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**SILENCE IN THE SPACES BETWEEN:
ANTHONY McCALL'S CIRCULATION FIGURES, 1972/2011**

Helen Wainwright

Abstract

This article will assess how the adaptation of Anthony McCall's work, *Circulation Figures, 1972/2011*, has manipulated the limits of filmic practice since its initial creation in 1972 to its realised form in 2011. *Circulation Figures* sits outside McCall's recognisable alliance with solid light films, in which beams of projected light appear tangible through their presentation in smoke-filled, darkened spaces, by utilising the 'off-frame' and 'off-screen' as ways to think about alternative spaces of interaction. The audience becomes firmly rooted within a specific location, yet the piece can be seen as simultaneously referential in its nature, as it always refers to an 'elsewhere' through the disjunction between sound/silence and stillness/movement. Consequently, *Circulation Figures* will be (re)placed within an alternative art historical framework, as I question how this work not only bridges a forty-year gap to create new places of performance but also realigns the margins between the avant-garde stage of the 1970s and contemporary artistic practices.

Circulation Figures was most recently shown at Face to Face, 16th February to 23rd March 2013, Sean Kelly Gallery, New York City

Key words: Cinematic, Fowler, Iles, McCall, Metz, Off-frame, Off-screen, Performance, Photographic, Sculptural

In the First Place

In 2011, Anthony McCall revisited *Circulation Figures* for inclusion in an exhibition titled *Off the Wall/Fora da Parede* which took place at the Museu de Serralves in Porto, Portugal, from 21st May to 2nd October 2011. The exhibition was organised by Chrissie Iles and offered a restaged version of her earlier show, *Off the Wall Part 1*, which took place at The Whitney Museum of American Art from 1st July to 19th September 2010. *Circulation Figures* was conceived in 1972 when McCall invited a group of fifteen photographers and filmmakers into his purposefully newspaper-littered and mirror-lined studio and asked them to record their encounters with the environment (fig. 1-3). The resulting space required the participants to question their involvement with it, as their behaviour was influenced by the reflective surfaces, the actions of others, and the newspapers on the floor. The subsequent photographs and footage were collated by McCall and put into storage, silently awaiting a further use, which did not come for nearly forty years.

Writing in 2006, George Baker described *Circulation Figures* as a 'happening', referencing the legacies of minimal and conceptual art preceding McCall's work, and the performance of artworks in the present in front of live audiences.¹ Happenings would take place in every day environments, opening them to the unpredictability of the audience or chance encounters, and were classed as temporary, ephemeral pieces which had no embedded afterlife. McCall's initial event could certainly be described in such a manner, yet the description fails to sit so neatly now. In 2011, *Circulation Figures* became a piece of performance art by combining all the elements of the first event in new ways and within a different environment, embracing the supposed temporality or ephemerality commonly associated with the definition of happenings and extending it through the continued performance of the work.

The footage and images from 1972 are now showcased in a room visually reminiscent of the original site (fig. 5-6). Newspapers still clutter the floor, whilst reprinted photographs from the original event are hidden amongst the crumpled papers. Mirrors still act as framing walls, but in the middle of the room a double-sided screen showing the original recorded footage acts as a focal point within the space, switching between moving images and film stills (fig. 4-6). A soundtrack now accompanies the footage, playing noises familiar to the scene: camera clicks, newspaper shuffling, and the gentle buzz of film cameras, but only when the screen is paused, showing a film still and otherwise silent. In contrast, when the film begins to play again, the soundtrack is unexpectedly silenced, breaking with conventional cinematic techniques of synchronous sounds and images. As people enter the room, their reflection is multiplied infinitely by the mirrors, and they begin to take photographs of themselves within the space, becoming active participants in the creation of a performance by extending the circulation of the work through their personal photographic images, movements and sounds.²

In 2005, Jonathon Walley stated that McCall described works that utilised film during live events as ‘conditions’, ‘distinguishing them from both objects and performances’ in order to encompass all contributing elements of his artworks, rather than emphasising one element over another.³ In both instances, the conditions seemed set. In 1972, McCall created a live performance in which his participants were able to navigate their way around the studio freely, and the outcome of those encounters was left undefined by McCall. However in 2011, *Circulation Figures* became a staged installation contained within the frame of the gallery, and the original methods of interaction were extended even further, by utilising the previous footage and images from the original event.

