panel that introduces Getting the Picture. Photograph by author, 3 June 2008.

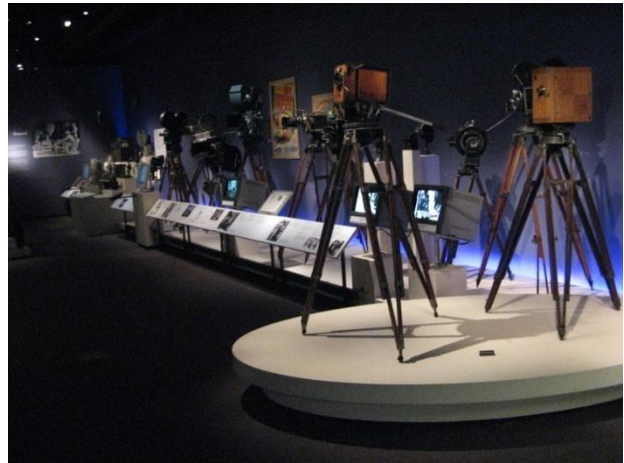


Fig. 2.9. Getting the Picture corridor. Photograph by author, 3 June 2008.

The Video Flipbook is found on the first leg of this first level of the exhibition in the chapter titled From Still to Moving Images. The name of the chapter is printed directly on the right wall along with a three paragraph caption and a black and white image that mentions the “persistence of vision” phenomenon that dates back to 1824. During my visits, this phenomenon was taught by museum educators with no mention of the more recent research that has debunked the myth of persistence of vision (Anderson and Anderson).⁶¹ The wall caption is followed by a computer station titled The Illusion of Motion and a partially open red curtained alcove where public restrooms and a set of lockers, perhaps for staff members, are located (see fig. 2.10).

⁶¹ In a follow-up essay to their 1978 claim that “‘persistence of vision’ was an inaccurate and inadequate explanation of the apparent motion found in a motion picture,” Joseph and Barbara Anderson “suggest that henceforth the phenomenon of motion in the motion picture be called by the name used in the literature of perception -- short-range apparent motion.” The authors argue that: “Motion in the motion picture is . . . an illusion, but since it falls within the short-range or ‘fine grain’ category it is transformed by the rules of that system -- that is, the rules for transforming real continuous movement. The visual system can (and does) distinguish between long-range and short-range apparent motion, but it seemingly cannot distinguish between short-range apparent motion and real motion. To the visual system the motion in a motion picture is real motion.”

There are unmarked doorways presumably off limits to the public; as Susan Stewart writes on the organization of collections, their “space must move between the public and the private, between display and hiding” (155).



Fig. 2.10. Curtained area leading to public restrooms and private unmarked doorway. Photograph by author, 28 May 2008.

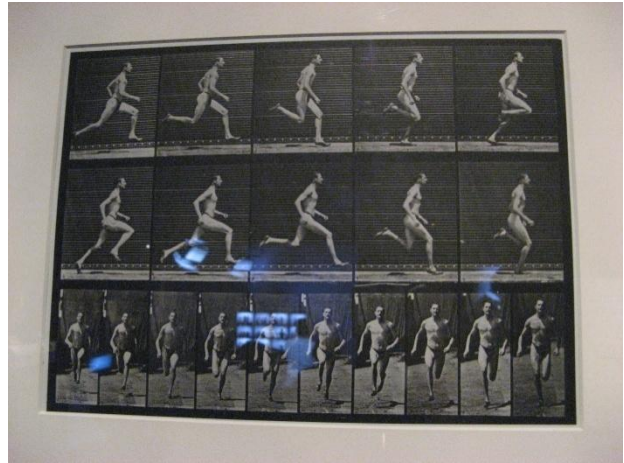


Fig. 2.11. Photogravure plate by Eadweard Muybridge with reflection of Video Flipbook. Photograph by author, 27 May 2008.

Next is a red curtained wall upon which hangs plates from *Animal Locomotion*, created using photogravure in 1887 by Eadweard Muybridge; the glass frames reflect the Video Flipbook monitors opposite them so that the bodies of museum visitors dance, jump, or move randomly on early photographic experiments from the late 1800s (see fig. 2.11). These curiously animated images are followed by two Mutoscopes; one features Charlie Chaplin, reportedly a distant relative of mine, in “Eating Soup,” the other shows a scene from Georges Méliès’ “A Trip to the Moon” (see fig. 2.12).⁶² Explaining her interest in early video games in relation to “parallels with the history of early cinema,” such as their “coin-operated, arcade format,” Rochelle Slovin recollects: “Mutoscopes were still to be found in the beachfront boardwalk penny arcades of my childhood in the early 1940s” (139). During my research visits several

⁶² In his recollection of his experience with one of the museum’s Mutoscopes, William Weir, a reporter for the *Hartford Courant*, emphasizes the labor involved with this mode of spectatorship: “Look into the lens, turn the crank and watch Groucho Marx get into a food fight. The whole film is only a few minutes long, but you have to keep cranking the whole time, and it gets a little wearying.”

fellow visitors delightfully recollected Mutoscopes from visits to nearby Coney Island and other boardwalks.



Fig. 2.12. Mutoscopes featuring “A Trip to the Moon” and “Eating Soup.” Photograph by author, 27 May 2008.

Drawing on tour group’s familiarity with flipbooks, educators often reference them when explaining how lesser known objects in the museum function. Flipbooks were compared with Rolodexes, Zoetropes were referred to as “the Xbox of the 1830s,” and Mutoscopes were described as “flipbooks on a giant wheel.” Gregory Barsamian’s *Feral Fount* was compared to a flipbook made of sculptures instead of pages. Instructions given by educators in using the Animation Workstations included: “Like a flipbook, each picture should be a little different than

the one that came before it.” When asked, in reference to the Eadweard Muybridge’s *Animal Locomotion* plates, “If you cut out the pictures and put them together what would you have?” tour members enthusiastically replied: “A flipbook!”

During select tours and as part of programming open to all visitors, Motion Workshops are led by museum educators. Some educators open the workshops by distributing *Fliptomania* flipbooks featuring icons such as Elvis Presley, and allowing participants to thumb through them.⁶³ They note: “We don’t read them like a regular book. What do you see?” Giggling children replied “Elvis moving his hips!” Using rubber bands and index cards with holes punched on either end, participants create Thaumatrope. They are instructed to draw something on either side of the card, on one side the drawing should be upside down. An educator explained that the Greek term Thaumatrope means “spinning wonder,” to which the students approvingly replied “Oh snap!” Some children’s drawings are inspired by their favorite movies, television shows, or video games. As these Thaumatrope spin, they recollect moving images from video game arcades and beloved Saturday morning cartoons.

2.4 RECOLLECTING THE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF VIDEO FLIPBOOKS

“So you always wanted to direct and star in your own movie but just didn’t have a few million to spare. Now, for the price of admission to the American Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria, Queens, you can make a flip book of yourself in action: one minute and it’s in the can. For \$2, you can buy a printout that becomes 40 flippable pages. Clamp them with an alligator clip, and voila!”

— William S. Nieder Korn, *New York Times*.

Flipbooks, known also as flick or thumb books or thumb cinema, can be traced back to a 1868 British Patent for “The Kineograph a new optical illusion” by John Barnes Linnett, a

⁶³ The Motion Workshop is advertised on the museum’s website: “FOR GRADES 4-6 This half-hour workshop for younger students explores the science that underlies the perception of moving images. Students make a Thaumatrope—a nineteenth-century optical toy—and create their own moving images at the *Video Flipbook* and the *Digital Animation Stands*.”

printer in Birmingham (Fielding 2; *Flipbook.info*). Raymond Fielding explains that the flipbook “in its final and perfected form consisted in mounting the pictures as the leaves of a pad or book, which, bent back and exhibited by slipping from under one’s thumb, brings the picture into sight in such rapid succession that a very good motion picture is produced” (2). As evident in figure 2.13 the instructions for using the Video Flipbook are fairly straightforward; however, a security guard is usually stationed nearby to assist visitors who cannot read the text or appear confused. Printed in black letters at the top of the screen that visitors stand in front of is the instruction: “Stand here for Video Flipbook.” Some visitors dive into their five-second movement and continue it long after the time is up; other visitors become deer in headlights, frozen by the pressure to perform in front of the camera or spectators. Christopher Wisniewski, Director of Education, explained in a March 2008 personal interview that the Director of Security and Visitor Services is one of his closest collaborators and confirmed that the guards are instructed to assist visitors as needed. This pedagogical dynamic between security guard and visitor interrupts traditional understandings of museum guards as silent witnesses divorced from the touristic experience except in the event of a security violation.

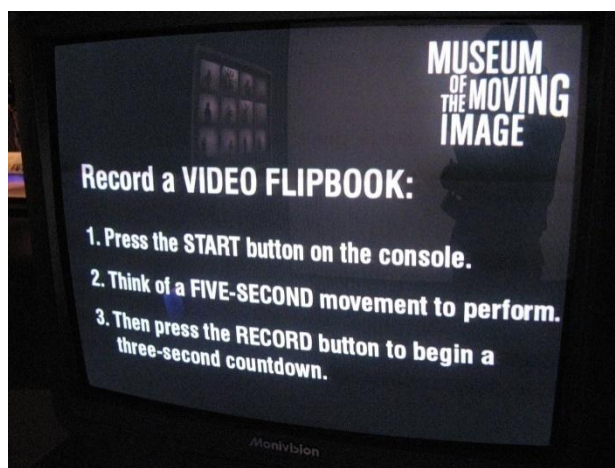


Fig. 2.13. Video Flipbook, instructional monitor. Photograph by author, 28 May 2008.



Fig. 2.14. Video Flipbook, playback monitor. Photograph by author, 28 May 2008.

A Video Flipbook control panel, reminiscent of those found in traditional photo booths, allows the visitor to position herself better within the frame by tilting the camera up or down and zooming in or out. After pressing a red button labeled Record, the instructional monitor counts down three seconds for the visitor to get into place. When not displaying directions, the instructional monitor displays whatever is in the camera's frame, a reminder that the museum is an environment of surveillance and that visitors are also being recorded by security cameras. Once the visitor records a five second movement, a video of the movement is automatically screened on the instructional monitor followed by still images that appear one at a time, from left to right and top to bottom, forming a grid of sixteen stills.⁶⁴



Fig. 2.15. Video Flipbook, playback monitor. <http://www.youtube.com/drebetancourt>. Video by author, 14 Mar. 2008.



Fig. 2.16. Video Flipbook, playback monitor detail. <http://www.youtube.com/drebetancourt>. Video by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

The final instructional screen reads: “Your VIDEO FLIPBOOK is available for printing in the Museum Shop. If others are waiting, please give the next person a turn.” This spelling out of museum etiquette is echoed in the instructions to other interactive displays, reminding visitors

⁶⁴ During my February 13, 2009 research visit, Carl Goodman explained to me that the appearance of the still images is meant to evoke the unfolding of a flipbook.

to play respectfully.⁶⁵ The video flipbook is also screened on the larger playback monitor along with the previous eleven videos recorded creating a grid of visitors' bodies moving together (see fig. 2.14).⁶⁶ Audio is not recorded, yet most visitors seem unaware of this and make noises to accompany their movements in turn creating a cacophonous environment. The video shorts above of the playback monitor (see figs. 2.15 and 2.16) include soundscapes of the exhibition space recorded when the Video Flipbook was empty of other visitors.

The Video Flipbook is part of the museum's celebratory performance of the moving image which aims to demystify the transformation of still images into moving ones. Explaining that the Video Flipbook "is inspired by Muybridge's stop-motion photography of the late nineteenth century," Jakovljevic references an interview published in museum materials in which Curator of Digital Media Carl Goodman states: "We've tried to recreate for our visitors this sense of awe and wonder that people used to feel with those early animation devices" (360). Unlike a number of the interactive experiences, the Video Flipbook is situated in a very open space allowing other visitors and security guards to gaze freely upon the moving bodies of those who engage it. Even after those bodies exit the space, their mediatized bodies remain looped in

⁶⁵ Museums, like libraries, are traditionally viewed as quiet spaces which operate through codes of etiquette and formality that attract certain visitors and intimidate others. They are not usually associated with places we go to work, but as places which house great works. The processes involved with the work displayed are often ignored or overshadowed, as it is the finished product that is given the spotlight – sometimes literally. Museums are not commonly associated with places we go to play as often rules restrict behavior. Threats of discipline dampen temptations to play, and encourage self-surveillance as well as the surveillance of fellow visitors. Bags and even certain articles of clothing must be checked upon entering many museums, cameras and other recording devices may be confiscated – and flash photography is often a no-no, food and drink is usually prohibited, cell phones must normally be silenced, and some museums do not permit visitors to carry ink pens. Style icon Kate Spade, whose handbags have been exhibited at the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, devotes one page in her book *Manners* to museum and gallery etiquette. Comparing a museum visitor to a child in a store, Spade warns, "NE TOUCHEZ PAS!" and explains that "The reprisal for such misbehavior in a museum or gallery is taken seriously, and is an inflexible rule worldwide. (Standing close to the art only works if you are not blocking anyone else's view.)" (83). Certain exhibits in *Behind the Screen* subvert traditional museum etiquette by not only encouraging visitors to touch but also to play; however, the play that the museum encourages involves being mindful of other visitors who may be waiting to play.

⁶⁶ Figure 2.1 features only seven video flipbooks (though the Video Flipbook monitor can display up to twelve) because this photograph was taken at the beginning of the day; five squares of the grid remain blank awaiting the recording of new video flipbooks.

motion on the playback monitor and are only replaced after the creation of the subsequent twelve video flipbooks. It is notable that unlike several of the other computer based interactive stations, the Video Flipbook did not malfunction during my research visits. The technological automation of the Video Flipbook erases labor as those who built and maintain it remain “behind the screen.” The Video Flipbook, however, exposes the “behind the screen” labor of security guards whose role in the museum is highlighted by the added responsibility of assisting visitors as needed with its operation.

Museum shop attendants also have an important role in the production and consumption of video flipbooks. Video flipbook souvenirs are available for purchase in the museum shop; visitors pass the shop as they enter or exit the museum. It is located immediately inside the museum before one reaches the visitor services counter where tickets to the museum are sold and articles such as bags over a certain size must be checked. On the shop checkout counter is a Video Flipbook playback monitor that allows visitors to identify their video by number and request a flipbook.

Often visitors record more than one flipbook, and must decide which ones to purchase. A museum shop attendant explained to me that at the end of each day the footage is erased, so visitors are unable to purchase flipbooks from previous dates. After a flipbook is selected, the shop attendant prints it onto four 8.5” x 11” pages. Each page contains ten small color images for a total of forty images; the images are numbered in red ink and printed on perforated Avery Laser Business Card paper. A number identifying the flipbook is printed in a margin along with the date and time the flipbook was shot.

The visitor watches as the museum shop attendant separates the images, stacks them, adds a front and back cover, and staples it all together in order to create a functioning flipbook.

This process contrasts with that of recording the flipbook as it exposes that though automated technology is involved in the creation of the flipbook, ultimately an actual museum worker must then assemble it by hand. In other words, the creation of a souvenir flipbook involves more than just the visitor's pressing of a red Record button; in order to collect the finished product, the visitor is dependent on the labor of a shop attendant. The front cover features the museum's logo; the back cover lists the museum contact information, its copyright, and advertises that the Video Flipbook is available for private events. The museum website's Employment Opportunities page lists job descriptions for Mobile Exhibition Team Leaders and Members, "personable and party-positive individuals" who are responsible for the transport, setup, and operation of the Video Flipbook, explained by the museum as "a highly-engaging, unique interactive installation featured at some of New York City's most spectacular parties and events."

In its online profile of the museum, *New York Magazine* states that you can "Create a flipbook 'movie' starring yourself," but surveillance conscious warns: "(One caveat: anyone with a sense of curiosity can view your pictures in the gift shop, and anyone with \$7 can print them out)." I admit that I did consider doing this, but felt it would mark me as overly voyeuristic, which led me to fish instead in a filthy puddle to retrieve the lonely flipbook left behind by another visitor. One may also purchase Fliptomania brand flipbooks of icons such as King Kong from the museum shop. On the last day of my March 2008 visit to the museum I lingered in the exhibitions until informed that the museum was closing. As I left the museum I stopped in the shop to purchase a video flipbook of myself but the shop attendants were busy packing up merchandise in preparation for its closure during the ground floor renovation. Instead of disturbing them, I exited the museum knowing that as part of her daily duties a shop attendant would later erase the digital video traces I left behind.

During my May and June research visits to the museum I was permitted to shadow tours while the museum was closed to the general public. The Video Flipbook was a favorite stop on many of the tours, especially for school children and adolescents. As a participant-observer I avoided taking photographs or video of fellow visitors, and instead scribbled notes about the video flipbooks they created. Tour group members were divided up into smaller groups, each of which had a turn to perform in front of the Video Flipbook camera. One educator enthusiastically suggested: “Act like a chicken, shoot hoops, or dance!” Rules commonly given to tour groups by museum educators included: No fighting (“not even play fighting because that sometimes becomes real”), no hurting each other, no sound (“so no noisy fun”). When groups became too rowdy, educators would respond with statements such as: “Remember we’re in a museum so we can have fun, but we have to be quiet.”

Since the shop was closed during these visits, museum educators printed out souvenir video flipbook sheets and gave them to a teacher (or the appropriate group leader) to assemble later. Educators printed the flipbook sheets in a private room next to the video game display. It appeared to be a storage room holding items such as wheelchairs, guard rails, a cart, and bins with packing blankets. School children waited impatiently in the corridor and restlessly chattered. A chaperone and several of the children mischievously attempted to peek into the room. A museum guard exited the room and told the students to clear the area; hungry for a glimpse behind the screen, they reluctantly retreated.

2.5 FLIPPING THROUGH *YOUTUBE*

Recollections of the Museum of the Moving Image can be found online, and *YouTube* features a handful of video flipbooks publicly shared by museum visitors. A search for “museum of the moving image video flipbook” returns seven results which suggest links to

additional videos.⁶⁷ It is not clear how many of the video flipbooks were created in the Museum of the Moving Image, as not all are captioned or tagged with the museum's name or other indicators.⁶⁸ The museum's official website also features animation shorts created by students using the Video Flipbook during a semester-long course. This section recollects a number of video flipbooks selected from the fifteen on *YouTube* that are explicitly associated with the museum.⁶⁹

The fifteen flipbooks were added to *YouTube* between August 17, 2005 and September 19, 2008 (their creation dates are not included online), and range from five to seventy-four seconds in duration. The videos discussed here can be found on my *YouTube* Channel Video Flipbook Video Log: <http://www.youtube.com/drebetancourt>. Five of them are silent (videoflipbook's "Video Flipbook," "June 2006 full staff," and "Tim + Meredith"; saraingreen's "Interns Immortalized" and "Interns Immortalized 2"; and sighclub's "Amy at Museum of Moving Image"), five feature diegetic sound (hamburgephones' "Flip book"; gottabegorgeous' "Motion"; holymeatballs' "VVP visits the Museum of the Moving Image"; pplaw's "Museum Of The Moving Image"; and JasonEppink's "Happy Birthday Alessandra Video Flipbook") and three feature non-diegetic sound (mondellomusic's "Our Movie"; RedRaspus' "Museum of the Moving Image - Video Flip Book"; JasonEppink's "Re: Gmail: A Behind the Scenes Video"; and montsinya's "Flipbook").⁷⁰ Each offers perspectives on how video flipbooks perform as mediatized souvenirs, and how the Video Flipbook functions as a site of work, play, and surveillance.

⁶⁷ Less specific *YouTube* searches for "video flipbook" or "video flip book" return approximately 5,000 results.

⁶⁸ Since *YouTube* users are subject to its terms of use, which require that they have authorization to upload videos, the assumption here is that these flipbooks were posted by someone featured in them or involved in their creation.

⁶⁹ Montsinya's "Flipbook" is included among these because in an electronic message sent to me she confirmed its association.

⁷⁰ In keeping with the video titles and profile names of *YouTube* users as listed on the website, the case of the letters used in names and titles appear here as they appear on the website. *YouTube* user JasonEppink is quite possibly Jason Eppink, Assistant Curator of Digital Media at the Museum of the Moving Image.

Hamburgephones' "Flip book," the video flipbook added to *YouTube* most recently, is one of five videos that feature a person flipping a hardcopy video flipbook with their fingers (the others are: "Video Flipbook," both of JasonEppink's videos, and "Flipbook"). This involves an interesting twist of the video flipbook that returns the souvenir to its original medium: from video to still images to a video of (moving) still images. These videos foreground the materiality of the video flipbook; the person flipping the actual flipbook touches each page, whereas the spectator's fingers most likely remain touching the mouse or keyboard in between clicks or taps. "Flip book" is an eleven second video featuring a single close up shot of a person flipping a flipbook souvenir. She holds the flipbook in her left hand, and flips it at an unsteady rhythm using her right hand. It is unclear who is holding the camera (or if it's on a tripod) as the point of view appears to be that of the person flipping the book.

The background is a wooden floor, and the soundscape of the pages flipping includes background noise (possibly from a television) as well as someone saying "nuuuuh . . . use a halogen." As the black and white pages are unsteadily flipped, two warmly dressed females are visible beginning on the first page. They appear to be smiling, possibly laughing, and enjoying themselves. One leans out of the frame and then disappears, as she returns into the frame her companion disappears. The video recollects the flipbook as a playful performance of disappearance and reappearance. As spectators, we are unable to see the full details of the flipbook because some pages are skipped or obscured from full view. "Flip book," frames recollection as peeking, and emphasizes its fragmentation.

Montsinya, who posted her video "Flipbook," to *YouTube* on June 13, 2007 recollects in an email message to me: "I'm from Barcelona and I was visiting my sister, who lives in New York. I went with my friend, the other girl in the video, and we really had a very good time at

the Museum of the Moving Image.” Her thirty-five second video, appropriately tagged “La construcción de un flipbook,” demonstrates how to assemble a paper video flipbook souvenir. The video features a musical soundtrack, and the speed of the footage appears to have been accelerated. Montsinya cuts out each of the pages, puts them in order, stacks them together, and holding the assembled flipbook with both hands, she flips it twice. Each time she flips it, the flipbook performs differently as the pages that are visible varies slightly. Montsinya’s hands are the only parts of her body videotaped, and the bodies of her and her friend circle whimsically around each other as she flips. As I screen the video flipbook online, I wonder if Montsinya’s paper flipbook lives next to her family albums.

Four of the *YouTube* videos recollect Museum of the Moving Image employees and interns in ways that echo family portraits. The videos are especially interesting in that they present “behind the screen” museum laborers on screen. Videoflipbook, who appears to be a museum educator and whose user name is inspired by the Video Flipbook, has posted four Museum of the Moving Image related videos to *YouTube*. “Video Flipbook” and “Sound Effects Editing” were posted on September 3, 2008 and each features a male, presumably videoflipbook, demonstrating these interactive displays. Both videos include footage of instructional screens. It is notable that “Video Flipbook” is a silent demonstration that includes added instructional titles whereas “Sound Effects Editing” is the only one of his videos that features sound (diegetic sound from the display as well as spoken instructions which may have been added through a voiceover).

“Video Flipbook” recollects the production of a video flipbook as a somewhat magical process. Videoflipbook performs jumping jacks, nearly completing his fifth one as the five second shoot ends. The video cuts from the final instructional screen to videoflipbook smiling

and proudly presenting a souvenir video flipbook to the camera. There is no indication that an actual person assembled the flipbook by hand. Audience members might assume that the video flipbook was automatically assembled by a machine, and perhaps spit out in a manner similar to photo booth pictures. In the final shot, videoflipbook flips through his souvenir, and then beams at the camera as he presents it once more.

The video flipbooks “Tim + Meredith” and “June 2006 full staff” may have been shot outside of *Behind the Screen* because the background appears to be a different screen than the one found on the third floor of the exhibition. The screen is less taut in these five second videos, and the lighting appears warmer. Both videos were posted on *YouTube* on April 26, 2007.

Videoflipbook’s description of the “Tim + Meredith” video is “= disaster!” The video begins with a medium shot of a female, presumably Meredith, alone; her hands are on her hips and she appears to be whistling a tune. Tim, whose shadow is visible from the beginning of the video, immediately enters the frame and proceeds to yank one of Meredith’s pigtails. She reacts by punching him in the face. In response Tim brings both of his hands up to his face as he falls out of the frame. Meredith, seemingly shocked by the incident, clutches her own head and moves in the opposite direction. “Tim + Meredith” recollects early silent slapstick films. The museum staff members become silent stars for five seconds, and they frame the Video Flipbook as a unique site of work and play.

