CYANOTYPES

CHRISTIAN MARCLAY



(a)

FOREWORD

This book is designed to celebrate the remarkable group of cyanotypes Christian Marclay produced between 2007 and 2009 at the University of South Florida's Graphicstudio.

For more than forty years, emerging and established artists have been invited to work in residence at the Tampa studio. As a university-based atelier, Graphicstudio encourages artists to explore both traditional printmaking methods and new approaches in collaboration with a highly skilled production staff of printers and fabricators, and to tap the resources offered by the larger academic community. Artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Roy Lichtenstein, Ed Ruscha, and more recently Allan McCollum, Vik Muniz, Los Carpinteros, Mark Dion, and Teresita Fernández have created innovative limited-edition works, both prints and sculptures, at the atelier.

This rich history of research and experimentation has inspired visiting artists to respond and explore new ground in their own practice. Graphicstudio first utilized the cyanotype process, invented by Sir John Herschel in 1847, with Rauschenberg in the early 1970s. Unlike silver-based photographs, cyanotypes employ an emulsion of iron compounds and are often referred to as "blueprints." Marclay was very familiar with the cameraless process of the photogram, but curious to explore the cyanotype technique and extend the scale and complexity with the expertise of Graphicstudio.

With the atelier's team of printers, Tom Pruitt, Sarah Howard, Will Lytch, and Tim Baker, Marclay created each cyanotype by placing music cassettes and reels of unspooled tape directly onto photosensitive paper and then exposing it to light. Adopting and adapting two outmoded technologies—the cyanotype and the music cassette tape—Marclay continued to explore his interest in the resonances between the aural and the visual.

The printers' notes on this project describe the first experiments as single exposures produced outdoors in the light of the sun. Tests were made of the emulsion formula and various papers to determine the ideal intensity of the Prussian blue color. A cold-press watercolor paper (Arches Aquarelle) was chosen as it allowed the best balance of scale, archival stability, and retention of emulsion density. As experiments progressed, wind and heat convection currents made the delicate strands of cassette tape squirm and flex, so for better conditions the project was moved indoors after a large, high-power ultraviolet exposure lamp was installed in one room.

Graphicstudio's research into the procedural parameters of the cyanotype method offered Marclay the control and flexibility needed for his dramatic successes. Working in both vertical and horizontal formats, he created unique "drawings" by using multiple exposures and layering strands of cassette tape into a variety of compositions (using hundreds of music cassettes purchased from Tampa thrift shops). Using various compositional strategies, at times working at a scale of up to 100 by 51 inches, he ultimately created four series of unique cyanotypes: *Memento*, *Mashups*, *Allovers*, and *Grids*, and an *édition variée*, comprising thirty-five images, titled *Automatic Drawings*.

This "blue book" brings yet another dimension to the dynamic relationship between artist and studio. Both Marclay and Graphicstudio decided that it was important to document the full scope of the project with a publication. Museums and collectors around the world have acquired many of the artist's cyanotypes, and this book presents an opportunity to bring the works together and address their significance. JRP|Ringier copublished the book with Graphicstudio; Noam M. Elcott placed Marclay's innovations in a broad historical context; David Louis Norr served as the publication's editor; and the Swiss firm Norm designed it.

I extend my great appreciation to Christian Marclay for his continuing dedication to working at Graphicstudio on projects that will build our legacy and inspire generations of artists to come.

Margaret A. Miller Professor and Director Institute for Research in Art Graphicstudio University of South Florida Tampa







UNTIMELY DETRITUS CHRISTIAN MARCLAY'S CYANOTYPES

NOAM M. ELCOTT

Christian Marclay's *Memento (Survival of the Fittest)* (2008), a monumental blueprint or cameraless cyanotype, stretches out before us nearly four feet tall and eight feet wide. Perfect catenaries and irregular tangles of piercing whites and bright azures sweep across the image or recede into its Prussian blue expanse. We are thrust into a forest of light, or, better still, a tropical pool, from the depths of which we peer up toward the sunlight that breaks the plane of the water. But as our eyes float down to the bottom of the image, where broken cassettes litter this ocean floor and transform it into a dirty and abandoned dance hall, the plunging ribbons of light transmogrify into party streamers. And yet the ethereal light—stripped of naturalistic or supernatural connotations—pulls itself out of the refuse and shines no less brightly for its bathetic associations. A transubstantiation without the miracle.

Where to begin? The allusions tucked into *Memento (Survival of the Fittest)* (fig. **2**) range from natural history to the history of art, from media technology to popular music. Like the magnetic tape whose cameraless traces infuse the image with lustrous debris, these allusions are freed from their sources only to be bound into inchoate knots not easily untangled.¹

The cassettes that make up *Memento* (*Survival of the Fittest*), culled by Marclay from the thrift stores of Tampa, Florida, represent a pop-cultural miscellany. The work is in fact a memento to a specific media technology that is rapidly approaching extinction in advanced capitalist countries. And in this respect the title of the cyanotype could not be more fitting. Today, the term "survival of the fittest" is most closely associated with Herbert Spencer and social Darwinism (the bunk application of evolution to the realm of anthropology and politics). But the phrase was initially understood by Spencer, Darwin, and their contemporaries as a synonym for "natural"

selection," Darwin's equally famous term for the operative force behind evolution.² Applied to the realm of media archaeology, the subtitle *Survival of the Fittest* might be viewed ironically: in an age of digital music, cassette tapes have gone the way of the mastodon.

But there is another face to natural selection, and it is expressed poignantly—if rather disdainfully—by R. Child Bayley in his 1906 tome The Complete Photographer, where he dismisses the blueprint as a printing method "which survives, as the Darwinians tell us some of the lower forms of life survive, from the extreme simplicity of its structure."3 Among the insights of natural selection or the survival of the fittest is the recognition that a human is no more "fit" than a bacterium, no more "selected" than an ant. Blueprints survived decades longer than their more rarefied competitors not in spite of their extreme chemical simplicity, but because of it. In other words, the traits that enable survival are not ontologically superior to others; they are simply better suited to their environment. (In much of the so-called third world, you still get more mileage out of a cassette tape than from an iPod. Blueprints have a similar pragmatic advantage over digital scans in that they are likely to last much longer.)4 Marclay's commitment to "lower" forms of media and the simplicity of their structures sustain his extensive exploration of cyanotype photography and is nowhere in greater evidence than in one of his earliest cyanotype projects, the Automatic Drawings (2007-8), an édition variée that comprises thirty-five images. (a)

