Radiant Sites: Projection and the Mobile Spectator in Contemporary Moving-Image Installations

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Radiant Sites:
Projection and the Mobile Spectator in Contemporary Moving-Image Installations

by Taylor Hobson

2022

Submitted to the Faculty of Bryn Mawr College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of the History of Art

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Abstract

This dissertation examines contemporary moving-image installations that use projected images to expand and elaborate upon the cinematic experience. It focuses on works by Douglas Gordon (b. 1966), Jim Campbell (b. 1956), and the partnered artists Janet Cardiff (b. 1957) and George Bures-Miller (b. 1960), all of whom have reconfigured the classical cinematic system of viewing since the 1990s. Through their works, I trace the term “expanded cinema” as a literal extension of projected light from the screen into the open gallery and beyond. I argue that the term “projection” – as thrown light, mental anticipation, and moving bodies – brings together cinema’s apparatus, text, and reception as a cohesive experience.

These artists transport their light-based images to the gallery, exposing the projected image to mobile spectators, as well as to lighting conditions less conducive to a clear picture. However, the works I will discuss also maintain an explicit connection to the theatrical projection of narrative film. As these artists expand the exhibition spaces of cinema from theater to gallery, they also converge numerous cinematic formats, including celluloid film, magnetic videotape, digital video, still photography, and dynamic audio. I offer “projection” as a term which tethers the myriad trajectories of cinema’s expansion back to its apparatus, and even to the mobile spectator. Beyond the light phenomenon, I also draw from psychoanalytic theories of projection, especially relevant given its foundational contribution to film theory since the 1970s by authors
such as Laura Mulvey, Christian Metz, and Mary Ann Doane. Furthermore, the “suture” theory of Kaja Silverman and others offers a link between classical Hollywood editing conventions and the spatial orientation of the gallery spectator. From these theorists, I ultimately offer a notion of the projecting viewer, a physically active version of the “embodied viewer” as conceived by phenomenological film theorist Vivian Sobchack. By observing their similarities to the common multiplex, art house, or even living rooms, these otherwise uprooted screens reveal in fleeting flickers traces of what we might intuitively call “the cinematic.”
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# Table of Contents

Abstract

ii

Acknowledgements

i

List of Figures

vii

Chapter 1: Introduction: Expanded Projection

1

Chapter 2: Exorcised Screens: Douglas Gordon’s Remodeled Theaters

19

Chapter 3: Exploded Projectors: Jim Campbell's Home Movies

74

Chapter 4: Exposed Cinemas: The Projecting Spectators of Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller

130

Bibliography

184

Figures

192
List of Figures

Chapter One

Figure 1.1: Morgan Fisher, *Projection Instructions* (1974), 16mm, film still 1

Figure 1.2: Robert Whitman, *Shower* (1964), 16mm loop, projector, shower stall and curtain, water, water pump, 80”x30”x30” 3

Figure 1.3: Samuel van Hoogstraten, *A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House* (c. 1655-60), oil and egg on wood, 22.8”x34.6”x23.8” 11

Chapter Two


Figure 2.3: A.K. Dewdney, *The Maltese Cross Movement* (1964), 16mm, film still 28

Figure 2.4: Bill Viola, *Cycles* (1973), videotape, video still 32


Figure 2.6: Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960), video transferred from 35mm, video still 38


Figure 2.8: Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960), video transferred from 35mm, video still 40

Figure 2.9: Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960), video transferred from 35mm, video still 40
Figure 2.10: Alexandre O. Philippe, 78/52 (2017), digital, video still 42

Figure 2.11: Sophie Feinnes, The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema (2006), 35mm, film still 42

Figure 2.12: Gus van Sant, Psycho (1998), 35mm, film still 43

Figure 2.13: Alfred Hitchcock, Psycho (1960), video transferred from 35mm, video still 49

Figure 2.14: Alfred Hitchcock, Psycho (1960), video transferred from 35mm, digital photograph of video screen 49

Figure 2.15: Douglas Gordon, Between Darkness and Light (after William Blake) (1997), video installation, dimensions variable

Figure 2.16: Douglas Gordon, Between Darkness and Light (after William Blake) (1997), video installation, dimensions variable Courtesy Gagosian Gallery and the artist 51

Figure 2.17: Douglas Gordon, Between Darkness and Light (after William Blake) (1997), video installation, dimensions variable Courtesy Gagosian Gallery and the artist 51

Figure 2.18: Michael Snow, Two Sides to Every Story (1974), 16mm film loop, two projectors, switching device, and aluminum screen, 9½’x19 ½’x41’ Installation view, Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, MN, 1974 52

Figure 2.19: Albrecht Dürer, Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman (c. 1600), woodcut, 3”x8½” 57

Figure 2.20: Douglas Gordon, 5 Year Drive-By (1995), video projection, dimensions variable, screening at 29 Palms Inn, Twentynine Palms, CA, September 22, 2001 Photographer: Kay Pallister 60

Figure 2.21: John Ford, The Searchers (1956), 35mm, film stills 62

Figure 2.22: John Ford, The Searchers (1956), 35mm, film still 72

Chapter Three

Figure 3.1: Jim Campbell, Illuminated Averages #1: Hitchcock’s Psycho (2000), photographic transparency in lightbox, 30”x18” 74
Figure 3.2: Jim Campbell, *Night Light* (1995-98), custom electronic, light bulbs, glass, 71”x15”x6”  

Figure 3.3: Jim Campbell, *Photo of my Mother* (1996), custom electronics, glass, photograph, LCD material, 71”x15”x6” Photographer: Sarah Christianson

Figure 3.4: Jim Campbell, *Photo of my Mother* (1996), custom electronics, glass, photograph, LCD material, 71”x15”x6” Photographer: Sarah Christianson

Figure 3.5: Jim Campbell, *Photo of my Mother* (1996), custom electronics, glass, photograph, LCD material, 71”x15”x6” Photographer: Sarah Christianson

Figure 3.6: Anthony McCall, *Line Describing a Cone* (1973), 16mm film projection, projection 118”x157”, overall dimensions variable

Figure 3.7: Jim Campbell, *Glimpse* (2007), Custom electronics, video projector, DVD player, slide projector, blank slides, dimensions variable Photography credit: Courtesy of the Artist

Figure 3.8: Jim Campbell, *Glimpse* (2007), Custom electronics, video projector, DVD player, slide projector, blank slides, dimensions variable  
Installation View, Espacio Fundacion Telefonica Madrid, Madrid, Spain, 2015  
Photography credit: Courtesy of Espacio Fundacion Telefonica Madrid

Figure 3.9: Nam June Paik, *Zen for Film* (c. 1964), 16mm film projector, 16mm leader  
Installation view, Pulitzer Art Foundation, St. Louis, MO, 2014 Photographer: David Johnson

Figure 3.10: Anthony McCall, *Miniature in Black and White* (1972), Eighty-one 35mm black and white slides (continuous loop), carousel slide projector, and miniature Plexiglas screen, 16”x11”x24”

Figure 3.11: Jim Campbell, *Home Movies 1248-1* (2008), Video installation: custom electronics, 1,248 LEDs, 16’x10’x7½” Installation View, Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA, 2008 Photography credit: Courtesy of the artist

Figure 3.12: Jim Campbell, *Home Movies 1248-1* (2008), Video installation: custom electronics, 1,248 LEDs, 16’x10’x7½” Installation View, Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA, 2008 Photography credit: Courtesy of the artist

Figure 3.13: Jim Campbell, *Home Movies 1248-1* (2008), Video installation: custom electronics, 1,248 LEDs, 16’x10’x7½” Installation View, Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA, 2008 Photography credit: Courtesy of the artist
Chapter Four

Figure 4.1: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *The Paradise Institute* (2001), mixed media, 16.6’x36’x9.8’ 130

Figure 4.2: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *The Paradise Institute* (2001), mixed media, 16.6’x36’x9.8’ 131

Figure 4.3: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *The Paradise Institute* (2001), mixed media, 16.6’x36’x9.8’ 136

Figure 4.4: Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Metropolitan Orpheum, Los Angeles* (1993), gelatin silver print, 16½”x21¼” 140

Figure 4.5: Jean Cocteau, *Orphée* (1950), 35mm, film still 160

Figure 4.6: Jean Cocteau, *Orphée* (1950), 35mm, film still 161

Figure 4.7: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *Her Long Black Hair*, audio walk with photographs 163

Figure 4.8: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *Her Long Black Hair*, audio walk with photographs 165

Figure 4.9: Author’s photograph, Central Park, New York 169

Figure 4.10: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *Her Long Black Hair*, audio walk with photographs 177

Figure 4.11: Jean Cocteau, *Orphée* (1950), 35mm, film still 182
Chapter 1: Introduction: Expanded Projection

Morgan Fisher’s *Projection Instructions* (U.S., 1974) makes the process of projection, already essential to screening any film, exceedingly crucial. The four-minute, 16mm film features only frames of text, the first of which reads: “Attention projectionist: This film is a series of instructions addressed to you. The instructions must be followed if the film is to be shown correctly.” With this opening, Fisher establishes the rules of his game and changes those of standard cinematic projection, namely keeping the film in focus. Now, after threading up the film, the projectionist need not worry about setting up a changeover reel or checking the theater for appropriate volume. Instead, they are occupied with reading the film and adjusting the mechanism to match its directions, which include “Turn off lamp” and even “Throw out of focus” (fig. 1.1). With these pronouncements, a consistent and sharp projection of the film would be deemed a failure.

