

Fig. 1
Eric Baudelaire
Sugar Water 2007
Video still
72 min HD projection
Courtesy of the artist and
Elizabeth Dee, New York

Eric Baudelaire's *Sugar Water*, the Deleuzean Event, and the Dispersion of Spectatorial Labour

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Eric Baudelaire's *Sugar Water*, a 72-minute film, explores the cyclic eruptions and dissipations of a traumatic "event", rendered as four discrete photographic images that depict the stages of a car being fire bombed on a Parisian street. The four static photographs are pasted by a professional sign poster in chronological sequence in a Métro station in Paris and the film records the bill poster's activity in a single, unedited take (Figs. 1–5). By appending the name "Pte. Erewhon" to the station (appropriated from Samuel Butler's satiric novel, itself an inversion of the word "nowhere"), Baudelaire's film evinces "the desire called utopia" that Fredric Jameson locates in science fiction. Against such fragmentary dystopian desires, the film offers up an equally fleeting trace of the "actual": an unedited film documentation of four photographic images as they are distributed by an advertising/image system in the Parisian Métro. The posting of the images has its own set of pre- or post-effects, or to be more precise, a lack of effect on the commuters who pass through the station and barely notice the images of what appears, depending on the moment, to be either an episode of violence cued to recent racial disturbances and rioting in Paris, stills from a Hollywood film, a terrorist attack, or an advertisement for Peugeot. The images, given their ambiguous content and open-ended framing, are inseparable from the muted or non-existent reactions of the various commuters, who appear to be suspended in a history-less timeframe or perceptual limbo marked by both continuity and rupture and characterised by an estrangement from events. *Sugar Water*, with its meditations on the temporality of traumatic events, at once shocking and ashocking, in a post-9/11 era, raises questions about the dissemination, duration and ultimately perception of historical events in a media-saturated era, an era where events and spectators' perceptions of them exist simultaneously as photo-journalistic images and cinematic images from Hollywood films.

On the face of it, Baudelaire's film is a straightforward documentation in the day of a life of a Parisian bill poster and the commodified images he traffics in. The film functions as a digitally filmed re-enactment or apparition of a theatre of memory, and it is useful to outline the staging of the piece. To create the film, Baudelaire located the camera on the platform where it remained for the duration of the filming. The film was shot with a Panasonic P2, a camera developed for the broadcast news industry. Because it uses solid state memory (flash cards) in place of tape, it bypasses some of the limitations inherent in tape based video, and allows for more rapid offloading and distribution of video as data files. In Baudelaire's case the video was shot in DVCPRO-HD format directly onto a hard-drive and edited on *Final Cut Pro*, with color alteration with *Adobe After Effects*. The camera was positioned so that the viewer can see the bill poster in the foreground, and a set of stairs (to the platform) in the background. This is the set of stairs that most of the commuters enter and exit from. There are thus three blind spots, which serve as staging areas for the 16 actors Baudelaire employed: one behind the camera, one at the head of the stairs, and one camera left, in the general area where the train comes in and passengers board. There are no hidden passageways or "backdoors" through which the passengers might travel. Thus, everything passes before the lens of the camera and is subject to a certain verifiability. Sound effects were edited in later. In addition to the Métro sounds, Baudelaire inserted a cover of Johnny Cash's cover of Sting's "I Hung My Head." The music is heard when the subway doors open and like the cyclical recurrences that mark the comings and goings through the station itself, the music is hard to fix (in terms of attribution), to locate physically (no musicians are ever seen), or to make out clearly, so that the musical soundtrack comes in and out of focus, moving from foreground to background, and traversing various genres as well as musical eras.

As the film begins, the viewer first sees a man, wearing a work suit and carrying a ladder, enter an empty Parisian Métro station. He stands in front of a billboard covered with blank blue paper and begins to methodically post an image of cars parked on a Parisian street. The image is laid out in eight discrete squares, beginning with the upper left and ending with the lower right so that the image is assembled in the rapid, labour-intensive way that an actual sign poster in Paris would. But then, instead of leaving and moving to the next billboard, he repositions his ladder in front and begins posting a second image, this one of a car exploding, over the first image. After posting the second image, he begins the cycle anew, pasting up an image showing the same car in flames. Fourteen minutes later, he pastes a fourth image of the charred remains of a car over the preceding image. His method of posting each image does not vary in terms of method or compositional order, nor does the time it takes him to complete the work. After the fourth image has been posted, the bill poster pastes over it with the blue sheets that the film began with. The film then loops again without titles or credits. The posting of images suggests a chronological sequence as well as an endless erasure of the image-events which comprise it.