This article aims to question how it might be problematic for a viewer to assess this work as either an ephemeral performance, akin to the happenings Baker references, or an interactive installation in its own right. In both situations the space is questioned by the repetition of newspapers on the floor, through the mirrors on the walls, the soundtrack, and via the documented footage and photographs, but also through the spaces between what has been performed (and is therefore absent) and what is displayed in the present. Through this unavoidable absence, the presence of the current artwork is amplified. The opposition between absence and presence has been the focal point of performance studies since the 1980s, and recently the polarity between the two terms has moved towards a give and take relationship, particularly through Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield’s edited volume *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History* (2012). The ‘tireless movement between’ the performance and the resulting documents are highlighted, requiring a consideration of how the flux of ideas in works such as McCall’s might signal the necessity of the viewer as a vehicle for exchange and the circulation of ideas.

Ultimately, *Circulation Figures* departs radically from the current art historical conception of McCall’s work as inherently concerned with reconfiguring spatial experience(s) by utilising light as a pliable sculptural medium, as seen in works such as *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) or his more recent *You and I, Horizontal III* (2007). Such works consciously invert cinematic practices, and rather than viewing projections on a screen, McCall tests the boundaries between the sculptural, cinematic and pictorial by creating beams of light which appear to be deceptively tangible, inviting viewers to reach out in attempts to grasp them, despite the knowledge that they remain untouchable. *Circulation Figures* successfully questions similar formal margins but also utilises entirely different media to (re)construct the understanding of specific locations and how access to alternative times and spaces may be provided. Within *Circulation Figures*, McCall holds one foot in the avant-garde of the 1970s and extends his stride into contemporary discourse concerning the gallery space and screen.⁴

The reinterpretation of the work through the approaches suggested within this article could lead to alternative understandings of the spaces signified within the piece.

The Presence of Space

In 1985, Christian Metz remarked that ‘film is an extraordinary activator [...] it endlessly mimes the primal displacement of the look between the seen absence and the presence nearby.’⁵ This observation is indicative of the relationship films and photography have to the spaces in which they are viewed, as they are at once representative of displaced locations, yet remarkably dependent on their inherent referential nature. Space in this sense is fluid and constituted through the movement occurring between things, whereas place is viewed as permanent and static, and is constituted through a sustained level of involvement. As movements within films stretch beyond the framed screen and into the off-frame space, the impermanence of a physical locale is highlighted and an allusion to the constant absence of the original site is made. The off-frame is utilised by McCall to create alternative spaces of interaction to show how different realities and experiences occur beyond the framed space of the projection, yet still represent what Metz has called ‘the seen absence and the presence nearby.’⁶ McCall alludes to the imagination as an activator, making what is absent present through the physical manifestation of the piece (i.e. the film/photographs/newspapers), but also through the spaces pointed to beyond the frames and through the opposition between silence and sound, movement and stillness.

Iles investigated similar concerns in her earlier 2001 exhibition, *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art 1964-1977*, in which the space of the screen acted as an initial instigator for involvement, rather than the sole proprietor of the experience. The artists included within this exhibition (of whom McCall was one) purposefully utilised the space surrounding and beyond the screen, expanding cinema to ‘[disrupt] the picture plane through temporality, not so much destroying illusionism as redefining its limits.’⁷ During the late sixties and early seventies, many cinematic practices were fragmented in order to emphasise their fundamental nature and artists began exploring the essential processes of filmmaking. Artworks which involved time, light and movement were now considered cinematic through their virtues rather than solely through their physical manifestations, i.e. as projections (see Gene Youngblood’s book, *Expanded Cinema*, 1970). The illusionism of the screen was reconfigured to include the environment surrounding it, as the space of the spectator became part of the work itself, and is precisely what this article contends. Such issues were also raised during the staging and restaging of Iles’ 2011 exhibition *Off the Wall...*, in which the collision of space and time within the works curated was highlighted, in order to decipher how the action/participation occurring within specific environments affected the embodied spectator.⁸ This is a central concern within most of McCall’s work, and he is considered a pioneer of expanded cinema for his exploration of all the components of cinematic experience, transforming cinema into an immersive, participatory experience.

The audience’s role within the 2011 installation of *Circulation Figures* is at times problematic and differs from the inversion of cinematic practices seen in McCall’s earlier works as he now subtly subverts viewing experiences through various means. The forty-year silence which filled the gap between the initial 1972 event and the 2011 performance has been purposefully emphasised through the stop-start of the accompanying soundtrack, and the paused film stills, followed by moving images. The stillness which is matched with sounds, and the movement married with the silence of the gallery, emphasise the delay between the two moments, and McCall very cleverly allows the disjunctions between their presence and absence to be explored. There is a certain level of importance placed upon what has happened and what could happen in these moments between, epitomized by the pauses, disjointed sounds and moving projections, and contrasted with the audience’s own quiet disruption as

they walk through the newspaper, creating their own noise and producing their own still photographs (or even films). The unification of the cinematic material off-frame with imaginary off-screen space is further enhanced through such opposition, and the relationship between the projected images, the sculptural properties of the work, and audience experience is subverted.

