Editors' Preface

Lynette Hunter, Alex Lichtenfels, Heather Nolan, and John Zibell

Copresence with the Camera emerged through a series of ongoing conversations between politically motivated artists. These conversations started informally, between collaborators at various events, exhibitions, and conferences, and among colleagues and friends working on filmmaking and critical approaches to working with a camera. Over three years of listening to and talking with each other, unexpected resonances between artistic practices led to collaborations that were proposed and later actualized, and to excitement over the revelation of common goals. Together, we felt there was an opportunity to put together a collection of critically engaged artists' writings and documents about the art we were and are still making, and this is the work this journal issue continues. It is our intention that these pieces exist in a dialogue with both one another and the works that they document. The relationship between artmaking practice and academic writing is complex. However, we firmly believe that reading a piece about a work can never provide an adequate substitute for experiencing the work itself. For this reason, where it is feasible and appropriate, we have provided links to the works that have been written about, and we encourage you to watch them alongside their documents.

The exploration of these conversations in the materials of this journal is intended to be both stimulating and constructive in whatever field of creative practice you may work, or indeed if you are reading for general interest. Aside from these contexts of working with a camera, one element that has consistently motivated us to put together this journal issue is that it is often a great pleasure to learn about how artists make their work—what they do and why, and how it affects both them and their audiences. We asked each contributor to think at least in part about what it is like to be present with a camera in a somatic or phenomenological way. We hope that the essays, documents, and interviews collected here maintain the sense of discovery and exhilarating abandon in artistic experimentation and risk that all of the contributors try to cultivate in their work.

The first essay in the journal issue is Alex Lichtenfels' "Introduction: Practice as Research, Politics, Affect, and the Camera," which grounds the collection in ongoing conversations held by practitioners, critics, and academics. We hope that this brief "Editors' Preface" and this "Introduction" give a clear rationale for the collection, documenting how it engages with contexts such as practice as research, academic disciplines, political action, artmaking practice, and the cultural significance of the camera. Beyond this, when reading and viewing the work of contributors as both artmakers and documenters, particular themes, consonances, and methods inevitably emerge, and the collection is structured on the loose areas that excited us the most.

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The loci we have chosen that are central to the contributors' practices are alternative methods and histories, devised filmmaking practices, and cross-disciplinary methodologies. We have structured the issue around these three areas. Inevitably, any attempt to classify artmakers in groupings such as these is doomed to failure, because it will always reduce the individuality of particular works to categories that their totality will always exceed. The structure here is rather an attempt to highlight common things that artists are thinking about and common methods that they are using in their practice—the structure aims to be helpful by elucidating contexts and practices that could contain the specific potential for politically affective work.

Alternative Methods and Histories

Several of the artists contributing to this collection are challenging established histories of places, myths, and events by retelling those histories from alternative perspectives, and by using the camera to generate alternative processes of artmaking which reflect those perspectives. The connection between perspective and process is deliberate. Histories are always ideologically inflected not only through the content they select but through the ways they are told. Offering alternative political histories necessitates alternative ways of telling those histories, and affective practice is one way of approaching this task.

Kevin Lee, "Instrument of Reflection: A Study in Smartphone Filming"

Jeff Burke and Jared J. Stein, "Live Performance and Post-Cinematic Filmmaking"

Anuj Vaidya, "Forest Tales: Toward a Practice of Eco-Cinema"

Frank Wilderson III and Cecilio M. Cooper, "Interviews on Critical Race and Trans/Queer Approaches to Filmmaking: Incommensurabilities—The Limits of Redress, Intramural Indemnity, and Extramural Auditorship"

Devised Filmmaking Practices

One of the legacies of the film industry's history is that the vast majority of the time, a premium is placed on preparation and mapping out a film in advance as a way of saving time and money during the expensive period of filming on set. One of the possibilities that the reduction in the price of filmmaking equipment affords is the increased ability to treat the on-set portion of the production process as an essential part of devising the creative process and enabling the creative act, rather than as the execution of a blueprint. Devising in this sense means not only not having a script, but learning new methods of responding to particular places, people, materials and/or technologies (such as the camera) as part of an affective politics of filmmaking. This is the approach taken by several of our contributors, all in slightly different ways.

Chris Brown, "Installed in Chalk: Mapping Screen Performance in *Coccolith* (2018)"

Alex Lichtenfels, "Materiality of Nothingness: Inspiration, Collaboration, and Craft in Devised Filmmaking"

Interview: Kirsten Johnson with Alex Lichtenfels, "Finding a Person and Losing a Person: On *Cameraperson*"

John Zibell and Heather Nolan, "Action with Camera: Making the Future Audience Present"

Interview: Carlo Hintermann with Ilya Noé and Alex Lichtenfels, "The Film that Breathes: On *The Dark Side of the Sun* and *The Book of Vision*"

Cross-disciplinary Methodologies

Finally, several artmakers in this book come from non-filmmaking backgrounds, yet have been using cameras in their work. These examples offer up methodologies of using cameras that often come from different lineages of arts practice and different cultural sites. These generate alternative ways of knowing by incorporating a new element into established, yet ever-evolving modes of practice, to

explore previously unarticulated ways of being. The methodologies they draw upon range from theatre, to dance, to circus, to installation art, to the performance lecture, to holographic performance. At the same time, the alternative uses to which these practitioners and scholars put the camera open up new approaches in the disciplines from which they draw and bring different perspectives to lived experience.

Diego Aguilar, Regina Gutiérrez, Álvaro Hernández, "On ABSENCE Doings: The Cuts of Disappearance"

Darrin Martin, "Audio Description as a Generative Process in Art Practice"

Interview/Script: Rabih Mroué with Lynette Hunter, "Attending to the Glitch: *Sand in the Eyes*"

We would like with this issue to make a case for a conception of practice as research as a challenge to established ways of knowing through the camera in interdisciplinary screen production contexts, as well as offering alternative approaches to practice as research in performance contexts more generally. The contributions to the collection work on how co-presence with the camera forms a compelling and significant point of political enquiry within such contexts. The issue comprises a constellation of documents that may help practitioners who work with cameras in both professional and academic contexts to attune themselves to the politically affective possibilities of their practice. Finally, we hope that by interweaving documentation of some mould-breaking artmakers' practices, this issue will prompt scholars, students, and artists to think through alternative approaches to the use of the camera in both filmmaking and film study.

Introduction: Practice as Research, Politics, Affect, and the Camera

Alex Lichtenfels

This introduction is intended to ground some of the exploratory field presented by the materials in this journal issue, on which the three loci of alternative methods and histories, devised filmmaking practices, and cross-disciplinary methodologies are situated. The contributors to the journal are all artmakers who use the camera—some established, some new, some actively working in academia, some working as professionals, several who work across all of these contexts. At least three things unite the contributors. First, we are all interested in new methods of making art. Second, we share a political commitment. This doesn't necessarily mean we share values or ideas about politics, but rather the conviction that our work is in some way of political import. Third, we all use cameras in our practice. Separating these three areas inevitably provides a false image of what we are doing, because they are so often intertwined. For many of us, making art in new ways that involve cameras is a method of doing politics, and separating out any one of these elements means that a working image of the whole is lost. At the same time, rather than trying to provide such an image, what the theoretical separation of these aspects of the contributors' approaches enables is a way of locating the value of this collective work in various academic and cultural contexts, inaugurating, refreshing and contributing to significant conversations about the use of cameras in making art politically.

This essay is therefore focused around three political topics which run throughout the structure of the collection. The first area, concerned with the fact that we are all invested in new methods of making art politically, relates closely to debates about the nature and method of practice as research in the creative arts in general and screen production in particular—practices that generate new approaches to making and documenting artwork. The second area, political import, discusses the way that new practices might generate different ways of knowing and how these might provide alternative strategies for engaging with the world than those given by liberal and neoliberal institutions and ideologies. The final area considers artmakers who use cameras in a range of different related media. It argues for the importance of the camera in today's cultural climate, and how that importance might be harnessed in as yet undocumented ways of valuing through artmaking and political action.

Practice as Research and New Methods of Making Art

There is a growing area of academic writing that is specifically concerned with practice as research relating to those who use cameras as an integral aspect of their practice. Following a now established academic usage (e.g. Nelson 2013; Barrett and Bolt 2007; Smith and Dean 2009), we take practice as

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research to mean doing something (practice) that generates new ways of knowing (research). But rather than presenting methodologies for knowledge production, the contributors focus on methodologies for processes through which we can engage in knowing. We also recognize it is not usually as simple as that. The multiplicity of methods by which this can be achieved are numerous. For example, Smith and Dean distinguish between practice as research, research-led practice and practice-led research (2009). Hansen and Barton follow the movement from creative development to research-based practice (2009). Riley and Hunter explore the differences between practice as research and performance as research (2009). Over the past decade, there have been ongoing debates about what practice as research actually means—what knowledge is, what scholarly knowledge is, and what the relationship between practice and the way we disseminate knowledge about practice is and/or should be.

Practice as research in performance studies has been a key academic progenitor of practice as research methods across a range of mediating materials. Practitioners using cameras evoke disciplines that use screens as exhibition methods. Both film and television production, for example, almost always use both cameras as production tools and screens as exhibition methods. Given these artmaking contexts, one of the early collections with some contributions similar in terms of subject matter to this one is *Practice-as-Research: In Performance and Screen* (Fuschini et al. 2009). In that collection, Jonathan Dovey's essay points out that innovative works are "rarely accommodated within the genres available to the hitfactory of mass media" (Dovey, 61). It is also our experience that the practice of making, or training in the making, of innovative works, however well-studied in film studies, has been difficult to sustain in film production programs. The dominance of a "hitfactory" in the industry has made it difficult to develop practice as research for filmmaking. Two recent collections focused on screen production are *Screen Production Research: Creative Practice as a Mode of Enquiry* (Batty and Kerrigan 2017) and *The Palgrave Handbook of Screen Production* (Batty et al. 2019). In addition, the journal *Media Practice and Education* (formerly *Journal for Media Practice*) has published many articles by those using cameras that document their work (for example, Nevill 2018) and sustains debates around what media practice as research is and could be. For example, a 2018 special issue focused on the question of "practice and/as media industry research" (Freeman 2018, 117–21).

However, it is important to recognize that while there is an evolving interest in screen practice as research, it remains a nascent area within the larger field of creative practice as research, certainly when compared with a discipline such as dance within performance studies (for example, Foster 1988). As Batty and Kerrigan articulate in their introduction, "screen/media/video production has been more tentative in its approach [than other disciplines] and has a less developed set of research literacies" (2017, 3). Or, as Leo Berkeley points out in his essay for that collection, "it is challenging to point a postgraduate research student in filmmaking research to a body of literature, that even in contested terms, provides a grounding in how they can make their film as a research activity" (Berkeley 2017, 30). The editorial focus of the present collection, and the approach to what practice as research is and what it means to write about it, specifically addresses these concerns and would like to sit alongside that 2017 volume in its offer "to provide a global benchmark of sorts from which others can contribute and move the discipline forward" (Batty and Kerrigan 2017, 3). These essays embrace a similar spirit of tracing the contours of an exciting new way of doing research. At the same, time they would also specifically like to enter the larger contemporary research impulse toward process-based methodologies that question underlying assumptions and to argue that practice as research with a camera and in filmmaking is young enough to be able to establish itself in alternative ways of working and communicating about that work.

Batty and Kerrigan write that creative practice research

> requires peers to determine whether or not the work makes a unique contribution to knowledge. For this to happen, the contribution and how it has been arrived at has to be articulated clearly and systematically, and in the academy language is the currency of such an explication. (2017, 10)

For us, one of the great benefits of practice as research is that it challenges notions of what knowledge is, and that it can produce new ways of knowing. During the enlightenment in the West, the development of scientific and philosophical methods altered not only what we knew, but also our understanding of what constituted knowledge. For example, in *Event*, Slavoj Žižek outlines the difference between the development of a scientific ontic/ontological attempt to discover the world as it is through the application of scientific methods, and the approach of Immanuel Kant's transcendental philosophy, which instead attempts to discover the "universal structure of how reality appears to us" (2014, 5). Both methods not only produced new knowledge but developed new ways of knowing. Alternatively, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Thomas Kuhn famously argued that scientific revolutions involved paradigm shifts, new methods of understanding and processing data that are potentially incompatible with methods available until that point. We think that one of the most exciting things about creative practice as research is that it may enable such revolutions, even if they take place on a smaller scale than changing the course of science, because it can generate new ways of relating to and communicating with other people, other materials, the world, through artistic practice. It can generate new ways of knowing.

One of the important insights of practice as research in performance studies is that how we know, and any knowledge about what we know has material form. Historically, this idea can be traced to the idea of embodied knowledge, which Shogo Tanaka (2013) shows derives from the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Tanaka takes up Merleau-Ponty's discussion of touch typing, describing the knowledge inherent in this practice as one "that is not a reflex but rather comes about through repeated bodily practice. It is not distinctly explicit or conscious and hence we cannot articulate it as an objective designation. The knowledge of typing is deeply embodied" (Tanaka 2013, 48). There is a clear connection here to particular kinds of creative practice, most obviously those that use repetitions of bodily movements, such as acting or dance. For example, in the case of the actor's embodied knowledge acquired through many years of practice, that way of knowing is latent in the materiality of the actor's body. Embodied knowledge is closely related to tacit knowledge (Knudsen 2017), or knowledge that comes about through repetition of a particular task, whether we think of that task as primarily corporeal or not. These definitions effectively extend the realm of embodied knowledge to practices that may not seem at first to involve the body in the same way as acting. Thus film directors and producers develop their own ways of knowing even if their bodies are not always thought of as their instruments of knowing or expressing as much as their minds or their ability to orally communicate—as if the brain and voice were not part of the body. We follow Tanaka (2013) in refusing this Cartesian mind/body distinction, taking a position where all knowledge has material form, is embodied, in a film, with a camera, or equally in a piece of academic writing.

Staking the claim that materiality as artmaking practice is not only a way of knowing or expertise, but can also generate knowledge is important because knowledge implies not only a refined way of doing things (expertise) but also transferability. When actors work together, they understand something about what the other person is doing, not only through reduction of that doing to a

linguistic articulation, but through trained somatic contact with it. The knowing generated by artmaking practices is thus, in part at least, the enactment of the artmaking practice and the material contact it affords with media and the other practitioners and audiences. The production of new ways of knowing is the enactment of new artmaking practices, which is a dominant area that links the practitioners in this journal.

This conception of the potential of practice as research problematizes attempts to locate the research value of artmaking practice generating new knowledge in academic language. Such an attempt will inevitably involve a reduction of one way of knowing—artmaking practice—into the kind of knowledge that can be articulated in academic writing. Batty and Kerrigan note that academic language is the currency of determining whether an artwork contributes to knowledge, and that for purposes of sustainability and growth, it is important to legitimize screen production itself as a research practice within academia. The approach was vital to the early years of practice as research in the arts and humanities in the 1990s (see Nelson 2013), even though the distinction between ways of knowing had been present in the sciences for decades—for example, in the distinction between pure and applied physics.

However, conceptualizing material practices as knowledge presents challenges that can disrupt the knowledge-based form of this scholarly currency. The recent philosophical impetus toward process (for example, Deleuze studies) has meant that the ways of knowing in practice as research may challenge established ideas about what constitutes knowledge. It is by no means a given that conventional academic language should be the currency of knowledge in the university context or anywhere else. This idea is not new; for example, in 1993 Christopher Frayling wrote about the connection between art and knowledge that "the thinking is, so to speak, embodied in the artifact, where the goal is not primarily communicable knowledge in the sense of verbal communication" (1993, 147). However, if part of what practice as research points to is the diversity of ways of knowing that creative practice can offer, it may also challenge other academic assumptions about the communication of knowledge and the value of research. For example, if a big part of the value of art making is the emergent impact of the processual method, the reproducibility of the work within a preexisting knowledge paradigm may be of scant importance. Simultaneously, the manner in which different ways of knowing coexist and constellate have to be considered. The contributions to this issue of *Performance Matters* would like to participate in the conversations about theoretical work ongoing in this area.

For example, Christie, Gough, and Watt's *A Performance Cosmology: Testimony from the Future* (2006) anthologizes documentation of the practice as research work of many practitioners working in performance studies. The structure of the book is original, conceived as a series of field stations on a journey through the Aberystwyth-based Centre for Performance Research's history. Because it comprises "speculative essay, fiction, interview, fragmentary recollection or chronological table, it has been hard to create a necessary distance" (Christie, Gough, and Watt 2006, x). The reader is encouraged to approach it as a non-linear collection—the editors write "Journeys rarely end at the intended destination and even less frequently begin at their point of departure. . . . We wish you new discoveries on your journey through this cosmology—from whatever point or port you choose to enter it" (xi). *A Performance Cosmology* thus juxtaposes multiple forms of documentation and encourages the reader to do the labour of constructing a path through the work. Similar approaches to documenting process through critically reimagined typographic materials have marked texts in performance studies for some time, from, for example, Matthew Goulish's "Memory is This" (2000) to Lynette Hunter's *Disunified Aesthetics* (2014). The journal *Performance Research* has a consistent

record of supporting such experimentation, but it is far from widespread, or even acceptable, in academic publishing.

In a completely different way, the film-philosophy movement in film studies has embraced the materiality of knowledge production in its commitment to notions of films that think neither as humans do, nor according to a reductive form of knowledge as expressed in philosophical writing. For example, in *Filmosophy*, Daniel Frampton argues that film thinks according to its particular aesthetic properties, and he locates the site of the production of this knowledge in what he terms the filmind (2007). Alternatively, John Mullarkey argues that "film and viewer *make each other* through a coordination of speeds that generates a thought that is truly cinematic only when it is 'truly philosophical,' that is, by disrupting all previous categories as to what might count as philosophical thought" (2011, 96). Key to this disruptive process is the idea that "*Knowing is a part of a material process, not a representation*" (96, italics in the original). Thus both performance studies and film studies have embraced challenges to established ways of knowing by considering the means by which different ways of knowing may interact and constellate, and by conceiving of knowledge as material process.

This journal issue hopes to take up this challenge by documenting the various ways its authors communicate their practice. The articles do not represent an attempt to translate the knowledge generated by a work to an academic form, even as they sometimes emulate it to ease access for the reader. Instead, they attempt to respond to artistic practice that enters into a new context for discussion, alongside the work of the practitioner and other contributors, such that traditional forms of academic knowledge are present but not privileged. Thus, interviews sit alongside reflections on process, experimental writings, and traditional academic essays, which, in turn, all sit alongside the works the authors have made and the material processes by which they made them. A constellation of ways of knowing forms links, dissonances, and productive tensions as the reader encounters them. But this is also a collection of explorations *for* practitioners. Another key function the writings in this issue attempt is to perform as documents that can interact with artmaking practices using cameras in order to begin to attune artists to what is going on in their practice and thus inform its future development. The documents given here are neither solely knowledge repositories nor instruction manuals but may feed back to those engaged in artistic practice to attune them to what is going on when they work with cameras and allow them to act on this in the future.

Politics and Affect in Working with a Camera

A practice as research approach that focuses on ways of knowing also impacts on ideas of how research is designed, and what the relative importance might be to the research of the researcher's experience of what it is that they do. In terms of research design, such an approach does not always advocate identifying research questions in advance of practice. To do so can limit what the research is doing to preexisting discursive fields of academic inquiry. It is the case that something must be designed in artmaking practice before commencing—but the very act of asking a research question that has to be answered before the creative process is undertaken limits the type of knowledge and the types of answers that process is likely to generate. Rather, the design of processual practice as research might seek to allow situations in which new ways of knowing may expand or emerge. Alain Badiou describes something similar to what such design aims at in his notion of the event. For Badiou, an event is a fundamentally ethical happening, something that "happens in situations as something that they [the human animal] and their usual way of behaving in them cannot account

for" ([1993] 2001, 41). A Badiousian event "compels us to decide a *new* way of being" (41). Practice as research that generates new ways of knowing does not originate with a question but the intention to create an event.

Events mark a break with established structures of knowledge. This leads to the key question of how we know events are occurring, since to *know* this in an *established* way would paradoxically invalidate the break that is supposed to have occurred. Through the notion of the event, the production of knowledge can be linked to the production of affect. Affect is one location where we might seek evidence of events, in distinct somatic responses to particular situations of artistic practice (Manning 2012). Batty and Kerrigan (2017) point out that if we use their premise of what practice as research is, then the practitioner's experience does not seem particularly relevant to practice as research— excepting those cases where the research design would specifically necessitate this. Of course, any data that we use in research must be justified. However, in affective artmaking practices, an embodied moment of affect becomes a method of understanding, perhaps what dancers call the "felt sense" (Gendlin 2003; Rome 2014) that an event and a new way of knowing is becoming present. This kind of practice also involves the artmaker being attuned to the knowledge that emerges through the material processes they use, and being able to recognize how what is happening at a particular moment in a particular situation enables artistic response (Hunter 2019). Affect is not only a feeling but can become a wellspring that forms artmaking process: the way performers need to "listen" to one another or respond to a place, or the way a documentary cameraperson reframes in response to the evental moments that they film. Affect manifests itself very often in the artmaker's body as physical feeling, responsive sensation, and/or thought. As such, the artmaker's experience of their body becomes a key site of inquiry in thinking about and documenting affective practice. "What goes on in my body when the event occurs?" and "how might my body respond to that situation in an artmaking process?" are key questions for an affective politics of the camera (Hunter 2018).

Affect is also intrinsically intertwined with political events (Massumi 2013). The contributors to this issue share a commitment to political change through artmaking practice. What this means is not that our art contains overt political messages, or that we think more people will vote for the political party that we support. Rather, we view artmaking as a politically engaged practice. The filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard famously said that "the point is not to make political films but to make films politically" (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin 1968, in McCabe 1980, 19). As with apparatus theory, art has the power not only to convey certain messages but also to encourage audiences to see the world in particular ways that may be governed by particular ideologies. Perhaps the most famous examples of this idea in film studies are Laura Mulvey's notion of the male gaze and the way it informed Hollywood cinema's propensity to encourage misogyny in the viewer (1975) and Jean Narboni and Jean-Louis Comolli's article "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism" (1969), which showed how the form of Hollywood films such as *Young Mr. Lincoln* (dir. John Ford, 1939) encouraged viewers to identify with particular ideological viewpoints and operations. This political result of identification with ideology came about not because of a reductive "message" encoded in films, but because of the way films were made, using a production line model in a capitalist "factory of dreams" that tried to extract maximum profit from audiences. There are plenty of exceptions to this rule, but the point is that the way of making something is always a politically situated practice, and that the method of production directly affects the specificity with which audiences are politically situated in relation to that something.

Therefore, changing the way that films get made may allow filmmakers to engage audiences and themselves politically in alternative ways. If we use cameras to engage with the world in new ways, then we are doing a new politics. This is one place where politics meets affect. As a site that potentially disrupts established ways of knowing and allows new ones to emerge, affect, and the way we develop process from affect, is profoundly political. We call this "politically affective practice." It is political because it is related to politics, as are all structures of expression. It is affective (as opposed to effective) because the political change it produces is measurable only by the way that those who engage with it—audiences and practitioners—are fundamentally affected by that engagement in terms of their socio-political presence. This kind of political change draws on the term "emergent," theorized from the distinction between the sociocultural discourse of liberal hegemonic political structures and the sociosituated performativity (Hunter 2019) of the groups positioned alongside those structures. The distinction has been carefully articulated from phenomenology in fields such as AfroAmerican studies (Wynter 1992), Indigenous studies (Wilson 2008), and feminist studies in science and technology (Haraway 1988). It is in this sense that our definition of practice as research takes on a political meaning. To conduct work that seeks to enter into discursive realms of established, often institutionalized knowledge production is to pass over the possibility of ways of knowing, making, and living that sit alongside this structure, a possibility for which this collection strongly advocates.

Copresence with the Camera

This approach hopes to contribute to debates around practice as research in film and media studies, screen production, and creative practice in general. The *Copresence with a Camera* issue is firmly interdisciplinary, and its title is carefully chosen. Many of the contributors are doing significant work by making things that might be identified as films, yet they do not come from film studies or film production backgrounds. They may not even think of themselves as filmmakers, and may indeed find film conventions anathema to their political needs. As well as traditions of filmmaking, the contributors draw heavily on traditions of artmaking and practice as research in other disciplines: from installation work, to lecture format, to digital holographs. This journal issue directs the reader to the materiality of the "camera" rather than the "screen" because it is concerned with the processes of making work. While many of the artmakers here exhibit on screens, and some consider the screen an essential element of their processes of making, cameras provide a more appropriate locus to centre the contributors' practices. These artmakers have backgrounds in a range of academic disciplines—film production, film studies, theatre, fine art, digital arts, cultural studies, African American studies, and performance studies, to name a few. The issue calls on interdisciplinarity through shared concerns with the common and disparate affordances that cameras can generate, and through examples of work that clearly merge different artmaking practices, for example, live performance work that merges interactive theatre with live video feeds.

Cameras can act as tools that help artists to develop politically affective ways of working within their practices. This means that there are two common methods of making works with cameras not represented in the issue. In the first method, the practitioner has a goal and picks a particular tool to achieve it—I know that I want to entertain an audience by adapting this screenplay into a Hollywood film, and I know that using a camera allows me to do this. In the second method, the reverse happens, and the camera is loaded with a set of presuppositions about what can and/or should be achieved by using it—this camera comes preloaded with a set of filters, or software programs, so I'd better apply them to my images. According to the first method, the camera is a

mere tool to fulfil the vision of the artist. According to the second, the artist is a mere tool to fulfil the vision of the camera, or at least the people that design, make, and market it. In contrast to these methods, the practitioners writing in and interviewed for this collection work *with* cameras as material things. The work is rarely, if ever, goal-oriented in the ways described above, in which it ties in with a product-driven idea of research design. Here the documented processes of practitioners working with cameras reveal what practitioners and cameras can do together as a whole greater than the sum of its parts. That is why we have called this collection *Copresence with the Camera*: it is about the things that can happen when particular people team up with particular machines. By using cameras, we can see, experience, and capture the world in ways that are not conceivable without it. We can change ourselves and offer a platform from which audiences and other practitioners may do the same.

Cameras are not only interesting tools but also highly important things in the twenty-first century, and the relative democratization of access to them has made this more the case than ever before. Cameras are important culturally; everyone with a smartphone has a camera that can open the door to social media apps. YouTube has proved a massive success—at least in volumetric terms—in distributing user-generated content. Cameras are important politically: among other functions, cameras are now frequently used not only to propagandize for power but also to document abuses of power. It is also clear that more and more artmakers are using cameras in their work, and that cameras appear to hold still untapped latent potential for those both within and without traditional filmmaking contexts. But many things are not yet clear—the effects of democratization of access to cameras are ethically and artistically ambiguous: they have been both integral to and abusive of political movements as diverse as Black Lives Matter and the Iranian anti-government protests of 2009. Cameras are more important than ever, but how that fact and the democratization of access to them might be harnessed to make interesting, valuable art remains only partially answered. This issue of *Performance Matters* attempts to offer an image of a constellation of artmakers using cameras to make art in a variety of ways that challenge normative practices and open up the camera to seeing things differently.

All of this is to argue for a situation in which the artmaker's claim to ways of knowing is taken seriously as artistic process, and that creative practice as research might seek to bring academic knowledge closer to a perception of knowing as experienced and used by artmakers rather than the other way around.

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Instrument of Reflection: A Study in Smartphone Filming

Kevin B. Lee

In 2016, Kriss Ravetto and I conducted a video essay intervention with the Bill Viola *Martyrs* video installation at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. The video essay, accompanied by a statement authored by Kriss, was published the following year in the videographic journal *[in]Transition* (Lee and Ravetto 2017). As a complement to Kriss's account, I offer my own evaluation of the project, focusing specifically on the processes of working with an iPhone camera in the making of the video essay and the effects of using such technology in understanding the relationship between the parties involved in the video: the person filming (in this instance, myself), the site being filmed, others within the site, and the viewers of the resulting video essay. While Kriss's account provides a critical and theoretical framework that informs both our understanding of the installation and our interventionary project, I will give more of a practical account of how we attempted to express our critical intentions in a filmmaking context, and how the real-time experience of creating the work added further complexity and complication to our critical response to Viola's work and its installation within St. Paul's Cathedral.[1]

The project was like none I had previously attempted. I had produced hundreds of video essays analyzing works of film and media through found footage. This was my first attempt to critically engage with a media work that was not accessible as found footage, but as a site-specific work that could only be accessed by visiting it. This raised a host of new questions for my own video essay practice: how would I perform a video essay analysis in a live three-dimensional space, requiring filming of original footage of the work, and in the midst of other visitors? Drew Morton acknowledges these challenges in his review of the video essay:

> There are some obvious and inherent challenges that the critics took on to produce this piece. First, the creators needed to capture and repurpose their footage through second-hand means, using cameras instead of a direct rip from a digital source. Secondly, the effectiveness and uniqueness of Viola's works are not just defined by their audiovisual compositions, but by such pragmatic variables as a Museum's (or Cathedral's) space, lighting, benches, and the audience. The primary gift of "Martyrs for the Mass" is the weight it places on just how fragile and subjective the experience of watching installation videos can be—especially when so much of the meaning of a work like Viola's depends on the last painting, sculpture, illuminated manuscript, or stained glass work you encountered in close proximity. (Morton 2017)

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St. Paul's Cathedral had commissioned Bill Viola, with the cooperation of the Tate Modern in London, to create a large four-panel work titled *Martyrs*. This work does not refer to a specific religious event or narrative, but it carries strong religious and biblical references nonetheless. The installation presents four individuals, each of whom are isolated in an abstract background set within a vertically oriented video monitor. These four figures are being tortured in different ways that refer to each of the four elements of nature. From left to right, one is buried by earth poured over him; another is suspended by ropes and blown by a strong wind; a third is drenched in water; the fourth is seemingly burned alive. These acts of martyrdom run synchronously as an eight-minute loop: once the acts are consummated, the video fades to black and restarts. The monitors are positioned at least a metre above the ground, effectively elevating the figures in each screen so that the viewer must look up at them as they are being martyred.

We were curious about what it meant for a work like this to be exhibited in St Paul's Cathedral. St. Paul's, an iconic religious institution of London, also functions as a hub of London tourism, which sustains much of its financial upkeep (the entrance fee to the cathedral was £18 when we visited). In certain ways, the cathedral functions as much, if not more than, within the tourist industry as it does within its primary religious context—at least if one is to judge the number of tourists wandering the premises compared to those worshipping—and is using the tourist industry to maintain its religious functions. *Martyrs* is also commissioned by the Tate Museum of Modern Art, a major world art institution and one of London's major tourist attractions. We were thus interested in examining this work as an intersectional site of twenty-first-century religion, art, media, and commerce. We visited the cathedral intending to capture on video both the work itself and its effects on visitors, that we may reveal the economic and cultural substructures informing its presence.

One wrinkle to our plan was that filming of the installation was prohibited by St Paul's. This posed several questions: What rights and agency exist for someone occupying a role of critical or scholarly intervention when one is not granted permission to film or document a work or a site? To what extent can one work within the designated parameters and constraints of the apparatus, and to what extent must one circumvent, reject or oppose them? What creative possibilities and critical realizations do each of these options afford?

In contrast to this clearly delineated set of options, what we observed upon arriving at the site was a grayer space of intentions and actions. Many visitors were filming the installation, seemingly oblivious that they were violating the site's guidelines. These guidelines clearly were not being consistently enforced, whether because the cathedral did not have the staff capacity to constantly monitor the site, or because enforcement was not practical. Perhaps smartphone photography has become such a normalized function, particularly in tourism, that to discourage it within the space would be to discourage the touristic engagement with the work. This prohibition would thus undermine the industrial logic justifying the work in the first place, even as it logically upheld the aspects of the installation functioning as both a quasi-religious expression and a work of copyrighted media art, in either case commanding reverence and deference from the spectator. In this regard, the tourists were already doing the work of disrupting the logic of the space that we had set out to do through the mobilizing of one's own body and image-making technology that we had designated as our interventionist strategy.

However, this didn't mean that their activity was inherently critical; rather, their capturing images of the installation was further facilitating their consumer enjoyment of the space. We then had to ask ourselves: how could we use these same instruments to disrupt normative image consumption? This

essay posits these kinds of questions in the context of a discussion of the relationship between the body and the subject, the body and the camera, and what kind of relationships we see within our own act of being in a site. It thinks about how our act of filming or using the camera or any device for capture itself shapes the relationship, our way of seeing the dynamics that we are trying to capture, and also our role in the capturing. Here specifically, the use of a smartphone has particular effects on these dynamics.

In this light, it is productive to review the raw footage in chronological order to account for how Kriss and I proceeded to situate ourselves throughout our filming and move through a series of tactics we adopted for our intervention. These tactics came to us in the moment, as it was our first encounter with the installation, and we wanted to capture this first encounter spontaneously, intuitively, and honestly. How does the resulting footage document a series of moments that reflect a shifting relationship with the video installation and its surrounding space? How do our actions from one moment to the next reflect our evolving state of mind when we engage with any particular situation?

After we reviewed our resulting video essay, I went back to St. Paul's a year after the making of the first version to film footage we wished we had taken the first time. This additional re-shoot prompted me to think further about the learning that goes on directly through the use of the technology, which I will address at the end of the essay.

Analyzing a Chronology of Raw Footage

Reviewing the footage I captured, I can point to a range of patterns that give a sequential progression through the modes of "spontaneous" filming that I engaged in on that first visit.

June 23 2016 Site filming

69 video clips

video file names	Type of shots
4511-4515	establishing shots
4516-4523	interior initial orientation
4524-4528	incorporation of site visitors
4530-4537, 4541	**slow motion tracking (round 1)**
4537-4740	contextual shot
4543-4549	slow motion inserts
4550-4554	regular inserts
4556-4558	**slow motion tracking (round 2)**
4560-4561	distant shots
4562-4565	site visitors
4570-4574	**slow motion tracking (round 3)**
4575-4580	close ups of touch traces

II. Martyrs for the Mass video
   Viewing the work:

Movement 1 (0:00-0:41) reflective close ups	4 shots
Movement 1b (0:41-0:54) four panel re-composite	1 shot
Movement 2 (0:54-1:20) transitional montage	2 shots
Movement 3 (1:20-4:29) lateral slow motion tracking	3 shots
Movement 4 (4:30-6:06) double screen soft montage	2 shots
Movement 5 (6:06-6:16) voyeuristic observation	
Movement 6 (6:18-6:33) four panel re-composite	1 shot
Movement 7 (6:33-7:11) forensic close ups	4 shots

Shoot Notes

Strategies:
- Disruption
- Obfuscation
- Re-Interpretation

Tactics:
- Scan rate
- Reflection
- Recomposition (cropping / re-framing)
- Reconstitution
- Speed

Bodily actions:
- Static positioning
- Proximity (to the screen, to viewers)
- Lateral movement

Relations
- Voyeuristic / unobtrusive / non-invasive observing
- Conspicuous / obtrusive / invasive / observing

Visual effects

Difficulties
- Angles/positions
- Evaluation of strategies
- Editing of different approaches to achieve cohesion

We arrived on June 23, 2016, at 10:00 a.m. at St. Paul's Cathedral. The first series of shots are rather standard establishing shots of the exteriors, except that they are filmed vertically in contrast to the horizontal orientation of most film and video works.

Establishing shots of the exteriors. Photo: Kevin B. Lee.

Already we were thinking about the properties of smartphone photography. We didn't bring a standard film or video camera, partly because that would have given us away to cathedral staff. We had to embrace the technology that a regular visitor to the site might have. I brought an iPhone 6S. This choice brought to mind the everyday modes of smartphone filming, distinguished from the more traditional cinematic modes. For me, this difference is most clearly marked by orientation: the horizontal paradigm of cinema versus the verticality of handheld smartphone framing. As we'll see, my approach alternated between the two as I am interested in investigating their respective aesthetic and ideological qualities, especially in relation to one another.

Next, we enter the actual installation in the back of the cathedral. The footage begins to capture the four-panel work itself, described above, with a glimpse of some of the spectators.

Shot from behind the spectators. Photo: Kevin B. Lee.

Here, I was working through the dilemma of wanting to show what this piece is doing for the spectators, trying to see its effects on them while not wanting to interfere with their experiences. To film them from the front in order to better capture their facial expressions would clearly disrupt those same expressions. This dilemma gives this initial footage a tentative quality.

I also wanted to document the installation itself. I was drawn to the light spillage from the windows of the cathedral, which bestowed a hallowed aura upon the video installation. This effect is even more intense in the video footage; the way the phone camera lens captures the light of the space seems to hang a halo over the installation.

Installation with apparent halo. Photo: Kevin B. Lee.

I find it remarkable that this effect is even more pronounced in the footage I captured than what I observed in person—as if this halo was specific to digital recording. Either way, I had barely entered the site and found myself already contending with an auratic effect that this space was generating. How does one find a critical position to interrupt that aura, or at least resist replicating the aura through their recording? This shot lasts thirty-six seconds—what does that duration tell about my experience of that aura? As I review this shot critically, I see how conflicted it was between three impulses, in descending order of intensity: to experience, to document, and to intervene.

I'd like to think I was predisposed to being critical; if I wasn't, I was just consuming the work like any other visitor. Being with Kriss Ravetto helped offset this normative impulse, while seeing other visitors wielding their smartphone cameras produced a doppelganger effect that could trigger the basis of my resistance. Another trigger occurred the first time a cathedral staff member had asked me not to film. After this interruption, none of the subsequent series of shots last more than thirty seconds. These shorter shots may be informed by a fear of further interruption by the staff. Thinking about the impact of the hidden forces embedded in the cultural experience, and the transgression of authoring an unauthorized version of the experience, the duration of shots becomes an indicator of bumping up against those forces. Now I wonder how this apprehension in occupying the space with a camera could have been more vividly conveyed in the final video essay. How much can one tell that footage is illegal just by watching it?

But from this point, the duration of a shot takes on the opposite meaning than when I first filmed the installation at length, absorbed by its aura. Now aware of the illegality of filming, extended duration becomes resistance to normative behaviour. And from this point, the possibility of non-normative filming practices, especially with innocuous everyday devices like smartphones, as an interventionist tactic, became more present in my mind.

Photo: Kevin B. Lee.

I wonder how much tension one perceives in this image; as its maker, I can recall much tension in its making. I am shooting at eye level with the spectators but also standing behind them, an interplay between proximity and distance, identification and disassociation between them and me. I don't know if they would have felt any of that tension. There are moments when a spectator does notice me, but they were probably less likely to assume I was filming them than the installation. Alongside the tension I felt in my filming, another quality in this footage is spectatorial stillness: everyone is frozen in their looking. We do not see their faces, so it is all conveyed through the way the camera captures their bodies.

At the same time, I noticed many of the spectators carrying iPhones and viewing the installation through them as they captured footage while also listening to audio guides rented from the cathedral that introduce the installation. An array of technology, both institutional and personal, mediates the visitors' experience of the site. One may wager that the visitors' plugged-in state makes my own filming activity less conspicuous. In this sense, their mediated engagement with the site mediates my own engagement: it gives me both material to document and a cover under which to conduct the documentation. Over the next several minutes, I settle in and become more comfortable and confident with my own presence in the site.

About ten minutes into my visit, I begin experimenting with the slow-motion function on the iPhone, an addition to the newer models' set of features. At the time, Apple was aggressively promoting this feature in television ads, with the effect of persuading consumers that the iPhone could achieve images with an unprecedented cinematic quality through high resolution slow motion. I certainly was susceptible to the dream of creating beautiful cinematic images with this project, and with just my phone—a DIY maker fantasy. At the same, I was driven by a somewhat contradictory impulse to making beautiful images: I thought this feature could work to disrupt a normative experience of the space by amplifying the hypnotic effect of viewing this work, a frozen state of spectatorship. At the same time, I wanted to move within that frozenness so that motion becomes a disruptive tactic, even a mode of commentary on the scene. If I reference *The Matrix*, when the scene freezes around Keanu Reeves, allowing him to move within his own privileged space-time, this movement is definitely an articulation of a certain kind of power relationship involving disruption of time and space. It is as if I can move within this state of hypnotizing spectacle while everyone else is still stuck in their hypnotized gaze, differentiating my own gaze as interrogatory.

That there were three rounds of slow motion, as indicated in the chronology listed above, shows how intent I was on using slow motion on the iPhone, invested in its possibilities and just trying to work it over and over to reach its potential. I had not had much experience filming slow motion with the phone before, but with each round of filming, I felt more familiar and competent with the technique. At the same time, it yielded results that had no bearing on my acquired skill. One unexpected effect of the slow motion function was that its frame rate differed radically from that of the video monitors in Viola's installation. This resulted in a strong flicker effect appearing in the recorded monitors. I considered this another effect to disrupt the experience of Viola's installation, breaking the spell of his languidly moving high resolution images and transforming them literally into a visual transmission. But looking at this footage, another dilemma emerges: to what extent do these effects of slow motion and glitch disruption amount to their own kind of spectacle? If slow-motion has an inherent hypnotic power, to what extent is it working against Viola's aesthetic hypnosis, or replicating it by way of reconstitution?

The question of true disruption also bears upon the act of filming. So far in the video, every shot is taken by me while standing behind the spectators, who are all positioned in a row before the installation. I kept wishing that I could film from the opposite direction with a frontal view of the spectators, capturing their expressions as they watched the installation. But I didn't dare to attempt that, assuming that the spectators would no longer be looking at the installation, but at me. Still, it is worth considering what such a disruptive approach might achieve, what situation that may have produced, necessitating more of an interaction between the spectators and me. It changes the nature of the project from one of detached critical observation to activism: an on-site intervention. In contrast, a video essay can at best hope to function as an intervention after the event.

There were moments when people who moved away from the monitors did become aware of my filming. These moments give a sense of the camera as an interloper, getting into people's intimate experience with the work and on the cusp of interrupting it. This moment of cognitive shifting from one state to another is what I now like about these shots.

Photo: Kevin B. Lee. Photo altered to protect spectator anonymity.

What I like less is how much they reveal of the installation. I have been thinking of digitally masking the monitors from these shots so that there is more emphasis on the spectators, making the act of intervention and critical redirection of attention more explicit.

The desire to find ways to visually contextualize the site led a shot of people looking at a didactic sign introducing the installation. This is a classic observational documentary approach, and it shows that, despite the desire to adopt disruptive filming techniques to creative disruptive images, I eventually capitulated to more conventional documentary techniques, with rather banal wide shots taking in the scene.

Meanwhile, Kriss's attention was drawn in a diametrically opposite vector. Drawing as near as possible to the video monitors, she noticed smudges on their surfaces, which indicated that some

people had actually touched the installation screens. Taking my cue from her observation, I concluded our filming with close-ups of the panels. What does it mean that these images affected someone so much that they tried to touch them? When I went back a year later to take more footage, those smudges were still there. The staff hadn't bothered to clean them; perhaps they did not even notice them.

Photo: Kevin B. Lee.

Capturing those smudges on the highly reflective surface of the screens tested the limits of the iPhone camera; the autofocus flips back and forth, trying to determine what should be focused on. I want to focus on fingerprints, but the camera is having trouble gauging depth because of this reflective surface, so it keeps focusing on the lights reflected on the surface. Even drawing nearer to the screen creates a vertigo effect, as the focus keeps shifting to something other than what I want to capture. There's a paradox at play in that these shots, more than any of the others, are seeking to grasp the material dimension of the installation—the composition of the screen, the pixels of the monitors. And yet the instrument being used for this purpose betrays its limitations. One technology for image capturing is having trouble seeing another for image transmission. I wonder about how this predicament could be accounted for in the video essay without requiring explanatory narration. Perhaps this is also part of the intuitive process of filming, responding to the technology when it is doing something you don't expect or cannot control, and treating that as material for further inquiry.

My own filming approach flips between deliberation and intuition. At the time, I thought I was filming spontaneously, without much premeditation. In dialogue with others, such as the editors of this volume, I became aware that there are different types of spontaneity informing the situation. On the one hand, there is a spontaneity of filmic practices so established and normalized over decades of industrial film language that they manifest in one's filming behaviours without thinking. By this, I am thinking of establishing shots, close-ups, inserts, etc. This is a kind of visual vocabulary as normal as common speech, habituated into spontaneous expression. Then there is a spontaneity that exists outside these habituated expressions, which one might call truly "free."

Post-Publication Review

After editing the video and publishing it on *[in]Transition*, we thought about how we could further develop it. I have since reconsidered several creative choices in the published video, starting with the use of split screen to present multiple images at once. The first use of split screen reconstitutes the four panels of the Viola installation, substituting details from each panel filmed in close-up.
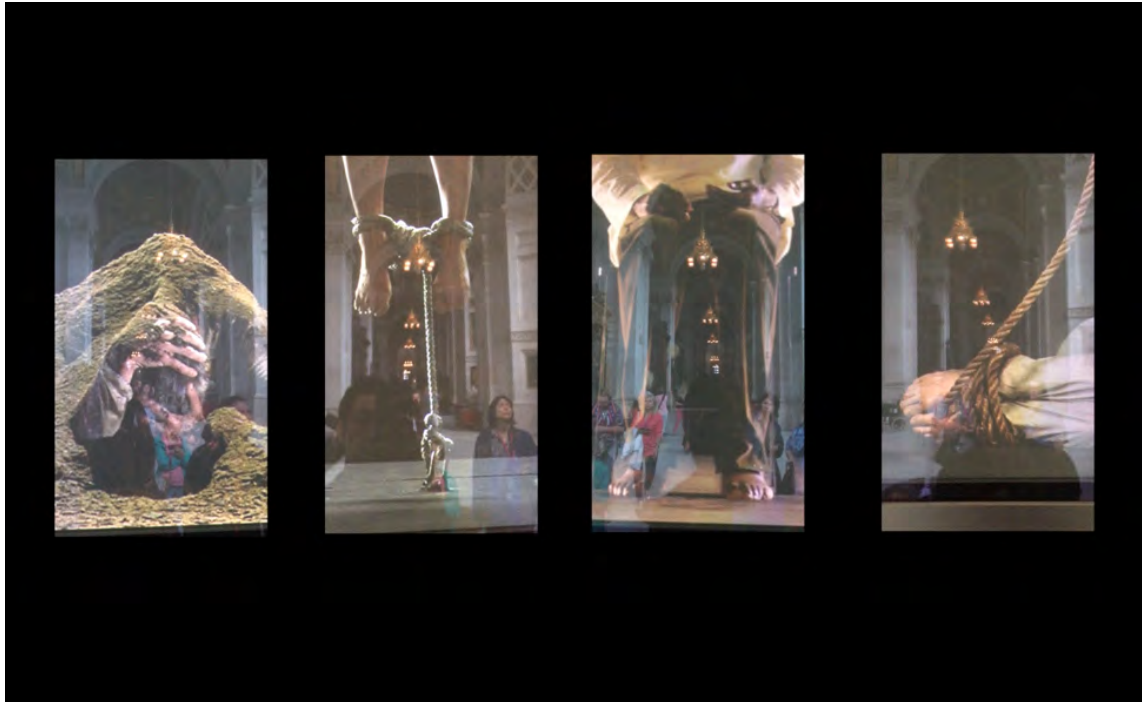

Photo: Kevin B. Lee.

Looking at that edit, I realize I do not like that it adopts a more literal approach, attempting to reconstitute the original work. This reconstitution risks cancelling the defamiliarization effects of the preceding shots. Later instances of split screen also commit what might be called a sin of wanting to see too much at once. These strategies risk producing new modes of visual hyper-consumption of the scene in place of critique. If we took away the parameters of the screens, the site would become stranger and more abstracted, placing more emphasis on how people situate themselves in relation to it. Sometimes you have got to put the blinders on for the viewers of the video essay so that they are more focused on alternatives. Right now, I find certain details too distracting and offering more information than is necessary.

Another technique that had a lot of potential for the reworked video essay was the capturing of reflections. Kriss and I are interested in layers, though in different ways. My original approach to the filming considered layers as generating spatial depth of field, like the rows of people standing in front of the screens. Kriss is interested in layers of reflectiveness and layers of images overlaid on top of each other. She was more fascinated by the reflections in the screen that imposed the architecture and spectators onto Viola's images. I was focused on making clean, cinematic tracking shots, while she was more interested in the messiness and commingling of images in the reflections within the four panels, where one can occasionally see people walking across the installation and

people looking at the images. It is worth unpacking these reflective surfaces as spaces for further exploration.

As we zeroed in on the reflections, Kriss and I asked how we could make these reflections into images as visually compelling as how we found them in person.

Photo: Kevin B. Lee.

With this image, I was working with vertical framing of the reflections to see how it could draw attention to the architecture of the cathedral as well as the spectators. The reflections of the spectators captured by the video highlighted the question of how much the spectators were aware of their own reflections in the glass. It also makes me wonder whether Viola intended those reflections to be noticeable to the spectators and thus a part of his work. I don't think the spectators were aware of the reflections when they were looking at the installation, but the footage certainly brings them out, so for the viewer of the video essay, it disrupts their direct access to Viola's images. For some of these images, you can't even tell if these reflections are actually reflections; the imaging technology of the phone seems to flatten everything, putting it all in one plane. Take this shot, where the body of one of the martyrs seems to be lying inside the cathedral.

Photo: Kevin B. Lee.

I tried to capture as many of these reflections as I could, but I kept running into the issue of the screens being positioned so high I couldn't get the angle I wanted. For a visitor to see themselves reflected on the image-screen, they would have to get so close up that you actually lose the view of the work itself. One has to give up something in order to see one's reflection.

This leads to the question of how close a spectator is meant to get to the screens. At the site, I observed how visitors settled into a general average distance, alongside the didactic sign. The sign provides an implied vantage point to the work, since it is where one reads about the work. However, visitors may be influenced by the positions of others. At one point, I was blocking the sightline of others to one of the screens, but I was probably appearing to them as a spectator so enraptured by the work that I drew nearer to it. This had the effect of drawing others nearer as well. It was interesting to witness the collapsing of distance generated by my body: how people who were initially standing far from and somewhat intimidated by the disturbing images being displayed on the panels were now encouraged to step closer due to my own proximity to the screens. The point at which I was as close as I could be to the images was when others were also as close as I'd seen them during my visit. This may have been the closest to an act of intervention we performed within the site, breaking the demarcation line of viewing from a respectful distance. The insertion of my body into the space made critical intervention successful for that group of people. At the same time, the existing smudges on the screens meant that others had been doing it before me.

I should comment on the audio dimension of the video essay, which I would have liked to have spent more time working on had time and resources allowed. There is a voiceover track offering a narrative element to the video, about which I am ambivalent: how much voiceover is necessary, and what sort of voiceover narration can really add alternatives to ways of seeing the installation? We have also thought about using onscreen text but have not figured out what that text would be. Is it factual text, is it para-fictional text, is it critical interpretive text—or all of the above? We would need to think through what we are doing with the image before bringing text into it.

The audio track of the version online mostly consists of voiceover found in the cathedral audio guide, spoken by the docent. At one point, he says, "We really wanted to work with Bill Viola because we wanted to work with cinema. We wanted to acknowledge cinema's role in our culture, but also it's been typically used as a medium for mass control and so what Bill Viola is doing here is he's turning it against that." As if religion is not about mass control at all! We also include sound bites of Bill Viola and his partner Kira Perov talking about how this work is not a representation of martyrdom, but an experience: the audience experiences martyrdom. The installation really is a self-aggrandizing rhetoric of absorption and having this unmediated experience of the ecstatic, made possible by art and spirituality through a corporate partnership of their respective institutions. I suppose what I felt was not quite successful in the video essay was our incorporation of these statements without indicating our critical position toward them, at least as explicitly as I am stating now.

Refilming and Reconsidering the Vulnerable Spectator

In March 2017, nine months after the first filming, I went back to capture more footage, particularly to address some of the inhibitions that kept me from filming certain types of shots. I was thinking more about martyrdom in relation to the look—the looking of the spectators. I wanted to explore how these looks relate to the idea of martyrdom, what it means to be a witness to martyrdom and especially in this technologically and commercially constructed context. I also wanted to have a potential reverse shot for those slow-motion tracking shots I had done before, because this, the frontal shots of people looking, felt like the thing I was most reluctant to shoot.

A question remains: how to capture someone's look without interfering with it? I realized that the iPhone has cameras on both sides that can shoot both toward and away from the one holding it. And so I pretended to film selfies while actually filming what was in front of me.
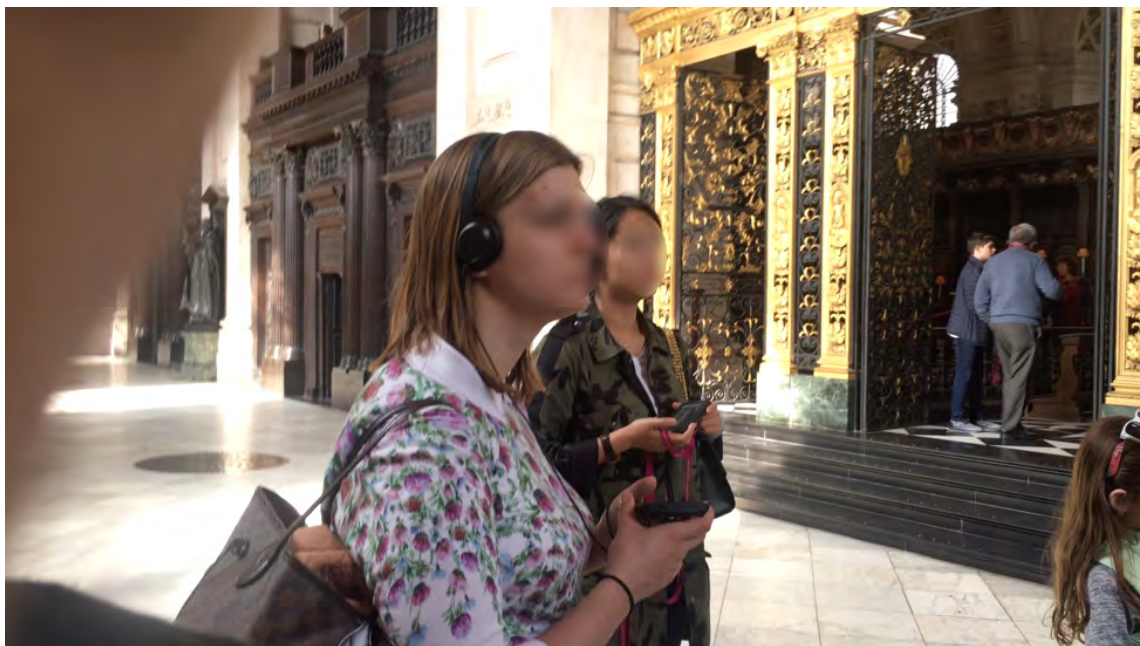

Photo: Kevin B. Lee. Photo altered to protect spectator anonymity.

Here we have the equivalent to a reverse shot of the backs of those heads I captured from the first filming (as shown in the image shot from behind the spectators). To be honest, I am more attracted to the backs of those heads because you have to imagine what the expressions of their faces are. A frontal shot like this seems too profane in its explicitness. And it preys on naïve, unaware, unselfconscious looks. Throughout my filming, I have been trying to be respectful but still have a critical position to state in terms of analyzing what is happening with this installation. Here I feel I am exerting a power relation that I do not feel comfortable with: collecting faces for affects in an ethically questionable way. Although I am interested in capturing that conflict in the way that the film emerges from the technology, what it does is suggest a limitation or a complication with the intervention I am trying to stage. I am not innocent either in this, and if this is to be an intervention, the ethical conflict needs to be performed. In a way, it points back to the Viola installation, which is also preying on these unaware, unselfconscious, naïve looks.

I am left thinking about my relationship to the inherent vulnerability of the spectator. There was already an implicit assumption in my initial proposition with this project that tourists are in a vulnerable position of being exploited, and this situation is what must be confronted: one in which the church, the museum, and the artist produce an environment that capitalizes on spectatorial vulnerability. If the installation promises a direct, unmediated, intensely intimate experience of martyrdom, our video essay was intervening in those illusions. In doing so, we discerned the border that divides criticality from complicity, exploration from exploitation. Once that border is delineated, it puts me in a position to decide which side of the border I am on.

On the other hand, this essay has also been like describing a hall of mirrors. How can one possibly describe a border within a hall of mirrors?

Note

1. This text is largely based upon a transcript from a presentation given by Kevin Lee to members of the Co-presence with a Camera project on September 30, 2017, in Davis, California. It has been edited for clarity.

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Live Performance and Post-Cinematic Filmmaking

Jeff Burke and Jared J. Stein

Introduction

The materiality of early cinema—for example, a certain number of rectangular images per second—has had a lasting impact on filmmaking across established and new media, and in turn, on live performances incorporating it. Even in the early twenty-first century, contemporary digital video production practices focused on content that was nonlinearly edited but still consisting of fixed, temporal progressions—whether representational or abstract. Like the media hardware platforms available to theatre-makers—e.g., monitors, projectors, and cameras—the content in live performances was often more or less congruous with audiences' expectations and assumptions of content in cinematic and broadcast experiences: moving backdrops for location and mood, text for information and context, or sheer visual juxtaposition of abstract and recognizable elements. However, the steadily increasing use of computer graphics, even in nonanimated cinema, and the emergence of virtual reality (VR), with its nonrectangular presentation and audience point-of-view (POV) selection, are breaking down the vestiges of early cinema's material affordances. Real-time editing and rendering and contemporary artificial intelligence (AI) techniques are changing how even the most conventional of cinematic images are being assembled. And notably, the increasing flexibility of *delivery* has been facilitating the divergence of media in live performance and cinema, as the former has been able to take advantage of, for example, cost-effective nonlinear playback opportunities—while unnecessary (for now) to the delivery of cinema, valuable to its production processes and thus heavily invested in. All of these evolutions parallel and impact new uses of digital cinematic media[1] in live performance and present new opportunities for live performance structures, including shifting roles for audiences, creators, and performers—during creation processes and performances, and in between each show.

UCLA's Center for Research in Engineering, Media and Performance (UCLA REMAP) has explored the use of dynamically controlled digital video in live performance since 2004.[2] By "dynamic control," we mean the use of software for triggering and/or manipulating media based on conditions within a given performance. Here, we focus on a set of the Center's recent works that reflect parallel progress in three areas related to this control and the content it is controlling: *algorithms*, as embodied in software, used to select and render fragments of media; *cinematic media*, in

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terms of how it is conceived and shot relative to the performances to which the algorithms are ultimately applied;[3] and the *performances* themselves, considering their evolution in narrative and dramaturgical structure and performative and scenographic form to become more tightly coupled with the other two areas.

In this paper, we do not trace many antecedents by name. The works discussed are influenced by and relying significantly on prevalent narrative, dramatic, and theatrical conventions—patterns of plot, some quite ancient—seen as clearly within work wherein those patterns are the focus of dramaturgical revolt. To some degree, the composition of dramatic action and choreography must always have resulted in algorithms for at least humans to follow. Endings, if nothing else, have to be prescribed by something. We have thousands of years of structures from which, dramaturgically, we can find parallels to power structures of new media technologies, e.g., deus ex machina of farce wrapping itself up farcically, the concert of form and improvisation within known Commedia dell'arte techniques, rituals of scheduled randomness such as happenings, and redefinitions of zeitgeist from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution through Modern Drama and the Symbolists to the patterns of Beckett.

We can also find parallels to countless explorations of relationships between manipulators and "puppeted" objects, and to different types of meaning that can be found in single, specific gestures within movement theatre traditions outside our own. For us, the structural points of reference intersect with investigations in database aesthetics—by media artists and theorists including Fabian Wagmister (at UCLA REMAP), Lev Manovich, Lynn Hershman Leeson, and George Legrady— while the corporeal role of the body and the object onstage intersect with many telematic performance and cybernetic explorations, such as works by Adriene Jenik and Stelarc. Approaches to nonlinear, respatialized film and video by Josef Svoboda and many contemporary projection designers also set up a post-cinematic approach. At the convergence of these two broad historical roads (though one is quite a bit shorter than the other!), we aim to explore how live performance, narrative drama in particular, with its evolving patterns and built-in expectations, can not only *react* to unique capabilities of digital media, computation, and networks but *drive* technology development specific to the theatrical stage.

By concurrently developing software systems, media, and dramaturgy (i.e., the algorithmic, cinematic and performative), we have been able to experiment with their intersections—iteratively moving forward on the pieces' overall constructions as we attempt to make aspects of the three work in concert. With the projects described below, we explore how authoring on these three layers simultaneously is generating or uncovering for us an implicit post-cinematic concept of media. By articulating this concept here, and relating it to contemporary trends, we hope to identify questions that can be pursued in future work and generalize about opportunities for the evolution of the relationship between media and live performance.

In all of these processes, algorithms executed by software code have been employed for the real-time selection and display of media content based on aspects of a story-in-progress. Through this, the pieces address issues at the junction of storytellers' need for authorial control and desire to provide agency to audiences and performers in response to fluctuating circumstances, in contrast to what normally coincides with more conventional media designs, such as uses of media per static sets of circumstances (e.g., scenes in a play) and predetermined events. We imagine in the future, machine learning (ML) and AI technologies will bridge the gap between composition of live experiences and agency within them—with new types of media within new types of human-authored

narratives, allowing for worlds that synthesize, in ways we have yet to imagine, new inputs (and/or contexts) and decisions to be made by artists. We will touch on this in the conclusion; first, it is useful to lay some groundwork, starting with common abstractions, and then with specific examples. Project by project, we have noticed some common threads that, to us, suggest some early fabrics of this synthesis.

When using "author" in its various forms, we mean to emphasize the notion of fixing elements within performance ahead of their use—within text, code, or other elements—accompanied by the general expectation those elements are to remain fixed during the life of the work even as they may be interpreted by others and contextualized differently in different productions. For our purposes here, even procedural or algorithmic compositions, or open-ended performance structures, are "authored" in this way, because the algorithms or procedures are fixed even if they describe an input-output relationship that is open and provides, for example, agency to the audience. We use "storytelling" to denote a more general creative act that may or may not involve authorship of fixed material. A general direction of this paper is to explore how new technologies are enabling authorship of more sophisticated relationships between preexisting, generative, and audience-supplied elements within storytelling, along with authorship of how those relationships themselves might evolve through artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Common Threads

One of the authors' key collaborative interests has been to develop new forms of dramatic literature and the software (or systems) they require in parallel, in order to explore new theatrical possibilities that emanate outward from the performance text via algorithmic control of media and other performance elements. Here, we omit some strands more related to nontextual aspects of the works, for example, the use of real-time sensing to create new engagements with the body on stage. As it may (accidentally) reinforce a dangerous indifference to bias and subjectivity in the real-world creation and applications of algorithms, we do not fully subscribe to the concept that algorithms are content-neutral or media-neutral, discussed recently in Pizzo, Lombardo, and Damiano (2019). However, with these threads, we emphasize those elements that can be considered within the creation of texts to be subject as much as possible to artists within worlds they create, with many different potential realizations, and with the real-world realities of the media or device being used as thematically related to their creation as they wish.

From Scripts and Trim Bins to Databases

Similar to others creating on digital platforms, we have long been organizing digital content, including text and cinematic media, in databases as opposed to according to a conventional linear list or timeline. This is an unsurprising approach for contemporary artists working on digital platforms, given the affordances of new digital media, including those identified by Manovich at the turn of the century, such as its numerical representation and modularity (Manovich, Malina, and Cubitt, 2001). Rather than triggering digital cinematic media segments in live performance according to a more linear and fixed schedule—e.g., stage managers' cueing or scripted events—in much of our work, content objects need to be accessed nonlinearly and automatically based on algorithms and their applications to improvised events. While the trim bin of digital editing could be considered a database, we refer here to a collection of content that is ready and intended for real-time assembly and fluid delivery rather than raw materials used in preparing these final cuts.

Bridging Humans and Algorithms via Folksonomies

To organize these database media, we often apply semantic tags (keywords) following a taxonomy formulated for a piece and/or emergent within it. More complex metadata structures for organizing database media within our earlier works have given way to flat collections of such tags, which are easier for collaborators and audience members to understand and less arduous to apply to large corpora of content. All the tags used in a piece (the tagset) form a folksonomy, with a role similar to that of hashtags that create relationships on social media, yet more highly curated. Their use was influenced by other work at REMAP in community-generated digital artworks. When necessary, depending on their relationships to the content they are labelling, points in the story, possible audience inputs, any real-time digital manipulation required, and other elements of the experience, tags can be organized into hierarchical families for a more structured folksonomy. A group of characters attempting to create division among an audience, for example, could apply tags to individual audience members corresponding with their answers to certain questions and then create further division, or even reconciliation, depending on how those tags relate to tags applied to audiences of past performances. The tagset itself could be provided by a piece's authors, generated by the audience, or devised ahead of time and/or revised in real time by the performers, or any combination of these. We use "folksonomy" rather than "taxonomy" to convey this flexibility, as well as the potential for the public (audience-facing) availability of the tags for reuse, as with hashtags in social media. While extensive metadata systems, such as Dublin Core, have their place in organizing media, we have found that the use of folksonomies is an efficient way to bridge human understanding of media relevance with algorithmic decision-making.

Three Dimensions of Agency: Interpretation, Improvisation, and Participation

Implicit in the use of random-access databases to hold and organize media according to folksonomies is a view of media, including text to be delivered to performers or audience members, as a dynamic, evolving facet rather than a fixed overlay. This modular, random-access view of media, including cinematic elements, emerged from our interest in exploring new types of agency enabled by digital systems in live performance that parallel some of the societal promise of contemporary digital technology, whether it has been realized commercially or not.[4] In an *a posteriori* look at the Center's work in live performance, we identify three dimensions of agency being explored:

> *Interpretation:* the agency of ensembles, wherein the relationship between authorial and directorial control is delineated and the creators of a performance design a digital system—particularly the code embodying its algorithms—to work for their particular progressions (more traditional dramaturgical elements) and their interpretation of them, which can change as expressed in actions, dialogue, and media, as well as in their relationships to each other.

> *Improvisation:* the agency of performers, choices made in response to varying circumstances within the performance including those executed by digital components, and in return potentially influencing changes in components or creation of new components that then influence other choices by performers or even audiences.

> *Participation:* the agency of audiences, opportunities for public participation to impact circumstances and make choices, including those related to creation, changes or use of media content and taxonomy.

Cinematic media content has become a vehicle for these dimensions of agency in our work, as it has become easier to create, capture, select, remix and manipulate with technological advancements in digital media while retaining its visual power and cultural relevance. These dimensions of agency often relate closely to a thematic and technical focus on the *points of view* of performers and audiences, as fields of capture, as well as fields for providing customized content, as in augmented reality and its personalized presentations overlaid on individuals' points of view. This is described in more detail in our examples.

Metatheatrical Bridges

In this paper, we define a metatheatrical bridge as a technological system that is purpose-built for a given piece and is acknowledged in some form within the piece's own story or world. It is a technological construction with narrative functions that bridge fiction and reality, to varying degrees acknowledged directly or disguised by story elements—parallel to how, within more conventional dramaturgy, blackouts can be due to power outages, characters turning off switches, or simply the "hands of the storytellers." With much of the work described below, the goal was for such systems' diegetic and nondiegetic presence to be interwoven and, in doing so, bridge the agency and identity of the audience and performers within both the fiction and the real world. One of our aims for using such bridges is to achieve intrinsic relationships between text and software (or system) that explore what is unique about digital computing among the many technologies incorporated into theatre and performance throughout history.

Live Performance Use Cases

Starting with two original works by students as part of a research and curricular program created and supervised by Burke and advised by Stein, and concluding with a series of three projects created by Burke and Stein together, we describe specific instances of these threads, and their evolving integration within what we have come to see as a single dramaturgical-technological project.