While experimental film has frequently been self-referential, rarely has a film about film been a film about the real-time act of projection. The projectionist does not enter the space of the audience, yet their expressive calibrations are visible on screen. That is, while *Projection Instructions* enacts a conceptual cinematic exercise, its effects are nevertheless more visible than a standard presentation of pre-recorded footage. At times, the text goes out of focus, or the frame goes completely black. Should the technician-performer accidentally flip the power switch rather than the lamp, the film would stop altogether, inciting a particularly potent rupture. That is, while obstructing the
film’s imagery is permissible, even prescribed, the 16mm footage must still run steadily through the shutter at 24 frames per second. Following this logic, it also has an end. It is decidedly a film, and as such it is circumscribed, timed out, and contained within the length of the filmstrip.

The film’s visual call and response is interactive, but not for the audience, who sits in the theater facing the screen. Nevertheless, the screened images do not address the audience. Spectators are not engaged in an unfolding narrative, photographic documents, or even abstract compositions. Rather than an object to be viewed, the screen speaks past its audience, a rare defiance of cinematic expectations. Surely even the most tedious experimental film wishes for appreciation from their slouching attendees? Yet Fisher’s film ignores its audience, reaching out just past them to the soundproof booth behind the back row. By addressing its own apparatus, or the person responsible for running it, *Projection Instructions* expands the parameters of its screening room through its projected image. No oblique view of the cinematic apparatus is prompted here, and yet Fisher’s spectators cannot help but acknowledge the imminence of the modifications being made to the screen. The agency of the projectionist also comes into relief, no longer simply a technician but a maker of images on the level of a cameraman. When out of focus, this textual film becomes less literature and more radiant abstraction. A suddenly black screen can trigger associations of more familiar cinematic emptiness, such as a hard cut to black, or the end. Yet this darkness indicates not a jump in narrative time but a recalibration of the cinematic equipment that drives it. When the lights go out, one’s eyes might adjust to the darkness and notice the theater’s architecture. Fisher’s film
makes projection visible, never mind the fact that it had been since the invention of cinema.

*Projection Instructions* expands the scope of the cinematic experience while remaining visually within the frame of the screen. The previous decade, Robert Whitman had exhibited his first four *Cinema Pieces* (1963-64), a review of which elicited possibly the first use of the term “expanded cinema.” Also shot on 16mm film, these works escape the theater to stand freely in the gallery. If the dry text of *Projection Instructions* exposes the pragmatic nature of cinema’s materials, Whitman’s films bring the screened spectacle out of the regulated confines of the theater so that we can get a better look. The *Cinema Pieces* project footage of mundane activities such as a man taking a shower. However, Whitman disguises his screens as objects that correspond to his moving images: a shower curtain hanging above a tub, a bathroom mirror, or a window (fig. 1.2). The film’s content thus absorbs the screen into the diegesis, transforming it into a sculptural object positioned in the open art gallery. Of course, this dialogue between cinematic illusion and its material support brackets out the projector, the unseen protagonist of *Projection Instructions*.

In this dissertation, I will look at further extensions of theatrical projection which intercede in the open gallery space, and sometimes into the outside world, in the works of Douglas Gordon, Jim Campbell, and collaborative artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller. Like Whitman, these artists transport their light-based images to the gallery, exposing the projected image to mobile spectators, as well as to lighting

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1 Andrew V. Uroskie, *Between the Black Box and the White Cube* (University of Chicago Press, 2014), 112.
conditions less conducive to a clear picture. In both cases, attention extends beyond the borders of a rectangular screen. However, the works I will discuss also maintain an explicit connection to the theatrical projection of narrative film. Like *Projection Instructions*, these objects and installations reconfigure the codified spatial conditions of the screening room. Gordon slows films to near-static images and thereby reframes the screen by recalibrating projection. Campbell applies light to images in irregular, sometimes obstructive ways that recast projection as facilitator and aggravator of vision. Cardiff reconstructs Hollywood narratives and their audio-visual supports into mosaics of cinematic fragments. Approaching the movie theater from these oblique angles reveal nuances of the cinema, only as its typical form is stretched and remolded by the images therein. By observing their similarities to the common multiplex, art house, or even living rooms, these otherwise uprooted screens reveal in fleeting flickers traces of what we might intuitively call “the cinematic.”

Throughout the following chapters, I borrow the term “expanded cinema” to encompass broadly the variations which the cinema can undergo when its mode of projection is altered. Originally used to describe Whitman’s filmic sculptures, this category of alternative film and video exhibition became codified by Gene Youngblood’s 1970 book *Expanded Cinema*. Youngblood’s text sought to predict the radical possibilities of then modern electronic media, particularly the utopian potential of broadcast television, but its forward-looking vision outpaced the technology available at the time. In contrast, I will reign in the expansive trajectory of these multisensory

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installations by reiterating their relationship to feature film projection standardized in the classic Hollywood era.

I will trace expansion as it occurs in several ways simultaneously. Spatially, the projection in a gallery or outdoor installation widens the arena of spectatorship, shifting attention from the projected image to its source equipment and the now mobile viewer. Accordingly, that freedom acquired by the audience validates more varied perspectives from which to view the screen. In the case of Whitman’s shower-screen, those perspectives are still constrained to one side of the projected surface, but of course also include the domestic space and the arts institution. Expansion can also describe the evolution of cinematic materials. The path from celluloid film to electronic video and digital media have loosened the strict mechanics and exhibition practices of the early cinema. Portability, non-linear editing, and projection that emanates from the screen itself have streamlined the production and screening of the moving image. Yet these innovations and reconfigurations still yield linear cinematic illusions indebted to earlier, analog technology. It should be noted that none of the primary works I will discuss are projected on celluloid film. However, their magnetic and digital compression of historically analog filmic mechanisms encourage us to look for the artefacts of film projection therein. The film medium persists despite its reformatting, and I wonder, echoing Andrew V. Uroskie’s question, “has the film itself become a projector”?

I offer “projection” as a term which tethers the myriad trajectories of cinema’s expansion back to its essential apparatus. Here, I echo Pamela Lee’s assertion that “expanded cinema is a serious engagement with the ‘formal arrangement of film,’ of

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3 Uroskie, 30.
which projection represents the ultimate part.”\textsuperscript{4} The etymology of “projection” denotes action, a “throwing forth,” apt for describing the light that travels across the theater to the screen.\textsuperscript{5} As mechanical support and psychological concept, the word offers a material and methodological tool to explore that space which expansion opens up. Furthermore, it invokes the most ineffable and ethereal part of that machinery: directed light. Uroskie has recently sought to organize cinema’s expanded history “around movement rather than stasis, event rather than object.”\textsuperscript{6} Projection insists upon the process of cinema. Mary Ann Doane sees a similar reconstruction of cinema in new media, but one focused on the displacement of the screen from cinematheque to televisions to smartphones.\textsuperscript{7} By concentrating on projection rather than the screen, we might more productively trace the trails of displacement rather than follow the transformed object of the screen at its various locations, and even how we carry it with us.

The artists on which I choose to focus this exploration of projection are all notably adjacent to the cinematic. Campbell frequently uses still photographs, though with animating light effects overlaid atop their surface. Gordon locates his screens in locations that sometimes obliterate their images completely. Cardiff meticulously breaks apart and reconstructs audio-visual components to create uncanny cinemas. One could call these works “paracinematic,” a term preferred by Jonathan Walley and taken from experimental filmmaker Ken Jacobs.\textsuperscript{8} Though fitting, I believe that relying on that

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{4} Pamela Lee, “Bare Lives,” in \textit{Art and the Moving Image}, ed. Tanya Leighton (New York: Tate, 2008), 150.  
\textsuperscript{6} Uroskie, 237.  
\textsuperscript{8} Jonathan Walley, \textit{The Paracinema of Anthony McCall and Tony Conrad} (New York: Brill, 2007), 355.}
neologism for these artists’ works implies a too open-ended extrapolation of the traditional cinematic system. By targeting the points where “projection” is fostered throughout their installations, I hope to provide a term that follows their expanded trajectories while still grounding them in the traditional cinematic model.

Radical modifications to the traditional system of cinematic projection can offer a productive model through which to interrogate this fragile and heterogenous mechanism. Gaps are inherent to the celluloid filmstrip, its shuttered projector, and the electronic transcoding of digital media. I am particularly interested in those artists’ interventions which expose further blank spots in that system. Sound, for instance, is discussed often in the following chapters. Sound’s relationship to image can have dynamic effects on the cinematic experience, and interrogating how one sense affects another often offers the most generative openings. Many of these works are unstable and change for each viewing. This dynamism aligns with Rick Altman’s framework of “cinema as event,” a theory set in opposition to the film as a text. The cinematic event frames each screening as unique, but it also widens the scope of the film to include the collaborative network of laborers that constitute that film’s production and distribution. Sound, according to Altman, is particularly event-oriented, as it foregoes its own autonomy but can also disrupt the fidelity of a scene. Sound without images, slowed video footage, or even the distillation of a single, flickering light offer isolated components of the cinematic apparatus. By examining the effects of these components when alienated from synched sound or 24-frame-per-second footage, we might better understand the elusive

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10 Altman, 15.
phenomenon of cinematic illusion by revealing its structure in outline. By visualizing the
projected image only in silhouette, its dark shape can be separated from its dynamic,
photographic illusion. Such a methodology itself resembles the properties of projected
light: elusive, yet capable of a clear picture when exposed within contrasting darkness.

Light escapes our grasp, yet its capacity to thread together the myriad objects of
the heterogenous cinematic system – lenses, screen, and audience – reframes the
methodology of cinematic reduction as a phenomenological process. Rosalind Krauss
points to the difficulty of reducing the heterogenous system of film projection, which she
sees as leading to a contagion of late capitalist spectacle, a “post-medium condition.”