While the bill poster labours, commuters in the Métro station go about their business. They wait for a train, distractedly look toward the tracks, carry a baguette, engage in small talk, read. A few glance at the bill poster in passing but most do not notice the images being posted or the bill poster. The commuters walk up and down the platform, some towards the exit and some presumably towards the opening doors of a train, although Baudelaire provides only the sound effects of a train entering a station. Over the course of the 72-minute film, the same commuters recur on numerous occasions, sometimes walking into the station, sometimes walking to board the train, sometimes with their back to the camera and walking toward the exit, sometimes standing on the platform in between the camera and the stairs, and sometimes facing the camera as they walk down the platform to a point behind the camera. A young couple enters the station as the sign poster is putting up the second frame of the first image and the couple returns at approximately the same moment in the bill poster's pasting up of the second, third and fourth images. In this way, actions appear contradictory: regular and random, at some moments rigidly scripted, and at other times accidental. These actions do not appear as literal occurrences so much as approximations. Larger circulation patterns are repeated with minor variations so that patterns that appear one moment evaporate the next. In this way, memories seem to develop on top of other memories, and this endless process of remembering, re-remembering and mis-remembering is given literal embodiment as a series of displacements in what might be termed the field of memory; the film generates the feeling that the memories one is having are not quite one's own. *Sugar Water* in this sense functions as a Sartrean "transcendental field". In his 1937 article "The Transcendence of the Ego", Sartre, according to Deleuze, elaborated on his idea of "an impersonal, transcendental field, having the form neither of a personal synthetic consciousness nor subjective identity – the subject, to the contrary, always being constituted."

¹ Memories of events, like the patterns they create, come and go. With one exception, the characters in *Sugar Water* wear the same clothing and repeat similar gestures, so that over time one has a memory not so much of specific details but a memory contour of a very general and repetitive cycle of actions with minor alterations of behavior, a kind of procession of human vagueness marked by brief moments when we seem to recognise particular human individuals. Such moments, rather than congealing instants into a recognisable narrative, suggest the dispersion of memories into events or what Deleuze terms "the agonizing aspect of the pure event."² At various moments, watching *Sugar Water* calls to mind certain activities of looking back at one's own life. Was one reading Queneau's *Exercices du Style* last Thursday when one boarded the Métro, or was it the preceding Tuesday? The actors' entrances and exits are choreographed, though not precisely, to the actions of the bill poster as he cycles through his work. One of the actors looks at her watch as she walks in front of the camera. She looks at a book a few minutes later, but there is no way to



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definitively say that the second action followed the first. As Badiou notes of Deleuze's event, "The [pure] event is always that which has just happened and that which is about to happen, but never that which is happening."³

Sugar Water invites comparison and contrast with a number of Andy Warhol's films that explore ideas having to do with duration, indeterminate timeframes, mechanistic conceptions of the human, and the non-events or non-happenings that punctuate indeterminate durational experiences. In *Sleep* (1963) for example, Warhol filmed the poet John Giorno engaged in what might first appear to be a continuous and unedited "performance": a protracted period of inactivity, i.e. sleep, that is surprisingly active in terms of both Giorno's restless movements on the bed, alterations in lighting, and other flickering moments of disturbances staged across an endlessly ambient state of supposedly unaltered meditateness. But the disturbances and non-continuities are not confined to in-camera moments. When completed, *Sleep* ran to five hours and 21 minutes.⁴ Although it is sometimes mistakenly assumed to be a single take of unedited footage, it is in fact the result of numerous splices and re-used sections of tape, making the film at once chronological and fragmentary, with the cuts between spliced sections at times jarringly irregular and excruciatingly and literally repetitive at others.

In *Sleep*, as Pamela Lee notes, "what appears continuous is discontinuous."⁵ Or as Warhol succinctly put it, the time in his movies was "actually faked".⁶ Branden Joseph remarks that although it appears to be a "single, uninterrupted static shot...", *Sleep* proves infinitely more complex, its five and a half hours made up of twenty-two separate close-ups of Giorno's body, multiply printed and then spliced together into variously repeating sequences.⁷ *Sleep*, unlike *Empire*, is continuous and unspliced; both were filmed at 24 frames per second and projected at 16 fps, creating a hallucinogenic slow motion that resembled the passage of actual time but was actually one third slower than the events filmed. By altering the film's projection speed, Warhol altered the spectator's perception of events and the passage of time, creating a rift between filmic and real time, a rift that anticipates Baudelaire's photographic/filmic crossover. In any case, Warhol's films suggest both the continuous, linear and unedited passage of time, as well as unending stasis and absence of narrational progress. Joseph notes of *Sleep*: "viewers find themselves caught within a time frame that refuses to advance."⁸ *Empire* and the *Screen Tests* are, at the experiential level, unrelentingly on-going and linear as well as static and repetitive, directed as much to things that are not happening as things that are.