“June 2006 full staff” features sixteen people, presumably Museum of the Moving Image staff. From my visits to the museum in 2008, studying the video (left to right and top to bottom) I believe that recognize at least six people including: Sean McNally (Assistant to the Director); Timothy Finn (Director of Security and Visitor Services); Rochelle Slovin (Founding Director); Livia Bloom (Assistant Curator); Christopher Wisniewski (Director of Education); and Carl

Goodman (Senior Deputy Director and Curator of Digital Media). Tim and Meredith from “Tim + Meredith” are also recognizable as they are wearing the same outfits in both videos; there is one man who might be videoflipbook, but I am not certain it is he. As the five second video begins, everyone waves ecstatically at the audience. A woman hides in the center of the group, only the right side of her face is visible. She pops up and reveals the Museum of the Moving Image logo in red on her black t-shirt; as she stands fully erect her arms form a wide V. Waving her extended arms back and forth, she returns to her original hiding place as the video ends.⁷¹

In the last second of the video, Carl Goodman blows a kiss toward the audience. In comparison to Rochelle Slovin and David Schwartz, Goodman remains out of the spotlight in much of the press on the museum. A 1996 interview with Goodman by Debra Jo Immergut reveals that he first met Slovin “when he wrote music for a fellow student who happened to be her son.” Immergut’s article opens with Goodman’s questioning of the role digital media will hold for his own descendants: “reflect[ing] upon a shimmering compact disk he finds on his desk. ‘I can imagine telling my grandchildren about this little silvery disk,’ he muses.”⁷² The museum staff is recollected here as a fairly diverse, fun loving team. I am left wondering how descendants of this museum family will recollect their predecessors through video flipbooks.

Why did videoflipbook post “June 2006 full staff” and “Tim + Meredith” almost a year after they were created? Did something in particular inspire him to recollect them online? I question the “June 2006 full staff” title; surely the museum employed more than sixteen staff members in 2006. Does the “full” refer to full-time (versus part-time or temporary), or is it

⁷¹ When I questioned Carl Goodman on February 13, 2009 regarding the creation of “June 2006 full staff,” he was surprised that the video flipbook was on *YouTube*. He explained that it had been created during a goodbye celebration for an employee, and possibly also because they were testing an upgrade to the Video Flipbook.

⁷² A *New York Times* article by Ralph Blumenthal includes a seemingly random, or perhaps out of context, quotation by Carl Goodman that nevertheless interestingly links the Museum of the Moving Image with family ritual: “This is where I’m going to get married, surrounded by Barneys and Dick Tracy.”

meant to indicate that the video includes the museum's staff in its entirety and if so, who is classified as staff (e.g., security guards, interns, maintenance crew members)?⁷³ In a June 4, 2008 interview, Christopher Wisniewski confirmed that the museum was operating with a low level of seven educators. An article published in *The New York Times* the day after the museum announced its renovation and expansion noted "no full-time employees are to be laid off, Ms. Slovin said." During my March 2008 visit, along with the excitement about the museum's expansion, came a nervous buzz regarding employment cuts. The tension manifested curiously in an exchange between museum employees about the seven colorful Leiser Architecture presentation boards that hung on the wall directly across from the visitor services counter before the renovation of the first floor (in May 2008 the boards had since been relocated to the second level of *Behind the Screen* and are also currently featured on the museum's website). The employees joked that they were all going to be replaced by the digitally rendered "Asian" woman who represented a museum employee in one of the panels (see fig. 2.17).

Considering that five of the seven presentation boards showcase screens whereas only two feature staff members, perhaps the more pertinent question here is: to what extent will museum workers be replaced by moving images? Videoflipbook's "Video Flipbook" and "Sound Effects Editing" demonstration videos could easily eliminate the need for actual museum educators to demonstrate these displays to tour groups. Just as many airline safety videos now feature animated flight crew and passengers, so might the digitally rendered women who represent museum employees in the Leiser Architecture panels take videoflipbook's place in demonstration videos. The juxtaposition of videoflipbook's two museum "family" video

⁷³ The final page of the Museum of the Moving Image FY07 Annual Report lists: five senior staff members; twenty-one staff members; seventeen educators; thirteen security guards; five building maintainers/engineers; six visitor services/retail assistants; twenty-six interns; eight volunteers; eight mobile Video Flipbook staff members; and five former staff members who contributed during the 2007 fiscal year (43).

flipbooks with his two demonstration videos creates an online album that recollects bits, literally and figuratively, of a variety of relationships he holds with the museum and his fellow staff members. In the words of Carl Goodman: “‘It’s all about the bits, anyway,’ he remarks sagely. ‘The bits will live on.’” (qtd. in Immergut). As Immergut concludes: “Bits are the Elgin marbles, the Faberge eggs of Mr. Goodman’s ‘department’ . . . When bits -- the digital units of information storage -- are put together in interesting ways, they tell us tales and reflect our culture, Mr. Goodman explains, and thus become a part of the moving-image media that are AMMI’s reason for being.”

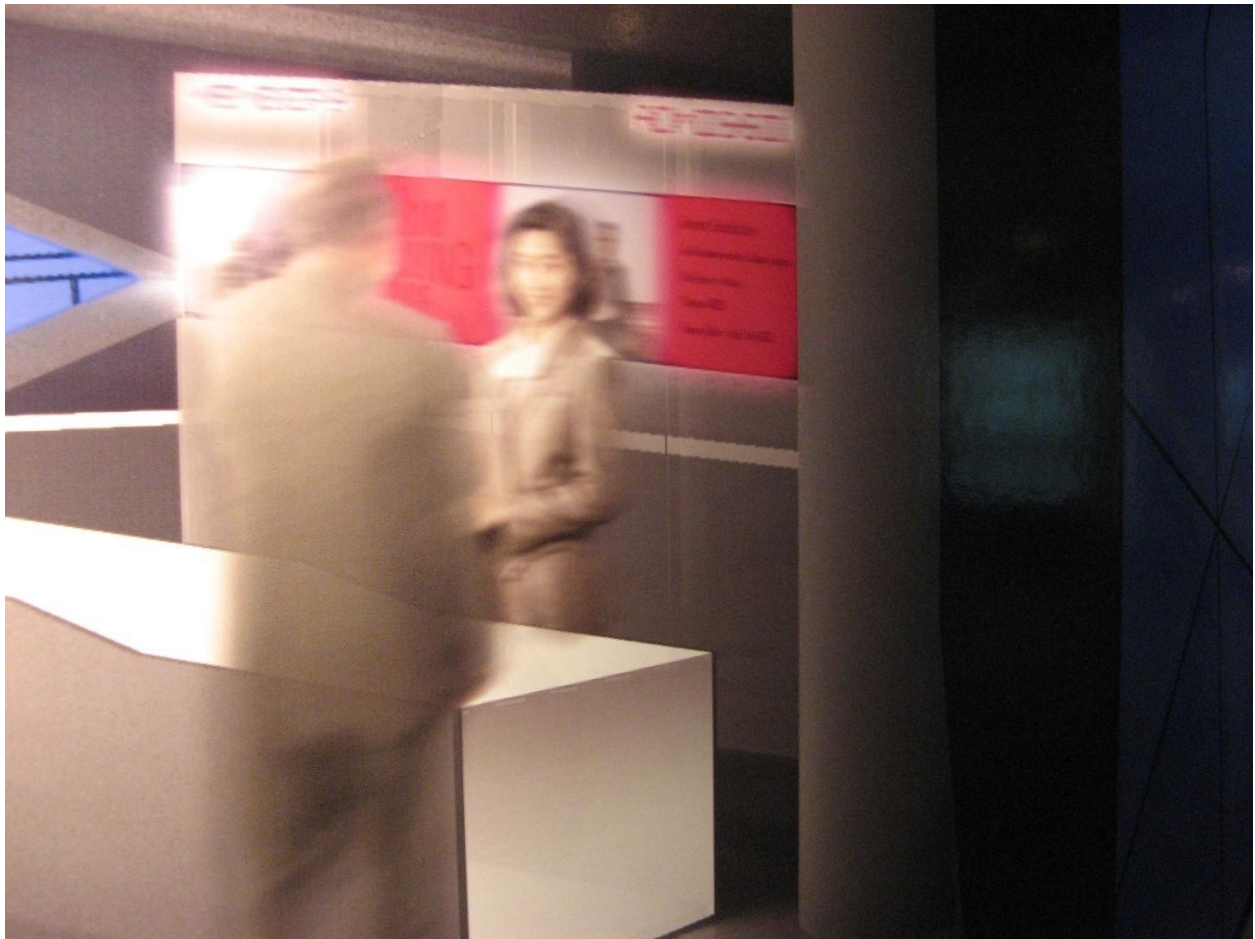


Fig. 2.17. Leeser Architecture presentation board of the lobby and front desk, detail. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

Lumière and Company, a 1995 documentary directed by Sarah Moon, features short films created by forty international directors using the restored original Cinématographe patented by the Lumière brothers a century earlier. Each director was required to adhere to three rules: the maximum duration of the film short was fifty-two seconds; a maximum of three takes were permitted; and the use of synchronous sound was prohibited. Moon poses a number of provocative questions to the forty directors including: “Why did you choose to participate?”; “Why do you film?”; and “Is film immortal?”, and she receives diverse responses. As I watched the fifteen video flipbooks on *YouTube* I was struck by how the rules and questions of *Lumière and Company* echoed through them. Those featured in self-directed video flipbooks are limited to five seconds in duration, if others are waiting they are only allowed one take, and as the videos are silent there is no synchronous sound.

Two video flipbooks posted on *YouTube* on August 15, 2007 by saraingreen answer at least one of Moon’s questions through their titles: “Interns Immortalized” and “Interns Immortalized 2.” The description posted about the first video is: “the interns say goodbye to the museum, forever immortalized in flipbook form.” The second video is described as “a second shot.” The museum boasts an attractive internship program. According to its website, college students enrolled in specific types of programs may apply for unpaid semester long internships with possibilities for course credit.⁷⁴ The museum also serves as a host institution for the ARTS INTERN program which “places college undergraduates from diverse cultural backgrounds who have financial need in paid summer internships in New York City museums.” The duties listed for Digital Media Interns include: “further development of the Museum’s website and digital presence in online communities such as Facebook, Flickr, and YouTube.” The internship

⁷⁴ E.g., “American Studies, Cinema Studies, Media Studies, Popular Culture, History, and/or Material Culture.”

program has drawn key staff members to the museum.⁷⁵ In a 2005 interview with *Gothamist.com* Chief Curator David Schwartz, whose list of favorite directors incidentally begins with the Lumière brothers, explains: “I was a film school graduate, trying unsuccessfully to get work as an apprentice film editor, when I lucked into a ten-month internship at the Museum. I’ll have been at the Museum twenty years this September.”

The five nameless interns featured in both of the “Interns Immortalized” video flipbooks are anonymously immortalized. In the first video the interns, positioned near the backdrop, crouch down, then jump up extending their arms in the air. The interns may be aiming for unison, but each person moves at a different speed in effect creating synchronized dance move gone wrong. As they jump they appear joyful as if reveling in the silliness of their performance. A male intern is positioned in the center, and is closer to the camera than his fellow interns. He appears to be leading the production, and once he raises his head he maintains intense eye contact with the audience.

What is most striking about the leader’s role is that his apparent happiness immediately takes a swift turn as he deflates into posture of defeatment tinged with painfulness or sadness. This raises questions. What does saying goodbye to the Museum of the Moving Image entail? How might one document it? The Video Flipbook becomes an appropriate site of memorialization in that it recollects the interns through visual technologies integral to the museum’s mission and educational agenda. What does he imagine he will miss? His duties, his co-workers who have possibly become friends, being “behind the screen”? Whatever it may be, the flipbook recollects the ritual of leaving a place where these interns shared a history. It in turn becomes a celebration of *communitas* as well as a souvenir that performs loss.

⁷⁵ Livia Bloom, former Assistant Curator, is listed as an intern in the Museum of the Moving Image Annual Report FY 2004.

The second video, “Interns Immortalized 2,” is similar in tone and content to the first, yet features bold differences. The leader from the first video is clearly marked here as the one who orchestrates the performance. The video begins with his four fellow interns crouched down near the backdrop, their bodies are only partially visible. The leader is stooped over near the camera, and the lighting silhouettes him. He takes several steps backwards and while doing so extends his body and arms upright. As he nears the rest of the interns he dramatically raises his arms as if raising their bodies. Next he brings his arms down and his body drops completely out of frame. His fellow interns follow, but the video ends before they can make it out of the frame. They are frozen in their exit, whereas their leader has already disappeared. The leader maintains a somber expression and though he meets the camera’s gaze briefly, his solemn eyes remain downcast. In contrast, the rest of the interns maintain laughter or smiles. The act of leaving is recollected here as a mixture of emotions; for most it is one last hurrah, but one that is led by someone who saturates the scene with a certain degree of seriousness and reminds us that the business of goodbyes is not always fun and games.

The “Interns Immortalized” videos as well as “June 2006 full staff” echo “Group portrait, Astoria Studio, New York, NY, 1927,” a black and white photograph that I stumbled upon in the museum’s online Collection Catalog while digging for bits about the early Astoria Studio at [http://collection.movingimage.us/viewers/index.php?representation_id=1658&version=tilepic& width=1000&height=650](http://collection.movingimage.us/viewers/index.php?representation_id=1658&version=tilepic&width=1000&height=650). As described in the Catalog, this portrait of “approximately 100 actors, actresses and studio employees” was taken in 1927 to “commemorate the (intended) end of Famous Players-Lasky feature film production at Astoria Studio,” that was scheduled to occur as a result of the company’s Hollywood consolidation. The portrait is male dominated, but features a handful of females. Three of the women, who wear dresses or skirts, are seated on the

floor in poses that reveal their legs. These women form a stark contrast to the row of men seated in chairs behind them, the majority of whom are conservatively dressed in suits and ties. One of the men may have even been the model for the camera operator who glides back and forth on a Museum of the Moving Image souvenir pen from my first visit in 2004. The portrait was taken during the “silent era” of film, a period described on the Kaufman Astoria Studio’s website during which “over 100 films were produced” marking the studio as the “Mecca” of this era. The KAS website continues: “From Valentino, Swanson, the Gish sisters and W.C. Fields, Astoria was home to the great talents of an exciting new industry. Still, the motto for actors on Broadway was: ‘don't quit your night job.’”

It is unclear in the portrait who holds which role in the Astoria Studio hierarchy. Perhaps the people seated in the front have VIP status. One woman, who stands midway back in the right side of the frame, is dressed in a suit and tie. Two men toward the right edge wear overalls. The bodies, and in some cases even the faces, of at least a dozen people are obscured making it impossible to determine what they are wearing. How did they end up being eclipsed? Were they late to the portrait and forced to find a spot that only allowed them to peek through crowded spaces, or were they relegated to the rear because they were not as elegantly dressed or groomed as the rest of their studio family? An enormous curtain forms the backdrop reminding me of the heavy curtains that dress *Behind the Screen* with a showy luxuriousness.

For a goodbye portrait, many of the subjects’ expressions are not very somber. Perhaps some of them hoped to move to California; perhaps some of them were just excited to be featured in a movie studio portrait, or for that matter in any portrait. Growing up surrounded by cameras, I realized that I took photographs for granted when I telephoned my grandmother to ask if she had photographs of movie-going at the New Orleans Saenger Theatre during her young

adulthood. She laughed at me, and I imagined her shaking her head on the other end of the telephone line. In 1953, she was the first of her immediate family members to immigrate to the United States from Belize. “Remember we were poor, we didn’t have cameras. Most of the pictures we have were taken by G.I.’s or during vacations or Mardi Gras.” The only home movies my maternal grandparents have were shot on film during Mardi Gras, back when everyone wore costumes. I make a note to watch the films which were transferred to a VHS tape; perhaps there is a shot with the Saenger in the background? While I’m at it, I make a note to convert the VHS footage into a digital format now that VCRs have been relegated to the electronic graveyard. But back to the Astoria Studio portrait . . .

It was perhaps a good thing that those featured in the Astoria Studio portrait did not appear too blue. As explained in Collection Catalog historical notes that reference 1927 and 1928 *New York Times* articles, the studio, which was destined to serve as rehearsal space for Publix Theatre stage productions and the Paramount Short Subjects, would instead “be used for the production of feature-length sound films, including the forthcoming Marx Brothers’ film *The Cocoanuts*.” The photograph intended to close the chapter on Astoria Studio feature film production, instead marked the beginning of a new chapter referred to today as “the talkies.” As the KAS website boasts: “*The Letter*, the first all talking feature film shot at the Studio, earned an Oscar nomination for actress Jeanne Eagels. The talking film debuts of Claudette Colbert, Edward G. Robinson and Tallulah Bankhead were filmed here.”

The name Tallulah pulls me back to the New Orleans Saenger Theatre. I do not remember it as a movie palace where pianists played soundtracks to silent films, but as a concert venue where I listened to Tori Amos perform on piano “Talula,” a song that references not the screen and stage queen Bankhead, but Marie Antoinette and Anne Boleyn. I am humming the

lyrics as I retrace a path to *Tut's Fever*, the Museum of the Moving Image's movie palace installation:

Congratulate you
Said you had a double tongue
Balancing cake and bread
Say goodbye to a glitter girl

Talula, Talula
You don't want to lose her
She must be worth losing
If it is worth something
Talula, Talula
she's brand new now to you
wrapped in your papoose
your little Fig Newton
say goodbye to the old world

I am recollecting the young daughter of a museum security guard who delightfully created dozens of video flipbooks over the course of the work day while her mother ensured that visitors did not lean on captions or use flash photography. These recollections are mixing with JasonEppink's "Happy Birthday Alessandra Video Flipbook," a video flipbook that I watched repetitively on *YouTube*. "Talula" lyrics give way to "Happy Birthday to You." The "happy" falls away as I recollect that Tallulah Bankhead's mother died shortly after her birth. My grandfather's mother died during his birth, forever marking his birthday, the beginning of his life with the ending of hers. I am recollecting my great-grandmother in silence now. I am creating a flipbook of recollections about the great-grandfather we never knew, who laid the original carpet in the Saenger Theatre as the "silent era" came to an end.

Fig. 2.18. Instructions: Please assemble this flipbook of recollections and feel free to add your own. Note: heavy-weight paper works best. Images by author feature: photographs of the New Orleans Saenger Theatre and the author by John Betancourt, 21 Mar. 2009; and a video flipbook of the author and Jael Humphrey created at the Museum of the Moving Image, 16 Mar. 2009.







<p>39</p> 	<p>40</p> 
<p>37</p> 	<p>38</p> 
<p>35</p> 	<p>36</p> 
<p>33</p> 	<p>34</p> 
<p>31</p> 	<p>32</p> 

CHAPTER THREE

RECOLLECTING *TUT'S FEVER*

3.1 RETRACING A PATH TO *TUT'S FEVER*

“It (King Tut’s tomb) was packed with such a fabulous trove of gold and ebony treasures that when Carter first peered inside and was asked if he could see anything, his famous reply was: ‘Yes, wonderful things.’”

- BBC, “Cairo paternity test for King Tut.”

“Gallons of scent were added to the cold water to produce a delicate aroma of roses, lavender, sandalwood or whatever perfume best suited the happenings on screen that evening.”

- David Atwell on 1930s movie palace air-conditioning systems, *Cathedrals of the Movies: A History of British Cinemas and their Audiences*.

Leaving the Video Flipbook, one passes a window opposite the animation stations that reveals the second floor below: an Egyptian movie palace, a TV room, huge signage, computer stations, display cases featuring a jumble of artifacts, fellow visitors, and a uniformed museum security guard. Next to the window a lengthy caption accompanied by a large image covers a narrow wall and vies for attention, it introduces a wide corridor lined on either side with cameras and sound equipment elevated on display platforms. In the middle of the corridor is an enormous piece of production equipment – my attention pulled in opposite direction by displays on either side, each accented with looped videos playing on small monitors, I did not see it until several visits later.

The right side of the corridor ends with a little room. Inside the room is an interactive computer station; once activated, scenes from films are projected onto a screen and the instructions on the monitor invite the visitor to dub her voice over the voice of characters such as Dorothy Gale or Babe, the Gallant Pig. A large window enables visitors passing by to observe the room occupants and vice versa. It is becoming apparent that the museum’s captions and its instructions for visitor interaction blend together. If one avoids all captions, which is

tremendously difficult to do considering their visual dominance, it is impossible to know how to operate these stations “correctly.”

Visitors must be able not only to see, but to read, or be assisted by someone who can. Though some interactive displays may be operated more intuitively than others, they are designed to be accessed by the following of specific written English language instructions. Few areas of the museum are void of pre-recorded audio. There is often a stream of overlapping voices and sounds coming from various electronic displays and museum visitors which creates a carnivalesque, and at times chaotic, atmosphere:

the sound of someone cranking a Mutoscope . . . “Say the lines along with your character.” . . . laughter . . . a language that I cannot indentify . . . “Game over!” . . . “What did your mother call you to tell you apart from your brothers and sisters?” . . . a baby cries . . . “Play it again . . . oh shoot!” . . . the hum of a hard drive . . . the sound of gun shots . . . “Perhaps we shouldn’t talk too much about (sound of clearing throat) family.” . . . silence . . . “I want *more* terror! The aliens are going to probe you” . . . “Shhhh!” . . . more laughter . . . the sound of James Dean’s coffin lid rising . . . “We must be over the rainbow!” . . . “It leaves a trace.” . . .

Certain stations feature headphones, audibly isolating visitors from the rest of the shifting soundscape of pre-recorded voices, music, noise, and the voices and sounds of other visitors. Vision, hearing, and touch are the senses consistently called upon, and activated less noticeably are taste and smell.

Exiting the small room, one walks past film related artifacts and a series of five additional interactive stations or screening areas separated to various degrees by walls or curtains. A sixth station on the left side features a wide window that allows a different perspective of the second floor than did the first, smaller, window. Continuing through the exhibition one passes a display case on the left which is full of bodies, more specifically a series of ten human like torsos - each a slight mutation of the next. I am reminded of the art of Zoe Leonard, specifically her museum exhibition photographs that critique display practices such as: *Preserved Head of a Bearded*

Woman; Seated Anatomical Model in Box; Wax Anatomical Model with Pearls; and Beauty Calibrator, Museum of Beauty, Hollywood. The museum's display of special effect models, especially those related to the human body, hauntingly echo anatomical displays in medical and science museums and invite visitors to recollect interactions between actual bodies and special effect bodies in moving images.

One passes a bare corridor to the right leading to an emergency exit (this corridor includes the entrance to the publicly off-limits room where museum educators printed out video flipbooks for impatient tour groups during my May and June 2008 research visits), and arrives at a corner section full of video games and related artifacts. One's sense of smell is powerfully activated by the stench of decaying vomit. On a May tour, a fifth grade student questioned the educator: "Why does it smell so bad? It smells like puke!" As his classmates giggled wildly and held their noses, the educator replied that she didn't know but that it may have something to do with the benches in the center of the space. She assured them: "We'll only be here a little while."

A spaceship hangs from the ceiling of the corridor outside of the video game corner. The corridor parallels the camera/sound corridor found on the opposite side of the third floor. The right side of the corridor features a display of television artifacts, and the left side features projector artifacts. Both sides are likewise accented with looped videos playing on small monitors. This corridor ends the third floor/first level of the core exhibition. Visitors are forced to repeat the loop or to exit through the entrance and continue to the second floor, the second and final level of the core exhibition, by elevator or stairs.

Moving into the second level of *Behind the Screen* one enters through a portal similar to the one on the first level and is greeted by a wall covered with portraits of movie stars, many of

whom meet one's gaze. To the immediate right are two computer stations identical to the one found upon entering the first level, as well as a curtained off-limits area. After passing through a doorway, to one's left there is a bright living room in hyper-saturated reds and yellows; a television serves as its centerpiece and features an abstract video. To the right is an Egyptian movie palace, and one is welcomed by a larger than life Marilyn Monroe.



