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Curating the Godardian institution: agency and critique in film and contemporary art

JENNY CHAMARETTE 

In the final scene of *Visages Villages/Faces Places* (2017), then-octogenarian filmmaker Agnès Varda and artist JR make the long train journey from Varda's Paris home to visit Jean-Luc Godard in Rolle, on the north-west shores of Lake Geneva in Switzerland. Godard is not at home when they arrive; instead a cryptic message is taped to his door, addressed to Varda, one of his oldest friends. Upon reading it she bursts into tears, calling Godard a filthy rat. The extent of Godard's belligerence is now recorded for posterity in the cinematic legacy of one of his closest peers, who died in 2019. Godard's abstruse, absented presence in the film is a typical gesture, and his attraction as *provocateur* for auteur-led cinephilic film audiences is an enduring vestige of European film cultures.¹ Significantly overshadowing the work of peers like Varda, who gained significant international acclaim only in the last decade of her life, Godard continues to be described as a major figure in the western film studies canon. Whether invested in as a biographical entity,² 'audio-visual thinker' or 'film essayist',³ or foremost (anti)canonical figure in film studies,⁴ Godard's cultural capital and polemical style are long-held perspectives in film scholarship.

This essay acknowledges the values attributed to Godard's cultural production, while offering an alternative analytical framework for his first and only installed moving-image exhibition, *Voyage(s) en utopie – Jean-Luc Godard, 1946–2006: A la Recherche d'un théorème perdu (Voyage(s) in Utopia [...] In Search of a Lost Theorem)*. Evaluating

1 Michael Temple' describes it as 'a faithful reflection [...] of a certain tendency in British film culture at the end of the 1960s. Cinéophile, progressive, European, intellectual, metropolitan', in the foreword to Richard Roud, *Godard*, 3rd edn (London: British Film Institute, 2010), p. vii.

2 Antoine de Baecque, *Godard: biographie*, Collection Pluriel (Paris: Pluriel, 2011).

3 Rick Warner, 'Godard's stereoscopic essay: thinking in and with', in Seung-hoon Jeong and Jeremi Szaniawski (eds), *The Global Auteur: The Politics of Authorship in 21st Century Cinema* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 61; Rick Warner, *Godard and the Essay Film: A Form That Thinks* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2018).

4 Susan Bennett, 'Godard and Lear: trashing the can(n)on', *Theatre Survey*, vol. 39, no. 1 (1998), pp. 7–19.

archival evidence alongside certain tendencies within this controversial exhibition's critical reception, I employ contemporary art histories and feminist reappraisals of Godard's authorship to re-examine *Voyage(s)*' capacity for institutional critique. I show how archival and art-historical analysis of *Voyage(s)* and its subsequent scholarly reception reveals significant tensions more broadly relevant to film studies, as the field fluctuates uneasily between 20th-century art and film histories, modernist aesthetics and cinematic exhibition, and 21st-century models of interdisciplinary recontextualization, pluralist historiographies and canonical reappraisal. By acknowledging these tensions, I reconsider one of film studies' most tenaciously defended auteur figures, not as an author, artist or curator but as an institution, ripe for critique itself.

Voyage(s) ran from 11 May to 14 August 2006 in the South Gallery of the Pompidou Centre in Paris. The exhibition was the result of a lengthy, ultimately dissolved collaboration between Godard (who positioned himself sometimes as the artist and at others as a 'provider of services'),⁵ the Pompidou Centre, and the exhibition's commissioner Dominique Païni. Païni resigned six months before *Voyage(s)* opened, and has written extensively about his catastrophic experience of the project,⁶ which began in 2002 and cost around €1.8 million. Documents in the Pompidou Archives, dated 28 February 2006, 8 March 2006 and 13 March 2006, confirm that between 2 December 2003 and 15 February 2005 (the latter date some three months prior to the exhibition's opening), expenditure of the 'co-production' between Godard's production company Peripheria and the Pompidou Centre was €1,312,095.21, with 30% of those costs borne by the former and 70% by the latter. Final costs for the *Voyage(s)* exhibition came to an additional €481,142, split more or less equally between the two organizations; thus the total expenditure over the collaboration was weighted at around 65:35 to the Pompidou Centre and Peripheria respectively. Although it would be difficult to trace budgetary allocations at a granular level, according to the Pompidou's accounts (which normally expire after 10 years), approximately 60% of total Pompidou funding comes directly from public funds, the rest deriving from sponsorships, donations and legacies.⁷

Despite receiving 1200 visitors daily, the critical reception of *Voyage(s)* was ambivalent. The project was conflict-riven, and the failure of the first unrealized 'Projet 1', otherwise known as *Collage(s) de France: archéologie du cinéma d'après JLG* (*Collage(s) of France: Archaeology of Cinema According to JLG*), has been extensively documented.⁸ Curiously there remains proportionally more audiovisual and sculptural material in circulation relating to the unrealized *Collage(s) de France* than there are physical remainders of *Voyage(s)*, the majority of whose objects and artefacts were donated to the charity Emmaüs at the exhibition's close.⁹ In 2018 the architectural maquettes initially developed for *Collage(s)* were exhibited at the Miguel Abreu Gallery in New York; film footage by Anne-Marie Miéville in 2005 of the nine

5 Correspondence from Peripheria to Pompidou, 11 April 2006. Archives Centre Pompidou, box 2008011/123

6 De Baecque, *Godard*; Daniel Fairfax, 'Montage(s) of a disaster: Voyage(s) En Utopie by Jean-Luc Godard', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2015), pp. 28–29, fn. 23.

7 Archives Centre Pompidou, boxes 2008011/123, 2009051/005 and 2018026/003. 2018 budgetary figures for the Pompidou Centre can be found at <<http://mediation.centrepompidou.fr/documentation/bilandactivite2018/bilan-activite-2018.pdf>> accessed 31 October 2021.

8 De Baecque, *Godard*; Michael Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013); Anne Marquez, *Godard, le dos au musée: histoire d'une exposition* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2014); Fairfax, 'Montage(s) of a disaster'.

9 Pompidou Archives, box 2008065/010. See also Marquez, *Godard, le dos au musée*, pp. 251–54.

- 10 'Memories of Utopia: Jean-Luc Godard's "Collages de France" Models', *Miguel Abreu Gallery*, 14 January 2018, <<http://miguelabreugallery.com/exhibitions/memories-of-utopia/>>; Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, *Reportage Amateur (Maquette Expo)*, amateur footage (2006); John Bloomfield, 'Godard as curator: Le Désordre Exposé', 7 December 2014, <<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/film/godard-curator-le-desordre-expose>> both accessed 2 September 2021.
- 11 *Jean-Luc Godard, Le Désordre Exposé* (Céline Gailleurd and Olivier Bohler, 2012), <<https://nocturnesproductions.net/documentaires-documentaries/adiou-godard-ou-lart-selon-jean-luc/>>; François Albera, 'Jean-Luc Godard, le désordre exposé (Céline Gailleurd & Olivier Bohler)', *Le Blog documentaire*, 24 March 2013, <<https://leblogdocumentaire.fr/jean-luc-godard-le-desordre-expose-celine-gailleurd-olivier-bohler/>> both accessed 2 September 2021.
- 12 Alex Greenberger, 'Jean-Luc Godard to stage exhibition version of his latest film, "The Image Book"', *ARTnews*, 11 May 2018, <<http://www.artnews.com/2018/05/11/jean-luc-godard-stage-exhibition-version-latest-film-image-book/>>; Elsa Keslassy, 'Jean-Luc Godard to adapt "The Image Book" into traveling exhibit; star in "A Vendredi Robinson" (EXCLUSIVE)', *Variety*, 10 May 2018, <<https://variety.com/2018/film/global/jean-luc-godard-to-adapt-the-image-book-into-traveling-exhibit-star-in-a-vendredi-robinson-exclusive-1202805535/>> both accessed 2 September 2021.
- 13 'Memories of Utopia'.
- 14 Sam Rohdie, 'Deux ou trois choses ...', *Critical Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 3 (2009), pp. 85–99; de Baecque, *Godard*, Adrian Martin, 'Godard in the gallery: story of a ruination', *Vertigo*, no. 30 (2012), <https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/issue-30-spring-2012-godard-is/godard-in-the-gallery-story-of-a-ruination/> accessed 2 September 2021;

original maquettes was screened in London at Tate Modern in 2014,¹⁰ and a 2012 documentary by Céline Gailleurd and Olivier Bohler about *Collage(s)* and the subsequent actual exhibition was broadcast in 2013 on Ciné+, an arm of French television company Canal+, and premiered at Tate Modern in 2014.¹¹ While *Voyage(s)* itself may be long buried, its traces and ramifications remain in the Godardian popular imaginary. In late 2018, news reports emerged of another 'interactive' exhibition planned by Godard based on his film *Le Livre d'image*.¹² Bolstered by *Voyage(s)*' cultural significance at the Pompidou, the architectural maquettes have supported claims that Godard is 'one of the greatest visual intelligences at work and one of the most significant artists of our times'.¹³

Both scholarship and the citational/reproductive systems of *Voyage(s)* cross-reference practices of institutional and museological critique. Sam Rohdie, Antoine de Baecque, Alex Munt, Adrian Martin, Michael Witt, Anne Marquez and Daniel Fairfax have all examined *Voyage(s)* as contemporary installation art, interpreting its symbolic structures as a seamless extension of Godard's earlier moving-image projects.¹⁴ My analysis is accordingly informed by Institutional Critique, a political-aesthetic strategy and eponymous mode of contemporary arts practice contextualized in art history for over 40 years,¹⁵ or longer if extended to the early and mid 20th-century avant gardes regularly discussed in relation to Godard (André Malraux, André Breton, Marcel Duchamp). My argument therefore combines archival research, technical reconstructions of *Voyage(s)* and feminist art-historical critique to question Godard's attributions as a visual artist and a cultural/curatorial figurehead; thus my interpretation necessarily decentres Godard as *Voyage(s)*' auteur/curator figure in order to explore the work's critical potential as institutional and institutionalizing discourse.

In the first instance I provide historical re-engagement with the exhibition's construction and disposal. Drawing on documents released over the last 20 years to the Pompidou Centre Archive, along with individual and collective visitor accounts, I examine *Voyage(s)*' material qualities as multimedia installation(s). In doing so I challenge existing scholarly claims about *Voyage(s)*' aesthetic and interpretive strategies and visitor engagement. In the second part of the essay I examine in detail scholarly claims predicated on creative agency and critical practice. While the works of *Voyage(s)*, its assembly and curation have been widely attributed to Godard, my archival research shows the extent to which agential control of the exhibition's conception and creation was substantially redistributed, reopening an ambiguous space for agential attribution in scholarly contexts. Deploying tactics of destabilizing authorship initiated by feminist-inflected scholarship on Godard, I question discourses that recuperate the exhibition's operational difficulties as acts of strategic failure to supply ongoing narratives about Godard's creative innovation. In the final section I examine what critical acuity can be salvaged from *Voyage(s)*' history if it is understood as

Witt, Jean-Luc Godard, *Cinema Historian*, Marquez, Godard, *le dos au musée*; Fairfax, 'Montage(s) of a disaster'.

- 15 Andrea Fraser, 'From the critique of institutions to an institution of critique', *Artforum*, vol. 44, no. 1 (2005), pp. 100–05.

- 16 Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); So Mayer, *Political Animals: The New Feminist Cinema* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Girish Shambu, 'For a new cinephilia', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 72, no. 3 (2019), pp. 32–34.

- 17 Wasson, *Museum Movies*, p. 622.