In *Sugar Water*, a number of impossible or unlikely scenarios erupt that work more openly to destroy notions of continuity, and though these scenarios are understandable given the context of the physical staging areas and blind spots, they are not immediately comprehensible in terms of narrative conventions that the film sets up. For example, a young couple enters and walks past the

camera, to wait (presumably) on the station platform for the next train. A few minutes later, the sound of a train pulling into the station is heard, and the viewer sees the same couple walk with their backs to the camera and depart the station without presumably ever having got onto the train. Such occurrences are numerous and, although not immediately noticeable, accumulate and suggest that beneath the illusion of a linear, chronological filmic recording of events, a number of the actions that are occurring are not occurring in the space of a seven minute wait on a Métro platform, but instead *are* cyclical and repetitive actions taking place over a period of weeks or months and spliced together at some later point in the editing room. This is precisely the effect communicated by the bill poster who would not post over an advertisement he had just posted. In this sense, a set of expectations converges on the film's durational trajectory, some conditioned by cinematic techniques, others by advertising cycles and conventional film narratives, and some by forgetfulness or mis-remembering. In comparison with Warhol, the time is not actually faked; however, it *looks* like it has been.

With its various and overlapping time cycles, *Sugar Water* is an exercise in what can and cannot be remembered accurately. Does the woman with a baguette enter once or twice during the bill poster's posting of the second image? How many times does she reappear per scene, as say compared to the young couple that usually (but not always) follows her. In addition, a number of incongruent time cycles appear superimposed upon the activities of the platform: the diurnal schedule of a bill poster, a five or six week advertising cycle, the day-in-and-day-out schedules of various commuter and 20-something flaneur types, and the schedule of the Métro's arrivals/departures. These time cycles punctuate, like clockwork or the blinking Metropolitan Life Tower in Warhol's *Empire*, each bill posting at the midway point and near the end of each bill posting scene. If the piece is on a straight temporal run, then a number of different clock times would seem to be running concurrently. Moreover, each of these overlapping cycles works to further disperse recollection into a durational space resistant to both memory and narration, where memory is regarded not so much a function of retrieval but of frequency, where remembering something again is as distinct as remembering something the first time. Among the interesting issues posed by both Warhol and Baudelaire is: what does it mean to remember something twice?

The actions of the commuters and bill poster do not appear to be solely continuous and linear but instead appear contained or framed by *both* cyclical and chronological cycles, i.e. they communicate both repetition and variation, and motion and stasis, with the distinction between the two difficult to discern. What emerges from this set of cyclical disjunctions is a species of false memory on the spectator's part, where what we remember does not seem to jibe with what we saw (a few minutes ago), where distinctions between true and false, theatrically staged and digitally altered, and past or present seem impossible to grasp and

possibly irrelevant.⁹ In this sense, Baudelaire works to transform a still image, regarded as a discrete entity linked to a specific moment in time, into something that can only be understood as part of a whole, changing durational process that is subject to increasing distraction and forgetfulness, as well as to mis-framing¹⁰ and appropriation for widely divergent political and economic ends. The first image of the car could be read as an advertisement, the second and third as digitally-produced stills from a Hollywood post-production company, and the final image could possibly be regarded as a photo-journalistic image. Yet no legible chronology, ideology, language, or medium-specific representational system frames the various images sufficiently. As Baudelaire notes, no photojournalist has been able to capture the exact moment of a car exploding – only its aftermath. Yet everyone believes they have seen cars exploding based on movies they have seen. Likewise, each character in *Sugar Water* appears multiple times as a kind of serial or repeating image, doing roughly the same thing when he or she reappears. The characters appear in a cycle of time that suggests what Fernand Braudel termed *la longue durée*, those rhythms of time that change little over the course of months and years but that admit of minor, daily variations, those “events” occurring “in the margin of traditional history.” In *Sugar Water*, the *longue durée*, which for Braudel was still a function of history, is explicitly rendered as cinematic experience. As in Braudel, such endless actions are prone to the inertia and forgetfulness that mark the large forgotten expanses of history that Braudel associated with “pre-industrialized economies”¹¹ and that Baudelaire transfers into an eternal, post-9/11, endlessly filmic present.