Fig. 3.1. *Tut's Palace* entrance as seen from *TV Lounge*. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

She strikes a pose recognizable from the film *The Seven Year Itch*. With her left hand Monroe teasingly holds her dress in an attempt to keep it from blowing up higher and further exposing her panties. With her right arm she holds up the movie palace marquee announcing the film that is playing, which in light of her gigantic size, paradoxically casts her as a King Kong. Her body and famous white dress have been adorned with Egyptian themed accessories. As I enter *Tut's Fever* gazing at Marilyn's enormous body, I am humming the lyrics of David Essex's "Rock On," a song that I was introduced to during my youth by *The Young and the Restless* soap opera star Michael Damian's cover:

And where do we go from here / Which is the way that's clear

Still looking for that blue jean, baby queen / Prettiest girl I ever seen
See her shake on the movie screen, Jimmy Dean / (James Dean)

3.2 MOVIE PALACE RECOLLECTIONS

"What was the heady elixir that distilled the potion called movie madness? What cravings engendered the dream palaces?"

– David Atwell, *Cathedrals of the Movies*.

"Many theatres used mirrors to increase the vistas and they were in most cases the first architecture to use mirrors decoratively."

– Jim Rankin, commenting on an image of the New Orleans Saenger Theatre,
Pbase.com/affablebeef.

Although I was born too late to experience the era of the picture palaces in their full glory, *Tut's Fever* is immediately recognizable as both homage to and parody of the grandest movie theatres. *New York Magazine* describes *Tut's Palace*: "Harking back to 1920s picture palaces like Grauman's Chinese and the Aztec, both the facade and interior of the 26-seat theater depict an Egyptian theme, with caricatures of Orson Welles, Marilyn Monroe, James Dean and other screen legends as pharaohs, priestesses, and mummies."⁷⁶ According to Van Summerill

⁷⁶ Various reviews of *Tut's Fever* list differing seating capacities. On my March 2008 research visit the theatre sat thirty visitors.

there were “possibly as few as 42 Egyptian-design theatres constructed in the United States (Theatre Historical Society of America estimate)” and approximately one dozen remain. He notes that Peery’s Egyptian, “Utah’s only existing bona fide movie palace,” is “thought to be one of only two Egyptian-style ‘atmospheric’ theatres (with an auditorium ‘sky’ dotted with twinkling stars) in the nation.”

Having never frequented an Egyptian style movie palace, I recollect *Tut*’s predecessors through the records of cinema historians such as David Atwell who traces the connections among several in the United States including: Grauman’s Egyptian in Hollywood (1922), Peery’s Egyptian Theatre in Ogden (1926), the Netoco Egyptian Theatre in Boston (1929), as well as England’s: Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly (1812, the “famous home London home of animated photographs”), the Egyptian-style Carlton in Islington (1930), the Pyramid at Sale (1933), and the Riviera in Manchester (3, 70-71, 78-79, 94-96). Explaining that “Grauman’s Egyptian seems to have been particularly startling in its efforts to outdo even Tutankhamun, Atwell quotes Ben Hall: “it ‘made King Tut’s tomb look like the old family burial vault’” (79). Upon learning that I was writing about movie palaces, Rebecca Marcon, my brother Joel’s godmother, shared her recollection of Grauman’s Egyptian:

I saw the movie *Earthquake* there in 1974 and a scene in that movie shows the inside of Grauman’s when the earthquake hit. Needless to say it was kind of scary being in the same place that I was seeing on the big screen. They had just put up nets under the chandeliers and all across the ceiling because the sound system (meant to simulate vibrations of an earthquake) had actually cracked the plaster in this theater’s ceiling.

The theatre was damaged two decades later by the Northridge earthquake. It was renovated, and now serves as the permanent home of the American Cinematheque, a nonprofit organization that offers screenings and hour long docent-led tours of the theatre.

Van Summerill traces the fascinating story of Peery's Egyptian, created by the Peery brothers, Harman and Louis. Constructed out of the rubble left by a 1923 Ogden fire, the Egyptian literally rose like a phoenix on the site of the Peery family's first home. "Large lettering on the back of the Egyptian proclaimed it to be, '*Ogden's Only Fireproof Theatre . . . A Safe Place for the Kiddies.*'" The theatre enjoyed a fruitful heyday, and underwent several renovations, including one in 1961 that Summerill asserts "was not kind to aesthetic sensibilities. Many of the 1924 interior designs and colors were painted over. A mammoth new screen was erected in front of the stage and proscenium, and auditorium walls were painted pink, to match new drapery."

The Egyptian gradually declined to the point that it "was ordered closed by county authorities late in 1984 for health code violations." It was rescued and restored by "a complex partnership that included Weber County, Ogden City, Weber State University, Egyptian Theatre Foundation, and Ogden/Weber Chamber of Commerce." As of 1997 the Egyptian has served as a performing arts/movie theatre. It boasts a "magnificent" Wurlitzer theatre pipe organ, the instrument that in 1924 accompanied the theatre's opening film, *Wanderers of the Wasteland*, a silent Western and the third feature to be filmed in Technicolor. Reportedly lost as of 1971 according to its devastated director, the late Irvin Wiliat, the last remaining print of *Wanderers* "decomposed and turned into jelly."

I was raised with stories of how my great-grandfather helped make the Saenger Theatre of New Orleans, created in 1927, majestic through his work as a carpet installer. David Naylor writes, "Flagship of the Saenger chain, the theater was launched by a parade down Canal Street led by Adolph Zukor and F. P. Lasky, heads of the Paramount-Famous Players Studio, partners of the Saenger owners" (108). The same Adolph Zukor built the Astoria Studio earlier that

decade. What is commonly left out in historical renderings of the Saenger as well as other movie palaces is the issue of segregation; it is often concealed by descriptions of theatres' chandelier lighting and statuary. Naylor, for example, is appalled that the Saenger funded "an escalator from the main foyer to the upper lobbies" during its late 1970s \$2.5 million renovation by selling eleven of its twelve "original grand lobby chandeliers" that had reportedly "come from Versailles by way of the Château de Pierrefonds," a twelfth century in France castle (108).

Behind the Screen does not address issues of segregated theatres, though Ralph Blumenthal closes his article on his visit to the museum in 1996 with the note: "Less savory sides of the screen trade are on display, too: posters for 'race movies,' including westerns with 'all-colored' casts and a forlorn photo of a small-town movie house, 'the Rex Theater for Colored People.'"⁷⁷

Upon questioning Caucasian and Latina/o elders from various places and diverse backgrounds about their memories of segregated movie theatres, they are usually unable to remember much beyond the grandeur of the movie palaces, the price they paid for tickets, or who was on the silver screen. One of my Mexican-Belizean uncles explained that the Saenger was considered the fanciest movie palace in New Orleans. It was the place where one would take special dates, and movie-goers dressed up nicely for the occasion. He recounted that in many of the theatres African Americans were forced to sit upstairs. There is an evident erasure of memories related to the African Americans and individuals who did not pass as "white," who

⁷⁷ The Moving Image in the Theater section of the *Behind the Screen* Study Guide published on the museum's website briefly addresses segregation in a subsection titled Segregated Theaters:

American racial segregation, combined with negative stereotypes of African-Americans in early movies, prompted the development of an extensive film production and exhibition circuit that operated independently of Hollywood. Films were created for an exclusively African-American audience and shown in segregated theaters. Between 1912 and 1948, more than 350 of these films—known as race movies—were produced and distributed by over 150 black-owned and white-owned companies.

The breakdown of segregation contributed to the end of the race movie industry. A 1939 survey reported 430 "Negro" theaters in the United States, but by 1942 another survey found only 232. By the 1950's, these specialized theaters were all but gone.

were either not permitted as customers or offered only second class seating in movie palaces. Wendy Ann Gaudin's "Passing Narratives" includes a story collected from an anonymous interviewee who explains that "Back then, the Saenger Theater on Canal Street was for whites. Not even a balcony for the colored. But, we wanted to see The Passion Play. We wanted to do what the white people did, so we just went! We paid our fare and sat down with the white people and nobody told us nothing!" In her book on Southern movie palaces, Janna Jones writes that "In most cities, African Americans built and operated their own movie theatres," which she emphasizes "in no way rivaled the picture palace" (30).

My grandfather's mother died during his birth in 1931, and his father, Joseph Aymar Labbé, died shortly after he was born leaving him orphaned during the Great Depression. My grandfather does not know much about his parents or their ethnicities, but believes his father was Cajun or Creole, and his mother, who was adopted and named Gladys Verda Terrebonne, may have been Italian.⁷⁸ Not wanting to risk separation at an orphanage, my grandfather and his five older siblings stayed together and raised themselves. My grandfather's sister Ruth died of tuberculosis when he was a teenager. Their father's work laying carpet at the Saenger Theatre is one of the only things my grandfather remembers about him, and it was most likely work done before his birth considering the Saenger opened on February 5, 1927. His recollections are vague, and he has no specific details to share. He only knows that his father's knees gave out from laying carpet, and after that it was difficult for him to find work. My grandfather's only

⁷⁸ As evident in *Experiencing Louisiana: Discovering the Soul of America*, one of the two permanent exhibitions at the Louisiana State Museum in Baton Rouge, many of the differences and similarities between Cajun and Creole cultures are debatable; and there are, of course, people who have roots in both cultures. In describing the settlement of the Creole Coast, Terry G. Jordan-Bychkov explains: "settlers bore a hybridized culture, the chief ingredients of which were Iberian, French, and African, with lesser or greater admixtures of English, Celtic, and Amerindian traits. Bloodlines were as mixed as the culture was creolized" (75). In his essay on the Cajun homeland, Lawrence E. Estaville explains that "émigrés from west-central France crossed the North Atlantic to become Acadians living on the far eastern margins of seventeenth century Nouvelle France. Caught up in their tragic diaspora, *le grand dérangement*, many Acadians became Cajuns in the eighteenth century and created a new homeland, Nouvelle Acadie, in South Louisiana" (83).

surviving sibling is his eldest sister, age ninety-five. Her recollections have been hijacked by dementia.

Damaged badly by Hurricane Katrina, who struck in August 2005 while the Saenger was being refurbished, all remaining carpet has since been stripped from the theatre (Cuthbert qtd. in *Cinema Treasures*). William Hooper's webpages on the New Orleans Saenger feature a photograph of the ladies' powder room which shows the original carpet. The caption notes that the carpet had the Saenger logo woven into it. The image is so grainy that I cannot identify the logo. I notice, however, the silhouette of a man who leans slightly into the frame and that a mirror reflects a glimpse of another man's silhouette. Pictures of the mezzanine follow, and it is noted that the carpet in these images, termed the 'Paramount Swirl,' replaced the original carpet in 1940. Paramount Publix bought the theatre in 1929, just two years after it opened in 1927 as a venue for movies and staged performances (*Cinema Treasures*). In a photograph of the Saenger from the late 1970s Henrietta Wittenberg, niece of Julian Saenger, smiles proudly; gazing back at me Wittenberg holds a large, white purse in one hand and holds onto a railing with the other hand as she stands elegantly in white shoes on a naked floor which awaits new carpet (Hooper). My first visit to the New Orleans Saenger, or at least the first one that I can recollect, was for a concert in 2002. I admired its restored splendor and I studied the carpet I walked upon for traces of my great-grandfather's labor.

I am writing this chapter in New Orleans in my temporary home, just a few blocks from the Saenger. Often times when studying photographs of *Tut's Fever*, I recollect the Saenger though they appear nothing alike. The Saenger is my primary entry to the movie palaces that inspired the creation of *Tut's*, and to a culture of movie-going whose traces fade as I write. In the foreword to David Atwell's seminal book on British cinemas, published in 1980, Bevis

Hillier, Chairman of the Thirties Society, writes “In the year of my birth, 1940, there were some 5,500 cinemas in Britain. Today about 1,100 remain. This is worse than ‘decimation’” (ix).

Atwell’s book details the demolitions of numerous cinemas, and the transformation of some of the few survivors into bingo halls, bowling alleys, concert halls, ballrooms, factories, shops, studios, clubs, parking garages, or even churches. He explains: “Cinemas, being basically windowless brick boxes, do not readily lend themselves to conversion without destroying the interest of their internal decorations” (170).

Most of the movie theatres of my youth are gone, a handful of multi- and megaplexes have replaced them. Since my move to Baton Rouge in August 2005, at least two of the capital city’s movie theatres have closed (Cinemark Tinseltown and Siegen Village Cinema 10). New Orleans holds a special place in cinema history. Vitascope Hall, created June 26, 1896 on Canal Street from a vacant store, is considered the first storefront theatre in the country. This claim is undermined by theatre purists who haughtily discount its makeshiftiness: “One month after the Vitascope was introduced, a New Orleans entrepreneur rented a store, painted the windows black, hung a sheet, laid out chairs and ran movies for a short period” (Sommer). Like many movie palaces and theatres around the world, a number found in New Orleans were designed for stage productions, or served as homes to them at various points during their existence.⁷⁹

From my living room balcony in New Orleans I can see Lori Gomez’s *Downtown Streetcar* on Poydras Street. It is one of approximately eighty replica streetcar sculptures designed and painted by local artists as part of the Young Leadership Council’s Streetcar Named Desire Project created post-Katrina “to provide a tangible sign of hope and recovery to citizens

⁷⁹ According to David Naylor, “It was only after World War I that theaters built primarily to showcase silent motion pictures were opened in any great number. Vaudeville remained popular, but the theater marquees of the day showed that the ‘silents’ had gained equal billing or better” (15). Naylor also emphasizes that “Vaudevillians were not the only live performers at the new motion picture theaters. The great organists rose with their consoles from the depths of the organ pits before film presentations and during intermissions” (15).

and visitors of New Orleans” (*Young Leadership Council*). According to *StreetCarArt.com*, the sculpture was formerly located “at Basin & Canal (next to the Saenger Theatre)—the future site for the Art Pavilion that will be built with the proceeds risen by the YLC’s Streetcar Named Inspire project.” It now decorates the sidewalk in front of Le Pavillon (which it also features), the historic hotel, where many Saenger Theatre-goers likely dined before catching a movie.



Fig. 3.2. Lori Gomez’s *Downtown Streetcar*. Photograph by author, 2 Feb. 2009.



Fig. 3.3. “Saenger Theater” from safety film negative created 29 Oct. 1941. Photo by Charles L. Franck Studios. Courtesy The Historic New Orleans Collection, acc. no. 1979.325.5923.

Cafés were especially popular during the thirties and through the late fifties in Britain’s large, elaborate cinemas termed “supers,” but apparently the Saenger did not have such an eatery (Atwell 87, 116-17).⁸⁰ The Saenger represented on Gomez’s streetcar is one of the post-movie palace era, and its marquee advertises a sold out Aaron Neville concert (see fig. 3.2). According

⁸⁰ Jazzland, a *Cinema Treasures* user, comments on the Saenger Theatre profile page that in the 1960s “champagne was served at the concession stand and the theater.”

to historic photographs, during its cinematic reign, the Saenger's marquee advertised films such as *The Gaucho*, *Sailor Beware*, *So Proudly We Hail*, and *King Kong vs. Godzilla* (see fig. 3.3).

The Saenger shares Gomez's streetcar with fashion from various ages, a trumpeting Louis Armstrong alongside two legendary Storyville venues where he once played, and buildings such as the Saenger's Canal Street neighbors Hotel LaSalle and D. H. Holmes department store.

Across Poydras Street the Civic Theatre on Baronne Street is visible. According to recollections by jazzland, a *Cinema Treasures* user, the theatre, previously named the Poché, became the Civic through a contest "held to rename the theatre using the same number of letters." While employed on Taylor Hackford's feature film *Ray* as a production assistant to the Assistant Directors, I worked on scenes shot outside of the Civic. I stood in the alley, and gave cues to the glamorous Regina King and Kerry Washington. Later, while shooting in nearby Louis Armstrong Park, Jamie Foxx bench pressed during breaks, throwing the starstruck horde of extras into fits of excitement. An article about the Civic and other newly historic designated landmarks nearby notes that it was "built in 1906 as a playhouse in the Shubert Co. chain and is said to be the oldest surviving theater in New Orleans" (Eggler). Robert Day, a Baton Rouge neighbor, shared his recollections of the Civic Theatre:

In the wake of the *Saturday Night Fever* phenomenon that sparked the disco craze . . . the Civic, which had not run movies for at least several years at that point, was turned into an impressive disco emporium which drew large crowds for a period. I knew the guys who put it together and they needed to get rid of the theater seats. I took all 1,200 of them with the thought that I could make a bundle selling them off. I put them together in groups of two and three and trundled them around to area flea markets for months. I sold maybe six and gave the balance to a black church. One of my many success stories. I still have a few of them.

Next door to the Civic Theatre is a loft and penthouse complex; its name, Civic Lofts, capitalizes on its neighbor's fame, leading many to believe mistakenly that it is the former theatre. The

actual theatre is scheduled to be converted into apartments (Eggler). Gomez's cheerful downtown along with the Civic inspires me to take a half mile pilgrimage to recollect the Saenger through my own photographs and, upon return home, through images found online.

Retracing a pilgrimage that I made in December 2008, I walk down Baronne Street, turn left on Common Street, then right on University Place and arrive in front of the Orpheum Theatre, another movie palace whose post-Hurricane Katrina fate remains uncertain (see fig. 3.4). Approximately one year after Katrina, Karen Brooks and Amy Eiermann reported it was in need of a \$4 million renovation: "The stinking, moldy Orpheum Theater off Canal Street sits silent and abandoned, its stage warped and wood floors buckled, no longer suitable for the likes of Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky and Marvin Hamlisch." Purchased for \$675,000 by Wehand Properties of Dallas, Texas in June 2006, the former home of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO) since 1982, "was built in 1924, a Beaux Arts style, four-story building that began as a vaudeville house that once featured the Marx Brothers. It went on to become a movie house and adult-movie theater, and finally became a performing arts space for about 1,200 spectators" (Brooks and Eiermann). Unable to gain access to its interior, I turn to news reports for glimpses inside. Stacey Plaisance describes a February 2006 tour of the Orpheum with Jeff Montalbano, then LPO manager: "Walking on the dingy, now brownish-red carpet, he pointed out the paint flaking from the ceiling from weeks of moisture exposure and the hundreds of once-plush blue seats now almost entirely consumed by brownish-green mould" (qtd. in *Cinema Treasures*). In historic photographs a number of the Orpheum's lobbies appear oddly claustrophobic in contrast to its expansive exterior (see fig. 3.5). I recollect seasick nights in tiny, low-ceilinged quarters on a cruise ship in the Gulf of Alaska.



Fig. 3.4. Orpheum Theatre. Photograph by author, 2 Feb. 2009.



Fig. 3.5. “Orpheum Theatre,” from safety film negative created 29 Oct. 1941. Photo by Charles L. Franck Studios. Courtesy The Historic New Orleans Collection, acc. no. 1979. 325.5897.

David Naylor details the Orpheum’s exterior design: “A Polychrome terra cotta frieze runs nearly the length of the main façade . . . just above the marquee. The upper portion of the façade is a classical five-bay scheme. Figures of cherubs and angels add an ethereal touch to the interior” (107). A red and black River City Construction banner hangs across the center entrance doors. The banner would have to be removed in order to open the doors; smaller signs with the same logo adorn nearby doors. Though I gaze in awe at the five bays and read the carved letters aloud “Music; Drama; Comedy . . .,” what strikes with me most powerfully are the faded posters in the display cases near the entrance. One case advertises *It’s Time*, Michael Bublé’s “new” album, released in 2005; another case features a *Let God and Let Go* poster, Aaron “AJ” Jackson’s gospel play that was scheduled to be performed at the Orpheum before its cancellation “just hours before curtain time when city officials ordered a mandatory evacuation” (Plaisance qtd. in *Cinema Treasures*).

One of the larger wooden framed cases advertises the orchestra's 2004-2005 14th Concert Season that was interrupted by Katrina while just a half mile away some thirty thousand evacuees crowded into the Superdome seeking shelter under its ripped roof. My uncle was transported by helicopter out of Charity Hospital Intensive Care Unit, located between the Orpheum and the Superdome. We feared he was dead until by chance our cousin, a nurse at Baton Rouge General Medical Center, recognized him and contacted us. My paternal grandmother's sister died shortly after evacuating. Written in permanent black marker in large curvy letters on the outside of the glass case that houses the LPO poster is the word "ESCAPE," which, in memory of those who did not escape Katrina, lends an ominous connotation to the framing of movie-going as an escape from reality.

The Saenger remains boarded up. Glimpses of its pre-Katrina interior are featured in the film *Ray* and in Jessica Simpson's "Angels" music video (see fig. 3.6 - 3.9). "New Saenger Theater," an image found in The New Orleans Historic Collection (THNOC), depicts an early Saenger poster that includes text from a thunderingly dramatic description of the theatre:

Two and a Half Million Dollars woven by Artists – welded and moulded by Artisans . . . Nearly a City Block under One Roof Echoes New Orleans March of Progress – Happy voices raised in song and carol – An Acre of Seats in a Florentine palace of Splendor – dim and stately Gazes – luxurious Promenades – Magic Carpet weavers lurk betimes – a thousand and one Stories of Life . . .

As I arrive, a street vendor is setting up his table of merchandise near the theatre's entrance. This section of Canal Street is crowded with locals, tourists, hustlers, and people waiting for the streetcar or bus. It is a gloomy, gray day and difficult to imagine that audiences once lined up to watch films inside, and gaze upon the "cavernous auditorium's ceiling, like other Atmospheric style theaters, [it] was painted dark blue, and sprinkled with constellations over which clouds drifted before a show began" (Krefft).



Fig. 3.6. Saenger Theatre. Photograph by author, 19 Feb. 2009.



Fig. 3.7. “Saenger Theater,” from safety film negative created 29 Oct. 1941. Photo by Charles L. Franck Studios. Courtesy The Historic New Orleans Collection, acc. no. 1979.325.5919.

Cinema Treasures users share, and even debate, Saenger recollections online.⁸¹ Heated arguments erupted regarding the appropriateness of discussing movie palace rebuilding so shortly after Katrina. Jazzland recollects: “Sadly, prior to The Civil Rights Act, African Americans were not admitted to this theatre,” and notes that old photographs of the neighboring State Palace Theatre (formerly the Loews) featured a sign advertising “The finest colored balcony in the South.” Ken m.c. writes: “In 1945, a handicapped patron bought a ticket and was told that ‘cripples are not admitted to the theater on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.’ He sued

⁸¹ Though the comment policy on *Cinema Treasures* includes rules such as “No personal attacks,” they are not always followed. *Cinema Treasures* elaborates on its “No off-topic discussions” rule: “You are welcome and encouraged to add your memories to a theater page, but please do not post copious amounts of general remembrances about living in a certain town, or decade, etc. This website is about movie theaters; it’s not intended for other types of nostalgia. If a comment about a specific town gives context for a theater, then that’s terrific. Otherwise, please post it somewhere else.”

and was awarded \$250.” On January 12, 2009 New Orleans officials announced “an innovative plan for a city agency to take ownership of the majestic Saenger Theatre while leaving management in the hands of its longtime owners, who intend to reopen the shuttered playhouse by 2011” (Krupa). A *Times-Picayune* article in which Michelle Krupa reports on the Saenger’s rescue was followed by more than sixty comments from readers, many of whom harshly debate each other, criticize or celebrate the news, and share recollections of the theatre and its neighborhood. Odumase writes: “My favorite memory of the Saenger? I grew up in the 50s and 60s and remember when the Saenger was for whites only. Once, we were allowed to enter, I remember thinking that this place is not that grand.” No one responds to this recollection, though many of the comments are charged with racial and class tension.

Several users recollect the magnificent organ and those who brought it to life, MysticBayou writes about Stan Kahn rising “up out of the pit on the organ blasting the theme from the movie *2001*... The effect was thrilling even by modern high tech. standards.” Some users recollect their own or family member’s work in the theatre. Staloysius55 asks: “My uncle Ray McNamara played the organ in the Saenger in the very early days. He could really make it HUM!! Anyone remember him?” Nolalady0403 writes: “My greatest memories were going there in the 40’s and my mom always reminding me when we looked up to the stars on the ceiling that my uncle put those stars there.” CarlosMo recollects a surprise appearance by Jerry Lewis after the opening of *The Nutty Professor*:

He was wearing, of all things, a powder blue cowboy outfit with white trim, boots, hat and holster. He pulled out the gun and twirled it around and did several tricks...go figure. The show ended when he said they would be handing out “Nutty Professor” rulers (again, go figure) at the side door. There was an instantaneous dash out of the theater. It’s a wonder no one was trampled.



Fig. 3.8. Saenger Theatre. Photograph by author, 15 Dec. 2008.



Fig. 3.9. “Saenger Theater,” from safety film negative created 29 Oct. 1941. Photo by Charles L. Franck Studios. Courtesy The Historic New Orleans Collection, acc. no. 1979.325.5915.