- 18 Antoine de Baecque, 'Godard in the museum', in Michael Temple, James S. Williams and Michael Witt (eds), *For Ever Godard: The Work of Jean-Luc Godard 1950 to the Present* (London: Black Dog, 2007), pp. 118–19.

Institutional Critique, or failing that as institutional discourse. Reconsidering *Voyage(s)* in the light of contemporary artists of Institutional Critique, I examine how an overdependence upon Godard as elevated agent undermines *Voyage(s)*' capacity for critique, reducing it to institutionalizing pastiche.

My analysis interrogates the disciplinary standpoints and ideological tendencies of scholarship centred primarily on this key auteur figure. It is not a favourable reading of *Voyage(s)*, nor of the discursive tendencies pursuant in some of its scholarship. Nonetheless, the ramifications of this type and object of analysis are more widespread than *Voyage(s)* itself, whose history might be all but forgotten by even the most prominent Godard scholars. My argument speaks to tensions already raised by scholars of 'The New Cinephilia', such as Girish Shambu and So Mayer, who seek more enriching approaches to film studies beyond canonical Anglo-European films and filmmakers as primary vehicles of value and meaning.¹⁶ By contextualizing the critical and cultural formations of Godardian discourses in relation to *Voyage(s)*, I demonstrate the critical benefits of a more inclusive understanding of film exhibition (the site-specific display of film in non-theatrical and theatrical settings) as a curatorial, museal and aesthetic strategy, as well as a cultural and industrial practice. As non-theatrical film scholars like Haidee Wasson have identified, the dynamics between the moving image and the museum are elastic.¹⁷ In parallel with interdisciplinary research by Wasson and others, I widen *Voyage(s)*' contexts, situating it as a unique if distinctly problematic set of material cinematic topographies, ideologies and cultural politics, associated with contemporary art, curation, exhibition, material cultures and museological debates. These complex tensions revealed through film, media and the museum are borne out not only in their successful integration, but also in moments of dysfunction, as I now discuss in the contexts and detail of *Voyage(s)*.

Godard's attitudes towards museum institutions, ideologies and politics are complex, often contradictory, and well-documented, as de Baecque explains:

Museums are represented [in Godard's films] as institutional, cultural and ideological spaces [as well as] an imaginary site that can encourage and nurture editing, which is key to Godard's cinema [... Museums are] the most authentic and moving embodiment of History [while at the same time also] derisory sites of great learning, which is inherited, defunct and conservative [...] Museums displace, lock away and appropriate artworks. They are an imposture [...] The traditional museum is, for Godard, a large-scale abduction of art.¹⁸

Museum critique is a sustained, if fluctuating concern in Godard's filmmaking. In the oft-cited 27-second sequence from *Bande à Part* (1964), in which the young protagonists Franz, Odile and Arthur race through the Louvre, the scene's visual emphasis on the exuberant, accelerated expenditure of leisure time prefigures postmodern tropes of

- 19 Steve Jacobs, 'Strange exhibitions: museums and art galleries in film', in Andre Jansson and Amanda Lagerkvist (eds), *Strange Spaces: Explorations into Mediated Obscurity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 299.
- 20 André Malraux, *Psychologie de l'Art: Le Musée Imaginaire* (Paris: Albert Skira, 1947).
- 21 Cyril Neyrat, 'The old place', trans. Simon Cropper, *Vertigo*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2006), p. 12.
- 22 Theodor Adorno, 'Valéry Proust Museum', in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber Nicholson (London: Neville Spearman, 1967), p. 175.
- 23 Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Sharon Macdonald (ed.), *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998); Peter Vergo (ed.), *The New Museology* (London: Reaktion Books, 1989).
- 24 James S. Williams, 'The signs amongst us: Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*', *Screen*, vol. 40, no. 3 (1999), pp. 306–15.
- 25 Jacques Rancière, 'La Sainte et l'héritière: à propos des *Histoire(s) du cinéma*', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 537 (1999), pp. 58–61.
- 26 Isabelle Frances McNeill, *Memory and the Moving Image: French Film in the Digital Era* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian*; Warner, *Godard and the Essay Film*.
- 27 Many thanks to Michael Witt for drawing this to my attention. See also Michael Witt, 'À la recherche de *Sauve la vie* (qui peut) de Jean-Luc Godard', *1895*, no. 81 (2017), pp. 71–102.
- 28 Rebecca J. DeRoo, *Agnès Varda between Film, Photography and Art* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), pp. 115–42.
- 29 Jenny Chamarette, 'The disappearing work: Chantal Akerman and phenomenologies of the ephemeral', *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2 (2013), pp. 347–56.

consumption and entertainment within the museum.¹⁹ This irreverent treatment of museum spaces early in Godard's career is more loosely juxtapositional than dialectical, though from the 1980s onwards his films – *Passion* (1982) and *The Old Place* (with Anne-Marie Miéville, 1998), for example – turn towards iconic painting in art museums. His cinematic museums comment self-reflexively on the politics and ethics of display and exhibition within a Eurocentric, predominantly metropolitan French framework. In this respect, Malraux's 'imaginary museum'²⁰ of visual citation, juxtaposition and montage is a useful comparison for Godard's citational rhetoric,²¹ as is Theodor Adorno's essay 'Valéry Proust Museum', in which 'museums are like the family sepulchres of works of art. They testify to the neutralization of culture.'²² The 'Godardian' approach thus aligns with mid 20th-century strains of modernist European social critique, which lambast the conservative and undemocratic drives of early 20th- and late 19th-century European public art museums towards acquisition, preservation and the total command of sources and discourses of knowledge. Nonetheless, in the later 20th and early 21st centuries, significant transformations in museum policy, engagement, education, architectures, collections, acquisitions, preservation policies and displays have diminished somewhat the critical charge of these earlier museological models.²³

The background to *Voyage(s)*' conceptual aesthetics is largely attributed to Godard's video essay work, particularly *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–98). Scholars have described Godard's critique in this context as a commentary on, variously, the role of cinema in relation to other visual art forms,²⁴ cinema's incorporation or disruption of art,²⁵ and the role of film/cinema in storing, enumerating and connecting art works via montage, collage and citation.²⁶ In *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and earlier montage essay films *Sauve la vie (qui peut)* (1981) and *Voyage à travers un film (Sauve qui peut [la vie])* (1981), Godard's filmmaking interrogates unstable processes of cinematic archiving, exhibition and display.²⁷ *Histoire(s)* indeed shares characteristics with *Voyage(s)*: an episodic structure, dense juxtapositions, thematic explorations of 20th-century history, and cinema as an art form recording and responding to that history.

Voyage(s) took place during a groundswell of installed moving images in European museums, by individuals more often pigeonholed as filmmakers than visual artists: Varda,²⁸ Chantal Akerman (who had made moving-image installations since the mid 1990s),²⁹ Abbas Kiarostami, Victor Erice³⁰ and José Luis Guerín.³¹ This 'cinema in the museum' phenomenon was recognized in April 2006 in a dedicated *Cahiers du cinéma* special issue, which cited these figures alongside Pedro Almodóvar, Tsai Ming Liang and others as representing a new transition of cinema into museums, or vice versa, as museums became producer-commissioners.³² Paris was a particularly auspicious location for filmmakers making this crossover into non-theatrical spaces.³³ However, unlike these other exhibitions of similar prominence, location

Fig. 1. Maquette, Installation view.
Voyage(s) en utopie – Jean-Luc
 Godard, 1946-2006: *A la Recherche
 d'un théorème perdu*, Jean-Luc
 Godard, 2006, Pompidou Centre.
 Reproduced with permission of
 Michael Witt.



Fig. 2. Opening exhibition sign,
Voyage(s) en utopie. Jean-Luc
 Godard, 2006, Pompidou Centre.
 Reproduced with permission of the
 Archives Centre Pompidou.

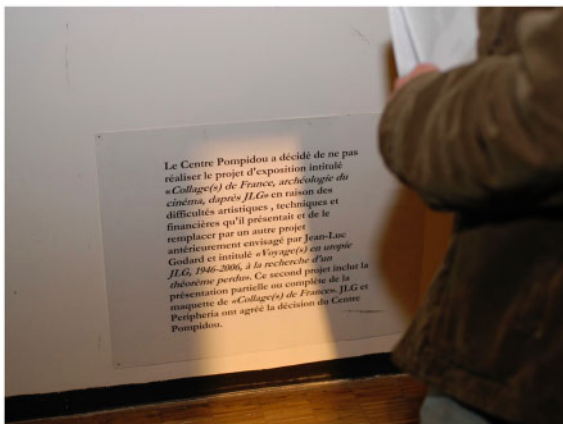
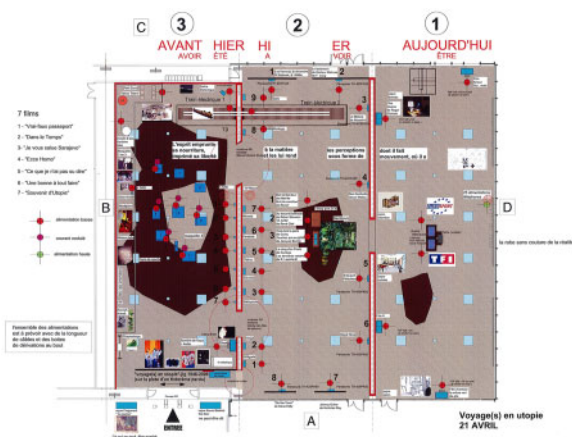


Fig. 3. Diagrammatic layout of
Voyage(s) en utopie. Reproduced
 with permission of the Archives
 Centre Pompidou.



- 30 Jean-Philippe Tessé, 'Kiarostami/Érice à Barcelone', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 611 (2006), pp. 32–41.
- 31 Abigail Loxham, 'An encounter with ethics and documentary images in the exhibition "Totes Les Cartes"/"Todas Las Cartas"/"All the Letters"', *Studies in Documentary Film*, vol. 7, no. 3 (2013), pp. 295–306.
- 32 Jean-Michel Frodon, 'Le cinéma au musée: le grand tournant', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 611 (2006), pp. 8–9.
- 33 For more detail see Kelley Conway, 'The new wave in the museum: Varda, Godard and the multi-media installation', *Contemporary French Civilization*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2008), pp. 195–217.
- 34 While the maquettes were exhibited in New York in 2018, the *Voyage(s)* guest book was exhibited by artist Anthony Huberman in his exhibition *Hello goodbye thank you*, 26 July–1 September 2007, at the artist-co-operative Castillo/corrales gallery, Paris. Marquez, *Godard, le dos au musée*, p. 380, fn. 223.
- 35 Martin, 'Godard in the gallery'; Fairfax, 'Montage(s) of a disaster', p. 27.
- 36 'Le Centre Pompidou a décidé de ne pas réaliser le projet d'exposition intitulé "Collage(s) de France, archéologie du cinéma d'après JLG" en raison des difficultés artistiques qu'il présentait (les mentions "techniques et financières" sont barrées) et de le remplacer par un autre programme intitulé "Voyage(s) en utopie" (my translation). Jean-Luc Douin, 'Godard par lui-même au Centre Pompidou', *Le Monde*, 11 May 2006, <https://www.lemonde.fr/cinema/article/2006/05/11/godard-par-lui-meme-au-centre-pompidou_770651_3476.html> accessed 31 August 2021. See also de Baecque, *Godard*, p. 805.
- 37 Signed contract dated 18 April 2006, Archives Centre Pompidou, box 2018026/003.
- 38 Document dated 10 July 2006, Archives Centre Pompidou, box 2009051/005.

and period, *Voyage(s)* did not travel after its first full instantiation, notwithstanding the reappearance of the maquettes in 2018.³⁴

Voyage(s) notoriously substituted a larger, more costly and incomplete project entitled *Collage(s) de France*, a portmanteau term combining collage technique and the highly regarded Collège de France, the institution at which luminaries such as Jacques Lacan and Claude Lévi-Strauss delivered guest lectures, and from which Godard was rejected in 1998.³⁵ In the first and second 'room' spaces of *Voyages en utopie*, architectural maquettes representing this grander but unrealized nine-room project were displayed as exhibition objects, alongside seven or eight others fabricated by designer Jean Gabel (figure 1). The maquettes documented design work not subsequently implemented in the full-scale exhibition: their artefactual presence in *Voyage(s)* constituted an interpretive act, bringing three-dimensional sketches of the imaginary exhibition, *Collages*, into the realized *Voyage(s)*. As already noted, their tangible form and continued circulation have since fortified popular discourses about Godard's exhibitionary practice, despite their relatively small constituency within *Voyage(s)*, and their inclusion of only one moving-image work.

