Forming, Informing, Recording, Erasing, Documenting, Deleting

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I would like to suggest a very specific listening method for the first paragraph of this talk. As you hear each word, please forget the previous word, such that, at any given moment, there is but one word stored in your head. By the time you hear, for instance, the word "instance," the word "for" should already be gone: unremembered, undocumented, unrecorded. A period should erase the entirety of the preceding sentence. This first paragraph then will forevermore function as part of, and *not part* of, this talk. As it ends, it will no longer exist and, if you have successfully acceded to my suggestion, you will listen on without it. As with much that is forgotten, it may yet render effects upon what is to follow while, in itself, remaining inaccessible. As we reach the end of this paragraph its forgetting is nearly complete.

Now then…

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The EOB Tape of June 20, 1972


Report on a Technical Investigation
Conducted for the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia
by the Advisory Panel on White House Tapes

May 31, 1974
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On May 31, 1974, the Advisory Panel on the White House Tapes issued a report commissioned by the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia. The panel wrote:

> Through many […] rounds of test, hypothesis, and test again, we converged upon a single, self-consistent set of results, which we express in the form of seven conclusions:

1. The erasing and recording operations that produced the buzz section were done directly on the Evidence Tape.
2. The Uher 5000 recorder designated Government Exhibit #60 probably produced the entire buzz section.
3. The erasures and buzz recordings were done in at least five, and perhaps as many as nine, separate and contiguous segments.
4. Erasure and recording in at least five places on the tape required hand operation of keyboard controls on the Uher 5000 machine.
5. Erased portions of the tape probably contained speech originally.
6. Recovery of the speech is not possible by any method known to us.
7. The Evidence Tape, insofar as we have determined, is an original and not a copy. (35-36)

The Advisory Panel was comprised of six experts in audio forensics. Their task was to analyze an eighteen and a half minute gap in the evidence tape – otherwise known as "Tape 342."

Tape 342 was recorded on June 20, 1972, in President Richard Nixon's office in the Executive Office Building (or EOB) adjacent to the White House. To refresh our collective memories, this was just three days after five men were caught repairing previously installed listening devices in the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate Complex in Washington D.C. One of the five men, James McCord, was at the time, employed as Security Coordinator for the Committee To Reelect the President. The upshot here is that one of the burglars had direct ties to Nixon.

The break-in was reported the following day in *The Washington Post* and on June 19th, the day after that, by network television news.

Figure 1. Photographs of magnetic tape recorders: Uher 5000 and Sony 800B

On June 20th, the recording date of Tape 342, Nixon met with H.R. Haldeman, his Chief of Staff, at the office in the Executive Office Building. It wasn't until July of 1973, more than a year later, that Congress, and the public, learned of the existence of a tape recording system in the White House and the EOB. The system, which employed a number of Sony 800B reel-to-reel machines to record all of Nixon's conversations, was mentioned during televised hearings by White House aide, Alexander Butterfield. District Court Judge John Siricia immediately subpoenaed nine tapes thought to contain information relevant to the Watergate investigation.

Of these tapes, Tape 342 that came in for special scrutiny, due to the fact that this tape records a conversation between Nixon and his Chief of Staff, just two days after initial reports of the discovery of the break-in, as well as the existence of an

eighteen and a half minute gap during which no speech is audible, replaced by what the Advisory Panel refers to as the "buzz section."

Nixon's secretary, Rose Mary Woods, claimed that, while transcribing the tape on her Uher 5000 machine, she had mistakenly erased a four or five minute section, when she reached to answer a telephone, failing to release the foot pedal which ran the machine and accidentally pressing the RECORD button, rather than the STOP button. However, the Advisory Panel determined that the buzz section was the product of a series of between five and nine actions that required manual operation of the tape recorder.

SPEECH — LOUD BUZZ — SOFT BUZZ — LOUD BUZZ — SPEECH

SECONDS AFTER START OF BUZZ

0   100   200   300   400   500   600   700   800   900   1000   1100

EVENT 5   EVENT 6   ← SIX K-1 PULSES →

RECORD HEAD EVENTS →

ERASE HEAD EVENTS →

EVENT NUMBER

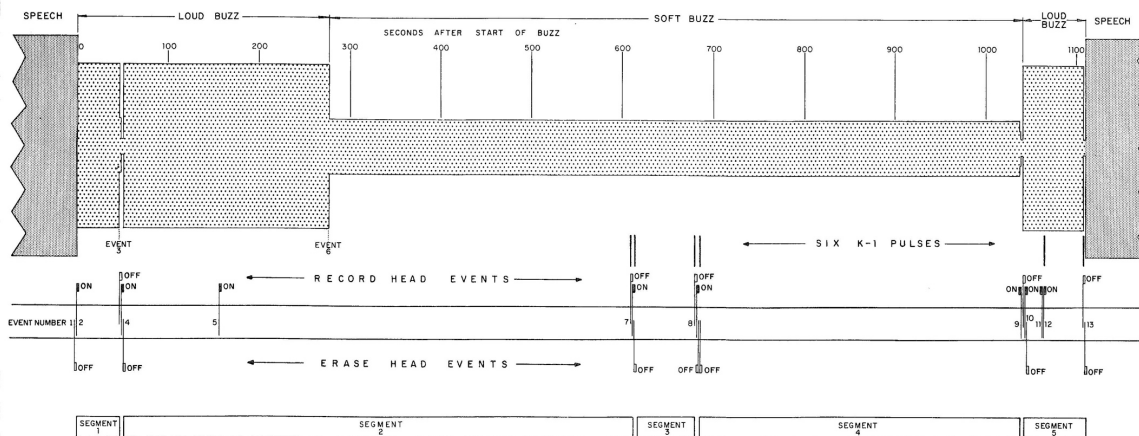SEGMENT 1   SEGMENT 2   SEGMENT 3   SEGMENT 4   SEGMENT 5

Figure 11. Chronological diagram of events in the 18.5 minute buzz section, EOB tape recording of June 20, 1972.

The buzz section is comprised of two distinctly different buzzes. The initial section of louder buzz lasts approximately 280 seconds, which would agree with Woods' claim of four to five minutes of accidental erasure. This is followed by a softer buzz, lasting approximately 770 seconds, or nearly thirteen minutes. The Panel concluded that the loud buzz was caused by a "dirty" power source in Woods' office. And that, the buzz "resembled power line interference and that the Exhibit 60 Uher was especially sensitive to such interference." (Advisory Panel Report 4) Therefore, the soft buzz must have resulted from erasure or recording conducted at another location with a cleaner power source. The incriminating nature of the Panel's conclusions regarding Tape 342 was a major factor in turning both public opinion and congressional action against Nixon, eventually leading to his resignation.