I walk home down Canal Street, known as the widest street in the country, past neighboring weathered and worn movie palaces including the Joy and the State Palace and sites where others, such as the Strand, the Tudor, and the Globe once stood. The Tivoli Theatre in the nearby Hoffman Triangle area now serves as a D. W. Rhodes Funeral Home, and is undergoing a \$3 million renovation after being ravaged by Katrina (F. H. Myers Construction). There are too many movie palaces to recollect here, so I return to *Tut’s Fever* . . . I am humming The Bangles “Walk Like an Egyptian,” and praying for an uneventful hurricane season:

All the old paintings on the tombs
They do the sand dance don't you know
If they move too quick (oh whey oh)
They're falling down like a domino

3.3 SITUATING *TUT’S FEVER* WITHIN *BEHIND THE SCREEN*

One passes through *Tut’s Fever’s* lobby, which features a concession stand (see figs. 3.10 and 3.11). A chaperone of a June 2008 tour group remarked: “I bet that popcorn is stale!” Visual treats include Luxor Licks, Memphis Drops, Nefertari Sticks, and Tut’s Nuts. One enters

through a doorway into the theatre. One may leave the theatre by way of a rear corridor that features a window to a tiny room. Inside the room is a coffin that opens as one pulls a cord and reveals a mummified James Dean. Continuing through the corridor leads back to *Tut's* lobby where one exits through the entrance. Upon exiting the movie palace, to the right are movie posters and high above them is the window to the first level of the exhibition/third floor. Past the movie posters is a large case that houses a miniature movie theatre.

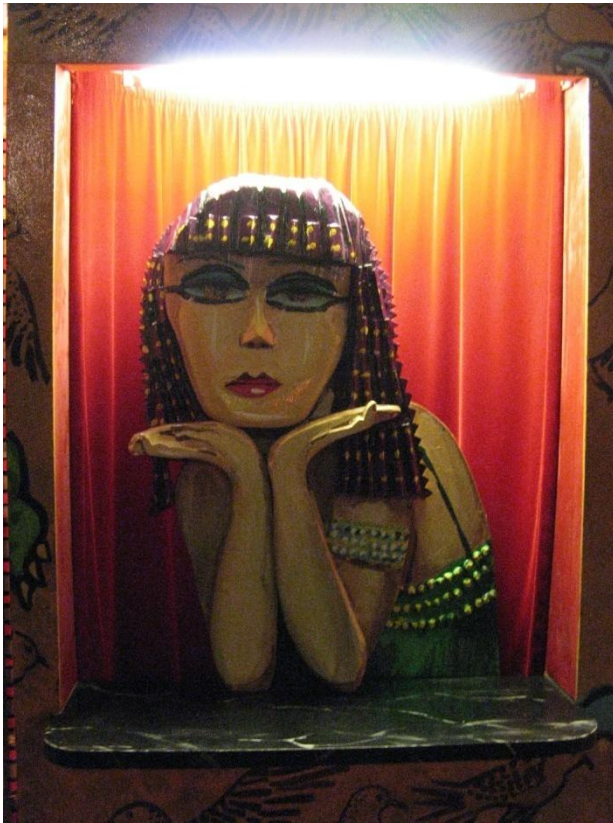


Fig. 3.10. Ticket vendor, *Tut's Fever*. Photograph by author, 18 Mar. 2008.

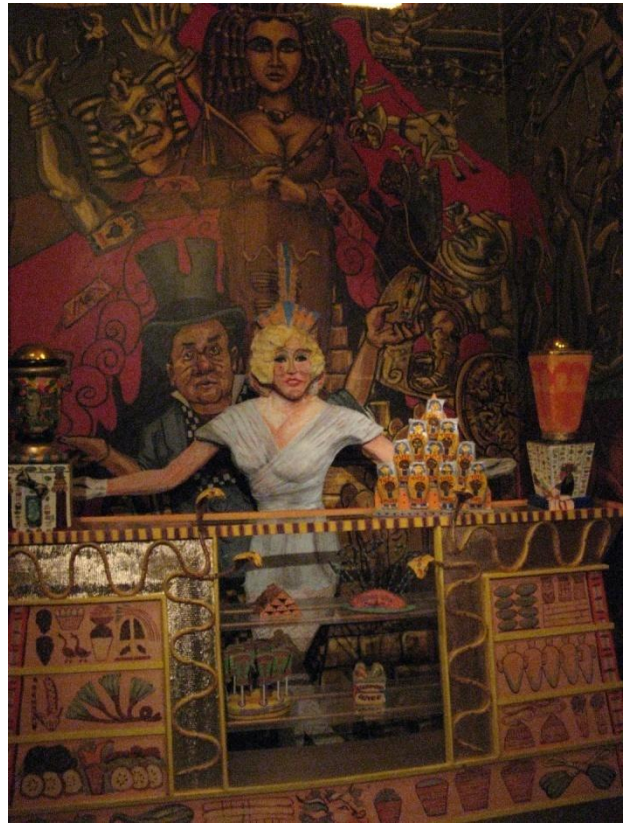


Fig. 3.11. Concessions stand worker, *Tut's Fever*. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

Following my first visit to the Museum of the Moving Image, my primary recollections about *Tut's Fever* were its Egyptian theme and its incorporation of Mickey Mouse (see figs. 3.12 and 3.13). I do not believe that I watched a film in *Tut's*, but I remember sitting in one of the chairs in the silent, goldenly lit, empty theatre just to get a feel for the whimsical environment. I

also remember not knowing if it was okay to enter the installation; I did so cautiously and was immediately enveloped by its playfulness. *Tut's* is located somewhat partially underneath the area on the third floor that houses the Video Flipbook. In order to get to *Tut's* from the Video Flipbook visitors must either back-track to the entrance/exit then take the elevator or stairs to the second floor/second level of *Behind the Screen*, or they must continue traveling through the first level of the core exhibition as intended which will loop them back to the entrance/exit.



Fig. 3.12. Lobby of *Tut's Fever*. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.



Fig. 3.13. *Tut's Fever*, theatre interior. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

Branislav Jakovljevic contrasts the position of the museum's pre-renovation/expansion major screening facility, the Riklis Theater located near the entrance, with that of the first film museum, the Musée Permanent du Cinema of the Cinémathèque Française, whose "labyrinth ends with the screening room" (359; 354).⁸² What he fails to mention is that *Tut's Fever*, as a miniaturized movie palace with a prominent placement in *Behind the Screen*, is arguably the centerpiece of the museum which frames it, and the films screened inside, as the masterpieces of

⁸² Jakovljevic references a quotation by Richard Roud from his biography of Henri Langlois, the founder of the Cinémathèque Française: "Langlois's museum was a three-dimensional film, his history of the cinema . . . The museum was meant to be a prologue to the screenings" (354). Jakovljevic also notes that *Behind the Screen* "actually begins and ends in the gift shop" (359). Considering the gift shop's placement before the museum's temporary closure in 2008, on the ground floor next to the Visitor Services counter, the Riklis Theater, and the William Fox Gallery, it is more accurate to describe the gift shop as what begins and ends the museum visit itself.

the Museum of the Moving Image.⁸³ It remains to be seen how the currently underway renovation and expansion of the museum may challenge the reign of *Tut's Fever*, as new artifacts, artwork, and screening areas could potentially overshadow it.

Writing on Red Grooms' use of scale, Susan Saccoccia contrasts "a tiny Pequod bobbing on a puddle-sized ocean" found in his installation *Moby Dick Meets the NY Public Library* with the "human-scale environment" of *Tut's Fever*. She describes *Tut's*: "a cozy pharaoh's chamber that cocoons visitors in the magic of movies. A yellow mural coats the small screening room's walls, ceiling, and seats. Its frieze displays a pantheon of Hollywood stars cast as Egyptian deities. Walt Disney waves from a chariot named 'Walt's Express.'" Shortly after leaving *Tut's* the visitor arrives at a miniature model of the Roxy Theatre enclosed in a glass case.

Opened the same year as the New Orleans Saenger Theatre, the Roxy's caption notes that it was demolished in 1961 and TGI Friday's, a chain restaurant, now stands on its former site. The juxtaposition of the Roxy and *Tut's*, both miniaturized to varying degrees, marks the accessibility of *Tut's* as a functioning theatre yet emphasizes that the movie palaces of the past remain untouchable. A small heavily curtained screening alcove, similar to those scattered throughout both floors of *Behind the Screen*, follows the Roxy display and in its simplicity forms a stark contrast to both of its explicitly miniaturized neighbors. A looped twenty-two minute video titled "The Movies Begin" plays in the screening area. The entry is guarded by a headless and handless mannequin dressed in the uniform once worn by ushers at the Radio City Music Hall.

Immediately inside the entrance to the second floor where *Tut's* is housed, are two interactive computer stations identical to the one found on the floor above it which features an

⁸³ Directly referencing Cinémathèque Française material, Jakovljevic explains: "According to the concept of the universal survey museum, the history of an art *has* to culminate with the masterpiece: . . . in the Cinémathèque Française it is the film that 'can not be seen anywhere else in the world'" (354).

outdated searchable database of professional roles in the moving image industry (see fig. 3.14). A curved, high wall of stars visually dominates the space (see figs. 3.15). Predominantly black and white photographs of film legends including Lucille Ball, Carmen Miranda, and James Dean honor the glamorous, establish the personality of this floor of the exhibition, and introduce Acting, the first chapter of this level. To the left is Hair and Makeup, the final chapter of the exhibition. Continuing along the pathway intended by the museum, one passes through a doorway and finds Jim's Isermann's installation, *TV Lounge*, to one's left (see fig. 3.16).



Fig. 3.14. Second floor entrance. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.



Fig. 3.15. Doorway leading to *Tut's Fever*. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

Jakovljevic describes *TV Lounge*: “depicting the ‘television viewing environment’ from the days of High Television in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, this room from a suburban house with op-art paintings on the wall and plastic sofas represents the stunning comment on how the obscure non-place of the TV/museum culture spills into the reality of the living environment” (365). Reflecting an awareness of its boundary play, the closing sentence of its museum caption states: “*TV Lounge* also explores the tension between the public space of the museum and the private space of the living room, and it evokes nostalgia for an outmoded futurism reminiscent of the animated TV series *The Jetsons*.” On a continuous loop, Ali

Hossaini's experimental twelve minute video, "Epiphany: The Cycle of Life" dances on the large TV screen that forms the centerpiece of the installation. What struck me about *TV Lounge* is that upon close inspection, it was dusty and its wear and tear was visible. Perhaps the museum was waiting for the renovation to spruce up its *TV Lounge*, or perhaps the museum workers responsible for its maintenance were occupied with other priorities. It is also possible that the installation's wear and tear is an intentional effect that was factored into Isermann's artistic vision.



Fig. 3.16. *TV Lounge* as seen from inside *Tut's*. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

The nostalgia that *TV Lounge* evoked for a time I have experienced only mediatized was both interrupted and intensified by an awareness of the installation's neglect. Framed as a living

room, it acted as a reminder of in/visible domestic labor. Lucy Lippard concludes her book *On the Beaten Track* with a hopeful meditation on her longtime summer home as a “nostalgia trip and trap,” through which she opposes Susan Stewart’s disabling portrait of nostalgia and reclaims nostalgia’s potential to create a past that brings “inherited significance” into the present (153, 164). For Lippard, nostalgia as “part of [her] lived experience, . . . is desire unremoved from the senses, . . . a seamless and positive part of life, a reminder of breadth and depth, a confirmation of continuity” (164). Across the pathway is *Tut’s Fever*; exuding nostalgia, its humorous character contrasts with the hauntingly empty and seemingly sterile environment of *TV Lounge*.

The juxtaposition of *TV Lounge* and *Tut’s Fever* is especially striking considering David Atwell’s remark in 1980 about the birth of television: “Ironically, the greatest technological advance of all . . . has proved the catalyst for the cinema” (165). Months later, I stumbled upon an online photograph album featuring images taken by a Museum of the Moving Image visitor. The ones that stuck with me were family photographs of a little girl playing in *TV Lounge*. Her presence added warmth to the installation. If one were unaware of the context, one might assume that the child was in her own home versus a museum.

3.4 RECOLLECTING THE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF *TUT’S FEVER*

“Work in the morning / Pictures at night / Braces the system / And keeps the heart light.”
– Picture Playhouse June 1, 1914 programme (qtd. in David Atwell’s *Cathedrals of the Movies*).

“Although both films and cinema offered a sense of occasion, one did not, unlike the theatre, have to dress up to go to the cinema; the only person wearing evening dress would be the manager as he stood on the foyer greeting patrons.”

– David Atwell, *Cathedrals of the Movies*.

The caption to *Tut’s Fever* is on a stand positioned on the floor to the right of its entrance and next to the feet of the caricatured Marilyn Monroe (see fig. 3.1). In order to read it without

telescopic eyesight, one must bend down. Though much of the literature on *Tut's* mistakenly acknowledges Red Grooms as the sole creator, the museum's caption lists his wife, Lysiane Luong, as co-creator. In the museum's September 1 – November 24 , 1989 calendar Luong is specifically credited for designing the Rita Hayworth as Nefertiti chair covers featured in *Tut's*. Along with a *Citizen Kane* Rosebud Christmas ornament and sets of Disney and Olden Days themed flipbooks, Luong's covers are among the merchandise advertised as holiday gift ideas; they sold for \$280 each.⁸⁴ The *Tut's Fever* caption notes 1986-88 as the creation dates, and lists it as a mixed media commissioned piece. It is worth including the full text description as it appears on the caption:

Tut's Fever is an homage to the ornate movie places of the 1920s, an architectural form exemplified by Sid Grauman's Egyptian and Chinese theaters in Los Angeles. Red Grooms and Lysiane Luong have created an installation about movies using imagery inspired by the tomb paintings they saw during a trip to Egypt. According to Grooms, "We got to reading all these books about Hollywood, and the Egyptian afterlife." The exodus from Egypt, for example, is transformed to the flight of movie moguls from New York to California. The sarcophagus containing the remains of King Tut, who dies in his youth and was then immortalized, is replaced by a movie star who met a similar fate.

Instead of the traditional slideshow of souvenir photographs of their travels, Grooms and Luong offer visitors an imagined souvenir from the golden era of the movie palace.

This souvenir theatre, central to *Behind the Screen*, plays a unique role in the museum's domestication of moving image culture. Robin Finn terms *Tut's* a "phantasmagoric exhibition"; she notes that Slovin "commissioned it in 1988 to help the museum open with a bang despite being basically bankrupt" and comments that "no one ever accused her of being a slave to the bottom line." As a site of explicit celebration, for a minimum fee of \$450 birthday parties may be held at the museum. The museum's website explains that parties include: "Lots of laughs at a

⁸⁴ The description notes that the Luong's chair covers are: "silkscreened and hand painted in five colors on cotton sateen. Fits any folding chair 30" x 19" x 16.5"."

private screening of a short film starring either Laurel and Hardy or Charlie Chaplin (you choose which one) in the whimsical Tut's Fever Movie Palace, an art installation and theater.” The celebratory status of *Tut's* is demonstrated through both form and function, and through its screenings and parodic design, it demystifies and remystifies the moving image and related labor practices as it invites visitors/audience members to recollect the movie palaces of the past and those still standing boldly, or quietly crumbling, in the present.

In a February 13, 2009 interview with Carl Goodman, he recollected that his previous office, before the museum's flood and subsequent renovation, was adjacent to *Tut's Fever*. He enjoyed the clump-clumping sound and laughter of excited visitors as they moved through the theatre. His son, not easily scared, is more familiar with electronic amusements than traditional haunted houses; while visiting *Tut's* he was surprisingly frightened when James Dean's mummified body popped out of the sarcophagus. As a functioning theatre *Tut's Fever* regularly features Classic Movie Serials open to museum visitors. On multiple visits (and multiple times per visit), I saw *Adventures of Captain Marvel*, described in the daily visitor schedule as a: “Collector's 16mm print. Directed by John English and William Whitney. With Tom Tyler, Louis Currie. In this classic Republic serial, Captain Marvel tries to keep the villainous Scorpion from creating a mysterious and all-powerful weapon.”

Tut's depicts theatre laborers such as a ticket vendor, concession stand worker, and ushers (see fig. 3.10 and 3.11). The presence of these mute characters foregrounds the museum laborers, particularly the projectionist, who remains “behind the screen.” As one waits for the movie to begin, creaking, stomping, and shuffling noises fill the silent theatre as the projectionist enters the projection booth unseen. The construction of *Tut's* is far from soundproof. The auditory awareness created of the projectionist's presence reminds visitors of the laborer seated

above and behind them, opposite the screen that normally monopolizes their senses. Shortly after the screening begins, a museum security guard closes the theatre doors. Often remaining invisible inside the corridor, the security guard's presence is always heard and sometimes seen if she peeks inside the theatre or ushers in latecomers.

3.5 “WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?”: RECOLLECTING THE DEATH OF JAMES DEAN

“Live fast, die young, leave a good looking corpse.”

– Nick Romano, *Knock on Any Door*.

“James Dean’s death had a profound effect on me. The instant I heard about it, I vomited. I don’t know why.”

– Montgomery Clift, quoted in *Montgomery Clift: A Biography*.

“Tour buses will go to Dean’s mortuary, the church that held his funeral, and to his grave, billed as ‘a pink granite headstone often covered in red lipstick from his fans wanting to leave something behind.’”

– John Swansburg, “James Dean: What Would He Have Grown Up to Be?”

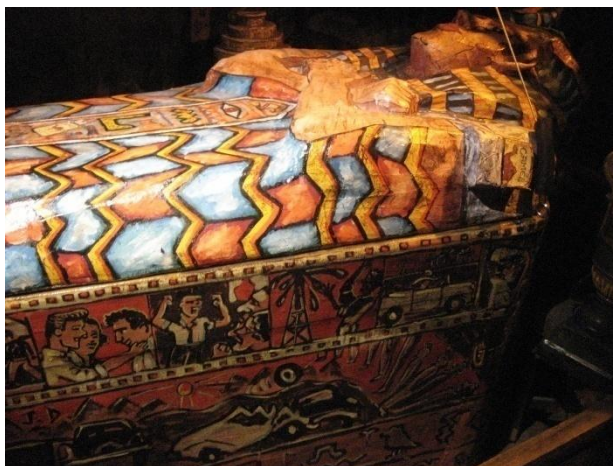


Fig. 3.17. James Dean’s sarcophagus, exterior. *Tut’s Fever*. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.



Fig. 3.18. James Dean’s sarcophagus, interior. *Tut’s Fever*. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

Positioned as both a passionately worshipped screen idol and a fun house gimmick, James Dean is one of the most memorable bodies featured in *Tut’s* (see figs. 3.17 and 3.18). Judd Tully describes the early stages of *Tut’s Fever* which included a miniature model of the

theatre: “Grooms stands over his doll-house-size model, reaching in to lift James Dean out of a custom-fitted sarcophagus worthy of Tutankhamen. Red laughs and waves the miniature movie star.” Robin Finn shares an anecdote that describes Slovin’s reaction when the “cable that opens and shuts James Dean’s sarcophagus” failed and the magic of *Tut’s* was unintentionally demystified: “‘Oh, this is not good,’ says Ms. Slovin, who likes her interactive exhibits to deliver the goods, in this instance a fanciful rendering of Mr. Dean’s beautiful corpse. ‘Somebody yanked too hard and broke the wire.’” Emphasizing the bright side of the scenario and contrasting the museum with the MoMA, Finn comments, “But at least they found their way to this out-of-the-way museum to pay their respects to Mr. Dean and catch the daily 16-millimeter cliffhanger at Tut’s -- try doing that at the Museum of Modern Art.” With the cable broken, visitors are unable to interact with James Dean’s sarcophagus; he remains hidden from their gaze and the body preserved in the sarcophagus is left to their imagination.

The opening of McGrif’s *YouTube* video, “The New York City Trip,” includes a Museum of the Moving Image souvenir show and tell, and he pans around his bedroom searching for somewhere to hang his newly purchased laminated *Taxi Driver* poster. The final thirty seconds of the approximately seven and a half minute video features *Tut’s Fever* in action. The video cuts from *Feral Fount*, where one of McGrif’s companion remarked, “You can feel the wind generated from it too,” to the interior of *Tut’s Fever*. McGrif leads his male and female companions on a tour that ends with James Dean popping out of his sarcophagus. McGrif instructs: “You come up there, and you go down here . . . Come out wherever you are . . .” He pulls the cord, exposing Dean’s body, and the group erupts into laughter. Their bubbling responses include: “I didn’t know what you were going to do!”; “Oh my God!”; “Oh, that was classic.”; “Ahh, was priceless!; “He’s not even that scary looking!”; “Like, I didn’t even know

what was happening, I see like this guy's arm come up and I have no idea what happ.” The video cuts off in mid-sentence, leaving viewers to wonder what happened.

When it comes to the death of James Dean, no one knows exactly what happened. Warren Beath, author of *The Death of James Dean*, asserts: “. . . not even the locals seem to know exactly what happened that day in 1955 . . . None of the Dean biographies which have been published devote more than a sentence or two to the accident itself – and most of this is misinformation. Some say that Dean's head was nearly torn from his body. Many disagreed as to where the crash occurred” (12). Dean's death certificate lists “broken neck” as the official cause of death (Riese 134). Carroll Baker, who appeared in *Giant*, the film starring Dean that was in production at the time of his death, recalls receiving the numbing news of his fatal car accident: “On Friday, September 20, around six o'clock, Elizabeth, Rock, and I and a small group were watching the rushes. George Stevens was behind us at his desk by the controls. The projection room was dark. The phone rang. The soundtrack screamed to a halt. The picture froze” (Adams and Burns 220). The exterior side of James Dean's sarcophagus in *Tut's* recalls his death visually in a comic book stylized film strip format accented with hieroglyphics. Red Grooms and Lysiane Luong call attention to the relationships among Dean's screen roles, his tragic death, and the mythologization of him as an icon that will continue long after our own lifetimes. Immortalized at age twenty-four, Dean's androgynous attractiveness and reported bisexuality are among the popular recollections of him.

Contrasting the first film museum with the Museum of the Moving Image, Jakovljevic writes that Cinémathèque Française artifacts “were neither labeled or protected” and relates that “James Dean's leather jacket and Marilyn Monroe's dress were stolen (354).” Everyone wants a piece of James Dean, and Beath, identified as “a Dean Collector and fan” knows this well (Riese

44). Beath notes that a garage nearby the site of Dean's death "is empty except for a bag of the polished stones from Japan which are stored to replenish those taken from the base of the Dean monument for souvenirs" (14). He describes Dean's tombstone as "chipped and cracked by putty knives, hammers, and picks. The letters of his name are chiseled and gouged by the relic hunters" (16).⁸⁵

It is notable that the lip of Dean's sarcophagus in *Tut's* as well as the interior of its top feature his name, perhaps for the benefit of those, such as myself, who knew little about him before catching Dean fever in the museum. Dean is buried in Fairmont, Indiana's Park Cemetery in what Beath describes as an "unassuming plot"; he explains that Dean's "rust coloured" headstone was stolen on April 14, 1983 reportedly by someone driving a pick-up truck (18). Later "as strangely and suddenly as it had disappeared," a farmer found the two hundred pound tombstone one night near a country road, and "wrapped in a blanket to preserve any finger prints" turned it over to the police who gave it to Marcus "Markie" Winslow Junior, Dean's cousin (199). James Dean was an only child, and Beath's recollects that "Jimmy used to pull [Markie] in a wagon" (199). After debating whether storing the tombstone for a bit might stop the "crazies" from carving it, Markie soon "returned it to Jimmy's unquiet grave and cemented it again to its base. Within four weeks it was gone" (199).