Like all of Marclay's cyanotype projects, the *Automatic Drawings* were created collaboratively with the Graphicstudio atelier, based at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Marclay's work with Graphicstudio began several years prior with a suite of photogravures and continues to the present with

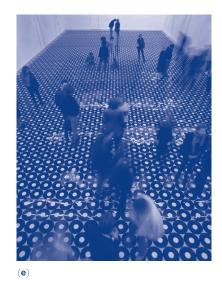
- 1 The title derives from John Krishak's *Big Beach Outreach*, a 2006 Evangelical Christian album featuring such tracks as "Children of Promise," "Overwhelming Power," "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus," and "Survival of the Fittest." This last song layers missionary lyrics above synthetic sound and 1980s beats. Its inclusion in *Memento (Survival of the Fittest)* testifies first and foremost to the mixed bag of pop culture available in the thrift stores of Tampa, Florida, where Marclay collected the cassettes with which he executed the work.
- 2 See Diane B. Paul, "The Selection of the 'Survival of the Fittest," Journal of the History of Biology 21, no. 3 (1988): 411–24.
- 3 R. Child Bayley, *The Complete Photographer* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1906), 396.
- 4 Media archaeologist Siegfried Zielinski has adopted a related approach—that of the geologist and zoologist Stephen Jay Gould—in order to deemphasize technologi cal progress in favor of diversity: "excellence," in this model, is a measurement of diversification events and the spread of diversity. See Siegfried Zielinski, Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means, trans. Gloria Custance (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), 5. As digital scans replace blueprints and digital music replaces cassette tapes, there may be a net increase in the reproducibility and transmiss bility of information, but a net loss of excellence as all information is reduced to a common binary base. Excellence is an apt criterion by which to judge Marclay's vast and diverse output in music, performance, video. installation, assemblage, sculpture, photography, and other media and practices. But excellence runs the risk of becoming to media archaeology what social Darwinism is to anthropology; namely, bunk science. After all, media are not organisms and media technologies are not naturally

further photogravures as well as a variety of hand- and hanging-scrolls. The most fecund collaboration to date has been formed around the creation of cyanotypes: six separate series—altogether 117 individual works—beginning with the *Automatic Drawings*.

The Automatic Drawings are the simplest of Marclay's cyanotype creations, but they contain the seeds for nearly all his other series. The title references the Surrealist practice, pioneered by André Masson in the 1920s, in which the artist's hand is allowed to move without conscious purpose across the page and to create a drawing "freed" from reason and rational constraints. (This practice was later pursued on a monumental scale and on American soil by Jackson Pollock and other Abstract Expressionists.) In Marclay's version, it is the chance meanderings and accumulations of magnetic tape that compose the automatic forms, which are then drawn by light directly onto the photographic paper.

If the compositional principle owes a debt to Surrealism, the technique—and, in many respects, the form as well—recalls the origins of cyanotype photography. Sir John Herschel, a

between these two bodies of work. Each of Marclay's Automatic Drawings is composed by placing a clear, plastic cassette near the top of a piece of cvanotype paper—cut to the precise proportions of an audio cassette—and unfurling its magnetic tape into a "tail." The ensemble is then exposed to an artificial light source rich in the ultraviolet range of the spectrum (similar to sunlight), washed with tap water, and dried. But the comparison with Atkins's algae images has more than just a pseudomorphological basis: the cyanotype chemistry used today is virtually unchanged from that of the 1840s—a mix of ferric ammonium citrate and potassium ferricyanide. Furthermore, no two images by Atkins or Marclay are the same; each is a unique photographic inscription of the specimen made without recourse to photographic negatives or cameras. Formally, both Atkins and Marclay manipulate the specimen to fit on the page and reveal its structure through the relative opacity and translucency of its various parts. Specimens are laid flat and movement is averted in an effort to create the clearest possible image. In both cases, the subject matter must be "killed" in order to be represented (this will be seen again in Marclay's



prominent gentleman scientist (whose work inspired, among others, the young Darwin) discovered the cyanotype process in 1842, three years after Louis Daguerre and William Henry Fox Talbot announced their inventions of photography to selected scientists and the general publics of France and England. Unlike the daguerreotype (Daguerre) or the calotype ("beautiful image," Talbot), however, the cyanotype ("deep-blue image") was not photo-sensitive enough to be used in cameras; furthermore, its fantastic blue was a liability for a young medium closely associated with naturalism and verisimilitude. Cyanotypes were initially taken up almost exclusively by a small elite of botanists for the purpose of plant illustration. The most prolific among these was Anna Atkins, who is often credited as being the first female photographer.5 From 1843 to 1854 Atkins compiled multiple volumes and copies of Photographs of British Algae; in her images, the Prussian blue background conjures the sea—a lifelike context for the oceanic organisms. (b)(c)(d)

When laid out across a table, Marclay's *Automatic Drawings* are reminiscent of pages from Atkins's *Photographs of British Algae*, as if Marclay were a natural historian of media technologies. In place of Atkins's British algae, Marclay uses a cassette tape; instead of sunlight, he employs artificial ultraviolet light. Otherwise, there are several surprising resemblances



later series, such as *Memento*). Finally, for both Atkins and Marclay, production is "artisanal" (despite the photomechanical context of illustrated books and graphic prints) and the works are dispersed within intimate social circles: this is literally the case for the dozen or so known copies of Atkins's *Photographs of British Algae* (original recipients included family friends and scientific luminaries like Talbot, Herschel, and Robert Hunt, a scientist and early photo-historian)—but it is also true for Marclay's *Automatic Drawings*, which were composed for Graphicstudio "subscribers," a small circle of supporters and friends of the atelier.

The fundamental difference between Atkins's work and Marclay's is, of course, history. Atkins embarked on her cyanotype illustrations at the dawn of photography; Marclay delved into the cameraless blueprints in an era that has been dubbed "post-photographic." Atkins's once-living organic specimens resemble only slightly the dead media captured by Marclay. And of course, the practice of the nineteenth-century layman scientist bears little resemblance to that of the twenty-first century professional artist.

Ultimately, what separates Marclay from Atkins is the advent of modernity. Marclay's cameraless photography purposefully resurrects the history of modernism—a history that

spans roughly the century from 1860 to 1960—and its relation to the popular. *Memento (Survival of the Fittest)* is not a memento to the natural selection of algae or media, nor to the brute materiality of plastic cassettes, a once-dominant technology reduced to so much rubble today. Marclay's cyanotypes are mementos to a point in modernity when avant-garde forms laid claim to the popular imagination and borrowed from the dregs of popular culture. That point in history now appears as distant as cyanotype photography and Rolling Stones audiocassettes. And it is here, at the intersection of avant-garde art and the refuse of popular culture, that Marclay began his career.