But if the actions of the characters appear apparitional in their cyclical repetitions, much in the manner of Deleuzian time-images, they also betray, in their automaton-like reappearances, what Pamela Lee has termed “a *seemingly* literal relationship to time”.¹² This temporal framing brackets the linear, real-time unfurling of specific actions: rummaging through a purse, asking someone the time, running to catch a train etc. For example, one woman enters eating a baguette. When she appears again, she is eating a baguette, but the baguette is shorter. Most actions are thus both cyclical and recurring as well as chronological and changing from instant to instant, but the overall effect of the film is to suggest the static, cyclical and only slightly changing, i.e. nearly static, nature of daily life, a succession of what Deleuze termed “any instant whatever”. Against this, of course, is set the remarkable set of changes or what Deleuze terms “privileged instants” suggested by the four images of a car being bombed.

From a Deleuzian standpoint, *Sugar Water* documents the interpenetration of “privileged instants” (*les instants privilégiés*) and “any instant whatever” (*l'instant quelconque*) that Deleuze saw as the defining quality of cinema in our era, a cinema in which images do not bear a merely mimetic relation to matter but exist as a continual and unending process of movement within it. *Sugar Water* can be regarded as occupying a position between what Deleuze terms a “move-



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ment-image” and a “time-image”, as well as between American and European cinema. Briefly restated, Deleuze argued that the movement-image characterised the first, classic phase of Hollywood filmmaking and defines a practice conducted under the reign of the sensory-motor apparatus, wherein all images are linked to actions in a causal/linear manner and time is understood as a function of a particular physical location. Thus time is subordinated to the space in which an action is carved out of. Characters perform acts that respond to particular occurrences in the present and all actions in turn are related to their place in a narrative that rationally frames and organises each event into a fabric of past, present and future. Examples in *Sugar Water* of movement-images might include those transitions within the film where continuity is evident, as in the shortening of the baguette, the purposeful walking down a platform, the continual rustling through a backpack or purse to find something, and the changing times that are recited when one passenger asks another for the time of day. In contrast, the time-image, according to Deleuze, is associated with all those situations where narrative and linear structure drop away and an “incommensurable” gap or interval opens up between images: “The cut, or interstice, between two series of images no longer forms part of either of the two series: it is the equivalent of an irrational cut, which determines the non-commensurable relations between images.”¹³ As a result of these irrational cuts, empty, directionless, depersonalised spaces, variously termed non-spaces or “any-space-whatevers,” (*espace quelconque*) begin to appear. Following the work of the anthropologist Marc Augé, Deleuze locates such spaces in airport terminals, waiting rooms, and subway stations, spaces which people move through in order to get somewhere else. Unlike Augé, who regarded such spaces as de-singularising, Deleuze regarded such spaces as open-ended locales: “... a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metrical relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible. What in fact manifests the instability, the heterogeneity, the absence of link of such a space, is a richness in potentials or singularities which are, as it were, prior conditions of all actualization, all determination.”¹⁴ (*Cinema 1*, 109)

In a deliberate echo of Deleuze, *Sugar Water* offers up a hallucinatory and literal intercalation of days into what is first perceived as a calendrical sequence. The film intercalates moments of actualisation and difference and discontinuity within the overall flow of sameness that characterises the day-to-day and year-to-year lives of the commuters, those twenty-first century flaneurs who appear in *Sugar Water* as unmoored and affectless pedestrians on the Pte. Erehwon Métro platform. However, it is precisely the gaps in their behaviour, the accidents and inconsistencies in their appearance or actions during the film’s running time that serve to jog the temporal scheme and create fissures or gaps in what might otherwise appear to be merely a continuous fabric of time. What emerges in short are various and unpredictable “privileged instants”, shot

through with recognitions of pronounced singularity, difference and identity. “The privileged instants ... are still any-instant-whatevers: to put it simply, the any-instant-whatever can be regular or singular, ordinary or remarkable”, (*Cinema 1*, 6) and to be extracted they demand a new form of spectatorial labour. For the spectator, it is hard to place individual’s actions in any clearly localisable space or time, and notions of past, present and future seem irrelevant to describe their existence. Deleuze references Jacob Epstein, who likens the shot to a cubist painting: “Epstein has the most deeply and poetically extracted this nature of the shot as pure movement, comparing it to a cubist or simultaneist painting: ‘All the surfaces are divided, truncated, decomposed, broken, as one imagines that they are in the thousand-faceted eyes of the insect—descriptive geometry whose canvas is the limit shot For the perspective of the outside he thus substitutes the perspective of the inside, a multiple perspective’” (*Cinema 1*, 23)