The importance of *Off the Wall...* rests on the realisation that the aspects of all the works included within the exhibition relay the idea that works do not have to be physically present, performed live or embodied, in order to be classed as performative; that is, pertaining to the act of performance and encouraging a presentness. Alternatively, they may simply be pointed towards through photography, film or other modes of documentation. In this way, the interpretation of performance offered through *Off the Wall...* was expanded by accumulating a range of photographs, films, drawings and videos that did not need to be regarded as documentary, but were performative in their own right; they constitute an action rather than act themselves, and return us to the off-frame space in which the performance is imagined. As Iles makes clear, ‘they’re not documents of performances that have concluded. The performance only takes place in front of the camera.’⁹ In other words, what was happening at a specific moment is not the end of a performance *if* it was being documented. The consequential documentation automatically becomes performative as it extends the original event by inviting participants to imagine their involvement in a performance in the spaces between the screen projection and mirrored images.

Philip Auslander expands upon this point, writing that there are two different modes of performance documentation which he terms ‘theatrical’ and ‘documentary’. Auslander suggests that theatrical documentation is performed solely for the camera, whereas the documentary category produces documents which are both a record of a performance having taken place, and a method through which it can be reconstructed or continued.¹⁰ In either case, through reiterating the suggestion that something else can be said to exist beyond the materiality of an image, the act of communication between the viewer, the photograph and the site of its creation is emphasized, above the relationship between the document and the original performance. Auslander states that ‘in this respect, no documented piece is performed solely as an end in itself: the performance is always at one level raw material for documentation, the final product through which it will be circulated and with which it will inevitably become identified’.¹¹ Documentation becomes performative as it refers to the original event in a non-corporeal capacity and requests that viewers create a version of the performance in their minds; in a sense completing or continuing the initial event.

The performative nature of the photograph does not only exist in the ‘setting-up’ preceding the moment of creation, or in the act being performed in front of the lens, but is also found in the way viewers react to an image when they encounter it, which is entirely dependent on post-event manipulation and presentation. In this sense, Iles’ earlier assessment that photographs of performances often do not show something complete or finished goes some way towards describing future involvement with such images. Photographs of performances often do not conclusively present us with the past but rather reveal elements of something that was passing and *being* performed, and consequently, what is shown within an image transfers a certain degree of expectation onto its viewers, requiring them to continue or create a performance of their own in relation to it. Iles’ exhibition served to question the indexical connotations of film and photography by claiming that they prolong interaction and encounters far beyond their frames.

Circulation Figures fits precisely within this framework as a piece which is able to refer to a specific performance through documentation but also *continues* it at the same time. In this way, the temporality of the original event is questioned and the traditional association of the happening as momentary is transformed into a tool through which something retains meaning,

the value of which is constantly evolving because of surrounding imagery, recorded sounds or future installations. In a similar fashion, within his earlier works, McCall consistently called into question how people interact with given spaces as he investigated the relationship between an audience and cinematic/filmic representations. In particular, *Line Describing a Cone* – arguably his most famous work – creates an inversion of spatial interaction as the expected uses of exhibition spaces are reversed by creating pitch black rooms and cutting into them with beams of projected light. The spaces are transformed into interactive performance spaces as audiences interact with beams of light rather than focusing solely on a screen of projection. The *raison d'être* foregrounding McCall's earlier, solid-light films may seem to fit uneasily with *Circulation Figures*, both in its initial stages in 1972 and in its current form. This is partly due to the sculptural properties of McCall's films maintaining a central focus on 'primary experience, not secondary,' an involvement driven by recognising that 'the space is real, not referential; the time is real, not referential.'¹²

As a result, the solid-light works do not allude to alternative times or places but require absolute attention to the present. In contrast, *Circulation Figures* is referential to the point where it relies on an allusion to previous events in order for it to be fully understood as an artwork in the present, although it is not reliant on this knowledge in order to function as such. This is partly due to the utilisation of the above-mentioned media: newspapers, mirrors, film, and photography, all of which denote a specific moment in the past. Through the contrast between movement/silence, and stillness/sound, McCall implies the absence of previous events, yet emphasises the presence of the new audience. McCall is also exploring how these media are referential on their own, as they question the indexicality of a perceived moment, whilst also subtly re-examining how spaces can be framed in the mind of a viewer. In other words, at times the subject matter within the piece is not always McCall's sole focus, but rather it is the experiential properties akin to those explored by the artist within his solid light works that are ultimately reinvestigated.