In 1978, Marclay, who was born in the United States but grew up in Switzerland, had returned to America and was an art student living in Brookline, Massachusetts. "At the time," he says, "I was already thinking about sound." So begins the artist's account of his gramophonic epiphany, more than three decades ago and almost exactly one hundred years after Thomas Edison announced his invention of the phonograph. Marclay recalls:

I was living in Brookline; while walking to [art] school on a heavily trafficked street a block away from my apartment I found a record on the pavement. Cars were driving over it. It was a Batman record, a children's story with sound effects. I borrowed one of the turntables from school to listen to the record. It was heavily damaged and skipping, but was making these interesting loops and sounds, because it was filled with sound effects. I just sat there listening and some kind of spark happened. . . . Just the fact that I picked it up was significant of that cultural difference. If I had grown up in the U.S., I wouldn't have thought twice about seeing a record on the street. That's what surprised me about American culture: its excess, the prevalence of so much waste. When I first came [back] to the United States [in 1977], it was a common sight to see broken records on the street. It took away the preciousness of the object.6

Marclay pursued these skips, loops, and sounds through orchestrated and improvisational manipulations of the gramophone—a technique made popular through parallel developments in hip-hop. His may be the only music career ever launched by a broken record.

Marclay has revisited the scene of destruction in a number of installations—notably in *Footsteps* (1989) and *Echo and Narcissus* (1992), for which he covered a gallery floor with thousands of twelve-inch vinyl records and compact discs, respectively. At first glance, these installations would seem to be comments on the programmed obsolescence that is a driving force behind advanced capitalism. But Marclay added another dimension. The vinyl records of *Footsteps* (e) contained the sound of Marclay's own footsteps mixed with the quick syncopations of tap dancers' pattering feet. As visitors meandered through the gallery, they added the physical marks

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7 Thomas Y. Levin argues that the twofold indexicality in Footsteps—namely, a vinyl record's recorded sounds and "the vagaries of its subsequent performance history"—is a component of all records as soon as they are played. Thomas Y. Levin. "Indexicality Concrète: The Aesthetic Politics of Christian Marclay's Gramophonia." Parkett, no. 56 (1999): 166. Interestingly, this is precisely the definition Walter Benjamin gives to an artistic original as distinct from the reproduction (gramophonic, photographic, or otherwise): "In even the most perfect reproduction, one thing is lacking; the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place. It is this unique existence—and nothing else—that bears the mark of the history to which the work has been subject. This history includes changes to the physical structure of the work over time, together with any changes in ownership." Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," in Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 3, 1935-1938, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

of their own footsteps to the mix. Their treading feet imprinted the mechanically reproduced records with a unique layer of skips and loops—as if to reinforce the preciousness of the records by reminding audiences of their destructibility. Each of the 3,500 individually trod-upon records from *Footsteps* was packaged and sold at the close of the exhibition; an edition of 1,000 was released, out of which 100 copies were signed and numbered.

In *Echo and Narcissus*, (f) Marclay took advantage of the reflective surfaces of compact discs, transforming their capability for sonic regurgitation into a capacity for visual reflection. This transmutation from the aural to the optical register (alluded to in the work's title) is emblematic of Marclay's œuvre; indeed, it is perhaps its most important structural operation. Unlike the records of *Footsteps*, the 15,000 CDs used for *Echo and Narcissus* were summarily dumped after each exhibition; they could be installed and experienced but not owned as individual objets d'art.

Between the 1989 exhibition of Footsteps and the first iteration



of *Echo and Narcissus* in 1992, Marclay began experimenting with cameraless photographs (also known as photograms). Made through the interposition of objects between a light source and a photosensitive surface, photograms have been known at least since the 1830s, when Talbot placed leaves and lace on photosensitive paper and exposed them directly to light. Cameraless photography of all kinds has been practiced by amateurs, children, scientists, and others since the invention of photography. (The most familiar and widely disseminated form of cameraless photograph is the X-ray image.) Avantgarde artists—notably Man Ray and László Moholy-Nagy—first explored the technique in the years following World War I.8 (g) The critical response to the introduction of photograms into

8 The best available overview of twentieth-century photograms is Floris M. Neusüss and Renate Heyne, eds., Das Fotogramm in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts (Cologne: DuMont, 1990). A comprehensive survey, curated by Tim Roth, of artists who employ cameraless techniques is available online at www.photogram.org.

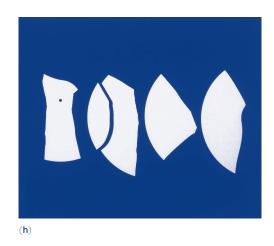
⁵ As Carol Armstrong has demonstrated, Atkins's cyanotypes are best understood as a type of nature print, drawing, or illustration. See Carol Armstrong, "Cameraless: From Natural Illustrations and Nature Prints to Manual and Photogenic Drawings and Other Botanographs," in Ocean Flowers, ed. Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁶ Christian Marclay in Douglas Kahn, "Christian Marclay's Early Years: An Interview," *Leonardo Music Journal* 13 (2003): 19.

avant-garde discourse in 1922 was split. On the one hand, Man Ray sold his first "rayographs" (as he called his cameraless photographs) to the fashion impresario Paul Poiret: they were first published in Vanity Fair (November 1922); and Man Ray eventually adopted the technique for advertisement spreads in Harper's. In short, rayographs were utilized as a tool for the "New Vision" that was sweeping over Europe and America, a modern view inextricably tied to the marketing and sale of serially manufactured commodities. At the same time, a limitededition portfolio of rayographs was advertised in terms of its artistic pretensions: "This is the first time that photography is placed at the same level as original pictorial works."9 The title of the Vanity Fair piece in which the rayographs first appeared was "A New Method of Realizing the Artistic Possibilities of Photography." The Parisian polymath Jean Cocteau quickly understood that the artistic value of the rayographs lay not only in their suppression of overt mimesis in favor of an at least partial abstraction, but also in the fact that each print is unique and no more reproducible than a drawing or painting. "Your prints," he wrote Man Ray in an open letter from 1922, "are so

and *Untitled (Guns N' Roses and Survival of the Fittest)* (all 2007–8) (fig. **23**) resemble works from the more coherent series and even recycle several of their cassette tapes; but the tension they embody is first and foremost between garbage—both physical and cultural—and its sublimation.

