

The ARCADES

**Contemporary Art
and Walter Benjamin**

Exhibition Wall Texts



Elevator lobby

THE ARCADES: CONTEMPORARY ART AND WALTER BENJAMIN

- A Arcades, Magasins de Nouveautés, Sales Clerks
- B Fashion
- C Ancient Paris, Catacombs, Demolitions, Decline of Paris
- D Boredom, Eternal Return
- E Haussmannization, Barricade Fighting
- F Iron Construction
- G Exhibitions, Advertising, Grandville
- H The Collector
- I The Interior, The Trace
- J Baudelaire
- K Dream City and Dream House, Dreams of the Future,
Anthropological Nihilism, Jung
- L Dream House, Museum, Spa
- M The Flâneur
- N On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress
- O Prostitution, Gambling

P The Streets of Paris
Q Panorama
R Mirrors
S Painting, Jugendstil, Novelty
T Modes of Lighting
U Saint-Simon, Railroads
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X Marx
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a Social Movement
b Daumier
d Literary History, Hugo
g The Stock Exchange, Economic History
i Reproduction Technology, Lithography
k The Commune
l The Siene, The Oldest Paris
m Idleness
p Anthropological Materialism, History of Sects
r École Polytechnique

ARTISTS

Erica Baum
Walead Beshty
Milena Bonilla
Andrea Bowers
Nicholas Buffon
Chris Burden
Haris Epaminonda and Daniel Gustav Cramer
Simon Evans
Walker Evans
Claire Fontaine
Lee Friedlander
Rodney Graham
Andreas Gursky
Raymond Hains
Pierre Huyghe
Voluspa Jarpa
Jesper Just
Sanya Kantarovsky
Mike Kelley
Tim Lee
Jorge Macchi
Adam Pendleton
Martín Ramírez

Bill Rauhauser
Mary Reid Kelley
Ry Rocklen
Markus Schinwald
Collier Schorr
Cindy Sherman
Taryn Simon
Joel Sternfeld
Mungo Thomson
Timm Ulrichs
James Welling
Guido van der Werve
Cerith Wyn Evans

Anne & Bernard Spitzer Gallery

Introduction

THE ARCADES: CONTEMPORARY ART AND WALTER BENJAMIN

The Arcades Project is the final, unfinished masterwork of the great twentieth-century Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin. It is his effort to understand the modern condition in all its multiplicity.

Benjamin's text, assembled mostly in the 1930s, is a mountainous accumulation of quotations, notes, sketches, reflections, citations, and commentaries, never published in his lifetime. These features—unfinishedness, compilation, taxonomic disorder, intellectual experimentalism—find expression among many artists today.

The Arcades Project foreshadows our experience of modernity: we absorb an overwhelming mass of information and cultural activity, yet it comes to us in a fragmented form, often through social and digital media, without the orderly coherence that thinkers and artists once predicted for the future.

Benjamin began his project around 1927 with a short essay about Paris's nineteenth-century iron-and-glass vaulted shopping arcades, forerunners of the mall. The arcades are interior spaces that cut through city blocks, with some of the mysterious quality of a labyrinth. Though they imitated the form of a vaulted cathedral, they used modern engineering and materials and were lined with shops instead of chapels. Parisians could amble through them, idling and observing, picking and choosing. Benjamin saw this activity as a metaphor for how we encounter the world; he regarded the arcades as an important step in the development of modern consumer culture and the commodification of all aspects of daily life.

This exhibition of contemporary artworks is inspired by The Arcades Project. It is a collagelike construct through which visitors may stroll and browse like Parisian flâneurs, or saunterers, experiencing it in fragments. The works on view demonstrate how artists today grapple with the world's disorder, having accepted the disappearance of a

master narrative as our perennial condition. Where many artists of the past imagined themselves in a heroic role as interpreters of the world, distillers of reality, artists today face the difficult idea that the world is resistant to interpretation or structure and remains chaotic and incomplete. Just as Benjamin compiled ideas, the artists here mine the details of modern life to create new archives, full of treasures and secrets.

Reflecting this arrangement, each artist is paired with a "Convolute"—the name given by Benjamin to each planned section of The Arcades Project. The poet Kenneth Goldsmith has created a poem for each Convolute, intricately composed of found fragments of existing texts. You are invited to discover connections between Benjamin's categories and the works on view. Your activity as a cultural flâneur completes the exhibition.

Jens Hoffmann

Convolute poems by Kenneth Goldsmith

Convolute typography by Project Projects,
Prem Krishnamurthy, Maxime Harvey

The Arcades: Contemporary Art and Walter Benjamin has been organized by Jens Hoffmann, Director of Special Exhibitions and Public Programs, with Shira Backer, Leon Levy Curatorial Associate.

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#TheArcades

The companion volume is on sale in the Cooper Shop.

In the hallway to the right of the introduction

On the front of the first panel on the right:

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Exhibition design: Project Projects, with Daniel Kershaw

Lighting: Clint Ross Coller

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Design LLC

Exhibition interns: Sophia Inkeles, Michael Neumeister

On the front of the first panel on the left:

WALTER BENJAMIN

The philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) was born in Berlin to a prosperous Jewish family. He was one of a number of left-leaning German social theorists, known as the Frankfurt School, who critically examined both capitalism and communism and incorporated existentialism, psychoanalysis, sociology, and aesthetics into their work. Among his friends were Bertolt Brecht, Hannah Arendt, Gershom Scholem, Theodor Adorno, László Moholy-Nagy, and Max Horkheimer.

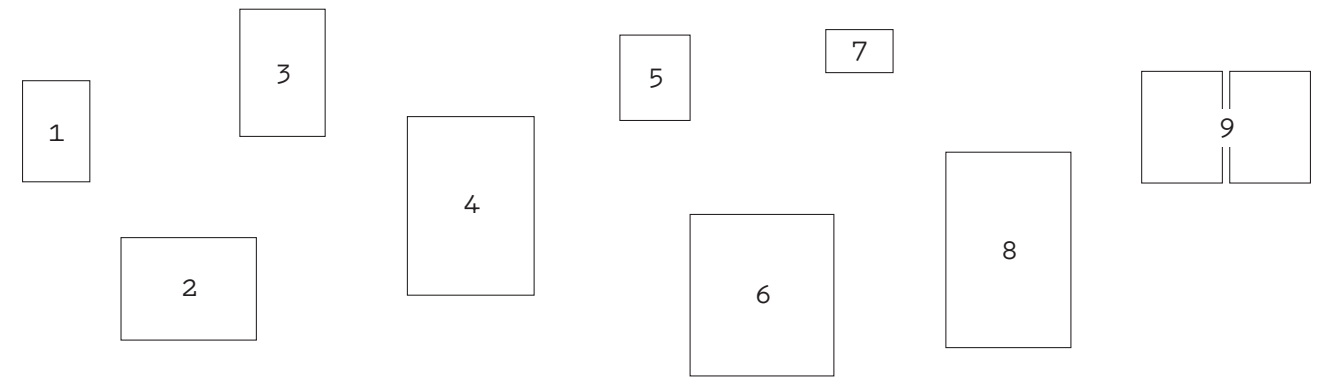
Benjamin's research was eclectic, ranging from Jewish mysticism to Marxist theory to close observation of the everyday; above all, he was interested in defining and understanding modernity and in exploring the conditions and forces that create social change. He rejected the orderly, highly structured approach of classical philosophy and academia as inadequate to reflect the disordered complexity of his world; instead, he experimented with the idea of a text collaged from myriad passages, selections,

and quotations, whose arguments are an amalgam of many voices.

