Boundary Crossings { object | exhibition | installation }

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Abstract

A documentary media maker is one who observes the world, decides what to record using a variety of tools, grasps the meaning of what has been recorded, and finds a structure that conveys a cohesive story with a particular relationship to the historical world.

The work described in this thesis provides a basis for understanding documentary construction as a process of crossing boundaries: what we create is defined similarly by borders and interiors, each with their own function and value. I examine the contours of the experience of observing events in the social-historical world and sharing traces of those events with others.

Boundary crossings are examined through the analysis of three projects:

Hawt Couch, an object that shares its memory of past events;

Provocative Objects, an exhibition and exhibition catalog that interrogates the limitations of traditional documentation; and

This Place in a Space, an installation offering visitors the opportunity to experience one or both sides of the objective/subjective divide.

Using a framework encompassing issues of immersion, computational media, and boundary crossings, each project is contextualized with connections to dynamic media, design, cinema, narratology, philosophy, and installation art.

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Jim Campbell: *Hallucination,* 1990
Video image, black & white video camera, 50-in. rear projection video monitor, laser disc players, custom electronics, © Jim Campbell, courtesy of the artist

Preface

Preface

The afternoon I became engulfed in flames

Once upon a time I lived in San Francisco. On a cool and windy day in 1990, I went with a friend to see *Bay Area Media,* an exhibition of new media art at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMoMA) curated by Robert Riley.[1] Little did I know at the time, it was to become a landmark exhibition, helping to legitimize the new media art movement, and a formative experience for me that planted the seeds that lead, in part, to where I stand today.

Strolling through the exhibition with no specific idea of what to expect, I came upon an installation by Jim Campbell titled *Hallucination.*[2] On a large rear projection video monitor I could see myself reflected in the black and white image of the surveillance camera's gaze. Just as I was about to turn to my friend Eric[3] to say something along the lines of "what's the big deal?" I was engulfed by flames. I watched my doppelgänger in the electronic reflection burn up in vivid color, along with the sound of crackling fire. It was like no other piece I had ever experienced in a museum. It was immersive, yet at the same time I was aware of the artifice of the experience. I stayed around for a while watching how people would interact with the piece when their double on the monitor was suddenly toasted like a marshmallow over an open fire.

A woman would occasionally appear in the video reflection, sometimes she observed the environment passively, other times she would interact with the environment. The experience of seeing her on the monitor the first time and turning, expecting to see the real person behind me, then realizing she was only an apparition in the video was uncanny, triggering a mild sense of anxiety as well as a philosophical inquiry: what was going on here on a metaphorical and theoretical level?

1. The exhibition ran from March 15 to May 13, 1990 and included work by Bill Fontana, Doug Hall, Paul Kos, Tony Labat, Lynn Hershman, Chip Lord, Mickey McGowan, and Alan Rath. Lynn Hershman's *Deep Contact* also stood out, inviting me to touch an image of the guide who appeared on a touch sensitive computer screen, but since it involved actual touch, I found it less immersive. For some reason touching the computer monitor made me all too aware of the surface tension between myself as participant and the guide as a virtual presence. See: *Bay Area Media,* San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, exhibition catalog, 1990.

2. Jim Campbell created the experience with a large screen rear projection video monitor, a video camera, custom image processing, custom electronics, two videodisk players, and a Macintosh computer. He used HyperCard and a Macintosh simply as a sequencer; the heavy lifting had to be accomplished with custom electronics and image processing code. See: "Hallucination," *JimCampbell.tv*, web site, http://www.jimcampbell.tv/portfolio/installations/hallucination/ (accessed January 12, 2011).

3. A designer, programmer, and cinephile, Eric is someone who would have spent more of his time programming if I did not pull him away from work to fly kites on Ocean Beach, catch a movie once in a while, or visit a museum exhibition. Eric was well read and a thoughtful critic with a keen mind, which made him the perfect museum-going partner.

After our journey through the exhibition, Eric suggested we catch the California Street cable car down to the financial district. The familiar smell of burning pine produced by the track brakes[4] provided the perfect accompaniment to the sensation of the cool frizzle[5] on my face as I worked through my response to *Hallucination* in my head. The din of fog horns bellowing in the distance mixed with the raspy sound of the cable car as it was pulled by the underground cable along the tracks, accompanied by an occasional ring of the cable car's vintage bell. Moments like this reminded me why I loved the city of seven hills.[6] After getting off the cable car we walked to the corner of Columbus and Pacific, the location of Brandy Ho's,[7] one of our favorite restaurants located just a few blocks away from City Lights Books,[8] where we would end up after dinner, spending a couple of hours browsing through the art, cinema, and commodity aesthetics sections.

Over the cold noodle salad, chicken in black bean sauce, and crispy fried dumplings, we talked about the immersion we experienced. Eric had a penchant for sensing trends. We often engaged in discussions about what was going on in the movies or exhibitions we saw. This was a time before the World Wide Web,[9] e-mail was the killer app, and Apple's HyperCard[10] was most people's introduction to the hyperlink. Personal computers of the day only provided a tiny window onto their own hard drive, they were devices used mostly for word processing, spreadsheets, and e-mail, or a graphical application (if you were lucky enough to have a Macintosh or a fancy Unix workstation). Alan Kay's

4. "The Brakes," San Francisco Cable Car Museum, web page, http://www.cablecarmuseum.org/the-brakes.html (accessed April 2, 2011).

5. While frizzle is often used to describe the formation of an object into small, crisp curls, it can also refer to the mix of fog and drizzle.

6. The seven hills of San Francisco refers to Telegraph Hill, Nob Hill, Russian Hill, Rincon Hill, Mount Sutro, Twin Peaks, and Mount Davidson, see Tom Graham, "City of Hills," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, November 7, 2004, http://t.co/3giaz6k (accessed October 2, 2010).

7. Brandy Ho's was founded in 1980 and became famous for authentic hot and spicy Hunan food without MSG, http://www.brandyhos.com

8. City Lights is a landmark bookstore and publisher that specializes in literature, the arts, and progressive politics. It was founded in 1953 by poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Peter D. Martin, http://www.citylights.com

9. Between 1989 and 1991, Tim Berners-Lee developed the first Web browser at CERN, see Wikipedia contributors, "Tim Berners-Lee," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_Berners-Lee (accessed October 2, 2010).

10. Wikipedia contributors, "HyperCard," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HyperCard, (accessed October 2, 2010).

Jim Campbell: *Hallucination,* 1990

Jim Campbell: *Hallucination,* 1990
Black & white video camera, 50-in. rear projection video monitor, laser disc players, custom electronics, © Jim Campbell, courtesy of the artist

vision of the Dynabook,[11] a laptop computer connected to a global network like the web of today, had yet to be realized. In this pre-web context we discussed how our experience of *Hallucination* was redefining our position as viewers of new media art.

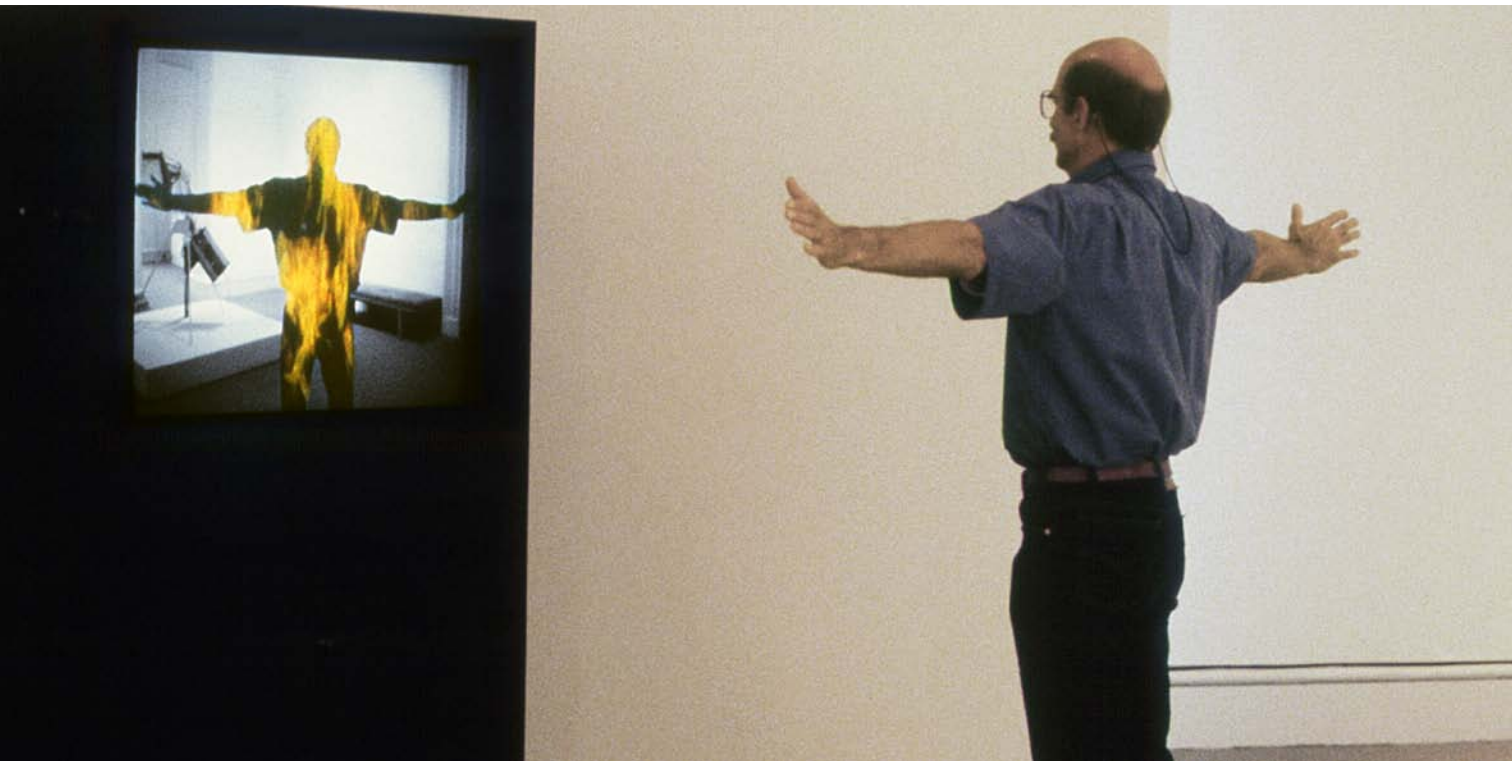
Hallucination stood out for us because it moved beyond the boundaries of the installation and video art we had seen and into a realm combining participant immersion and computation.[12] As a result, Campbell achieved a high level of engagement by embedding us in the materials of the piece, both as actors and observers interconnected in the process of production. This was a new media experience, enabled by a computational component (performing the image processing required to composite the flames onto the moving bodies in the video image), and it worked without a mechanical interface. It only required our bodies to wander into the space to draw us in.

Janine Marchessault wrote that the illusion of immersion in *Hallucination,* "depends not on eliding the spectator but on masking her invisibility with another invisibility. *Hallucination* enacts this process through the presence of one more viewer."[13] It was during my conversation with Eric that I may have realized what exactly it was that differentiated new and old media: new media uses software as a medium and data as material. *Hallucination* struck a chord that continues to resonate

11. Wikipedia contributors, "Dynabook," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dynabook (accessed October 2, 2010).

12. *Hallucination* was not the first interactive art piece to incorporate the visitor into the work itself, although it was the first I had witnessed personally and certainly among the earliest examples that had a significant computational component.

13. Janine Marchessault, "Incorporating the Gaze: Interactive Video and Other Death Drives," *Parachute* 65 (Winter 1992), pp. 23-28.



with me. Robert Riley, the curator of *Bay Area Media,* wrote appropriately,

> My measure of art is seduction, when you're absolutely convinced by the authority of a work that this is the way things are. There are fundamental changes in the way you see the world after looking at the artwork. It is the most ultimate exchange of humanity, wisdom and intellect that we have.[14]

My experience with *Hallucination* changed the way I see the world. In that fire, I saw media convergence and all its implications. Notions of hypermedia and the computer as a medium, our connection with computational objects, and new media art, as both substrate and form, came together in that single moment of combustion. The reverberations of experiencing *Hallucination* encouraged me to study media production at Film Arts Foundation, City College of San Francisco, and the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC). There was synergy with my work at Apple, and I took on a new role as a regional multimedia evangelist, producing a variety of videos and multi-image slide presentations for internal use. I was on a path moving away from the Unix and networking support I had been doing, crossing the boundary from technologist to media maker.[15]

A short while after my experience with *Hallucination* I visited Apple's Advanced Technology Group in Cupertino. I saw a tiny postage-stamp

14. Robert Riley, "Voices Lecture Series," Gallery 400, program notes, University of Illinois at Chicago, January 14, 2002, http://www.uic.edu/aa/college/gallery400/02_spring2002/02_spring2002-v01.htm (accessed October 1, 2010).

15. I have maintained dual citizenship and often cross the boundary between disciplines and perspectives.

sized movie of Apple's 1984 commercial[16] playing on the Macintosh screen. This was the technology Apple eventually released as QuickTime at the end of 1991, a significant technological breakthrough. It must have been the multiplicative effect of having seen *Hallucination,* producing videos using the analog technology of the day, and now watching a movie play on the computer screen and putting it all together: I was watching the future of cinema and dynamic media flash before my eyes inside a tiny window on a Macintosh screen.

QuickTime was described by the technical folks not as a video player, but as "a software infrastructure for working with time-based media." There was nothing about the architecture that limited the resolution or quality of the video, only the power of the processor. QuickTime could handle multiple tracks of video, audio, images, timecode, metadata, pretty much any data stream. QuickTime made possible a renaissance of audiovisual applications on the Macintosh, digital audio workstations and non-linear video editors rapidly transformed sound and film editing from a mechanical process using tools like flatbed editing tables[17] to a process taking place in the protean medium of the computer. I began to think about computers less as tools and more as a medium. While *Hallucination* had led me to this realization in the abstract, QuickTime had shown me that the idea was practical and real. Taking Moore's Law[177] into consideration, it was evident that in just a matter of time, personal computers would be handling full-quality, high-resolution video and enabling the emergence of new forms of time-based media.

Eventually I moved to Boston to accept a one year teaching position at the MIT Media Laboratory, where I taught video production and editing in an atelier environment.[188] This was followed by graduate studies at the lab in the Interactive Cinema Group. After my time at MIT I worked on *The East Village*,[19] a start-up experimenting with web-based entertainment, telling stories using a mix of media (photos, text, music sound track and video "micro-dramas") that some people dubbed "cyber-soap operas" and for a while in 1996 (ancient times by Internet standards) it was a popular property on Time Warner's Pathfinder web site. Combining the computers, the web, and storytelling held a lot of promise, but it was particularly difficult to build an audience given the limited access to broadband connections at the time.

Later, after spending several years working as a Design Lead for a management consulting firm advising clients building digital businesses during the dot.com boom, I returned to filmmaking, working in a variety of roles as producer, director, cinematographer, and editor. During this time I began teaching video production courses. Which brings us to the present. As a student in the Dynamic Media Institute I've had the opportunity to expand my creative practice and contextualize my work. And it all started the afternoon I became engulfed in flames.

16. Apple's classic 1984 commercial can be seen on YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R706isyDrqI (accessed October 10, 2010).

17. Moore's law is named after Gordon E. Moore, a co-founder of Intel, who first described it in a 1965 paper observing a trend in integrated circuit fabrication in which the number of transistors doubles approximately every two years (originally stated as one year). The capabilities of computing hardware and electronic devices closely tracks Moore's law, including processor speed, memory capacity, and the number of pixels in digital cameras. Moore's law is useful in making predictions in terms of computing capabilities, see: Gordon E. Moore, "Cramming more components onto integrated circuits," *Electronics* 38:8, April 19, 1965; Dan G. Hutcheson, "Moore's Law: The History and Economics of an Observation that Changed the World," *The Electrochemical Society INTERFACE* 14:1 (Spring 2005) pp. 17-21.

18. My perspective on the method of teaching predominant at the Media Lab is a hybrid form of instruction modeled after the traditional art studio schools of Europe and updated with ideas from the Bauhaus, Jean Piaget, and Seymour Papert. Taking its name from the French word for artist's studio, a traditional atelier consists of an artist working with a small number of students to train them in artistic practice. In the case of the Media Lab, each research group within the lab consists of a professor, distinguished in their research area, working with a small number of students. The students, working as research assistants on projects within the context of the professor's research, while also taking a series of project-oriented classes to build skills and techniques they can apply to their own work leading to a masters or doctorate degree.

19. Edward Rothstein, "The Web is a star in soap operas that appear on it," *The New York Times,* May 13, 1996, http://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/13/business/technology-connections-the-web-is-a-star-in-soap-operas-that-appear-on-it.html (accessed October 10, 2010).

Next page:

Jim Campbell: *Hallucination,* 1990
Detail of video image

Photograph made within the installation
Bharti Kher: *Reveal the secrets that you seek,* 2011
Set of 27 shattered mirrors, golden frames, variable dimensions,
Paris Delhi Bombay, Centre Pompidou, Paris, August 1, 2011

Introduction

Introduction

Living in a time of change

We humans, who are oh so human, hunting game, picking berries, making artifacts, and telling stories, have always lived in a time of change as a result of the things we do. No matter how much we may long for a simpler time, there is no way any of us can step into the same river twice.

Much of the change we encounter is the result of the tools we make as we attempt to place our subjective experience, our awareness, outside of ourselves. We do this in order to relate to other humans, to bridge the boundary between each of us, and perhaps an alien or two.

We have collected a deep and rich history of expressing our anxiety over change and boundary crossings. This thesis is no exception: the fact the case studies don't present a single, structured, linear argument on the surface reflects this anxiety. The primary medium I choose for my creative work, documentary film, is undergoing change more rapidly than I can make sense of it. Perhaps this has something to do with the end of the grand narratives and the postmodern emphasis on subjective experience. Christopher Crouch writes,

> We are connected by intellectual threads not only to what is happening around us, but also with what happened in the past, and the way that it colors the present. History undergoes constant and continual revision by all cultures.[1]

1. Christopher Crouch, *Modernism in Art, Design and Architecture,* Macmillan, 1999.

The seeds of this thesis were planted a long time ago when I first read Ted Nelson's *Literary Machines,* Sherry Turkle's *The Second Self*, and Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema.* Nelson imagined the computer as a medium that would connect all the lexia of human literature in a

hyperlinked universe. Turkle explored how our relationship to objects changes when these objects are embedded with computation and found that as a result, we tend to endow them with agency.

Youngblood imagined cinema transformed in response to technological and political changes into synaesthetic cinema[2] that would "transcend the restrictions of drama, story, and plot,"[3] and thus freed, would more closely mirror the artist's consciousness. For Youngblood cinema was a continuum that was neither subjective, objective, nor non-objective, but a synthesis of the three he called "extra-objective," meaning "the simultaneous perception of harmonic opposites."[4]

Youngblood predicted that cinema would alter and enhance human perception, approaching the holy grail of communication: conveying human consciousness. Each of these books profoundly influenced my perspectives on media and design. While I'm in the middle of the changes under my analysis, it's impossible to piece together a coherent story. As I trace a linear path, contours emerge gradually, a snapshot comes into sight, a process of becoming revealed through the recounting of narratives that eventually take the form of this thesis document.

Along with Nelson, Turkle, and Youngblood, I've been influenced by many thinkers along the way. Plato wrote of his anxiety over the transition from oral culture to literate culture.[5] Friedrich Nietzsche killed our most sacred cow.[6] Jacques Derrida disassembled several philosophical systems with the glee of the Cheshire Cat.[7] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari overhauled our model of culture and knowledge and replaced

2. Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema,* E. P. Dutton, 1970, http://www.vasulka.org/Kitchen/PDF_ExpandedCinema/book.pdf (accessed August 15, 2008), pp. 346-351.

3. Ibid, p. 77.

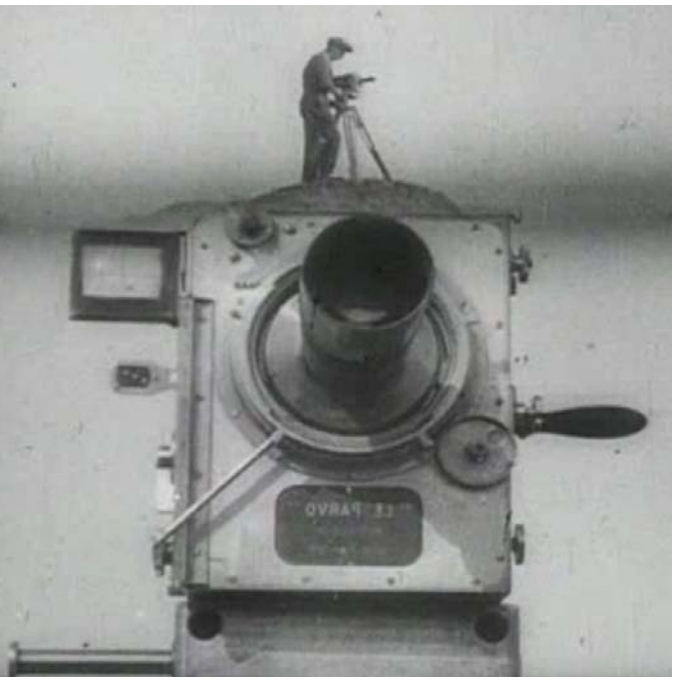
4. Ibid, p. 81.

5. E. Douka Kabitoglou, *Plato and the English Romantics,* Routledge, 1990.

6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* Walter Kaufmann, Trans., Vintage Books, 1974.

7. Jack Reynolds, "Jacques Derrida," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* January, 12 2010, http://www.iep.utm.edu/derrida/ (accessed September 20, 2010).

Afternoon commuters
August 4, 2011, La Défense station platform, Paris



it with the rhizome.[8] Francis Fukuyama declared the end of grand narratives,[9] leaving us adrift in a postmodern soup, served chilled by Jean-Francois Lyotard.[10] Edmund Carpenter realized that each medium offers a different perspective on reality.[11] Marshall McLuhan held up a mirror and showed us that media is an extension of ourselves.[12]

In the developed world, most of us live attached (psychologically and metaphorically) to our mobile communication devices. For many of us they have become fetish objects, extensions of ourselves, tools enabling us to cross the boundaries of space and time. Our communication devices provide a constant infusion equivalent to a drug-like substance, much like the Soma[13] Aldous Huxley envisioned.[14] No wonder we worry about the transition of what remains of our literate culture as we are engulfed by digital media, a condition for which we don't yet have a good name. Our various forms of media, those which we create to relate to other humans, are both a source of comfort and anxiety.

It is in this context of changes that I write. I've spent my adult life living in urban spaces (San Francisco, New York, Boston), wrapped in a mesh of mass transit, the fabric of technological change, capitalism, and global trade. In this environment I observe the materials of modern communication: mobile devices, touch screens, lighted signs, neon glow, reflections of traffic lights on wet streets after a rain storm, flashing LEDs, beeping, buzzing, fragments of conversions, the sounds of cars, trucks, airplanes in motion, the pulse of ideas, concepts, notions, obsessions, desire. In sum, the patterns of energy of human life

9. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, 1992.

8. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome," *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* Brian Massumi, Trans., University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 3-25.

10. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Trans., Manchester University Press, 1986.

11. "Each medium […] communicates a unique aspect of reality […] a medium is not simply an envelope that carries any letter; it is itself a major part of that message," see: Edmund Carpenter, "The New Languages," *Explorations in Communication,* Edmund Carpenter & Marshall McLuhan, Eds., Beacon Press, 1960, pp. 162-179.

12. McLuhan wrote, "The medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology," see: Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man,* McGraw-Hill, 1964, p. 7.

13. Soma is the pleasure drug of the future described in Aldous Huxley's 1932 novel, *Brave New World*, the term is used as a brand name for Carisoprodol, a muscle relaxing drug, and also refers to San Francisco's South of Market (SoMa) area with live/work spaces, trendy restaurants, and nightclubs.

14. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World,* Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006.

Man With a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, 1929)
This self-reflexive documentary presents a view of the people and machinery of modern urban life in several Soviet cities. The range of cinematic techniques is breathtaking: double exposure, fast and slow motion, tracking shots, freeze frames, jump cuts, split screens, unusual angles, extreme close-ups, stop motion, etc. The film is an important milestone in cinema history both in terms of cinematic language virtuosity and anticipating works with multiple subjectivities and database narratives. Frame enlargements, public domain.

itself emerge as a global organism with each node, each cell, a distinct and unique consciousness moving along a path in search of its destiny. These patterns, and the traces left behind, are a source of fascination for me as I observe the world through the lens of my camera, my window onto this world.

With my camera, as a documentary maker, I strive to visualize these traces, always reminded of Plato's cave.[15] How does our use of documentary media change our representation of an experience (which originally took place over a much longer time frame)? What happens when we throw in computation? Aaron Koblin's work with flight patterns[16] comes to mind as something using time in a computational context to reveal patterns we would otherwise not see, much as Dziga Vertov did in his 1929 film, *Man with a Movie Camera.* Vertov wrote in a 1923 manifesto, "I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it."[17] In 1929 Vertov explained,

> Kino-eye = kino-seeing (I see through the camera) + kino-writing (I write on film with the camera) + kino-organization (I edit) . . . Kino-Eye means the conquest of space, the visual linkage of people throughout the entire world based on the continuous exchange of visible fact . . . Kino-Eye is the possibility of seeing life processes in any temporal order or at any speed . . . Kino-Eye uses every possible means in montage, comparing and linking all points of the universe in any temporal order, breaking, when necessary, all the laws and conventions of film construction.[18]

For Vertov, the camera was an extension of the eye, an extension of human perception. Joseph Schaub suggests Vertov was the first cyborg,

15. Plato's allegory of the cave describes a group of prisoners who are chained to the wall of a cave, facing a blank wall. They watch the shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of a fire behind them. The shadows are as close as these prisoners will ever get to viewing reality. For Plato, a philosopher is someone who comes to understand that the shadows on the wall do not make up reality, what we see is essentially an illusion, it follows that our media technologies enable us to record reflections of reality, while reality itself always remains elusive. See: Thomas Brickhouse, "Plato," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* May 9, 2009, http://www.iep.utm.edu/plato/ (accessed September 20, 2010).

16. Aaron Koblin, "Flight Patterns," web page, http://www.aaronkoblin.com/work/flightpatterns/ (accessed September 20, 2010).

17. Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The writings of Dziga Vertov,* Kevin O'Brien, Trans., University of California Press, 1984, p. 17.

18. Ibid, p. 87.

"Kino-eye, then, is a cyborg construction that contains multiple positions for the production of film meaning."[19] Today, with so many of us carrying around mobile devices that are both camera and screen, we've closed the loop on Vertov's vision of a "linkage of people throughout the entire world based on the continuous exchange of visible fact," changing the notion of boundaries in crucial ways. As a documentary maker I strive to make the invisible visible, whether it's a pattern, a process, a situation, or an emotional insight. The confluence of new and old media technologies are expanding our knowledge of the world and helping us see from perspectives that we could not have seen otherwise. Vertov's films and writings were prescient and inspire an interest in media technology of the past, present, and future. What is the nature of the boundaries we bridge between what we see and what we share with others?

19. Joseph Christopher Schaub, "Presenting the Cyborg's Futurist Past: An Analysis of Dziga Vertov's Kino-Eye," *The Cyberpunk Project,* 1998, http://project.cyberpunk.ru/idb/cyborg_futurist_past.html (accessed February 3, 2008).

Boundaries, borders, and narrative

A boundary exists whenever an entity is circumscribed from its surroundings. For example, a boundary (border) separates the interior of a gallery from its exterior. We can experience boundaries in the form of surfaces (e.g., a video screen) which demarcate a physical exterior and a virtual interiority. A boundary demarcates the intangible space between a person and an object (e.g., an iPhone). Borders that separate political states are often a site of transgression. Events have temporal boundaries. Whether indeterminate or determinate; natural or artificial; real or virtual; accepted or contested; every object has a boundary. Abstract concepts have boundaries that are more difficult to define, often leading to endless philosophical debates, but the boundaries are there, somewhere.[20]

The Proto-Indo-European (PIE)[21] base of the word *border* is bherdh-, which means *to cut.*[22] The PIE base for *boundary* is bhendh-, meaning *to bind.*[23] A border divides entities into distinct units. But this does not imply anything about the ontological status[24] of these units. They are merely divided. On the other hand, a boundary adds a special nuance: the distinct and divided units have the ontological status of being bound within those units. The units are tied together with the concept of cohesion. Communications professor Audrey Kali shared with me a delightful scenario to illuminate the nuance that differentiates boundaries and borders:

> Say there is a herd of goats out in a pasture, and I put a fence up between them and create a border. They are still part of the same herd of goats, but they are divided with a border. Nothing about the essence of that herd has changed. Take that same herd of goats out in a pasture, and I put a fence up between them and want to create a boundary. This means I want to instill in those units of divided goats, a sense of cohesion in each of their herds, and I want them to want to keep the other goats out. I want them to be bound to one another – that is the ontology I want to create. So, I put special pheromones on the goats – one type for those on one side of the fence and another type for those on the other side of the fence. The goats with pheromone "A"

20. Achille Varzi, "Boundary," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Edward N. Zalta Ed., http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/boundary/ (accessed October 21, 2011).

21. The Proto-Indo-European language (PIE) is the reconstructed common ancestor of the Indo-European languages, spoken by the Proto-Indo-Europeans. The existence of such a language has been accepted by linguists for over a century, and reconstruction is far advanced and quite detailed, see: Benjamin W. Fortson, IV, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction*, John Wiley & Sons, 2011.

22. *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed., J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, Eds., Clarendon Press, 1991.

23. Ibid.

24. A language ontology is the concepts underlying and being coded by linguistic signs along with the representation (or model) of these concepts and their interrelationships, Audrey Kali illuminated these concepts via personal correspondence, November 5, 2011.

Musée du quai Branly
Collections area and reflection from vitrine, Paris, August 3, 2011

> will not want to be around the goats with pheromone "B". Thus, I've created a boundary between the goats, and even if I remove the fence (the border), they will not want to violate the other herd's boundary. [25]

A border-crossing is a trespass, while a boundary-crossing is a transgression. Negotiating border and boundary crossings, redefining boundaries, challenging borders, are essential activities in art, communication, and design.

One way we bring cohesion to our experiences is through narrative, a sequence of events (which may be fictional or non-fictional). The word derives from the Latin verb *narrare,* meaning "to recount," with origins that can be traced back to the PIE root gnō-, meaning "to know."[26] H. Porter Abbott emphasizes that narrative is found throughout the ordinary course of our lives,

> Narrative is the principal way in which our species organizes its understanding of time. This would seem to be the fundamental gift of narrative with

25. Audrey Kali, personal correspondence, November 5, 2011. For further elaboration on the concept of boundaries, see: Roberto Casati and Achille C. Varzi, *Parts and Places: The structures of spatial representation,* The MIT Press, 1999.

26. *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed., J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, Eds., Clarendon Press, 1991.

the greatest range of benefits. And it certainly makes evolutionary sense. As we are the only species on earth with both language and a conscious awareness of the passage of time, it stands to reason that we would have a mechanism for expressing this awareness.[27]

Psychologist Jerome Bruner explains that narrative deals with the "vicissitudes of human intentions"[28] and is a "performance of meaning"[29] in which the {reader|viewer|listener} participates in a dance with the {writer|media maker|storyteller} in a cultural context constructing meaning through a process of translation and interpretation, creating something that is more than exists in the text itself.[30]

Through narratives we articulate our sense of self through time or in actions,[31] each framed within ontological discourses that describe our individual ways of reasoning about and imagining our place in the world, for which there exists an indeterminate boundary between ourselves and others, as well as with ourselves and the world. Monica Lindgren & Nils Wåhlin have studied boundary-crossing individuals in the context of people who frequently change their organizational affiliation.[32] They argue from a social constructionist[33] perspective that our identities are not simply a collection of stable categories like "profession" or "gender" as inscribed by political, cultural, and economic institutions. Instead, identity construction is an ongoing process in which our reflection on life events and the pattern of these events shape the contours of our identities.

People are constructed through the stories they tell themselves and to others about their own history. Likewise, narratives of a social group help constitute the world in which it functions as a collective entity, however, the narratives need not be literal and totalizing (keeping others out), they can also be open-ended and ambiguous (inviting others in). The building blocks of collective experiences (which we share with

27. H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative,* Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 3.

28. Jerome Bruner, "Two Modes of Thought," *Actual Minds, Possible Words,* Harvard University Press, 1986, pp. 17-18.

29. Ibid, p. 25.

30. Ibid, p. 33.

31. Mark Bracher, *Social Symptoms of Identity Needs,* Karnac Books, 2009, p. 23.

32. Monica Lindgren & Nils Wåhlin, "Identity construction among boundary-crossing individuals," *Scandinavian Journal of Management* 17:3 (September 2001), pp. 357-377, doi:10.1016/S0956-5221(99)00041-X

33. Social constructivism offers an alternative to positivism and empiricism (the assumption that nature is revealed to us through observation and what we perceive is what exists). Social constructivists question if our categories are actual reflections of nature. If our understanding of the world does not derive from nature "as it really is" then where does it come from? Social constructionists would say knowledge and learning occurs in the context of community. We construct knowledge through social interactions and enculturation during which our shared versions of the world are constructed, humans are seen as individual-in-social action, see: Vivien Burr, *Social Constructionism,* 2nd. ed., Routledge, 2003, pp. 4-23; and Chapter 6, "Social Constructivism," Robert H. Jackson and Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

each other and individually as stories) are the foundation of social cohesion. Rather than a single, totalizing narrative, social cohesion is best understood in terms of Karl Popper's model of three interconnected conceptual spheres,

> . . . first, the world of physical objects or of physical states; secondly, the world of states of consciousness, or of mental states, or perhaps of behavioral dispositions to act; and thirdly, the world of objective contents of thought, especially of scientific and poetic thoughts and of works of art.[34]

34. Karl R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach,* Revised ed., Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 106.

Popper's objective contents of thought are the abstract information patterns of social action, communication, and art. The Internet, World Wide Web, and the notion of cyberspace constitute the contemporary boundaries and information patterns we negotiate, media scholar Daniel Downes writes,

> Cyberspace [...] provides maps for exploring the boundaries of symbolic and perceptual experience. This is the allure of Plato—that we can engage in some pure and essential form of communication (commercial activity, learning, falling in love) without the mess of bodies. In fact, precisely because this is not the case, cyberspace remains a useful metaphor. It is spatial—we create spaces and opportunities to engage in acts of communication. Through these, we can think more reflexively about issues pertaining to personal and collective identity, society, and mediation.[35]

35. Daniel M. Downes, *Interactive Realism: The Poetics of Cyberspace,* McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005, p. 141.