If Cocteau insisted that objects could be sublimated only through the poetic hand of the artist, Tristan Tzara, the irascible Dada ringleader, proposed a radically different interpretation in his introduction to *Champs délicieux* (Delicious fields; 1922), the first limited-edition folio of rayographs. In contrast to Cocteau, Tzara had little interest in preciousness. And art? Well, as Tzara joyfully proposed: "Let's speak of art for a moment. Yes, art. I know a gentleman who makes excellent portraits. This gentleman is a camera." Like Marcel Duchamp—who, in the same year, famously answered a questionnaire on the artistic significance of photography with the rebuke "You know exactly what I think about photography. I would like to see it make people despise painting until something else will make photography unbearable. There we are "13—Tzara was impatient with questions of art and artists. He believed that the rayo-











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precious because there exists only one of each."1

Marclay has always been attuned to this contradictory dimension of cameraless photography. Every photogram he has created is a unique original. Indeed, his very first series—comprised of photograms of broken records—immediately invokes his early gramophonic epiphany and, with it, the desire to restore the preciousness of the object taken away not by technological reproduction so much as by wasteful consumption. As its title suggests, Broken Record in 5 Pieces (1990) (h) is composed of the fragments of a single gramophone record. But rather than attempt to make it whole again, Marclay emphasizes the preciousness of the vinyl disc through its transposition into a photogram. If in Footsteps Marclay succeeded in transforming 3,500 identical records into 3,500 unique recordings, Broken Record in 5 Pieces transforms an anonymous and disposable record into a unique composition in black and white. "Your records," Cocteau might have said to Marclay, "are precious because there exists only one photogram of each."

In the same vein, Marclay has produced several dozen cyanotypes that belong to no defined series and follow no preordained compositional principle. Works like *Untitled (Sonic Youth, R.E.M., and One Mix Tape)*; (fig. **5**) *Untitled (Luciano Pavarotti, Halo, Sound Choice and Three Mix Tapes*); (fig. **15**)

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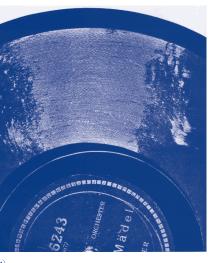
- 9 "Bulletin de souscription: Champs délicieux," Les Feuilles libres (1922).
- 10 "A New Method of Realizing the Artistic Possibilities of Photography," *Vanity Fair* (November 1922), 50.
- 11 Jean Cocteau, "An Open Letter to M. Man Ray, American Photographer" (1922), in Christopher Phillips, ed., Photography in the Modern Era (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Aperture, 1989), 2.
- 12 Tristan Tzara, "Photography Upside Down," in Phillips, ed., Photography in the Modern Era, 5.
- 13 Marcel Duchamp in "Special Issue: Can a Photograph Have the Significance of Art?," MSS. [Manuscripts] 1, no. 4 (1922): 2.

graphs freed beauty from the hegemony of a select elite. Cameraless photographs, after all, are among the simplest aesthetic objects to produce.

Even more than his first cyanotypes, Marclay's first series of photograms are the simplest of photographs: black and white in a binary sense (that is, without tonal gradations); a layout that is neither aleatory nor composed, but bluntly documentary; literal to such a degree that the titles—like *Broken* Record in Three Pieces (1990)—provide nearly complete descriptions: a one-to-one correspondence between referent and image with regard to size and transparency. If there is visual beauty in the work it is in the broken record itself: the contrast between its rounded and jagged edges, the fragmentary quality that makes it appear like pieces of a puzzle, its wreckage and its fragility. For Tzara, the broken record itself would clearly have sufficed. And if there is a need to record the record, cameraless photography succeeds in an artless transposition that captures the beauty of the pure material itself rather than the invention of the artist. Tzara's description of Man Ray's rayographs may be perfectly well applied to Marclay's first

Marclay's turn to garbage and its traces—for example, broken records and their cameraless inscriptions—follows closely on Rauschenberg's lead. But where Crimp delineates a clear progression from production to reproduction in the case of Rauschenberg—and thus from modernism to postmodernism—Marclay establishes a much more complex and playful relationship between these opposing poles, one that strikes at the heart of the interwar avant-garde.

As Marclay tells it, his interest in cameraless photography began with a photograph of a gramophone reproduced in Moholy-Nagy's mid-1920s classic *Painting Photography Film*, published as part of the Bauhaus book series. While Marclay often highlights the gulf that separates visual from acoustic art, as well as their incongruous intersections, Moholy-Nagy's text unifies the two practices beneath an overarching theory of "production-reproduction." And it is here that Moholy-Nagy first explored the possibility of cameraless photography. Before ever venturing into the darkroom or laying his hands on photosensitive paper, Moholy-Nagy set out a theory of technological media and their place in aesthetic practice. He argues that art





photograms and his first cyanotypes—as well as to *Echo and Narcissus*: "As a mirror throws back an image without effort, as an echo throws back a voice without asking why, the beauty of matter belongs to no one: from now on it is a product of physics and chemistry." ¹¹⁴ From the very beginning, Marclay's photograms straddled the line between preciousness and detritus.

The critic Douglas Crimp chronicled the shift from modernism to postmodernism in the visual arts through the work of Robert Rauschenberg: "Rauschenberg had moved definitively from techniques of production (combines, assemblages) to techniques of reproduction (silkscreens, transfer drawings). And it is that move that requires us to think of Rauschenberg's art as postmodernist." Importantly, examples of Rauschenberg's reproductive work were among the most seminal products of the formative years of Graphicstudio; and the specific type of reproduction employed was cyanotype photography.¹⁶ Rauschenberg's Made in Tampa series (1972–73) inaugurated what would become a years-long collaboration between the artist and Graphicstudio; (i)(j) the series marks, in retrospect, a significant link between the postwar American avant-garde and Marclay's recent cyanotypes. Rather than presume the unique originality of his every brushstroke, Rauschenberg utilized mass-produced images, everyday junk, and other bric-a-brac and their traces—as the basis for much of his later work.



is an instrument in the development of the sensory faculties and that reproductive technologies must be opened up to their own *productive* ends—that is, rather than merely reproducing the sights and sounds of the world, artists must explore the expressive potential unique to each medium.