When the Nazis invaded France in 1940, Benjamin fled Paris. He managed to reach the Spanish border, but was trapped there between the collaborationist police of France and Spain. Facing arrest, he committed suicide. He was forty-eight.

On the wall next to the panel:

Walter Benjamin at work on The Arcades Project in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1937, photographed by Gisèle Freund.



1. Benjamin as a child with his sister, Dora, and brother, Georg, c. 1904.
2. Benjamin's German passport, 1928.
3. Benjamin's Hebrew exercises, c. 1929.
4. Page from a 1930 article by Benjamin for the German Encyclopedia Judaica on "Jews in German Culture," with his marginal comment: "Heavily shortened by the editor, stripped of all essentials . . . at various points the text is neither written nor corrected by me."
5. Benjamin's so-called lullaby drawing, May 22, 1934, drawn under the influence of mescaline, with puns on the words "sleep" and "sheep."
6. Benjamin's curriculum vitae, May 1938.
7. The author's library card for the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1940.
8. Affidavit from the philosopher Max Horkheimer, August 1940, written to help Benjamin obtain an entrance visa to the United States.
9. Benjamin's last letter to the theorist Theodor Adorno, August 2, 1940, written as he sought to leave France for the United States.

All photographs and documents are in the collection of the Walter Benjamin Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin; facsimiles are provided courtesy of the Hamburger Stiftung zur Förderung von Wissenschaft und Kultur / Akademie der Künste, Walter Benjamin Archiv.

On the back of the first panel on the left:

THE ARCADES PROJECT

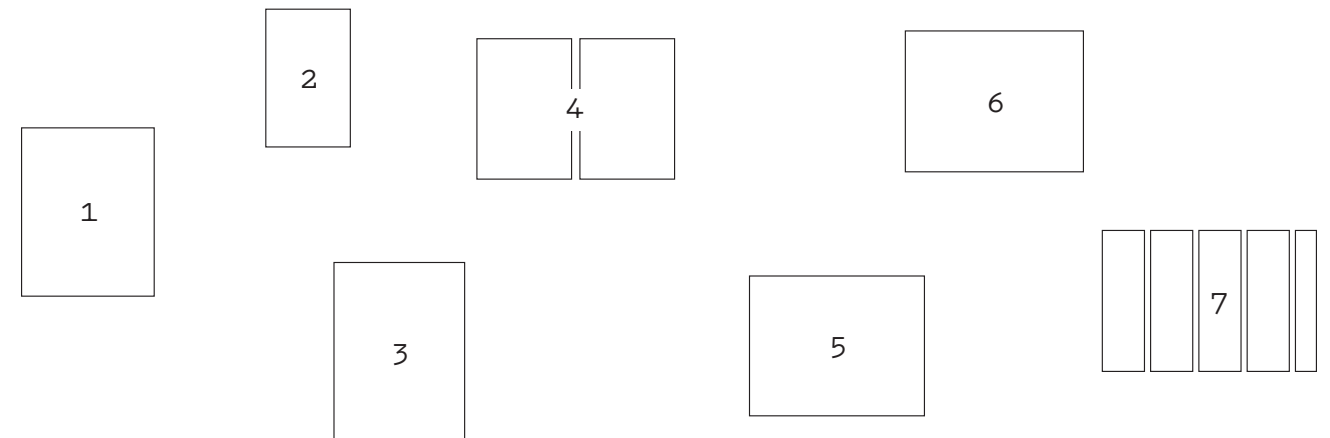
The Arcades Project, composed between 1927 and 1940, was Walter Benjamin's final book, and remains incomplete. Its primary subject is Paris in the nineteenth century and the rise of a modern culture of consumerism. The text's central metaphor is the arcade, or covered shopping passage. The Paris arcades were designed to attract browsers, offering a respite from traffic, bad weather, sooty air, and scruffy street life. They exemplify the urban culture of flânerie—strolling and people-watching—brought indoors and embedded in the very architecture of the city. "An arcade," noted a guidebook in 1852, "is a city, a world in miniature."

By 1940 The Arcades Project comprised a vast collection of jottings, partial essays, dossiers, observations, and quotations, together with notes about a possible structure: a list of thirty-six "Convolutés," or themes. Benjamin's work ended abruptly when France fell to the Nazis in June 1940. He fled Paris a day before the German army arrived, after first consigning his manuscript to his friend Georges

Bataille. Bataille hid it in Paris's Bibliothèque Nationale; it was found there in 1981 and finally published the following year. Despite the efforts of editors, the book, which runs to more than one thousand pages, still resists categorization and structure.

On the wall next to the panel:

Passage des Panoramas, Paris, built in 1800, photographed between 1880 and 1900.



1. One of Benjamin's first notes for Paris Arcades, an early version of The Arcades Project, with a sketch of an arcade, 1927.
2. Early notes on the arcades, 1927.
3. First page of the manuscript for Benjamin's essay "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," 1935.
4. The thirty-six Convolutives for The Arcades Project, date unknown, between 1928 and 1940. Benjamin conceived of these categories as a possible chapter order for the book.
5. Manuscript page from Convolute J, "Baudelaire," The Arcades Project, date unknown, between 1928 and 1940.
6. Manuscript page from Convolute Y, "Photography," The Arcades Project, date unknown, between 1928 and 1940.

All photographs and documents are in the collection of the Walter Benjamin Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin; facsimiles are provided courtesy of the Hamburger Stiftung zur Förderung von Wissenschaft und Kultur / Akademie der Künste, Walter Benjamin Archiv.

On the front of the second panel on the right:

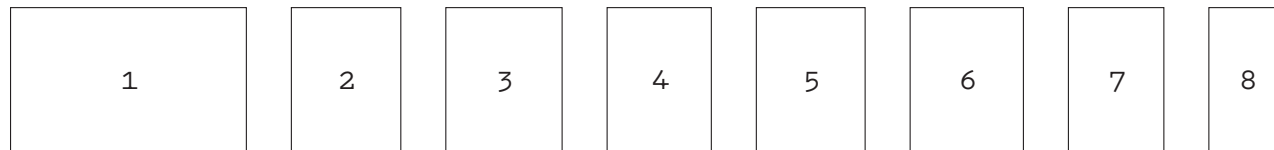
THE ARCADES OF PARIS

Paris's shopping arcades are long interior passages lined with shops that run through a city block. Most were built between 1800 and the 1920s, and many were vaulted with the then-new technique of cast iron and glass. Some were cruciform, with a dome in the crossing, like cathedrals. At the height of their popularity around 1850, there were more than 150 in Paris and the form was imitated in other cities—Milan, London, Brussels, New York.

Paris was the point of departure for Benjamin's exploration of modernity. The city, with its exuberant urban life, was both antique and modern, organized and turbulent; above all, it was a place to be experienced by the saunterer—strolling, window-shopping, casually picking and choosing snippets of street life.

On the wall next to the panel:

Georges Peltier, map of Paris, 1920–1940.



1. Passage Choiseul, built in 1827.
2. Passage de l'Opéra and Galerie du Baromètre, built in 1822, demolished 1925, photographed c. 1868 by Charles Marville.
3. Galerie Vivienne, built in 1823.
4. Passage des Panoramas, built in 1800.
5. Passage du Saumon, built in 1830, demolished 1899, partly preserved as Passage Ben-Aïad.
6. Passage du Grand-Cerf, built in 1825.
7. Passage du Caire, built in 1799 (named for Napoleon's Egypt campaign), photographed in 1928 by Germaine Krull.
8. Passage du Ponceau, built in 1826, photographed in 1928 by Germaine Krull.