Tricia Nixon Takes Vows In Garden at White House

Tricia Nixon escorted from White House by her father

By NAN ROBERTSON
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 12 — After a tension-filled delay because of rain, Tricia Nixon was married today in the Rose Garden of the White House to Edward Finch Cox, the man she has described as "my first and last love."

When the rain let up, the President's diminutive ethereal blond daughter, who turned 25 years old last February, finally walked down the curving staircase of the columned South Portico on her father's arm for the first outdoor wedding in the 171-year history of the mansion.

...in New York with his other, younger daughter, Julie. He gave her away to Dwight David Eisenhower 2d, only grandson of the late President Eisenhower. That wedding united two of America's most celebrated political families.

The wedding this afternoon was the eighth involving a Presidential daughter at the White House.

But whether it would go off outdoors was touch-and-go most of the day. Reports for forecast a 30 per cent chance of rain.

CITY TO DISCLOSE BUDGETARY TRIMS FOR DEPARTMENTS

Mayor's Aides Make Decision on Final Figures Scheduled to Be Announced Today

By MAURICE CARROLL

Mayor Lindsay has summoned his supercabinet, the heads of all major city departments, to Gracie Mansion this morning to tell them the cuts that their departments face in his revised budget.

"All of them made their pitch to the Mayor within the last 48 hours," a mayoral aide said yesterday. "Sunday they get the word."

The $9.13-billion budget originally made public by the Mayor must be trimmed by a few hundred million dollars to reflect the revenue package he extracted from Albany, which provides for less than the $1.1-billion gap that Mr. Lindsay had said existed between projected income and spending.

No Details on Cuts

The Mayor's advisers were not saying precisely yesterday how much the budget would have to be cut, or where.

Key city Councilmen have been told that the Mayor would bow on one point that had been made an issue by the Council and the Board of Estimate—by agreeing to double the projected income forecast for offtrack betting to $50-million.

Deputy Mayor Richard R. Aurelio, who sat with Budget Director Edward K. Hamilton, said only:

"We'd have to take serious note of the Board of Estimate's and the Council's views on OTB."

But Councilmen said that they had been told privately that the higher figure would be used.

'Cushion' is Possible

The effect of doing so would be to provide a $25-million cushion, which could be used...

NIXON CRITICIZED AS MAYORS MEET

Housing and War Policies Attacked and Defended at Parley in Philadelphia

By MARTIN TOLCHIN
Special to The New York Times

PHILADELPHIA, June 12 — President Nixon's foreign and domestic policies were sharply criticized and at times defended today in a number of resolutions introduced at the opening session of the 38th annual United States Conference of Mayors.

An afternoon of spirited debate included a heated clash over a resolution to urge the President to "end the war in Vietnam," a dispute between Mayor Lindsay of New York and Mayor Joseph L. Alioto of San Francisco and a nearly unanimous attack on the President's housing policies by the conference's 27-member resolu-

Vietnam Archive: Pentagon Study Traces 3 Decades of Growing U. S. Involvement

By NEIL SHEEHAN

A massive study of how the United States went to war in Indochina, conducted by the Pentagon three years ago, demonstrates that four administrations progressively developed a sense of commitment to a non-Communist Vietnam, a readiness to fight the North to protect the South, and an ultimate frustration with this effort—to a much greater extent than their public statements acknowledged at the time.

The 3,000-page analysis, to which 4,000 pages of official documents are appended, was commissioned by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and covers the American involvement in Southeast Asia from World War II to mid-1968—the start of the peace talks in Paris after President Lyndon B. Johnson had set a limit on further military commitments and revealed his intention to retire. Most of the study and many of the appended documents have been obtained by The New York Times and will be described and presented in a series of articles beginning today.

Though far from a complete history, even at 2.5 million words, the study forms a great archive of government decision-making on Indochina over three decades. The study led its 30 to 40 authors and researchers to many broad conclusions and specific findings, including the following:

¶That the Truman Administration's decision to give military aid to France in her colonial war against the Communist-led Vietminh "directly involved" the United States in Vietnam and "set" the course of American policy.

¶That the Eisenhower Administration's decision to rescue a fledgling South Vietnam from a Communist takeover and attempt to undermine the new Communist regime of North Vietnam gave the Administration a "direct role in the ultimate breakdown of the Geneva settlement" for Indochina in 1954.

Three pages of documentary material from the Pentagon study begin on Page 35.

¶That the Kennedy Administration, though ultimately spared from major escalation decisions by the death of its leader, transformed a policy of "limited-risk gamble," which it inherited, into a "broad commitment" that left President Johnson with a choice between more war and withdrawal.

¶That the Johnson Administration, though the President was reluctant and hesitant to take the final decisions, intensified the covert warfare against North Vietnam and began planning in the spring of 1964 to wage overt war, a full year before it publicly revealed the depth of its involvement and its fear of defeat.

¶That this campaign of growing clandestine military pressure through 1964 and the expanding program of bombing North Vietnam in 1965 were begun despite the judgment of the Government's intelligence community that the measures would not cause Hanoi to cease its support of the Vietcong insurgency in the South, and that the bombing was

Vast Review of War Took a Year

By HEDRICK SMITH

In June, 1967, at a time of great personal disenchantment with the Indochina war and rising frustration among his colleagues at the Pentagon, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara commissioned a major study of how and why the United States had become so deeply involved in Vietnam.

The project took a year to complete and yielded a vast and highly unusual report of Government self-analysis. It was compiled by a team of 30 to 40 Government officials, civilian and military, many of whom had helped to develop or carry out the policies that they were asked to evaluate and some of whom were simultaneously active in the debates that changed the course of those policies.

While Mr. McNamara turned over his job to Clark M. Clifford, while the war reached a military peak in the 1968 Lunar New Year offensive, while President Johnson cut back the bombing of North Vietnam and announced his plan to retire and while the peace talks began in Paris, the study group burrowed through Government files.

The members sought to probe American policy toward Southeast Asia from the World War II pronouncements of President Franklin D. Roosevelt into the summer of 1968. They wrote nearly 40 book-length volumes backed up by annexes of cablegrams, memorandums, draft proposals, dissents and other documents.

Many Inconsistencies

Their report runs to more than 7,000 pages—1.5 million words of historical narratives plus a million words of documents—enough to fill a small crate.

Even so, it is not a complete or polished history. It displays many inconsistencies and lacks a single all-embracing summary. It is an extended internal critique based on the docu-

mentary record, which the researchers did not supplement with personal interviews, partly because they were pressed for time.