Extending the Presence of Space

The use and development of film, video and cinema were addressed during the *Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art*, a discussion published in *October* in 2003, in which McCall played a part alongside George Baker, Chrissie Iles, Malcolm Turvey and others. In particular, Iles raises concern for how the space in which artists' works function and gain meaning has changed since the early 1970s, shifting from the use of the gallery as a primary experiential tool, towards contemporary installations which do not rely as intensely on the space of a gallery to emphasise the piece, despite the space of display maintaining an intrinsic effect on the experience of an artwork.¹³ *Circulation Figures* is part of this argument, and McCall embraces the distinct differences between the two modes of critical thought within this piece. On the one hand, this work embraces the contemporary cinematic return to the projection/projected through the double-sided screen in the centre of the room, but it immediately subverts any cinematic experience of it, as the newspapers and mirrors make viewers distinctly aware of their physical presence in the space, whilst also making them aware of other people, either through reflections or the physicality of moving through the papers on the floor. In this way, McCall has destabilised a more traditional form of cinematic projection by using means entirely reminiscent of his work in the 1970s, referencing the space beyond and around the frame of the projection or mirrors, as well as within them.

The underlying influences for the final form of *Circulation Figures* arguably began to surface during the *October Round Table*, eight years before the piece would be completed. McCall discusses Stan Douglas' use of alternative narratives and the disjunction between sound and image in *Journey Into Fear* (2001), whilst also referencing Peter Wollen's essay 'The Two Avant-Gardes' (1977), in which the differences between 'the physical material of

the film' and its 'signification' are addressed.¹⁴ These are all key elements in *Circulation Figures*, however, most significantly, the dialogue occurring between sculpture and film, epitomised by McCall's reference to Rosemary Trockel's installation *Spleen* (2002), is extremely telling as to his approach to this work. In her installation, Trockel creates a significant divide between her filmic and sculptural works by creating wall-like structures which act as both a screen for projection on one side, and a sculptural object on the other. McCall makes the following assessment after discussing *Spleen*:

The problem is that one does not look at video screens and sculpture in the same way. However placed within a space, when you watch and listen to video or film, you enter the elsewhere of the moving image, and you leave your physical body behind, which remains rooted to the spot. To study sculpture—or to explore architectural space—you must walk, measuring what you see with your eyes and your physical body. These two experiences are diametrically opposed.¹⁵

Here, McCall encapsulates the conundrum of *Circulation Figures*: are viewers supposed to approach this piece as a moving image or a sculptural work? McCall very cleverly resists focusing on either the projected image or the sculptural elements of the piece by forcing viewers to be explicitly aware of the space in which they are standing, whilst presenting them with disjointed sounds and images that spread off the screen and into the imagination. McCall forces a clash of the two opposing modes of viewing so that viewers are required to simultaneously embody and imagine space. This is achieved by immediately confronting the viewer with a newspaper-lined floor; as they step into the space they are instantaneously aware of where they are standing, as well as their physical presence within a given space (fig. 4). Secondly, the entire artwork and images of the viewer are multiplied into infinity by the mirrors facing each other on parallel walls, not only meaning that the viewer becomes aware of themselves (again) but of other people too. Their presence, and that of other people, is encountered in such a way as to emphasise the gap which will always exist between the piece and their involvement with it. Thirdly, the viewer interacts with the film, before realising that they are standing in an environment which has been recreated in the manner shown on screen and in the photographs.

The duplication of the past and present, the viewers and their reflections, and the original participants emphasises the spaces between all elements of the work (fig. 5-6). At a later date, McCall made the following assessment: 'Cinema creates a virtual world, a place that you enter with your eyes and your imagination but not with your physical body. My pieces require that your actual body be there in the flesh, in the present. And active.'¹⁶ Although seemingly contradictory to his views expressed above, both approaches – the latter being McCall's artistic aim – are combined within *Circulation Figures*. On the whole it requires a certain degree of imagination from its audience, as the projection and reflections '[create] a virtual world' off-screen, but additionally McCall makes his viewers explicitly aware of their 'active' presence, in-line with the aforementioned use of newspapers, mirrors and the projected image.¹⁷ To reinforce such a reading of the piece, the projected film in the centre of the room runs at intervals; pausing at specific moments before proceeding to play again, rather than simply running from beginning to end (once again evoking McCall's earlier attempts to negate/resist traditional cinematic techniques).