Photographs by Germaine Krull are in the collection of the Walter Benjamin Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin; facsimiles are provided courtesy of the Hamburger Stiftung zur Förderung von Wissenschaft und Kultur / Akademie der Künste, Walter Benjamin Archiv.

On the back of the second panel on the right:

These models of four Paris arcades offer an impression of the unique architecture of the arcades, which is also reflected in the structure in which you are standing.

On the wall next to the panel:

Top left: Passage du Grand-Cerf

Top right: Passage du Caire

Bottom left: Passage de l'Opéra

Bottom right: Galerie Vivienne

Robert J. Hurst Family Gallery

To the left of the introduction

On the left wall, moving clockwise:

CONVOLUTE Q: PANORAMA

Nicholas Buffon

Left to right:

Katz's Delicatessen, 2017

Foam, glue, paper, paint

Courtesy of the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts, New York

Odessa, 2016

Foam, glue, paper, paint

Courtesy of the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts, New York

Lower East Side Coffee Shop, 2016

Foam, glue, paper, paint

Collection of Matt and Susan Ross

The Stonewall Inn, 2017

Foam, glue, paper, paint

Courtesy of the artist and Callicoon Fine Arts, New York

The original purpose of Paris's covered shopping passages was to preserve shoppers from the dirt and disorder of the streets: from hanging laundry, cooking smells, stray animals, foul weather, and the general cacophony of urban life. They were idealized microcosms of the city. The nineteenth-century panorama was another kind of artificial, miniaturized environment, a precursor of the cinema. A typical panorama was a cylindrical room whose interior walls were lined with theatrically lit paintings and sculptures depicting a scene: a historic battle, an exotic jungle, the depths of the sea. Walter Benjamin saw the panorama as a self-contained world within a world.

Nicholas Buffon's dioramas pay homage to contemporary American cities by replicating with minute accuracy the most mundane aspects of the urban environment—parking meters and fire hydrants, air-conditioning units and delivery trucks, drooping houseplants and crushed milk cartons.

They are panoramas of the unspectacular: instead of offering escape to a faraway place or time, they radiate tenderness for the careworn, disheveled places in which we live.

CONVOLUTE A: ARCADES, MAGASINS DE NOUVEAUTÉS, SALES CLERKS

Walead Beshty

American Passages, 2001–11

Slide projection

Courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles

Benjamin saw the Parisian arcades, one of the subjects of *Convolute A*, as emblematic of a societal mindset that typified nineteenth-century Paris and, by extension, modernity as a whole. Today's shopping mall, the heir of the arcade, is equally emblematic of the cultural milieu that produced it—namely, the car--commuting suburbs that proliferated across America in the twentieth century. By the time Benjamin began to compile his text, many of the hundreds of arcades that once dotted Paris had been destroyed, and those that remained were dilapidated. Walead Beshty's melancholic photographs of abandoned shopping malls suggest the decline of a way of life.

CONVOLUTE M: THE FLÂNEUR

Lee Friedlander

Left to right:

New York City, 2011

New York City, 2010

New York City, 2009

New York City, 2011

Gelatin silver prints

Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

The figure of the flâneur, or idler, turns up frequently in nineteenth-century French art and literature. Enthralled by the city and endowed with ample leisure time, the flâneur made a study of Paris's new boulevards, teeming with

omnibuses, cafés, and shops. The shopping arcades were one of the flâneur's favorite habitats; Lee Friedlander depicts similar spaces in New York City, the capital of the twentieth century.

Moving to the next gallery

Michael R. Bloomberg Family Gallery

To the right of the doorway, moving clockwise:

CONVOLUTE X: MARX

Milena Bonilla

Stone Deaf, 2009–10

Graphite rubbing on paper, HD video 5-minute loop

Courtesy of the artist and Kadist, San Francisco

When Karl Marx died in 1883, he was buried with his wife beneath a humble plaque in London's Highgate Cemetery. In response to the petitions of visitors who had trouble finding the grave, he was disinterred in 1954 and moved to the cemetery's main avenue. A massive monument, capped by an enormous portrait bust, now marks the spot. The site of Marx's original grave is still indicated by the deteriorating stone marker seen in this work. Unlike the grandiose bust, the stone has been reclaimed by nature. In this film, it is dappled with sunlight and teeming with insects—including

social insects, whose perfectly integrated communal lives offer a tempting prototype for ideal human societies such as those that Marx envisioned. The story of Marx's migrating grave suggestively echoes the shifting legacy of Marxist philosophy, which has been particularly fraught in Milena Bonilla's native Colombia.

CONVOLUTE J: BAUDELAIRE

Mary Reid Kelley

Charles Baudelaire, 2013

Pigment print

Courtesy of the artist and Kadist, San Francisco

Mary Reid Kelley's interest in nineteenth-century Paris derives from her sense that certain elements of its culture and politics rhyme with those of our present moment: disillusionment in the wake of failed ideals, narcissistic obsession with appearances, relentless pursuit of money. Charles Baudelaire—denounced in his time for his transgressive sensibilities—emerged as the preeminent poet of nineteenth-century Paris. His interests in vice, in crowds, and in fashion converged in lyric poetry on the beauty of the modern city.

For Benjamin, Baudelaire was the perfect flâneur and chronicler of modernity; nearly a fifth of the text of The Arcades Project is devoted to the Convolute on him.

CONVOLUTE N: ON THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE, THEORY OF PROGRESS

Taryn Simon

Left to right:

Folder: Abandoned Buildings and Towns

Folder: Swimming Pools

Folder: Costume – Veil

Folder: Paper – Endpapers

2012

Archival inkjet prints

Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian

The source material for these works comes from the Picture Collection of the New York Public Library, arranged in categories of the artist's choosing. The library's image bank, which comprises some 1.29 million pieces, organized under twelve thousand subject headings, is a grab bag of postcards, prints, posters, and pictures clipped from books and magazines; in it, masterworks of art appear alongside travel brochures. Certain types of images predominate, attesting to the history of the collection's development, from bulk donations to the shifting interests of librarians and library patrons.

As Taryn Simon's work suggests, bias and happenstance contribute to the formation of ideas, and both can be informative, reflecting the society that created the archive. Both the Picture Collection and her investigation of it are Benjaminian in spirit: The Arcades Project, according to its author, aims to illuminate history through analysis of "the smallest and most precisely cut components" of the past.

CONVOLUTE a: SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Adam Pendleton

Black Dada Reader (wall work #1), 2016

Adhesive vinyl

To the left of the doorway:

what is . . .?/Chagall (study), 2017

Silkscreen ink on Mylar

To the right of the doorway:

Dada Dancers (study), 2016

Silkscreen ink on Mylar

Courtesy of the artist

Nineteenth-century Europe was roiled by social unrest, as shifts in politics and industry led to the growing power of the working class. Alternative visions for society could be found in many forms, from utopian communes to labor unions.

In contemporary America, entrenched injustices— vast disparities of wealth, enduring discrimination against members of minority groups—have recently sparked similar protest movements, from Occupy Wall Street to Black Lives Matter, as well as new writing on social conditions. Adam Pendleton's work considers the role of language in shaping political consciousness. Here, he turns to a foundational text of black literature, W. E. B. Du Bois's 1903 book The Souls of Black Folk, in a towering, wall-size graphic statement.