Grace Plains (2014)

Grace Plains, a student-authored, -directed and -designed interactive theatre piece at YouTube Space Los Angeles, integrated live-action role-playing, murder mystery, and morality-play tropes. Small groups of audience members wearing optical head-mounted displays (Google Glass), providing them with information about their identities as potential investors and other role-playing hints, were taken along a tour of a scientific facility by its high-ranking staff members, played by two actors. The audience was led along a continuously changing set of circumstances to decide what to do with an increasingly powerful (and human-seeming) AI. They were introduced to the AI, voiced by an actor, and got to know it. At the height of a conflict between the lab director and the AI inventor about the development and purpose of the AI, the potential investors came across a dead body. The AI was blamed, and the audience was forced to decide as a group if the AI should live or die.[5]

Real-time agency, of the ensemble, performers, and writers, was the most prominent exploration within this piece. A team of writers in a control room fed the audience participants and actors, also wearing the devices, suggestions for dialogue and motivations for action—giving them guided agency to improvise.

Control display from *Grace Plains*, showing each audience member's and actor's POV and current customized text, focused on their character within a fast-evolving experience.

Technicians, in a separate control room, manipulated media within the piece's surroundings. Online audiences could watch a composite POV cut live from participants' head-mounted feeds by a television director. On-the-fly choices were made by the writers (watching each feed) to instigate improvised theatrics, using a database of text providing them with prewritten phrases, and also to further instigate drama headed toward an eventual (known) finale. The audience participants had significant agency to make choices within their role-playing context, as guided by the writers, who were, in effect, also live directors. Unlike the online audience's single feed, consisting of its director's called shots (a multiple-camera live television shoot), the writers could feed any text to any or all participants, and could do this in any combination of pairs or groupings within the group as a whole. (See http://graceplains.com/ for the students' explanation of the experience.)

In this piece, unlike the others to follow, there were no direct metatheatrical bridges between the technology and the story. The head-mounted displays existed outside of the narrative, functioning as both cue cards and hidden cameras. One of the most important experiences drawn from this experiment was the use of machine-supported real-time writing, by human authors, to support audience agency. The technology allowed aspects of oral storytelling, role-playing, and directorial techniques to be applied individually with each audience member, without the others knowing, and suggested a direction for experiences to be both personalized and collective, despite an inability to mitigate the distraction of each person having a head-worn display. It was also an energizing experience for authors to engage with the piece as it continued to evolve in the hands of each audience, similar to live-action role playing in other contexts—with a mix of events devised in real time and ones that were prewritten, organized by a simple and emergent folksonomy of their

applicability to situation and character. In some ways, it was also similar to how stand-up comedians' acts are workshopped over time and bands revise their playlists for concerts, but far more intricate, having to incorporate actual actions of audience members rather than just changes in response to group laughter, applause, heckling, or calls for encores. The experience suggested considerations for creating dramaturgical structures that facilitate and incorporate evolution. We returned to these ideas in some of the later projects described below.

Bodies for a Global Brain (2014)

Bodies for a Global Brain, a short student web series created within the same research and curricular context as *Grace Plains*, used as a "script" text mined from social media that was selected dynamically for performance, using ML. It also explored real-time choice and reaction by the ensemble. A young couple, previously only having met online, decide to allow their thoughts to be controlled by the will of the Internet, via a new global consciousness system they designed. The pilot episode follows them as they meet and then begin to interact with the world and each other at the whim of the network. The result was a partially improvised performance based on a database text, selected via a writer/director-provided folksonomy that resulted in linear cinematic media.

While shooting, the actors, with a scripted set of circumstances and pre-rehearsed character arcs in mind, were fed the mined text via optical head-mounted displays (again, Google Glass). They were bound to this text to accomplish their characters' objectives—creating new obstacles, types of tactics, and plot twists; they had significant agency. Though the words forming the dialogue appeared as if completely random, the writer/director had several ways of sculpting the overall experience. A backstory was created to give the actors insight into their characters. The script itself was first constructed as a series of scenes with emotional arcs of the characters' relationship that could be rehearsed in a traditional way. Then, a large amount of Twitter data—a database of text—was captured, and a small set of that data was manually tagged with "intent" tags by a large group of students based on a folksonomy created by the director to match the "intents" within this arc. The tagged data were used to train the ML system, essentially generating an algorithm that provided a mapping between directorial intent keywords (tags) and matching text from a larger Twitter corpus. (Note here that the tags are *not* Twitter hashtags; they are keywords applied to existing tweets by the machine learning system.)

To deliver dialogue in real time to each performer during the performance, a software system was built enabling the director to select a set of intent tags and use them to recall a matching Tweet from the full database and deliver it to the appropriate performer via the head-mounted display.
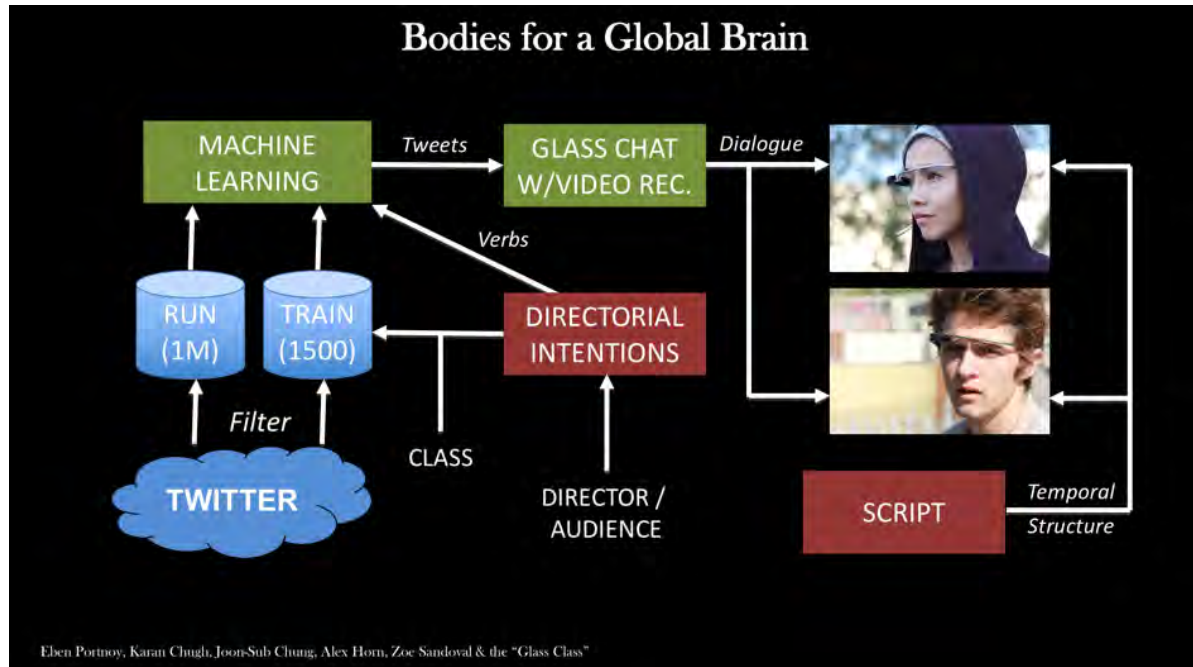
Block diagram explaining the *Bodies for a Global Brain* system, challenging the two lead actors to react "in the loop" with a machine learning algorithm.

Unlike in *Grace Plains*, this entire *Bodies for a Global Brain* system was part of a metatheatrical bridge. In the story, the characters elect to receive instruction from the "global brain" of the Internet on what to do, thus embodying the technology's real-world function more simply. The actual system does for the actors something very similar to what the system within the story does for the characters. (See https://vimeo.com/119866019, which includes an explanation of the circumstances.) It was the director—rather than a computer vision system—who observed the actors and their points of view and made decisions about what "type" of content to deliver. But the loop of control had a strong analogy connecting story and system, as did the presence of POV cameras. The characters choose to live by the word of a global brain not unlike the AI proposed by Google, Amazon, IBM, and others. This motivated the use of POVs and an envisioned but not implemented user interface for audiences to contribute to the control of the performers' process. Even though the cameras were not directly in the loop of the system as realized—i.e., they were not influencing the AI and not diegetically described—and only existed in the story as unacknowledged parts of the head-worn displays, this work influenced bridges with even more automation and similarities between story and system created for the later pieces described below.

Los Atlantis (2015)

A faculty-directed participatory stage piece created in collaboration with students, *Los Atlantis* followed a small band of travellers as they explored the futuristic archive of a historical city. The audience, invited to accompany the travellers, was offered agency to interact with various interfaces to explore and contribute to the archive's contents, online at first and then in person. During each performance of the run, audience members, both in person and online, were guided through a series of vignettes integrating media from the archive, with their participation further expanding its holdings.

A scene from within one of the *Los Atlantis* vignettes, where the performers exist within media pulled from a cloud database.

We discuss this project in more detail in Burke et al. (2017). Here, we focus on specific facets that continued the exploration of how the cinematic, algorithmic, and performative intersect in the threads described above. In the previous two projects described, media content was one of the *outputs* of the performances—the live feed of *Grace Plains* and the edited episodes of *Bodies for a Global Brain*—but the story-related algorithms embodied in software code were concerned entirely with the text, and from that code emerged the mechanisms for audience and performer agency. In *Los Atlantis*, we pursued this fluidity and importance for media itself. Most of the software was concerned with the collection, categorization, and recall of cinematic media using similar techniques. "The Archive" was the story's repository of the history of the city discovered by the travellers; in the real world, it was a database of media, hosted on YouTube, tagged with a folksonomy defined by the authors. It was a metatheatrical bridge and the focal point for contribution and agency: media was supplied to the repository and tagged by the ensemble, who gathered it on their cell phones throughout Los Angeles, and optionally by audience members who logged on to a website in advance of a performance. Media matching certain criteria within the folksonomy, and certain formal characteristics (length, etc.), was used in the performance.

The original intent was to have a large number of dynamically selected media cues, in which the media came from database queries with results changing depending on what was uploaded before, or potentially during, the performance. In practice, the desire for visual and temporal control drove only a small subset of cues to be truly dynamic, and with unpredictable, often shifting results, though all media for the show was retrieved in real time from YouTube. The limited dynamism may have arisen from the use of a fixed text that did not provide sufficient flexibility or dynamic prompting, as in the previously mentioned projects. Despite this, the Archive was a successful bridge between the

technological world of the production and the story, because of its library-like nature, which was a parallel intent. The holdings were intended to be as fluid and accessible to the characters within the story as they were to the storytellers' execution of it. Additionally, the piece expanded the earlier two projects' use of live POV streams as outputs, by allowing online audiences to pick between one of four characters to follow into different, sometimes parallel vignettes (see https://vimeo.com/141879159).

Our reactions to the realization of *Los Atlantis* led directly to *Search for Global Song,* described below. First, we wanted to focus on not just the selection but also the assembly of a sequence of media from a database—expressing control of that assembly within algorithms rather than manual editing, and creating the foundational footage with unknown, shifting assemblies in mind. Therefore, second, we wanted to make *all* media algorithmically selected while still being assembled into a cohesive narrative sequence, to enable a mix of control by text, code, and interpretation. Finally, we wanted to explore the relationship between text and interpretation more carefully because of the strong interrelationship of these elements and media-processing code. (In a piece that starts with a text, software that processes media typically affects the realization of a specific instance of that piece, not the text itself—though that is the subject of the final example.) The motivation for these choices was twofold*: Search for Global Song* was part of a general research effort to explore the joint authoring of code and text, and there was a specific objective to tell a familiar type of story—intersecting slice-of-life character studies—using a key facilitator of intersection today, albeit algorithmic media selection in Internet advertising. We aimed to present familiar input and output forms to the interpreters and the audience, respectively, by focusing on cinematic short-form drama, while creating an algorithmically driven system to select and remix interpretations within the limitations of those inputs and outputs.

Search for Global Song (post-production)

Search for Global Song is an experimental short film (about twenty minutes long) that tells the story of three strangers who frequent the same café—a retiree, an unfulfilled middle-aged classical musician, and an exchange student electronic musician who has overstayed their visa—living in the same neighbourhood, and coincidentally connected by people in a single but unspecified, unseen place across the world. Their lives are sampled and interwoven by the electronic musician, resulting in a final musique concrète composition encountered in the café, for which the audience just happens at that moment to include the retiree and the classical musician. The script was written for interpretation by different directors to yield different sets of foundational footage to be algorithmically edited together in real time to produce different variations of the same film (see https://vimeo.com/223828818). The editing code also listens to the audio evolving from a given cut and inserts it back into the musical composition of the final performance within the film, providing a metatheatrical reflection on the film's structure via "found sound" from its corpus. Like the film's characters, interpretations collaborate with coordination to create a new piece of music each time it is cut. While not strictly a live performance by humans, the edit assembly is done live by software, resulting in a live music composition. As such, it has, for us, been an informative intersection of cinematic media creation that applies methodologies from and our theoretical interests in live performance.

We are finishing an initial implementation of the code that edits the film. It will operate on source media from four completed shoots—two productions of the entire script and two productions of short selected pieces (see https://vimeo.com/223829046). Shot with four different casts and crews

in different locations, *Search for Global Song* incorporates the most extensive notion of a database of media of any of the examples given here. All selected clips from all shots of all scenes are individually uploaded to YouTube, from each interpretation. They are associated with a given place and/or specific story requirement by a folksonomy of properties (tags with values, as described below). Expanding on *Los Atlantis*, the organization of the media takes into account formal requirements, such as shot length, by organizing this information via an edit decision list (EDL) that we created based on a human edit, as well as semantic tags that represent story milestones. These are embedded in the media through the use of timecode markers in the editing software. An assembly program uses these EDL "targets," which express the writers' intent, the directors' interpretations, the story marker information and other metadata associated with each uploaded clip from each interpretation and attempts to assemble a cut following algorithms created by the authors and our collaborators. Algorithms progressively select and assemble shots in order to meet the story objectives, while also balancing other external parameters such as the amount of each interpretation to use on average across a given edit of the film. The algorithms' parameters are varied by the film's creators and production team to generate different edits and can change depending on events of the day, attributes assigned to the location of a viewer, viewer preferences, etc. (that is, the parameters of the algorithms can be varied manually or by other algorithms).
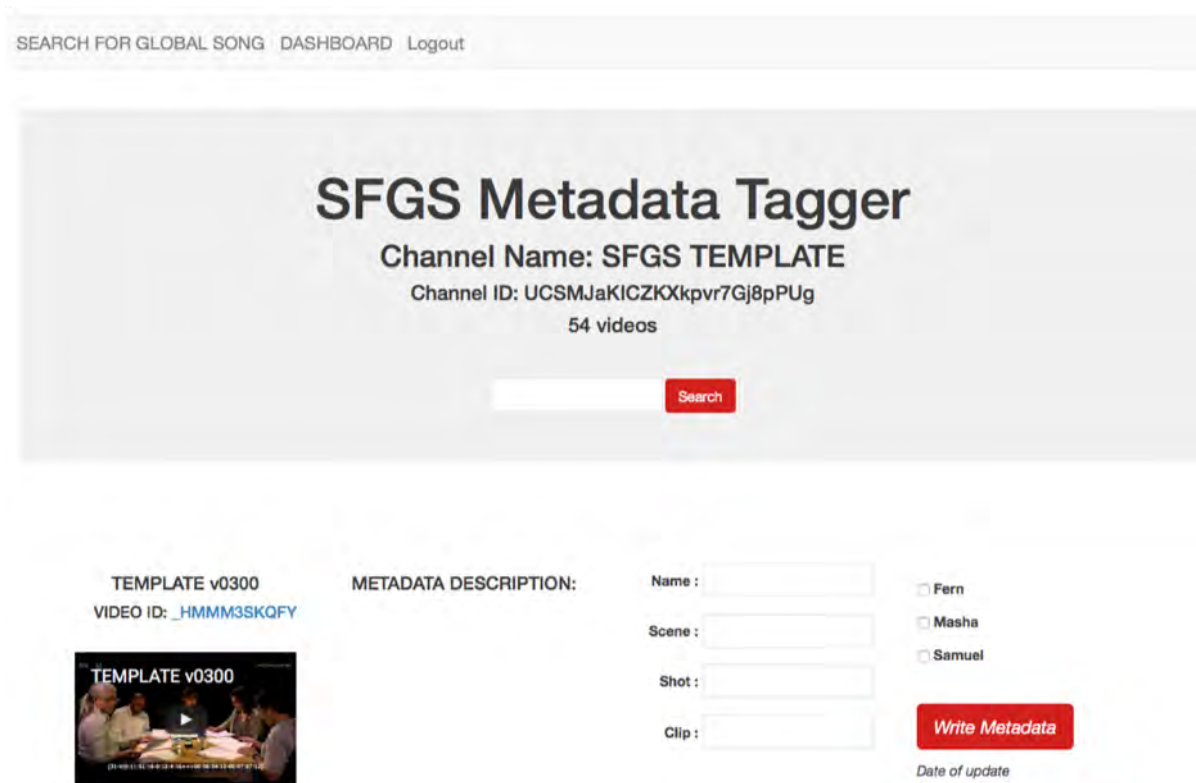

One metadata entry screen from the *Search for Global Song* system, used by contributing authors to assign folksonomy tags and other metadata linking their version's media elements to the broader structure.

As the characters go about their daily lives, they also communicate with people in the same unspecified, unseen location across the world—via email, webchat, SMS, mobile phones, etc.—which motivates their actions and coincidentally leads to the events being recorded by the electronic musician, and why the electronic musician is recording them. Similarly, the audio system listens to the resulting edit and uses the composition of the audio mix to generate an algorithmic composition

of the final song in the piece, which is overlaid onto a character's performance. This composition bridges the assembly algorithms and the character's use of found sound throughout the story, in the final performance. The script and code together make the database a continuous (if hidden) metatheatrical authority within the experience and vice versa. Independently from how any final cut may purposefully or inadvertently—depending on the assembly—shed light on common threads between the interpretations, the characters within the story communicate across cultures, and this motivates sound collection and the electronic musician's composition.

The traditional, modern notion of montage, i.e., stemming from early Soviet directors such as Eisenstein, includes action being displayed while condensing space and time. It does, though, assume conventional Western notions of character, as if portrayed by the same actor within one story world, and the story world itself is absolute in terms of its locations. *Search for Global Song*, too, is defined by its script's absolutes—a progression of occupations and actions, types of locations and off-screen locations, and certain character descriptions, for example, age, and age in contrast to the other characters' ages. The script itself does not suggest or presume montage, nor even montage sequences in the contemporary, non-Soviet sense (for passages of time). Its plot is purposely arranged within real time, with jumps in time arranged in scenes over subsequent days. It does, however, explicitly allow for a montage of the directorial interpretations, especially as expressions of the locality of the places and the ensemble. An action portrayed by one actor playing a character could be concluded by another actor (in another interpretation) playing the same character; a character portrayed by one actor could be recording street noises in one location at the beginning and end of a scene while different actors portraying the same character could be recording noises from different streets in different locations in between. The piece condenses space and time between interpretations (the individual shoots) while following via the "unity of character" (the progressions of their actions), regardless of differing interpretations (how the same characters may appear differently, in terms of gender, ethnicity, fashion, etc.)—within one narrative frame that guides intercutting of media to allow the various interpretations to emerge for the audience.
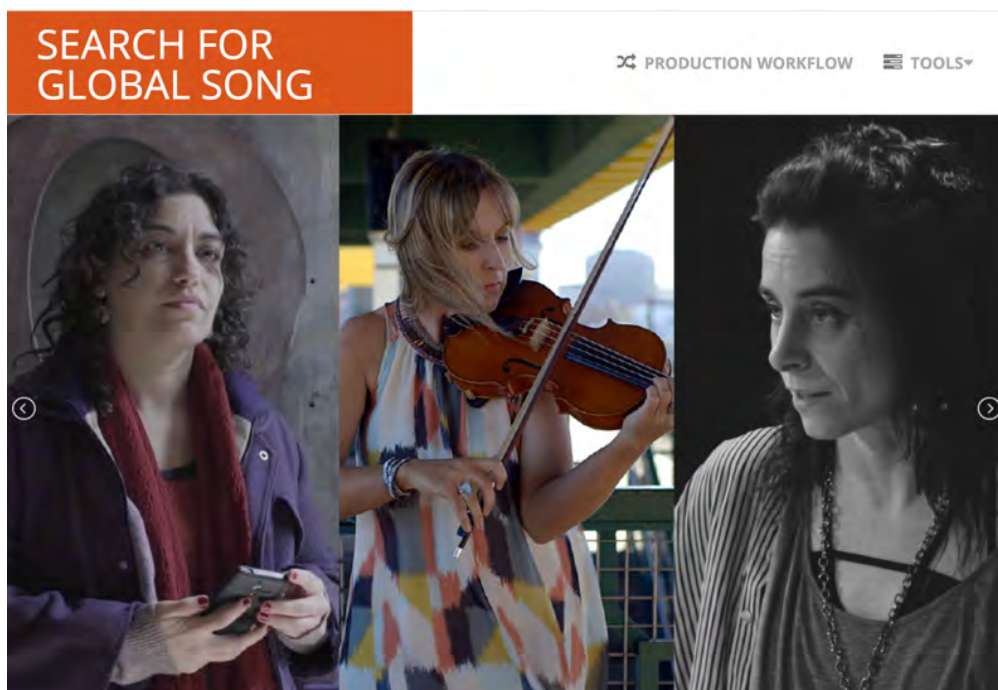
Three directors' interpretations of one lead character in *Search for Global Song*.

Entropy Bound (current)

Digital technology is central to the audience *experience* in each piece above, yet it has a limited impact on the emotional trajectory of the characters, despite the presence of metatheatrical bridges, so was often perceived as not impacting the *story* as it unfolded. In *Los Atlantis*, the limit was likely the fixed text, preventing shifts in media from shifting the characters. In *Grace Plains* and *Bodies for a Global Brain*, very limited text structure hampered audiences' abilities to follow a story. This was not necessarily a problem for those works, but our desire in the works that have followed has been to balance agency and authored structure while making the technology-supplied fluidity of database media central to the characters' drama. This balance became a key challenge of interest.

For this reason, with the new work *Entropy Bound*, we are exploring how to integrate characters' objectives and reality with the technology more closely, so as to make that integration itself a metatheatrical bridge—that is, their actions are not only enabled by the system's placement within the story but also *required* for their very existence. There could be no progression of actions without it. The pursuit followed directly from our experience with *Search for Global Song*. In our opinion, as producers and early test audiences for the editing algorithms for that short film, we found that perhaps unsurprisingly, it was the characters that provided unity across very different interpretations. Unlike the plot, which of course, one doesn't know until one has seen the whole piece, parallel characters from parallel interpretations became immediately relevant and integrated quickly our ability to find coherence amidst the cross-cutting. The value of the unity of character, particularly across different and changing media, was what we chose to explore specifically within our most recent project.

Lead actor Rey Jarrell wearing a point-of-view camera in a workshop rehearsal of *Entropy Bound* that she felt explored "how much data you need to be sure who you are" (December 2018, UCLA).

Entropy Bound is an experimental comedy for the stage based on a metatheatrical bridge embedded within a character. It follows a highly determined, at times obsessive-compulsive urban professional who has suffered a traumatic brain injury and is now living life with a first-generation digital brain implant. Living with her parent and her best friend, who have moved in with her to help her recover, and participating in the best friend's web series about their cohabitation, she relies on the implant and its evolving base of media for all memory since her accident. Her last real memories end at the moment of impact, and, as enforced by the growing corpus of media from her POV of continuously trying to perfect that last moment, she assumes the evolution of the perfection is significant because it's the only new memory available to her, and she has, since her last real memory, been sharing it. Her best friend, since she came to, has been "broadcasting" her journey to the web series audience, that is, the audiences attending the play.

The composition of *Search for Global Song*'s presentation—a montage of interpretations—changes according to the choices of the algorithms applied; the narrative core will not. But algorithmic editing, and manipulation more broadly, are applied live in *Entropy Bound* to media content to enable real-time human reactions to shift the plot itself, further contributing to the corpus of media, and then again, the plot, and so on. For the authors, this circular yet progressive pattern mirrors increasingly prevalent cycles of media use in everyday life and numerous dramaturgical possibilities. To reflect this within a stage story and a theatre-making process, we anchored the central character's entire memory in a database of expanding media content, with the individual memories being recalled according to the whim of an algorithm. And similar to algorithms in social media systems, the algorithm in *Entropy Bound*'s system enables its user, the lead character, to react in real time to events within her POV, using tags—thus training the system to further enable her and placing the actor in the position of training the system on which her character must depend.

In an initial workshop of *Entropy Bound*, we learned from the actor playing the lead character that, for her, the distinction between her instrument as an actor and her character became blurred through the implant's role as a metatheatrical bridge and the use of rehearsal footage mixing the real world and the fiction. This was further reinforced by a need in the workshop for her movements to be tuned to frame images properly within the POV camera worn above her ear. She envisioned the same would happen to anything the implant could record and redisplay. Going forward, we use the term "actor/character" to convey this blurring. We also suggest a similar shift within the audience; they are already an audience both inside (the best friend's webcast) and outside the fiction, and are recorded by the implant.

Just as in *Los Atlantis*, the database in *Entropy Bound* has a defined role within the drama, as does the algorithm, and the audience and each performance impact the evolution of that role. It contains the actor/character's POV—an archive in her head, each frame and video segment annotated with its semantics and importance. This semantic folksonomy is applied in real time by machine learning[6] analysis, as is the segmentation of the running POV video into discrete clips. Within the fiction, in addition to an implied analysis by the implant of her circumstances, the main character has been able to add tags within her field of view since coming to with the implant having been installed. This is actually what happens within the main actor's process through rehearsals and the run, as the first rehearsal is when she came to, when the implant starts recording while she is in character, and the actor/character can begin adding tags.

Objects—for example, different hams she prepares for the web series (and actual) audiences—are the primary focus of the character's POV, and these key objects are understood by the system. Each

group creating a new interpretation (production) must train the ML system to map objects from the real world to those required by the script, codifying their interpretation of key items and embedding it into the collection of algorithms that drive the piece—including the main actor/character's reactions to (tagging of), for example, the hams and the other characters. Here, the tags of the folksonomy are envisioned as being defined by the authors of text and code, but with significant flexibility for each production to choose to what physical objects they are applied. These choices filter through the overall aesthetic approach to the production and yield media to which the character responds via improvisation. The actor portraying her not only is charged with being a dramatist in the moment, but also in that production's dramaturgical evolution by continuous in-the-moment training, adding reactions/tags to what she sees, so the system can understand how she feels about what is around her, and what she needs to know in lieu of memory. In the script, [brackets] denote objects, for example, [ham], that the system must be trained to recognize, and *italics* represent opportunities for improvisation by the actor in response to the media associations retrieved by the system based on what is happening on stage. Further, the character directly interacts with the audiences, getting collective and individual reactions to her object, and thus within her POV, captures these for the database.[7] This permits each audience's interpretation to be incorporated by the character into the show. Their reactions to her [ham] are interpreted and tagged by her, further training the system.
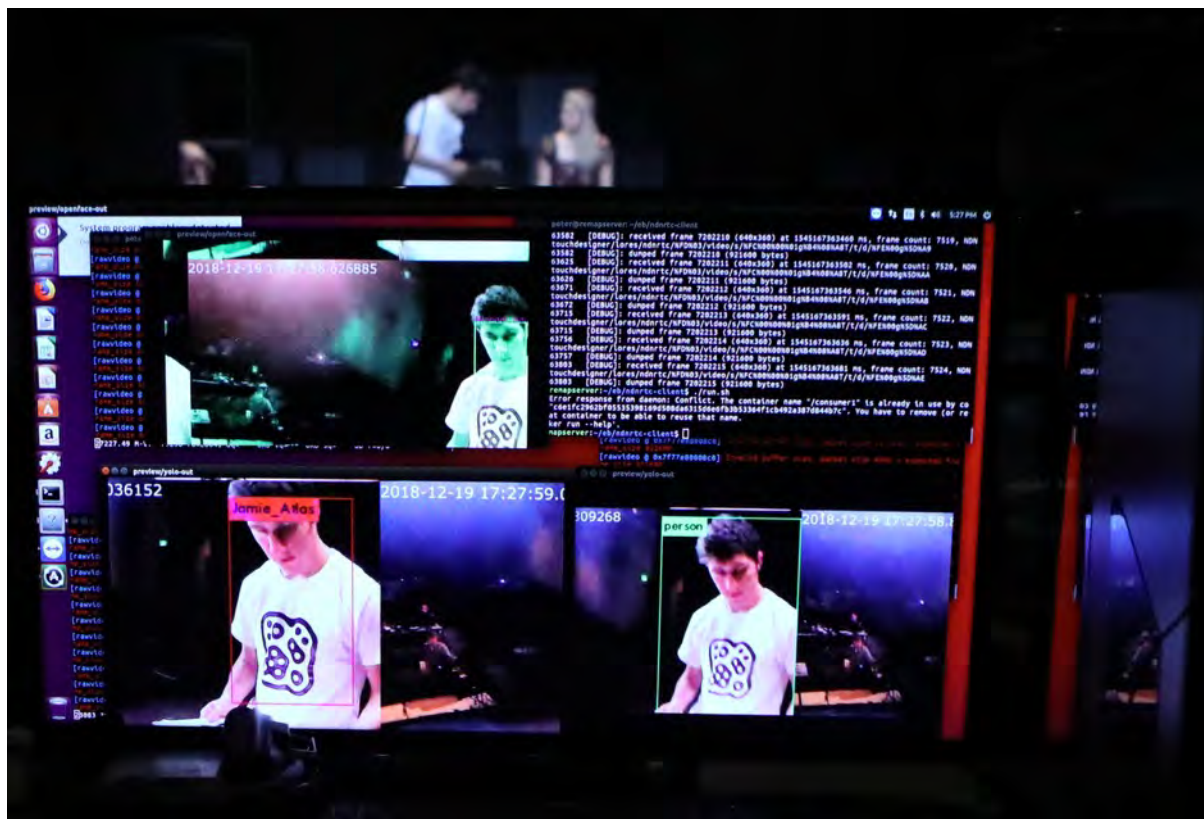
Live machine learning analysis of the lead actor's POV camera in *Entropy Bound*. System by Peter Gusev.

The folksonomy has three types of tags: 1) those corresponding to bracketed items as recognized by the ML system; 2) additional tags from the ML system that provide general semantic analysis of its observation (for example, labelling person-like elements in the POV camera as "person" with a confidence value); and 3) emojis[8] that are used by the lead character (as improvised by the actor) as

diegetic labelling of her environment (as seen by the POV camera). The actor/character selects and applies these latter tags within the action of the play, while the first two are selected automatically and invisibly, although a particular production may choose to reveal them to the audience. The tags applied to any given moment are unique within each run of the performance. The available tags in the folksonomy are defined by the code and used to organize the media within the database (and the character's memory). The metatheatrical bridge (the implant/system) uses this database of semantically tagged media segments as the artificial memory within the story. Implicit within the action are overlapping hierarchies of the media segments.

The hybrid folksonomy is eventually explicitly revealed to the audience in a way that it is not in the other projects. It is the audience's reactions to the events of the performance, including the current state of the algorithm and its results, that motivates the character's participation in the use of the folksonomy. The main character's memory of everything since the production began is limited by what the database contains, and the database contains only actions obtained since the process of the production began. The audience provides the mechanisms for expansion of the database through the opportunity to do another performance, their presence in the POV media, and—still under discussion—the expansion of the folksonomy itself by providing new tags. With each performance, the audience's existence and participation within the piece motivate the next one—with each audience gradually aware of past audiences' inclusion and impact, then eventually, theirs. (See https://vimeo.com/324643293/02d628f91b for details about the recent UCLA workshop of the piece-in-progress.)

Dramaturgy of Robots

Based on the work discussed above and that of many other contemporary artists, we anticipate that instructions for humans to create performances will soon be regularly accompanied by instructions for computers to participate in the realization of those performances. Just as scripts allow for interpretation, so too will these algorithms that are embodied in code. Unlike a traditional text, code used in performance will continue to enforce authorial decisions in real time on an ongoing basis, including the management and manipulation of cinematic media. They may even maintain connections to their authors—in real time or at any customized intervals.

After a talk on robotics (Bell 2018), anthropologist and Intel Senior Fellow Genevieve Bell cites a colleague's phrase, "any algorithm surrounded by an object is a robot." This can be extended to the mechanisms and rules of dramaturgical segments—actions—and how they are executed. Whether tactics of characters portrayed by actors, gestures within traditional dance drama forms, movements by puppets or objects, or progressions of frames, drama is generally crafted by maps of these actions. There are already some robotic roots advancing narratives—"puppeted" progressions— regardless of the psychological, emotional, or spiritual reality being created, or the cultural and human connections. The maps themselves are what motivates and elicits these intangibles. For thousands of years, there have been endless rearrangements of actions, within and across cultures, centred on events. The complexity and options of continued rearrangements, and their ability to incorporate cinematic media fluidly, now grow by the operational possibilities of code, which can not only be applied to the map for the performers, but also to the nature of the live events, the rituals justifying them—show by show for the performers, the system and the use of media—each with a new audience.

Digital media, including the cinematic image, are the inputs and outputs of this emerging robot dramaturgy, and its memory. Its expressive properties are malleable based on algorithms and how these function within the creative process. One could envision algorithms in counterpoint or opposition to expressive properties authored within text being layered in for a given interpretation, analogous to other types of interpretation. In a way, to allow for this more sophisticated, and perhaps interesting, direction, we are seeking to establish the role of algorithms embedded within the text, as opposed to merely accompanying it—and to find a way to invite and even celebrate interpretation by others of digitally driven, media-rich forms of performances that are often conceived/written and also realized by the same group of people.

Previously, the manipulation of media has often been left to directorial and design interpretation rather than being a core aspect of traditional playwriting. There is an arc in the works described here toward both input and output media processing being described by code during the writing process—code that will ultimately manipulate actual media, as in real-time filmmaking. A significant challenge—with some analogy to writing plays without code—is the practicality of creating code that expresses media relationships with sufficient generality for it to apply to any interpretation, yet with enough specificity for there to be "a piece." Conversely, there must be code that implements those generalities for a given production's interpretation and media specifics. (A simple example is how a character's "social media channel" in a script and its corresponding code might be manifested in a projection within one production and through an application on the audiences' cell phones in another. The same general manipulations of media apply to both, but what controls pixels on screens is quite likely different.) A full treatment of this challenge and how it might relate to typical techniques in large-scale software systems is outside the scope of this paper, but we address some new tools that could be applied to make it more feasible in the conclusion below.

In filmmaking, it seems that yesterday's post-production process is today's real-time, on-set capability. In developing use for algorithmically manipulated media, we have borrowed and been inspired by real-time techniques, taking us further and further away from historically cinematic processes and structures, though not necessarily from the visual formalisms that result from them. As conceivers of new works of text and code that allow for interpretation while we actively (via code) continue to participate in those interpretations, our challenges are structural: what to show when, what to capture, to whom to yield control or offer agency, and within what ruleset. In addition to Manovich, we might look at Eco's *The Open Work* (1989) and its notion of an artistic work completed in collaboration with, for example, its audience, as it intersects with the procedural art of Lewitt, in which a detailed set of instructions can be used anywhere to create the same piece of art. In our case, instructions executable by a computer are provided to implement the authors' objectives with respect to media. Lewitt said, "the idea becomes a machine that makes the art" (Cox, 2007). Such allusions sample just a few precedents; in fact, they omit decades of critical scholarship and foundational work from many digital artists, such as Lynn Hershman Leeson's use of POV and robotics in many of her works. There is a rich history to draw from as we consider how to write code that accompanies text, embodying authorial constraints while trying to offer mechanisms for agency. For us, the post-cinematic is the algorithmic, which leads to the question: What kind of algorithms do we have today that progress the possibilities for both digital media and performance?

Conclusion—A New Thread: Narrative (and Media) Extension by Machine Intelligence

The quickening of the interconnectivity of the world and the pervasiveness of media and their content is culturally unavoidable. The significance and utility of customs built into dramaturgical structures are perpetually shifting as that connectivity and our human place in it evolves. Performance, from its earliest roots, started as an entirely localized ritual—in form, context, and content. Generally, dramaturgical structures contain justifications for that ritual of sharing space, as well as shared vocal, physical, and visual languages and taxonomies (from shared culture and as created specifically for particular performances). Generally, individual components of the structures—actions—progress toward further justification and further contextualization of their rituals and languages. One specific gesture—within Kathakali, for example—or grand realization— for example, Oedipus—can have concrete relationships with the justifications for the performances themselves.

The potential difference between the drama of the past and the drama of the present is the difference between literature and the sort of literary robot described above, which can be distributed to enforce its abstractions and rules (algorithms) at any time in performance, including real-time execution of a given production. This opportunity shifts the demands on imagery from the cinematic and televisual worlds that have been a part of theatre since at least the 1950s to the real-time filmmaking (e.g., Watercutter 2020) of today: media can be accessed on demand from databases; tags can provide easy descriptive power over that media; algorithms can influence, curate and embody various types of agency and generative behaviour (and, then, may guide their further embodiment by performers or audiences); performers can closely influence not only media but the semantic structures organizing that media, or be tightly coupled to both, embodying the outputs of the algorithms; authors can continue to influence interpretations via shared code that becomes a platform for future stagings of a work. The social media-powered evolution of remix culture (Lessig 2008) motivates choices within dramas that can ask audiences to contribute, by adding, tagging, commenting on, or changing what they are given—all on top of new types of materiality and very different physical affordances—but we are also interested in the machine within a given work that enables the remix itself.

To conclude with a direction in which to head, we suggest ML and AI more generally offer ways to make increasingly sophisticated algorithmic mappings between inputs and outputs that can embody the layered interpretation that exists in any live performance. Specifically, we are interested in mechanisms that more easily map between the computational abstractions in code accompanying a text versus that used to implement media manipulations in a specific interpretation, as discussed above. More fundamentally, new types of cause and effect relationships between actions and media, with the technologies enabling them as metatheatrical bridges, and new opportunities to define cause and effect through algorithms with broad-reaching inputs and outputs, will result in new levers of control, interpretation, and agency. In *Entropy Bound,* we provide a system that analyzes an actor's (and character's) POV based on semantics we as authors have decided on in advance and then use to model and execute how that media is to be incorporated in a given production's interpretation. Crafting this new type of system is exciting, yet comes with it for authors new unknowns—about how a given work will change, incrementally and overall. It yields aspects of authorship to the lead actor, within a context that requires they make decisions in the moment, similar to how one psychologically, emotionally and even spiritually interacts with machines on a daily basis (e.g., what

to react to on social media, what to ignore, what to share and with whom, how to categorize connections, who to mute or unfollow) and what is done by the machines behind the scenes that orchestrate these rituals.

Compellingly for authors, ML offers an opportunity to train systems by example—of how to map complex inputs to complex outputs, to drive media selection and assembly. As we hope to have shown, there are many mappings central to the common threads we described: for example, from the world of the authors to the world of the directors, and from the story to the meta-theatrically relevant real world. AI, more generally, is an approach that models the world (or *a* world), uses inputs to refine that model, and generates decisions and outputs based on the model. Authors are already model makers, and for example, folksonomies represent a distilled model of a story world; the algorithms that manipulate media based on them describe relationships between elements in that model. These ideas, familiar in gaming, hypertext, and interactive media art, become more relevant to cinematic media in live performance as we gain capabilities to relate media to story abstractions in real time via ML and AI.

The cinematic image is a certain kind of memory for this robot dramaturgy—algorithms realized onstage with a traditional text—that borrows from the audience's visual familiarity with film. Each piece becomes a sort of purpose-built robot with digital and human parts, fluidly digesting and regurgitating the previously inviolable chain of twenty-something cinematic rectangles per second alongside each other element of the theatrical event.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. By "cinematic media," we mean visual media content that, in some substantive way, incorporates optical capture of the physical world to distinguish it (imperfectly) from purely computer-generated imagery. We sometimes use this two-word term interchangeably with "video" in this essay. Also, we mix plural and singular uses of "media" and "data" as needed to keep the language familiar within a given context.

2. Except where noted, in this paper, by "live performance," we mean a live event seen by some number of physically present audience members and perhaps also through Internet streaming or other means.

3. Our work has considered other types of media as well, such as sound and 3D graphics; here, we focus on cinematic media.

4. It's also relevant that media in theatrical performances is often already modular—broken into cues that are distinctly triggered—even if their effect on stage is that of a smooth transition. This already relates more clearly to the cinematic shot or edited sequence than to the unbroken experience of an entire film.

Algorithmic control of modular media is not that big a step; the bigger question is who controls the algorithm and how predictable it is.

5. For more on this piece and the one following, see Burke and Stein (2017).

6. A specific sub-area of AI in which algorithms learn to improve their performance over time.

7. Is the audience a metatheatrical bridge? In some sense, yes, as they are also the best friend's audience for his streaming show on the main character's life. That said, for this paper, we have focused only on technologies that have an author-controllable function as being such bridges.

8. Our goal with this is to use a language that is visually expressive and can be used in a variety of language contexts.

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ALTERNATIVE METHODS AND HISTORIES

Forest Tales: Toward a Practice of Eco-Cinema

Anuj Vaidya

Prologue: The Cinematic Forest

Imagine this: I sit, in the noon time sun, in an outdoor classroom in the Sagehen Experimental Forest.[1] The sun is streaming across the meadow, bouquets of wildflowers pepper the landscape, the edge of the grass is bordered by stands of white fir and pine. Suddenly, the wind picks up and plumes of yellow pollen blow across my field of vision. The gurgling of the nearby stream and the sound of the wind rushing through the trees is the soundtrack to this cinematic experience, with the occasional chirping of juncos, squealing of squirrels, and the beeps and clicks of my computer. I am in Scott MacDonald's "garden in the machine," distanced from the machinic grind and routine of modern life.

For MacDonald, this garden is eco-cinema—the practice in avant-garde filmmaking that "uses technology to create the illusion of preserving "Nature," or more precisely, that provides an evocation of the experience of being immersed in the natural world" (2004, 108). Eco-cinema facilitates a retraining of perception, a slowing down of time and the body, reorienting viewers toward a different mode of cinematic consumption. As MacDonald acknowledges, while current cinematic practices seek to intervene in the routine experience of everyday time, opening up space/time for escape, they simultaneously accelerate consumption. They speed up the disappearance of the very world that eco-cinema seeks to hold on to, the world that it circulates in. For MacDonald, then, cinema—a fragile medium that deteriorates and disappears—becomes a reflexive/reflective surface upon which to project the eventual disappearance of the world itself. "If we cannot halt the decay and transformation of the world or of cinema," he says, then at least through the medium of film, "we can hold on to it longer than may seem possible" (108).[2] But these pine trees that face me offer a different mode of engaging the cinematic. For if the cinematic is "of the cinema," then these trees are inextricably entangled in the histories of the moving image and their circulation: it was wood pulp that the Swiss brothers Camille and Henri Dreyfus put through the process of acid treatments and hydrolysis in order to create cellulose acetate, the material substrate that makes all celluloid possible. In my cinematic experience of the forest, however, celluloid is turned back into cellulose, revealing the im/possibility of turning film back into the material life it originated from. This is the cinematic as a process of reversal that frees the captured image, what Nadia Bozak (2011) calls "fossilized light," back into uncaptured light, releasing the spectacle of cinema back into the landscape. This is the goal of my practice, then: against all odds, to return the forest to the forest.

Anuj Vaidya is an artist, educator, and media curator whose practice inhabits the cusp of cinema and performance. Invested in process, and with a keen sense of the material ecologies of his practice, Vaidya seeks to engage a politics of retreat, where retreat is reflection, self-care, and reorientation toward an eco-practice. His collaborative project, *LRS (Larval Rock Stars)*, with artist/scholar Dr. Praba Pilar, provides the engine for his larval method. LRS rejects the category of the "human" and posits, instead, the "larval" as an emergent space which holds the potential for forms that are in the process of actualizing. Vaidya was co-director of the South Asian Film Festival in San Francisco from 2008 to 2019.

Forest Tales: An Introduction

Many forests inhabit this essay: historical and contemporary, imagined and situated, metaphorical and material, literary and performed. Together, they make *Forest Tales,* a queer, sci-fi, eco-feminist re-telling of the epic *Ramayana* as a *Sityana*.[3] The *Ramayana* tradition has spawned numerous counternarratives over space/time that challenge the normative inclinations of the tale (Richman). A. K. Ramanujan calls this the "pattern of difference." According to him, "every author . . . dips into it and brings out a unique crystallization, a new text with a unique texture and a fresh context." This is the ecology of the Ramayana tradition—what Paula Richman calls the "questioning Ramayanas"—which has sustained the diversity of this storytelling practice over centuries. In my crystallization, Sita—daughter of the earth—emerges not as human, but as forest, revealing the latent ecological potential of the epic. It is this metamorphosal quality that I hope to borrow for cinema itself, in this essay and in my practice.[4]

Forest Tales, originally imagined as a film, intended to extend the ethos of ecology into artistic practice by using human-powered energy solutions to produce the film. However, since the most environmentally friendly film is one that never gets made, the project now exists as an embodied performance of the film. Speaking with Sita is, therefore, not only a narrative strategy but also a critical method in my "restorying."[5] It offers the opportunity of speaking with the land and centres the agency of the forest and all its entangled relationships. It acknowledges the inseparability of material and metaphor, urging me to rethink eco-cinema as method, in addition to being a lively discourse on nature in/and cinema.

In the last few decades, Rama's narrative has become a powerful political tool in the hands of a growing Hindu supremacist movement in India, seriously undermining the democratizing thrust of the epic tradition. It has also been used to justify and intensify resource extraction from forested lands, pitting the neoliberal nation-state against the lives and livelihoods of Indigenous peoples (Guha). The moving image has played a significant role in this consolidation of Hindu power through a state-sponsored version of the epic, Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayan*, which was televised across the nation in the mid-1980s, reaching over eighty million viewers. Public intellectuals such as historian Romila Thapar (2014) were especially concerned about the fact that the phenomenal reach of the series was promoting a singular vision of the epic as the original and correct version of the story.

While the deployment of cinematic images as political propaganda has a long and gnarly history, Nadia Bozak argues that the cinematic apparatus has always already performed this function from its very inception, as a tool and catalyst of the "hydrocarbon imagination." She says, "indeed, cinema is intricately woven into industrial culture and the energy economy that sustains it" (Bozak 2011, 1). According to the Albert Report commissioned by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, every hour of on-screen media production is responsible for an average of 5.8 tonnes of CO_2 emissions, which is equivalent to one person flying around the equator in an airplane (BAFTA 2012). And while Hollywood is one of the leading sources of air pollution in Los Angeles, second only to the oil refining industry, it is the inordinate amount of energy that filmmaking consumes that is its "most glaring indulgence—if not abuse," according to Bozak (2011, 5). What cinema offers us then, in terms of its visual logics, is a "resource image" that makes "visible the subordination of nature as the root of industrial culture" (54). Bozak goes as far as to say that cinema even demands this relationship, spectacularizing and normalizing extraction and consumption.

As a filmmaker and artist not bound by the terms of the industry or the market, the fuel and energy needs of my production became one of the first sites of interest and intervention for my project. Toward this end, I started a project in 2013, in collaboration with Ashwin Vaidya, a physics and math professor at Montclair State University. Over the course of a semester, we worked with his students to research and build hand-crank and bicycle power mechanisms so that I could get a sense of what it would take to power an independent film production off the grid. Ultimately these experiments led me to recognize that while I could produce a film off the grid with much human labour, and a frugal aesthetic,[6] the question of distribution remained, for—as Bozak reminds us via Walter Benjamin—embedded in every image is the industry itself, and this includes the technologies by which the images are made, and also the technologies by which the images are circulated and consumed. So while I grapple with the implications and imaginaries of a decentralized exhibition system for my film, *Forest Tales* circulates as a performance. It is not cinema, but rather the "cinematic" that becomes the unit of inquiry here, moving me toward what Bozak calls a "resource-conscious image"—one that is "self-conscious of its cinematic relationship with the biophysical world" (2011, 190). Thinking cinematically means thinking with the apparatus (camera, projector, etc.) and the practices (story-boarding, editing, etc.) that cinema engenders, in order to make visible that which is rendered irrelevant by the logic of the "resource image." The goal is not to fix these sites of origin, or their trajectories; rather, it is to be attentive to how they emerge or unfold, what contours they follow, and what ontoepistemologies (Hunter 2015, 5) they enact—in short, to acknowledge cinema as a material and embodied process.

As film scholar Vivian Sobchack reminds us, given the radically material nature of human existence, the screen image is "where the aesthetic and the ethical merge and emerge in the flesh" (2004, 1). Our bodily ability to sense the world is what Sobchack calls "sense-ability," or sensibility—in other words, aesthetics. The range of our sense-ability, in turn, defines our "response-ability," or responsibility—in other words, ethics. In the rush to seize the pleasures of cinema and technology, Sobchack wonders if we have forgotten the "energies and obligations that animate our 'sensibility' and our 'responsibility'" (3). Rather than the body, it is embodiment that emerges as the frame of reference in her analysis. For it is in the carnal experience that sensory consciousness and fleshy materiality meet as an "irreducible ensemble," revealing "the intimate and materially consequential bonds we have (whether we deny or embrace them) with all others and all things" (3). *Forest Tales* takes Sobchack's concerns seriously and urges us to pay due attention to the material entanglements of our cinematic practices, in terms of both embodiment and environmental impact.

Forest Tales: An Eco-Cinema in Two Acts

The forests that you will encounter in the following scenes are part of a performance, *Forest Tales: An Eco-cinema in Two Acts*, that took place at the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco in December 2016. The performance, presented in two acts, simultaneously introduced audiences to different aspects of cinematic production through a participatory process, while also familiarizing them with the narrative thrust of my retelling.[7]

Story-boarding was the cinematic hook that allowed audiences a glimpse into the cinematic process in act 1. Working with illustrator Fei Rost over two to three months, I had developed a series of six to eight story-board frames to focus on during the performance. The production of

these images formed the backbone of the first act. Act 2, on the other hand, was set up like a film shoot followed by a "viewing" session, which in this case was a visualization. The following script for a documentary about the performance will introduce you to the structure of the piece and help you envision the embodied cinema that this intervention is attempting to perform.

All sound in the performance was powered by a bank of three bicycles, bringing into relief my concerns about what it takes to energize cinema. Volunteers were recruited from the audience each time the bicycle bank needed to be activated to produce power for the sound system. This process brought attention to the labour of embodiment as a prerequisite for the labour of cinematic production and spectatorship.

Forest Tales: Becoming-Sound. Photo: Anuj Vaidya.

Sobchack argues that we have an impoverished understanding of the visual as only that which is visible, whereas vision is an embodied experience that is felt as much as seen, helping us "make meaning in ways that inform and include but also far exceed the particular sense and image-making capacities of vision" (2004, 187). Following Sobchack's expansive definition of the visual, I invite you to envision the scenes described below with all your senses, as you read the script for a documentary about the performance.

The Script: *Forest Tales*

Forest Tales: Story-boarding. Photo: Anuj Vaidya.

TITLE SCREEN: Act 1, Story-boarding

CUT TO: The documentary begins with shots of Fei Rost drawing story-board plates as I describe the narrative of my film to him.

In my retelling, the sitas begin their journey as a million microbes in outer space, arriving on earth to seed and sprout a sentient forest—Ganga Satellite. When Rama, scion of the Om Corporation, encounters the forest, he falls in love and requests the sitas to take human form (as Sita). Curious about human ways, Sita returns with Rama to the centre of the Om Corporation, and there, transfixed by the drone of progress, she forgets that she is a forest, that she is a goddess.

Forest Tales: Sita emerges into the world as human. Illustration: Fei Rost.

As Fei sits on stage and works on story-board plates from the narrative, a close-up of his canvas is projected on a screen so audience members can see the frames come to life. As the performance unfolds, audience members are invited to unspool VHS tapes (of the nationalist 1980s television version of the *Ramayana*) and roll them into balls of videotape yarn—seeds for a future experiment.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE SCREEN: ACT 2, Becoming-Plant Rehearsal

FADE IN: The camera slowly zooms in on Margaret Kemp who performed the role of Sita. She is standing with her eyes closed. You hear me welcome the audience to the "behind-the-scenes" of this film shoot. They are invited to witness a rehearsal, where Margaret "becomes-plant" in a toxic forest. As the scene continues, Margaret's body becomes more and more rigid until she contorts and falls to the floor.

Forest Tales: Becoming-Plant, Margaret Kemp. Photo: Anuj Vaidya.

Presented as a meditation, this adaptation of Natasha Myers' *Kriya for Your Inner Plant*[8] (2014) considers the impact of e-waste on plant bodies. This rehearsal offers a frame to orient audiences to the scene that will be shot as part of the performance. This is INTERCUT with shots of the set. Behind the rehearsal area the stage is set as follows: there is a large red fabric that covers the floor; this is the toxic forest, which has turned into a site for farming digital materials. To the left, there is a mound of plants and wires that rises from the forest floor; to the right is a digital farm—batteries, circuits, and electronics growing out of the forest floor.

CROSSFADE

Forest Tales: Becoming-Camera #1 and #2. Photo: Anuj Vaidya.

TITLE-SCREEN: Act 2, Becoming-Camera

DISSOLVE INTO: A series of shots, each one capturing a different audience member looking intently through a viewfinder in their hands. Audiences are invited to take one of four camera positions to capture the shot: camera #1 is positioned stage right and is a close-up shot on Sita; camera #2 is centred, and is a high-angle shot also framed on Sita; camera #3 is stage left, and is a low-angle shot that captures Sita through the digital farm; and camera #4 is a pan shot that moves across the digital farm, coming to rest on Sita.

Forest Tales: Becoming-Camera #3. Photo: Anuj Vaidya.

The audience members have been charged with becoming-camera[9] and "capturing" the shot in their minds; this shot will become fodder for an "imagined cinema" later in the performance.

Forest Tales: A view from camera #3. Photo: Anuj Vaidya.

The shot is repeated six times so that all audience members get a chance to become-camera. For each take, I announce "Scene 1, Take x," and then call for "Lights"—at which point the electric lights are switched off, and the blinds rolled up to let natural light into the space. I say "Roll Camera," which is the cue for audience members to perform (in other words, to become camera), then "Roll Sound," at which point the sound designer/musician Ruby Mountain plays a track of frogs singing. Since the sound is powered entirely by bicycles, it takes a minute of pedalling each time before the sound cue comes on. Then I say "Action," at which point the camera #4 pans across the digital farm, across the floor of the bleeding forest, and finally comes to rest on Sita. The other three cameras remain static.

CROSSFADE

TITLE-SCREEN: Act 2, Imagined Cinema

DISSOLVE INTO: Close-up of audience members' faces, each one blindfolded with a blue piece of cloth.

Forest Tales: Imagined Cinema. Photo: Anuj Vaidya.

This is INTERCUT with Ruby Mountain live mixing a soundscape to accompany a visualization of a scene from *Forest Tales*. In this scene, a recurring dream of a golden frog has brought Sita back to the forest, and she arrives at a clearing where digital plants are being farmed. The toxic air causes her to faint, and when she awakens, she has been transformed into a cyborg-plant-human hybrid. At this moment, a monstrous golden frog appears above her and reminds her that she is a goddess. As the

frog begins to sing a mournful song, all of Sita's forest kin who have gone extinct since she became human come back and visit her, so she can grieve their passing.

CUT TO: Ruby singing *The Song of the Golden Frog.*

CROSSFADE

TITLE-SCREEN: Act 2, Screening the Rushes

DISSOLVE INTO: Audience members are taking off their blindfolds. The range of responses to the visualization is quite impressive—while some of the audience members have only seen colours in response to my leading visual track, others have imagined the scene as a comic strip, while yet others have imagined a three-dimensional enactment of the scene (as opposed to an image on a screen); only some people have a hard time imagining anything at all—focusing instead on the soundtrack. In a few instances, one person's descriptive imagery triggers another person's archive, so that they share a whole new set of images from their memory—images that they had not actually seen during the visualization, but that had been precipitated as a result of the conversation. Images from popular science fiction movies surface, both as part of the visualization and also as a result of the conversation: these are the mass media archives that we share. While many of the audience members are faithful to my instructions and restrict their visual imagery to the prompts they were primed with by the film shoot, others explicitly refuse to follow my instructions and instead opt to create their very own visual tracks, following their own aesthetic inclinations driven by their personal archives. In the end, each person's imagined cinema is unique, even though they all emerge from the same visualization/narrative.

FADE TO BLACK

Adrian Ivakhiv argues that the cinematic apparatus is a worlding machine, created through the interaction between its geomorphic lens (representations of space), its biomorphic lens (representations of life), and its anthropomorphic lens (representations of the human). "Together, these three 'morphisms' produce a world which is material at one end, social at another, and interperceptual in the middle," he writes (Ivakhiv 2011, 127). It is through the meaning-making mediation of human perception—both intellectual and affective—that the moving image acquires weight. It not only captures movement on screen, but simultaneously moves us emotionally and affectively, and it is in the feedback loop between the narrative and affective elements of the image, and between the cinematic world and the real world, that our imagination is sparked.

Based on feedback after the performance, it became clear that what was most effective about the performative mode of the cinematic described above was that it allowed audience members ownership over the act of image-creation. In this moment, the separation between the projected image and the perceived image was collapsed, putting into relief the corporeal foundation of cinematic practice which must work on and through the human body. The performative mode foregrounded the constructed nature of the moving image, while at the same time allowing audience members to "feel" the images. While the act of becoming-camera foregrounded the material ecology of cinema, it also simultaneously slowed down the perceptual mechanism, priming it for the imagined cinema to follow. Alternately, the act of blindfolding audiences served to heighten the felt experience of the image and narrative. The performance, ultimately, encouraged audience members to experience the inextricable relationship between the perceptual, social, and environmental

registers of filmmaking, allowing for a rich discussion about the ecologies of the moving image in the post-performance discussion. Ultimately, in the process of reflecting on the visualization, a different kind of cinema was invoked—a situated cinema that relied on the technology of the body to conjure up its hopes and dreams, and not one beholden to market-driven technologies and their self-sustaining ideologies.

Eco-Cinema as Deep Ecology

While my practice has always straddled the cusp of performance and cinema, it was only with *Forest Tales* that my practice began to engage with the material impact of the cinematic process, and that performance became an intervention into the cinematic process itself, rather than its representation. For instance, both my videos *Chingari Chumma* (2000, in collaboration with Tejal Shah) and *Bad Girl with a Heart of Gold* (2004), use performance as a strategy to stage an intervention in the representational politics of Bollywood films. In the former, Tejal and I restage a formulaic climax sequence from a 1970s Bollywood film and turn it into a queer S&M fantasy. In the latter, I re-enact four different roles essayed by the iconic star Helen, in order to enter her narrative universe and rescue her from "death by Bollywood." In both these cases, the "ecologizing" of the image was a function of limited economy, but also because the films were referencing existing cinematic narratives, a significant percentage of the visual imagery was accounted for and did not have to be produced.

Such DIY practices that consume and produce negligible energy and waste compared to the mainstream industry are typical of second cinema (or European art cinema), third cinema (or post-colonial/third world cinema), queer cinema, video and installation art, according to Bozak. But it is only in "fourth" cinema (or Indigenous cinema) that Bozak recognizes an embodied practice of eco-cinema, where material practices and representational concerns dovetail, and "video imaging technologies (now digital video) and Internet distribution forward environmental concerns . . . often in tandem with the preservation of Indigenous culture" (2011, 3). Ultimately, the eco-cinema that she invokes is a "fifth cinema"—a carbon-neutral cinema of the future—that proactively engenders an environmentally sustainable cinematic practice. It scales back, and performs, a fundamental shift in how we arrive at the intersections of digital culture and energy solutions—through "a digital consciousness and an energy revolution (as opposed to the skewed variants we have now, a digital revolution and an energy consciousness)" (11).

Bozak is, however, suspicious of the digital as a green alternative to celluloid as it opens up a whole new set of problems that have to do with how rapidly digital formats evolve, rendering older formats inaccessible (2011, 188). In material terms, the digital and the cloud are merely iterations of carbon-based media, with the digital building upon the plastic materiality of the celluloid and the cloud resting upon the materiality of a digital infrastructure, which in turn rests upon older telecommunications networks, which are themselves layered onto the transcontinental railway system (Hu 2015, 5)—all of which rely on electricity and a petroleum-based economy. While the celluloid acknowledges its materiality as a petroleum-based medium, the digital masks its materiality as a silicon-based medium by displacing the focus onto the structure of its information (as in the binary code), and the cloud pretends to be immaterial. As of 2014, IT-related services accounted for 2 percent of our carbon emissions (Walsh), equivalent to air travel, and with the rate at which we are consuming digital media, this does not seem to be a trend that will reverse anytime soon (Roettgers 2018). This is especially true given that we can access the cloud from the palms of our hands, at the

snap of our fingers—this is an intimate relationship. But a deeper intimacy lies in the materiality of cinema—celluloid or digital—which not only holds our representations but is slowly insinuating itself into our very material bodies in the form of micro-plastics (Harvey and Watts 2018), corporeally entangling us with the cinematic.

This is not to say that evolving media technologies have not had a positive social impact, providing access to marginalized voices and communities. Bozak notes (via Timothy Corrigan) "that video formats have since the 1960s enabled filmmakers to render history immediate and public, refusing the rigid temporality and textures of dominant narrative systems" (2011, 51). For instance, as film scholar B. Ruby Rich (2013) notes, the New Queer Cinema movement was made possible largely due to a revolution in camcorder technology that made it economically viable for independent productions. Similarly, the 3rd i SF International South Asian Film Festival,[10] where I have been programming since 2006, came into existence in a post-9/11 media landscape that equated "brown bodies" with fear and terrorism and was premised upon undoing stereotypes about South Asians in the mainstream media by using the same media technologies to tell our own stories.[11] But this visibility has come at the cost of a growing problem of e-waste,[12] what Bozak (via Jennifer Gabrys) calls the "residual ecology of the moving image." At the crux of the matter "is the counterintuitive premise that objects are made according to the enduring principle of planned obsolescence but are at the same time composed of materials (plastics, glass, compressed metals) engineered to endure" (Bozak 2011, 158).

The mainstream film industry, however, is not necessarily concerned with patterns and technologies of consumption. The conversations around eco-cinema in this context revolve instead around green production practices for the film and television industry. The British Film Institute and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts have spearheaded the Albert Consortium and the Greening the Screen initiatives,[13] respectively, to move the entire television and film industry toward best practices in relation to environmentally sustainable filmmaking. In 2017, the Producer's Guild of America, in partnership with the Environmental Media Alliance, finally released a Green Production Guide to reduce carbon emissions. They offer two tools: the Production Environmental Actions Checklist (PEACH), which certifies films with the "EMA Green Seal," and the Production Environmental Accounting Report (PEAR), which is a carbon footprint calculator for films.[14] In addition, they provide directories of eco-vendors offering a range of sustainable products and services from costuming to catering. In addition to these tools, carbon offsetting remains a popular method for productions to espouse sustainable practices in the process of acquiring a "carbon neutral" certification. But "eco" in this context is a function of the emergent carbon economy, and an attempt at "greenwashing." Amanda Scarano Carter, West Coast Chair of the PGA's Green Initiative, makes this clear when she talks about the "double bottom-line," putting economic priorities on the same level as social priorities. "A film should strive to do well financially, but also do right by society in general," she says (Warren 2019).[15]

This is a perfect example of what Arne Naess calls "shallow ecology," which he defines as the "fight against pollution and resource depletion" (1973, 95). Gregory Bateson argues that ecology cannot simply be understood as the environment; rather, we must recognize that there is no separation of the organism from the environment. Ecology then describes, as Naess elaborates, a set of relations that determine the conditions of life in a given environment. Naess argues that science and technology, while useful tools to study ecology, cannot ultimately be the arbiters of the quality and diversity of life, for they are themselves beholden to economic imperatives in modern societies.

These imperatives value growth and market expansion, conflating wants with needs (Naess, 104). Instead of ecology, then, Naess argues for an ecosophy—a philosophy of ecology—as that which should guide our actions. In his view, philosophy prioritizes cultures and relations and demands that we pay attention to the consequences of our actions. In the great philosophies of the past, he argues, "the importance of technology is recognized, but cultural values get priority of consideration" (Naess 1989, 87). Naess calls for a "deep ecology" instead, one that acknowledges the intrinsic value of all forms of life and non-life in and of themselves. Anishinaabe/Haudenosaunee scholar Vanessa Watts takes this even further, not only assigning value but also agency to the non-human. This is what she calls place-thought, the ability of the land to think and speak, not metaphorically, but in material terms. Whether we can listen and respond ultimately depends on our own "sense-ability" and "response-ability," to borrow Sobchack's terms. "Thus, habitats and ecosystems are better understood as societies from an Indigenous point of view," she says (Watts 2013, 23). Ecology in this understanding becomes synonymous with community, bringing human and non-human actors on a level playing field, and requiring an ethics of reciprocal care for survival. Ultimately, Watts homes in on the concept of sovereignty as that which separates Western and Indigenous relations to the land: in the West, sovereignty is understood as freedom, but in Indigenous conceptions, there is no freedom without responsibility.

It is this reciprocity that *Forest Tales* seeks to enact, centring the agency of the forest and making visible the enormous cost of cinematic practice—not only in terms of footprint, but also in terms of its "brain-print" (Townsend 2011). As Naess elaborates, the first step in the transformation of shallow ecology to deep ecology is in the transformation of our consciousness, so that we become aware of the consequences of our actions. French philosopher and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari calls this consciousness our "mental ecology"—an ecology of ideas—which he sees as becoming increasingly homogenized through "mass media and telematic standardization" (Naess 1989, 35). Ultimately, Guattari calls for a move toward a "dissensus," an active undoing of this singular way of thinking by expanding the notion of ecology transversally across the registers of the individual, the social, and the environmental. It is process, rather than product, that needs to be centred here, and Watts's concept of community rather than the market, so that we are not taken in by the shallow lustre of the image, but look deeper into the material entanglements of our practices to see who benefits from them, and at whose expense.

Epilogue: Larval Cinema

In his elaboration of deep ecology, Naess stresses the importance of action as a central feature of ecosophical practice. While the ends of this action are clear—a radical transformation of our social values guided by a philosophy of ecology, as opposed to a science of ecology—he leaves open many pathways for us to get there. Naess calls his own practice Ecosophy T, where T represents his mountain hut Tvergastein. This is a place with which he has an intimate relationship, and that has been an active collaborator in his thinking. He encourages others to find their own sites of place-thought, and pathways of reasoning, to arrive at the conclusions he has reached so that they are particular to an individual's own experience.

Following Naess's call to action, then, the eco-cinema that my practice seeks to manifest is a larval[16] cinema, a shape-shifting cinema invested in a complete transformation of itself, so that it is unrecognizable to its current hydro-carbon and digital incarnations. For when larval forms metamorphose, their material transformations are radical, their new bodies bearing merely the most

essential traces of previous forms. My experiments similarly engage with the most basic elements of the cinematic—kinesis, image and sound, and the spectator—reinterpreting and rearranging them in various permutations and combinations to arrive at cinematic incarnations that reveal cinema's entanglements with corporeality and energy consumption. For Thomas Elsaesser (2014), it is not just the unique mode of capturing kinesis/kinesthetics for representation that defines cinema, for the pre-cinematic (in the figure of Edward Muybridge) is already attending to motion in images. Rather, it is the relationship or arrangement between the image, the medium, and the spectator—what Elsaesser calls the "cinematic dispositive"—that populates the category of the cinematic. In this conception, the cinematic extends in time both ways—forward into a speculative cinema of the future, and into the past, as a prefiguration of the cinematic apparatus as we know it.[17]

A larval cinema, therefore, enacts a politics of retreat, and I use "retreat" here in its multiple valences. As a noun, a retreat is a place of refuge and reflection, a place from where to start again with renewed insight. As a verb, to retreat is to refuse engagement with the extractive "ecologics" (Ivakhiv 2008, 24) of cinema; it is as much as a strategic withdrawal as it is a reorientation: not a retreat *from* cinema, rather a retreat *to* the cinematic. The cinematic is a field of vision that expands cinema's purview beyond the image to include the apparatus through which these images are made, circulated, consumed, and eventually disposed of. It makes visible the embodied entanglements of cinema, which works through and on the body. Rather than viewing cinema as simply a cultural phenomenon, a larval cinema demands that we not separate nature and culture, but rather recognize cinema as a natural-cultural phenomenon that emerges from and merges back into the biophysical world. This is what Adrian Ivakhiv (2011) calls a process-relational account of cinema, where one must track the cinematic along its material, social, and perceptual ecologies, all together (mirroring Guattari's three ecologies). The separation of these ecologies is an underlying assumption of the project of modernity, which sets the human apart from nature, framing ecology as management of the "other" rather than as "self" in a relativist state of being. Instead, a larval cinema espouses a relational state of becoming, a de-scriptive ecology as opposed to a prescriptive ecology, one that asks us to pay due attention to emergent relations, as opposed to the management of difference. The management of difference is achieved through homogenization invested in consolidating power, rather than consolidating the kind of community set out by Watts above. While the digital mirrors the *Ramayana* in its democratizing thrust, facilitating equitable access to the modes of production, it remains far from delivering on this promise, as is evident in the still relevant "digital-divide" (Hobson 2012; Nelson 2002) and the continuing lack of diversity on screen and behind the lens in the motion picture industry.[18] *Forest Tales* stages an intervention into such totalizing narratives of the *Ramayana* and of cinema, both of which are invested in consolidating power by promoting totalizing narratives—of Hindu supremacy in the former case, and of the market in the latter case.