In Deleuzian fashion, Baudelaire regards the shooting of a film much as Jacob Epstein regards the shot, as a perspectival shift in an on-going temporal process. Thus Baudelaire describes the process of creating *Sugar Water* as a photographic/cinematographic transfer between an initial negative (i.e. exposure) and a positive (print). The film *Sugar Water* functions as the “positive” whereas research of the commuters’ various gestures and habits functions as the “negative”: “Each actor had a small set of stage directions (actions to repeat, motivations, a mini role description based for the most part on actual activities and attitudes observed by myself and my first AD Laure Vermeersch during the preparation of the film. We went out for hours on subway platforms, noted behaviours, selected activities, and scripted the film that way – as with many other projects of mine, observations of reality serve as the source for recreated reality. To take a photographic metaphor, I like to think of these observations of the real as a kind of “negative” used when I print the “positive” in the film.”¹⁵ Such cross-overs mark the project. *Sugar Water* is staged like a theatre piece and then filmed to reveal cinema’s operations. And yet it does what virtually every Hollywood film does: it creates a series of orchestrated illusions. Such a process is allegorised in the activity of the sign painter. Because each of the four still images is manually assembled from eight fragments, *Sugar Water* documents how a cinematic illusion is created i.e. as a composite of still images played at a speed that erases the frame disjunction, so that again Baudelaire employs a manual and somewhat anachronistic method (wheat pasting) of image dissemination to stage a cinematic effect that is discontinuous and fragmentary, as well as repetitive and cyclical. Here Baudelaire’s choice of actors suggests that Baudelaire conceives the *distribution* of images in *Sugar Water* as inseparable from economic cycles involving varying forms of production and circulation. He hired professional and non-professional actors to play the various Métro goers, but used an actual Parisian sign poster as the main character, once again complicating the relation between events and their representation, between the professional labour of the bill poster and the unpaid, flaneur-like activity



Fig. 4
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of various young people, and between actors and non-actors who are employed in various ways to produce what at first appears to be a single, coherent illusion. In this sense, the manual work of the bill poster is the labour that allows the spectator to see the image decompose into its constituent parts.

Baudelaire does a number of things to subvert our expectations of image production as it relates to specific mediums and to create a number of barely visible disruptions on the surface of his filmic practice. Where Warhol worked to create the illusion of filmic continuity Baudelaire works mainly to puncture such an illusion. Since it is unlikely that a Parisian bill poster would re-paste over an advertisement immediately after pasting it up, the viewer assumes that the film is comprised of five different events, filmed at different times of an advertising cycle, and later spliced into a single continuous film. Yet the film was actually shot in a single take and is thus absolutely faithful to events as they transpired, at once continuous and coterminous with events themselves. Baudelaire thus creates a cinematic effect, the illusion of time passing in an edited film, by staging it as a theatrical performance piece and then filming it so that the cinematic illusion created via editing, is, at it were, contained completely in the performance. As in his earlier staged photographic work *The Dreadful Details* (2006), the various events or actions staged by the actors and non-actors would seem to have been altered from the inside out in order to conform to certain cinematic conventions. The abandoned station that Baudelaire employed as his set is frequently used by film crews, and the four stills were digitally altered by a post-production company. The actors exist not within any clearly defined narrative progression but in some sort of interval, some gap between the performance of their actions and a spectator's perception of those actions. They are produced by and within the space of cinematic conventions. In its deliberate staging and production of surreal recurrences and hauntings, *Sugar Water* suggests the most dystopian of filmic and literary genres, science fiction, as well as the utopian forms of thought that underlie them. *Sugar Water* is, in this sense, a "flattened" species of science fiction located in a surreal and unlocalisable present that is regarded as a cinematic post-production effect and is marked by what Jameson described as "the waning of affect."¹⁶ Like Warhol's various *Screen Tests* and his movie *Inner and Outer Space*, *Sugar Water* documents the manner in which images are formed or constructed in and across specific media formats and though time, though Baudelaire, in a departure from Warhol, shifts the focus from the simultaneously generic and idiosyncratic conditions of individual portraiture¹⁷ in a media age (where everyone will be famous for 15 minutes) to the more general and dissipated conditions of event processing in a post-media age, an age marked by an unceasing broadcast stream of information as well as the loss of medium specificity. Such a structural model of distracted, cross-platform appropriation articulates the general and even generic processing of events in a post-9/11 era, regarded as an endless succession of vaguely cinematic images. Thus, although *Sugar Water's* immediate frame of reference is the more recent racial tensions to strike France and the