Light thus becomes the most suitable material to prioritize in the cinematic apparatus. It
is as ethereal as the illusion itself, and it connects the myriad of surfaces and cogs in a
concert of photomechanical spectacle. Projection provides a potential tool for exploring
the crisis of the post-medium condition in a generative way, namely by invoking these
“cohesive movements”: the movement that allows for the cinematic illusion – the
movement of filmstrip and the sequential animation on screen – is also a movement that
spreads outward into the gallery in which the audience moves. Mental projection occurs
with every anticipation of on-screen action in the cinema, and here it becomes
complicated by the projection of spectators’ bodies as they inspect the sculptural screen.

Projection Instructions uses a film to transform the auditorium into a site for exhibiting
the expressive capabilities of the cinematic apparatus. How then might our bodies
respond to such a presentation were it to address its viewers directly? How might a

11 Rosalind Krauss, “A Voyage on the North Sea”: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition (New
York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 45.
projected image ask us to interrogate the spaces in which we view them, and how might these new spaces invite us to watch their images differently?

Beyond the light phenomenon, I also draw from psychoanalytic theories of projection, especially relevant given its foundational contribution to film theory since the 1970s. The term has a complex psychoanalytic history but generally refers to the displacement of the ego from a subject to an external object or other individual. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis’s entry for “projection” in the *The Language of Psychoanalysis* begins with the general maneuver by which “a neurological or psychological element is displaced and relocated in an external position.” Their definition retains the sense of a trajectory from center outward, as in Sigmund Freud’s application of the paranoiac’s defensive reflex. Melanie Klein suggests that the outward projection of challenging emotions allows one to better manage them, attributing to distance and objectification a capacity to control. These mental processes exist in abstraction, oriented around a process and thus difficult to align with cinema as a visual object. Nevertheless, Kaja Silverman underscores that psychological projection establishes cinematic viewing as a two-way activity. That is, viewing a film is both active and passive, “a constant process of projection and introjection, of sending out ‘a sort of stream called the look’ so that ‘objects can come back up the stream in the opposite

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direction.” This distinction aligns the spectator with the projector itself, and projection thus becomes a useful tool for grounding the ever-expanding role of the spectator in moving-image installations within the traditional cinematic apparatus.

That notion of spectatorship as an active projection itself has precedents in art historical theory outside of the cinematic. Michael O’Pray traces the concept of projection as a mental device for art spectatorship to Heinrich Wölfflin’s study of the Baroque and Wilhelm Worringer’s emphasis on empathy in one’s engagement with modernist painting, both of which establish projection as an inherent part of expression. Projection as a description of a viewer’s engagement informs much phenomenological film theory, as I will discuss below in more detail. Sean Cubitt similarly offers projection as an empowering alternative to the constraint of perspectival viewing, one that deals with moments of becoming rather than points of vanishing. Of course, one must be careful in too broadly applying active mental projection to the viewing of any object, for fear of diluting the term’s potential. I would argue that using the screen-based, cinematic viewing structure as a common cultural model for projective viewing mitigates that concern by offering a shared cultural reference. That is, cinema as institutionalized projection can be cautiously expanded and applied to adjacent viewing experiences.

Predecessors of the cinematic apparatus are particularly relevant to an expansion of cinema’s parameters, most notably optical devices applied to the Dutch visual arts in

17 Sean Cubitt, “Projection: Vanishing and Becoming,” *Refresh! First International Conference on the Histories of Media Art, Science and Technology* (Banff: Banff New Media Institute, 30 September - 1 October 2005), 9.
the 17th century. As early as 1916, Hugo Munsterberg delved backward into what he called “The Outer Development of the Moving Pictures” to trace a precinematic history from Edison’s Kinetoscope to the camera obscura.18 Tom Gunning notes that the camera obscura, though associated with photography’s invention, naturally projected moving images before they were fixed by hand or by chemicals.19 This suggestion of a concept of the cinematic that predated even the still photograph adds justification to the pursuit of expanding cinema’s parameters. In addition to using projection as a conceptual tool, Dutch “perspective boxes,” like those of Samuel van Hoogstraten, used anamorphic lenses to paint the interior of miniature boxes that would bend into a natural perspective when seen through a peephole (fig. 1.3).20 Experiments like these and tromp l’oeil framing devices convey a compulsion to construct spaces based on skewed perspectives and optical tools. Such preoccupations support Svetlana Alpers distinction that the projective grid, unlike the perspective grid, “lacks a positioned viewer” and thus opens the illusion to innumerable expanded points of spectatorship.21 I would compare these playful appeals to the spectator’s sense of spatial orientation through visual tricks to the modern illusions of cinematic projection.

“Projection” when used within a psychoanalytic approach can suggest not only the process of casting the moving image but also its materially and temporally dynamic process of creation.22 Given the slipperiness of cinema’s heterogenous structure, Jacques

Lacan’s emphasis on the mirror stage in early childhood development offers a concrete image that corresponds visually to the most central object of film spectatorship: the screen. Seminal film theories by Jean-Louis Baudry, Christian Metz, Laura Mulvey, and others extend the mirror metaphor as a device to navigate the cinematic audience, who both identifies with and remains at a distance from the projected image like the child who first recognizes himself as an object in the mirror. However, I want to emphasize not the importance of the screen in the cinema but, rather, that of the calculated spatial construction outlined between the screen, the projector, and the spectator, as did the “apparatus” theorists of the 1970s. Throughout the following chapters, I will return to the concept of cinematic “suture” associated with this movement, specifically as theorized by Silverman, who characterizes narrative cinema’s shot/reverse-shot editing structure as a device of spatial orientation for the viewer that absorbs them within the diegetic world. Such “suturing” highlights the relationship of the spectator’s perception of physical space to that of the projected image. As such, suture theory provides a key link between the cinematic apparatus and its illusory experience based on the viewer’s embodied sense of space. Furthermore, this link prompts my incorporation of several classical Hollywood films as evidence for the cinematic properties of my primary studies of projection installations.

The expansion of cinema from the theater into the open gallery requires a remodeling of the filmic apparatus. As interactive elements distract from the screen, for

instance, the primacy of the objecthood of the cinematic text is sacrificed. However, that psychoanalytic articulation of space through projection and displacement offers a sturdy framework to enact a phenomenological approach. In particular, I will emphasize the establishment of spatial orientation in cinematic spectatorship as put forth by Silverman and Stephen Heath. If we take such views seriously and also consider historical antecedents of cinematic projection to be the mapping of three-dimensional space onto a two-dimensional surface, then we must fully explore the spatial implications of modern iterations of the phenomenon.

From this construction of space, I will argue that such establishment of spatial awareness logically implies the potential for bodily movement through such spaces. Even Lacan, whose mirror allows us to stabilize the cinematic phenomenon around the screen, suggests that the viewing subject undergoes an internal anticipation of movement. That is, the child who has not mastered motor skills nevertheless demonstrates an impulse to move toward the mirror image recognized as the self. Not to be confused with the gesticulation of limbs which exercise this link between the image and the body, this “slightly leaning-forward position” expresses a premature impulse to move toward the spectacle despite the exhibited acknowledgement that it merely reflects the child’s present location. Identification with the image thus outpaces one’s motor skills yet nevertheless engages them in anticipated movement.

In order to work through psychoanalytic film theory toward a phenomenological approach, I will rely heavily on Vivian Sobchack’s push beyond the psychoanalytic

model. Sobchack invokes Maurice Merleau-Ponty to amend the Lacanian mirror and focus on the perceptive capacities of the body before it.27 Her “embodied viewer” understands the visible world through a displacement akin to mental projection; however, more importantly, that resemblance is felt rather than simply seen. For Sobchack, the film is neither text nor object but a body, capable of the same perceptive and expressive faculties as its human spectator.28 That reciprocity, in turn, affects how spectators respond to the cinematic experience. Sobchack treats narrative space as a mediator of the spectator’s lived world, as in the repeatedly used nighttime locations of film noir.29 She also extends the potency of location to the exhibition environment, namely the screening room as a conditioning space for the cinematic experience. Even further, Sobchack takes this spatial approach literally by proposing that the mobile camera, as perceived through the projector, resonates uniquely with the spectator’s proprioceptive senses.30 As such, the author provides a foundational account of the spectator’s mobilization through cinematic viewing. This bodily analogy between apparatus and spectator will be essential to my final discussion of Janet Cardiff’s cinematic audio-walk through Central Park.

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Below, I summarize this dissertation’s three chapters. Each section focuses on a different artist who has worked since the 1990s with projected images in a way that expands and elaborates upon the familiar, commercial system of cinematic spectatorship.

28 Sobchack, Address, 274.
As the chapters progress, the works therein depart from these standard practices in more radical ways. In addition, each artist targets a different component of the cinematic apparatus, including the screen, the projector, and the screening environment.

Chapter One, entitled “Exorcised Screens: Douglas Gordon’s Remodeled Theaters,” looks at three works by the Scottish artist Douglas Gordon (b. 1966), all screenings of Hollywood films that intervene in their mode of projection. The chapter begins with 24 Hour Psycho (1993), which slows a commercially distributed VHS copy of Alfred Hitchcock’s Psycho (U.S., 1960) to last the length of an entire day. The installation is a seminal work of expanded cinema’s era of replaying and remaking classic cinematic narratives, but one which often is described in the abstract given its extreme duration. I read the footage as closely watched minutia, a less conceptual and more cinematic mode of spectatorship through which the images reveal evidence of their transfer from film to video. The projection makes us view the film differently, and I argue that the excruciatingly slow motion of its scenes incites an embodied perception of the original film. Its projection extricates any cohesive plot from the silent screen, and the editing practices of suture theory repel the viewer into the imminent gallery space. Yet Psycho’s infamous tension and Hitchcock’s signature suspense are transferred to the viewer who faces bodies in uncanny motion while aware of the vulnerable zone of their periphery.