Additionally, *Circulation Figures* is accompanied by a soundtrack, which was developed by McCall in conjunction with David Grubbs, Associate Professor of Music at The City University of New York, specifically for the 2011 version of the work.¹⁸ The projection and soundtrack run together, but at oddly disjointed times so that the moving images are never accompanied synchronously by sounds. Every thirty seconds the film is paused and the

soundtrack plays for thirty seconds, before cutting to silence as the film then continues to play for thirty seconds, and so on and so forth. This action interrupts the continuity of the piece and destabilises the viewer as they try to work out whether the sounds are from within the room or from the projection (and vice versa when the film is being played). In addition, to confuse the situation to a greater extent, Grubbs makes clear that McCall re-recorded specific sounds which resonated with the imagery on screen, ‘the clicks of still cameras, the whirrs and clicks of movie cameras, and the sounds of navigating piles of crumpled newspapers and magazines’.¹⁹ Despite the existence of pre-recorded sounds from the original event in 1972, McCall made a conscious decision to re-record specific sounds, related to what is presented within the space, to accompany the film. In turn, this decision furthers the disjunction between the image, the gallery space and the moment of the original event, and further confuses these times and temporalities. Similarly, the relationship between the image paused on screen and the sounds accompanying it is not definitive; ‘the soundtrack is fixed in relation to the image component, but even given the offset structure (moving image gives way to sound and vice versa), there is no sound-image synchronization of events’, despite the viewer being led to believe this is the case.²⁰

The artwork as a whole becomes reliant on its audience’s physical recognition of the space in order to function effectively. The multiple screens and the resulting disjunction between the moving image and sounds reiterate that this artwork is focused on spatial and durational structures rather than a single, continuous narrative. McCall was ‘intrigued by the possibility of an extended present tense’, he favoured ‘permutation rather than narrative as an organising principle’ within his work, which ultimately led him towards ‘cyclical structure’.²¹ This move implies that this method of artistic creation allows his work to subsume a variety of independent meanings, determined by the viewer, and the moment at which they choose to access the work. The cyclical structure and lack of synchronization not only prolong audience involvement, but they relay the circulation of the information contained within the piece and the disruption between sounds and imagery.

These ideas tie in with the discussion of the off-screen encouraged by Catherine Fowler as a reaction to Iles’ exhibition *Into the Light*. At times throughout this exhibition, Iles invited viewers to ‘look not merely at the screen, but beyond it [...] and to the relationships set up between one image and the next.’²² The space surrounding artworks is essential for the meaning inherent within, and produced between them, and by situating certain artists within the same exhibition context, Iles is reiterating the importance of understanding framed space, or the use of projection within gallery environments during the 1960s and 70s. This is the point on which Fowler’s argument is built, as she uses Iles’ exhibition to ground her interpretation of the off-frame in contemporary artists’ works. Fowler introduces the off-screen as an alternative means of assessing how the frame of the screen functions, especially in a gallery environment. The off-frame is presented as a ‘material space’ whereas the off-screen is ‘imaginary or fictional’ in reference to Pascal Bonitzer and Noël Burch.²³ The audience may never embody an off-screen space because it is an imagined environment, but rather it is enticed through movement or scene changes on-screen, whilst the ‘off-screen space is the unseen that remains unseen’ in the darkness of the cinema.²⁴ This level of imaginative interaction is expected in a cinematic viewing space, but Fowler’s argument makes clear that a fundamental change occurs when moving between projections in a cinema, and the use of projections within a gallery environment. She acknowledges McCall as one of the artists who had originally redefined the limits of audience interaction with cinematic works, but a return to his later work is not made within the article. At the time of Fowler’s article, McCall was largely dealing with similar issues to those he sought to deconstruct during the 1970s. *Doubling Back* (2003) and *You and I, Horizontal III* are visually and structurally similar to *Line Describing a Cone*, or *Long Film for Four Projectors* (1974). Generally, McCall’s

works never deal with ‘the security of the frontal flat images’ to ‘return our gaze to the centre of the frame’, so it seems all-the-more intriguing to be faced with *Circulation Figures*, a piece which embodies the principles of Fowler’s argument both visually (through a clear investigation of the frame) and physically (through the production of meaning within the gallery environment).²⁵ It would seem plausible to suggest that *Circulation Figures* could be perceived as symptomatic of the changing nature of film display within gallery spaces, as such a shift is consequently recognised by McCall within this piece.