Moholy-Nagy's announced revolution in avant-garde art was a first step in a radical reconfiguration of the entire sensual world, from fashion and advertising to human perception itself. He delineates the productive uses of three media: gramophone, photography, and film (the matrix in which the seed to Marclay's cameraless work was planted). In the early 1920s, Moholy-Nagy envisioned a new form of musical composition through the direct manipulation of the gramophone record grooves. An "ABC of the groove," as Moholy-Nagy called it, would replace all other instruments, create a graphic language of composition, eliminate the need to "reproduce" music via amateurish interpretation, and allow for the distribution of sound without cumbersome orchestras. Productive phonography, according to Moholy-Nagy, would surpass all reproductions of extant sounds. What is more, this "alphabet" of the record groove would be enabled by photographic enlargements of gramophones. (k)

Of the three media technologies addressed in Moholy-Nagy's early text, only photography found a productive outlet in his practice. It was time, he asserted, to employ mirrors and

¹⁴ Tzara, "Photography Upside Down," in Phillips, ed., Photography in the Modern Era, 6.

¹⁵ Crimp, Douglas. "On the Museum's Ruins," *October* 13 (1980): 56.

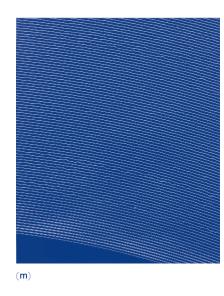
¹⁶ See Ruth Fine and Mary Lee Corlett, eds., Graphicstudio (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1991), 232–37.

¹⁷ László Moholy-Nagy, Painting Photography Film (1925/27), trans. Janet Seligman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969).

lenses to produce creative light effects, rather than merely reproducing images of the outside world. To do so (as Moholy-Nagy made clear in both theory and practice the following year), it was necessary to do away with the camera and experiment with the direct exposure of photosensitive surfaces. In other words, the same theoretical assertions that supported the photogram also called for a productive use of the gramo-phone.

Moholy-Nagy mustered no substantive attempt at productive phonography: he would never master an "ABC of the groove." But neither could he have anticipated its ultimate realization, as media-theorist Friedrich Kittler observes, among "New York disc jockeys [who] turn the esoteric graphisms of Moholy-Nagy into the everyday experience of scratch music." 18

In the early 1980s, Marclay was among those DJs. But in his "turntablism" he broke out of Moholy-Nagy's binary conception of production-reproduction and set loose a whole complex of postmodernist preoccupations. (I) Early Marclay tracks, such as "Dust Breeding" or "Groove" (both 1982), reference classic avant-garde notions but depart entirely from Moholy-Nagy's



fantasy of a gramophonic "alphabet." Rather than manipulating the record grooves on a microscopic level in order to create an entirely new language of sound, Marclay manipulated multiple records on a complex turntable station in order to mix fragments of recorded music ("reproductions") with sounds that derive uniquely from the properties of turntablism ("production"). In his music, Marclay explodes the production-reproduction divide by making productive use of reproductions.

More than acoustic montage but far from an elementary language of the groove, the sonic practice that Marclay helped to initiate was thus an investigation into reproductive production—or productive reproduction. Where modernists sought out elementary properties, universal languages, and the essence of a medium, postmodernists like Marclay have embraced contingent attributes, local dialects, and, as art-historian Rosalind Krauss has characterized it, the "post-medium condition." Marclay's œuvre is not limited to a single medium or approach. Music, performance, appropriation, collage, photography, readymades, and video—along with practices and objects that defy simple categorization—are all part of his expansive approach to art. But rather than disintegrate into eclecticism, Marclay's focus on the acoustic has opened up a

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new set of aesthetic conventions that lend coherence to his artistic output without falling into essentialist explorations of a medium.

Without these conventions and references, a viewer confronted with *Untitled* (2004) (m) would be at a loss (though a blissful loss) to decipher the curved pattern of lines running three feet across the surface of the image. What is the meaning of the dark band that tears across the top third of the photogram? How to explain the moiré patterns that appear at irregular intervals? To the uninitiated viewer, this untitled photogram might be read as an exercise in abstraction. To those more familiar with the history of photograms, however, the image might at first appear like an extension—perhaps an unwitting repetition—of avant-garde photographs (made both with and without a camera). Photograms of gramophones date back at least to Man Ray's rayographs (n) from the early 1930s. Indeed, a flier for a 1932 exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York describes Man Ray's transposition of the inscription of sound into an inscription in light:

His abstractions have opened a field which is far from being fully explored as yet. He has discovered that the most familiar objects can be transposed in a domain where they escape their own utilitarianism. A pair of scissors ceases to be a thing that cuts, a gramophone record is forever silenced, but beautiful spectrums have been made apparent.²⁰

Several years earlier, Moholy-Nagy published a microphotograph of gramophonic grooves (Enrico Caruso's high C, according to the caption) in From Material to Architecture, his 1929 summary of his Bauhaus teaching later translated as The New *Vision*.²¹ (o) While there is no direct influence here—Marclay was unaware of these images when he embarked on his own series of photograms—a distinct formal parallel is apparent. Of course, while Man Ray contextualizes the moiré pattern within recognizable images of records, Marclay's fragment is rendered virtually abstract. And while Moholy-Nagy still used camerabased photography, Marclay attains his close-up of record grooves without a camera. (To make these images, Marclay repurposed traditional photographic equipment: rather than using a camera-based negative, he inserts a fragment of a broken, transparent record directly into an enlarger.) But these formal and technical differences seem inconsequential in light of the dramatic formal similarities and underlying shared fascination with the attributes of a specific medium. It appears that the many hands in Marclay's photograms are not those of the artist but the hands of a DJ mixing his favorite tracks from the historical avant-garde. Rather than break with modernism, Marclay is replaying it.

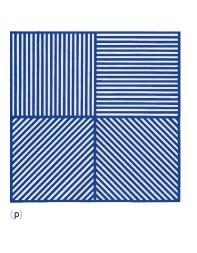
In Marclay's version, however, there is a difference. And that difference, again, is history. New Vision photography helped shift modern tastes from the artisanal and unique to the industrial and mass-produced. Artists like Man Ray helped to inculcate new desires in modern consumers. Moholy-Nagy framed his discussion of advertising much as he did his discussion of art: in terms of medium-specificity, visual literacy, the embrace of the new. Marclay revisits the materials, techniques, and forms of the historical avant-garde under markedly different economic and technological conditions. While the technological reproducibility of photography once dovetailed perfectly with the technological reproducibility of commodities, both photochemical photography and industrial production are today on the wane in the West. Similarly, photographic abstraction—

which once marked the radical frontier of formal experimentation in art—is now securely established in galleries, museums, and the critical literature. Most important of all, where abstraction once struggled with the socioeconomic and technological conditions of modernity, it has become a style utterly divorced from those conditions. Marclay revisits this early moment of the avant-garde in order to (re)unite formal, sociological, and technological concerns.