The study emerged as a middle-echelon and official view of the war, incorporating material from the top-level files of the Defense Department in which the flow papers from the White House, the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Some important gaps appear in the study. The researchers did not have access to the complete files of Presidents or to all the memorandums of their conversations and decisions.

Moreover, there is another important gap in the copy of the Pentagon study obtained by The New York Times: It lacks the section on the secret diplomacy of the Johnson period.

But whatever its limitations, the Pentagon's study discloses a vast amount of new information about the unfolding Ameri-

U.S. URGES INDIANS AND PAKISTANIS TO USE RESTRAINT

Calls for 'Peaceful Political Accommodation' to End Crisis in East Pakistan

FIRST PUBLIC APPEAL

Statement Is Said to Reflect Fear of Warfare if Flow of Refugees Continues

By TAD SZULC
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 12—The United States appealed today to India and Pakistan to exercise restraint and urged the Pakistanis to restore normal conditions in East Pakistan through "peaceful political accommodation."

It was the first public statement by the United States on the situation in the subcontinent since the Pakistani Army last March 25 began quelling the East Pakistani movement for autonomy and later for independence. The statement reflected the increasing concern here that hostilities may erupt between India and Pakistan if the massive movement of East Pakistani refugees into India is not halted.

5 Million Refugees

The latest figures available to the State Department indicated that more than five million refugees have crossed the borders into India. This represents more than 7 per cent of East Pakistan's population. Refugees are reported still entering India at a rate of more than 100,000 a day.

A cholera epidemic is spreading among the refugees, and the State Department announced today that three United States Air Force planes were delivering a million doses of anticholera vaccine to India. The planes are to participate in a refugee airlift.

The United States concern is that peace may be threatened by the pressures generated by...

On June 13, 1971, one year and four days prior to the Watergate break-in, the New York Times published a front page story with the headline, "Vietnam Archive: Pentagon Study Traces 3 Decades of Growing U.S. Involvement." This archive, 7,000 pages of classified documents, which would come to be known as "The Pentagon Papers," had been systematically and incrementally removed from a safe at the Rand Corporation, by Rand employee, Daniel Ellsberg, who transported them after working hours to the advertising agency office of the girlfriend of a colleague. Through the night Ellsberg photocopied the documents, returning the originals to the safe in the morning. These leaked documents track the internal decision making that guided the U.S. involvement in Vietnam through five successive Presidential administrations. Upon their publication, the U.S.

congress and the public were confronted with reams of evidence of systematic deception about motives and strategies. It became apparent that many U.S. officials had known, for years, that the war could not be won. Ellsberg's actions constitute one of history's most significant leaks of classified information and the Pentagon Papers played a significant role in turning public opinion decisively against the war.

But if you investigate the history of the leaking of classified materials, you will find that it is very brief and shallow. Prior to the invention of the photocopier, such leaks were few, far between, and so humble in scope as to seem quaint. But this history accelerates and expands in leaps and bounds with the introduction of photocopiers, portable audio recording devices, phone taps, bugs, and video cameras. Nixon's presidency functioned as a potent testing ground for the effects of mechanical reproduction – of audio in the case of the White House tapes and text, in the case of the Pentagon Papers. The impact of new, cheap, fast and readily available technologies of mechanical reproduction landed with particular force during Nixon's presidency. As Lisa Gitelman notes,

> In the 1930s documentary reproduction had meant access; now it meant archive. The techniques of mechanical reproduction in the 1930s—with the exception of carbon paper—were typically framed as techniques of distribution, of circulation. Photocopying shared this same logic, but it was also used as a technique of preservation, an embrace of plenitude and redundancy. (92-93)

If we continue rewinding, from Tape 342 in 1972, through the Pentagon Papers in 1971, we encounter other significant employments of new, cheap, fast and readily available technologies of mechanical reproduction. In 1970, the exhibition

Information, organized by Kynaston McShine at the Museum of Modern Art in New York featured more than 150 artists working in documents and data. Also in 1970, Christine Kozlov, made *Information: No Theory*, a reel-to-reel tape recorder recording and re-recording the sounds of the gallery on a tape loop. During March of 1969, the exhibition *One Month* consisted of 31 responses – one for each day of March – to a form letter from curator Seth Siegelaub. The year prior, 1968, Siegelaub made *The Xerox Book*, an exhibition-as-book, consisting of works that could be reproduced for display by the eponymous Xerox machine. In 1966, Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden, soon to be members of the Art & Language collective, made *Soft Tape,* a reel-to-reel tape recorder playing back a short, theoretical text at a volume specified as "the 'zero point' between understanding the spoken words and indecipherable noise." And in 1963, William Anastasi made *Microphone,* a reel-to-reel tape recorder playing back a recording of the machine's own mechanical operation. None other than John Cage described it as "a recording of the recorder recording the recorder."

(*William Anastasi's Pataphysical Society: Jarry, Joyce, Duchamp, and Cage*. Edited by Aaron Levy and Jean-Michel Rabaté, Philadelphia: Slought Books, 2005, 55.)

With these examples in mind, alongside Ellsberg's exercise in durational photocopying and the vast archive of Nixon's tapes we can consider the implications of Gitelman's observation. As photocopying (and tape recording too) "embrace plenitude and redundancy" both input – what can or should be reproduced – and output – where these reproductions go, in what form, and to whom – change dramatically. A cyclical logic of redundancy and repetition emerges. Not only did Kozlov record the gallery and then, just two minutes later, record over that recording with another recording of the same space; not only did Anastasi record the sound of the tape machine to be played back by that same

machine, doubling the mechanical sound of the recorder; but among the logs of Nixon's tape archives, we find hours and hours of recordings of Nixon in the Oval Office, listening to previously recorded tapes; recordings which record prior recordings.

Gitelman also notes a transformation of the *type* of information that was reproduced and saved, quoting Richard Ullman's historiographical study of the history of the Pentagon,

> Not only is there unauthorized reproduction and circulation (within the government usually) of even the most restricted formal documents; but also informal ones, such as drafts, memos, and notes . . . the like of which in a prior era would have been confined to the personal files of their writer are now reproduced and circulated to his colleagues and friends—and, in turn, are retained in their files. These informal materials . . . were among the most valuable sources at the disposal of the authors of the Pentagon study. (Gitelman, 92-93, quote from Richard H. Ullman, "The Pentagon's History as 'History,'" Foreign Policy 4, 1971, 154.)

Here, we encounter a practice that we might describe as "*parergonal*," that is, a strategy of reproduction, retention, and distribution that puts emphasis not just on the primary document – the *ergon* – the work-product of the authors, but also on the "drafts, memos, and notes" – the *parerga*.