Although a direct reference to contemporary film installation is not made by McCall in relation to the piece, in the accompanying wall text he states that ‘working on the completion of *Circulation Figures* in 2011 involved some time-traveling back and forth: my structuring principles would have been entirely familiar to me in the 1970s, but in editing the footage and planning the final work I made full use of digital technology.’²⁶ The projected image on screen makes his audience aware of both the limitations and possibilities of the space in which it was/is framed both then and now. The multiplicity of frames utilised within the piece make this motive explicit by repeating the information contained within them, but also highlighting the gaps in between. McCall asks his audience to at once recognise that they are part of a performance and proceeds to make them explicitly aware that they may be part of the off-screen space, by creating an environment which *looks* like the environment shown on screen, encouraging viewers to *act* in a similar manner (fig. 5-6). What the audience actually imagines and then takes part in is an alternative space in-between the still and moving frames of the documented footage, and the metaphorical frames of the gallery, the mirrors and the screen. The ontological nature of the environment is interrogated in its entirety. There is a distinct relationship between what the audience can see on screen and what they can see in the room, and just like the original photographers in McCall’s studio, the audience questions what were they supposed to be looking at.

Concluding Remarks: Taking Place

The off-frame space in which the viewers find themselves is an extremely charged space, capable of simultaneously rooting and uprooting an audience. Metz summarises this distinction neatly, writing that the ‘the filmic off-frame space is étoffé, let us say “substantial” [...] because we generally know, or are able to guess more or less precisely, what is going on in it.’²⁷ Whilst conversely the ‘photographic off-frame space is “subtle”’, acknowledging that a viewer is entirely omitted from the space of its creation, yet still acutely aware of it.²⁸ McCall emphasises this disjunction through the utilisation of the soundtrack, playing only when a film still (functioning here in a similar way to a photograph) is shown. The off-frame space surrounding the still assumes the role of the severed space, which otherwise remains disembodied. Once again, McCall is toying with the differences between a specific, anchored sense of off-frame space, and the fluidity of its definition. In other words, McCall recognises that the off-frame, commonly associated with traditional cinematic viewing spaces, does not only exist as an imagined space.

Fowler acknowledges that the definition of the off-screen/off-frame relies on the ‘black box’ of traditional viewing spaces, and queries how such an interpretation may be problematic when film projections move into gallery spaces and into the opposing ‘light of the white cube.’²⁹ In drawing direct attention to the frame by centralising it within the installation, and then multiplying the space surrounding its edges with mirrors, McCall emphasises the imaginary potential of off-frame space. Conversely, this action also emphasises the physicality and materiality of the space. As such, *Circulation Figures* could be seen to embody the conundrum of the off-screen, as it at once relies on the imagination of prior events and moments (referred to as an elsewhere, beyond the frame), as well as the physical recognition of its place within a gallery. Iles and Fowler both acknowledge that a fundamental

shift between the use of the gallery space by avant-garde artists and contemporary film artists has occurred, returning our gaze to the frame itself rather than the embodied space of the spectator. In offering a dialogue between two alternating modes of access, McCall is able to approach and express this aforementioned shift in an extremely critical way.

The wall text which accompanies *Circulation Figures* states that during the 1970s ‘the attention of the mainstream media monopolised the representation of public affairs’ rather than focusing on an over-indulgence in private, everyday imagery.³⁰ In contrast, within contemporary Western society, ‘the circulation of images has become both radically decentralised and massively expanded, with the surveillance of public spaces providing the sinister edge to this apparent democratisation.’³¹ Within this short text, it is insinuated that reading *Circulation Figures* must be limited to an assessment of the means through which imagery (albeit film or photography) is utilised and disseminated. Yet such virtual worlds of saturation and surveillance produce what Alison Butler termed alternative ‘spaces of circulation’, in which images and film – and therefore the off-frame and off-screen – function.³² Likewise, the discussion within the *October Round Table* focused on cinematic space and the differences between films made for the cinema and films utilised within a gallery environment, during which Iles likened the ‘immersive space of contemporary cinema’ to the ‘immersiveness of the projected image in much installation art.’³³ Although McCall is not critiquing ‘Cinema’, he is certainly attuned to the problems of complete absorption promoted by its darkened spaces. Aligned with the issues surrounding the off-frame and off-screen at stake within Iles’ exhibitions and Fowler’s article, it seems clear that *Circulation Figures* intends to anchor its audience within the space of the projected image, yet also detach them from it by referring to the *elsewhere* of the image.