Sara Ahmed suggests that the world acquires shape through the force of repetition. This is, first and foremost, a matter of orientation, for this is the starting point from which the world unfolds for people, creating proximities. We tend toward what is proximate, in distance and significance, which in turn shapes our bodies by creating tendencies and dispositions, forcing us into certain alignments. It is just not just a matter of what worlds emerge when objects come into view, but also what opportunities are missed when objects recede into the background. In terms of cinema, Adrian Ivakhiv proposes that it is the cinematic gaze that does this work, shaping "our seeing and sensing of the worlds it produces and, in turn, the world we live in" (2013, 9). For as he elaborates, cinema creates virtual worlds that interpenetrate with our own. "If films produce worlds," he writes, "this productivity is rooted to some degree in a reproduction of the existing pre-cinematic or 'profilmic' world" (8), a world that "has become altered, othered from within, by

cinema" (25), and reduced to a catalogue of potential images. Following Ivakhiv, one might say that the cinematic framing increasingly precedes our view of the world now. The camera's mode of seeing the world is so pervasive that it has been sedimented into our perceptual ecologies since the advent of photography, and has only been intensified through the digital. In other words, the cinematic gaze is the acculturation of the eye to the view of the camera, such that it literally prefigures the world. If Vertov's kino-eye "[strives] to make the camera an instrument of pure vision" (8), then Ivakhiv reminds us that it is the filmmaker's eye that frames the "profilmic" world for the camera in the first place, becoming-camera and capturing the world as image through the naked eye before extending this frame to/through the camera itself. But it is also this very merging of the camera and the eye that might allow us to let go of the camera altogether, and reorient toward the material world around us, which is always already cinematic now.

This reorientation, which is also significantly a realignment, requires us to consider cinema's conditions of emergence, so that we may attend to its spectral histories and entanglements. The technology of cinema was decidedly a capitalist world-making project from its inception, where civic participation was imagined as the purchase of a ticket; now, it is also the purchase of a digital device. While "carbon neutral" is a fantasy that cannot realistically be achieved, for the very act of living itself is carbon-dependent, a larval cinema aspires to tread softly upon the earth. It aspires to be immaterial—a matter for the imagination so that the material world can continue to inspire our visions. Ultimately, *Forest Tales* centres the technology of the body in its practice of eco-cinema, asking participants to reorient themselves away from the screen, to face each other. It reorients itself away from singularities toward a multiplicity of voices and practices—in short, a forestation.

Forest Tales Production: Cast and Collaborators

Margaret Kemp is a film and stage actress, performance artist, who is currently an associate professor of theatre and dance at University of California, Davis. More information about her work can be seen at http://www.mlkemp.space/.
Fei Rost is a freelance illustrator who was studying fine arts and biology at the University of San Francisco when he participated in this performance. For more information about his work, please visit http://fehinfei.com.
The costumes and sets for the performance were designed by **Dana Kawano** and **Yoshinori Asai**, with assistance from **Julie Fong**.
Ruby Mountain aka Krystle Ahmadyar is an Oakland–based vocalist and songwriter who calls upon her training in jazz, experimental electronic and Afghan music to create compositions of love, resiliency and social justice. Her work can be heard at https://soundcloud.com/rubymountain.
The bicycle-power setup was from *Rock the Bike*, an Oakland-based nonprofit whose mission is to use pedal power as a way to start a conversation and a change in consciousness around climate change. More information about their events and products can be found at https://rockthebike.com/.

Notes

1. The Sagehen Creek Field Station is supervised by the University of California, Berkeley and hosts experiments by scientists and artists from across the UC system. http://forest.ucnrs.org.

2. While I invoke MacDonald's view of eco-cinema here, I acknowledge that it is only one of many modes of engagement with cinema ecology. As Adrian Ivakhiv catalogues in his *Green Film Criticism and its Futures* (2008), the field has blossomed since MacDonald's initial use of that term in relation to experimental cinema, to include critical analysis of wildlife and nature documentaries, and representations of the environment, the non-human, and dystopic climate futures in mainstream cinema. More recently, there has also been a critical focus on the material ecologies of media production, as in the works of Sean Cubitt and Nadia Bozak. Ivakhiv (2011) seeks to extend this by examining cinema as an anthrobiogeomorphic machine—one that has repercussions along vectors of production, representation, and perception. It is these latter variants of eco-cinema that I engage with more deeply in this paper.

3. The *Ramayana* is a living, breathing tradition in India and across large parts of Asia, shaping conversations around *dharma* (or ethics) in personal, social, and political matters to this day.

4. I engage queerness in my project along the axes of both image (or representation) and image-making as a strategy to decentre normative readings of both Sita and cinema. For a more detailed engagement with the queer underpinnings of this project, please refer to *Forest Tales: Restorying the Ramayana* (QED, 2019).

5. Qwo-Li Driskill (2016) engages restorying as a tactic toward restoring the past as a radical decolonial future in the present. They offer the doubleweave, a Cherokee basket weaving technique, as a metaphor for story-telling, drawing attention to the *asegi* (or queer) narratives that remain hidden in-between the two skins of the basket. It is within this framework that I situate my project, *Forest Tales*.

6. While the hand-crank mechanism worked in theory, it failed to be a practical human-powered energy solution. On a weekend shoot, I managed to get three minutes of camera power for a mobile phone from twelve hours of hand-cranking. Bicycle power, while significantly better (only needing four to six hours of labour for two hours of battery power), still only allowed for a very stringent shooting ratio.

7. While this was the first performative iteration of the project, it built upon a previous text-based incarnation, *Forest Tales: Proposal for An Ecological Cinema*, which took the form of a press kit for a forthcoming production of the film. The press kit can be accessed at https://handspuncinema.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/foresttales_proposalforanecologicalcinema.pdf.

8. The kriya is a yoga-inspired meditation/visualization which leads participants in an exercise of becoming-plant.

9. A more recent incarnation of this project used the concept of a "motion-picture" in order to engage the cinematic. In this performance, audience members were asked to "become-sprocket" (rather than become-camera) and advance a series of still images, literally putting pictures in motion, while I performed the soundtrack.

10. This is an annual event organized by 3rd i Films, the oldest South Asian media arts organization in the United States: http://www.thirdi.org.

11. It must be noted, however, that the aspirations of most indie filmmakers is not to remain independent forever, but rather to use platforms such as film festivals to eventually plug into industrial networks of cinematic production and distribution.

12. According to a recent UN Press Release (2019), the world produces 50 million tonnes of e-waste annually, only 20 percent of which is currently recycled. Global e-waste output is set to reach 120 million tonnes per year by 2050 at current rates of consumption.

13. See http://wearealbert.org/ and http://www.bafta.org/initiatives/sustainability/video-greening-screen.

14. See http://www.greenproductionguide.com/.

15. As long as cinema is tied into capitalist modes of production—for instance, the arts and culture industry contributes 4 percent to the GDP of the United States (Florida)—it is "eco" as a function of the economy that continues to be prioritized over "eco" as a consideration of the environment. Further, these strategies are

largely voluntary in Hollywood, which means a very small percentage of the industry adopts these eco-friendly practices.

16. Spawned through my distributed intelligence with artist/scholar Praba Pilar (and our collaborative project *LRS: Larval Rock Stars*), the "larval" is a shifting position that is always moulting, always metamorphosing toward embodiments and practices that are contingent and in response to political imperatives. The "question mark" is the engine that activates and engages our arousal toward a more-than-human ethics that seeks to move us away from necrotic egocentrism and toward biotic ecocentrism.

17. Roma Chatterji (2015) illustrates this through her work on the *Pat Chitrakars,* an itinerant story-teller community of West Bengal who use scrolls to tell traditional stories from the epics alongside modern tales (such as the story of 9/11). The celluloid and the digital also engage the scroll, but in different ways—the former by collapsing the image into the cinematic reel, and the latter by turning the scroll into a linear form. Therefore, in the next instalment of this project, I intend to use scrolling as a method to illuminate what Elsaesser calls the "history of imagined futures in the past," and the "rewriting of the past in light of the future" (2014, 48).

18. The 2015 #OscarsSoWhite controversy revealed the disparity in representation and access for people of colour in Hollywood to this day. Similarly, it has taken over a century of cinematic production for Dalit-made films, such as Nagraj Manjule's *Fandry* (2013) and *Sairat* (2016), to achieve popular success in India.

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Interviews on Critical Race and Trans/Queer Approaches to Filmmaking: Incommensurabilities—The Limits of Redress, Intramural Indemnity, and Extramural Auditorship

Frank Wilderson III and Cecilio M. Cooper in Interviews

PART I: Frank Wilderson III interview with Cecilio M. Cooper

CMC. What made you decide to begin filming *Reparations Now*?[1]

FW. I was in my last year of grad school. It was something like 2004. I was working a lot of odd jobs and came into repeated contact with people like Wanda Sabir, who's in the film, and a college instructor at Alameda Community College and N'COBRA (National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America). N'COBRA was a reparations-oriented black political organization. I was very interested in the concept of what it would take to repair us, black people, as slaves. People like David Marriott, and Saidiya Hartman, and [Hortense] Spillers, and Jared Sexton, had put forth this idea of "absence" as being the essence of black suffering, as opposed to "loss"; and reparations [depended] on a concept of loss, on a concept of having had something that was taken away. Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death* gave us a way of thinking about slavery as an abstraction; as a relational dynamic.

The bane of studies about slavery up to this point was the fact that scholars *thought* they were describing slavery, when in point of fact what they were doing was reporting on the experience of being a slave. Patterson is the first person to come along and correct this, much the way Karl Marx was the first person to come along and intervene against the empiricism of economists who *thought* they were describing political economy, when in point of fact, what they were doing was reporting on empirical events of political economy. Patterson's book, *Slavery and Social Death* defines slavery as

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Frank B. Wilderson III is an award-winning writer whose books include *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid* and *Red, White, & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*. His literary awards include the Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Legacy Award for Creative Nonfiction, the American Book Award, the Maya Angelou Award for Best Fiction Portraying the Black Experience in America, a National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship, a Jerome Foundation Literature Award, the Eisner Prize for Creative Achievement of the Highest Order, and the Judith Stronach Award for Poetry. Dr. Wilderson was educated at Dartmouth College (BA), Columbia University (MFA), and UC Berkeley (PhD). He spent five and a half years in South Africa where he was one of two Americans who held elected office in the African National Congress during the apartheid era. He also worked as a psychological warfare, secret propaganda, and covert operations cadre for the ANC's armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe. He is a professor and the Chair of African American Studies at UC Irvine.

a relational dynamic. And he identifies three constituent elements which define slavery at every historical period and in every society which had slaves. Slavery, Patterson's research shows, is not forced labour (although slaves are often forced to work); nor can it be defined by the fact that slaves are in chains (although slaves were often in chains); nor can it be defined as unwaged work (although this is, indeed, a common experiential reality of slavery). Patterson argues that slavery, at the level of a definition that holds across time and space, is "social death." And social death has three constituent elements: general dishonour, natal alienation, and naked violence, or what Hortense Spillers and others have characterized as openness to gratuitous violence.

Now, where I and other Afropessimists depart from Patterson is in his assertion that all groups of people can *become* slaves. This is not a statement that we disagree with. It's the fact that Patterson includes black people in this. In other words, we would argue that there is no *before* slavery for blackness—no prior moment of freedom, or social plenitude. In his description of slavery, Patterson talks about it in terms of a narrative progression. In other words, he argues (correctly, I might add) that every ethnicity and social formation has either enslaved people or been slaves. He talks about being "recruited" into social death: in other words, one is a captive in a battle. Prior to this moment one was not considered socially dead by the world. But at the point of capture one is given the "choice," physical death or social death. So, that's one way. Another way is to be caught in a dragnet while minding one's own business. This would be the way Patterson might describe what happened to Africans during the Arab and, later, the European slave trade. We wouldn't argue with the empirical evidence. But we would use Patterson's own brilliant definitional correction to refute this argument: in short, black people were socially dead to the world *prior* to the round-up.

Again, Patterson uses words which signify a narrative progression, such as "recruitment" and "recruit." These words fit in, perfectly, with a narrative of loss—so they ring true for social formations that have *experienced* social death at one or another point in history. But our argument is that the word "Black" as that which denotes a social formation does not have an existence prior to its imbrication with social death. Around the time I was checking out N'COBRA, and preparing to make the film *Reparations . . . Now*, I was beginning to face this contradiction. And, I was beginning to face myself, someone in his late forties, still a student, getting varicose veins working in a bookstore—all this coupled with the fact that there wasn't a moment in Blackness prior to social death; that our suffering bore no analogy to the suffering of other oppressed people. Even if they had *experienced* slavery. That's a long-winded answer to say that I was becoming hyperaware of the paradox between what N'COBRA was saying about how to redress slavery in a quantifiable manner and a deepening sense that not only can we not quantify the loss, but we can't use the language of loss to talk about what happened, and is happening to us. There was a tension between that and a sense of insanity that I think all of us feel, as black people. And that insanity stems from not being able to have a heritage of loss, which is what every other person has.

CMC. The opening of the film includes Abbey Lincoln's "Down Here Below." What about the song (lyrics, performance, etc.) resonated with the film's themes?

FW. When I first heard Abbey Lincoln sing that, I said to myself: "Well this can't be a song like most ballad singers from that era, about love that was lost, or the rejection of a lover." It really sounded to me like a song about the sense of being Black in the twentieth century, and feeling oneself as still in the hold of the ship. I wasn't really sure that that's what she meant by that, because there are other singers who I listen to, and I'm kind of an aficionado of a certain kind of black female ballad singers from this period, 1955 to 1975, so I like Gloria Lynne, Sarah Vaughan, Carmen

McRae, and Nina Simone, and Abbey Lincoln. In my youth, in college the 1970s, only Nina Simone would come to campuses and sing in an overtly revolutionary way. So, when I heard Abbey Lincoln sing "Down Here Below," I wasn't sure she meant it the way I *heard* it; not until I saw a video, where Abbey Lincoln talked about the lyrics exactly as I had imagined they should be described. She began speaking about the trauma of slavery, in the present tense, meaning, it's about what we are going through *now*, how we suffer, *now*. Yes, empirically, it has strong resonances with the past, with the Middle Passage, but it also *explains*, lyrically, the slave *relation*, which is a constant, even after the chains come off. And she was also crying as she was explaining what the song is about. I was pleased to know that how I had interpreted the song was aligned with Abbey Lincoln's intentions.

CMC. I'm glad you brought up tense. I'd been thinking about time within the song and throughout the film's narration. There are things happening with the tense of the prose in both the monologues and voice-over. When the narrator opens, he communicates using repetition. He relays a story about a past event with present tense verbs to an absent interlocutor. How do you address temporality in the film? How does time structure the narrator's testimonies, interviews, the film's pace, etc.?

FW. In graduate school, Jared Sexton once told me that for Jacques Lacan there is no time in the unconscious. So as I am retelling a past incident of racial profiling, I am also saying—through a persona who is also me—that this event is not something that happened in the past; in effect, it had happened before it happened and is happening now, as I speak. All this is another way saying that for a black person it's not a question of whether one will be marked as a criminal, but a question of when. The happening itself is timeless.

One of the things that I want to say is that I'm really thankful for all of your questions. Some of them are actually showing me more about what's going on in the film than I actually understood myself.

To give you a little footnote, I was so involved in film theory from 1997 to 2004 when I finished my dissertation, and I wanted to engage film in a different way, as something other than an object of critique. Charles Burnett came to UC Berkeley in 2004 and he led a workshop for a small group of black graduate students; we were to go out and make a short film. And I was also at the same time taking an extension class at UC Berkeley with my wife, Anita, on documentary filmmaking. So I was really trying to get my hands working in film, and to think about some of the ideas I was thinking about theoretically, and not just be a film theorist. A year later, I had raw footage for *Reparations . . . Now*, and I also scripted my monologues and footage of the interviews. I edited it with the help of a major editor, Leticia Houston. It was important to me that she be a black woman to edit this film. Leticia saw possibilities of using jump cuts in the interviewee's testimonials. I think it worked well.

Again, my monologues were scripted and were very different from the interviews of Wanda, the college instructor, or Caroline or Adrian, respectively the homeless woman who sells *Street Spirit* newspaper and the UC Berkeley undergraduate. Those interviews were all spontaneous. I wrote my monologues without making me as the director look like he completely understood slavery as social death. I wanted him to not completely understand slavery as social death—I wanted the *film* to understand that. I wanted him to struggle, like most of us do, with the fact that we cannot find an empirical ballast to anchor our notions of slavery to.

The opening monologue was really about something that had just happened. I was in beautiful north Berkeley where I lived and going to my chichi laundromat. This White woman rolled up on me as

I'm folding my clothes and just started saying "I know you've been coming here to steal these clothes." [*laughter*] I was so paralyzed, because here I am, with a lot of facial hair, long hair, 215 pounds, 5'10," and if I'm going to stand up for my rights? I don't think so. In the end I'm going to look like the aggressor. So, I purposefully let her harangue me so people would be aware that I was the one being attacked. Then a Native American woman said, "Actually you're accosting him." And it really wasn't until that Indian woman said, loudly, "He didn't do anything, you just picked him out and you started yelling at him," that I began to stand up for myself in that laundromat.

In the direct address, my persona is breaking the fourth wall and trying to tell a story about that incident in the laundromat.

It's interesting that you should bring up the issue of repetition in the three opening vignettes, when I'm talking to the spectator about the laundromat incident. When you said that I was "talking about a past event with present tense verbs, and there is an absent interlocutor"—yes. Your question has made me understand something that I didn't understand when I was making the film: that in those three vignettes I'm speaking to a non-Black person. Well, I knew what I was doing but I only now really *know* who I was speaking to.

I'm trying to get somebody who is not Black to have empathy for what it means to be Black in this world; and the third time, I realize that this can't happen because black speech has no auditors. It's as though we can't be injured. Injury is that which happens to another species. And it takes some rhetorical scaffolding, some outside supports—to say, as in the Native American woman in the laundromat, "Hey, he is not the imago, he is an innocent washer of clothes"—before that speech actually has any auditors. This is what is happening as my persona is trying to tell the story; the only difference is that unlike in the laundromat, on screen I have no human scaffold, like the Native American woman's coming to my aid. On the screen there are no human supports, so the persona just gives up.

CMC. How different audiences are hailed by the direct address or are able to witness the interviews seems to be tied up with the frames through which people articulate their claims. These could be claims for reparations, justice in a broad sense, or even rethinking a statute of limitations on criminal offences. Can you say more about how you—outside of the film and in your life as a student—were wrestling with these questions about slavery? Given that people say that slavery has been over for so many years and black people need to get over it, how do you deal with these incongruent ways of dealing with loss . . . or something more extreme than loss? I think they're definitely addressed by your interviewees.

FW. Can you say a little bit more about what you're saying there? I'd like to know a little more about your thoughts and then I'll say something.

CMC. I suppose it's the idea that the losses or voids, more acutely, that emanate from antiblackness, from social death, are not quantifiable in any kind of chronologically coherent way. We can also wrestle with how people think about redressing transgressions or consider what form reparations can take. Forty acres and a mule, for example. When you start trying to do the math involved in remunerating the true costs, the numbers cannot add up. The black speakers in the film seem to principally engage a black interviewer. However, these conversations happen in the context of documenting their experiences negotiating with non-black people over these questions. So it's a kind of a testimony to these failed interactions between black people about redressing black deprivation.

Even in the black intramural interactions, black people's failed experiences of trying to grasp at a grammar percolates in the film.

FW. Yes, yes, yes. I think you've said it better than I can say it. That's very helpful.
One of the ideas you brought up was the impossibility of quantifying black loss, the paradox of measuring absence. What I find is that when showing this film in a room in which there are over 80 percent black people, the black people in the audience are able to engage the film in a discussion which has a kind of form that Jared Sexton might call psychoanalytic, in that the discussion is seeking to express and unpack a unique grammar of suffering (social death) without monumentalizing the collective ego with narratives of recovery or resurgence, without trying to find a way to monumentalize the ego, without searching for a way to make black flesh whole. That's probably the most rewarding kind of exhibition experience for me. Why it's the most rewarding is because the way we treat each other, whether it's intra-black class—I don't want to call it warfare, because we're not entities—but you get what I mean, it's class conflict, or gender or sexual orientation conflict, those are all ways in which we as black people find what Sexton calls "borrowed institutionality": a way of attempting to *be* in ways that we can never be.

It's only by destroying a black person in our midst. Where the real work would be to a) accept that subjectivity is what happens parasitically on us, and in contradistinction to us, and so we should be able to find a way for all of us to be worthy of our suffering and wallow in that contradiction. In the next move, b) would be an analytical condemnation of all those people who do have the capacity to be subjects. And I feel that when this film is shown in a room that is at least 80 percent Black, that those kinds of things can happen.

But I've showed it at Stanford once. Only 10 percent of the audience was Black. And, during the Q & A it became clear to me that they were not comfortable with the film, or with themselves. It was as though they were watching themselves being watched by the non-black people in the auditorium. So, they, quite understandably attacked me and the film as being depressive and even divisive. They said the film was a real downer. And some of them chastised me for my negativity. But I don't blame them for the way they jumped out of a bag, I blame Stanford. What must happen to the chemistry in the body if one thinks one is being watched? They must have felt watched. I understand that.

And it became very clear to me that black people who were there—young adults, eighteen, nineteen, and in their early twenties—were desperately in need of salvaging their identity and presence and their social and economic capital that they felt had accrued to them because they were students at Stanford.

What went down is the lights came on in that space at Stanford and I expected to have the great black-dominated conversation that I'd just had up the road at the Grand Lakes Theater by Lake Merritt, where it was 80 percent black people. Instead, the *Black* folks at Stanford were angry at the depiction and said it was demoralizing and depressing. And I was shocked, because that was the same response that I got in Orange County when it was shown to a group of white senior citizens in the extension school at UC Irvine. One woman at UC Irvine, a white retiree who spent her working years as a high end corporate lawyer, asked me condescendingly—but thinking she was being helpful—had I ever seen *Eyes on the Prize*? And didn't I think I should have made an uplifting movie like *Eyes on the Prize*. "Because your film is a real downer." Well it's the same thing that the young black people were saying at Stanford, and I really believe that it's because it's very hard for black

people to inhabit these multiracial spaces particularly like the Bay Area, where there is a pressure on the entire gathering to universalize the way in which we imagine suffering. These settings produce crowding out scenarios that prohibit the exploration of social death, black suffering.

CMC. No that works, that works. I'd like to now ask you about the mise en scène—the film's scenery, set design, and art direction. The actor's costuming during the first monologue complements what's happening in the story that he tells. It also seems to visibly accentuate the failure of certain kinds of "borrowed institutionality" like class or gender in the case of the first speaker. It hearkens back to how I imagine your exhibition experience with the black students at Stanford. It seems like you are speaking to their fraught position in the film. The speaker's carriage in the opening sequence is echoed in the staging of the third and fourth monologue. There's the preppy sweater over the shoulder, the non-fat latté, there's a patterned background, this initially cocky presentation, and then the image in the frame dissolves. It seems that the director anticipates black challenges to the film rooted in the borrowed institutionality inflected by wealth with these editorial decisions. Would you agree with that?

FW. Yes, completely, completely. When I write memoirs and stories I try to find the places where I would be embarrassed and then embarrass myself even more [*laughter*]. Nikki Giovanni was once asking James Baldwin "How can you write about your father?" And she was saying she didn't believe she could write about her father. And Baldwin said "When the book comes out, it may hurt you [in this case, he means his father], but for it to hurt you, it had to hurt me first. I can only say as much about you as I am willing to say about myself. And that has happened to anyone who has ever tried to live." I've thought about that quote for many years. There are two aspects to it. If you're saying something about someone else, you're saying something about yourself. But many writers shy away from the second aspect. I realized that I was brought up as that person who believes that he's an extraordinary middle-class black person who can be heard because of those extraordinary accoutrements of class, gender, and sexuality.

So, in the opening monologues I'm also trying to deconstruct that; for example, the subtitles when I have my cashmere sweater on, wearing penny loafers. The caption beneath my image reads, "Dr. Wilderson, a Negro Filmmaker." [*laughter*] This is all about fungibility—Blackness is fungible; a fungibility that this persona, the director of the film, cannot accept, because he's invested in the idea that he has agency as a subject. But by the time we get to the third monologue, we find that he comes to realize that the world isn't going to see him as being anything more than that which was expressed to Fanon as he rode the train in France: "Look, a Negro!"

CMC. I want to also ask you about the demographic scales at which the film addresses reparations. Wanda Sabir talks about us being Afrikan in a pan-ethnic collective sense. Adrian talks about black students specifically on the UC Berkeley campus. Caroline was also broad about it, but the filmmaker specifically invokes his nuclear family. I wanted to ask you about how the idea of community, kinship, and family trouble the capacity for reparations given that the filmmaker articulates ideas through both patrilineal and matrilineal lines in non-identical ways.

FW. Tell me more about the patrilineal and matrilineal lines as they are working for you, because I'm not sure I theorized that as I was making the film, but I might have intuited it.

CMC. I'm also intuiting. The captions "Negro," "same Negro as last time," and the anecdote about how "we were Negroes in 1962" reference changes in racial terminology and the politics of naming.

Negro circulated before African American, Black, or black American became fashionable. But thinking about the politics of naming also brings to mind the story about how you acquired your last name, Wilderson. It's inherited from your father's side of the family, who acquired it in an almost arbitrary way. I believe your story was that the overseer mandated that people on one side of the street get one name while those people on the other side got another. According to heteropatriarchal convention, progeny inherit their father's surnames. The anecdotes about your mother, on the other hand, chronicle how she was raised in a debutante ball and that she wrote an open letter to her white neighbours. These are spoken alongside family photos. Some are intact, but there is also a torn, amputated photo of a male figure. To me, these things abstractly percolate around black matrilineality and patrilineality in the film.

FW. Yes, even though "black family" is always a term under erasure—a form of what Sexton calls "borrowed institutionality," which is to say no institutionality at all . . . even though this is the case, you're right, my slave name comes from my father's lineage of incarceration, *his* family's plantation, if you will. And so the film is also guilty, at some level, of this sense that patriarchy, heteronormativity, and filiation are indeed operative, when the evidence shows that they are not. But there are also images and aporias that work to disrupt this illusion; the still photography, for example: family photos that are torn or with people literally cut from the image or, for example, the photograph of my father, the torn, amputated limbs of a male figure. Making the film helped me realize that the violence against Blackness is a kind of terror that is really impossible to make empirically coherent.

At first, I wanted to get this point across by using lynching photographs from the book *Without Sanctuary*. Thank god for Saidiya Hartman! She told me "Don't do that!" for all the reasons that we know from the first part of her book *Scenes of Subjection*: the repetition of the spectacles of mutilation and violence against black people has a pleasurable affect for viewers; a form of pleasure (like seeing black people beaten and shot and mutilated in Hollywood movies) that *instantiates* antiblackness with an intensity that eclipses the pedagogic effect one had hoped the images would have.

Somewhere along the line, my wife, Anita, and I were going through all sorts of other photographs to use, ones that could take the place of the lynching photographs. And she said, if we could portray absence through the way in which we edit and display the still photographs, we might get the same effect as we had hoped for with the spectacular violence of the lynching photographs. I'm not sure my father would be happy about the way we've cropped, if you will, the photograph of him in his late twenties.

CMC. One of the most compelling lines of the film was spoken by Caroline when she talks about this "hate look." She says, "I know most of you blacks have seen this look, how most white people look at you, this hate look." I find that fascinating. It brings me to the journal editors' prompt for this special issue: What are the political implications of using a camera? So much about antiblackness is expressed through the visual realm. Media forms like photography, film, and video became perfected through ethnographic representations of African-derived people. Then also, in terms of filmmaking, work like D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* comes to mind. So I wanted to know what you thought about being a black person actually using the medium of film, which has been such a technological instrument used rhetorically to convince audiences to disparage blackness and emplot our senses of self in relation to that disparagement. It teaches us all how to look and hear each other and is implicated in rendering black people abject. What does filmmaking open up? What, for you, are its limits? How does it enable your exploration of reparations with regard to antiblack visuality?

FW. That's a very good question, I'm not sure if I can answer it. But let me approach in a roundabout way. Throughout various segments of *Black Skin, White Masks*, you get various *kinds* of Frantz Fanons. For example, there's the Fanon of disalienation. In fact, this is the Fanon, Fanon the psychiatrist, to whom the *intent* of the book is probably most consciously aligned. It's also the Fanon that I appreciate the least. This is Fanon the Healer, the Fanon who says, "I'm going to cure my white wife, or the white prototype, of her White superiority complex; and I'm going to cure myself, the black prototype, of hallucinatory whitening through a process of psychoanalytic intervention." His main objective as a healer is to provide the black psyche with what he calls a "progressive infrastructure."

Now, in my own work, I've decided to do a hijacking of Fanon and of Lacan by saying that what Fanon does for us is show us why a progressive infrastructure of the psyche is actually dependent on antiblack violence, even as he tries to use psychoanalysis and psychiatry to bring that about. Fast forward to 2000, and David Marriott writes *On Black Men*. In the first chapter, on photography and lynching, he intimates two contradictory things. One, can there really be a black unconscious if desire in the black psyche is always overdetermined by the question: What does this white person want of me? And he follows that up later in the book in "Frantz Fanon's War." In both chapters Marriott is asking, "Can we even call the black unconscious an unconscious?" He also says something to the effect of he wants to provide a progressive infrastructure to the way we look at lynching. So that's a laudable desire coming from someone whose writing I trust more than Fanon's writing itself. And so what I see by that is that he does have pictures of lynching in that article, but he's built around it a scaffold of critique, a meta-critique, which disturbs the way in which one—the way in which you or I—would look at a lynching photograph and find it irresistible. As opposed to saying, "That's *someone* in a tree," it would be, "That's *me* in a tree." He's saying that if we provide a progressive infrastructure, which is a critique that shows how the mutilated body actually produces white community and how it is essential to the development of human capacity, as opposed to thinking of lynching as being a discriminatory act, then maybe that interrupts in some way the immediacy of the psychic identification.

So I kind of hoped that *Reparations . . . Now* would do something like that, because I do believe antiblackness is a construct. But I don't believe that film, or an article, or a series of psychoanalytic sessions is going to have transformative capacity for black people in the way that it does for the working-class subject or the non-black woman or LGBT people who are not Black, where the problem is the problem of counter-hegemony: anti-gay, anti-trans, anti-worker, anti-woman hegemony that can be countered by hegemonic incursions. I think that ultimately an ocean of violence of the same magnitude that created the situation is required to undo it. But I *do* think that intra-black discussions do *something*. And I would leave it at that, at the "dot dot dot," the ellipses between "Reparations" and "Now." *Reparations . . . Now*: I don't know what it does, but it does something.

CMC. Could you speak some about your lighting choices? For example, you shot in black and white vs. colour. Certain sequences also feature lighting effects and heavy shadow.

FW. In the documentary filmmaking class, the teacher thought that colour would bring more life and movement to the film if it was just going to be three or four talking heads with close-up shots. I really resisted that.

I did all the interviews of black people about their *experience* just by myself. So all the camerawork was done by me, lighting, everything, because it would be impossible for the interviewees—Wanda, Caroline, and Adrian, and even myself—to speak to *two* people on the other side of the camera, one who is Black (me) and one who is white (Anita), without being aware that they were speaking to a mixed audience. I wanted the interviewees to forget the racial dynamic of a mixed race film crew (or the audience members who would later see their testimonies) and to speak Black-to-Black as much as possible.

Everyone had their preferences as to where they wanted to be interviewed, and I adhered to that. Caroline wanted to do it where she worked, on the street, selling *Street Spirit*. Wanda wanted to do it at the College of Alameda, but do it in a private room. Adrian said, "If I'm going to tell these stories, I'm going to need about three or four drinks." [*laughter*] So we drank wine in my apartment. Especially when I talked to him beforehand, when I realized where what he had to say was going—the murder of this little girl in Las Vegas—that needed to be much more intimate and in a darker surrounding not so much for a spectator—this is bringing me way back—but for him and for me. So that I darkened the room as much as possible in that shot, so he could speak about these things. And I should say that each of these interviews was about two hours long. I tried to make these encounters as intimate to the people as possible and that meant no crew. Just me and the interviewees. Of course, it helped that I had a prior relationship with all three of them. Caroline and I had done political work on the streets of Berkeley against storeowners who were calling the cops on people panhandling outside their door. Wanda and I had been at the College of Alameda together and we might have crossed paths at N'COBRA meetings. And Adrian and I knew each other from UC Berkeley.

CMC. You seem to be incorporating things that—from what I recall from the reparations conversations at the time—seem beyond their scope. This includes sexual violence and the effects of trauma on the body. Both Wanda and the narrator remark upon this in the film. There's a point where he says, "I can't do this anymore," exasperated. His voice falters and there's a change in his posture. He deflates. Wanda talks about experiencing anxiety or panic attacks and describing sensations in her body. Do you think that these invocations of black embodiment already fell neatly within the scope of reparations organizing then? Or, by including them, are you troubling the normative framework of reparations? Are you intentionally interrogating how embodied experience figures in way the reparations' demands have been articulated, heavily inflected by black Marxist/radical traditions? I'm trying to better understand why the white Berkeley student's assault and murder of the black girl figure so significantly here.

FW. Thank you for that. "Reparations Now!" was emblazoned on the t-shirt N'COBRA had. I wore that t-shirt a lot in the late 1990s. It was the word "reparations" and the word "now" with an exclamation mark. This is precisely what I did with the title and what the film does—whether I was knew I was doing it or not. It disturbs the Marxist notion of economic reparations as being an adequate form of redress. The meetings for N'COBRA had to do with: "What is the best way to quantify what happened to us?" As though a number could be put on it, the absence of being, and as though it's a problem of the past. You know, "What is an acceptable sum, figure, amount of property, for redress?"

Jared Sexton used to say, "I will talk to you about crime and I will talk to you about punishment, but I will never talk to you about crime and punishment together." He wanted to separate these two conversations, which Americans typically lump into one conversation. The common sense linkage

between punishment and crime has as its base the assumptive foundation that the state, the United States in particular, is ethical and all that needs to happen is for us to work out strategies to realize its ethicality. But if you separate crime and punishment, then you can actually have a critique of punishment and the state's right to do it—you find yourself able to focus on state power rather than "criminals" as a problem for the state. And a critique of crime (sans the anxiety over punishment) allows for a more comprehensive critique of capitalism, at the very least, if not antiblackness. By separating the two conversations, by forcing the interlocutor to enter into a different framework of discussion, suddenly the state and civil society become "criminal," for lack of a better word, and we stand a better chance of discussing the ethics of power rather than the morality of individual behaviour. In my use of ellipses between "Reparations" and "Now" I wanted to distance the problem from the putative cure. I didn't want a film about solutions. I wanted a film about the problem—one for which our epistemological universe avails us of no coherent solution.

Slavery did not *happen* in the past; it was *happening* now. I wanted to get at, not directly or analytically but symptomatically, the ways in which you cannot analogize black slavery to any other form of loss. It was between the late 1700s and 1840 that 389,000 black people were bred like cattle into four million people. In a milieu of this magnitude of sexual assault, words like rape and sexual violation lose their salience in that kind of situation. And it also means that something has happened in the libidinal economy—the collective unconscious and the world, which is still with us. In other words, Wanda, who is having a panic attack and whose stomach is hurting, and Caroline, who says, "It hurts, it just hurts," because the hate's there, and Adrian who has lived his college years (what for most people are the best years of one's life) with "no protection against the storm"—in other words, these people are living a kind of total vulnerability that the Marxists would tell us had gone away with 1865.

And it's also something else. What other groups experience through the state is a kind of fear—a fear that if I cross the border, I'll be sent back; a fear that if I don't act like a proper heterosexual woman I'll experience violence or I'll be ostracized. It's always *if, if, if, if, if*. But I think that what we as black people live through is not fear, but terror. Terror cannot be sourced psychoanalytically—it's affective, rather than emotional; terror is not what happens to us in sketchy situations, terror is the air we breathe. We have these interviewees who are differently gendered, and differently classed, and they all live day-to-day with a sense of terror; their psychic relationship to the world hasn't changed since the nineteenth century. And what that implies is a structure of violence unlike the capitalist structure of violence or the patriarchal structure of violence. Hegemony is not in play here. What we have instead are pure relations of force.

CMC. The last thing I'll ask you is this: The narrator's final sequence ends with a direct address. He turns his head towards the camera and says, "Now you know." After having taken us on this journey—and this is in 2005—what is it that you would want different parts of your audience to know? And what do you know now that you didn't know then? Is there anything else you'd like to add?

FW. [*laughter*] I need to be honest with you. I see my work as an academic and as an emerging filmmaker as being parasitic on certain institutions in order to labour in such a way so that I can foster intramural conversations between black people about our suffering. So I'm not sure that I want any non-black person to know anything. [*laughter*] Which is odd, because so many non-black people—in Europe, in the States, and in Canada—have picked this film off of Vimeo and used it in their classes. They are seeing pedagogic value in it. A film like this can only educate preconscious

registers of the mind and it cannot educate the unconscious, because the unconscious goes on faith, not analysis. (Well, let me say that we can't *know* how the unconscious is being informed or transformed by this film.) Though what I do think is that we as black people need and appreciate interventions that allow us to talk about what we're going through without analogizing it to what other people are going through. And that sounds like a really simple thing. I'm sixty-two years old. If I can die and people at my funeral are able to say, "He shat on the inspiration of analogy" [*laughter*], or "He shat on the very inspiration of the personal pronoun 'we'"—I mean write *that* on my tombstone—I would consider myself having had a satisfactory, a successful life. [*laughter*]

PART II: Cecilio M. Cooper interview with Frank Wilderson

FW. You've had quite a sweep in terms of your life trajectory and your professional career. You have been a performance artist, a filmmaker, and an activist. Throughout the entire time, you've always been an intellectual. Maybe you could give the reader a brief idea of the sweep and arc of your career, from artist to where you are now.

CMC. When I arrived in the Bay Area, I was a college dropout. I had spent the years prior involved in student organizing at the local and national level. Ultimately, I became disillusioned with higher education and withdrew. Then I spent time working at Planned Parenthood, labour unions, and LGBTQ nonprofits. In hindsight, I think these failed experiences of trying to do political work or advocacy in coalitional contexts indelibly informs the analysis I have now.

Washington, DC was still home when I first flew out to perform for a San Francisco arts festival. I relocated to Oakland and eventually enrolled at Mills College. The fall after graduating with my bachelor's degree, I began PhD coursework. My undergraduate focus on ethnic studies and intermedia arts intellectually complemented what I was trying to explore onstage. My entrée into performance came through queer nightlife: gay bars and queer parties, being a drag king, and doing burlesque. I found myself drawn to addressing sociopolitical questions through performance while divesting from providing entertainment. Queer nightlife led to the more formalized art scene. The Bay Area art establishment is very multicultural. Its funding and priorities are bound up with surrounding educational institutions. In terms of getting into film or video, it was me trying to experiment and use a grammar that was different from writing prose in a linear and cogent way. I tried to more abstractly wrestle with some of the issues I was failing to fully capture onstage.

FW. You've made two films that pack a lot of punch. One is called *Uncle Samima Wants U* and the other is called *SHADOWPLAY*. I can see how your theoretical work on the ontological status of Blackness as being void of a narrative arc has either explicitly or implicitly informed your choices, with respect to cinematic and narrative strategies. And I do want to ask you about that. First, maybe we could discuss something to ground the reader. Neither film is structured in a kind of traditional narrative way, but we sense that you're making a direct political comment on the 2008 election when Barack Obama was elected in *Uncle Samima Wants U* by starting off with the advertising war between Coke and Pepsi, which prepares us for the parallelism in the way you inter-splice the cuts between Democrats and Republicans on the campaign trail. The film was made long before the Trump v. Clinton campaigns, I should say, because there's a way in which someone on the left in *this* moment in time might look at the film and take issue with your critique of electoral politics; especially the segment near the end of the film where you have the cartoon characters from South Park being chastised by Puff Daddy for not being involved in his "Vote or Die" campaign. Your film is

definitely not coming down on Puff Daddy's side: you're actually lampooning the slogan, whereas South Park is promoting the slogan. But what would you say to someone who would argue that, "You are expressing a form of defeatism which we don't need at this moment, especially with the (2018) interim elections drawing nigh, with the need to get rid of Trump's congress and to get rid of Trump." And it's not just non-black people on the left who would say this. Ten years ago, *Black Agenda Report* refused to publish an article I submitted to them during Obama's first campaign. It was titled, "Why I Don't Vote." The rejection letter said, "This is just not a line we can support." How would you respond to someone who is saying that your film is doing something like that?

CMC. I made *Uncle Samima Wants U* in 2008 and I returned to it again in 2012. At that time, I was leaving a performance studies PhD program to enter an African American studies PhD program. I found that certain corners of black studies were especially preoccupied with the prospect of Obama's reelection. Conversations around electoral politics active back in 2008 were resurfacing. I remember so much clamour—especially on social media—insisting that it was vital that black people vote. There was a party line that everyone who was not white, cis-het, Christian, and wealthy should be Democrats. Here I go ruining everybody's fun with this film. I don't think I would care enough to make that kind of statement now as I'm even more divested from those kinds of mystifying representations of the state than I was then. But I'm grateful for the opportunity to reflect upon it and its significance for the trajectory of my thinking and artistic practice.

Uncle Samima Wants U was one way of arriving at my current disposition. Alongside audience polls from reality shows like *Dancing With the Stars* or *American Idol*, I use the Coke and Pepsi wars as a thematic thread. I end by presenting water as a forgotten alternative to the soft drinks. This could mean abstention, at minimum, but is open to other interpretations. In other words, we can have different kinds of agitating conversations that don't inevitably climax with us acceding to neoliberal or progressive terms of engagement. Their agendas still mean me harm, so I eschew supporting them any longer. I'm trying to say that I couldn't care less about maintaining decorum, feigning respectability, or cosplaying democratic citizenship. I know that makes me sound like a terrible person to certain individuals. [*laughter*] Oh well.

Many like to say that we disrespect our ancestors with this position, because they supposedly died for the right to vote. I think some were murdered while seeking some semblance of citizenship, avenues for recognition, or reprieves from terror. Our reflections on their aspirations are speculative. And many have basely reduced them to being about casting ballots. How? I think that we all really need to interrogate what we believe we know about what our forebears wanted while also taking inventory of our competing desires to instrumentalize them. We're not fully aware of what our desires are much less being able to assess their ability to be fulfilled.

I've screened the film as part of a performance for both east and west coast audiences. There would always be black people in attendance who would be fuming with me. Certain artists and professors even refused to speak to me from that day forward.

FW. It's really interesting that if someone thinks that the film is so insignificant, that it would be significant enough to them to go to the heavy lifting of not speaking to you—that's really something. That says it has a really, really hard effect. One of the things that makes *Uncle Samima Wants U* easier to get on a first screening than *SHADOWPLAY* is the fact that there is a duality that is very pronounced throughout—whether it's the back and forth editing of commercials you splice in there, where one commercial says Coke and the other commercial says Pepsi; or the back and forth editing

of the commercial where two Coke and Pepsi dispensers are warring with each other in an empty hallway, spitting out cans toward each other; and all that is inter-spliced with film footage of news events, of Democrats and Republicans speaking.

What's interesting about both your films is that there is no voiceover narrator, no one to guide the spectator. But there's a conventional guide to *Uncle Samima Wants U* that's easier to get to than *SHADOWPLAY*. In *SHADOWPLAY*, you've got three films from the 1930s: *Morocco*, *Zouzou*, and *Blonde Venus*. You're doing loops, and jump cuts, and collision montage, and associational montage, and intellectual montage. So we've got two Marlene Dietrich films that are being sampled and one Josephine Baker film. Black women in one Marlene Dietrich film, *Blonde Venus*, figure prominently throughout. Then, of course, there is Josephine Baker in her film. None of this is separated or contextualized enough and the speed at which it happens means that its effect is really subliminal. What are you trying to do here?

CMC. Thank you for that question. I'm going to backtrack a bit. *SHADOWPLAY* was created as a stand-alone film unlike *Uncle Samima Wants U*, which accompanied an onstage performance. There's no narrator in the latter, because the costuming, make-up, props, lighting, and movement further signal to the audience. The entire look is an aesthetic mashup. It's a red, white, and blue amalgam drawing from burlesque, drag, and minstrelsy. Samima is a portmanteau (Aunt Jemima + Uncle Sam). As a backdrop to the presidential campaign, I used those two figures to trouble the idea of kinship, race, and gender in the national imaginary. I hadn't yet read Hortense Spillers' work when I created these two projects. However, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe" immediately resonated with me when I read it years later because ideas around a possessive grammar were already permeating my art.

While the Coke-Pepsi wars sequence projects behind me upstage, I chug from two litre-sized soda bottles. Then I start mixing what remains in each bottle, repeatedly pouring back and forth one into the other. Then I continue drinking the brown mixture until I pantomime vomiting it up into a metal bucket. I'm staging a visceral response to the film's contents, which continue to screen. It's didactic, much like the labour organizer's mandate to "stay on message." Nuance is sacrificed in order to get people to come away with a clear thesis. *Uncle Samima Wants U* was far more agitprop in its approach than *SHADOWPLAY*'s conceptual tenor. I had six and a half minutes to pithily communicate something to the audience. But what gestures, words, materials, sounds, or images are available for someone like me to use?

Along with some of my own camera work, I used a lot of found footage for both films out of necessity. I was a black queer trans person living in poverty. It's what I could afford as I didn't have full access to the lights or camera equipment I needed then. I applied the skills I already had mixing music and ambient sounds to create something else with found footage. By the time I began making *SHADOWPLAY* in 2013, I was ready for a break from displaying my body via performance. It's intended to be a stand-alone experimental short. My introduction to film in academic contexts came via feminist film theory. When approaching *SHADOWPLAY*, I thought about Sergei Eisenstein's montage as a Marxist editing technique alongside D. W. Griffith's investment in narrative editing. Black filmmakers had historically drawn from a variety of traditions, but I was trying to figure out for myself how I could most ethically engage formal strategies whose assumptive logics strained to exhaustively account for antiblack violence. My concerns around desire, violence, and representation could not be accurately conveyed with linear logic. So there are sequences in the film that

intermittently employ different kinds of montage—jolting collisions and others that use consistent rhythm.

In one scene, I contrive an interaction between two characters from separate films by manipulating a continuity editing technique, shot-reverse-shot. I directly cut from a shot of the white male soldier played by Gary Cooper in *Morocco*. The composition centres him in the frame; he is turned toward his right in a three-quarter profile head shot. He stares ahead as he lustfully bites from an apple. I cut from that directly to a full-length shot from *Zouzou* where Josephine Baker slowly pivots. She coquettishly displays her sparkly swimsuit while staring off to her left. Then I cut back to Gary Cooper. The shot-reverse-shot gives the impression that they are in the same room looking at each other. They're actually from two separate cinematic worlds, but I edit them together because I'm arguing that they belong to the same conceptual territory. Even though Baker does not appear in these Dietrich films, she's absolutely ensnared in ways that Dietrich's white femininity is constituted and consumed. Baker figures cinematically as Dietrich's shadowy foil.

FW. Very interesting. I think that might be a way to leap to where you are now. You're writing this monograph called *Other | Worldly Possessions: Territory, Slavery + Cosmography in the Early Modern Atlantic World*. I think given what you said, we would be remiss to read this work, which will one day be a groundbreaking book, as a pure cultural history. If I'm hearing you correctly about *SHADOWPLAY*, what you're suggesting is that Marlene Dietrich's capacity to wallow in the machinations of femininity is fuelled by what is happening to Josephine Baker, that these two things are not separated, if I'm hearing you correctly.

CMC. Yes.

FW. Well here's a question then. How did your practice as a performance artist open up unexpected political implications—not just in your craft as a performance artist and filmmaker, but what I'm really getting to is your ensemble of questions today? In other words, how did you travel (and I think we're on to something with this Marlene Dietrich parasitic femininity bit on Josephine Baker), how did you travel from *SHADOWPLAY* and *Uncle Samima Wants U* and your work as a performance artist to your current writing? One of the things that I was struck with within your overview to the monograph was the way that you speak of blackness as "chimeric negation." That sentence: "Blackness, as chimeric negation, flourishes as an organizing principle of space—both bodily and geographic," resonates with what I'm now seeing in *SHADOWPLAY*. But I'd like to hear more, and if you could bring us deeper into your thinking.

CMC. I arrived at examining race, gender, sexuality, and empire through the films *Blonde Venus*, *Morocco*, and *Zouzou* by way of one of my earlier performance pieces on the Hottentot Venus. As a black queer nonbinary transmasculine person, I was becoming more aware of the parameters through which I was being consumed onstage and in the larger world. Furthermore, I found that the sexualities and gender expressions of the non-black people around me were inextricably tethered to mine, like a spider-web. At that time, I still prioritized trying to be in conversation with cisgender/non-trans black feminist artists and intellectuals around hypersexualization of black personhood.

There is an unspoken expectation that I as a performer with this embodiment operate with a self-effacing spirit of generosity toward the audience. But I hated the audience by the end of it. [*laughter*] The hostility I experienced at the hands of the audience, producers, performers, academics, and

funders over a five-year period became exasperating. I determined that channelling my interests away from performing into scholarly work was a more sustainable option. So I pursued a PhD rather than an MFA. In the last piece I performed publicly called "Mammy Dearest," I eat a white baby drenched in Aunt Jemima syrup. The more honestly I communicated how alienated I felt from the world in my work, the more antisocial it became. It was a horrific fantasy turned spectacle, which was one way to respond to the steadfast reminders that black sovereign subjectivity was a gendered impossibility that upheld the plantation family romance.

This wasn't purely a historicist exercise in accurately documenting past events. It emerges creatively out of my day-to-day experience as the black queer nonbinary transmasculine person. My capacity to claim the territorial integrity of my body-space was structurally impaired to near foreclosure. A flashpoint for trans suffering is negotiating infringements on our capacity for bodily autonomy. How does chattel slavery inflect the grammars through which that suffering is expressed?

Territorialization became a preoccupation and ultimately the theoretical core of my writing when I began to seriously contend with territory not simply as nonbodily, extracorporeal geographic space. Territory encompasses space, lifeforms, knowledge, and culture. By tracing how blackness figures in early modern scientific discourse, *Other | Worldly Possessions* examines how territorialization in the Atlantic World during the Age of Discovery occasions black dispossession. The violation and capture of enslaved black bodies not only fuels how air-land-sea area is invaded and seized, but also how fields of knowledge are apportioned and secured. What are the affective registers through which humans are emplotted into space and place? How is blackness disavowed in the ways that non-black people understand and map the world? How does antiblackness shape how black people inhabit Atlantic World territory and debilitate their claims to it and pursuits of possessive individualism? These questions extend back to my performance work, where instead of investigating only the overdetermined condition of black femininity or black masculinity as discrete phenomena, I also meditate on the sex-gender binary as a racialized axis of Atlantic World territorialization.

FW. What you were just saying about the way you are being consumed on stage—you don't actually talk about that directly. But I think that if you think about a queer trans person and Wanda Sabir, in the film, as a cisgender heterosexual person, you're both being consumed as academics also. If I'm to read here between the lines of your "Overview" to the critical writing, what you're saying is that in the audience of academia—which is of course shot through a prism because they're not all in one room like an auditorium—there's a certain kind of aggressivity and violence that a black trans person experiences—and in your situation, because you're bringing black studies into a place in which traditional scholars say it doesn't belong, there's two whammies against you there, if I'm correct. Maybe you could tell me more about that.

CMC. Dominion over spheres of knowledge is expression of sovereignty and then some. Territorialization isn't only achieved by occupying landscapes, but also entails the racialized delimiting of epistemological arenas (Wynter 2006; Judy 1993). Another scandalizing aspect of my experience is the vitriol directed toward me because of my racialized gender expression, sexuality, class background, birthplace, and political investments. I'm extra. In academic contexts, I'm disproportionately targeted because of that excess while simultaneously being overlooked. Sabotage, isolation, gaslighting, surveillance, harassment, punishment, and even assault are all things I've encountered. The perpetrators vary. Many would prefer to wield me as a mascot that does not speak for itself. I'm prized most as a vector through which others can accomplish themselves. The antiblackness of it makes the violations more egregious than the words "illegibility" or

"tokenization" can convey. The interdisciplinary terrain of gender & sexuality studies especially authorizes queer non-trans scholars and cis-het women to deploy bodies like mine in ways that persistently prioritize their suffering at our expense while simultaneously working to sanitize black trans people out from the field's salaried personnel. We function more readily as rhetorical objects through which they craft self-serving arguments than their interlocutors. This stifling dynamic is among the chief reasons why I shifted from doing a practice-as-research dissertation to a theoretical/archive-based dissertation. Bound up with the phobic responses to my embodied comportment, my competence and claims to authorship are relentlessly attacked. The disruption some think I present is exacerbated by the atypical objects and vantages that animate my writing. I do not believe that black studies should be reduced to exposé, uplift, or statistics. We should think more capaciously about its potential.

FW. Yes, yes. Let's go more into your writing. I see this as a major book. There's a lot at stake in this project, you're showing that thought itself—the capacity to imagine meta-categories like possession, verticality, chaos, and matter—is predicated on an imaginative labour and the raw material of this imaginative labour is black flesh. In other words asking: why is the European capacity to imagine the witch hunts predicated not on white women—even if they're being burned at the stakes—but on blackness as property that enables such rituals of demonization? Once you start saying that the persecution of white women as witches is predicated on the imaginative labour of antiblackness, it compels us to rethink the assumptive logic of late modernist humanist discourse.

CMC. By foregrounding blackness's role in early modern witch hunts and trials, I am able to show how antiblackness dually inflects possession as a territorializing expression of 1) property rights and 2) spiritual infestation. This allows me to show how demonological obsession with exorcising blackness' supernatural infiltration is inextricable from chattel slavery's transmogrification of black flesh into property.

Antiblackness is unthought in the attendant scholarship. Blackness circulates discursively, but is cordoned off from discussion of racial slavery's interface with the occult sciences. That conceptual sequestering fascinates me. I'm intrigued by demonology and alchemy where antiblackness operates even in the seeming absence of actual black persons. Matter putrefies during *nigredo*, alchemy's "blackening process," and purifies during *albedo*, its "whitening process," so that it can undergo gendered transformations into more perfect forms like gold. I'm not saying there's an isomorphic relationship between what's happening with blackness then and now, but resonances abound in how it's been weaponized toward the purpose of conquering, modifying, and managing territorial procurements across time. Alchemical tradition, spanning the eleventh to seventeenth centuries, is no exception. Its chromatic, chemical, and symbolic distinctions influence contemporary schools of thought like posthumanism or new materialism, for example.

FW. You use the word "fuels," and that's a really interesting verb to think about how antiblackness *fuels* the capacity to think chaos, to think matter, to think verticality. "Possession" is a key word in your work but you have complicated this paradox with another paradox, which is to say that in addition to the concept of possession—which brings to mind the accumulation of fungible items, commodities, territorialization, as well—all this stuff becomes legible through possession of a black body, a body that cannot possess itself. How can we come full circle, through these concepts, to the work that you've done as an artist?

CMC. The idea that African-derived people's blackness made them more susceptible to being demonically infested or possessed or having the territorial integrity of their bodies occupied by another isn't unrelated to being possessed by the property relations of a white enslaver at the time. The idea that black people were vulnerable in this way means that wherever they go, they're mobile and motile landmarks. They index and trouble sovereign claims they can never possess. The vicarious claims made through us can cover an array of things.

FW. I want to loop this back again to your work as an artist. You said earlier that a lot of the ways in which you're theorizing sexuality, methodology, and antiblackness today were not fully developed back in the day when you made these films and were doing certain performances with them. One of the things I see—and this is in my own work also—even though politically *Uncle Samima Wants U* is at the level of a preconscious narrative, it is imbued with questions that neither you or I are really concerned with anymore. There's a way in which the cinematic strategies are resonant with this impossibility of Blackness to cohere as a body at any scale—that you're writing about today. I see that operating in the ways in which, especially *SHADOWPLAY*, refuses to let us be stabilized by a narrative arc. The rapidity of the montage, the ways in which—when Gary Cooper does say something, we have to strain to hear it as though we're not an auditor.

I think that what I'm trying to say is—let me make it anecdotal: Steve McQueen, the black artist and filmmaker, made a film, *Hunger*, about the IRA prison strikes. For the first very long opening sequences of the movie, there's no dialogue. There's just the acoustics of captivity and the visuals of captivity. For a long time throughout the film, there's no continuity in the way in which the narrative works normally in another film along the same situations, which is called *Some Mother's Son*. The way the continuity works with the latter film is explained to the audience: who's suffering, why are they suffering, and what's at stake for Irish redemption.

None of that is happening in the first part of Steve McQueen's film. There's an absence of coherence. And I think this has a lot to do with the fact that we've got a black person making a film, even though the film is, putatively, about some white people. You see what I am saying in terms of his grammar of suffering? It has infused itself into this film, which is why some people from Northern Ireland that I spoke to really hated that film. [*laughter*] I see that intuition working in the film *SHADOWPLAY*'s comfort with the absence of a narrative spine that hooks us in, because ultimately, what you're going to say years later in 2018 is that other people's narrative spine comes from their parasitic relationship to Blackness. Do you agree with that or did I miss the boat somewhere?

CMC. That makes sense. It's not possible for someone like me to intelligibly emplot myself within the narrative space of a film or even modernity at large. So why try? Blackness is maligned as a disaggregating force. Rather than masochistically trying to domesticate back through the Pillars of Hercules and the vestibule into the house of culture, why not let it spiral throughout me to limn something else? This methodological impulse de-prioritizes resolution or prescription. I think alienation is an incendiary position to think from rather than flee. Black people—we are estranged from imaginations that nonetheless need us. This is a world-making and world-breaking conundrum. However, I don't think that only needs to be our problem. It's everybody's problem.

FW. Exactly. I think that's a beautiful—well not beautiful [*laughter*]—but a good place to end it for now.

~

Frank Wilderson and Cecilio M. Cooper have had final editorial control of the script of these interviews.

Note

1. Frank Wilderson's *Reparations . . . Now* is described in 2008 as a work in progress: a documentary with an audio track consisting of black people reflecting on issues associated with the dilemma of slavery and its ramifications in the twenty-first century—ranging from the sublime and banal to the vitriolic and bloody. The film's images are selected and combined in a pastiche of emotional and intellectual montage so as to compel the viewer to contemplate the terror of everyday black life and the impossibility of "repairing" a slave. Interviews with politicos, scholars, artists, and workaday and homeless black folks are cross-cut with still photography and swaths of the director's monologue about the psychic and political wounds of a middle-class black family that descended from the White Castle Plantation in Louisiana (now a "historic site" / combination bed-and-breakfast resort). The film deliberates, without resolution, on unnamable loss. http://www.incognegro.org/reparations.html.

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Installed in Chalk: Mapping Screen Performance in *Coccolith* (2018)

Christopher Brown

Introduction

This article will explore the mapping of screen performance in *Coccolith* (2018), a film directed and produced by the author that was shot in the Ramsgate tunnels in Kent, UK. Although screen performance broadly refers to acting undertaken for the camera rather than theatre or installation performance, the following argument makes a case for an approach to filmmaking that draws on notions of site-specific performance, more readily associated with installation art. For once we conceive of a camera and an actor as being installed in a particular place and then proceeding to perform that place, the concept of screen performance gains greater dynamism. While land and geological formations can themselves be considered as performing entities, as agentive in shaping a screen drama, this article will focus on human responses to the chalk tunnels—on approaches to filmmaking that support actors in offering affective and embodied responses to place.

The Ramsgate site comprises a railway tunnel constructed in 1863, a scenic railway tunnel built in 1936, and a network of air raid shelter tunnels dug in the late 1930s. The passageways extend over five kilometres under the city and have been central to a range of historical experiences in the maritime port. Following fifty years of closure, a section of the Ramsgate tunnels reopened to the public in 2015 following a Heritage Lottery investment. Visitors (at least those accessing the tunnels legally) are taken on guided tours of the half-kilometre-long section of the tunnels that is safe to enter, the same portion in which the film was shot.

The film was conceived as a practice-as-research project that sought to represent the characters' experience of the tunnels in a manner that challenged paradigms of commercial filmmaking, which tend not to value place in its own right, instead using it as a backdrop for an existing story. *Coccolith* instead owes a great deal to traditions in experimental and art cinema that have sought to rethink how place is conceived in relation to narrative, visualization, and performance (evident, for instance, in the work of Andrei Tarkovsky, Monte Hellman, Tsai Ming-liang, Claire Denis, and Apichatpong Weerasethakul—some of these influences are discussed below). Everyone involved in this project— particularly the director/producer, director of photography, sound designer, and actors—sought to develop a drama that responded to their experience of the tunnels. The project developed structures for screen performance practices engendered by a consideration of this specific environment.

A human response to the tunnels might be, for instance, physical (the actor lowers their head to avoid a low ceiling), perceptual (the actor stares into a vanishing point), memorial (the tunnel provokes a recollection in the actor), or associative (the tunnel makes the actor think of something else). I will argue that when a film project is structured in a way that enables the actor to affectively

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respond to the characteristics of geological material, it allows for a form of site-specific performance through which the relationship between place and space can be explored and critiqued. Tuan (1977) refers to place as a centre of "felt value," endowed with specific socio-historical and cultural meaning (4), in contrast to space, the three-dimensional interval of distance between objects and "that which allows movement" (6). Yet Tuan suggests that in experience, "the meaning of space often merges with that of place" as, for example, "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (6). The article concerns itself with how human experience of an environment might allow for a form of site-specific performance through which these interrelated notions of place and space can be probed. The experience of the tunnels, by both filmmakers and actors, is conceived in terms of a charting of movement—a process I will suggest can be understood as tender mapping, a concept derived from Bruno's (2002, 217–45) reading of Madeleine de Scudéry's *Carte du pays de Tendre*, and which I sought to articulate as an approach to film practice.

The tunnels are dug into chalk, and in their very composition, evidence both layers of geological history and the past existence of living things; *Coccolith* takes its name from the microscopic calcite shells shed by ocean algae, which accumulate on the sea bed over millions of years, forming chalk. The film captures the material result of this primordial geological process—the chalk environment itself—while dramatizing notions of historical accumulation figuratively. Multiple histories inscribed in the same place coexist in the film frame: Liam (Matthew Harvey) is from the present-day, Postcard Woman (Emily Outred) is from the 1930s, Smoking Man (George Naylor) is from the 1940s, the Surveyor (Kazeem Amore) is from the future, and Disco Woman (Eugenia Caruso) is from an alternate present-day. These characters inhabit the same tunnel environment but are on journeys at different points in time.

At the level of process, we sought to develop strategies that enabled the actors to respond meaningfully to the attributes of the tunnel environment. A more critical configuration of filmmaking practice felt timely, given that the Ramsgate tunnels otherwise risk permanent affiliation with nationalist sentiment and wartime mythology. Tour guides tell stories about the townspeople who lived in the tunnels with permanent addresses during the war, for instance, or Winston Churchill's visit, during which he was asked to stub out his cigar for health and safety reasons. Guides relate how the city mayor in the 1930s was revered locally for his foresight in persuading a reluctant Home Office to get the tunnels extended during rearmament, an initiative now mythologized (probably inaccurately)[1] as the triumph of a grassroots hero over Westminster bureaucracy.

Just how important is political context in the telling of such tales? The constituency of Thanet South, where Ramsgate is located, had one of the highest national levels of support for the UK Independence Party at its most recent peak, with leader Nigel Farage standing as its candidate in the 2015 general election and taking 32 percent of the vote (BBC 2018). The region also had one of the highest votes in favour of Brexit, with 64 percent of residents opting to leave the European Union (Electoral Commission 2016). Tour guide narratives of British resilience in the face of European aggression might well say as much about contemporary concerns over globalization and immigration, toward which the Brexit vote gestures, as they do about wartime experience. The slow evolution of the Ramsgate tunnels into a heritage attraction entails the commodification of memory and a politics of organized remembering, of the type which Edensor argues, in its reification of the past as linear and fixed, relies on a narrative impulse which "can eclipse the past's alterity" (2005, 138).

Even chalk, the raw material within which our filmmaking was installed, carries with it nationalist connotations: the White Cliffs of Dover, another quintessential symbol of British nationhood, are just fifteen miles down the coast from Ramsgate. In this sense, it must be acknowledged that to conceive of chalk as an accumulation of coccoliths, while geologically accurate, is nonetheless to offer a counter-myth, an alternative vision of the tunnels' history, heritage, and temporality. While our approach drew on discourses of mapping, to be further elaborated below, it is important to note that I was primarily concerned with mapping insofar as it enabled us to develop an approach to filmmaking rooted in our experience of the tunnels. The project was not seeking to counter the more reified heritage map, nor was it solely designed as an exercise in counter-mapping. This article will discuss the processes that shaped the making of the film, which sought to use the raw material of the tunnel environment to generate a tender mapping.

Point of Departure

In order to contextualize the subsequent discussion of tender mapping, it is worth first outlining the central ways in which the process of making *Coccolith* departed from typical industry paradigms. I have explored elsewhere the ways in which the project sought to reconfigure film and sound practice in the service of articulating an alternative representation of the tunnels and their heritage (Brown and Knight-Hill 2019). In contrast to commercial filmmaking, in which sound design primarily occurs in the post-production phase, we argued that by conceiving a project as properly audiovisual (by deploying concepts of texture and gesture, shared by film and sound practice), it is possible to rethink both the role of the soundtrack in relation to a film's diegesis and the role of the director in relation to sound design. The directorial adoption of mapping as an approach similarly evolved out of a desire to reconsider the relationship between performer and environment.

An important moment in the project's development occurred when the decision was taken not to use a script. I initially wrote a fifteen-minute screenplay for the film, and while many of its themes made their way into the final project, it was ultimately abandoned, and the actors never saw it. Using a script would have prevented us from fulfilling what emerged as a central objective of the project in the development stage, namely to facilitate site-inflected performances by the actors as their characters travel through the tunnels. In the place of a script, I wrote a concept outline of just four hundred words. This was designed to give overall narrative shape to the film and functioned as a guide for the cast and crew, listing the film's ten scenes sequentially and providing some very basic description of the action. I also wrote a few bulleted character notes for each actor, an example of which is included below. These documents provided a framework for scenes and characters that were subsequently devised, something discussed in detail below.

It is not my intention here to analyze in any depth the performances themselves—the results of the filmmaking—nor to discuss definitions of particular acting styles. I will instead focus on analyzing how the performances came about: the structures, contexts, and processes that shaped them. In doing so, I should acknowledge that my focus here on *human* performance does tend to exclude a consideration of the chalk tunnels as performative agents in their own right, which would challenge the implied ontology whereby land is viewed as passive vis-à-vis active human agents such as filmmakers or actors. A full consideration of this would require a separate study; what I intend to focus on here is how a film and its performances might be shaped by the human experience of site.