aftershocks of 9/11, the film is more accurately described as framing a series of surrounding and even generic events, rendered as images, that are both connected to and disconnected from any singular event, linked to both Parisian and global disruptions, and thus difficult to get hold of and think about in a single-minded way. Likewise, the recurrences that mark the film would appear to occur on different planes: on the one hand the recurrences of the commuters suggest activities dating from say last week, and on the other, the recurrence of a bill poster whose appearance suggests a mode of image distribution dating from the nineteenth century. In this regard, *Sugar Water* is at once an illustration and embodiment of the dissolution of an event across and into discontinuous historical eras, physical surroundings and modes of consciousness. *Sugar Water* creates what might be termed a differentiated media solution where what Deleuze termed “the communication of events”¹⁸ is fashioned from the continuous feed between still photography and moving image. This inversion makes ambiguous the manner in which the filming was done and calls into question the continual pressures on the part of the spectator to make narrative out of the fragmentary recurrence of individual still frames. As a mirror-like deconstruction of the processes of image production and meaning making, *Sugar Water* addresses that condition where everything “opens itself up to the infinity of predicates through which it passes” and every event is doubled: “... the question here is about the double structure of every event. With every event, there is indeed the present moment of its actualization But on the other hand, there is the future and the past of the event considered in itself, sidestepping each present It has no other present than that of the mobile instant which represents it, always divided into past-future, and forming what must be called the counter-actualization.”¹⁹ Because *Sugar Water* creates a schizophrenic space that contains the staging of both a theatre piece and a film, as well as the recurrence of a bill poster and a young artist carrying an artist board, the film holds some possibility for revolutionary potential, able to exist, as Deleuze and Guattari note, both “*hors-classe*” and beyond bourgeois subjectivity.

It is important to ask from where does the commuters’ lack of engagement, their estrangement from images, usher. Or to put the question somewhat differently, is the film ever able to answer that question that Deleuze posed in *Anti-Oedipus*: “How does a delirium begin?” and can such delirium be made to inhabit the spectator’s position, where it might produce the intensive labour akin to Deleuze’s blacksmith or, the spectator to Duchamp’s *Rotoreliefs*, or alternately, to Baudelaire’s bill poster? Without answering this question, it is useful to state that Baudelaire’s mechanical staging of the variable and fleeting circuits of memory implies that the commuters’ predicament is a function of being “in between” worlds, labour practices, and events. Perhaps most significantly for the viewing of the film, the actors are choreographed between overlapping representational systems: on the one hand, the filmic production and circulation of images, and, on the other, an almost theatrical and haptic advertising system that involves the wheat pasting of photographic still images by a Parisian bill

poster in a Métro system dating from 1900. It is not an accident that most of the commuters do not see the bill poster, though he is in plain sight, for the bill poster exists as a form of nostalgia directed to the future, to test the illusion-making principles of the filmic medium itself in science fiction parable about a creature from another world in time. Although he anchors every scene and its cyclic repetitions, he is largely invisible, a bit of the human performing something that lies just beyond the realm of the mechanical, a bit of the anachronistic and labour-intensive that revives the haptic potentialities of the image construction itself. He posits, as Fredric Jameson notes of Deleuze’s nomadic blacksmith, a “relationship to the singularities, the contingent ‘events’ of raw material.”²⁰ Here the raw material is no longer iron but the image, subject to varying degrees of fetishisation. Deleuze’s bill poster is part automaton, but he is also human, in a way that the commuters on the Métro, who are *less* regimented in their daily lives, also appear to be less human and less connected to the events around them.