The second part of this chapter moves to two other Gordon works with different modifications that further the physical expansion of 24 Hour Psycho. Between Darkness and Light (after William Blake) (1997) projects two films – Henry King’s The Song of Bernadette (U.S., 1943) and William Friedkin’s The Exorcist (U.S., 1973) – atop each
other on the same screen. The films compete in an excess of sound and motion, and their material supports take over the gallery, a path from pro-filmic to projected space which I trace using examples of structural filmmaking from the 1970s. *Five Year Drive-By* (1995) expands beyond any theater entirely, as Gordon proposes a monumental installation of the classic John Wayne Western *The Searchers* (John Ford, U.S., 1956) in the Southwest American desert in which it was filmed. Slowed to last five years, the static sequence of frames would run for the same period of time that it takes the characters in the narrative to complete their search. Projection now matches diegetic time and place, the vast scopes of which make Gordon’s cinema into an illuminated earthwork that threatens to swallow up the viewer’s attention, as well as the images on screen. In general, this chapter uses Gordon’s calculated recalibrations of projection to explore their transformations of the films and their subsequent impact on the viewer’s sense of embodied space.

The second chapter, “Exploded Projectors: Jim Campbell’s Home Movies,” explores three works by San Francisco-based artist Jim Campbell (b. 1956), whose cinematic objects render private family images as nearly illegible beams of light. *Photo of my Mother* (1996) reduces moving-image projection to a single image overlaid with a regular flash of light which obstructs it from view every couple of seconds. Campbell presents this memento of his own mother within an elaborate mechanism that alternates transparency with opacity, a tension which I argue distills the function of the filmic projector. Campbell both puts forth and rescinds the offer of his maternal image, and the resulting phenomenon makes viewers aware of both their heightened engagement with the still picture and their bodily responses as they exhale in rhythm with the extinguishing light. In addition to psychoanalytic suture theory, I also borrow from early French film
theories of cinematic *photogénie* and Édouard Gilissant’s theory of sociological opacity. Light obstructs amateur family videos in two other Campbell works – *Glimpse* (2007) and *Home Movies* (2006-08) – to suggest that the essential functions of transparency and opacity in the analog film projector are not just material. Rather, I argue that this interplay is part of the mental experience of engaging with projected images, one shared by analog and digital media. As with Gordon, I also explore how these modified projections can make the emotional content of its images into a lived experience, as viewing personal images becomes intimately felt.

My third and final chapter, “Exposed Cinemas: The Projecting Spectators of Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller,” focuses on two installations by collaborative Canadian artists Janet Cardiff (b. 1957) and George Bures-Miller (b. 1960), both of whom reorganize the audio and video components of the screening room to reconstruct cinemas of their spectators’ bodies.31 *The Paradise Institute* (2001) expands the cinema from within, reconstructing a miniature theater in which the familiar aspects of film projection are exploded. Viewers watch a fragmented, *noir*-tinged film on a screen framed by a hyperreal view of a theater auditorium. The rows of seats and side walls seem to align this extended theater with the spectator’s present surroundings and absorbs them into a film that is half a mystery and half a tableau of self-reflective spectatorship. Furthermore, individual headsets play a spatially dynamic recording of not just the film’s soundtrack but also the ambient noises of a movie theater. Whispered conversations, errant coughs, and room tone harmonize to create a realistic theatergoing soundscape

31 Though they most often work together, I will henceforth refer to the pair simply as “Cardiff,” as the prominent use of Janet Cardiff’s voice in these installations make the artist a presence felt by the viewer of the work.
which in turn balances the spectator’s sense of bodily presence at the threshold between fiction and reality. I read *The Paradise Institute* as a cinematic experience about the felt cinematic experience, for which I rely on the phenomenological film theory of Vivian Sobchack. I use Sobchack’s concept of the embodied spectator as symbiotically interactive with film as another lived body to support my argument that Cardiff’s installation presents its screen as a passage through which the viewer’s body anticipates entrance. That sensory spectatorship becomes fully realized in the last work I discuss, Cardiff’s 46-minute site-specific walking tour *Her Long Black Hair* (2004). Set in New York’s Central Park, participants armed with a Discman, a map, and five photographs embark on foot through the park’s southeast corner. Cardiff’s binaural soundscape here projects images of Central Park. Between clomping hooves and overheard conversations, Cardiff’s footsteps dictate the pace of the listener’s legs and breath. Her measured voice anchors the sonic tapestry and solicits a forward projection of the viewing body, here gazing on its own volition at scenery that is invaded by Cardiff’s realist and location-appropriate foley art. I argue that *Her Long Black Hair* positions its viewer to actualize the sense of motility stimulated by *The Paradise Institute*. As embodied spectators project themselves across the park and through Cardiff’s motley narrative, their bodies become the apparatus, audience, and text of a mobilized cinema.
Chapter 2: Exorcised Screens: Douglas Gordon’s Remodeled Theaters

Introduction

In this chapter, I will show how the video installations of Scottish-born artist Douglas Gordon (b. 1966) explore their own expanded scope, reformatting the act of projection to incite an upheaval in the surrounding space. Gordon is perhaps best known for his 1993 video installation *24 Hour Psycho*. On a freestanding, double-sided screen, he slowed down Alfred Hitchcock’s 1960 thriller to last an entire day (fig. 2.1). *Psycho’s* duration of one hour and 49 minutes is extended to 24 hours, and its narrative is obscured by silently transforming frames. Gordon followed this manipulation with modified projections of other classics: some at varied framerates, some screened outdoors, some in mirrored images. Each of these modifications reframe the films they exhibit, and yet the source material is never fully excised from the viewing experience. Their images persist, even when frozen, distorted, or washed away in an excess of surrounding light. Gordon’s singular gesture of “replay,” as Catherine Fowler describes it in reference to *24 Hour Psycho*, resonates throughout the entirety of his lengthy projections.32 I would argue that this intervention is also one of “rearrangement.” In these galleries, projection becomes inseparable from its reshaping of physical space into a site in which, as John Ravenal suggests of many video installations, 

“the heightened awareness of the conditions of spectatorship often becomes, in some ways, the subject of the work.”

As a result of an intervention of their projectors, three installations – 24 Hour Psycho, Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake) (1997), and 5 Year Drive-By (1995) – engender an experience of viewing which encompasses their cinematic equipment, their Hollywood source materials, and the sites which sustain the phenomenon of their projection. These layers of cinematic production, projection, and perception are processed through the transformed screenings of their films and converge within the embodied sensation of the spectator.

**24 Hour Psycho**

For 24 Hour Psycho, Gordon borrows wholesale a recognizable and historically relevant film, projected silently and at a rate of roughly two frames per second. As a prototype of the slasher film, Psycho lured its viewers with efficient cinematic storytelling and taught editing and music. Anticipation abounds as Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) steals $40,000 from her office, but her sudden murder in the bathroom of a roadside motel provides a singular shock, both in its disruption of Hollywood conventions and its violent portrayal on screen. Marion’s death marks a transformation to the film’s final two-thirds and to the subsequent history of cinema. In 24 Hour Psycho, the shower scene is repurposed as an obstinate parade of terrifying frames. Where rapid cuts once overstimulated its theatrical audiences, this new labored pace confuses the sequence’s continuity by fragmenting the film within an excess of time. Marion’s long

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drive from Phoenix now seems interminable, but it still presents the same unflinching view of Janet Leigh’s face and the anxious contortions of her expression.

Bodies now move at a halting rhythm. Leigh no longer walks briskly across her office to her desk. Rather, her arms inch upward and her torso trades one section of the screen for the open area directly adjacent to it. Her figure does not pass by the background but instead gradually displaces space. At the same time, the outlines of the set also undergo busy transformations. The once subtle motion of a camera panning left causes the edges of the screen to jump with incremental changes as props and shadows shift around the threshold of just-on- and just-off-screen. A lamp cannot float casually off screen because the slowed pacing necessitates a specific point at which the object is present and at which it disappears. This exterior shifting also conveys a sense of uniformity, as the transformation of one side of the screen corresponds to a counter-directional change on the other side. Seen simultaneously with Leigh’s displacement of space, the two movements – one exterior and one internal – suggest a vortex of gradually shifting space, a concert of stilted motion that unfolds with a steady forward clicking.

And yet, in these mechanical movements of 24 Hour Psycho, one also senses something maniacal, a foreboding anticipation familiar to those who have seen Psycho.

Certainly, the expansiveness of 24 Hour Psycho encourages a reading of the installation in the abstract, distanced from its narrative, and within the history of cinema. However, to frame Gordon’s installations only as a sign of these broader cultural implications is to ignore Janet Leigh’s interminable contortion among the pristine white tiles of the shower, or the strange persistence of a stuffed bird, a prop which otherwise passes briefly across the screen. These extended moments, and the sense that their
numbers preclude a viewing of the entire work, are all part of the immediate experience of standing among 24 Hour Psycho. In what follows, I will make a case for this close reading of Gordon’s installation as a phenomenological and embodied experience, one which makes meaning with each passing frame of Psycho as it confronts its living, responsive spectator.

Admittedly, I would not presume to account for each moment – say, every 1,140 minutes in the daylong runtime – and the innumerable degrees of attention to which each viewer might grant each frame. However, we can interpolate the potential reflexes of Gordon’s viewers based on the consistent formal features of his installation: here, the open gallery, its traversable screen, and the glacial, uncomfortable motion of Psycho. I argue that the visual details of these video images must be closely read to yield a more detailed and productive characterization of the installations as phenomenological event. Models of Gordon’s spectator as “embodied” have heretofore lacked any description of the formal particularities of his projected images. However, as I will show, there is a productive way to attend to the minutia of these images, despite the vast quantity of visual data that make up each installation. This close reading is necessary, as it is through the screened image as video – and as Psycho, specifically – that the sensory experience of 24 Hour Psycho is informed and structured. As an extended run of a compressed video format, Gordon’s re-projection transforms Psycho into something to be seen, but also felt.