The momentary illusion and immersion experienced within *Circulation Figures* teases the audience with the impossibility of obtaining the elsewhere (both of the original event and the passing of time) referred to within it. Similarly, McCall notes that ‘the figures recorded in 1972, circling round one another and assiduously producing images only of themselves, looked, then, like some kind of hallucination. But re-visited today, those same figures, acting the way they do, seem almost familiar.’³⁴ The audience of this work instinctively record themselves within the installation, on cameras, mobile phones or iPads, circulating documents of their experiences. Could it be that Roland Barthes’ well-known interpretation of the photograph as a ‘bizarre medium’ may translate onto such a cinematic conundrum? The photographic image to Barthes is ‘false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest, *shared* hallucination [...] a mad image, chafed by reality.’³⁵ The fundamental success of *Circulation Figures* rests precisely on this ambiguity, as McCall re-circulates the ideas implicit in the original 1972 performance, filling the silence of the spaces between with what ‘is not there’ but what ‘has indeed been.’³⁶ *Circulation Figures* sits neatly on a theoretical threshold between 1972-2011, and beyond.

Images

Fig. 1: Anthony McCall, *Circulation Figures* (1972/2011), original event, 1972, image courtesy of the artist.



Fig 2: Anthony McCall, *Circulation Figures* (1972/2011), original event, 1972, image courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 3: Anthony McCall, *Circulation Figures* (1972/2011), original event, 1972, image courtesy of the artist.

ANTHONY MCCALL
CIRCULATION FIGURES
INSTALLATION VIEW
2011. 04. 26

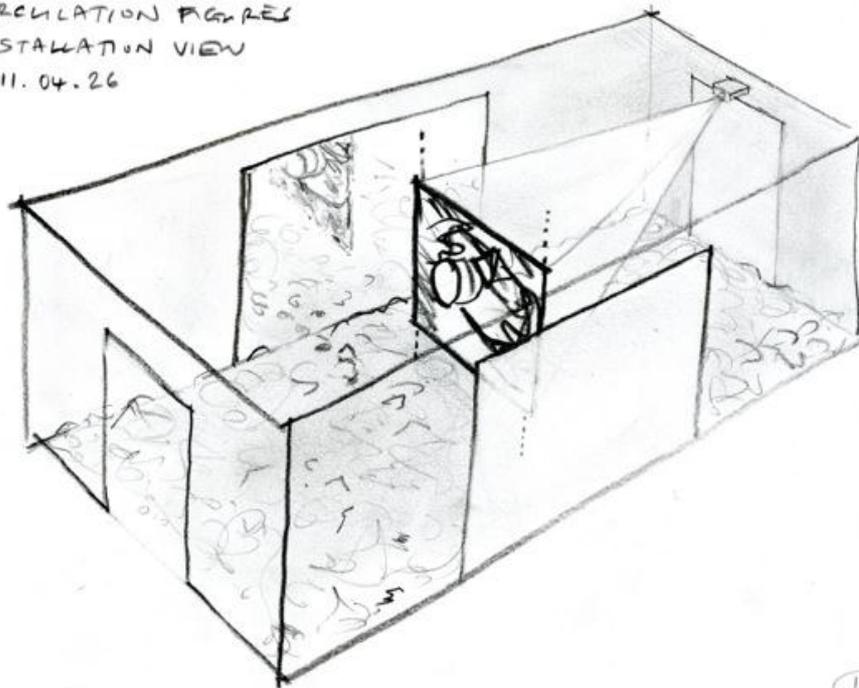


Fig. 4: Anthony McCall, *Circulation Figures* (1972/2011), installation view at the Museu de Serralves, Porto, Portugal, 2011, image courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 5: Anthony McCall, *Circulation Figures* (1972/2011), installation view at the Museu de Serralves, Porto, Portugal, 2011, image courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 6: Anthony McCall, *Circulation Figures* (1972/2011), installation view at the Museu de Serralves, Porto, Portugal, 2011, image courtesy of the artist.