What then does the spectator see? *Sugar Water* transfers the bill poster’s illusion-making activity to a place both inside and outside the film or, that is, in a place where the film image intersects and becomes indistinguishable from the matter of the world: in the lives of various social actors, in an advertising system, in a bucket of wheat paste, and in a dispersed spectatorial position itself, which has been externalised in certain cinematic modes of production *and* internalised by the various actors – all this occurring in an era when, as Jameson noted, “everything in our social life – from economic value and state power to practices and the very structure of the psyche itself – can be said to have become ‘cultural’ in some original and unauthorized sense.”²¹ *Sugar Water* is easy to watch but hard to grasp in its entirety or as a completed experience structured by the feelings, and this point is reinforced by the endless looping of the film, which functions as a kind of estrangement from the limited arrangements and choreographed things of the world that the filmmaker, using a camera designed for the news industry, records.²² In this sense, the actors as well as the spectators to such actions and news events are partly resistant to what Jonathan Beller has termed the “cinematic mode of production,”²³ a condition where every action performed is subject to extraction of surplus value, when “capital puts our senses and our subjectivity to work 24/7”²⁴ and where the viewer’s current labour is expended in decoding the cinematic apparatus of concealment itself in search of various failures of logic and memory. Taken in this regard, *Sugar Water* is a filmic parable, a bit of theatre-less script, a new media history painting, a performance piece, and a quasi-sensationalist bit of FX conjuring. It appears as something unspecific to any single genre or distribution platform, marked by a displaced allegorical function, and imbued with false memory. As one watches the film, various disruptions and accidents surface, forcing the viewer to ask, were the actors performing differently the last time I saw them or am I mis-remembering what they did (or did not) do? In this, *Sugar Water* offers up another pattern, a generic variation of a life, where memories do not

correspond exactly to past experience but to a present moment that is constantly being reconstituted out of the past and where repetitions are, to rephrase Deleuze, “differential”. Deleuze notes of forgetting: “When we cannot remember, sensory-motor extension remains suspended, and the actual image, the present optical perception, does not link up with either a motor image or a recollection image which would re-establish contact. It rather enters into a relation with genuinely virtual elements, feelings of déjà vu or past in general (I must have seen that man somewhere), fantasies or theatre-scenes (he seems to play a role that I am familiar with). In short, it is not the recollection-image or attentive recognition which gives us the proper equivalent of the optical-sound image, it is rather the disturbances of memory and the failures of recognition. That is why European cinema at an early stage confronted a group of phenomena: amnesia, hypnosis, hallucination, madness, the vision of the dying, and especially nightmare and dream.” (*Cinema 2*, 54-5)

It is at these moments that a space for a new spectatorial labour might be said to emerge as a dispersed spectatorial body, a labour of and in images. A “problem” of memory finds its technological analogue in the contemporary digital production of film as well as in the more ancient theatrical staging of cinematic effects within a film. Such technological analogues multiply throughout the film, encompassing both the bill poster’s and the digital programmer’s hand. Both could be said to operate magically and across temporal registers and both could be said to attempt to place or locate the labour of creating a utopia in a space that is at once nowhere and everywhere, in a new kind of spectatorial work space, a space where as Beller argues, images labour *as* capital. In *Sugar Water* such diverse practices take part in a process wherein our own memories and their formation are themselves concealed from us by certain technologies of production and then revealed as false memories, or what Benjamin described as images “distorted in the state of resemblance”.²⁵ Such memories are linked as much to Hollywood as the films of Andy Warhol.



Fig. 5
Eric Baudelaire
Sugar Water 2007
Video still
72 min HD projection
Courtesy of the artist and
Elizabeth Dee, New York