This stilted rhythm of Gordon’s projection does not progress through story beats or character arcs. Rather, it is a meter of tension transposed outside the screen and felt within

34 Jiaying Sim, “Embodiment, Curation, Exhibition: Douglas Gordon’s ‘Pretty Much Every Film and Video Work from about 1992 until Now” Screen Bodies 1, 1 (Spring, 2016): 89.
the viewer’s living body. By taking the re-screenings of Gordon as phenomenological events, I hope to characterize these installations through their effects on the body of their viewers. Readings of Gordon’s works often focus on the artist’s intervention into their source materials. Others focus on their sculptural and architectural forms and their relationship to abstraction and conceptualism. I build on these readings while arguing that the pivotal point around which these expansive screenings make meaning remains the human spectator, who holds a position between the machine and a thrown image. Gordon’s spectator invariably responds to each precise moment of encounter with these projections and the conditions they generate.

My phenomenological reading of 24 Hour Psycho attempts to describe in more concrete terms the spatial properties of Gordon’s installation, as determined by its projected film. Ken Wilder rightly assesses that the work’s complex mode of viewing necessitates a consideration of its spatial components, an approach which he develops in reaction to Michael Fried’s attempt to classify the viewer of 24 Hour Psycho within his too rigid category of antitheatrical art. Fowler also applies a spatial model to frame 24 Hour Psycho’s viewing condition by characterizing the installation’s site as a combination of in- and out-of-frame. In her reading, the latter site is writ broadly beyond the theater walls, including each individual spectator’s subsequent memories and mis-

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rememberings of the film.\textsuperscript{38} Victor Burgin also conceives of films as “hybrid object,” pliable in their susceptibility to the viewer’s memories, a concept necessarily routed through the phenomenological state of viewing which he describes as “fascinated incomprehension.”\textsuperscript{39} Yet these infinite characterizations of space and memory prove too abstract for a thorough exploration of the dynamic viewing experience therein. Relational aesthetics might seem to offer a better model, but in my view, this, too, provides too vague a framework to be of use in such specific visual conditions as Gordon’s installations.\textsuperscript{40} While following this spatial conceit, I will attempt to hone that abstract consideration of space into a more precise description of Gordon’s theater and the viewing experience it inscribes. Gordon’s projection constructs a room haunted by \textit{Psycho}, recasting the film’s images in a strange motion. I propose that this viewing environment functions as an arena for a redispersal of the spectator’s visual attention, refocused and concentrated in the lived sensations of the body in the dark gallery.

\textbf{Expressive Deconstruction}

Despite its straightforward conceit, 24 \textit{Hour Psycho} presents a layered, and often conflicting, work of cinematic projection and viewing. The original film presents Marion’s death in the shower in an efficient arc of serenity, frenetic terror, and abject stillness, all of which flashes across the screen like the parabola of its murderous knife. It is edited with frenzy, quickly enough for the sounds of the slashing blade to merge with

\textsuperscript{38} Fowler, “Remembering Cinema Elsewhere,” 34.
the breath of the viewer’s own high-pressure respiratory response. *24 Hour Psycho* dissolves that rapid pace in an overabundance of time. Yet the horror of the scene is nevertheless conveyed to the viewer, whether by association with the familiar sequence or by the images of a stabbing knife, a screaming woman, and her inert face. These projections appear no less terrifying when suspended in isolation. In fact, its sustained languidness renders even inanimate props in the same apprehensive motion. Gordon’s fragmented projection thus preserves the emotional content of *Psycho*, even as it invites the deconstruction of its illusory form.

Gordon’s intervention within Hitchcock’s film occurs with the use of the projector, not the camera. *Psycho* is played from an unaltered, commercially available ½” VHS tape. This video medium conveys the visual content of Hitchcock’s original film, but it also follows a logic of compression that makes visible the traces of its own electronic transference. The six reels of *Psycho*’s 35mm filmstrip would have been scanned and translated to electrical signals that might distort color and other visual details which would be exposed, but not manufactured, by Gordon’s projection. *24 Hour Psycho*’s earliest iterations in Europe used a locally purchased videocassette, so the film was likely compressed to video at the regional standard of 50hz. That technical specification requires transferring the film at 25 frames-per-second to match the video signal and reduce static, a process which also shortens the runtime by several minutes and

41 The 1993 showing of *24 Hour Psycho* at the Kunst-Werke in Berlin was projected from an “ordinary copy of *Psycho* purchased form a local video store, which would not have subtitles due to the German home video standard of dubbing audio from Hollywood films: see Biesenbach, 13.

results in the appearance of distortions and repeated frames at Gordon’s slowed speed.\textsuperscript{43} That is, attempts to parse these video images into distinct units also results in visible signs of indistinction. This outward expression of video’s hybridity becomes most acutely apparent in the effect of judder, a vibrating distortion of figures within the frame.

As \textit{24 Hour Psycho} reaches toward the single unit of the video frame, its screen exposes this artefact of the transcoding process. The viewer looks upon the incremental movement of Marion through her motel room, a sluggish yet uninterrupted motion made possible by video’s adaptation of the film image. In its unnatural slowness, the figures within Hitchcock’s film consequently produce a new kind of motion, most apparent in shots of heightened action and quick movement. The close-up of Marion’s shadowy killer and the kitchen knife that swings downward on its first plunge here appears staggered – not just stilted, nor slow, but almost blurred. Every few frames, the knife’s image is accompanied by a faded echo of itself, a ghostly double that predicts its next position on the screen (fig. 2.2). Played at Gordon’s pace, this soft shaking reads as an intermittent static, a glowing interference that gravitates around quickly moving objects like the diving knife, or the silhouetted head as it turns to make its attack. Several seconds later, that blur occurs between the scene’s two human figures – Marion and her silhouetted attacker – when a hard cut from one to the other is projected on video as a momentary overlap. Though that hybrid figure is read as a fleeting technical glitch, it is nonetheless noticed by the viewer at this pace, and it foreshadows well-known moments of deliberate

overlays in *Psycho*, such as the synthesis of Marion’s lifeless eye and the shower drain, or Norman’s fade into the skeleton of his mother.

This interference constitutes an internal motion within the screen, thereby challenging the viewer who tries to follow the scene’s continuity. This localized dynamism does not move from A to B; rather, it vibrates in a way that confuses the forward motion of the film’s frames and projects the flattened, interwoven layers of the video image toward the viewer. The knife does not hang in momentary stillness but rather quivers in its own frenzied displacement. The irregular shaking of the video images does not obscure the knife, the shower, or Leigh. Nor does Gordon’s reduction of speed completely evacuate those objects of their narrative significance as a murder weapon, the Bates Motel bathroom, and Marion Crane. Rather, Marion’s terrified turn toward her attacker is punctuated by a shudder in the projection itself. This vibration on Leigh’s face announces the dynamic electronics of the video in conjunction with the photographed objects which it makes visible.

The deconstructive gesture of *24 Hour Psycho* has antecedents in avant-garde films of the 1960s which also reveal cinema’s material supports as a complex and irreducible system. Gordon’s manipulation notably bypasses the camera, exercising the mechanical functions of the projector exclusively. The strobe effect of Peter Kubelka’s *Arnulf Rainer* (1960) reflects the projector’s role as a synthesizer of distinct celluloid frames, but his film foregoes illusion to reveal the flickering abstraction of its materials. Gordon’s projection is not abstract; it retains the recognizable photography of *Psycho*. A more suitable analogue might be A.K Dewdney, who titles his *Maltese Cross Movement* (1967) for the precise and complex motion of the film projector’s gear which maneuvers
the shutter’s intermittent blockage of the image and produces the illusion of animation.\textsuperscript{44} That mechanism allows for the erratic editing and cut-off spoken words which comprise his cinematic tone poem. Dewdney’s film is punctuated by the appearance of the Maltese cross itself: A cutout stencil of the cross’ shape revolves in a staggered motion which betrays its own crude form of illustration but, at the same time, simulates the flickering effect that underlies the entire film’s projection, a motion whose source is the actual Maltese cross in the projector itself (fig. 2.3).

As seen in these examples, structural cinema’s self-expression of its own mechanical supports takes many different forms – and at times spotlights different supports. Indeed, these myriad projects underscore the heterogenous nature of the cinematic system and its similarly disparate components. The particular format of \textit{24 Hour Psycho} amplifies this complicated relationship between material and illusion. In fact, videotape embodies a cinematic ontology put forth by Peter Wollen, who frames cinema’s medium reduction as an impossible task of foregrounding its material supports without sacrificing the fiction of the projected text.\textsuperscript{45} As I will discuss in detail, video does not allow for the clean division of film frames. Instead, it complicates the relationship between medium and text. The result is the strange and unique motion in Gordon’s slow projection, and the experience of self-aware viewing it provokes. For this reason, we must take care to interrogate the revealed materials of \textit{24 Hour Psycho} in terms of its particular medium: an electronic reformatting of the original 35mm celluloid film reel.