Marclay's *Grids* series of cyanotypes (2009), his most recent cyanotype collaboration with Graphicstudio, evinces the strife inherent in this complex merger. One is tempted to find allusions to the countless grids present throughout twentieth-century art, from Piet Mondrian to Agnes Martin and Sol LeWitt. (p) Over a century ago, the grid signaled modern art's will to silence, its hostility to literature, narrative, and discourse. "As such, the grid has done its job with striking efficiency," argues Krauss. "The arts, of course, have paid dearly for this success because the fortress they constructed on the foundations of the grid has increasingly become a ghetto."²² Works such as Marclay's *Large Cassette Grid No.* 7 (2009) (fig. 8)









industry on the brink of collapse.

Technique and style correspond closely in the early experiments Marclay did with cameraless photography around 1990 and both relate to avant-garde precedents of the 1920s and '30s. His newer cyanotypes, however, simultaneously turn back the photochemical clock to the nineteenth century and allude to more recent art, creating strong dissonances between content and form. One recent reviewer likened the work to "X-rays of Cy Twombly or Jackson Pollock canvasses" in an attempt to bridge the cameraless technique and the art-historical allusions.²⁴ But the warring parties will not be reconciled so easily.

they available in a gamut of "standard" sizes (including seven,

great deal of variation; so long as the hole is punched in the

center (a convention Marclay challenged in earlier works), the

diameter and thickness are irrelevant. This is not the case with

the audiocassette. Regardless of manufacturer, length, quality,

or special features, every audiocassette must fit into the same

size audio deck and, by extension, into the same size cassette

box. The result is an audiocassette whose near-golden propor-

tions are an ironclad industrial norm. Large Cassette Grid No. 7

evinces a perfect grid only because every cassette box is man-

one of Marclav's Large Cassette Grids has the same dimensions

and the same number of cassette boxes—within which there is

room for infinite minor variations based on the relative translu-

cency of the plastic, the precise manufacture of the boxes, and

the presence or absence of tapes within the boxes. Whereas so

much contemporary abstraction struggles unsuccessfully to

escape whimsy, Marclay's geometric abstraction adheres to a

standard—a standard rooted in the industrial design of an

ufactured to the same size specifications. Accordingly, every

ten, and twelve inches), but each "standard" format allows for a

Marclay's recent cyanotypes of cassette tapes grew out of a 2001 series of twenty-five photograms, each almost exactly one square foot, where ribbons and knots of magnetic tape pulled out of audiocassettes leave white, weblike patterns on a matte black ground. Like his earlier series, the new works consist largely of unspooled reams of cassette tape. But the two bodies of work are ultimately more different than similar, in material, color, orientation, scale, and historical references. Recent pieces such as *Untitled (Guns N' Roses, Sonic Youth and Two Mix Tapes)* (fig. 41) and *Mashup (Two Cassettes Diptych)* (both 2008) (fig. 33) are composed not only of magnetic tape but also of the cassette containers from which they are pulled. In place of the black ground of silver gelatin, Marclay

betray the fine tracery and rigid geometry evident in works by

ric system to the inflexible parameters of the frame. Marclay's Large Cassette Grids are nearly the precise inversion of Stella's stripe paintings: he begins with standard-size cassette boxes (4 by 2½ inches), which he assembles into columns and rows until he has attained a nearly perfect square (38½ by 39 inches). Where Stella's frame determines the content, Marclay's content strictly governs the frame. But the precise (and rigorously consistent) dimensions of Marclay's content are a product of a particular industrial logic. Records vary in size: not only are

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²⁰ Emphasis added. The exhibition was held April 9–30, 1932, at the Julien Levy Gallery (602 Madison Avenue, New York

²¹ László Moholy-Nagy, Von Material zu Architektur (From Material to Architecture), Bauhaus Book 14 (Munich: Langen, 1929). Published in English as The New Vision—From Material to Architecture, trans. Daphne M. Hoffmann (New York: Brewer, Warren and Putnam, 1932).

Frank Stella, Agnes Martin, and countless more recent painters of geometric abstraction—rather than the perfection of truly industrial products. From this art-historical vantage point, each cassette box (a redundant appellation: cassette derives from French for little box or case) adds another brick to the walls of modernism's grid ghetto. But if the power of the modernist grid lies, in part, in its capacity to articulate the very properties of the canvas—its flat rectangularity—Marclay's grids seem to operate in reverse. Consider, for example, Stella's seminal stripe painting Die Fahne hoch! (1959).23 (q) The ratio of the work's width to height—five to three—ostensibly derives from that of the Nazi flag referenced in its title (recalling Jasper Johns's famous American flag series inaugurated only a few years prior), and the content—black enamel stripes divided by thin lines of unpainted canvas—applies an extremely basic geometric system to the inflexible parameters of the frame. Marclay's

²² Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986), 9.

^{23 &}quot;Die Fahne hoch!" ("the flag on high"), also known as the "Horst-Wessel-Lied," was the anthem of the Nazi party from 1930 to 1945.

²⁴ Michael Wilson, "Christian Marclay, 'Cyanotypes,'" *Time Out New York*, no. 679 (2008): 62.

¹⁸ Friedrich Kittler, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 50.

¹⁹ See Rosalind Krauss, "A Voyage on the North Sea": Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999). For her more recent reflections on Christian Marclay and the "post-medium condition," see Rosalind Krauss, "Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition," October 116 (2006): 55–58.

turns in these works to the striking Prussian blues of cyanotype. Moreover, where Marclay's black-and-white photograms of tape lack any clear orientation, the recent cyanotypes strongly imply the force of gravity and the attendant horizontality or verticality of their fabrication. Marclay's 2001 black-and-white photograms may be most readily comprehensible when considered in terms of avant-garde cameraless photography; by contrast, the recent cyanotypes—in particular works like *Memento (Hüsker Dü)* (fig. **27**) and *Allover (Kenny Rogers, Rod Stewart, Jody Watley, and Others)* (fig. **14**) (both 2008), which measure approximately four by eight feet—are clearly in dialogue with post–World War II American painting.