After a moment of shocked silence in reaction to the disappearing grave, my rising Dean fever triggers David Essex's "Rock On." The "Jimmy Dean / (James Dean)" refrain usually surfaces when I study images of the Dean's sarcophagus in *Tut's*. I begin tapping my foot, and bobbing my head. Essex, a glam rocker commonly linked with a "David Bowie-esque

⁸⁵ In "Killing Dillinger: A Mystory," Michael Bowman includes a passage about John Dillinger, another legend interred in Indiana, specifically Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis. In instructing visitors on how to identify Dillinger's headstone, Bowman writes: ". . . This is the one that will be all nicked up / The one that has been replaced several times / The one the cops gotta keep their eyes on even today" (344).

androgyny,” channels Dean in his 1973 “Rock On” video. He straddles the microphone stand, and struts provocatively to the haunting beat. The song was featured in the film *That’ll Be the Day*, starring Essex along with Ringo Starr and Rosemary Leach. Don of Indianapolis, a *Songfacts* website user recollects: “Yeah...absolutely a great song. It's yet another gem from my ‘74 Senior Year.’ I've always been intrigued by the James Dean callouts, as he AND the song have a real, *sauve* coolness about them.”⁸⁶ The first *Songfacts* user comment regarding the song comes from Pete of Nowra, Australia: “[‘Rock On’] was used in a McDonalds TV commercial at least in Australia, it featured a James Dean look alike walking down George St Sydney, the setting was the 50's, I was told the look alike was actually a McDonalds store manager from Canada, it was an excellent commercial.” Following the *YouTube* link provided by Pete in a later comment leads to a one minute commercial which was posted by LiquidWit in December 2006.

The majority of the commercial is a single shot featuring the Dean look-alike walking toward the camera through a busy city while eating a Big Mac. Half way through the video, a McDonald’s employee catches up with “Dean” and returns some change to him presumably from the sale of the Big Mac. The employee’s uniform triggers a recollection of one of my childhood dance recitals. Our instructors ordered costumes for our jazz, tap, and ballet performances from a catalog, but often, in an effort to make recitals more affordable, one of our three costumes was home-made. One year, the theme of our home-made costume was McDonalds. We attached Happy Meal boxes and cups to brown trays and incorporated them into our tap dance. As I shift my focus back to the commercial I wonder if that was the year that my little brother Joel took

⁸⁶ In an attempt to preserve character, misspellings and grammatical errors featured in directly quoted texts have not been corrected or altered.

dance lessons at the school I attended. I make a note to dig out old photos, and I fervently hope that it was the one year my parents purchased the recital video.

As the commercial nears its end, the text “MacTime Rocks On” appears in the bottom right of the shot along with the McDonald’s logo. The shot then dissolves into another of the actor walking away from the camera with his back facing it. As he walks through city steam the actor / “James Dean” disappears. The video is followed by 57 comments, including one posted in December 2008 by Nfoster122: “Hey this is my brother and I am so proud of him. I was little when he made this commercial and when he returned from Australia he brought me a stuffed Koala Bear, (my fav animal) He is a great actor and person and I am lucky to call him my brother. Keep your head focused, you are a great deal of talent. Love-Tash.” *YouTube* allows users to rate comments by clicking on thumbs up or thumbs down icons; no one has given Nfoster122’s comment a thumbs up or down.

The next comment was posted by 8doherj, and by contrast received two thumbs up: “deliberately went and bought a cheeseburger at Macdonald’s and walked down the street with this song playing in my head. shows how advertisements still work after the ad has been taken off the air.” According to additional comments, including some identified as being by the actor, the video was shot in Sydney and starred Travis Feldman of Indiana, James Dean’s birth state. I leave *Tut’s Fever* and continue to a nearby glass display case in search of someone else’s brother. His name is Martin.

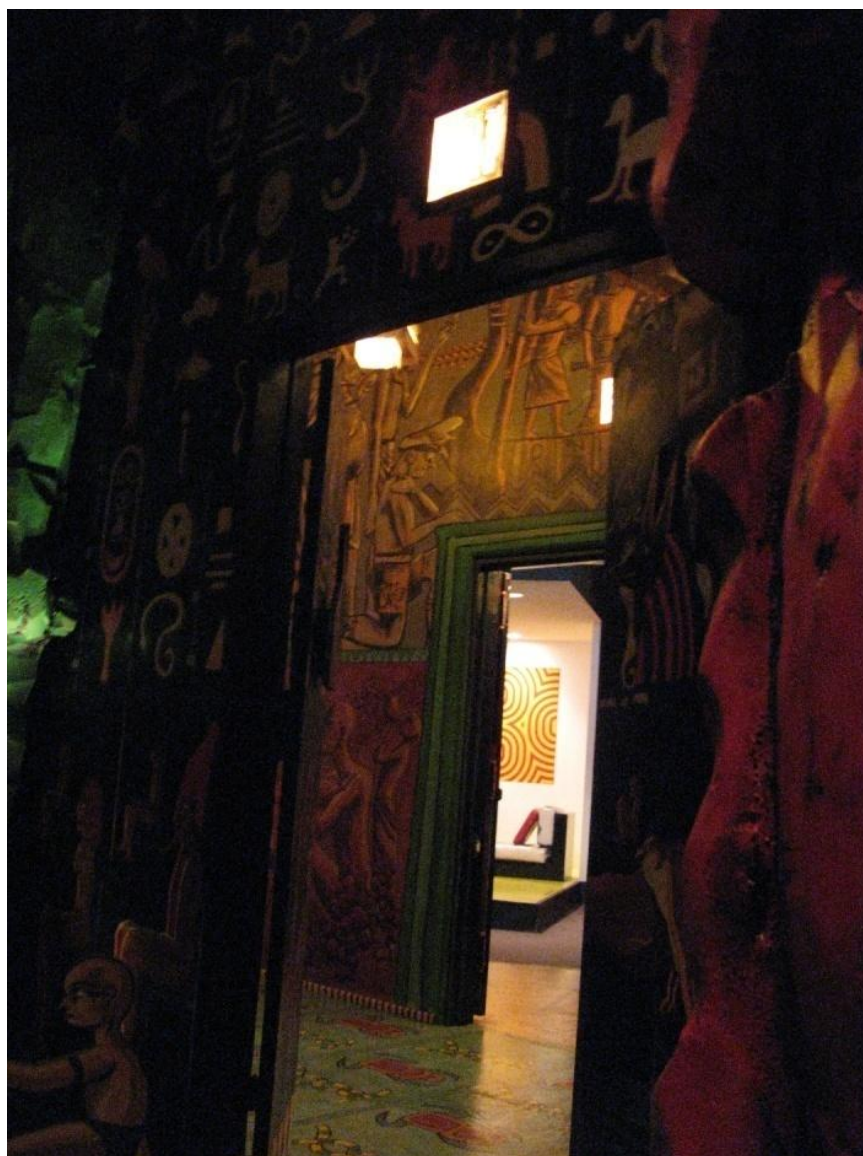


Fig. 3.19. *Tut's Fever* entrance/exit doorways. Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

CHAPTER FOUR RECOLLECTING “MARTIN’S FIRST HAIRCUT”

4.1 RETRACING A PATH TO “MARTIN’S FIRST HAIRCUT”

“There’s no such thing as a bad home movie. These mini-underground opuses are revealing, scary, joyous, always flawed, filled with accidental art and shout out from attics and closets all over the world to be seen again.”

– John Waters, *Homemovieday.com*.

Memories of my first visit to the Museum of the Moving Image in January 2004 do not include the home movie artifact titled “Martin’s First Haircut.” It is difficult to know how exactly it hailed me. Drawing on Louis Althusser’s notion of interpellation, Michael Bowman’s teachings on how mystory subjects hail us encourage a contextualization of the role of culture, ideology, and agency in the construction of our identities. Reviewing the questions that Bowman poses in his Performance and Composition course, I ask myself: “Did I choose ‘Martin’s First Haircut’ or did it choose me? How did this home movie call me; what were the circumstances that led up to its call, and why did I answer it? In what ways might I have been ‘de-interpellating’ myself from one mode of subjectivity by answering this particular call?”⁸⁷ These questions might also be asked of the Video Flipbook and *Tut’s Fever*. My heart skips a beat with the realization that recollecting through this trinity of objects (an interactive experience, an art work, and an artifact), chosen in part to demonstrate the museum’s organizational system reveals that family is heavily embedded in them and throughout *Behind the Screen*. My recollections of family through the core exhibition demonstrate a tension in the exchange between individual and collective memory. The exhibition provides a framework for collective memory that my individual recollections variously welcome, interrupt, and resist.

⁸⁷ Though this study was not designed as a mystory, it is informed by the mystoriographical research process as introduced by Ulmer in *Teletheory: Grammatology in the Age of Video* as well as by the teachings and writings of Michael Bowman, Ruth Bowman, and Patricia Suchy that draw upon and extend the mystory (Ulmer; “Killing Dillinger” M. Bowman; Suchy; “Performing the ‘Mystory’” Bowman and Bowman).

The dots quickly connect in rapid succession as I re-collect the museum's explicit framing of family in relation to moving images, as well as ways in which the absence of family is powerfully evoked. In terms of literal families, on my March 2008 research visit, many of the visitors were families. A few months later, on my May and June research visits during a period the museum was temporarily closed to the public, the majority of the tour groups I shadowed were groups of school children chaperoned by their teachers and parents (or other family members). Though I visited the Museum of the Moving Image alone, the museum invites the recollection of family memories – of my own family and those families, both fictional and real, who I know only through film and television. Moving images are after all part of our familial landscapes that remain with us long after we exit the movie theatre and turn off the video game, TV, computer, video camera, or home movie.

Upon exiting *Tut's Fever*, to one's right are movie posters and high above them is the window to the first level of the exhibition/third floor. Past the movie posters is a large case that houses a miniature movie theatre. To the left immediately next to the living room installation is a fairly small display case of licensed merchandise, followed by two computer stations, then a large case filled with home movie equipment. The wall that follows the case boasts an image and lengthy caption. Across from the home movie equipment is a Kinetoscope, and a small, heavily curtained screening alcove featuring an early black and white film.

A movie theatre usher uniform stands alert next to the alcove entrance. High above this area is the large rectangular window to the first level of the exhibition on the third floor. Past the screening room is an area featuring two computer listening stations and a wall of soundtrack covers. Visible in the distance is licensed merchandise in glass cases and a display of costumes. Inside the large case that features home movie equipment, a home movie animates a monitor.



Fig. 4.1. Display case featuring “Martin’s First Haircut.” Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

On my self-led tours of *Behind the Screen*, I passed by the glass display case several times without particularly noticing the small monitor inside upon which “Martin’s First Haircut” played continuously on a loop. I do not remember if the movie itself drew me to it, or if it was the anecdote I overheard a museum educator sharing with an elderly female visitor who stood alone in front of the glass case. The educator, who was standing nearby in order to demonstrate the Kinetoscope to interested visitors, casually approached the woman and explained that “Martin’s First Haircut” is a home movie starring the museum’s director (Rochelle Slovin), her mother (Pauline Shaw), and her younger brother (Martin Shaw). Once the movie was contextualized as a familial artifact featuring Slovin, I became fully enraptured by it. A glimpse of the childhood of the enigmatic director, whom I was immensely looking forward to meeting

during my research process, was unexpectedly offered to me in the form of a charming home movie.

The informal conversation between the museum educator and the visitor demonstrated attempts at meaning making by outside spectators. The three of us delighted in the movie despite the fact that we are not related to Slovin or one another. In his essay “Home Away From Home: Private Films from the Dutch East Indies,” Nico de Klerk, an archivist at the Nederlands Archive/Museum Institute in Amsterdam asserts that “It is in the conversations among family members that a home movie or series of home movies is made into a meaningful whole” (148). As strangers screening a home movie together our conversation was perhaps more playful because “Martin’s” disrupts the museum place through its evocation of domestic space. Its genre positioned us as a familial audience, and simultaneously as a restricted audience, separated from the screen family by a glass barrier. As outsiders, museum-goers are not typically the preferred audience members of strangers’ home movies, yet during our screening we were the only audience members. I later wondered if the museum educator has ever watched “Martin’s” in the company of Slovin or if the conversational gems she shared with us about the movie are second hand, worn slightly with each retelling. The only “facts” that she relayed to us were the identification of Slovin, Martin, and their mother (whose name she did not mention and perhaps did not know). The majority of the conversation involved her pointing out her favorite bits – her enjoyment of the movie was contagious. I joyfully digested her narrative and hungered for more details.

I anxiously awaited asking Slovin for stories surrounding her home movie and its inclusion in the exhibition. In the meantime, I met with Chief Curator David Schwartz who appeared amused at my fascination with “Martin’s First Haircut.” Schwartz told me that

Slovin's father, Irving Shaw, was a member of an amateur filmmaking group, which explained the movie's professional touches such as its use of titles. He emphasized that the museum's collection began with flea market finds and artifacts belonging to those involved with the museum's creation. There was perhaps a slight apologetic or defensive hint in Schwartz's voice in his explanation of how some things by chance or accident became part of the collection; yet there was also great pride conveyed as he recounted the museum's blossoming since its humble beginnings and noted its current ability to be more selective in its practices of collection and display. I was crushed to learn that the 2009 renovation of *Behind the Screen* will involve the removal of the home movie artifacts, including "Martin's First Haircut." This decision, Schwartz explained, is rooted in an effort to intensify the focus of *Behind the Screen* on the professional moving image industry.

The most striking thing about the inclusion of "Martin's First Haircut" in *Behind the Screen* is that Rochelle Slovin permitted her own private familial movie to mingle with a range of artifacts and in turn *become* part of the eclectic collection of the core exhibition displayed to the public. In her introduction to the anthology *Mining the Home Movie: Excavations in Histories and Memories*, Patricia Zimmermann writes "Amateur film and home movies open up a series of questions"; three of the examples she lists are: "How are film history and social history intertwined? How can we begin to unravel their historiographic significance in counter-distinction to these other kinds of film histories from above? . . . How do we understand the visual inscriptions of amateur film, where the public and private are fluid?" (2). "Martin's" inclusion in the exhibition marks not only the fluidity between public and private moving image related boundaries evident throughout the museum, but also between public and private museum related boundaries.

Though most visitors do not have the opportunity to meet Slovin during their visits, they meet her through this artifact. Since there is no caption indicating Slovin's relation to "Martin's First Haircut," however, most visitors probably remain unaware of the private connection between the home movie and the founding director of the museum. Unless a visitor is provided the verbal captions by a museum educator as I was, Slovin remains the anonymous little girl and presumably big sister of Martin. The caption on the rectangular panel below the display case reads only: On Video Monitor: / *Martin's First Haircut* (Irving Shaw, 1947) / Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Irving Shaw. The panel ends with a section titled Home Movies which provides a brief summary of 8mm home movie technology.

Irving Shaw's October 2005 *New York Times* obituary does not mention his filmmaking, but describes him as a loving family man, a successful pharmaceutical businessman, a former mayor of East Rockaway, New York, and a leader in his Jewish community. Returning home from my March 2008 research trip, what I remembered most about "Martin's First Haircut" was the big sister, Rochelle Slovin and a swing set. Though made secondary by its title, as the older child with a mane of dark hair, stylish dress, and an apparent keen awareness of the camera's presence, her gaze remained with me. Martin had a beautiful head of hair, with delicate curls; I remember him less though he was the named star of the home movie. I remember the children swinging, and the sense of freedom this evoked. I believe at one point Slovin pushes her younger brother on the swing and proudly gazes back at the camera, but perhaps I only imagined this scene.

After being introduced to "Martin's First Haircut," I wondered if I could access a copy of it to take home for future viewing. Since I had not yet met Rochelle Slovin, I feared she might think it was odd that I wanted a copy of her home movie as both object of study and souvenir.

Instead of risking a possible humiliating rejection by Slovin, I videotaped “Martin’s First Haircut” through the glass case, conscious of the curious glances in my direction from museum guards and fellow visitors. Audio was not an issue since the movie played silently in the glass case. Its silence made the movie all the more intriguing as it left its sound to my imagination. What I brought home with me was a miniDV recording of a television monitor upon which plays a DVD of the home movie performance originally recorded with an 8mm film camera. In other words, it is a recording of a recording of the original. I wonder about all that is lost (and found) in translation through these various modes of reproductive technology that allow me to screen Slovin’s home movie in the museum and as a souvenir in my own home.

4.2 SITUATING “MARTIN’S FIRST HAIRCUT” WITHIN *BEHIND THE SCREEN*

“Get your child familiar with the haircut process by showing them how it works, or even buying them a video tape to watch about getting your haircut . . . If you are gonna show them yourself how it works, you can grab a cheap old Barbie doll from like a dollar store and a pair of cheap old scissors that actually cut the hair.”

– 3lilangels, “Tips to Prepare Your Child for Their First Haircut.”

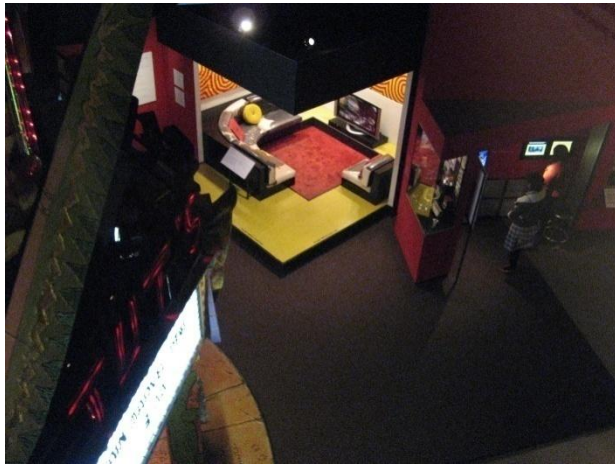


Fig. 4.2. View from the third floor window of the area to the left of “Martin’s.” Photograph by author, 14 Mar. 2008.

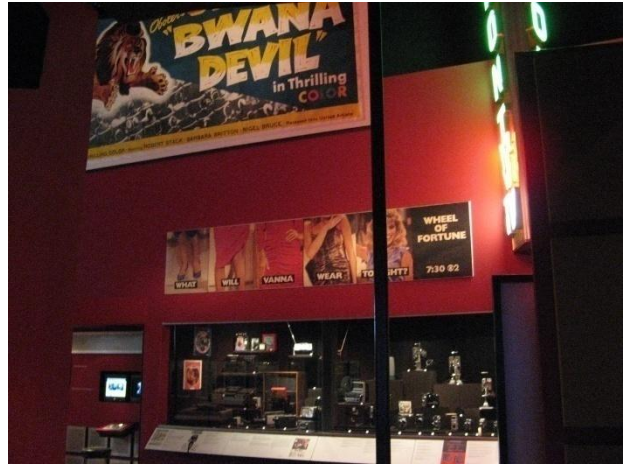


Fig. 4.3. View of display case featuring “Martin’s” from the screening alcove opposite it. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

The physical position of “Martin’s First Haircut” within *Behind the Screen* literally allows one to trace ways in which it is situated in context with the range of cultural practices and

metanarratives surrounding it. Patricia Zimmermann notes that “Consonant with explanatory models of history from below, the history of amateur film discourses and visual practices are always situated in context with more elite, more visible, forms of cultural practices such as Hollywood, national cinemas, and avant-garde movements, as well as other, larger, historical, political and social metanarratives” (4). A visitor who stands in front of “Martin’s First Haircut” is only a short distance away from *Tut’s Fever* movie palace which can be seen to her left. Unlike *Tut’s Fever* and the Video Flipbook, which function as “stars” of *Behind the Screen*, there appears to be no mention of “Martin’s First Haircut” in the museum’s literature or the many reviews of the museum found in newspapers, magazines, travel guides, blogs, and other publications. “Martin’s First Haircut” is easily eclipsed by the nearby *Tut’s Fever* and *TV Lounge*, yet the display of this home movie *inside* of a glass case emphasizes its value. Unlike *Tut’s Fever* and *TV Lounge*, “Martin’s” remains untouchable and free from visitor’s fingerprints.

To the visitor’s immediate left is an interactive computer kiosk that demonstrates aspect ratio (see figs. 4.2 and 4.3). Directly before it is a glass case that houses television artifacts such as *TV Guide* toothpicks, old issues of *TV Guide*, a 7UP advertisement featuring a family watching television together and enjoying the “All-family drink!”, and an assortment of TV related merchandise including drinking glasses and TV dinner boxes featuring very unappetizing images of meals (see figs. 4.2 and 4.4). Television viewing is framed as consumption and closely linked with familial rituals such as dinner. To the visitor’s immediate right are several projectors. A panel provides the corresponding captions and a brief technology related summary titled The First Home Projectors which emphasizes that it was through projection that moving images were first introduced into the home.



Fig. 4.4. Display case featuring TV related merchandise. Photograph by author, 28 May 2008.



Fig. 4.5. Artifacts that share the display case with “Martin’s”; reflection of “The Movies Begin.” Photograph by author, 19 Mar.

To the right of the projectors is a free standing panel titled *The Moving Image in the Home* that briefly discusses home filmmaking, television, video, and gaming technology. The panel is illustrated with a poster circa 1955 titled *After the Round-Up* that shows a young girl and boy, presumably siblings, dressed in Western costumes. The boy is asleep in a chair, his pistol has fallen to the floor. His sister big sister holds a rifle; animated, she stands facing him, perhaps on the verge of waking him to watch TV. Between them and visually dominating the poster is a television which features what appears to be *The Roy Rogers Show*. A pet dog hungrily eyes a forgotten plate of chocolate cake left on the floor near the sleeping boy’s pistol. The living room is framed as an environment of consumption with television as its centerpiece. The relationship

between the TV program and the children's Western gear reveals a fluid boundary between their televisual and familial landscapes.



Fig. 4.6. Area opposite “Martin’s.” Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.



Fig. 4.7. Display case that houses “Martin’s.” Photograph by author, 16 Feb. 2009.

Opposite the glass case which houses “Martin’s First Haircut” is a Kinetoscope and a curtained screening area mentioned in the previous chapter which features a looped video titled “The Movies Begin.”⁸⁸ The headless and handless mannequin / Radio City Music Hall usher guards the screening area and provides a contrast to the representation of actual bodies mediatized in “Martin’s First Haircut,” “The Movies Begin,” as well as with the scantily clad muscle man featured in the Kinetoscope (see fig. 4.6). Though all of these mediatized bodies, like the mannequin, remain silent, their movements are accompanied by music and occasional commentary from “The Movies Begin” soundtrack. “The Movies Begin” is visually reflected upon the glass display case, creating a reminder of the roots of “Martin’s First Haircut” and everything else inside the case (see figs. 4.1, and 4.5). A visitor who views “Martin’s First

⁸⁸ As its caption notes “The Movies Begin” is a twenty-two minute video created by Kino International for the Museum of the Moving Image. It features early films by the Lumière brothers, Pathé Frères, and the Edison Manufacturing Company. Except for the six minute short titled “Films by Auguste and Louis Lumière,” which features commentary by Bertrand Tavernier and music by Stuart Oderman, the remaining sixteen minutes of the soundtrack features music created by Donald Sosin for the museum.

Haircut” or nearby areas can be watched by fellow visitors, security guards, or other museum employees from both of the windows found on the second floor (see fig. 4.2).

“Martin’s First Haircut” is positioned at the far right end of a large glass case which houses a variety of artifacts related to creating amateur movies and screening movies, including commercial ones, in the home. Inside of the display at the opposite end are several movies beginning with the videodiscs (somewhat ironically) *Hair* and *Endless Love* and a *Rio Bravo* videotape (see fig. 4.7). There is a variety of outdated equipment such as VCRs; some of their doors are open as if someone just loaded a tape or pressed the eject button. The titles on the tapes inside the doors are readable and include “classics” such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Psycho*. Cameras, portable televisions, projectors, and reels of film also share the case; several objects are accompanied with their manuals or boxes.

The rectangular panel below the case features captions, advertisements, and brief summaries on related technology such as: The First Home Projector. A one paragraph caption titled Home Video explains the technological and economic driven shift from film to video in the seventies, and concludes by noting the current shift to digital media. Next to the Home Video caption is a September 1982 advertisement for Walt Disney Home Video (WDHV). It features a photograph of three generations of family members (three children with their parents and grandparents) in their living room enjoying Disney’s *Treasure Island* together. They are joined by Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck. The mother relaxes on the sofa thanks to Minnie Mouse who cheerfully presents a tray of drinks. This blending of Disney icons and actual people frames the cartoons as family members, and shift the role of domestic labor from the mother to Minnie. The message that surfaces is that Disney not only serves families, but *is* family, and the

consumption of Disney videos will free mothers from the domestic labor traditionally expected of them.



Fig. 4.8. Walt Disney Home Video advertisement on display panel.
Photograph by author, 16 Feb. 2009.

Below this image the caption, written in large bold letters reads “Home Sweet / Home Video.” The caption is followed by five paragraphs promoting Walt Disney Home Video. The ad is capped with an image of a videocassette box and the logo which features Mickey in his sorcerer’s apprentice *Fantasia* costume and the tagline “The magic lives on . . .” Echoing Kodak ad campaigns, the text begins with the claim that WDHV “helps you create fun filled family

events that will turn into even sweeter memories as time goes by.” WDHV frames itself as capable of magically transforming family through products that “will bring out the best” in family members, and serve as a vehicle for sharing “something special” among them.