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\textsuperscript{44} Daniel Barnett, \textit{Movement as Meaning in Experimental Film} (Amsterdam ; Rodopi, 2008), 96.
\textsuperscript{45} Peter Wollen, “‘Ontology’ and ‘Materialism’ in Film” \textit{Screen} 17,1 (1976): 9.
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Recent texts have emphasized the significance of the video medium in Gordon’s installations but only as a conceptual framework. Often, video is used to contextualize these projections within a particular technological moment of cinema without addressing in detail how the medium affects its images. Several authors have addressed video’s significance in 24 Hour Psycho in terms of its opened accessibility to the viewer’s control. These interactive functions figure Gordon’s viewer as analytical and participatory, but not as an embodied individual bound by specific sensory experiences and precise moments of Hitchcock’s film. Ultimately, it seems that the expansive durations of the installation often provoke similarly abstract readings of the experience it provides.

To contend with the materials left exposed by Gordon’s intervention, we must first properly address video’s tendency to disrupt such modernist approaches of reduction. Psycho is no longer film in the material sense at any point in the process of 24 Hour Psycho, and it reacts differently than film to being stretched across time. To produce an image of Janet Leigh, Gordon’s projector does not emit light through a semitransparent, celluloid film frame of the actress. The transfer of film to video reformats those images into electronic data which is stored on magnetic tape and decoded by a VCR upon projection. More than simply duplicating the original, video reformatting

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synthesizes the segmented celluloid film frames into an interlaced electronic signal. This “telecine” process conveys in its portmanteau the hybrid nature of its purpose to retain film’s audio-visual content in a more fluid and malleable medium. Videotape projection consolidates much of the innerworkings of the celluloid film projector, namely the corrective procedure enacted by the synchronized movements of the projector’s shutter with the regularly sized black bars that divide each still frame of film. Were a film to be projected without the Maltese cross’ intermittent shuttering, its speed alone would not be enough to create an illusion of fluid motion. Marion’s body would animate only with the memories of preceding frames viewed around obstructive black bars.

By removing the need for a shutter to negotiate film’s patterns of image and blackness, the videocassette also offers 24 Hour Psycho what a celluloid print could not: continuity. The electrical signal interlaces multiple frames into a single video image, often resulting in projections of two moments interwoven and overlapped. The video copy of Psycho can be distilled and parsed, but even while paused it will reveal a hybrid image, thereby redefining “frame” as an amount of processed information rather than a distinct physical unit. In this visual language, Marion Crane and Norman Bates creep forward with a staccato shifting of their joints, unnaturally mechanical movements strung together in a simulation of fluid motion. By instating continuity across its frames, video allows for Gordon’s slow but unbroken stream of images. However, that continuity also removes any markers of distinct units of the photographic projection, precluding the

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48 For more on video’s electronic makeup as it relates to celluloid film, see: Roy Armes, On Video (Florence: Routledge, 1988); and Moran, James M. Moran, There’s No Place Like Home Video (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

viewer from any easy attempt at deconstructing its materials. Unable to discern between individual frames, *24 Hour Psycho* produces a cohesive, and thus impenetrable, image stream which pushes back upon the viewer. The modernist who searches for an essential unit is instead forced to reconsider the very rules of looking.

This interiorized shudder invites us to look beyond reductive formalism and toward a cinematic experimentation which embraces the intricate and chaotic layering of reformatted media. *24 Hour Psycho* uses video to redirect any gesture of medium reduction into a phenomenological situation, one in which the exposed electronic makeup converges with the emotional weight and narrative traces of *Psycho’s* fiction. Unlike the convergence by which shutter and filmstrip collude to project the illusion of movement, Gordon’s installation foregrounds both the filmic world and its material underpinnings at once.

**Traces of Transcoding**

When we inspect the video version of *Psycho*, as *24 Hour Psycho* compels us to do, we nevertheless look through the blur and onto the familiar figures of its fiction. The unnaturally slow Marion Crane exudes a cascading series of contexts. She inches forward within the site of her death, as well as within the set of Hitchcock’s production, but also shrouded within the grainy trace of the film’s transfer to video. The accumulation of these moments of *Psycho* – its production, screening, and dissemination into home television sets – inverts the reductive gesture of modernism, despite the deconstructive elements of Gordon’s intervention. Each of these layers are made visible, pushed forward, but also merged on the surface of the projected image.
24 Hour Psycho embraces the additive components collected by video transfer, and in this way it finds a closer correspondence with early video works of Bill Viola. Cycles (1973) captures a television video display with a video camera (fig. 2.4). However, Viola also records the moving blades of a fan in the space between television and camera, re-inserting a catalyst of intermittent visual obstruction, a vestige of the celluloid film frameline made obsolete in video’s removal of the shutter. The fan distorts the screen with an indistinct haze, and so Viola conjures the artefacts of his new medium by external interference and analog means. His viewer looks across the videotaped space of the room but also through a built contrivance that reproduces the symptoms of earlier film technology.

As in Viola’s Cycles, the interference conjured in 24 Hour Psycho reflects an interaction between electronic and photographic media. The knife that shakes suspended in the air for several seconds bares the indexical trace of the original photographic image. The momentary doubling of the blade emerges from the electronic interlacing of two analog frames, each a successive moment in time, into one video field. The patchwork of blur is not a photographic index but, rather, reflects its interaction with the electronic transcoding process, a cinematic trace which Mary Ann Doane notes “does not evaporate in the moment of its production, but remains as the witness of an anteriority.”50 Indeed, in a single moment, the shadow of the killer’s knife momentarily outpaces its solid form, offering the viewer a premonition of the next frame. Nevertheless, the appearance of both the solid and ghostly knife in the same frame reads as a stilted advancement in the otherwise continuous motion of the shot. Drawn out across several seconds, that

intermittent distortion enacts a push and pull of the knife’s downward trajectory. It also exposes a reluctance not seen before in the swift movements of the killer’s arm.

*24 Hour Psycho* expands the exhibition of its video source to reveal the compressed layers collected by the film transfer. Flattened into a single image, the video produces a visual echo of its various formats reverberating atop each other. These acute visual traces are easy to point to but difficult to decipher. Its ambiguity incites a feedback of time and space, within the narrative and without. *Psycho’s* judder also acts as a stain which refers to an ambiguous event: not merely the photographic trace of *Psycho’s* actors, but those figures imbued with the electronic residue of that photograph’s transference to video. In its indistinction, the doubled knife incorporates both the shooting location of *Psycho* and the duplication lab. *24 Hour Psycho* allows that electronic image to become opaque with its accrued traces, projecting its chaotic field toward the viewer, who cannot remember just how fast, and just how sure, the knife was once swung at 24-frames-per-second.

The occasional shaking of figures signals the various media through which *Psycho* has been filmed, viewed, and reprocessed. In this electric morass, video’s projection generates a discourse between the film as material and as narrative text. The stain penetrates most deeply in the 35 seconds of *24 Hour Psycho* in which a dying Marion, leaning against the wall of the shower, reaches toward the camera. Her foregrounded hand remains in focus, and yet it travels upward across a patch of bright light reflected against the tile, haloing her fingers in a luminescence that washes out any distinct outline (fig. 2.5). Marion stares distantly across her waning consciousness, the

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51 Doane, 142.
apparent separation between her mind and body made visible by the framing of the camera, which obscures the elbow that connects her upper torso to her outstretched arm. The focus, too, is concentrated on her palm, leaving her face in darkened haze. One might mistake Marion’s open-mouthed stupor for a still image, were it not for the upward motion of her dislocated hand. Were we to focus on that face, to step toward it, we would find that the resolution has reached a limit. Her face does not become clearer. Any indistinct patch of projected light found on her cheek might be an artefact of the electronic transfer, but it could just as easily be the illuminated streams of water falling between Janet Leigh and the camera, or a tear running down Marion Crane’s face. These layers never quite distinguish themselves from that compressed field, thick with overlaid indices. Even the viewer who moves in for closer inspection is countered by the camera which pulls out, leaving Marion in further unfocused darkness. Fittingly, the shot ends not with a merciful cut but drowned in the transition to another shot: a close-up of her hand, gripping the shower curtain, overlaid upon her expiring expression.

Excavating Video’s Collapsed Sites

All this is not to confine my interpretation of 24 Hour Psycho within a technodeterministic framework by which its projected images are overshadowed by its media.52 In what follows, I will unpack these layers of 24 Hour Psycho’s images, compressed by video transcoding yet expanded by time in the gallery, specifically in terms of their spatial consequences. Notably, the instances of figures appearing doubled or stretched are

artifacts of a site swallowed up in the video transfer. The video medium is rife with vibrating traces of this transcoding, suggestive of the invisible sites of its labor. Its viewers can read the reprocessed lives of the film in its interference on screen, signs of the technical evolution of film’s copy and dissemination, not just its production.

Certainly, the maneuvers allowed by VHS tapes provide a turning point in film criticism, and particularly in the works of Hitchcock, by facilitating closer analysis and fragmentation. The videocassette copy of Psycho speaks not only of the salvaged afterlives of Hitchcock’s film, but also of its birth. Psycho notably features a black-and-white film stock in the Technicolor era, but Hitchcock also employed television production crews. The film’s visual motifs are thus infused with materials catered to the electronic medium of television and, by extension, video. Thus, the signs of interlaced frames that buzz along the knife’s edge of the slowed shower scene trace the process of the film’s transference and dissemination through video, but also the moment of its photographic conception. These past sites accumulate in the flattened, interlaced video image, creating a medium which echoes its previous formats but which also pushes forward with electric static, toward the viewer and into the installation space. It is the culmination of these layers at the space behind the viewer’s back, where light slips in from the exterior galleries that would otherwise be blocked out by theater doors, which I will explore below.