Crossing boundaries creates space for new intellectual and structural configurations. It creates new opportunities for cross-cultural or cross-discipline collaboration, cooperation, and understanding, with the potential of creating more holistic theory, expanded frameworks, and new practices.

This thesis reflects the influence of a wide range of disciplines and traditions that shape my professional identity and influence my creative practice, drawing from visual communication,[36] new media,[37] instal-

36. For a perspective of visual communication influenced by anthropology, see: Sol Worth, *Studying Visual Communication,* Larry Gross, Ed., University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.

37. An excellent survey of the foundations of new media is: Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort, Eds., *The New Media Reader,* The MIT Press, 2003.

lation art,[38] documentary film,[39] and documenting art.[40] The fact that I could draw from such an eclectic repertoire was one reason I was attracted to the Dynamic Media Institute as the right place to pursue a MFA. The interdisciplinary approach, the openness of the curriculum, stood in contrast with the academic imperialism and turf wars that exist between departmental divisions at other institutions. My approach to dynamic media practice requires mastery in a variety of disciplines upon which new and emerging media forms depend.

As a student at the Dynamic Media Institute I've been offered an opportunity to develop understanding and insights into deeper truths which can only be revealed through the interplay of multiple disciplines and approaches to art and design. In the end, stories, design, and art are about crossing boundaries in order to bring about conceptual innovation (art), solve a problem (design), or bridge cultural divides (storytelling). I see these three as part of a larger whole of creative endeavors. I have trouble seeing distinct boundaries between them, for I have crossed them time and time again, blurring their distinctions in my model of the world.

Reality of the movie moving from reality to the camera

Documentary is both a methodology and medium we can use to observe social reality and tell a story about our subjects, through their activities, as sociologist Jack Katz writes, "create the ongoing character of particular social places and practices."[41] Bill Nichols adds, "At the heart of documentary is less a story and its imaginary world than an argument about the historical world."[42] With both the means of recording and editing video in the hands of more people than ever before, videography is rapidly moving beyond professional documentary makers and becoming part of everyday life for anyone coming of age in the twenty-first century.

Documentary construction[43] encompasses an ensemble of processes and technologies for capturing images, recording audio, structuring materials through editing, and presenting the result as a linear video or a component of a computational media experience. Documentary construction is both an array of independent components that can be put into action, and a process used within an organization of social actors that include institutions, filmmakers, craftspeople, and subjects to accomplish the production of a linear video or computational media object. This is accomplished following a set of strategies that include research, interaction with subjects, locations, and environmental constraints (e.g., weather, lighting, noise, institutional restrictions).

As media technologies become a pervasive factor in the social context, the methods of observing and creating meaning with digital video has evolved into a dynamic process that's part of the fabric of everyday life. The invisible fourth wall[44] of traditional theater and film[45] has given

38. A survey of the history and critical issues of installation art is provided by: Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* Tate Publishing, 2005; and Mark Rosenthal, *Understanding Installation Art: from Duchamp to Holzer*, Prestel Publishing, 2003.

39. A survey of the history and critical issues of documentary film is provided by: Patricia Aufderheide, *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford University Press, 2007; Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film,* 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 1993; Jack C. Ellis & Betsy A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film,* Continuum International, 2005; and Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary,* 2nd ed., Indiana University Press, 2011.

40. For discussions of documenting art, see: Martha Buskirk, "Contingent Object," in *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art*, The MIT Press, 2003; Caitlin Jones and Lizzie Muller, "Between Real and Ideal: Documenting Media Art," *Leonardo* 41:4 (August 2008), pp. 418-419; and Gaby Wijers, "Video Documentation of Installations," *Inside Installations: Preservation and Presentation of Installation Art,* Netherlands Media Art Institute, 2007, http://www.inside-installations.org (accessed June 5, 2010).

41. Jack Katz, "Ethnography's Warrants," *Sociological Methods & Research* 25:4 (1997), p. 414.

42. Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and concepts in documentary,* Indiana University Press, 1991.

43. I borrow the term "documentary construction" from: Barbara Barry, "Mindful Documentary," Ph.D. Thesis, Dept. of Architecture, Program In Media Arts and Sciences, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2005, http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/32497 (accessed August 14, 2008).

44. Elizabeth S. Bell, *Theories of Performance,* Sage Publications, 2008, p. 203.

45. Barry Hampe, *Making Documentary Films and Reality Videos*, Henry Holt, 1997.

way to more a fluid, active context between subject and filmmaker. The camera has become an actor, the subject's activities and the process of observation flow in both directions: in front of, and behind the camera. Documentary construction has deep roots in the traditions of photography as scientific inscription, cinema as entertainment, propaganda, magic, and ethnography as a methodical observation of the social world. Along with its use as art, entertainment, and education, documentary is also used as a research tool in the social sciences and design.[46]

Innovative filmmakers who broke from the dominant design paradigm[47] of their time and still influence us today include Robert Flaherty (1884–1951), Dziga Vertov (1896–1954), and Esfir Schub (1894–1959). Flaherty created the first ethnographic film with *Nanook of the North* (1922), inspiring a wave of documentary filmmakers as explorers of the social reality. Dziga Vertov developed a style of realistic filmmaking he called "kino-pravda," later translated as cinéma vérité by ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch. Rouch used the term to describe the technique he and sociologist Edgar Morin used in *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961)[48] to present a truthful and sometimes intimate snapshot of Parisian life. *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929)[49] is widely regarded as Vertov's masterpiece presenting an extensive encyclopedia of cinematic techniques that we are still learning from today.[50] Schub pioneered the compilation film with *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927)[51] and later she became the first filmmaker to use sync-sound interviews in *Komsomol is the Chief of Electrification* (1932),[52] now a cornerstone of contemporary documentary practice. These filmmakers each had a unique approach, furthermore, what they all had in com-

46. Brenda Laurel, Ed., *Design Research: Methods and Perspectives*, The MIT Press, 2003.

47. The dominant design paradigm refers to the phenomenon that inventions and innovation at first flourish as many different designs before a dominant design emerges in the marketplace. The framework can also be applied to explain the process of aesthetic innovations and the establishment of mainstream aesthetics, see: James M. Utterback, *Mastering the Dynamics of Innovation,* Harvard Business School Press, 1996.

48. French title: *Chronique d'un été*

49. Russian title: *Chelovek s kinoapparatom*

50. Lev Manovich uses *Man With a Movie Camera* as a guide to the language of new media, see: Lev Manovich, "Prologue: Vertov's Dataset," *The Language of New Media,* Leonardo Books, The MIT Press, 2001, pp. xiv-xxxvi.

51. Russian title, *Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*

52. a.k.a. *Komsomol: Patron of Electrification,* Russian title: *KSHE / Komsomolya - shef elektrifikatsii*

Les and Ricky
Documentary filmmaker Les Blank records a conversation with fellow documentarian Richard Leacock, Halibut Point, Massachusetts, July, 22, 2001

Jean Rouch, Marceline Loridan Ivens, and Edgar Morin in *Chronicle of a Summer* (Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, 1961)
Frame enlargement, © Icarus Films, New York

mon was the goal to portray reality on film as truthfully as possible (within their own ideological framework), setting the foundations for both the ethos and techniques of documentary filmmaking that are with us today. One of the crucial boundary conditions concerning documentary filmmakers has been how much should they interfere with the profimic events they record with their camera.

Direct cinema filmmakers believe that passive observation offers us the best chance to experience the unvarnished truth, to capture what filmmaker Richard Leacock described as "the feeling of being there."[53] The direct cinema filmmakers wanted to avoid the excesses of the expository films made in the 1930s and 1940s such as *The Plow That Broke The Plains* (Pare Lorentz, 1934) and *Night Mail* (Harry Watt & Basil Wright, 1936). Examples of films made with the direct cinema ethos include *Happy Mother's Day* (Richard Leacock & Joyce Chopra, l963), *Titicut Follies* (Frederick Weisman, 1967), *Salesman* (Albert & David Mayles, 1969), and *Seventeen* (Joel Demott and Jeff Kreines, 1983).

The counterpoint to the positivist objectivity of direct cinema has been the engaged observation practiced by cinéma vérité[54] filmmakers who believe they should develop extensive knowledge of their subjects and their world through participatory observation including direct interaction, often on camera. This approach is exemplified by *Chronicle of a Summer*[55] (Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, 1961) and *A Kalahari Family* (John Marshall, 2001). In these films we see the filmmakers engaging with their subjects, in sharp contrast to the direct cinema ethos of a passive "fly on the wall" observer. For example, in *A Kalahari Family* we see John Marshall on camera provoking bureaucrats with challenging questions, crossing the boundary between observer and observed.

53. Richard Leacock, "A Search for the Feeling of Being There," *richardleacock.com,* web page, May 20, 1997, http://www.richardleacock.com/15854/A-Search-for-the-Feeling-of-Being-There (accessed October 10, 2010).

54. Mohammad Ali Issari and Doris Atkinson, *What is Cinéma Vérité?*, Scarecrow Press, 1979.

55. For a detailed discussion see: William Rothman, "Chronicle of a Summer," in *Documentary Film Classics,* Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 69-107.

In recent decades we've seen documentary films become more reflexive and personal, canonical examples being *Sherman's March* (Ross McElwee, 1986) and *Roger & Me* (Michael Moore, 1989). Today we see a greater variety of approaches and a breakdown of genre conventions. The contemporary wave builds on the paradigm of cinéma vérité adding approaches that are personal, performative, and reflexive, incorporating audience engagement, shattering the invisible wall, and further blurring the boundary between filmmaker and subject. Examples include *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (Werner Herzog, 1998) and *Exit Through the Gift Shop* (Banksy, 2010).

The combination of digital video, social media, and web-based video has made collaborative films like *Life in a Day* (Kevin MacDonald, 2011) possible,[56] breaking down the fifth wall by blurring the distinction between the filmmaker and the audience themselves.[57]

In a conversation about Jean-Luc Godard's film, *La Chonoise,* David Sterritt asks the director why he photographed the clapboard several times during the film. Godard replies,

> Why not? Because the real subject is not *La Chinoise.* It's a movie doing itself which is called *La Chinoise.* It's not together. The subject is not the actors but the artistic way of showing them. Both together. They are not separate. [In the film] the young painter says, "Art is not the reflection of reality, it is the reality of a reflection." To me it means something. Art is not only a mirror. There is not only the reality and then the mirror-camera. I mean, I thought it was like that when I made *Breathless,* but later I discovered you can't separate them from reality. You can't distinguish them so clearly. I think the movie is not a thing which is taken by the camera; the movie is the reality of the movie moving from reality to the camera. It's between them.[58]

The *boundary* between *reality* and the *camera* (and/or audio recorder) is the central framework that guides this thesis exploration as I examine

56. On July 24, 2010 thousands of people from around the world uploaded videos of their day to YouTube in order to participate in this documentary about one day on earth. From over 80,000 submissions (4,500 hours of footage), director Kevin MacDonald, working with a team of researchers, crafted a 90 min. documentary film showing the cycle of life on earth played out in twenty-four hours, MacDonald said, "I learned to appreciate the beauty of some of this amateur footage. There's a great and very specific beauty to material that's shot on handicams or even on cell phones and the kinds of shots that [...] an amateur can get that actually professionals couldn't get," see: "Conversation: Kevin MacDonald, Director of 'Life in a Day'," *ArtBeat, PBS NewsHour,* http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/blog/2011/01/conversation-kevin-macdonald-director-of-life-in-a-day.html (accessed October 12, 2011).

57. The *fourth wall* refers to the imaginary wall at the front of a classic proscenium theatre through which the audience observes the action. When actors address the audience directly, it's described as "breaking the fourth wall," bringing into sharp relief the boundary normally maintained in film and theatre. In a similar fashion, the emergence of social media and interactive media creates the possibility of a *fifth wall,* involving a two-way dialogue between the audience and artist, either before, during, or after the experience of a creative work. See: Glorianna Davenport, Stephan Agamanolis, Barbara Barry, Brian Bradley, and Kevin Brooks, "Synergistic storyscapes and constructionist cinematic sharing", *IBM Systems Journal* 39:3&4 (2000), pp. 456-469.

58. Jean-Luc Godard, quoted in David Sterritt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*, University Press of Mississippi, 1998, p. 29.

Jean-Pierre Leaud and Anne Wiazemsky in *La Chinoise* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967)
Frame enlargement, © Films Distribution, Paris

Harun Farocki: *Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades,* 2006
November 26, 2011, MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts. In the mists of recession, job losses, Occupy Wall Street protests, and attacks on collective bargaining, it seemed fitting to visit the exhibition *The Workers* at MASS MoCA, a museum situated in what was once a factory. Among the works was Farocki's installation, presenting cinematic sequences looping on monitors arranged chronologically, presenting a time line, each loop depicting the boundary between workplace and home. They begin with the Lumiere Brother's *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1895) and end with Lars von Trier's *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), see: http://www.massmoca.org/event_details.php?id=631 (accessed November 26, 2011).

the contours of the experience of observing events in the social-historical world and sharing traces of those events with others. It is rooted in the documentary filmmaking tradition and from there takes an excursion into the world of installation art. Arthur Danto writes,

> To recognize the present as historical is to perceive both it and one's consciousness of it has something the meaning of which will only be given in the future, and in historical retrospection. For it is recognized as having the structure of what will be a past historical moment [...] There is an entire vocabulary, the language of narrative as we might call it, the rules of whose meaning presuppose internalization of this structure [...] To exist historically is to perceive the events one lives through as part of a story later to be told.[59]

When we convey this history with moving images, we typically call it a documentary film. We use narrative techniques to weave our recollections into a story. Perhaps all art at some level is documentary, but at the same time I find it useful to differentiate between works that are pure conceptual innovation, works that communicate feeling-beliefs, and works presented as social or personal reality. We flirt with the slippery concept of reality in this thesis, but we'll avoid addressing it directly and leave that project to the philosophers to sort out.[60]

The documentary turn

Boris Groys observes that social media has constructed a new social space and all things can be considered sources of aesthetic experience. As a result, art no longer holds a privileged position, instead it mediates between the subject and the social and historical worlds. This places new emphasis on the dynamics between artist vs. spectator and creator vs. viewer, re-imagining artistic practice as a form of public discourse.[61] Contemporary art has freed itself from the constraints of post-struc-

59. Arthur Danto, *Narration and Knowledge,* Columbia University Press, 1985, pp. 342-343.

60. For a journey through the rabbit hole of reality and objectivity, see: William P. Alston, "Yes, Virginia, There is a Real World." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 52:6 (August 1979), pp. 779-808; John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Peter Nidditch, Ed., Clarendon Press, 1975, originally published in 1689; Paul Moser, *Philosophy After Objectivity,* Oxford University Press, 1993; Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth: Philosophical Papers*, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

61. Boris Groys, *Going Public,* Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle, Eds., Sternberg Press, 2010.

turalist critique of representation,[62] leading to an increasing number of artists taking up social, political, and historical issues in their work. As a result, Mark Nash has observed contemporary art taking what he terms a "documentary turn."[63] He traces the development back to *Documenta 11* in 2002 for which he served as co-curator. The exhibition displayed a range of works attempting to make a connection with social reality. One example was Steve McQueen's *Western Deep,* a study of workers in the world's deepest gold mine in South Africa, a work Dan Fox described in this manner:

> The film took its audiences through long periods of disorienting darkness, abrupt blasts of noise and vacuums of silence. Occasionally a miner's lamp might illuminate an elevator shaft, then once again darkness fell. An intense passage under the strip lights of a medical examination room would then segue back to darkness. These were moments of clarity along a daunting, disorienting journey. Dreams of lucidity while fully aware of the impossibility of getting anything near a clear picture of the global push and pull.[64]

Nash also points to *The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality, and the Moving Image,* a 2008 exhibition at The Hirshhorn presenting contemporary moving image art illustrating how cinema has blurred the distinction between illusion and reality.[65] Curator Kerry Brougher explains,

> Today, the cinema is everywhere. It is on television, your computer screen, projected onto buildings, and carried around with you on your iPod. The cinematic is in the way we perceive the world, in the way we speak, in the way we dream. We have no need to enter a movie theater to escape into an illusory world; life itself is just like a movie.[66]

Nash asserts, "the most interesting work these days occurs on the *borderline* between fiction, documentary, reality and fantasy."[67] The documentary turn does not imply a turn towards the documentary film

62. Craig Owens, "Authorship and Identity," in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology,* Donald Preziosi, Ed., Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 343; see also: Michael W. Smith, *Reading Simulacra: Fatal theories for postmodernity,* State University of New York Press, 2001.

63. Mark Nash, "Reality in the Age of Aesthetics," *Frieze Magazine,* Issue 114 (April 2008), http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/reality_in_the_age_of_aesthetics/ (accessed October 28, 2011).

64. Documenta is an exhibition of modern and contemporary art taking place every five years in Kassel, Germany. It was founded in 1955 by artist and curator Arnold Bode, see: Dan Fox, "Documenta 11," *Frieze Magazine,* Issue 69 (September, 2002), http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/documenta_111/ (accessed October 28, 2011).

65. Glenn Dixon, "The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality and the Moving Image | Dreams", *The Washington Post,* February 21, 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/gog/exhibits/the-cinema-effect-illusion-reality-and-the-moving-image-dreams,1145788.html (accessed October 15, 2011).

66. "The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality and the Moving Image," Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, press release, January 7, 2008, http://www.hirshhorn.si.edu/info/press.asp?key=90&subkey=340 (accessed October 15, 2011).

67. Ibid, Nash, emphasis mine.

genre or objectivity, rather it represents a turn towards the *appropriation* of some of the aesthetics and formal structures of documentary.

The turn is characterized by an increased involvement by artists in "history telling" in a subjective context.[68] A recent example of this is *The Unanimous Life,* a 2009 exhibition of works by Deimantas Narkevičius at Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, Netherlands. It explores the connections between record, memory, and testimony in a selection of film and video works (as well as other mediums). By combining contemporary biographies and layering historical footage, Narkevičius shows visitors how easy it is to mythologize reality and that myths, in turn, can produce the effects of reality.[69] Wyndham Lewis observes, "The artist is always engaged in writing a detailed history of the future because [they are] the only person aware of the nature of the present."[70]

68. Dieter Roelstraete, "The Repeat Function: Deimantas Narkevičius and Memory, *The Unanimous Life,* exhibition catalog, Reina Sofia Museum, 2008, pp. 69-80.

69. Ibid.

70. Wyndham Lewis, c. 1930, quoted in Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* McGraw-Hill, 1964, p. 64.

Installation art

Installation art is more a type of production rather than a movement with a strong ideological framework. The essential characteristic of most installation works comes down to viewer participation, and when combined with the factor of space and time, distinctly differentiates installation art from other genres. While the nature and level of participation varies between each work, in every installation the viewer is compelled to complete the work: meaning is created from the interaction between the viewer and work, the viewer becomes part of the work itself.[71] Clair Bishop, a professor of art history, explains that the values of installation art concern

> ... a desire to activate the viewer – as opposed to the passivity of mass-media consumption – and to induce a critical vigilance towards the environments in which we find ourselves. When the experience of going into a museum increasingly rivals that of walking into restaurants, shops, or clubs, works of art may no longer need to take the form of immersive, interactive experiences. Rather, the best installation art is marked by a sense of antagonism towards its environment, a friction with its context that resists organisational pressure and instead exerts its own terms of engagement."[72]

71. Julie H. Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art,* The MIT Press, 1999, p. xiii.

72. Ibid.

Artists who work in this genre want to achieve a level of perceptual immediacy that working in the time/space dimension affords them in a way that painting, photography, and sculpture do not. Mark Rosenthal writes,

> The viewer is asked to investigate the work of art much as he or she might explore some phenomenon in life, making one's way through actual space and time in order to gain knowledge.[73]

73. Mark Rosenthal, *Understanding Installation Art: from Duchamp to Holzer,* Prestel, 2003, p. 27.

Installation art has several historical precursors. El Lissitzky's *Proun Room* (1923), Kurt Schwitters's *Merzbau* (1933), and Marcel Duchamp's readymades beginning with *Fountain* (1917) are among the earliest milestones. The contemporary history of installation art begins with the ground-breaking environments and happenings orchestrated by Allan Kaprow (1927–2006) in the 1960s. His work was a response,

in part, to the discussion around minimalism and art as action in the wake of Jackson Pollock's death. Kaprow wrote that Pollock

> ... left us where we must become preoccupied with and even dazzled by the space and objects of our everyday life, either our bodies, clothes, rooms, or, if need be, the vastness of Forty-second street. Not satisfied with the suggestion through paint of our other senses, we shall utilize the specific substances of sight, sound, movements, people, odors, touch. Objects of every sort are materials for the new art: paint, chairs, food, electric and neon lights, smoke, water, old socks, a dog, movies, a thousand other things to be discovered by the present generation of artists. Not only will these bold creators show us, as if for the first time, the world we have always had around us but ignored, but they will disclose entirely unheard-of happenings and events, found in garbage cans, police files, hotel lobbies; seen in store windows and on the streets; and sensed in dreams and horrible accidents."[74]

74. Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life,* Jeff Kelley, Ed., University of California Press, 2003, originally published in 1958.

When Kaprow writes "horrible accidents" he creates an uncanny connection with Pollock's death, providing a "tear" through which Kaprow reflects on what Pollock took with him, and what he left behind for us to work with. This is where Kaprow used the term "happening" for the first time, arguing for a "concrete art" and suggesting that craftsmanship and permanence should be forgotten and perishable materials should be used in art.

Kaprow was deeply influenced by composer John Cage (1912–1992) in whose class at the New School Kaprow began to work out the concept of happenings. The influence of Dada and Surrealism is also evident in Kaprow's work. His first successful happening was *18 Happenings in 6 Parts,* performed in 1959 at the Reuben Gallery in New York.[75] The experience involved performers and visitors following instructions, moving objects around the gallery, as the audience followed the action through multiple rooms.

75. Allan Kaprow, *18 Happenings in 6 Parts,* Barry Rosen and Michaela Unterdörfer, Eds. Steidl/Hauser & Wirth, 2007, published in conjunction with a performance at the Haus der Kunst, Munich, November 9-11, 2006.

Kaprow's installations (*An Apple Shrine,* 1960; *Words,* 1961; *Yard,* 1961 et al.) and happenings influenced a range of contemporary artists.[76] Happenings are closely associated with performance art and draw inspiration from theories of conceptual art and Dada. It's often difficult to distinguish between performance art and happenings, as both are carefully planned artistic/theatrical events with spontaneous elements. They are both best experienced live, as any documentation pales in comparison. In any case, both happenings and performance art meld together elements of visual art, sound art, and dramatic theatre in order to elicit a memorable response from the participants or audience.[77] Some argue that performance art is characterized by more emphasis on dramatic action compared to happenings, but the terms remain fluid.

76. Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings,* Harry H. Abrams, 1966.

77. Michael Kirby and Jim Dine, *Happenings,* Dutton, 1965.

Kaprow wanted to erase the distinction between art and life, actions would come forth from unplanned reaction to become art, but he did not conceive the happening itself as art prior to its enactment. Fairfield Porter had a strong reaction to *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* when it was first performed,

> If he wants to prove that certain things can't be done again because they have already been done, he couldn't be more convincing... The 'Eighteen Happenings' devalue all art by a meaningless and deliberate surgery. And the final totality is without character; it never takes off from the sidewalk.[78]

78. Fairfield Porter, "18 Happenings in 6 Parts," *The Nation,* October 14, 1959.

Kaprow wanted to make non-art and contrary to Porter's critique, it took off and influenced the art world profoundly. A small group of influential New York artists participated in performances of *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* and some of them began presenting their own happenings, including Jean Tinguely, Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Whitman, Wolf Vostell, Joseph Beuys, and Tadeusz Kantor. In a conversation with Paul McCarthy in 2000, Kaprow stated that his goal has been to, "make experimental art, art whose status as art could never be known."[79]

79. "Allan Kaprow and Paul McCarthy," MOCA Audio & Video, March 27, 2008, http://www.moca.org/audio/ (accessed January 12, 2011).

Happenings were quite popular through the 1960s. In the early 1970s artists began to turn to performance art[80] which was characterized by more emphasis on dramatic action, with Marina Abramović, Chris

80. RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present,* 3rd ed., Thames & Hudson, 2011; see also: Steve Dixon, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation,* Leonardo Books, The MIT Press, 2007.

Charles Sandison: *The River,* 2010
August 3, 2011, Musée du quai Branly, Paris. As I walked between the museum entrance and the collection area, I was immersed in this installation consisting of a river of moving words projected on the ramp leading up to the collection area. The text consists of 16,597 names of all the peoples and geographic locations displayed in the museum's collections. The work represents the cultures flowing through time and space like water, see: http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/musee/areas/the-ramp.html (accessed August 15, 2011).

Burden, Carolee Schneemann, Laurie Anderson, and many others taking the genre along its very own trajectory. Fluxus[81] was another outgrowth of happenings; it had the goal of investigating an anti-art which combined several art forms operating outside the commercial art world. More recently the emergence of cyberSurrealism[82] carries on with a contemporary twist the spirit of happenings, performance, and Fluxus refracted through the paradigms of surrealism and cybernetics.

Throughout the 1980s, art museums, for the most part, ignored digital and electronic art. It was not until the 1990s that we saw the legitimation and rise of the new media art movement.[83] It was around this time that I experienced *Hallucination*. Installation art inverts the traditional principles of sculpture: while a sculpture is designed to be viewed as a self-contained form, an installation, on the other hand, surrounds the visitor in the space of the work itself. The viewer inhabits the work, experiencing an environment controlled by the artist which may include objects, light, sound, image displays, and projections. The locus of the work lies in the experience of the visitor.

Kantian aesthetics, influential throughout the modern period, favored formalism. On the other hand, John Dewey's aesthetic theory inspired Allan Kaprow to bring action and space into his work as evidenced by the notes he wrote in the margins of his copy of Dewey's *Art as Experience*.[84] It was through my reading of John Dewey and studying the work of Allan Kaprow that I became interested in moving away from the cinema screen and into the space of installation. Julie Reiss, an art historian, suggests installation art

> ...refers to a wide range of artistic practices, and at times overlaps with other interrelated areas including Fluxus, Earth art, Minimalism, Video art, Performance art, Conceptual Art and Process art.[85]

Reiss explains that all of these genres of art share certain concepts: site specificity, institutional critique, temporal elements, and transient qualities.[86] Some scholars have challenged the term installation art, as it apparently can apply to practically anything that does not fit the traditional taxonomy of art. Clair Bishop puts forth the indictment:

> Almost any arrangement of objects in a given space can now be referred to as installation art, from a conventional display of paintings to a few well-placed sculptures in a garden. It has become the catch-all description that draws attention to its staging, and as a result it's almost totally meaningless.[87]

Beginning in the late 1950s installation artists challenged the dominant minimalist aesthetic of the time with works that involved direct interaction between the space and the work within it, often becoming a single unit, and in the extreme case the object was no longer a physical thing but a pure experience at a specific time and in a particular space. As Bishop writes,

81. After the Latin word for "a flowing." Fluxus artists staged many of the early happenings and worked with minimal and everyday materials. Although commonly associated with political and cultural activism in the 1960s, Fluxus artists resisted being classified in these prescriptive and narrow categories. Theorist and art philosopher George Maciunas (1931-7198) was the founding member of Fluxus, an international community of artists, composers, designers, and architects including Yoko Ono, Joseph Beuys, George Brecht, Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Wolf Vostell, and Dick Higgins; see: Hannah Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, University of California Press, 2002.

82. lou suSi, "cyberSurrealism defined + Cybernetic Methodologies," *The Bureau of cyberSurreal Investigation,* web page, http://cybersurrealism.com (accessed December 12, 2010).

83. Mark Tribe and Reena Jana, *New Media Art,* wiki, https://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/display/MarkTribe/New+Media+Art (accessed January 12, 2011).

84. Jeff Kelley and Allan Kaprow, *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow,* University of California Press, 2004.

85. Julie H. Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art,* The MIT Press, 1999, p. xiii.

86. Ibid.

87. Claire Bishop, "But is it installation art?," *Tate Etc.,* Issue 3 (Spring 2005), http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue3/butisitinstallationart.htm (accessed April 23, 2011).

Christo and Jeanne-Claude:
The Gates, 1979-2005
February 19, 2005. *The Gates* was a site specific installation consisting of 7,503 vinyl gates with saffron-colored nylon fabric that were installed along 23 miles of paths in Central Park, New York City for sixteen days in February of 2005.

> . . . the distinction between installation art and an installation of works of art has become blurred. Both point to a desire to heighten the viewer's awareness of how objects are positioned (installed) in a space, and of our response to that arrangement.[88]

Context plays a role in our perception. We can't separate the space from the objects contained within the space, with installation art the whole environment becomes the work of art and acknowledged as such. Installation art is often, in part, a response to the effects of mainstream media. At first it was cinema and magazines, then television, and more recently the internet and ubiquity of mobile multimedia devices. All compete for our time and attention. Installation art emerged around the same time of the invasion of television into the American home. This may simply be a correlation without a functional relationship, but I think there's a strong basis for the argument.

An installation may be made specifically for a particular space like *The Gates* (Christo and Jeanne-Claude, 1979-2005),[89] a work installed for sixteen days in New York City's Central Park from February 12 to 27, 2005. Typically installation art is a site-specific work created to exist in a particular space, however, if the particular work can be constructed within a "white cube," this allows the work to travel from one museum to another. One example of an installation designed to be installed in a range of spaces is *Ghost/Transmemoir* (Bose Krishnamachari, 2006-08),[90] a work exploring themes of impermanence and transition in the city of Mumbai, mobility becoming integral to work's essence.

88. Ibid.

89. *The Gates* was on view in Central Park, New York from February 12-27, 2005, see: Michael Kimmelman, "In a Saffron Ribbon, a Billowy Gift to the City," *The New York Times,* February 13, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/13/arts/13kimmelman.html (accessed October 14, 2011).

90. *Ghost/Transmemoir* was exhibited at the Peabody Essex Museum in the *Gateway Bombay* exhibition at the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, July 14 to December 7, 2008, see: Randi Hopkins, "Maximum City," *The Boston Phoenix,* July 3, 2007, http://thephoenix.com/boston/arts/43060-maximum-city/ (accessed July 12, 2011); see also: Jitish Kallat, *Bose Krishnamachari Solo Exhibit: Ghost Transmemoir*, Gallery Artsindia, 2006.

Bose Krishnamachari:
Ghost/Transmemoir, 2006
July 14, 2007, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. The installation consists of 108 dabbas (the ubiquitous lunchboxes of Mumbai) each has an embedded video monitor showing short interviews with residents of Mumbai, ranging from street vendors to corporate executives. Visitors can hear both the interviews and the sounds of the city in the many headphones connected to the work.

Documentary and installation art

Both documentary and installation art have played a role in shaping the work described in this thesis. The two fields may seem, at first glance, to be far apart from each other. Documentary film, whose origins are simultaneous with the birth of cinema, has always been a site for experimentation in terms of both technique and form. Historically, the conventions influencing documentary makers have been more fluid that those of mainstream cinema. From the perspective of reception, documentaries are usually presented as a temporal screen experience in which the viewer remains in a fixed position. Installation art is a spatio-temporal experience in which the viewer is a participant moving through a space. Historically, the representation of space has been at the heart of fine art. James Werner observes a shift of cultural dependence on materiality to a dependence on temporal experience through visual communication.[91] Recent technological developments have allowed for interactive spaces, works that present unique spatial relationships, often creating situations that are immersive.

If we examine John Grierson's classic definition of documentary, "the creative treatment of actuality,"[92] there is no specific form of the work implied. While there are no doubt historical factors that have influenced documentary makers to follow particular conventions and work in a form that primarily revolves around a single screen, this "lock-in" is not pre-ordained. When documentary moved from analog film to analog video, many of the conventions remained intact, but there was

91. James P. Werner, "Post-Digital Awareness: An Insight into New Immersion Practices in Installation Art," *Human Creation Between Reality and Illusion,* Anna-Teresa Tymienieck, Ed., Springer Netherlands, 2005, pp. 169-183.

92. For a discussion and critique of the definition, see: Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real II: Documentary: Grierson and Beyond,* British Film Institute, 2008, pp. 14-15; Ivor Montague writes, "In a sense every work is the creative treatment of actuality. Actuality is the raw material that, as experience, must pass through the consciousness of the creative artist (or group) to become transformed by labour and in accordance with technical and aesthetic laws into art product," see: Ivor Montagu, *Film World,* Penguin, 1966, p. 281 (quoted in *Claiming the Real II*, p. 17).

tearing at the seams. With the transition to digital video the form is no longer bound by technological "lock-in," instead a new horizon of possibilities emerges, driven by computer technology. Computer scientist Alan Kay writes,

> The protean nature of the computer is such that it can act like a machine or like a language to be shaped and exploited. It is a medium that can dynamically simulate the details of any other medium, including media that cannot exist physically. ... It is the first metamedium, and as such it has degrees of freedom for representation and expression never before encountered and as yet barely investigated.[93]

93. Alan Kay, "Computer Software," *Scientific American* 251:3 (September 1984), pp. 52-59.

With the computer as a medium and data as material, we can merge the traditions of photography, typography, graphic design, audio and moving image production, interactivity, immersion, interaction through sensors, and more, into an expanded palette of infinite possibilities that Lev Manovich refers to as a "hybrid, intricate, complex and rich visual language,"[94] that I shall call *computational media.* It encompasses every conceivable media form in a computational environment, which essentially makes it a hyper-medium, much as Alan Kay observed. The important technological transformation in cinema has not been digitization, but the remediation[95] of the medium in a computational environment. Computation is what truly makes new media *new.*

94. Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media,* Leonardo Books, The MIT Press, 2006, p. 11.

95. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin define remediation as the formal logic by which new media refashions prior media forms. It is one of the three traits, along with immediacy and hypermediacy, of Bolter and Grusin's genealogy of new media, see: Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media,* The MIT Press, 1999.

The landmark exhibition, *Future Cinema,* organized by the ZKM Institute for Visual Media in 2002, examined "the cinematic imaginary," the metaphors and stylistic devices used by avant-garde movements in the 20th century to define cinema as a "phantasmagorical experience" and presented a survey of the impact of new production technologies on cinematic conventions and how moving images have been presented.[96] The architectural spaces in which we view cinema and video expanded into installation practices in the sixties and seventies, and surrounds us today in a multiplicity of forms.

96. Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel, Eds., *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film,* The MIT Press, 2003.