Notes

- ¹ George Baker, 'Film Beyond Its Limits' in *Grey Room*, Vol.25, (Autumn 2006), 92-125, (p.108).
- ² Anthony McCall, E-mail conversation with the author, (2012). McCall had not predicted that upon entering the space, individuals would begin to take pictures (and more than likely films, too) of themselves within the space, therefore extending the piece ever further and circulating the fundamental ideas of the work.
- ³ Jonathan Walley, Anthony McCall - Early Film Work, *LuxOnline*, (2005) <[http://www.luxonline.org.uk/artists/anthony_mccall/essay\(2\).html](http://www.luxonline.org.uk/artists/anthony_mccall/essay(2).html)>, [accessed 7th May 2014].
- ⁴ Catherine Fowler, 'Into the Light: Re-considering Off-frame and Off-screen Space in Gallery Films', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 6:3 (2008), 253-267.
- ⁵ Christian Metz, 'Photography and Fetish' in *October*, Vol.34 (Autumn 1985), 81-90, (p.87).
- ⁶ Metz, *Photography and Fetish*, p.85.
- ⁷ Chrissie Iles, *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977*, exh. cat., New York, Whitney Museum of American Art, (2001), p.65.
- ⁸ *Off the Wall/Fora da Parede* stemmed from a two part exhibition first displayed at The Whitney Museum of American Art in 2010. The first part, titled *Off the Wall: Part 1 – Thirty Performative Actions*, 1st July – 19th September 2010, focused on how the walls (or frame) of a gallery transformed performative actions, as audiences were urged to question how they recognised and therefore took-part in the performance itself. The second part focused on the work of Trisha Brown: *Off the Wall: Part 2 – Seven Works by Trisha Brown* (30th September – 3rd October 2010). *Off the Wall/Fora da Parede* was built on the legacies of the first two exhibitions at The Whitney and accumulated the work of over 100 artists, including Anthony McCall. It was within this reconceptualised exhibition that *Circulation Figures* was first staged.
- ⁹ Daniel Kunitz, "'Off the Wall": A Q&A with Whitney Curator Chrissie Iles' on *Blouin Art Info*, (13th July 2010), <<http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/35195/off-the-wall-a-qa-with-whitney-curator-chrissie-iles/>>, [accessed January 2014].
- ¹⁰ Philip Auslander, 'The Performativity of Performance Documentation' in *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol.84, (2006), 1-10, (pp.1-2).
- ¹¹ Auslander, *The Performativity...*, p. 3.
- ¹² Anthony McCall, interview by Gautam Dasgupta, 'Interview: Anthony McCall: Formalist Cinema and Politics', *Performing Arts Journal*, No.3, (1977) 51-61, (p.52).
- ¹³ Anthony McCall, et al. 'Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art' in *October*, Vol. 104, (Spring 2003), 71-96, (p.75).
- ¹⁴ McCall, *Round Table...* p.81
- ¹⁵ McCall, *Round Table...* p.76
- ¹⁶ Graham Ellard & Stephen Johnstone, 'Anthony McCall' in *BOMB Magazine*, Vol.97, (Fall 2006) <<http://bombsite.com/issues/97/articles/2841>>, [accessed April 2012].
- ¹⁷ Ellard & Johnstone, *Anthony McCall*.
- ¹⁸ David Grubbs had previously produced the soundtrack for McCall's earlier work *Leaving (With Two-Minute Silence)* (2009), and has worked with other visual artists such as Stephen Prina, Angela Bulloch, and Cosima von Bonin.
- ¹⁹ David Grubbs, E-mail conversation with the author, (2012).
- ²⁰ Grubbs, 2012.
- ²¹ Jonathan Walley, 'An Interview with Anthony McCall' in *The Velvet Light Trap*, No.54, (Fall 2004), p.69
- ²² Iles, (2001), p.34
- ²³ Fowler, *Into the Light*, p.256.
- ²⁴ Fowler, *Into the Light*, p.256.
- ²⁵ Fowler, *Into the Light*, p.254.
- ²⁶ Anthony McCall, 'Wall Text' for *Circulation Figures* (1972/2011), sent to the author via e-mail, (2011).
- ²⁷ Metz, *Photography and Fetish...*, p.86
- ²⁸ Metz, *Photography and Fetish...*, p.87
- ²⁹ Fowler, *Into the Light*, p.259.
- ³⁰ McCall, *Wall Text*, (2011)
- ³¹ McCall, *Wall Text*, (2011)
- ³² Alison Butler, 'A Deictic Turn: Space and Location in Contemporary Gallery Film and Video Installation', in *Screen*, 51:4, (2010), 305-330, (p.306).

³³ McCall, *Round Table...* p.88

³⁴ McCall, *Wall Text*, (2011)

³⁵ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) p.115.

³⁶ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p.115.

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Biography

Helen Wainwright is undertaking a PhD in Art History at The University of Nottingham, and is concerned with reinterpreting the work of Antony McCall, Gordon Matta Clark and Stephen Shore in relation to the terms 'pictorial', 'sculptural' and 'cinematic'.