53 David Colangelo, "Hitchcock, Film Studies, and New Media: The Impact of Technology on the Analysis of Film" in Technology and Film Scholarship: Experience, Study, Theory, Santiago Hidalgo and André Gaudreault, eds. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018). 136.
54 Birtwistle, 15.
My focus on the technical aspects of 24 Hour Psycho is to show how the film is opened up and spread apart by the conditions of its own medium. In turn, this operation conditions its viewers to be more expressive, active, and perceptually aware than in the theater. This reframing does not anatomize Psycho to the point of a purely clinical observation of medium. Its images, while slow, are also dynamic enough to stop Gordon’s screen from becoming completely sculptural, or a monument to a past cinematic era.\(^55\) Rather, I offer 24 Hour Psycho as an exposed view of Hitchcock’s film, a cross-section of Psycho’s dense layers of production and distribution. The installation’s deconstructive gesture works through and in correspondence with Psycho, specifically by remodeling the exhibition space with the strange-yet-familiar wallpaper of the film’s projection. This screening room frames and guides the viewing experience, and the combined visual expression of Psycho’s narrative content and video tendencies re-sites the space of cinematic projection as a phenomenological event. More specifically, this act of viewing becomes a sensory experience informed by the interaction of the strange performance on screen and the dim, open gallery space behind the viewer.

Psycho’s repurposed video-form is not limited to its surface. Its formal qualities include not just the complex field of the video image but also the space of the gallery, lit by the residual light of the screen. I have suggested that the interlaced video image redirects a modernist gesture of reduction toward a phenomenological framework which incorporates viewing as a sensory experience. Assessing that embodied response requires first addressing the spatial conditions which are established by Gordon’s intervention. These expanded materials provoke an engagement with the viewer, who moves forward

\(^{55}\) Monteiro, 15.
to inspect the screen, a physical performance of the psychological engagement with this immersive medium. In this space dictated by the installation, 24 Hour Psycho conflates the act of viewing with the phenomenon of projection.

Psycho’s exhibition history has a particularly significant impact on the conventions of American theatrical spaces. The Classic Hollywood era had long established conventions for a film’s content, pacing, and overall duration, most notably since the shift away from the short, self-contained tricks of the cinema of attractions.56 But Hitchcock’s thriller firmly entrenched audiences in a standardized spatial position that corresponded to its narrative dimension. By insisting that theaters not allow customers to enter the screening room after the film had begun, Hitchcock preserved the shock of twists like Marion’s murder, the death of an apparent protagonist made even more shocking for its occurrence in the middle of the film.57 Psycho’s temporal contingency becomes spatially imminent for the viewer as the doors behind them are shut, confining them with its projected images locked in their particular order within the unbroken text. The gesture of closing the doors preserves the film’s secrets, but it also confesses to the seriousness of the crime committed within the film and the psychological weight of witnessing it. Psycho thus becomes interwoven with the conditions of its exhibited space.

24 Hour Psycho also includes spatial regulations in addition to those regarding framerate, thereby literally reshaping the spectator’s relationship with the environment.

57 Andrew V. Uroskie, Between the Black Box and the White Cube (University of Chicago Press, 2014): 42-3.
The screens used for the installation remain approximately 10-by-13 feet.\textsuperscript{58} These screens have been placed at times suspended in the center of the gallery and at others leaning against architectural features of the rooms, but the exhibition space has remained at least 17 feet high and cover a 46-by-23 foot area.\textsuperscript{59} Furthermore, Gordon’s nearly square screen caters to the reformatted 4:3 video image of \textit{Psycho}, not to the original 35mm aspect ratio of 1:85.1. The shot of Marion showering while her shadowy murderer approaches is cropped to eliminate the curtain and running water which appear to the extreme left and right of the theatrical print (figs 2.6, 2.7). \textit{24 Hour Psycho}’s video source is thus formatted to fit the screen of Gordon’s installation as well as the home television set. The electronic transference of the film to video is here embedded within Gordon’s projections, both inside the screened image and in the shape of its frame.

The semitransparent material of Gordon’s screen also illuminates a correspondence between the physical space of the gallery and its projected images. This fabric facilitates a two-sided projection which reminds us that Gordon’s maneuver doubles even as it divides, producing more \textit{Psycho} and for a longer duration. The paradox of a cinematic text which grows even as it is segmented recalls the spatial conditions of \textit{Psycho}’s theatrical run. Shutting theater doors satisfies a desire to preserve the shocking twists around which the film pivots, surprises which also make watching the film an inherently bifurcated experience. That is, \textit{Psycho} is seen differently during its first and second halves, but the audience’s expectations also change between a first viewing and...

\textsuperscript{58} Monteiro, 151.
all subsequent ones. At Gordon’s speed, even the most dedicated cinephile would not recall the exact distance between two shots, or the particular grain of the area where shadow meets light. By opening up the spatial and material conditions of its projection, 24 Hour Psycho revives the uncertainty that lies within each magnified moment of the film, evaporating the distinction between the informed and ignorant viewers of Psycho.

The spatial conditions incited by Gordon’s intervention with the projector are reinforced by the changes that occur within Psycho’s visual language. Even in its obstructed form, Marion’s stifled scream nevertheless resonates across the distended projection of her open mouth and through the electric vibrations of its video image. The shimmering static that shadows her startled face preserves the film’s continuity, never allowing it to reach the point of the single, still image, despite frequently being described in those terms. As a consequence of this fluid progression, the first phenomenon of discontinuity occurs at the point of the edit.

In 24 Hour Psycho, the cut from one shot to another replaces the division between frames of a film reel, and this new break occurs, significantly, in spatial terms. Editing most often reveals the periphery of the camera, as when a shot of Marion speaking to Norman in the motel office shifts instantly to one of Norman, the object of her address, speaking from the other side of the room. The shot/reverse-shot structure operates by its circumscription of virtual space in the film. According to the suture theory of narrative cinema, as put forth by Daniel Dayan and Kaja Silverman, this calculated sequence of a shot followed by its approximated opposite view effectively absorbs the viewer within

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60 For example, Jaroslav Andel, “Still is Moving” in Superhumannatural: Douglas Gordon (Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2006), 113; Broeker, 70; Taubin, 69; Mulvey, 103.
the film’s narrative.\textsuperscript{61} However, far from a fluid transition, such suture requires a rupture, both in the splice of the celluloid film reel and in the attention of the viewer. One is initially entranced by the filmic image – say, the shot of Marion in the motel office and feast of visual detail it offers (fig. 2.8). Inevitably, that pleasure is eroded by the recognition of the frame, the material agent which reveals the narrative illusion as such. With this visual absorption spoiled, the viewer enters a state of discomfort and dispossession, aware of a controlling force that projects the illusion and yet unable to see it. Significantly, this stage of spoiled plenitude is characterized by an authoritative yet invisible agency: the “absent one,” which Silverman also places in psychoanalytic terms as “the speaking subject.”\textsuperscript{62}

At 24 frames per second, this crisis would find resolution with the reverse angle: the appearance of Norman as the object of Marion’s gaze, as well as the opposite wall of the room (fig. 2.9). However, \textit{24 Hour Psycho} does not allow for such reabsorption into the fictional space. Instead we stand outside the screen, confronted by its incessant imagery but unable to confront it ourselves as a cohesive narrative. When a cut does eventually occur, it is an altogether foreign experience and no longer an element of the film’s narrative. Norman’s gaze is no longer a response to Marion’s but its own, unmoored image. Gordons’ slowed projection is divisive, like the initial cut of the edit, but it withholds the comforting sight of the reverse shot, instead reiterating the same insistent image with slight variations. \textit{24 Hour Psycho} thus denies our reentry into the


\textsuperscript{62} Silverman, 204.
screen, and so we continue to stand outside it, between *Psycho*’s shadows and the sense of the absent one over our shoulders.

As I have stated above, *24 Hour Psycho* dissolves the narrative thread of Hitchcock’s film without destroying its every trace, in particular the persistence of its individual images. But it also emphasizes the cuts, now made spectacular by the infrequency of the shot changes. Spatial orientation – not dialogue, nor even discernable action and consequence – thus becomes the first degree of cinematic language that the viewer encounters. The cut is now a jolt, and a phenomenological experience, yet this also has corollary to the film in its standard framerate. Like the traces of narrative, the phenomenological experience incited by Gordon’s intervention also has a corollary in the film’s traditional projection. Silverman insists that “[m]ost classic cinematic texts go to great lengths to cover over these ‘cuts.’ Hitchcock’s *Psycho*, on the other hand, deliberately exposes the negations upon which filmic plenitude is predicated. It unabashedly foregrounds the voyeuristic dimensions of the cinematic experience.”63 Silverman explores the spatial consequences of suture using *Psycho*’s opening sequence, in which an omniscient camera above the Phoenix skyline floats steadily toward an open window, across which threshold we first find Marion Crane and her lover, Sam. For Silverman, this elongated, deliberate forward motion disrupts suture, foregoing spatial closure for an extended encounter with the uncomfortable gaze of the absent one, the uneasiness of which is doubled by the moral impropriety felt during such a voyeuristic scene.64

63 Silverman, 206.
64 Ibid.
If *Psycho* repeatedly subverts the traditional functions of editing to heighten discomfort with the screened narrative and avoid complete resolution by suture, then *24 Hour Psycho* extracts those momentary disruptions and spreads them across the duration of the film. As a result, it also fixes its viewer perpetually in the displaced and paranoid second stage of suture. In the context of Gordon’s installation, the opening sequence loses its stubborn forward propulsion, as the sameness of the framing is lost in the creeping pace of the projection. It becomes less insistent to the viewer, who no longer anticipates a reverse shot of the opposite horizon, partly because every sequence now expresses the same, uniform insistence. Similarly, by fixing the viewer in the uneasy, transitory stage of suture, faced with an image of a dying narrative and without any subsequent narrative resolution to anchor them, *24 Hour Psycho* also transforms even the calm face of Marion in the motel office into the tension-filled shot of her in the shower.