Artists, designers, and performers working in new media have been rethinking the foundations of image projection, replacing analog forms with computation and digital representation as a "protean pathway" between viewers and the materials of the work. This challenges the conventions of cinematic language, expanding the vocabulary to include interactive platforms, non-linear narrative, databases, and new interfaces. This expansion re-configures the narrative conventions of cinema and foregrounds the reflexive dimension of images. This exhibition marked a turning point that began in the 1960s in which cinema extends to any practice in which the projection of images plays a vital role, regardless of the specific media. Youngblood suggests that artists are ecologists crafting the environment and that expanded cinema will bring art and life closer together.[97] Youngblood's vision of expanded cinema is not only possible, but necessary.

97. Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema,* E. P. Dutton and Company, 1970, http://www.vasulka.org/Kitchen/PDF_ExpandedCinema/book.pdf (accessed August 15, 2008), pp. 346-351.

Next page:

Window in collections area
August 3, 2011, Musée du quai Branly, Paris.

Hawt Couch hardware components and *This Place in a Space* notebook sketches
December 12, 2010 – March 5, 2011

Case Studies

Case Studies

Introduction

Case studies are at the core of the work we do at the Dynamic Media Institute. Through these projects, we explore our interests and discover new ones as we make things. It is crucial to understand that making things is only a starting point, the process is not complete until we reflect on our experience of making and the results of our making. This reflection is shared through the case studies we present in our thesis documents. The way I see it, the case studies we write present detailed surveys of our particular projects in the form of qualitative, descriptive research. The case studies are written from our individual perspectives, each drawing conclusions about specific projects in specific contexts. Our design research does not place priority on the discovery of positivistic, generalizable truths, nor do we seek to identify generalizable cause-effect relationships, rather, we take a qualitative approach that emphasizes personal exploration and subjective description.

The type of understanding we seek to arrive at through this process can be described as thick description,[1] a detailed description of an event and/or object in a particular context. Through the use of our self-defined methodologies, we interpret the meaning of the data we collect and the results we observe. Unlike the quantitative methods of scientific research (with a focus on questions like who, what, where, when, and how much), design research case studies go beyond this, providing the humanistic approach needed for the exploration of creative work with naturally high levels of ambiguity. This approach is capable of providing a holistic understanding of the project under analysis through inductive logic (reasoning from specific issues to more general terms).

1. Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture," *The Interpretation of Cultures: selected essays,* Basic Books, 1973, pp. 3-30.

Case studies share many of the characteristics and underlying philosophical assumptions of ethnography, field study, and participant observation. They strive for holistic interpretation of the events and/or objects under study. As interaction researcher danah boyd writes,

> At its most surface level, ethnography is about writing culture. In practice, it's about diving into a particular culture and working to understand that culture on its own terms, interpreting signals to understand underlying signs. Traditionally, ethnography has concerned itself with cultures that are geographically framed or ethnically bounded.[2]

2. danah, boyd, "Choose Your Own Ethnography: In Search of (Un)Mediated Life," paper presented at *4S,* Montreal, Canada, October 13, 2007, http://www.danah.org/papers/talks/4S2007.html (accessed December 10, 2011).

When we write case studies, we are writing about what may be thought of as a micro-culture: we are observing our own aesthetic practices with their own codes and conventions, and writing about them from the perspective of a participant-observer. In contrast to scientific or statistical analysis which has the goal of producing *quantifiable data* and reproducible results, our case study methodology offers *qualitative insights and questions* for further research based on the study of particular instances.[3] We may never be able to determine clean and neat cause and effect relationships (that remain an elusive goal even for reductionistic, quantitative research). In contrast, our qualitative approach offers a rich and nuanced position from which to identify tendencies and productive strategies that are actionable in the context of creative work.

3. Martyn Hammersley, *The Dilemma of Qualitative Method: Herbert Blumer and the Chicago Tradition,* Psychology Press, 1990.

Three case studies are presented in this thesis:

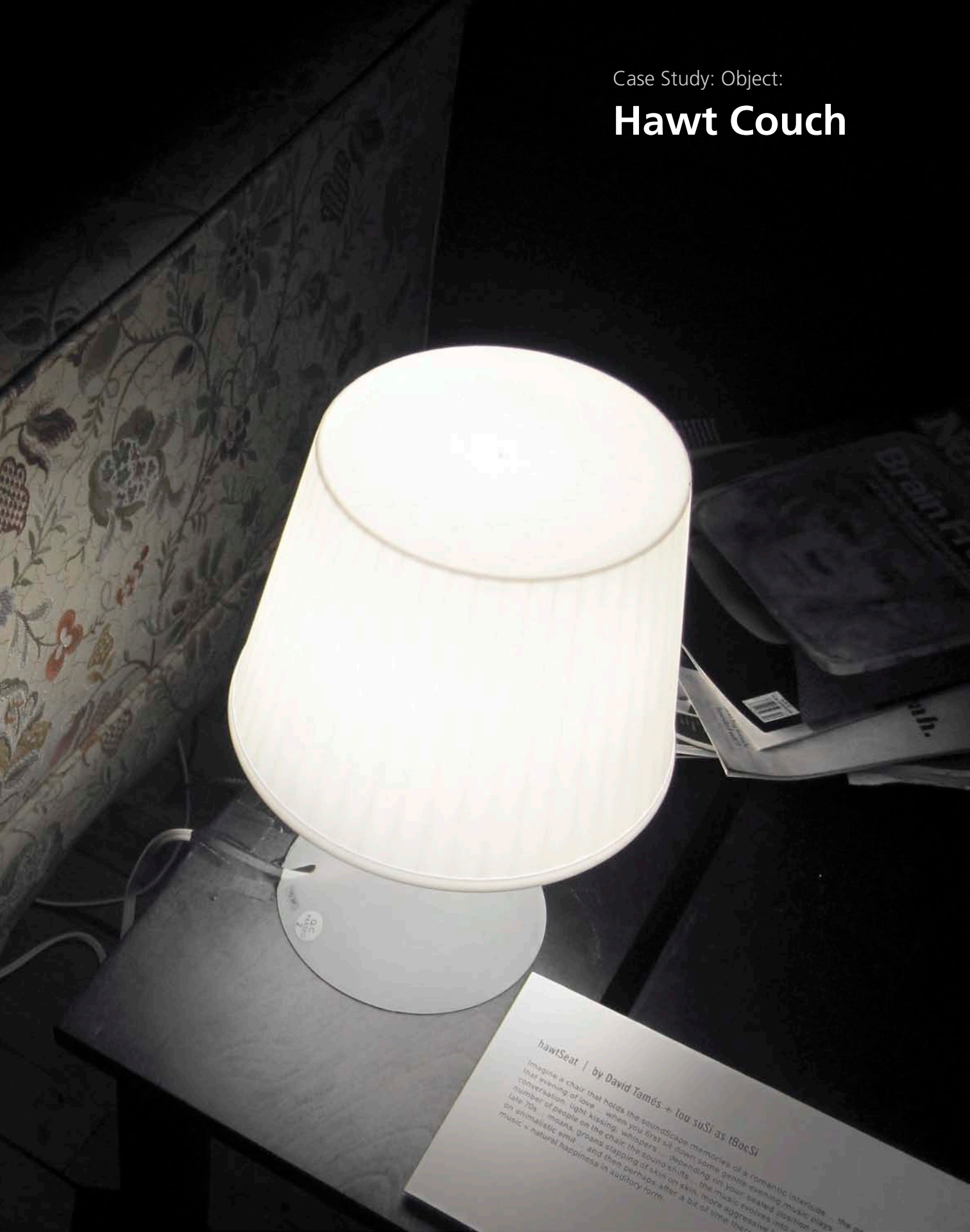
> ***Hawt Couch*** is an *object* that shares its memory of past events. It represents a foray into physical computing and using an object, instead of a screen, to tell a story. This collaboration with lou suSi mixed the metaphor of "the couch" with the sexual undertones of suggestive sounds made by the couch in response to people sitting on it.
>
> ***Provocative Objects*** is an *exhibition* and catalog that interrogates the limitations of traditional documentation. It provided an opportunity to organize, run, and document an exhibition/event in collaboration with lou suSi and provides a lively snapshot of contemporary work in dynamic media.
>
> ***This Place in a Space*** is an *installation* offering visitors two perspectives of my experience documenting the Bumpkin Island Art Encampment. The work brings together my explorations as a student including documentary production and the language of installation. It was a process of exploring important boundaries in my work: { participation | observation }, { video screen | installation space }, and { objectivity | subjectivity }.

Through a framework of immersion, computational media, and boundary crossings, I analyze each project and reflect on my work, making connections to new media, design, cinema, philosophy, and installation art.

Hawt Couch 2.0
Collaboration with lou suSi, interactive installation, *mediaLuscious: Design + Art Review,* Group Show, *Dynamic Media Institute,* Pozen Center, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, March 5, 2011

Case Study: Object:

Hawt Couch



Case Study: Object:

Hawt Couch

Overview

Hawt Couch (a.k.a. *HawtSeat*) is a physical object designed to be installed in a gallery setting. Visitors who sit on the couch experience aural traces of a romantic encounter that may have occurred on the couch at some point in the past. The sequence of sounds differs depending on whether visitors are moving or simply sitting still. The project is a result of a collaboration with lou suSi,[1] a fellow Dynamic Media Institute student. The work began in the Design for Motion and Sound class during Spring semester, 2010 in which our professors challenged us with the notion of "story first." By refracting the notion of story through our mutual interests in experience design, storytelling, and provocative objects, we created a piece of furniture with a naughty sound track.

Experience

Everyday physical objects are fixed in space and are rarely thought of as dynamic, let alone a potential site for experiencing a story. While we often attach biographical significance to the most significant objects in our lives and know ourselves and others through particular objects we collect and share,[2] the objects themselves don't tell the story. The social life of things[3] exists as an interpretive layer we superimpose on objects, they exist in a form outside the actual thing. On the other hand, what if we could embed the traces of a story into the object itself, allowing the object to become the storyteller?

Dynamic media, audio in the case of the *Hawt Couch*, is complex. It exists in a state of flux. As the couch responds to gestures and produces sound, an ephemeral, immediate experience of "now" is created,

1. Lou Susi writes his name as "lou suSi." The standard treatment of proper names as suggested by the *Chicago Manual of Style* is to capitalize the first and last names, however, the manual does acknowledge that when people prefer special treatment in terms of spelling and capitalization of their name, these should be respected. The manual draws the line at the start of sentences, in these cases the first letter of the sentence should be capitalized. See: "8.4 Capitalization of personal names," *The Chicago Manual of Style,* online edition, http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch08/ch08_sec004.html (accessed October 29, 2011).

2. There's a vast literature on the meaning we attach to objects. One particularly innovative study was made by Janet Hoskins, who wrote an ethnography of six women and men from Eastern Indonesia who narrate their own lives by talking about their possessions. Hoskins shows how the object is not only a metaphor for our image of self but a site of reflexivity and introspection, a means of knowing oneself through the social life of things. See: Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of Peoples* Routledge, 1998.

3. Arjun Appadurai assembled a collection of writings that examine how things are sold and traded, shedding light on the cultural basis of economic activity from the perspectives of sociology, cultural anthropology, and economics, see: Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in cultural perspective,* Cambridge University Press, 1986.

translating the gesture of sitting and/or motion into a series of sounds selected from a database and orchestrated by code. The sounds play back dynamically, responding to particular patterns of sitting and motion gestures.

A person who sits on the couch will hear sounds of a romantic encounter which may or may not have actually happened. Movement influences the playback of explicit material. Mapping ordinary gestures to a piece of furniture provides a novel interface. We orchestrated an experimental aural experience of the couch's encounters. Can objects become provocative objects?[4]

Participants take delight in how their movements influence the choice of sound clips. Observers simply listen. If someone is sitting still on the couch, the couch will provide a much milder experience as compared to when movement is detected on the part of the visitor. When two visitors are sitting on the couch, the sound clips are chosen to be more embarrassing, especially in the event the other person is a stranger. It may be taken as a provocation of sorts if two people sitting on the couch know each other.

4. *Hawt Couch* was originally intended to be shown at the *Provocative Objects* exhibition, http://provocativeobjects.com (accessed April 2, 2011).

Hawt Couch 2.0
Discarded couch, accelerometers, CapSense sensors, Arduino, MacBook Pro, digital audio, powered speakers, Processing, and custom code, *mediaLuscious: Design + Art Review*, March 5, 2011

Technology

The technology used in *Hawt Couch* was the result of a series of experiments conducted with a variety of sensors and computational strategies. This work began in the Design for Motion and Sound course with the question, what technologies could be used to create a couch-bound story experience? I had done some work with the Arduino microcontroller[5] in previous projects. Everything started looking like it needed an Arduino-based solution. With the addition of a Wave Shield,[6] the Arduino could be used to play sounds, and with some force-sensitive resistors (FSR)[7] tucked just under the cloth covering of the couch cushions, we could tell when someone was sitting on the couch. By adding some code to the hardware, an experience began to emerge.

The most challenging aspect of the hardware was reliably detecting whether someone was sitting on the couch and which cushion they were on. Because the FSR sensors were acting like stiff buttons, I was not getting the subtle response from the sensors I had hoped to get. I tried some tilt sensors,[8] but they were prone to unreliable readings as they shifted and moved inside the cushions of the couch. Even after adding some de-bouncing code to the tilt sensors, it was still too much of an on-and-off response. I wanted to be able to detect whether someone was sitting on the couch with more subtlety.

I eventually built a sensor called CapSense that could reliably detect if someone was sitting on a couch cushion consisting of two components: a sensor plate and a circuit. The sensor plate consists of two pieces of aluminum foil sandwiched together with wax paper between them,

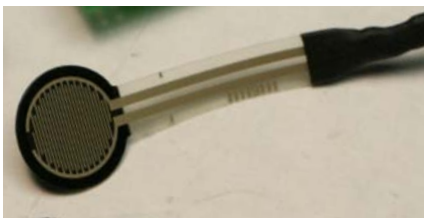
5. The Arduino is a microcontroller board programmed using the Arduino programming language (based on Wiring) and the Arduino development environment (based on Processing). The software is open source and boards can be built by hand or purchased preassembled, see: http://www.arduino.cc/

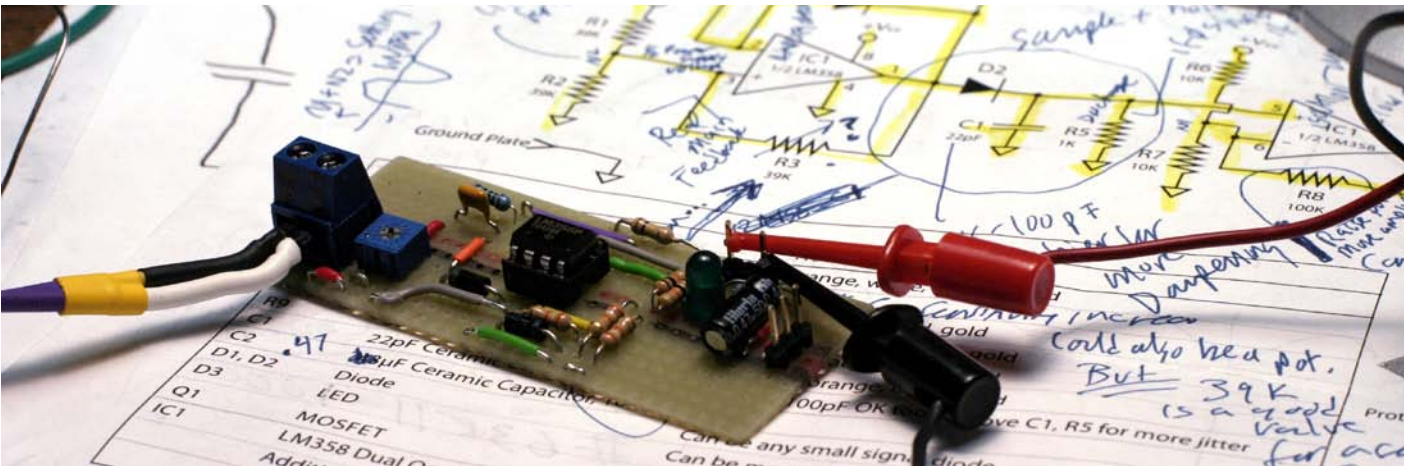
6. The Wave Shield is a shield for the Arduino with an onboard DAC, filter and op-amp for high quality output. Audio files are read from an SD card and the output is available via a standard 3.5mm mini-jack. A volume control is included. See: "Adafruit Wave Shield for Arduino Kit - v1.1," Adafruit Industries, http://www.adafruit.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=94 (accessed March 25, 2011).

7. A force sensitive resistor (FSR) will vary its resistance depending on the amount of pressure being applied to the sensing area. The harder the force, the lower the resistance. The FSR we used can sense an applied force anywhere in the range of 100g-10kg. The sensors are simple to use and good for sensing pressure, but they are not accurate. See: "Force Sensitive Resistor," Sparkfun Electronics, http://www.sparkfun.com/products/9375 (accessed March 25, 2011).

8. "Tilt ball switch," Adafruit Industries, http://www.adafruit.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=35&products_id=173(accessed March 25, 2011)

Below:
CapSense sensor plate
Right, top to bottom:
FSR sensor; Tilt sensor; Piezo-electric sensor





CapSense circuit board, version 2

creating the electrical equivalent of a capacitor.[9] The electrical characteristics of the sensor change in response to the proximity of a human body part. When it touches the sensor it causes it to flex. I installed this sensor under each of the cloth covers of the couch cushions.

This first version of the circuit component included two separate detection circuits crowded on a single perf-board. This assembly worked for a few days and then stopped. Countless hours of troubleshooting did not come up with a solution, even with substitution of the op-amp chip and several other components. I decided to punt this mess and ordered additional parts from Jameco[10] including proper prototyping boards, sockets for the IC op-amp, and assembled a new circuit board very, very carefully. I also built a third, more compact version.

The second and third versions of the circuit assembly worked perfectly and reliably after extensive testing. With this sensor I could detect when someone was sitting on cushion 1 or cushion 2 or both. And the data was not jittery as it was with the earlier sensors I had experimented with. A set of audio files were loaded into an SD card on the Audio Shield for the sound component. Lou collected a collection of borderline obscene sounds of an anonymous couple making out.[111]

The software orchestrating the sounds was written for the Arduino. Because the Wave Shield does not support concurrency, the system could only play one sound effect at a time. The results were limited, and not being in stereo curtailed the sense of spatial location when played despite having two speakers located on the left and right side of the couch. But it sort of worked, and we hauled the couch over to the Patricia Doran Gallery for installation at *Provocative Objects.*[122]

During installation, when I went to test the couch, it did not work. The Wave Shield would not play sound. After more troubleshooting, I determined the piece couldn't be in the show. We placed it in the lobby

9. The discovery of the right sensor came as a result of help from Fred Wolflink, Associate Director, Technology for Teaching and Learning, MassArt. One day in his office he raised and lowered his hand over a copper plate on his desk. Traces on an oscilloscope reacted with a warping sine wave as an LED on a prototyping board glowed increasingly brighter as Fred's hand approached the plate and then dimmed as his hand moved away. I immediately realized this was the sensor I was looking for. I liked the "analog" feel of it's response to proximity. Fred showed me a handwritten schematic of the capacitive sensor circuit he was working with and he explained the theory of the circuit. I gathered the parts I needed to build the circuit and soon had the first version of CapSense in my hands.

10. http://www.jameco.com (accessed March 25, 2011)

11. These sounds were recorded in a non-disclosed location, on possibly the very same couch we were using, by performers who requested anonymity.

12. *Provocative Objects* took place in the Patricia Doran Gallery on November 12, 2010, see http://ProvocativeObjects.com (accessed March 25, 2011).

area playing music from famous pornographic movies of the 1970s. *Hawt Couch* was silent[13] on its debut.

Not thrilled with the inherent limitations of the Wave Shield (mono playback and lack of concurrency), I decided that the Arduino is good for interfacing with sensors, but it was not the right tool for the heavy lifting of sound clip orchestration. For sound clip playback we needed a foundation that could support concurrent playback of multiple sounds, allowing them to be mixed and overlapped, along with stereo playback. I decided this was better taken care of in Processing[144] with the Ess[155] library running on a Macintosh. So I set aside the AudioShield and went to work on more Processing code and the concept of *Hawt Couch 2.0* was born.

I added two accelerometers[166] in order to detect both people in motion and someone in a seated position. The accelerometers allow for a great deal of subtlety in sensing what's happening on the cushions. By using the CapSense capacitive sensing plate below the surface cloth covering of each cushion I could detect a simple "sitting" state. With the accelerometer embedded in the foam inside the cushion, a wide range of motion-related activities were detectable. I assembled an LCD readout[177] to monitor in real-time the data coming from the couch showing me the state of the CapSense sensor and the X, Y, and Z values of the accelerometer in each cushion. This served as a diagnostic tool helping me understand how to interpret the data and a range of gestures and activity patterns detected with this new dual sensor array in each cushion, and helping to guide the code I was writing.

In this new configuration the role of the Arduino was limited to collecting data. All of the sequencing of the sound, including asynchro-

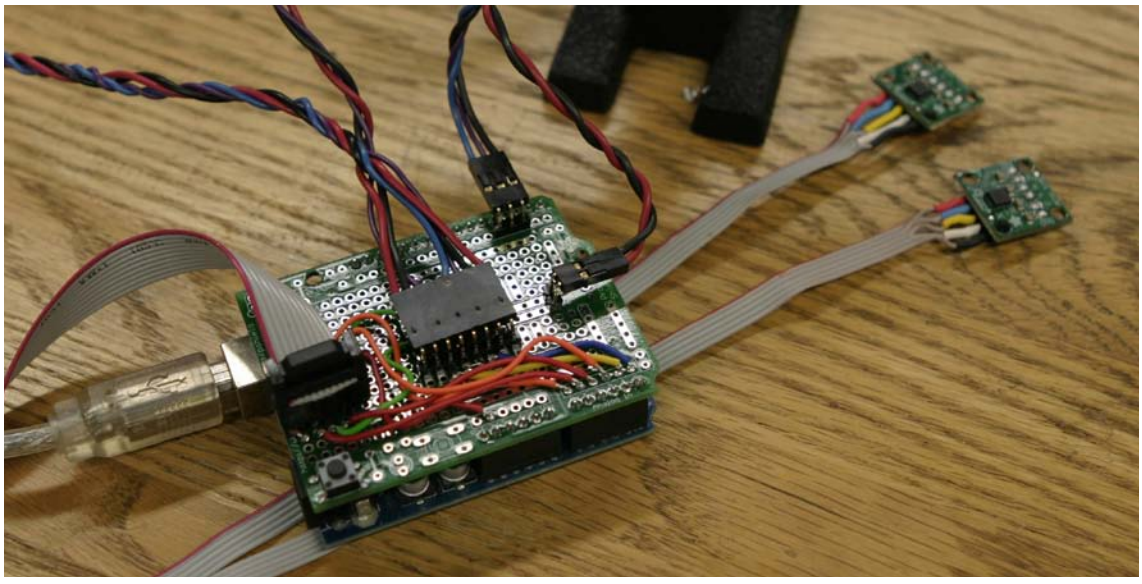
13. Silent in the sense of a "silent movie," there may have been music playing, but the music was not intrinsic to the couch, see: Carl Davis, "Silent films were never really silent," *The Telegraph,* March 26, 2011, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/classic-movies/8406944/Silent-films-were-never-really-silent.html (accessed November 23, 2011).

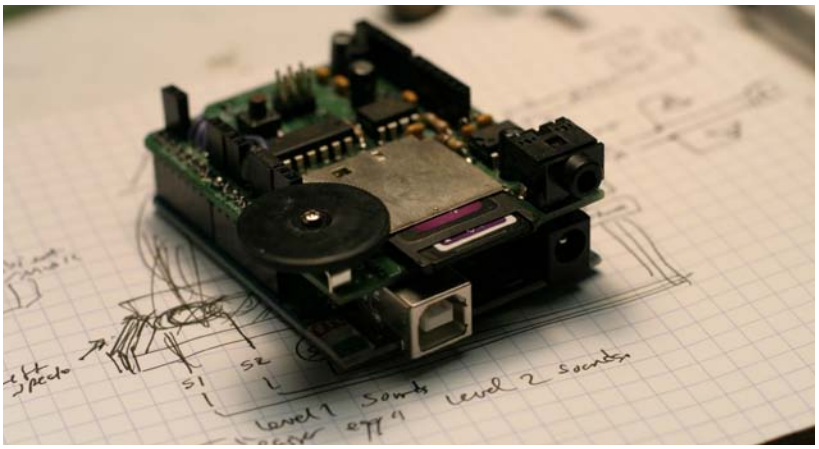
14. http://processing.org (accessed March 24, 2011).

15. Ess is a sound library built on JavaSound that allows sound sample data to be loaded or streamed, generated in real-time, manipulated, saved, analyzed, or simply played back, see: http://www.tree-axis.com/Ess/ (accessed March 25, 2011).

16. "ADXL335 3-axis Accelerometer Breakout Board," Adafruit Industries, http://www.adafruit.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=163 (accessed March 25, 2011).

17. This was assembled from two components: "i2c / SPI Character LCD Backpack," Adafruit Industries, http://www.adafruit.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=37&products_id=292 (accessed March 25, 2011) and "Red & Black LCD 16x2," Adafruit Industries, http://www.adafruit.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=257 (accessed March 25, 2011).





Adafruit WaveShield
An Arduino shield with audio playback capabilities

nous mixing of music and sound effects, was orchestrated with code written in Processing. The data the Arduino collects from the capacitive sensors and accelerometers were collected and smoothed by code running in the Arduino and then fed as a string of bytes through the serial interface (via the USB connection) to the Processing code.

This project pushed me to do more programming than anticipated, and in two different environments. The first version of *Hawt Couch* was a disaster and I was ready to retire the project. Naturally, lou suSi, my collaborator, submitted a proposal for participating in the *mediaLuscious* show. As a result, I was committed to getting the code to work. I became more fluent working in both the Arduino and Processing environments. I found it valuable to push my programming skills in the physical computing realm which was an unexpected outcome of my time as a student at the Dynamic Media Institute.

Below, left to right:

Arduino with prototyping shield
Used for inter-connects and accelerometers

CapSense circuit boards, versions 2 and 3

lou suSi installing sensors in a cushion

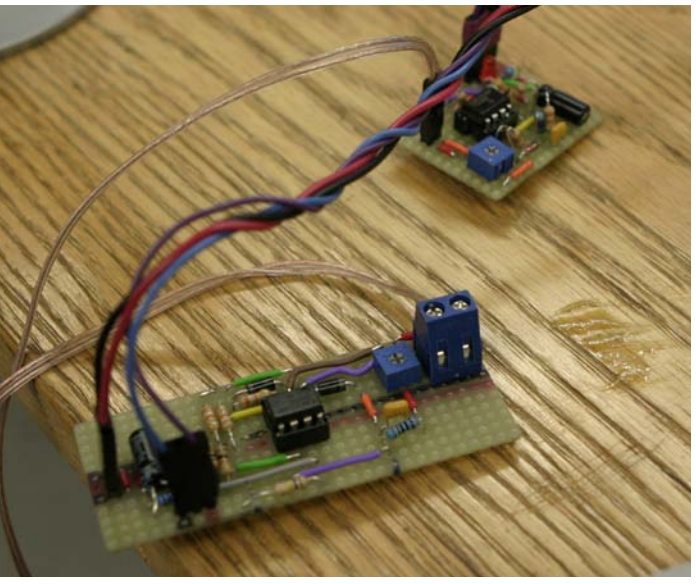
Page 56:

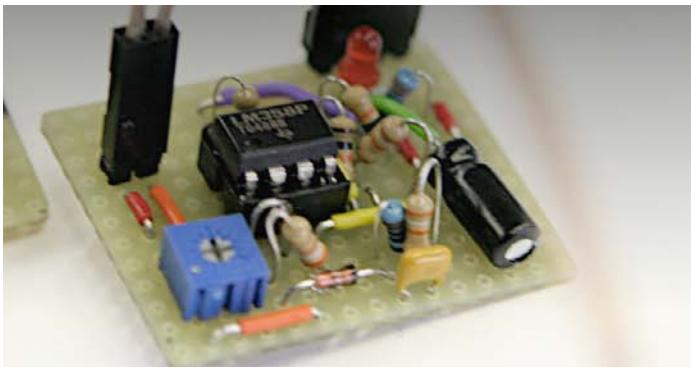
Testing CapSense sensor with circuit board version 3
Dynamic Media Institute studio, December 12, 2010

Final assembly and coding
Dynamic Media Institute studio, December 12, 2010

Page 57:

CapSense sensor circuit diagram
Circuit designed by Fred Wolflink




LM358P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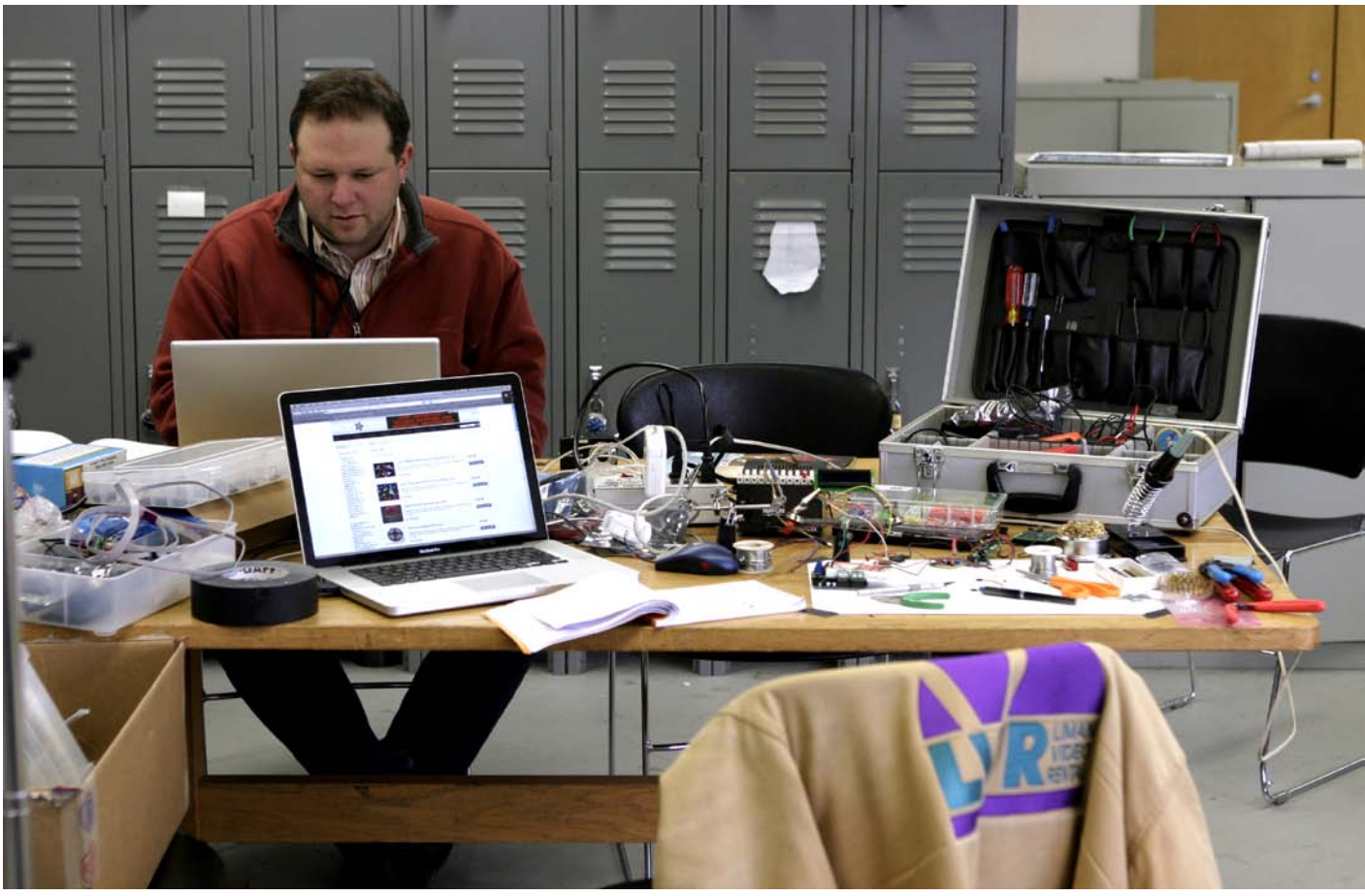
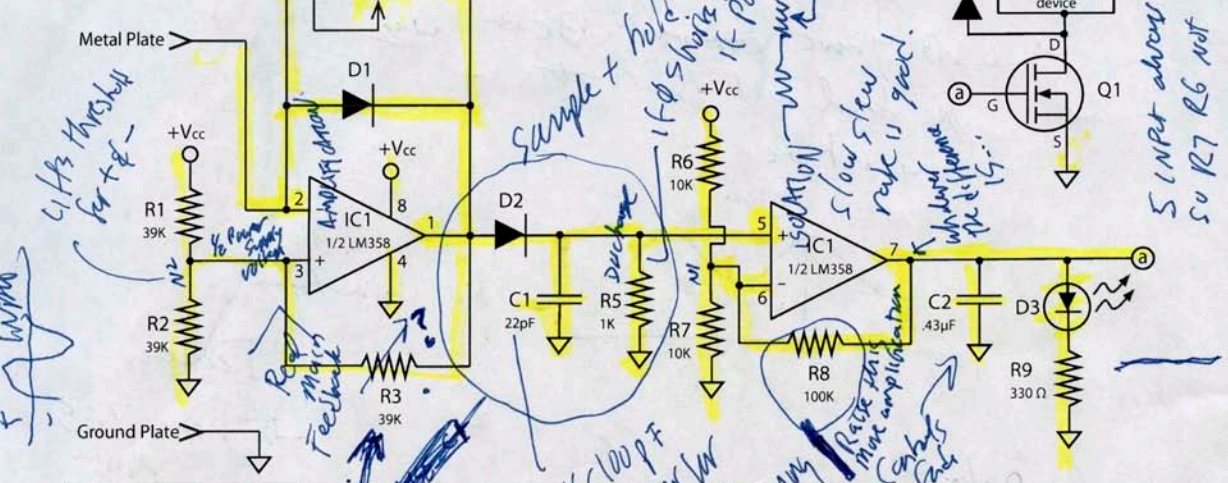
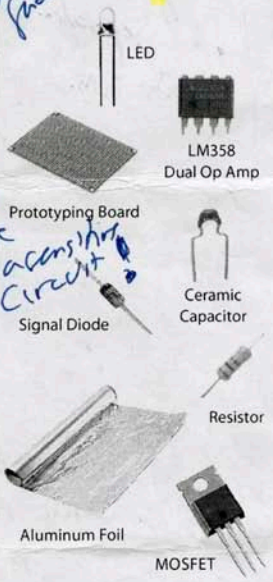


Capacitance Sensor Circuit



Parts		
ID	Description	Notes
R1, R2, R3	39K 1/4 Watt 5%	Orange, white, orange, gold
R4	1M Potentiometer	
R5	1K 1/4 Watt 5%	Brown, black, red, gold
R6, R7	10K 1/4 Watt 5%	Brown, black, orange, gold
R8	100K 1/4 Watt 5%	Brown, black, yellow, gold
R9	330Ω 1/4 Watt 5%	Orange, orange, black, gold
C1	22pF Ceramic Capacitor, 10 V	18pF—100pF OK too, remove C1, R5 for more jitter
C2	.43µF Ceramic Capacitor, 10 V	
D1, D2	Diode	Can be any small signal diode
D3	LED	Can be most any LED with V_f around 2V
Q1	MOSFET	Specifications to be determined
IC1	LM358 Dual Op Amp	
	Additional Items needed: Small prototyping board, aluminum foil, wire, binding posts, power supply, etc.	