CONVOLUTE Y: PHOTOGRAPHY

Tim Lee

Untitled (Alexander Rodchenko, 1928), 2008

Four photographs

Courtesy of the artist and Kadist, San Francisco

Untitled II (Alexander Rodchenko, 1928), 2008

Painted stainless steel, mirror, Leica 1 camera

Courtesy of the artist and Lisson Gallery, London

In the 1920s the Russian artist Alexander Rodchenko took advantage of the new, highly portable (and now-iconic) Leica 1 camera to bring his avant-garde sensibility to photography, the topic of Benjamin's Convolute Y. His subjects were familiar—street scenes, portraits, architecture—but he introduced acrobatic angles and dynamic play with light to render them strange and exhilarating, forging dramatic abstract compositions out of ordinary objects. Putting his work in the service of the newly established Soviet Union, he made use of photography's potential to reach the masses through inexpensive, limitless reproductions.

Tim Lee has constructed an apparatus that allows the classic Leica camera to photograph itself. When photography emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, it was hailed for its ability to chronicle the world with objective exactitude. This idea, however, overlooked the intentionality of the photographer as well as variables in the photographic process. The camera lens turned back on itself is a fitting metaphor for the self-reflexive historical methodology proposed in The Arcades Project.

CONVOLUTE V: CONSPIRACIES, COMPAGNONNAGE

Voluspa Jarpa

What You See Is What It Is, 2013

Steel modules, laser-cut acrylic plates

Courtesy of Mor Charpentier, Paris, Enrique Jocelyn Holt Collection, and the artist

During the early years of the Cold War (1950s–1970s), art in the United States increasingly avoided overt political or social references, instead drawing the viewer’s attention to materials, colors, brushwork, and other purely visual elements. This trend culminated in Minimalist works such as Donald Judd’s iconic stacked boxes of the mid-1960s. Minimalism was given a concise motto by the painter Frank Stella: “What you see is what you see.”

At the time, in Voluspa Jarpa’s homeland, Chile, a military dictatorship supported by the United States executed, tortured, and imprisoned thousands of citizens. Facing a

political climate hostile to free expression, many artists couched their political critiques in indirect terms.

Jarpa refers to this history, adulterating Judd’s icon with reproductions of declassified government intelligence documents. The records are so riddled with expurgations that they are nearly as inscrutable as the steel boxes that hold them.

Nineteenth-century Paris saw repeated cycles of unrest and revolution, largely driven by an aggrieved proletariat responding to an entrenched aristocracy and a growing middle class. Compagnonnage, the ancient term for apprenticeship in medieval guilds, was still in operation and became a unifying mechanism of political action.

On the threshold between the current and
the next gallery

CONVOLUTE d: LITERARY HISTORY, HUGO

Erica Baum
From the Dog Ear series

Left to right, first row:

Never, 2015

Enclosing, 2010

Mad, 2009

Left to right, second row:

Page Pencil, 2013

Wishes, 2014

Elegant Solution, 2009

Left to right, third row:

Shoes, 2009

Played, 2016

Void, 2013

Left to right, fourth row:

Venice, 2014

Corpse, 2009

End There, 2009

Archival pigment prints

Courtesy of the artist and Bureau, New York

Erica Baum's photographs explore the printed word at its most mundane and ephemeral: in pulp paperbacks, card catalogues, even the captions on stereoscopic slides. She alters these found materials to emphasize their materiality, prompting the viewer to consider the grain and color of aging paper or the tactile pleasure of thumbing through files.

Dog ears, or bent page corners, are the simplest form of annotation. Here, they are presented as literary and aesthetic objects in their own right. Baum's intervention is minimal, but the effect is profound: each dog ear hints intriguingly at the narrative obscured by the cropping of the page while also generating suggestions of new meanings.

As literature, The Arcades Project is more compilation than composition. Walter Benjamin collected passages of other writers' texts and recombined them according to his own design. In *Convolute d*, Benjamin explores the history of his own medium, with a focus on the popular nineteenth-century novelist Victor Hugo, whose writing was immensely politically influential. Words, for Benjamin and Baum alike, are both fragile and fiercely powerful.

Moving to the next gallery

Joseph & Fanya Heller Gallery

To the right of the doorway, moving clockwise:

CONVOLUTE b: DAUMIER

Walker Evans

Subway Passengers, New York

Subway Passengers, New York

1938

Gelatin silver prints

Private collection, San Francisco

The French Realist painter and printmaker Honoré Daumier is known for his trenchant caricatures of the French bourgeoisie and his sympathetic portraits of members of the working class. The photographer Walker Evans, who documented the harsh conditions of poor Americans during

the Depression of the 1930s, was directly influenced by Daumier. For his so-called subway portraits, taken between 1938 and 1941, he concealed a camera beneath his overcoat to capture passengers at their most unguarded. For Walter Benjamin, as for Evans, Daumier was an important link between artistic realism and the journalistic social critique of photography.

CONVOLUTE p: ANTHROPOLOGICAL MATERIALISM, HISTORY OF SECTS

Ry Rocklen

Blue Eyed Worshipper, Southern Mesopotamia,
2600–2500 BC, 2015

Ceramic vessels, mirror-mounted panel, brass, glass
Bjørnholt Collection, Oslo

This sculpture is one of a series based on objects in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It combines a photograph of an ancient figurine, printed in glaze and applied as a decal to the flat surface of the front of the sculpture, with a cast that offers a modified form of the original, again in frontal view. Rocklen sources much of the material for his art from secondhand shops and junkyards. For Blue Eyed Worshipper, he used a thrifted plush bathrobe to cast the draped tunic, while a button from one of his own sweaters became the shell and lapis lazuli eye of the figure. This process intertwines real and

virtual space, the ancient and the contemporary, the authentic and the sham.

Benjamin devoted Convolute p to the concept of “anthropological materialism,” his own version of the materialist, anti-idealist philosophy of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Like them, he sought explanations for the unfolding of events not in invisible or spiritual forces, but in the concrete systems and structures of the world. To this notion Benjamin added a focus on the poetic richness of everyday objects, which exert their power through their entanglement in human lives.

CONVOLUTE k: THE COMMUNE

Andrea Bowers

The Triumph of Labor, 2016

Marker on cardboard

Rennie Collection, Vancouver, British Columbia, courtesy of
Susanne Vielmetter, Los Angeles Projects

In 1871, working-class dissidents seized control of the government of Paris. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels cited this event as an example of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which they identified as a necessary stage in progressing from capitalism to communism.

This mural is an enlarged adaptation of an 1891 woodcut by Walter Crane (1845–1915), a British artist associated with the Arts & Crafts movement, to commemorate May 1, International Workers’ Day. Crane, an ardent socialist, combined heroic depictions of workers with allegorical figures representing triumph and prosperity. Andrea Bowers reprises Crane’s composition on a monumental scale; her materials—flattened cardboard boxes and black marker—refer to the hasty, homemade signs associated with contemporary street protest.

Hanging from the ceiling:

CONVOLUTE T: MODES OF LIGHTING

Cerith Wyn Evans

Astro-photography by Siegfried Marx (1987), 2006

Chandelier (Barovier and Toso), Morse-code unit, computer
Collection of Susan and Steven Jacobson, New York

One of the most profound changes to the streetscape of nineteenth-century Paris was the introduction of gas lamps, which were used in the arcades as early as the 1820s; Benjamin's sources in *Convolute T* describe the impact of artificial lighting on the city. In this work, an elegant chandelier blinks this text in Morse code:

With the advent of radio astronomy in the early 1960s, techniques for the mapping of space made enormous technological advances. New findings were applied to existing data, and it was discovered that within maps charting vast swathe of the Southern Hemisphere, astral bodies— estimated to be millions of light years

away—had been erroneously named and catalogued after microscopic inconsistencies within photographic emulsion. Solar systems identified from particles of dust, galaxies from dandruff.