We can relate this practice to the aforementioned exhibitions and art works; works which collaboratively constructed the foundations of conceptual art. These works maintained a similar attitude to their own *parerga*. Consider, for example, this statement from Sol LeWitt's "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," published in *Artforum* in 1967, right in the middle of the period we're outlining:

> The idea itself, even if not made visual, is as much a work of art as any finished product. All intervening steps – scribbles, sketches, drawings, failed works, models, studies, thoughts, conversations – are of interest.
> (LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* 1967.)

If we think about LeWitt's statement in terms of the dissolution of the *ergon/parergon* distinction, we are left with a dispersed field of relations between vastly different kinds of significant structures. So scribbles, sketches, thoughts, and conversations – even those not accessible in the work as presented in an exhibition context – are not supplemental or adjacent to the work. They are not mere addenda, but are parts of the work itself, to *precisely* the same extent as the gallery-presented object, framed or plinthed self-evidently for our contemplation. LeWitt makes explicit the transfer of power from the *ergon* to the *parerga;* from the center to the periphery, from ipseity to difference, from the ontological to the epistemological. This movement from *ergon* to *parerga* is, in my opinion, the single most salient defining feature of the art we call conceptual. It is also its most important modification of the category of art.

But this transformation wasn't happening only in art. It was happening in art because it was also happening elsewhere, because other things were changing, such as the new, cheap, fast and readily available technologies of mechanical reproduction we've been discussing. If we return to Richard Ullman's observations about the Pentagon's production of its own internal history after what Gitelman calls "the Xerox Revolution," we can see a very similar logic being brought to bear, not on conceptual art, but on the history of the U.S. military industrial complex. Note how similar this idea is to LeWitt's.

> … drafts, memos, and notes … were among the most valuable sources at the disposal of the authors of the Pentagon study.
> (Gitelman, 92-93, quote from Richard H. Ullman, "The Pentagon's History as 'History,'" Foreign Policy 4, 1971, 154.)

The Xerographic turn was widely felt in the art world, celebrated in some quarters, but heartily dismissed in others.

Art: Xeroxophilia Rages Out of Control

Show Featuring Copied Materials Opens

By HILTON KRAMER

AN exhibition that will gladden the hearts of incurable Xeroxophiles everywhere opened yesterday at the New York Cultural Center, 2 Columbus Circle. Regarded by its sponsors as an art exhibition, the show is called "Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects." It consists, for the most part, of Xeroxed copies of various texts (not all of which are intended for reading), which are mounted on the walls or displayed in cases just as if they were—you must forgive the expression—works of art.

The exhibition has been organized by Donald Karshan, the director of the New York Cultural Center. Thirty-one "artists" are represented, and there is an additional presence felt here from beyond the grave—the voice of the late Marcel Duchamp is heard on the public address system reading some nonsense about language.

What we are offered here is, in Mr. Karshan's words, "Post-Object Art." "In this end of the 20th century we now know that art does indeed exist as an idea," Mr. Karshan writes in a statement on the exhibition. "And we know that quality exists in the thinking of the artist, not in the object he employs —if he employs an object at all. We begin to understand that painting and sculpture are simply unreal in the coming age of computers and instant travel."

This statement will certainly bring joy to all those aspiring artists who, though possessed of perfectly wonderful ideas for works of art, somehow could never quite get them to come out the way they envisioned them. Now all they need do is write down their concepts, have their little bits of typescript properly Xeroxed, and they will be in business. I suspect that Mr. Karshan is in for some heavy mail in the months to come. There must be thousands, if not millions, of people who feel they have great "ideas" for art, and until now have suffered the handicap of having no means of realizing them.

●

Still, it is rather touching to see Mr. Karshan using the word "quality," a sure sign that his emancipation is not yet complete. The "artists" in the "Concepual Art" show have no such hang-ups, however. Their total indifference to estheic qualiy is only .oo apparent.

There is, by the way, one thing to look at the show—

Exhibition at New York Cultural Center

a fold-out book of photographs by Edward Ruscha called "Every Building on the Sunset Strip." It is interesting to find this amusing litle nothing drafted into the service of "Conceptual Art." When it made its firs tappearance in 1966, it was thought to be one of the minor footnotes to the Los Angeles branch of the Pop movement. One can only wonder where it will turn up next.

The best thing in the "Conceptual Art" show, however, is Joseph Kosuth's "Information Room." This consists of two library tables covered with the sacred texts of the movement — paperback editions of Wittgenstein, Ryle, and other philosophers on one table, art magazines and volumes of art criticism on the other. There are chairs, of course, and one is invited to sit down and read.

It would be unfair, I think, to single out any of the Xeroxomaniacs in the exhibition by name. After all, as we have been told so often, the medium is the … etc.

For Mr. Karshan's information, however, it is not the object artists "employ" that interests us. It is the object they *make.*

Hilton Kramer coined the terms "Xeroxophilia" and "Xeroxomaniacs," and lamented their raging out of control. Thirty five years later, Jean Baudrillard concluded that the Xeroxophilia of the 1970s had pervaded the foundational logic of culture, He wrote,

> Much more than market speculation, we should fear the transcription of every thing in cultural, aesthetic terms, into museographic signs. That is culture, that is our dominant culture: the vast enterprise of museographic reproduction of reality, the vast enterprise of aesthetic storage, re-simulation and aesthetic reprinting of all the forms that surround us. That is the greatest threat. I call it the DEGREE XEROX OF CULTURE. (Jean Baudrillard, *The Conspiracy of Art*, New York: Semiotext(e), 2005, 105.)

Kramer's and Baudrillard's alarm bears witness to the pertinent historical fact: the pervasiveness of the Xerox machine, and the shift in technologies of reproduction more generally, cut through the culture, leaving marks at numerous strata. If it did not quite transform each of us into a Xeroxomaniac, it did establish a Xerographic sensibility, and for Baudrillard, an inescapable Xerographic relationship with reality.

Gitelman compares this to Virginia Jackson's idea that the reception of forms – lyric poetry in Jackson's analysis – helps to produce our understanding of the forms themselves. In other words, forms don't precede reception fully formed, but are formed by the ways in which they are received, when, where, in what contexts, and by whom.