The entrance to the *Voyage(s)* exhibition infamously foregrounded the substitution of *Collage(s)* to *Voyage(s)* via its entry-point text:

The Centre Pompidou has decided not to carry out the exhibition entitled 'Collage(s) de France: archaeology of cinema according to JLG' due to the artistic difficulties it presented [the words 'technical' and 'financial' were struck through with black marker pen, but still visible and legible beneath] and to replace it with another programme entitled 'Voyage(s) in Utopia'.³⁶

This introductory sign has been extensively reproduced in popular press and scholarship (figure 2). But archival research also indicates that the text replicates near-verbatim the legally binding 'preamble' to the final and replacement contract for *Voyage(s)*, signed 18 April 2006 by Godard, his production company Peripheria, the Pompidou Centre's legal department, and the general director of the Pompidou, Bruno Racine.³⁷ From the outset, therefore, legal conflict and resolution became tacit and explicit interpretive tools for *Voyage(s)*. Photographic evidence from the opening night suggests that the score-through described in *Le Monde* took place during the period of the exhibition's opening and not before. Godard and his representatives regularly visited the exhibition to examine the condition of works, making numerous adjustments and sending a long list of complaints about their working order to the Pompidou.³⁸ The score-through and initials alongside the panel were therefore most likely a direct intervention from Godard, in staged contravention of the legally binding wording. These issues are typical of the evolving technical history of *Voyage(s)*' installation and demounting, which make it particularly difficult to identify its final instantiation and creative attributions.

Films / œuvres audiovisuelles			
Travée 3	titre	auteur	durée
	Vrai-faux passeport	Jean-Luc Godard	55mn25
	Dans le temps	Anne-Marie Miéville	4mn15
	Je vous salue, Sarajevo	Jean-Luc Godard	2mn24
	Ecce Homo	Jean-Luc Godard	2mn06
	Ce que je n'ai pas su dire	Anne-Marie Miéville	2mn35
	Une bonne à tout faire	Jean-Luc Godard	8mn20
	Souvenir d'utopie	Anne-Marie Miéville	6mn15
Travée 2	titre	auteur	durée
	Bob le Flambeur	Jean-Pierre Melville	
	La nuit du carrefour	Jean Renoir	
	Au hasard, Balthazar	Robert Bresson	
	14 juillet	René Clair	
	Les trois font la paire	Sacha Guitry	
	Touchez pas au grisbi	Jacques Becker	
	Le sang d'un poète	Jean Cocteau	
	Les dernières vacances	Roger Leenhardt	
	On the town	Stanley Donen, Gene Kelly	
	Arsenal	Dovjenko	
	Savat Nova	Serguei Paradjanov	
	Johnny Guitar	Nicholas Ray	
	Les hommes, le dimanche	Robert Siodmak	
	Le testament du Docteur Mabuse	Fritz Lang	
	Le Messie	Roberto Rossellini	
	Don Quichotte	Orson Welles	
Travée 1	titre	auteur	durée
	Eagle one	Roger Corman	
	La même vert-de-gris	Bernard Borderie	
	film x		
	Oui ... mais	Yves Lavendier	

Les 7 films de la travée 3 ne sont pas diffusables dans la rétrospective, excepté "Vrai Faux Passeport" et "Je vous salue Sarajevo"

Les 9 extraits de films/JLG de la travée 2 sont au choix et bon vouloir de JLG.

Fig. 4. List of films for *Voyage(s) en Utopie* dated 18 April 2006.
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Centre Pompidou.

- 39 Archives Centre Pompidou, box 2018026/003.
- 40 Before Yesterday (To Have Been) – 3; Yesterday (To Have) – 2; Today (To Be) – 1 (my translation).
- 41 Martin, 'Godard in the gallery'; Matthieu Laurette, 'Review: Jean-Luc Godard', *Frieze Magazine*, no. 102 (2006), <<https://frieze.com/article/jean-luc-godard>> accessed 31 August 2021
- 42 Alex Munt, 'Jean-Luc Godard Exhibition: Travell(s) in Utopia, Jean-Luc Godard 1946–2006, In Search of a Lost Theorem', *Senses of Cinema*, no. 40 (2006), <<http://sensesofcinema.com/2006/the-godard-museum/godard-travels-in-utopia/>> accessed 31 August 2021.

The three-room installation of *Voyage(s)* fully occupied the 1100 square metres of Galerie Sud in the Pompidou. Each room was enigmatically titled and enumerated by enlarged digital reproductions of Godard's distinctive handwriting, implemented by the exhibition's chief architect and scenographer, Nathalie Crinière.³⁹ Hier (Avoir) – 3; Avant Hier (Avoir été) – 2; Aujourd'hui (Être) – 1.⁴⁰ Minor discrepancies between accounts suggest that the precise layout of objects displayed in these rooms shifted, even during the exhibition's opening.⁴¹ Nonetheless, material from the Pompidou archives presents several diagrams, the last of which is dated 21 April (figure 3).⁴² Seven new commissioned films are inventoried, of which four are by Godard; the other three list Miéville as creator. The remaining exhibited films were by canonical, mainly Euro-western male auteur filmmakers, and shown in excerpt, though their finalization was the subject of some difficulty (figure 4).

The exhibition was originally due to open on 26 April 2006, but was first delayed until 3 May and then finalized at 10 May 2006. As late as mid April 2006, however, the final film list for *Voyage(s)* was not established, nor had requisite permissions been cleared. Last-minute

substitutions replaced Roger Corman's direct-to-video war film *The Hunt for Eagle One* (2006) with Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* (2001), and Yves Lavendier's *Oui, Mais ...* (2001) with André Techiné's *Barocco* (1976). Archival correspondence refers to difficulties in obtaining screening rights to these works for public exhibition: for *Histoire(s) du cinéma* the Fair Use argument had retrospectively offered Godard some protection from legal action by image rights holders, but this did not extend to film exhibition in the publicly funded space of the Pompidou.⁴³ One of *Voyage(s)*' early scholars, Alex Munt, produced a useful layout sketch of paintings and films displayed as he saw them in 2006, with other supports, sculptural and non-filmic objects removed (figures 5 and 6).

Supports for the films were embedded in or hung on the exhibition's walls, stacked against them, or propped on household furniture. Technical supports listed in the final contract of services include flat screen televisions, box AV displays, small colour monitors and LCD screens, as well as up to 30 mobile phones capable of receiving and transmitting television broadcasts. Some phones were installed (figure 7), but it is unclear whether these were operational for the exhibition's duration.⁴⁴ Unlike the accompanying comprehensive Godard retrospective exhibited in the Pompidou's cinema auditorium, *Voyage(s)* itself did not contain projection – not even in the small scale model of a projector and screen, into which a tiny iPod screen had been inserted, in one maquette. If a key element of the materiality of cinema is screen projection, then this was manifestly absent from *Voyage(s)*. This is resonant with Godard's focus on, for example, the reproducibility of the digital/digitized video image in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, but nonetheless contrasts significantly with the investment in analogue materials in the rest of the exhibition. *Voyage(s)* contained excerpts of digitally screened film materials, made to appear as if they had been installed without professional intervention, in a style executed faithfully by Crinière's interior architecture team. Unfinished construction materials, temporary structures, esoteric objects, amateur and DIY effects and hobbyist artefacts (figure 8) were also installed to Godard's specification. Despite their haphazard impression, these assemblages were precise technical implementations, indexing the materiality of making, waste and by-products, some of which was discernible in the original maquettes.

Paper copies of plans, annotations and poster replicas of artworks were wheat-pasted to part-painted installation walls. Remnants of cloth, dustcovers and partially completed floor coverings littered the space. Cabling, pencil marks and tears in the stud walls simultaneously exposed the structures of the gallery, and synthesized rough construction. Scaffolding lay on its side in the final room of the exhibition, while electric cables looped from the ceiling struts of the gallery (figure 9). A model train set, framed by discontinuous wooden fencing, shuttled between rooms labelled 'Hier' and 'Avant-Hier' (figure 10). Featuring in other Godard works, and with symbolic associations of childhood and

⁴³ For further discussion of Godard's complex relationship to copyright law and image reproduction, see Warner, *Godard and the Essay Film*, pp. 65–70.

⁴⁴ Facsimile of contract, dated and signed 18 April 2006, Appendix 2. Archives Centre Pompidou, box 2018026/003.

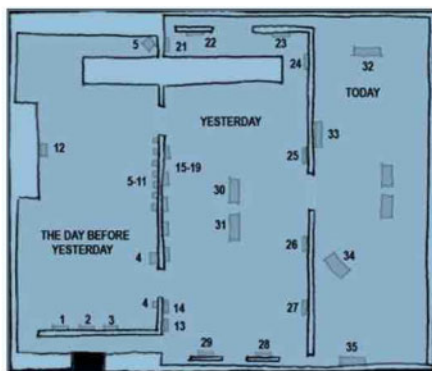


Fig. 5. Sketch layout of *Voyage(s) en utopie*. Reproduced with permission of Alex Munt.

THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY

1. Nicolas De Staël (1914-1955), *Les Musiciens, souvenir de Sidney Bechet*, 1953
2. Hans Hartung (1904-1989), *P. 1960-112*, 1960
3. Henri Matisse (1869-1954), *La Blouse roumaine*, 1940
4. Goya
5. JLG, *Vrai faux passeport*, 55'25
6. AMM, *Dans le temps*, 4'15
7. JLG, *Je vous salue Sarajevo*, 2'24
8. JLG, *Ecce Homo*, 2'06
9. AMM, *Ce que je n'ai pas su dire*, 2'35
10. JLG, *Une bonne à tout faire*, 8'20
11. AMM, *Souvenir d'utopie*, 6'15
12. JLG & AMM, *The Old Place*, 1998 (excerpt)

YESTERDAY

13. *One Parallel Movie*, 1971, Donn Alan Pennebaker (excerpt)
14. *Week End*, 1967, JLG (excerpt)
15. *One Plus One*, 1968, JLG (excerpt)
16. *JLG/JLG: Autoportrait de décembre*, 1995, JLG (excerpt)
17. *Nous sommes tous encore ici*, 1997, AMM (excerpt)
18. *One Plus One*, 1968, JLG (excerpt)
19. *Le Vent d'est*, 1969, JLG & Jean-Pierre Gorin (excerpt)
20. *JLG/JLG: Autoportrait de décembre*, 1995, JLG (excerpt)
21. *Après la réconciliation*, 2000, AMM (excerpt)
22. *Les Hommes le dimanche*, 1931, Robert Siodmak & Edgar G. Ulmer (excerpt)

23. *Le Testament du docteur Mabuse*, 1932, Fritz Lang (excerpt)
24. *Le Messie*, 1976, Roberto Rossellini (excerpt)
25. *Don Quixote*, 1992, Orson Welles (excerpt)
26. *Arsenal*, 1929, Alexandre Dovzhenko (excerpt)
27. *Sayat Nova*, 1968, Sergei Paradjanov (excerpts)
28. *Johnny Guitar*, 1953, Nicholas Ray (excerpt)
29. *On the Town*, 1949, Gene Kelly & Stanley Donen (excerpt)
30. *Les Dernières vacances*, 1947, Roger Leenhardt (excerpt), *Les Trois font la paire*, 1957, Sacha Guitry (excerpt), *Le Sang d'un poète*, 1930, Jean Cocteau (excerpt), *Touchez pas au Grisbi*, 1954, Jacques Becker (excerpt)
31. *Elena et les hommes*, 1956, Jean Renoir (excerpt), *Au Hasard Balthazar*, 1966, Robert Bresson (excerpt), *14 Juillet*, 1932, René Clair (excerpt), *Bob le flambeur*, 1955, Jean-Pierre Melville (excerpt)

TODAY

32. *Barocco*, 1976, André Téchiné (excerpt)
33. *Black Hawk Down*, 2001, Ridley Scott
34. *Films X* (excerpts)
35. *La Môme vert-de-gris*, 1953, Bernard Borderie (excerpt)

JLG: Jean-Luc Godard
 AMM: Anne-Marie Miéville

Fig. 6. Sketch layout of *Voyage(s) en utopie*. Reproduced with permission of Alex Munt.

Fig. 7. Flip-up mobile phones with digital colour screens installed in final room, 'Aujourd'hui', in *Voyage(s) en utopie*, Jean-Luc Godard, 2006, Pompidou Centre. Photograph from opening night, 10 May 2006. Reproduced with permission of the Archives Centre Pompidou.



the Deutsche Reichsbahn, a train set was present in the initial *Collage(s)* maquettes. This element thus constituted one of very few enlarged translations from original concept to final exhibition.

This technically precise if aesthetically 'messy' three-dimensional collage, deploying domestic and mechanical artefacts, invites easy comparison with the avant-garde ready-mades of Duchamp and others.⁴⁵ The exhibition's first room deployed miniature models of mechanical technologies with varying degrees of function, alongside replicas of 19th- and 20th-century painting and sculpture, and digital moving-image technologies, collated to give the impression of incongruous assemblage. The second room appeared more visibly choreographed: a large display of potted plants partially obscured monitors placed in their midst that screened film excerpts (figure 11) in a manner reminiscent of Nam June Paik's *TV Garden* (1974), while other screens were hung or placed next to temporary walls. In *Voyage(s)*' final room, 'Aujourd'hui', chairs, tables and beds (mostly purchased from the furniture store Habitat), as well as fridges and ovens were combined with digital flat screens and flip-top mobile phones, as well as furniture from Godard's Paris apartment.⁴⁶ These predominantly non-filmic, non-museal objects were placed in semi-structured domestic order – an incomplete 'exploded apartment' (figure 12).⁴⁷ Object arrangements and their materiality thus appeared to be central concerns for the exhibition, in contrast to the idiosyncratically presented film.

Amongst this assemblage of non-filmic objects, the films were significantly outnumbered, overshadowed or obscured. Tiny monitors installed in the walls of the 'Avant-Hier' room (figure 13) displayed on loop the only new film works by Godard and Miéville, but the unlabelled films' proximity and diminutive size made it difficult to discern their qualities in detail. Other unlabelled film extracts by Godard were screened as loops on slightly larger wall-mounted monitors in subsequent rooms, but without indicated sequence or viewing relationships. In each case, without headphones or sound isolation, copious noise bleed from

⁴⁵ Jehanne-Marie Gavarini, 'In the still of the museum: Jean-Luc Godard's sixty-year voyage', *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2006).

⁴⁶ Correspondence between Pompidou staff dated 26 January 2006 identifies Godard's request to transport furniture from his Paris apartment to the Pompidou for the purposes of the exhibition; later items of furniture were transported from his home in Rolle. Archives Centre Pompidou, box 2008065/010

⁴⁷ Bamchade Pourvali, from the exhibition pamphlet, *Voyage(s) en Utopie JLG, 1946–2006*, *In Search of Lost Theorem* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, DAEP, 2006).

Fig. 8. Unfinished stud wall, blue paint, poster and dustcovers at entrance to *Voyage(s) en utopie*, Jean-Luc Godard, 2006, Pompidou Centre. Installation view. Reproduced with permission of Michael Witt.



screens around each room, in addition to the noise of the train set and ambient social sound, made distraction and confusion the predominant auditory characteristics of the space (figure 14).

From an experiential perspective, the size, auditory volume and impression of incomplete construction made it difficult to engage with the films whilst operating within the gallery space. Unlabelled, excerpted and/or looped films running simultaneously in a non-soundproofed environment made spectatorship a randomly determined, impressionistic experience. Consequently, rather than articulating criticality through an intentionally spatialized juxtaposition of moving images, *Voyage(s)*' prevailing audiovisual characteristics were diffusion, distraction and sensory indistinction, curated alongside more clearly grouped and delineated non-filmic, non-museal objects and art reproductions. If it is true, as Adrian Martin writes, that screen duration is 'the only time for which, in a profound sense, Godard presumes he has a hold on his spectators',⁴⁸ or as Rick Warner puts it, 'Godard's gestures of citation,

48 Martin, 'Godard in the gallery'.

Fig. 9. Final room 'Aujourd'hui' looking towards previous room, 'Avant-Hier.' Installation view. *Voyage(s) en utopie*, Jean-Luc Godard, 2006, Pompidou Centre. Reproduced with permission from Archives Centre Pompidou.

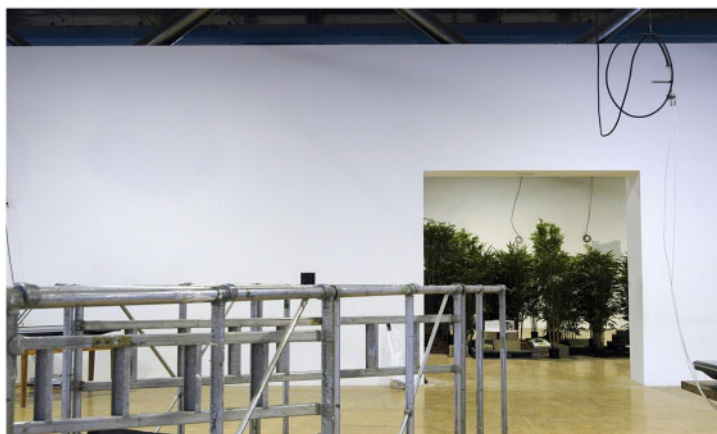


Fig. 10. Model train set. Installation view. *Voyage(s) en utopie*, Jean-Luc Godard, 2006, Pompidou Centre. Reproduced with permission from Archives Centre Pompidou.



Fig. 11. Potted plants and box monitors. Installation view. *Voyage(s) en utopie*, Jean-Luc Godard, 2006, Pompidou Centre. Reproduced with permission from Archives Centre Pompidou.



Fig. 12. 'Expanded apartment' in final room. Installation view. *Voyage(s) en utopie*, Jean-Luc Godard, 2006, Pompidou Centre. Reproduced with permission from Archives Centre Pompidou.

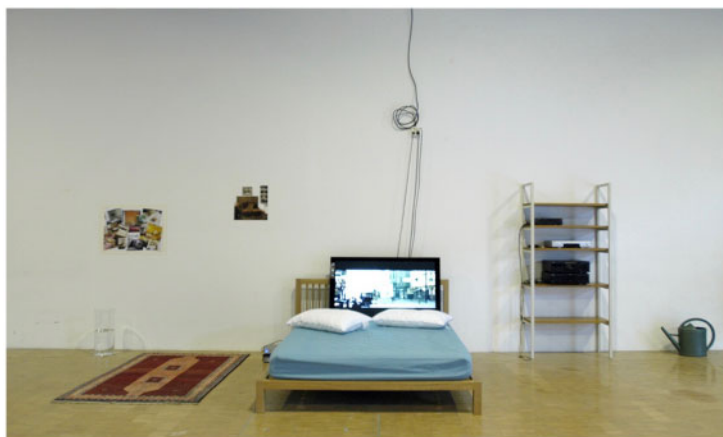


Fig. 13. LCD screens projecting digitized film excerpts. Installation view. *Voyage(s) en utopie*, Jean-Luc Godard, 2006, Pompidou Centre. Reproduced with permission from Michael Witt.

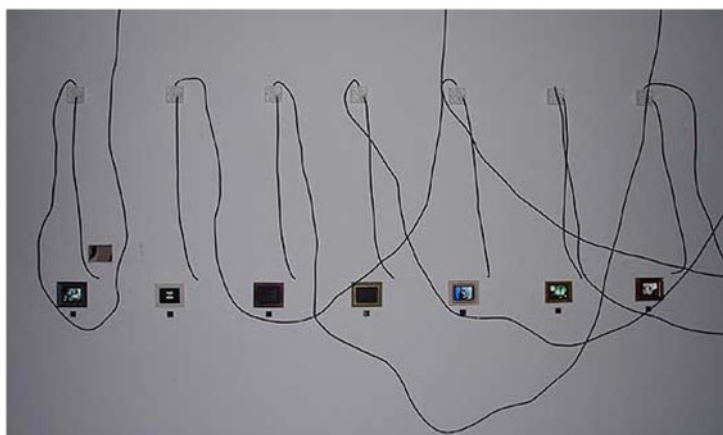
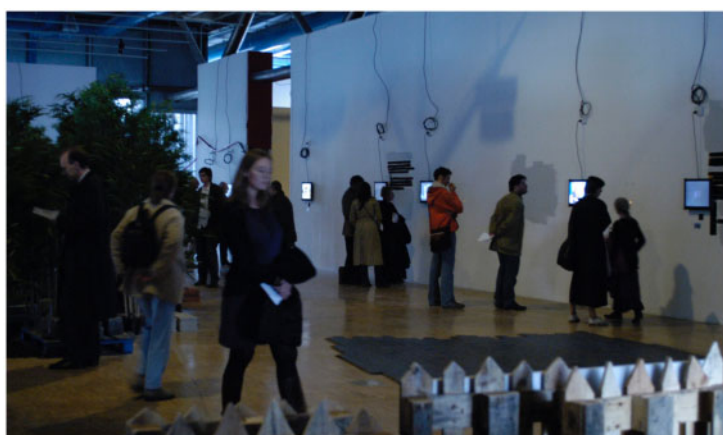


Fig. 14. Installation view of room 2 (Avant-hier) on opening night (10 May 2006), *Voyage(s) en utopie*, Jean-Luc Godard, Pompidou Centre. Reproduced with permission of the Archives Centre Pompidou.



49 Warner, *Godard and the Essay Film*, p. 70.

50 Exhibition pamphlet, *Voyage(s) en Utopie*.

51 Munt, 'Jean-Luc Godard Exhibition'; Fairfax, 'Montage(s) of a disaster'; Marquez, *Godard, le dos au musée*.

52 For a fuller account of these dynamics in relation to time-based media and 'new media art', see Beryl Graham, 'Open and closed systems: new media art in museums and galleries', in *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 449–71.

53 This was a fundamental conclusion of Pierre Bourdieu's paradigmatic volume on museum and art access and social class: that museums are exclusionary site of knowledge. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

54 See Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*.

55 Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-garde and kitsch', in *Art and Culture* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1961), pp. 3–21.