How might filmmakers and actors immerse themselves in an environment in a way that leads them to think, feel, and remember in ways generated by, and connected with, these tunnels? Site-specific practice is more readily associated with theatre, art, and installations than with filmmaking, yet site-specific approaches were particularly resonant when developing the project, and in terms of performance they can broadly be understood following Pavis as "a staging of performance conceived on the basis of a place in the real world (ergo, outside the established theatre)" (1998, 337). Films are, of course, always shot outside of the theatre, and usually (if shot on location) then in something approximating the real world. Yet, while the absence of a live audience does make filmmaking a qualitatively different endeavour to theatrical forms of staging, site-specific modes of working were useful to us when attempting to devise film performances that were not merely shot on location, but instead "conceived on the basis of a place."

Coccolith aims to situate the audience in the position of a visitor to the tunnels, on what almost comes to resemble a dark and twisted guided tour: an anti-heritage itinerary. Throughout the project's development stage, we revisited the practices of a range of filmmakers who conceive performance in terms of an itinerary through an environment that is mapped, either onscreen or implicitly. One such example was Monte Hellman, who when making the countercultural road movie *Two-Lane Blacktop* (1971) sought to capture an impression of spontaneity in the actors' response to landscape, something he referred to as "the quality of doing something for the first time" (1995, 17). He insisted both on shooting sequentially and doing so over an actual cross-country route that could be traced on a map, explaining: "We would never get the feeling of covering that ground unless we actually did it. Beyond that, I knew it would affect the actors—and it did, obviously. It affected everybody" (Walker 1970, 37). Hellman used various tactics to further heighten this impression of immediate affect, such as withholding the script from the cast except for daily excerpts. The relationship between a map, upon which an itinerary is traced, and performance here comes into focus: Hellman was not seeking improvisation but instead site-driven performances that inflected narrative in a particular way. The dialogue may be scripted, but the performances are defined by the journey itself—by the actors *being there*, travelling along a route, seeing the landscape for the first time.

Though the subject matter is entirely different, *Coccolith* owes a great deal to earlier work such as Hellman's that is not easily categorized in relation to established modes of performance. Rather, performance is best considered in the context of a production's structuring thematic impulse—such as the way a film is shaped by the relationship between journey and place. The concept outline that replaced the script is an itinerary for an exploratory journey through the tunnels, or more precisely, three itineraries: one for Liam (the protagonist in the first half), one for Disco Woman (the protagonist in the second half), and one for the audience, comprising both of the above. These are not structured in relation to a map of an actual geographical area, however, but to a map of the Ramsgate tunnels that is entirely fictitious. This is the point of departure for tender mapping, an approach I will argue generates a kind of screen performance that responds affectively to the tunnel environment.

On the Map

That maps are instruments of power as much as a representation of a part of the earth is by now well established, as is the view that mapping is inextricably linked to the rise of the modern state. Thongchai (1994) argues that the process of mapping itself brings into being state borders, the shape

and visual form of a nation, and obscures the origins of the state in history. For Wood, maps are fundamentally propositional, and mapmakers "extraordinarily selective creators of a world—not *the* world, but *a* world—whose features they bring into being" (2010, 51, original emphasis). Ramsgate recently appeared on a map in *Darkest Hour* (Wright 2017), during a scene in which Churchill masterminds the Dunkirk evacuation, helping consolidate existing propositions regarding popular understandings of nationhood. The city is identified as the starting point for a return trip to Europe, symbolizing English resourcefulness in the face of continental aggression. This occurs in the context of a film that, along with *Dunkirk* (Nolan 2017), has been seen to offer "a reflection and endorsement of the Brexit mood," representing "England congratulating itself on its past—an idealized past, shorn of inconvenient fact" (Jack 2018).

In contrast, a map of the Ramsgate tunnels that appeared in *The War Illustrated* on September 27, 1940, proudly announced: "Ramsgate has the world's finest shelters!" It traces the tunnelled route using a thick black line laid above the streets of the city, which is drawn more faintly in the background. The tunnels are shown to connect various public buildings, landmarks, and squares— municipal markers of the state and its mobilization in the war effort. The text below the map emphasizes the success of the subterranean network in saving lives, consistent with the reassuring solidity of the thick black line that signifies the tunnels, drawn on a massively exaggerated scale. Rings of dotted lines encircle areas subjected to heavy bombing, reminding us of the devastation wrought upon the city. The map is an assertion of national strength, certainly, but one that responds to an immediate and palpable fear of death, quite different from the cozy nationalism that drives contemporary wartime nostalgia.

On *Coccolith* we sought to critique, at a localized level, the spatial foundations of national mythmaking by creatively remapping the Ramsgate tunnels in a manner that enabled the actors to affectively respond to the site—what I refer to as tender mapping, to be discussed below. Conley has argued that reading and seeing are co-extensive in cartography and film, and a map "requires complex modes of decipherment quite similar to those required for close and exacting making and study of cinema" (2007, 207). *Coccolith* utilized several of Conley's ideas. Our predilection for wide shots emphasizing topographic representation, relief, perspectival tension, and depth of field will be examined below. More broadly, a mapping impulse defines the film's structure.
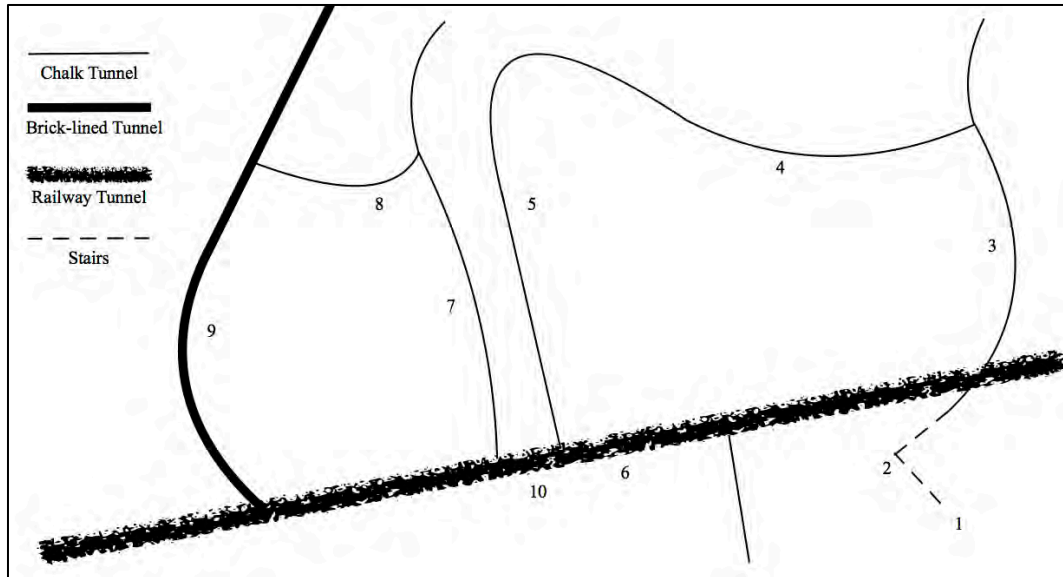
The film map, which was designed and used by the director when preparing the shoot and was the basis for the concept outline given to all the actors. Map: Christopher Brown.

The camera follows an itinerary through the tunnels that roughly corresponds to the form of a figure eight, with the two protagonists each completing a circle or loop. The audience is made aware of tunnels branching off in different directions, and cavernous spaces with multiple exits. The numbers indicate the location of scenes that appear sequentially along the route:

1.   Liam on the promenade
2.   Liam enters the tunnels via a stairwell
3.   Liam walks through a dark shelter tunnel
4.   Liam encounters Postcard Woman
5.   Liam walks past Smoking Man
6.   Liam meets Disco Woman at the disco ball in the railway tunnel
7.   Disco Woman walks along a tunnel
8.   Disco Woman encounters the Surveyor
9.   Disco Woman follows the Surveyor and makes a phone call
10. Disco Woman returns to the disco ball before turning to leave

This fictitious map bears little resemblance to the actual layout of the Ramsgate tunnels, shown (in an approximate rendering) below. The dotted circle indicates the portion of the tunnel complex in which the film was shot, the only area that is safe for the public to enter.
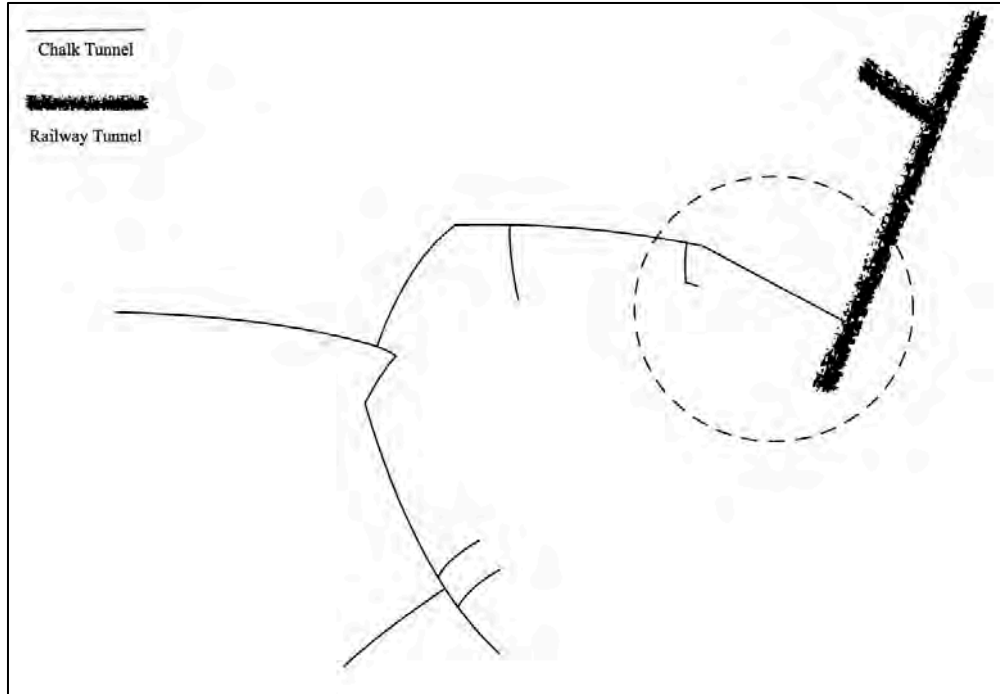
An approximate rendering of the layout of the Ramsgate tunnels. Map: Christopher Brown.

The third map zooms in on this and is a map on which the numbers now correspond to the locations where the scenes were filmed, which lack any pattern or sequence.
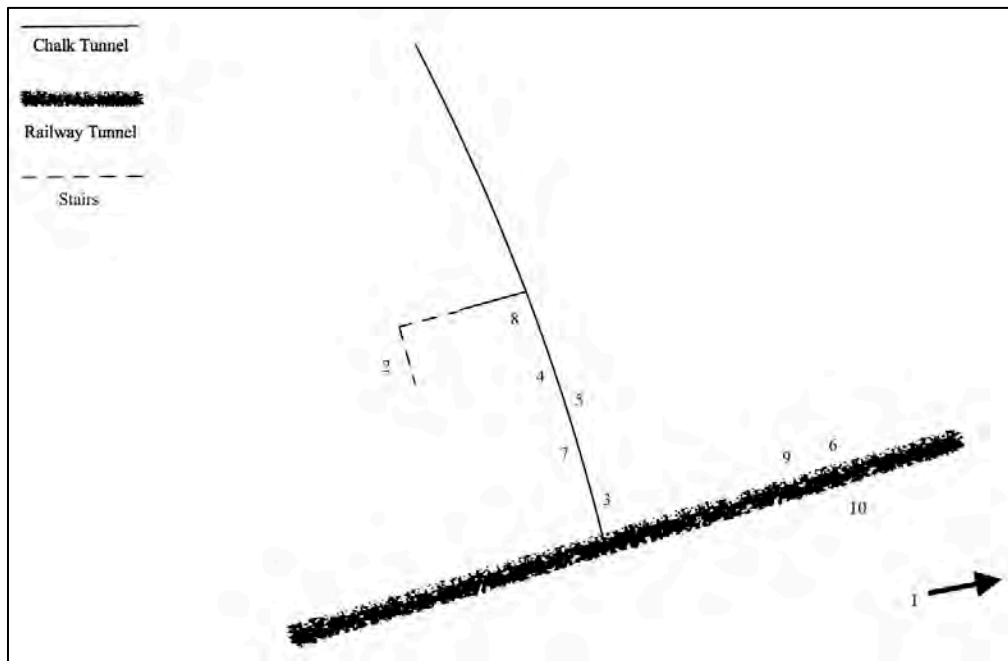
Map of tunnels with numbered filming locations. Map: Christopher Brown.

In emphasizing the circularity of the characters' itineraries, the imagined film map generates overlapping journeys at different points in history, in line with the film's critique, while encouraging

a particular mood: the tunnels appear twisted and maze-like, thus confusing and scary, when in reality they are readily navigable.

Fictional mapping of this type relies on the handling of audience perspectives on space, which depends on them being accustomed to established modes of spatializing narrative. Liam's entry into the tunnels is a case in point. A wide establishing shot shows him walking toward the tunnel entrance on the cliffside promenade.

Liam approaches the tunnel. Photo: Christopher Brown.

The shot then cuts, within classical conventions of the 180-degree rule (the reinforced cliff wall even makes the line visible), to a shot of Liam entering the tunnels via a stairwell.

Liam entering the tunnels via a stairwell. Photo: Christopher Brown.

In reality, the entrance is nothing but an inset shelter with a seat, while the stairwell is an air raid shelter entrance some distance inland (these stairs lead nowhere, as the entrance has long since been sealed). Similar strategies are used later in the film, for example in the scene in which Liam arrives at a fork in the tunnels and has to decide which route to take. He opts for the lit passage, into which he strides before the film cuts to a shot of him progressing along the passage. The lit passage in the first shot is in fact an alcove little more than a metre in depth, originally constructed to house a chemical

toilet during the war. A light panel was placed in the alcove to establish continuity with the lighting in the second shot, filmed in a lit tunnel elsewhere.

It remains contentious to refer to spatial trickery of this type as mapping. Indeed Misek considers a mapping impulse to be immediately obstructed by this type of editing because a map "represents a spatial totality. A film, by contrast, fragments space-time into the discrete unit of the shot. When individual shots are edited together, the result usually involves spatial discontinuity, temporal discontinuity, or both" (2012, 54). Yet film mapping can also be considered as a more process-oriented engagement. Neither Bruno (2002) nor Conley (2007) would consider spatial or temporal discontinuities in editing as necessarily obstructing a film's mapping impulse. On the contrary, Bruno (2002, 241–45) argues for the ways in which such dislocations consolidate *Hiroshima mon amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959) as a work of cartographic cinema. The issue is partly one of terminology, which Roberts suggests is "very loosely defined if measured against those more likely understood by professional cartographers: makers of maps in the more conventional sense" (2012, 69). At stake in such debates is perhaps the discipline of cartography itself, which Wood argues is often erroneously conflated with mapmaking when it is in fact a comparatively recent professionalization of the practice (2010, 121).

If, when making *Coccolith*, we certainly felt no allegiance to any "conventional sense" of mapping, then I would concede that the film map could be considered a diagram of a tour, rather than a map. For de Certeau (1984), maps involve *seeing* (the knowledge of an order of places) and present a tableau, whereas tours entail *going* (spatializing actions) and organizing movement (119). But as far as film practice is concerned, how easy is it to differentiate between the two? When preparing the project, I revisited Bruno's reading of Madeleine de Scudéry's *Carte du pays de Tendre*, a work which "made a geographical documentation of relational space in the form of a map" by which women might navigate interpersonal relations (2002, 223). This tender mapping later crossed into film and "does not reproduce the ordering principle of analytic knowledge but rather tries to chart a movement," calling into question de Certeau's binarism: "In Scudéry's form of cartographic narration, as in film's own, there is no distinction between map and tour. Both are a form of architectural narration." (245). As the map and the tour become indistinguishable, a tender mapping is generated. Conceiving a practice-as-research project in these terms enables us to reconsider how the directing of screen performance, as a process, might be attuned to the features of a specific environment and its history.

With tender mapping, the map around which the concept outline of *Coccolith* was developed and its filmic tour become indistinguishable. With this in mind, the concept outline used by the actors is not merely a neutral document designed to assist the devising of scenes, but a written charting of movement. This creates an apparent tension for the actors, who, in their performances, must negotiate between mapped space (a chronological route and sequence, provoking a character's psychological journey) and unmapped materiality (the immediate experience of incoherent fragments of a site, provoking a spontaneous reaction). The following sections, focusing on this tension, discuss firstly, how the actors mapped their characters' emotions in relation to the attributes of the site, and secondly, how the cinematography and visualization constructed a space in which these journeys could unfold.

Direction of Travel

Absent maps drive the narrative of *Coccolith*. Liam becomes lost in the tunnel network and is ultimately trapped, whereas Disco Woman tries to find her way out and eventually succeeds. Losing and finding one's way are presented in psychological as much as spatial terms; the character notes each actor works with are strategically lacking a clear map, which opens the actor up to the exploration of devised work in installation. While the tunnels lure Liam into forgetfulness and reverie, Disco Woman consults a mobile phone, trying to access a cellular network via which she might be able to situate herself both physically (by activating a location function) and emotionally (by making a call to her estranged lover).

The production was structured to facilitate, through performance, the displacement of affect onto space. This was the objective in the earliest stages of casting, a process that sought to identify actors who were skilled in devising characters and in weighing up the impact of environment on performance. The experimental nature of the project's approach was stated in the casting call, and all of the actors except one (with whom I had previously worked) went through an audition process. Given that the project had no script, the actors were not required to learn audition sides in the manner that is usual for film productions and most theatre productions. Instead, they were asked to prepare two short performances that tested their ability to develop a credible performance from a simple scenario prompt. One of these was as follows:

> You are in a narrow tunnel. It is completely dark as you blindly feel your way along the rocky walls. The silence is deafening, which makes you scared. To calm yourself down, you talk out loud—imagining that you are speaking to someone you used to love. You apologize for what you did to them, and ask their forgiveness.

The scenario asks the actors to devise and undertake a journey along a tunnel trajectory that is at once physical and psychological, enabling the casting team (the director, casting director, and assistants) to assess the ability of the actor to credibly evoke their character experiencing the environment in question. The second scenario was similarly designed to encourage the actors to prioritize environment when undertaking their preparations, but emphasized desire and recollection:

> No dialogue. You are on holiday in an English seaside town, sitting at a table in your chalet, writing a postcard to a close friend. Your children play in the background, making a lot of noise. As you write, you try to decide whether to write the usual pleasantries, or to tell your friend about a man you saw on the beach earlier. You remember how you were attracted to him—but also how dangerous he looked.

In the auditions, the actors firstly delivered their prepared scenes. I then requested that they perform one of the scenes again, after giving some instructions that were intended to alter the tone of the performance. For instance, the second scenario tends to evoke emotions such as desire and love, and perhaps also feelings of nostalgia. One intervention I made after observing the initial performance was to tell the actor that an unknown person was standing directly behind them as they wrote the postcard. An adaptable performer would tend to interpret the scene differently as a result, for instance capturing a sense of unease or fear.

Given the nature of the project, the casting process was also designed to assess actors' confidence in working without a script. In many cases, it became quickly apparent that some actors were simply uncomfortable with this kind of approach. Others, however, responded effectively, and final decisions on casting were made after the filmed footage of the auditions was reviewed. The casting

process fed directly into the devising process. For instance, some aspects of the second audition scenario (the postcard, the children) evolved into the characterization of Postcard Woman, whereas different elements of the same scenario (desire, the man on the beach) helped shape the characterization of Liam.

The bulleted character notes and concept outline, given to the actors after casting, provided an itinerary through space and emotion from which to develop a performance. The character notes for Disco Woman provide an example:

- a character from the present
- she is Italian
- she has just left a party, dressed smartly in a dress with a shawl
- she carries a mobile phone
- she does not speak except for one moment when her emotions spill out[2]
- she is searching the tunnels for phone reception, so she can talk to someone
- a melancholy journey as she tries to come to terms with a betrayal
- is she troubled because she suspects her lover's infidelity?
- or are her feelings of abandonment provoked by something else?

The concept outline renders these initial prompts in a spatial dimension, guiding her emotional progression as she moves. She is introduced as immobile, swaying from side to side, lost and upset (scene 6). Next, she starts to walk, searching and inquisitive (scene 7). She then speaks on the phone, of her feelings of abandonment, of an era being over (scene 8). Her return to the disco ball indicates sadness, yet knowledge gained, as she observes the men who are trapped, trance-like, as she was previously (scene 9). The film then closes with her escape and empowerment (scene 10). This sets the stage for a tender mapping, tracing in broad terms Disco Woman's emotional route from stasis to movement, from entrapment to freedom.

"What is mobilized in film's own emotional mapping," Bruno contends, "is the plan of an unconscious topography in which emotions can 'move' us, for they are themselves organized as a course. In film, as in the emotional course mapped by Scudéry, sentiments come to be mapped as physical transformations, written as moving physiognomy" (2002, 245). In *Coccolith*, the relationship between this affective topography and the physical topography of the tunnels unfolded on set, but also during the devising process beforehand. Documents such as the character notes provided initial guidance, indicating, as it were, the general direction of travel, while the detail of characterization emerged through the devising process. Our preparations were typical of site-specific practice in installation, as myself and the actors researched "historical documentation; site usage (past and present); found text, objects, actions, sounds, etc.; anecdotal guidance; personal association; half-truths and lies; site morphology (physical and vocal explorations of site)" (Pearson 2010, 8, drawing on earlier work by Fiona Wilkie).

Our deployment of this research was not neutral. Each character was conceived in relation to an aspect of the site that evoked either a marginalized history or an alternative perspective on history. Liam's name is instructive; it appears on actual graffiti in the tunnels, discovered during our initial recce, which homophobically alleges: "Liam is queer" (visible in the lower left of the shot of Liam entering the tunnels via a stairwell). This led to the protagonist being named Liam, aligning him both

with transgressive counter-uses of the site and with queer sexuality, aspects that form the basis of his emotional journey through the tunnels. Liam's is a narrative marginalized from the nostalgic, and resolutely straight, wartime mythology associated with the tunnels. He is also from the present, a choice designed to counter a heritage agenda that focuses on six years of the site's active history (1939–45) at the expense of the seventy years that have elapsed since.

The actors were given an unusual degree of freedom to develop their roles, albeit within defined limits; this contrasts with the norms of commercial filmmaking, in which actors are conventionally expected to interpret a written screenplay and to follow strict blocking instructions in relation to how the shot is staged and composed. After casting decisions had been made, I restricted my activity with the actors to the collaborative devising of characters, a process that lasted around three weeks. I let each of the five actors work with me in whichever way they preferred, for as much or as little time as they needed, encountering a diverse range of working methods. Some preferred to meet in person; others I spoke to over the phone. Some emailed written ideas; another exchanged messages with me. One drew on Method training to develop a role in line with personal life experience; another focused on visual prompts and image research. The intention was that the actors would arrive in the tunnels with fully developed characters and that their task, at the moment of filming, would be to articulate the character's response to the site.

Typically, I would start by giving the actors a prompt with which to work—an object or material associated with the tunnels. When devising the character of the Surveyor, for instance, I gave the actor two structural engineering surveys from 1954 undertaken by the Ministry of Works, entitled "Underground Accommodation," one surveying the shelter tunnels and the other the railway tunnel. The reports were previously classified (the authors appear to have been considering the possibility of renovating the tunnels for use as air-raid shelters during the Cold War). I asked the actor to draw from these documents whatever terminology and ideas he needed to develop his character, and we subsequently had a phone conversation in which we discussed what ideas the survey had prompted. We began to chat about the similarity of the tunnels to nuclear bunker sites and were reminded of *Into Eternity* (Michael Madsen, 2010), a documentary about the construction of a spent nuclear fuel repository in Onkalo, Finland, accessed by a tunnel that spirals half a kilometre beneath the earth's surface. Drawing on this influence, we decided that the character's agenda would be to assess the tunnels' suitability for the disposal of an unspecified waste substance, and a dramatic goal was shaped. In subsequent emails, we fleshed out the character further. For example, the actor originated the idea that the survey could be delivered vocally, and we considered how his voice might be recorded as he spoke, in the end opting to use a headpiece. When preparing the role, the actor memorized the survey nomenclature so that on-set, he could deploy it, without thinking, in the form of muttered observations delivered into a headset.

While I had a general idea as to the direction in which the actors were taking things, I did not know exactly who their characters would be—or become—until the camera was rolling and the actors were able to respond to the tunnel environment itself. Parameters were set out to maximize spontaneity: the actors were not rehearsed prior to the shoot; they did not meet each other; I did not discuss with one actor another's preparations. Once in Ramsgate, run-throughs were extremely brief and focused largely on warm-up or physical blocking where this was required. I will now turn to the filmmaking process itself, focusing on how the cinematography and visualization supported the actors in offering affective and embodied responses to the tunnels.

You Are Here?

When researching the history of the Ramsgate tunnels, I came across a description that I could not get out of my head. The narrow gauge "World Scenic Railway" was constructed within the tunnel complex in 1936 and featured train carriages fitted with spotlights above each window frame. A series of tableaux were fixed to the tunnel walls, depicting countries around the world, including Japan, Canada, Egypt, and Switzerland, which were illuminated as the train moved (Catford 2005, 2). Holidaymakers could explore the world, doubtless as an exotic spectacle, on their way to the beach. Framed illuminations, moving in front of the viewer's eyes, transporting them into fantasy explorations of faraway places; a productive tension between stasis and movement—were the tunnels giving me cinema itself? Sadly, the illuminations are long gone, and the scenic railway tunnel is ruined and inaccessible. But this imagery stuck with me, especially the format of the tableau; it left me with a feeling that the tunnels themselves had an aesthetic to release, a feeling that is ultimately irrational.

Few would subscribe, any longer, to the view that site-specific art has an original and fixed relationship to its location, and practices "that would prioritize the physical inseparability between a work and its site of installation" (Kwon 2004, 13) have generally been in retreat. These remarks may at first sight seem inapplicable to filmmaking, given that finished films are rarely screened at the locations where they were shot. But on *Coccolith*, we were consciously striving to avoid any notion of "shooting on location," with its reductive connotations of site as backdrop for a human drama. Instead, our production was conceived more in terms of an installation. To conceive of the camera and performances being *installed* in the chalk tunnels is not to imply their inseparability, but rather that the filmmaking approach responded, to an unusual degree, to the qualities of the site itself.

In commercial filmmaking, locations tend to function as a backdrop *for* something—usually human drama, an actor delivering scripted lines or action.

Liam approaches the Smoking Man. Photo: Christopher Brown.

The scene in *Coccolith* in which Liam approaches the Smoking Man illustrates how our approach was somewhat different. The concept outline provided merely some basic guidance: "Liam moves forward, and finds Smoking Man again. Smoking Man is leaning against the wall, staring ahead, and now seems unaware of Liam's presence." This guidance evokes a dramatic idea (a relationship, or lack thereof), but the detail, realization, and affective qualities of the drama emerge from the manner in which the actors are installed within the location and how the performer responds to the

environment. This dynamic plays out in front of the camera and generates emotional resonance. Liam looks close into Smoking Man's eyes and seems to be attracted to him in some way, but after glancing toward the vanishing point of the tunnel, he moves away. It is the actor's response to the tunnel that implies there is a choice between staying and leaving. It is as if the tunnel draws him away.

If remapping the tunnels provided a context for an actor's physical and emotional journey, then our cinematography assisted in the creation of a filmic space in which this could play out.[3] During the development phase, we decided to capture the majority of the scenes in their entirety using locked-off wide shots; some of these appear in full, while others were edited. This approach came about in response to several factors: site-specific limitations; our desire to heighten the actors' responsiveness to the environment by affording them reasonable freedom of movement within the frame and the opportunity to perform a scene in full; research into the aesthetic practice of other filmmakers; and my desire to reference the tableau format which I intuited (however mystically) the tunnels had afforded. The framed illuminations in the scenic railway took the holidaymakers on a tour, whereas the *tableaux* might have been viewed as one might read a map, allowing visitors to identify landmarks and locations distributed across an image-field. As discussed above, this distinction between the map and the tour is broken down once filmmaking, as a process, is reconceived as the tender mapping of a particular site.

Site-specific limitations set the parameters for our later aesthetic decisions. In the recce, it became evident that the level of lighting in the tunnels was very low, and that we would not be able to boost this substantially, given the lack of power sources over long distances and our limited budget, which prevented the rental of a generator or cabling. We were instead restricted to the use of existing lighting (single bulbs placed at intervals of around ten metres) and battery-powered LED light panels. After some experimentation, we concluded that the Arri Alexa offered the widest creative scope in low-light conditions. The body of the camera is heavy, however, which made quick manoeuvring in narrow tunnels impractical. Tracking shots, in particular, were time-consuming to achieve: following characters at head-height risked damaging the camera on the low and uneven ceilings, while the operator and crew had to pass bulbs that unavoidably cast shadows. The budget limited us to two days in the tunnels, so while three complicated tracking shots were filmed, we made far more extensive use of long, unbroken takes with no camera movement.

Ultimately just three tracking shots were taken, and two of these had to be filmed with a smaller DSLR (Digital Single-Lens Reflex) camera, which was more practical to operate in the shelter tunnels. The shot in which Liam enters the chalk tunnel for the first time was filmed in darkness, with the character illuminating the walls using his torch as he walks. Our approach was influenced by the scene in *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (Apichatpong Weerasethakul 2010) in which the characters enter a cave and explore it by torchlight. Apichatpong has discussed this scene in terms of how Plato's cave allegory is complicated by Buddhist perspectives and also takes on resonance in the context of the effacing of Thailand's history.[4] Consciously connecting film to the shadows from the fire on the cave wall, Apichatpong's shots focus less on the characters than on the walls of the glistening cave, illuminated by the characters' torches. Our scene in *Coccolith* attempted something similar. Tracked from behind as he walked, the actor was free to shine his torch onto any area of the tunnel wall, which spotlighted and distorted, at random, the textures of the chalk surface. The scene attempts to evoke the proto-filmic qualities of shadow-and-light-play, while the raw material being illuminated—chalk—acts as the film's central metaphor for historical accumulation.

As the above example suggests, in developing our aesthetic approach, we turned to existing practice that explores the relationship between site, camera, and performance. Another influence was *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (Tsai Ming-liang, 2003), shot entirely within the confines of the dilapidated Fu He theatre in Taipei. The film features ghostly characters that haunt the decaying cinema complex, while formally, it utilizes wide shots extremely long in duration, emphasizing composition in depth. Many of Tsai's performers, meanwhile, give the impression that their characters are unaware of others around them. A ghostly woman (Yang Kuei-mei) who is watching a film eating watermelon seeds remains oblivious to the terror she has engendered in a Japanese tourist (Mitamura Kiyonobu) seated a few metres away. The performances give the impression of characters occupying the same place but different spaces, a notion also taken up in *Coccolith*. Take the scene (captured in a single shot) in the railway tunnel in which the Surveyor enters, followed by Disco Woman.

The Surveyor enters, followed by Disco Woman. Photo: Christopher Brown.

The actor playing the Surveyor was told to perform as if his character was alone and unable to see anyone else. The actor playing Disco Woman, by contrast, was told that she was able to see and hear the Surveyor. At play here are two characterizations involving different temporalities—two spatial routes—meaning that each actor had different perspectives on the physical topography of the tunnels at the moment of performance. This resonates strongly with de Certeau's notion of space as practised place, which Kaye considers vital to much site-specific art as it "admits of unpredictability" and allows a single place to be "realized in successive, multiple and even irreconcilable spaces" (2000, 5). On *Coccolith*, we were attempting to enable two notions of space—embodied by the performances—to coexist within the frame (in keeping with the film's concept of inscribing multiple histories within a single site).

In his analysis of the interplay between the spatiotemporal aesthetics of art cinema and video installation practice in Apichatpong's work, Kim (2010) observes a tendency to use shots with extended duration that exceed narrative economy. This allows viewers to become engrossed in the spatial properties of the individual shots: "The spatial dimension of duration acquires a phenomenological depth and length in which the moment of the viewer's perception and the temporal register in the image are inseparably fused together" (Kim 2010, 128). The use of extended duration in several scenes in *Coccolith* drew on these conventions, associated with slow cinema, an approach to filmmaking which in formal terms is defined by long takes, static camerawork, a preference for wide shots, and a tendency to maintain a distance between the subject and the camera; both Apichatpong and Tsai have been associated with this approach.[5] The use of long

duration and static camerawork on *Coccolith* was designed to encourage the viewer to consider the spatial relationship of the performers to the tunnels. An example would be the shot of seventy-two seconds in duration, in which Liam approaches Smoking Man then retreats into the depth of the tunnel (shown above). Other scenes, such as that featuring Postcard Woman, were later edited, albeit in a limited manner. But crucially they were staged and shot in an unbroken manner, thus giving the actors the freedom and opportunity to perform place, to respond to the ruined tunnels, to the "disparate fragments, juxtapositions, traces, involuntary memories, inferred meanings, uncanny impressions and peculiar atmospheres" that Edensor suggests are evoked by ruins (2005, 162).

Our approach to cinematography in *Coccolith* was designed to facilitate actors generating space by performing place. The camerawork seeks to capture the resulting unpredictability and ambiguity via a predilection for wide and unbroken shots, long in duration, which allow the performances to play out in full. It is the combination of the cinematography with the encouragement of the actors to respond to the attributes of the tunnels that generates the performing of place. But implicit in this, is there not a lingering adherence to the actuality of a single or orderly place? "Despite the proliferation of discursive sites and fictional selves," Kwon observes of site-specific practice, "the phantom of site as an actual place remains, and our psychic, habitual attachment to places regularly returns as it continues to inform our sense of identity" (2004, 165). Our approach betrays a conviction that the work and its site of installation *perhaps might* be inseparable.

The cinematography certainly keeps open this proposition. Our wide shots were intended not only to encourage the actor to attune to the place but also to de-privilege the place of the actor within the frame, drawing attention instead to the geological strata and matter such as chalk. Human beings are depicted as just one component of the tunnels' broader material texture via a spatial overview, while elsewhere, the use of close-ups provides focus.

Liam meets Postcard Woman. Photo: Christopher Brown.

The shot in which Liam meets Postcard Woman in certain respects aligns the project with visual realism as conceived by André Bazin, whose theories Conley argues are implicitly built on cartographic principles, exploiting the lexicon of geography and geology, contending "a loose or even unbound network of tensions of the same charge that are distributed *all over* the image-field. No one place or site has privilege over another. The image-fact requires the shot to be read as might

a map" (2007, 8). In one sense, *Coccolith* could be seen to visually render a topographic understanding of realism, emphasizing the tunnels' raw material. Yet this always remains in tension with the characters who emerge from specific timeframes and exist in particular spaces. In exploring the shot as one might a map, the viewer is asked to contemplate the propositional connections between film, performer, and the materiality of the tunnels.

Epilogue: Redrawing the Map

If *Coccolith* is primarily concerned with using the characteristics of the tunnels to generate a process of tender mapping, then occasionally, our desire to counter-mythologize conflicted with this aim. This is perhaps most evident in Disco Woman's phone call. Hitherto silent, the character suddenly launches into a sustained, fast-paced diatribe. Her speech was designed to shock because it is unexpected, but also because it is delivered in Italian, invalidating any assumptions that the character might be British. This moment represents the deliberate imposition of commentary onto the environment, hence our decision to shoot in an extreme close-up that excludes the architecture and pushes the background into soft focus.

And what is nationality - a question of blood?

Disco Woman's phone call. Photo: Christopher Brown.

The actress devised the monologue herself after we exchanged a few ideas and notes. The ostensible subject matter is Disco Woman's feelings of abandonment by her lover, but this was a device that enabled us to reflect on Brexit, on the myths of nationhood that motivated us to offer a creative remapping of the tunnels in the first place.

Wood refers to mapmakers as "extraordinarily selective creators of a world—not *the* world, but *a* world" (2010, 51), a characteristic shared by actors and filmmakers. To map something is also to acknowledge tensions in the interpretation of place and the fundamentally propositional nature of that practice. If mapping is to bring something into being, to conceive of film practice-as-research as an exercise in mapping is to adjust conventional boundaries between seeing, reading, and doing. The process of making *Coccolith* suggests that filmmakers can adopt practices that encourage a tender mapping, attending to the unique features of a particular place.

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Further information about *Coccolith* is available at http://www.coccolithfilm.co.uk.

Notes

1. The mayor most likely succeeded in this because he had a relative in the Home Office.

2. See Brown and Knight-Hill (2019, 320–23), which offers a detailed account of the role of the director in visually conceiving a spatial experience of the tunnels characterized by the absence of sound—silence.

3. The cinematography achieved this in conjunction with sound. For a full discussion of how sound helped shape cinematic space on the project, see Brown and Knight-Hill (2019).

4. Apichatpong is the director's given name, by which he is referred to in the article, in line with Thai naming customs. He explains that in *Uncle Boonmee*, "I wanted to go to the roots of this narrative, which is the cave, in which we live and where we created the first films, the drawing of the shadows from the fire. So, there are many reflections of the allegory in my films, but I am also really fascinated by Plato and Buddhism. Ok, this guy comes down and tells us about the sunlight, but is that reality? I am not sure whether the outside to which he is pointing is necessarily reality." (Apichatpong 2016).

5. See, for example, Lim 2014. These formal strategies are always matched by a slowness or stillness of content; stories exploring mundane existence and individual agency within local cultures, in a manner often critical of the capitalist/modern/globalized obsession with speed. Other filmmakers associated with slow cinema include Pedro Costa, Béla Tarr, Lav Diaz, Kelly Reichardt, and Jia Zhangke.

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Materiality of Nothingness: Inspiration, Collaboration, and Craft in Devised Filmmaking

Alex Lichtenfels

> The image, alone capable of negating nothingness, is also the gaze of nothingness upon us.
> —Maurice Blanchot (1997, 40)

Context

Primary Films was set up by Teddy Powell, Joe Churchill, and me in 2011, although it had evolved from projects we had worked on since 2003. Together, we have made ten short to medium-length films (alongside *lots* more commercial work), and always with an agenda to experiment. Around the time Primary Films was formally constituted, we had come to an impasse in our filmmaking—to some extent, we had made aesthetically original work, and we were good at having a vision and realizing it because we knew our roles and how to execute them. But this wasn't what artmaking was supposed to be like. At the same time that our work became more "refined," we craved the thrill of learning on the job, of experimenting with new ways of working just to see what happened. There was a political dimension to our desire at this time as well. To borrow an adage from Jean-Luc Godard, "the point is not to make political films, but to make films politically" (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin 1968, in McCabe 1980, 19). While the films we made were never ideologically mainstream, and the way we made them had a lo-fi element that necessitated a sense of community (cooking the food, creating a big focus on team spirit since we couldn't pay anyone), we were still using hierarchical role structures with directors, 1st ADs, and DOPs that have pervaded the film industry at least since their formalization under the Hollywood studio system.

There was a hopefulness in filmmaking when we started working together. As Bruce Mamer says of the feeling that pervaded in the late 1990s, "inexpensive digital cameras and desktop digital editing would spark an outpouring of digital features that would revolutionize not only the content and the delivery of the product but also the makeup of those who create the product" (2014, 86). We shared this feeling, but only when confronted with the idea that a revolution in filmmaking would mean making films politically did we start to understand the scale of realizing our hope. We could not make new kinds of films with nonstandard perspectives by using established and/or industrial filmmaking processes. We would need to let such aesthetics emerge from our development of new and radical processes.

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We made several attempts to start such development. In 2016, we conducted a filmmaking workshop at the University of Greenwich based on practices involving energy such as yoga or Lishi, a practice of Chinese physical culture.[1] We designed and enacted collaborative exercises, after which we tried to articulate what the actors and the camera were doing in terms of a vocabulary of energy. But neither the actors or we had a significant enough basis in the practices we were drawing on, and their pedagogies and vocabularies, to stop this descending into a vagueness that fell apart. Conscious not to repeat the same mistake, in 2017 we made the short film *Motherland*, where we co-wrote a script as a result of a series of exercises in narrative development using a round-robin format—but we slipped back into familiar roles on set due to a need to get the film done, and perhaps because we knew it would work in a conventional sense. While both useful experiences, these attempts were certainly filed under the "failures I learnt from" section of things we tried. They failed because we couldn't create a context to develop our crafts in new directions—the workshop opened craft onto a directionless plane where it couldn't be focused, and *Motherland* pushed craft back into industrial practice. But if they failed, at least they set up what I call the challenge to craft.

If the context in which craft finds itself is too vague or abstract, as in the energy workshop, then the cameraperson or actor will not have a context in which they can perform effectively, and their craft will not be able to operate. However, if the context is too known and defined, then craft will simply repeat its learned processes, as with *Motherland*. Craft's dilemma is that craft is necessary to artistic integrity but is also the basis of industrial process. The challenge is to create contexts where the artist uses their craft in new ways, augmenting that craft's practice by performing it in situations that encourage novelty and experimentation without collapsing into an "anything goes" fuzziness.

This is to provide a context for what follows, a documentation of the workshop that we participated in with seven other artists in May 2019[2] in and around Davis, California. It follows from a workshop conducted in London in 2018.[3] The aim of these workshops, from my perspective at least, was to create a collaborative context where the craft of filmmaking could develop. Cinema has been proclaimed dead more times than can be counted, but twenty years after the advent of cheaper means of production, it is still very much in its infancy and only starting to dip its toe into a sea of possibility.

Documentation

The documentation in this article is intended to be a snapshot of a filmmaking process used in a particular time and context—but, as such, it is fraught with danger. First, the workshop's methods have neither been refined nor codified as a practical System, and such codification is also not the point of this documentation. If our philosophy of practice is anything, it is that if we have something called a process, this process must never solidify. It must always change in response to its environment and its history; replication is death. In this sense, the process we are using is always itself in process. Indeed, this is the condition of a living artistic practice in the spirit of how Ian Watson describes Stanislavski's system as a dynamic and developing practice over many years (2009), rather than the way *An Actor Prepares* (Stanislavski 2013) has often been read, as a gospel determination of this system's rules. Second, a written article does not share a craft with the craft of filmmaking it documents, which forces it to reflect on its own value. As Gregory Sporton writes about academic writing on dance, "The challenge of explaining it [dance] faces both the inadequacy of words and their pointlessness" (2017, 123). If this article is a snapshot, its purpose cannot be to translate craft to what is still often called knowledge in academia—or articulation in academic

language—and thereby allow academic knowledge to claim authority over and determine a way forward for the craft. Such translation misses craft entirely in its reduction to the words of formal academic writing, and worse can start to be read as an instruction manual for practice. This observation by no mean discounts the idea that research can both be informed by and lead practice (see, for example, Dean and Smith 2009), but emphasizes that such research will need to account for how its knowledge might be communicated and used when it does not share a way of knowing with the craft of the practice it is informed by or trying to lead.

Communication between practice and writing about practice—whether the latter is expressed as documentation, research, or theory—needs to be a two-way street. If documentation is to have any value for practice, then this begins by acknowledging that it is not capturing practice in a form of objective knowledge but capturing it according to its own craft of documentation, which is simply a different way of knowing. While documentation inevitably misses the knowledge of the craft it captures because it does not take the form of that craft (in which that craft's way of knowing is embedded), where it acknowledges this it has the advantage of understanding that it can only hope to give a sense of craft's knowledge if its own form can be attuned to that craft in some way. One way to think of this attunement is as affect. While acknowledging the plurality of the uses of the word "affect," Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg write:

> Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing, vital forces beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability. (2010, 1)

Affect is a force that when encountered challenges subjectivity—whether subjectivity is couched in terms of an ideological way of knowing, or emotion, which is "affect captured by a subject, or tamed and reduced to the extent that it becomes commensurate with that subject" (Shaviro 2010, 3). It challenges because it is experienced as a feeling that being has that exceeds being's sense of itself. Affect, then, can name the recognition of a way of knowing based in a craft that exceeds my subjectivity without reduction to my craft's way of knowing in documentation.

If the form of documentation of the practice of a craft—such as filmmaking—is attuned to affect, it can attempt to practise its own craft—here as writing—from the position of fidelity to this attunement.[4] That fidelity will change the craft's practice, since documentation's way of knowing is challenged by affect, and it will need to invent a new way of knowing in response. Documentation is therefore likely to become a self-conscious exercise that both documents affect and, by extension, requires an articulation of the way fidelity to affect demands its own process changes. This type of documentation is thus inevitably a metacommentary on its own making. But if it is a metacommentary, it is not (or is not supposed to be) of the sort that articulates its process in order to be the ultimate expression of the craft it both describes and claims to practise, where metacommentary attempts to hermetically seal its content by giving the final word on that content within that content. On the contrary, it is necessarily a metacommentary to open up documentation to another practice. Its self-reflection on its practice enters its documenting craft by attuning to the affect of another practice and may return to that other practice not as academic knowledge, but as embodied craft with its own affective force. If documentation has any influence over future practice, it is because the craft of documentation and articulation in language persists affectively in me as I

continue in my filmmaking so that in those moments where filmmaking craft is called upon to extend itself anew, I will be drawing on a set of practices I would not have had if I had not documented what I had done before. In this way, documentation is neither a reduction of practice to the knowledge of academic language nor an instruction manual for practice; it is its own practice, the affective potential of which may yet extend to other practices.

The documentation that follows thus weaves a description and analysis of our workshop with an articulation of nothingness as defined by Jean-Paul Sartre. The philosophical work is not intended to define what was "really" happening in the workshop but to sit as a counterpoint to the description and analysis that, in their resonance, can provide a method of attuning to any affective happening.

What We Did in California

The participants in the California workshop are Me, Joe, and Teddy; Heather Nolan, Kathy Hendrickson, Alvaro Hernández, Regina Gutierrez, and Lucy Roslyn, all actor-performers; Julian Gatto, a multimedia artist; and finally John Zibell, a filmmaker and actor we worked with at the London workshop. John deserves special mention as the workshop derived largely from his ideas and practices, which themselves come from a variety of traditions, but particularly the American improvisational theatre tradition started by Viola Spolin and continued by her son, Paul Sills (see Spolin 1999). We start by telling stories, each in turn—the brief is to choose a story from your life that you consider cinematic. Kathy disturbs us when she talks about the time she went to a party she probably wasn't old enough to be at. John captures an image of his son, Django, mucking about on the back of a bicycle—time suspended in his description as it was for him in this moment. I tell the story of the time I managed to phone myself, pick up, and start a conversation. The stories become a collection of raw material that we take forward into the work we are going to make. Over four days, we will repurpose them, mash them together, whisper snippets of text from them in the pieces that we make.

Then we make a diagram of what we think cinema is—not one that follows a textbook, but where we can contribute whatever words come to mind for us in that moment. We riff off one another, so that someone will say "time," then someone "performance," before someone else will throw in "camera"—the words can be abstract, concrete, impressionistic, technical, or aesthetic. Someone says "reality," and John writes it on the back of the board where no one can see it. This becomes a template for what will become our work—not in a linear sense where we each make a piece of work that explores a particular idea or concept that we have identified, but as something heightening our awareness of our tools, materials, and processes, and how they might interconnect to generate directions for what we are about to do.

Then, we start to make machines. First in front of one another, later developing them in groups and presenting to everyone. To start a machine, you say, "I/We begin," to end it, you say "I/We end," and in between you do something. The one consistent element with the machines is to try to work with the materiality of everything involved in the machine—bodies, props, light, sounds—meaning as far as it is possible, to divorce the elements in the machine from their social and ideological functions, treating them as raw material. We start by standing in a circle and making machines with gestures. John extends his arm and brings it back in. That's it, the whole machine. Someone does a press-up, someone else does a squat. And then a second round, this time machines that involve the space. Lucy is eaten by a crash mat in the corner of the room. Regina dances with the portable

whiteboard. Then machines that use a sound. Then machines in pairs—Lucy and I use my spare inner tube to twirl around and get tangled and untangled. Regina, Alvaro, and Julian use the pole you can open the studio skylight with as a balance beam. Machines with cameras, machines with a frame, machines with light.

On day two, we go to UC Davis' McLaughlin Reserve, a portion of which was burnt by the 2018 California wildfires, to make more machines. In the morning, we get a lecture about the reserve from the coordinator, Cathy Koehler. There are lots of interesting facts about the local geology and ecology, and I learn what subduction is. This too becomes material for the machines. Machines in groups of three—Kathy, Teddy, and I create a maze where you have to avoid touching trees but stay in the camera frame. Individual machines—John dances with an ashen tree. Machines in the tall grass with a camera drone—Lucy and I put on blindfolds as Teddy operates the drone and directs us. Machines with tracking shots.

On day three, it's raining, but we keep going in the massive hangar next to our lodgings. Joe and Heather repeat "geology ecology" for what seems like an eternity. Alvaro performs Regina's story, and Regina watches it back on the monitor and cries. This is itself a machine created by Teddy and Regina; Regina is being filmed, and we all watch this back together. Someone screams something from the balcony.

On day four, we are back from the reserve in the studio. John and Alvaro sing at the piano. A dark corridor is given spotlights as the performers navigate it in different ways. The pipes from Teddy's story about the organ and the homeless people become reflections in the glass. Shadows of our crawling fingers gradually disappear in the fading light. Everyone is exhausted. We make dozens of machines per day, hundreds over the week. The philosophy is to get through as much as possible. We see what doesn't work and reject it. We see what works and reject it anyway to try something new, a relentless moving forward. The stories we told, the diagram we drew, the machines we started with create a context in which we are constantly forging connections between different practices, phrases, and concepts. Once a machine is made, it is over—it can be remade but never repeated. It feels like being inside a ball gathering momentum—at first, you aren't sure where it is going, later you still aren't sure, but you know the momentum is certainly taking it in a direction. The work gathers pace because whether we are in it or watching it, we are forging connections the work has given us.

What Is Inspiration?

I was thinking about nothingness because of what happened during our workshop, particularly in those moments of collective inspiration, where a person or a group would make a machine that would magically shake everyone in the room. When Lucy arrived at the door of a party and broke down for nine minutes because she was early and had forgotten the Shiraz and Pringles, and wasn't sure if she was meant to bring one bottle or two, and was getting eaten by her scarf, we were all in fits of laughter. But what we were laughing at was deeply disturbing as well as funny—who can't remember if they should have brought wine and Pringles, and who cares if it should have been one bottle or two, and who is so out of control that they get eaten by a scarf? In this way, the work had a deeply affective dimension, and neither performer nor audience seemed to know how to contain it within a structure of subjective emotion.

Moments like these make the whole process worthwhile. What is wondrous is that the moments don't come from specific planning of the moment or meticulous rehearsal of a precise action, but that they emerge from a process. Everyone inside the process knows they happen because of the process, but the wonder persists because the moments nevertheless emerge unexpectedly, from some inarticulable place—seemingly from nothing. In collaboration, the process doesn't belong to any individual; it may be designed by someone but takes on its own movement, structure, momentum, and possibility when everyone gets involved. This is perhaps why such process can be called collaborative, when it ceases to belong to an individual but is a collective force, and when this collective force strikes as affect it strikes at the core of the individual beings that comprise it, but of whom it is more than their sum. These individuals cannot perceive how the force that creates the moment is itself created; they perceive only the moment and are affected only by the force, the being of which testifies to its hidden origin. To them, the force must have an origin, but it seems to come from nothingness. If our work had value, it was in the way a collective momentum gathered to create such forces and affects.

It must be admitted that words like "being" and "nothingness" are used impressionistically in the previous paragraph, and why not—they are words capable of carrying quite the impression. Nevertheless, without reducing the affective force to philosophical concepts, by tracing the force in writing using such concepts, a new force might come about, not as affectively identical but arising from the practice of its description of the way collaborative practice might determine affect's origin.

Sartre's definition of nothingness is attractive because nothingness is both at the heart of intentional being and gives being the possibility of its freedom. Both an elucidation of intention and freedom are key to the problem of understanding the origin of affective force in our practice. Our intention—the way we set about our process—may lead to the production of affective force, but only in an indirect way, since a direct method of producing affective force is a contradiction in terms. If we knew how to produce affective force, it could become a mechanized process that is replicable and can be assimilated into market structures, whereas affective force is precisely what evades reduction to our knowledge and those structures. Sartre's understanding of the relationship between intention and nothingness will help to illustrate the connection between our process and the hidden origin of affective force without reducing our process to a method that manufactures that origin in a knowable way. Key to this relationship is freedom, in the sense that freedom can name what happens when intention morphs into inspiration, and the artist becomes free to act as not intended as the affective force takes root in them.

Sartre locates nothingness in the being for itself, a conscious being who questions. This being is opposed to the being in itself, a concrete and bounded being, which is also an abstraction since these bounds cut it off from the world, whereas our conscious experience is always of being in the world (Sartre 2003). In asking a question, being presupposes nothingness, since the response can always be negative. In looking for his friend Pierre in a café, Sartre questions whether he is there or not, but the question itself already gives to intuition the possibility that he is not there, a possibility that then nihilates the café in his looking for Pierre into what Sartre calls "ground," the absence of something specific: "In fact Pierre is absent from the whole café; his absence fixes the café in its evanescence; the café remains *ground*; it persists in offering itself as an undifferentiated totality to my only marginal attention; it slips into the background; it pursues its nihilation" (Sartre 2003, 34). This idea of nothingness is attractive because it locates nothingness at the heart of being. On the one hand, nothingness does not constitute a purely subjective function of being, since when the room is nihilated as I look for Pierre, the possibility of a negative assumed in the question "Is Pierre here?" is

not produced by the experience of the room as ground—on the contrary, nothingness gives that experience its possibility. On the other hand, neither is nothingness a transcendence pre-existing being, an ether that gives being its possibility. Nothingness is being's nothingness; it is only on the basis of the possibility of the being for itself questioning that nothingness can exist—its existence does not precede this possibility.

> Nothingness if it is supported by being, vanishes *qua nothingness*, and we fall back upon being. Nothingness can be nihilated only on the foundation of being; if nothingness can be given, it is neither before nor after being, nor in a general way outside of being. Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being—like a worm. (Sartre 2003, 45)

This model resonates with our practice because it is clear that the affective force generated by collaborative process *is* generated by that process; it does not pre-exist it. Yet, it is only generated by collaborative process because its origin already lies at the heart of collaborative process in the possibility of its emergence as something that happens that is not directly intended.

While an intention decided on as a collective or by an individual in the context of collaboration never aims directly at the production of the affective force, collaborative processes cannot be mystical. They must be intentional and practical. Do an exercise based on this score, move your arm over there; this is how craft can be utilized without the context becoming too vague. Even though intention is not directed at the production of affective force, it is only through intention that it becomes possible for something like affective force to happen. Yet it can also only happen when practitioners are open to deviating from intention—to doing what is not intended. It is in this way that Sartre's nothingness provides a good analogy for the origin of affective force—at the heart of artistic intention is the possibility that what is intended will not happen and that an affective force may emerge.

However, even if nothingness gives the potential for the intended not to happen, the artist(s) will still need to know how to act when it doesn't happen in order to allow the affective force to emerge. Here the possibility of freedom in Sartrean nothingness allows an exploration of what the artist can do when confronted with such a situation. For Sartre, freedom is a part of consciousness and can be identified in consciousness' break between its present and its past:

> Pierre's absence, in order to be established or realized, requires a negative moment by which consciousness in the absence of all prior determination, constitutes itself as negation. If in terms of my perceptions of the room, I conceive of the former inhabitant who is no longer in the room, I am of necessity forced to produce an act of thought which no prior state can determine nor motivate, in short to effect in myself a break in being. (2003, 51)

Consciousness must disengage itself from being in order to posit the hypothetical—since being is concrete and not hypothetical—and in order to question. But consciousness is a part of being and thus being breaks with itself. But this break is not marked temporally. There is no distance between the prior and present state: "we see suddenly and evidently that *nothing* has just slipped in between that state and the present state" (Sartre 2003, 51). This ability to disengage, to posit the hypothetical, is freedom: "Freedom is the human being putting his past out of play by secreting his own nothingness" (52).

Again, this description of freedom resonates with artistic practice, because the idea of breaking with one's own being, with nothing separating one from that being, allows the artist to open themselves to the freedom to act not as intended yet while retaining being's craft. Being is not separate from the prior self in practice—it retains all of its training and embodied craft as actor or cameraperson; otherwise, practice would slip into vagueness. But what they will do must nevertheless be undetermined, a free artistic choice. It is in this sense that artistic being is capable of openness to the possibility of inspiration, surprise, and novelty that are essential components of art while retaining the craft to respond to this possibility affectively.

The Machine That Breaks Itself

Pick two people in the room. You must walk around the room and try to form an equilateral triangle with them at all times, without letting them know that you have picked them. Everyone does this. At first, chaos—just a mess of bodies trying to achieve the goal. Then people start moving faster, trying to keep up. And then finally everyone is running in a circle, but everyone must go faster because no one can keep up. And then collapse. This is a machine that breaks itself—a score aligned to an intention that is impossible to fulfil, and that confronts the intention with its failure. In the score, there is a simple intention—stay two metres from everyone else in the room. Anyone who can judge distance and move relatively flexibly can take part in this game. But at some point, things fall apart— the word "intention" always implies the possibility of failure, but it is precisely in failure that liberty is given to the artist, the liberty of "What am I supposed to do now?" When intention fails, craft has to do something—no longer is craft trying to achieve something that it aims its intention at, it simply needs to deal with a set of circumstances that it does not know how to act within, but on occasion can navigate. This capacity is artistic freedom, and its inauguration is the moment when nothingness is secreted, when craft that was bounded by intention can become what it is not.

Day two on the McLaughlin Reserve—evening. We find a field. The theme of the day is environment. We are making machines with our surroundings. We find an old log, and Lucy, Regina, Heather, and I jump onto it. At one end of the log, we place the camera on a mini tripod. The machine's score is simple—we have to walk from one end of the log to the other, and each trip must be made faster than the last. We're going to have to pass each other on the log, of course, and the rule here is "no using your hands"; passing each other should be done by handless negotiation and balance. If you fall off, there's a getting back on point at the end of the log. We start, and it's hard because you're going slowly. Keeping your balance is difficult without momentum. As we speed it up, the movements find a rhythm and balance, and the task becomes easier. Then we have to go faster still, and this is harder because our movements are less precise. Then we have to go faster than we can, and the machine breaks as we fall off the log. The tension comes between order and improvisation—you are ordered to follow a straight line back and forth but need to find a different way to get by someone each time, and eventually, the machine will break, and you will fall off the log.

We do it again, this time with me, Heather, Kathy, and Joe. The camera wasn't so involved the first time, but this time we have three. One camera is positioned frontally to the side of the log, the top of the log forming a horizontal line near the bottom of the screen. One is at one end of the log looking toward the other, so the performers are walking toward and away from the camera. A final camera is on a drone looking down on the performers in a top shot. It's as if the action is taking place in a cube, and we have a camera attached to three of the faces, so the centre points of the

shots will intersect. To me, it's an obvious set-up—to bring something of the extreme formality of the back and forth score by thinking of the cameras in these geometric terms, set up at ninety-degree angles. Watching this iteration back, the cold removes of the angles create a tension in juxtaposition with the passing and falling, bodies being forced to do something different as the speed changes, or as they got tired, or as they were a little worried about pushing off another body and hurting them, or about being pushed. But the falling off is still in the machine, as is the passing—it's safe in the sense that one is never confronted with the moment of "What on earth do I do now?" It is a machine that has its own failure built into it, but at the moment of failure ended.

The log machine filmed from three perpendicular angles. Photos: The Performative Camera Workshop.

The next day it's raining, and Lucy and I are in the big hangar. We decide to do this again, just the two of us, along a crack in the floor instead of a log. No drone this time—health and safety. We remember the stories we told on day one—snippets and lines here and there, and we will incorporate them into the machine, improvising a dialogue made from the snippets. We start—the exercise is much harder on a crack because the stakes are so low. If you lose your balance, you just step on the floor next to the crack, so my self-preservation instincts don't kick in to aid the action. I have to concentrate much harder on staying on the crack and passing Lucy. I'm in a Machiavellian mood, so I decide to try to take down Lucy with my snippets. We go back and forth—I don't know if it's successful, but I'm enjoying myself. I use the subduction lecture and Teddy's story about the homeless people in the church with the organ: "Are you trying to subduct me?" pass on the crack, "You're just an organ without a body," pass on the crack. Then we pass again, and as we do it, I fling my arms in the air, and I know I'm going to lose my balance. I'm in that moment where you know the thing is going to end and there's nothing you can do about it. I'm annoyed with myself because if I fall, the machine will be over—no getting back onto the crack in this machine—and I

was enjoying it. Then she grabs me to restore my balance, pulls me toward her quickly and hugs me tightly and tenderly. It works because I've just been being mean to her. It works because it deliberately breaks the machine, not to break it, but to prevent it collapsing. It works because the tenderness of a hug interrupts the cold argument that has been going on and because Lucy could make that gesture in that moment. If I had to describe it, I would say I felt both comforted, terrified, and overwhelmed, which in its ceasing to make sense testifies to some kind of affective force. My only regret is that we ended it after the hug. To continue when that had happened would have forced new choices on both of us and given a completely new context to any attempt to continue in the same vein.

I lose my balance on the crack, just before Lucy hugs me. Photo: The Performative Camera Workshop.

Two big theoretical problems remain if Sartre's model of being and nothingness is to be a viable metaphor for practice. First, how can we think of artistic practice as consciousness? Consciousness is vital to the validity of Sartre's notions of nothingness, intention, and freedom. But artists have often decried consciousness, or certainly conscious thought as anathema to artistic process, and however much we may disagree with this and admire intellectual artists, it would be churlish to invoke consciousness as the ultimate limit on artistic possibility, whereas it is a limit on the possibility of Sartrean nothingness, intention, and freedom. The second problem is how the notion of collaboration might be brought to bear on Sartre's model. While Being is identified with person in the world in Sartre, we are talking about quite a different situation in collaborative practice, one in which the being that produces the work is not easy to identify, and indeed may not exist at all as a quantifiable individual.

Consciousness

Sartre is very clear that consciousness is a key part of the "for itself" that allows nothingness to be nihilated: "The Being by which nothingness arrives in the world is a being such that in its Being, the Nothingness of its Being is in question" (2003, 47). Because consciousness is what questions,

consciousness is required in order for nothingness to be nihilated, which is problematic for the idea of the freedom of artistic practice following a Sartrean model of freedom. But what does Sartre actually mean by questioning? In the example he gives with Pierre in the café, he writes:

> I have an appointment with Pierre at four o'clock. I arrive at the café a quarter of an hour late. Pierre is always punctual. Will he have waited for me? I look at the room, the patrons, and I say, "He is not here." Is there an intuition of Pierre's absence[?] (2003, 33)

It is important to ask if the questioner articulates both the question "Will he have waited for me?" and the conclusion "He is not here" in the same way as Sartre expresses them in a written sentence. While Sartre doesn't give a direct answer here, his wording suggests that the structure of consciousness does not match the structure of its articulation in his philosophy. Above all, this is evidenced by his use of the word intuition. If you articulate a question and then answer it, this is a logical process of thought that draws a conclusion and thus not really an intuition at all, which has associations of knowing without being articulated. In this case, the question becomes: in what sense can a question be a question if it is not articulated?

An articulated question may be a metaphor for intuition, but for me, a more accurate way to describe "intuition" would be a state of intended craft. The word "intend" implies possibility in that intending does not guarantee that the intended outcome occurs; it can occur or not occur. When articulated, an intention can take the form of a question—will the intended thing occur—but articulation does not have to be the experienced state of intention. Indeed, Sartre acknowledges this in an example where he distinguishes an articulated question from expectation: "to be exact, I myself expected to see Pierre, and my expectation has caused the absence of Pierre to *happen* as a real event concerning this café" (2003, 34). The distinction here is important, because when we think of an articulated question, we often think of it as something that minds do, they articulate in language, whereas intention in craft avoids the Cartesian mind/body distinction. Even the word "expectation" conveys a somatic apprehension and tension. The athlete about to start a race may intellectually think, "I intend to win," but they may not. It doesn't alter the fact that, on the start line, their whole body is attuned to this intention, alert but relaxed, ready to explode as the starting gun is fired. And it is in this sense of craft that intention can nihilate nothingness in artistic practice because it opens up possibility. Intention should not imply that the articulated thought "I'm going to make something really good" is sufficient to intend to do that. In its unarticulated sense, intention requires craft to intend, requires the actor to know in their body how to be present, or the cameraperson to anticipate an event in symbiosis with the camera.

When I chose to film the log from three sides of a box, I didn't consciously think about its effect. I relied on an embodied craft of filmmaking to intend to film in this way but without consciously articulating why. Indeed, when we watched the footage together as a large group, it surprised me how people less familiar with cameras hadn't realized how the shots would turn out—whereas I knew how to previsualize them because of my filmmaking craft. Thinking of consciousness as an intending of craft rather than thought, or an articulation of questions, is a way of integrating Sartre's consciousness into a description of a model of artistic practice.

Collaboration

We see Lucy standing behind a glass door. In the glass of the door, we see Heather's face reflected. Joe films this so that we see both their heads in close-up—Lucy's through the glass and Heather's reflected in the glass. Initially, the door is closed so that their heads are on opposite sides of the frame. The machine's score is for Heather to tell the story to Lucy of how she tried to phone her sister but ended up phoning herself. As the door opens, the tone of the conversation is to be happy, and as it closes sad. But as the door opens, the changing angle of the glass also changes the position of Heather's head in the frame, so that it is now superimposed on Lucy's.

The piece starts as a conversation between two friends. Although neither Lucy nor Heather hold phones, Heather holds her hand to her ear. The framing makes this seem like a phone conversation as well, with the reflection detaching the actors in space, but retaining a close-up on them and using opposite sides of the frame, which is very much how we are accustomed to seeing phone conversations on screen. As the conversation starts, the scene plays as a confession of one's stupidity to a close friend. Lucy seems to be indulging her, playing along but disconcerted by her friend's stupidity—when she is happy, she seems to be putting it on. All of a sudden, we wonder if Heather is calling herself on the phone, and we are witnessing the conversation that she had with herself. This sense is created when their heads merge in a super-imposition. It is amplified because Heather is driving the conversation but is also the ephemeral reflection that we never really grasp, and the reflection itself reminds us of a mirror. The happy and sad instruction also plays into this. When Heather is happy, Lucy is happy as well, and vice versa. Even Lucy's more "put on" happiness seems to testify to Heather sublating the stupidity of her action into a narrative of kooky klutziness. It can be read both ways, and this is what makes it interesting, in that it opens onto its audience the possibilities of a story surrounding this moment. Joe, who is on the camera, makes choices as well, reacting to the conversation, to the moments when this is two people, and the moments it could be one. When the conversation ends, Heather tells Lucy that after she called herself, she called her sister for real. Lucy asks, "Did she pick up?" and they laugh. The door closes, and Heather deadpans, "No." The machine ends with them blowing on the door and making kisses in the foggy glass to each other. Kisses to a friend, or a tragic need to blow kisses to oneself? As a self-contained piece, it's probably the most successful machine we make, a moment of genuine collaboration between two actors and a camera/person. But how is its affective force generated collaboratively?

Heather speaks to Lucy as reflection. Photo: The Performative Camera Workshop.

Take a cameraperson and an actor collaborating. Each can be defined as an individual in the classical sense of a person. But the force emerging is not individual. From either's perspective, their consciousness, or craft intention, is focused toward the other, but their freedom is doubled in this moment. As has been established, they have freedom of action, which is close to what Sartre describes. It is a freedom in which conscious being secretes nothingness as the past breaks with the present to give craft unlimited possibility. What I am contending is that they are here also free to be acted upon, which appears to be a contradiction, since freedom implies a being's choice but to be acted upon appears to mean to be the passive recipient of another's choice. And yet, if consciousness is a giving over of my being to a break with my being, from the "in itself" to the "for itself," then the nothingness secreted by being renders being vulnerable not only to its own being's change on the basis of free action but also to external forces. This appears to be impossible; since nothing separates me from my being, there appears to be no location in me for an external force to affect me. However, an analysis of Sartre's distinction between fear and anguish reveals how the inauguration of freedom can collapse the internal/external distinction, such that nothing separates being not only from itself but also from external forces.