Gitelman writes, "In comparison, xerography offers a way of reading that helps produce documents as such, where the way [of reading] in question depends not upon the discipline of literary study but rather on the disciplinary structures of modern bureaucracy, including its media of documentary reproduction." (103) Gitelman's book is entitled, *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents.* The subtitle announces the designated object of study: the category of the document. So in a movement that echoes this thesis (and of which I'm sure she is aware), Gitelman's construction of a media history of the document ends up

constructing documents to historicize. This is not to nitpick a flaw in Gitelman's method, but to point out that her thesis, adapted from Jackson's, is inescapable. It is operative in her own study. And this forming of forms through the process of informed reception is surely as operative in the construction of any cultural form as it is in the construction of lyric poetry or Xerography.

For example, John Mowitt has made similar claims about music, "By sanctioning specific technical mediations of listening as subjectively normative, musical reception supplies the social order sponsoring such mediations with an experiential confirmation." (Mowitt 217) Again, this must be true of other cultural forms and other types of audio recordings. So the use of audio recorders to record non-musical material, whether the bugged phone conversations of a political rival or policy debates in the halls of power at its highest levels, would likewise serve to produce our understandings of the forms of these recordings: what they *are*, what they can do or be used for, how to listen to them, what they mean. And this forming via informing, works in both directions. At the same time that it is defining the form of the being-listened-to-material, it is similarly defining the listening-being. Mowitt points us first in the direction of Jacques Attali, who says that "any organization of sounds, is […] a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality." (Attali 6) If music is that organization of sounds which creates a community, then recorded music – as a genre, as a medium – creates a community of listeners-to-*recorded*-music. The recording then becomes the content, the form, the technology, and the epistemic code. Likewise, Xerox copies create a Xerox-copy-consuming community. Conceptual art then, from Siegelaub's *Xerox Book* to tape works by Anastasi and Kozlov are not so hermetic as some have claimed, not merely "a recording of the recorder recording the recorder." These works are part of a complex circuit, creating the form and its apparatus of

reception – the software and the hardware – simultaneously. As surely as they are creating conceptual art, they are creating a conceptual art audience and interjecting themselves into these communities as tests and provocations.

One need only hash out the facts of Siegelaub's *Xerox Book* in order to get at some of the nuances of this. After an unsuccessful attempt at enticing the Xerox Corporation to foot the bill for the project, Siegelaub realized that producing the thousand copy run would cost more than twenty thousand dollars ($20,000). As a result, what we know as the *Xerox Book* was produced using offset lithography. Still, recalcitrantly, we refer to it as the *Xerox Book*. More to the point, we continue to think of it as a touchstone in the artistic use of new, cheap, fast and readily available technologies of mechanical reproduction in the 1960s, not because we are dupes or because "the offset lithography book" is too ungainly a mouthful, but because the book, while not being produced by a Xerox machine is still, decidedly, a product of Xerography.

Mowitt warns against artificially sundering production from reception in contemporary media exegesis. Pointing now, in the direction of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, Mowitt writes:

> they identify as a distinctive element of postindustrial capitalism the fact that it has become impossible to separate the subject from the technologies of cultural reception. Any political critique of capitalist culture that has recourse to a non-integrated subject as the agent of social change fails to engage its object. This is not, however, a recipe for political resignation. Negt and Kluge simply insist upon locating the contradictions of experience capable of holding a political charge in the only nature we have left – culture. (Mowitt, 219)

Lytle Shaw applies the Jackson-Gitelman-Mowitt thesis to the information gathering activities of Nixon's secretary of state, Henry Kissinger. Shaw derives a theory of Statecraft which leans on both Xerographic logic and what I have called forming via informing, or the construction of an object by means of its reception. Shaw writes,

> Kissinger's model of research, in which documentation precedes (or transcends) a driving hypothesis, operates as an "avant-garde" form of surveillance in relation to the more classic evidentiary models… (Shaw 31)

In Shaw's analysis of audio recordings in modern poetry, he revisits some common tropes. For example, in constructing his own category of "narrowcasting," he identifies a particular variety which he dubs "artifactual narrowcasting," which Shaw describes as,

> a tendency on the part of audiotape to embed within itself a series of abyssal gaps, noises, and registrations of contingent sound that challenge the medium's storage and retrieval protocols. What is *narrow* here is the literal tape its users would like to hear through to "voices" and "events" that would exist, as it were, on the other side, but that instead returns attention to its opaque, noisy sonic surface. But rather than understand this sonic noise merely as a failure or distraction, I will be listening, in what follows, for the ways this contingent bleed from the surrounding situation embeds revealing encrustations of period information onto the audio work. (Shaw 4)

Of course, this description will sound familiar to those of who have read Kittler, or the scores of latter day media scholars who have followed Kittler's thinking. But Shaw pushes through what Kittler calls the "bottleneck of the signifier," allowing "the real" captured by the agnostic medium of magnetic tape, to speak beyond its mere materiality. For Shaw – and I'll lay my cards on the table here – for myself as well, the artifactuality of tape is not a conduit for the conveyance of an a-signifying

material strata. On the contrary, this artifactuality can be read, decoded, and reconstructed in its socio-historical specificity. It's mediality is also a message. As Shaw notes,

> This artifactual narrowcasting, which transcends the intentionality associated with spatial and temporal modes, nominates tape as a special object of historical study, wherein the "problems" associated with the audio work are also openings to the social world beyond it, next to it, or, in a sense, *inside* it. (Shaw, 13)
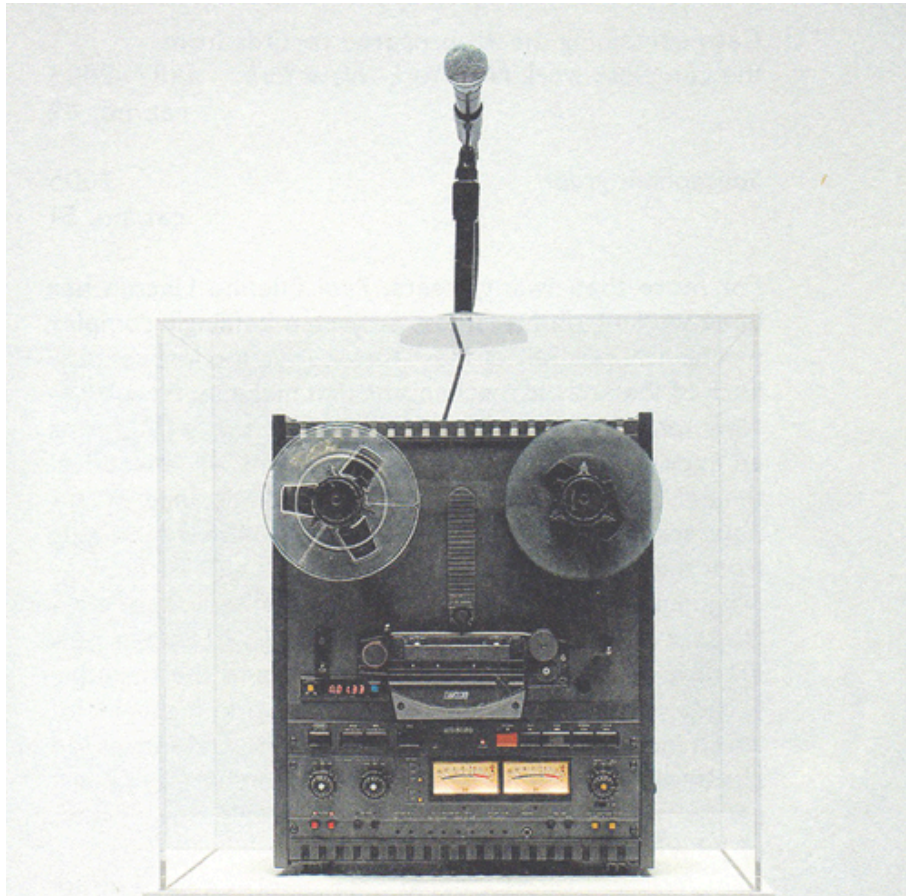
Accepting this artifactual construction of *parergonal* meaning allows us to think productively about Christine Kozlov's *Information: No Theory*, originally presented in

