

INDUBITABLE HYBRIDITY

Amy Sillman + Charles Bernstein
collaborate on *Pinky's Rule*

"It always starts fast and then begins unwinding"

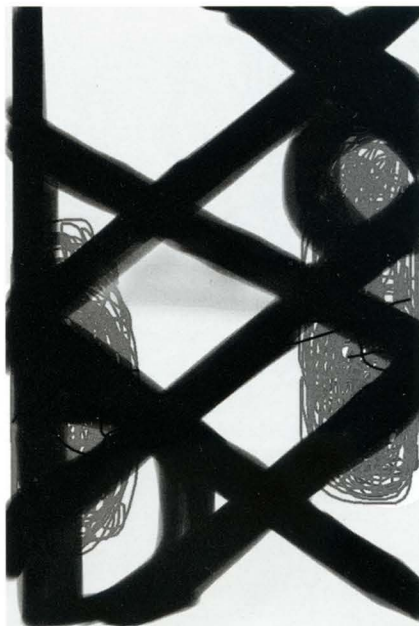
—Amy Sillman recites
Charles Bernstein's poem
in *Pinky's Rule*

Pinky's Rule (2011), a seven-minute iPhone animation, is an intertextual play and response collaboration with images by the painter Amy Sillman and text by the poet Charles Bernstein, and as such, is an indexical record of the creative process between the two artists. Their strategy of intentional interactivity proceeded incrementally, over a six-month period, as they constructed the animated images and poem.

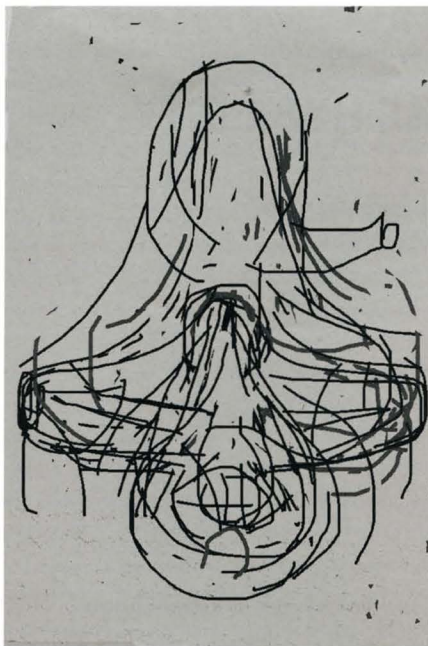
Sillman and Bernstein's collaboration began on the occasion of Bruce Pearson curating an exhibition for the Big Wall at the Bowery Poetry Club. The exhibition's *raison d'être* was to instigate a kind of hybrid breeding ground between painters and artists. The intertextual pieces produced would then become the exhibition. As paired collaborators, the painter Amy Sillman and the poet Charles Bernstein began their creative commingling resulting in *Pinky's Rule*.

Sillman recounts (in an email to this reviewer), "the poem didn't exist till the animation and visa versa." And Bernstein wrote (in the online magazine *Jacket2.org*): "In making the work, the collaborators went back and forth, toggling from image to poem and poem to image, so that it is impossible to say which came first. All the images bounce off the poem and the poem is constantly grappling with and extending the graphics. Sillman made more than 2,000 images for the film."

While both artists create within their own forms, they are also both reciprocally interpreting the other form within their own. Together, their gerundive performativity is intertextual transliteration at its best, conflating the image and the word into a reversible simile: pictures as language—language as pictures. For the collaborators, though, the speech act seems to be a more apt metaphor for their originating process, which they describe as "'iconophrastic' (both speaking picture and pictures speaking)" [*Jacket2.org*] The fluidity and polyvalence



ALL IMAGES Charles Bernstein and Amy Sillman, *Pinky's Rule* (2011), frame enlargements. Courtesy the artists. © Amy Sillman and Charles Bernstein.



of forms and media, the gestures and utterances, imbue a unique hybridity to *Pinky's Rule*. Sillman rhetorically gestures moving from abstraction to figuration and back again. Bernstein ekphrastically conjures up vivid images through his sequential textual constructions.