56 'À peu de choses près, la proposition de Godard correspondait à ce qu'allait être *Voyage(s)* en utopie, c'est-à-dire une exposition qui expose l'impossibilité d'une exposition sous la forme de ruines' (my translation). Dominique Païni, 'De *Collage(s)* de France à *Voyage(s)* en utopie, retour(s) d'expositions', *Cinéma & cie*, vol. 9, no. 12 (2009), pp. 11–15, 14.

for the duration of his career, tend to coincide closely and indispensably with viewer address',⁴⁹ then the layout, structure and environments of *Voyage(s)* encouraged viewer *disengagement* and antagonism. Viewer address was at best physically obfuscated, at worst denied.

No doubt due to the last-minute alterations to the exhibition and required lead times for design and print runs, *Voyage(s)*' accompanying visitor guide did not provide a list of works or plan of the exhibition. Instead the guide gave brief synopses of relevant artists, places and film titles, declaring that 'Godardians will recognize his very specific universe but for the visitor discovering the artist's work, here are some key words to accompany their visit'.⁵⁰ Either consciously or unwittingly, the language and expression of this interpretive model prioritized those already knowledgeable about Godard's work processes and the film works on display, occluding key information that might serve as a useful interpretive tool for the less knowledgeable. Scholarly analyses published after the exhibition closed were therefore the first point at which a full list of film artefacts became available to a wider audience.⁵¹ This retrospective scholarly analysis stood in for museum interpretation, retroactively providing specialist insight into an exhibition that omitted substantive interpretive tools for non-specialist visitors. Unsurprisingly, numerous scholarly-critical analyses of *Voyage(s)* have focused on knowledge of the films as single channel, theatrical film texts rather than engaging with the occluded exhibited film experience, limiting analysis of curation, scenography, site specificity and viewer interaction.⁵²

From the standpoint of exhibition practice, these models of restricted interpretation, symbiotic with expert knowledge, share similarities with the late 19th-century museological practices that Godard so disdained.⁵³ Despite large visitor numbers the films were difficult to access, and conceptually available only to an elite minority of Godardian specialists with an in-depth knowledge of canonical European film history, some of whom reconstructed meaning-making for the exhibition once *Voyage(s)* ceased to be available to the public. *Voyage(s)* thus tended to emulate rather than challenge both conceptions of the late 19th-century public museum as the gatekeeper of knowledge,⁵⁴ and mid 20th-century strands of Greenbergian art criticism, where art is for the elites and not the masses.⁵⁵ While Païni described *Voyage(s)* as an 'exhibition which reveals the impossibility of an exhibition, in the form of ruins',⁵⁶ the performed 'ruins' of *Voyage(s)* only appeared makeshift, confusing and chaotic in accordance with a carefully executed delivery plan, and complex legal documentation. *Voyage(s)* thus implemented the *staging* of ruins, simulating a roughly made temporary exhibition, with the implicit intention and/or explicit effect of creating an excluding and rebarbative film-viewing environment. Far from being 'impossible', these performed and scripted assemblages effectively reinforced monumental visions of cultural interpretation – visible to many, available to few – through a highly specialized system of unlabelled citational praxis. Furthermore, since viewer address and understanding were

manifestly obstructed, *Voyage(s)* impeded rather than revealed a transformation of Godardian citational methods through film exhibition. Unsurprisingly, retrospective scholarship on *Voyage(s)* tends to downplay the energy-consuming and overwhelming aspects of the exhibition experience; it is difficult to know how to examine critical capacity amid confusion, and easier to ignore confusion than to interrogate it. Nonetheless, *Voyage(s)* and the scholarly interpretations that followed are implicated in a mutually dependent interpretive relationship which, as my subsequent analysis investigates, was perhaps over-hasty in transposing onto *Voyage(s)* a range of Godardian mythologies and interpretive systems of cinematic citation.

André Habib has directly attributed myth-building to Godard's intentions for the exhibition's disastrous hinterland, describing 'a fantastic[al] mythology in which each person involved became a character'.⁵⁷ Fairfax has extensively analysed the Godard/Païni relationship as a conceptual 'clash between [...] the artist and curator', predominantly asserting Boris Groys's dichotomies between the publicly accountable curator and the privately free artist.⁵⁸ Meanwhile at the end of *Voyage(s)* 400-page catalogue, Païni sets up Godard's aims and the Pompidou's mission in conceptual, aesthetic, economic and ethical opposition. For Païni, Godard's use of reproducible, fungible objects, collated in a collage-like manner, conflicted with a museum whose objectives are founded on the authenticity and inalienable value of art objects on display.⁵⁹ While generous towards *Voyage(s)*, Païni's statement curiously elides the extensive modern and contemporary art practices and historical accounts of trash, waste, replicas, copies and simulacra, the dissemination of which the Pompidou, containing the second-largest museum of modern art in the world, has no doubt been instrumental.⁶⁰

In each case, scholarly mythologies of conflict become part of Godard's legacy. What is less clear is the extent to which either the Godard/Païni/Pompidou conflict, or the 'failure' of the exhibition, are intentional acts or exhibitionary effects of *critique*. Godard scholars Baeque, Habib, Marquez, Munt and Fairfax all suggest that the exhibition's messiness and 'failures' – be they political, financial, aesthetic or reception-based – parallel Godard's reflexive engagement with cinema's apocalyptic failure to expose the atrocities of the 20th century.⁶¹ According to this logic, the antagonism of *Voyage(s)*' gestures or Païni's 'impossibility' align with Godard's mid 20th-century ethical critiques of the image, cinema and image-making institutions such as museums. The exhibition's experiential qualities, controversy, overspend, delayed opening and subsequent donation of (damaged and in some cases unuseable) material to charity are thus subordinated to the argument that failure and impossibility are devices of performative recuperation for Godard and for *Voyage(s)*.⁶²

The possibility that the exhibition was the result of a *non-strategic* refusal to collaborate is less extensively considered. If it were an

57 André Habib, 'Godard's Utopia(s) or the performance of failure', in Douglas Morrey, Christina Stojanova and Nicole Côté (eds), *The Legacies of Jean-Luc Godard* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014), p. 225.

58 Fairfax, 'Montage(s) of a disaster', p. 38.

59 Dominique Païni, 'D'Après JLG ...', in Nicole Brenez (ed.), *Jean-Luc Godard: Documents* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2006), p. 426.

60 See Vera Dika, *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The Uses of Nostalgia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Martha Buskirk, *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005); Gillian Whiteley, *Junk: Art and the Politics of Trash* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014).

61 Fairfax, 'Montage(s) of a disaster', p. 38.

62 André Habib goes so far as to describe this as a 'performance of failure' consistent with Godard's entire oeuvre, in Habib, 'Godard's Utopia(s) or the performance of failure', p. 225.

63 Martin, 'Godard in the gallery'.

64 Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology*, rev. edn (London: IB Tauris, 2013), pp. 84–113.

65 Kathleen K. Rowe, 'Romanticism, sexuality and the canon', *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 42, no. 1 (1990), p. 50. For further feminist engagements with Godard, see also Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 77–94.

66 Email correspondence from 13 July 2006 to 29 March 2007 between Pompidou staff, regarding customs regulations and donations to Emmaüs. Pompidou Archives, box 2008065/010

67 Marquez, *Godard, le dos au musée*, p. 254 (my translation).

68 'à envisager plus comme une installation d'artiste qu'une exposition à proprement parlé' (my translation). Correspondence between Pompidou and exhibition manufacturers, dated 9 January 2006. Archives Centre Pompidou, box 2009051/002.

'incomplete' exhibition, Godard might be, as Martin amiably describes him, a 'proud DNS (did not submit) artist' rather than an individual mastering a finalized artwork.⁶³ Considered in detail, it is unclear why incompleteness and conflict in *Voyage(s)*' history are critically productive in the exhibition's manifestation. In the haste to create post-facto alignment of *Voyage(s)* with Godard's filmmaking oeuvre, there may be an overvaluation of the innovation or intentionality of dysfunction in *Voyage(s)*. Indeed, feminist scholarship has shown us how art history and film studies habitually reproduce Romantic narratives of 'God's little artist', sustaining a continuous and uninterrupted vision of individual genius via an almost exclusively white, male, European canon.⁶⁴ Over 30 years ago Kathleen Rowe stated that

the name 'Godard' encourages critics to assume that his works' contradictions originate in an 'artistic vision' which is consistent and true to itself [...] Mainstream criticism views Godard as an 'auteur,' a person who belongs to the protected species of creative geniuses.⁶⁵

The Romantic discursive formation of 'Godard the artist' thus frequently fuses, or *confuses*, the person, intentional creative agency, authorial figure and creative prodigy, resulting in scholarly narratives where every mistake and error bolsters the imago of Godard as artist-genius.

This question of discursive formation over agential attribution is not only speculative. When viewed through financial and legal frameworks, *Voyage(s)* also pragmatically complicates the agential narrative. Prior to the exhibition's opening the Pompidou's insurers valued the architectural maquettes at €700,000, with Godard's consent; at its close the Pompidou did not acquire the works, instead executing Godard's request to donate the maquettes and most other artefacts to the charity Emmaüs. However, when a €5000 Swiss customs fee accrued, pursuant to the maquettes not being returned to Switzerland, Godard refused to pay, vehemently denying any financial value to the maquettes at all.⁶⁶ His renunciation of, and refusal to acknowledge financial value for, the artefacts most directly attributable to him effectively eschewed them as artworks in the eyes of the insurers, lawyers, French and Swiss Customs, and the Pompidou Centre itself. The precise provenance of the maquettes is in any case unclear: at least eight were manufactured in France and not at Godard's Swiss home in Rolle; some were donated to Emmaüs, some not. Marquez's research shows that least some of the maquettes were sold at auction in 2007 to a private collector for €11,000, a value that she rightly points out 'is the price of craft, not of art'.⁶⁷ In correspondence with contractors in January 2006, *Voyage(s)* is described by Pompidou staff as 'to be considered more as an artist's installation than an exhibition as such'.⁶⁸ Yet according to Godard, the legal frameworks of Swiss and French customs, and the auction price of the sold items in 2007, the works are not art and Godard was not the artist.