In the center of the room:

CONVOLUTE Z: THE DOLL, THE AUTOMATON

Markus Schinwald

Untitled (Machine I), 2016

Brass, wood, motor

Courtesy of Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, London, Paris,
and Salzburg

The artificial universe of the arcades was populated by artificial beings: in shop windows, dressmakers' dummies kept company with mechanical figures that revolved on pedestals to the accompaniment of tinkling mechanical music or popped out of closed baskets to surprise children. These uncanny dolls have a menacing aspect, suggesting the encroachment of technology and artifice on nature. Markus Schinwald blends the human with the nonhuman to unnerving effect. This figure, with its anthropomorphic Chippendale-style furniture legs, exudes an unsettling erotic energy.

CONVOLUTE B: FASHION

Collier Schorr

Jennifer (Head), 2002–14

Pigment print

Private collection

This image encapsulates all of the stereotypical features of woman as an object of desire in twentieth-century mass media: teased blond hair, dramatic cheekbones, lips breathlessly parted. The model's conformity to the ideal is so perfect that it is deadening. It is all but impossible to encounter her as a real person. Collier Schorr has worked as a commercial fashion photographer throughout her career, and she often makes use of the conventions of that genre in projects that explore the ways fashion traffics in desire.

Walter Benjamin saw this desire as a perverse aspect of the fetishistic worship of commodities. For bourgeois Parisians of the nineteenth century, the ever-shifting shapes of shirt collars and bustles, on view in the shop windows of the arcades, were enthralling, an exaltation of the material world. In fashion, the reduction of human beings to capitalist objects found its purest expression.

CONVOLUTE H: THE COLLECTOR

Cindy Sherman's imaginary collector, portrayed by the artist herself, is ensconced in her study, her chosen objects towering behind her like fortifications. Despite this, like many of Sherman's characters, she emanates vulnerability.

Cindy Sherman

Untitled #474, 2008

Chromogenic print

Collection of Cynthia and Abe Steinberger

Benjamin views the flâneur, the gambler, and the collector as emblematic of certain aspects of modern culture.

The impulse to collect is an intensified version of the general tendency of the bourgeois citizen to focus on his or her private domestic space, filling it with carefully chosen objects.

In The Arcades Project, Benjamin uses a similar approach to the writing of history, which he describes as ragpicking: he recovers cast-off scraps of information overlooked by historians, weaving them into a text that illuminates a place and time. While the ragpicker gathers the detritus of society and is subject, decisively, to chance, the impetus of the collector is to shape a small world whose contents are entirely within her or his control.

CONVOLUTE L: DREAM HOUSE, MUSEUM, SPA

James Welling

Morgan Great Hall, 2014

Inkjet print

Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford,

Purchased through a gift from Nancy D. Grover in honor of
Robinson A. Grover (1936–2015)

The phrase “dream house” appears in two of Walter Benjamin’s *Convolutives*, K and L, referring to both private dwellings and public spaces. A home may reveal the values, aspirations, and tastes of its owners; public spaces such as casinos, arcades, and museums reflect the psychology of whole societies.

This work by James Welling shows the interior of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, founded in the mid-nineteenth century. Such institutions, a mix of museum, library, and historical society, represented the cultural aspirations and civic ambitions of American cities at the time. Today, museums like the Wadsworth shape our visions of the past; the overlaid photographic images in this

piece suggest the recursive nature of this project, in which each generation reflects on and sees itself reflected in those that have come before.

CONVOLUTE r: ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE

Bill Rauhauser

Drawing Compass, 1960–70

Pigment print

Bill Rauhauser, courtesy of Hill Gallery, Birmingham,
Michigan

The École Polytechnique, or polytechnic school of Paris, was founded during the French Revolution in emulation of the much older art school, the École des Beaux-Arts.

Benjamin, studying the Paris of the following decades, was both fascinated and worried by the shifting relationship between art and technology. If, in the past, technology had served aesthetic or spiritual ends, the nineteenth century saw it gain ascendancy over art.

Bill Rauhauser began his professional life as an engineer. He is often called the flâneur of Detroit, known for his photographs of the city's street life. This work is part of an ongoing series in which carefully selected objects appear against plain backgrounds, sharply lit so that they are visible

in every detail. The shape of the compass, like the other items in the series—a music stand, a baseball, a rain boot—is dictated by its function; nevertheless, Rauhauser presents it as a thing of beauty.

CONVOLUTE i: REPRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY, LITHOGRAPHY

Timm Ulrichs

Walter Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical
Reproduction" – Interpretation: Timm Ulrichs, The
Photocopy of the Photocopy of the Photocopy of the
Photocopy," 1967

Sequence of 100 black-and-white photocopies,
wooden frames

Courtesy of the artist and Wentrup, Berlin

Though The Arcades Project was his magnum opus, Walter Benjamin is best known for his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Photography and film, he argued, have profoundly altered the ways in which we experience art; by allowing the dissemination of infinite copies of an image, they have divested the original of its almost magical status.

Among the technologies of photomechanical reproduction, photocopy machines, in particular, prioritize efficiency over beauty, reducing clarity and detail to create serviceable replicas. Yet photocopying is an act of transformation. To create this work, Timm Ulrichs made one thousand copies of the cover of Benjamin's essay; each successive copy was made from the one before. This display shows every tenth copy, revealing the visual noise that invades the image as the photocopy machine loses information from the original and introduces incidental details of its own, from dust on the glass to smeared ink. Thus, a purely pragmatic object is imbued with the mysterious markings of time and process that give a work of art its singular power.

CONVOLUTE I: THE INTERIOR, THE TRACE

Simon Evans

The Voice, 2010

Mixed media on paper

Collection of Alka and Ravin Agrawal

Simon Evans's drawings, made with delicate, humble materials—paper, pencil, tape, correction fluid—offer a sense of intimacy that is earnest and ironic by turns. Evans uses highly public visual formats such as subway maps and album covers to record emptyings of pockets and closets, amorous confessions, and uncomfortable memories.

The Voice recalls a therapist's injunction to "listen to the voice within." The mandala shape of the drawing reinforces the idea that it is intended to focus attention; through thousands of mantralike iterations, however, the voice refers only to itself; it leads nowhere.

Benjamin observed that under industrial capitalism the citizen is reduced to the traces she or he leaves in the administrative apparatuses of the state or the marketplace: stamps in a passport, deposits and withdrawals at the bank.

Conversely, as if to offset this diminution, domestic interiors assume great importance, filled with lovingly chosen objects that reflect their owner's personality. In a public space, the traces that the individual leaves are soon effaced or distorted by the traces left by others. At home, we are surrounded by our own marks, our own memories.

CONVOLUTE W: FOURIER

Joel Sternfeld

From the series Sweet Earth: Experimental Utopias in America

Left to right:

Dacha/Staff Building, Gesundheit! Institute, Hillsboro, West Virginia, April 2004

Oneida Community Mansion House, Oneida, New York, August 1996

Roofless Church, New Harmony, Indiana, May 2000

Paolo Soleri at Arcosanti, Cordes Junction, Arizona, August 2000

2005

Chromogenic prints

Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

In this series of photographs and texts, Joel Sternfeld chronicles utopian communities across the United States, from an eco-village in the Arizona desert to a whimsical hospital in the mountains of West Virginia. Such communities have a rich history in America, the land of self-invention and fresh starts. The nineteenth-century French socialist philosopher Charles Fourier was a profound influence on such projects in both America and Europe, inspiring movements of people committed to living in ways at odds with those of mainstream society. He proposed egalitarian communities in which all members worked together and held property in common. Fourier dreamed of societies that functioned as smoothly as well-oiled machines, and the integration of domestic life with work life through architecture was one of the tenets of his vision. The unusual character of the buildings in these photographs suggests the eccentric doctrines that led to their construction.