The viewer views and the listener listens as moments of a descriptively referenced diegesis are vaguely anticipated—perhaps even transiently satiated—and then dashed. Such reticence for an implied causality is aptly expressed and occasionally inverted, as the sound track of *Pinky's Rule* consists of Bernstein's poem recited by the “loquacious” Sillman. He writes/she speaks such phrases as: “undeniable resemblances.” In counterpoint to the text are images of Sillman's speedy lines, figuratively suggesting the bottom half of a two-legged man or woman, and then, as more lines are drawn, transforming into complete abstraction. The moving image is almost simultaneously figurative and abstract as it echoes in time Sillman's recitation of Bernstein's text. Both image and text are delivered playfully—revealing emotive and intellectual rigor in equal measure—as the viewer views and the listener listens.

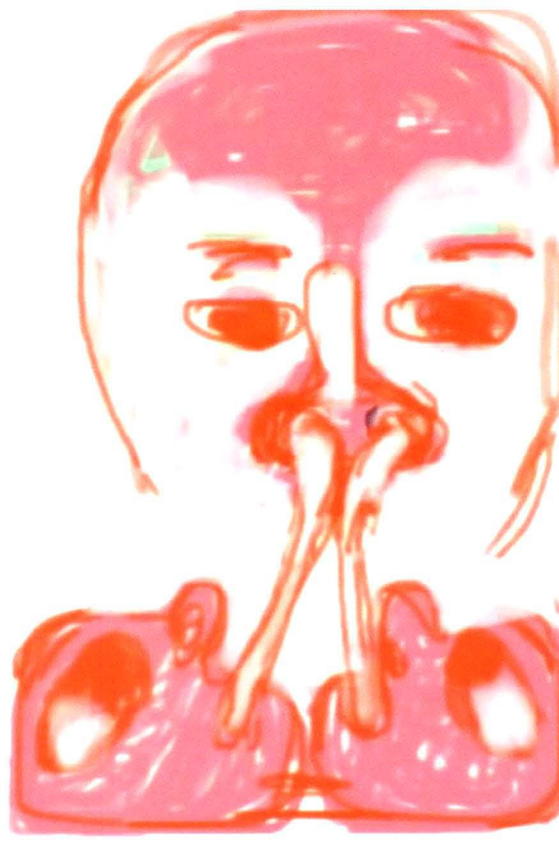
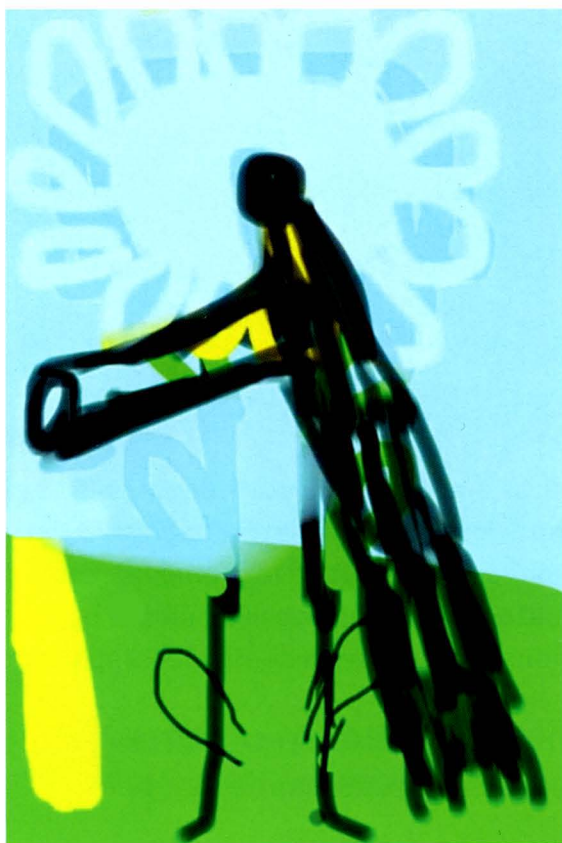
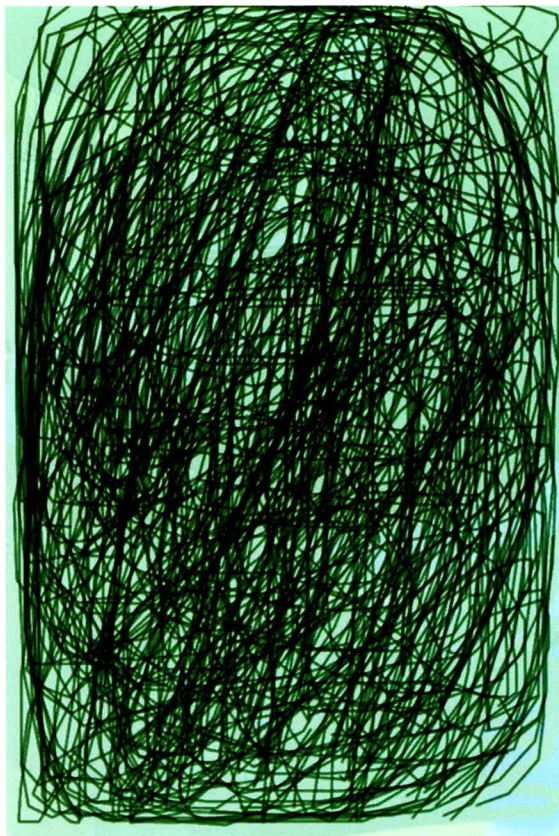
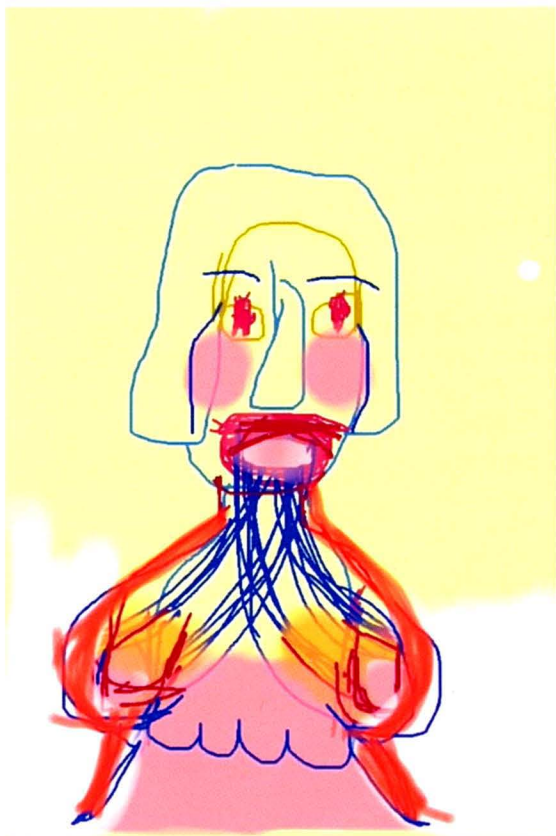
Hearing the words of Bernstein through the “voice” of Sillman suggests a visual and textual strategy, which begins to veer from *diegesis*—from faux