Artistic attribution would be problematic in any analysis of single-channel theatrical film, where agency and authorial voice become

- 69 Correspondence from Peripheria to Pompidou, dated 11 April 2006. Archives Centre Pompidou, box 2008011/123.
- 70 Correspondence between Pompidou Centre, Godard and Peripheria, dated 20 and 29 August 2006. Archives Centre Pompidou, box 2008011-123.
- 71 Martin, 'Godard in the gallery'.
- 72 Antoine de Baecque, 'L'"expo Godard", compromissions impossibles', *La Libération*, 12 July 2006, <http://www.liberation.fr/culture/2006/07/12/l-expo-godard-compromissions-impossibles_45886>; Clarisse Fabre, 'Comment Jean-Luc Godard s'est disputé avec son commissaire d'exposition', *Le Monde*, 22 April 2006, <https://www.lemonde.fr/cinema/article/2006/04/22/comment-jean-luc-godard-s-est-dispute-avec-son-commissaire-d-exposition_764360_3476.html> both accessed 31 August 2021.
- 73 Anne Marquez describes the views as being very divided 'entre fascination dévote et violent rejet', or 'between devoted fascination and violent rejection' (my translation). Marquez, in *Godard, le dos au musée*, p. 352.
- 74 Laurette, 'Review: Jean-Luc Godard', p. 102.
- 75 Andréa Picard, 'Travels to dystopia: JLG in Paris', *Cinema-Scope*, no. 27 (2006), p. 68.
- 76 Paini, 'De Collage(s) de France à Voyage(s) en utopie'.
- 77 André Habib, 'Un Beau Souci. Réflexions sur le montage de/ dans Voyage(s) en utopie de Jean-Luc Godard', and Céline Gailleur, 'Du naufrage des utopies à l'effondrement de l'œuvre totale', *Cinéma & cie*, vol. 9, no. 12 (2009), pp. 17–25, and pp. 27–34.
- 78 Rohdie, 'Deux ou trois choses ...'.
- 79 'Cet essai documentaire en sera l'exploration patiente et minutieuse, à la recherche de nouveaux théorèmes pour son cinéma' (my translation). Marquez, *Godard, le dos au musée*, p. 13.

complicated by conditions of conception, funding, production, editing, distribution and reception. In the case of *Voyage(s)*, however, where three out of the seven commissioned new films were made by Miéville and not Godard, where 21 other films not by Godard were shown in extract under difficult viewing conditions, where Godard during the process of the exhibition's development attempted to renounce his artistic or curatorial intervention, describing himself as a *prestataire de service* (service provider),⁶⁹ then the facts of the exhibition start to shift Godard's creative agency towards the margins.⁷⁰ Where the extent of creative work attributable to the individual known as Jean-Luc Godard is diminished, an agential vacuum is created into which 'Godard the artist' is all-too-easily interposed. In a worst-case scenario, *Voyage(s)* could be considered a public art exhibition without artworks, made at high cost but with little financial value, elitist in its obfuscation of viewer access and knowledge. This evidently falls short of the positive or recuperative qualities of failure asserted by much Godardian scholarship on *Voyage(s)*.

To mitigate this conclusion, scholarship on *Voyage(s)* could analyse and incorporate rather than elide the exhibition's technical history and public reception, particularly visitor bewilderment⁷¹ at its confusing and unfriendly 'building site'.⁷² Documented sensory and emotional reactions in the press and guest book in 2006 present useful accounts of visitor response.⁷³ *Frieze Magazine* called *Voyage(s)* 'at first sight [...] a huge, trashy mess made by a 75-year-old man'.⁷⁴ Andréa Picard was less diplomatic in *Cinema-Scope*, describing *Voyage(s)* as 'cluttered, disorderly, obnoxious, loud, discomfiting, and quite conspicuously devoid of art'.⁷⁵ However, later scholarly analyses of the exhibition tend to distance themselves from the negative sentiments of visitors and critics, lauding *Voyage(s)* as a masterful and controlled work of citation and critique. The 2009 exhibition dossier in *Cinéma & cie*, which includes yet more analysis by Paini of the fallout of the show,⁷⁶ describes *Voyage(s)* as a metacritical *bricolage* which, in poststructuralist fashion, drew together objects and film media both obsolete and current, to destabilize cinema and the museum as failed institutions of visual culture.⁷⁷ These qualities are attributed to Godard, thus reinserting *Voyage(s)* into a smooth narrative about Godard's critical trajectories in film, incidentally mirrored by Sam Rohdie's involution of *Voyage(s)* into *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in *Critical Quarterly* at around the same time.⁷⁸

Marquez's 2014 monograph *Godard, le dos au musée* is the most comprehensive account of *Voyage(s)* to date, entirely devoted to its critical contexts, archives, histories and interpretations. Marquez commits her analysis to 'patient and meticulous exploration, seeking out new theories of [Godard's] cinema'.⁷⁹ Substantially more detailed and archivally supported than previous accounts, Marquez's analyses nonetheless remain circumscribed by the discourses and mythologies of 'Godard the artist', wherein *Voyage(s)* serves exclusively as an interpretive vehicle for the Godardian cinematic project. Godard's

80 Fairfax, 'Montage(s) of a disaster', pp. 37–38.

81 From a 2014 interview with Godard in the *Libération* newspaper: 'La langue de Godard s'est toujours exprimée dans une verve de fomentateur, qui excite les plaies et fait chier le monde.' 'Godard's language has always expressed itself with the energy of an agitator, who opens up old wounds and pisses everybody off' [my translation]. Olivier Séguret, 'Jean-Luc Godard, l'insurrection permanente', *Libération.fr*, 11 June 2014, <https://next.liberation.fr/cinema/2014/06/11/jean-luc-godard-l-insurrection-permanente_1038932> accessed 2 September 2021.

82 Rowe, 'Romanticism, sexuality and the canon', p. 53.

83 Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, pp. 17–58.

84 See Douglas Crimp and Louise Lawler, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).

85 Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992); Bill Brown, 'Objects, others and us', *Critical Enquiry*, no. 36 (2010), pp. 183–217; Sherry Turkle (ed.), *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011); Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2017); Gaynor Kavanagh, *Dream Spaces: Memory and the Museum* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000).

86 Daniel Buren, 'The function of the museum', in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (eds), *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), pp. 102–09.

87 Alberro and Stimson (eds), *Institutional Critique*, p. 3.

mythologized rebarbative approach is noted by subsequent scholarship: in 2015, for instance, Fairfax described *Voyage(s)* as a “‘V” sign to the institutionalized art world’.⁸⁰ But this perpetuates another sedimented vision of Godard as the eternal cinematic provocateur who ‘opens up old wounds and pisses everybody off’,⁸¹ and whose relentless malignity is a source of politically radical prowess. *Voyage(s)*’ interpretive strategies of conflict, elitism and inaccessibility are thus absorbed by subsequent scholarship: Godard becomes, essentially, too big to fail. This, as Rowe clarified in 1990, is a well-established mode in Godardian scholarship:

Godard’s ironic, outrageous pose both neutralizes his social criticism and solidifies the standing of the ‘initiates,’ those with the power to construct authors and build canons [...] Irony makes interpretation into a game, a kind of ‘intellectual sport’ establishing boundaries between the initiated and uninitiated.⁸²

By endorsing boundaries between Godardian initiates, and uninitiated and uninformed visitor others, scholarly sportsmanship ultimately neutralizes any latent potential in *Voyage(s)* to produce original social critique, and disregards the museological aims of contemporary museums to inspire, entertain and educate a diverse spectrum of the public.⁸³

For *Voyage(s)* to have ongoing critical value, a shift away from discourses endorsing ‘Godard the artist’ could prove actively beneficial. Assumptions of Romantic irony and authorial control in *Voyage(s)*’ construction and reception sidestep more compelling questions about the exhibition as curatorial enterprise, albeit an eclectic, inconsistent, frustrating and ultimately unfinished one. Since *Voyage(s)* references long-established tropes of contemporary art, curatorial and exhibition practice, these warrant further investigation. The most relevant of these are the museum in ruins previously alluded to by Pääni,⁸⁴ the investment in objects as carriers of beliefs, cultures and emotional relations;⁸⁵ the performative exposure of museum structures of support and upholding discussed by artist Daniel Buren;⁸⁶ and the history of exhibition-making and curation as artistic practice and institutional critique in the 20th and 21st centuries. It is to these last two points that I now turn.

Institutional Critique has a different birthplace to critical and political filmmaking. Housed in theoretical and political convergences between art, museologies of display and curation, its conceptual, performance, moving-image, participatory and activist forms have sought to ‘intervene critically in the standing order of things [in the art world and museums] with an expectation that these interventions would produce actual change in the relations of power and lead to genuine reconciliation’.⁸⁷ As such, Institutional Critique’s histories offer a complex and integrated understanding of artworks (including moving images), artists, markets and institutions. Less concerned with individual agency or film as primary exhibition tool, it examines the specific situatedness of artworks and how they resist, challenge, subvert or transform the social, political,

aesthetic and curatorial movements that underpin it. Rather than deploying detached Romantic irony, it invites (but does not always sustain) engaged activism and institutional transformation.

Institutional Critique has important resonances in criticism and scholarship on *Voyage(s)*. While Matthieu Laurette was nonplussed by *Voyage(s)*' messiness in his 2006 *Frieze* review, he places it firmly within these conventions, citing numerous Anglo-European figures from the late 1960s to the 1990s:

Think early 1990s' Karen Kilimnik and Cady Noland meets Raymond Hains meets Jason Rhoades meets Hans Haacke meets Marcel Broodthaers meets Martin Kippenberger meets Guy Debord meets May '68 pavements meets car boot sale [...] After losing control, it seems Godard regained total charge of his exhibition, making this possibly the first large-scale, institutional retrospective that is officially self-curated, self-managed and embedded in an autonomous structure of decision-making – institutional critique at work.⁸⁸

Setting aside Laurette's inaccuracies about Godard's curation and decision-making, the notion of Institutional Critique appears regularly over a decade of writing on *Voyage(s)*. Fairfax suggests that 'the evolution of *Voyage(s)* functions as a paratext for the installation itself, a performative gesture necessary to give "bite" to the work's institutional critique'.⁸⁹ Citing Thomas Hirschhorn and Paul McCarthy, Fairfax models the Godard/Paini conflict as an artist/curator dialectic, while Marquez compares Godard to Buren, Haacke and particularly Broodthaers.⁹⁰ Other scholars had already identified a curatorial impulse in Godard's filmmaking, processes of citation and montage: in 2010 Isabelle McNeill described Godard as a collector of images and objects alongside contemporaries Varda and Chris Marker, blurring distinctions between filmmaking, art and curation.⁹¹ The 2014 Tate Modern event positioned Godard as 'an auteurist super-curator, instrumentalising the work of poets, painters, historians, filmmakers, friends and foes alike'.⁹² And while the title of 'Godard the curator' risks confusing creative agency and discursive power, it also implicitly embraces the histories of Institutional Critique in curation and contemporary art practice.

In their curatorial manifesto, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Asad Raza argue that conflations of curatorial and artistic boundaries are essential developments in art history:

As artists themselves have moved beyond the simple production of art objects, and towards assembling or arranging installations that galvanize an entire exhibition space, their activity has [...] become more consonant with the older idea of the curator as someone who arranges objects into a display.⁹³

After the global political upheavals of the 1960s, the shifting lexicons of curatorship in Museum Studies and Art History parallel developments in contemporary art practice, whereby the politics of display becomes a

⁸⁸ Laurette, 'Review: Jean-Luc Godard', pp. 102–03.

⁸⁹ Fairfax, 'Montage(s) of a disaster', p. 25.

⁹⁰ Marquez, *Godard, le dos au musée*, pp. 339–44; Fairfax, 'Montage(s) of a disaster', p. 39.

⁹¹ McNeill, *Memory and the Moving Image*, pp. 52–53.

⁹² John Bloomfield, 'Godard as curator programme notes', 7 December 2014, <<https://screenshadowsgroup.wordpress.com/2015/01/19/godard-as-curator-programme-notes/>> accessed 2 September 2021.

⁹³ Hans Ulrich Obrist and Asad Raza, *Ways of Curating* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016).

prevailing subject of both. This reflexive accentuation of exhibition display not only brings visibility to art works excluded from visible structures of power in museum galleries, but also becomes a form of critique of institutions. Art historian Terry Smith identifies these types of works as:

Anti-exhibitions, substitutions of one kind of public display space for another, including transpositions of nonmuseum spaces into the museum and vice versa. [...] these were envisaged, firstly, as vehicles for showing the artist's own work, then the work of confreres, until the transformatory urge embraced the museum as institution, beginning with the reinstallation of certain rooms, through parts of the collection, until some artists showed us ways for rethinking the museum itself.⁹⁴

The fluid relationships between art, display, exhibition, education, interpretation, artist, curator and critic are formative of contemporary art.⁹⁵ Considering *Voyage(s)* not as a work 'by Godard', but as part of the topographies of contemporary art history, exhibition practice and museology, thus aligns closely with these models. By tracing elements of Institutional Critique through this 'failed' project, we can also identify elements that are occluded, ignored or erased. Consequently *Voyage(s)* becomes a case study for how and where we do the work of interdisciplinary film studies.