For Sartre, "fear is fear of beings in the world whereas anguish is anguish before myself. Vertigo is anguish to the extent that I am afraid not of falling over the precipice, but of throwing myself over. A situation provokes fear if there is a possibility of my life being changed from without" (2003, 53). But if I am for myself with nothingness coiled at the heart of my being, then I am what I am not, so I cannot know what I am (since I am not it). Since I am what I am not, how can I distinguish between a possibility in me that derives from conscious freedom and a possibility that is given to me, which may nevertheless be experienced as freedom? In fear, I can bracket off something external to me of which I am afraid—the boulder teetering on the cliff above my head that I see, or as Sartre puts it, "unreflective apprehension of the transcendent" (2003, 54). But in this positing of a transcendent to me, I immediately render myself as a being "in itself," as a bounded being outside

the bounds of which at a minimum lies this transcendent. Sartrean fear is dependent on apprehension by a being "in itself."

In contrast, the "for itself" cannot meet the external with fear because this would announce a retreat to the "in itself." But it can nevertheless be stricken by the external. Not as when the boulder falls on my head without me noticing. If I am lucky enough to have survived this misfortune, then I will likely posit the boulder as something external to me. I will bracket it from me as an object I want nothing to do with as the cause of my pain. But what if I am standing underneath the boulder, reflecting in anguish that I am free to move or stay, and then it falls? A second question will help us to answer this one. Why would anyone do that? What gives Vertigo its possibility? What allows people to stand under the boulder at all? Sartre's answer is that fear leads to being becoming aware of its own possibilities in freedom. When confronted with the cliff edge, I become aware of the actions I can take as possibilities in this situation: "At the very moment when I apprehend my being as *horror* of the precipice, I am conscious of that horror as *not determinant* in relation to my possible conduct" (Sartre 2003, 55). Anguish, then, "is precisely my consciousness of being my own future, in the mode of not being" (56). Therefore, as far as "anguish is anguish before myself," the myself that this anguish is before is not self-identical in the sense of an "in itself." Anguish is the "for itself" fearing an "in itself" that it is not yet, and yet fear cannot be an adequate word since although consciousness posits an external future being, nothing separates its being from this future being. But, correlate to the "for itself's" fear of being "in itself," the "for itself" also therefore desires to "not be itself." There is an aspect of being "for itself" that, when confronted with the cliff edge, thinks not only "I could," but "I want," or to be pithy, the being "for itself" is also always being "for not itself."

So I am standing underneath the boulder, anguished, desiring it to fall on me and not fall on me, unable to decide what to do, when it falls. Now, I can no longer bracket its action off completely from myself—I have desired its falling as one of *my* possibilities. Or rather, if I do bracket its action, I must also bracket off the being "for itself" that desired this, a moment of madness that the "in itself" articulates, and that was not really me. I use the example of the boulder in order to illustrate that things can happen *to* the "for itself" in the freedom that anguish brings. But they only happen *to* the for itself when the for itself is theoretically separated from the external force that acts upon it. Strictly, from the position of the "for itself," this did not happen to it, since its happening was a possibility that belonged to the "for itself." This happening to it is different to a decisive act, to choosing to stay under the boulder or to move, because I have taken no decision to act. But just as it is in my possibility without decision that I am free to act, it is also in this state that I am free to be acted upon. In this latter case, whatever happens to me is my possibility and yet requires action that is not mine. Further, because it is my possibility, *nothing* separates me from the origin of this action.

The point is that something can happen to the anguished being at the moment of freedom and indecision before a choice to act is made, and what happens at this point is quite different to what happens to the being "in itself" bracketed off from the world. If I am simultaneously for myself and for not myself, then what happens to me in this suspended moment becomes indiscernible from me and from not me if I do not retreat from this force into an "in itself." And what is this if not a description of affective force? Of another's craft which strikes at the heart of my being, and yet is not me. This is what I mean by the double freedom that nothingness brings, both to act and be acted upon. It is also in this way that affect is mine but cannot belong to me, that it must have been in some way made collaboratively, as my freedom acts upon another's freedom to be acted upon or vice versa.

In this scenario, I change, but I cannot identify the origin of my change because the origin is precisely between a me and not me separated by nothing, where my possibility is not separated from another's action, or my action from another's possibility. It is in this nothing that a force of change takes root, and yet under observation, this force's origin is indiscernible from this nothing, since to discern it would be to make nothing something. The affective force is thus like a photon in that it acquires the materiality of mass with speed, but when halted so that it can be observed in consciousness lacks any materiality whatsoever. This is the materiality of nothingness and can be the basis for collaborative artmaking.

Let's go back to our example of the actor and cameraperson confronted with each other. In this moment of practice, let's say that each is "for itself" (and thus also "for not itself"). Something happens. One uses their craft toward the other, and the materiality of nothingness is felt. The actor and cameraperson experience this as an affective force that is both of their being and not of their being—indeed, the audience can be included in this as well if it too is "for itself." And this is what is meant by collective energy, that sense of something happening in the room. That every being "for itself's" nothingness is materially infused but that this infusion is still by necessity articulated by every being as emanating from nothing. That doesn't mean we all feel the same thing as practitioners—a mystical collective energy that overtakes us all—but that our nothingness is indiscernible to us from that which affects it, infused with materiality by the force of our collaborators.

Conclusion

I don't know how our workshop translates into an end product, but writing this piece has made me aware of some of the necessities of the next stage of the process. I think there is a "you-had-to-be-there-ness" about these machines, in a real sense that if you were there, the pieces were sometimes successful as performances. But cameras have the quality of being where information is stored as well as taking on an active role in these performances. In this sense, when you see a camera live, actively engaged in a performance, there is no guarantee that what it records will reflect the affective particularity of that moment as it occurred to the artists and/or audiences present. Additionally, we are working with materials that have been collectively generated over a week, stories, things that happened, places, moments, machines, and phrases. The machines often work because the performance resonates—a call back to an earlier moment informs the current one. Perhaps the machines described and analyzed here work anyway, outside of the current context. But I can't help thinking that this is more likely if you know the story of how I phoned myself. Or if you've seen the footage of the log, and heard the lecture on subduction before watching Lucy and me on the crack. You can't bring that moment of performance back for an audience, but you can attempt to contextualize it by creating a presentation context that will allow it to resonate anew. This attempt suggests a form of montage—it is about creating a context between machines that allows the audience to experience the breaking of them. This next stage brings its own practical questions. Filmmaking is done in groups, so the actual act of filming lent itself to a collaborative dynamic—there was always plenty for everyone to do. However, editing is done alone traditionally, or maybe with an assistant or director present, so a key question is, "How can collaboration work in an editing context?"

And yet simply articulating in language that this might be the next stage is insufficient as an instruction. Through the practice of theory, I also hope to allow these moments to resonate a little

here. By putting an adaptation of Sartre beside a description and analysis of an artistic practice, I can practice a form of montage where the reader will have to seek out the connections to allow the two elements to harmonize. In its own practice, then, this article attempts to perform a research role where knowledge is generated through theory and criticism not as an articulation of practice, but as an attunement to affect, a part of practice unknown to practice that becomes embodied. As theory, it does not affect practice on its own terms—in the next workshop, I will still just do my craft. But I hope that lurking as material in the nothingness of my practice will be theory all the same.

Notes

1. "Film and Energy" Workshop. 2016. Primary Films and the University of Greenwich.

2. "Co-presence with the Camera" Workshop. 2019. Workshop 4, Davis Humanities Institute Research Workshop Series "The Performative Camera." McLaughlin Reserve, May 2019, University of California Davis.

3. "Victim Capital Workshop. 2018. Primary Films and the University of Greenwich.

4. I borrow the term fidelity here from Alain Badiou's fidelity to the event, which he articulates in *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (2012). While not identical to affect, for Badiou, the event similarly challenges the person; it is "something extra, something that happens in situations that they and the usual way of behaving in them cannot account for" (2012, 41). For Badiou, the ethical act maintains a fidelity to the logic of such an event.

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Finding a Person and Losing a Person: On *Cameraperson*

Kirsten Johnson in Interview with Alex Lichtenfels

A. L. The project for the journal *Performance Matters* is about looking at process, and how people work, and how people have developed their processes that they use in their career, or their craft, or their art. That's the focus.

K. J. Just process around camera work.

A. L. I was hoping also to ask you a little bit about the films that you've directed. To start off with, how did you get started? What's the history, and what was your route into becoming a cameraperson?

K. J. There's always the short story and the long story, but as an American, I was incredibly confused and interested in race relations from the time of my early childhood, because I grew up in the '70s, and didn't understand what was going on, on a social level, but I could feel the racism in the worlds that surrounded me, and it didn't make sense to me. So I was always trying to figure that out.

I was raised as a Seventh Day Adventist, and it is a pretty particular religion that has certain constraints. No dancing, drinking, smoking, but also no movies. As a child, I saw missionary slides. I would see these slides of the world, and see someone wearing this fabulous outfit in Papua New Guinea, and then it would be like, "Look. We converted them, and now they're wearing khakis and a light blue shirt." And I would just be confused as a child, because I was like, "They looked really good before. What did we do?" I watched some movies and there were some people in our church who were a little subversive, and so I remember sneakily seeing *Harold and Maude* at someone's

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Alex Lichtenfels is a filmmaker and theorist who is a senior lecturer in film production at the University of Salford. He has several years' experience in the film and television industries, working primarily as a freelance producer and director in corporate and advertising venues. He is also an independent filmmaker with the Primary Films collaborative, producing or directing numerous short films as well as several longer projects. Through his work, he investigates emerging filmmaking practices, driven by research into technological changes and how methods used in other artforms might be applied to filmmaking. He is concerned with how these practices might allow for new types of films that engage audiences in nonstandard ways. He is currently pursuing research projects on remodelling the organization of film production based on anarchist political principles, and the links between film and antihumanist ethics.

house when I was a kid. But I really didn't go to the movie theatre, and movies were off limits in a certain way. I watched some television. But I think from a very early age, I was quite visually preoccupied.

As I aged, I grew, I started to question the religion and grow away from it in some ways, but I ended up going to a secular university, which blew my mind. When I was there, I became really involved in South African anti-apartheid activism. I was very curious about African colonial history, and I happened to see a couple films by Ousmane Sembène, and then a film by Djibril Diop Mambèty. I saw *Touki Bouki*. And it was so different from what I understood about blackness in the United States, and the history of African American history and racism. There was just such a self-confidence and an un-self-consciousness, and a freedom, and a different energy, that I was just like, "Whoa, what's going on here?"

My senior year of college, I thought I would be interested in writing about how different directors of colour dealt with racism and blackness all over the world. I wanted to go to Brazil. I wanted to go to London. I wanted to go to Paris. I wanted to go to West Africa. I made the finals of the competition, and then I didn't get it. I was so embarrassed and disappointed, so I just decided to buy a one-way ticket to Dakar. I didn't speak French. I didn't know people spoke Wolof. I didn't know it was an expensive city. I didn't know the country was Muslim. I was incredibly naïve, and very young. I literally got on a plane and went, and knocked on Ousmane Sembène's door. He was like, "Who are you, and what are you doing here?" And he said, "Well, we're making a movie in a year and a half. If you're still here then, you can be an intern."

I stayed in Senegal for two years. In the course of that, I met all of the Senegalese filmmakers, went to FESPACO, realized there was this really odd and, once again, racist world of European funding for African films, and there were all these older European women having affairs with African directors. I could see my future, and I was like, "I don't want to be writing books about African cinema when I'm fifty."

Suddenly, one of my friends said, "You know, in France, there's a film school, and it's free." I went to France, and spoke to them about whether I could apply for this school, and they're like, "No, you're an American. We're giving money to countries where people need support." And I said, "Could I apply as a French student?" And they were like, "I don't think you understand. We have the crème de la crème of France here. This is an haute école." I talked to someone else, and they're like, "They'll never let you in. There's no way in the world they'll let you in, especially if you apply as a director, but maybe you can sneak in through one of the technical departments." That is how I chose cinematography, not because I had a particular proclivity for it, but it seemed like the most likely thing—not choosing sound editing and production. I like images. Just by the sheer absurdity of who I was—I spoke French with this strong Senegalese accent—I got into the cinematography department.

There, I totally fell in love with the camera. I was sort of shocked, because . . . this is the centre of filmmaking. Why wouldn't you want to be in this position? You're the one who gets to hold the camera and move the camera. I think from my complete lack of exposure and my naïveté, when I encountered the power of the camera, I was completely incredulous that I was allowed to be the one at the centre of things, to be at the heart of things. It feels like a secret, in a way, how much the camera is the centre of cinema. I always have this feeling that I get to be here. It's like a free gift of pleasure, that I'm the one that gets to touch the camera.

A. L. You talk about that being a revelation. Was there something that happened, or a particular sort of project that you worked on in which that realization took hold?

K. J. At the time, we were working with big 35-millimetre film cameras and 16-millimetre film cameras, and I was intimidated by loading the film, and the lenses, but I also was very struck by the preciousness of things, the way cameras were treated so reverentially, and that there was so much protocol around it and the delicate handling of it. I loved that, even though it's not really how I am at all. At the time, video was just beginning, and we were using these huge SVHS cameras or Betacams.

And while I was in film school, like any film school student, I was learning rudimentary ideas about cinema language, but because it was the school that it was and the time in history that it was, we got to meet some remarkable people. I had lunch with Godard at the cafeteria. I talked with Raoul Coutard. And Agnès Godard. I talked to Agnès Godard. . . . Not knowing anything about anything, barely knowing anything about cinema, I was meeting these remarkable people and having conversations about what it is to make films. There was also an incredibly sophisticated sound department there, and a really wonderful man named Michel Fano, who talked a lot about how natural sound recording conveyed emotion. I think almost more than anyone at the school, it provoked me around what might be possible when I filmed.

My first opportunity came from Amy Ziering, who came to France with a deal with the French government if she employed a French film student working on her film about Jacques Derrida. I, as a student, got to film with Derrida, and that was a realization that the camera could give you access to a person of his calibre. I knew that I knew nothing, but I get to go into Derrida's house because I'm the one who knows how to work the camera. He had a lot of skepticism about being filmed and pushed back a lot about it, and really felt like no image of him and no scene of him would ever accurately represent his complexity and his dimensions, and so there was often tension around whether we could film or not film. At one moment, he said, "You're out. Everyone leave. I can't deal with this. I'm too distracted. I need to think. I'm preparing things." And Amy was quite desperate because she'd flown over, and really needed to shoot, and didn't have any money, and all these kind of things. So she really begged him, and he said, "Well, if only Kirsten stays here with the camera, and she does not say a word, that would be okay."

I literally stayed in his house, wordless, for eight hours while he worked and prepared a trip. I think that day, in combination with observing him as an extraordinary person, it just changed everything for me. I realized that I could show what I was thinking in the way that I filmed. That had never occurred to me. I thought I had to explain everything. As a human, that's what I have to do—tell you what I'm doing, tell you what I'm thinking. [Not explaining] became increasingly pleasurable as the day went on. I would have an idea and then search for the way to embody it in response to who he was and what he was doing. That's a key moment for me.

A. L. Is there an example of that, of a shot that you took or something where it was in response to, or something you did?

K. J. We'd had these ideas about the fact that he didn't believe that being filmed could accurately represent him, so I was trying to film him in reflection, or through windows, or in distortion. But then there's just a moment where he's clicking the pen tops back onto the pens, and it's this very small gesture, but it feels like you see how his mind is working. It occurred to me that it is absolutely

the case that filming is fragmentary, inadequate, and incomplete, but there is evidence that you can gather that relates to people's inner states. You can't know anything. I don't know what it meant for him to very carefully put those pen tops on. But there was a way that he did it that was so deliberate and clearly such a habit, and so unusual, that it's as meaningful as evidence about him as a thinking. To capture a shot like that, and do it in—not in opposition to him, but him saying, "You will never learn anything about the interior of me by filming," and then I was like, "Ooh. I don't know what I learned, but I know something more than I knew before."

A. L. Watching a film like *Cameraperson*, for me—and maybe it's because of the clips you select, but I guess you select them for a reason—there's definitely a very developed style that is going on there. Is that something that you're conscious of developing, and how has that developed since the Derrida film?

K. J. It was a revelation for me upon making *Cameraperson* that I did have a consistent style or approach that's pretty ineffable. *Cameraperson* is made of footage that exists over the course of twenty-five years, so of course, technology is changing. The cameras I was using: the lenses are changing. My capacity to see what I'm actually shooting was changing, going from I'm looking through a tiny eyepiece, to I'm looking at a teeny-tiny screen, to I'm looking at a giant high definition screen. All of those things are changed throughout my career.

Yet what I had to admit in a certain way when I saw the footage was that, one, I was present—there's evidence of me in the footage, and there's evidence of the way I behave and the way I think and how I feel in the footage. That may be, at times, extremely abstract, but I did not understand how present I was. I believed, in some ways, that I was skilled at filming in different ways for different directors, and then, in fact, when I looked at the footage, I was like, "Oh, I'm a one-trick pony." There's a way in which there's a sameness to it, which I could devalue or accept or value, depending on how I feel. But it was a revelation to me, and it was not something I was ever purposefully trying to do, to develop a style. I was much more interested in searching with directors for "How do we create the cinematic language that's necessary for this particular film?" The revelation of how coherent *Cameraperson* is was a total surprise to me.

A. L. One of the things that I saw in it, and I don't know if you were doing intentionally, is a real attention to duration in shots, letting shots go on and on, even when something has happened in the shot—which is usually when we expect the cut—so that you keep encouraging or making the viewer look at what happens next, and what goes forward in a shot. Have you had any thoughts on that, or have you noticed that, or whether that's just me putting interpretation to your work, or . . .

K. J. Well, I think it's a very beautiful observation. The motivation for me in the choices we made about how we sequenced things or which shots we chose was very connected to, "How do we allow the viewer of the film to share my experience?" Part of my experience as a cameraperson is this pleasure and curiosity of searching for shots, and then the necessary patience of waiting for things to happen. But over time, I've developed the understanding that you don't just stop when you've found one thing. In fact, there may be more things coming. And that there's increased pleasure if you have waited almost to the point of despondency, so that there's nothing more, and then suddenly, boom, there is something more. So, for example, the shot with the boxer. Never in a million years would I imagine we were going to find his mother. But the payoff of that, for me as a cameraperson, and for the spectator, is huge, right? I didn't stop at that moment. I continued to film him for probably half an hour after that. I kept following him.

One of the things that was a conundrum for us when we were making the film was "How do we translate extremely long duration into short periods of time?" I filmed the baby who was struggling for life in Nigeria for dozens of hours. I can't remember right now the exact number of hours, but it's something insane. There's like thirty-four hours' worth of footage. That was part of what had been disturbing and haunting for me, to watch that family go through that, to watch the hospital staff attempt to save him when they did not have the capacity to save him, when they were pulling medical teams away from other patients because I was filming, which we learned later. All of those things are in the pain and conflict and ethical dilemma that I carry about that footage. And it lasted a really long time in a situation where people are screaming, it's loud, there's HIV positive blood on the floor. The physical experience of being there is incredibly intense. So then how do I . . . What's the duration of a shot I include in an hour and a half long film? Interestingly, part of how we upped the intensity of that particular scene was that we took the sound out the moment the baby is born, so that literally from the first moment that he's born, you as an audience are holding your breath, thinking, "Is he breathing?"

I was looking for the many different ways the tools of cinema are able to give us the possibility of having emotional experience that is not real life, right? It's not me filming a baby who's deprived of oxygen for thirty hours, right, but it is fragments of that, and then how do we allow that to connect to the intensity of what it really was, without being manipulative or deceitful? That was part of what we tried to do with the film, was use the footage in as many different ways as possible, so some shots are their entire duration, there are montages, there are shots that . . . The woman who has the abortion, in the original film, she was a cutaway, so just adding her voice was what changed it. That was very deliberate, trying to use all of the many different tools of cinema to express the experience of being the cameraperson.

A. L. That really comes across especially for me, that sense of self-presence and your presence in the film is definitely there. One thing that you mentioned that I'd like to pick up on is the idea of searching when you're using a camera. That's so present in that final shot, where you're panning left and right, and you're picking one person up and then all of a sudden—and as I watch, what my experience of you is, that you pick it up before I notice it, and that puts you in such a present tense moment. I just wonder how on earth do you do that? Do you notice it, and then stop the camera? Is your body is very intuitive? How does getting a shot like that work for you?

K. J. Thank you. I'm so glad that that shot was meaningful to you, because for me there's so much of cinematography in that shot.

A. L. The focus, as well, was impressive.

K. J. It is the finding a person and losing a person. For me, I feel like there's an enormous amount of loss in the act of filming people, as much as there is this incredible experience of discovery and passion and pleasure, because you can't stay. You can't go as deep with the person as you want to. You can't "do" for them. These kinds of things go through one's head. I feel like I've learned about searching from the example of other camerapeople, particularly Jorge Müller Silva, one of the camerapeople on *The Battle of Chile*. In the opening scenes of the film, we see the footage of Leonardo Henrichsen, who filmed as a soldier in a tank turns and points a gun at him. Then we see the image tumble when Henrichsen is hit by the bullet and loses control of his camera. He died shortly thereafter. Silva is the cinematographer who continued on the film after this death—this is a cinematographer filming knowing that he could be shot and killed for working on this project—he

goes to this military funeral when things are on the verge of violent change. Basically, someone has assassinated the naval admiral who is loyal to President Allende, and all of the different heads of the different military branches are there at the funeral pretending that everything is normal, but in fact, half of them are about to support Pinochet taking power by a military coup and half of them know they're probably going to be killed.

Silva just does this extraordinary work. It's a super tense situation. It's formal. He's not really supposed to be there. And he's shooting on 16 millimetre, and he—search is the word. He just slowly moves up people's bodies until he finds a detail that betrays something, not even necessarily knowing what it betrays. Someone's doing his tie and being cocky, someone's got a drop of sweat dripping down his neck, someone's scratching, but as soon as he registers that detail, then he just pans away and finds someone else. And he lands where he lands. So he might land just on a nondescript part of their jacket, and then he very calmly just starts searching for the evidence of what that person is feeling internally. That shot, it's just a sequence. The way he pans out with full trust he will find something has been a great inspiration to me throughout my career. And he was killed after the coup happened. He was one of the people taken to the stadium and killed. He really was operating under fear for his life, and yet he had this incredible calm confidence in the profundity of human existence, and the fact that psychological things show in people's body language, and that the camera can see them.

For me, that's what I try to do, trust that there is visual complexity in the world that will share something with me. I just pan—I just followed. In that shot, I would just follow a person until they were replaced by another person. In a certain way, for me, it's saying every human individual is worthy of being filmed and being seen, and basically all you have to do is look with patience and curiosity and love.

A. L. It's a word you've mentioned several times, "evidence," that the camera looks for evidence, but it's not an evidence that produces knowledge, necessarily, or produces knowledge in the way that we think about it, but produces complexity, human complexity.

K. J. That's right. And it can't be verified, necessarily. The other thing that I think is so fantastic about it is that it's generative, so that once you have seen a shot that has given you some evidence, then you realize that you can triangulate that shot with another moment. For example, I'm making a film with my father right now, and we were filming auditions of the stuntpeople who are going to play him, who are going to enact his death. So we're looking for his doppelganger. It's a comedy. It's going to be funny.

So in doing the audition, we were having him stand next to the stuntpeople who are supposed to play the role of him. Suddenly you realize, in a wide shot, because they're the same size as him, even though it's perfectly absurd—he's an eighty-five-year-old man, and this is a thirty-four-year-old with big muscles, but who's trying to look like him, so they slump their shoulders—you have this effect of the idea of a doppelganger. To place that in a symmetrical way, suddenly you're seeing Tweedledee and Tweedledum. There's a twinning of the image that then becomes a way that I shoot my father with other people. And then it is coming up under this idea of, when my father dies, he cannot be replaced. He is irreplaceable. And yet he is just a man. Many men look like him. Someone will . . .

Those themes that are a part of my thinking and feeling about what the movie will be, I have found visual code to express. Then I look for that shot. It's not that I set that shot up, but when I see him standing next to another man, I think of the idea of doppelganger. I think of the idea of irreplaceability. I think of doubling. And it informs a language that I am creating in the service of making the film. This generative aspect, where you get ideas from filming, because you see and recognize something in what you have filmed.

A. L. That's really interesting, because earlier the way that I understood what you were saying was that the progress that you made in your development of style as a cameraperson was not based in self-reflection, or you weren't aware of it. But there is some connection there between the work you do and the way you think, and then the way that feeds back into your work when you gather images is . . .

K. J. Absolutely. Yes. And no question, for example, that I learned early on how differently expressive hands are from faces. That's a stock thing that you learn as a cameraperson. Shoot a cutaway of the hands. But there's a language around a lot of cinematography that I feel is misleading. Words like "B roll" or "cutaway" basically give you the understanding that the action is something like "let me just get this thing that's meaningless, because we'll need it to cheat." I have found the actual word "cutaway" misled me for many years in filming until I discovered, it's not a cutaway of the hands, it's: look at someone's hands in a meaningful moment, and you will discover a world about the person that you will never see in their face, particularly if they're trying to contain their emotion or hide their emotion, or they don't even understand themselves.

I have this moment with a mother whose son had been shot in cold blood, and we filmed her probably only three months after he'd been killed. We were filming a meeting with her and the son's father and the lawyer. She started smoothing a napkin in such a way that I knew she was about to completely collapse. I was the only one who saw it, and without asking the director, I stopped filming, and I said, "Do you need to take a break?" She left and disappeared into the bathroom, and was completely collapsed. The director was quite confused and angry with me, and, "Why did you do that? We would have filmed her crying." And I was like, "This is a relationship. This person has agreed to be in a film about her son's death. She will obviously cry in this film. But if we, in this first half an hour of filming her, expose her in this way, trap her into this situation of being filmed, she will not trust us."

When you're becoming a cinematographer, you have so many words—shoot, and take, and stealing images—I think there's a whole vocabulary of cinematography that emerged from parasitical processes that were a part of colonial military history, that had to do with misrepresenting people, taking things from people, being acquisitive, and I'm searching to express new vocabulary.

Creating the word "cameraperson"—it certainly existed before, but was not really used. I'm not saying I invented the word, but to affirm the word in a deliberate way was a deliberate act and a response to. . . . You know, every day someone calls me a cameraman, but there's a way in which what that says is: some people are allowed to do this, some people are not allowed to do this. You embed this cyborg idea into the very word. I am not just a person when I film. I am not just a camera. I am a cameraperson. And I see and experience and have power in ways that I don't when I am just a person, and that a camera doesn't without a person. I think that's increasingly relevant as we move into a world of more machine filming cameras, as we go into more surveillance camera, more world in which the simple technology of the camera is making choices that people aren't, and

AI. I think the particular subjectivity of the person who [is] seeing is ridiculously meaningful, and we're not acknowledging that. I think we have great potential to lose that in our images of the future. I'm a real advocate of trying to find and advocate for words that express the complexity of what's happening.

A. L. Well, it's a question. Would it be fair to say that those words and that terminology also extend into the processes, into the way that camera operators are trained to capture certain images, for example?

K. J. Absolutely. I feel like there's so many things I had to unlearn, and that I was striving to do for years until I realized, I don't want to do that or be that. It's also in the behaviour, so that you learn, "I need to be a fly on the wall and not be present, and be invisible." And then people do things like walk into people's worlds and just start filming them without asking if they have permission to do so, without introducing themselves, without recognizing that other people have agency. I've certainly been guilty of this many times, and often it's a question of, you know, it's sunset, the light's dropping, you've just got to get the shot because the shot's there and it's so beautiful. So you do these shots, and then after the fact, you realize with horror what you've done.

An example of that would be in Nigeria, the grandmother of that baby. I had been filming with her for hours. I knew her name. She had given us permission to film. But they didn't expect that the mother would almost bleed to death. They didn't expect that the baby would be in crisis. They'd given their permission when the woman was pregnant with two healthy twins. But I kept filming, and there's a moment when, in their protocol in this particular hospital, a family member has to carry the baby from one clinic area to another. And it was an emergency situation, and the grandmother was carrying the baby, and I ran around in front of her and was walking backwards. She stopped and posed. I realized, here's this woman whose grandchild is dying, but because of the hierarchy in her mind being a seventy-year-old Nigerian woman, if a white American woman with a big expensive camera is standing in front of her, she believes she has to stop, even at the expense of her own grandchild's health.

I have learned many times that even when you think that people have agency, that they are actually embedded in a structural social political system that has so conditioned them to be powerless that, even though they may be full of contempt for you or just horrified that you are filming in such a moment, they will accept. That is where I realized that part of the history of camerawork is this abusive. . . . It's an abuse of power that has not been acknowledged. I think that's in the imagery, and it's in the ways in which we realize there's been such misrepresentation in imagery of all kinds.

A. L. That goes right back to your opening about being a child seeing those images from the colonial era.

K. J. And just a child picking up on the signals of the world. Like, hmm, something's off here, right?

A. L. That brings up the whole question of ethics, and how you then go. You find yourself in that situation, and of course however much you might want to rid yourself of the associations that a camera might have, or the things that a camera is doing in terms of power structures, it's not possible, I guess, to do that completely. How do you then approach those situations in such a way that you think that what you're doing is ethical, but you're still getting what you want and are making a film that you want to make?

K. J. I think that that tension is almost always present. Early in my career, I sort of imagined, oh, I can be decent, and I can be ethical, and that's what I want to be. Over the course of my career, I've realized it is a much more complex matrix than that. I am in the matrix with. . . . The reason I am there is because either I am making a film or I have been hired to film on behalf of another director. There is no other reason for me to be there than my contribution to making a film. But I've also learned that it is not necessarily always shooting in that moment, actually filming, that is the choice to make. Sometimes making the choice not to film, like in the example I gave with the mother of the shot son, the choice to stop filming is the thing that enables the future film.

One of the things I would say, very simply, I have learned to be kinder to myself, and to accept that making mistakes about what is ethical or what is decent, being naïve, is acceptable to a point, but if you have been given the information or the knowledge and you ignore it, then I think you are accountable for your lack of ethics. You are responsible for the way in which you may be causing hurt or harm or pain, or into perpetuity, damage to another human. I accept that I often do not yet know things, but as soon as I learn things, then I am accountable to what I have learned. I need to be thinking in as active a way as possible, so to know that every situation is freighted with power dynamics, and relationships that exist that precede our presence as a camera team will go on after we leave, and that the film has the potential to change those dynamics, perhaps on behalf of one person we've filmed and not on behalf of another person.

One of the things that really matters to me when I think about filming is the notions of past, present, and future. I think of cinema as time travel, and I think of myself as having the capacity to—the camera allows me to be physically present in situations that I would never be in. But by being extremely present in that place, I must learn as much as I can about the past of that place, and I must imagine the possible futures, because I, by being there with the camera, am changing that matrix. That's one of the things I love thinking about, is: What do I not understand about what's going on here? What do I not understand about why someone is letting me film? That's another thing that I think about constantly. Why are they letting us film? What is the motivation there? What is the need? What is the wish? I often say, when you come with a camera, you come with a promise. You just don't know what it is that you're promising and to who.

This idea that I'm actively thinking about all these dynamics all of the time is so busy in my head that I sometimes forget that I'm a part of that puzzle, because I'm trying to figure out things that are unfamiliar to me, I forget what is familiar, what is me. Then there are moments like the Nigerian grandmother who remind me, oh, that's what I look like. That's who I am to her.

I constantly battle against the ways in which we are all seen too simply. Like looking at anyone, there's a series of labels that people see from the outside. But I'm trying to continue to give clues. What I'm doing when I'm filming is trying to give people many more ways into knowing who I am, so that they don't stay on the surface of who they believe me to be. That allows them to perhaps wish to share more of who they actually are. Because I believe that all of these identifying identities, they impact, profoundly, who we are, and they really matter, especially if you're living in a racist world or a misogynistic world, or a world where poverty is disrespected. . . . All those things matter, and yet there is also still a very particular person there who has a complicated relationship to their racial identity, and has a complicated relationship to being a woman, and has a complicated relationship to aging—and is hilarious, and is mean-spirited, and can be both. I'm trying, when I film, to give people clues about disrupting what they think they're seeing so that they can disrupt what I think I'm seeing.

A. L. And that's so clear in the way it comes across in *Cameraperson*. I actually wrote it down in my notes. There's a dedication to complexity, to complexity of people.

K. J. I like that. I am absolutely dedicated to complexity [*laughs*].

A. L. I think it goes back to the things we were talking about earlier, like duration or looking for evidence. To me, those were ways that some of those things, some of the complexity of people started to come across. To me, it's very anti that idea of making a film where you set it all up to conform with a particular vision of the world. You're looking for what you don't know, or something like that?

K. J. Yes. And then in the moment with Kathy Leichter where the snow falls from the roof. Then the world gives you something even more mysterious than you could imagine. And then the level of pleasure of having a moment like that is so intense, because it's just like, "Ahh! There's more going on than even I imagined." I love having that happen. The extreme surrealistic serendipity of the world is really thrilling to me.

A. L. In almost all of the films that you include in *Cameraperson*, there's a real dedication to politics as well. That must be something you're conscious of. How does that come about? How do you go about choosing projects, to the extent that you can choose projects, of course?

K. J. One of the dualities of me, perhaps, is that I very much believe in the specificity of the individual, but I also understand that people exist within systems. I think that comes from my upbringing, in that I felt very particular. I wouldn't say I felt alienated. I actually believed in the religion I was raised in when I was a child, so I felt very much a part of things, but I also felt deeply in confusion in relation to some of the things that were given to me as absolutes. But even though when Waco happened in Texas and went up in flames, I was within a system. Despite the fact that I was this sweet, thinking, caring child, I would have been on that team and thought that the apocalypse was coming, and gone down in flames happy, because I existed within a particular system.

I think I translated, at a certain point in life, my understanding of the religious system in which I existed into looking at political systems. For a while, I would say my understanding of that was quite simplistic, also. There was a missionary zeal I was raised with, and I translated [it] into politics with an activist's sensibility. It happened to align with a moment in documentary history that was convinced of its own capacity to make positive change. I was absolutely a part of a wave of impact films, and I was also a part of a wave of personal films. In both cases, I felt like I started to understand the limitations of both of those genres.

But for quite many years, I felt that I had the capacity to do something. I needed to do something. There's a genocide happening in Darfur. I need to go to Darfur, because maybe this is a way to contribute. I can't change things in any other way. And then, through the experience, I realized change is not a one-to-one thing like that. In similar ways, I was seeing the evidence of what NGOs were doing all over the world, seeing the way governments were failing all over the world, seeing the way individuals were failing all over the world, and just how hard it is to be a decent anything in the world, or create a system that functions.

The moment I started working with Laura Poitras, I finally found a match of a person who had an aesthetic vision that connected to a sophisticated, complicated political vision, that connected to a real interest in "What is happening to this particular human in this really remarkable position they are in that is at the centre of a system?" She found a way to bring complex psychological portraiture and systemic understanding together that, for me, was a revelation. Anything short of that became less interesting to me. Once I realized that that kind of combination was possible, I didn't want to work on other projects that were [not doing this].

A. L. A question related to that is, how does that relationship work? I assume that when you're going around filming, you must be in quite small teams, probably. Only you and a director, or maybe a soundperson, or . . .

K. J. Yeah. In that case, we were often just the two of us, but sometimes with a soundperson. I will give you an example. When we were working on a film, we didn't know what it would become, and then it became *Citizenfour*, and it became *Risk*. Because Laura is who she is, she's thinking about the complexity of cinema language at the same time she's thinking about the complexity of the individual we're filming and the scene. With the project we were working on, the general set of themes about the project was surveillance, and what do we not know about how governments are surveilling us, and who are the people who understand more about that than us? And how do we get to them? How do we film them? In the course of doing that, we watched *The Conversation*, which is this incredible film about paranoia, about surveillance. We talked a lot about the opening shot of the movie, which is this slow zoom into the park, where the sound is distorted, and marvelled at how much that shot did to communicate about the themes of the film.

So when we were following Julian Assange into London for him to go to this court appearance, we decided this is the perfect opportunity to attempt to quote that shot. We planned to follow him into the courtroom in a handheld shot walking behind him and then to film his exit from the courthouse from a location across the street up in a building, which would allow us to quote the shot from *The Conversation*. I rode with him in a taxi into the city, followed him up from behind as he got out of the car and walked to the courthouse as planned. What happened though was that it was so intense when we got out of the car—there were so many other cameras, and I was so amped up, that I put the camera above my head, and I was following right behind him with this great tight shot of his head. But [in] moving the camera up high like that was when I pushed the wrong button. I turned the camera off when I thought I was recording! I did not record it. And I was, like, going to die.

And Laura is so remarkable that—because anybody else would have been angry at me and so disappointed, and, "Well, we're not going to take that risk on another shot. You have to try to get close to him when he comes out of the courtroom, and that's what matters." She was like, "Ah, that wasn't that interesting a shot. What we're trying to do with this other shot's going to be much more interesting." Which is incredibly generous of her, for one thing, but it's also . . . She understands, when the stakes are really high is when you make terrible mistakes. It's so intense.

So we went across the street and went up I don't know how many storeys, and had this window. When Julian emerged out of the court, his little head of white hair, and I started slowly zooming out. We had a soundperson down on the ground. Wellington Bowler was there. You were getting these close voices and far voices, and people responding to him. You had the intimacy, more intimacy than I ever could have gotten in the crush of people, and we had this shot that was full of ideas. That's the kind of leadership she has as a director, where you'll think about ideas together, you'll try

things, things will fail, she will not punish you, but she'll see it as an opportunity, and she'll double down. Like, okay, we're going to risk this. She understands how to take risks in ways that are very meaningful.

A. L. Just to go back to *Cameraperson*, I wanted to talk about the editing in it, as well as the camera work. One thing that happens is that you're contrasting shots of these far-flung places, often with people in quite traumatic situations, with shots of your family, and there's also these quite big tonal changes that go on from very traumatic scenes to very playful, more comedic scenes. I just wondered what were some of the thoughts or some of the ways that you came to those decisions to make those kinds of cuts.

K. J. When you are a cameraperson, your life can go in the course of a day from being with the most powerful people in a city to the most destitute people in a city to an incredibly joyful situation to a traumatic situation, in a moment. You travel that as a cameraperson. One of the things I was experiencing, because I had filmed so much and had been so many places—I've been to, I think, eighty-six countries in the world—is that you start to not be able to remember anything, because it's just too much. Your system can't hold all of the images, all of the people you've been staring intently at. That loss of memory was happening to me at the same time that I was experiencing my mother's Alzheimer's, and I was completely fascinated by how memory works and troubled by the fact that I was having all these incredibly intense experiences, yet I honestly could not tell you where I was the day before. I was trying to remain a coherent person.

And so I wanted that in the movie. I wanted the level of contrast of, we're in Yemen, about to be arrested and thrown into jail, and I have two twins, and I'm a mother, and I'm home playing, to just smack those up against each other as hard as I experienced them. I was pregnant when I filmed the shot that I just told you about Julian Assange—I got a sonogram in Egypt when we were filming the hackers who were doing the revolution. You're in these situations, and you're like, I can't believe this is happening. And you're managing all of that. I wanted the viewer to experience this accumulation. Things take on more meaning if you have been in six post-genocide situations than they do if you've only been in one. It turns out, that's me. I have been to all of those locations. That takes on a different meaning. So I was trying to include the fact that all of this experience that the camera has allowed me has changed me and allows me to see the world in a different way. That was part of what we wanted the editing to do.

I had two remarkable collaborations in the editing process. The first was with a woman named Amanda who helped me break through a lot of my inhibition about me being in the film. I did not want to be in the film at all. We went through a process that was so emotionally draining for us that she needed to stop. She couldn't go any further, and then I took a real break, because what we had made revealed to me that I was traumatized in ways I didn't understand. Together, we had made this really raw, unwatchable, almost message to ourselves that things were not okay. I don't know if that makes sense.

I once filmed in Haiti, and we were going to meet a journalist at the airport. And instead of saying hello to me when she met me at the airport, she put a photo of two kids who had been burned—they had been set afire with rubber tires as members of the opposition. She put this photo of their charred bodies in my face, and said, "We need to go get photocopies of this right now." I was like, "Whoa." She's in the middle of things. She's so deeply in what she's in, she does not even know

she's not saying hello to me as a human being, and she's putting this image of great trauma in my face.

That's what I felt about the cut that Amanda [Laws] and I made, when she had allowed and encouraged me to go as deeply as I could into this traumatic material. Then it was almost like a message to ourselves of, "Oh, this is not okay, and we can't do this to other people.' This isn't what you do to someone when they come to a movie theatre. You don't stick this photo in their face, and say, "Look!"

That cut had lots of voiceover. I talked over everything and explained everything, and that was just oppressive in every level. So we had this notion of, maybe it would be possible to do the film just with the footage. I started floating that with different editors who were available, and when I met Nels [Bangerter] and started talking to him about it, that's when I realized we had something on our hands. Then we basically went with that idea. I told him everything that I could think of that I wanted in the movie, and then I said, "Let's try to do it with no voiceover." He took a test run at that all by himself. I stayed out of the edit room for weeks and weeks, and then we had a proof of concept of, "Oh, yeah, this will be possible."

A. L. Moving forward, are you planning to do more films where you direct or you're not only being a cameraperson?

K. J. Post-*Cameraperson* I made a promise to myself I would not work on anything that doesn't attempt to push the form, and is not profoundly risk-taking. So there's a way in which, if Laura were to come to me and say, "I have this project . . ." I agreed recently to work with Sam Green on his Kronos Quartet project, which is entitled *Joy*. But basically, I'm working on this project about my father that I told you a little bit about.

And then the other project I want to talk to you about, because what I'm interested in is exploding this notion of subjectivity behind the camera. It's a longer-term project about the idea of camerapeople in the twenty-first century. It's talking about this pressure I see coming from the future that exists in many countries already, China, Egypt, where documentary camerapeople make films about nature or sports, where people . . . it is now clear repressive governments understand that you can't have a brilliant subjective person operating the camera, because it's too dangerous to them. So I'm working on a long-term project that I hope will include an exhibit and the work of many different camerapeople, going back into all of our different archives to explore these different themes. That's what I'm working on, and would love to continue to be in conversation with you about it.

A. L. Doing this project, I think that there's a consistency with a lot of the people about this idea of the camera being connected to the person's subjectivity, and certainly camerawork takes place within that context of either these very oppressive governments, where you can't film something unless you're filming something that they don't mind, or the opposite of that. I find it in the UK: anyone can pick up a camera and use it, but while you're not prohibited from filming, you're encouraged to use your phone, or your camera in particular ways, and to make adverts, or to make yourself look beautiful, or whatever it is. To me, that's a context which is also denying subjectivity in some way.

K. J. Absolutely. I so appreciate the way that you're putting these ideas together and are interested in what the camera does. And I do think the context now is really different, and I don't think we have

analyzed it enough yet. I don't think we know what it's going to be yet. All of this is up for grabs in ways we never imagined.

~

Kirsten Johnson has had final editorial control of the script of this interview.

DEVISED FILMMAKING PRACTICES

Action with Camera: Making the Future Audience Present

Heather Nolan and John Zibell

The authors first presented material for this article during a research colloquium in April 2017. The early material focused some thinking and playing by and around bodies and cameras. The presentation had both live and mediated components. The live component, spoken in two parts— one by each author—played against a short film developed during the research. The mediated part sometimes screened as background, sometimes as foreground in relation to the live elements. As each author presented, the non-speaking author operated a camera. This camera was framed not simply as a documenting device capturing the live and mediated elements, but also as another player present in the space energizing the performance. During the making of the short film, the authors tested acting and devising practices proper to both cinema and theatre, which were applied in varying forms to a brief devised narrative, to a series of exercises and theatre games, and to the oral delivery of the paper itself with the camera. At times the projected film was intended to sync up with the live presentation for the colloquium participants as the authors gave the talk. The intention was for the visuals on the screen and the accompanying audio to provide a counterpoint to, and at times complement, the spoken text and the present bodies as they read, improvised, and played some simple theatre games as case studies of the work. The filming and the presenting/performing were made for both live audience and camera. Audience members later fed back on a kind of *presencing*[1] work that they had experienced happening within this assemblage of bodies, images, spoken word and the live camera operator. The feedback around the energy of the camera suggested for the authors a relation to the camera as a stand-in—not quite present but presencing—a "future audience."

The focus of this article is the attempt to language this idea of presencing in terms that are useful for the actor and to consider the differences between presencing in acting on the stage and in film, in an effort to find what is useful for film actors in theatrical training practices. To do this, we will continually repeat the *languaging* of what seems to be an idea, so that what we think it means can *exhaust* itself and we may be able to continue working with it as a critical term that takes other forms or energizes other bodies. This is an actor training practice that we are also bringing to the practice of critical writing. We work with *repetition*, both in acting and in writing, as a movement from one form to another—languaging to gesture and gesture to languaging—until habitual forms of meaning-making become exhausted. The thought, as a movement at work on the body and between bodies, becomes strange and acquires an anamorphic distortion. Repetition of this kind, the kind that is useful to the actor and the critic, fragments what seems, under analysis, to be a single idea. Repetition is also an actor training practice—fragmentation of what appears to be unitary—for character.

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Presencing is not, for the two authors, about an intention, for example, to become present with the camera, or to expand one's "theatrical presence" for an audience of a lone, myopic capture device. It is about what the authors, since their days of conservatory training, call by the phrase *releasing on intention*. Releasing on intention is to notice the emergence of an intention and paradoxically do nothing about it. The phrase is a bit of jargon in particular actor training circles from the Stanislavski[2] lineage; if it has an originator, that name has long been forgotten and exists in no published texts that the authors could find. The "release" in question is not a denial that one intends an outcome. That would be to assume the audience didn't sense the intention or the work by the actor to (pretend to) erase it. Rather the actor takes no action on the intention, releasing expectation for a particular outcome, and is open to what becomes emergent in the release. Release maintains the intention within the process but exhausts the "intent." Such intention is thusly presenced by the actor through practices of releasing.

One practice is called by Viola Spolin[3] "no motion." Spolin's word for "intention" that is presencing but not acted on is *focus*. Spolin would coach players to "put the intention (or the focus) in no-motion." Focus is paradoxical in Spolin. It is the point of concentration for the player, something that the player enters or "goes into" the way one enters a space of play and the flow of playing. Focus is also an operation that decentres and depersonalizes the actor and the intention.[4] A similar tool for the actor in the Stanislavski tradition is called *physical action*. A physical action is an improvisation that engages the body in ways that require the construction of a new apparatus. It is a kind of self-attending that is measuring the imperceptible movements as they happen—like Spolin's focus. Spolin's games and various Stanislavski exercises that were used in the presentation were chosen for presencing a future audience.

Theatre actors often discover the life of a story only when the audience bodily enters the process. The live feedback from bodies in-person in the audience potentially pulls the players into a liminal space between the theatrical material and the audience. Lack of response is sometimes the most palpable response for any actor who knows the difference between the painful silence following an event that has been set up but failed to "happen" on the stage and the enlivening silence of an attentive audience for whom the actor's work is indeed working, or *playing*. After a "setup," the failed happening in much Western narrative theatre must rely on what modern Stanislavski actors often call "indication." The event didn't happen, but actors *fake it*, they indicate that it did happen, striking a tacit deal with the audience.[5] Once the deal has been struck, the audience and the players are no longer in a participatory relation potentializing a happening.

In the theatre, events happen when the audience and the players make contact as they participate in the process of materializing something. For media and film actors, this kind of participation is less available, and the camera, taken solely as a recording device, tends to push any potential contact with an audience into an abstract future. The actor trained for the medium of the stage but not for the camera cannot find a way to be both within the cinematic material and with the audience—inside and outside of the character, narrative, and happening. The camera, uncanny in its near-human accompaniment, tends to see the flow of energy proper to theatre events as outsized, too "big." And still, many film actors seem to be able to ride on something like that audience energy flow with the camera. Is it a useful framing for a cinema actor to think of the audience as being made present by the actor themselves through a special kind of play with the camera? Can an actor form the injunction "make the future audience present" into a focus? We maintain that such a focus is what the cinema actor needs to sustain. We also maintain that the functioning of the kinds of play proper

to theatre games (and the functioning of focus and physical action) within our creative processes throughout our careers, both on the stage and with the camera, come from play with such a focus. *Make the future audience present* was the focus of the live and mediated work done for this presentation, though it was not articulated this way until the writing up of this article. But here our task is to consider how to articulate this in a useful way for a group of critics/scholars who may not have trained or played in ways that afford them the language, the body and attentive practices, and the sense memory necessary to think through Stanislavski's physical action or Spolin's no-motion and/or focus.

What appears in this essay has been framed for players, framed as a focus, and as an interrogation into practices of acting for stage and for camera, so that these practices can be used in training performers working in various contexts involving film and potentially other time-based media such as virtual reality (VR). Challenging the metaphor "acting *for* camera" with the alternative "action *with* camera," we primarily engage strategies both for dislocation and decentring of the sovereign seat of the film director—a centred point of focus toward which bodies are trained and become entrained, and also for the notion of the camera as a kind of neutral recording device. The intended effect of this manoeuvre is to do on the page what the actor does when using a Spolin focus or a Stanislavski physical action: to explode the imagined static point of perception variously embodied by the figures of director, camera, and future audience through practical approaches for "playing with" and rendering of a decentred sensorium, one that includes the audience, that can be anywhere, everywhere and potentially nowhere.

The games played in researching this article have been developed by the authors based on work they have done with exercises first created by Stanislavski and the theatre games of Spolin (improvisation), two practitioners who approach the work of the actor-as-player from different angles but continually overlap. For Spolin, the job of the player is to "transform the space" (Spolin 1999, 251). This transformation is not "done" by the player but happens between players when they are at play, when they are participating in the game, and when they engage with the special focus that a particular game requires. For Stanislavski, the job, as defined above, is to find a physical action that is analog to the action given to the characters in the script (Stanislavski 2008, 74). Stanislavski's work involves sustained improvisation with the physical action connected to and within the limits of a rigorous and embodied critical analysis of a narrative (from within and without simultaneously) or a character caught up in the given circumstances of a narrative. This neither means that the player leaps—as many young practitioners of the Stanislavski System attempt to do—for a representation in the form of the most obvious stereotype, nor that the player imagines an effect and develops the physical action (or its earlier incarnation of the sequence of "inner images" attached to the notion of "sense memory") as a cause that will produce it—such as recalling from an archive of personal trauma a memory that causes anxiety or sorrow so that the player's voice cracks and eyes tear up in a sad scene. One does not prepare and then present an effect in Stanislavski, nor does one simply refresh last night's effect. The work on the physical action is done every time for the first time forming an experimental approach directed at learning what may happen when the character or narrative is encountered moment to moment via a practice derived from and coloured by the text, the body of the player, and the space of play uniting the player and audience.

At the same time, our critical articulation of the research into theatre games draws not only on Stanislavski's work around the physical action but also on its inflection in various Western theatrical training traditions, including those of some of Stanislavski's followers (and revisers): Grotowski, Brecht, and Strasberg, as well as the works of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. From these

writers, we have generated critical perspectives for actors and a framework for thinking about what and how bodies perceive while in the space of play. The critical practice also asks how this theatre framework differs from how and what cameras make perceptible because of the conditions of various framing devices: for example, devices that render an illusion of depth on flat screens, and in digital environments where those flat screens are used to imitate the openness of space by adding in a moving perceiver as is done in virtual reality environments. Given the ubiquity of cameras, and images of action that they introduce, these practices and frameworks are useful beyond the training of actors and help foreground the ways that cameras (both bodied and disembodied) structure or produce what actors traditionally call behaviour, which we will be unpacking in terms of "montage."

Much of our research draws from workshops where we used theatrical devising techniques and games with filmmakers and actors. We also draw from years of training and practice in the theatre, and filmmaking and film-acting practice. We take as a given that most actors-in-training in the West already have a relationship to camera that brings with it habits, ways of seeing, and entanglements that require examination.[6] We pull the camera into the making process, not as a capture device or as a stand-in for a future audience, but as one of the elements of the mise-en-scène. Actors become filmmakers and vice versa. The processes we found emerging unsettled the habitual end-directed narrativizations of the actor-filmmaker-editor continuum. Our essay reflects on our rigorous attempts at disrupting tendencies to take the camera, or the cinema apparatus in general, in terms of perspective, and instead play or be active *for* nothing by being *with* camera (Deleuze 2009).

When we refocus, via our analysis, the phrase "acting for camera" as "active *with* camera," we do not mean to create a new metaphor for actors interested in technology (which also takes action—actualizing as players do something virtual—on the bodies it performs with and in the space between). Rather we turn the figure toward practices of acting that it both emerges from and continues to fold back into. We draw on specific trainings traditionally associated with stage acting and try to understand how those trainings might be different when acting with camera.[7]

The move from "acting" *for* (or toward) a camera to "playing" (literally *with* nothing or no specific effect intended) is not the innovation of the authors of this piece; we contend that it has been part of Western actor training practices at least since Stanislavski began systematizing and circulating thought and reflection on the craft of the actor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Stanislavski 2008, 2009; Benedetti 2008; Zibell, forthcoming). To approach a demonstration and an explication of making the future audience present, the authors wanted to test how a handful of theatre games and exercises encourage playing with the camera—pulling it into process rather than letting it be a (subjective) receiver of intention. One should not imagine that the authors understand these practices as producing something like an (objective) reality in which the future audience actually becomes present. Rather we are trying to develop an approach to "play" with camera whereby a kind of energy between camera and body is not removed from the process, nor is it interpreted as the "gaze" of a sovereign individual. This energy—a version of which is theorized as a "genetic power" by Deleuze (Deleuze 2015, 20, 99, 102, 105) and, by scholars following Deleuze (and Deleuze and Guattari), as the "virtual body" (Guillaume and Hughes 2013, 117–43), "machinic enslavement," "subjectivity's entry into the machine" (Genosko 1996, 95–96),[8] and "subjectivity (that) exists for the machine" (Lazzarato 2014, 39)—is also wrapped into the figure of the cyborg.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari write of "a state of affairs, thing or body that actualizes the virtual on a plane of reference and in a system of coordinates; the concept in philosophy expresses an event that gives consistency to the virtual on a plane of immanence and in an ordered

form" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994b, 133). This actualizing and ordering of the virtual body constitutes a *problem* for Deleuze that is never solved by the philosopher but is pulled into continual variation, into process with the very conditions of its emergence. It is a generative practice; it is also a problem elaborated in Deleuze's work on subject formation in *Logic of Sense*. It is a problem of immanence and Deleuze's innovation around "an impersonal and pre-individual transcendental field, which does not resemble the corresponding empirical fields" from which sense, the self, and subject become actualized (Deleuze 2015, 102). The camera presents such a problem for the player and must likewise be pulled into continual variation. Focus and physical action are tools for thinking/playing this pull.

Near the birth of cinema in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Stanislavski himself, widely thought of as a trainer of theatre actors, conceived of the actor's body and mind as a cinematic assemblage.[9] Stanislavski is often relegated to the stage by practitioners, leaving the training of actors for film to the Actors Studio in New York, which was set up and run by practitioners such as Elia Kazan, Uta Hagen, Stella Adler, and Lee Strasberg who variously—and sometimes at odds with each other and Stanislavski—creatively re-invented the Stanislavski "System" calling it "The Method." It should be noted here that the authors—and many others—take Stanislavski's work as suited to both stage and screen as well as other media. More importantly, it should be noted that his work is not restricted to Western narrative realism. Stanislavski conceptualized and published a poetic vision of the actor as a kind of cinematographic cyborg playing a virtual film on the projection screen of the "mind" and in the space. Stanislavski did not use "virtual," "cybernetic," or "cyborg"; these were later attached to his work by the authors and their mentors. In a flourish that Stanislavski would later reincarnate, the authors contend, as the physical action, he tells young actors to conceptualize and practise being both inside and outside the work—between the material of the theatre and the audience. "The film [of inner images] itself is running inside me, but I see it projected outside me" (Stanislavski 2008, 74). It is worth quoting Stanislavski at length, and this can be found in the appendix, but a brief citation is needed here.

> We need an unbroken line not of plain, simple Given Circumstances but ones that we have coloured in full. . . . Every moment in the outer and inner progress of the play, the actor must see what is going on around him. . . . A continuous line of fleeting images is formed, both inside and outside us, like a film. . . . Constantly watching the film of your mental images will, on the one hand, make sure you stay within the play, and, on the other, unfailingly and faithfully guide your creative work. (Stanislavski 2008, 74)

Stanislavski begins with the play's "given circumstances" and immediately asks the actor to render them as a film, as "inner images" that both tune and are tuned by the actor who plays them without ever losing the context within which the play happens.[10] This projection involving mind, body and the space of play is what we contend produces the encounter between audience and actor.

There are many differences between acting for the theatre and for film that are easily named but which must be unsettled: with a camera, the audience is potentially brought in much closer, so movements and expression must be made "smaller"; the camera has a limited view, so awareness of the actor's location and embodied practices are necessary; scenes are generally broken up into smaller bits that must be repeated several times. Much actor training for film rests on the idea that actors do what they would for theatre acting—play Stanislavski's inner film sequences or find a Spolin focus to play with—but do it "smaller." Rather than work to be less expressive or smaller, we

would like to offer practices that, through playing with camera, allow actors to "become imperceptible" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994a, 3, 11, 115, 171, 187, 197). The "becoming imperceptible" of the film actor requires practices borrowed from the theatre, but they also all draw on the attention that one might give to a physical action in the sense that Stanislavsky develops in his later writing that we outline below. Perhaps one question Deleuze can help answer is: Can the practices that an actor uses to address the issues of working with camera be pulled into the practices of Stanislavski's physical action, and if so, how?

In his first book on cinema, *The Movement Image*, Deleuze gives what could be taken by an actor as grounds for developing a new take on physical action: "Cinema works with two complementary givens: instantaneous sections which are called images; and a movement or a time which is impersonal, uniform, abstract, invisible, or imperceptible" (Deleuze 1986, 1–2). This articulates an approach that we contend Spolin and Stanislavski share. They want the actor to stop cogitating and circulating representations in the forms of prepared pictures or still images projected onto the body and get into a flow—paradoxically (following Zeno) dependent on the "instantaneous sections" of "divisible" space and "indivisible" movement by which an actor covers it (Deleuze 1986, 1–3).

Actor Training Practices with Theatre

Bodies are mediated. Training/tuning of bodies in early Stanislavski addresses the mediation through the "system" for which he is usually remembered. The system is about acting "as if" (Stanislavski 2008, 37–59). What shows up with bodies training toward the "as if" practices are habits, patterns, and entanglements. The actor must be able to make choices about when to put such habituations to use. The actor becomes attuned to mediation (habit, training for daily life) for the purpose of engaging in a different kind of mediation (the stage, the theatre). So, the early training of the system gets (incorrectly) called in places "un-training" as though the entanglements can be undone by an actor who chooses when and if to use them. This posits the mediated body that shows up on the first day of rehearsal as a kind of material to be mastered, to be overcome. These habituated spaces of our lives, where change becomes imperceptible without the technology of the "system," are where the actor trains. The actor in training learns how to tune the body to develop an apparatus for measuring changes at the micro level—the terms "awareness" and "attention" are used quite often in acting programs to talk about embodied practices directed toward such measuring. When we are doing this building of the apparatus—on the fly, in the moment—we are doing what Stanislavski called the physical action. The physical action itself cannot be replicated but leans on repetition.

Stanislavski, who, like everyone who has followed him in the attempt, failed at defining the physical action, wanted the idea to focus his entire body of work. He journaled about his own practice for more than sixty years (Benedetti 2008, 14)—it may well be the longest practice as research project on record. He developed what he called the System of Physical Action through this research, which included his writing practices and his work as actor, as director, as artistic director, and as trainer of actors. Toward the end of his life, he told a group of actors that they could not learn his system and must develop their own (Moore 1984, xvi). Just before his death, Stanislavski wrote that he had come to realize he no longer needed a system—he only needed the physical action (Richards 2003, 4; Toporkov 2014; Benedetti 2004, 71–72, 101). This was long after he had rejected his early idea of the "psycho-physical" action—which is the central idea of what gets called The Method. Psycho-physical action directs expression internally, whereas physical action directs expression into an inward-outward movement into the space and with the things in its environment.

A physical action is not a physical gesture or a piece of stage business.[11] It cannot be defined as a specific action because it is incipient; there is no end-directed intentionality. At the same time, it does not want just anything to happen, and so it sets up a particular ecology in which something happening will occur—an intentional release. An example of a physical action: in New York in 1994, John Zibell, directing a production of Romulus Linney's *Holy Ghosts,* cast a highly trained, erudite actor to play the role of a man with severe developmental and cognitive challenges and no formal education—not unlike Lenny in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men.* For weeks, the actor felt he was doing a cliché characterization, that it was inappropriate, hurtful. The character was described by the playwright using the euphemism "slow." And the actor seemed hung up on that term. We came up with the following for a physical action: every time the actor heard another character speak, he was to translate that character's line (word for word) into French—the actor's second language—and then back again into English before responding. Further, whenever he spoke, he translated his own text—without pausing to have the thought—into French while speaking the line in English. This didn't slow his rate of delivery. He became much more active. He looked like someone working very hard, very methodically. Like someone struggling to translate language. His focus was both internal and external—it exhausted him. The first time he did it he had powerful emotional responses at times which seemed, on the surface, to be wildly inappropriate for the script, for the narrative. Interestingly, they came at different times every night. And of course, they worked every time. You cannot predict the effects of a physical action. You set it to work and attend to where and how your flow of attention moves, and all bodies in the space get caught up in that flow.

Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski picks this up and locates Stanislavsky's "journey" as a personal "hero's journey" for the actor (Grotowski 2012; Richards 2003, 115–35). By practising with any physical action, the actor should experience a kind of burning away of the mediated body, the habitual body, the inattentive, unaware body that flies much of the time on auto-pilot—or so Grotowski believed. Grotowski called the effect of the physical action—in "secular spiritual" terms—a "burning away" of habit, of what he called at the end of his life "the daily body," leaving the "life body" visible for an instant.[12] Grotowski's practices are designed around a messianic (and metaphoric) approach to physicalizing what happens in training. This *beyond* space is for him where the actor trains to work, in the spaces where movement becomes imperceptible . . . without the technology of acting intervening.

Grotowski is helpful in thinking about the imperceptible work of the actor that is made perceptible through in-person theatre work. Actors develop, and train and practice with, technologies of the body dialled into multiplicities of movement—movement of word, language, thought, affect, concept, story, light, proteins, shadow, air, pheromones, blood, neurochemicals, and on and on—and the technologies for measuring changes in them must be continually brought into focus, engaged with, interrogated, sustained and refreshed. Actors work to extend the reach of their own embodied measuring and focusing technologies into the spaces beyond the capacity of the habitual sensorium—in imperceptible ways.

Bertolt Brecht engages with physical action in his fight against a discursive instrumentalization by the cinema. He suggests that actors do not do what they are trained for. We train so we do not have to act. We train and train and the moment seldom comes when we act. We just show up and talk and listen. In both the theatre and theory of Brecht, the work is to create encounters rather than outcomes. Actors and audience may not be able to see how they are pulled into such an encounter, but they do it. It is an action without an end goal.

Those of us who act "like" someone died, those actors are not acting, are not playing, are not caught up in what Brecht called a *gestus*—the imperceptible and energizing swirl of past and present, of individual and context, of knowing and not-knowing that is his development of physical action (Brecht 2014, 82, 126). We have abbreviated this element in the process of physical action as "not-knowing" because it includes the known but exhausts its specificity. Brecht's idea of gestus is, for us, most helpfully made practical for the actor in the contemporaneous work of improvising/devising of Spolin.

From Acting with Theatre into Acting with a Camera

As actors, we want to take various ideas of the imperceptible into work with camera, which, as we're conceiving it here, intends practices attached to montage, even in its initial energizing of the actor. When we do so, we work with the mundane, with daily life, and energize it, not for the camera but as a camera does. We are like the unsighted cyclist who trained to echo-locate in traffic by making clicking noises. Body is camera. Body is the self-attending of daily life. We see this idea as a new critical formulation—and we are not yet satisfied with what it may mean. We would like to suggest that repetition and focus are not only body practices but also camera practices that occur in what we call "montage," which includes the fragmentation of the frame into pixels and the timing of a second into twenty-four, thirty, or sixty frames. It also includes Deleuze's homogeneous space and heterogeneous movement of cinema (Deleuze 1986, 1). Acting training happens where and when we need to develop an apparatus for measuring movement in the space of the imperceptible. Our two concluding case studies explore this idea in detail.

In critical terminology, one set of these apparatuses falls under what gets called *attention*—here, the inwardly directed camera of attention. Some theatre actors talk of *attending* as if it's a skill that can be developed, while related work on what gets called awareness is often taken as a tool. Awareness speaks to an attention that is undirected, unfocused: the attention of where and how one's attention is flowing, without direction but still under observation. When we are building a new apparatus for attending to the strange or strangely attending—building that apparatus on the fly, in the moment, with the other bodies that we encounter—then we are playing. We are doing something similar to Stanislavski's physical action, to Spolin's focus. For this inquiry into acting with a camera, the physical action is an improvisation or a game that engages the body in ways requiring the construction of a new apparatus.

One of the things most useful on the stage is how the physical action gives an actor somewhere to put her attention. On the stage, you are always becoming present, and if your attention wanders, you can take the audience with you into that diffusion. One part of your attention is, of course, always on the action of the play. But having a focus for attention seems to help create that elusive sense of "alive" for the audience. Heather Nolan once had a tiny part in an outdoor, poolside production of *Twelfth Night*. She was the High Priestess and spent a good deal of her time in the background of the action where she had been instructed to create a ritual of some sort. This ritual became so elaborate and precise, and she was so absorbed in it, that the feedback she got from audiences was that she was all they could watch. Even though she was moving quite slowly and not doing anything particularly interesting, the specificity of her engagement in the task was more "alive" than what the actors in the foreground, speaking text and jumping in and out of the pool, were doing. It was

perhaps not the best choice for the production, but it says something about the power of focused attention.

For the stage actor, the enemy of aliveness is replication, rote repetition, so we train in ways to fill those repetitions with the subtle changes to their immediate instant, to repeat some things—lines, blocking, even gestures—and to make new others. One actors' trick to appear fascinated or in love with an acting partner (for whom one may have a whole range of feeling) is to count the partner's eyebrow hairs or freckles. What's "real" is the focused absorption with minutiae, the actual looking, a focused attention that with luck, audiences read as "love."

The ways that film and stage acting each call upon the actor to repeat are, in some respects, different. The film actor may need to be incredibly precise in some repetition—for example, in hitting their marks, that is, stopping with their feet in an exact position on the floor or keeping their head in the frame—and not in others. Many times, the film actor is expected to do something different with every take, to try something new, so that when the time comes to edit the film, the director has different options to choose from. But what always repeats is the film itself, in subsequent viewings, for new or the same audiences. There is a sense in which film acting requires more or a different sense of aliveness. A kind of attention, a self-attending apparatus that focuses on the imperceptible, that can persist in spite of the exactitude and precision of "doing it again," and indeed through the action of the repetition itself. An attention that takes in the potential future audience, that includes them, through the camera, in the focus. One that presences the future human bodies through the camera, that sees the camera as the technology that brings them into the room. This way of attending when acting with a camera returns us to physical action as a simultaneous inward/outward process, which, when acting with the camera, we call "montage."