abreaction to the realm of the “difficult.” The poetry of Bernstein stems from the tenets of language poetry, which problematize the referentiality of language and the speech act, thus highlighting the act of Sillman reading Bernstein's text as extremely interesting as well as doubly ironic.

Sillman draws visual jazz on the fast track. Her animated lines display brush gestures of a kind of evenhandedness with raggedy edges. They come on quick—as unseen swipes for color and brush changes remain invisible. Her palette is digital as images appear in animated segments all ending in erasure. The screen becomes almost blank, but never completely, as Sillman's gestures always ever so slightly remain. And when there is a poetic pause—a breath taken—the screen sometimes goes to black, a rest for the eyes as well as the ears, only to begin again in a welcomed renewal of image and text as new referents of still more complexity are displayed and heard.

To experience *Pinky's Rule* visit: <<http://www.amysillman.com/pages/video.php>>.

MAUREEN NAPPI





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CONTRIBUTORS

Angela Dalle Vacche is a Professor of Film Studies at the Georgia Institute of Technology. She is currently completing her fourth book, *Andre Bazin's Cinema: Art, Science, Religion*.

Vera Dika is a film scholar whose books include *The (Moving) Pictures Generation: The Cinematic Impulse in Downtown New York Art and Film* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) and *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The Uses of Nostalgia* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Josh Guilford is Visiting Assistant Professor of English in Film and Media Studies at Amherst College. He managed print traffic at the Film-Makers' Cooperative between 2013-2015 and directed the Providence-based experimental film and video series, *Magic Lantern Cinema*, between 2010-2014.