The series title *Allover* is borrowed directly from the critical terminology introduced in the 1950s to describe the paintings of Pollock and his Abstract Expressionist cohorts: with the advent of "allover" painting, suddenly every part of the canvas was given equal weight; traditional compositional notions such as foreground and background, periphery and center were all but abandoned. For the painter, the canvas became an arena for action (per Harold Rosenberg). For the viewer, it was a con-

Rogers, Rod Stewart, Jody Watley, and Others), Marclay lays out rectangular cassettes, circular bobbins, irregular plastic shards, and many feet of magnetic tape all over the paper—after which he makes the first of roughly three or four exposures. (s) So long as these materials do not move (rare in the case of the wispy tape), they appear shockingly white in the final print. Before each exposure, Marclay adds additional materials, whose blue traces range from an extraordinary lightness (in the case of minimal exposure) to a depth that rivals those portions of the paper that were fully exposed to the artificial sun. In a perceptual inversion, the materials most proximate to the paper during the exposures tend to be brightest and thus appear closest to the viewer upon perusal; the reverse holds true for materials layered later and higher: they appear fainter, darker, blurrier, and more distant from the viewer. A very few objects float untethered from their surroundings (consider the broken cassette above and to the left of dead center, or the bobbin just beneath and to the left of that same central point). On the whole, however, our eyes are led through a network of lines and forms without beginning or end. We are left to sweep the



summately optical space, traversable only with the eye (per Clement Greenberg).

These qualities are present in abundance throughout Marclay's Allover series. A close comparison of his Allover (Kenny Rogers, Rod Stewart, Jody Watley, and Others) and Pollock's Number 1A (1948) bears this out. To begin, the two works are roughly the same size (the cyanotype measures 51½ inches high and 100 1/8 inches wide; the painting is 68 by 104 inches). Even more important—in terms of both process and productis the manner in which both Marclay and Pollock lay down, or "drip," the lines of color onto the material support. Photographs of the two artists at work are highly revealing. In Hans Namuth's famous photographs from 1950, (r) Pollock is seen traversing the perimeter of the recumbent canvas, pouring or flinging paint onto its surface. Marclay works in a similar fashion, dispensing magnetic tape across the cyanotype paper. In each case, the result is an intricate web of comingling lines and forms in which whites advance and darks recede without forming traditional figures and ground. There is continuous movement but no clear "up" or "down," "left" or "right." Both works evince especially tight choreography near the edges, which are respected in the whole but transgressed in the particular.

To achieve the visual qualities evident in Allover (Kenny



surface of the image or traverse its purely optical depth in an endless, rhythmic dance. Pollock would be impressed.

Whether Marclay could convince mid-century critics Rosenberg or Greenberg that his cyanotypes constitute "serious" painting is another matter. Does Allover (Kenny Rogers, Rod Stewart, Jody Watley, and Others) bear the traces of a dramatic dialogue between "canvas" and artist? Does it perform a Kantian critique of its very means? Or is it little more than "apocalyptic wallpaper," thus realizing Rosenberg's greatest fears?²⁵ These questions—once so urgent—seem utterly negligible—merely distractions—today. Pollock's more vital legacy lies in the collapse of the serious, formal rigor expected of "high art" and the seemingly wanton adoption of quotidian materials (metallic house-paints, sticks in place of brushes) and bestial traces (handprints, clustered at the top right of Number 1A, cigarette butts), and the refusal of studied composition in favor of intuitive or automatic traces. The impression of Number 1A is as sublime as the means are abject—the latter magnifying rather than diminishing the former.

The tension between the sublime and the abject was developed by Pollock and his immediate followers not only in the materials they employed but also in the orientation of the canvas. Critics and champions alike regarded the floor as an

25 See Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," in The Tradition of the New (New York: Horizon Press, 1959), 34. The Kantian model of modernism was proposed by Clement Greenberg in his 1960 essay "Modernist Painting," in Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, vol. 4, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 85–93.

unsavory place for art—and either sublimated it in favor of the works' eventual vertical position on the wall or emphasized this "base" dimension in order to desublimate art by contrast. Krauss tracks the legacy of Pollock's horizontality through Andy Warhol's *Piss Paintings* (1961), (t) *Dance Diagrams* (1962) (u) (schematic renderings of dance steps exhibited on the floor), and *Oxidation Painting* (1978) (v) (here again, it was urine that oxidized the metallic paints): "It is in this convergence between the footprints and the urine that Warhol's formal reading of Pollock's act of branding his work as 'horizontal' is made wholly explicit." Where Morris Louis and other Color Field painters elevated Pollock's drips into veils of transcendent color, Warhol and others grounded his drips in excrement

Marclay's two monumental cyanotype series, *Mementos* and *Allovers*, appear neatly separable into the vertical and the horizontal registers. No documentary photographs are needed to identify the work of gravity in the *Memento* series—produced at a slight angle to the perpendicular, but with a primary vector that is clearly vertical. Similarly, the *Allovers* are incon-

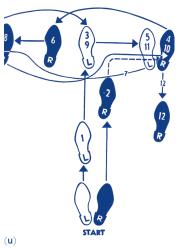
conjuring. That is what makes it hard to bear.28

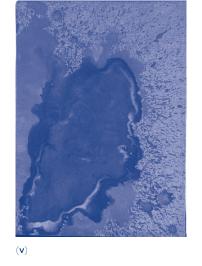
We have largely lost touch with the "vulgarity" of Abstract Expressionism (which, when compared to more recent cultural vulgarity, appears positively aristocratic). One would be hard pressed to gather a set of cultural references more closely aligned with "petty-bourgeois" (a.k.a. lower-middle-class) American vulgarity than those inscribed in the cameraless traces and titles of Marclay's cyanotypes: Rod Stewart, Céline Dion, Antonín Dvořák, Britney Spears, and so on. (It is said that one collector passed on *Memento [Britney Spears]* [2008] (fig. 7) lest he be tainted by the pop diva's vulgarity.) Marclay's monumental cyanotypes—and this is among their great virtues—restore to visibility the vulgarity of mid-twentieth-century American painting.