1970 as part of the exhibition, *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects,* at the New York Cultural Center. *Information: No Theory* is accompanied by a wall-mounted text:

> 1. THE RECORDER IS EQUIPPED WITH A CONTINUOUS LOOP TAPE.
>
> 2. FOR THE DURATION OF THE EXHIBITION (APRIL 9 TO AUGUST 23) THE TAPE RECORDER WILL BE SET AT "RECORD" ALL THE SOUNDS AUDIBLE IN THIS ROOM DURING THAT TIME WILL BE RECORDED.
>
> 3. THE NATURE OF THE LOOP TAPE NECESSITATES THAT NEW INFORMATION ERASES OLD INFORMATION. THE "LIFE" OF THE INFORMATION, THAT IS, THE TIME IT TAKES FOR THE INFORMATION TO GO FROM "NEW" TO "OLD" IS APPROXIMATELY TWO (2) MINUTES.
>
> 4. PROOF OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE INFORMATION DOES IN FACT NOT EXIST IN ACTUALITY, BUT IS BASED ON PROBABILITY.

Kozlov was present at the birth of conceptual art, having co-founded the Lannis Gallery with Joseph Kosuth in New York in 1967, the same year that LeWitt is credited with coining the term "conceptual art." Yet, you will find almost no mention of her in histories of the movement nor much in the way of substantive critical writing about her work. (One noteworthy exception is Brandon LaBelle's discussion of Kozlov's work in his 2006 book, *Background Noise.* As is so often the case, Brandon was ahead of the curve.) But it can sometimes seem as if Kozlov's entire career is little more than a rumor. As Pavel Pyś puts it in a catalogue essay for a 2015 Kozlov exhibition at the Henry Moore Institute, "No installation instructions, resumés or artwork-related correspondence survive. Few reviews mention Kozlov's work, and only one interview with the artist exists. Archival notes and lists are fragmentary and inconclusive, often suggesting the existence of

artworks, which remain lost or were never even realised." (17) It's as if the 4th point of the *Information: No Theory* text could be applied equally to Kozlov's entire oeuvre.

Kozlov had used recording media in previous works. Her *No Title* films of 1965 and '67 consist of black and transparent film leader displayed in closed canisters, And her *Information Drift* of 1968, is a single framed and wall-mounted reel of audio tape, accompanied by text which reads, "COMBINED RECORDINGS OF NEWS BULLETINS OF THE SHOOTINGS OF ANDY WARHOL AND ROBERT KENNEDY," incidents which took place just two days apart in June of 1968. (June apparently is not a good month for the powerful.) These works are presentations of

the media of technological reproduction rendered as objects, inaccessible as conduits of information. Proof of the existence of information or lack thereof does not exist, but is based only on probability. Still, that probability is based on other things. First, it is based on the readiness and receptivity of the media. In some fundamental way, unexposed film and unrecorded audio tape, are not yet themselves. They are, to a greater extent, even, than unpainted canvases or blank paper, mere possibilities. Only when they receive the information for which they are intended are they realized as the kinds of things they are. Tape might be thought of as a kind of Derridean arche-writing; a format that behaves in ways that are similar to Jonathan Sterne's description of the header syntax of an MP3, but also like Doug Kahn's 3rd internal sound, a discursivity that precedes Cage's hearing of low and high pitches in the anechoic chamber. Every medium is a prepared ground for a contextually constrained (if not quite pre-determined) set of marks to be made. Secondly, the probability of the existence of information is based on the artist's word. When Kozlov tells us what is in the canisters or on the reel, we are obliged to accept this information, not as certain, but as probable. After all, what would be gained by deception? Or, more to the point, what would be lost if *Information Drift* did not, in fact, contain recordings of news bulletins of the Warhol and Kennedy shootings? Lastly, the basis of probability is itself based on one final factor, that these seemingly blank media are not, in fact, blank. They do carry content, even if not in the conventional manner. *Information Drift* may be blank tape for all I know. Yet, even if it is, it is still about the shootings of Warhol and Kennedy. And it is about news bulletins. And about audio tape. And it is about technological reproduction and blankness and about the art world of the late-60s and its fixations on technological reproduction and blankness and conceptualism. It is about all these things that I am talking about right now. And I am talking about Kozlov's *Information Drift.*