Notes

The larger the metal plate, the more sensitive the circuit. Try this with a piece of aluminum foil or an aluminum pie plate.

Vcc can be between 5 and10 Volts

Connect 'a' to AVR or use the MOSFET to control high wattage devices

Circuit designed by Fred Wolflink
Computer Arts Center, MassArt

Work in Progress
v.1.1, December 6, 2010

Drawn by David Tamés
available at: http://davidtames.com/dmi/capsense/

Exhibition

The second version of *Hawt Couch* was installed at the *mediaLuscious: Design + Art Review,*[18] and this time it worked. For the show we decided to keep the interpretation of the data simple, establishing that the couch could be in one of nine states depending if someone was sitting or moving on one or both cushions. This enabled a more interesting response to sitter interaction. If one person was sitting on the couch, music and/or gentle making out sounds would play. If two people were on the couch at the same time, another set of making out sounds would play. If sitting on both cushions along with movement was detected, a special combination of music with more intense making out noises would be played. Once in a while an unromantic utterance would be played, interrupting the sounds of making out.

The new *Hawt Couch* system architecture worked much more reliably that the first, and from the perspective of the visitor's experience, provided a more nuanced experience. The asynchronous playback of the various sound cues made for a seamless landscape of sounds, more along the lines of a "score" rather than discrete sounds coming from the couch. The current hardware and code base provides a reliable platform for further experimentation in embedding aural stories in objects.

Process

This project started as a project lou and I began working on during the second half of the Design for Motion and Sound class during the Spring of 2010. We were challenged to create an experience that involved story, motion, and sound. Lou came up with the idea of the couch that would play back experiences of a previous interlude that took place on the couch. I immediately liked the idea and we began working on it together. The concept development moved along in parallel with our technology investigations, and we would intermingle our conceptual conversations with discussion of the tools we needed to implement the experience.

We did some sketching and lou developed a screen-based prototype of what the sounds might be like. I wanted an object that might provide a spring board for other "provocative objects" and a platform for excursions into physical computing. The psychoanalytical references to "the couch" were not lost on us.

The first phase was to figure out how to determine if someone was sitting on the couch. Our first experiments were with the FSR sensors. We wrote a very simple Arduino sketch to light an LED when the voltage changed as the FSR sensor was pressed as a result of someone sitting on the cushion. This was simple, but it was a start. We also experimented with tilt and piezeo-electric sensors. The next step was to add sound. For some reason we thought we wanted to do everything as a self-contained Arduino-based device, so we investigated various ways

18. *mediaLuscious: Design + Art Review,* Dynamic Media Institute, Group Show, curated by Alex Wang, Tania Ostorga, and lou suSi, Pozen Center, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, March 5, 2011, http://medialuscious.com (accessed September 15, 2011).

Page 59:

Hawt Couch 2.0
Discarded couch, accelerometers, CapSense sensors, Arduino, MacBook Pro, digital audio, powered speakers, Processing, and custom code. Exhibited at *mediaLuscious: Design + Art Review, Dynamic Media Institute,* Group Show, Pozen Center, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, March 5, 2011

of playing sound with the Arduino and I came across Adafruit's Wave Shield. We built the Wave shield, sharing the task of soldering all of the components to the board.

Creating a database of sounds was the creative core of the project. Before creating the database and to keep the program as flexible as possible, all of the sounds had to be selected and then edited using Audacity.[199] We had to decide the sequence of sounds and when they would play. This created a primitive form of dramatic structure for the experience. After a combination of online research, soldering, assembling, tinkering, code hacking, sitting, bouncing, sound recording, and sound editing, our efforts resulted in the first version of *Hawt Couch*. The technology section describes the final iteration of *Hawt Couch*.

19. Audacity is a free, open source sound editor available for Linux, Mac OS X, and Windows, http://audacity.sourceforge.net (accessed March 24, 2011).

Previously, I had viewed storytelling as something one did by writing words on a page, or in a blog, or by recording and editing images to create a video. By "writing" with motion and sound, I entered a realm completely separate and different from what I was used to. *Hawt Couch* opened up a more experimental process of storytelling. It was a form and genre expanding exploration into the nature of telling stories with objects and sounds; the embodiment of stories into an ordinary everyday object.

Rapidly cycling through phases of ideation, research, reflection, experimentation, making, and serendipity, we ended up with something that provided an instigation that spoke to the core of my thesis exploration: can media embedded into objects frame stories in a new way? The experience of working on *Hawt Couch* played a catalytic role in pushing me away from the screen and into real space, into the realm of installation art.

Reflection

Hawt Couch is ultimately about the idea of embedding stories in objects, or objects that can tell stories. It's not a finished idea, but it's clearly something that leaves space for further exploration. I'm interested in how I can move my media making practice from screens to objects. *Hawt Couch* merges physical computing with the expression of story through sound clips embedded in the couch. Can objects be considered storytelling devices? New media is about thinking of media forms and experiences in an expanding field. New media is about media makers moving out of their comfort zone. While the story *Hawt Couch* tells will never be confused with the classic Aristotelian poetics that structures so much of mainstream entertainment, it evokes a sense that something happened to someone. This unconventional context for a story asks the question, can an object tell a story?

Jean Baudrillard suggests provocatively that we have entered a "protean era of connections, contact, contiguity, feedback, and generalized interface that goes with the universe of communication."[20] Through

20. Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture,* Hal Foster, Ed., The New Press, 2002.

the experience of working on and observing people sitting on the couch and reacting to the sounds, I became aware of connections that I usually don't notice because they are lost in the complexity of everyday life. There is the potential (I'm not so pretentious as to actually think *Hawt Couch* achieved this but the experience did get me thinking) of an ecstatic form of communication. A form of communication that involves the participant in a process that presents new ways to perceive the world. The protean nature of digital media makes this possible.

The eclectic experience of working on and watching people interact with *Hawt Couch* has helped me see interconnections that might at first appear as discrete events, but they are connected. The sounds are evidence having nothing to do with the couch, but through juxtaposition, the old trick of editing masters, a causal link is made by the participant. Montage works with more than just images. Space, sound, image, objects all merge in an hyperlinked reality that we construct in our own mind. This is the ecstasy of working in space and engaging our bodies and senses. With this work I'm dealing with a level embodiment that I can't achieve with a screen. I've added a performative dimension to the experience I create, and when combined with cinematic montage and the emotional touch of sound, results in ecstatic media.

My reading of Sherry Turkle's work on our relationship with computational objects beginning with *The Second Self* [21] and her lecture at MassArt during the Spring of 2010 had a direct influence on *Hawt Couch*. In a talk with cultural theorist Henry Jenkins she said,

> The technologies of communication, are identity technologies. I think of them as intimate machines. They are not only, as the computer has always been, mirrors of our mind; they are now the places where the shape and dimensions of our relationship are sculpted.[22]

Provocative objects is lou suSi's play on evocative objects inspired by Turkle, she goes on to explain that evocative objects provide a window into life experience,

> When one pays careful attention to evocative objects, one "hears" psychodynamic issues, one "hears" family history, one "hears" a close attention to personal narrative and the texture of a life in all of its peculiarity and deeply woven interconnections with others.[...] our relationships with objects are profoundly interconnected to how we make meaning out of lives and think through who we are as people.[23]

Hawt Couch is also about our fascination with automata, and thus qualifies as a evocative/provocative object. Echoing Freud's 1919 essay, "The Uncanny," Hans Bellmer wrote,

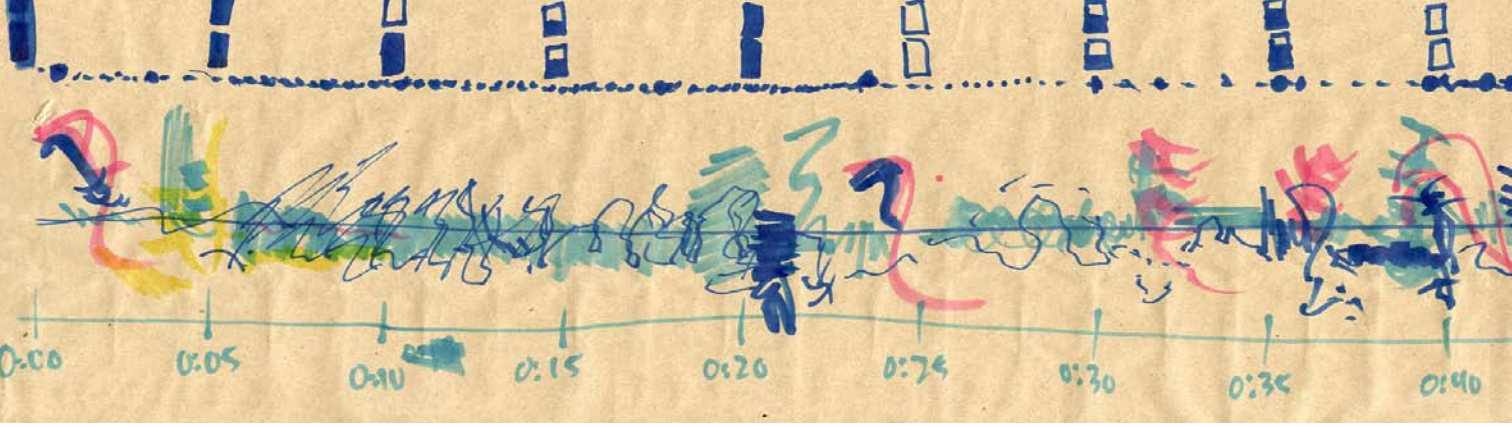
> Whether [the provocative object] occupies any place at all on the nearest or farthest see-saws of the confusion between the animate and the inanimate [...] it will be a matter of the personified thing, mobile, passive, adaptable, and incomplete, it will be a matter [...] of the mechanical factor of it's mobility of the joint.[224]

21. Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit,* Simon & Schuster, 1984.

22. Henry Jenkins, "Does This Technology Serve Human Purposes?: A 'Necessary Conversation' with Sherry Turkle (Part One)," *Confessions of an Aca-Fan,* blog, August 22, 2011, http://henryjenkins.org/2011/08/an_interview_with_sherry_turkl.html (accessed October 28, 2011).

23. Henry Jenkins, "Does This Technology Serve Human Purposes?: A 'Necessary Conversation' with Sherry Turkle (Part Two)," *Confessions of an Aca-Fan,* blog, August 24, 2011, http://henryjenkins.org/2011/08/does_this_technology_serve_hum.html (accessed October 29, 2011).

24. Sue Taylor, *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety,* The MIT Press, 2002, p. 100.



Sound visualization
A detail of an exercise I did in the Design for Motion and Sound class, Spring, 2010, visualizing a segment of *Kolaż* by Eugeniusz Rudnik. It was in this class that *Hawt Couch* was born.

Bellmer was re-configuring the human body with dolls situated between animate and inanimate, focused around the joints of the doll. In contrast to Belmer's "mechanical factor," *Hawt Couch* re-configures "aural traces" of a romantic encounter, de-constructed through fragmentation, both responsive and adaptable. Every time a visitor sits on the couch, the encounter is reassembled over again in a variety of combinations, no two exactly alike. Through this choreography of sound combinations inspired by Surrealist automatism,[25] the sequences become traces of live events and the sounds responsive to sitting and movement over time. Sound connects us to events on an emotional level.

Why does sound have the potential to touch us emotionally? It's uncanny how we tend to connect sound with feelings. Freud described the uncanny as an experience in which something is both foreign and familiar, leading to an uncomfortable (or at least ambivalent) sensation, usually occurring in the context of deciding if something is real or unreal. In its strongest form it can be a paradoxical experience of feeling, at the same time, both repulsed and attracted to an object. Freud wrote, "it is in the highest degree uncanny when an inanimate object—a picture or a doll—comes to life."[26]

Often sound brings something to life even though we can't physically see it or touch it. In fact, it is because we can't see it that the status of real or unreal is not obvious to us, and thus our experience falls into the uncanny valley[27] which lies between what is real and what we know to be obviously inanimate. If we're experiencing a good story we'll suspend our disbelief[28] and hover over the valley in narrative bliss, otherwise, we'll fall to the bottom of the valley and game over. Story provides the wind sail that carries us across the valley.

Psychologist Anne Fernald describes sound as "touch at a distance."[29] Of all of our senses, she suggests that sound literally touches us. The vibrations of air that enter our ear cause our ear drums to vibrate, which in turn move small bones in our inner ear that transmit the vibrations to hairs, and as the hairs bend they send electrical impulses to the brain. Sound isn't about some "thing," sound is a kind of "touch." It

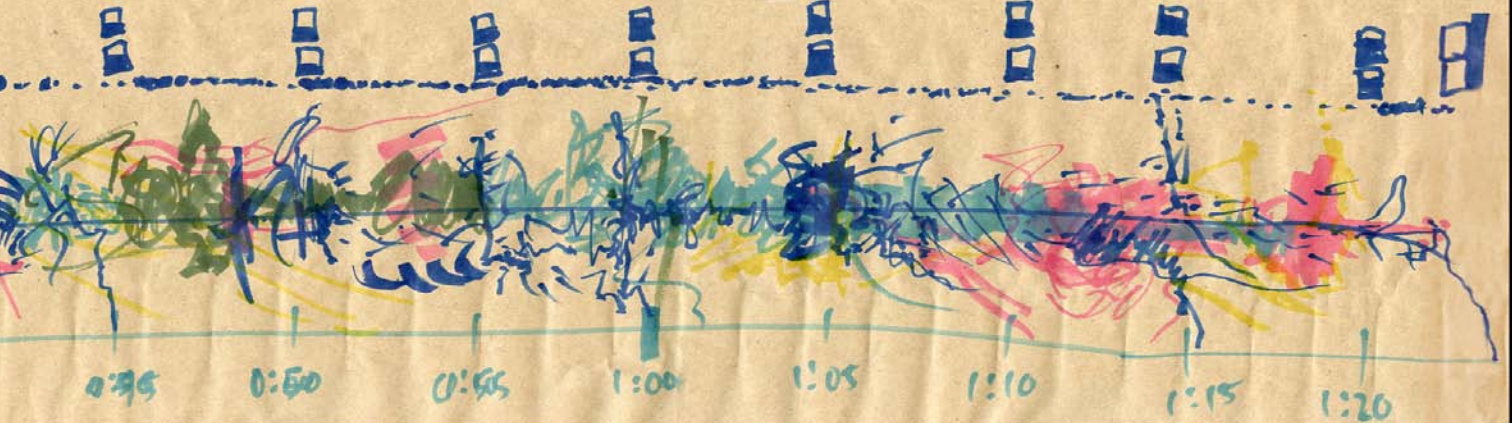
25. André Breton, "The Automatic Message," *The Message: Art and Occultism,* Michael Krajewski and Susanne Zander, Eds. Walther Konig, 2008.

26. Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny.* David McLintock, Trans., Penguin Classics, 2003, originally published in 1919.

27. Masahiro Mori, "The Uncanny Valley," *Energy* 7:4, 1970, pp. 33-35.

28. This popular assumption among readers, viewers, authors, and media makers has been questioned by Eva Schaper. She argues that while emotionally responding to something presupposes beliefs, that suspension of disbelief is "not only in itself an inherently paradoxical notion; it is also quite unnecessary in an account of the way we respond to fiction," see: Eva Schaper Eva Shaper, "Fiction and the Suspension of Disbelief," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 18:1, 1978, pp. 31-44, doi: 10.1093/bjaesthetics/18.1.31

29. Jad Abumrad & Robert Krulwich, "Musical Language," *Radiolab*, podcast, http://www.radiolab.org/2007/sep/24/ (accessed April 12, 2011).



quite literally touches us, evoking an emotional response. This scratches at the surface of the unique power of sound compared to visual or literary expressions. Take for example the two bass notes in the movie *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975); they do more to evoke a feeling of fear than any of the visuals could have done. This is probably the major reason *Hawt Couch* intrigues me.

Why was it important to work with sound? One reason is the fact that sonic stimulus increasingly mediates our experience of everyday life. This creates both a desire and opportunity for aesthetic encounters in the aural dimension. Caleb Kelly describes the "sonic turn" in recent art[30] that reflects an increasing number of artists investigating the aesthetic, cultural, and political dimension of sound art with a vibrancy that has not been felt since John Cage was teaching his Experimental Composition course at the New School in the 1960s.[31]

A recent example of sound art that caught my attention is *Lowlands*, an aural sculpture by Susan Philipsz[32] consisting of overlapping recordings of the artist singing an ancient Scottish lament, a cappella, in three different versions. *Lowlands* was installed at the Tate Britain in an empty white room with three separate black speakers. In contrast, it was originally installed beneath three bridges over the River Clyde in her native Glasgow. Adeline Amar wrote of the installation under the bridges that it was

> ...perfectly fitted for the location. The industrial bridges and walkabout graffiti suddenly become a meditative place, a physical memory that will haunt the passerby even when back in the loud Clyde Street traffic.[33]

I made a strange connection between how I imagined it must have felt to experience *Lowlands* under those bridges (my experience was limited to a YouTube video). Surprise is a key element to the effectiveness of a provocative object. Perhaps some day lou and I will install a future incarnation of *Hawt Couch* in a public location and we'll be able to observe what happens when people are caught unaware that a couch is reacting to their presence and movements. There's a lot of potential directions to explore in both aesthetic and metaphorical dimensions.

30. Caleb Kelly, Ed., *Sound,* Documents of Contemporary Art Series, The MIT Press and Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2011.

31. Kenneth Silverman, *Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage,* Random House Digital, 2010, pp. 133-136.

32. Red Cell, "Lowlands – Sound Sculptor Susan Philipsz Wins the Turner Prize," *The End of Being,* December 12, 2010, http://theendofbeing.com/2010/12/06/lowlands-sound-sculptor-susan-philipsz-wins-the-turner-prize/ (accessed October 29, 2011).

33. Adeline Amar, "Susan Philipsz: Lowlands @ Clydeside Walkway," *The Skinny,* April 20, 2010, http://www.theskinny.co.uk/art/reviews/99184-susan_philipsz_lowlands_clydeside_walkway (accessed October 29, 2011).

sara june: excerpts from *The Pleo Series*
Performance with Pleo Robot, ***Provocative Objects,***
Patricia Doran Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art
and Design, November 12, 2010, photo by Alice Apley

Case Study: Exhibition:

Provocative Objects

Case Study: Exhibition:

Provocative Objects

Genesis

The *Provocative Objects* exhibition and catalog grew out of lou suSi's investigations in cyberSurrealism,[1] and my participation in his exhibition, *American Cheese: an introspection.* This event provided the first public glimpse into the interdisciplinary, cross-cultural vision espoused and demanded by The Bureau of cyberSurreal Investigation.[2] Shortly following *American Cheese,* which reconstructive historians have labeled as the prequel to *Provocative Objects,* I worked with lou to plan an exhibit/event we dubbed *Tweet No More.* Unfortunately this concept perished by the roadside. The original concept for *Tweet No More,* before it became road kill, riffed off the critically acclaimed, immersive Punch-drunk and American Repertory Theatre (A.R.T.) production of *Sleep No More,*[3] but used a slightly more comedic input from the original Hitchcock-Shakespearean refraction filters applied to plot, character, and action. Shortly along the initial brainstormings, our co-curatorial consciences felt a strong instinct to push beyond parody and move into an entirely new experience concept. Seven meetings later[4] including a conversation with Sherry Turkle after her Media Tech Tonic lecture,[5] our idea evolved into *Provocative Objects.*

A major motivation for this project was the opportunity to collaborate with lou suSi. As we were planning the show we wanted to work with the larger arts community, with the idea that by bringing together students in the Dynamic Media Institute MFA program and working artists from the surrounding community, the interactions would serve to build a richer context for everyone involved, driven by our ethos of *vital inclusivity.* We believe the 21st century avant garde has inclusivity and participation among its defining characteristics, promoting art making and exhibition that fosters relationships and promotes inter-

1. lou suSi, "cyberSurrealism defined + Cybernetic Methodologies," web site, http://cybersurrealism.com (accessed February 10, 2011).

2. The Bureau of cyberSurreal investigation is a semi-fictional entity that looks for forensic evidence of the persistent attempts to assassinate creativity and stop pure innovation as expressed by artists, designers, musicians and performers that typically operate outside of the bounds of scientific methodologies and government monitoring, http://bureauofcybersurrealinvestigation.com (accessed February 20, 2011)

3. American Repertory Theater, "Sleep No More," web page, http://www.americanrepertorytheater.org/events/show/sleep-no-more (accessed January 12, 2011).

4. Often over pizza and a variety of libations including Dogfish 60 minute IPA at the Penguin Cafe in Brigham Circle, a favorite watering hole among Dynamic Media Institute students.

5. One of my extracurricular activities while a student at Dynamic Media Institute has been to organize Media Tech Tonic, a lecture series, http://mediatechtonic.com

action among participants, enabling people to be part of the art and encouraging lateral connections.[6] In the emerging paradigm of vital inclusivity, authorship is shared and cumulative in contrast to individualistic. Art is not simply the result of self expression by artists, but rather the result of a conversation with the audience and other participants in the process, widening the definition of who is an artist.

The Patricia Doran Gallery at Massachusetts College of Art and Design became "our box," our physical lure to capture the interdisciplinary energies of myriad talents. "The box" also metaphorically represents an invitation for gallery visitors to wander through the manifest collective subconscious of our gang of "provocateurs." Ultimately, we were playing with the ideology and sociopolitical poetics of the white cube.[7] Because it was there and available, we could not resist the opportunity; we jumped right in.

Process

In order to "spread our reach beyond the box" we put out a call for works on Rhizome ArtBase,[8] which stated:

> We are looking for pieces that instigate the viewer-participant-gallerygoer or blur the line and leave the audience wondering. Physical traditional art objects -- dynamic prototypes -- video, performative and conceptual work -- we're looking to collect an eclectic body of work to provoke viewer-participant exploration, thought, discussion and interaction. There will be a vaguely-defined "stageSpace" for certain event-related "performances" throughout the evening as well as numerous "objects" or installations.[9]

Between students in the Dynamic Media Institute program and artists from around the world, we received a total of 46 submissions. We structured an exhibition/event from these submissions. I came to realize there are a lot of parallels between what I do as a video editor and what lou and I did as we assembled the exhibition. Both involve building a structure to create the most engaging experience for participants as we made decisions on temporal sequencing of events and the spatial placement of objects.

A juried selection of 31 projects offered a wide range of work, to which we assigned the categories of "In the Gallery," "On Stage Performance," "Roving Performance," and "Video Loop." The structure of the exhibition catalog mirrors the categories, including descriptions, photographs, and selected essays by some of the artists and several interviews, along with a curator's introduction and a DVD with video documentation and high-resolution still images of the exhibition.

In the end, producing the catalog turned out to be a lot of work beyond our regular coursework. Why did we go through the trouble of creating an exhibition catalog? One reason is it provides proof that the show took place.[10] Without some form of documentation, how does anyone know it really happened? Arabella Decker writes, "In case

6. Orlando Patterson, "The Mechanism of Cultural Reproduction," in John R. Hall, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-Cheng Lo, Eds., *Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, Taylor & Francis, 2010, pp. 146-147.

7. Brian O'Doherty raises a set of provocative questions asking how artists must conceptualize their work in the context of the gallery space and system, see: Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The ideology of the gallery space,* Expanded edition, University of California Press,1999.

8. The Rhizome ArtBase, founded in 1999, is an online archive of new media art that includes editorial content, blogs, a community calendar, and more, http://rhizome.org

9. "Call for Proposals: Provocative Objects: The Extradition," *Rhizome ArtBase,* http://rhizome.org/announce/opportunities/55978/view/ (accessed December 12, 2010).

10. Ruth Waters et al., "Exhibition Catalogues: Why? How?" Women's Caucus for Art, http://nationalwca.org/aboutwca/publications.php (accessed October 22, 2011).

Left to right:

Provocative Objects Video Loop
A list of works appearing in the video loop may be found in the *Provocative Objects* exhibition catalog at: http://davidtames.com/provocative-objects/, photo by Andrew Ellis

Bureau of cyberSurreal Investigation: *Field Office*
Performance (welcome desk and show management), photo by Alice Apley

Elizabeth Mead: *Internal Organs,* 2010
Porcelain sculpture, no words+, photo by Andrew Ellis

of disaster (like fire or flood), the catalogue may be the only proof an official will accept about the artist's level of professional achievement (think insurance)."[11] In the end, she adds that "the fact that catalogues are held in many hands assures the survivability of the information."[12]

The exhibition/event

On the evening of November 12, 2010 our exhibit/event took place in the Patricia Doran Gallery at Massachusetts College of Art and Design. The experience brought together an eclectic group of works by artists from the Boston area, San Francisco, Madrid, Brooklyn, Memphis, Oakland, San Diego, and Chicago. The participating artists, designers, musicians, and performers came together to create a unique experience full of conversation, participation, and gallery-going fun.[13] The crowd buzzed with a delightful mix of people from the MassArt academic community as well as the wider Boston arts and new media scene. Our goal was to orchestrate a world-class event on a shoestring. And based on the generous attendance and level of engagement of those involved, as well as the informal qualitative feedback received from attendees, we succeeded, achieving what lou suSi referred to as "The cyberSurreal state." This was further corroborated by several participants during the after-party held at The Savant Project in Mission Hill.[14]

The planning and the structure of the show in terms of placement and time schedule was effective in conveying our notion of inclusivity,[15] inviting people "inside the box." In essence we were saying to visitors, "Come inside. See what we see. Experience what we dream and feel." The confluence of new and old media in the exhibition served to expand our knowledge of the world and helping us see from perspectives that we could not have seen otherwise. We were celebrating the intersection of art/design/performance of the past, present, and future.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Visit the exhibition web site located at http://provocativeobjects.com

14. Personal conversation with Philippe Lejeune and several other participants of *Provocative Objects,* November 12, 2010.

15. The concept of vital inclusivity is explained in the Process section.

Exhibition catalog

In addition to curating, organizing, and running *Provocative Objects,* we produced an exhibition catalog. The co-curatorial subcommittee of lou suSi and myself, acting as primary investigators from The Bureau of cyberSurreal Investigation,[16] spent countless hours interviewing the artists, gallery visitors, and the many assistants and collaborators that contributed to the humming success of the exhibition. These efforts were distilled into the exhibition catalog.[17] This is another way we invite others "inside the box." An open vessel for someone who could not attend but would like to experience some traces of the event. This provides another opportunity for someone else to see what we saw, experience what we felt at *Provocative Objects.* The catalog was published by the publications division of the bureau of cyberSurreal investigation in a very limited print edition and an unlimited digital edition.[18]

Lou and I begin the catalog with an introductory essay. We include descriptions the artists provided us of their objects (or performances) along with photographs (most were taken during the event),[19] and a DVD containing video sequences[20] providing a fleeting glimpse of what being there might have felt like. We chose not to write extensive curatorial notes, as we saw our role more as orchestrators that curators. Instead, we invited artists to contribute reflections on their works or their experience participating in the show in the form of an interview or essay. Two artists contributed essays and six participated in interviews included in the catalog. The centerpiece is an interview with artist Philippe Lejune about the evolution and thinking behind his work, *Do You Feel Connected? That is the Question.*

Brian O'Doherty describes the classic installation photograph as one without human figures.[21] In contrast, the images in our catalog show participants in the frame. Much as recent documentary has become

16. At present, the Bureau of cyberSurreal Investigation is a semi-fictional cybernetically augmented extension of the original Surrealist Movement from 1920s Europe and beyond.

17. In the classic sense of the term, an exhibition catalog is a work published to document an exhibition. As a minimum requirement it includes a list of works exhibited, additional information (e.g. photographs, essays, analyses of the works, artists biographies) is considered optional. In recent years there has been a trend to publish what may be called an "exhibition publication," which goes beyond a simple list of works and functions as a extensive publication published in association with an exhibition that goes way beyond simple catalogs.

18. Printed copies of the catalog were submitted to the Dynamic Media Institute archive and distributed to participants who contributed essays or interviews, the PDF may be downloaded from http://davidtames.com/provocative-objects/

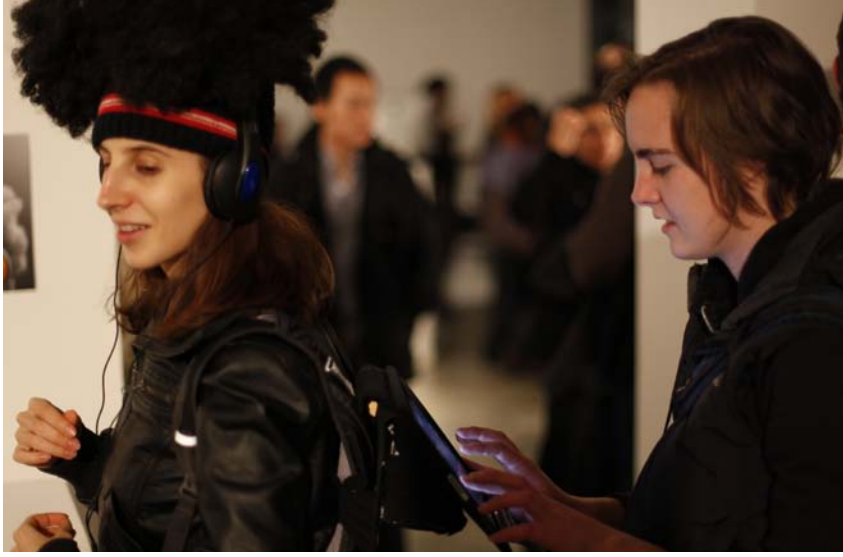
19. Alice Apley, Andrew Ellis, lou suSi, and Katsumi Take, and James Wight contributed photographs to the exhibition catalog, some of which are also used in this document.

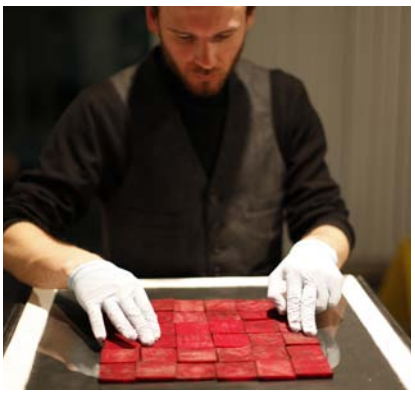
20. Andrew Ellis and Kent Millard contributed video to the exhibition catalog video suppliment.

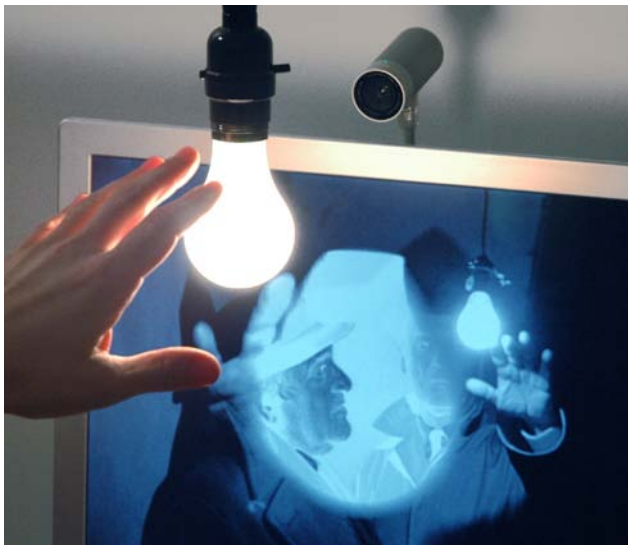
21. Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The ideology of the gallery space,* expanded edition, University of California Press, 1999.

Pages 70-71:

Provocative Objects exhibition
A list of works and performances appearing in the show may be found in the *Provocative Objects* exhibition catalog at: http://davidtames.com/provocative-objects/, photos by Andrew Ellis and Katsumi Take.







Left to right:

Philippe Lejeune: *Do You Feel Connected? That is the Question*, 2010
Wood, glass, light, laptop, iPhone, webcam, speakers, book, cables, the artist. As Angel Provocateur Lejeune invites people into his [__I__] and, among other things, triggered images into their minds. An extensive interview with Lejeune in which he discusses his work appears in the *Provocative Objects* exhibition catalog. Photo by Katsumi Take.

Chris Basmajian: *Can't Hear the Music,* 2008
Video camera, light bulb, display, custom software, computer, excerpts from the film *Alphaville,* directed by Jean-Luc Godard. An interactive video installation that samples a Cold-War era film about the conforming force of a computerized machine-state and it's destructive effect on society and humanity. By presenting and manipulating the film excerpts with ubiquitous consumer computer components, the piece takes a critical stance towards contemporary digital technologies, and questions the Utopian view many hold of our screen-based media culture. Photo by Chris Basmajian.

Andrew Ellis: *Mapkin,* 2010
Pen on napkins and Processing. Mapkin is an interactive collection of hand drawn maps on napkins. A participant is given a limited amount of time to draw their perspective of the world, from memory, on a napkin, and add it to the growing slide show collection. Photo by Andrew Ellis.

more transparent about the filmmakers role vis-a-vis the subject role in creating the representation, so we have made more transparent our process in the exhibition catalog by including images of the live event rather than the canonical exhibition photographs.

A contemporary exhibition catalog would not be be complete without footnotes, a bibliography, and other critical apparatus and some of those may be found in our catalog. We had fun playing with the conventions of the exhibition catalog but ultimately our hope was to create a useful document and a model for an exhibition catalog created in the changing context of the last days of print. We are influenced by the current trend in which exhibition catalogs have grown in size and scope and are increasingly seen as a comprehensive source of information on a subject area.

Reflection

The *Provocative Objects* exhibition and production of the exhibition catalog[22] provided lou and I with an opportunity to explore the process of conceiving, organizing, running, and documenting an exhibition and event. With *Provocative Objects* we worked within the constraints of time and budget as well as the limitations of the Doran Gallery, while at the same time evolving a critique of the aesthetics associated with the white cube, as summarized by Brian O'Doherty,

> A gallery is constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church. The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. [...] The art is free, as the saying used to go, 'to take on its own life.' [...] Modernism's transposition of perception from life to formal values is complete. This, of course, is one of modernism's fatal diseases. [...] Unshadowed, white, clean, artificial, the space is devoted to the technology of esthetics. [...]