1. Alain Badiou, "The Event in Deleuze," trans. Jon Roffe, *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy* no.2 (2007): 37-44. This text, "Levenement selon Deleuze" appears in Alain Badiou, *Logiques des Mondes* (Paris: Seuil, 2006). <http://www.lacan.com/baddele.htm>. Eric Baudelaire's film is named after Bergson's description of sugar water. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson notes: "I must wait for the sugar to dissolve; it is in the experience of vision and waiting, when my duration blends with that of the world, that the intuition of a moving reality emerges." This passage is referenced by Deleuze in chapter 1, from *Cinema 1*, 9.
2. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 63. On Baudelaire's connection to Deleuze, see Pierre Zaoui "On the Communication of Events," from a text about the exhibition *Circumambulation*, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, June 2007, http://baudelaire.net/works/sugar_water/PDF/Zaoui_Text.pdf
3. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 63.
4. In the months preceding the filming, Warhol had announced his intention of making an eight-hour long movie, but technological limitations made realising a full eight-hour film difficult. According to Callie Angell, the Bolex camera he employed was "capable of shooting only four-minute lengths of film," making a long film difficult if not impossible to produce. Warhol himself remarked afterwards that "I find editing too tiring." In Callie Angell, *The Films of Andy Warhol, Part II* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994).
5. Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia* (Boston: MIT Press, 2006), 280.
6. Angell, *The Films of Andy Warhol*, 16.
7. *Sleep* would remain the most edited of his films as well as the most repetitive, in terms of its reuse of particular segments. Likewise, in *Empire* (1964), where his avowed intention was to "see time go by," Warhol filmed the Empire State Building beginning slightly after sunset and continuing till 2:30 in the morning, using a rented Auricon camera mounted on a tripod. The Aurion enabled Warhol to shoot 50-minute segments and thus create a longer film that required less editing.
8. Branden Joseph, "The Play of Repetition: Andy Warhol's *Sleep*," *Grey Room* 19 (Spring 2005): 28. Joseph notes: "As time passes, recognition and anticipation take over, making it increasingly difficult to examine details: one waits for known changes to recur instead of noticing new occurrences." Contrast this reading with that of Henry Geldzahler, as cited by Joseph: "...we find that the more that is eliminated the greater concentration is possible on the spare remaining essentials. The slightest variation becomes an event, something on which we can focus our attention. As less and less happens on the screen, we become satisfied with almost nothing and find the slightest shift in the body of the sleeper or the least movement of the camera interesting enough." (26). It is likely that both readings are operative in Warhol, as they are in Baudelaire. On the affective space opened up by long, boring, static passages of Warhol's film work, see Jonathan Flatley, "Allegories of Boredom," in *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-1968*, ed. Ann Goldstein (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004): 55-76. "By mimicking the lack of affect that one might feel toward the everyday world of things and images..., Judd and Warhol's works allows boredom, which is the basic structure of feeling of late capital, to come into existence as such. And then something interesting happens: a different boredom emerges, one that ...[allows for] an emotional openness that is the condition of possibility for being affected and transformed..." (53).
9. On the splitting of Warhol's films into various planes or events, a position that anticipates Baudelaire's and that connects Warhol's notion of repetition with Cage's, see in particular, Branden Joseph, "The Play of Repetition: Andy Warhol's *Sleep*," *Grey Room* 19 (Spring 2005): 22-53. Vis a vis *Empire*, Joseph notes: "...the viewer's attention divides between the nearly motionless depicted image and the fleeting passage of film grain that push processing and the flashes and flares that occurred in developing have rendered extremely visible. The effect is of a temporal and material splitting: the flame-like lights of the Empire State Building and the dot of light on the Met Life tower appear as one layer, temporally slowed, while the grain of the film stock appears to cascade across the screen more quickly—the eye on this 'level' being attuned to the actual speed of projection—like a heavy rain or a flowing, celluloid stream." (28).
10. Warhol accomplishes something similar in his *Screen Tests*, where the initial sitters in the series were told not to move and in so doing came to resemble still photographs, albeit photographs rendered in the more fluid and durational medium of film. Although it is beyond the scope of this article, *Sugar Water* also plays on the differences between film and the televisual, what Anna McCarthy terms "the seemingly instantaneous temporality of live transmissions, but also the routine and redundant cycles of the broadcast day, the endlessly repeating programs that play on the CNN Airport Network ..." See "From Screen to Site: Television's Material Culture, and its Place," *October* 98 (Fall 2001): 97.
11. Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, trans. Sian Roberts (New York: Harper & Row, 1979): 27.
12. Pamela M. Lee, *Chronophobia*, (Boston: MIT Press, 2004): 279.
13. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 213. All future references are contained within the text.
14. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986): 109.
15. Eric Baudelaire, e-mail to author, January 18-20, 2008.
16. Jameson's examination of science fiction and utopianism is to be found in *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso, 2007).
17. Callie Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests. The Films of Andy Warhol Catalog Raisonne, Volume 1* (New York: Abrams, 2006), 12. Angell notes both the hybrid nature of the *Screen Tests*, as well as the conscious experimentation that characterised Warhol's production: "Balanced on the borderline between moving and still image, part photography and part film, part portraiture and part performance, the *Screen Tests* were conceptual hybrids, arising, like much of Warhol's work, from the formal transposition of idioms from one medium to another." (14).
18. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 174.
19. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 151.
20. Fredric Jameson, "Marxism and Dualism in Deleuze," in *A Deleuzian Century?*, ed. Ian Buchanan (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 28.
21. Fredric Jameson, *Post-Modernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press 1991), 48.
22. The FAQ site for the Panasonic P2 lines of cameras reads as follows: "Panasonic is...promoting "ING," or IT-based news gathering, as the next logical step in field reporting, not only in the form of tapeless cameras, but also in treating video as data throughout the processes of acquisition, post-production and distribution." <http://www.p2info.net/p2faq.php>.
23. Jonathan Beller, *The Cinematic Mode of Production* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2006).
24. Steven Shaviro, *The Pinocchio Theory*, <http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=561>.
25. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 205.