ARTIST'S TEXTS

Dacha/Staff Building, Gesundheit! Institute, Hillsboro,
West Virginia, April 2004.

When Dr. Patch Adams envisions the forty-bed rural community health care facility that he refers to as “the free silly hospital,” he hopes it will be “funny looking, full of surprises and magic.”

Adams’ desire to humanize healthcare has always taken radical form. From 1971 to 1983, he and nineteen other adults and their children moved into a six-bedroom home and called themselves a hospital. Three of the adults were physicians. They were continuously open to patients and saw fifteen thousand people over a period of twelve years. Initial doctor/patient interviews were three to four hours long, “so that we could fall in love with each other.” Since no donations were received, nor was there any outside funding, the staff eventually left and the hospital closed.

This led Adams to his present period of fundraising, which he often does in the guise of a clown. A three-hundred-acre farm has been purchased in West Virginia—chosen because it is the most medically under-served state in the

nation—and two buildings have been constructed. The Dacha/Staff Building was designed by the Yestermorrow Design/Build School of Warren, Vermont.

Amongst numerous other unconventional practices, the hospital will not charge for its services and neither will it carry malpractice insurance. Healing arts such as acupuncture, massage, yoga, herbalism and faith healing will be integrated into patient care. Patients and staff will stay at the hospital, and forty beds will be available for “plumbers, string quartets and anyone wanting a service-oriented vacation,” reflecting Adams’ vision that the health of the individual cannot be separated from the health of the community. Although the free silly hospital is not yet built, the idea of it can and does influence the dialogue on health care delivery systems.

Oneida Community Mansion House, Oneida, New York,
August 1996.

The members of John Humphrey Noyes’ highly religious and communistic Oneida Society believed that people could become perfect simply by accepting Christ into their souls. This was reasonable enough, but everything that followed that simple belief was radical to the point of heresy. God

was both male and female, and thus the community was governed by men and women alike. In the spirit of the holy community of Christians, every member of the community should equally love everyone else, including sexually. Monogamous marriage was a tyranny, “egotism for two,” and was replaced by the enlarged family that came to be known as “complex marriage.”

Eventually a hierarchy developed in which the most spiritual members had the most access to sexual contact (Noyes presumably at the top of the ladder). Unwanted pregnancies were avoided by “male continence,” whereby “the skillful boatman may choose whether he will remain in the still water . . . or run his boat over the falls.” To hold together the web of emotionality that was associated with complex marriage, members engaged in “mutual criticism,” in which the person being discussed remained silent while every aspect of his or her being was open to analysis.

Quite remarkably, it worked. The community, which held all property in common, thrived at Oneida from 1848 until 1881. In 1867, a eugenics experiment called stirpiculture was introduced—a committee decided who would procreate with whom. Polly Held, seen here in the garden of Oneida in 1996, is the great-granddaughter of a stirpiculture union between John Humphrey Noyes and a female member of the community.

In August of 1879, reacting to internal pressures from dissatisfied lower spiritual-status members, as well as members anxious to have “special love” and committee-free procreation, the society discontinued “complex marriage” and transferred the community property to a joint-stock company in which everyone held shares. Former members could continue to live in the mansion (their descendents still do) and work in various Oneida industries. Their highly successful animal trap company was transformed into Oneida Limited, the well-known maker of silverware.

In a sense, the community, while dissolving, wrote its own eulogy: “The truth is, as the world will one day see and acknowledge, that [we] have not been pleasure-seeking spiritualists, but social architects, with high religious and moral aims, whose experiments and discourses [we] have sincerely believed would prove of value to mankind.”

Roofless Church, New Harmony, Indiana, May 2000.

In the early 1800s, Robert Owen, a wealthy industrialist, took on the role of social theorist after radically improving labor conditions at a Scottish mill while increasing profits. New Lanark was famous throughout Europe because the

minimum working age had been raised to ten, a form of health insurance was initiated, and working hours were shorter than at other mills. Owen came to believe that by changing the conditions of people's lives it was possible to change their character, and that the final aim of character formation should be happiness. Happiness, he held, "will be the only religion of man." He and other similar thinkers of the time were referred to as socialists because they had a theory of society.

The opportunity for Owen to put his theories into practice came in 1824, when he purchased the entire town of Harmony, Indiana, and turned it into America's first secular utopian experiment. But what had worked in a narrow and isolated mill valley in Scotland did not work in the United States. Despite the participation of prominent scientists and of Owen's four highly educated sons, the experiment failed. There were many reasons: the purchase of a ready-made town did not allow members to gain the shared satisfaction and unity of purpose that might have come by building from scratch; deep disagreements churned between Owen and American co-founder William Maclure over education (leading some to dub the town "New Discord"); and the frontier farmers and mechanics who responded to Owen's invitation to join a new "community of equals," took him at his word, and resented the "uppity" standards of speech, table manners and courtly rituals imposed upon them by

the leaders. Despite the brevity of its life as a formal experiment, New Harmony proved highly influential throughout the nineteenth century. Without a community against which they might be measured, Owen's ideas could stand for general reformist principles and they did.

The Roofless Chapel was commissioned by Jane Blaffer Owen, widow of a descendent of Robert Owen, and designed by architect Philip Johnson in 1960 to echo the mark left by New Harmony as a place of inspiration. Johnson's concept was that only one roof—the sky—can encompass all worshipping humanity. The dome was built in the form of an inverted rosebud, tying it to the New Harmony Community of Equals, whose symbol was the rose.

Paolo Soleri at Arcosanti, Cordes Junction, Arizona, August 2000.

Throughout the twentieth century, architects have been particularly ready to offer their visions of an idealized urban future. For Le Corbusier, a "Radiant City" would be appropriate to the machine age, providing a highly efficient and organized grid to facilitate modern life. For Frank Lloyd Wright, it was critical that everyone have their own patch of earth on which to realize their individuality: thus his

“Broadacre City” not only necessitated personal land to live on, but a car to get there. The Italian-born architect Paolo Soleri is far less well-known to the public than Le Corbusier or Wright, but in the Arizona desert he is quietly building what is perhaps the world’s only true prototype of a futurist city.

Arcosanti is an “Arcology,” a word used by Soleri to describe the harmonious marriage of architecture and ecology. Unlike Wright, with whom he studied, Soleri believes that it is the physical dispersal in the landscape permitted by the automobile that has led to moral and spiritual dispersal in society. By contrast, Arcosanti, planned for five thousand inhabitants, will occupy only two percent of the land normally taken up by a suburban development. Residents work no more than a ten-minute walk from their homes, eliminating the need for cars within the city—consistent with Soleri’s prophecy of the eventual extinction of the automobile. Reminiscent of the historic center of Italian cities, every aspect of Arcosanti’s design, including numerous balconies, terraces and piazzas, encourages a maximum of social interaction.

Soleri is also critical of excessive consumption of resources. To avoid wasting materials, gardens, solar heating and natural cooling move the community toward self-sufficiency.

Arcosanti has been under construction for thirty-five years, self-funded by the sale of distinctive wind chimes and bells that are forged on site. It is being built by students and volunteers—progress is at once achingly slow and surprisingly fast. Visitors will find a substantial and unusual small community of about fifty permanent residents, and significant glimpses of a city that feels ancient and futuristic as it rises.