22. This case study is derived, in part, from the text lou suSi and I wrote in a collaborative manner for the *Provocative Objects* exhibition catalog and should not be considered the work of a sole author, but a derivative work made from a collaborative work.

> The space offers the thought that while eyes and minds are welcome, space-occupying bodies are not [...] This Descartian paradox is reinforced by one of the icons of our visual culture: the installation shot, sans figures. Here at last the spectator, oneself, is eliminated. You are there without being there...[23]

Some of our inspiration came from the avant-garde artists of the early-twentieth century, many of whom characterized the museum as a mausoleum. One particularly stinging critique was penned by Filippo Marinetti[24] (1876–1944), an Italian poet and founder of the Futurist movement, who wrote in his *Futurist Manifesto* that museums were

> ...cemeteries, public dormitories where one lies forever beside hated or unknown beings [...] absurd abattoirs of painters and sculptors ferociously slaughtering each other with color-blows and line-blows, the length of the fought-over walls [...]Calvaries of crucified dreams, registries of aborted beginnings...[25]

And while the white cube, a symbol of purity and restraint, continues to dominate the architectural template of museum exhibition,[26] it also continues to be challenged. Christiane Paul, a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, reminds us that museums are in the business of presentation, interpretation, and conservation, observing that "contemporary artistic practice challenges the traditional art world—its customary methods of presentation."[27] Jon Ippolito, an artist and former curator at the Guggenheim Museum urges that artwork must "keep moving to survive," and there is no "set it and forget it" approach if you are presenting contemporary work.[28] With *Provocative Objects* we hoped, in our own modest way, to challenge the white cube as a neutral container of objects, treating it more as a site for an ephemeral event consisting of works and performances at odds with the ideology behind the surfaces of the Patricia Doran Gallery's white walls.

23. Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The ideology of the gallery space,* expanded edition, University of California Press,1999, p. 15.

24. Filippo Marinetti was also a fascist ideologue. Mention of Marinetti does not imply support of his political ideas. Marinetti was one of the first affiliates of the Italian Fascist Party, therefore, we distance ourselves from his support of fascism and restrict our reading and use of Marinetti to his critique of the museum and art institutions. The many contradictions of his politics and character helped make him a fascinating and provocative thinker.

25. Filippo Marinetti, "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism," in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in Theory, 1900-1990: An anthology of changing ideas*, Blackwell, 1993, p. 148.

26. Janet Marstine, Ed., *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2005, p. 518.

27. Christiane Paul, *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond: Curatorial Models for Digital Art,* University of California Press, 2008.

28. Jon Ippolito, "Death by Wall Label", in Christiane Paul, *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond: Curatorial Models for Digital Art,* University of California Press, 2008.

Thomas Hirschhorn has provided one of the most striking examples illustrating contemporary critical attitudes towards the white cube. For the Whitechapel Gallery's *Protest and Survive* exhibition in 2000, Hirschhorn constructed *The Bridge*, a makeshift construction over the alley between the gallery café and The Freedom Press, an anarchist bookshop and publishing house.[29] This work is especially striking given the metaphorical reverberations that result from piercing the establishment of the white cube in order to create a link to an institution that is outside of both the white cube and mainstream culture.

Contemporary artists find themselves in a strange position as anachronistic makers of artisanal objects in a global capitalist economy based on mass production of commodities. This is perhaps one factor influencing the choice many artists make to work in public space or create more ephemeral works in the form of performances, interventions, and events.

The Bridge provides a catalyst for dialog on the relationship between art and politics by making a nostalgic connection to times past when many artists espoused radical manifestos. Julian Stallabrass wrote of Hirschhorn's work in his review of the *Protest and Survive* exhibition,

> It is an unnerving experience to tread on its slightly yielding surface (the bridge appears to be made of cardboard held together with masking tape) but stranger still is the contrast between the two spaces: one white-walled, tasteful, judiciously minimal; the other cluttered, hedged in by noble and unfashionable texts, tobacco-stained and marked by the passage of years. Moving between them reminds you just how corporate the décor of art galleries has become. That the passage between the two—art and politics, that is—should feel provisional and rickety is fitting. It has become a cliché in the contemporary art world to claim that the two cannot mix well, or that their alliance breeds tyranny, or that art can be political only in the continual recitation of contradiction. How has it come about that the bridge, so robust as recently as the 1970s, is now so frail?[30]

Can the objects we make provoke a re-evaluation of the institutions of meaning making? Can we challenge the notion of exhibition in a meaningful way? It is at this intersection of impossible tasks that *Provocative Objects* was conceived. Could we construct a bridge on our own between the "institution" and the world outside the white cube? Our bridge was metaphorical, our challenge to the notion of exhibition symbolic. Striving not to recreate a "mausoleum," we limited the event to a single day. Perhaps this had more to do with limitation of resources than ideology. Accordingly, who can argue against the notion that resources play a part in determining ideology? *Provocative Objects* is now but a distant memory of specters taking over and inhabiting a mausoleum for a night, with echoes of the experience in our documentation, the faint traces of the event captured in a book, a mausoleum in another form, offering an opportunity to reflect on what is preserved, and what is lost, in the traditional form of an exhibition catalog.

29. The Freedom Press is the oldest publishing house of its kind in the United Kingdom, and probably the last institution of its kind. It was founded in 1886 by a group of friends including Charlotte Wilson and Peter Kropotkin. Along with books and pamphlets, the press publishes *Freedom,* a fortnightly newspaper. See: Donald Rooum, "Freedom, Freedom Press and Freedom Bookshop: A short history of Freedom Press," *Information for Social Change* 27 (2008), http://libr.org/isc/issues/ISC27/articles/5%20Freedom,%20Freedom%20Press%20and%20Freedom%20Bookshop.pdf (accessed November 28, 2011).

30. Julian Stallabrass, "Cashing In," *New Statesman,* October 2, 2000, http://www.newstates man.com/200010020037 (accessed October 2, 2011).

Thomas Hirschhorn: *Bridge,* 2000
Model of the installation linking the Whitechapel Gallery Café to Freedom Press bookshop, *Protest & Survive* exhibition, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, © Whitechapel Gallery Archive.

Did we succeed in what we set out to do? It depends on how you measure success. We did not set forth a detailed set of evaluation metrics. The ultimate metric of success would be what kind of impression the show left on visitors. Did any collaborations occur as a result of artists interacting with each other at the show? Did artists discover a new path for their work they may not have seen prior to the show? Did visitors have a good time? Were they provoked in any way? Did we live up to the name, *Provocative Objects?* We can only reflect on these questions, since we did not conduct extensive qualitative analysis of visitor's reactions, however, some of the interviews in the catalog touch on this.

There were two quantitative metrics we considered and calculated: average attendance and attendance during the last hour of the show. Both of these numbers exceeded our expectations. The show was well attended with people from the Dynamic Media Institute, the broader MassArt community, and the Boston community at large. Attendance is one of the important metrics for an exhibition/event.

What is the curator's role on the periphery of established institutions? Perhaps the best opportunities to contribute in a meaningful way to our local arts scene is idea-focused exhibitions (especially in the form of a group show) in which something unexpected may occur as a result of the "mixing" of emerging artists and new approaches. This is at the heart of what lou and I were attempting with *Provocative Objects.* Our biggest challenge was to connect in a meaningful way with one of the relevant discourses in contemporary art. Innovation necessarily starts at the margin, and the margin is not the same as being marginal. All new movements and ideas have their start at the margin, and as time goes on, it either falls out of orbit or it is pulled in by the gravitational pull of the center. In the end, art that finds a place in the art world has to make connections with contemporary discourse in order to participate in the conversation. The influence of *Provocative Objects* may never be known.

This Place in a Space
First iteration of the installation, Tower Auditorium,
January 12, 2011

Case Study: Installation:

This Place in a Space

Case Study: Installation:

This Place in a Space

Origins

Can we create within a space an experience that reflects a place? This case study explores the question through the process of creating a new media installation reflecting my experience documenting artists producing site-specific art. I was interested in investigating what kind of participation engages a place. Can this experience be removed from its roots in physical space and transformed into another form? What is lost in translation? What do we gain through the process?

The specific place in question is the Bumpkin Island Art Encampment and my four year relationship to it. The Bumpkin Island Art Encampment provides participating artists with the opportunity to live and work in a temporary, intentional, artist community on a small island in the Boston Harbor. Artists are limited to the tools and supplies they carry onto the island, including what is needed to camp for five days and four nights. Any additional materials used in projects must come from resources available on the island: fallen tree limbs and branches, rocks, shells, seaweed, trash found on the island, debris washed up on the shore, bricks and ruins left by former inhabitants, and other found objects. The curators insist that everything found and used must stay on the island at the end of the project, and anything brought onto the island must be taken off the island. The encampment is a carry in, carry out art making experience. With the approval of the curators, installations which are made exclusively from found materials are sometimes allowed to remain intact at the mercy of the elements, and these appear on the island as evidence of prior encampment inhabitants.

Artists or artist groups are each given one plot of land on the island. As "homesteaders" during the five-day time frame, they camp on the land,

build a temporary home, and "improve" the land through temporary, site-specific, project or installation work. The experience begins with two days of setting up camp and art making, followed by two days of public viewing of the artistic works. This ends with a day of tearing down camp and preparing for departure. The curators encourage interaction with the public. Casual visitors, kayakers, campers, and others are offered access to the process of creating the works and perhaps even the artists reflections on their process. The encampment provides participants with the opportunity to meet and work with other artists. The social dimension is encouraged with a group dinner on the first and last evenings of the encampment. The curators challenge artists to "Respond to the environment, as defined in the broadest sense,"[1] and the projects may reflect, "the island's natural resources and human history, the cultural context of homesteading, the theme of artistic community, or other themes."[2]

I've experienced the Bumpkin Island Art Encampment four times: the first time in 2007 as a casual visitor who stumbled upon the encampment for the first time; the second in 2008 as an engaged visitor spending an entire day interacting with the artists and photographing the works; the third in 2009 as a participant in collaboration with Alice Apley and Sharon Dunn; and during my fourth encounter in 2010 I was an embedded documentarian creating my own work. It is the fourth experience that forms the core of my thesis work culminating in the installation, *This Place in a Space.* It's been fascinating to observe and reflect on my own evolution and the range of my work from observation to final installation; and the diversity of artists I've encountered along the way, from new to established. It's a wonderful intentional community, rooted in the experience of homesteading on the island, and one that afforded me the opportunity to produce work that expanded my range and vocabulary.

This journey led to a personal inquiry into the question of how do we create a space that reflects the experience of a place? *This Place in a Space* is an aesthetic and philosophical inquiry with two interwoven questions: First, how do the artists imagine the Bumpkin Island Art Encampment as a place in subjective terms? Second, using the video sequences I filmed and edited in my role as documentarian during the encampment and my experience creating those sequences, can I translate my experience working with this familiar material into the unfamiliar (to me) language of installation art?[3]

Space, place, and narrative

I'm using the terms place and space such that each is tied to a distinctly different concept. John Agnew offers a definition of place we'll take as a starting point in teasing out the meaning of place as compared to space. For Agnew, place can be one of three things: "1. location (the simple notion of 'where'), 2. locale (the material setting for social relations),

1. Jed Speare, "Bumpkin Island Art Encampment Request for Proposals," Studio Soto, April 6, 2009, http://www.studiosoto.org/Home/news/bumpkinislandartencampmentrequestforproposals (accessed October 10, 2011).

2. Ibid.

3. I began working through installation concepts for *This Place in a Space* in the Thesis Project I course in the Fall of 2010, refined them further in the Installation: Reflective Space course during the Winter 2011 Inter-session, and completed the work in Thesis Project II during the Spring of 2011.

and 3. sense of place (the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place)."[4] Henri Lefebvre sees the production of space as the reproduction of social relations,[5] a container of relationships, which becomes "knowledge and action."[6] Social structures, relationships, and activities help us name spaces (primarily experienced in our minds) and turns them into places (an experienced, inhabited, tangible unit of space). Yi-fu Tuan concludes that place is associated with security, while space is associated with freedom; he wrote, "we are attached to the one, and long for the other."[7]

Following Henri Lefebvre and Yi-fu Tuan, I imagine place as a social space consisting of relationships and human activity. The *place* of the Bumpkin Island Art Encampment, for instance, is created by the relationships and activities among the artists taking place in the *space* of Bumpkin Island over a particular time frame. The experience of place is constructed by the activities of the artists in a particular space over time, becoming a place, a location which becomes a story-organism,[8] a conceptual structure existing in human minds that can be communicated to others (albeit imperfectly) through various media forms, and renders persistent the experiences that took place among participants in the encampment.

Narrative organizes the structure of human experience. As Jerome Bruner writes, it's about "how 'life' comes to imitate 'art' and vice versa."[9] Bruner suggests the properties of the world of "reality" are constructed according to narrative principles with the objective of laying down the groundwork for a psychological understanding of how narrative organizes the structure of human experience. Rodger Schank and Robert Abelson argue persuasively that stories about our experiences and the experiences of others are the fundamental building blocks of human memory, knowledge, and social communication. They conclude that human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences; new experiences are interpreted in terms of past experiences; and stories depends on whether and how they are told to others, and these reconstituted memories form the foundation of our "remembered self." It follows that stories shared within social groups define our social selves, which may support or compete with each individual's own remembered self.[10] Our identity is the result of the stories we tell about the life we lead.

We find the connection between place and narrative in the literary theories of Mikhail M. Bakhtin. Bakhtin introduced the idea of the chronotope, which literally means space-time, and was directly influenced by Albert Einstein's theories. Following Bakhtin, Michiel Van Eijck and Wolff-Michael Roth suggest we understand place as the result of a dialectical and dialogical relation of the material world and its chronotopic nature in the various discourses in which a place is constituted as "this place." In other words, place is a lived entity that results

4. John Agnew, *Place and Politics*, Allen and Unwin, 1987.

5. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* Wiley-Blackwell, 1992.

6. Ibid.

7. Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

8. I'm using this phrase as defined in: Sol Worth, *Studying Visual Communication,* Larry Gross, Ed., University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981, pp. 8-12.

9. Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 18:1, 1991.

10. Rodger Schank and Robert P. Abelson, "Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story," *Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story,* Robert S. Wyer, Ed., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995, pp. 1-85.

Bumpkin Island
Looking towards Logan airport, August 30, 2008

from a dialogical transaction between a community and its material environment at a particular moment in cultural-historical time and is shaped by the identity of a group of people.[11] Keith Basso, after thirty year of ethnographic study of the meaning and significance of Apache place names found in the area surrounding the community of Cibecue, Arizona, wrote that Western Apache geographic features were

> points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse. Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people [...] Chronotopes thus stand as monuments to the community itself, as symbols of it, as forces operating to shape its members' images of themselves.[12]

We can't have space without time nor can we have time without space. They are like two sides of a coin that can't be separated. I conceive of space not as an abstract thing but ultimately a social space, produced by human activity. The place of Bumpkin Island, for instance, is created by the activities of the artists in the space of Bumpkin Island. The Bumpkin Island Art Encampment as a place is constructed by the activities of the artists in a particular space over time, and thus becomes a place.

In terms of site-specific art practice, the Bumpkin Island Art Encampment, by creating a place in a space, provided a context for both artists and viewers to have new experiences. The encampment, through its invocation of the homesteading and island metaphors, created a temporary home away from home, a place extending the meanings of a particular space. Lefebvre defined "appropriation" as the spatial practice where nature is transformed in order to satisfy human possibilities.[13] The curators of the Bumpkin Island Art Encampment transformed Bumpkin Island into a metaphorical island that facilitated and "appropriated" both the artist's and visitor's journey. The curators clearly understood the value of invoking powerful, resonant metaphors like "homesteading" and "island" in order to create new meaning of place in a specific space. In this context, the visiting public was invited to interact in generating the meaning of the space. The encampment is a production of place, which is meaningful by its own reproduction of

11. Michiel Van Eijck & Wolff-Michael Roth, "Towards a Chronotopic Theory of 'Place' in place-based education," *Cultural Studies of Science Education,* 2010, pp. 1-30, doi 10.1007/s11422-010-9278-2.

12. Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and language among the Western Apache,* University of New Mexico Press, 1996, p. 62.

13. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* Wiley-Blackwell, 1992.

the social relations of homesteaders, artists, visitors, explorers, performers, curators, and park rangers, among others.

First encounter with Bumpkin Island

On the sunny and magical day of September 4, 2007 my wife Alice and I stumbled upon the first annual Bumpkin Island Art Encampment. While walking along the Boston wharfs in search of a ferry that would take us to one of the mysterious islands, we came across an intriguing brochure:

> The Boston Harbor Island Alliance, Studio Soto, and the Berwick Research Institute collaborated to award eight artists with temporary land grants--the right to live, work and 'improve land' for three days on Bumpkin Island, a national park about a mile from the Boston mainland. With only what they carried on their backs and found materials, the artists:
>
> * Build a temporary shelter on the land
> * Live on the land for at least four nights, and
> * Improve the land via a site-specific project or performance.
>
> The public is invited to observe the works-in-progress on Saturday September 1st, with Public Visitation days on Sunday September 2nd and Monday September 3rd.
>
> Acting as temporary "homesteaders," artists will explore and transform an empty plot of land (their campsite) into a resource sustaining themselves and their community. Their works will pay tribute to the island's past inhabitants, highlight the island's natural resources, and engage the public as performer, apprentice, student, and honored guest. Projects include temporary shelters, shrines, musical instruments, performance, video and electronic art, and sculpture.[14]

We were hooked; we purchased our ferry tickets with anticipation and boarded the first of two ferries we needed to take to get to Bumpkin Island.[15] Given the vagaries of the ferry schedule we only had just over an hour on the island before we had to catch the ferry back to the mainland, so our exposure to the encampment was limited. We managed to see some of the works and engage in conversation with some of the artists about their homesteading experience. We were intrigued by the nature of the experience, the location of this pint-sized island in the harbor, with a spectacular view of the Boston skyline. The artists had transformed the rustic island into an exotic land. We planned to return the following year, allowing more time to linger and experience the island, the works, the artists, the place.

The Bumpkin Island Art Encampment serves as a beguiling metaphor of my experience as a documentary media maker, a process of exploring the world around me. I experience "places" and "people" through interaction with others, recording audio and video with my camera, reflecting on what I've recorded, and assembling the audiovisual materials into image events[16] through editing that I clarify and refine into a "sense of being there."[17] From the first visit, the island and the encamp-

14. Text from: Boston Harbor Island Alliance, Studio Soto, and The Berwick Research Institute, "Bumpkin Island Art Encampment," Brochure, ca. September 1, 2007.

15. Bumpkin Island, a 35-acre island in the Boston Harbor with slate and shell beaches and open fields, was used by Native Americans as a fish camp prior to European contact. During the colonial period, the island was leased to tenant farmers. The island hosted a fish-drying operation in the early nineteenth century and a fish smelting operation in the early twentieth century. In 1900, Clarence Burrage, a Boston philanthropist, founded a hospital for children with physical disabilities. During World War I the island was used as a United States Naval training camp, which was dismantled after the war. The hospital reopened briefly ca. 1940 for polio patients but closed during World War II and burned in 1945. Today, the physical landscape of the island has been reclaimed by plants (about half are non-native species) including various fruits and berries, shrubs, vines, field plants and trees. Wildflowers grow along the trails that lead visitors to the ruins of the children's hospital and a stone farmhouse. See: "Bumpkin Island Art Encampment," http://theartmob.net/edits/BumpkinBooklet.pdf (accessed March 25, 2011).

16. Sol Worth developed a theory that individual media makers are not isolated creators of idiosyncratic meanings, but are embedded in a larger cultural systems. Sequences of image-events reflect, "value systems, coding patterns, and cognitive processes of the maker," and furthermore, "To some extent, when we use visual images, we depend not on arbitrary sign meaning but on an expected common set of perceptual mechanisms and a common set of rules by which we perceive and organize the world. We are, however, learning that this set of rules by which we perceive and organize the world is as much dependent on our culture as on some set of built-in perceptual mechanisms. [. . .] Although image-events appear in no lexicon that has been bound and stacked in libraries, differing cultures use, organize, and imply and infer meaning from image-events in differing ways," see: Sol Worth, *Studying Visual Communication*, Larry Gross, Ed., University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981, p. 75.

17. I'm using "the sense of being there" in the manner documentary filmmaker Richard Leacock (1921–2011) described it, see: Richard Leacock, "A Search for the Feeling of Being There," *RichardLeacock.com,* May 20, 1997, http://richardleacock.com/#15854/A-Search-for-the-Feeling-of-Being-There (accessed May 20, 2011).

2008 Bumpkin Island Art Encampment
August 28–September 1, 2008

Top to bottom:

Dan Hisel, Hanna Rose Shell, Etienne Bensonl: The *Camoufleurs*. Site specific installation, drawing on artisanal weaving techniques, military concealment strategies and surveillance technologies, and bird nesting practices, the camoufleurs transformed their land, and its particular human and natural ecology, into a camouflaged homestead environment.

Self-Portrait inside *The Camoufleurs*

Sharon Haggins Dunn: *Spirits in the House: Then & Now.* Installation detail. Site specific installation. Using natural materials, captured images illustrate change and continuity of natural and human forces over time. Sharon Haggins Dunn and Alice Apley appear.

Sharon Haggins Dunn: *Spirits in the House: Then & Now*

Pages 84-85:

2008 Bumpkin Island Art Encampment
August 28–September 1, 2008

Gabe Moylan & Rachel Roberts: *Survival Kit*. Living off only the bare-bones survival kit provided by the Federal Emergency Management Association, the artists use island-found objects to recreate family photos, common domestic objects, and items of spiritual value often overlooked in disaster recovery.

2009 Bumpkin Island Art Encampment
July 30–August 3, 2009

Left to right:

Alice Apley, Curator Jed Speare, Sharon Dunn

Farm house exterior

Farm house interior during installation

ment became the site of a metaphorical, symbolic, and experiential exploration of "place." Could the project become a catalyst for reflecting on my process?

Second encounter with Bumpkin Island

As the summer of 2008 was coming to a close, I began a relentless juggling of school, work, and personal life. Over Labor Day weekend Alice and I made the trek to Bumpkin Island. We spent many hours exploring the island, visiting the installations and talking with the artists. The artist we spent the most time talking with was Sharon Dunn, who I had met earlier in the spring in the Studio Foundation department where we both work. We had a long conversation about her installation in the ruins of a former children's hospital, now overgrown with invasive poison ivy shrubs. I imagined what it might be like to light the installation at night, photograph it, and share the images with guests during the day. A theme of time shifting and historical traces began to emerge as I thought back on my second visit to the island. A project was quietly percolating in my subconscious with occasional glimpses appearing in my conscious mind.

Third encounter with Bumpkin Island

During the Spring semester of 2009 Sharon Dunn, Alice, and I responded to the 2009 Bumpkin Island Art Encampment request for proposals with a collaboration titled, *Dragonflies and Angelwings.* Sha-

ron would work on a site-specific installation on the island. Alice would observe with a video camera focused on Sharon's process. I would document the activity as a photographer. The seeds of this project were planted in our conversation during my second encounter with Bumpkin Island. Sharon wrote in our project proposal,

> Reflecting on places of ruin and landscapes as witnesses of human stories and untold human drama, the hospital ruins[18] haunt me; filling me with images of another time, another place, another culture, it gives me pause.[19]

Through our dialog, ideas emerged over time. Scribbles in my notebook, notes jotted down in the margins of the books I was reading, slowly formed into a coherent project proposal.

At once performance and site-specific installation, we explored the concepts of energy and time shifting. The project provided a vehicle through which to appreciate the natural ecosystem and the sacred nature of the site. Sharon reflects,

> Imagining moments of laughter, magic and miracles, this landscape is filled with memories of life and death [...] The work also references ritual performances, festive offerings, gifts and magical/mystical forms associated with the realm of spirits and fairies."[20]

Time and energy flows, with the stored energy of the sun as a source of light, helped make visible the installation activities that took place at night. This metaphorical construct was realized through addressing a practical challenge: Can visitors during the day see the light paintings I

18. Once Sharon, Alice, and I arrived at the island and began to negotiate spaces with other artists, we decided to move our work from the former children's hospital to the ruins of an old farm house.

19. Sharon Dunn, Alice Apley, and David Tamés, "Dragonflies & Angel Wings: An Interdisciplinary, Mixed Media Collaboration," Project Proposal submitted to The Berwick Institute, April 12, 2009.

20. Ibid.

Evidence, frame no. 7703, 2009
Light painting made within the installation:
Sharon Haggins Dunn: *Dragonflies and Angelwings,*
site specific installation, Bumpkin Island, August 1, 2009

Evidence, frame no. 7518, 2009
Light painting made within the installation:
Sharon Haggins Dunn: *Dragonflies and Angelwings*,
site specific installation, Bumpkin Island, August 1, 2009

2009 Bumpkin Island Art Encampment
July 30–August 3, 2009

Left to right:

Solar panel outside of the farm house

Resevoir battery (charged by solar panel) and camcorder battery charging station.

Image grotto inside farm house ruins, powered by solar charged battery.

Image grotto detail.

would make of the installation at night?

1. Energy shifting (Friday day => Friday night and Saturday day => Saturday night)

A solar cell battery charger was used to charge a large storage battery that in turn charged the batteries used for lighting the space at night, powering my D-SLR batteries, and Alice's camcorder batteries. As I made my light paintings during the evening, I was creating a "latent image" of the installation which I would show visitors the next day. I used a variety of small incandescent and energy efficient LED lights while creating the light paintings.[21] All of the energy used in this component of the project came from the energy stored in the high capacity LiIon battery pack that was charged by the sun falling on a solar panel during the daylight hours. That energy, transformed and time shifted, provided the light and energy needed to shoot photos and for Alice to record video. This energy also powered the LCD display in the image grotto for daytime viewing of the video.

2. Time shifting (Friday night => Saturday day and Saturday night => Sunday day)

During the day on Saturday a slide show of my light paintings was played back for visitors so that they might witness the time shifted activities that took place in the site during the evening hours, revealing the image of the night installation to daytime visitors. At the same time

21. Light painting, or light drawing, is a photographic technique in which exposures are made in a darkened environment by moving a hand-held light source and/or the camera. The light source may or may not appear in the image. The technique was used by Man Ray in 1935 to produce his "Space Writing" series, which are believed to be the first light paintings. Ellen Carey, a photographer who uses light painting techniques, discovered that Man Ray drew his signature with a penlight in the traces of the light. Her discovery was cited in the catalog of the *Alias Man Ray: The Art of Reinvention* exhibition at the Jewish Museum in New York, see: Abby Callard, "Man Ray's Signature Work," *Smithsonian Magazine,* November 10, 2009, http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Man-Rays-Signature-Work.html (accessed October 24, 2011).


batteries were kept charged using the high capacity LiIon battery pack which in turn was replenished by the solar panel. Much of this activity was performative and in the moment, with the primary goal of being open to my circumstances and engaging with the experiences immediately presented by the weekend, the site, Sharon Dunn's installation work, and Alice's documentation of Sharon's work.

3. Traces & Evidence

The content of my photographs and Alice's video echoed the traces of human settlements on Bumpkin Island (evidence of other places) through images, stories, and memories. We asked what holds a community together? (e.g., through documentation of artist homesteading). What traces are left behind? How is the history "remembered" by other homesteaders in their art? What are the traces? How are they marked? Walter Benjamin wrote, "To live is to leave traces."[22] Through this process we uncovered echoes of other places that have existed on the island as we simultaneously added our own fragile marks. As explorers and collectors each mark joins a narrative woven with island's context, present and past.

22. Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings,* Peter Demetz, Ed., Edmund Jephcott, Trans., Schocken, 1986.

The outcome of these activities included an installation in the *Bumpkin Island Traces III* exhibition that took place during the Fort Point Open Studios in the fall of 2009. The installation included a viewing box (a.k.a. peep box) titled *Evidence* playing the loop of light paintings that viewers saw in the image grotto during the encampment. Framed

Previous page:

Sharon Dunn, Alice Apley, & David Tamés: *Dragonflies and Angelwings*, 2009
Project documentation including Alice Apley: *Traces,* 2009 (video loop, 12 min., 42 sec.) and David Tamés: *Evidence,* 2009 (light paintings in peep box), *Bumpkin Traces III*, Studio Soto, Thompson Design Group, Boston, October 16 - 31, 2009

This page:

Bumpkin Traces III
Opening reception, Studio Soto at Thompson Design Group, Boston, October 18, 2009

David Tamés: *Evidence*, 2009 and
Alice Apley: *Traces*, 2009
Light paintings in peep box; Video loop, 12 min., 42 sec; *Inter-Akt,* Patricia Doran Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, April 15, 2010

on the wall, Alice's short video, *Traces*, provided a glimpse of Sharon's process. This media was framed by a collection of photographs and artifacts from Sharon's installation, now only accessible through *Traces* (Alice's video) and *Evidence* (my collection of light paintings playing as a slide show in a peep box), along with several photographs placed on the wall of the exhibit along with several artifacts from the installation, the only tangible remains from our time on the island. *Traces* and *Evidence* were shown again at the Dynamic Media Institute *Inter-akt* exhibition. This time the works were not contextualized with artifacts, the peep box and the video loop stood alone against a white wall.

Previous page:

2010 Bumpkin Island Art Encampment
July 29–August 2, 2010

Mark Davis: *Bumpkin Sky-Land* (top)

Zsuzsanna Szegedi: *Endurance Drawing* (middle left)

Cara Brostrom: *No Place to Go or Won't You Please Walk With Me* (middle center)

sara june and Nathan Andary: *Tidal* (middle right)

For a complete listing of projects with descriptions, see: "Bumpkin Island Art Encampment 2010," *Bumpkin Island Art Encampment*, web page, http://www.berwickinstitute.org/bri/bumpkinisland (accessed December 1, 2011).

Fourth encounter with Bumpkin Island

I participated in the 2010 Bumpkin Island Art Encampment as a project fellow. My goal was to observe the artists' process and explore through conversations how they conceived of Bumpkin Island as a place. I recorded each encounter in one of several mediums: audio, observational photographs, observational video, informal video interviews, and audio interviews several months after the experience. The dynamics of a video interview in comparison to a conversation in which only audio is recorded are very different, the artists were more reflective and introspective during the audio interviews in comparison to the video recorded on the island. I believe this was due to more than just the separation in time from the experience on the island. marisa dipaola (*the octopus's garden*) said,

> Usually if I'm making site-specific work or sculptures I make them and either bring them to the site or I make them onsite, but nobody sees it until the exhibition. It's sort of I have the work time is very meditative and quiet and no interruptions and you're just working and getting things prepared so your mind is just focused on working. But [on Bumpkin Island] you have visitors constant, and I felt like I'm more of a performer. I mean, from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. it was a constant flow of people, so much that sometimes I felt like I wanted to sit and catch my breath but couldn't.[23]

23. Audio interview with marisa dipaola, March 2, 2011.

On the island the artists were working in a performative mode, since visitors are walking through the island and are invited to visit the artists as they work prior to the public visitation days. The follow-up interviews allowed the artists to reflect on the experience with the benefit of time. Months later during the follow-up interview dipaola told me,

> I've definitely been looking for an opportunity to go back to Bumpkin and to also find other places that I can have a similar experience in, become a habitat, a dweller, a habitat builder. It sort of moved my work in a more interactive direction. I see my role now as to build spaces for people to interact in. I guess before that I thought I was an object maker. I made sculptures, I made things for people to look at, mostly. Things were touchable, things were personable but they weren't as open for others [to participate].[24]

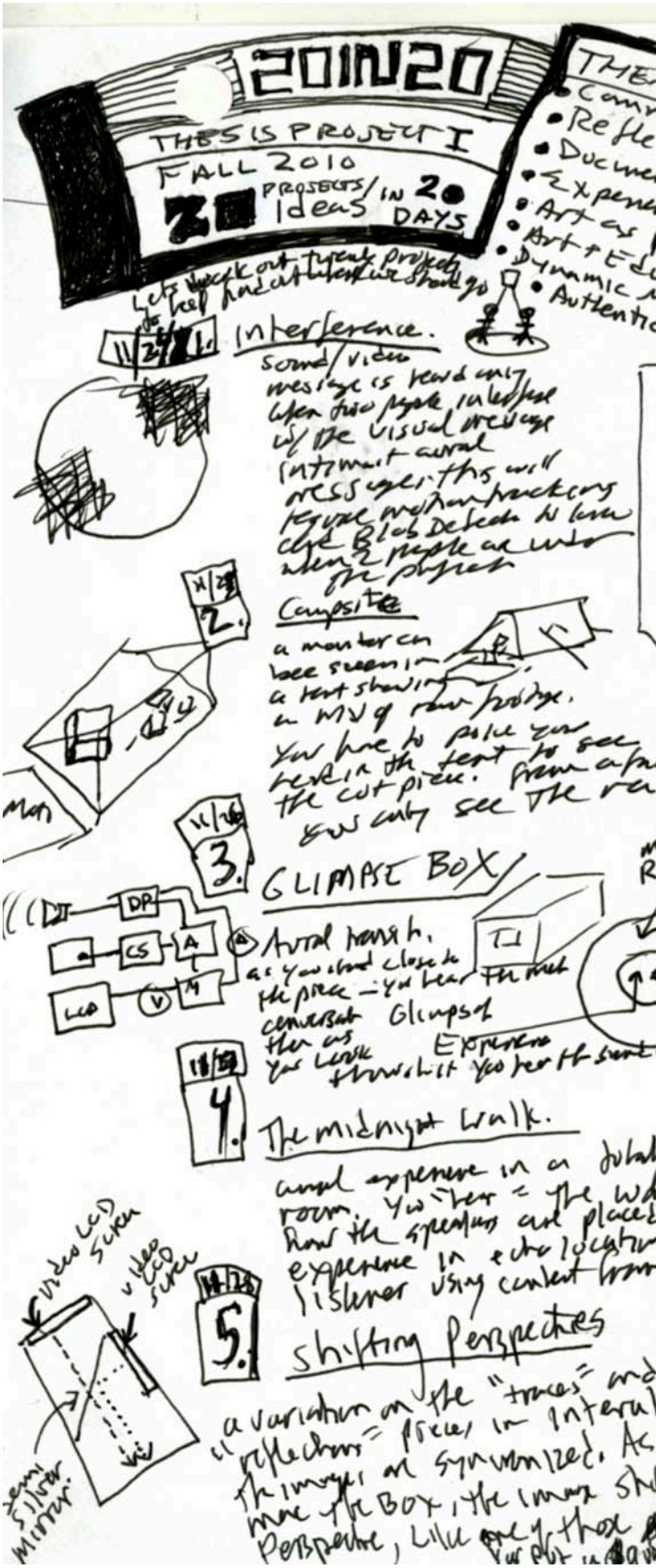
24. Ibid.