Disney’s commodification of family memories through its videos capitalizes on the magic associated with moving images. Regarding the relationship between “The Wonderful World of Disney” and popular memory, Henry Giroux explains that in Disney texts “memory is removed from the historical, social, and political context that defines it as a process of cultural production that opens rather than closes down history” (47). The family memories promised by WDHV are only the warm, good ones: “the sweet sounds of laughter” and the “glistening eyes” of children enraptured by “classics” such as *Dumbo* and *Pollyanna*. The slick, “pure magic” peddled by Disney contrasts sharply with “Martin’s First Haircut” whose “home-made” memories expose the superficiality of the advertisement.

Above the glass case is a 1987 *Wheel of Fortune* poster that asks “What will Vanna wear tonight?” and features five teaser images. Above this sign, two much larger twenty-four sheet posters, created by United Artists in 1952 and 1960 respectively, advertise *Bwana Devil* “in thrilling color” and *Exodus*. To the right of these artifacts is a working Dumont TV neon sign from the fifties. Together these signs, along with nearby 1932 Radio City Music Hall and 1948 Paris Theatre marquees, frame the display case as if reminding visitors of the dominating influence of television and film on amateur moviemaking. The mingling of objects from the familial landscape of home with signage from landscapes such as theatre districts nostalgically blends private and public screening environments that remain beyond the visitor’s reach.

Inside the display case directly above “Martin’s First Haircut” are two brightly colored issues of *Kodak Movie News*. Of particular interest is that female moviemakers, presumably

mothers, are featured on both covers (see figs. 4.1 and 4.9). The cover of the Spring 1960 issue features a mother filming three boys, presumably family and community members, who are playing on a jungle gym. The caption on the cover reads: “*Shoot amateur movies of / COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES / page 8.*” The two boys on the higher levels of the jungle gym appear younger than the third and both look back at the camera(woman). The third boy positioned beneath them, and possibly even outside of the camera’s frame, looks up at the boy highest above him which associates his gaze with the camera and maternal figure.



Fig. 4.9. Issues of *Kodak Movie News*. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

The cover of the Fall 1961 issue features a woman, presumably a mother, filming her daughter on the verge of blowing out candles on a birthday cake. The caption on the cover

reads: “*Shoot Indoor Movies / with a Light Bar.*” The girl wears a party dress and hat, and the elaborately decorated birthday cake shares the table with a large bowl of fruit. Of particular interest is that the woman holds the camera at a distance from her face so that it appears that she might be looking, not through the viewfinder, but directly at the girl during this key moment of the birthday ritual.

In the museum I wondered if *Kodak Movie News* commonly featured moviemakers as maternal figures. Were home movie cameras primarily marketed to mothers – pitched as the latest domestic genies guaranteed to make the work and play of raising children easier, or at least more glamorous? Was it a coincidence that both issues featured in the display case reflect white women in a position traditionally associated with white males, or were these issues specifically selected because of their uniqueness? In her book *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* Nancy West focuses on Kodak’s marketing of still photography equipment during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Launched in 1913, *Kodakery: A Magazine for Amateur Photographers* featured content by males, but was primarily read by females. According to West, the majority of the issues “between 1913 and the early 1930s, in fact feature a young female photographer on the front cover” (52).

The Kodak Girl was conceptualized as early as 1892 and functioned as the company’s primary sales model from 1893 through the early 1970s.⁸⁹ She gradually became more domesticated as the company became “uncomfortable, perhaps, with the implications of always depicting her alone or traveling in the company of another young woman” (West 60).⁹⁰ The

⁸⁹ West notes that it is uncertain whether George Eastman or his advertising manager L. B. Jones “came up with the idea of employing beautiful young women as Kodak’s central advertising image,” but considering his earlier Kodak advertisements, she suspects it was Eastman (114). Actress Cybill Shepherd was among the many women who posed as a Kodak Girl (53).

⁹⁰ The website *Kodak Girl*, created by a professional female photographer who identifies with the Kodak Girl, features a collection of Kodak Girl advertisements and images. The website discusses the role of the Kodak Girl as family album creator, and notes the shift in representations of the Kodak Girl from adventurer to home-maker.

iconic “superheroes in skirts” on the covers of museum’s *Kodak Movie News* wear dresses made of solid colors rather than the blue-and-white stripes that were introduced as the signature Kodak Girl costume in 1910, yet they maintain the promise of technological simplicity presumably desired by female consumers (56).

Both issues of *Kodak Movie News* foreground the maternal gaze, and neither features a father figure. The father remains both figuratively and literally out of the picture. Is he standing just outside the frame, perhaps directing his wife? Or in a postmodern twist, is he filming his wife filming the scene – perhaps with a more sophisticated camera? Why would he not be at his daughter’s birthday party? In any case, the father’s absence becomes a reminder of the often invisible domestic labor of mothers, and the fact that historically they witness more of their children’s childhood than do fathers.⁹¹ The juxtaposition of these covers with “Martin’s First Haircut” foregrounds the presence of the mother (Pauline Shaw) in the home movie, as well as of the father (Irving Shaw) who remains primarily behind the camera.

4.3 FOUR SOUVENIR IMAGES

“Family photography is not only an accessory to our deepest longings and regrets; it is also a set of visual rules that shape our experience and our memory.”

– Julia Hirsch, *Family Photographs: Content, Meaning, and Effect*.

Family movies function as material traces in their analog and digital formats and, following family photographs, are expected to capture the good times and to serve as lifeboats during the bad times. Their reference to the good times of yesterday leads us to believe that perhaps the good times will return. Typically, family photographs and movies avoid or minimize the rainy days. I sift through over 1,000 digital photographs taken during my March, May, and

⁹¹ In “Every technology is a reproductive technology,” a section (whose title is a quotation borrowed from Zoë Sofia) of her chapter “Maternal Exposures,” Marianne Hirsch considers the relationship between reproductive technologies and technologies of reproduction, specifically the relationships among maternity, paternity, and photography in the work of artists Sally Mann, Vance Gellert, and Patrick Zachmann (170-77).

June 2008 research trips, and I find four still shots of “Martin’s First Haircut.” These frozen moments of museum-going interrupt the flow of the home movie, and in doing so invite recollections that shift from stillness to movement and from silence to sound. In the introduction to her book *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch, referencing Barthes’ *Camera Lucida*, writes, “Photographs, as the only material traces of an irrecoverable past, derive their power and important cultural role from their embeddedness in the fundamental rites of family life . . .” (5). Even though I videotaped the entire film, which runs approximately eight minutes and forty seconds, I desired a few souvenir photographs. I was disappointed later upon realization that none of them feature Slovin. Collectively the four stills function as family photographs, yet their texture betrays their identity as video stills with lives beyond the frozen pixels.

I intentionally study the photographs closely before turning to the video as I am curious about how they operate as fragments, and how, when viewed in my domestic space, they help or hinder my re-collections of the movie I screened in the museum space. Love and Kohn, writing on the ways in which tourists negotiate their complex relationship to other places, assert that: “out of this negotiation, there emerges a place of wonder somehow bound up in a captured memento that the traveler and the thing, working together, can evoke anywhere, even at home in the living room” (57). The first image features a woman identified by the museum educator as Slovin’s mother; the educator clearly enjoying the movie had exclaimed, “Her mom is amazing!” (see fig. 4.1). Slovin’s mother is fashionably dressed and accessorized; her dark hair frames her face which is washed out by the photograph’s overexposure, yet nevertheless she appears stunningly elegant. I enlarge the image on the computer monitor and it appears her eyes are

closed; perhaps she was blinking or reacting to a gust of wind. It is difficult to make out the background of the image, perhaps the sky or the inside of a car?

The glass case reflects the area opposite of it: the freestanding Kinetoscope panel titled From Peep Shows to Projectors, and the screen which shows a scene from “The Movies Begin.” Everything in the case is numbered, and the numbers correspond to captions featured on the long rectangular text panel below the display case. I can read the numbers only if I enlarge the photograph on my computer screen. The two neighboring projectors are numbered 16 and 17, and the number 15 appears near “Martin’s.” In the museum space, the number system creates distance between the artifacts and their captions as it forces visitors to shift viewpoints in order to match them. In the space of most of my photographs it is usually impossible to capture an artifact and a readable caption together. Not everything fits neatly into a frame. There are two small circles in the top left corner of the photograph that went unnoticed on my visit, I cannot determine if they are hollow peep holes or reflective hardware. The circle on the right appears to reveal or reflect a face, possibly my own, but I am not sure. Perhaps I am looking too hard; perhaps I want to find myself in the image.

The next image in my collection features Martin and the man I assume to be the barber because of his uniform (see fig. 4.10). There is a third man who may be the father, a customer, a relative or friend of the family come to witness and celebrate the rite of passage, or perhaps just a stranger passing by? I doubt the man is the father since David Schwartz confirmed that Irving Shaw shot the movie. Whoever he is, the man appears to wear a pleasant expression though I cannot tell for sure; the barber smiles and Martin does not. They are outside on the sidewalk near a parked car, the bodies of the two men are shadowed on the sidewalk and all three males gaze back at the film camera as well as at me and my digital camera. A fourth and maybe even

fifth person are caught partially in the right edge of the frame. The top part of a neighboring projector creeps into the bottom of the frame; the words from the caption across the corridor are reflected on the glass and in turn the text appears ghosted on the upper left side of the photograph.



Fig. 4.10. Screen shot of “Martin’s.” Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

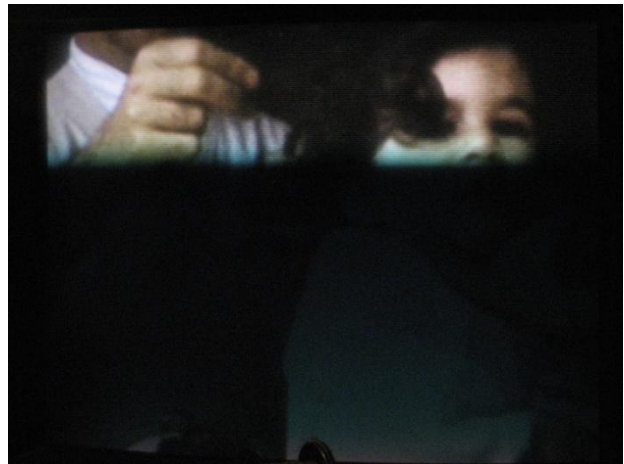


Fig. 4.11. Screen shot of “Martin’s.” Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

The next image is my favorite of the four, though it would traditionally be described as defective (see fig. 4.11). The majority of the image is darkened so that what remains recognizable is approximately the top quarter of the screen. It shows Martin’s face from his nose up and the right hand of the barber in the process of cutting the boy’s hair. The dark area is most likely a result of my digital camera recording the scanning effect which is created by a band of phosphors that are not glowing with their respective colors. What is indistinguishable as a whole picture to my eyes is not to my camera, which exposes the “behind the screen” operation of the television monitor and makes visible the lag of its phosphor refresh rate. As the camera catches what my naked eyes do not, I am reminded of the partiality of the many layers of images I am re-collecting in an attempt to understand better how the museum’s founding director is represented inside a glass case as a little girl, big sister, and daughter.

Martin gazes at me from behind a luscious curl that I know will soon be cut. It is this image that hails me most strongly as a witness of this rite of passage celebrated by his family and commemorated through a film viewed decades after its creation by an audience of countless museum visitors. I imagine Martin as a quiet, serious child, wise beyond his years. His curls remind me of my brother Cosmo's hair, a thick, rich, black mane of curly hair inherited from my father. My brother's hair has always brought him much attention and demands a very different hair care regime than my own wavy locks, which began blonde and turned dark brown as I aged. I have grown up jealous of Cosmo's dark skin and hair because it exoticizes him and marks him as related to our Mexican-Belizean grandmother, whereas I am teased as the Snow White of the family whose skin easily flushes scarlet and painfully burns when exposed to the sun for a short amount of time. Among the childhood treasures my mother handed down to me was a scarred Disney Snow White porcelain figurine, it had been broken and glued back together. In my family whiteness was equated with fragility and treated as a weakness.

The first curls I cut were not Cosmo's but those of a friend named Jael who I call my sister-by-choice. Her mixed roots are African American and Jewish, and she preferred that I cut her hair at home, rather than having it cut by a stranger in a salon in Madrid where we lived at the time. She was happy with the results, but when she returned the favor I ended up with patches of my white scalp embarrassingly exposed and subsequently documented in our family photographs. I wore a baseball cap to hide her mistakes, and laugh at these memories. I wonder if anyone saved a lock of Martin's hair during the creation of the movie, and if so if anyone considered including it alongside the film in the display case. *Behind the Screen* ends with Hair and Makeup display cases; one contains locks of hair and barber clippers used for styling actors (see fig. 4.12). The abundance of hair displayed in glass cases juxtaposed with the haunting life

masks opposite them triggered memories of the memorial artwork featuring woven human hair that is exhibited in the Louisiana State University's Rural Life Museum. The artifacts in the Museum of the Moving Image related to individuals who have passed away memorialize the role of fictional as well as actual people associated moving images.

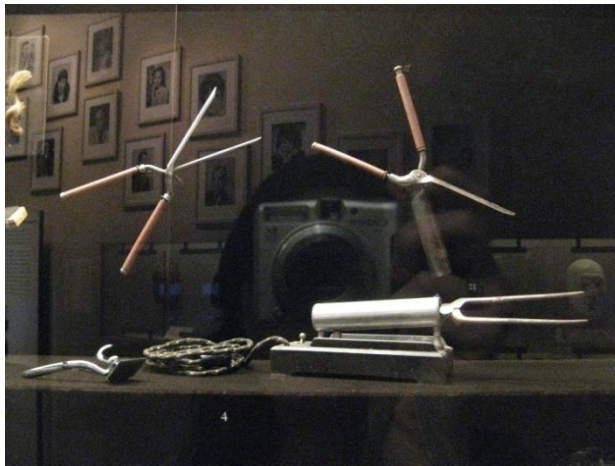


Fig. 4.12. Artifacts in a Hair and Makeup display case. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.



Fig. 4.13. Screen shot of “Martin’s.” Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

In my final still image of the home movie, Martin wears a serious expression (see fig. 4.13). He is surrounded by at least three adults; his mother and the barber beam at him, and the hand of a third adult appears to be either dusting off the boy’s face or holding one of his curls. Martin seems very uncomfortable and I would like to reach into the frame and remove the hand in front of his eye. His mother and the barber appear to want him to smile back at them, but instead he ignores them and gazes off into space. The barber’s right hand holds Martin’s chin, and I wonder if this is to steady the child’s head for the haircut or even the camera, or if it is an attempt to make Martin smile. Perhaps it is simply a raw gesture of affection for the precious child whose curls are being cut for the first time.

The still images frustrate me so I turn to my videotape of the movie hoping that it will give me more of the details I desire. I know already, however, from watching it in the past that it

too is only a collection of silent pixels that will likewise keep me at a distance. It marks me as a voyeur outside of this familial celebration which occurred before my own parents were even born. Nico de Klerk asserts: “Without their original participants home movies have no preeminently meaningfully reconstructable order. Yet that does not mean that they have no sense or significance at all” (150). Without Slovin to guide me through her home movie, I attempt to make sense of it on my own and in doing so consider its significance as an artifact that foregrounds the relationship among museums, moving images and memory.

4.4 HOME SCREENING

I wait until I am home alone for the night so I will not have any distractions. I plug my miniDV camera directly into the 32 inch television inherited from my brother Joel after his death. This is my first home screening of “Martin’s First Haircut” on a screen larger than the 2.5 inch playback monitor featured on my camera. The shakiness of my handheld footage triggers hints of motion sickness. The use of a tripod was out of the question, because, as a participant-observer, I did not want to call any more attention to myself than necessary as I toured *Behind the Screen*. Dizzily I listen to the museum educator discussing “Martin’s” as the camera’s viewpoint hungrily shifts position in order to record the movie while she talks, in effect producing a voice over.

The camera captures the opening title which appears modern and was most likely added by the museum, it reads: Martin’s First Haircut / Irving Shaw (1947). Cut to black. Cut to an illustration of a little boy getting his haircut; he is framed by the barber and a woman, presumably his mother, who holds a handkerchief to her face and appears to be crying. My video recording, like figure 4.11, captures the television’s scanning, so the top of most of my footage is darkened by a semi-transparent band which obscures the detail. Cut to the second title

which is framed with a decorative border in a pattern reminiscent of lace or snowflakes; it reads: Do You Remember / MARTIN'S / FIRST HAIRCUT/ ?. The letters that spell Martin are not in a straight line, their dynamic placement hints of playful memories.⁹² Was this the film's original title or was it untitled? Cut to an opening credit featuring the same decorative border, and text that reads: A / prim SHAW / picture / April 1947.

The first shot features the mother walking toward the camera, holding Martin's left hand and Slovin's right hand. Cut to a close up of Martin's face as he stares at the camera, he is wearing a hat and his curls peek from underneath it. Cut to a slightly different angle; Martin appears restless, cranky, and disinterested in being filmed. The museum educator's commentary on the film ends as she informs us she has to go downstairs to assist with a birthday party. Cut to a close up of the mother. She wears a pearl necklace, large earrings, a leopard print wrap or scarf, and a spectacular hat that has white feathers on its right side and black net in front. *"I make a note to show this video to my grandmother, a professional seamstress, as I know she would eat it up."*⁹³ Cut to a close up of Martin's face, his hat has been removed and his darling curls unleashed. *"I take a break for movie snacks and to plug my ergonomic mouse into my laptop as the touch pad rubs my index finger raw."*

Cut to a different close up of Martin's face, he turns the back of his head to the camera, his hair blows in the wind and toward the end of the shot his mother partially enters the frame –

⁹² Having not met Rochelle Slovin before screening "Martin's First Haircut" I was forced to imagine its creation. When I later had the opportunity to meet with the founding director, she shared recollections of its production. Slovin confirmed and corrected a number of things that I had suspected about its production, and recollected the role that "Martin's" and other home movies played in her family. One of her recollections was her father's creation of the title sequence. She described how he cut the decorative borders by hand and composed and shot the whimsical titles on their living room floor.

⁹³ In "Autoethnography's Family Values: Easy Access to Compulsory Experiences," Craig Gingrich-Philbrook problematizes the use of italics in autoethnographical texts. Though this study is not an autoethnography, in its modeling of recollection autobiographical memories surface and my writing style becomes at times arguably performative. I agree with many of Gingrich-Philbrook's points; however, I employ italics here in an attempt to limit confusion regarding my recollection of screening "Martin's" and the memories that disrupt, and in turn become part of, my process of re-collecting the home movie. In adhering to the Louisiana State University electronic dissertation guidelines, the italicized text in question is enclosed in quotation marks.

perhaps he is being asked by her to show off his curls? Cut to a medium shot of Slovin; she is wearing a yellow dress fitted with a white collar. She looks sassily at the camera, a headband holds her long, thick, black hair back except for a pouf of bangs. She is talking and there are gaps in her mouth from missing teeth. Cut to *“I realize that I am squinting in an attempt to figure out if Slovin has on a different outfit in this shot; I left my glasses in the other room when I took them off to hang up wet laundry.”*

“My glasses are now back on my face so let’s try this again:” cut to Slovin. She is smaller now in the frame and appears to be wearing the same outfit; as she talks, something, perhaps a newspaper, blows in the street behind her and reminds me of the plastic bag that danced in the wind in the film *American Beauty*. *“I remember that there is a portrait from American Beauty near the end of the exhibition. Later, as I sift through my photographs I realize that the portrait I ‘remembered’ is not American Beauty’s Mena Suvari in a bed of rose petals, but a portrait Annie Leibovitz shot of Bette Midler for a feature article captioned ‘Bette Midler Conquers Hollywood’ in the December 1979 issue of Rolling Stone magazine around the time Midler starred in The Rose, a film I have never seen. My video camera automatically shuts off since I have not touched it in a few minutes – so I turn it on and press play.”*

Cut to a close up of Slovin; she is twisting side to side, perhaps she is singing – wow, she is missing A LOT of teeth! *“When I reached adulthood, my mom returned the teeth I left for the Tooth Fairy. I keep them in a wooden Virgin Mary box I bought while visiting family in Mexico. The movie Gremlins spoiled the magic of Santa Claus for me and by extension the Tooth Fairy. I keep a plaster mold of my brother Joel’s teeth on my desk, created by his orthodontist as part of the process of customizing braces or repairing his broken jaw - I realize this might be considered grotesque but it provides a strange comfort. The Hair and Make Up chapter of Behind the*

Screen features the dental plumper Marlon Brando wore in *The Godfather* which is curiously juxtaposed with makeup used during the production of *The Cosby Show* and a *Cosby* family portrait (see figs. 4.14 and 4.15). Memories continuously interrupt my focus on the video and in turn become layered into later re-collections of it.” Cut to what appears to be an accidentally included, extremely brief shot of Slovin which interrupts the transition to the next shot.

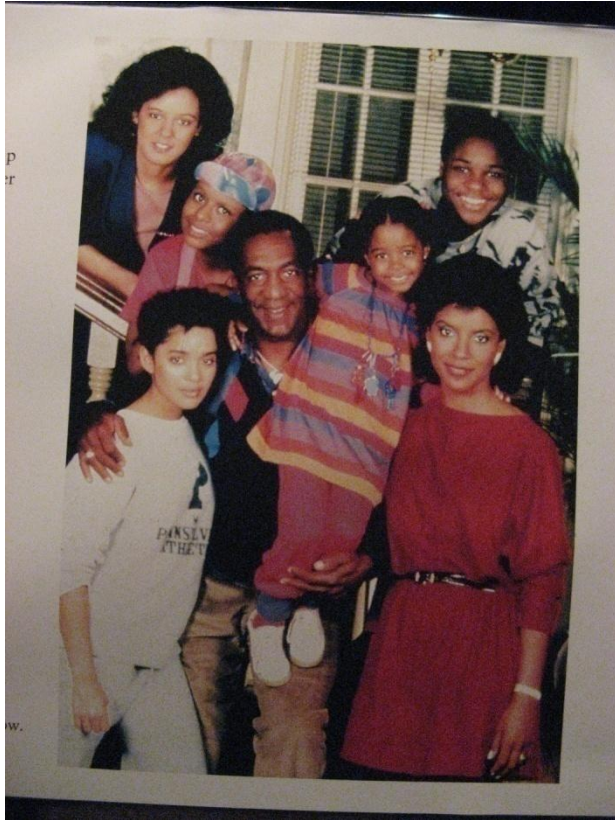


Fig. 4.14. Image on the panel below the display of makeup used during the production of *The Cosby Show*. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

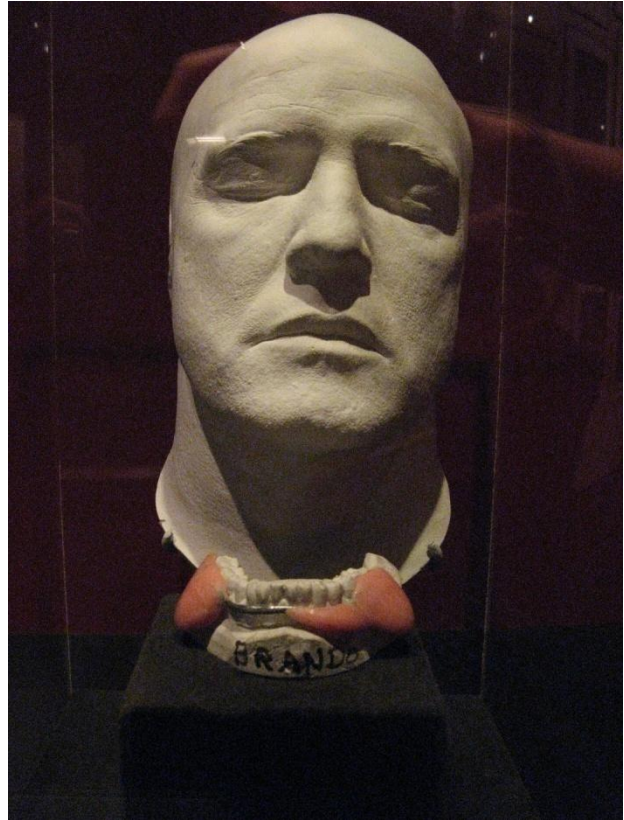


Fig. 4.15. Dental plumper worn by Marlon Brando in *The Godfather*. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

Cut to Martin sitting on a swing; the swing slowly moves back and forth seemingly by itself as Martin looks to his left then to his right. Cut to Slovin proudly pushing her little brother Martin on the swing. She is wearing a baby blue coat that she wore in the first shot and appears to be quite aware of the camera while Martin seems oblivious to it. Cut to a different angle that

reveals a brick building behind the chain link fence in back of Slovin. *“The alarm on my cell phone sounds reminding me to take my birth control pill. I ignore it for now.”* Cut to a close up of Martin on the swing with his hair blowing in the wind. Cut to a close up of Slovin; she is smiling shyly at the camera, and pushing Martin’s swing without releasing it. Her entire body moves back and forth with the swing. I realize that her headband appears to be a ribbon, it is topped with a bow and a bobby pin visibly holds it in place.