On the front of the freestanding walls

in the center of the room:

CONVOLUTE U: SAINT-SIMON, RAILROADS

Martín Ramírez

Untitled (Trains and Tunnels), A, B, 1960–63

Gouache, graphite on pieced paper

Collection of John and Barbara Wilkerson

In the nineteenth century railroads were harbingers of modernity, bringing profound change to rural and urban places alike. Railroads reached Martín Ramírez's home in rural western Mexico eight years before his birth; as a young man he left his home in Mexico to work on railroads in the United States. Trains became a frequent subject in his drawings, weighted with cultural as well as personal significance.

In Convolute U, Benjamin pairs railroads with the name of the eighteenth-century economist Henri de Saint-Simon.

Saint-Simon envisioned the restructuring of society to maximize economic productivity and scientific advancement. Railroads, the machines of the new age, were the first true global network and a powerful subject for that form of productivity called art.

On the pedestal in the center of the room:

CONVOLUTE F: IRON CONSTRUCTION

Chris Burden

Tower of London Bridge, 2003

Stainless-steel Mysto Type I Erector parts, gearbox,
wood base

Courtesy of The Chris Burden Estate and Gagosian

Innovations in the production of iron in the eighteenth century helped to bring about the Industrial Revolution. Cast iron was light and strong; its use in bridges, buildings, and machines altered architecture and engineering, making cities taller and architecture airier—as exemplified by the Eiffel Tower, built in 1889, and glass-vaulted arcades. Walter Benjamin suggests in *Convolute F* that iron construction represented a turn in the history of architecture in which the technical properties of a material began to dictate the styles of buildings, rather than the reverse.

Chris Burden's bridges evoke the giddy sense of possibility in the early days of iron construction. He uses children's building sets to represent real and imagined architecture, often at a scale that children can only dream of.

On the inside of the freestanding walls

in the center of the room:

CONVOLUTE D: BOREDOM, ETERNAL RETURN

Guido van der Werve

Nummer dertien, effugio C: you're always only
half a day away, 2011

12-hour HD video, framed text

Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York

Many of Guido van der Werve's performance-based films involve feats of endurance. Here, van der Werve runs around his house in Finland for twelve continuous hours on the longest day of the year, beginning at 11:00 PM and ending at 11:00 the next morning. While our attention may wander to the scudding clouds, to the light falling on foliage, to the rhythmic sound of footsteps, the runner is trapped in his loop until his self-imposed term elapses. For Benjamin, the

idea of a universe of infinite repetitions without any finale or goal, was a counterpoint to the Enlightenment's faith in progress.

ARTIST'S TEXT

Effugio c

you're always only half a day away

Running in circles: 1. Lit. to run in a circular path. The horses ran in circles around the corral for their daily exercise. The children ran in circles around the tree.
2. Fig. to waste one's time in aimless activity.

Guido van der Werve: a Dutch artist who started long-distance running in 2007. Soon after, he developed an addiction to running. Van der Werve ran his first marathon in Helsinki in 2009 and has been running two or three marathons per year ever since. His current personal best was achieved at the Berlin Marathon on September 25, 2011, a time of 3.13.55.

In 2010, van der Werve ran his first ultra-marathon, running from MoMA PS1 in Long Island City, New York to

Rachmaninoff's grave in Valhalla, New York. On June 8, 2011 he ran approximately two and a half marathons around his house in Finland in exactly twelve hours. In the summer of 2011, he finished his first triathlon.

Emotional poverty: suggests a depletion of emotional resources, an absence of emotional health and well-being, a state of lack rather than abundance. Emotional poverty is a state in which a person finds him/herself when he/she lacks the ability to deal with specific emotional circumstances or life in general, without totally breaking down into severe depression. Everyone struggles to deal with difficulties in life, but some simply cannot emotionally cope with difficult circumstances. They turn to escapism, or they may just shut down altogether. When a person finds him/herself in a difficult time, but is not able to process the difficulties and live life, he/she may very well be dealing with emotional poverty. It is defined by a limited range or depth of feelings; interpersonal coldness in spite of signs of open gregariousness.

Half a day: equal to twelve hours. The twelve-hour clock can be traced back as far as the cultures of Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt; both an Egyptian sundial for daytime use and an Egyptian water clock for nighttime use were found in the tomb of Pharaoh Amenhotep I. Dating back to approximately 1500 BC, these clocks divided their

respective times of use into twelve hours each. Nowadays you can theoretically fly to almost anywhere in the world within twelve hours or less.

A day is a unit of time, commonly defined as an interval of twenty-four hours. It can also be used to describe that portion of the full day during which a location is illuminated by the light of the sun. The period of time measured from local noon to the following local noon is called a solar day.

Hanging from the ceiling:

CONVOLUTE K: DREAM CITY AND DREAM HOUSE, DREAMS OF THE FUTURE, ANTHROPOLOGICAL NIHILISM, JUNG

Mike Kelley

Mobile Homestead Swag Lamp, 2010–13

Aluminum, steel, lighting fixtures, wiring

Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts and Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit

In The Arcades Project Walter Benjamin challenges the notion that the past is a fixed object, waiting to be elucidated. He calls the present “a waking world, a world to which that dream we name the past refers.” The dream quality of the past suggests that it is mutable, a patchwork of images and symbols that can be understood in myriad ways.

Mike Kelley’s work has also focused on the unreliability of memory. His project Mobile Homestead, a full-scale reproduction of his suburban childhood home, resides on the grounds of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Detroit. The building’s first floor maintains the floor plan of the original; its multilevel basement, closed to the public, includes crawl spaces and rooms that can only be accessed through ceiling hatches. The dreamlike, labyrinthine architecture suggests the slipperiness of the past. Kelley explores the denial of uncomfortable realities of abuse and oppression in domestic life, not in tune with the American Dream as represented by the suburban home, with its white picket fence. This lamp, a miniaturized version of the building, adds another layer of surrealness to the house.

On the back of the freestanding walls

in the center of the room:

CONVOLUTE S: PAINTING, JUGENDSTIL, NOVELTY

Sanya Kantarovsky

Two Suns, 2017

Oil, oilstick, pastel, watercolor on canvas

Courtesy of the artist

When photography was invented in 1839, critics began to warn of painting's imminent demise. In response, painting started to emphasize stylistic innovation. With Impressionism and then abstraction, inventive style emerged as a core value of what came to be called modernism. Painting survived, yet by the end of the twentieth century it appeared to have exhausted its possibilities.

Nearly two centuries after the death of painting was first declared, painters continue to grapple with the concept of

novelty—even if only to conclude that novelty is no longer possible. Sanya Kantarovsky ranges freely over the history of his chosen medium, imbuing his art with an uncanny sense of déjà vu.

On the threshold between the current and
the next gallery

CONVOLUTE R: MIRRORS

Mungo Thomson

June 25, 2001 (How the Universe Will End) March 6, 1995

(When Did the Universe Begin?), 2012

Enamel on low-iron mirror, poplar, anodized aluminum

Courtesy of the artist and Kadist, San Francisco

The arcades, with their skylight roofs and open entrances, are simultaneously indoors and outdoors. The mirrors and reflective glass windows of their shops and cafés further confuse and interweave spaces, creating a phantasmagoric atmosphere, seductive to the flâneur and reminiscent of the montagelike technique used by Walter Benjamin in The Arcades Project.