A portion of this insight made it into the video, *Documenting Bumpkin,* and it's something that I would have missed had I simply limited my materials to observational video recorded during the encampment. By

engaging at a more intimate, reflective level with the artists, having more than one interaction over a span of time, I was able to bring more reflective, subjective insights into my work. My experience on the island was very different from the more formal and carefully planned documentary production and teaching I do back "on the mainland." Island time is completely different. This "place" provided an opportunity to linger without rushing to the next appointment. I had more time to see, to feel, to respond, to reflect as I collected video, audio, photographs, and handwritten notes.

Process

In contrast with *Hawt Couch* and *Provocative Objects,* which were relatively well-defined and contained projects, *This Place in a Space* was more of an exploratory journey that spanned a long period of time. My experience documenting the Bumpkin Island Art Encampment in 2010 was first and foremost an opportunity to explore my media making process in a more reflective context and later expand my storytelling vocabulary by exploring the language of installation.



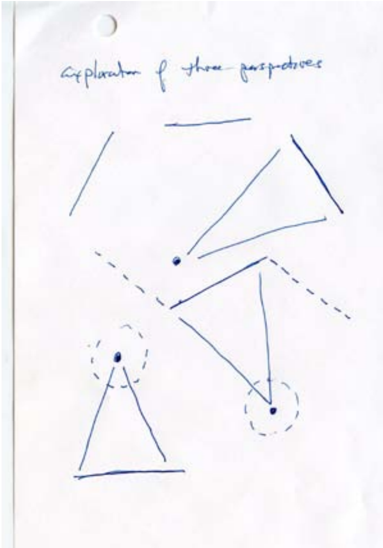
Right:

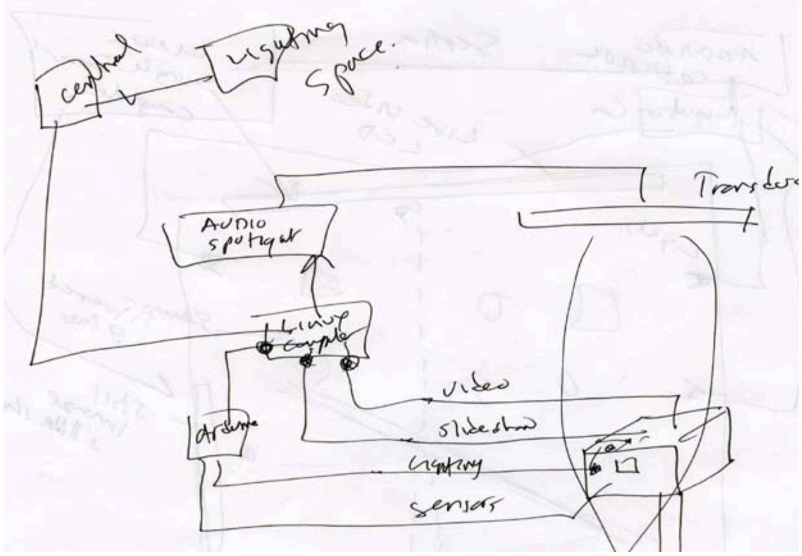
20 projects in 20 days
In the Thesis Project I class I challenged myself to think through twenty projects in twenty days as I worked to clarify and refine my installation concept.

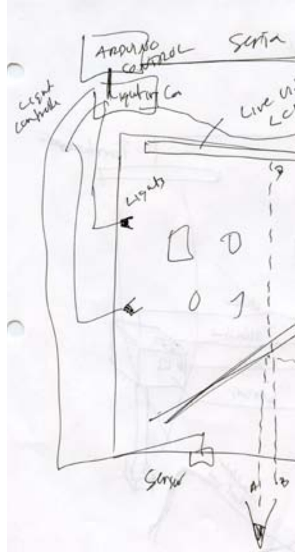
Pages 100-103:

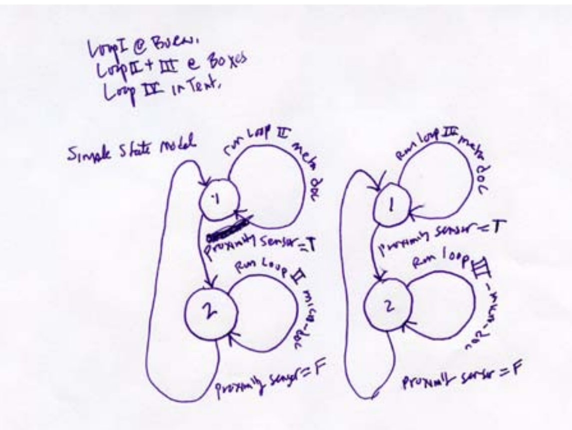
Excerpts from project sketchbook
Some of the notes and sketches made as I worked through the most promising installation concepts. I gradually simplified the concept down to the single tent, projection, and two perspectives for the visitor to discover, however, before achieving this simplicity I found myself working trough a variety of eclectic approaches.

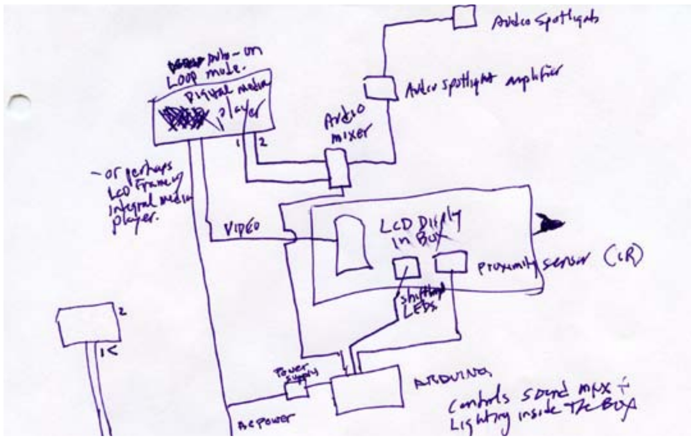

10. Provocative Object
ILLUSTRATING EXPERIENCE
11. What is your most memorable experience? What is experience?
16. Homage to NJP's TV Buddah and Scott Murray
6. Immersion
7. POINT OF VIEW
12. Automatic Editing
17. Personal Timeline
13. Ten Boxes
8. Reflective chair
18. LIGHT PAINTING
14. Exhibition Catalog Provocative Objects
19.
5 Seconds
9. Four Corners
15. COMMENTS
20.

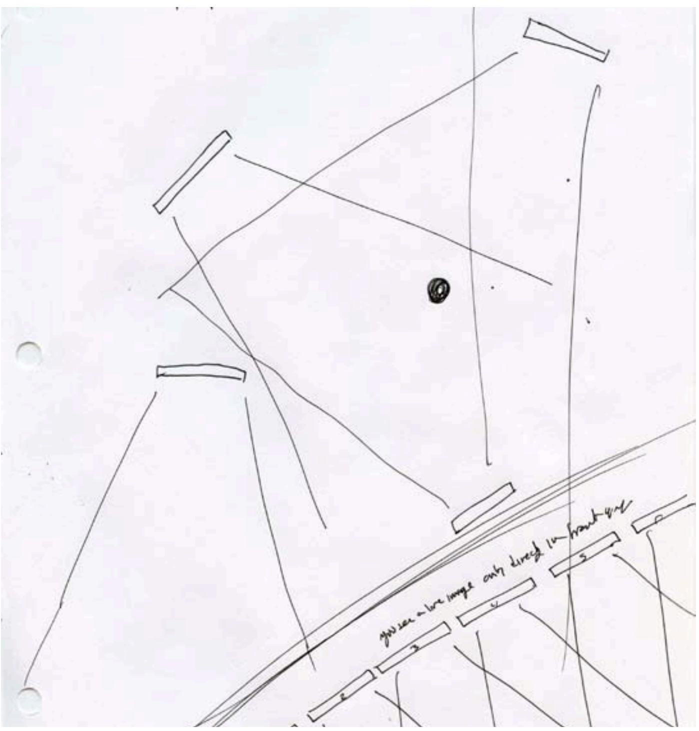

exploration of three perspectives

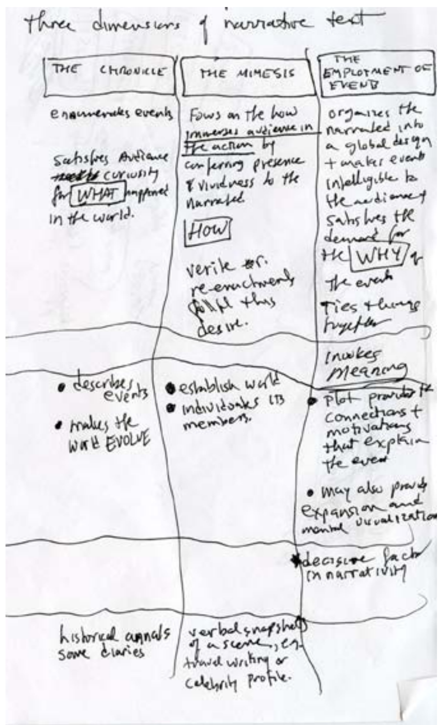

central
lighting
Space.
AUDIO spotlight
video
slideshow
lighting
sensors

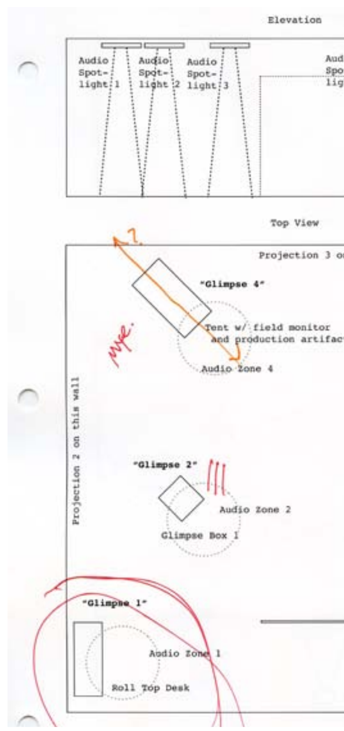


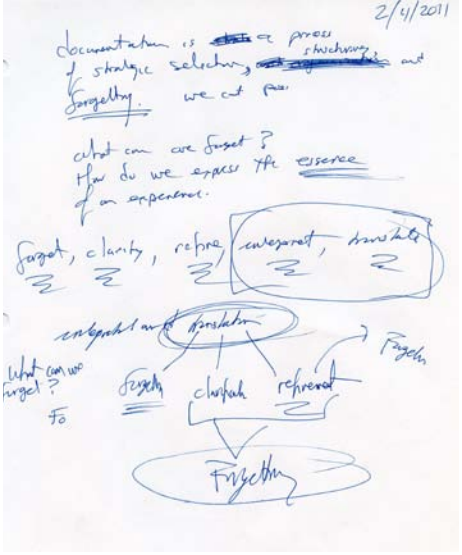

Simple State model
proximity sensor = T
proximity sensor = F

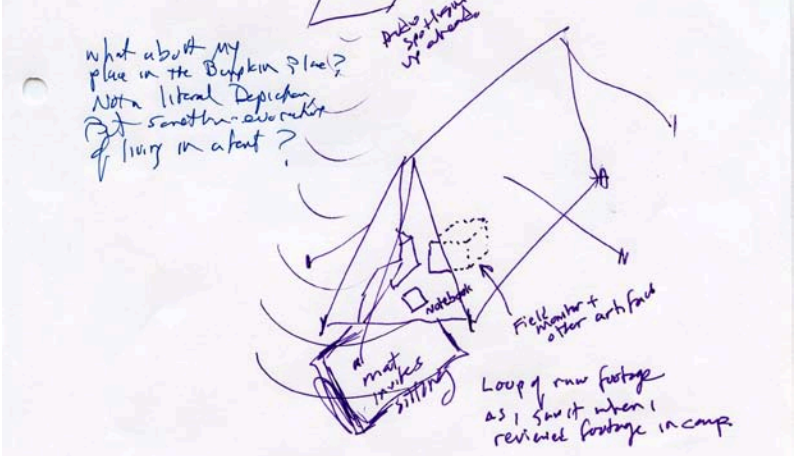

Audio Spotlights
Audio spotlight amplifier
Audio mixer
Loop mode
LCD Display In Box
proximity sensor (IR)
VIDEO
ARDUINO
controls sound mix & Lighting inside the Box

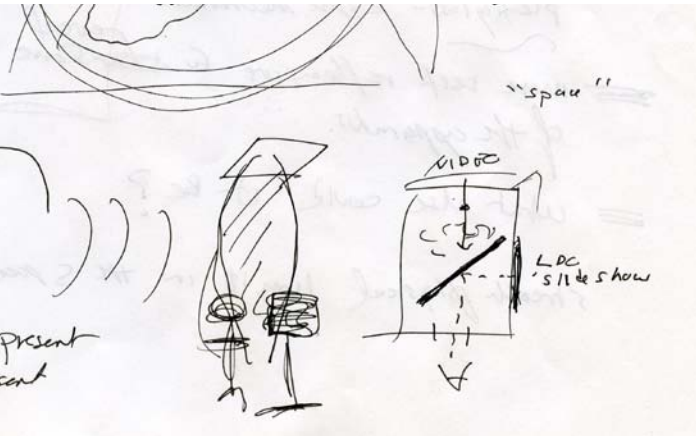


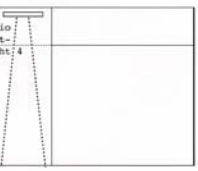

three dimensions of narrative text
THE CHRONICLE
THE MIMESIS
THE EMPLOTMENT OF EVENTS
enumerates events
HOW
WHY
describes events
makes the world evolve
establish world
historical annals
some diaries

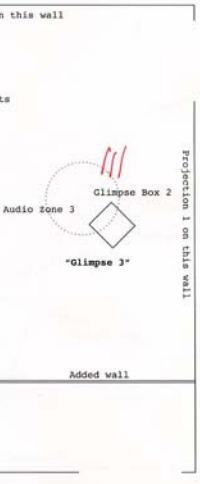

Elevation
Audio Spot-light 1
Audio Spot-light 2
Audio Spot-light 3
Top View
"Glimpse 4"
Audio Zone 4
Projection 2 on this wall
"Glimpse 2"
Audio Zone 2
Glimpse Box 1
"Glimpse 1"
Audio Zone 1
Roll Top Desk

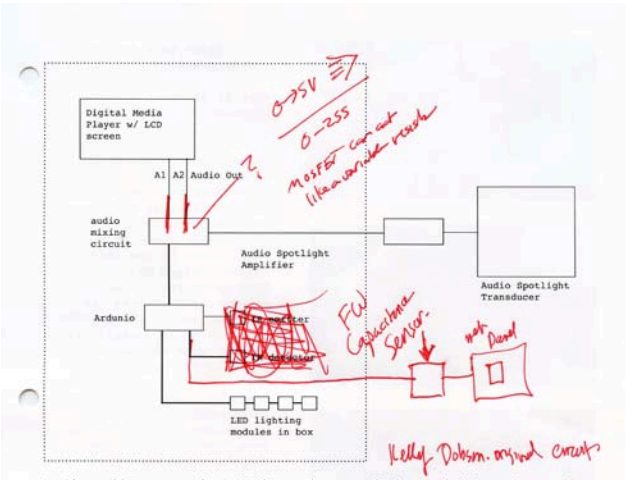




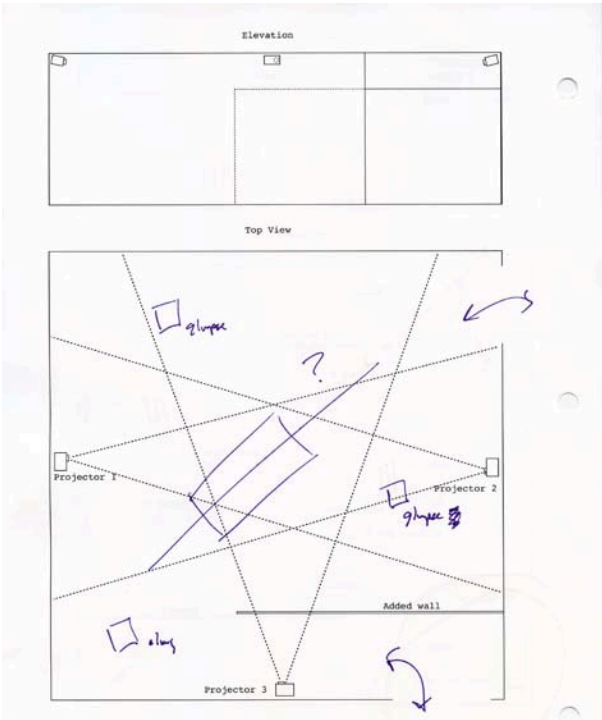


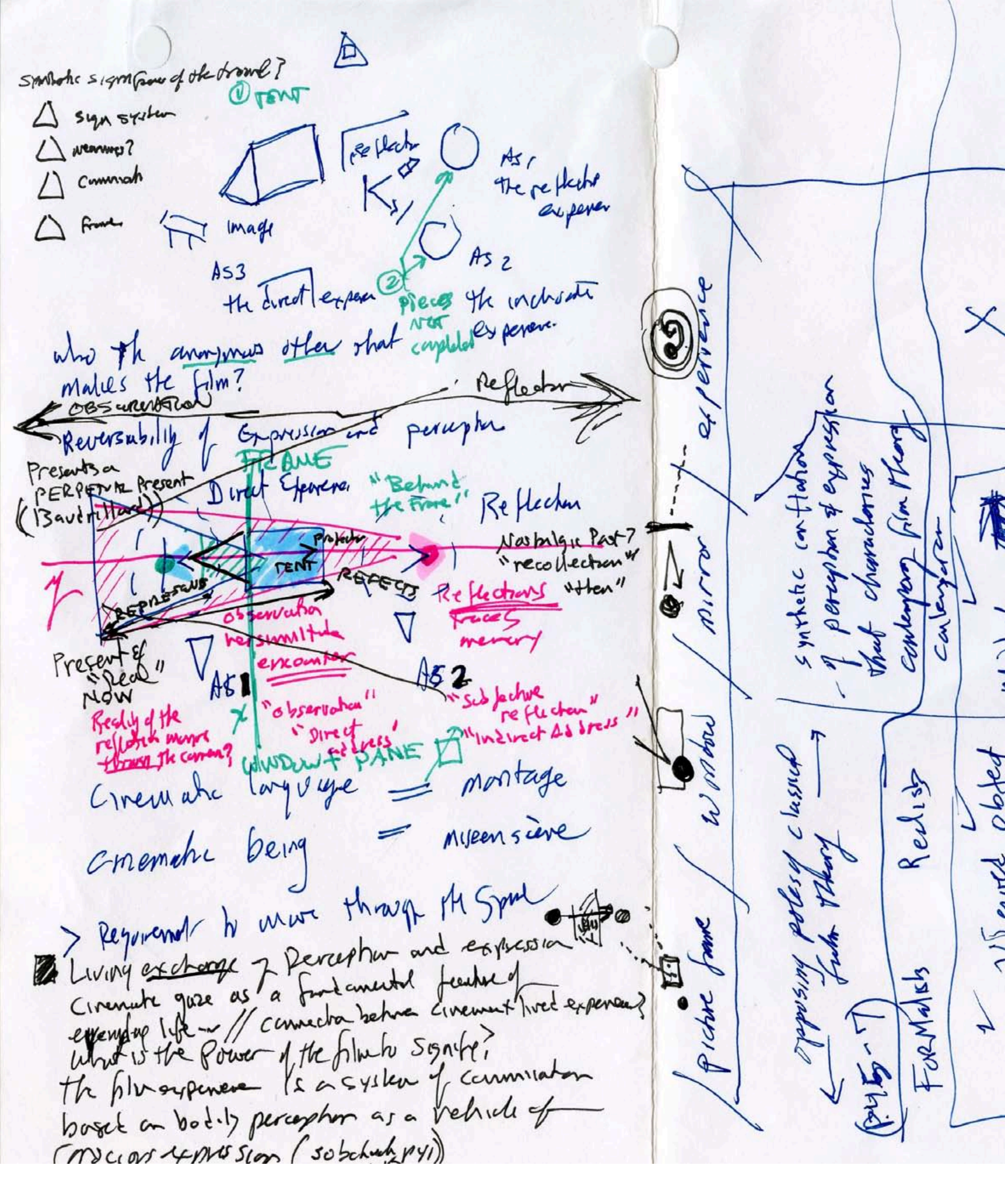


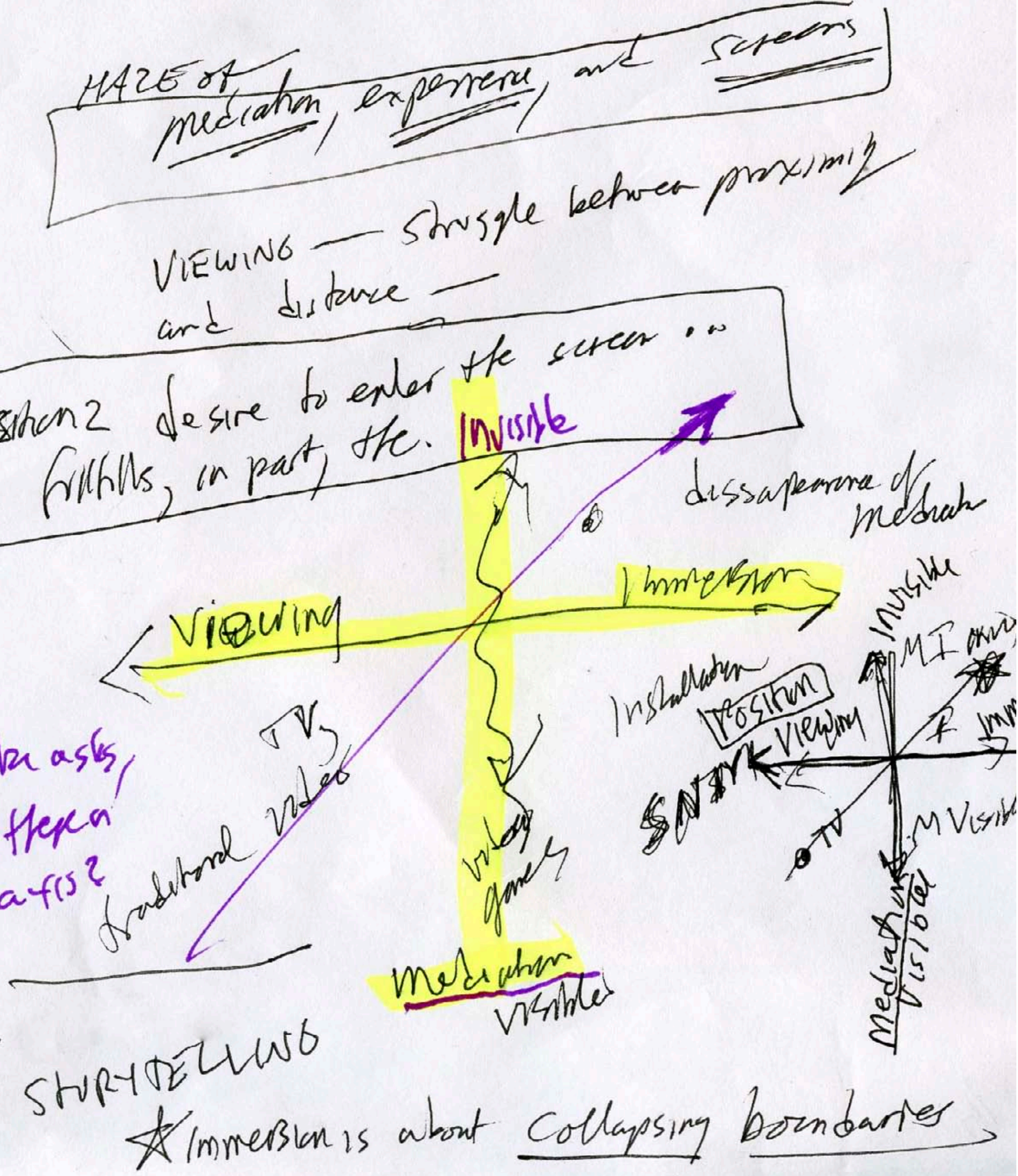




On the walls are projected blurry images of the activities that took place on Bumpkin Island. Sometimes tehy become a little clearer, but are never quite discernible. Sounds also are evocative of being on the island, but not quite. Some sounds have been slowed down and processed, as if time has faded them. In ther space the visitor will find two glimpse boxes, each stands at eye level on their own pedestals, plays a video loop. The boxes, provide visitors with two aural experiences, when the visitor stands close to the box, they hear a meta-conversation about the encampment experience based on post-encampment conversations. When they move closer and look into the box, they hear the actual soundtrack that was recorded on location. The system orchestrates a smooth crossfade between these two soundtracks. The box will reveal many respects how it is constructed (this is currently a work in progress). They may not end up as boxes in the end, this is still a work in progress.




TENT
sign system
meaning?
Image
AS3
the direct experience
pieces the inchoate
not completed experience
AS 2
who the anonymous other that
makes the film?
OBSERVATION
Reflector
Reversibility of Expression and perception
FRAME
Presents a
PERPETUAL Present
(Baudrillard)
Direct Experience
"Behind the Frame"
Reflection
Projector
TENT
Nostalgic Past?
"recollection"
Reflections "then"
REPRESENTS
Reflects
observation
memory
encounter
Present of "Real" NOW
AS 1
AS 2
"observation"
"Direct address"
"Subjective reflection"
"Indirect Address"
WINDOW PANE
Cinematic language = montage
Cinematic being = mise en scène
experience
mirror
window
picture frame
synthetic conflation of perception of expression
Realism
FORMALISM


MAZE of mediation, experience, and screens
VIEWING — struggle between proximity and distance —
desire to enter the screen ..
fulfills, in part, the.
Invisible
dissapearance of mediation
Immersion
Viewing
Installation
Position
Viewing
Invisible
Visible
TV
traditional video
video games
Mediation
Visible
Mediation visible
STORYTELLING
Immersion is about collapsing boundaries

First and second iterations of the installation

It was in Danielle Sauvé's Installation: Reflective Space course during the Winter 2011 Intersession that I refined the concepts for *This Place in a Space* which had begun evolving in the Thesis Project I course with Jan Kubasiewicz. All at once I found myself immersed in the history, critical discourse, and techniques of installation art. I created the first iteration on the Tower Auditorium Stage, January 7 through 12, 2011 and the second iteration in Squash Court #1, January 13 through 15, 2011, both on the MassArt campus.

The chance encounters with the first two installation settings set off many of the ideas that formed the final configuration of the installation. Working in real space and responding to the configuration, affordances, and limitations of each particular space was new to me in the context of studying the language and possibilities of installation art, and yet, at the same time, was familiar in the context of my experiences as an independent filmmaker who's had to shoot in a wide range of locations for which there was no time for a proper location scout.

I originally wanted to install in the gymnasium in order to work in a large space. However, Rick McDermott, Director of Events Planning and Theater Management, pointed out, "the gymnasium is impossible to secure, and the electrical service is terrible," and offered instead the Tower auditorium. The auditorium provided access to a theatrical lighting grid, a large screen with projector, a lighting board, in other words,

First iteration of the installation
Tower Auditorium Stage, January 7 through 12, 2011

all the trimmings, lots of bang for the buck, a good alternative. I had done theater lighting design in the past, so I was comfortable working in the space and familiar with the procedures of working in a theatre. Thinking about how to use the stage reinforced my idea of using the tent as part of the setting, which had already appeared in some of my sketches, but I was not sure about how it would work until I saw the piece on the stage. Upon reflection, the tent represented a temporary home, transient domesticity, I recalled how I viewed the rushes every night in the tent before going to sleep, the light of the LCD creating a glow that lit up the interior of the tent. In it I could see the images and listen to the audio I recorded for the first time. Reflecting on this experience led me to think the tent could serve as a source of the images in the space. I imagined the tent as way of translating some of the experience of being on the island into the installation, it's an object that both channeled and transcended the experience of the island, a metaphor for encampment, travel, shelter, temporary domestic space, and a container that had been on the island, filled with memories, that could act as a vehicle for bringing those experiences into the installation space.

Working in the context of the stage helped me see how I was creating, in some ways, a set. This had not occurred to me until I began working on a stage. There's the trope "all the world's a stage,"[25] but a stage also provides a particular context, which I found myself having to work against. One way I addressed this was creating a path for visitors to walk through the space. I would have them walk onto the stage,

25. Mark Kaplan writes, "The medieval trope of the world as a stage involves the sense that we perforce play roles that we have not invented, and the sense of terrestrial unreality. It is inextricably bound up with a view of the world where supernatural agents determine human destiny, and where the secular is a place of illusion in contrast to a higher non-secular realm," see Mark Kaplan, "Theatrum Mundi," *Long Sunday,* blog, September 2, 2005, http://www.long-sunday.net/long_sunday/2005/09/theatrum_mundi.html (accessed January 15, 2011).

through the set, and then off the stage. This would emphasize their role as performers in the experience, spending time on the stage and on the set. There was also a mystical connection with Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic triangle,[26] as well as the stability of the triangle layered with the implied transience of temporary housing. The layers of meaning and interpretation began to form the contours of an emerging configuration for the installation.

This Place in a Space may be considered a form of hypertheater,[27] one that represents a change in the configuration and status of theatrical space. Installation art offer the opportunities to create a hybrid of real space and imaginary place. My interest in installation was piqued after experiencing *Sleep No More*[28] and navigating through the physical and metaphorical multi-dimensional labyrinth. I was also influenced by responsive environments that came long before *Sleep No More,* in particular, John Krizanc's *Tamara*[29] and Glorianna Davenport and Larry Friendlander's *Wheel of Life.*[30]

In sharp contrast to traditional theatre and cinema in which the viewer remains in a single position throughout the performance (granted, the camera offers a mobilized gaze, however, the control is in the hands of the filmmaker), with installation art and hypertheatre the viewer takes on the role of a flâneur or flâneuse, a term Charles Baudelaire used to describe a person who walks the city in order to experience it.[31] By embracing a spatial context, a highly subjective experience is possible. For a documentary maker, the transition to working in a space opened up a new opportunity for immediacy of the experience with the individual subjectivity in the hands of the viewer, each with their own unique path through the space of the installation.

Third iteration of the installation

The third iteration of *This Place in a Space* was installed in the Sandra and David Bakalar Gallery for the *2011 MFA Thesis Show II,* April 30 through May 8, 2011. The installation is part meditation room, part gallery space, part theatre stage. It is an exploration of the language of installation and at the same time, my interrogation of the notion of place, simultaneously involved in the production of space, place, and non-place. The installation is about place in the sense that it channels the socially constructed place of the Bumpkin Island Art Encampment. It also exists in space in the sense that it has been constructed within the architectural space of a gallery. And it's also a non-place in the sense of Marc Augé's notion of non-place,[32] a place we perceive, but only in a partial and incoherent manner. Non-places are spaces for which meaning has not been socially constructed by a community. Instead, each individual imbues it with their own meaning, as we do with the temporary spaces we pass through rather than inhabit and imbue along with others a socially constructed meaning, e.g. the space in front of a computer screen or mobile device, airports, highways, etc.

26. I found this amusing given my interest in semiotics. For Charles Saunders Peirce, signs consist of three inter-related parts: sign, object, and interpretant. The sign is the signifier (e.g. a word, written or spoken, or a sound, like a siren). The object is what is signified (for example, the object to which the word or utterance is related, or the police car signified by the siren. The interpretant (and what makes Peirce's model interesting) is the conceptual understanding of the relation between sign and object. Unlike Ferdinand de Saussure's model (consisting of signifier and signified), For Peirce signification is not a simple relationship between sign and object, the sign signifies only through the process of interpretation, in other words, the meaning of a sign is realized in the interpretation that it generates in a person, see: John F. Sowa, "Ontology, Metadata, and Semiotics," *Conceptual Structures: Logical, Linguistic, and Computational Issues,* Bernhard Ganter & Guy W. Mineau, Eds., Springer-Verlag, 2000, pp. 55-81, http://www.jfsowa.com/ontology/ontometa.htm (accessed October 12, 2011).

27. This "hyper" terminology is similar to but used differently than Robert Abirached's idea of "hypertheatricality" (Vhypertheâtralité) in French nouveau théâtre, see Robert Abirached, *La crise du personnage dans le théâtre moderne,* Bernard Grasset, 1978, pp. 417-419.

28. "Sleep No More," American Repertory Theater, http://www.americanrepertorytheater.org/events/show/sleep-no-more (accessed June 12, 2010).

29. Eileen Blumenthal, "'Tamara' From the Ground Floor Up," *New York Times,* November 29, 1987, http://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/29/theater/tamara-from-the-ground-floor-up.html (accessed January 20, 2011).

30. Glorianna Davenport and Larry Friedlander, "Interactive Transformational Environments: Wheel of Life" in *Contextual Media,* Edward Barrett and Marie Redmond, Eds., The MIT Press, 1995, pp. 1-25.

31. Anne Friedberg has developed an extensive account of the role of cinema in postmodern culture in which she identifies the experience of a mobilized gaze through space and time as a crucial component of postmodern cultural identity. Her account includes a fascinating discussion of the gendered notions of flâneur and flâneuse, see: Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern,* University of California Press, 1993.

32. Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity,* 2nd ed., John Howe, Trans.,Verso, 2008.

Second iteration of the installation
Squash Court #1, January 13 through 15, 2011

Installation of the third iteration
Sandra and David Bakalar Gallery, April 30 through May 8, 2011

Throughout the iterative process of design I kept stripping out components and simplifying the installation. I had started thinking of a theatre set. I imagined multiple components inhabiting the space. As I worked towards my final design, I was inspired/challenged by the notion of meditative space. As soon as a visitor walked into the space I wanted a different energy level compared to the rest of the gallery environment. This was accomplished, in part, by keeping the space darker than the other spaces in the show. In theory, a meditation room is a quiet space. As the Bakalar Gallery is a noisy and acoustically reflective space, I was not able to create the quiet setting I had managed to create earlier in the Squash Court.

Interior of tent
Short throw projector, Audio Spotlight amplifiers, MacBook Pro, equipment racks, assortment of cables.

Meditation spaces are simple and free from clutter, so I eliminated every element I could until I was down to the tent with a projector in

the interior, a media player, two chairs, and two Audio Spotlights,[33] one above each chair. In the original concept I had specified multiple projections on the walls, but after doing several experiments in the Squash court I decided the single image emanating from the tent and appearing on the back wall of the gallery worked best. The multiple images resulted in sensory overload; which I did not want to create; simplicity became a critical goal for the final iteration.