Rather than presuming artistic agency in *Voyage(s)*, let us employ the fluid model of contemporary curatorial and exhibition practice. The figure of 'Godard' as a creative entity loosens, residing instead in a milieu of makers, artists, curators, suppliers and audiences. As Catherine Grant identifies, 'film artists are not properly individual "creators" but, rather, particular embodied sites where words and audiovisual forms inscribe or install themselves'.⁹⁶ In other words, *Voyage(s)* is constructed within multiply embodied sites of creative agency: not Godard, not Païni, not the Pompidou staff, but all of them. Given *Voyage(s)*' disproportionate emphasis on non-filmic material, the primacy of film as exhibition object is especially ripe for questioning. The artefacts of *Voyage(s)* are predominantly reappropriated ready-mades, replicas and reproductions: train sets, kitchen tables, ladders, cages, rags, wiring, wheat-pasted posters, marker pens, pot plants. While the 'citational' form of film installation in *Voyage(s)* (presenting films in extract across an expanded space/time) might bear relation to *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, the exhibition equally resembles numerous other forms of montage, collage, installation and reproduction in modern and contemporary art history, including those mounted by Aby Warburg,⁹⁷ or produced by Hannah Höch and Robert Rauschenberg. Displays of ready-mades, craft-based works, and copies or facsimiles have ample historical precedent in art museums, from the work of the Dadaists⁹⁸ to performance artists such as Joseph Beuys, or even the postmodern practices of citational repetition and circulation produced by Elaine Sturtevant (otherwise known as

94 Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York, NY: Independent Curators International ICI, 2012), p. 104.

95 Irit Rogoff, 'Turning', *E-Flux*, no. #0 (2008), <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68470/turning/>> accessed 2 September 2021.

96 Catherine Grant, 'Home-movies: the curious cinematic collaboration of Anne-Marie Miéville and Jean-Luc Godard', in Temple, Williams and Witt (eds), *For Ever Godard*, p. 116.

97 David Brancalone, 'The interventions of Jean-Luc Godard and Chris Marker into contemporary visual art', *Vertigo*, no. 30 (2012), <https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/issue-30-spring-2012-godard-is-the-interventions-of-jean-luc-godard-and-chris-marker/> accessed 2 September 2021.

98 See Rohdie, 'Deux ou trois choses ...', p. 86.

99 Patricia Lee, *Sturtevant: Warhol Marilyn* (Cambridge, MA: Afterall Books, 2016). It is also worth noting that museum and gallery exhibitions of moving images systematically deploy copies and digital facsimiles, rather than master tapes, to protect the original (if indeed an original can be identified).

100 Archives Centre Pompidou box 2007019/004

101 Alberro and Stimson (eds), *Institutional Critique*, p. 4.

102 Artistic or authorial self-negation has long been a subject of interest in studies of Godard. See, for instance, Kaja Silverman, 'The author as receiver', *October*, no. 96 (2001), pp. 17–34.

103 Artistic or authorial self-negation has long been a subject of interest in studies of Godard. See, for instance, Kaja Silverman, 'The author as receiver', *October*, no. 96 (2001), pp. 17–34.

104 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

105 In informal conversation with me, one of the employees in the *Pôle d'Archives Centre Pompidou* remarked that the records on *Voyage(s)* were some of the most frequently consulted in its collection.

Sturtevant).⁹⁹ If *Voyage(s)* is an 'anti-exhibition', then it is also a loose re-enactment of selected historical instantiations of Institutional Critique. And yet, in the context of the modern art collections of the Pompidou, a re-enacted deployment of Institutional Critique might be seen as anachronistic pastiche, appropriation, even acquiescence. By citing Institutional Critiques of display that institutions like the Pompidou have already absorbed and exhibited, *Voyage(s)*' distinctions between citation, derivation and critique become ambiguous.

Archival historiography of the exhibition is insightful in this regard. Païni's accounts, de Baecque's biography, and Gailleurd and Bohler's documentary all imply that Godard removed himself from direct dealings with *Voyage(s)* three months before the show opened.¹⁰⁰ While this is contradicted by Godard's regular correspondence with the Pompidou, most of the curatorial preparation, acquisition, construction and display, as well as the manufacture or procurement of artefacts, did fall to Pompidou staff, especially Crinière and her team. However, just prior to the start of the exhibition, Godard refused to participate in press conferences and televised broadcasts or to attend the exhibition's private view and press night.¹⁰¹ While his name remained attached to *Voyage(s)* as a star vehicle, at least for a period he erased his curatorial capacities, disavowing his creative labour. In this respect Godard's vocalization and subsequent disavowal of his own agency and refusal to speak publicly resonate with strategies of conceptual artists from the late 1960s, such as Eduardo Favario and Daniel Buren, Julio Le Parc and Enzo Mari, who closed, withdrew or denied access to their work and 'dialectically negated that which was the vehicle of their voice, and yet held on to it at the same time'.¹⁰² Buren exhibited at the Pompidou just prior to *Voyage(s)*, and there are both conceptual and contextual echoes between the two. Within *Voyage(s)*' multiply-refracted embodied sites of creative agency, there are still critical gestures that align Godard's approach with the singular construction of artist. Two tensions work against each other: resisting the over-simplistic narrative of 'Godard' as an authorial figure, while at the same time analysing inconsistencies that recuperate Godard within older practices of Institutional Critique, including self-affirming and self-negating claims by the artist to creation.¹⁰³

It is important to hold these things in tension: 'the discursive subject and the discursive object [of Godard]',¹⁰⁴ on the one hand, and Institutional Critique as a transformative act, and its collapse into re-enactments and repetitions of authorial self-negation, on the other. What might appear to be controversy or weakness in *Voyage(s)* was never likely to produce failure in a substantive way. The perpetuation of Godard's authorial prowess in film criticism and scholarship sediments his identity in the 21st century as provocateur. For the Pompidou, *Voyage(s)* became a controversial moment that has sustained continued research interest in its archives.¹⁰⁵ Although collateral damage was sustained in the form of Païni's ill health and resignation, and the extensive emotional labour expended by Pompidou staff in managing

conflict with Godard, little long-term institutional transformation seems evident, or even desired. Without institutional transformation, *Voyage(s)* and its mythologies function plausibly as institutional *support*: an expensive but reputationally lucrative simulacrum of 20th-century Institutional Critique. But Institutional Critique has already encountered such reflexive difficulties.

In the light of its absorption into art markets and museum collections, Institutional Critique of the last 30 years has attuned to its own paradoxes: it exists 'within' art institutions, while attempting to remain 'without' them. In 2005, artist Andrea Fraser acknowledged how she and other well-known proponents of Institutional Critique (Haacke and Buren) were absorbed into the capital-producing machinery of the art world, citing a critic of Buren's 2005 show at the Guggenheim Museum, New York:

How can artists who have become art-historical institutions themselves claim to critique the institution of art? Michael Kimmelman provided a ready example of such skepticism in his critical *New York Times* review of [Daniel] Buren's Guggenheim show. While the 'critique of the institution of the museum' and the 'commodity status of art' were 'counterestablishment ideas when, like Mr Buren, they emerged forty or so years ago,' Kimmelman contends, Buren is now an 'official artist of France, a role that does not seem to trouble some of his once radical fans. Nor, apparently, does the fact that his brand of institutional analysis [...] invariably depends on the largesse of institutions like the Guggenheim.'¹⁰⁶

Fraser acknowledges the inherent contradiction of Institutional Critique as radical art practice once it became widely recognized as such, and thereby effectively diffused by institutional ingestion. We should ask similar questions of *Voyage(s)*: Godard is a key figure in French and European cinema; his films are widely celebrated; his project at the Pompidou largely supported by public subsidies. How can a film-historical 'institution' still claim to critique the institutions of art, museums or cinema? And how can he do this in an institution as central to a French post-1968 vision of democratized culture and 'art for all', as the Centre Georges Pompidou?¹⁰⁷ By 2005, Institutional Critique by the external provocateur was no longer a tenable position for institutionally recognized artists, as Fraser articulates:

It's not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It's a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to. Because the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals, these are the questions that institutional critique demands we ask, above all, of ourselves.¹⁰⁸

Buren's 1970 essay 'The function of the museum', which expresses how the invisible supports of the museum and artwork give rise to its assumed

¹⁰⁶ Fraser, 'From the critique of institutions to an institution of critique', p. 278.

¹⁰⁷ Rebecca J. DeRoo, *The Museum Establishment and Contemporary Art: The Politics of Artistic Display in France after 1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Jenny Chamarette, 'Visible and invisible institutions: cinema in the French art museum', in *International Handbook of Museum Studies. Volume IV, Museum Media* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), pp. 95–119.

¹⁰⁸ Fraser, 'From the critique of institutions to an institution of critique', p. 105.

109 Buren, 'The function of the museum', pp. 108–09.

110 Lisa G. Corrin, 'Mining the Museum: an installation confronting history', in Gail Anderson (ed.), *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift* (Lanham, MD: Rowman Altamira, 2004), pp. 248–57; Walter Mignolo, 'Museums in the colonial horizon of modernity: Fred Wilson's Mining the Museum (1992)', in Doro Globus (ed.), *Fred Wilson: A Critical Reader* (London: Ridinghouse, 2011), pp. 374–90; Huey Copeland, *Bound to Appear: Art, Slavery and the Site of Blackness in Multicultural America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Iain Chambers et al., *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History* (London: Routledge, 2016).

111 See Frazer Ward, 'The haunted museum: institutional critique and publicity', *October*, no. 73 (1995), p. 88.

112 Anderson (ed.), *Reinventing the Museum*; Claire Robins, *Curious Lessons in the Museum: The Pedagogic Potential of Artists' Interventions* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 175–96; Anne Ring Petersen, 'Mining the Museum in an age of migration', in *Migration into Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

113 Much has already been written about this, but see the activist work of the Guerilla Girls, begun in 1985, to raise awareness about the overwhelming proportion of male artists in the collections and displays of many major global art museums, <<https://www.guerrillagirls.com>> accessed 2 September 2021.

value and mistaken autonomy, may have influenced *Voyage(s)*.¹⁰⁹ Critical gestures to devalue 'autonomous' artworks can be read into *Voyage(s)*' torn and unfinished display walls, reproduced images of famous paintings on their side, and the attribution problems related to the surviving maquettes. But these speculations stop short of delivering insight into the specificity of these critiques for Godard in 2006 in the Pompidou Centre. If we are to take seriously the scholarly narrative that both Godard's theories of cinema and Institutional Critique are espoused within *Voyage(s)* and its histories, then this calls us to consider its ethics and politics in the time in which it was made.