So while critics may often describe such works as "solipsistic," and "tautological," while Pyś, in the Henry Moore exhibition catalogue, proposes that Kozlov's "sculptures are governed by a hermetic logic," (17) and Jo Melvin, in the same catalogue says that "Kozlov set out to represent 'nothing', to reject concepts, and to consider the parameters of silence" (5), the truth is that these works have a lot to say. They do not retreat from their world into the sealed vessels of themselves.
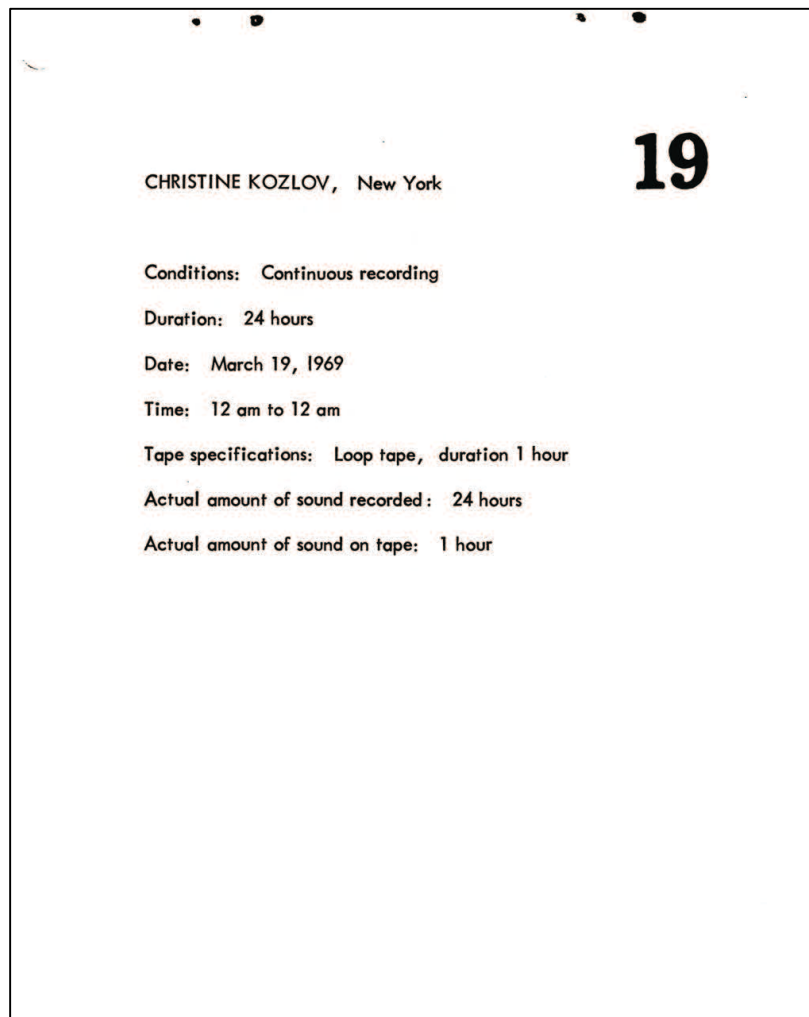
It's funny how the same critics who want to boil the work down to some noble reduction, to a kind of ascetic purity, unwittingly diagram the very connections by which the works speak. Only a paragraph after asserting the "nothing" and "silence" at the heart of Kozlov's work, Melvin notes that

> Kozlov's was a generation that faced political change and technological advances. Protests and campaigns for equal rights occurred at the same time as the Vietnam War, the Cold War and cheaper flights across the Atlantic. The interconnectivity of life was scrutinised by and incorporated into art practice – explicitly seen in the attention artists gave to data analysis, information systems, and documentation. (5)

So let us, once and for all, consign the noble reduction to the fantasy of its own hermeticism and attend, instead, to this scrutinizing of life's interconnectivity as it was engaged by conceptual artists – but also by the surveillance avant-garde and by the bureaucratic ideological apparatus – during the 1960s and 70s.

Kozlov's *Information: No Theory* is a kind of surveillance mechanism, recording the sound of the room for two minutes before erasing those two minutes to record the next two minutes. The tape is never played back, but the room is constantly surveilled by this technological eavesdropper. The tape recorder functions as a

parallel to Bentham's panopticon, here reimagined as pansonicon. One is constantly aware of the possibility of being listened to. But no one is listening. Instead, magnetic particles are being rearranged on the surface of the plastic substrate of the tape. Sounds in the space are being registered. But no one is listening.

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CHRISTINE KOZLOV, New York

Conditions: Continuous recording

Duration: 24 hours

Date: March 19, 1969

Time: 12 am to 12 am

Tape specifications: Loop tape, duration 1 hour

Actual amount of sound recorded :   24 hours

Actual amount of sound on tape: 1 hour

This was not the first time that Kozlov had proposed this kind of input-no output model. For Siegelaub's *One Month* exhibition in March of 1969, Kozlov contributed a text which proposed 24 hours of continuous recording in one hour increments.

It's easy to conceive of *Information: No Theory* as the modified realization of this earlier work which exists only as a proposal. The logic of the new, cheap, fast and readily available technologies of mechanical reproduction is subverted. *Information: No Theory* is a recording process directed not at the "frozen" product of the process but at the "fluid" time and activity at the point and time of recording. The conventional oppositions between presentation and re-presentation, between original and copy, between live and recorded, are destabilized.

In his book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture,* as a brief, footnoted aside, Philip Auslander, suggests that *Information: No Theory* initiates a more radical subversion of the stultifications of Attali's repetition than live, unmediatized performance. Auslander writes,

> In the context of a mediatized, repetitive economy, using the technology of reproduction in ways that defy that economy may be a more significantly oppositional gesture than asserting the value of the live. [In Kozlov's *Information: No Theory*] the functions of reproduction, storage, and distribution that animate the network of repetition were thus undermined by this way of using the very technology that brought that network into being. In this context, reproduction without representation may be more radical than representation without reproduction. (Auslander 47)

Kozlov's tapes and Nixon's tapes and the Pentagon papers all take place during the late 1960s and early-70s, a crucial moment in the development of what we now refer to – when we refer to it at all – as neoliberalism. Granted this is not the moment of neoliberalism's invention as an ideology nor its coinage as a term. That moment occurred at the "Walter Lippman Colloquium" here in Paris in 1938, where it was used to propose a state-managed economy in opposition to pure free marketism. Nor is this the moment of neoliberalism's most overt and aggressive implementation. That moment probably occurs in the 1980s under the regimes of

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Thatcher in Britain and Reagan in the U.S. What is crucial about the 1970s is the evolution of the meaning of the term. By the time it reached Thatcher and Reagan in the 80s, the term had mutated to designate an ideology of privatization, austerity, supply-side economics, and the championing of self-reliant bootstrapping facilitated by laissez-faire rhetoric acting as a smokescreen for activist, pro-business, pro-wealth government policies.