33. The Audio Spotlight is described in the Technology section below.

Faint echoes of the audio tracks are heard as you walk through the space. It was my hope that the space would invite visitors to dwell long enough to try both sitting positions and consider the difference between the two perspectives presented. Once a visitor is seated in one of the two chairs, the sound track is clear and distinct. Many of the visitors described their experience when seated as if the artist's dialog was playing in their head, which is the effect I wanted to achieve. I was pleased with how the installation worked.

Technology

The installation is technologically intensive by some standards. It has not been for the sake of using technology, but I feel drawn to the media forms of my own time, and this includes the moving image stored and produced through electronic means and the incorporation of reproduced sound in the space. One of the effects I wanted to achieve in this installation was to localize the sound of the observational video and the reflective interviews in two distinct locations in the gallery. Headphones were out of the question and a number of experiments with traditional audio systems proved unsatisfactory. Sound is annoyingly promiscuous. It spreads in all directions, bounces off surfaces, and even travels around walls. This has traditionally made it difficult to present sound and media art in a gallery setting without extensive architectural modifications of the space. Until recently there has been no practical way to localize audio, especially in a highly reflective gallery environment. The fundamental limitations of traditional speakers with their

lack of directivity (even when used with parabolic reflectors) has placed limits on the use of localized sound in gallery installations.

In order to overcome these limitations, F. Joseph Pompei invented the Audio Spotlight[34] while a Ph.D. student at the MIT Media Laboratory. His device opens up new possibilities for integrating localized sound in a gallery installation. Back in the dot.com days while working in the Viant Innovation Center,[35] among my roles was Sponsor Liaison to the MIT Media Lab. During some of my visits to the lab I had seen demonstrations by Pompei of what at the time was his research project. The Audio Spotlight threw a beam of sound like a spotlight. Since he was paying for his research and development by selling prototypes, at the time I first saw the device it was very expensive. When I started working on the installation I wondered if the spotlight might be a viable option. I had found no other way to localize audio that did not require extensive and expensive modification of the gallery space. I made a telephone call to Joe which led to some very good news: the device was now in full production and available at prices mere mortals could afford. I decided to incorporate the Audio Spotlight into my work, achieving my goal of localized sound without any awkward technological interactions.[36]

In terms of the video I was using, one issue I had to deal with when I first installed the piece in the Tower Auditorium was the image projected from the tent was not as large as I had hoped. What I needed was to use a short throw projector, which essentially is a projector with a wide angle lens that projects a larger image compared to a standard projector.

One additional technical issue that came up during the initial installation in the Bakalar Gallery was the issue of the ambient noise level. During normal operating hours the audio level of the Audio Spotlights was in perfect balance with the ambient noise level in the gallery. Unfortunately, during the opening reception, the ambient noise level would overwhelm the sound emanating from the Audio Spotlights. I resolved this issue by adding a pair of conventional powered speakers inside the tent that I engaged during the opening reception, which did a reasonable job of compensating for overwhelming background noise.

In an ideal situation (and something I hope to experiment with in the future) I could have electronically monitored the ambient noise level and adjusted the mix of conventional and Audio Spotlight sound in real-time. In a quiet setting the additional speakers would probably only be needed to fill the role of a sub-woofer, as the Audio Spotlight does not reproduce the lower octaves of the sound range. The effect of the sound coming from both the tent and "in your head" (from the Audio Spotlight) provided a fuller sound experience. In a quiet gallery it would not be appropriate to have sound bleed into the surrounding spaces, thus the Audio Spotlight provided the perfect solution for working with sound in the highly reflective Bakalar Gallery.

34. The Audio Spotlight in effect bends the laws of acoustic theory. The device makes a narrow beam of sound from a small acoustic source by generating ultrasound. Ultrasound has very short wavelengths (a few millimeters long) and therefore travel in an extremely narrow beam. Ultrasound is far outside the human range of hearing, however, as the ultrasonic beam travels through air, it changes shape in a predictable way. The Audio Spotlight generates a particular ultrasonic signal that within the air itself creates the sound desired and extremely directional, just like a beam of light. The Audio Spotlight is the first (and currently the only) truly directional audio system capable of generating high quality sound in a reliable manner. See: F. Joseph Pompei, "Fundamental Limitations of Loudspeaker Directivity," *holosonics.com,* web page, http://www.holosonics.com/tech_directivity.html (accessed March 26, 2011).

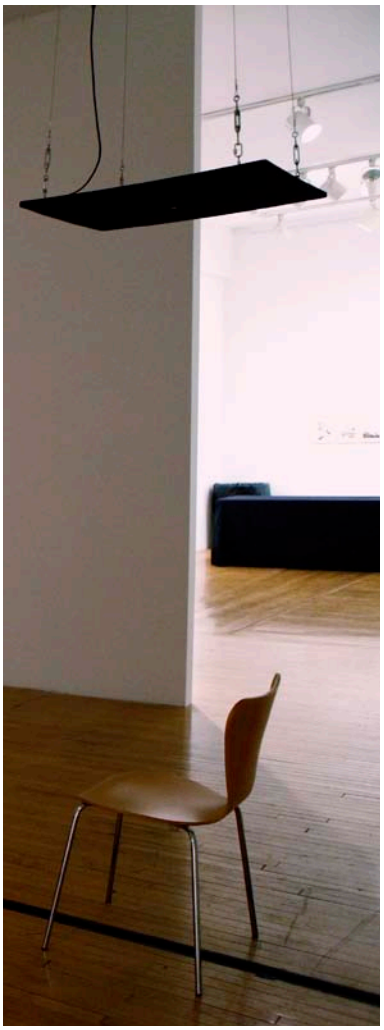
35. The Viant Innovation Center was a research group situated inside Viant, a now defunct dot.com consulting firm that during it's heyday was part of the "Fast Five" consulting firms, a group of publicly-traded firms that developed in the mid 1990s to capitalize on the rapid commercial development of the internet and the design of digital businesses. The term "Fast Five" was coined to draw a contrast with the established "Big Five" management consulting firms, and to make the point that the new breed of consulting firms was more nimble and could produce more rapid results, as history once again demonstrated, those who run faster don't always win the race, see: Wikipedia contributors, "Viant," *Wikipedia,* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viant (accessed September 23, 2011).

36. Traditional speakers can't provide effective directivity and localization of sound, Pompei writes, "no degree of phasing, focusing, or other manipulation can improve these results, as they are an inherent limitation of linear acoustics," see: F. Joseph Pompei, "Fundamental Limitations of Loudspeaker Directivity," *holosonics.com,* web page, http://www.holosonics.com/tech_directivity.html (accessed March 26, 2011).

Next page:

Installation of Audio Spotlights
Ed Slattery wielded a masonry drill in order to make the holes in the Terra-cotta ceiling of the gallery in order to install the hooks from which we hung the Audio Spotlights.


HUSKY




HUSKY

This Place in a Space
2011 MFA Thesis Show II, Sandra and David Bakalar Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, April 30 - May 8, 2011

This Place in a Space
2011 MFA Thesis Show II, Sandra and David Bakalar Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, April 30 - May 8, 2011

The visitor's experience

What follows is a fictionalized scenario based, in part, on the aggregate survey data I collected from ten exhibition visitors during the *2011 MFA Thesis Show II* exhibition. While my scenario may be more akin to an "ideal visitor's experience," of course, there is no such thing as an ideal visitor in real life.[37]

As you approach the gallery space you notice the room is not as bright as the surrounding rooms in the gallery. The lighting is limited, only two spotlights light the space, both focused on a blue traditional A-frame tent with aluminum poles on the outer ends. You hear faint echoes of competing voices echoing throughout the space, but the volume is relatively low, making it difficult to make out the words. The conversation in soft voices between the couple walking past you is more distinct. Facing both the rear and front of the tent are chairs. On the far wall you see a faint image projected, apparently emanating from the tent in the middle of the space. The chairs facing the rear and front of the tent are of modern design made from light colored bent plywood with chrome-plated, tubular steel legs. The chairs seem out of place next to the tent, yet right at home in the gallery setting with the hardwood floors and pristine white walls. Why are these chairs in the room? Why is a backpacking tent pitched in the middle of the room? And where is the sound coming from? As you walk around the space you see a bright image on the front of the tent, apparently a projected image emanating from inside the tent. What you first see as a faint image on the back wall becomes a bright, rear-projection image. As you approach the chair closest to the front of the tent, you notice the sound becomes clearer, you recognize the sound accompanies what's happening in the image on the face of the tent. A woman is walking along the beach in what looks like an octopus costume. This engages your attention, you sit and begin to watch and listen, you hear marisa dipaola say on screen,

> I started researching octopi and came across a story about Ringo Starr, when he was writing *Octopus's Garden* it was inspired by a trip out on Sardinia. He was sailing around the coast and the captain told him that octopi pick up shiny objects and rocks and will build gardens...

The short sequence of dipaola's *the octopus's garden* is followed by another artist profile. Why is the other chair facing the rear of the tent? You walk over to the second chair and sit. The bright image on the front of the tent is no longer in view, yet (in spite of light spilling in from the surrounding rooms) a faint projection fills a large portion of the back wall you are now facing. Now that you're sitting in the second chair the sound becomes louder and the words are more distinct. You hear someone talking. It's not immediately obvious, but eventually you realize it's an artist talking about what's happening in the video, but it's not a direct correlation, the sound of waves and island ambience that filled

37. Writing this section I was reminded of a scene towards the end of the film *Annie Hall* (Woody Allen, 1977), in which the character of Alvy Singer (played by Woody Allen) is watching actors rehearse his autobiographical play based on his relationship with Annie Hall (played by Diane Keaton) in which the scene in the play shows the characters making up and staying together, in contrast to the breakup we witness in the film. The camera starts on the two actors rehearsing on the stage, and then cuts to Singer, who says to the camera, "You know how you're always trying to get things to come out perfect in art, because it's real difficult in life."

This Place in a Space
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the other sound track are not present in this sound track. It's a solitary voice, with a more intimate tone, a richer, warmer sound, with a more reflective inflection,

> In the middle of the second day I began feeling exhilarated, a revelation that this is what I was born to do, it stopped being my proposal, I felt at home in a way that is indescribable to many land dwellers, I feel at home in the water...

You realize you are now experiencing a different perspective, a more subjective voice. Eventually the video loop returns to the point in the video was at when you were sitting in the first chair, you now hear marisa say,

> I see my role now as to build spaces for people to interact in. I guess before that I thought I was an object maker. I made sculptures, I made things for people to look at mostly. Things were touchable, things were personable but they weren't as openly for others...

You've now heard a different perspective on the same video sequence. What's going on here? What have you just seen and heard? You see a friend you had agreed to meet in the gallery enter the room and you stand up to greet them. After walking around the gallery and checking out the other exhibits, you catch the Green Line to downtown.

Later over dinner you try to explain your experience in the installation to your friend. After your friend listens to you describe the experience in detail, your friend suggests that perhaps you had experienced being on both sides of the screen. What you see and hear in the chair in front of the bright, direct image is a more "objective" recording of the event

unfolding before the camera, while what you hear in the second chair is a more "subjective" reflection of the experience, probably recorded after the experience, offering the perspective of time and distance, you are listening to an intimate conversation about the experience of doing site specific work on the island and how the artist imagines Bumpkin Island as a place.

Reflection

This Place in a Space is an installation that evokes traces of place while experimenting with the simultaneous presentation of observational documentary sequences about artists participating in the Bumpkin Island Art Encampment and their subjective reflections of their experiences recorded some time after the encampment. Through this work I explore the contours of the boundaries between: objectivity/subjectivity, observer/observed, and experience/memory, in the context of mediation and screens. I also considered issues of the ethnographic gaze, which Raymond Madden describes as the "specific way ethnographers have trained their observations on others."[38] Documentary filmmaking, as a close cousin of visual ethnography, is a way of representing

38. In addition, Madden presents an inventory of gazes including the "feminist gaze" and the "white male gaze," each referring to the position and perspective of the observer contingent on their social positions and their relation to the observed, see: Raymond Madden, *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*, Sage Publications, 2010, pp. 96-97.

This Place in a Space
Gunta Kaza and her students visiting the installation, *2011 MFA Thesis Show II*, Sandra and David Bakalar Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, April 30 - May 8, 2011

people and social interactions and therefore fraught with many of the same complications when we consider the notion of the gaze. This was brought out when I considered the difference between my observation of events and each artist's perspective on their process. Juxtaposing the two perspectives illuminated the limitations of pure observation: meaning is not always evident in actions, the artist's inner-subjective experience and reflection on their work plays an crucial role in creating meaning and therefore it was important to present how artists spoke about their experience on Bumpkin Island and their sense of Bumpkin Island as a place, in parallel with, and sometimes in contrast to, the observations I made during the event. Multiple perspectives enabled me to present a more nuanced representation of the encampment experience.

The front of the tent serves as both a pane and a window. A viewer siting in the "objective chair" sees and hears a documentary created in a manner consistent with the modes and conventions of a participatory documentary. On the other hand, a visitor who sits in the "subjective chair" sees a very different film and hears a completely different sound track. The viewer experiencing the alternative perspectives sees the images as faint projections on the back wall instead of the intense, bright image on the surface of the tent. Instead of hearing the sound of the artist talking to the camera person recorded on location, the viewer is listening to an intimate conversation that took place between the artist and I many months after our time on Bumpkin Island.

This alternative perspective brings the viewer into the other side of the screen; the subject's inner-subjective reflections on the experience of doing their work. Rather than seeing and hearing the artist's performative persona on Bumpkin Island, viewers are listening to a perspective recorded several months after the experience of being on the island. The tone and the insights are of a more reflective nature. The viewer is behind the screen, metaphorically inside the frame, experiencing insights not available on the surface of the film; they exist on the other side of the screen. The audio is crisp and distinct, while the images are a faint reflection, re-contextualized in the larger space of the gallery.

Why explore the language of installation? Why should I depart from the familiar way of the video screen? Ilya Kabakov once wrote,

> The installation as a genre is probably a way to give new correlations between old and familiar things. By entering an installation, these correlations, these various phenomena, reveal their dependence, their 'separateness,' but they may reveal as well their profound connection with each other, which was perhaps lost long ago, which they at some time had, and which they always needed. [...] A rather ambitious attempt to establish the correlation between art and 'mysticism' is embedded in the installation.[39]

Kabakov was writing about his installation, *The Bridge,* in the *Dislocations* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1991,[40] however,

39. Ilya Kabakov, "Artist's Notes," *Dislocations,* exhibition catalog, Museum of Modern Art, 1991; the exhibition ran October 20, 1991 through January 7, 1992.

40. Robert Storr, Ed., *Dislocations*, exhibition catalog, Museum of Modern Art, 1991.

what he wrote is applicable to a large number of installations. By physically moving through the installation in space and through time, we expand on what our visual senses and rational mind are constructing from the experience. Installation offers an opportunity to explore the role of embodiment with an expanded notion of cinema. In participatory documentary the camera becomes a catalyst, provoking events, situations and relationships that are revealing. Sometimes documentary makers enter a trance-like state in which they are engaged in the lives of their subjects, thereby achieving an understanding that is inaccessible to anyone who remains neutral and distant. Paul Henley explains,

> The implicit theory of knowledge underlying this approach is that true social reality is not to be found in the superficial observable details of everyday life but rather in the underlying relationships, sentiments, and attitudes which sustain them.[41]

41. Paul Henley, "Film-Making and ethnographic research," in John Prosser, Ed., *Image-Based Research: A sourcebook for qualitative researchers,* Falmer Press, 1998, p. 43.

While questioning the ethnographic gaze, the film *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989) was in my thoughts. This film disassembles and reassembles cinematic representation through the device of staged ethnographic interviews performed by actors, intercut with newsreel footage and photos of the Vietnam war, folk dances, marketplaces, women performing agricultural work, etc. The film generated controversy because it unveiled, rather than masked, the ideologies of documentary authenticity that legitimize exclusionary systems of representation.[42] Katherine Gracki writes of Trinh's work,

> Trinh critiques the interview as an antiquated form of documentary and ethnography employed to objectify and silence Third World women, but she does not ultimately reject it entirely. The interview has the potential to become much more than a methodological tool used to gain "scientific" data about cultural differences. It emerges in Surname Viet as an interstitial, hybrid space in which an ethical face-to-face encounter between self and other provides a dynamic alternative to the oppositional framework of Western identity constructions.[43]

42. Katherine Gracki, "True Lies: Staging the Ethnographic Interview in Trinh T. Minh-ha's Surname Viet, Given Name Nam (1989)," *Pacific Coast Philology* 36 (2001), pp. 48-63, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3595469

43. Ibid, p. 59.

Through this experience the installation becomes a reflection of a place for both myself and the visitor. Is it more important to depict accurately the experience like a documentarian strives to? Or is it more important to curate the experience of what the place is/was/and even could be? I have come to understand I should give the viewer a significant role in filling in the missing pieces, with the installation providing a framework for interpretation.

One visitor commented that the installation, "felt a little like a mausoleum, yet was alive with the presence of the artists and their reflections on the experience." Another visitor described it as an "encapsulated happening." The notion of a mausoleum never entered my conscious mind as I worked on the piece, but I could clearly see the visitor's characterization. This visitor had actually taken the time to sit in both chairs, therefore, unlike some visitors who only sat in one of the chairs,

or simply walked through the space without engaging for a span of time, this visitor was able to experience both perspectives expressed in the piece.

Reflecting on the comments by these two visitors, I realized that in some respects their insight connected with some of the many threads influencing the piece relating to the nature of documentary as well as some notions inspired by "Afterlife," a *Radiolab* episode in which David Eagleman, a neuroscientist, suggests there are three deaths,[44] the first is when the body ceases to function, the second is when your body is put in the grave (or perhaps, cremated), and the third is when your name is spoken for the last time. This resonates with me as a documentary media maker, especially since two of my films[45] have been about subjects who were dead at the time I made a film about them, with the primary thread of the films driven by the stories that people told about the subject of the film.

Eagleman wrote a beguiling short story titled "Metamorphosis" in his book *SUM: Forty Tales from the Afterlives*[46] that explores this kind of death. It's this third kind of death that documentary media makers often find themselves working to prevent. When we document an artist and their work, we are in effect contributing to the postponement of their third death. In "Metamorphosis," David Eagleman writes, "the more [our story] is told, the more the story drifts, that is the curse of history, because since we live in the heads of those who remember us, we lose control of our lives, and become what they want us to be."[47]

This notion of not having control of our lives is echoed in the Setswana proverb, "Motho ke motho ka batho ba bangwe," (I am a person through others),[48] reminding us we coexist, in interdependent lives, and our meaning and place in the world is constructed through our interactions with other people, which I'm constantly reminded of in my work as a documentary media maker. David Eagleman suggests what happens in the brain is that we make models of other people, we are "actually running a little simulation of that person in [our] head." He continues, "what happens when somebody dies is they exist only in the scattered heads of those people who knew them," and furthermore, "they exist in some way as these algorithms that continue to run, but through time, your model of somebody might drift."[49]

Islands provide a powerful yet problematic metaphor.[50] The idea of an island suggests isolation, uniqueness, a bounded situation. Within evolutionary theory we have the literal archipelago of the Galàpagos islands, and similarly modern social anthropology originated on the Kiriwina island in the Trobriand archipelago. The classic literature in social anthropology has depicted societies as closed, self-sustaining social system. Contemporary scholars have rejected the notions of closed systems, arguing that "no society is completely isolated, cultural bound-

44. David Eagleman in "After Life," *Radiolab*, podcast episode, http://www.radiolab.org/2009/jul/27/ (accessed September 17, 2011).

45. *Remembering John Marshall* (Alice Apley & David Tames, 2006), http://www.der.org/films/remembering-john-marshall.html; *The David Hamilton Smith Story* (Alice Apley & David Tames, 2012), work in progress.

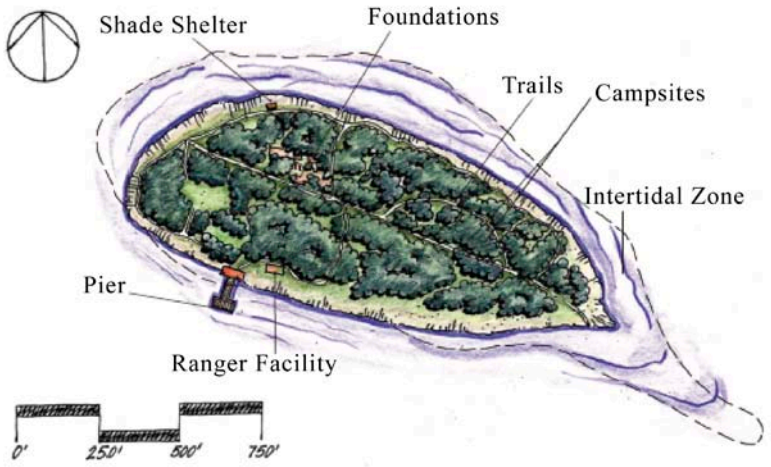
46. David Eagleman, "Metamorphosis," *Sum: Forty Tales from the Afterlives,* Pantheon Books, 2009, pp. 23-25.

47. Eagleman, ibid, p. 25.

48. Karen Haire and D.S. Matjila, "Teaching for Cultural Relevance and Restoration in the Multi-lingual South African Setting: The Pedagogical Potential of Bi-lingual Setswana-English Stories," *Alternation* 15:2 (2008), http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/docs/15.2/08%20Haire.pdf (accessed April 12, 2011).

49. Eagleman, ibid, p. 24.

50. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Do cultural islands exist?" *Social Anthropology* 1 (1993), http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/Culturalislands.html (accessed September 21, 2011).



Bumpkin Island
42° 16′ 52.00″ N 70° 53′ 15.4″ W
United States National Park Service, public domain

aries are not absolute, and that webs of communication and exchange tie societies together everywhere, no matter how isolated they may seem when viewed superficially."[51]

51. Ibid.

When thinking about Bumpkin Island both the classical notions and contemporary critiques come into sharp relief. When we arrive on the island, as either a visitor or participant, we are both isolated from our everyday life and yet we remain connected. The isolation is a deliberate choice. We hear the planes flying overhead as they make their way to and from Logan Airport, we have perfect mobile phone reception. No running water, limited supplies and food, but perfect connectivity to the communication infrastructure. While Bumpkin Island is a bounded system, it remains connected to our everyday life. In which sense can the phenomena of the encampment be said to be a discrete, autonomous, bounded and thus distinctive from other experiences? Why is the temporary social and cultural isolation experienced on Bumpkin Island such an important aspect of the experience?

For me, Bumpkin Island is both a literal and metaphorical island. During the 1800s and early 1900s Europeans and Americans who visited foreign lands often wrote about the isolation they observed in other cultures. It is important to note that this assumption turns out to be one that was imposed, not always observed. In our contemporary world we no longer have distinct boundaries between cultures as our systems of communication and economic exchange are now global in scale and may become all-encompassing in our lifetimes. The emergence of a world without cultural boundaries makes it harder for artists to work outside of their own culture and provokes a desire to work in site-specific settings outside of their experience of everyday life. Sometimes artists on Bumpkin Island have created unique social systems according to a unique cultural logic, and yet they can't remain a discrete society once visitors arrive on the island for a visit. It is the explorations of

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2010 Bumpkin Island Art Encampment
July 29–August 2, 2010

these boundaries of culture, time, and place that makes Bumpkin such a lively site for artistic exploration. Thomas Eriksen writes,

> Modern capitalism and modern means of communication—which transmit people as well as messages—defy boundaries and create uniformity as well as self-conscious difference where there were formerly unexplored and unknown differences. Contemporary cultural islands are, therefore, to an increasing extent thoroughly planned, their walls and moats carefully fashioned by humans who abhor the idea that humanity should be one down to the minutest detail. If it is possible that we can be us, someone else necessarily has to be them."[52]

52. Ibid.

It thus becomes the artist's challenge to defy the set boundaries that create uniformity and to recreate a new set of boundaries and cultural logic that at the same time helps us see our cultural islands and furthermore see our connection, not simply by economic exchange and communication, but as part of a human community, at once different and also the same.

The tent in the middle of the large gallery space became an island within the white cube. The gallery space becoming a metaphor for both our culture at large and the ethos of the white cube and the cultural institution of "the art world;" in the little tent, a world could be seen directly, while at the same time projecting a faint image on the white walls of the cube. A faded reflection of another world, another cultural logic, one at odds with the perfect white walls, the sterile container, the institutional context. *The island projected itself into the space.*

I had never created an installation piece on my own before, thus, working in the new, unfamiliar language of installation transformed my work in a familiar medium (documentary video) to an unfamiliar medium (installation). This was a challenge to take one form of translation that I'm familiar with and carry it over into another form that I'm still exploring and trying to understand. Something that I struggled with in the translation from documentary video to installation was the issue of framing both as a metaphorical and compositional device. What is



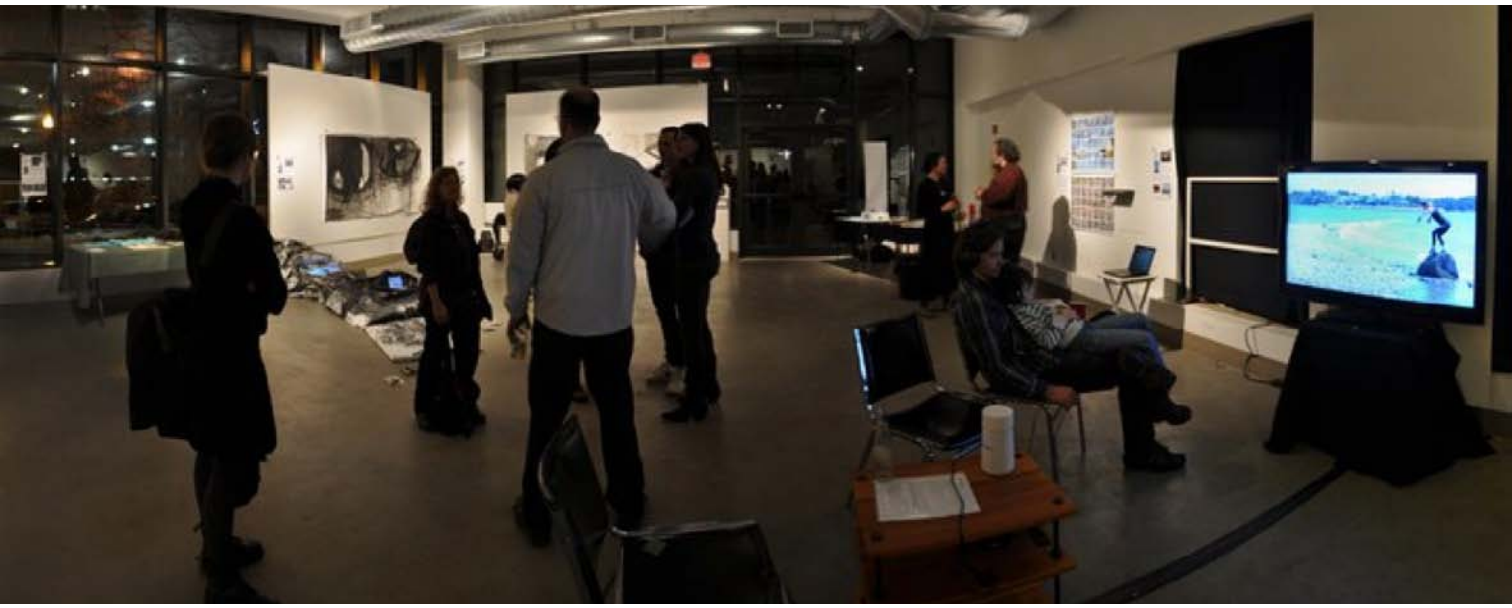
in the frame and what is out of the frame? What is included and what is excluded? These are some of the constant negotiations I go through while recording video. In addition, the composition of the objects, whether centered or to the left or right of the frame, is the result of my conscious and unconscious choices and expression, as well as a relegation of my relation to the subject. In the end, the way I frame and compose, the times I choose to shoot and choose not to shoot, all reveal my unique way of seeing the world around me.

If the frame is the primary unit of cinematic representation, what changes when the image is framed or projected in a different manner, for example, in a tent situated in a gallery space? Unlike the tendency of the frame to disappear when a viewer sits in a darkened room to watch image events unfold on the screen before them, the visitor to the installation is made conscious of the frame. How does the frame differ between cinema, photography, video, and installation art? New technologies have been driving the convergence of cinema and other visual arts since the 1970s, so this is not a new trajectory. Exhibitions like *Dislocations, Bay Area Media, Future Cinema,* and *Act/React* have demonstrated how artists have been using new media technology to enable new modes of participation and immersion.[53] This is not simply a technology-determined trend. Experimental filmmakers have been deconstructing and reinventing visual forms in both the cinema frame and the outside of the frame in the context of the gallery for quite some time.[54]

A traditional film is constructed from shots assembled in linear sequences in which the frame of each shot disconnects the image from its literal origins to elicit figurative, indexical, and metaphorical effects. This is only the starting point for *This Place in a Space,* which challenges framing conventions and subverts them for my own purposes. While *This Place in a Space* uses primarily figurative imagery, it's location inside of the tent, in a triangular frame, situated in the context of the gallery, re-contextualizes the video as both literal and reflexive

53. *Dislocations,* Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, New York, October 20, 1991 – January 7, 1992; *Bay Area Media,* San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), San Francisco, California, March 15 – May 13, 1990; *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film,* Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM), Karlsruhe, Germany, November 16, 2002 – March 30, 2003; *Act/React,* Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 4, 2008 – January 11, 2009; see also: Ursula Frohne, "Dissolution of the Frame: Immersion and Participation in Video Installation," *Art and the Moving Image,* Tanya Leighton, Ed., Isabel Flett Trans., Tate/Afterall, 2008, pp. 369–70.

54. Catherine Fowler, "Room for Experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eija Liisa Ahtila," *Screen* 45:4 (2004), pp. 324–43.



Video loop at *Bumpkin Forward*
Exhibition held at Mobius Gallery, Boston, April 1-10, 2011, I installed a video loop showing the videos which formed the foundation of the video used in my installation, *This Place in a Space*.

Photo by Zsuzsanna Szegedi (above).

Documenting Bumpkin, 2011, video loop, 21 min., 54 sec., featuring the artists of the 2010 Bumpkin Island Art Encampment:

Zsuzsanna Szegedi: *Endurance Drawing,* 2:43

marisa dipaola: *the octopus's garden,* 1:58

Ali Reid: *The Great Bumpkin Hunt,* 1:39

Maria Molteni: *A Spectacle on Bumpkin Island: Belly of the Beast,* 1:26

sara june + Nathan Andary: *Tidal,* 1:58

Mike Szegedi: *Video Confessional,* 1:25

Mark Davis: *Bumpkin Sky-Land,* 2:15

Cara Brostrom: *No Place to Go or Won't You Please Walk With Me,* 1:40

Sharon Dunn: *4-D Map: Portraits of Stones & Plants Found Along the Water's Edge,* 2:22

Kalmia Strong: *Bumpkin Historical Society,* 1:06

Camilo Alvarez, *Five + Nine,* 3:26
featuring the works of:
Jessica Gath: *I ____ Bumpkin Island Art Encampment*,
William Pope.L: *Hojiki*,
Seth West: *Water Ritual*,
Antoniadis & Stone: *Patient*,
Cyrille Conan: *fish heads*,
Douglas Weathersby: *camilo's bumpkin observation*).

material, re-framed within the installation, bringing into sharper relief the boundaries of the work, much as my experience of making the video, essentially boundless, must be constrained through some form, some mold, extruded into a new shape and material for reception by the visitor.

In order to frame the video into the triangular frame I had to distort, re-center, and displace the frame constantly. Much like the "pan and scan" technique of translating a wide screen movie to a small, almost square, television screen. This mixture of angles, tilts, and perspectives gives the video an unusual coherence when situated in the triangular frame of the tent. When viewed in a traditional frame I found it disorienting. In contrast, situated in the tent in the gallery space, it was remarkable how stable it felt. What is being framed is my relationship with the subjects, as I follow their art making experience on the island. Unlike the original video which played in a video loop on a large 16 x 9 video display, these images projected in the tent tended to include more close-ups which worked quite well to my delight. The moving, expressionistic framing invariably maintained an expressive immediacy which was lacking in the classical presentation of the video loop.

In traditional cinema the framing and composition are not the only factors that convey meaning. It is through editing of both the picture and sound that one creates the structuring process that conveys meaning along with a point of view. On Bumpkin Island the background usually includes the movement and activity of visitors, the artists work itself, the waves of the harbor, etc. The spaces reflect and refract the activities on the island, providing the viewer glimpses into this other world. Each

sequence of the video presents a fragment of the reality I perceived and chose to frame. It becomes a creation, rather than a record. Every shot I record is a trace of what I observed, it becomes a distant memory of some real event that is no longer in existence.

Each camera shot is a fragment of a reality bounded by the frame, it is a representation embedded with my intentionality (both conscious and unconscious) as the wielder of the camera. What that camera shot communicates, whether on its own or in a sequence with other shots, owes as much to chance as to design. Documentary cinema encompasses elements of improvisation, indeterminacy, and even automatism. The careful framing of shots is only the starting point; the juxtaposition and collision of shots through montage creates new meaning for both myself and the viewer. Dziga Vertov was a big fan of "observe the world and see what you get" (a.k.a. aleatory) filmmaking, creating meaning from bits of reality in the editing room. On the other hand, Sergei Eisenstein was not so fond of this approach. Eisenstein believed that the subject of the film must be chosen and other creative decisions derive from that.

I played the role of a participant observer enmeshed within the encampment, and in the follow-up interviews the artists were participants in my creative process. *This Place in a Space* offered me the opportunity to reflect first-hand on one of the crucial subtexts of post-modernity: who is the author? What is the { author, director, designer } function?[55] Where is it located? Is it with the filmmaker observing? Is it the artist being observed? Is it the editor weaving together a story? As I worked on this piece my notion of { author, director, designer } evolved into a

55. Michel Foucault proposes that the "author function" (which he defines in a very specific manner) may soon "disappear," along the lines but not exactly the same as Roland Barthes "Death of the Author." Barthes takes a different approach to the concept, writing, "In the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be disentangled, nothing deciphered." What is the difference between disentangling and deciphering? I feel Foucault's analysis of the "author function" is more useful than killing off the author. For Foucault the term "author" doesn't refer simply to a real person. He suggests the "author" is like a "narrator," an "alter ego" for the actual "writer." Towards the end of the essay he anticipates a new form of authorship in which the question of "who speaks" is responded to with an indifference, which brings to mind *Wikipedia* and much of the writing and video we see on the web in which the notion of author (or media maker) is increasingly ambiguous as a result of social and collaborative processes of production. See: Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," *The Foucault Reader,* Paul Rabinow, Ed., Pantheon Books, 1984; see also: Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image Music Text,* Stephen Heath, Trans., Hill and Wang, 1977.

more fluid concept of authorship as a complex, decentralized, set of interrelationships. I would not go so far as some postmodernist writers to say the { author, director, designer } has disappeared, but I do recognize our understanding of the concept is undergoing change.