If Pollock, Abstract Expressionism, Color Field painting, and mid-century America are the points of departure for Marclay's *Mementos* and *Allovers*, we are in need of an intermediary other than Warhol's *Piss Paintings* and Louis's *Veil Paintings* to deliver a Pollock less torn between the abject and the tran-



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ceivable except in their horizontal extension. On the walls of a gallery, however, these orientations are little inclined toward the transcendent or the abject. Photographic paper is a poor substitute for the magical, even spiritual powers so often attributed to paint and canvas. At the same time, magnetic tape is perfectly respectable compared to handprints and cigarette butts, let alone bodily excretions. Where Pollock's immediate followers tended toward the extremes, Marclay seems to channel the Pollock described by art-historian T. J. Clark as "a petty-bourgeois artist of a tragically undiluted type—one of those pure products of America." According to Clark:

what is special about Abstract Expressionism—what marks it off from all other modernisms—is that the engagement is with the vulgar as opposed to the "popular" or "low." I think we should understand the "popular" in nineteenth- and twentieth-century art as a series of figures of avoidance of the vulgar: that is, figures of avoidance of art's actual belonging to the pathos of bourgeois taste: a perpetual shifting and conjuring of kinds of simplicity, directness, naivety, sentiment and sentimentality, emotional and material force, in spite of everything about art's actual place and function that put such qualities beyond its grasp. Abstract Expressionism does little or no such

scendent. That intermediary is Rauschenberg. Around 1950, shortly after Pollock completed Number 1A, Rauschenberg embarked on a series of Blueprints in which his then-wife, Susan Weil, and their friend, Pat Pearman, lay sprawled across mural-sized sheets of cyanotype paper strewn with leaves, lace, and other bric-a-brac that would have suited Anna Atkins's circle quite well. (w) (x) Exposing the paper with a sun lamp much as Pollock had dripped his house paints and Marclay scatters his magnetic tape—Rauschenberg collapsed together the horizontal, the corporeal, the automatic, the vernacular, and the industrial. This was not a desublimation of art so much as a defiance of its potential "seriousness." Photographs of Rauschenberg and Weil at work were published in Life magazine in 1951, where the accompanying text explains: "Although the Rauschenbergs make blueprints for fun, they hope to turn them into screen and wallpaper designs."29 (They had already been used as window displays at the department store Bonwit Teller.) Conservative critics beware: wallpaper designs? ("apocalyptic wallpaper"!). Fun? ("Fun is a medicinal bath," as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer wrote. "The pleasure industry never fails to prescribe it.")30 lf, barely two years prior to the story on Rauschenberg, Pollock appeared ill at ease in the pages of *Life* magazine ("Is He the Greatest Living Painter in

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²⁶ Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 275. See also Rosalind Krauss, "Horizontality," in Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), 93–103.

²⁷ T. J Clark, "The Unhappy Consciousness," in Farewell to an Idea (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 300.

²⁸ T. J. Clark, "In Defense of Abstract Expressionism," in ibid.,

^{29 &}quot;Speaking of Pictures," *Life*, April 9, 1951.

³⁰ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment (New York: Continuum, 1988), 140.

the United States?" the headline asked famously and ambiguously), the younger artist made the pages of magazines like Life—as well as radios, television images, and other mass media—the very substance of his work. Art-historian Leo Steinberg understood Rauschenberg's canvases to be flatbed picture planes similar to "tabletops, studio floors, charts, bulletin boards—any receptor surface on which objects are scattered, on which data is entered, on which information may be perceived, printed, impressed."31 Neither transcendent nor abject. Rauschenberg's canvases do not avoid popular culture by rising above it or escaping it from beneath; they are simply surfaces on which mass culture collects—the way paint once pooled on Pollock's canvases. How is this "cultural receptacle" evident in Rauschenberg's early Blueprints? Initial impressions provide conflicting evidence. On the one hand, the *Blueprints* were produced in a resolutely horizontal position. On the other hand, the traces they bear are of the female nude, leaves, and other objects that link the works more closely with natural history than industrial culture.

A resolution of the conflict may be approached through a

signal moment of "productive reproduction."

This is where Marclay takes up the mantel from Pollock and Abstract Expressionism: industrially produced house-paints are replaced with industrially produced magnetic tape; the canvas as an arena for action is exchanged for blueprint paper as an arena for photographic reproduction. But rather than capture vestiges of the existential self (Pollock) or nature (Rauschenberg), Marclay records the residues of industrialized culture: cheap audiocassette reproductions produced on the nineteenth century's cheapest mode of photographic reproduction: blueprints.

Art-historian Thomas Crow argues that culture in the context of capitalism displays moments of negation and an ultimately overwhelming accommodation: "Modernism exists in the tension between these two opposed movements. And the avant-garde, the bearer of modernism, has been successful when it has found for itself a social location where this tension is visible and can be acted upon." Marclay's cyanotypes do not necessarily negate the cultural products of advanced capitalism. Quite the contrary: rarely has Pollock looked so fresh;



(00)



consideration of the cyanotype process itself. After its initial exploration by Atkins and other botanists, cyanotype photography was largely forgotten.³² Thirty years of near oblivion paved the way for the reinvention of the process: entrepreneurs suppressed John Herschel's name and formula as well as his appellation for the procedure. Instead of remaining a gentleman's (or gentlewoman's) scientific hobby, the "ferroprussiate process"—as the cyanotype process was redubbed—was employed for photocopying plans of any kind: in a word, blueprints. By the end of the nineteenth century, blueprint paper was manufactured industrially: in 1918 England, a 30-by-3-foot roll of cyanotype paper cost as little as one pound sixpence. Plans for a battleship required some 11,000 square feet of the paper. (Already in the eighteenth century, Prussian blue was the first widely manufactured artificial dye; its history is indivisibly bound up with industrialization.) Cheap and easy, blueprints remained the dominant industrial reproduction process for decades. This widespread mode of reproduction—though already in decline in the face of competing technologies like diazo prints (also known as whiteprints or blue-lines)—was the medium of Rauschenberg's Blueprints. Atkins conjured the ocean with her Prussian blue nature prints; Rauschenberg secured nature—in the form of the female nude and botanical elements—in terms of industrial reproduction. In other words, here even nature is rendered under the sign of mass media: a

never has Britney Spears appeared more interesting. Visually seductive and formally enchanting (approaching, perhaps, even apocalyptic wallpaper), Marclay's cyanotypes succeed not in direct negation—base materialism, desublimation, political criticism, or any other now-familiar strategy employed by modernist and postmodernist avant-gardes—but in rendering modernism's overwhelming accommodation to capitalism uncomfortably visible. Rather than an oscillation between the transcendent and the abject, Marclay fuses the beautiful and the vulgar.

³¹ Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," in *Other Criteria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 84.

³² The following account of the history of cyanotypes relies on Mike Ware, Cyanotype (London: Science Museum, 1999).

³³ Thomas E. Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in Modern Art in the Common Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 37.