The late-60s witnessed social movements constructing proposals for new utopian paths through the societies of the future. But this optimism was met by a less voluble counter, lurking in the implications of Nixon's "silent majority." When Nixon installed the network of audio tape surveillance across his offices, he did so not in the interests of transparency, nor, first and foremost in the interests of posterity. "The point," as Lytle Shaw observes, "was to be prepared for […] contingencies by having a preexisting audio archive that might be mobilized to pacify, threaten, or take down a new adversary." (21) Just as there is no real history of pre-photocopy leaking of classified materials, there is nothing we can call an era of the surveillance state prior to the advent of technologies of mechanical reproduction. This era begins in the 1960s with Richard Nixon, not because no State or agency had engaged in mass surveillance previously, but because the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 and the disclosure of the existence of the Nixon Tapes in 1973 are *the* events that create a public consciousness of such activities. (If I had more time, I would certainly also include the FBI's CONITELPRO efforts, first exposed in March of 1971.) Thus would begin the massive data battles that are the dark side of the usually optimistic declaration of the information age. In the wake of the Pentagon Papers, Watergate, and Nixon's resignation, Congress strengthened the 1966 Freedom of Information Act, even overriding President Ford's veto. Lest we think that this has no bearing on our

neoliberal present, allow Lisa Gitelman to remind us that "Ford vetoed the bill at the urging of his chief of staff, Donald Rumsfeld, and his deputy, Richard Cheney, who had consulted with Antonin Scalia, then a government lawyer." (Gitelman, 97)

This is also the beginning of the era of data colonialism. In Nixon's collection of 3,700 hours of recorded conversations, we can see the roots of the NSA's Telephony Metadata Program and of Facebook's hegemonic global data mining operations. If we are to truly come to terms with what it means to live under neoliberalism (perchance to resist it), we need to understand the subtle, yet ubiquitous hegemonic pull of the naturalness that licenses both its general logic and its specific mechanisms. We need to understand how, when speaking of the ideologies and policies of neoliberalism, Margaret Thatcher could have said, and probably believed, "there is no alternative." We need to understand how it is that so many of us, nearly all of us, assent – in our actions, if not entirely in our thoughts – to that judgment.

For Benjamin Buchloh, conceptual art comes of age, not coincidentally, at this same time. Buchloh writes,

> Paradoxically, then, it would appear that Conceptual Art truly became the most significant paradigmatic change of postwar artistic production at the very moment that it mimed the operating logic of late capitalism and its positivist instrumentality. (142)

As I've noted above, the Xerographic turn of conceptual art does not happen in a vacuum. Lisa Gitelman acknowledges that, "The media of textual duplication […] are importantly the instruments of bureaucratic control, part of and party to the

repertoire of state authority and managerial capital." (113) But as the technologies of mechanical reproduction become affordable and ubiquitous, the means of media production are more easily seized. As Gitelman says, "The smallness of small media allows 'the little guy' agency within the public sphere." (113) Philip Auslander suggests that there is something radical about works like Kozlov's *Information: No Theory.* This radicality is not the product of a solemn abnegation of the administered present, a retreat into absolute music or autonomous art. According to Auslander, Kozlov undermines the logic of the media she engages by using it inappropriately, "in ways that defy that [mediatized, repetitive] economy."

Cross-referencing Auslander's and Gitelman's diagnoses, a dissident strategy suggests itself. By intervening in the networks of neoliberal information production, distribution, and reception, an artist or a work or a reader can unveil the mechanisms of logic that justify the machine itself. And sure, this is a bit of the old baring the device song and dance. But in this case the device may be taken more literally. Kozlov's work doesn't simply reveal the mechanism of the artwork (although it does that too). Nor does *Information: No Theory* merely estrange the tape recorder itself. Rather, more potently, it estranges our relationship to the tape recorder, to recording writ large, to the information that may or may not be recorded, its representations, its repetitions, and ultimately the latent power conferred to the possessor of that information, its recordings, its representations, its repetitions.

Buchloh anticipates this argument, but dismisses it. Rather than escaping from the trap of Attali's repetition, such a move sinks deeper into the morass of neoliberal bureaucracy, what Buchloh calls "the aesthetics of administration." He writes,

Just as the readymade had negated not only figurative representation, authenticity, and authorship while introducing repetition and the series (i.e., the law of industrial production) to replace the studio aesthetic of the handcrafted original, Conceptual Art came to displace even that image of the mass-produced object and its aestheticized forms in Pop Art, replacing an aesthetic of industrial production and consumption with an aesthetic of administrative and legal organization and institutional validation. (Buchloh 119)

I have no intentions of brushing aside Buchloh's anxieties in order to celebrate conceptual art's engagements with the burgeoning bureaucratic mindset of the 1970s. But I wonder if Buchloh's reading of conceptual art is too literal, too credulous. His reception takes the administrativeness of conceptual art at face value, failing to allow for the possibility that works such as Kozlov's *Information: No Theory* perform a kind of bureaucratic drag. They may gussy themselves up in the accoutrement of the modern office state. They may adopt the attitude of the mid-level manager or the technocrat. But there is something wrong, something off, something that misregisters on the surface of the administrative substrate. In the mute recalcitrance of *Information: No Theory*, we confront the not-quite doubling doppelganger of our neoliberal embeddedness. And sure, this is a bit of the old Das *Unheimliche* song and dance. But it is precisely neoliberalism's canny normality, its no-alternativeness, that must first be unsettled in order to imagine and then construct a new home.

The trick, I suppose, is that the repetition must do more than simply expose the natural as manufactured, the *heimlich* as a carefully dissimulated contraption. It must wound its host. In the tussle between the simulation and its dissimulation, something must be erased, deleted. This occurs in Kozlov's *Information: No Theory*. But not at the obvious level of the never-to-be-played-back recording. The

significant erasure is not that of the recorded audio, but the erasure of the logic of the machine, of the spectator's relation to the machine, to being recorded, and her relation to the broader implications of recording. What is erased is the logic of recording information as a means of possession and power. The operative erasure of *Information: No Theory* is the same as the erasure of Tape 342. Nixon thought taping was a way to protect himself via possession. He would be the one who held the property of information – memories being too ephemeral to count as property, and property being the coin of the realm in neoliberalism. But the recording can never be and do what the recorded was and did. So, when he realized that the power of his possession could be turned against him, he erased it, thinking that an erasure, an absence, cannot be a possession. Yet, the fidelity of the erasure to the truth was truer than the recording could have ever been. Baudrillard describes how the recording ought to relate to the recorded:

> You must rip the same from the same. Each image must take away from the reality of the world, something must vanish in each image, but you cannot fall into the temptation to annihilate, definitive entropy. The disappearance must remain alive. (109)

And what better mechanism for this ripping of same from same than the ever newer, cheaper, faster, more readily available technologies of mechanical reproduction? Take for example, the above passage from Baudrillard, scanned from the original printed publication, converted to a pdf file, copied from that, and pasted into a Word document in preparation for this talk. The passage of this passage about ripping and vanishing and annihilation and living disappearance, through the scansion of the reproducing machine, yields this passage, ripped, vanished, annihilated, yet very much alive in its disappearance:

Yot mast rip the sameJ iom the same.E zcAi mage must take away from the reality of the world, something must r.anish in each image, but you caanot fall into the remptation to arnihilate, de6n_itive entropy. The disappearance must remain alive.