Ultimately, framing and sequencing is a complex endeavor rooted nevertheless in a coherent set of processes. When these sequences are placed in an installation, they are both re-framed and re-contextualized. Now you have an object within a gallery space framing the video. This creates new associations, and new permissions: "you don't have to stay in your seat and watch the whole thing." Viewers graze through installations; on the other hand, they sit to view cinema (in the classic sense, although contemporary viewing habits transcend classic modes of cinema spectatorship). In this context the viewer will see only fragments compared to someone who sits down to see an entire video in a screening room. I took this into consideration when I edited the footage, the value of each fragment to convey some aspect of the experience became more important than the coherence of the full sequence.

Very few visitors will ever see the whole video from both perspectives, thus, everyone's experience is incomplete, with a random start and end, with a different set of meanings and associations. With the proliferation of new devices for viewing audiovisual materials, placing a video in a gallery seems like an anachronism. The iPhone, iPad, and other devices are rapidly changing the relationship between makers, images, screens, and viewers. Now that everyone has a video camera on their phone, we are all makers, we are all viewers, we are savvier consumers of media. The aesthetics of the cinematographic frame is something we all have some relationship with in this new context of mobile devices. Does *This Place in a Space* take us back to a simpler, primal, elemental use of the image?

Instead of watching a story through the stationary proscenium, visitors move around the space. Augusto Boal coined the term "spect-actor"[56] to describe a viewer who is not just watching something performed, but choosing what to follow on their own. In the final installation I presented visitors with two primary viewing options: 1. if they sat in front of the tent, they could watch and listen to a video emanating from the tent about the artists during their time on Bumpkin Island; or 2. if they sat in the alternative position facing the back of the tent, they could listen to audio of the artists reflecting on their experience many months after the encampment, accompanied by the image projected onto the back wall of the gallery emanating from the tent. Thus, visitors had a choice, they could simply wander through the space, or they could wander and sit down in one or both of the sitting positions and experience some or all of the video and audio loop.

Installations bring the connections between art, narrative, design, interaction, and psychology to a unique juncture. The relationship between

56. Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed,* Charles A. McBride, Trans., Theatre Communications Group, 1993.

these remains a crucial challenge among contemporary artists, designers, and scholars alike. Visitors bring with them a host of associations, providing multiple interpretive layers to the experience. The involvement of a visitor poses a challenge: the tension between performance and exposition is far from unique to installation art. The pleasures of visiting an installation center around the visitor's experience of fold-like structures, certain aspects are fixed whereas other aspects can be expanded or contracted in response to the audience participation with consequences to the overall meaning of the piece to each of the viewers.

With an installation we can't assume the visitor will recognize the significance of any given image, sound, object, lighting cue. Compared to the linear screen-based stories I'm accustomed to making, telling a story with the language of installation becomes a creation more akin to an information space, a memory container, a spatial story[57] that contains both enacted and embedded narratives. Between the flexibility afforded to the visitors to choose their own path through the space and the coherence of the video sequence playing in the tent, viewers can find a traditional narrative, or they may not. It depends on the path they choose to take.

57. The concept of spatial stories derives from the work of Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* University of California Press, 1988; and Henri LeFebvre, *The Production of Space,* Blackwell, 1991.

This Place in a Space
Installation perspective from the "objective" chair, *2011 MFA Thesis Show II*, Sandra and David Bakalar Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, April 30 - May 8, 2011

Haystack Mountain School of Crafts
Deer Isle, Maine, August 6, 2008

Conclusion

Conclusion

Crossing the theory/practice divide

Crossing boundaries creates spaces for new intellectual and structural configurations. It creates opportunities for cross-discipline collaboration, cooperation, and understanding, with the potential of growing new theory and practice in rhizomic configurations.[1] The most complicated boundary I crossed as a student was to leave the familiar space of documentary filmmaking and venture into the realm of installation art. I was fortunate to find a guide in Danielle Sauvé. Her Installation: Reflective Space class provided an environment in which I could immerse myself in a new language and begin developing *This Place in a Space* in a context that combined doing both studio work and a parallel research project at the same time, reinforcing my ongoing theme of crossing boundaries and exploring borderlands.

I learned the value of crossing the thorny boundaries between theory and practice early and often, as manifested by navigating between the intuitive space of studio work in our studio courses and the intellectual space of reflective reading and writing in our seminar classes, from which a dialog was created that populated the borderland between creative work and theory with a rich landscape of connections, fresh ideas, new insights, renewed direction. Theory is often something designers and artists recoil from, however, I came to see an expanded concept of theory and studio practice as two parts of the same whole. The seeds of this realization, which only flowered during the Summer of 2011, were planted when Jan Kubasiewicz assigned us to read Gui Bonsiepe's essay, "Visuality | Discursivity"[2] in the Design Seminar II class during the Spring of 2009.

1. There is no better word for this than rhizomic. A rhizome is a plant stem that grows horizontally under or along the ground and sends out roots and shoots, from which new plants develop. The term was used by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in opposition to the notion that knowledge grows as a tree structure from previously accepted ideas, rather, they argued, new thinking need not follow established patterns, see Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome," in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* Brian Massumi, Trans., University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp. 3-25.

2. Gui Bonsiepe, "Visuality | Discursivity," *guibonsiepe.com,* website, 1997, http://www.guibonsiepe.com/pdffiles/visudisc.pdf (accessed February, 8, 2009).

This essay became a deeply influential factor in my work. Bonsiepe tackles the relationship between theory and practice in design, which are considered opposites by many designers. Bonsiepe writes, "Practice that considers itself unaffected by theory suffers from a strong error of perception. Theory permeates practice, though generally unnoticed."[3] Bonsiepe argues that theory illuminates what is already implicit in practice as theory. Perhaps this is why artists and designers get queasy when anyone starts to talk about theory, for theory questions the things practitioners take for granted. It reveals the ideology implicit in practice. Bonsiepe does not use the word ideology, instead he writes that theory, "casts into question things taken for granted,"[4] but in my mind this equates to ideology, the set of ideas that combine to form our goals, expectations, and actions. It's always uncomfortable to have a mirror held up to one's work, for it shows us another side, the view from across the borderland, challenging our deeply held beliefs.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

The analytical framework of boundary crossings began to emerge after reading this essay. Bonsiepe suggest that we can no longer maintain the strict boundaries between verbal and visual and between text and image. New media challenges the paradigm that design is primarily about the visual domain. We are designing for space that is not a geographic location, but a *space of flows* in Manuel Castells' parlance,[5] or *cyberspace* in William Gibson's parlance,[6] and this brings us into the realm of open rather than closed text, converged rather than distinct media, a fluid, computation space with a new form of materiality. Bonsiepe wants designers to overcome the division between logocentrism and pictocentrism, and the internet and new media forms are pushing us to do it.

5. In the sense of the term as used by Manuel Castells, see Chapter 6 in Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society,* 2nd ed., John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

6. Gibson coined the term cyberspace in his popular novel *Necromancer,* see: William Gibson, *Neuromancer,* Phantasia Press, 1984.

Bonsiepe's prescriptions bring into sharp relief the analytical framework of boundary crossing used in this thesis. It might be argued that each discipline needs a specialized language (their own circumscribed boundary around a field of knowledge) that is optimized for the particular problem domain of their discipline in order to do work efficiently. To these points we might add that as organizations become more complex, interdisciplinary cooperation, understanding, and dialog, becomes more important. Organizations that foster a culture of innovation (read enabling boundary crossings) depend on shared methodologies and a culture of knowledge sharing, while maintaining a respect for the contribution of individual disciplines. There are natural tensions between disciplines.

In most organizations with a goal to sell a product or service at a profit, there exists a three way dialectical relationship between design, technology, and business strategy, which when combined, yield the greater whole of the organization. The solution is not for designers, technologists, and business people to speak the same language and use the same methodologies (we're interested in crossings, not assimilation), but rather, to find common ground in the borderland through which we can all communicate. Bonsiepe's virtues of Intellectuality and Otherness come to mind. The worlds of business, technology, art, and design

need to find common ground and better ways to communicate, and this can be provided through an organization's culture, as demonstrated by innovative design firms like IDEO.[7] Artists and designers have a lot to offer the business world in terms of methodologies and strategies,[8] and there's been a lot written about bridging the boundaries between design and business with successful outcomes.[9]

When I think of the boundary between theory and practice, I see many parallels to the boundary between reason and passion, illustrated in this fragment from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet,*

> Your reason and your passion are the rudder and the sails of your seafaring soul. If either your sails or your rudder be broken, you can but toss and drift, or else be held at a standstill in mid-seas. For reason, ruling alone, is a force confining; and passion, unattended, is a flame that burns to its own destruction. Therefore let your soul exalt your reason to the height of passion; that it may sing; And let it direct your passion with reason, that your passion may live through its own daily resurrection, and like the phoenix rise above its own ashes.[10]

Perhaps we should think of theory as a process of *reflection and contextualization,* which will make for smoother sailing along the seas of our artistic and design practice. Theory has gotten a bad rap. There's a lot of bad theory out there. I would like to see practicing artists and designers begin to take possession of the word theory and imbue it with new meaning, making it relevant for practitioners as a process of reflection on, and contextualization of, our practice.

Just below the surface of my interrogation of boundary crossings is the divide that exists between relating the intuitive knowledge that comes from personal experience with the world of the scientific method. Two worlds. Two modes of thought. The borderland between the two is vast. I finally put it all together when I read Jerome Bruner's essay, "Two Modes of Thought,"[11] in which he describes that there's *scientific-logical thinking,* whose truth is found in verification through experimentation and, *narrative knowledge,* whose truth is rooted in verisimilitude. Therein lies the ultimate boundary crossing: narrative organizes the structure of human experience. Bruner writes that it's about, "how 'life' comes to imitate 'art' and vice versa."[12]

Making connections

What is it that ties all my work together? Starting the day I experienced Jim Campbell's *Hallucination* at the *Bay Area Media* exhibition all the way back in 1990 to now it's . . . boundary crossings. I've come to realize that I've always been interested in the space between disciplines, places, activities, roles, etc. When I worked at Apple I negotiated the space between being a technology specialist and a creative media maker, I also negotiated the space between our customers and product managers back in Cupertino. I was attracted to the opportunity to teach at the MIT Media Laboratory because I would be navigating in the

7. Tom Kelley and Jonathan Littman, *The Art of Innovation: Lessons in Creativity from IDEO, America's Leading Design Firm*, Crown Business, 2001.

8. Tim Brown, "Strategy by Design," *Fast Company,* June 1, 2005, http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/95/design-strategy.html (accessed April 20, 2009).

9. Thomas Kelley and Jonathan Littman, *The Ten Faces of Innovation: IDEO's Strategies for Defeating the Devil's Advocate and Driving Creativity,* Doubleday, 2005.

10. Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet,* Wordsworth Editions, 1997, p. 30.

11. Jerome Bruner, "Two Modes of Thought," *Actual Minds, Possible Words,* Harvard University Press, 1986.

12. Jerome Bruner, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Critical Inquiry* 18:1, 1991.

Apple iPhone
How do our notions of preservation and memory shift in a world where we have the ability to both create and retrieve any number of traces and fragments of our lives in the form of messages, images, music, sounds, and voices?

space between computer science and cinema. After my graduate studies from the Media Laboratory I worked for a start up where I worked in three roles, videographer, editor, and web producer. During this time I experienced many boundary crossings, along with all the metaphorical baggage that comes with the phrase tied to border crossings, illegal immigration, being seen as "the other," negotiating social differences, seeing things from more than one perspective, transgression, and many other things. Design professor Jan Kubasiewicz believes

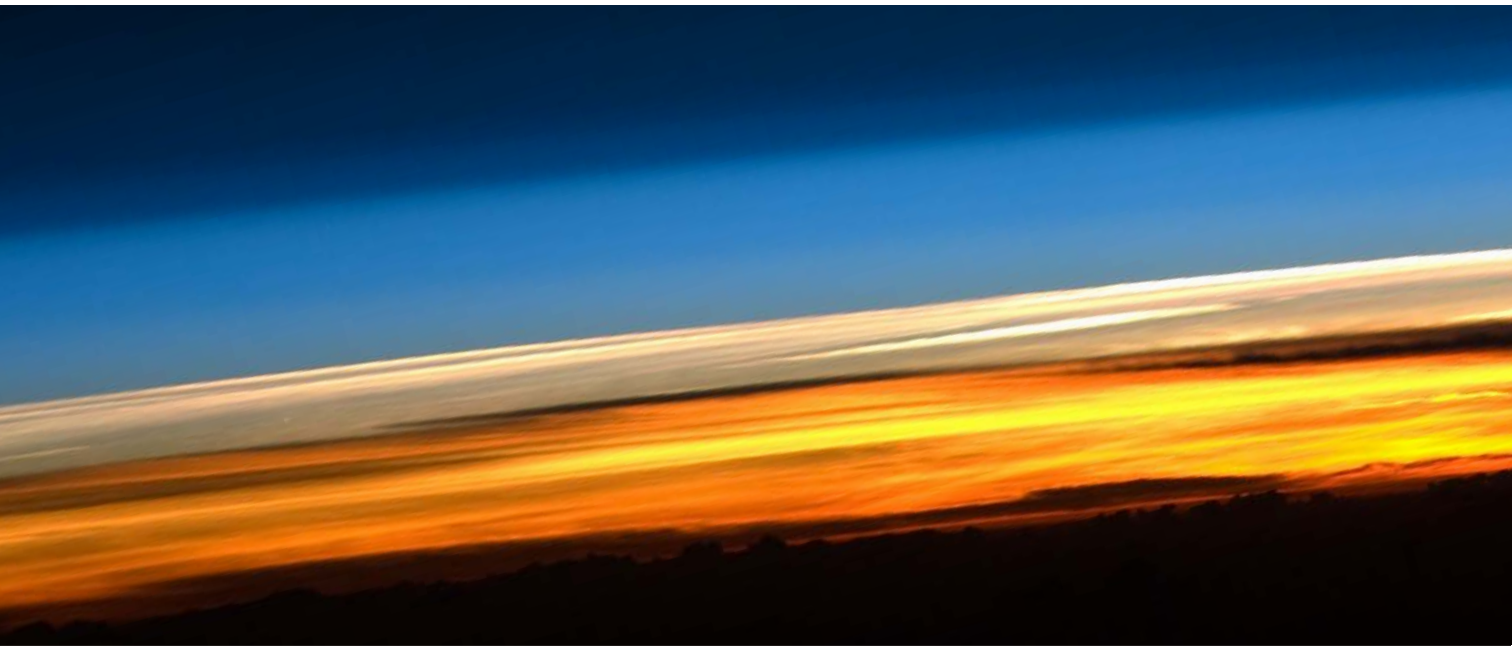
> Graphic designers and information architects, filmmakers and writers, musicians and programmers all offer diverse points of view and use the different 'native' languages of their respective professional fields in describing the human experience of communication. To adequately address the multiple aspects of dynamic media requires a combination of these expert points of view, accomplished through the difficult dialog along the borderlines of multiple disciplines.[13]

13. Jan Kubasiewicz, "Mapping the Experience of Dynamic Media," *The Experience of Dynamic Media: Works from the Dynamic Media Institute at Massachusetts College of Art and Design 2006-2010,* Jan Kubasiewicz, Ed., Dynamic Media Institute, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, 2010, pp. 10-15.

Each of the projects described in this thesis represents an interrogation of boundary crossings. My experience has been more than simply crossing disciplinary boundaries, it's been about crossing back and forth and reflecting on what I bring with me to the other side and what I choose to leave behind. Boundaries, contours, spaces in between, inside, outside, within, without, passing, becoming, one, other, all come into play.

Hawt Couch

I now see *Hawt Couch* as a boundary crossing between stories and objects, as well as crossing the boundary in terms of what we expect to happen when we sit on a couch. *Hawt Couch* invades the visitor's personal boundaries, entering a space we usually don't expect a couch to enter. The experience of working on this project has encouraged me to continue exploring with interactive scenarios orchestrating media experience with an interface that involves everyday gestures (e.g. sitting on a couch) and everyday objects. One simple extension to the project that comes to mind would be to try installing the couch in a public place, and at the same time, make the sounds more gentle and subtle. I came



to appreciate the flexibility of the Arduino platform for integrating sensor data and providing an interface to Processing, which is well suited for quickly prototyping a wide range of interactive media experiences. I'm glad that by working on *Hawt Couch* I was pushed into working with sensors and updating my programming skills working with the Ardunio and Processing environments.

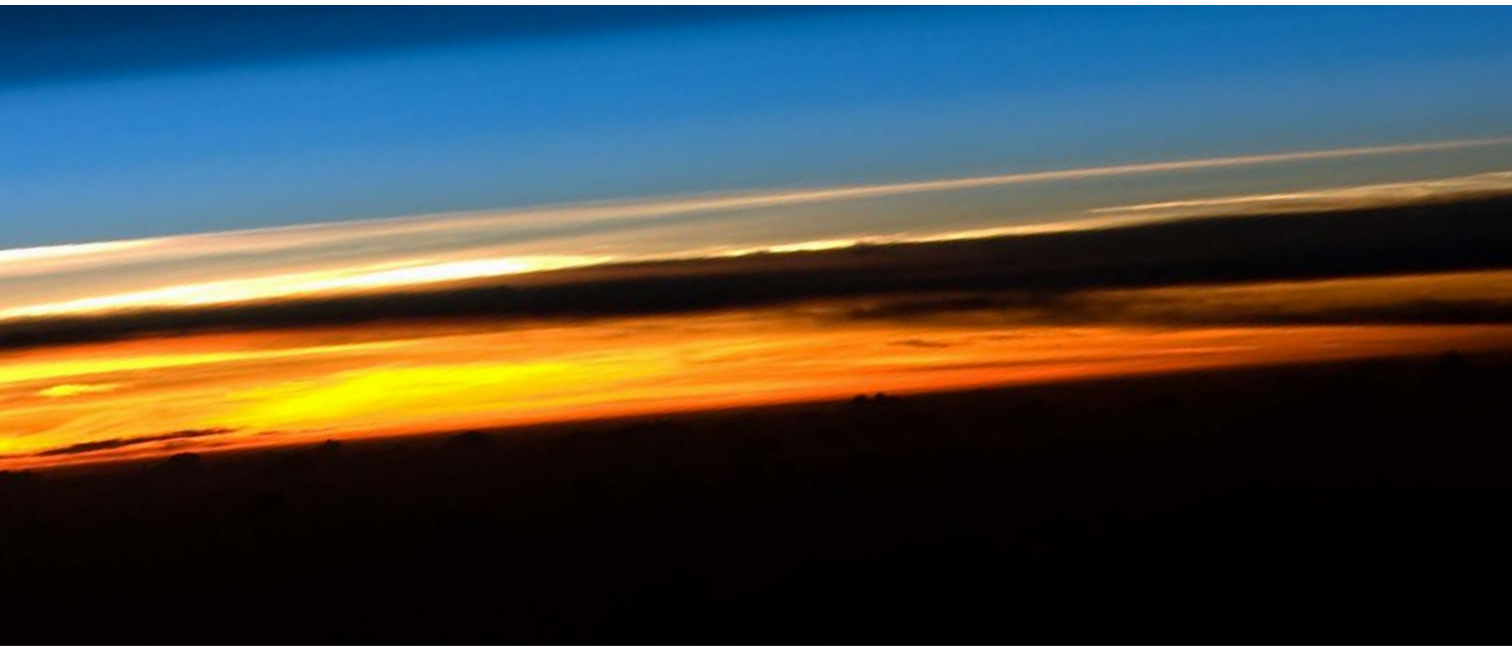
Provocative Objects

Provocative Objects offered me the opportunity to learn more about organizing, running, and documenting an exhibition and both about the conventions, codes, and practices of contemporary curatorial practices. Bruce Ferguson writes that exhibitions are, "the central speaking subjects in the stories about art which institutions and curators tell to themselves and to us."[14] I came to appreciate the work that goes into producing an exhibition and a catalog, as well as the value of creating a tangible artifact to document the event and to bring together the ideas related to the works in the exhibition. In the end, I came to understand the significance of exhibitions as a social process of meaning making. I'm humbled when I reflect on the incredible level and quality of work everyone involved with the event contributed to make *Provocative Objects* successful.

14. Bruce Ferguson, "Exhibition Rhetoric," *Thinking About Exhibition,* Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg, & Sandy Nairne, Eds., Routledge, 1996.

This Place in a Space

At the most fundamental level, *This Place in a Space* was an opportunity to examine, through a mix of familiar (documentary) and unfamiliar (installation) languages, the boundaries that define my practice



Sunset over the Indian Ocean
Photographed on May 25, 2010 by an Expedition 23 crew member on the International Space Station (ISS). The image presents an edge-on, or limb view, of Earth's atmosphere as seen from orbit. The ISS was located over the southern Indian Ocean when this image was taken, with the observer looking towards the west. Crew members aboard the space station see sixteen sunrises and sunsets per day due to their high orbital velocity (greater than 28,000 kilometers per hour). At that speed each sunrise/sunset event only lasts a few seconds. Image and text courtesy of NASA.

as a documentary maker: { participant | observer }, { screen | space }, and { objectivity | subjectivity }. Cinematic storytelling has been my key to the interpretation of reality, my looking glass into the world. I have worked in many roles: cinematographer, lighting designer, director, producer, sound recordist, photographer. In recent years my work has taken a turn towards directing documentary films about people and their creative work.

This Place in a Space took me on a new trajectory, exploring the complexity of documenting ephemeral, site-specific art and at the same time learning the language of installation. By introducing the contours of the gallery space into my work, I could create new insides and outsides as visitors move through the space. This lead to a new level of embodiment in my work layered through participant reflections on the experience, and created new layers of meaning for gallery visitors to discover as I presented two concurrent perspectives of my experience documenting the encampment. Learning the language of installation has been the most challenging and rewarding aspect of my experience as a graduate student at MassArt. I plan to do more installations in the future.

Embracing ambiguity

The metaphorical and analytical framework of boundary crossings has allowed me to deal with ambiguity and see situations from multiple perspectives at the same time. When you're in the zone of intersection between overlapping boundaries, multiple sets of rules, codes, and conventions are at play. Becoming more comfortable in this space is one of

the skills I honed during my time at the Dynamic Media Institute. As I write this I'm reminded of something artist and educator Robert Watts wrote in the context of art education,

> Developing knowledge and understanding of art is partly about embracing notions of ambiguity and mystery: that engaging with multiple and shifting interpretations of artworks should play a more central role in art education and that part of the process of engaging with art is the experience of "not" knowing and "not" understanding.[15]

15. Robert Watts, "Encounters with the Unexpected: From Holbein to Hirst (and Back Again)," *International Journal of Art & Design Education* 30:1 (February 2011), pp. 52.

Stephen Wilson, a Professor of Art at San Francisco State University, has described contemporary artists as those responsible for "keeping watch on the cultural frontier,"[14] which invokes the metaphor of boundary crossings, here to there, now to then, current paradigm to a new paradigm, from the known to the unknown. Wilson writes,

> Art is deliberate human action aimed at triggering the aesthetic response in others; thus, if successful, it serves the same function of making perception and interpretation more agile."[16]

16. Stephen Wilson, "Beyond the Digital, Preparing Artists to Work at the Frontiers of Technoculture," *Educating Artists in a Digital Age: Learning at the Intersections of Art, Science, Technology, and Culture,* Mel Alexenberg, Ed., Intellect Ltd., 2008, p. 30.

Art, in essence, is about crossing boundaries, and I use the phrase at the risk of stating the obvious in terms of what artists, performers, filmmakers, designers, musicians, and others, spend a great deal of their time doing. We cross boundaries at so many levels, and it's through this crossing that we make new connections, foster conceptual innovation, provide context for understanding our role and place in the world, expanding the horizon of our personal and societal potential, the list goes on.

Artists are in direct opposition to, and complementary to, positivistic philosophers and scientists. Each represents a different model of the world, but each model is incomplete without the other. A positivist can't account for every natural phenomena and experience humans are capable of. Likewise, artists don't account for every natural phenomena and experience. Our perceptions and experiences exist as a result of a process of encounter, in the interplay of the psychological boundary between what we perceive as inside and outside our bodies. Bodies, as expressed by phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, are "our general medium for having a world."[17]

17. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* Colin Smith, Trans. (Routledge, 1962), p. 146

As I reflect on the course of my studies at the Dynamic Media Institute, I am left with three question that I expect will shape my future work:

1. What is my new definition of place, locality, and community?
2. Is an increasingly visual culture moving us towards a new form of media literacy with more characteristics akin to oral culture?
3. Will preservation and memory shift from written language and discourse to traces and fragments of images, music, sounds, and voices that don't fit into tidy narrative frameworks?[18]

18. I'm influenced by the questions posed in: Ron Burnett, *How Images Think,* The MIT Press, 2005, p. 8; see also: Edmund Carpenter, *The Became What They Beheld,* Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1970.

18. Though this quote is widely attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, I've not been able to verify its origin beyond mention in: Graeme Harper, *On Creative Writing,* Multilingual Matters, 2010, p. 23.

"Art is never finished, only abandoned."

— Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)[18]

Sunset on terra firma
August 8, 2011, Avallon-Vauban, France

Las Vegas Convention Center
August 15, 2008

Et cetera

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18 Happenings in 6 Parts, 1959, Allan Kaprow, happening

An Apple Shrine, 1960, Allan Kaprow, installation

Australia, 1951, David Smith, sculpture

The Bridge, 2000, Thomas Hirschhorn, installation, *Protest and Survive,* Whitechapel Gallery

Flight Patterns, 2005, Aaron Koblin, data visualization, Museum of Modern Art

Fountain, 1917, Marcel Duchamp, readymade

The Gates, 1979-2005. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, installation, New York

Ghost/Transmemoir, 2006, Bose Krishnamachari, installation, *Gateway Bombay,* Peabody Essex Museum, Salem

Lowlands, 2010, Susan Philipsz, sound installation

Hallucination, 1990, Jim Campbell, installation, *Bay Area Media,* San Fransisco Museum of Modern Art

Merzbau, 1933, Kurt Schwitters, installation

Proun Room, 1923, El Lissitzky, installation

Reveal the secrets that you seek, 2011, Bharti Kher, installation, Centre Pompidou, Paris

The River, 2010, Charles Sandison, installation, Musée du quai Branly, Paris

Western Deep, 2002. Steve McQueen, installation, *Documenta 11,* Kassel, Germany, 2002

Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades, 2006, Harun Farocki, installation, *The Workers,* MASS MoCA

Silver Clouds, 1966, Andy Warhol, refabricated installation, The Warhol Museum, 2002

Sleep No More, 2010, immersive theatrical performance, Punchdrunk and American Repertory Theatre, Boston

Tamara, 1981, John Krizanc, immersive theatre, Strachan House in Trinity-Bellwoods Park, Toronto, Canada

Wheel of Life, 1993, Glorianna Davenport & Larry Friendlander, interactive media installation, Villers Experimental Media Theatre, MIT

Words, 1961, Allan Kaprow, installation

Yard, 1961, Allan Kaprow, installation

Films

Annie Hall, Woody Allen, 1977

Chronicle of a Summer, Jean Rouch & Edgar Morin, 1961

The David Hamilton Smith Story, Alice Apley & David Tames, 2012, work in progress.

Exit Through the Gift Shop, Banksy, 2010

The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty, Esfir Schub, 1927

Happy Mother's Day, Ricky Leacock & Joyce Chopra, l963

Jaws, Steven Spielberg, 1975

A Kalahari Family, John Marshall, 2001

Komsomol is the Chief of Electrification, Esfir Schub, 1932

La Chinoise, Jean Luc Godard, 1967

Little Dieter Needs to Fly, Werner Herzog, 1998

Man With a Movie Camera, Dziga Vertov, 1929

Nanook of the North, Robert Flaherty, 1922

Night Mail, Harry Watt & Basil Wright, 1936

The Plow That Broke The Plains, Pare Lorentz, 1934

Remembering John Marshall, Alice Apley & David Tamés, 2006

Roger & Me, Michael Moore, 1989

Salesman, Albert & David Maysles, 1969

Seventeen, Joel Demott & Jeff Kreines, 1983

Sherman's March, Ross McElwee, 1986

Surname Viet, Given Name Nam, Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989

Titicut Follies, Frederick Weisman, 1967

Exhibitions

Act/React, Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 4, 2008 – January 11, 2009

Bay Area Media, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), San Francisco, California, March 15 – May 13, 1990

Documenta 11, Kassel, Germany, June 8 – September 15, 2002

The Cinema Effect: Illusion, Reality, and the Moving Image, The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C., February 14 – May 11, 2008

Dislocations, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, October 20, 1991 – January 7, 1992

Experiments in Truth, The Fabric Museum and Workshop, Philadelphia, December 3, 2004 – March 12, 2005

Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film, Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM), Karlsruhe, Germany, November 16, 2002 – March 30, 2003

The Unanimous Life: Deimantas Narkevičius, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands, October 24 – December 6, 2009

The Workers: Precarity, Invisibility, Mobility, Massachsetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), North Adams, Massachusetts, May 29, 2011 – March 31, 2012

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"Musical Language," Jad Abumrad & Robert Krulwich, *Radiolab,* audio podcast, http://www.radiolab.org/2007/sep/24/ (accessed April 12, 2011)

Life in a Day, Kevin MacDonald, 2011, *YouTube*, video, http://www.youtube.com/lifeinaday (accessed October 10, 2010)

Out My Window, Katerina Cizek, interactive documentary, NFB/Interactive, 2010

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Thesis bookshelf
Home office, Roslindale, Massachusetts, January 12, 2011

Page 148:

Andy Warhol: *Silver Clouds,* 1966
Refabricated Installation, The Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, December 21, 2002

Film storage vault
Cineric Inc., New York, New York, May 20, 2002

This page:

Archives
The Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, December 31, 2002

Boston Media Makers meeting
Sweet Finnish, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, March 4, 2007

Colophon

This document was set in Frutiger and Adobe Garamond using Adobe inDesign CS5 running on an Apple MacBook Pro. Dynamic sidenotes by Peter Kahrel[1] was used to place the side notes.

Frutiger[2] is a distinctive and legible san-serif typeface designed by Adrian Frutiger (b. 1928). It has the rationality and cleanliness of Univers (also designed by Frutiger), but with the organic and proportional aspects of Gill Sans, designed by Eric Gill (1882–1940). Ascenders and descenders are very prominent, and apertures are wide to easily distinguish letters from each other. The typeface, originally named Roissy, was commissioned in 1968 by the newly built Paris – Charles De Gaulle Airport[3] at Roissy, France for their directional sign system. The Frutiger family was released in 1976 by the Stempel type foundry in conjunction with Linotype.

Garamond[4] is a group of old-style serif typefaces named after punch-cutter Claude Garamond (1480–1561). Garamond is considered to be among the most legible and readable serif typefaces for use in print applications. Most of the Garamond faces are more closely related to the work of a later punch-cutter, Jean Jannon (1580–1635). Adobe Garamond, the specific variation used in this document, shows a direct relationship to Garamond's letterforms which convey a sense of fluidity and consistency. Some unique characteristics include the small bowl of the a and the small eye of the e. Long extenders and top serifs have a downward slope. Garamond probably had seen Venetian old-style types from the printing shops of Aldus Manutius (1449–1515). Garamond based much of his lowercase on the handwriting of Angelo Vergecio, librarian to Francis

1. http://www.kahrel.plus.com/indesign/sidenotes.html (accessed August 1, 2011).

2. The description of Frutiger was drawn from: Wikipedia contributors, "Frutiger," *Wikipedia,* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frutiger (accessed March 1, 2011).

3. The choice of Frutiger came about as a result of my wife and I planning our summer vacation to Paris and Normandy, and since we'd be flying in and out of the Paris – Charles De Gaulle airport, I thought Frutiger might be good for the headings and captions.

4. The description of Garamond was drawn from: Wikipedia contributors, "Garamond," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garamond (accessed March 1, 2011).

Paris–Charles de Gaulle airport
August 15, 2011

Garamond matrices
Platin-Moretus Museum, Antwerp, photo © Dan Reynolds, http://www.flickr.com/photos/typeoff/2442039857/

I. The italics of most contemporary versions are based on the italics of Garamond's assistant Robert Granjon (1513–1589).

The physical books were printed by Edition One Books[5] on 148 gsm, smooth, acid-free, uncoated bright white paper; 100 point acid free binder board was used for binding, offering archival longevity.

Writing was done using Literature and Latte's Scrivener[6] along with BibDesk[7] for managing references. Some elements were created using Pages and Keynote from Apple's iWorks suite, Adobe Photoshop CS5, Apple Final Cut Studio, and BBEdit.

Espresso roast (genuine fair trade) from Dean's Beans[8] and Peet's Coffee along with music from the Secret Agent, Underground 80s, Indie Pop Rocks, Groove Salad, and Suburbs of Goa channels of SomaFM[9] provided essential stimulation while writing and designing the book, along with some of my favorite CDs including: Brian Eno and David Byrne: *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts,* Solitaire: *Fearless,* Spoon: *Gimme Fiction*, Anders Miolin: *Erik Satie,* Tin Hat Trio: *Memory is an Elephant,* Roseanne Cash: *10 Song Demo,* Brad Mehldau: *Art of Trio, Vol. 1*, Django Reinhardt: *Djangology,* Jean Michel Jarre: *Oxygene*, MC Solaar: *Prose Combat,* Love Tractor: *'Til The Cows Come Home,* John Coltrane: *Blue Train,* Portishead: *Dummy,* Suzanne Vega: *Days of Open Hand,* The Orb: *Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld*, Brian Eno: *Music for Films* and *Music for Airports,* and the oeuvres of The Beatles, Bill Evans, Moby, Talking Heads, Pylon, REM, New Order, Dead Can Dance, The Doors, The Clash, Yo La Tengo, Underworld, U2, Los Lobos, Tangerine Dream, and B-52s.

5. http://www.editiononebooks.com (accessed November 12, 2011).

6. http://www.literatureandlatte.com/scrivener.php (accessed December 2, 2010).

7. http://bibdesk.sourceforge.net (accessed August 15, 2008).

8. http://www.deansbeans.com (accessed July 17, 2009).

9. SomaFM is a listener-supported, commercial-free, alternative internet radio station broadcasting from a warehouse in the San Francisco SoMa district, http://somafm.com (accessed December 1, 2011).

David Smith: *Australia,* 1951
Detail, painted steel on cinder block base, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, January 3, 2009