Fig. 4.16. Display case featuring items used by hair and makeup departments. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

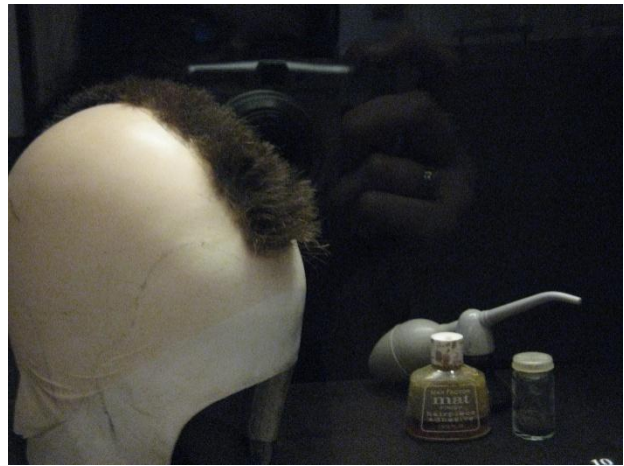


Fig. 4.17. Baldcap worn by Robert De Niro in *Taxi Driver* with atomizer, glue, and stubble pieces. Photograph by author, 19 Mar. 2008.

“Again, a memory flickers of a Hair and Makeup display case in Behind the Screen that features a pile of bobby pins and rollers displayed below hanks of hair and a drawing brush (see fig. 4.16). Nearby in the display case is a baldcap topped with an Indian ‘roach’ that was worn by Robert De Niro in Taxi Driver, it reminds me of the time my ex-boyfriend shaved half of my little brother Joel’s head (see fig. 4.17). Joel, probably only eight years old at the time, was thrilled with his new look. While cleaning up the cut hair someone (perhaps Joel in his excitement?) accidentally left my bathroom sink running. We left the house and later returned to a sorcerer’s apprentice scene from Disney’s Fantasia as my bedroom was flooding. Dye from a red throw pillow stained nearby items on the black and white vinyl tiled floor. This was one of

many floods. Over the years family photographs were damaged or destroyed by rainwater, forcing us to recollect without them.”

Throughout “Martin’s First Haircut” Slovin appears more aware of the camera than does the younger Martin. In her analysis of Roland Barthes’ winter-garden picture, Marianne Hirsch explains that part of its power “is that it allows us to think of an aspect of familial experience that has, for the most part, remained unspoken: the ways in which the individual subject is constituted in the space of the family through looking” (9). “Martin’s First Haircut” is edited as a presumably chronological series of events that can be roughly summarized as follows: a mother along with her son and daughter are introduced; the son and daughter play on a swing set; the son receives a haircut at a barber shop. The footage has been edited without the explicit use of reaction shots, so that the dominant point of view, or look, is that of the person shooting the film, presumably the father.

Like Barthes’ winter-garden picture, Slovin’s home movie “contains a series of intersecting and mutually confirming looks that tell the story of this nonverbal form of family relationship” (Hirsch 9). Hirsch writes that Barthes’ picture “suggests how looks position members of the family in relation to one another, in their predetermined, but forever negotiated and negotiable roles and interactions: mother and son, brother and sister, daughter and parents” (9). The film positions me as a family member, even though not of Slovin’s clan, inviting flights of memory about my own family. As I screen the movie, I interject and supplement what unfolds on screen with recollections of off-screen domestic and museum landscapes.

The story performed by “Martin’s First Haircut” is fragmented and in turn gently uncovers fragments of my own familial memories that interrupt my tracing of the familial look in the home video museum artifact. Each time I return to Slovin’s home movie I must “step into

the visual,” which drawing on Mieke Bal, Hirsch explains “is not to engage in theory as systematic explanation of a set of facts, but to practice theory, to make theory, just as the photographer makes an image” (15). My critical practices of recollection require that I share processes of re-membering in order to demonstrate their relationship with the museum’s display of material culture and modes of mechanical and electronic reproduction. My look positions me as an outside spectator, yet the reflexivity triggered through spectatorship invites questioning of the significance of familial looks within my own family, a re-(family)-membering.

Cut to a picture of a man wearing a suit and tie and a hat; he is pushing Slovin in the swing; her body swings in and out of the frame, each time revealing her little black shoes. Is this her father – I thought he was behind the camera? If so, who is operating the camera during this shot – the mother? The man stands in front of a chain link fence and behind it is a cemetery. This stark reminder of the dead makes an odd appearance alongside the first adult male featured in the film. It is a curious juxtaposition with the rite of passage of a young boy’s first haircut. *“My video camera automatically shuts off again. I notice that a scab on the bottom of my foot is about to fall off, but I know better than to pick at it. Instead I accidentally activate a magnifying feature on my mouse; it takes several minutes to exit this mode, and in the meantime random fragments of my sentences grow to enormous sizes as if a forming a chance based poem. It is past midnight. I realize I am getting sleepy and have a slight headache probably from staring intensely at the TV, laptop, and miniDV camera screens. I turn the brightness level down on the laptop screen then awake the camera.”*

Cut to a close up shot of the mother, this is the footage shot in figure 4.1. Cut to a slightly different angle. As I freeze the video in an attempt to confirm which frame matches figure 4.1, for the first time I notice a mole or beauty mark on the mother’s face. Cut to Martin

running toward a barber, this is the footage shot in figure 4.10. This angle reveals that the mystery man in the image is a stranger as he steps around the barber and walks away. I know already that Slovin does not appear in the rest of the approximately five remaining minutes of the film so it interests me less, and I stop continuously freezing the footage to study each individual shot. Did she not attend the ritual or was she just left out of the barber shop footage?

Here is a summary of the remaining scenes. The barber plays with Martin outside of the shop and introduces him to the striped barber pole symbol. Martin is more happily animated in these shots than the others; for a change he does not appear surly or in need of a nap. The haircut begins; one barber cuts Martin's hair while another holds his chin. *"The low battery icon flashes on my camera's screen; I have to plug it in, luckily there is one free slot on the power strip, maybe now it won't automatically power down when I fail to touch its warm screen and remind it I am still here . . . scratch that, it just did!"*

As I press the play icon on the touch screen I find the footage shot in figure 4.13. The haircut continues and is captured from several angles. I notice the barber is wearing a tie. There is a mirror in the background, I attempt to find the reflection of the filmmaker in it but do not see him. As Martin's hair is cut shorter, the piano soundtrack of "The Movies Begin" slows down then speeds up to a frantic pace appropriate for a chase scene. As Michael Bowman asserts: "Like other physical pursuits, the pleasure of tourism is often in the chase rather than in the actual capture of the object of one's desire" (114). *"I am chasing memories. Years after my parents divorced, my mother asked my father to bring Cosmo and me the piano. I would later hand my collection of instruments down to my brother Justin as he was the one who inherited not my father's curls, but his musical talents - as well as carpentry talent, which has led him to work on films alongside my father. I was named after 'Sister Andrea,' an instrumental song by the*

Mahavishnu Orchestra, a band that influenced Woodenhead, the popular New Orleans jazz-rock fusion group of which my father was a member. In an Offbeat article on the history of New Orleans rock, James Lean quotes the co-founder of Woodenhead, Jimmy Robinson's, description of my father: 'We had that guy Animal (James Comiskey) playing drums then, too, sort of a real lunatic, and everything that we did back then was propelled by this style that he had -- totally crazed, the Keith Moon school.' Busy with his work in film production and historical renovation, my father does not perform at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival as he once did. For the first time I realize that the name my parents chose for me marked me as a (big) sister when I was still an only child, before my six younger siblings had been born. I became a big sister eighteen days after my second birthday, and my recollections of only childhood are limited to those shared with me by older family members and their photographs. I'm cold, I turn off the fan, adjust the thermostat, pull on some pajamas, and remember with a sense of big sisterly duty that I must get back to Slovin's little brother Martin."

Martin's haircut ritual continues to the rhythm of a chase soundtrack. My shot zooms out revealing the artifacts surround "Martin's" as if to remind myself that I am in a museum, then it quickly zooms back in on Martin's face. In the background, I hear the museum educator who introduced me to "Martin's" as she calls out to a visitor attempting to enter the restricted *Tut's Fever*: "Um, I'm sorry that's actually a private screening sir . . . Excuse me sir, you actually can't go in there, it's a private screening . . ." I cannot hear the rest of their conversation though it is apparent that the "public" space of *Tut's Fever* has become temporarily "private" in order to serve as a ritualistic space where a child's birthday may be celebrated with family and friends versus strangers. In this case, *Behind the Screen* fails to deliver on its promise that visitors can access the "behind the scenes" space of *Tut's Fever*.

Martin's cape has been removed. For the first time his blue short sleeve shirt is revealed, the neck line is fitted with a white collar. The barber gives him a short handled broom and demonstrates how to sweep up his own curly locks. Martin, however, appears not to understand this sort of labor and instead plays with the broom and waves it around. Cut to the final shot: Martin's mother holds him outside of the barber shop, he reaches for the red, white, and blue twirling barber pole.

Cut to a credit identical to the one that appeared at the beginning of the film, featuring the decorative border and text that reads: A / prim SHAW / picture / April 1947. The film begins again. Looped, Martin's first haircut goes on forever. Well, forever until a museum employee turns it off at the end of the day or until the renovation of the core exhibition when it is scheduled to be removed permanently. *"It's almost 3am, and I am ready for bed as tomorrow I will move my youngest sister 233 miles away from home so she can begin her undergraduate studies. As part of this coming of age ritual, I decide to pack my video camera."* I turn off the TV, and the phosphors fade to black.

4.5 HOME MOVIES AND RETURNING HOME

My first recollections of home movies were the ones we shot using a video camera my stepfather, a professional athlete, borrowed from the university where he coached cross country, track, and field. The video camera was meant for recording the athletes he coached so he could play back their performance and suggest improvements in their form and technique. Like Slovin, I spent much of my childhood "living in that fantasy space" on stage, (Slovin qtd. in Alleyne: 24). My stages ranged from the auditoriums where dance recitals were held and the stages of the public schools I attended to the makeshift stages we created at home. The home movies ended abruptly when someone robbed our home and stole the video camera and the few valuables

owned by my family. The thief even ransacked my bedroom, leaving my jewelry box violently overturned and its wind up ballerina broken.

As a familial artifact “Martin’s First Haircut” invites us to question our own familial performances in relation to museums as well as moving images, in particular our home movie collections of these performances. As a detour, it encouraged recollections of my own siblings and ultimately returned, or recollected, me as an oldest sister. In what ways do our moving image artifacts trigger, trip, or amplify our processes of memory and in what ways might they interfere with them? In “Patty and Me,” Rachel Hall tracks ways in which photographs have been theorized by Barbie Zelizer, Roland Barthes, and Frederic Jameson as artifacts that “breed forgetting,” and counters this line of thinking by performing “memories of a shifting relationship to the Patty Hearst archive, which move through moments of nostalgia, comfort, desire, alienation, identification, frustration, hopelessness, and persistence (‘the persistence of vision’)” (348, 350). Drawing on the work of Carol Mavor, for whom “photographs open up vital, libidinal passages between the present and the past,” Hall’s engagement with the Patty Hearst archive is “an experiment in libidinal history” (351). Following in the wake of still photography, moving images might be viewed as an especially fertile breeding ground for forgetting, yet dismissing them as such ignores the possibilities they offer for remembering. “Martin’s First Haircut,” as both home movie and museum artifact, asks the viewer to recollect her own familial moving image performances as artful home-made products with seams that expose the ongoing work and play of remembering and forgetting that saturates our process of becoming.

In framing “Martin’s First Haircut” as an artifact worthy of display in an exhibition aimed at demystifying the moving image, the museum draws attention to the labor of amateur movie production as well as the mystification of family through home movies. Not all home

movies are shot by a single family member. In introducing the genre of home movies, Nico de Klerk explains that: “home movies have participants rather than spectators. Not only do family members participate in the making of the home movie to the point of handing the camera from one family member to the other, they also participate in creating coherence in and making sense of their images while these are being screened” (148). The collaborative process of creating home movies can in turn reveal behind the screen labor; as de Klerk asserts, “the absence of servants in most Dutch East Indies home movies is probably the best indication of their presence as amateur camera operators” (155). De Klerk offers several examples that visually communicate the complex relationships between colonial families and their servants, and in turn reveals that film, specifically the home movie, “provides the upholstery” that is “normally absent in mainstream history or sociology” (151). As a genre comparatively rich with the mistakes of amateurs, home movies are ripe with filmic accidents that expose the seams of home-made moviemaking and in turn reframe familial memories as unfixed and always moving.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: UNPACKING

5.1 “WRONG” TURNS

“Tourism leaves interesting and important traces on the world that can be librating, reviving, demythologising and hybridizing.”

– Adrian Franklin, *Tourism: An Introduction*.

As one leaves “Martin’s First Haircut” and makes her way through the remainder of the exhibition, she will pass two soundtrack stations housed in an alcove to her right. Beyond it, the walls on either side of her feature licensed merchandise in glass cases, as does an additional case that stands in the middle of the space. There is an emergency exit, then a wall of fan magazines, behind which is a display of costumes. In the middle of this area of the exhibition, there are three rectangular benches where visitors may sit. On the left side of the exhibition is a small room featuring a temporary exhibit on Loews movie theatres; next to it are two computer stations that allow visitors to tour the museum’s website. Past the costume display is a small, curtained corner screening room featuring a video related to the production of a King Kong film.

Along the right wall of the final corridor of the exhibition are miniature set design models. These are followed by a case of merchandise from a late night show, special effects artifacts such as a Yoda puppet, Freddy Krueger’s sweater, the *Exorcist* doll, *Cocoon* bodies, and display cases of artifacts related to hair and makeup. Along the left side of the corridor are computer stations where one can watch videos and listen to individuals involved in the making of films. The wall around the computer stations features portraits of film directors. The stations are followed by a tiny curtained space containing a Magic Mirror.

The left side of the exhibition ends with movie star lifemasks. These are eerily juxtaposed with the wall of famous faces that both welcome visitors to the second floor and gaze back at them as they exit the exhibition, and cross back “through” the screen. Before leaving the

exhibition, I enter the Magic Mirror. It asks visitors to select three costume choices out of eighteen possibilities. The mirror makes it difficult to photograph myself; and in several of my souvenir images my head is morphed with my camera and I have three arms (see fig. 5.1). In the background of most of these photographs appears one of the many families featured in the museum via the magic mirror's reflection of the Cosby family portrait. I am Dorothy, I am Marilyn, I am a critical tourist recollecting unexpected paths home through the Museum of the Moving Image.

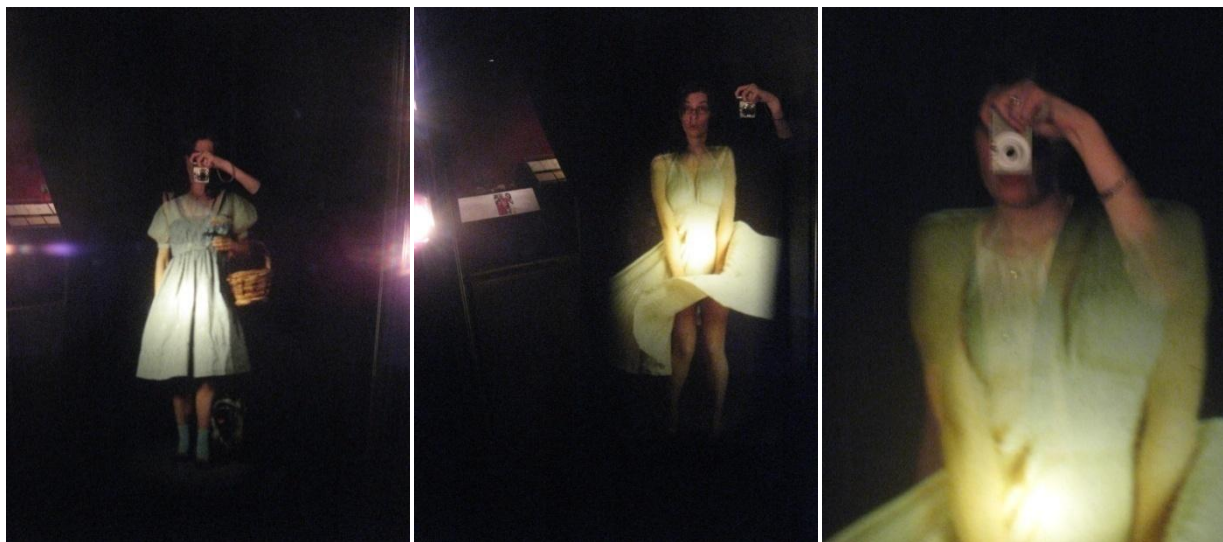


Fig. 5.1. Magic Mirror. Photographs by author, 19 Mar. 2008 (left, center) and 16 Feb. 2009 (right).

The reopening of the renovated *Behind the Screen* was originally scheduled for February 2009. Despite this date being extended, there have been changes made to the core exhibition. One of the most notable modifications is that the path through *Behind the Screen* has been altered since the former entrance/exits to both levels have been closed off due to construction. In questioning museum employees about this change, I realized that the path I had originally been instructed by a visitor services representative to take was, in part, backwards. Upon arrival to the second level/second floor of the exhibition I should have toured it clockwise beginning with Hair

and Makeup and ending with Exhibition. This would have situated “Martin’s First Haircut” before *Tut’s Fever*. I am tempted to rewind, switch directions, recollect again.

In retrospect, it does seem more logical to end *Behind the Screen* with the Exhibition chapter versus Hair and Makeup. But that requires that one switch directions, and tour the first level counterclockwise and the second level clockwise. What was it that derailed me from the intended path? Besides the unclear directions I was given, upon arrival on the second level, it made sense to repeat the directional path I took on the first level. In addition, touring the second level counterclockwise required walking through a doorway that held greater “behind the screen” promise than did the alternative, an open corridor. The teasing glimpses of the colorful *TV Lounge* and *Tut’s Fever* seen from the entrance (as well as from the two security windows on the third floor) also had a hand in drawing me through the doorway.

Had I toured the intended path, I would have arrived at *Tut’s Fever* at the end of the final leg, after screening “Martin’s First Haircut.” In traveling along the “correct” path, I would have also first visited a temporary exhibit on the history of Loews Theatres. My alternative domestication of *Tut’s* may have instead involved a pilgrimage to the New Orleans Loews State Theatre, known today as the State Palace Theatre (though I suspect I still would have been drawn to the neighboring Saenger in search of familial routes/roots). Or perhaps the June 3, 2008 screening of *Mongol* (with director Sergei Bodrov), a Museum of the Moving Image event, that I attended at the AMC Loews Lincoln Square 13 would have served as a major point of entry into *Tut’s*, though the multiplex, built in 1994 replaced a post office rather than a movie palace. We can only imagine how we may have toured differently along paths not taken.



Fig. 5.2. Former main entrance, Museum of the Moving Image.
Photograph by author, 20 May 2008.

5.2 UNPACKING THE TOUR, SOUVENIRS, AND TECHNOLOGIES OF REPRODUCTION

During my first visit to the Museum of the Moving Image in 2004 I settled for a few pens to gift as souvenirs. Perhaps I used one of the pens to scribble messages that marked my pilgrimage on the postcards I sent from Queens to those back home.⁹⁴ Adrian Franklin introduces his analysis of the “social life of souvenirs” with the assertion: “Souvenirs are a fascinating class of objects, not only because they enable the recreation of a touristic experience to occur but also because they seem to embody and retain something of the place (and its

⁹⁴ See Susan Stewart’s *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* for a consideration of the function of postcards as souvenirs.

significance) where they were purchased. This is nowhere clearer than in the case of souvenir objects sold to pilgrims” (108). The pens that I purchased came in an assortment of colors and all feature a white male operating a camera on a dolly. The dolly slides forward or backward depending on which direction the pen is tilted. Not looking particularly comfortable, the cameraman wears business clothes (coat and tie) and a hat, and glides in front of a city skyline.

More than five years later, a canary yellow pen still has a special place on my desk. As I hold it up to a light, I can see the name American Museum of the Moving Image, printed on the other side of the pen, upside down. The pocket clip reads “Made in Denmark.” It is an amusing coincidence that the souvenirs I purchased were writing instruments, as if I had known that years later I would write pages upon pages about the museum in an effort to understand better the museum’s domestication of moving image culture. I left the museum shop with a small plastic bag filled with gimmicky pens, and a jumble of mixed messages regarding the production and consumption of moving images.

When I returned to the museum in March 2008, I was searching for who and what was missing during my initial tour. I found bits of who and what I missed while touring *Behind the Screen* that I had overlooked on my first visit, and found that other bits had been removed or added. I relied heavily on detours to identify additional people, places, and things that I found to be missing from the core exhibition. In response to the museum’s domestication of moving image culture in *Behind the Screen*, my alternative domestication invited various collectives into my tour and detour of the core exhibition and involved the creation of a souvenir photo album. The tour of *Behind the Screen* shared in this study was primarily grounded in research visits made during March, May, and June of 2008. A more recent February 2009 research visit, the literature that I am sent as a museum member, updates to the museum’s website, and news

regarding the progress of its renovation and expansion continuously reframe and challenge the alternative domestication modeled here.

In Chapter One I introduced my research statement and critical tourism methodology as well as the Museum of the Moving Image. The three chapters that followed each retraced a path to the corresponding stop on the tour, situated the stop within *Behind the Screen*, and considered ways in which moving image culture is domesticated in the core exhibition, especially in terms of production and consumption. The alternative domestication of *Behind the Screen* modeled here is organized by a path through the exhibition; the temporal sequence resists a direct chronology, and the spatial organization is routed through sites including my living room and the downtown New Orleans theatre district. The employment of technologies of reproduction, particularly digital cameras, computers, and televisions, throughout my research process lent various generative rhythms to my alternative domestication.

Retracing was an important step in my alternative domestication and emphasized the integral relationship that movement and repetition have with memory in museum-goers' performative encounters. As Shannon Jackson eloquently summarizes, "performance theorists argue that the practical and analytic power of performance lies in its structures of repetition—whether in the actor's rehearsal, in the repeatability of [Victor] Turner's 'ritual process,' or in the productivity of Richard Schechner's '(re)storation of behavior'" (12). Museum-going is performative in the sense that it is an embodied process that requires repetition, the movement of the visitor's body from one object to the next. This repetition of steps, combined with the recollection of memories, makes for a spatial practice that potentially mobilizes objects otherwise "immobilized . . . in the display window of a museum" (de Certeau, Giard, and Mayol 208).

In Adrian Franklin's terms, the Museum of the Moving Image became "a place of significance and return," and my alternative domestication of it involved the repetition of touring its Astoria site. Responding to Dean MacCannell and John Urry, Franklin argues that repetitive actions are not "the opposite of tourism," in fact "the return to the familiar" is a practice enjoyed by many tourists (53). Yet another layer of repetition in this study relates to the technologies of reproduction displayed in the museum and used by visitors and employees for purposes ranging from surveillance to the creation of souvenirs. The Video Flipbook is characterized by the repetitiveness of flipping, *Tut's Palace* evokes the repetitive ritual of movie-going, and "Martin's First Haircut" plays repetitively on a loop.