Mungo Thomson playfully exploits the capacity of mirrors to befuddle perception; his reference to Time magazine extends this disorientation into a conceptual realm. Traditionally, news magazine covers have constructed

history as a series of timeless flashbulb memories. This work reacts against that static tendency by casting the viewer into a disorienting mise-en-abyme, a series of infinite reflections.

Moving to the next gallery

Nancy & Morris W. Offit Gallery

To the left of the doorway, moving clockwise:

CONVOLUTE L: THE SIENE, THE OLDEST PARIS

Haris Epaminonda and Daniel Gustav Cramer

The Infinite Library, 2007–ongoing

Reassembled and bound found books

Courtesy of the artists

The Infinite Library is an ongoing collaboration between Haris Epaminonda and Daniel Gustav Cramer. To create each volume in the series, the artists crop and reorder pages from existing books. In doing so, they disrupt the visual and semantic flow of the original texts: images and ideas that were once separate are brought together, and the intentions of the original authors are diverted or effaced.

In Benjamin's compilation of quotations for *Convolute I*, the Seine emerges as the connective tissue that binds the city of Paris together. Amid the city's dense accretion of built structures, the river represents the enduring, elemental force of nature; a vein of unknowability, with powerful currents and murky, mysterious depths; a link to the city's ancient past.

CONVOLUTE O: PROSTITUTION, GAMBLING

Rodney Graham

Good Hand Bad Hand, 2010

Painted aluminum lightboxes, chromogenic transparencies
Courtesy of the artist and Kadist, San Francisco

Rodney Graham often appears as a character in his own work, particularly in vignettes of masculine archetypes—the marooned pirate, the soulful cowboy, the grizzled card shark. The photographs, with their slightly hokey settings and costumes, have a downbeat, self-deprecating humor.

Walter Benjamin charted the ways in which capitalism strips us of the ability to determine our own fate, leaving us subject to impersonal forces whose scope and operations remain beyond our ken. The sense that success and failure arise from “causes that are unanticipated, generally unintelligible, and seemingly dependent on chance” predisposes us to gambling, whether in casinos or on the stock exchange.

CONVOLUTE G: EXHIBITIONS, ADVERTISING, GRANDVILLE

Raymond Hains

Martini, 1968

Plexiglas relief

Estate of Raymond Hains, courtesy of Galerie Max Hetzler,
Paris and Berlin

The Marxist concept of commodity fetishism describes the way in which, under capitalism, objects become unmoored from their relationships to real human needs and acquire an almost magical power to command desire. In nineteenth-century Paris this commercial culture was clamorous: advertisers jockeyed for the attention of potential buyers, papering over one another’s advertisements before the glue could dry.

The advertising poster, a form that developed rapidly during this time, helped to produce the fetish character of the

products it depicted. In this work, Raymond Hains distorts a famous logo, referring unmistakably to the Italian vermouth but undermining the effect of the original with a disorienting twist.

CONVOLUTE g: THE STOCK EXCHANGE, ECONOMIC HISTORY

Andreas Gursky

Singapore Stock Exchange, 1997

Chromogenic print, face-mounted to acrylic

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Purchased with funds contributed by the Photography Committee, 1998

The photographs of Andreas Gursky offer a scintillating tension between abstraction and reality in all its teeming detail. A shift from the concrete to the abstract is a hallmark of late capitalist society. Money is an abstraction of value. Debt is an abstraction of money. Stocks and bonds are abstractions of abstractions, their connections to tangible things—corn to eat, wood to build houses—reduced to the buzz of binary code through fiber-optic cables. Gursky's photographs, on the one hand, convey vividly the inhuman scale and compulsive regularity of the organs of our economy. On the other hand, they expose

their own status as images, as objects, by pruning and polishing reality to a painful sheen.

Benjamin saw the stock exchange as a linchpin in the collective mythology of capitalism: swarms of people, furiously busy, their inscrutable activities determining the fate of the world.

In the center of the room:

CONVOLUTE P: THE STREETS OF PARIS

Jorge Macchi

The City of Light, 2007

Lamp, table, map, digital print on paper

Inhotim Collection, Brumadinho, Brazil

Maps are among Jorge Macchi's favorite materials: he has charted urban itineraries that correspond to the branching cracks in a pane of glass; surgically cut away all elements of a city but its streets, rivers, or cemeteries; and used countries as collage elements, overlapping haphazardly as if fallen across a page.

Benjamin was fascinated by the tangled labyrinth of Paris streets, the subject of *Convolute P*. The unexpected constellations of people, places, historical events, and phrases that give their names to the old city's streets represent the chaotic plenitude of its history, enticing the adventurous flâneur.

On the floor in the center of the room:

CONVOLUTE E: HAUSSMANNIZATION, BARRICADE FIGHTING

Claire Fontaine

The Barricades of May Brickbat, 2007

Brick, brick fragments, digital print

Courtesy of the artist

The period between 1830 and 1848 saw seven armed popular uprisings in Paris, with insurgents repeatedly building barricades in the city's narrow medieval streets. In an effort to safeguard against future rebellions and to improve sanitation, the government of Napoléon III commissioned Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann to modernize the center of Paris. Haussmann transformed the city, carving wide, straight boulevards through its tangled heart.

Still, Paris remained a hotbed of revolution. The Communards seized control of parts of the city in 1871;

in May 1968, more than a century after Haussmann's intervention, students and workers built their own barricades during strikes and sit-ins against the conservative government of Charles de Gaulle.

Claire Fontaine's brickbats refer to such protests, wrapping the classic street weapon in the jacket of a book. The work calls into question the maxim that the pen is mightier than the sword, giving physical form to the debate between political movements based on intellectual persuasion and those that rely on direct action.

On the hanging screen:

CONVOLUTE C: ANCIENT PARIS, CATACOMBS, DEMOLITIONS, DECLINE OF PARIS

Jesper Just

Intercourses, 2013

Modified 5-channel video installation

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Perrotin, New York

In The Arcades Project, Walter Benjamin both describes and contributes to the mythology of Paris. He reflects on the astonishing volume of writing that has been devoted to “the investigation of this tiny spot on the earth’s surface,” from its buried antiquities to its bordellos.

Jesper Just’s video records a recent contribution to this history of fascination: a residential development in suburban China with mansard-roofed apartment blocks, a

mini Champs-Élysées, and a copy of the Eiffel Tower. Though it was intended to house ten thousand people, the cheaply built replica city is sparsely populated and already crumbling. Staircases lead to fields strewn with construction debris; weeds surround the Eiffel Tower. This hard-luck doppelgänger fulfills dystopian fantasies of the demise of a great city.

Inside the final room of the current gallery

CONVOLUTE m: IDLENESS

Pierre Huyghe

Sleeptalking, 1998

Projection of super 16mm black-and-white film,
transferred to video, sound

Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery,
New York

In the nineteenth century, with the rise of the bourgeoisie and changes to the lives of the working class, more and more people had time to spend outside of work and money beyond what was needed to meet basic needs. Sports, concerts, theater, and inexpensive travel all became accessible to much of the population.

Leisure time, however, is defined and delimited by work time. In 1995 Pierre Huyghe founded the Association des Temps Libérés (Association of Freed Time), a gesture aimed at recovering unrestricted time. The project is aligned with Benjamin's conception of idleness as fruitful and valuable, epitomized by the insightful, endlessly strolling flâneur.

Sleeptalking blends footage from Andy Warhol's 1963 film Sleep with a voice-over and footage of the poet John Giorno reminiscing about his life in a community of artists in New York in the 1960s and 1970s. Ribald, dreamy, and exuberant, Giorno's rambling narrative paints a picture of a kind of utopia, inhabited by people whose art was born of idleness.