Acting with a Camera

So what does an actor have to do to retain the energy of physical action on screen, especially in the face of an industry that usually wants an actor to replicate habitual action without understanding the importance of that energy? Stanislavski writes of memory and image work in terms of film, which is a good place to begin to think about physical action in the body's move from theatre to cinema, from the apparatus of theatrical attention to that of the moving image. When Stanislavski talks about the self, there often enters a tension between conscious and unconscious. This conscious/unconscious binary is deftly unsettled by the notion of "not-knowing" articulated through the devising work for the theatre of Spolin and Sills on which our methodology draws. Their work implies a complex relation of the known to the not-known being performed on the body: even more importantly, the performativity of the "not" within the known. "Not-knowing" also implies a present "knowing of the *not*," for in theatre, one cannot re-circulate the un-known or the un-named that exists in the subtle change of a repetition that involves both the in-person actor and their particular audience. The devising methods of Spolin and Sills insist on a physical action that is generating an ecology in which the actor attends to the imperceptible and is surprised. It is not a binary conscious/unconscious but a trained skill in becoming a medium for what happens that they call "space work," which is another key element in our development of montage strategies for film acting as we developed them from Spolin and Stanislavski. Spolin's space work is tied to another game mentioned above, called "no-motion." No-motion is also a principle and a practice that happens alongside space work and, for us, other practices. We read it, here, against Deleuze's cinematics.[13]

If an actor in theatre becomes the medium as we've contended, it is significant that cameras make circulatable or commodifiable material effects from bodies at play that are unnameable but filmable. Players with the camera need to live in that filmable but not nameable world. The work of a theatre actor and that of a film actor may begin with approaches that are similar, but in theatre, the camera is not there and the actor is, so the energy is entirely different. Cameras produce commodifiable materials from what cannot be named, that resist commodification to the extent that the energy of the unnamed can persist through the repetitions of the film—one can hold what isn't named in no-motion. We cannot dismiss the commercial forces of various kinds of camera production. We cannot deny that industrial practices produce a majoritarian discourse. We could try to counter with a minoritarian molecular set of practices, and this would be one focus of our devising workshops if they could have a single focus. But they do not. They cannot. To deal with the ubiquity of the camera and of images, what working with a camera also allows is the physical action of montage. This physical action is similar to that of the theatre actor in some respects but quite different in others.

However, Stanislavski's physical action and Spolin's no-motion or focus can activate the body for cinema. Stanislavski is caught up in a notion of the "self," but his work is most useful when that autonomous self cracks open to show the subjectivizing narratives that keep it from being a material self and anchor it in some other non-material fashioning of "character." Character is the coin of the realm of "realist" training for actors. However, that "coin" makes the individual a saleable object, a thing that can be circulated. Once an individual is exchangeable, it is a subjectivity. The subject becomes capital—in many forms. But, as with everyday life, a self, and a character the self makes, must to some extent be assembled daily as it daily disappears, and in ways that do not allow you to see it coming and going. This is both the good and the bad news. The self is what gets made somewhere between and among all the material elements you perform with in your life. You don't produce it. You do not control it. It's like community: you encounter it. But the moment you simply submit to it, it becomes a stable character.

For example, the camera and the global industrial cinema apparatus turns most characters played by Tom Cruise into "versions" of him. In *Eyes Wide Shut*, this served him and the film. He was a machine. He was a camera, seduced by every female form it gazed upon. He didn't even have to seduce them; there was no conquest in his *Traumnovelle*.[14] He was made object and became more and more passive as the film progressed. His "acting" became more and more machinic. Not robotic and stilted, with held, glassed-over eyes and monotone, monorhythmic, monovocal utterances, but machinic: as in only reproducing versions of his earlier self—earlier in the film, earlier in other films. He becomes consumable, as do his emotions, gestures, even his tics and physical entanglements.

Deleuze asks us to stop seeing the camera as anything other than us. There is no separation between the person and the camera. For him, the worst question is "why?" because it implies a bounded teleology with intention and self-realization or at least self-transparency. He turns us instead to the camera itself and asks, "How does it do?" without answering, "What does it do?" We are anxious about this because, in the asking of how, a what may emerge. And then what do we do? How do we measure the appropriateness of the what? For example: to ask, "'How does this happen?" is a useful question for an actor playing Ophelia. How does a young woman lose her mind to grief? But this is a kind of essentializing question and far too general. Perhaps: How does this young woman grieve? How does this young woman commit suicide? These questions can leave us within a narrative. Instead, our methodology, our point, is to keep away from a "ready-made" image that has a specific answer to a how and a what and a why already built into it. Hence, Deleuze's question of "how"

with a character generated by self, or a body, is in the area that sets us up for asking questions of "how with camera." How does a camera call bodies into a "for" with specific answers? And, how does a camera call bodies into a "with" that is surprised by what happens?

Devising as Montage

These lines of questioning undercut hierarchies, origins, sequencing, and the organizing principles of commodifying cinema. Physical action does not need a result to be interrogated. It is a continual process, and anything that feels like a result is a material that is just another flow or set of flows, maybe another apparatus to pull into the process, to connect up with. It may become an image in the archive. The process of training for montage, or physical action with a camera, that we are developing through improvisation and devising is the embodying of these questions.

Our devising methodology draws on the thinking that these questions generate and puts it into practice through developments of Spolin's space work. In our critical thinking in this essay, we began with the work of a theatre actor. For us, in the physical action of space work, you have a score that you develop in rehearsal (sense memory, for example), and you work on this and perhaps are able to put it in no-motion so that it creates responses (not just in your body, but in the director, the partner, the rest of the cast), and through repetition, you find that it can be sustained without it becoming named or known. At some point, it may, in the theatre, cease to be about the sense memory (internal film) and become deterritorialized and reterritorialized in this ecology. This ecology is the cast, the crew, the props, the costumes, the lines, the story, etc. With film, that kind of physical action is cut short because you may only work on this scene for a day.

We work under the claim that it currently takes years for an actor to have a sense of how to train for work with a camera—and concurrently with that camera work, they need to train in something like Stanislavski's physical action. Physical action of space work focuses the actor's apparatus inward as well as outward, and, through that focus, the actor works with the camera. What might it mean for an actor "to work with the camera"? Three things: the camera becomes another player in the company, the relation of the camera to body opens up practices to develop that self-attending apparatus that sees into the imperceptible, and the rules for engagement with both are emergent. Every time you deal with the camera, it's the first time—which is also what makes it a devising practice.

What we aim to do is to take the notion of the physical action of space work, as we are developing it through the devising games of Viola Spolin and Paul Sills, and see what happens when we practise it with the camera. We want to train to attend to the changes, perceptible and imperceptible, that happen when the camera is trained on us. We have experimented with space work to see how the focus of our attention might shift, and we watched and discussed the footage we had created, even filming our own discussions, to learn what we could about our own instruments—our bodies—and their relations to the camera.

Case Study 1: John Zibell syncing up a live presentation with a filmed presentation of opening a drink bottle

As the body of Zibell, live in the space, screwed on the top of a space work drink bottle, the projected body of Zibell mediated on the screen did something similar. It would be reductionist to

say that the energy between the two types of play came from the labour of the body, but that would indeed be a start to thinking through how they worked together and separately.

1) The devising game: Spolin has a space work game called "add a part" (Spolin 1999, 85). When played solo, the actor stands and looks into the space. Generally, for a young actor, it is important to move from off-stage into the space so that the whole body is made to engage. Then the actor sticks their hand into the "where," which is a segment of the space they have chosen. They sense something, and whatever they sense will immediately become a space object.

A young actor may well think, "What am I going to do?" and panic, then quickly write a scenario. They will often preconceive an object—perhaps a plastic drink bottle. As they get more familiar with the game, they will simply pick up something. They will not know why, but suddenly, there is a drink bottle, with weight, temperature, texture, etc. They will find they have a sense memory of a particular bottle, engage with it. They will make the bottle solid, discover other details about it, and will then probably go around the room and find two or three other things that are in the same space as that bottle. The focus is on finding the "where," finding what is in this space by locating these objects and communicating it to oneself. It is not about spontaneity, but simplicity. It is almost effortless when you find an object. At times the process is frustrating, but when you find the object, it's effortless. Over time, if you get out of your head and into the space, you are in full-body participation with this bottle.

2) When rehearsing to play the action of opening a drink bottle in this kind of space work, Zibell says: The first thing I do is "see" it. I'll put it across the room, and I'll see the details, the light and the shadow falling on it. Quite often, it doesn't look like it would if it were actually in the room—the lighting might be different. It doesn't quite fit in the space I am in, and I'll notice that, and I'll track through what that difference is doing to me in my body. If I can see it and can place it across the room, I'll have a certain somatic response, and when the object (here the bottle) goes away, that somatic response often goes with it. So, if I get stuck performing and I can't see the object in the space, I can remember the somatic response and that can help. Then I'll reach over and grab it, and I'll notice what that is doing to me. After thirty years, this all happens almost instantly—when it happens.

If I do this now, in this moment, I've just reached out, and I can feel my arm is a bit warmer because I've reached out, and I can feel the energy going down my hand. But I also have it in my head that this drink bottle in my hand is cold and wet, and I keep sensing that. What I'm trying now is trying not to look at it so that I can give it its weight. I might do that over and over, the unscrewing. I might repeat that over and over so that it becomes kind of like playing musical scales, where I don't care what my somatic response is, I want to understand something about the pacing of the thing. So instead of being an object, it starts to become a whole moment or even a whole narrative. The reach is a phrase getting toward a gestus, like a musical phrase, and so the reach, when I pick the bottle up, has a certain rhythm, slow: I can feel the contents sloshing in the bottle.

What I'm starting to do is add details to this event of encountering. If I start to get bored with that, I'll start to do another game called "beginning and end" where I'll break the whole thing down: pick up the bottle, unscrew the lid, take a drink, put the bottle down, put the lid on top, screw it on. . . . I'll do that till I feel like I know it. And then I'll speak the words "begin"/"end" at every segment of the manoeuvre. So if I reach with one hand, and the other hand comes up, with each movement I say, "begin"/"end," "begin"/"end" —so everything has its own frame. It is almost like making a

film of it, cutting it into little tiny chunks. I'll also try to heighten everything about it, so if I pick the bottle up and really feel it sloshing around, I'll heighten the sloshing of the water—"begin" *I slosh this way*, "end" it sloshes back. And as I do that, I am beginning to hear the sloshing of the water.

If I do this while training young actors, I might begin to coach them through the process, whereas if I do it myself, I'll just do it over and over.

3) When doing the space work in front of an audience, Zibell says: Quite often, if it's at the beginning of a show, I'd realize I was doing everything I'd been doing before, I was repeating, but I had no idea what to do. What it feels like is that I'm getting more "out" of it than when I'm doing it alone, but if there are enough details in there from the rehearsal, then one of the details will bring me back into the process. I might have put a hundred details into the feeling of the bottle, the work with my arm, the tension of this screwing motion. Sometimes I might feel it, and sometimes I would not, so I'd just make that gesture. I don't want to say I'm faking it, but I'm not encountering every detail each time. At the same time, those details are what can bring me back into the process if I start getting too far "out" of it. At this point in my acting career (over thirty years), I don't think anyone except maybe a director who knows me well could say that I was out of the process. But an audience who watches me every night would not know.

If I am "in" the process, there are still things happening that are surprising me. If I am "out" of it, I am not exactly anticipating the next thing, but I could sense where it is potentially going. When you are both in and out of the process at the same time, that's the critical moment for the actor. We call this process "montage." You are into the ecology of both in and out that you have trained for, that is needed for the present moment and the next physical action. At the same time, when you are in the process, there is no transition from one moment to the next. When you are out of the process, you are aware of the discrete moments for which you have prepared. When you are in and out, they flow. As a filmmaker, the metaphor that comes to mind is of stills in a film. You can fine-tune the stills, but they don't make cinematic sense until they flow—and then they have to be stills and flow at the same time. When I act, there is no transition from one bodily movement to another, but there is something about my attention that enables the flow. If you are "in" the process, you are available to the thing happening. If you are "out" of it, it is not likely that the thing will happen. You will still go through the moves, the gestures, but the gestus will not happen. The key to being a trained actor is the ability to know "I'm out of it right now, I don't know how to get back in—ah, there it is, now I'm back into it." For the highly trained actor, being "out" of "in and out" is the sense of keeping that flow happening.

When I acted this for the research colloquium, I found I had to open up. Usually, I literally close up parts of my body, and onstage I must continually remember to open them up. I often feel I can do this with the surfaces of my body that are facing the audience. These surfaces start to soften, and another, unseen, side starts to tighten—I find myself trying to loosen up. The act of picking up the bottle and unscrewing the bottle cap was not quite like the rehearsal. The sensations are not as heightened; the cold is not as cold. But the space around me starts to have a kind of substance, and the space in front of me, where the audience is, begins to warm up so it too softens and can do whatever it needs to do.

4) When doing the space work with the camera, Zibell says: When I acted picking up the drink bottle and unscrewing the cap for the video, it was not the whole body that was in focus. It is only what the camera can see, and good film actors know exactly what the camera can see. They will look

at the camera and see that it's a 14mm lens, and they know they are nine feet from the camera and understand precisely what the camera can see from that part of the room. They will know that it can only see this exact part of the body.

As an actor working with a camera, I tried first to set up the parameters for the physical space I could move in based on where the lens was, and then I let it go. The same way that once I'd repeated the action with the drink bottle many times in rehearsal, I could let it go. Then it is almost a narrowing process. I can fine-tune the space work of the "add a part" game and put the focus just on my fingers. The camera might just be on my face, but fingers are there with it, and the rest of my body is not. I'm not aware of the camera as an "audience"—I may be playing at a completely different angle from where the camera is looking. But I am still trying to find ways to presence the future audience in my work with the camera. With three cameras it can be easier because there's full-body acting like the stage. But if I try to play full body with one camera, or to act for it, everything goes, and I'm "out" of it. Film actors are often tied to their acting partners; you can always play with your partner. When you rehearse alone, you try to put yourself into the space, and dealing with space work objects helps you do that. Real objects can also help, but that is a completely different activity.

When you have an audience in front of you, they are helping. They bring a lot of energy onto that stage, and while I may not know which bit of the moment is telling the story or is landing the energy, the audience will tell me. I feel it in my skin, just like you know when someone is looking at you. And, as I pick up the bottle and feel the audience respond, I'll make that into a physical action where things flow together. With a film, you have to do it all by yourself. No one else is pulling it together for you. If I just make the gesture, it's kind of choppy. With space work, it comes alive. You have to find the flow that keeps the moments happening; otherwise, they are just discrete moments. When you rehearse a scene, you are breaking it up into discrete moments, and, at the end of the rehearsal process, you find they flow together—but that is only in theatre. In film, you rehearse in a different way, and you might not get any rehearsals of a scene at all. All you have is the moments, and you have to find the flow yourself. The space work preparation of "in and out" montage helps you create the flow of the moments and a space not only for your own work but also for an audience.

There is the added factor of the camera as an "attractor" that can make you feel as if it wants you to act "for" it. Often film actors are told to ignore the camera, but what is meant is exactly the opposite—that you know everything about the camera so that you can forget it and be playing with it. I do not want the camera to make me want to act to one single point. I have to play to everything all at one time, even if the focus is only on one part of my body. The camera can feel as if it wants to pull me to one side, and I don't want to go, I don't want to feel the energy of that pull. If someone is behind the camera, it can feel like a conversation because there is a partner there to play with. In that case, the camera starts to become part of the flow. But if I am working well with a camera, it is transforming or presencing a future audience into the space of the space work. The camera is in all of you somewhere, yet it surprises me. My playing flows through a sequence of moments over time, and although I know where they are going, they don't go there in the same way. Somehow it reveals something to me that I couldn't have anticipated. The flow does not go exactly where I thought it would go, it emerges moment to moment, and my own lived experience becomes much larger than I thought it could be.

During the feedback session, audiences at the event talked of how the screened images and recorded audio at times took focus, providing equal or even more energy than the "live" performance. This was not, they told us, because of a lack of interest in the speaking bodies in the room but rather

because of a kind of presencing work that appeared to have been done by the players when filming. We cannot help but observe that the work with the camera preceded and therefore informed—consciously or not—the work we did during the presentation.

Case Study 2: Heather Nolan repeating an action twice, once for and once with a camera

In the video that supported this research, we had created this activity: for Heather Nolan to fix a pair of glasses. They were really broken, and she had to create something real to do with them. She sits at a table, fiddling with the glasses, gets up and goes to the fridge, and then returns to sit and fiddle with them again. Audience feedback noted that the first time was "flat," and they did not feel engaged, but the second time "drew us right in." What made this difference?

1) The devising game: One game taught by Paul Sills in actor training is called "What's Beyond?" (Spolin 1999, 99–100, 121–22). You have something offstage in mind, and you play a scene that has nothing to do with it. In the theatre, part of the way it works is that the audience has a sense of something going on that is not seen or heard, almost as if it is a secret. But for the player, it is about what is happening on your body. There is no language for it; it's about having an idea, or memory, or sensation beyond what is happening on stage. Everyone should know something is there without you saying anything, but from how it plays on your body.

If an actor is training to use this game, they might first think about activities that connect them to what is "beyond"—how your body holds the idea or memory, what it looks or feels like when you think about it not in words, or indeed, where it is in you when you are not thinking about it. When I practise the game, I spend time by myself, thinking about it, imagining it, picturing it, feeling it. It could, for example, be a friend's cancer diagnosis. My awareness of this "beyond" emerges through my body, and I spend time sensing it. I'm seeing what happens on the body, putting that sensation all around the body, asking myself where I feel it—what do I notice, what happens, what do I feel, what does the body want.

The improvisation of "beyond" is there to work on how to bring all of this on stage. In the scene, you look for moments when it's in your body. It comes and goes, it is "in and out," but it's there, it's present for you. And then things come out of you, your body, your mouth. The goal with theatre improvisation is a kind of interrelation, with your partner, yourself, in the moment. It creates moments that are fleeting and recognizes that the things you are creating are often funny or creative precisely because they are fleeting. There is no return. In dealing with the camera and the future audience, it is quite different. The moment may be fleeting, but it will need to keep that sense every time it is repeated.

2) Rehearsing "What's Beyond?": I'll be thinking about what "works" when I rehearse for the theatre. Acting in the theatre is about partner work and audience. What "works" is what makes something happen in that space between, and I will be looking for moments when the "what's beyond" emerges. Rehearsing for the camera is quite different, and I search for what feels "good" to me. In both cases, it might be to do with my body, face, or voice. It might be a breath—I might recognize that I'm holding my breath. Or it might be a physical movement—when we use physicality, there's an easy, clear, simple place for something to emerge.

Practising often depends on what is needed by the character. The hardest acting is to make something easy look difficult. If it is already difficult, that is simpler. An improvisational game gives me focus. It is not so much a task as a focused consciousness that means that I am no longer pretending but rather becoming in front of the audience. In rehearsing, I use the game to help me create a score that can be repeated. The game helps me find new activities, a slightly different edge. It helps me to be curious and actively looking or seeking, so the repeated action is not just replicated.

3) Playing "What's Beyond?" with the theatre: In theatre acting, I'll have choices that I have made while rehearsing with the game, basically a score, but I'll be waiting for what happens. This is the "in and out," always an interplay between what is arising and what I think I have chosen. Neither is perfect, but something happens, an event happens. At times what happens simply makes you ready for the next thing you need to do. Often, the audience gives you an indication of what is working. In rehearsal, it is almost impossible to tell, but in performance, you can sense if they are "with" you— maybe it's how quiet the space is, maybe it's a sense of energy. The "what's beyond" is something the audience can see, but they may not know it is there.

Something is happening in the space that does not actually have to do with me but with what is playing across my body. It is an acknowledgement that something is happening in the space between me and the audience that feels close, related to me but which is not me, because, in performance, it is also the audience's bodies and what is playing across them. With theatre, there is a bigger sense of something that is being created between the stage and the audience. When I act on the stage, something happens between the audience and my sense of myself that is not randomly here or there, but quite precisely about three inches from the surface of my body. There's a feeling of light and dark and warmth. Every actor has an experience of feeling uneasy just as they go on stage, but the moment you step into it, there is this other body. It is not solid. It's almost like a virtual body that the audience watches, and it is felt differently in every repetition. It is multiple but particular in each scene. I feel it both as a consciousness that opens toward the audience, inviting them to engage, and something protective.

4) Playing "What's Beyond?" with a camera: First, there will have been little rehearsal, and in the case of the video we made of me mending the glasses, there was hardly any. We decided that I would come in through the door, having had an argument with my son—this became the "what's beyond" of the game I played in the scene. I go to the table and start trying to mend the glasses. I then get up, go to the fridge, return, and start mending them again. I was not consciously aware of the difference that the repeated action would have on the audience, and what I now suggest is simply what "could have" happened.

In film acting, the eye of the camera usually becomes the centre of that feeling that the body is being broken into bits, and the actor's job is to keep the body whole, in some kind of integration, even though for me, everything becomes unnaturally tiny. Practising with the game can help the repetition of film acting reintegrate the body back into process. The games get you away from thinking too much. They not only ask you to do other kinds of actions, but they also get you into sensing the expansiveness, the boundary of that virtual body. The "in and out" of the "What's Beyond" game can create an expansiveness that includes the camera so that it is not centralized but made part of a larger space.

The "virtual body" of the film actor is different from what I feel in the theatre. In front of the camera, there is a heightened awareness of micro-changes, and the actor is continually sensing for

the moment in which the bits of the body become a whole body, the virtual body. That virtual body is no longer three inches away because, at times, the camera itself invades that space. The virtual body is close to the skin, and it's warm. You are always aware of where the camera is focusing, but as long as that remains a "bit" of the body and not part of the whole virtual body, it does not feel "good." In this video, the camera is on the whole upper body, but most of what is happening is going on with the hands and the glasses. When we first shot the scene of the broken glasses, I slipped back into old habits. My physical actions didn't work; I was active not with the camera but for it, keeping my awareness of it just on the edge of my attention and ignoring my responses to it. In the second, repeated, action, I had a focused sense of the hands and glasses being watched, so all of my energy was going to that space. The game set up a whole system of processes, a montage of "in and out"—storytelling, sense memory, the preoccupation with having something outside of the camera's mechanical focus—that created for me an expansiveness so that the world of the filmed scene extended out of the frame.

Working with the camera, the sense of audience changes. For example, on stage, there are ruptures of the space when something unpredictable happens or "goes wrong," and it all becomes part of the action—everything in the room becomes part of the playing. On camera, everything is broken up into tiny bits, and all kinds of things are happening around you that are meant to be outside of the action. At the same time, as a film actor, you are trying to make everything part of what you are doing; you "accept all offers." In film acting, you usually have the choices: to focus on the camera or to feel what the camera is focusing on or to focus not on the camera and attempt the futile effort of ignoring it. A game such as "what's beyond" gives you a virtual body with a different focus that includes the camera. The games can be used to make different kinds of space with the camera so that it is not so much what the camera is doing but what the actor is trying to do. When you exclude the camera, it becomes the focal point, but if you include it, it becomes part of a larger world, and the actor can play. You can create a space that includes you and the camera, and perhaps that is the space the audience senses when the film acting feels "good" to the actor.

The games give the actor a way to sense themselves and others in the room differently, and the focus the game enables becomes the focus of the camera. It opens a connection with the camera. They train you to focus on one part of the body so that it is part of a whole virtual body, not just a "bit" that happens to be in the frame. This releases some kind of flow, and that becomes the opening for working with the camera rather than acting "at" or "to" or "for" the camera.

Commentary: Montage as a Way of Living

We are multiple. Not in the sense that we may "act" many roles, many distinct individualities that can appear when needed or—worse—when desired. We are multiple in that we may, if we practise properly, find ways to se(ns)e ourselves without the structure named "individual" intervening. Stanislavski talks to Toporkov about adding something extra to his performance, of becoming a human (+), of finding a tone and painting the whole performance with the single brush of that tone (Toporkov 2014). This is the central focus of US Strasberg-based Method work. To be continually revising one's brushes. To let the appropriate tones emerge and change during play. Through our critical work, we would suggest that today we have no consistent "human" on which to build. If we are to follow Baudrillard, we only have the (+), the supplement that emerges with repetition. The human exists only in a virtual dimension, as possible and as effecting the "actual" in its moment-to-moment enactment. In 1995 Baudrillard wrote, "There is always a camera hidden somewhere. It may

be a real one—we may be filmed without knowing it. We may also be invited to replay our own life in whatever television network. Anyway, the virtual camera is in our head, and our whole life has taken on a video dimension. We might believe that we exist in the original, but today this original has become an exceptional version for the happy few. Our own reality doesn't exist anymore. We are exposed to the instantaneous retransmission of all our facts and gestures on whatever channel" (Baudrillard 1995, 97).

Yet under these conditions, we are not multiple. We are identical to ourselves only insofar as the self remains outside of anything that can be actualized. If we are multiple, we aren't multiple "things" or multiple selves, multiple "its," multiple "theys" that appear in series or sequences. If we are multiple, there is no final solution to the question "who." There is no way to cut up the body and all of the flows moving through it and through which it moves into species, strata, class, set, race, gender, family, denomination. We cannot say where the whole of any single flow that we are caught up with begins or ends. We can cut the flow, but in cutting it, we find that it too becomes multiple. Multiple is not a diversity of models on which we may base our played self. It is the opening out of all models to locate the rhizomatic connections, the moments that montage may enable us to bring together in flow.

Notes

1. We intend to put a lot of pressure on the key terms italicized here, returning to them and repeating them, as actors do when critically interrogating text and context.

2. Russian theatre practitioner, trainer, writer, director Konstantin Stanislavski (1863–1938).

3. Actress, educator, director, author, creator of theatre games (1906–1994) (http://Violaspolin.org).

4. While the quotes from Viola Spolin appear in her published works on theatre games, the text attributed to Paul Sills herein is all remembered text. The authors trained and worked with him between 1990 and 1998. Because games training for Sills was largely about what the body produces—including the production of memory—the original spoken text is less critical to this work, done in 2017, than the remembered text, which is a rendition that plays on the author's bodies currently. The continual repetition of these terms by Sills and afterwards Zibell and Nolan in their own work leaves us the feeling that we have remembered them quite accurately.

5. Film and theatre director Mike Nichols—mentor to the authors—often called this collusion between audiences and actors "the deal." Nichols articulated the deal repeatedly in his master classes for actors, saying: "I'll pretend this is happening if you pretend to believe it."

6. On film sets, practitioners often speak of how a scene looks "to camera"—removing the customary article. One of the implications is that "camera" sounds like a name rather than an object—the camera. Wherever we employ this grammatical construction we do so to position camera as another body. It should also be noted we do not capitalize camera as it needs to be a body for the actualization of the virtual, not a subject of capital.

7. See Zibell *In Preparation* (forthcoming) for analysis of the instrumentalization of the body and the bodied camera inherent in the theatrical work of Stanislavski, Brecht, and Grotwoski.

8. Guattari relates this "entry" to a kind of commitment—"as in the past, when one "entered" a religious order" (Genosko 1996, 96).

9. In the late twentieth century, acting teacher George Morrison, who was a student of Lee Strasberg, a colleague of Mike Nichols and Paul Sills with whom he established and ran The New Actors Workshop Conservatory—where the authors of this paper began their studies—would use the term "cybernetic" for the kinds of moment-to-moment adjustments made by the actor using the physical action.

10. This page alone in Stanislavski's work refutes the common critique that his practices were "self-indulgent," ethically suspect, and in the service of "identification" and not (as Brecht asks) social interrogation.

11. Early Stanislavski used the example of Lady Macbeth trying to wipe the blood off her hands as a "simple physical action." But later in his work, the term took on a much more difficult to define usage (Stanislavski 2008, 164). He told his actors to leave behind the "histrionics" and simply wash the blood until it was gone. That this was enough.

12. The terms "daily body" and "life body" do not appear in Grotowski's major writings. They entered into Grotowski's lexicon very late. Playwright Ayad Akhtar, who studied and worked with Grotowski at the Grotowski Work Center in Pontedera, Italy at the end of Grotowski's life, frequently used these terms during a two-year-long period of rigorous training in Grotowski's *Plastiques Exercises* in New York in 2004–2006. The authors participated in these workshops with Akhtar.

13. The topic of no-motion would require a monograph to elaborate. Briefly, it relates to the work earlier in this paper on "releasing on intention." One can hold one's intention in "no motion." Practising no-motion begins with motion through space. First, the player emulates slow-motion as the cinema represents it. Then the player begins to "contact" or "enter into" the immobile in the motion. One can "see" one's own movement—as one moves—in a series of still frames within the flow. This produces affect and sensation proper to this iteration of the game and this iteration only. A player can "hold" one of the frames—a key frame perhaps that depicts a critical point in the movement—in no-motion as the body carries on through the sequence.

14. *Traumnovelle* (*trans.* Dream Story) is the title of the novel by Arthur Schnitzler on which Kubrick based *Eyes Wide Shut*.

Appendix: Stanislavski Quoted at Length on the Instrumentalization of the Body

"First we need a continuous line of Given Circumstances through which the scene can proceed, and secondly, I repeat, we need an unbroken series of inner images linked to these Given Circumstances. Put briefly *we need an unbroken line not of plain, simple Given Circumstances but ones that we have coloured in full.* So remember this well, forever: every moment you are onstage, every moment in the outer and inner progress of the play, the actor must see what is going on around him (i.e. the external Given Circumstances, created by the director, the designer and the rest of the production team) or what is going on inside, in his own imagination, i.e. those images which depict the Given Circumstances in full colour. A continuous line of fleeting images is formed, both inside and outside us, like a film. It lasts as long as the creative process lasts, projecting the Given Circumstances which the actor has fully coloured, onto the screen of his mind's eye, so that he now lives his own life entirely.

"These images create a corresponding mood inside, which then acts upon your mind and evokes matching experiences. Constantly watching the film of your mental images will, on the one hand, make sure you stay within the play, and, on the other, unfailingly and faithfully guide your creative work.

"Now, concerning mental images, is it correct to say that we really see them within us? We have the capacity to visualize things which do not exist in actual fact, but which we merely picture to ourselves. It is not difficult to verify this capacity of ours. Take the chandelier. It is outside me. It is, it exists in the material world. I look at it and feel, as it were, that I am extending 'my ocular antennae' towards it. But now I take my eyes off the chandelier, close them, and want to see it again in my mind's eye, 'from memory.' To do that, I have to withdraw my 'ocular antennae,' so to speak, and then direct them from inside myself, not outward towards a real article, but at some sort of imaginary 'screen in our mind's eye' as we call it in our jargon.

"Where is this screen to be found, or, rather, where do I take it to be, inside or outside myself? My own feeling is that it is somewhere outside me, in the empty space before me. The film itself is running inside me, but I see it projected outside me.

"To make sure you understand me completely, I will talk about it in other terms.

"Mental images arise in our imagination, our memory, and, thereafter, our minds, as it were, project them outside ourselves, so we can see them. But we see these imaginary objects from the inside out, so to speak, not from the outside in, with our mind's eye.

"The same thing happens with hearing. We hear imaginary sounds not with outer but with our inner ears, but we identify the source of these sounds, in most cases, as not inside but outside ourselves.

"I would say, turning this statement on its head, that imaginary objects and images take shape outside ourselves but nonetheless arise, in the first instance, inside ourselves, in our imagination and our memory" (Stanislavski 2008, 74–75).

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DEVISED FILMMAKING PRACTICES

The Film that Breathes: On *The Dark Side of the Sun* and *The Book of Vision*

Carlo Hintermann in interview with Alex Lichtenfels and Ilya Noé

Collaboration and Sharing

Alex Lichtenfels and Ilya Noé. How did you end up starting to work with other people? And how did that collaboration start to gel?

Carlo Hintermann. If we are talking about cinema, narrative cinema or experimental, whatever, I think that collaboration is a key element. At first [and to find out about making films], me and my collaborators [Daniele Villa, Luciano Baracaroli, and Gerardo Panichi] said: "Let's meet the directors that make differences in our life" [and collect what they say into edited interviews in books]. These people create something that has a peculiar environment, to let the movie be something a little bit different, kind of a breathing entity. Something that takes shape, thanks to the collaboration of people. But at a certain point, it becomes something that is not your movie anymore. It's something that is in the world, and it continues to grow.

The answer is not just the collaboration on a movie, but it's how we can do something in the art field that changes the approach, to produce the things that you think are interesting, unique. And so if something is unique, you need to create the right environment to let things happen. The best way to create this collaboration is to bring all the people [together]. When we worked, we shared. It was not just working on a movie, but it was sharing something.

Carlo Hintermann graduated in film directing at the New York Film Academy and made his first short films starting in 1996. One of these works, *Les deux cent mille situations dramatiques*, was selected for the Venice Biennale, 1999. With collaborators Luciano Barcaroli, Gerardo Panichi, and Daniele Villa, he formed the film company Citrullo in 2001. Their collaborations include the film *Rosy-Fingered Dawn: A Film on Terrence Malick* (2002) and the co-written book *Terrence Malik: Rehearsing the Unexpected* (2016). In 2011 Hintermann co-directed with Lorenzo Ceccotti *The Dark Side of the Sun* and his current project, co-produced with Gerardo Panichi, is *The Book of Vision*, starring Charles Dance and executive produced by Terrence Malick.

Alex Lichtenfels is a filmmaker and theorist who is a senior lecturer in film production at the University of Salford. He has several years' experience in the film and television industries, working primarily as a freelance producer and director in corporate and advertising venues. He is also an independent filmmaker with the Primary Films collaborative, producing or directing numerous short films as well as several longer projects. Through his work, he investigates emerging filmmaking practices, driven by research into technological changes and how methods used in other artforms might be applied to filmmaking. He is concerned with how these practices might allow for new types of films that engage audiences in nonstandard ways. He is currently pursuing research projects on remodelling the organization of film production based on anarchist political principles, and the links between film and antihumanist ethics.

Ilya Noé is a visual/performance artist-researcher, eager collaborator, sporadic teacher, and occasional curator who lives and works in Berlin, where she is one of the founders of the city's Association for Performance Art. Noé represented Mexico in Venice's *OPEN2000*, became a UNESCO-Aschberg Laureate, and was the recipient of one of Mexico's National Young Art Awards. A special guest at both the European Landscape Biennial in Barcelona and the International Biennial of Cerveira, she has made installations for many galleries and exhibitions, most recently the Biennale of Shanghai.

A. L. & I. N. You have talked about putting these books together (Barcaroli, Hintermann, and Villa 1999, 2000, 2001). As I understand it, there was a group of you. It wasn't just you alone who was writing that book on Terrence Malick, or making this film about Malick where the four of you guys had the credit as directors, as co-directors. How did the dynamics of that collaboration work?

C. H. I think it was about the books (Hintermann and Villa 2016) and making space for all the practitioners and collaborators. Also to demystify Malick as the solo romantic genius or whatever, and how politically expedient this was, as a gesture. [When we were editing books], we were a special group of people with very peculiar qualities. The work that we did was a combination of the different qualities. You work with these qualities, so if you have something that is focused, you need to give the right task to people. I like to share. I don't like to have the feeling that something is happening because it's my way of saying, "OK, I'm here. I did that. Something important." I like that we are here, and we are all doing something important.

This is something that continued also all during the editing. For example, often you are very tired of feedback and feedback and feedback. But you need to relax at a certain point and see if, in that feedback, there is something interesting. Because the first reaction is, I've been working one year on these things. But now I understand that. . . . And then it's very delicate, because there is the moment instead in which you need to defend something and say, this needs to stay as it is because it's part of a process. The moment that you feel that this is not part of the process, you can quit. If it's part of an organic process, it's there because you follow a process.

We were building books like movies, in the sense that we collected interviews. And we were editing as a continuous flow, exactly in the same way [as film editing], to make a contribution, to put down some seeds. Not just to say, "this is the work of that director." We didn't want to tell the secret of somebody. We would like just to show how it's complicated to build a mechanism and let that secret grow into a movie. And so I was always fascinated by this kind of mysterious place, which is the place of creation.

Little by little, I started to realize how important it was to build the same kind of environment. So I realized that it was important to start a company to do our projects, the projects that we wanted to do. Because in most cases, the relationship with production could be tricky. Sometimes it is impossible because nowadays it's difficult to have a unique and original project. You need to be your own producer, and we ended up also producing directors who, in a way, worked to create this kind of peculiar environment.

I really like movies that are kind of open, that can meet an audience. And when you meet an audience, something is happening. It's not just that you want to show something to somebody, but you want that person to be part of the relationship and the dialogue.

The Combination of Being Clear and Open: Approach and Attitude

A. L. & I. N. What does it mean to make a collaborative film?

C. H. With a movie, the space is where you want the field to land. I don't specifically set exactly everything. But I set a mood, a tone. I try to weave all the elements that go in that direction. It's

always interesting to understand how to follow these things, to be in this mechanism, this kind of mysterious thing that is there.

For me, it's important to have collaborators that I trust because it is a very different way [to work] in which you are very open to something that is happening around you. You throw your idea as far as possible, and then you are running to reach that first idea that you have—to be at the level of this first big, important idea that you had. If you start with something that is very humble, very flat, everybody will say something [like] "OK, we're going to do it like this. We're going to do it like that." The idea that you throw is like a mood that's shared or the tone. And I'm interpreting it as a narrative of sorts, of shared narratives. The good thing is to involve people and have everybody aiming at the idea that you throw very far away, so everybody is going in that direction. And I think that this approach is very interesting because it doesn't make a difference between the big production and a very small one. It's the approach that the first *Star Wars* was made, actually, that everybody was considering, "What is this project?"

I think that all the time you need to spend time. And the thing is that you need to be humble, because it's the only way—understanding that you need to create something, that you don't take things for granted is an important attitude. And sometimes, you can create this atmosphere around you, but it's not easy. In most cases, it requires that you put yourself aside, which is something unnatural for a director. But for me, it's the most powerful way of directing. And it is interesting, because it's not that you need to show that you are weak. On the contrary, you know that you will reach your goal through the collaboration of other people. But when an idea is far from your goal, you need to show it very clearly, you need to be very clear about it. So the combination of all these things makes it difficult to have the right approach. But you need to spend the right time to build these things.

Having people that are leading [professionals] to give shape to these things, is for me, totally exciting in the sense that . . . working with professionals is to understand this inner world in those tiny details, all the work of your movie is there. I use as a reference the painting of Bruegel in which you have the *Fall of Icarus*. You have Icarus, which is a tiny, tiny little figure on the background. And the rest of the painting is the life of the village and people and moving. It's exactly this. Sometimes, the important thing is that little detail on the background. With professionals, it's like you switch on an engine again that brings a bomb of an incredible energy. Because we are talking about professionals who work in the history of Italian cinema that, you know, changed completely the approach, in terms of authenticity and how also with the period movie things can become alive. I think it's something amazing, for a director, to watch those professionals in action. It's fantastic. You see how much the detail makes all the difference. This means also, in most cases, you have to protect people. You start having many different producers, and you are working with collaborators that you feel are important to you. You need to protect your editor, your visual effects supervisor, whatever.

A. L. & I. N. How do you think collaborators can develop that process? Is it about looking at other art forms? I guess for you, it's about looking at the filmmakers that you liked. How do you get someone to that stage, where they're able to think in that way? Or to do practice in that way?

C. H. I need an approach that is both free and responsible. Even if people are used to a variety of projects, going from a big movie produced by a major to an independent movie, it is always driven by specific ideas—the approach is very clear, what you want to do. I think that this is a way to give the responsibility to the people and the freedom to bring something into the project.

[Working with Malick], it was a very different way in which you are open to something that is happening around you. Then you spend months to catch the right images that you need. And when you work for him, you know that if you do something that is the right thing, that you want to do—the things that you aim for—it would be in the movie. In this way, it's incredible because you are completely free but totally responsible. I think it's the best way to collaborate with people, that you give this freedom, but the people are responsible to do the maximum they can achieve. And you see how important is this way of changing things [being open] to do something differently.

You are priming yourself to catch something that is totally unexpected. And this could happen, also, in a premier movie [a feature film]. I had this approach in my last movie. I prepared everything. Everything was storyboarded. But at the end, I had the central element of the movie that I left open, and some of the guys, they got to grow during the time I was shooting. In most cases, this openness is in a combination with mastering the technical elements. For example, in the case of a director of photography being incredibly trained and experienced, but at the same time able to forget these things and to go to completely different references.

Letting Things Work: The Image

A. L. & I. N. Are we talking about collaboration not only with other people but also talking about collaboration and allowing for dialogue between the images?

C. H. For example, I could quote a piece of *The Divine Comedy* about the love between Paolo and Francesca, and say, "It would be nice to have that image," and you try to reach the tip of it. But the way you will do it is totally in your hands in the sense of the way you will put the camera, the way you will follow things, to try to achieve this image. And being also respectful, because in that image, there is all the movie. Then how you assimilate it is also the result of the work with other people of the profession. They're bringing something. But you all have that image.

That's why, for example, when I'm writing something, I always imagine a starting point and where I want to arrive. And sometimes, sharing an image, such as a painting, really helps getting people on board. Nowadays, sometimes when you build a project, you spend years. And in these years, things change. Things grow. Iosselliani [Otar Iosseliani, Georgian filmmaker, b. 1934] always told me: at the same time, you need to be respectful of the guy [the person you were] that you brought to the story in the past. So be respectful of that boy who, ten years ago, wrote the story, because going back to that boy who was there and was dreaming about that movie, you can sometimes find something that is its essence. That original moment in which you drew your idea, there is something mysterious in that moment. It's like when you have a piece of poetry that you can't explain in words. You can explain Sylvia Plath's poetry, and we can discuss it for hours. But at the end, there is something that is hiding behind the words that is so powerful that is there. I have always been fascinated by people that have the strength to preserve this mystery.

Take a novel by Gesualdo Bufalino [Italian novelist, 1920–96]: the way he composed things that are using different times, different levels of the narration without prioritizing the past, the present of the things, but having things stay together. What happens when reading is that there's always this flow of emotion, mood, in which the word is always hiding in a way, each word hiding, because they are so well-chosen. In the same way, an image is the end of power. It is not just the combination [chosen word and flow], but they make something that is still arising. You don't need a producer or

co-producer of your movie if they have their own idea—they explain everything, and they don't see that sometimes what is important is what is hiding in the combination of two images, something that is not there. This is the place in which the integration takes form. It's something that is mysterious and that continues to work in the mind of an audience or a reader that is doing something. I don't know why I'm attracted, but you are not exploiting something. You are not suggesting that this is the way you need to watch these things.

We have still the illusion that in the world, as it is, everything is set. Everything is there. And everything is working somehow. The reality is that nothing is working. You need to let the things work. I think that the way of combining the two things is to find new means, a new way, a new approach of doing things. All the time that you are doing something that is changing, it's a little revolution. You need to find the key person or key people that allow you to do that because they did the exact same things when they started creating something.

Technique and Sensibility: Qualities

A. L. & I. N. When you offer this image and you end up throwing this idea for everybody to go in that direction, it struck me that there might be a friction, a tension between that and how to keep it at the same time open.

C. H. I think the important thing is to share things—not just to please somebody and to say, "OK, your work is important," but to incorporate things, to have the ability to bring something in and to understand. It's really an attitude that is so unique, especially in the world of cinema, where usually as you know, everything is standard. Instead, all the time, you enter into a different way of doing something.

Protecting these mysterious things [that are different] is developed out of confidence, paradoxically, in the people who are working on something, in the sense that you can never take for granted the result that you will achieve. It's [work] that you need to invent all the time, and has two main levels, in the sense of cinematography, of sound, of acting. If you always consider that your result will be something that you achieve in a different way, [no matter what skills you have,] you will feel that you are responsible to find this different way. So, for example, Sam Shepard [United States actor, playwright, author, screenwriter, 1943–2017] said to me, "OK. If I started to be confident as an actor, it didn't work at all. I needed to invent something. I needed to be me doing something and finding my own language in that movie." It makes a lot of difference, with even two people or one hundred. But if you have just one or two people that are not sharing these things, that's the moment in which everything collapses.

Instead, it's the way of maintaining this atmosphere and this way of working. You need to protect it, because it's continuously under the darker industrial way of doing things, and with this behaviour you go to the next step, to bring something in. [With this behaviour] you will have a person who will do three times the things that you want doing than if you go there and say, "Now, you need to stay day and night to work on it." But this is something that you learn in life.
This process of collaboration is also a moment of creation when you are writing a script or you are in exchange with other people. Sometimes you surprise people in reaching the goal when you bring these things out of people, when you don't see just the professionals doing their thing. Instead, you are thinking, this is a sensitive guy who likes flowers. And you move the sensitive guy that likes

flowers into the right place, where he can give a contribution because of that. Not because it's a great key thing, but in doing that, in a way you are always making a documentary in the sense that you try to understand the quality of the people.

The director you admire, when I have met them, they always talk about this quality of understanding. It is very delicate, this balance. But I think a director, with this attitude, is doing the best work when he's able to find this quality in people and let this quality flow into the movie. Malick found the quality in things. It is something that is precious to me, and it's with this meaning that you understand the question of balance, of finding your way, of how much time you need to spend. Not to follow something that will give you a status. "To be again," this is the question. In the sense that it's not "to be or not to be," but to be something different all the time.

But it is depending on the project. For example, if you write a project that is just following one character, and you really need someone special for it, you can take the risk to take no professional actors for everybody else. You will have the possibility of doing that, because the movie allows you to do that. But if you have a movie with a very complicated narrative structure and a schedule that is very tight, you will not have the time to do it, and you need a completely different production approach.

Process: The Language and Rhythm of the Film

A. L. & I. N. You started to realize the idea of the director as someone who gives freedom to the crew or the other collaborators when you were making your first films and meeting and writing your first books about directors. Why did you choose that as a way?

C. H. [When you are younger,] twenty years old, you are so dogmatic and you have the illusion that you need to be muscular, you need to make it your responsibility. And I only understood later, years later, that it was a very immature attitude. In most cases, I think often, young people are much more conservative than older ones. I always found fantastic old men totally open, and I found very young people that are very dogmatic. On the one hand, it's fear. On the other hand, it's dogma. And so you say, "OK, I have ten rules. Nobody can tell me anything, because I'm following these things." All the work that I'm trying to do is to destroy this dogma, this taboo, because often you are suffocating your creative process with a lot of structure.

To have something open—all the time that I have an exchange with somebody, makes a difference for me. For example, I brought this very neat script [to some producers] to screenwriter Pascal Bonitzer. Everything seems to me that we are in the right place, and I give a very brief, fantastic description of the eighteenth century, with it being very detached. And Pascal Bonitzer says, "OK, but I don't see why this character is in that place without doing anything, we need flesh and blood." For me, now, it was completely . . . I didn't expect it at all—especially considering the movies he wrote for Rivette [Jacques Rivette, French film director and critic, 1928–2016]. But it was fantastic, because you understood how even the creation of language had been passed by [in your own script] and put a taboo on your back. It let me find something. It's very interesting how you need sometimes to have somebody that shakes you and shows you a different way, a different attitude. And this is all part of this process. If you are convinced that by your own, staying close in your room with a set of rules, that you will achieve something, it's really the wrong path.

A. L. & I. N. Some of your collaborators are very established, some are very new to filmmaking—it's clear that none of them have worked in this way before. But the collaborators, let's say, are all so committed to a particular way of working. So what is it that allows that to start happening?

C. H. As a producer, for example, I suffer a lot from these things. When we produce somebody we see that with a change of attitude, you can achieve a much better result. It's related to this kind of spiritual attitude that you can have in doing artistic things. At a certain point, I started to go back to rediscover my Jewish heritage. What I found fascinating is to put the self aside, and also to find ritual as a moment in which you are building something, and building something that is not just you. I think that we are missing a lot, because we consider ritual a constraint and something bad. Instead, the repeating of a gesture, doing something that has its own time, that is different from the time outside, is fantastic in the sense that it's the same thing that you're doing when you're doing a movie. You find your own rhythm. It's not the rhythm of the world. It's the rhythm of the world that you are creating. Like when you suspend time and you go back, or you go far away to reach something that is not there, that's not reachable with your hands. Religion, when it's not too dogmatic, trains you in these instincts. It's also something that you do in a collective way, with the cooperation of somebody.

What I like is when you feel in a movie something that is really working as processing and lets somebody process something at the conclusion. This is very difficult. In most cases, there is the story editor of the production or things that push in the direction of making everything clear so that you need not to miss anything. But often, you need a weird thing happening to let the movie stand out. I like the cinema that gives you these things. For example, for me, a director like Bruno Dumont [French cinematographer, director, screenwriter, b. 1957] has this way of working underneath with something that will burst into the open of a sudden, something wild will happen, and something that is natural in manner is very violent. You feel something, but you don't clearly see the picture. You feel something. You feel tension. You feel . . .

You need to be a great artist to be able to do that. Because often, what you are not seeing or what you are not hearing is the most important thing of the movie. It is the same in a great novel or a great piece of poetry. It's these things that need the collaboration, the cooperation of an audience, a reader, something to reach something. This is very precious and is very archaic in the way we relate to art in general.

A. L. & I. N. Your approach is not the usual industrial vocabulary. How would you talk about people working together and communicating?

C. H. It's very difficult when you want something that has its own language. What I learned simply studying a work that I like is how important it is to find this language, to find this proper language. And how important it is that if you conceive a project, that it has its own language. Every element of the project aims to reach its own language, then the project will advance by itself. If you take out one of the pieces, everything is going to collapse. My reference is always Borromini in Rome, for whom, in the Baroque period, the ornament was part of the structure. So if the ornament is part of the structure, and you take out the ornament, the structure is going to collapse. So don't let a producer take out the ornaments because the project has its own language and is a breathing entity, in a way, is its own life.

When you have a common language, cinema really grows. It's really interesting now how much cinema is involving other arts, like performance. Often, somebody is doing an experimental work and giving their language to the people that will do the blockbuster the day after, and it's in that sense [also] that the performance artist is experimenting.

[When directing,] I needed to invent something. I needed to be me, doing something and finding my own language in that movie. But it's very delegated, in the sense that it passes through the way you build the crew and people that work together. In the end, you achieve something that is unique. This is the way of building a language, having sometimes some odd but very interesting person working with you. In that moment in which you share something, it's the moment in which the director is unique, and because they feel there is a common language people understand, they can be part of these things of going ahead.

The Dance

A. L. & I. N: When you talked about what you called the dance earlier—this space everybody's coming to, to achieve what's happening—you said "That's why we did it, that's the why of why we did it." Question, so what is it about that that makes it so important, or that makes it the "why"? That makes it somehow the core of . . .

C. H. It's when you see that the people that are working on things are feeling part of those things. And they are dancing because they want to dance. This is not because you force them to dance. And people dance together. And we see, we dance with the feet. We don't dance with the head. Because if we dance with the head, everybody will do their own dance. Instead, we dance with the feet, because we are all part of this dance. [We are responding] to other people's feet. If you feel that people are dancing with the feet on the set, I think that is the moment to say, "OK, that's why I'm doing these things." Because I want to share a moment that is important for everybody. It's not just a moment that is important for me.

It's rare that you have the feeling that these things are happening. Probably for only two days if you shoot for two months. In those two days, you have the feeling that you did your job and gave credence to the people, and let people feel confident to bring something and help something. That is, again, inside the detail. If you have an electrician who needs to follow a character with light, he can do it in a good way or in a bad way. When they do something that is really incredible technically—they are always reaching for things. It's also physically demanding and you see the difference. You see the difference. I have to say that in a certain moment, in certain projects, I had some problems in the sense that people don't want to push too much. They want to produce and say, "We'll just correct this. It's a work as other works, and you can pretend." Instead, sometimes you see somebody that is putting in this extra value. When you see these things, you say, OK. And you feel that in that moment the thing that you are doing is a collective effort.

A. L. & I. N. How does the approach or attitude that is needed for collaboration come about in the practice of making a film?

C. H. I think that the cinema, just with the power of framing, can show this attitude. Which is something fantastic. For example, following the work of the experienced cinematographer and cameraman, you really understand how framing is a kind of attitude. And you find people that really

feel the frame. It is something alive. It's something that gives you the difference. And then you go with the dialogue between lenses and things. But at a certain point, I sometimes feel the moment instead to collaborate. I felt that some intimate moment, I had the need to operate [the camera] myself. My own documentary [work] is to gain the trust of what you are filming, to let something happen, arise, because you have established the right distance with something. And the right distance, it changes a lot. If you are shooting in some documentaries, I really felt that the relationship between the camera and the person I was filming needed to pass through me, to [find] the physical approach.

I'm totally fond of Jörg Widmer [German cinematographer, joergwidmer.com]. It's because he has this natural way of letting the frame bleed, which is something amazing. It's never forced. It's always finding the right way, the right approach to let things arise. Which is not something that you learn somewhere. I think that it's really an attitude. . . . And you can feel it. When you have somebody like him, and the director who is able to incorporate these things in the movie, that is where the [film] language goes one step forward. For example, when you have this free shooting that follows characters using very wide lenses, it's something completely different from staying completely close to one character and following them everywhere. There is that technique that many directors use, of letting something breathe in this natural way, in this kind of flow, something that is continuously flowing, and then [afterward] you likely see the same approach in a commercial.

The Dark Side of the Sun (Ceccotti and Hintermann 2011)

At the end of the first interview, Hintermann began to talk about his film *The Dark Side of the Sun*, which he began to make shortly after filming a documentary about pen pal relationships with inmates on death row in Texas. The film is based on a summer camp for children with xeroderma pigmentosum (XP), a lethal disease that isolates them because they cannot go into the sunlight. At Camp Sundown, children who suffer from XP can play together at night.

A. L. & I. N. How does a film like that come about? How do you even find the subject and the people? Maybe how does it start?

C. H. I was in New York, and I was reading the *New York Post*, and there was an article about that family [that ran Camp Sundown]. I was interested that even in the tough situation, incredible things arose at a certain point. I started investigating the links of certain conditions that put you into a limitation, how people react to that. And so I said, these things [about the camp] are very interesting, but I was very afraid of exploiting that reality, being driven just by the most obvious aspect.

It was several years later that it was the time to approach those people and explain why I want to make a movie about them. If they don't want to do it, I completely agree . . . but I like this challenge of knowing each other and establishing something. And so I like their attitude, for they were not interested at all in having media coverage. After that first meeting with them, I started writing the project. Then, I decided to attend a camp to understand. Because for me, it was not easy to find the right approach. So I wanted, together with the other people, to get together with Daniele [Villa], who was the producer of the movie. We decided to bring something there, a little workshop to the children, and start with having them shoot something. So it was important for us that they knew how to make documentary and to bring something into it. And there, in that moment, I understand that it was possible to do the movie because they start understanding, questioning things. Little by

little, the children were attracted to me instead of the contrary. So they were also deciding what I can do or not. From that moment on, we started to build a production.

A. L. & I. N. How do you think collaborators can develop that process of building?

C. H. It was complicated, because it was adding animation. I understood immediately that I needed to write the project with the children and to find a way to have them own something—and this was the animation. It was fantastic because they wrote the story of the animation. I collected all the stories of those children, then I wrote something and I bring them the writing, asking them what they think about it. And so things start to grow, be wild with your imagination. It was fantastic because at the end this was the production. It needed to stay at the level of the imagination of the children who were going to build this kind of cosmogonic universe in which you have gods and whatever, and images.

I started building the animation as the documentary of the inner world of those children, where is the secret that was impossible to show with the camera. In a way, it was there, that tool [the animation], that possibility of putting into that dimension their fear, their desire, their life. It was a fantastic process that ended with them dubbing their own character.

It was a project where we needed to stay at the level of our protagonists in the sense that all the cinema apparatus needed to stay, to follow the needs of the people. So if you can't use the lights, you need to find the solution. It's not that you need to force them to do something that they can't do. This was challenging, completely challenging because we needed to develop a special deal with a company that was making lights with the LEDs. We needed to incorporate the toys of the children as our lights. And so all these things became very organic.

Paradoxically, it's you that is missing something. The one that is challenged is you, in the sense that you need really to change your way of viewing things. It was an upside-down world. We didn't sleep because we needed to shoot all night long. But then, the children were so excited that they started to continue with doing things during the day. For us, it was that we needed to find a way.

A. L. & I. N. I would be so tempted to try and turn that into a story where the story is about making something incomprehensible comprehensible. How does that process work? How does it work with the animators, as well?

C. H. We had people who worked on the movie that were attending the camp, even when we were not shooting. I had an editor there dressed like a clown . . . and it created a kind of intimate relationship. After we went to the camp, we had Skype and other things that are used, because it's the way they can communicate. The children are very connected, and it was easy. Some suggestions came also from the process of animated movies that they were watching, some Japanese things that they liked. This is a background that Lorenzo Ceccotti, director of animation liked, so it was interesting. And I was also on the production side. Because at the end, the main producer was NHK, the Japanese television [channel], which was fantastic because they followed the project.

It's very strange, because at the beginning, it's very complicated to work with Japan. Because there are many things, different cultures. So you need to gain their trust. And it takes a while. But once you arrive at that moment, they are so into it that [you really try to] understand each other, which is the good part of the project.

After they joined the project, they came all the time on set. And they followed the moment of creation of the animated process.

The children started something, and we started working on those things. We took the time to let the things grow. So we work on that for quite a while. And then, of course, I wrote some dialogues and other things that are inside the movie, starting from the suggestion of the children. We wanted to do the best from these suggestions and things that were coming from them.

The Book of Vision (Hintermann in post-production 2019–20)

In the second interview, Hintermann went on to discuss some of the processes in the feature film *The Book of Vision* that he was making, with Terrence Malik as executive producer. The film is based on a fluid sense of time between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. His work on this film has taken many years of preparation (from ~1997), which he talked about first, but his focus was on the way the director works with the camera and the actors.

A. L. & I. N. The title, *The Book of Vision*, I can't help but read that and think of the books that you made early on. Is that conscious for you? Or was it something more to do with the plots?

C. H. It's linked with the meaning of books in general. The book is not just a physical object that stays there. It's animated, it's alive, and it can be a medium to reach something. *The Book of Vision* is this: it's a book that the vision is . . . it's not there. In a sense, it's to let the vision arise. And so this is the link to books. And if I go back to the book that I wrote, I try to do the same things, to let people speak and bring images, things, thoughts, dreams.

A. L. & I. N. Why did you decide to produce this film with your collaborators, with you own company?

C. H. [We talked to several producers but] they didn't find a deal. So we took back the rights to the film and decided to produce it ourselves. After this period that we had with the Italian unit of *Tree of Life* (Malik 2011), we were experimenting with a different way of doing a movie, fiction movies, in the sense that the approach was similar to documentary. We decided, OK, let's try to build our own structure for the movie. Let's be the main producer. So we tried to organize things in a way to be very planned, but at the same time, with some freedom for improvising and trying things out that we wanted to go one step forward.

The movie has a CG part that I designed, together with Lorenzo, the guy who did the animation in my previous work. Again there was one layer of the movie that was made considering some things that were interesting about time. What we tried to do is to go back to the way of visual effects that were made in the movies of the eighties, more or less like *Labyrinth* (1986), a fantasy that had most of the visual effects on camera. This let us start conceiving things differently. There is a fantasy part in the movie that is related with a forest, and tree people that live in the forest. So we started conceiving to have as many things as possible, things on camera, things that we can shoot to integrate with CG. Then we evolved this concept of trying to project stuff during the shooting, to have some elements that will not be CG, but what we had already filmed. So the performance of the actor was not to act with the green screen but to have something visible in front of them.

A. L. & I. N. This is a much more practical question in some way, but isn't the film industry, the way it's designed almost the most antithetical place to things that you've been describing happening? So how on earth do you, how do you make that work, on a practical level?

C. H. I started to work on that, putting together a very complex production frame, with the help of Malick, who decided to be the executive producer of the movie, which helped a lot in putting together all the crew and all the people. We started choosing—considering the things that we said yesterday—we started to choose the right collaborators in order to create this atmosphere, this mood. I wanted to create a completely different environment in which people can feel that they can contribute to something.

You need to gain the trust of the people, and this was the case. For me, it was also interesting to work in a frame that is more the one of American production, in terms of departments, in the sense of having a production designer who is also responsible for the look of the movies so that you consider the movie as a whole thing. So you are not divided into different departments but you try to turn it all together in order to obtain what you want. It was the first time that I started working in this way, and it helped a lot to put all the people together who were working in relationship— costume design and production design and DP and visual effects. In the end, it became having a nice exchange with friends. But fantastic professionalism. So it was the best situation possible.

Again, it was a question of finding solutions. I spent a lot of time looking for the right location, to have a place that was already bringing something to the location, that was a character in its own. It was a long preparation, and all the time, during the years, I learned how to do all the processes, to work on a movie.

A. L. & I. N. You said that this feature film is continually combining different levels or ideas about time. How did you approach that while making the film?

C. H. In documentaries, I like to plan things, especially in a certain location: to see what is going on there, having the right tools to cover the things that are happening. One example in *The Dark Side of the Sun* was the sequence of flying lanterns that they were using. What we did was simply to design a shot, but the action was totally live. [It's important] to have the tools to get something that is spontaneous, but to have enough tools and means to cover that moment in the best possible way. I did *The Book of Vision* with the same approach, and with the design of many things in the movie. It's a movie in which the camera is often moving, and the idea is to have a kind of vertigo that goes from the contemporary part to the period part. The actors are doing two roles, one in the contemporary part and one in the past. So I really wanted the time of the movie to be a combination of these two elements.

For these things to work, score has also the same attitude, having some instruments that are real, like a saxophone and clarinet, so the way we recorded them, you can feel the instrument, you feel the mechanism. And on the other hand, to have a layer of electronic sound that create an effect of having the dream or remembering something coming from the past. And then project the two into the future. I tried to work so all the elements of the movie have these two layers at once.

The idea was to have this new time that was a combination of past and future. And to reach that goal, you work in a subtle way, in the sense that all the elements, all the departments, in terms of costume, in terms of production design, music, lights, are trying to work in this direction. I had it in

mind to have a movie with its own language. The main thing is already made, so actually, we try to do something new. For my producers, it is very complicated, it was demanding in terms of production. But we put together fantastic professionals. For me, it was like having a fantastic palette to combine things and to put things together.

And then, of course, came the work with the actor. It was another layer of this idea. What I tried to do is to have everything well prepared, so that I have room to play with the actors and let the actors bring something in. The script was highly articulated, because the story's very complex. There are many things going on, both in the past and the present, and I needed to follow a structure that was there and clear. In certain cases, with the main actors, I shared also the storyboard. It was not simple for the people that read the script for the first time. Many things were going on. It was not easy to understand the lines of the character. So I needed to help them in entering these things, and with the challenge of acting two roles, one in the present, one in the past.

I was open to letting the characters change with the approach of the actor. This was quite complicated, because with the schedule that I had, with the structure and the script that I had, it was not obvious how to do that. So I took actors coming from theatre, adding a big experience from theatre. All the actors involved with the movie have fantastic technique, and they can go back to their professional skill when things become tough. These things helped them a lot because they are not afraid. They know where they can find things because they have many tools to do that. This helps you to bring in something new. Also, the character changes, so I made some changes while I was shooting, because I understand that some characters take their own importance. You arrive at a moment which is beautiful, and which is through the character that is leading you. You are not working as a puppeteer with your character, but it's the character that talks to you.

A. L. & I. N. You talk about working with actors, trying to make sure that you create a space where there can be some experimentation, or they can bring something in for themselves to the role, like we were talking about yesterday. How does that literally happen? What do you do in order to generate that space or in order to encourage actors to . . .

C. H. I didn't feel that it was helping if I leave the actor completely fresh to come on set and start a performance. I preferred to rehearse several times. In all the movies, how I build the space is important, especially the period part. I tried to have the position of the character as his way of living in the world, in the sense that if you have some power, you stay in a [social] position, and you walk in the space in a certain way. I rehearse this element, giving to the actors an idea of how to use the space. This was also linked with the camera movement that we designed with the DP. So I think that in this case, having some restriction, in the sense that knowing how you [the actor] need to view the space gives room for bringing something else into the actual performance, so they felt confident in the way that they needed to move in the space.

If a character, at a certain point, say in a hospital, moved from the bed to the window, all these things were pretty well planned, for the actors to feel confident in the place that they are. This positioning and the camera were totally at the service of the performance. They let an actor be confident that he's in good hands. And not just in the hands of the director, but in the hands of the director of photography. Because when you have an actor that is experienced, probably his performance was brilliant, but was not shot in the right way. It could happen. Instead, when they find that something is solid, they feel free to act without this concern and this worry about "Oh my gosh, I need to move because the camera is not shooting in the proper way." This is something that

you know little by little. You understand that the actor, during the rehearsing, brings in something fantastic, and you need to understand how to shoot it so that it can be as effective as possible.

This is the work. For me, it was very stimulating because I needed all the time to click into how to catch the ideas that the actor had. For example, in the movie, you have a lot of top shot because you have a character who is being accused of something. The way the character is in the space is as if they are alone in a big hole and all the attention is on them, like during the Inquisition. If you let the actor feel that the shot is the right one for that moment, then they are really free to just bring something. This is something I was learning while working. It's something that you can't learn in a book. It's something that happens by having discussions with people, and for me, that's why we spend so much time to have the right collaborators. If you have an incredible technique, for example, the idea of the DP bringing in an incredible key grip, it changes completely the way things happen. With this film I felt totally free because even to design something, a complex camera movement, it was possible to do so on the spot. Sometimes you have a key grip, and you say, "OK, we need to do something. This is the moment," and they say, "This is impossible. We need to spend three hours more. We need to . . ." Instead, when you feel that you have someone who immediately can react to these things, and bring also something in, it's fantastic. So you feel that the camera is kind of dancing.

For me, an important point for reference is Bertolucci's [Bernardo Bertolucci, Italian director and screenwriter, 1941–2018] cinema. The way he's using camera movement is always a way to narrate something. It's not that you're just doing a camera movement to show something. But it's because it's the right one in that moment. It's difficult to obtain these things without the right professional. You need somebody who can react fast and can follow you, so you feel really supported. When the people understand what you want to do and they follow the way, and they put their energy into achieving something, it's the best thing. For sure, I had those people who really helped me, and this helps the actors because they never need to worry about these technical things, so you give a lot of freedom to them. When you work with experienced actors you can see if the actor is using his technique and that's it, and it's already good because they are very good—or if they are trying to find something instead of using something that is already there.

A. L. & I. N. You've been using this word "shared" a lot. And it's about that, we are in it together. Everybody, with their differences, contributes to it. There's a space that, I don't want to call it safe, but where everybody can do what they do, fostering this ecology . . .

C. H. In the moment, you really need to forget who you are, forget the things that are there, and give room for those moments. This means understanding when these moments are about to happen. And so you need your assistant, in the production that is there, just to push it. To say, "Let's go. We need to shoot that one" or say "OK, no." Or, "This is something that is happening now. We need to focus on this moment." Or, "It's better to have this moment and cut another scene if I need to." Oddly enough, Malick is also shooting this way. Do you think that he's going to shoot forever? Instead, he's concerned about staying on a precise schedule. So it's a question of saying, "OK, it's better to have this element and probably adjust other things, change other things, instead of not having [this moment]." This is something that you have the feeling of, with everybody, again, the collaboration. It's not something that is just in your mind. But you have the feeling of these things together.

For example, it's a good sign when you see that someone in the crew is interested in something. You have people who are used to shooting every day and on many different projects. When you see that somebody lets their attention click, you say, "OK. That's something, we are starting to do a movie." There is the moment that you have the feeling that you are actually doing a movie. There are many movies that are just, "OK, plan, we do these things, we stay in time, and whatever." Instead, it's very nice to see when people start to feel they are a part of something, that they are a part of the creative process. This, I think, is the best moment. It's incredible, because it's a kind of drug, in the sense that you want to go back to that feeling later. Because you feel that this is the purpose of why you are doing something.

It makes sense to do this work when people are considered as part of this creative moment, because it's a kind of dance and everybody has a role in that dance. Everybody gives a contribution, and in most cases, it's a contribution on the spot. You might have, for example, a grip that is following a character with real lights. So if you are changing something, if something happens that was not planned and you need to adjust, when that guy feels that he's part of it, you really see the set dancing together with the performance. This is the best moment. It's really fantastic when these things happen.

So again, it's a question of creating a very organic way of shooting. The environment is everything. It's really delicate. And while you edit, you really understand what is working, what is not. And you understand why. And the reason always lies within the whole environment, not just with a few people or one actor or whatever.

I think, in most cases, you need to foster these things and help these things happen. It's not easy, because you are always under pressure. There are always things coming from outside. It's really tough. Luckily, I have a lot of professionals who really like to make movies. This is the difference. You could have a lot of people who just want to finish the day of shooting, and that's it. So it's really important to foster the attitude of being part of the movie. At the end of the movie, it's not yours. It's not the movie of the director. And this, for me, is a matter of fact. It's not something that is a philosophical thing. A movie is made by the effort of everybody.