Jihoon Kim is an assistant professor of cinema and media studies at Chung-ang University. He is completing his first book *Between Film, Video, and the Digital: Hybrid Moving Images in the Post-media Age* (Bloomsbury Academic, July 2016).

Andrzej Jachimczyk is a writer and filmmaker, and a Catherine Malabou Fellow at the European Graduate School, Switzerland. He lives in New York City.

Steven Jacobs is an art historian specialized in the relations between film and the visual arts. His other research interests focus on the visualization of architecture, cities, and landscapes in film and photography. His publications include *The Wrong House: The Architecture of Alfred Hitchcock* (2007) and *Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts* (2011). He teaches at Ghent University, Belgium.

Juan Carlos Kase is Assistant Professor of Film Studies at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. His ongoing research concerns the overlapping aesthetic, historical, and political registers of experimental cinema, documentary, art history, performance, and popular music within North American culture.

Sarah Keller is Assistant Professor of Art and Cinema Studies at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. She co-edited the collection *Jean Epstein: Critical Essays and New Translations* (Amsterdam University Press, 2012), and her book *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control* (Columbia University Press, 2014) examines the role of unfinished cinematic works by focusing on the Maya Deren oeuvre. Keller's current project, *Cinephilia/Cinephobia*, focuses on the history and theory of love and anxiety in the cinema.

Chris Kennedy is an independent filmmaker, film programmer and writer based in Toronto. He is the Executive Director of the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto and programs the Free Screen at TIFF Cinematheque. www.theworldviewed.com

Laura U. Marks' most recent books are *Enfoldment and Infinity: An Islamic Genealogy of New Media Art* (MIT Press, 2010) and *Hanan al-Cinema: Affections for the Moving Image* (MIT Press, 2015). She has curated programs of experimental media for festivals and art spaces worldwide, most recently the Robert Flaherty Seminar in 2015. She teaches in the School for the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver.

Bruce McClure graduated with a degree in Architecture in 1985 and worked on residential projects in small offices until 2008. In 1994 he recognized his interest in cinema by building simple devices that used intervals of light to affect the perception of motion. Eventually he adopted the film projector to organize light and sound into "projector performances." These performances have been produced at many colleges, universities, cine-clubs, museums and international festivals.

Maureen Nappi is an artist and scholar who specializes in the integration of the theory and practice of arts + technology, media and gender. Dr. Nappi teaches Media Theory + CGI in the Media Arts Department of Long Island University, Brooklyn. Her recent publications include: "Shulamith Firestone: Cybernetics and Back to the Feminist Future" and "The Dialectics of Kinesis + Stasis in my Visual Art."

Simon Payne is a video artist and Senior Lecturer in Film and Media Studies at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK.

John Powers is completing his PhD on technology and avant-garde cinema at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His writing has been published in *October* and his films have shown recently at the Crossroads Festival and the Onion City Experimental Film and Video Festival.

Birgit M. Schneidmueller is a Ph.D. candidate in Cinema & Media Studies at York University in Toronto. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Communication from Tulane University (US), and a Master's degree in Media Culture from Maastricht University (Netherlands). Her interests include transmedia storytelling, digital culture development, and the intersection of branding and social media.