This is not simply a moot point; Institutional Critique at its strongest has the power to enact transformative museological change in site-specific ways. In 1992 Fred Wilson's pioneering show *Mining the Museum* at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore became renowned both as art and museology.¹¹⁰ *Mining the Museum* employed disruptive archival practices by recontextualizing existing museum objects in its collection, demonstrating how object displays have excluded their wider social, cultural and museal contexts to privilege white-coded narratives about American history.¹¹¹ Within the vitrine entitled 'Metalwork 1793–1880', *Mining the Museum* famously combined ornate silverware and iron slave manacles. The apparently simple juxtaposition identified and satirized the relational histories of 19th-century serviceware and the slave trade, underpinning the vast wealth accumulated before and during post-abolitionist Empire. It made visible the historical occlusions and racial bifurcations of Anglo-European vitrine displays in the Museum's collections, directly linked to their place, time and cultural significance. It exposed the white Anglo-European violence implicit in manifestations of American historical wealth. 'Metalwork 1793–1880' became one of the most celebrated installations of the exhibition, and *Mining the Museum* one of the most highly researched examples of contemporary exhibitionary practice, artist intervention and Institutional Critique.¹¹²

Objects matter deeply. Their placement and context matters, whether those objects are fungible or of irreplaceable value. And, as Fraser notes, artists are part of the institution. The ethical choices of their critical practices carry weight. The films of *Voyage(s)* presented white, predominantly Anglo-European auteurs, and included the work of just one female filmmaker, Godard's long-time collaborator Miéville. These screening choices emulated without challenge the problematic and much-discussed demographics of major art institutions. Yet some of the most foundational interventions in Institutional Critique of the last 40 years have explored this very subject: artworks marginalized in museum collections and the visitor demographics that museums fail to welcome.¹¹³ These interventions are not simply absent from *Voyage(s)*' citational mechanisms, their contributions to the conceptual promise of *Voyage(s)* as critique are

114 Fraser, 'From the critique of institutions to an institution of critique', p. 105.

115 Hito Steyerl, 'The institution of critique', in Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray (eds), *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique* (London: MayFlyBooks, 2009), pp. 15–16.

116 I have adapted this from Grant, 'Home-movies', p. 116.

elided from interpretation and scholarship.¹¹⁴ *Voyage(s)*' manifestations of Institutional Critique ally with pre-1970 Anglo-European practices, targeting the cultural institution without acknowledging or transformatively addressing the (white, male, European) artist's complicity therein.¹¹⁵ There are some minor exceptions: excerpts from non-European films by Alexandre Dovzhenko and Sergei Paradjanov are included in *Voyage(s)*, and the houseplant-filled space interspersed with monitors nods to conceptual artist Nam June Paik's *TV Garden* (1974), albeit without Paik's medium-specific engagement with television technologies and perspectival viewing. But neither *Voyage(s)*, nor its popular reception, nor its scholarship, seek to transform canonical Euro-western exhibition practices at the Pompidou in 2006, of which Institutional Critique is itself formative.

What transformative critical capacity, then, can be found in *Voyage(s)*? Display disruptions, information scarcity and denial of authorship are well sedimented in histories of Institutional Critique, as I have shown. Although it replicated paintings from the Pompidou's collections, *Voyage(s)* was remarkably site-nonspecific in its approach, withholding information from visitors, enacting and exercising power in a surprisingly uncritical manner. Godardian mythologies of personal conflict aside, *Voyage(s)* did not demand any transformations of the Pompidou as a contemporary art institution. When an intervention of Institutional Critique simulates older political landscapes, occludes voices which have spoken transformatively in relation to contemporary political and ethical concerns, maintains the status quo of the artist and the institution, and offers minimal ethical questioning available for its public, one might ask *where is the critique?* Furthermore, if acknowledgement of an artist's institutional complicity can constitute transformative critique in some sense, it must be claimed as intentional: it cannot come from self-erasure, nor from a multiply-refracted set of embodied sites.¹¹⁶ If there is a demand for transformation (as there is in Institutional Critique), then complicity must also be situated, enunciated, framed and resisted: the effectiveness of Wilson's *Mining the Museum* shows this in action. In the obfuscation of intentionality or enunciation, it is difficult to find in *Voyage(s)* the Institutional Critique upheld by its scholarship. But this renders neither *Voyage(s)* nor its scholarship valueless.

Within the exhibition's complex historiography and scholarship there is an opportunity to interrogate the sites of values, meanings and attributions that constitute 'Godardian' discourse. We can only take up this opportunity if we refrain from redirecting errors and occlusions as recuperative strategies ingested by this self-same discourse. If we replace the discursive figure of 'Godard' as artist, author or curator with an institution, the intentionality of *Voyage(s)*' simulations and anachronisms becomes irrelevant. Institutions are not subjects, they are subjectifying forces. Patterns of power, knowledge and oppression are woven into the

117 See Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988); Clive Gray, 'Museums and politics: an introduction', in Gray (ed.), *The Politics of Museums* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 1–28.

118 Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 167–90.

119 Shambu, 'For a new cinephilia', p. 32.

fabric of cultural institutions; they are structural rather than intentional.¹¹⁷ Current museological strategies in every major Anglo-European museum strive to interrupt these patterns by producing alternatives, but it takes effort – they are, after all, working against the centuries of colonial strategy that birthed the public museum as we know it.¹¹⁸ In this sense we can recognize the effortful striving, the wasteful disruptions and the significant tensions in *Voyage(s)*, without excusing them. Historicized through 20th-century exhibitionary practices, *Voyage(s)* rehearses rather than transforms past political and ethical gestures in modern art. All of *Voyage(s)*' contentious acts have critical artistic precedents: these constitute the unwilling inscriptions of meaning that produce exhibitionary histories. Even its exhaustion of a €1.8 million budget has precedents in Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty's public provocation/art action, 'K Foundation Burn a Million Quid' on 23 August 1994. If we consider *Voyage(s)* within a broader set of exhibitionary-curatorial cultures, habits and formations, then its individual value becomes less important than the unconscious patterns it reproduces, and the ways in which those patterns are transmitted through subsequent scholarly studies. *Voyage(s)* is significant as an object of study because that study identifies it as part of an institutional discourse whose subjectifying forces crystallize mythologizing imbalances of power in cinema and museums, which in turn contribute to ideologies that maintain both Anglo-western modern art and white male figures such as Godard at the apex of a hierarchical canon of cinematic and artistic value. *Voyage(s)* was neither transformative nor radical, but rather deeply discursively and institutionally embedded.

Many of the scholarly and popular valuations of *Voyage(s)* identified in this essay demonstrate committed appreciation of Godard's oeuvre; they come from a place of love for art-making in a specific location and period. Love is a necessary part of art criticism, as Girish Shambu identifies in *The New Cinephilia*. But these valuations also derive from 'one narrative of movie love among innumerable in the world [...] authored mostly by one minority group: straight white men'.¹¹⁹ Writing motivated by love is praiseworthy, but it can also shield a scholar or critic from counter-indicative archival data, from observing discursive trends in scholarship, and identifying one's position within them. In my attempts to understand the formations and deformations of that loving impulse, I have shown how historiographies of *Voyage(s)*' and Godardian scholarship subtend broader questions in film studies. They inform how we examine the intolerable tensions between individuated creative agency and the multiple structures that form institutional power. They help us shift beyond dominant minority groups, and film as a single-channel cinematic experience.

Godard's continued celebration as a cinephilic icon and Godardian scholarship are deeply intertwined. Godard scholars regularly programme his films at retrospectives, speak and write publicly about his work; likewise film distributors and writers exploit straplines praising Godard

120 The 'For Ever Godard' retrospective on the European streaming service MUBI is an example of this: marketing straplines for its 17 February 2020 email campaign include 'GODard + deparDIEU' (associating deity with the filmmaker and actor respectively). MUBI

121 Shambu, 'For a new cinephilia', p. 33.

122 See Volker Pantenburg, *Farocki/ Godard. Film as Theory*, trans. Michael Turnbull (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015); Beatriz Bartolomé Herrera and Philipp Dominik Keidl, 'How Star Wars became museological: transmedia storytelling in the exhibition space', in Sean Guynes and Dan Hassler-Forest (eds), *Star Wars and the History of Transmedia Storytelling* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), pp. 155–68; Jihoon Kim, 'Stanley Kubrick in the museum: post-cinematic conditions, limitations and possibilities', *Curator: The Museum Journal*, vol. 60, no. 4 (2017), pp. 467–87.

123 Una Chung, 'Crossing over horror: reincarnation and transformation in Apichatpong Weerasethakul's "Primitive"', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 1/2 (2012), pp. 211–22; Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*

as the consummate filmmaker.¹²⁰ Film cultures exist within a mutually influencing matrix of scholarship and critique, distribution and exhibition, fandom and cinephilia, art and entertainment. Studies of Godard are central to the Euro-western cinephilic canon, taught on school and university curricula, lauded in both film-historical and film-theoretical discourses. They are a dominant force in upholding postwar Euro-western film as a primary truth claim for the ontology of film studies. It is vital, from a scholarly perspective, to examine those truth claims, via detailed engagements with work produced under Godard's name – even work that has fallen out of favour, even work that is critically unsuccessful, even if there is no tangible 'Godard' to disentangle from it. It is important both to critique and to curate the Godardian institution, to make space for what is to come.

Godard scholarship can, if it wishes, continue to uphold 'Godard-the-artist' discourses in film and visual art, asserting the necessity for hieroglyphic study in the 21st century on the same basis as existed in the 20th. This route preserves Godard's work as monumental and unchanging in value, a situation which his consistently disruptive behaviour has sought to unsettle, and which contradicts claims for radicalism or reinvention. It also insulates his work from more interrogative criticism that might recontextualize rather than reinstitutionalize Godard, among newer topographies of film and screen studies. Alternatively Godard scholarship can make room for more open and contextual reflections on his work of the last 20 years, where technological change no longer privileges Europe or the white male auteur as central sites of cultural production, nor the cinema as principal site of film exhibition. As this essay demonstrates, *Voyage(s)* proves as problematic in the archive as it does in the art-historical contexts of Institutional Critique. Its authorial attribution is unclear, its histories unmeritorious, its critical capacities at best nebulous; yet *Voyage(s)* and its scholarly histories are a compelling example of institutionalizing processes in action.

In the pursuit of rigorous thought, occlusions and contradictions must be acknowledged rather than overwritten, lest this overwriting obscure the disciplinary transformations to come and the institutionalizing discourses that precede. As Shambu writes, 'we must forever be open to the possibility of reevaluating or even renouncing our objects of previous adoration in light of new knowledge, new consciousness, new imperatives'.¹²¹ When film is exhibited in gallery and museum contexts, what arises in the nexus of film studies, fine art, art history and museum studies is a disciplinary–epistemological opportunity: to reassess entrenched discourses about single-channel theatrically exhibited film, to examine their recalcitrant traces even in the most recent scholarship about canonical figures, and to create a more spacious appreciation of the critical intersections between installed non-theatrical and theatrically exhibited film. Bringing the exhibition archive and art history into film studies via specific case studies allows for a more capacious

(Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013); Jacqueline Lo, 'Moving images, stilling time: the art of Fiona Tan', *Third Text*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2014), pp. 56–66; Lisa Åkervall, 'Networked selves: Ryan Trecartin and Lizzie Fitch's postcinematic aesthetics', *Screen*, vol. 57, no. 1 (2016), pp. 35–51; Alison Butler, *Displacements: Reading Space and Time in Moving Image Installations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

understanding of where and how to place auteur figures such as Godard, outside of the cinema. In turn this allows us to cast a judicious eye over critical overstatements about visual artistry and those filmmakers regularly cited within the 'gallery turn', observing the frequency of white, male and/or Anglo-European auteurs in case studies about film and the museum.¹²² And indeed, to identify where this prevalence has been overturned in favour of wider distributions of non-white/non-male artist-filmmakers and performance artists.¹²³ In this sense, by framing the singular, romanticized imago of the white, male, Anglo-western auteur within the institution, by recognizing this configuration *as an institution*, we can also reinvigorate the plurality of film in film studies, and recultivate its own critical capacities.

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