Audiences

A. L. & I. N. The ethos you've been talking about is also collaborating with the audience. It is about the dialogue. It is about the sharing. It goes back and forth. It's a to and fro. How does this process of making art or making films, how does that then reflect back on those people who are giving themselves to it, in some way? Or giving part of themselves, or changing themselves, because they're looking beyond who they are to another.

C. H. If you have this approach while you are making the movies—free your mind so that your ass will follow—actually, the audience will stay in the same position, in the sense that they'll take the movie in this way. It doesn't matter if it's a huge audience or a small audience. The important thing is that you activate a process. There is a genre where we open things up. You can win all the Oscars in the world, but if you are not activating a process you are not letting the audience do a process. I prefer something where you start questioning, that it's something that you didn't grasp. And you start thinking for weeks.

Iosselliani, for example, said that a movie is an anthology of our desire. And if you do edit the movie in this way, every image is a kind of portrait of a desire, of reaching something or doing something, you have this continuous movement, and you know that nothing is compressed. You realize how much this is so when you are writing, when you are shooting, when you are doing the movie, you are exactly doing that—making an anthology. At the end, you need to do your anthology of the best that you did in all the process.

A movie is something that, in a way, breathes. Even if you have a movie that has really polarized critics, it's important that there are those specific moments in the movie where, you know, the movie as an entity works in all these parts. And sometimes in a movie you pick something as an audience that is important for you, for your life, that changes something, that creates this process of thinking. In general culture, art is fascinating because it's something that I never consider an accessory, that is aside of our life. I always consider it as part of our life. And I think it's a beautiful thing. When I'm watching a movie, I'm not considering that I'm watching something. I consider that I'm living in something.

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Carlo Hintermann has had final editorial control of the script of this interview.

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On ABSENCE Doings—The Cuts of Disappearance

Álvaro Hernández, Regina Gutiérrez, and Diego Aguilar[1]

In Colombia, where the performance *What Is to Disappear?—What We Not Know about an Empty Chair* was created, one of the last reports of the Commission of Memory has given a statistic of more than eighty thousand people disappeared. All the participants of this process have been in one way or another in relation to "acts of disappearance," whether because some of our activist work has been with people that directly suffered the consequences of the Colombian internal armed conflict and disappearance became an ever-present occurrence, or because the disappearance of a family member has been suffered directly. Here, we worked absence and disappearance not in relation to the lack of presence of the disappeared but rather—and in relation to the many dialogues we have had with people who have suffered the traumatic consequences of acts of disappearing—to the affective and imperceptible mattering of what actively remains among us, the absent presences, perhaps, as well as the continuous presencing of their absence. We are thinking through our own artistic practices to work with such an indeterminate real, but also with and alongside the work of people, artists, and activists, especially from Latinoamerica around disappearance. We all live among the death and the undead, and those of whom we have no certainty of either death or non-death. In this sense, this work is an attempt for thinking disappearance from a perspective of what Lynette Hunter calls affective politics (Hunter 2018).

Diego Aguilar has been, since 2016, a professor of media art and art and technology at the National University of Colombia, professor in the Master of Visual Arts, and Director of the Technopoetics Research Group, which focuses on the dialogue between knowledge between art, science and technology, configuring questions about the photographic, documentary, moving image, optics, screen, narrative and the body. Producer of experimental video and artistic practices in digital and low tech media, he has participated in international exhibitions and festivals in countries such as Spain, Argentina, United States, Indonesia, Germany, Chile, and Colombia—for which he has won several recent awards in holography, video art, and experimental video.

Regina Gutiérrez is a multidisciplinary performing artist and theatre educator specialist in the areas of movement, physical theatre, and acting—including corporal mime, acrobatics, and scenic combat. She has participated in numerous productions as an actress, assistant director, and producer. As a theatre educator and researcher of the performing arts, she has worked with low-income children and adolescents, and on social projects, investigating the theatre body as a vehicle toward knowledge. She has led performances with women from different regions of Colombia on topics such as gender violence and sexual abuse and has been part of the activist movement involved in the recovery of territory for Afro-Colombian communities as well as in the formation of green movements along the Atlantic Coast of Colombia.

Álvaro Hernández is an interdisciplinary artist who has received international awards and participated in and created pieces of street theatre, physical theatre, collaborative theatre, and other performances with artists and communities in Asia, Europe, North America, and Latin America. He has collaborated with Indigenous communities of Amazon and the region of Putumayo in Colombia and has developed performances joining art and activism within Colombian communities affected by the armed conflict. He has been the artistic director, playwright, and dramaturg of *Entropico Teatro* since 2003. Hernandez is currently investigating modes of doing with plants and other than human relations, trying to map relational territories that go beyond the bifurcation of modern thought. His interest is the activation of post-capitalist ecological ways of doing, forms of senti-pensar the world that contribute to the generation of impactful actions in relation to the socio-environmental crisis. Hernandez is a professor in the Department of Arts-ASAB at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Colombia.

This essay remains undone. It attempts to engage with different registers of the experience of working absence throughout the process of the coming together of this work. Thus, in the writing as well as in the process of making, it does not clearly separate between the process of creation and the performance, just as it does not work along the opposition between absence and presence. Each part is a way of engaging with what the work did and could have done and how it worked or how we felt it working. Hence, the writing is a way of keeping ongoing what-where else the work could do.

I. Encountering

Alvaro said: locate as many features as you can all around your body, sense spots more than specific parts of the body, sensations that feel awkward or out of place, others that pass or feel moving, others that connect. Feel them irradiating more than in isolation. Try to hold to them and trace a line along their course, starting in any of them, feel the ways they moved . . . now, drop the line and feel them all at the same time.[2]

The process from the very beginning was bounded by particular constraints that could have been understood as "obstacles" but were embraced as platforms to enable otherwise relations.[3] The largest constraint was that the cast members were in four different parts of the world. A video artist was in Argentina, a dancer between countries, two performers were in different regions of Colombia, and the director and a performer, and also the assistant director, in the United States. A set of propositions was adapted to make this situation work and advance the project. It was decided that the director and assistant director would separately develop material according to certain guidelines and transmit it to the others via the Internet in meetings scheduled in advance. They would work separately without sharing their material so that the material was random and unconnected. Nobody really knew what this performance was about, which was intentionally one of the guidelines of the director. Nothing was fixed, every piece of material—diagram, videos and stills of movement and/or objects, letters, fragments of text, sound recorders—was just a door to generate scores for more unknown.

Each of the performers took pieces of those materials and engaged with them in as many ways as they could find. We all shared online different fragments that would blind each other to the whole of what had actually been done. The pieces were collaged, gathered in a sort of media patchwork. The pieces could be taken separately or together with others and then used to originate a new part. The video artist began to develop ways to intercalate the fragments so that other textures would appear, unidentified images, that were there but not quite. What emerged of this digital venture of sharing material and making it available and presencing in unknowable ways was the question of what moves and how it is moved from media to embodiment. The different locations of the performers made it impossible to share an actual space, and thus, the sharing became a work to be done through the fragments virtually collected. The online sharing was the site in which the actual presence of the performers was virtually co-composed in order to become more, to emerge and move within a set of terms "not already identifiable" (Manning in Bordeleau et al. 2017, 16).

The virtual connectivity of the fragmentary sharing was pressing toward a precise work about presencing whatever was felt by the participants as disappearance. Images, video footage, and visual or sound interventions of the materials downloaded and shared through the Internet became connectors, sensory motors moved by the work done through the collective interventions occurring in separate time-spaces and colluding in the work of each one of us. The way these virtual sharings occurred was also a mode of taking in, and being porous to the change incited by the "inexpressable

and inexperienceable" force of the not-known,[4] and was particularly important in linking what could make presence in the work of the performers in its different locations—the ripples of what was there and yet not, not yet identifiable or determined as such, a potentiality to work without knowing exactly what it was, or what it could become.

When we met at last in Bogota, we recorded rehearsals every day: to document, to revisit what happened, to have a memory of them, to repeat, replicate, and reactivate. Mainly, though, rehearsals were recorded with the purpose, up to some point, of producing propositions for change. Everything that we recorded was revisited every day and then reworked during rehearsals, for materials and performers become loose and lost and thereby, something could rapidly shift; usually, a lot was changed each day. From one rehearsal to another, the performance could completely modify its shape or sometimes just be affected in imperceptible manners that on many occasions took effect as a result of our observations of the recording videos and audios. This uncomfortable, unstable sense was a constant technique that emerged in the effort to make disappearance/absence and its emerging ecology of dramaturgying appear.

From the performance *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*. Directed by Álvaro Hernández. Photo: Diego Aguilar and Álvaro Hernández.

de-FRAMING OUT-in FRAME

Two cameras are placed at the edge of two of the sides of a rectangular space, with *nothing/ no-thing* in it. The performers arrive at the usual time of rehearsal, put on appropriate clothes, talk about daily stuff, and after a brief time, tried to enter the space for *rehearsal* to start, but they are stopped at its edges. The cameras just started recording the space, and they will be recording for about one hour and a half—to be exact, one hour thirty-six minutes and twenty-one seconds. During that lapse of time, "*nothing happens*," "*nothing is to be done*," except the camera capturing the movement of *nothing in space*, and the bodies of the performers at ease on one side and separated from the rectangle by a distance of two metres or so, without any *real* task, any goal to accomplish. They do not really know

what is going on or what this is about since they were not told what to do, apart from not entering the space and being aware of the cameras to avoid getting recorded. No speaking is done, as it would interfere with the recording. After some time, the performers start moving along one side, the side of the rectangular space that is not caught by the camera, at times bored, at times actively involved in finding a way to engage with the camera's doing. The cameras keep recording until they are stopped (one hour thirty-six minutes and twenty-one seconds). We all take a break. From what? Someone might be thinking. And yet "something's doing" (William James, quoted in Massumi 2013, 1). "That much we already know. Something's happening" (Massumi 2013, 1). Already so much doing and changing in the transformative ongoingness of event taking form. We take a time. Is that what a break is about? Taking some time?

Everyone gathers after a five-minute break, *this time*, with the task of carefully observing what has been recording during one hour thirty-six minutes twenty-one seconds. *Nothing* else to be *done* besides observing the images recorded of this *time/space* with a complete absence of objects: empty? Full of nothingness? During the same length of time: one hour thirty-six minutes twenty-one seconds. The images of both cameras are downloaded on a computer and then played simultaneously on a big screen, each view on a side of this screen split into two halves.

What is it that the performers are looking at on the screen? Nothing? The time/space is there in the images projected on the screen. Is it an absence of any-thing? But even that absence happens in time/s: one hour thirty-six minutes twenty-one seconds of lived time felt otherwise, other time, by the engagement of the performers with the one hour thirty-six minutes twenty-one seconds of image-movement on the screen. Looking at the time of this absencing, with a fullness of time being felt, is maybe looking with *nothing* to see except time.[5] The moving images passing on the screen take time and move in time, some time, and yet time is nothing to be seen, time disappears and is itself disappearance. This disappearing time moves, passes, transforms and changes, becomes anew in unpredictable ways opening up as potential for multiple futures to come. Time is then to be felt, feeling time of duration, a turning to the passage of the flow of time vibrating internally in us (Lapoujade 2018), time becoming in a-tension, time tending, at-tending[6] with the passing of past tendencies.

Right after the watching of the video recording is finished, *this time* without a *break*, the performers stand right at the edge on the sides of the space. Each one chooses a spot and WAITS, at-tending to the stillness doing in disappearing time. Whatever has been caught and captured by the camera helps the performers to engage in their waiting, accentuating differently for each performer particular qualities and rhythms of time. In the co-composition of the recorded images and the dynamisms generated by the movement of the stillness of the waiting bodies, performers begin to feel the passage of Waiting-Time. What we call Waiting-Time contains both the linear, progressive, and deterministic conception of time in its incessant ticking and also felt time, flux, and continuous moving of time becoming, changing differentiating, time-duration. What is the time of the disappeared?

From the performance *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*. Directed by Álvaro Hernández. Photo: Diego Aguilar and Álvaro Hernández.

During the performers' waiting, time/s unfold. Their still bodies' movement syncs with the history and stories of time-consuming seconds, minutes, hours, of linear time ticking, time reduced to containment, imprisoned in the recurrent unicity of its determination, and, at the same time, their movement moved in stillness inserts different temporalities. The performers attend to be moved and feel time moving, to become and be altered by time, to get engaged in the dynamic, their bodies continuously middling in a fluctuating movement of change and open-ended multiplicity of time-duration.[7] It is through felt time, time in its permanent movement of change and differentiation (Grosz 1999) that absence and disappearance are foregrounded: through its uncontainable felt force, in its nonexistent, not-present but virtual-real potential. Each of the practices and propositions created in the process of creating *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair* engages with the "presencing" (Hunter 2019) of absence and disappearance, attuning and at-tending with what is taking out of place.

For if disappearance is "time not to be had" even when time is nothing to be had, in other words time out of present, time intense, eventing, continuously fleeting and shifting, it is reserved yet with the potential to become. And, on the contrary, to make disappear is also the freezing of time, the taking of someone else's/some thing's time, leaving them absent of time, with an absence of time that otherwise could have been "filled" (Derrida 1992, 3) if time were/would have been left to be done/have. This camera montage, then, considered how to engage and respond to the presence of disappearance. The essay is about the doings of this process in feeling absencing time and absent presences. The temporalities immersed in the process are felt in excess.

On the one hand, the surplus of the "rest of the time," the time left undone, frozen and framed in a waiting for something never to arrive, clock time excessive and obsessively marking time. The time-

trauma of those left waiting, sufferers of the too many disappeared that, as Donna Haraway remarks, include

> human resisters to criminal nation states, the imprisoned, missing generations of the Indigenous and other oppressed people and peoples, unruly women, trafficked child and adult sexual and other workers, black and brown young people, disposable young people of every race or ethnicity, migrants, refugees and displaced people, stateless people, human beings subject to ethnic cleansing and genocide, and already about 50% of all vertebrate wild life that were living on earth's lands and oceans less than 50 years ago, plus 76% of fresh water species. (Haraway 2018, 73)

Disappearance made of extractivist practices of life ongoingness, in permanent undoingness of life,[8] in a continuous surveillance of bodies for the sustainment of practices and forms of killing.

But, on the other hand, there is the deframed felt excess of time ongoingness, time constantly changing and vibrating, creating the potential for indeterminate and unexpected becomings, time flowing out-in movement moved toward the search for futures to come, on the movement making of the new, of unpredictable unknown worldings, uncertain configurings for new "people to come" (Deleuze 2004, 345). Where is "the rest" of the time of the disappeared? The time that was not left to be there, and the felt time of absent presences. What is left? What remains in past traces of multiple pasts becoming in unknown futures. In Waiting-Time, as it was understood in this process, the performers engaged in both a radical sensitivity and hyperawareness to the recurrent, determinate unfolding of linear time, felt second by second, minute after minute, but also, in opening up ways of not-knowing, unpredictable, emergent and surprising taking of forms where the intensity of flowing time's inner vibration can be felt, when the traces of disappearance take and make presence. In the midst of our time/s, forms of living and dying emerge as surplus and excess of life intensive, and in new entanglements of death and life coming and becoming together.

Disappearance opened up in this particular process the performers' modes of engagement with the always incomplete, always impossible task of fully grasping the experience of the work becoming. The task was not to represent the disappeared or the experience of disappearance but engaging everywhere and everywhen with the nonperformativity of absencing. What would that do to the performers? What would it become throughout the process? And how would that be felt by the audience? These are questions we are keeping in motion across this piece of writing.

The Camera and the Body: Waiting-Time and the Cut

In the video recording of "emptiness" in the space, the cameras frame the absence of things. The frame conducted by the cameras is a "cut," a world gathering that can limit with precise boundaries everything in it. Everything that divides and makes difference of what is in it and what is not, what is excluded and what gets to be contained, that demarcates its inside and outside, extracting and capturing a slice of life-movement, excising its uncontained potential. Although the violent cut performed by the frame of the cameras restricts the limits (curating and encircling what is to be seen), it can also be, as Jean Luis Comolli points out while speaking about Pedro Costa films, "an opening, a call to the non-visible . . . a portion of the visible determines part of the non-visible— what is left over or outside that, unframed by definition, and can be surmised to be without boundaries in time or space. Inseparable from the screen, the off-screen is cloaked in indeterminate shadow" (Comolli 2010, 63–64). The frame made by the camera creates a container that cleanly

separates its own reality, making it independent but also a double of a time that "exists outside" as an excess outside of it. Whatever is inside the container has been isolated and extruded from some supposedly pre-given reality for which the image stands. Most framing operations dissected by the camera gaze in the mainstream normatization of film-video tend to aim for completeness and transparency with images that represent and reproduce a "given" within the frame, and in appearance become more real than what they supposedly stand for. Whatever is out of the frame remains in the shadow, present, but with no apparent effect.

Our question would be here: how does the work with the cameras turn the nonvisible, what is "left outside," "the out of field" (Deleuze 1986) of the frame, into view? Or more specifically, how does the framing of the empty space enable the performers to bring absence, that is, a flow of the excess and a flowing of time, into the feeling of sensations, affects, and percepts? There is no real answer to that question, but in the context of this performance, we would say, by creating ways to bring stillness into movement or better yet, by finding ways to be moved by the movement of stillness. That is what we call Waiting-Time.

When the cameras recorded the "empty" space, the engagement was not with what was in the frame or left outside of it, but rather with/in the potentiality of the movement image, on the reversal and refusal of the image, its imaging of nonimage.[9] Rather than attending to what was and what was not visible on the recorded images of the "empty" space, what mattered was the particular engagement of the performers to make, to do, to create, to generate, themselves and others and the felt movement-becoming of time waiting, that are invisible to the eye. The camera created "insensible" projects as a force re-forming and in-forming the outside-in of the moving image and bodies stillness blurring any clear divide between inside and outside. The waiting in this camera practice of presencing absence here attempts to join what is and what is not.

From the performance *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*. Directed by Álvaro Hernández. Photo: Diego Aguilar and Álvaro Hernández.

At the edging of these bodies on the dynamic unfolding of Waiting-Time, they breathe in-out time. In an utter tension completely dynamic and manifested in their precarious balance (Barba and Savarese 2006, 35), almost there and not yet to be, almost moving and yet not, in the same place but still way away, the bodies of the performers breathe out a trajectory without moving. No more than an inch, their bodies elongating in the space, prolonging their connections, the trajectory emerges throughout in relation to these present bodies and those absences "not here or there, and yet here and there."[10] Right there in their middling, the performers breathe in and out, out-in, moving imperceptibly throughout their future trajectories. A powerful intensity that edges all the way toward the in-pulse of their movement becoming, becoming movement, here still-awaiting, not yet and yet, nothing.

The movement of stillness already moving between time ticking and untimely[11] time feels the intensity of its own waiting, the potential coming to be and not yet let go. Disappearance intensively waits, intensively feels time ticking, and time flowing and echoing in the midst of multiple times.

If there is something left after the violent and traumatic cut of disappearance, it is the intensified sense of a Waiting-Time. What sort of time is that of the disappeared? In the silent noise of a never arriving? The empty time/space awaits with an intensity similar to that of the stillness of the bodies at the edge of the rectangular space. The cut performed by the cameras in their framing, just as the rectangular space in which rehearsals occur co-creates a container, an out-in framing of uncontainable mattering. Whatever empty space we thought of it, was now/it had always been full and will be cramped by the activity of its potential eventuating. A frame captured by a video camera of a space absent of objects, no-thing in it, and simultaneously being projected on a screen. Just that. A performance that never came to be, part of this process of making presence of disappearance.

Some bodies at the edge, edging across the intensity felt by time passing, vibrating, moving intensively in still waiting-time. The no-thingness felt by the time captured by the cameras opened up forms to hold still, to make stillness felt with the overlapping and multitemporality of time/spaces becoming in Waiting-Time: time-image in a void, unbecoming, time felt intensively in the absence of any-thing and any-body on the verge of movement becoming, coming to be. We all wait, we keep waiting for their "re-turn." The making of this empty space by both bodies and cameras, outspaced, that is, made room for things to come, bodies to be moved rather than bodies expecting to move. There is an a-tension in Waiting-Time that reverberates in the potential to make felt absence affective sense, middling, in the entanglements of sensible and insensible matterings. In the stillness of Waiting-Time vibrates a radical quietude that activates the potential brought forth in the unfolding of indeterminate past tendencies, waves of energy spreading and distributing. What is being felt, not quite, not yet, is an inner vibration, a multiplicity of minute streams shifting, orienting and disorienting, feeling carried through adjustments and disadjustments, relentless energy with no fixed location, all around in multiple directions at the same time, balancing and out-balancing, in the fragile balance of middling.

From the performance *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*. Directed by Álvaro Hernández. Photo: Diego Aguilar and Álvaro Hernández.

After some time, no less than hours, we breathed in-out for the last time, waited . . . stepped back and finished the rehearsal. Nobody actually got to enter the space. After that, then, we waited and made Waiting-Time and time to wait every single day.

At the edge of the rectangular space where rehearsals happened, the bodies struggled to pre-feel/pre-sentir[12] what moved movement to occur. And now-then we did. We walked.

To come to move is to traverse a gap, an interval, movement moving, and what movement moves. To move is then to become undone by doing-becoming of movement. There, the performers did not anticipate the movement, nor did they know where to move, undoing knowing to know the destination or any prediction for movement to be moved. The performers at-tending in stillness engaged in tracing the slightest of changes perceived throughout their bodies when movement is felt to move-them, and then they walked. For some, movement moved them forward and back, for some toward the sides, or back toward the top, or down toward the ground and up through the centre, in any case, at least in two directions at once, or in many directions at once. Movement does not have a direction but rather dis-orientations, multiple tendencies moving all at once with different orientations.[13]

2. Affective Technologies

It seems that any weird event we come across may relate to the piece somehow. I am becoming obsessed with ways of seeing or looking at things in strange ways. Every day we go to look for chairs in antique shops. We take photos of them and make strange video footages, we basically sit, but there is always some strange feeling about it. I think we are not actually looking for the chairs but for the feelings they carry.[14]

How did the performers respond, give "response," and relate to the immaterial, incorporeal, imperceptible, untimely dimensions of absence-disappearance? How did our bodies and practices change in the relation with technological devices to feel with absence and disappearance? Rather than embracing determinate paths and choices through which performers and participants of this process would have acted to produce an encounter with absence-disappearance, we were moved to think-act with/in chance and change, in insensible occurrences happening when undoing oneself to the indeterminate. In focusing too much in our present and therefore subsuming to the deterministic logics of a radical presentness of the present, we can risk losing the sense of our losses. We would need to lose the self to the encounter and, therefore, at-tend, tending-toward, along and among the tendencies of inexpressible forces of becomings and coming otherwise.

In *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*, those were problems crossing every single practice developed during the process. The technologies used, the cameras, computers, holograms opened up pathways for at-tending in the practices of the performers and the audience members. Yet even though this essay focuses on the intervention and use of technological devices, it cannot do so without making the relation with the bodies across which and with which those connections were established. In this sense, the process and the performance are akin to what Luciana Parisi calls "technoecologies of sensation" (2009), a notion invested in working the ways in which technical machines change and affect the capacities of a body to feel. The process fully embraced the technical machines/devices used all along the creation of the performance to open up modalities of attentions, sensation and perception, ways for the bodies to feel and make felt difference and change with-in the process. The use of technologies and their intra-action with the bodies of the performers during this process is immersed in a particular practice of understanding the process of creation, which is called here, the dramaturgying.[15]

From the performance *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*. Directed by Álvaro Hernández. Photo: Diego Aguilar and Álvaro Hernández.

The interplay between the recorded material and the ways of embodying it enhanced our perception of time/space and the materials with/in and effected a more porous sense of our bodies. The recording devices always present during rehearsals and performances kept on changing the ways in which the bodies of the performers experienced the affect of the threshold between presence and absence. Instead of moving as if space were already predefined, the performers traced sensations, affects and percepts that made them move, lured them to be moved. This is what we call *trajectories*, emerging vectors of affective traces through which the becoming of time/space remains and projects. The trajectories then became intriguing intricacies to feel the rest—*Lo que resta, el resto, los restos*, in Spanish—the remains, what remains of the disappeared. But what remains? That is something we will never know and so is through the detailed embroidery of our doings that we could-can feel the change that happens/ed to our bodies when we open/ed up to the unknown.[16] Each time a performer was moved by orientations of affects in the unfolding-making of their trajectories, the others engaged in response and moved in relation to the remains, what was left, the residue of their actions. We called that "picking up the crumbs," the imperceptible rests that could act upon the change of the others' bodies vanishing trajectories.

Recording Devices: The Body and the Image

During the whole process of making the performance *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*, technological devices of different kinds were brought to the rehearsal space to provoke unexpected encounters and relations with the bodies of the performers. Cameras to record video and take photographs and sound recording devices were used from the beginning of the process as a means to play and put in trouble the performers' forms of engagement. Computer coding, "false holograms"[17] and digital interventions of images were used later on to interfere with and intervene in the material recorded and make available other sources for the performers to engage and become with. The actual presencing of absence happening through/with the performers' actions and the potentiality of the virtual world emerging in their affective responses was always an open question. In that sense, the technological devices created other forms of looking upon the events occurring in the rehearsal space, adding layers of complexity and forms of response to what was happening with the bodies of the performers and the relations created by their actions. The intervention of technological devices was in itself a means to intervene in the piece from the beginning and create within it assemblages of connections that made present virtual worlds in which bodies could engage with imperceptible, insensible fields. The technologies at hand aimed to shape other sensory connections that could help the engagement of the performers with the uncanny affect of disappearance.

The whole arrangement of technological devices in the rehearsal space—constantly recording and then being revisited in different ways—effectively and affectively amplified the somatic effects of the networks and circuits crossing and trespassing bodies and time/space. In a way, the cameras and screens were, following Shaviro, attending to "the continuity between the physiological and affective responses of" the bodies of the performers "and the appearances and disappearances . . . of the bodies and images on the screen" (Shaviro 1993, 255–56, in Sobchack 2004). While Shaviro refers to the cinematic experience and the relationship between bodies and images, we take Shaviro's ideas to refer to the way in which the recordings and technological interventions in this performance provided a constant source for expanding and feeling the "somatic complexity" (Hunter 2016, 1ff) occurring across these "circuits of vibration" happening in the middling of the actual bodies and their alteration through the devices. The technological devices constantly activated ways the

performers could respond in attempting to animate this new interrelated dimension occurring between actual and virtual presences.

The director/performer of the piece and the assistant director/performer worked in close collaboration throughout the process using the technological devices in different ways:

– The video recorder and sound recorder devices were used traditionally to create material for documentation of the whole process, including the performances. The ways in which the process was documented were varied, but they strangely bind together not only what happened in the time of the rehearsal but also what happened before or after. There were recordings and images of numerous drawings, diagrams, and the processes of getting to do them. There were registers of multiple events that might or might not have had a relationship with the piece but potentially could have, or that could make something happen (a lot of images of people sitting, footages of people turning corners, children playing, water running, raining, clouds, doors closing or opening, sunsets, trees, etc.). There were recordings of things, objects, that may have generated something (a shattered glass, the dents on the surface of a crashed car, empty spaces, small parts of things, corners, people alone, rare positions, holes, lots of chairs, forks, spoons, mirrors, old things, etc.) or images that sort of register a thought or a concept (colours, gradients of light, dark, close-ups, zoom-ins). There were registers of unidentifiable things and several recordings of the performances. Many sounds were recorded at close range, making it very difficult to identify what sound was or where it came from when amplified.

– The recordings (both video and sound) were used to create scores for the performers to start a work, or to observe attentively what happened during the rehearsal and remember or engage deeper with some specific things that may have worked or could potentially work if more exploration were added. For example, very small and specific things would serve as potential scores: the "redness" of a certain light, the speed of a particular trajectory, the specificity of a way of sitting, the many possible ways of sitting, the proximity or distance between one thing and another, a way of looking, a circular or angled movement, a word or a way of saying it, etc. Also, a part of the recording—a very small one, usually—was watched and emphasized by the director as a starting point for some particular work that, without knowing exactly what it was or might do, could eventually lead to something. For example, the way in which a performer went down to the floor and came back up, or the way a chair was located in the space and the relation that was created by it, or the three steps and the sudden turn of one of the performers. Many of these details were seized right there in the moment of their happening during the rehearsal and taken into very different directions, but many others were caught on video and then transfigured into potential sites to enable experimentation and improvisation.

– The cameras were used to enhance the sense and perception of time/space for the performers. Instead of seeing how different the space was in the screen from the actual space, the focus was put into how one and the other could make possible different sensoriums and nurture forms of sensing across time and space. There were multiple experiments of this type done with cameras and sound recordings. On one of them emerged our whole engagement with Waiting-Time described above.

– Images, video footage, and sound recordings were isolated and repeated and showed as simple details. These details were then copied and repeated for the performers in the space and then used as points of departure to move in whatever uncertain ways that could come. Most of the work done using these techniques was not directed toward the creation of any particular thing but rather as a

way to gather affects, sensations, and percepts that could then be realized through the interaction between the bodies on stage and those bodies being made on the screen.

– The recordings were allowed to intervene and interfere and then showed to the performers as something new that could potentially originate something different. A repetition of an isolated second or half-second of sound, a light intervention of a still image, an overexposition, or some sort of effect that most of the time made the original image or sound unrecognizable, or its original source reappeared as a "shadow," just recognizable in the background, felt rather than recognized. Whatever was lying in the background was inverted to the fore.

– More complex procedures with the use of holograms of diverse types were used to intervene and interfere in the bodies' connections and ways of engagement with absence and disappearance. During the process of rehearsal, a video artist designed small printed geometrical shapes that were hung on some part(s) of the performers' bodies. Every time their movements happened to come across the camera's lens/gaze, the software read the code and translated it into an image of an object projected on the screen. Bidimensional objects become visible on the screen as if they "magically" appear as a result of the performers' movement. The performers created ways of making the hidden object parts of their bodies appear with their movement. Later on in the process, more sophisticated holograms were used that actually emerged on space. Some of them emerged with sound; every time the performers sang or spoke, the holograms got activated, took form.

All these different forms of relating to the technological devices and ways of working with the material products of their use were aiming to intensify whatever possible felt experience emerged of the potentiality carried by the incorporeal force moved by the affective experience of disappearance. Every technique that evolved with the technological devices was tangentially stretching the porosity of the performers' bodies into the unknown reconfigurings of the bodies' actions. Many materials gathered with the recordings and other devices became entry points to the physical, readjusting, disjointing the continuum of chains of actions of the performers. The unseemingly disconnected and fragmented materials rejoined in paradoxical relations coming "together-apart" with the precarious actions of the performers bridging the gaps in their middling. Actions were associated and dissociated, jointed with/in relations and disjointed with the sudden felt affect of a new dissimilar material. For example, with a performer sitting (actually sitting during rehearsal) while a light is passing through a window—recorded by video—what they came to be together-apart was completely unexpected, opening up ways of affecting and being affected. The technological devices incited the encounter with the incorporeal and affective presence of absence and disappearance, with "bodies without image" or bodies presencing (Featherstone 2006).[18]

From the performance *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*. Directed by Álvaro Hernández. Photo: Diego Aguilar and Álvaro Hernández.

One of the performers waits at the edge of the rectangular space attending to the passage of movement moving, in the lure for nonmovement move, doing "nothing" in waiting, and in so doing, yielding restlessly with the flow of currents and vibrations of unexpected becomings and unbecomings. At the threshold, the felt latency of what exceeds the viewed in the camera's frame of the empty space and between time doing and the undoing of time of the bodies' Waiting-Time, it opens up as a gaze into the void the absence of any presence and the doing of the very presencing of absence: the "co-presence of the living" with the unknown sensations of absential configurings, never fully realized and always becoming. And in within not-moving, not yet, the multiplicity of energetic waves weaving across the vibrational intensity that flows across the micro-movements, resisting to rest, voicing the echoes of the disappeared. Waiting for so long that temporalities break open into the fissures of time doing and the undoing of time, into the midst of the untimely time of the undead. Waiting until the felt force of what was/is doing moved us. We kept on mobilizing the ways in which absence, and with it, the openness of bodies to the unknown was made presencing by doing.

The rehearsals were video-recorded to remember what was done and have the possibility to engage again with a certain part or detail. As the performance was constantly changing, on some days radically, one way to remember parts left undone or unfinished or others with no apparent sense or connection was using video cameras and audio recorders. This was important because we did not work adding parts in progression, but generating material that had the purpose of undoing the usual doings and reconnect with materials differently and thus become engage with otherwise forms, sensations and relations. In other words, whenever something emerged, everything could change. The performance evolved by chance and indetermination, and sometimes that meant that everything that had been done was put aside, or left to rest and then be taken back again under other circuits of connections.

The other way of using the video-recorded material was with the aim of creating forms to destabilize the present perception of spacetime and hence open gaps, disorienting remains that could be filled, that is, traversed through emerging turning points of inflection and change. The recordings were observed or heard and then put to work in relation to the unfolding trajectories of the performers, in some way making palpable the crumbs, affective remains emerging across their doings. Sometimes the recordings were played first but many times simultaneously.[19] Emphasis was always put on what could be felt in between, in the middle of a movement(s), objects-things, a fragment of time, a sitting, an action or chain of actions, chairs, the movement of a rope, the knotting of the rope, words, etc.

Once these spots for felt sense were conjured, the work was to "fabulate" with them. Reactivating anew potentials, unknown configurings in the middle of layers of multiple pasts, virtual potentials readdressed in the concrete materiality of the "crumb," and their force projected in timespace through the mattering of the performer's doing. Regina Gutiérrez, one of the performers, created a recording with sounds of objects and materials used in some form during rehearsals or outside rehearsal time but that were actually taking part in the process. She then used earphones and let herself be affected in her movement by the audio. In the incorporeal traces of the "crumbs," performers encountered their ways to make them emerge anew.

The material generated served the purpose of encountering different states, dense chains of memory-time that led to the encounter of changing states. The crumbs created trajectories of affects[20] and percepts that made room for openings to variations felt. At each rehearsal, new encounters emerged in the coming together of the actions of the performers and the unknown sensations intersected along the trajectories of crumbs, so the performance kept changing all the time.

The bodies of the performers were grappling at all times with sustaining the gap, the dislocation, an otherwise coherence/incoherence opened up in putting them-selves in the interstices of an unperceived, unconsciously felt non-presence yet made by their practices intensively active and real, non-presence presencing. In working on the indeterminate middling of absence-presencing/presence-absence, the performers rendered them-selves loose by de-touring, re-turning, turning and shifting, re-orienting and being oriented otherwise, acting upon and in the midst of the unfolding field of relational forces, attuning, at-tending[21] and listening attentively to the felt force of absence unbecomings, and becoming in presencing and back. Becoming oriented, breaking loose in dis-orienting and being re-oriented along the torrent of actions and attentions that emerged when at-tending/tending toward what moved and moved them, engaging with the indeterminate mesh from which unpredictable emergences took form in the passage of changing states. In the "precarious balance" that occurs in the middle of the passage of balance and unbalancing acts, the fragile unstable bodies hold the intensity of their continuous becomings. Absence was never the complete lack of presence, but rather the rendering of the bodies' capacities to be continuously turning, shifting, moving, re-locating, re-situating their bodies in their continuous failed attempt to be making presence-present and thus creating multiple ways of absence becoming palpable. In carrying the feeling of the continuous movement of changing states, absence opened up as the "false positive" of presence, or its radical negativity, a turning into what is not (-yet?), which is an opening up of the multiple configurings and reconfigurings, the out-now of action becomings, a middling in-between times/spaces, here and there, now and then, here and not-here, presence and absence at once.

The Holographic: Image and Body

The action of bodies and images in conjunction oriented the process toward making felt sense, following Comolli, "the side of the shadow": "The part of the body transforms in the stakes and agent of representation: open up the spectator to the possibility of perceiving and maybe understand what does not make itself easily be seen, what escapes to the concrete of representation, what cannot be or does not want to show, what leaves stupefied the machinal eye" (Comolli 2002, 5).[22] Comolli refers here to the possibilities of the hologram and the holographic experience to make perceptible, palpable in some sense, what Comolli calls "the shadow," what may not be grasped or have been lost by the concrete image-representation.[23] The possibility of grasping the insensible and affective incorporeality of absence is what the image-making and the work of the whole performance attempted, and as far as images were concerned, the work was made, thinking-doing with holograms.[24]

From the performance *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*. Directed by Álvaro Hernández. Photo: Diego Aguilar and Álvaro Hernández.

The hologram's concrete materiality, its physical characteristics and qualities, configure a site of potential for image-making otherwise that resists the habits of transparency and hyperreality of mainstream audiovisual media.[25] The making of images through the holographic experience became, just as the whole process, a particular attention toward a multidimensional and multitemporal layering that crowded and made "turbid" the experience of the performance.[26] Unlike transparency, the performance, in connection with the image-making through the holographic, put layer upon layer, superimposing, overlapping connections and relations.

In the process of creation, the special characteristics of holography opened up a rich terrain to think and do otherwise with images in the midst of the becoming and unbecoming of absence mobilized by this performance. This does not mean we believe that the hologram is the only possibility for

such a middling, but it was the medium we engaged with to encounter modes of engaging with what absence and disappearance might/could become during this process.

In a hologram, light behaves in various ways at the same time, when traversing and colliding with the mirrored surface and with the translucent photosensitive surface of it. The light in a hologram reflects, that is, it re(turns) flexes (folding, bending, or braiding). The light, when encountering these objects (mirror, hologram), bends over the surface and changes direction and folds instantly to return the gaze, return the light, and return the image contained in the surface. In a hologram, the light also diffracts, as the hologram can only exist if a diffraction grille is recorded on the film, and the information of the object given by the bounce of the laser light is superimposed and interlaced on the initial net. Therefore, the image is created in that superposition of two pieces of information: one that creates a matrix grid, and another that has differences in distance, depth, and volume coming from the captured object. Thus, the reconstruction of the hologram is given by the braiding of these two diffractions, which is always changing because the position of the observer will change the way that weaving of light is related. This makes it possible to reconstruct the object from multiple points of view, with its depths floating in the air or penetrating the bottom of the surface. And finally, a hologram refracts the light, re(turn) fracts (divide, fracture). When light passes through a translucent surface with different refractive index (due to different atomic structures and densities), light is divided into its spectra. In this way the white light is divided into the wave fronts that allow one to see the colours of the rainbow when it crosses the surface of a prism or the vertices of a glass or mirror, so that depending on the type of hologram, the light can be divided on the surface, to make one or another colour visible depending on the position of the viewer.

Holograms are objects and topological images that divide and inhabit two or more dimensions. The surface belongs to the spectrum of the second dimension, but the image inhabits the third dimension from its ghostly and its physical and optical actualization occurring at the same time, and furthermore for its instalment in the temporal dimension. A hologram can be said to be topological because, in itself, the surface has the virtual power to divide and still contain and fold while preserving the information of the whole of the image in the fragment. A hologram can be fragmented into many parts, separating each part into different spaces, and even then, each part has the entire information of the object inscribed. A hologram needs to be journeyed, rounded, sculpted all around its faces so it can be perceived in its variety of arrangements. But, just as with this performance, it can never be completed, only partially, always exceeding views, since what emerges is continuously changing and becoming different.

The "cuts" a hologram performs do not separate, as in the framing of a camera that wants to perform an exclusion, a clear and transparent splitting of inside and outside. Rather, there is an unframing or deframing, a sort of middling, a vanishing of the boundaries performed in the overlapping and superimposition of temporalities taking presence in the "presencing" (Hunter 2018) of bodies' doing. Multiple pasts are carried along an event of events, action of actions, sitting of sittings, and, through the continuous shifting, twisting, curving of the bodies, fissures are opened, gaps in which the imperceptible and indeterminate may be pre-felt, felt sensed and become otherwise in a collective. Absence is rather the felt experience of the excess or the excess felt without location, with no definite terms or position; it is the affective fielding of absent presences/presencing.

Holographic Editing

During the performance, a hologram (or "false hologram"[27] in this case) was modified live through free intervention with video editing software that was at the site, working and reworking of the actions and bodies of the performers in particular ways.

A performer danced occupying the space with her back, being moved in refusal of a forward advance, a sensation of carrying a feeling that occupied everything and could not be localized. It moved through her back side, behind, and every movement was a way of touching it, making palpable that back-feeling. The body loosened the frontality and inverted itself at each moment. Every time, she moved forward the body, prolongated toward the back. Always something there behind, haunted and haunting.

Another performer moved by trying to readjust, re-membered, as in putting the members together of her dead brother. Each movement released a touching that touched her brother's remains, and it was a remainder of some other movement that she could not predict or knew exactly where in the body was the next touching happening; she a-tended carefully, and each movement changed where her brother's absence was felt. Her movement attended to the fleeting and vanishing points, changing from one point to another, from one part of the body to another, imperceptibly and yet fully sensed by the audience. This performer's daily practice was to notice carefully the marks, sketches, traces left by absent objects that lasted long enough in the same place to make an impression of time. And then, each step of her trajectories during the performance was stepping onto those absent presences. Her journal describes rocks, beds, plant-pots, refrigerator, heavy chairs, liquid substances dried up or half cleaned, books, trees, cars, forest, spots everywhere, holes, not there and surviving presence. The trajectories, as was pointed out, were full of virtual traces across which the performers felt the latency of multiple pasts, passing, and coming together in unexpected and indeterminate forms.

1. The holographic editing worked with the video image from a closed-circuit camera system. That is, the editing of the bodies in the performance was made from a camera that, in real time, received the image of the space, the performers, and the present audience. This enabled the digital transcoding of their image and gave the possibility of live editing, through subtle effects, the movement of the bodies that appeared on the scene. In this way, on the holographic screen, located to one side of the stage, those who participated (both performers and audience) could see a reconstructed or deconstructed image of themselves, depending on the editing dynamics of certain moments of the work. While the actual bodies moved through space, the digitized bodies disappeared from the holographic screen while the fixed objects remained; or otherwise, the digital bodies multiplied, changed the temporality with respect to their real double, or stopped in the space of the screen.

An instant of the performers' movement was captured by a camera in closed-circuit and immediately projected onto the screen, caught in the moment and suddenly dissolved into small like-particles, sort of remnants, debris, traces of the body already gone, that nevertheless contained its passing, a becoming of its next-state, a passage to another instant of movement captured again by the camera. An instant of time becoming that immediately fled and morphed into something else. An image transiting, becoming other, carrying in its transit what was once and what could come to be. The images of the bodies captured live on the screen recalled the different temporalities of the bodies becoming on their movement across the stage and their middling, the in-between state where bodies

were, still imperceptible, immaterial traces of unpredictable and indeterminate becomings, passing from one image to another across the gap. The same body took form in the next instant captured by the camera but already changed, in another time. The time in between one image and the next, appearing and then reappearing on the screen after and before their own dissolution carried the intensity of disappearance, the affect of undead bodies, constantly there in time-waiting and yet vanished in untimely time. Bodies becoming through the screen and emerging in different time-images that too quickly disappeared. Sometimes, a body got captured by the camera, and then, when emerging in the next image after the in-between dissolving time, it was not anymore. The initial body had left the spot where the camera was able to capture it, and another body had replaced it. A body had dissolved and then emerged another, or with others, bodies were actually one and all at the same time.

From the performance *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*. Directed by Álvaro Hernández. Photo: Diego Aguilar and Álvaro Hernández.

As the holographic surface-screen was translucent, the images projected onto it morphed, enveloping the space in a sort of spatialization of the image, a taking and making space of the image. The translucent images became colour, degrees of intensity of light texturing the space and the bodies in different ways. When the images traversed the screen and collided with a different surface, especially a worn and old wall that was in front of the projector across the performance space, they doubled. Doubled instances, now images enlarged and in-formed by the encounter with a new material, texturing and altering, reworking the materiality of the space and the form of the image. The first image—the one on the screen—and its secondness separated and connected in ubiquitous and pervasive ways, re-informing one another, rebuilding new sensations of the space and the spacing of time in between these image-events, images altering and changing each other in connection and separation.

2. A different kind of relationship with the holographic occurred when real-time images projected on the screen shared their temporality with prerecorded images of the performers happening during the process. Most of these prerecorded images had in common a state of fragility as they were emphasizing past events when the bodies' adjustment felt awkward, misadjusted, precariously balanced, or in an effort to engage a particular position, speed, or body tone. Recorded bodies hanging upside down during rehearsals and then turned around during the imaging of the performance as if they were originally standing and yet exhibiting on the screen the effortful qualities exceeding their reappearance. Images of bodies climbing chairs, sharing the time-space of one sitting, sitting in different ways, sustaining particular speeds in their action of sitting, remaining in-tension. Past event images then morphed without losing their singular temporal quality with real-time images of the audience and the performers' doing. The present time constantly reactualizing in the passing that bridged past occurrences and future becomings, conforming a temporal collage of time/s superimposed and reworking each other in their relations. The audience included on the screen became another participant captured on the audiovisual montage enabling the unexpected emergence of audiovisual and temporal narratives. The transducer of images, image-maker, improvised concatenating and superimposing images that occurred either in the past or in the actual happening of the performance. The images on the screen created a new organization of the events, a different order running in parallel to what was actually happening on the performance space. Images transformed into events. If one were to stay only with the screen, one would have seen a parallel performance that reorganized and reoriented the action of the one happening live with both intra-acting in a movement of doing and undoing each other.

3. Finally, in the background of the performance, the one body in the work, seemingly immobile, and yet flowing across networks of connections, co-composing images that traced the tendencies and multiple affective trajectories of objects, performers and the audience within the holographic screen / connective surface of projection. The video-performer, constructing the dynamics of the hologram images in "responsiveness" to the affective field of forces composing among performers and audience; in the search for immediate reconfigurations of the actual happenings in the performance space emerging from his engagement with the presencing of the bodies and the absent presences. The video-maker located behind the holographic screen, in the *out-side-in* oriented his imaging improvisation across series of past images reassembled and morphing in times superimposed and new ones taking place and being assembled at the moment, images continuously becoming other, imaging. More than something to see, movement moving of sensations, s-seeing/s-cening atmospheres.

3. Absencing

A body we can't see but we not-know is there somewhere . . . somehow . . . there and then, here and not here . . . something we couldn't catch but almost . . . a thought that will never be back but scrambles and meshes with others . . . a body like . . . hers/ours going in some direction until we don't see it anymore . . . the sight that follows that body until it vanishes . . . the vanishing of the sight spreading in grains of light.[28]

What emerges is a surface of becoming, continuity of transformations that expresses as it is now-out, in the now becoming of these particular events eventing. The imaging of this performance coming through the surface of the screen-connective and transforming tissue places in relation both bodies' actual and virtual presences. The audience members enmeshed in the permanent folding and enfolding of actions coming together in the relations enabled by the proximate doing with the

performers[29] and in those of the screen surface of projection, without rest, on more than one plane, dephasing in manifolds. And in there-then, there is an expression of the not-known, body-not and bodying.

By the end of the performance of *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*, a performer coils a fifty-metre rope that touches, pushes and crashes everything together, touch touching and touching touched touching twenty-one chairs and plenty of objects sliding with-through the rope pulling and piling up all around the centre of the space. The audience is moved to a side and pays attention to the slow and violent cutting of rope taking everything together and apart, and "together-apart." Only four chairs are left undone by the rope's movement. Four performers take a metronome and sit/sitting still, WAITING. Only the metronomes move, the rope and the performer coiling it. The metronomes seize the tempo, the intervals of time variation. It is a ticking timing the internal of tempo vibration, the constant sound of different tempos. Meanwhile, the rope knots, connecting and intersecting in its passing, and keep going, doing, time feeling, time cutting, felt time.

From the performance *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*. Directed by Álvaro Hernández. Photo: Diego Aguilar and Álvaro Hernández.

Notes

1. This piece is written by the stitching and weaving of fragments of conversations, journal notes, and the thinking that emerged throughout the process of creation of the piece *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair*. Because of the collaborative nature of the whole process this essay tries to weave together the thinking process that happen among three collaborators: Álvaro Hernández, Regina Gutiérrez, and Diego Aguilar.

2. From Regina Gutiérrez's journal.

3. "Otherwise" here is used the sense of "alterity" (Levinas 1974).

4. Manning considers the virtual not as opposed to the real, but as an "always an integral aspect of the actual" (Manning 2012, 224).

5. See Derrida on "nothing" (Derrida 1992, 6).

6. At-tending is a central concept in Hernandez's research on emerging ecologies of dramaturgying.

7. As articulated by Bergson, Deleuze, Lapoujade, or Grosz.

8. See a reading of the performance of *What We Not Know about an Empty Chair* from a perspective of an affective politics in Hunter (2019).

9. Inspired by Deleuze's concept of the outside (Deleuze, 1989, 2006).

10. From the text of the performance by Álvaro Hernández.

11. See Elizabeth Grosz on the untimely. 2004, 117), and on becoming undone. 2011).

12. The Spanish *pre-sentir* seems to us to encompass better the uncanny, ghostly, indeterminate felt sense that moves along absence-disappearance. *Presentir* (without the hyphen) is used recurrently in Spanish (or at least in Colombia) to refer to uncanny affects.

13. This whole first section refers only to one rehearsal, which encounters propagate all over the process. The writing in it attempts to "propagate" what emerged in the rehearsal, thus making blurry the time(s)-space and separation of rehearsing and performing, process, and piece of art.

14. From Regina Gutiérrez's journal.

15. The creation of the process in itself is enacted, practised and formed through what we call the "dramaturgying." Rather than explain what is, this essay splits open the processes of the process; the practices emerged in the "coming together" of this piece.

16. Bruno Mazzoldi (2019) points out the displacement needed from the present to the doing when thinking of the uncertainty of the present brought forth by these "catastrophic" times. Lynette Hunter's notion of "presencing" (2016) also refers to the idea of presence as a changing and processual mattering by doing and thus moving toward a fluid and porous sense of body and self. Here, during the process of making this piece, the way to engage disappearance and absence was by slowing down and paying attention to the detail in the doing. The displacement of the present is something that disappearance permanently remains.

17. This term is coined by Diego Aguilar, the video artist collaborator of this process. The term will be explained later in this essay.

18. We are inspired by Featherstone's (2006) "body without image" notion in which he refers to the body from an affective perspective, as something constantly shifting, moving and feeling, in contrast to a more static, fixed and bounded conception of the body. We use here "body without image" to refer to the incorporeal and affective quality of disappearance as well as to the passage from images captured through the devices to nonpossible images, the affective resonances of the disappearance, but also to the body shifting between what is being seen and what is being felt seeing.

19. This is a" technique" developed by Regina Gutiérrez and Álvaro Hernández working together in rehearsals and their journal writing. There was a time when all the performers wrote letters. There was a time when some of us drew lines in space.

20. Trajectory here does not mean (only) displacement or movement; it also refers to the openings through which, in between which affective tonalities are released, features that redistribute the connections and encounters gathered in the eventuating of an event coming to be. Trajectory is used in similar ways to Deleuze & Guattari (1994, 2004) but also in the way that trajectories are composed by theatre directors or choreographers (see, for example, Pavis 2016).

21. At-tending refers to the orientation or disorientation toward what bodies are moved. At-tending is a tending-toward, movement moved by the tendencies (Massumi 2013) of the event's taking-form.

22. Translation by the authors. "El lado de la sombra" or "The Side of the Shadow" is the title of Comolli's book.

23. The situation is different here compared to the first quote of Comolli at the beginning of this text, however approximate. In the first one, Comolli refers to cinema in relation to frames. Here, Comolli is talking about a completely different experience and medium, the hologram, where the idea of frame becomes at its best blurry, and perhaps does not work here anymore. As we'll see, the hologram works in a completely different way from the images recorded and projected at the beginning with a camera.

24. Diego Aguilar, a Colombian video-artist and the video-performer of this piece, has worked for years with holograms. With other collaborators, he has created an art-laboratory to develop art pieces, ideas, and thinking around holograms. They construct and make holograms of diverse types.

25. What here relates to the detailed aspects of holograms comes from the particular thinking of Diego Aguilar.

26. When Álvaro Hernández, the director of this piece, and Diego Aguilar, the video performer, got together to work in this process, they realized both were working on ideas around disappearance and absence. Neither of them knew exactly how the other was doing it. When they started rehearsing together, without knowing or aiming toward some definite outcome, parallels between the work with holography and the work happening around the performance opened up spaces of common thinking and doing. Holography can potentially open up a hauntological means for the image-time.

27. In this work, a "false hologram" was the site to perform the image-making during the performance; that is, an audiovisual projection that contained two-dimensional animated images, real-time captures in closed circuit, videos and 3D animation, projected on a translucent micro-engraved surface that received the light from the projector. This film is called "holographic projection film" because of its microscopic treatment, its configuration of material changes having on the surface a "hologram" that supports a significant percentage of light.

28. From the text of the performance by Álvaro Hernández.

29. The audience members were seated-sitting in chairs while performers moved among them, right in the middle of everything doing, and at the same time becoming together with the performers on the movement of the imaging.

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Audio Description as a Generative Process in Art Practice

Darrin Martin

Prologue

Audio or verbal description is the act of describing the visual elements of a work of art, be it in the form of film, television, live performance, sculpture, painting, or interdisciplinary art relying on the visual. It has been developed over the years as a method of inclusion for low vision or blind individuals. With some attention to closed captioning, I am focusing on audio description, or a variation of it, as a generative force to activate an original work of art. Simultaneously, I will be addressing how models of the above accessibility modalities make possible the entry of a wider array of audiences beyond, but including, those initially intentioned for such accommodations. I will be using historical and contemporary examples of some works of art that use audio description as core to their process. I will also be describing some of my own video installation works within the fold.

Is there a difference in the reception of this essay if you hear my voice or read the text? To hear my voice is to feel the vibration of the words as they caress your hearing parts . . . hammer, anvil, stapes into the hair cells of your cochlea. Sound vibrations are also shaped by the space of the room in which they are spoken. The words, heard audibly, caress your cheek, and if I could make them in your presence, I would have them hold your face gently in the moment that I speak. To read this text is to let the shapes and syntax on the page speak from inside your mind. If you listen to your own interiority, is it your voice that echoes these words or mine? If you have never heard my voice, it would more than likely be your own. Or is inner recognition of words on a page voiceless if not activated by a physical utterance?

What if you heard my words recorded? My presence unattainable, the words are activated through the technology of the given moment, which we may think available in perpetuity. However, we likely know better, as many of us have lived through vinyl, audio tape, film, and the never-ending formats of video production unto the current digital codecs of the day. The distance between the message recorded for you and its reception is one of historical context even if the message had only been recorded or written yesterday.

The Divide

A two-screen synchronized projected installation titled *The Divide* originated through contemplating audio description as a generative force through the performative attempt at understanding the remnants of history. It was initiated by asking a pair of identical twins, Justyn and Tracy Houston, to describe a series of stereoscopic photographs ranging from the late nineteenth century to World War I. These stereoscopic photographs were examples of the first 3D (three-dimensional) techniques,

Darrin Martin is an artist born in Catskill, New York, who currently resides in Oakland, California. His artworks engage the synesthetic qualities of perception by exploring tactile, audible, and visual phenomena through video, sculpture, and print-based installations. Influenced by his own experiences with deafness, his projects consider notions of accessibility through the use of tactility, sonic analogies, and spoken metaphors. His video works have been screened, his installations exhibited, and his solo exhibitions shown at many galleries internationally. Martin also occasionally curates video screenings and is a professor of art at University of California, Davis.

where a photographer captures a scene with two cameras about an eye-distance apart. When I recorded the twins, they took turns describing the images. I edited their exercise with the original stereoscopic images oscillating frame by frame as an attempt to simulate the 3D effect. However, because the images are made to be viewed through a stereoscopic viewer adjusted to a specific distance from your eyes, the projected oscillation generates a peculiar reaction. Simulating the 3D effect on a grander scale, one has to consider the depth of field involved, ultimately choosing what becomes three-dimensional and what becomes off-kilter in the image. In its assemblage, I adjusted between these two modes, often moving the two states around so that the background becomes three-dimensional, then foreground, to midground in varying order. The installation of *The Divide* is composed of two projections on adjoining walls that meet at a corner of the room. The corner viscerally highlights the conventional split between stereoscopic images and the process that takes place to acclimate these slightly different perspectives upon the world as a cohesive whole. Text of their words are displayed in the conventional format of closed caption underneath the speaker or upon the images they are talking over.

In post-production, I began to find moments where their subjectivity more apparently slipped into the descriptive exercise. For example, when one of the twins looked at a photograph of a pair of little girls and noted that they looked potentially impoverished, he concluded, "They look like they are enjoying themselves anyway!" However, there is nothing in the image to indicate that joy. In another photograph, in which a hunter is carrying a gun, a twin interpreted the outing as if the subjects were out hunting "prairie dogs," which populate their rural Western New York State landscape, even though the image was taken in Sweden. While they clearly understood that the stereoscopic photographs they were describing were old, they constantly struggled to bridge the gap and connect the images to their lived experiences.

The Divide installation. Photo: Darrin Martin. For a simulated excerpt see https://vimeo.com/143839300.

As Régis Debray reminds us about how we experience images: "Decoding can claim it is exhaustive, while a deciphering can only uncover layers of superimposed meaning regarding an always undecidable and ambiguous object" (1996). When recorded, the twins were not given specific instructions about what to say. They were incredibly uncertain, as revealed in their speech patterns and use of "uh," "you know," and "um." These utterances were included in the closed captions, heightening the spaces between expressed convictions. The first time I premiered the work, the gallery contained a lot of audio reverb, exacerbating the room noise already present in the original recordings. This put the audience in a space more willing to occasionally follow along with the closed captions while attempting to decipher the Houston twins' words.

Witnessing an audience move between multiple layers of watching and reading appeared to activate multiple modes of communication. Visually, the twins' interactions with each other and the stereoscopic viewers were coupled with the projections of the photographs themselves and all their shifting dimensionality. The immersive scale of the piece combined by these layers gave one the ability to shift focus, similar to the way that the 3D components of the piece would shift between foreground, midground, and background. Occasionally, there are moments where I present an image on the screen that may not be the image described but has some relationship to it. A slight slippage occurs between what is being deciphered and what is being seen, keeping the viewer engaged in the act of finding meaning themselves.

Feedback Flashback

My first experience of experimental theatre was a coproduction by the Wooster Group and Richard Foreman's Ontological Theater. The work titled "Lava" was performed at the Performance Garage in New York City in 1989. In Foreman's introduction of his play, he wrote, "There are writers who despair that a gap exists between the self and the words that come, but for me that gap is the field of all creativity—it's an ecstatic field rather than a field of despair. . . . It's the unfathomable from which everything pours forth."[1] In the play itself, Foreman's voice, as offstage director and represented by an oscilloscope, waxes poetically upon various stages of reality, while reminding the audience that language, as a form of expression, is always borrowed since the speaker did not invent it themselves. I recall an attempt to decipher the work with a handful of friends that accompanied me after the production. We pondered a two-fold problem existing between spaces in time. The first, existing between the author's words and the experience upon which he/she was attempting to capture with those words. The second, between the words finally written and their performance and/or reception by an audience. So many gaps, but this is theatre.

Simultaneously, I was being exposed to video art as a potential artistic discipline. Immediacy was one of video's most defining characteristics, especially in comparison to film, which needed to be chemically developed before playback. Through video, artists were seeking to close the gap onto which Foreman speaks. Of course, very little of the work witnessed was simulcast live. However, immediate playback and potential interactions with the screen, at the time of its recording, were characteristics taken advantage of by its practitioners. Artists such as Joan Jonas and Peter Campus utilized methods of rescanning or live mixing through blue screen technologies to generate works that put their bodies in a meta-space, flattening the area between author/artist/body and their inscription onto videotape. Artists such as Nam June Paik and Skip Sweeney helped to create video synthesizers and generated feedback loops into their audible and visual vocabulary affecting both live and prerecorded materials.

Three early video works that engage the medium of video through description, as they attempt to exploit its inherent immediate properties, are Dan Graham's *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (1975), Vito Acconci's *Undertone* (1972), and Richard Serra's *Boomerang* (1974). In *Performer/Audience/Mirror,* Graham contemplated video as a semiotic mirror and situated himself between an actual mirror and an audience in the work's recording. In roughly five-minute intervals, he shifted performed descriptions from his interpretations of his subtle bodily placement to the observations of the audience (and their perceived attitudes and positions). In the performance/tape he stated, "Looking at the audience, it seems there is a lot of amusement and gaping . . . gaping expression on some people. Other people are looking and wondering . . . twinkling in the eyes of some people, a wavering of the eyes . . ." Then, turning his back to his viewers, he continued the cycle, though this time positioning himself closer to the mirror where it is harder to decipher his gaze, he continues to describe himself. "And the hair seems a little bit disheveled, uncut done improperly, darkish. As I move back to the side I see little bits of red, uh, just a slightness of red on the skin and the pink of the ear. I see a little bit of my undershirt showing as I walk back my stomach sticks out, just a tiny amount." The audience laughed at his drawing their considerations to a seemingly awkward trait framed by the descriptive process as Graham attempted to bridge attentions. As a viewer of the tape, one is made aware of the slippage between the artist's subjective utterances and his observations of the audience included in the tape itself. Graham used verbal description to explore the potentials of intersubjectivity by blurring the lines between the subject and object through not only his words, but also the mirror and recorded event (Graham 1975).

In Vito Acconci's *Undertone*, the artist placed himself at the end of a table while the camera was at the other end, composing a triangular composition of a foreshortened table and Acconci's presence in a direct affront. While he never described his position per se, such as "I'm at a long table . . . ," he talked about what his position at the table may entail. He moved through different modes of discussing how he wanted us to respond. His hands were under the table, and he actively wanted to convince us that there was someone else under the table, perhaps making sexual advances. "I want to believe . . . I want to believe there is a girl here under the table. She is resting her forearms on my thighs," or if it is just himself, as later expressed, "I want to believe I'm doing this myself. I'm rubbing . . . I'm rubbing my thighs with my forearms," etc. When he put his hands above the table folded into each other, Acconci was always addressing the need for us to believe him or doubt him directly. In a moment of dire recognition, he directly stated, "I need you. I need you to be sitting there. Facing me. I need you to be sitting there facing me because I have to have someone to talk to. I have to know you are there facing me. So, I know someone is there to address this to."

Through different cycles of repetitive gestures that he performed for over half an hour, Acconci moved from expressing his own beliefs or disbeliefs to a desire to shape the audience's imagination. His descriptions oscillated between building up an erotic fantasy of arousal underneath the table and a description of his psychological need for us to believe or disbelieve him. Both modes are seemingly enforced by his repetitive utterances as if truth derives from innumerous reiterations. His eyes were either locked on the camera in a direct address or closed as if he was trying to convince himself of something. Whether the descriptions are based on someone actually underneath the table or something incredibly interior, neither is accessible to the viewer. While the table's underbelly was not necessarily off-screen, it is blocked by the fixed camera's vantage point as well as the limitation of any given technology to reveal the truth, as the artist presents a shifting subjectivity moving gingerly between unnerving arousal and self-delusion (Acconci 1972).

Lastly, in Richard Serra's *Boomerang,* which was originally broadcast live on a television station in Texas, artist Nancy Holt wore headphones and attempted to describe the experience of hearing her own words played back to her on a one-second delay. Holt described the activity as interfering in her thought process, dissociating the words from their meaning and context. Both her spoken and delayed words are accessible to the viewer. Early in the tape, Holt claims that she is "once removed from herself" as if words themselves were the physicality of her own embodiment. "The words become like things. I am throwing things out into the world and they are boomeranging back . . . boomeranging back . . . boomeranging back." Holt's struggle slowed her down, and her exercise was eventually interrupted by "Audio Trouble," a break in the program where these two words appear on the screen for an entire minute. The break brings Holt into thoughtful engagement with what she calls "delayed time." The videotape itself reminds us of the struggle to reflect on the immediate present as it slips away into the next moment, leaving our reflections tethered to the past. The work's original context was a live broadcast, only exacerbating the struggle (Serra 1974).

These artworks act as historical touchstones for my consideration of developing a situation that may generate a performative descriptive methodology to explore and blur "subjective" states and "objective" realities. These pieces use forms of audio description in video to complicate the idea of a singular subjectivity, and this is an element that I have been attempting to explore in my work. How does empiricism operate when intersecting with the artistic imagination? How might audio description as artistic practice trouble the binary? How might the gap in which Richard Foreman writes flatten through an improvised encounter with another medium and/or context?

The Casts

At the centre of the installation, a CRT monitor sat on a pedestal with headphones tethered to it. The projection on the back wall consisted of compositions of a swimming pool accompanied by images of the pastel plaster cast sculptures animated through the picture plane. These rather ambiguous forms sat as sculptures on shelves mounted at varying heights on the side walls. Their animated representations stop at different locations within the compositions of the back-wall projection. At the specific point in which they rest, a tethered cord emanates from the projection wall to connect to shelves holding the actual objects. In the CRT monitor, the circular images of heads of shirtless men, oscillating upon shifting pastel colour fields, fade in and out of the screen. They appear to be fondling the objects below them and off the frame while discussing what they think they are holding. Their words are closed captioned for those not wanting to wear the headphones or those with impaired hearing. On the projected wall, there are moments where all of the objects are animated, rubbing against each other, and you would hear an amplified fondling, the sounds of someone deeply caressing the objects.

The pool acted as a loose metaphor around subjective experience itself. While the architecture around the pool was hard and angular, the fluidity of the water invoked the grappling for understanding when attempting to explain something that may feel abstract or unfamiliar. The men were originally filmed in a studio situation and instructed not to look at the objects in question, and although they could have used their peripheral vision, none of them chose to. In their descriptions, they tried to figure out what the objects were by interjecting a likeness or by creating comparisons to similar things. "This is like a fire hydrant." "This was something beautiful once." "This is a piece of architecture in my hands." The men engaged in this activity projected their imaginations onto the description of the objects, sometimes using repetition as a way to crystalize their convictions: "It

could feel like the bottom of the ocean. There's this round thing up here. Yeah, sort of like the bottom of the ocean. It's the sea . . . it's the sea floor." There were also moments of witnessing pure physicality, where they were expressing observations upon the coldness, heaviness, and tactile qualities of the objects in question. The similes, occasional metaphors, and moments of physicality became the piece's driving force. Later, I was to find out about kinegliphs, which were tactile sculptural objects and models used to train veterans of World War II who lost their vision on the battlefield. Kinegliphs were used to sensitize their tactility and/or facilitate their understandings of actual spaces, though the research into them appears to have been short-lived (Anon 1946).
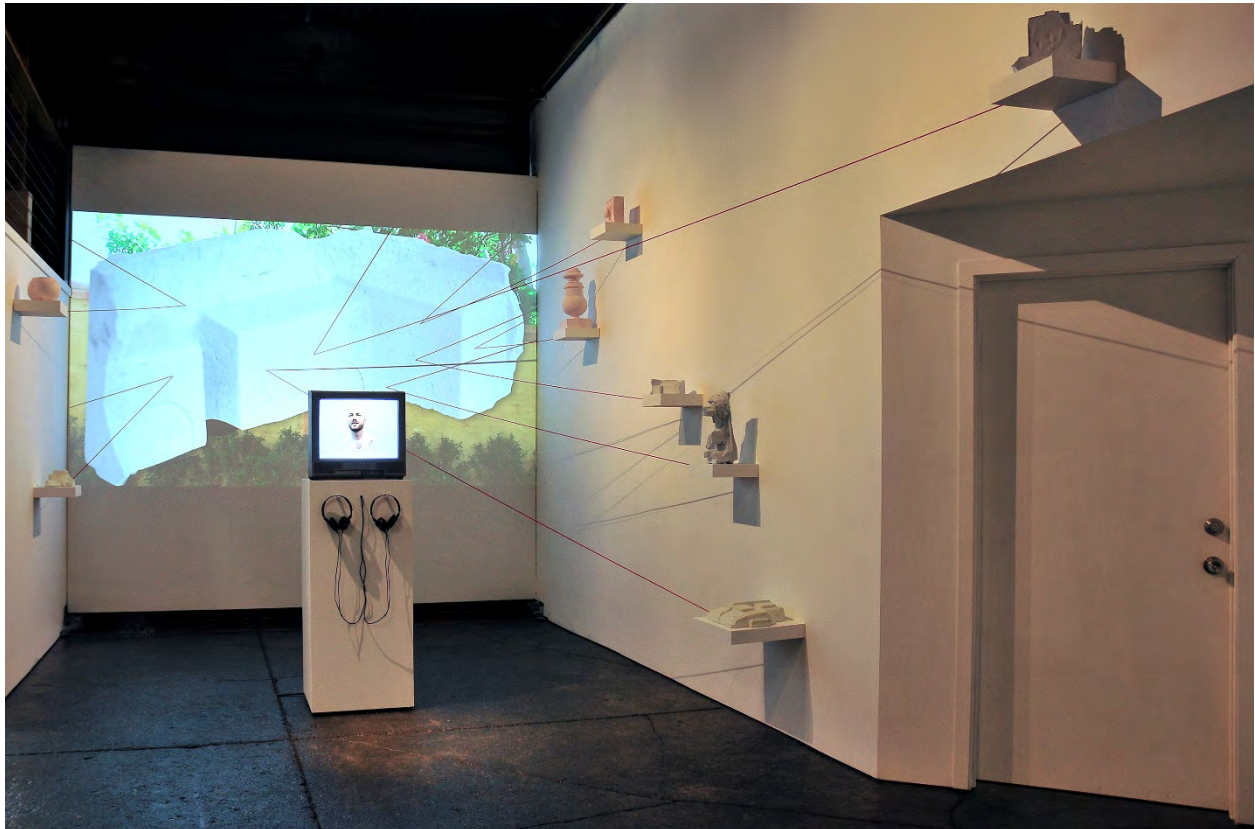
The Casts installation. Photo: Darrin Martin. For documentation see https://vimeo.com/173672872.