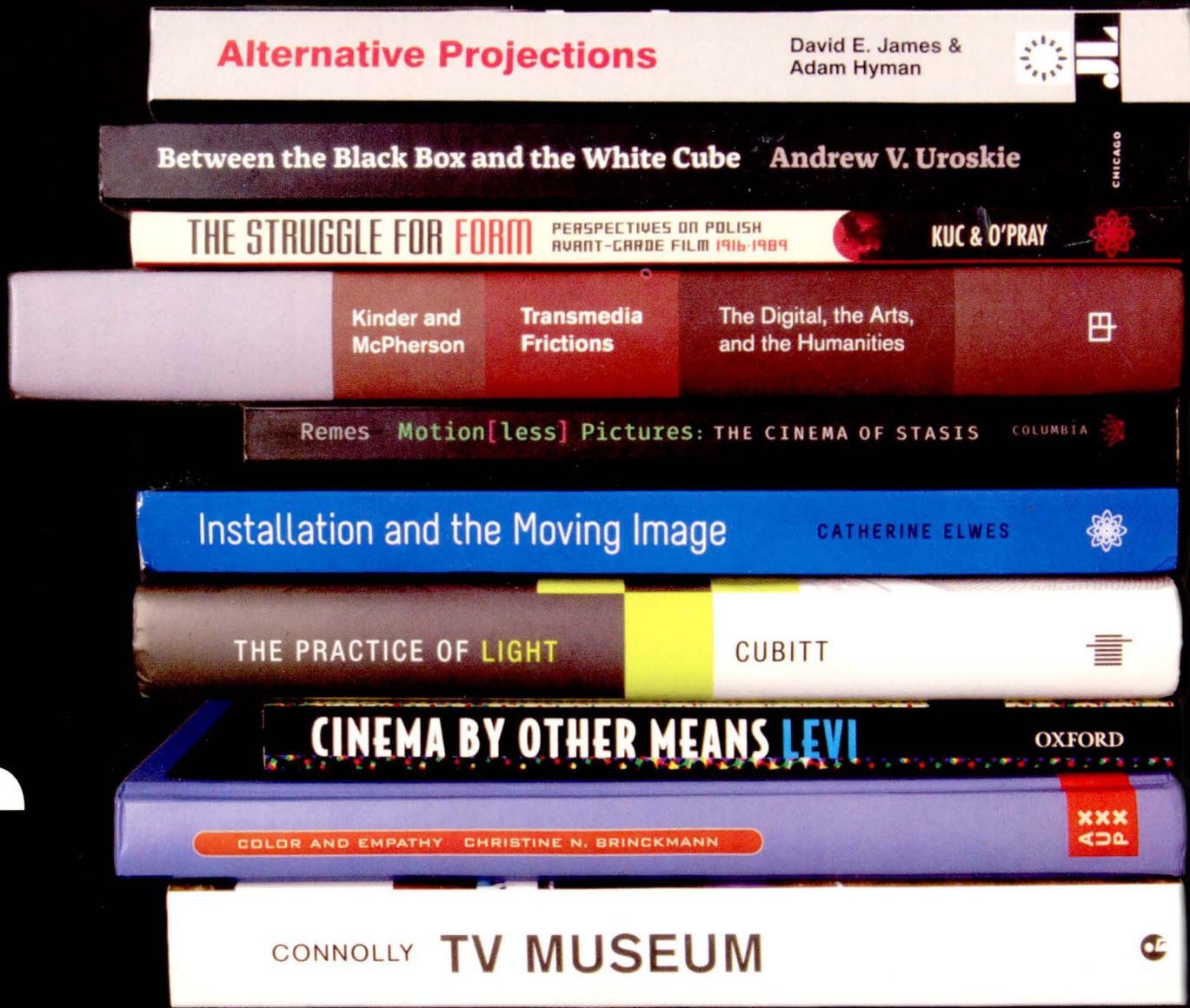
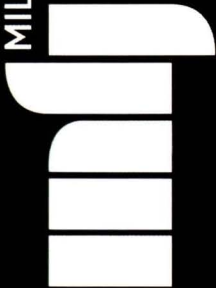
Rachel Stevens is an interdisciplinary artist based in NYC. She is currently working on a project commissioned for Paths to Pier 42 in Lower Manhattan, participating in a year-long residency with iLAND (Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Art, Nature and Dance) and teaching in the Integrated Media Arts MFA program at Hunter College.

Rachel Valinsky is an independent curator, writer, and translator based in New York. She is a doctoral candidate in Art History at The Graduate Center.

Grahame Weinbren is the senior editor of the *Millennium Film Journal*.

Alison Wielgus is an Assistant Professor of Media at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. She recently received her Ph.D. in Film Studies from the University of Iowa. Her work reconsiders cinematic archives through sites of experimental exhibition.

Michael Zryd is Associate Professor of Cinema and Media at York University in Toronto.



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Title Page

Soda_Jerk, *The Time that Remains* (2012), frame enlargement. Courtesy the artists and Walter Phillips Gallery, The Banff Centre.

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