My alternative domestication of moving image culture in Chapter Two included flipping a found souvenir and *YouTube* videos. I fished the found video flipbook out of a mud puddle, and I flipped it into a family album. Several of the *YouTube* videos feature an interesting twist of the video flipbook that returns the souvenir to its original medium: from video to still images to a video of (moving) still images. I recollected video flipbooks that demonstrate their hand assembly and flipping, specifically hamburgephones' "Flip book" and montsinya's "Flipbook." Next, I turned to four video flipbooks on *YouTube* that invite spectators "behind the screen" and into the museum work place. In terms of the in/visibility of labor, Videoflipbook's video demonstration of the production of a paper video flipbook excludes footage of its hand assembly as if that step magically took place. I identified rhythms of appearance and disappearance in which flipbooks peek back at spectators as we peek at them. The flipbooks that I discussed ranged from flippant to serious, and as I flipped them they flickered, turned, twitched, jerked, whipped, propelled, flutterer, revealed, snapped, spun, and struck. By introducing a *YouTube* video flipbook collective into my tour of *Behind the Screen*, my alternative domestication of the

core exhibition demonstrated ways in which these mediatized souvenirs perform as online family albums.

I discovered that video flipbooks are deleted daily, erased from the computer's memory. This routine act of erasure foregrounds the materiality of paper video flipbooks as souvenirs and the ephemerality of their digital counterparts. Unless fixed to paper they disappear, and can only be recollected in one's mind. Visitors such as myself who have videotaped our video flipbooks (as they were screened on the playback monitors), employ technologies of reproduction to subvert the museum's practices of erasure. In demonstrating the privileging of paper souvenirs (created in part through the use of electronic technologies of reproduction), I question what is at stake in routine purges of digital memory. How might the sale of digital video flipbooks alongside the sale of their paper counterparts, for example, challenge traditional notions of the materiality of souvenirs?

Chapter Two transitioned into Chapter Three with an invitation for readers to assemble a flipbook from images that merged my tour of the museum with my detour to the Saenger Theatre back home in New Orleans. My alternative domestication of *Tut's Fever* in Chapter Three included a pilgrimage to the Saenger and investigated the relationship between *Tut's* man of the house, James Dean, and immortality. Chapter Three considered how *Tut's Fever* provides a museum and movie-going experience that caricatures movie palace and industry workers and variously conceals and reveals the labor of Museum of the Moving Image workers, specifically projectionists and security guards. In an online detour in Chapter Three I searched for recollections of David Essex's "Rock On" song in hopes that they would lead me closer to James Dean, the star of *Tut's Fever*. I arrived at an Australian McDonald's commercial posted on *YouTube*. Through the online comments, I learned that the actor was someone's big brother.

The video performed for his little sister as a familial artifact through which she recollected a souvenir Koala he brought her during her childhood. In bringing together collectives from *YouTube*, *Cinema Treasures*, *NOLA.com*, and *Songfacts*, I acknowledge the importance of the memory work shared by online communities to my alternative domestication of moving image culture.

Chapter Four's tour of the home movie "Martin's First Haircut" involved a home screening detour during which I introduced my own familial memories into the film's narrative. The rhythm of my alternative domestication of "Martin's First Haircut" was shaky from my handheld videography, it sped up with the fast forwarding of footage, momentarily froze with each pause, retreated rapidly with the rewinding of footage, shook when I awoke the video camera from its sleep, and sent me chasing memories to the soundtrack of a neighboring display. The convergence of film, digital video, and digital photography involved in my alternative domestication of "Martin's" allowed for a consideration of the rhythms these technologies of reproduction encourage as well as the relationships among them. Photographing film that has been transferred to DVD exposed the limitations of human senses; my cameras saw and heard what I did not. They captured the lag of the television's phosphor refresh rate as well as bits of dialogue.

My digital images allowed me to zoom in and out, pause, rewind, and fast forward in order to study details I could not otherwise see or hear. In describing the "unconscious optics" introduced by the camera, Walter Benjamin writes: "With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals

in them entirely unknown ones . . .” Technologies of reproduction open our perception; however, in doing so, they also expose their own limitations and our agency and responsibility as users. They reveal our fingerprints on their screens, buttons, and dials, reminding us of our bodily traces as museum-goers and the political implications of marking versus unmarking.

During my February 13, 2009 research visit Rochelle Slovin explained that “Martin’s First Haircut” and “June Beams,” another home movie created by her father, were among the films screened during a home movie program held at the museum. In Chief Curator David Schwartz’s explanation to us regarding his selection of “Martin’s” over “June Beams” for inclusion in the core exhibition, he identified its traditional narrative structure as one of his reasons. It has a beginning, middle, and end though, as Slovin noted, it was not shot chronologically. The rhythm of my alternative domestication of “Martin’s,” however, is one that loops because in the museum it is screened on a loop. There is repetition with each beginning, middle, and end; and depending on when one begins screening it, the narrative unfolds differently before being wrapped into each subsequent loop.

There are obvious flaws in the common assumption that visual technologies of reproduction and the products created with them shut off the rest of our senses in their privileging of the ocular (in some cases, alongside the aural). In “Looking for Stonewall’s Arm” Michael Bowman notes that “in most ideological critiques of tourism, the sense of sight is particularly important” (103). Adrian Franklin argues that “visualism, the dominance of the visual, spatially disembodies relations with the natural world” (85). Concerned that the majority of tourism scholars have focused on the visual sense, Franklin encourages us to be attentive to tourism as an embodied experience. Responding to Franklin’s critique of visualism, this study demonstrated ways in which we might reframe visually oriented touristic performances as

embodied practices themselves in an effort to move beyond the static binary of visual versus corporeal performance. It is in the very stillness of my performance as a photographer, videographer, or moving image spectator that I am often most aware of the ways in which all my senses are activated. These acts of bodily self-discipline highlight ways in which our senses defy control. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's assertion that "sensory atrophy is coupled with close focus and sustained attention" fails to acknowledge the productive potential of disruptions that continuously shift these practices into "multisensory, multifocus events" (57). The marginalization of the visual is not a practical solution to the study of tourism, specifically museum-going; instead, we might reconsider the multisensory connections among touristic practices without sidelining any of the senses.

Along with technologies of reproduction, memory, especially as articulated by my conception of recollection, played a significant role in my alternative domestication of *Behind the Screen*. The model developed here offers an approach to critical tourism that challenges simplified notions that mechanical and electronic technologies of reproduction and their products must either help or hinder our ability to remember. Moving beyond debates on authenticity that have dominated tourism studies, this study asks instead how these technologies (particularly digital cameras and computers) help us to understand memory work and play (MacCannell, Urry). In other words, it asks how they structure, prompt, aid, or interrupt our processes of remembering. It demonstrates that they influence the rhythms of our memories because of the performances they demand of us, such as flipping, fast forwarding, screening, and zooming, but maintains that our recollections have lives of their own. Memories refuse to stay fixed in our minds, even when recorded on paper, videotape, or digital drives. Rather than taking a technological deterministic approach, this study innovatively models the employment of

technologies of reproduction without naively expecting that they will necessarily allow one to recollect better. Instead, rather than promoting a dystopic, utopic, or nostalgic approach to technology, it embraces specific technologies of reproduction for the varied, creative rhythms they offer in the negotiation of remembering and forgetting in a mediatized culture.

Despite tourism site restrictions such as the prohibition of photography, technologies of reproduction often remain at play through our mental associations, surveillance cameras, or handheld devices such as audio wands that feature pre-recorded audio related to exhibitions. As Philip Auslander argues in *Liveness*, even if we do not personally watch television or shoot movies, we live in a mediatized culture. A popular assumption is that we can revisit mediatized events more easily than others; however, as modeled in the previous chapter, repeated screenings of a particular movie, for example, did not yield identical experiences. Recollection that involves mechanical and electronic technologies of reproduction and their products remains an embodied and radically contextual process, capable of disrupting or bolstering cultural hegemony.

As museum visitors we imaginatively transform museum collections through our recollection of them. Imagination, as the trusty sidekick to memory, is called upon to fill in the gaps or at minimum create scenarios regarding their cause. We wonder if the gaps exist because we took too many photographs, shot too many movies, or recorded too many songs, and worry that we have forgotten how to remember. In her essay on Patty Hearst, Rachel Hall challenges concerns about the relationship between photography and memory, including Roland Barthes' reflection in *Camera Lucida* that his old photographs "stood in for memory; they actively produced forgetting" (348). Noting Barthes' view that the Photograph "blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory," Marianne Hirsch, writing on the role of the photograph in

mourning, adds the claim made by Marguerite Duras that “photographs promote forgetting . . .” (20). Our use of technologies of reproduction as demonstrated here become additional processes to recollect, rather than replacements of our recollections. If anything, mechanical and electronic technologies offer fresh metaphors for better understanding our own processes of remembering and forgetting, and complement older ones such as the mystic writing pad, the book, the theatre, the labyrinth, the sea, the stomach, and the mineshaft.⁹⁵

The alternative domestication modeled by this study encourages a critical tourism that accounts for the role that interactivity and material culture play in our ongoing processes of becoming. In her book *Becoming*, Carol Mavor describes the researcher’s relationship to the subjects she studies as one that involves flirting in order to keep them “alive - ripe for further inquiry . . . The more we flirt, the more we fantasize about our subject, the more elusive and desirable it becomes” (16). Alternative domestication as modeled here acknowledges the role that desire plays in museum-going, and how objects in the collection flirt with us not only through their content and display, but also through their associations. In his book *The Object Stares Back*, James Elkins draws on Martin Heidegger in describing the “betweenness” that exists in our interactions with objects: “part of me is the object and part of the object is me, there is no such thing as a pure self, or an object that is apart from that self” (44). The Museum of the Moving Image boasts a particularly “moving” collection of interactive experiences, commissioned artwork, and artifacts and becomes a rich site for considering the “betweenness” inherent in the work and play of museum-going. In its demonstration of the liminality of museum-going, “as a mode of activity whose spatial, temporal, and symbolic ‘in-betweenness’ allows for social norms to be suspended, challenged, played with, and perhaps even

⁹⁵ See Douwe Draaisma’s *Metaphors of Memory* for a consideration of metaphors, ranging from an abbey to the act of working, including a number related to technologies of reproduction.

transformed,” this interdisciplinary study contributes to performance studies as well as to museum studies, media studies, and memory studies (McKenzie 25).

5.3 GAME OVER: INSERT ONE RECOMMENDATION TO PLAY AGAIN

“Branching narratives with multiple endings might require several playings to see all of the story that there is to see.”

- Mark Wolf on CD-ROM-based video games, *The Medium of the Video Game*.



Fig. 5.3. Video game tokens from a Feb. 16, 2009 research visit to the Museum of the Moving Image. Photograph by author, 22 Mar. 2009.

Having worked for several museums, I considered the practical stakes of this study along the way, and believe that its primary usefulness for museum professionals is its innovative mapping of museum-going as an ongoing and complex process that takes place within and beyond of the walls of the museum. For museums interested in visitor responses, the model of alternative domestication offered here situates museum-going as a collaborative process that encourages open dialogue, especially with regard to visitor and employee experiences. As evident through interactive media projects such as those developed by Second Story Interactive Studios, museums and visitors can benefit from challenging traditional boundaries surrounding practices of collection, exhibition, and reception.

During my February 2009 research visit, the Interacting with the Screen chapter of the exhibition had been expanded and moved to the second level/second floor, across from “Martin’s” and between *Tut’s Fever* and the Soundtrack Jukebox stations. For a quarter, current visitors can purchase a token and play one of fourteen classic arcade games including Tron, Pac

Man, and Space Invaders (see fig. 5.3). This section imagines *Behind the Screen* as a video game in which my goal as the visitor/player is to make practical improvements in various levels of the exhibition based on my alternative domestication of it. The name of each level of the game corresponds with themes or topics relating to the narrative of the core exhibition or its organization: Astoria Studio, Home Movies, Online, and Miscellaneous. The quest required on each level specifies the type of improvement called for: Find missing people, Remember “Martin’s First Haircut,” Visitor participation, and Lagniappe.

Rather than being presumptuous, I want to acknowledge that this is an exercise of possibilities. Some of the possibilities may have already been realized to some extent in the past; some might not fit with, or may even challenge, the course of direction set by the museum as its post-expansion course has yet to be fully unveiled. Considering the current economical recession, I also understand that the suggested improvements may be neither feasible nor practical at this time. Finally, these suggestions range in degree of generality and specificity, and do not detail the “behind the screen” logistics necessary for implementation.

SELECT LEVEL: ASTORIA STUDIO. SELECT QUEST: FIND MISSING PEOPLE.

Behind the Screen whet my appetite for the stories of the behind the screen laborers of the historic Astoria Studio. Finding little about these people inside the museum I turned to sources including newspaper articles, Richard Koszarski’s book *The Astoria Studio and its Fabulous Films*, and Helen Dudar’s Smithsonian article “Those Golden Years when Hollywood was Way Back East.” It is notable that the Museum of the Moving Image’s collection began with what might be described as a domestic collection. Branislav Jakovljevic explains that the museum “started from a collection of film memorabilia that Larry Barr bought from flea markets” (368). Dudar’s article features a fascinating anecdote from Larry Barr, a former Vice President of

production at Kaufman Astoria Studios and a business representative for IATSE Local 52 and the Screen Actors Guild. Barr's father, who worked as a prop man at the Astoria Studio during its early years, "sometimes came home to the Bronx with souvenirs of his work, the most lavish a six-foot cake that had been a prop in a movie and that kept the Barrs and their neighbors in dessert for a week" (Dudar). The inclusion of anecdotes such as these in *Behind the Screen* could greatly enrich its narrative.

The query "Astoria Studio" yields ten results from the Museum of the Moving Image online Collection Catalog. In addition to "Group portrait, Astoria Studio, New York, NY, 1927," the photograph that I included in my tour of the Video Flipbook, among the results are seven photographs and hour long oral histories with actresses Constance Binney and Colleen Moore. What if visitors could listen to these oral histories in *Behind the Screen*? The description of a photograph from 1925 titled "Studio site photographs, Paramount Pictures Costume Department, Astoria, NY" notes that the attached label reads: "A portion of the Wardrobe Department in Paramount's New York studio. Here players are fitted for all screen roles. Expert seamstresses are employed to alter and adjust clothing at high speed." What if the Costume chapter of *Behind the Screen* included a monthly demonstration by guest seamstresses who could show visitors the speed and tools required in today's industry? As the Collection Catalog grows from its current size of 3,649 entries to encompass more of the over 130,000 objects in the museum's collection, it may suggest additional opportunities for including "missing" people in *Behind the Screen*.

SELECT LEVEL: HOME MOVIES. SELECT QUEST: REMEMBER "MARTIN'S FIRST HAIRCUT." As communicated to me by David Schwartz, the removal of "Martin's First Haircut" along with other home movie artifacts from *Behind the Screen* is motivated by an effort shift the focus of the core exhibition more directly on the professional industry versus amateur

moving image production. While I understand the need to keep the scope of *Behind the Screen* focused and manageable, Jim Isermann's installation *TV Lounge* would make a unique home for home movies such as "Martin's." On my February 2009 research visit, a looped selection of presidential campaign commercials from *The Living Room Candidate*, the 2008 edition of the museum's online exhibition, played on the television in *TV Lounge*; during 2008 visits Ali Hossaini's experimental twelve minute video, "Epiphany: The Cycle of Life," played on a loop. The introduction of home movies into the *TV Lounge* screening program could be complemented by a home movie program in a larger setting such as the one that originally featured "Martin's."

The question "Nobody really wants to see my dumb old home movies, do they?" appears on the Center for Home Movies (CHM) "Frequently Asked Questions" webpage. The CHM response reminds us that "Home movies from just a few years ago show a world that looks pretty different from the one we live in now . . . Seeing this world in home movies is useful for historians, writers, documentary filmmakers, costume designers, and even the ordinary people who live in those same (but somehow different) places today." CHM asserts: "If your home movies depict the everyday life of people of color, the differently abled, or others who continue to be under-represented in commercial films and on TV, we think it is especially important that they be shown." Participation in CHM's annual Home Movie Day would allow Museum of the Moving Image visitors to share their home movies outside of the home and participate in the dialogue surrounding these cultural artifacts, many of which will not survive the coming years without proper preservation.

SELECT LEVEL: ONLINE. SELECT QUEST: VISITOR PARTICIPATION. An interactive online component of *Behind the Screen* would allow for increased dialogue among museum employees and visitors interested in moving image culture. There are a number of

models already in play by museums around the world. *Arago: People, Postage, & the Post* is an online database developed by Second Story for the National Postal Museum (NPM), a Smithsonian Institution, in 2006. It allows users to recollect their own collections from those exhibited online, add notes, and share the contents of their collection with others through email. The Arago Researcher Program, a Smithsonian Behind-the-Scenes Volunteer Program, allows qualified experts in philately or postal history to contribute to the online collection database and to collaborate on exhibits featured on the NPM website. *ARTscape*, developed by Second Story for the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM), permits users to re-collect the museum's collection offline (with the use of an Acoustiguide audio wand during visits to its actual site) as well as online (with the use of a mouse during visits to its website).

This study demonstrated the interactivity already at work in museums, such as encounters with material artifacts and “old” technologies; and it emphasized the trend of incorporating new technologies in an effort to increase the interactivity of exhibitions. “Beyond Online Collections: Putting Objects to Work” an essay by Brad Johnson presented at Museum and the Web 2004 conference raises the question: “If we care about creating interactive projects that can withstand shifts and changes in technology, why wouldn't we care about creating projects that can withstand shifting points of view?” Johnson argues: “When visitors themselves can play a more active role in contributing their ‘playlists,’ personal pathways, annotated collections, and stories with these new interactive formats, then we will get a taste of how revolutionary the Web can be.” The Museum of the Moving Image could benefit from capitalizing on its already popular website through extending an invitation to visitors and all those associated with it to share *Behind the Screen* experiences online. During research visits I had the pleasure of getting to know a number of museum guards, and they recounted some of the most interesting stories about

the core exhibition.⁹⁶ Computer kiosks inside *Behind the Screen* could allow visitors with limited personal access to the Internet to engage in online discourse.

SELECT LEVEL: MISCELLANEOUS. SELECT QUEST: LAGNIAPPE. In Louisiana “lagniappe” is a popular term used to describe the giving of “a little something extra”; here it refers to a few additional brief suggestions, some of which overlap with those discussed above. Boasting the title *Behind the Screen*, the core exhibition could make a greater effort to include representations of the less glamorous roles in moving image production. In other words, many of the laborers responsible for making moving images a reality remain invisible in *Behind the Screen*. They are often overshadowed by the big name actors, directors, producers, and others at the top levels of the production hierarchy who are already familiar to us on screen, especially with the advent of behind the scenes featurettes included on DVD releases and promotional websites. What about projectionists? We hear them in *Tut’s Fever*, but rarely see them. The single paragraph devoted to projectionists in the Moving Image in the Theater section of the online *Behind the Screen* Study Guide closes with the statement: “In recent years projection systems have become increasingly automated, but operating a film projector still remains a complicated and usually unappreciated task.” Shifting more of the spotlight to lesser known and unappreciated contemporary and historic roles in moving image production would add greater depth to the core exhibition.

Much of the Museum of the Moving Image’s programming features invited guests, some with celebrity status. While I will be the first to admit that I enjoyed hearing lively discussions among some of my favorite stars, such as Steve Buscemi and Werner Herzog, during museum events, I have yet to rub elbows with them in *Behind the Screen*. Though tours of *Behind the*

⁹⁶ The recent tragic death of U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum guard Stephen Tyrone Johns, who was shot by alleged white-supremacist James von Brunn, reminds us to recognize the men and women who serve in the often unappreciated and unglamorous roles that make museum-going possible.

Screen by celebrity guests might be a major attraction, they would likely involve heightened security and would not necessarily solve the problem of bringing attention to those underrepresented in the core exhibition. Inviting guests who hold underrepresented roles in *Behind the Screen* to lead tours or demonstrations might be a better solution, and one that would emphasize that typically the majority of those who work on a major moving image production do not have the opportunity to walk (or, depending on interpretation, the responsibility of walking) the red carpets while sporting designer fashion.

During my first visit to the Museum of the Moving Image, still relatively fresh out of film school, I was questioning what devoting the rest of my life to the moving industry might entail. I doubt that I am the only visitor who has been or will be drawn to the museum, and particularly to *Behind the Screen*, by this type of question. Granted, the expectation that a museum could answer a question of this magnitude is unreasonable; however, I would have left less disappointed if it had provided career guidance and a more diverse picture of those who labor “behind” the screen. The computer kiosk that features Who Does What in Movies and Television provides a basic introduction to various roles. It could serve as a better resource if it accepted résumés, as Slovin stated in 1996 that it eventually would (Blumenthal). It would also be more resourceful if it allowed visitors to sign up for moving image related listservs, newsletters, or other forms of practical literature. There are countless other ways that *Behind the Screen* could connect visitors to moving image production educational and career resources, including those outside of the mainstream industries, that would benefit local communities and beyond.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ The Museum of the Moving Image’s educational programs include a range of workshops; however, these are typically geared toward schools or special groups rather than the general public.

According to its February 27, 2008 press release, the museum's "new design invites visitors to step into the museum through moving images. 242 video monitors cover the entire entry including the doors." As the Museum of the Moving Image architecturally embraces interactive technologies, visiting its site will involve navigation through additional screens. Lisa Delgado reports on the museum's expansion and describes the plans for its new entrance: "By entering, 'you're literally walking through the image,' said architect Thomas Leeser in a talk at a recent celebration of the upcoming expansion . . . Adding to the permeable effect, the image is broken up by areas of glass between the monitors, which 'breaks down the authority of the image and its controlling power,' Leeser added." In its innovative spatializing of the moving image as museum environment, the spectator becomes more mobile and the embodied experience of moving image and museum going is made more apparent. Leeser also noted: "We wanted to move away from the idea that the museum's just about film . . . This is an opportunity to grow in new media" (qtd. in Delgado). During my February 13, 2009 research visit, Carl Goodman explained that digital technology has completely replaced the use of film in *Tut's Fever* screenings. With the museum's push toward new media, it remains to be seen how *Behind the Screen's* domestication of moving image culture will develop, to what degree film will be eclipsed within it, how its focus on moving image production and consumption will be renegotiated in changing displays, and what kinds of tactical opportunities for alternative domestication will result.

5.4 BACK HOME

So what is the next stop? During a recent neighborhood walk, my spouse and I noticed that Lori Gomez's *Downtown Streetcar*, the sculpture that depicted a pre-Hurricane Katrina Saenger Theatre, was no longer parked in front of Le Pavillon Hotel. We would learn later that it

had been auctioned off at the Young Leadership Council's Streetcar Soiree ("Streetcars on the Auction Block").⁹⁸ I wondered how the still abandoned actual Saenger Theatre, sadly dressed with a Latter and Blum "back on the market" sale/lease sign, would fare in an auction. As we strolled by the Orpheum Theatre, we saw that the glass of two of its doors had been shattered. We were able to photograph its previously inaccessible interior; though there were no lights on, and the flash of our camera did little to illuminate the dark theatre (see fig. 5.5). Its decaying stench was overwhelming; and as I stumbled away dry heaving, I recollected the smell of vomit on the first level of *Behind the Screen*. This area of the core exhibition was the previous location of the Interacting with the Screen chapter on video games before it was moved to the second level; it currently houses a display of early film artifacts including a Magniscope and projecting Kinetoscope. *The Great Train Robbery* is screened to music Donald Sosin produced for the museum. I do not remember smelling the stench of vomit during my most recent visit to the museum, perhaps when the exhibition was changed this area received a deep cleaning.

Fingering a souvenir Museum of the Moving Image video game token, I wonder how the rhythm of my alternative domestication of "Martin's" may have differed had I screened it to the blips, bleeps, and electronic explosions of the video games now neighboring it, rather than to the piano soundtrack of "The Movies Begin." I flip the token into the air and watch it spin. The "Progress Photographs" page in the Expansion section of the museum's website includes images of steel workers signing the final beam and lifting it into place during the March 18, 2009 Topping Off ceremony. The latest image, dated May 29, 2009, depicts the removal of columns between the old and new building lobby. The Museum of the Moving Image and its collection continually grows and changes, as does its domestication of moving image culture and in turn

⁹⁸ The webpage "Streetcars on the Auction Block" on the Young Leadership Council's website refers to the sculpture as "Downtown in Motion."

my alternative domestication. The token lands noisily on my keyboard, it is cold on my skin as I flip it again. The work and play associated with the sites recollected here continues beyond these pages as memories flip through my fingers.



Fig. 5.4. “Orpheum Theatre, Stage and Seating,” from safety film negative created 29 Oct. 1941. Photo by Charles L. Franck Studios. Courtesy The Historic New Orleans Collection, acc. no. 1979.325.5881.



Fig. 5.5. The Orpheum Theatre, New Orleans. Photograph by author, 21 Mar. 2009.

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VITA

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