What does not get initiated in a lot of art on exhibit is direct touch. This norm is ingrained in the format of most gallery and museum displays, except for touch tours for the blind and interactive works of art. *The Casts* installation pushed broader ideas of access in another direction, soliciting a tactile engagement. Even so, audience members rarely touch anything, partially because that is expected gallery behaviour, and partially because some of the shelves are out of reach. The audience is left to live vicariously through the sensual observations of the subjects represented.

Both *The Casts* and *The Divide* present untrained performers with an improvisational task of description, while activating relationships with different forms of perception. Closed captions operated differently in the two pieces. *The Casts* uses them as a way to potentially engage with the subjects presented in the CRT monitor with or without perceiving their voice, while *The Divide* does not leave the same options. *The Divide* addresses visuality in a layered and compressed way, while *The Cast* performs a series of deconstructions between the virtual and the real; between the audible and the readable. *The Casts* also included the sounds of caressing the objects, potentially eliciting the

desire to touch. This may lead to a viewer's engagement with the space between the sound heard and imagined action of themselves participating. Meanwhile, *The Divide* suggested an opening between spaces of likeness differentiated by the slightest shifts in perception spatially while spanning gaping distances temporally through improvised photographic interpretation.

Varying Abilities

From 2001 to around 2010, I was making work informed by the experience with my sudden deafness, which was caused by a failed operation meant to fix a disease affecting my middle ears. The operation was performed on the ear that tested worse in audiology exams, with a statistic of less than 1 percent failure. My operation failed. I became entirely deaf in my right ear, acquiring tinnitus —a ghost effect often caused by trauma or loss of hearing, sounding like a series of high-pitched frequencies ringing in my head. I videotaped every audiology exam I took during those years. Influenced by science fiction, linguistics and synesthesia, these materials were at the heart of a series of artworks that included experimental short videos and multi-channel installations.

The idea of opening up to more complex understandings of subjective engagement came to me during an academic residency initiated by professors Catherine Kudlick and Susan Schweik in the fall of 2010, sponsored by the University of California Institute for the Humanities. I worked with a group of scholars from various universities in a Critical Disability Studies Faculty Research Cluster. Although the cohort gathered was not specifically focused on the arts, within the first few days of us convening, issues of access to the broader field of the arts (including fine art, theatre, dance, film, television, and music) began to take centre stage in our conversations. In many ways, the direction was ushered into shape by Georgina Kleege, a scholar whose writing on accessibility and whose engagement with a variety of creative communities through performances and museum touch tours has contributed immensely to an intersection of curatorial and scholarly fields. Throughout the quarter, the group held a series of in-person and virtual meetings. We challenged each other with readings and exercises, responding critically in discussions about representations of people with disabilities, as well as the possibilities of artworks that engage people of varying perceptual abilities.

I shared the following two blatant pop culture examples with the group to illustrate what an accessible cinematic paradigm of the above might be. Regarding critical thinking about disability representations of the blind, one could look at the official 1984 music video of Lionel Richie's *Hello* to find a blind college student being pursued romantically by her professor, played by Richie. In the video, after following her around the school and telephoning her at her house, Richie steps into an art studio where the student had sculpted a clay bust of him, supposedly "rendered" from the magical abilities of the blind. While it was not a direct likeness, a viewer would wonder how she even knew what his face looks like, since the music video did not lead us to believe they had yet had any intimate exchange. Was it from his voice? Or the superpower of echolocation rendering a likeness? Interesting to note that most comments about the video stem from the inappropriateness of a professor (Richie) stalking his student. The fact that she is blind only heightens the oddness of the scenario.[2]

For an accessible pop cultural example of a video work that could be transformative, when considering what a music video might sound like by incorporating audio description methods for the blind, one need search no further than *Total Eclipse of the Heart Literal Video Version* (DASir 2010). This hilarious use of description sung together with closed captions has cleverly appropriated the

1983 official song and video of Bonnie Tyler's *Total Eclipse of the Heart* with changed lyrics sung to describe the given video and all its surreal and melodramatic majesty. The détournement took a page from the Situationist International, as the new lyrics catalogues a mixture of camera cues and music video clichés from the 1980s, including "Close-up of some candles, and dramatically posing" and "I pull my feathered hair whenever I see floating cloth."

While these examples present a two-fold conundrum, the latter challenged our cohort to consider the potential of a collective participatory method of audio description in moving image material. We sought more improvisational alternatives to the short-lived institutional rules of audio description as prescribed by various institutions such as the Audio Description Project: An Initiative of the American Council of the Blind (2019) or the Described and Captioned Media Program funded by the U.S. Department of Education (2019). We became interested in how the act of description ultimately revealed aspects of our own subjectivity through our various biases, preferences, and abilities. We were also attentive to how the act of description slowed down our conversation and often revealed, even to the members of our group that had 20/20 vision, that we were not always seeing the same thing because our attentions were particular and varied. Many of the rules of engagement for more institutional methods of audio description are delivered with an attempt at objective coolness, no matter the content of the material being described. We were open to the fact that this "objectivity" may be an impossibility or even dehumanizing in some cases since it implies a static and essentializing subjectivity. For an illustrative example, turn on the audio description for any episode of Netflix's *Black Mirror,* a show filled with varying degrees of dystopic horror, to hear a description verbalized by the equivalent of a disaffected Siri with slight British intonations.

One of the revelatory events for me during our first week together was asking the group to describe the centrepiece of my trilogy of single-channel videos on hearing loss, *Monograph in Stereo.* While the work centres on various audiology exams, it also cuts to curious scenes of interior spaces, fragmented corners, and cropped limbs whose bodies have fallen off the frame. *Monograph in Stereo* contains a lot of image processing and colourful abstractions among a range of clearer representations. Each of the eight artists and scholars was challenged to audio describe different sections of the video. Interestingly enough, despite the amount of abstraction apparent in many of the sections, the only participants who attempted to describe the movement of colour and shape were Georgina Kleege and Catherine Kudlick, two members of our group who are blind. That led to opening up a dialogue about the abstract qualities of the video. Given that many people who are blind perceive something visually through varying degrees of difference, their abilities allowed the conversation to go beyond the recognizable representational imagery to focus on colour or movement in ways that had not been previously described but were no less present. This left me considering the difficulty those with so-called "normal" sight may have when confronted with imagery that is a mixture of abstraction and representation, in that there may be an attentive bias toward imagery depicting objects, people, and places, even if partially obscured.

To some degree, we see another example of normative vision's dependence on representation in the 2009 three-channel video installation *I See a Woman Crying (Weeping Woman)* by Dutch artist Rineke Dijkstra (2019). In this twelve-minute artwork, Dijkstra records a group of London school children at the Tate Liverpool in a typical museum education exercise of describing Pablo Picasso's 1937 painting *Weeping Woman.* The artist has chosen not to give the audience a glimpse of the painting itself, as the students gradually speculate why the woman in the painting is depicted as crying. While there are brief moments when the students express that there are various shapes and colours depicting the subject, their real focus is on why the woman could be shaken to tears, which is

nowhere indicated within the artwork itself. Funerals, weddings, and regrets swirled about their imaginations, constructing false narratives as to why she seems shattered to tears. In an unlikely turn of events, toward the end of their descriptive act, they discuss how joy could also produce tears, and perhaps the subject of the painting is ridiculously happy. However, language about compositional strategies or how abstraction is integrated into the rendering of the subject was mostly absent. Of course, the children look as if they are pre-teens, and the audience is taken more by their tangential ramblings and group dynamics than anything else. Certain boys lean comfortably on their peers, while others seem a little more isolated by the camera frame. The quieter members of the group finally offer their contributions toward the end of the exercise.

Returning to the Critical Disability Studies Cluster, we continued to work together, developing and performing what became a participatory method of audio description. We explored the idea that one could potentially work notions of access into the very inception of an artwork, rather than as something that would get added on after its completion. With a successful application to the University of California Institute for Research in the Arts (UCIRA), we reconvened at the University of California, Irvine, to continue our work, further augmenting our original cluster with other artists and graduate students for a week in June 2012.[3] The gathering, called *Art Inclusion: Disability, Design, Curation,* comprised workshops and presentations to initiate innovative methods of description, simultaneously investigating notions of access in the exhibition of all kinds of work in the broad field of the arts (sculpture, film, dance, etc.). During a session I led, I unravelled a spool of found film titled *Clouds and Precipitation* among the residency participants and had them describe their section of celluloid film in hand through whatever perceptual means available. The activity was video-documented via two-camera shoot that followed the ribbon of the film stretched out in a park. Behind each participant was a portable green screen that moved from person to person. The original film was later chroma-keyed into the documentation of its own description and shown at the end of the residency as the footage slid in and out of sync with its verbal translation.

Listening In . . .

In a subsequent installation, titled *Listening In . . .* , I further complicated this layering of video and audio description by developing the tension between multiple sensory modalities as the work spread across three screens of synchronized media. The artwork was an endeavour to activate the archives of Charles Graser, an important test subject in the development of cochlear implant technology. The cochlear implant bypasses the usual biological hearing process in profoundly deaf subjects through the insertion of a coil placed inside the inner ear of the cochlea that electronically stimulates the area. The installation was part of an exhibition titled *Silence Pressure Noise*, curated by Vicky Moufawad-Paul at the McIntosh Gallery of Western University in London, Canada. *Listening In . . .* includes an interview with Graser, animation, and processed media imagery, as well as closed captions, hand-written texts, readings of his notes by a voice actor, and translations of snippets of the above through American Sign Language (ASL).

Graser, whom I interviewed in 2013, lives in Sacramento. He has undergone over sixteen experimental operations from the early 1970s until 2010. He lost his hearing through a reaction to medicine given to him to recuperate from an accident where he was badly burnt. After a half year corresponding with Dr. William House (an American otologist, physician, inventor, and medical researcher in Los Angeles), Graser became a research subject in the development of hearing technologies. Graser and Dr. House also worked closely with Jack Urban, a mechanical engineer

who had previously worked on aerospace projects and then for Disney's automata experiments, including the talking President Lincoln in the Hall of Presidents.

Listening In . . . installation. Photo: Darrin Martin. For excerpted documentation see https://vimeo.com/258469424.

Not only did Dr. House become one of the inventors of the cochlear implant, but his House Ear Institute also further investigated techniques still considered experimental today. One is the auditory brainstem implant, which uses electronic stimulation to bypass the inner ear and activate parts of the brain that are understood to be responsible for perceiving sound. Graser underwent one of those operations, though the positive results were short-lived, and the benefits fizzled on his return home shortly after the procedure.

In all his years as a test subject, Graser would take notes he called "reports" about how he perceived sound with every new hearing device. He developed a keen sense of the technical jargon and would include observations on carrier frequency, masking, and gain. At other times, his observational writing took a more everyday tone. For example, he would write about screech sounds as a part of hearing, what choruses or bells sounded like in his church, and the voices of male actors on television being perceived through various prototypes as high-pitched. He wrote these and more eloquent letters, and it was through these records and their personal interactions that Urban and House were able to fine-tune Dr. House's invention, the cochlear implant.

Jack Urban (left), Charles Graser (centre), and Dr. William House (right). Photo: Graser Archive.

When preparing for the interview with Graser for *Listening In . . .* , I had anticipated asking him to describe his first experiences of hearing in various environments and through the procedures he underwent and the devices used. However, upon meeting him, it became apparent that many of those observations felt long ago. Instead, he immediately began telling me the story of the accident that resulted in a treatment that took his hearing and, for a brief moment, his ability to see. Eventually, he did reminisce upon moments of perceiving sounds, though interestingly, they were focused around his experiences with noise. For example, he recalled hearing interference as a result of being too close to high-tension wires and when visiting an underground power plant. These moments were evidence to him that the devices were picking up very real energies that would otherwise be imperceptible to astutely "normal" hearing individuals. The moments of obstruction were the memories he ended up gravitating toward, even if they had occurred years ago.

The installation is spread out over three synchronized screens. Two are horizontal projections of equal size. At the McIntosh Gallery, I spaced a distance between them in response to an odd architectural element of the gallery where the walls meet at a 45-degree angle, which softens the corners of the room rather than forming a cleanly abutting corner. These two projections contained independent imagery, though sometimes they were tied together with compositional elements that horizontally crossed over from one screen to the next. The third monitor was situated vertically on a tripod standing out from the wall on the right side of the projections. This monitor provided a physical presence in relation to human scale, as it stood roughly six feet tall.

The McIntosh Gallery asked me to describe *Listening In . . .* for audience members who may have low vision or blindness. This itself presented a challenge as the work is multi-layered and spreads across different screens. It was discussed how this would be used specific to the installation, considering that the work also has sound, which I did not include in the description. Besides putting it on their website, the text would be read before entering the installation for groups or individuals needing more description or wanting an augmented descriptive experience. An excerpt of this text follows:

> Section 0:00 to 3:09: The video is a constant loop, but for the sake of description, I'll begin at the section where the subject, Charles Graser, is telling the story of how he lost his hearing.
> – In this section, a headshot of Graser is framed on the left screen projection. Graser is a white male in his eighties with a full head of gray hair, nicely cut. He wears glasses and a beige-and-white patterned button-down shirt. On the right projection, the same shot of Graser in mirror image is displayed but slightly muted in tone. Daniel Sonnenfeld, a white man in his early fifties with cochlear implants and similar hair coloring as Graser, is chroma-keyed in front of this muted image. He has a goatee and wears a pink shirt. He is interpreting Graser's words using American Sign Language (ASL).
> – On the vertical monitor are 3D-simulated representations of an ear floating in space, and the object is filled with colorful noise. Closed caption text crawls through the frame at varying heights. At times, the central ASL interpreter is catching up to the narrative being told, and the left projection is disrupted with a 3D-simulated image of something being said. For example, an image of a school, foot, or car is displayed after mention in Graser's narrative.
> – At one moment, Graser talks about being on fire, and all three screens are filled with a red and orange texture. After this, the vertical image of the ear is more abstracted, layered, and grayscale. The section ends with the right projection revealing the source of the fire imagery, which is a scribbly drawing of a truck on fire rendered by one of Graser's children.

The descriptions went on for another five sections. Description may work well for many kinds of artworks, and it likely functioned for the three other pieces presented in the group exhibition in which *Listening In . . .* premiered; however, for visually dense time-based works, the task may be incredibly challenging. *Listening In . . .* may certainly be one of those works, because of its complex visual elements, continued sound collage, and its length in general.

To some degree, the attempt was quite metaphysical, as a work dealing with multiple modes of access becomes, in turn, introduced by a visual description before one enters the space of the exhibition. When I have had an opportunity to screen works in the presence of people who are blind, I have observed sighted individuals whispering in their ear more information as to what might have otherwise been missed. It is a live impromptu audio description that sometimes is only a few words to categorize missing pieces to the images before them. This experience also includes when presenting works that actually incorporate audio descriptions as the genesis of their creation, like the examples above, which leads one to several questions: How much description is too much or not enough? Can negotiating this itself be a creative act? And the largest question when considering notions of access and the arts: is any artwork 100 percent accessible to all people?

No matter the perceptual abilities of an audience, one has to consider cultural background and educational upbringing among a variety of other factors that may inform how one might understand or experience a work of art. Also, one has to consider that many artworks rely on various amounts of ambiguity as a way to curiously draw upon the audience's interests and sense of their own imaginations.

Mining the Gap

While both *The Casts* and *The Divide* used improvisational description as a generative method, *Listening In . . .* is unique in the sense that the subject's descriptions are not improvised and are in the historical record. Many of Charles Graser's archival materials used in the piece are now housed at the Smithsonian. These materials consist of "reports" to Dr. William House and Jack Urban, letters to specific people (including individuals with deafness curious about the technology), and clippings of news events and pamphlets that in some way document images of Graser for a broader audience interested in learning about cochlear implant technologies. Instead of performing for the camera, the interview with Graser was in response to questions I asked him, coupled with his own sometimes tangential remembrances.

The video animation of Graser's archive works in tandem with his words being read by a voice actor and an interpreter using American Sign Language. The combination creates a densely layered cacophony of description. The voice actor, Matthew Gottschalk, listened to the sound of Graser's interviews and tried to emulate what he might sound like as a younger man. Both the ASL interpreter and the voice actor performed with a more direct awareness of playing to an audience. In *Listening In . . .* , I explored the potential of the layering of all these materials in tandem with audible and visual noise to build a kind of surrogate presence, which combines Charles Graser's perceptual and personal experiences through my own subjective skills and interests as a media artist.

At the same time, Daniel Sonnenfeld's performance of American Sign Language (ASL) was admittedly self-conscious, given that Sonnenfeld, though born deaf, learned oralism as a child. He only learned ASL as a young adult and stated that his skills were fairly rusty, given that he had now relied on hearing through his implants for several years. The inclusion of ASL as another avenue of access was problematic in the ways in which cochlear implant technologies have, at times, become politicized among the Deaf community as a catalyst for eroding Deaf language and culture.[4] However, while making this piece, I sought the advice of people in the Deaf community as to where to turn. I became interested in working with someone with a more complex relationship to the visual language than a professional ASL interpreter. Graser himself learned very few signs as his deafness came to him much later in life, and he spent much of his energy attempting to find ways to hear again. The way ASL operated within the installation became a scenario of alternative systems activating the archive. In quite the opposite manner to institutionalized norms of audio description, sign interpretation for the Deaf is often expressive of loudness or emotional content through amplification or exaggeration of gesture. Even when the ASL interpreter in *Listening In . . .* was not very expressive, I considered him further extending the relationships with visuality, sound, and implied meaning.

The way that I worked with sound and noise in *Listening In . . .* and their relationship with images was informed by Graser's recollections coupled with my own experience of deafness. Static noises, pitched ringing frequencies, and sounds of machine oscillations whirred within and between music

and spoken words. Graser talked about how a lot of people with hearing issues complain about the noise heard through their various hearing devices. Feedback, buzzing, and excessive gain were a few of the characteristics he transcribed and navigated through in order to aspire tow greater fidelity. Many people, including myself, also suffer the additional noise generated by their own bodies, tinnitus, in competition with negotiating the attempt to hear the world around them. The visual glitch became part of the picture as a constant reminder of a lack of fidelity while initiating within the viewer an attempt to decipher what lies beyond this veil of interference. Nothing within the scope of *Listening In . . .* assured the viewer of the stability of the image.

Although I would like to consider modes of access at the inception of an artwork rather than as an afterthought, the inclusion of closed caption in this way presents a challenge. Though I am presently researching ways to include a real-time voice to text convertor in future projects, much of my work with closed caption has been post-production. Within the tediousness of the process, there are many times I feel I get a better understanding of what happened in the original shoot. While creating the captions for all the pieces above, I cannot always understand the speaker or sounds present, and in the process of re-listening attentively, my understanding shifts. In some cases, my relationship with certain sounds becomes nostalgic upon their rediscovery. For example, in the opening scene from *Monograph in Stereo*, which was shot near my mother's house, I heard a train whistle in the valley that I never hear anymore because of my changed hearing. However, as a boy, I always heard that train. In an odd way, hearing it through controlled amplitude activated a childhood reverie connected to what is no longer accessible to me.

Closed captioning and audio description have different embodied responses. Judging by observing audience engagement, some viewers may have found the layering of *Listening In . . .* overwhelming, and they would only watch a small portion and move on. The freedom of gallery viewing of media artworks often welcomes a type of flexibility that allows one to enter and exit at any given moment. While I am not in control of how an audience member moves through any installation or where they might bring their attention, I am curious about instigating the splintering of tasks in the hope that people may revisit parts of the work with the notion that they may have missed something. *Listening In . . .* may also induce a kind of dizzying effect since there was a lot to take in both visually and audibly spread across the expanse of the gallery. Art rarely induces a physiological response in a viewer. This sense of disorientation is important for me to consider the ways in which abrupt changes to one's perceptual abilities remove a person from the space of the familiar. Perhaps it is only in the attempted simulation of this altered state one may feel open enough to imagine another person's subjective embodiment, a taste of intersubjective time.

Certainly, *Listening In . . .* attempts to explore the gap between words and action, which Richard Foreman considered "the unfathomable from which everything pours forth," but what is this gap if authored by someone other than a writer or playwright? My engagement with audio description has been activated by a curiosity about trying to understand others by permitting a space for my subjects to explore perception aloud. The task frames a space for their impromptu words and imaginations. Prior works activated this inquiry through the expanse of history, as in *The Divide*, or through connecting with abstract objects that physically lie outside of the frame, as in *The Casts*. Through *Listening In . . .*, I activated an existing, well-documented engagement with description as an attempt to build a kind of co-presence of altered perspectives. Unlike the first-generation video artists, whose explorations of description were, to some degree, based on the attributes of conceptual and performance art practice in intersection with the new medium of video, I would like to consider the act of audio description in media installations and other potential modes of access through the wide

lens of disability studies. Simultaneously, I remain curious about how this lens, with its origin in the concept of inclusion, can potentially offer uniquely new experiences for a broad audience.

Notes

1. Playbill but also reiterated in Als (2009).

2. For a YouTube treat: https://youtu.be/b_ILDFp5DGA. For hilarious social commentary, see Kiernan Maletsky and Gavin Cleaver, "Lionel Richie's "Hello" is the Most Confusing Music Video of All Time," *Dallas Observer*, February 14, 2014. https://www.dallasobserver.com/music/lionel-richies-hello-is-the-most-confusing-music-video-of-all-time-7060460.

3. Additional artists brought into convene included theatre artists (Victoria Ann Lewis, Terry Galloway), dancer/choreographers (Jürg Koch), and visual artists with practices in design (Sara Hendren) and art and filmmaking (Alison O'Daniel). For the full list of graduate students and more details on the cluster and resulting residency, see Kudlick and Schweik (2014).

4. There is a lot written about this. My first exposure came in the form of the Academy Award–nominated documentary film *Sound and Fury* released in 2000.

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Attending to the Glitch: *Sand in the Eyes*

Rabih Mroué in Interview with Lynette Hunter

PART ONE: Digital Surprises

Rabih Mroué is a Lebanese performer who lives now in both Lebanon and Berlin, Germany. He has created intricate connections with audiences, often using video as a way to destabilize the performance context, and in doing so, destabilize what "video" is expected to do (Mroué 2013).[1] This article provides context, from an interview with Lynette Hunter that he gave for this collection, for the script of an "academic/non-academic" lecture, *Sand in the Eyes* (2017), about the different ways that film techniques are used to generate an effective political reaction to death and execution. Mroué is interested in how an alternative and unsettling performance technique is quickly co-opted by those in power, and in how to un-co-opt or de-co-opt the strategy and take it back from power, or to reduce the "maximum damage" that is done by those in power.[2] He is also a performer fascinated with how it feels when the camera makes us all look the same even when we are individually acting against systemic structures. This doubling of the complex reflection on a specific political strategy, with the self-observation of what happens to his own performing body when engaged in that strategy, is a hallmark of his work.

An early video Mroué made and that he talked about in the interview is "set" in 1973, and although the viewer is not told the date, a Lebanese person watching it at the time would likely have worked this out. The voiceover says about one blurry figure in a street demonstration, "That's me, here," while, as he comments later, "In fact we all looked the same." Mroué commented that the video asks, "How can I prove to you that I am not as the others" when the video maker wants nevertheless to "act in a fair cause, and we have to go and make our voice heard?" The video maker goes on to question: "How can I participate with a collective?" How can we "be aware that we are all together but at the same time each one of us different from the others?" This is quite apart from the fact that at the time Mroué himself would have been a "little child," and that the person pointed to "does not look like me" (Wilson-Goldie, 76). These elements of maintaining an integrity that can resist manipulation, and simultaneously acting collectively for a political cause, are troubled by the

Rabih Mroué is an actor, director, and playwright. His works, which deal with issues that have been ignored in the current political climate of Lebanon, examine how the performer relates to the audience within a non-traditional atmosphere. In addition to his work in theatre and performance, Mroué has shown exhibitions of film and visual art at galleries, museums, and biennials, including Galerie Tranzitdisplay, Prague (2011); dOCUMENTA-13, Kassel (2012); CA2M Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Madrid (2013); SALT, Istanbul (2014); MoMA New York (2015), and the Kunsthalle Munich (2016). His works are in the collections of the MoMA New York, Centre Pompidou Paris, SFMOMA, the Art Institute of Chicago, CA2M Madrid, MACBA Barcelona, and the Van Abbe Museum Rotterdam, among others. Mroué is a co-founder of the Beirut Art Center and a long-time collaborator with Ashkal Alwan. He is currently an associate director of Kammerspiele Munich.

Lynette Hunter is Distinguished Professor of the History of Rhetoric and Performance at the University of California Davis. Much of her research has related to the rhetoric of Western democratic politics and has included many textual forms, writing genres, and performance modes. More recently these research areas have led to *Disunified Aesthetics* (2014) and her research into training, practice, rehearsal and performance, including the book *A Politics of Practice* (2019), and her current exploration of performing as training in affect.

way the technology of the video camera can both undermine the integrity and call into question the political action as well as donate integrity to a political cause.

In a widely circulated later piece, *The Pixelated Revolution* (2011–16),[3] Mroué begins to delve into the way video technology affects the body of the person holding the camera. This piece began when he noticed that the lack of journalists in Syria during the early stages of the civil war (from 2011) led to many individuals reporting on what was happening around them. Mroué also notes that the regime "was controlling the country very efficiently, so that it was difficult for journalists to report from the side of the protesters," and he adds that online video posts "immediately turned out to be a kind of resistance in itself. The videos were uploaded online, so that everyone could access and work with them. There was no signature, which means that they were meant to be for everybody." There were not only specific strategies being used—such as never taking an image of a person's face—that Mroué began to list into a manifesto for this kind of filming (Mroué 2013b, 381–84), but also strange embodied affects emerging that he attributes to the need to learn the technology.

In *The Pixelated Revolution*, Mroué performs a critical lecture to begin to analyze these alternative effects and affects, and in doing so also incorporates video he has generated to perform the critique. The lecture talks about how the revolution plays out partly through the hundreds of younger people who use their phone cameras to record the deaths on the streets of Lebanon/Syria/Middle East—specifically through a group focused on recording snipers hidden in the urban landscape, one function of which is to warn people against these snipers. In Mroué's video, there is the person holding the camera and seeing through the viewfinder, so the viewer of the video Mroué is making watches the technical process that conditions what we see. In other words, the person in the video uses the camera to record reality, but cannot escape the affective force of the camera as something that is creating a version of reality and is therefore fictive. The video is neither fiction nor nonfiction. So, as the holder of the camera, you record the sniper, but when the sniper aims at you, you don't recognize that "you" are about to die, and you keep filming . . .

The film Mroué makes of this is shot through the screen of an iPhone, as if the camera is the person. Yet the viewer knows from the voiceover that someone is holding the camera. In a sense, the viewer "becomes" the person holding the camera but is more aware of the difference between the fiction and nonfiction and hence horrified when the actual person holding the camera cannot tell when the sniper is aiming at them. Yet when that actual person "dies," the viewer cannot tell the difference, cannot tell if the person holding the camera has actually been aware of the difference and is acting, or whether they have been shot—as the camera keeps on recording. The camera does not die.

In a later interview about *The Pixelated Revolution*, Mroué notes:

> When the protesters use their mobile phones, put them in front of their eyes and look through the lens to see what is happening there, I believe the eye is not yet used to understanding what it is watching on that tiny screen in order to give the brain the signals to react immediately. This is why the protesters were not running away when they watched the gun aiming towards them. I think we should train ourselves to use technologies. It needs time. (Mroué 2018a)

Yet simultaneous with the time needed to learn the technology, the regime learns to use these videos against the protesters. Unlike various attempts to control the media that have been associated with earlier revolutions, such as the Romanian, Mroué suggests:

> Digital data is so spread out, so dispersed, especially for the protesters, it is something that you cannot control. We can use it, but immediately the state power can re-appropriate it and use it against us. It is not like in a television studio, which is a physical thing, a building you can occupy. Digital material is full of surprises. Sometimes it is broken and you see only half of it, in other cases it freezes or it simply disappears. It is something virtual that you cannot grasp. It is fragile, rootless and lies somewhere in the cables. (Mroué 2018a)

These digital surprises, or glitches, are a way that the technology makes present its materiality, no longer mere materials or just an object, but a thing which the people using it can never fully know.

In the interview for this collection focused on *Sand in the Eyes*, Mroué pointed out the direct similarity with the way that governments co-opt alternative strategies generated by artists, so that much artmaking either has to create techniques difficult to co-opt, or build in a process by which they can be un-co-opted, or indeed that the whole of the history of making art in whatever medium is a process of de-co-opting. This may be one key reason that he builds research structures around his practice, or rather that his practice is to build creative research structures that resist the co-optation of his practices with film.

In selected comments from this interview, we focus on the form that his critical analysis takes—the glitched "lecture." Performers are usually aware of the ease with which the materiality of their work becomes appropriated and reduced to predictable material, and loses its ability to unsettle social, aesthetic and political conventions. Mroué's comments on his lecture form unfold how it incorporates a critical analysis of the artwork that is made into the artwork itself, and can delay, re-direct, elude, and glitch attempts to normalize its political impact—can insist on its materiality.

The Script: *Sand in the Eyes*

Rabih Mroué / Translated from Arabic to English by Ziad Nawfal

All images are from the live performance by Rabih Mroué, "Sand in the Eyes."[4]

The story starts with this USB stick I found in my mailbox.

In a white envelope without any markings on it. Photo: Rabih Mroué.

No sender's address, no destination, nothing. I opened it and all I found inside was a USB stick. There was nothing else inside the envelope. No papers, no inscriptions of any sort. I figured it was certainly not addressed to me, and must have landed in my mailbox by mistake. So I decided to put it back on top of the mailbox, convinced that its owner would certainly find it and take it back.

Mailbox. Photo: Rabih Mroué.

The next day, there was nothing on top of the mailbox. So, I concluded that the owner of the USB stick must have gotten it back. I opened my mailbox and to my surprise there it was again, this time without the envelope. Something strange was happening. It seems the USB stick was addressed to me. I took it and of course the first thing I did was put it in my computer to see what was on it. To my surprise, it contained a large collection of promotional films and clips produced by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham, also known as ISIS. Films that I've always refused to watch, and always refused to possess.

USB contents. Photo: Rabih Mroué.

Like many people, I am convinced that no one should watch these films. And if necessary, they should only be viewed by people who are specialists in this subject, in addition to those who belong to the fields of the military, police and security services, and maybe some intellectuals as well. But watching them for the sake of watching them, that is exactly what ISIS would want. They want a large and widespread audience to witness their crimes and horrific terrorism in order to instil horror in the hearts of people, spread fear and hate towards migrants, strangers, refugees, foreigners, in other words towards the "other." . . . In order to create, little by little, a sharp cut between something called the Islamic world and something else called "the Western world." And the second reason why we should not watch these videos has to do with our contribution to the crime, since every time we watch a hostage getting his head decapitated or being burned or executed by bullets, we are contributing to the crime happening all over again. It is as if by watching, we are the ones operating their killing machine.

This is why we should refuse watching them. But with this USB stick, I felt that someone wanted me to watch these videos and work on them. But why? And who is this unknown person? Definitely not someone from ISIS. There was no threat or any invitation to join their organization. In any case there is no way they would ask an atheist and infidel such as me to join them. Actually, the surprise came when I noticed an engraving on the external cover of the USB stick. Very strange. Here it is: www.lfv.hessen.de. I Googled it immediately, and got the answer at once: LFV is short for Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz.

USB stick. Photo: Rabih Mroué.

The English translation means State Office for Constitutional Protection. In other words, this USB stick belonged to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Hessen, Germany. It is one of the branches of Germany's secret service. Strange. Why would the Security Office of this state send me copies of ISIS films? Is it possible that they need my help to solve some mystery found in the videos, decipher their codes? But I am not a specialist of images. What does this have to do with me?

In Germany, like many other countries in the world, the constitution was modified after the declaration of War on Terrorism, and security institutions adopted a proactive role. One of the decisions was to list ISIS as a highly dangerous, illegal, and prohibited organization.

It is for this reason that strong censorship was applied to ISIS. And a serious Internet operation was launched against ISIS's propaganda apparatus, aiming to delete and block all their web accounts and videos. Yet, every time a video would be deleted, ISIS would find new ways to upload it again. Almost as if ISIS had a large army of technicians working day and night on creating self-regenerating programs that would spawn and upload new content on various websites. You remove something here, and something else gets created there, one time, two times, ten times even, and so on and so forth. Like a virus that is spreading and no one is able to control it, contain it, and get rid of it.

And the issue is that, the virus is here, inside this USB stick, which was sent to me from Hessen. Why Hessen? Anyway . . .

Since I have taken a clear decision not to watch any ISIS films, and yet at the same time feel a certain responsibility towards this USB stick and its contents, I decided to ask a friend of mine to watch them for me. This way I would keep and preserve my decision while not running away from my responsibility. So I asked this friend to watch all the films on the USB stick and give me a detailed report on each one. I also asked him to tell me if he saw something unusual in any of the videos, in which case I would watch it. He agreed.

And like a scientist working in some laboratory, he carefully placed the USB stick inside a nylon bag, sealed it with tape and left.

I confess that I felt relief when I got rid of that USB stick. It almost felt like revenge; instead of allowing it to take words out of my mouth, I sold it to someone who would take words out of its own mouth.

Two days later, my friend sent me an excerpt from one of the ISIS videos, saying that one of the terrorists looked exactly like me. He said, "The resemblance in the eyes is frightening, you have to watch the video."

The eyes. Photo: Rabih Mroué.

What is the probability of someone appearing in someone else's pictures without knowing? And what does this feel like? In today's digital age, with the proliferation of miniature cameras and smart phones, it is quite possible, if not certain. Human beings are constantly taking pictures. Every minute there are millions of photos being taken around the world and stored in various places located on the Internet.

I am convinced that my face appears in the photos of many people whom I do not know and whom I've never seen, and vice-versa. For instance, you could be crossing Alexanderplatz while someone is taking a picture of his or her friend, and click, you're in the photo. When we appear accidentally in other people's photos without knowing, we are secondary characters, like extras in a scene, part of

the background. Honestly, I don't think there's any problem in appearing in unknown people's pictures, as long as these photos remain private. But the fear is to suddenly find out that your face appeared in some advertisement or propaganda for a political party or organization, like the video my friend told me about. Although I assure you that this is not me in the video but someone who looks a lot like me. But perhaps it is me because I find it particularly disturbing, unnerving, unsettling.

Is there any way one can control appearing in someone else's pictures unintentionally, even if he or she appears in the background?

In 2003, I was invited to audition for the role of Saladin in *Kingdom of Heaven* by Ridley Scott. I was very excited. And since I couldn't go to London for the casting, they asked me to record myself in Beirut.

I practised for the role of Saladin and recorded the last scene with Balian, when they agree on handing Jerusalem over to the Muslims.

After I sent the recording, I received a polite e-mail saying that my age did not correspond to the role, and my facial features did not have the required roughness for the role of Saladin. They thanked me for my effort and suggested that I contribute to the film by appearing in a crowd scene. In other words, the proposal went from me starring as one of the film's main characters to being an extra; to being one of the many Arab soldiers in Saladin's army fighting against the Crusaders. They said that although they are extras, they still hold an important role in the film. The extras are the real heroes. They said that I am important because they need extras who speak Arabic. As compensation, they offered to give me one line during the battle. I pictured myself in the battle of Hattin shouting: "Onward, onward to Jerusalem!" with the Arab armies behind me, and Saladin in front of me.

And so I travelled from Beirut to Marrakesh, where an air-conditioned bus drove us to the city of Ouarzazate. There I joined the Arab armies under the leadership of Syrian actor Ghassan Massoud, who played the role of Saladin. There, I discovered that the phrase I was supposed to shout in the battle was "Allahu Akbar" (God is great). I agreed reluctantly. But luckily the phrase was cut during the editing process and only the battle remained.

This is another photo from the movie. And that's me. I can tell from this flag.

The flag. Photo: Rabih Mroué.

When I watch this scene, I don't understand how I accepted to be in such a film. To be one among many, to be an extra, to be or not be, that is not anymore the question, and it's all the same in the end.

My question is: If I agreed of my own free will and choice to be an extra in this scene, how did this scene become part of an ISIS film?

This excerpt sent me by my friend is from a film produced by ISIS where they use shots from the Ridley Scott movie, and more precisely, the scene in which I appear.

How did I end up in an ISIS film? Why does the way the camera seems to capture me leave me so powerless?

Who recruited us to join ISIS and their likes? How does this happen? Did they pay money to the producer and distributor to obtain the legal rights to use the scenes? Or were they pirated? In either case, I wonder how thousands of people go from one place to another and suddenly end up with ISIS one day, and the day after with some other organization or party or occupation, against their will. Is this what it means to be an extra?

In all Arabic dictionaries, extra or background actor means:

> An "additional" actor, from the Italian "comparsa" which means "**extra actor,**" an **ordinary citizen recruited for a fee** to play a **simple role** in an artistic, cinematographic or televised scene, **with no major or noticeable importance.** Extras are **secondary** characters that are **not directly related to the plot,** but they

add a natural atmosphere to the scene **when needed**. Often they **help to create natural surroundings** for the story.

This definition seems to relate to a larger understanding of the concept of citizen/individual in Arab countries, and the relationship between the citizens/individuals and those ruling over them. The definition specifies that the extra is an **ordinary citizen**, meaning there are non-ordinary citizens, and he is not one of them. Ordinary also implies there are first-class citizens, second and third-class citizens, and so on and so forth. Ordinary citizen means the vast majority of people, the crowds or masses, the people who are powerless, meaning a crowd of extras, "**extra citizens.**" Additional. Excessive numbers, purposeless and hence useless. By definition, the role of the extra is **secondary**, in the same manner that the roles of Arab societies are secondary and **tend to go unnoticed**. Consequently the part they play is ineffective . . . and should it become effective one day, such as was the case with what is referred to as "the Arab Spring," it will be described as a riot or in the best of cases as an uprising, a revolution, a civil war . . . etc.

In addition to being an ordinary and extra citizen, the extra is furthermore **recruited**. . . . But the definition does not specify who recruits him. We can assume however that he is recruited by the powers in charge. They recruit him to play **a simple role**, a secondary role. . . . They pay **him a fee**, they don't say how much is this fee, but I assume it is as usual a low and a cheap one. And his essential role is to **create natural surroundings when needed.** As if the presence of the extra adds legitimacy and credibility to something that is unnatural, such as a totalitarian regime, a dictatorship or a corrupt government, or as in the case of a military coup d'état. The gathered masses and crowds are there to convey this "credibility and legitimacy." And when the ruler/hero does not need them anymore, they cease to be useful…

I think there is no need to go on and on regarding the ways in which Arab governments transformed their people into extras. What I am talking about essentially is fiction films. Not "reality." And when I suddenly found myself appearing in a nonfiction film, such as a propaganda video from ISIS, I remember that for many years now the new technologies had had us playing the role of extras as if non-fiction is fiction. We have become used to the situation and forgotten about it. But whenever a new shock occurs, such as the ISIS one, we are reminded of this situation.

This scene reminds me of our failure as active citizens of our societies. We always play the role of the angry population, the gathered masses, the fighters in the name of God/the nation/the ruler, the guards, the witnesses, the victims, the innocents, those who rejoice and hail the divine victory, the banished, the exiled, the refugees, the prisoners, the weak, the deprived, etc. . . . Those are the roles that are given to us, and we agree or are forced to play these parts, accepting them in exchange for the bare minimum.

For many years there was a consensus in the world that the monster called ISIS must be fought, this monster also called "terrorism." . . . Everyone, allies and enemies alike, united in the fight against one common enemy. Among them, those that used to support terrorism; and those that pretend to fight terrorism; and those that have a special interest in prolonging this war until the balance of power turns to their benefit; and those countries that already terrorize their people and citizens. All together, they are going to fight this malignant disease.

Each country is hiding its real interests in this war, and under this pretext, a large numbers of people turn into extras, while death, exile and destruction become mere details in a minor scene from a

larger film entitled "The war on terrorism." This film is rolling and each one of its main players has written the ending that suits him, although the ending of the film will most probably upset all expectations.

<div align="center">৯</div>

Terrorism and the war on terrorism.

This is a still photo from a video concerned with terrorism.

Photo: Rabih Mroué.

And this is a still photo from a video concerned with the war on terrorism.

Photo: Rabih Mroué.

In principle, I wouldn't allow myself to play the first film for you and let you watch the terrorist slit the throat of his hostage. Ethically and morally speaking, such a thing is not feasible. Besides, there is probably a law that forbids me from playing such a film in a public space in front of an audience, even if the audience is over eighteen.

As for the second film, which was shot from a flying drone and shows a missile being fired, hitting its target and killing people, there would be no problem in showing it; I can do so without any embarrassment and any moral, ethical or even legal issues.

Is it the nature of the event that draws the red lines of restrictions and limits, so we know what we are and what we are not allowed to show? Or **is it the physical distance** from the event that forbids or allows the act of watching? **Is it the obscenity of the act of killing** that prevents us from watching the video of the beheading, and forbids us from screening it publicly? **Or is it the side committing the act** of killing that draws the red lines, allowing at times and forbidding at others, depending on the circumstances, facts and results?

Both films are documenting killing, yet each one is doing so in its own way. It seems that the objection is not against killing or documenting it, but either on the manner of killing and/or on the manner of documenting it.

In the particular case of the beheading, the killing takes place in an obscene manner where the camera is close to the scene, allowing the viewer to see clearly the cruelty of this barbaric act. The camera footage is also used with conventional Hollywood techniques to claim reality, a real event.

While in the drone video, the killing happens from afar, in a clean manner since there is no physical involvement by the executors, moreover the camera is very far, which prevents us from seeing and

understanding. There is no difference between a tall or a short building, between a man or woman, old or young. . . . Nothing, everything looks like an abstract painting. . . . Blurred.

Moreover, in the more abstract drone video, there is no proof that the killing took place. And even if we make sure that these moving white dots are human beings, we still do not know anything about their identity, exactly the same as the soldier who executed the operation and fired the deadly missile. He remains unknown to us (the viewers). We do not know his name, nor do we see his face. And after the missile has been fired and the target is eliminated, and even though the manner of the filming claims a kind of non-fictional reality, it's still possible to say that everything we've seen is a fabrication.

The first video uses fiction film techniques so that we know that the knife is real, the knife penetrating the neck is real, and the death is real. There is no artifice and no fabrication in fictional reality.

The knife *here* is going to cut the body in two pieces, placing them next to each other. This is why we can't bear the death.

Yet with the drone missile *there* is going to cut the body in thousands of pieces and blow it into the air thus concealing it as if it did not perish, and therefore it is obviously not going to appear in the images. The blurring of its non-fictional reality means that none of it is real, and this is why we can bear the death.

However, the issue is not whether one prefers to have the body cut off into two pieces or the body blown into thousands of tiny pieces.

The issue is elsewhere.

In fiction films, to kill is acceptable. Obscenity is acceptable. Everything is acceptable. But these two types of films are not fictional but true. And real documented killing is a scandal. It is as if the clarity of the first one is meant to convince us beyond doubt that the film belongs to the documentary world, and aims to create a loud scandal. And the second one, with its blurriness and lack of clarity, wants to convince us that it belongs to the world of fiction, thus concealing the scandal and obscuring it. But in reality, both films document the real.

The blurriness of the drone images represents the war against the terrorists. As Bilal Khbeiz says, the blurriness of these photos can be interpreted as "Images of the future, like the blurred readings of fortune tellers," "connected to the mysterious future." Yet they hold within them a "promise of bringing a peaceful world devoid of terrorism." In this sense the blurriness "turns war into a continuation of politics." The opposite of ISIS films that cut all ties from politics, in the same manner that they cut heads, "irrevocably turning the war into mere terrorism that produces clear images of a past with no future … of a past full of death …"
But today and since the war against terrorism was declared many years ago, these promises turned out to be disappointing, bringing wars and not a single instance of peace. Well, what future awaits people who are caught between terrorism and a war against terrorism?

However, what also differentiates the ISIS film from the drone film is the gaze. In the ISIS film, the gaze is present and direct, while in the drone film, the gaze is absent and absented.

In the ISIS film, the killer looks straight at the camera. His gaze intends to pierce right through the lens towards the viewer. The killer wants to establish eye contact with the whole world as he commits the act of killing with obscenity. It is a gaze to which we as viewers cannot remain indifferent, because it is aimed directly at us. With this gaze we become involved and cannot stay partial. We have to take a stand right away, without hesitation, decide rapidly if we are for or against, if we should stop watching, etc. As for the victim, the gaze shifts between looking directly towards the lens (eye contact) and looking away at the ground, making us feel as viewers the responsibility of what will happen to him, on the one hand, and our weakness and incapability on the other, because when we look at him and his desperate need for help, we know that we are powerless.

The people in the drone video, whether they are innocent victims or terrorists, are unable to look straight into the lens because the camera is far away in the sky and moving all the time. Even if their eyes were looking directly into the lens, we wouldn't be able to see them because of the distance; consequently, there is no eye contact between the victims and us/the viewers.

And contrary to the ISIS video, the perpetrator's gaze in the drone video does not exist, because his presence is always hidden somewhere outside the image. And since the act is taking place independently from us, thus we remain indifferent and do not feel involved with it unravelling in front of our eyes.

However, in the two videos, whether the gazes are involving us as viewers or not, whether the act is clear or blurred, death is still happening inside the two videos, inside the images. But what is happening is another death, which takes place outside the image: it is our own death as viewers. A death that happens every time we view one of these films.

In the ISIS film, what matters is not the victim who is executed. Most of the time, we do not know who the victim is or their name, unless they are American or European citizens or the like, and even in these cases, the killing is not addressed to this specific victim but to us, the viewers. This person who is about to be executed represents all of us, and this knife that the perpetrator is pointing toward us is the knife that slits our throats every day. Our death in the ISIS film is a direct and actual death, and that is why we cannot bear to watch it.

In the other film, where both killing and filming are conducted from a far distance, with no eye contact, no identification, no proof, and the events are taking place independently from us, our death is indirect and diluted, as if it were happening in small doses to be swallowed easily over an extended period of time, and that is why we are able to bear it and watch it. Our death is actually happening by giving up our privacy and public spaces little by little in exchange for safety and security, and also by accepting to live under the so-called "state of emergency" that is most often used as a pretext for suspending our rights and freedom guaranteed by laws and constitutions.

In the drone films, everything looks soft. A long grey and blurred shot. The only cinematographic effect used is the digital zoom, plus scanning: left, right, up and down. Technically, it looks very simple, but in reality, it consists of a complex set of highly sophisticated techniques where the act of killing is happening through the collaboration between hidden elements, in different times and places working together in an amazing synchrony, thus making death happen indirectly and obliquely.

<p style="text-align:center">୭</p>

The question that poses itself here is: if this is the shot, then what could be its counter-shot? Is it the drone itself, which fired the missile? Or the location of the hit, a shot from the ground? Or is it a shot of the soldier sitting in the control room, his hand on the joystick, his finger pressing on the trigger? Or the military headquarters where the commander-in-chief is leading the entirety of the operation? Or is it a shot of the American president sitting behind his desk and signing the order to invade Afghanistan or Iraq? Or . . . or . . . or . . .

Of course, it's neither this nor that. And at the same time, it's all of these elements working all at once and in coordination with one another, via remote control.

But what if we say that the ISIS film itself is the counter-shot of the drone one and vice-versa?

In ISIS's HD films and the drone films, the war looks like an action movie, a war between the good guys and the bad guys. The good guys are coming from the sky like angels sent by God to fight the bad guys who are coming from hell below like monsters sent by Satan, to destroy the earth and human beings. They must be beaten before they succeed in destroying all of humanity.

But in this scenario, the monsters know how to use modern technology and advanced methods and one of their main weapons is the image itself.

In this war between images, between killing and counter-killing inside the image, the two sides seem to be at equality. But in reality, the battle is different. ISIS does not have, and did not have, the possibility to wage war with the same weapons as the rest of the world. For this reason, the equal fight between the drones and the ISIS fighters can only take place in a fictional scenario. And in fiction films, the hero will not allow the battle to be uneven, and he will face the bad guy with similar weapons, in order for the battle to be fair.

Let's imagine a film that brings these two sides together in one scene. In American movies and in order for the battle between the allies and ISIS to be fair and just, it has to take place like this:

Of course the criminal dies and the hero is victorious.

In this movie, the hero is the American cowboy. But the hero could also be this one, or this one or this one . . . or this one . . . or . . . and the list is long.

But for now, let's assume the hero is the cowboy. Okay, imagine a scenario where all the gangsters and all the criminals are dead and there are no enemies left on the face of the planet or outside the planet. . . . Hmm, what will the hero do in this case? Will he stop being a hero? Is this it? But then what will happen to all the weapons? Will they be thrown away? Destroyed? Is it that simple?

In the good/evil equation, I believe that the hero does not stop fighting, even if there's no one left to fight with.

What is the outcome in this case? Let us take the short film by Peter Tscherkassky from 1987, *Shot/Counter-Shot*, and see what it suggests to us.

This shot contains everything: established shot, shot/counter-shot, long shot, medium, shot and close-up. Everything is here; there is no need for editing, no need for visual or sound effects, even no need for dialogue or soundtrack. The hero is everything and there is no space for anyone else in the picture. No enemy, no extra, no victim to defend, nothing. . . . He is alone in the shot, playing all the roles. Everything can be found in this short film. Even death is present in it. Do we need to ask who he was shooting at? Who is this hidden enemy whom he was trying to kill? Where is the bullet flying to? Where did the bullet that killed him come from? And why does the hero die at the end of the film?

Maybe the title of the movie *Shot/Counter-Shot* holds all the answers to these questions. The explanation is that the hero is confronted with his own image, and consequently there is no difference between the shot and the counter-shot. . . . The hero and his image are identical to the degree that when we turn to the counter-shot, there is no difference in the picture. It looks like a mirror image. It is likely that his image has the same speed as him, the hero. Consequently, the hero kills his image at the same time that his image kills him. The two deaths take place at the same time. For a moment we might believe that it was a suicide, but in reality it's not; what took place was a mutual killing. The death of the hero is different from the death of the hero's image. In the film both of them die; but if the human being dies, does the image die as well? Of course it does. Everything dies in the end.
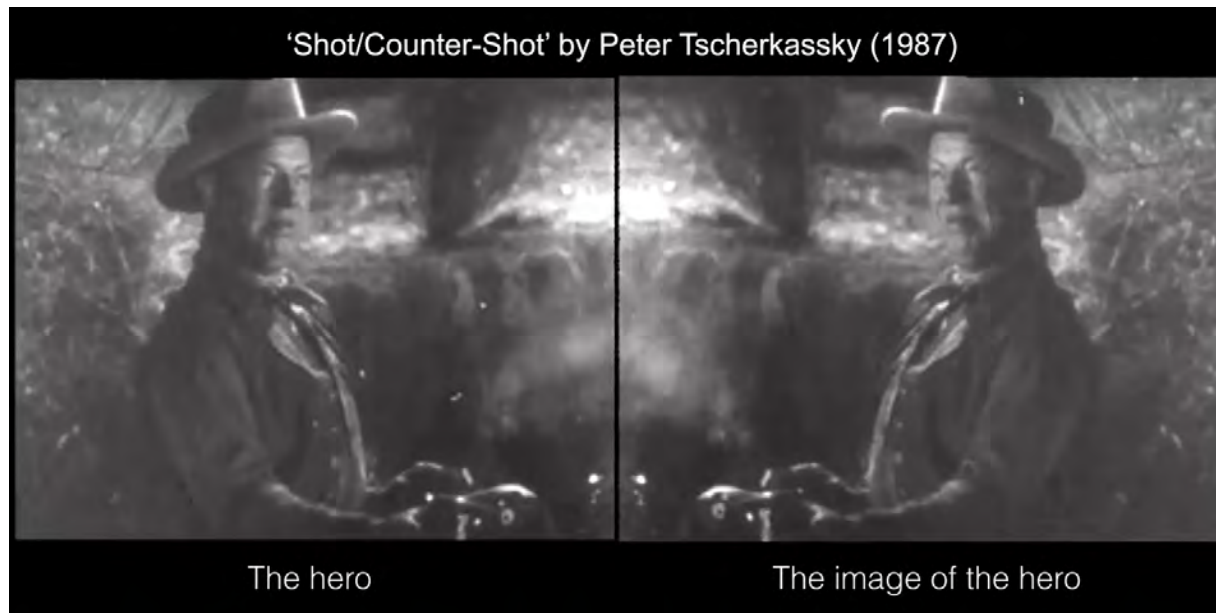
Shot/Counter-Shot. Photo: Rabih Mroué.

Tscherkassky's short film muddles the endings of Hollywood movies, which are usually either happy or sad. Although it makes us laugh, we cannot really decide if this film is a comedy or a tragedy. As for me, after watching the ISIS films, all I can say is that the ending of this film is neither happy nor sad. It is both and neither at the same time. It is hope and despair at once, blended together, without competition or difference between them. Just like our situation today, we are watching with our hands covering our eyes, we want to see, but at the same time, we don't.

We try to go on with our lives, while fantasizing about a revolution without hope and without despair.

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In a world that is overloaded with cameras (everywhere we go there are cameras switched on), is there any way to escape from the curse/spell of appearing in someone else's pictures/videos, whether it is intentionally or unintentionally, whether it belongs to the state authority, to an institution such as banks, or to an individual?

I really don't want to appear in other people's images without my permission, whether as part of the background, an extra, or the main figure. And it seems to me that there is no way to solve this problem, unless I stay inside my room and never go out at all. And if I decide to go out on the streets, then I have to disguise myself, wearing camouflage and hiding my face. But all these solutions seem ridiculous and nonsensical. So what can be done to solve this problem?

For me, the only way to solve it is to be a glitch in a photo. Let me explain. "Glitch" is a technical term used widely in electronic and digital fields. It is sufficient to know that in digital moving images, a glitch means an unpredictable change in the system's behaviour that causes a short-lived error in a system or machine; it means that something obviously goes wrong. (For more, read Olga Goriunova and Alexei Shulgin, *Glitch*, and Laura Marks, *Arab Glitch*).

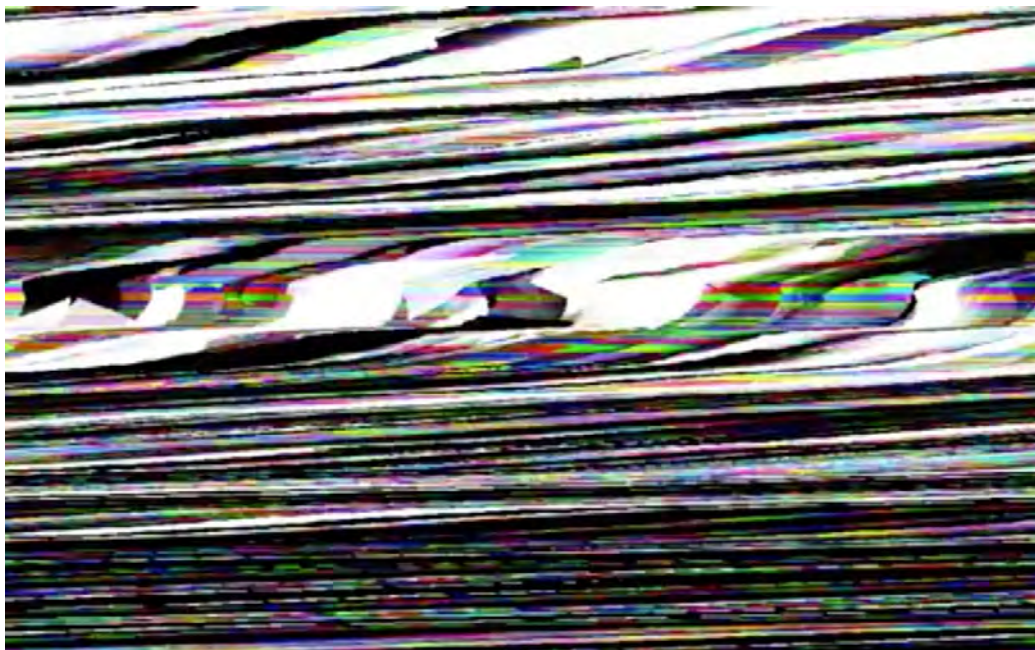Here are some photos of glitches showing the defects they cause to images.
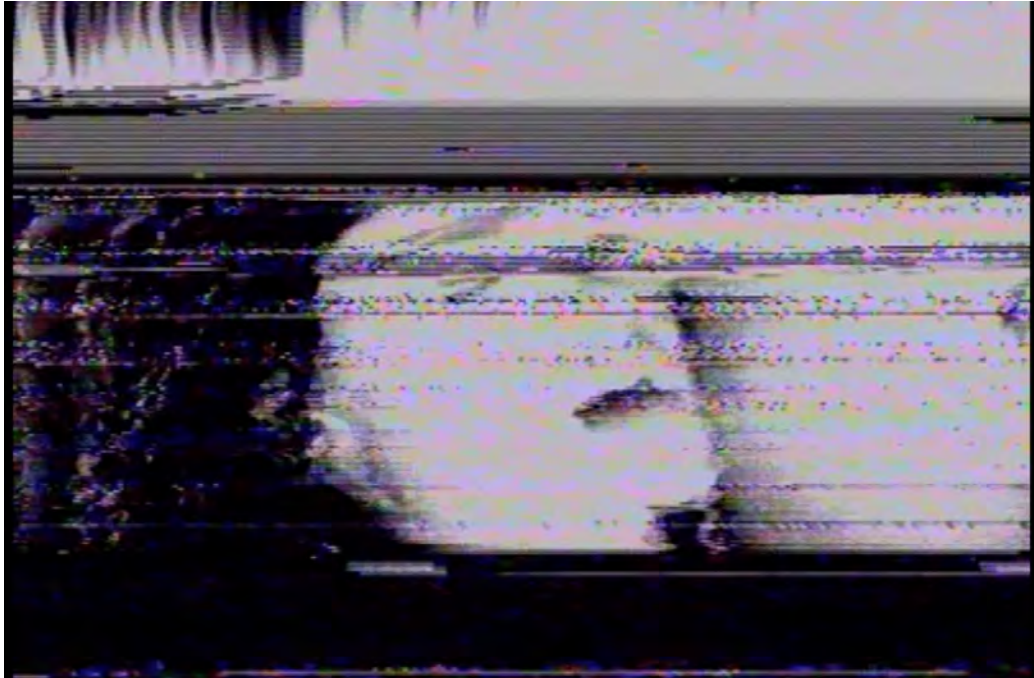

Photo: Rabih Mroué.

Photo: Rabih Mroué.

So imagine yourself like a glitch, or as one of the causes of the glitch, so whenever someone takes a photo of you, then that image is broken and destroyed. I think this is the best way for us to escape from being in images. We will be like an error inside the system; we appear as a scratch and not as human beings. That's the only way to take the revenge against images; especially the "High Definition" images produced by ISIS or those produced by the drones and security cameras planted everywhere. I want to be a glitch, a digital bug that will claw at images and damage them. So, whenever you see a glitch, know that this is my ghost or the ghost of someone who refuses to be in images.

But how can we transform ourselves into glitches?

Imagine a small device that can transform its holder into a glitch. Whenever you turn it on, then it will interrupt the camera's signals and cause a short-lived error in it. And it will make an obvious glitch on the photo, thus you won't appear in it. And if you appear, then it will be your ghost but not you.

Something like this.

So let's assume this is the device that I am talking about.

Now, let's try it.

I will turn it on, you take a photo of me, and then you will see that your photos will be damaged with glitches.

But before we do this try out, I just want to say that this whole presentation started with a USB stick that come to me from Hessen from an unknown person, maybe by chance and maybe on purpose.

Nevertheless it taught me something very important: for someone to be sensitive, to be cautious, to be aware, to refuse as part of a resistance is something, and to be in a total denial is something else.

Well, let's try it now. I will count till three and then turn the device on you [and] take a photo.

one, two, three

(Dark)

End of Script

PART TWO: From the Interview

Sand in the Eye is a lecture about war, and terrorism, and the war on terrorism, and the use of film techniques as part of this war. In the interview, it became clear that Mroué's choice of the lecture genre to talk about the effects generated by these techniques is precise. The academic/non-academic distinctions that surround the genre are analogous to the fiction/non-fiction distinctions that beset the video materials that circulate in the name of terrorism and in the name of the war on terrorism. As a member of an audience, in whatever medium, we tend to think ourself able to distinguish between what is real and what is not, what is factual and what is not. For example, he says, the non-academic lecture is less "scientific" and more subjective than the academic—but is it? He asks, do we really think that Derrida is not being subjective? We tend to think that the academic lecture leaves a record that can be checked, but does evidence of preparation really mean that we are not being manipulated? Or is it a sign that that is exactly what is happening? If a non-academic lecture does not have a responsibility to sincerity, let alone veracity, and can lie to an audience guilt-free, does this mean that the academic lecture is always guilty? Or that the lack of responsibility guarantees a lack of guilt? And how do these questions relate to the ethics of the videos that circulate in the name of terrorism?

Mroué's performances nearly always place him directly in front of an audience, he says, so that he is challenged to provoke and risk himself in the face of the representations of himself in the script, for example, in the text above, as a potential Saladin. Considering whether or not this story actually happened is the moment the audience member begins to work on the possibilities for glitch. When the viewer of the lecture or the video begins to unsettle the generic distinctions that promise us ethical certitude, they enter glitch-mode. On the one hand, when we watch an execution video, the conventions of Hollywood set up expectations of the "real" and therefore the "true." A viewer could be thinking not only that they are more involved through the use of those conventions, but also that "this is a real occurrence of terrorism, and the death makes me feel bad." The effect generated makes us confident that we know how to respond. On the other hand, when we watch the drone footage, not only are we safely "at a distance," but the conventions of documentary can also lead us to think, "this is a real occurrence of the war against terrorism, and so, while it is horrible watching the deaths, it is a good thing to know the fight is going on." The effect generated again makes us confident that we know how to respond. Yet . . . the use of the kinds of techniques that Hollywood uses for realism should alert us to the manipulative quality of the execution video, which calls into question the effect that occurs. Just so, the drone footage comes from government sources with a vested interest in the fight should generate a concern with how far we can trust its effect on our responses.

When we try to maintain the effects of realist film and/or documented footage, we become highly susceptible to manipulation. In this state, Mroué suggests that another death happens. He says:

> There is another death that is happening outside the image that we don't see: it is actually our death as viewers—when we watch these images we die a little bit, each time we die a little. Every time we click on the video and watch it then we are doing the crime again, so it happens in the time of watching. It's not the past time, it's not the representation. It's actually this way: as if we the viewers, we are making the killing machine, we're making the killing machines every time we watch. This is why we should we should refuse to watch them because we don't want to participate. These videos are not meant to document, they are meant to be watched at one time or ten times. Whether it is the execution video or the drone "footage," they want to spread [their claim on reality] as a rumour everywhere. This way you cannot anymore avoid watching it or the temptation to peak, to be voyeur, yes? And by watching it then you are you making the killing machine go on. (Mroué 2018b)

The distinctions we thought we could make that guaranteed that we could trust the effects we felt to guide us to a responsible ethical position have been erased by this critical lecture, which glitches the academic/non-academic. Not that Mroué wants us to resolve that erasure. The work on glitching that erases distinctions makes us aware of the materiality of the technology, that it cannot be controlled by us, and that we need to learn it in as many of its contexts as are relevant to our ongoing lives. "Glitch" becomes here the practice of calling, under its name, diverse and massively complex sets of indefinable breakdowns at the electronic, software, hardware levels, so that each glitch is both a general category and a particular material unsettling. The distinctions we could make render us a de-individualized mass of people, manipulated by predictable effects, so these videos of death eliminate the power of affect at the heart of resistance. To sustain affect, the lecture is filled with vestiges of signs that hover around what is real and what is not, what is fictional and what is not, what is material and what is not. It makes present the way we might deal with being part of a mass audience for a technology that has the political effect of inactivating us and of voiding ethical response by claiming clarity for these distinctions. Instead, we are invited to work as collaborative individuals, to resist the voiding and its distinctions by retaining an attention to the glitch. The glitch happens because the materialities of the technologies at play are beyond our understandings of them, and outside the seamless readings of any distinctions: there is no shot/countershot.

The collaborative individual has a self that cannot be pinned down. To act collaboratively is to recognize that we can never know "other" people, let alone "other" things. This is the work of glitching, to be in the process of meeting the impossible-to-know and engaging with it. That process of enabling glitching can also be a refusal to watch these videos in the first place. Mroué notes:

> This is what I argue at the end of my script, to refuse as part of a resistance is something. And to be in a denial and an ignorance is something else. If you know what they are about and you refuse, but you know and you are conscious about what they are about and you are working . . . this is fine. But if you just make a denial, you don't want to know, then this is something else. (Mroué 2018b)

Working on erasure in filmmaking, working on enabling the glitch, is a choice to unsettle the conventions that bind us to normative ethical responses and allow the materiality of our interactions

with technology to generate affect and event. Glitching is a way of learning how a film technology can respond to emergent political structures, and how those structures can be shaped by emergent film practices.

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Rabih Mroué has had final editorial control of the script of this interview.

Notes

1. Several of Rabih Mroué's scripts are brought together in Mroué (2013). See in particular "Theater in Oblique," trans. Ziad Nawfal (250–57), an introduction to the performance "Looking for a Missing Employee" presented at Al-Madina Theater, Beirut, November 2003; and "Three Posters: Reflections on a Video-Performance" trans. Mona Abou Rayyan (302–15), initially performed with Elias Khoury, Ayloul Festival, Beirut, September 2000.

2. Mroué (2013c) says: "My early experiments with video came out of my experience working in a Lebanese television station in the early 1990s. The position I had at Future Television required me to perform a number of jobs including filming, editing and directing. This showed me how the media manipulates images to construct a particular image of reality. So I started to think about how to translate this technical expertise into a multimedia theatrical practice that would question the ideological roles assigned to images."

3. *The Pixelated Revolution* was co-produced by dOCUMENTA (13) in 2010 and won the Spalding Grey Award when performed in New York. The translated text by Ziad Nawfal, "The Pixelated Revolution," is found in Mroué (2013b, 387–93).

4. *Sand in the Eyes* was first produced by Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, as part of the project "100 Years of Present", funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media in Germany. Co-production with the Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden.

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