By repeatedly reenacting the movement from visual pleasure to felt dispossession, *24 Hour Psycho* restages *Psycho*’s manipulation of cinematic suture to the lived space of the gallery and around the viewer’s body. The set design of *Psycho* has often been restaged as a space for critical inquiry of the film. Alexandre O. Philippe’s documentary *78/52* (US, 2017) invites viewers to revisit the shower scene by reconstructing the motel room as a backdrop for its film industry interviewees (fig. 2.10). Slavoj Zizek unpacks Norman’s psychoses from the dimly lit fruit cellar in *The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema* (Sophie Feinnes, UK, 2006) (fig. 2.11). Gus Van Sant restages each shot of *Psycho* in his 1998 remake, a production equal parts conceptual exercise and Hollywood feature.65 In

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this last example, Anne Heche repeats Leigh’s desperate reach toward the camera, her gesture and the surrounding tiles so familiar that the production of both films comes into relief simultaneously (fig. 2.12). This is not to mention Hitchcock’s own appearance in the shower during advertising for the film, where he offers a tour of the motel which doubles as an enticing appeal to purchase a ticket for *Psycho*. Reconstruction as a critical gesture also recalls the compulsion of collectors, whose fervent completionism occasions home video reissues like those used in *24 Hour Psycho*, or in a 2019 rerelease which reconstitutes the film with momentary but mythologized footage cut by Hitchcock at the behest of national censorship boards.\(^{66}\) In fact, Gordon sites his own compulsion to inspect *Psycho’s* framing compositions for specific details which inspired his slow projection.\(^{67}\)

By reconstructing the gallery with the visual traces of *Psycho*, Gordon’s installation solicits critical engagement with the film while also withholding immersion in its narrative. As a result, *24 Hour Psycho* is a space primed for a critical interrogation of the filmic text, a living and sensory version of the analytical studies of *Psycho* mentioned above. The gallery becomes a space which facilitates a multisensory experience provoked by sight. Notably, that spatio-sensory conception finds a precedent in vivid passages of *Psycho’s* foundational criticism. Hitchcock critic Robin Wood describes of the shot of spiraling drain as “a sense of vertigo” and places the tormented

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\(^{67}\) Broeker, 63.
psychological state of Norman in terms of the Bates house, filled with a decrepit atmosphere so thick that “one can almost smell it [Wood’s italics].” 24 Hour Psycho generates that intense and sensitive viewing. No matter the location shown at any given hour of the day, we find ourselves perpetually in Psycho’s shower, a fraught location conjured by the constant presentation of distorted faces peering out toward something behind us that is never shown.

**Fear and Trembling**

As Psycho begins to encroach on our own living, breathing bodies, the viewer’s sensory response to its projection is targeted, problematized, and put into relief. 24 Hour Psycho casts its viewer perpetually in the second stage of suture, plagued by discomfort and barred entry into the screen’s narrative. The sensation recalls the ominous click of Psycho’s theater doors which Hitchcock ordered shut, but here spread throughout one’s body. This event provides a more imminent and embodied form of cinema’s sensory effects, which might encourage us to look closer when a scene suddenly goes quiet, or strain to see what is obscured by the camera. Stranded by a day’s worth of movements that begin but are never allowed to continue in fluid motion, we are as uncertain about the next video image as we are about the conditions of our present environment.

Psycho is reduced to stilted movements removed from the context of their narrative world, and so Gordon’s spectator experiences a lived version of Hitchcock’s film. Marion’s particular situation is no longer accessible, and yet the images of her face,

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the motel, and even the shower linger as a wallpaper of light. The lack of relief provided by suture occurs here on several levels. The viewer finds no resolution in a shot’s reverse angle. Even one intimately familiar with *Psycho* cannot predict the timing of the next shot, as once familiar rhythms and expressions are rendered strange at this speed. Furthermore, even those initial shots are overlaid with the distortions of video transfer. The viewer who turns back to *Psycho* for some degree of consolation finds a vibrating field of electric static that increasingly puts in doubt the reliable stasis of film’s essential material. In this way, the comfort of uncovering the structure of *Psycho*’s projection is withheld from the viewer, leaving them stranded in the immediate experience of watching. *24 Hour Psycho* does not allow one to step back and view the installation from a perspective of control. Rather, we find ourselves washed away in a continuous present, a momentary existence made scary by the lack of knowledge of what lies beyond each two-second frame, or over our shoulders.

The expanded duration of *Psycho* indeed reverses the original directive established by Hitchcock upon the film’s theatrical release, and the extended screening necessitates spontaneous viewership. Yet I would caution against attributing the same agency to this freedom as to the viewer of a DVD of *Psycho*, who controls the film through operations like rewind and pause.70 I would argue that Gordon’s projection is as restrictive as it is freeing. The invariable movement of *24 Hour Psycho* fixes its viewer in a complex psychological state, compelled by slowness that is at once analytical and expressive.71 Vivian Sobchack reconciles these two modes by re-siting slow motion’s

70 Mulvey, 102-103.
71 Taubin, 33.
operations in the phenomenological subject of the viewer’s body. The viewing body here becomes a sensory receptor, a living vehicle for processing the manipulated speed of projection. The operations of this mechanized body make meaning of that unnatural incongruence through a shortness of breath and a palpitation in the chest.

With its uniquely expressive electronic medium, Gordon’s screening illuminates the dark gallery with a 24-hour-long projection of a single, sustained note of suspense. In this way, the tense tone of Psycho becomes translated to the lived space of its projection. Notably, Silverman describes suture’s disorienting maneuvers in threatening terms. With its subversion of suture’s closure, she offers that the film “terrorizes the viewing subject,” who “submits” to the fiction for comfort in response to a cinematic machine that is “lethal; it too murders and dissects.” 24 Hour Psycho repeats ad infinitum the subversion of suture described by Silverman, thus extending its dangerous operation of rupture from the imaginary to the visceral and embodied.

Gordon’s intervention underscores the vulnerability in each of Psycho’s images, stuck in torturous metamorphosis and sometimes explicitly unclothed, unaware, and in imminent danger. Whether or not in immediate peril, each figure seems helpless, and that vulnerability informs the experience of viewing 24 Hour Psycho above all else. Suspense remains Hitchcock’s narrative signature, and the anxiety cultivated in Psycho is relocated and dispersed across each frame of 24 Hour Psycho. Dayan sees suture’s sequence of expanded views within cinema’s fictional world as culminating in the self-aware

73 Silverman, 211.
interrogation of the viewer, who asks “Who is watching this?” In Gordon’s manipulated projection, that self-awareness becomes more physically perceived, and the question becomes more ominous: “Who is watching me, watching this?”

The inability to suture back into the narrative consequently heightens the viewer’s own physical awareness of their bodies in their strange surroundings. As such, Marion’s circumstances begin to resemble our own. As we watch her reach out with her last breaths, she suddenly seems to reach toward the gallery itself rather than at the camera lens. These traces of natural human biology foreground our own beating hearts as witnesses to a life doubly decomposed, signs of our own persistent vitality which are echoed by the electromagnetic vibrations of the video projection. The visual rhythm is one of push and pull, a staggered staccato of still frames softened by the intermittent blur that blends them together. This cardiac energy revives Marion’s life and death with repeated viewing rather than embalm it. Slow motion thus foregrounds viewer and technology in a shared ecosystem of spectatorship, a symbiotic encounter which pushes *Psycho* forward to the surface of the screen and to the walls of our beating chests. Facing these figures, one does not need to be touched to feel the anticipation of physical contact in the atmosphere behind them. As vulnerable bodies in space, viewers bring the tensions of *Psycho* into the exhibition environment, rather than project their own experiences onto the on-screen figures. Gordon’s audience is left to focus on what does remain visible, only to find signs of absence: a dark gallery; a film whose tedious speed hides most of its images; and, of course, no projectionist.

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74 Dayan, 96.
The spectator confronts these pointed images but does so within the uncertain atmosphere of the dark gallery, illuminated only by the tragic contortions of its trapped figures. *24 Hour Psycho* thus constructs a lived space using the blueprints of suture theory. The projection of *Psycho*’s frames solicits a narrative engagement with the film, and yet their frigid movements deny any further immersion in that fictional world, relegating the viewer instead to a transitory space of discomfort, dispossession, and distress. Unlike Hitchcock’s decree which locked the theater doors to preserve the fictional space of the film, here the surreptitious traces of *Psycho* and their horrific associations become the decorative motif of a gallery that confines Gordon’s spectator. It is precisely this openness that emits anxiety from the screened images, which themselves flicker with the unstable insecurity of video compression. In *24 Hour Psycho*, what becomes most disconcerting is that our freedom to exit does not eliminate our paranoia, nor does the vulnerability of *Psycho*’s slowed projection diminish the film’s lurking suspense.

*24 Hour Psycho* remolds the sterile gallery with an atmosphere of apprehension. Slow motion does not elucidate *Psycho*’s narrative. Rather, its projection expands to incite a new sensory experience based on curious, close looking. For several minutes of the 24-hour projection, the viewer witnesses an alternating pair of sluggishly moving cinematic compositions. First, waves of distortion wash over the screen, covering an intensifying light in the lower left corner. That dissonance abides with a cut to Marion’s furrowed brow as she struggles to peer through the downpour of rain overtaking her windshield. The second shot makes sense of the first. But as we return to the wave-covered highway, we find ourselves confronting the same challenging visual composition.
as Marion (fig. 2.13). We might even contort our face with the same squinting efforts. Eventually, and inevitably, Marion looks hopeful. As she pulls off the road and toward shelter, the lessening rain settles to a more languorous distortion of broad splashes that intermittently reveal and obscure a legible sign through the regular swipes of her windshield wipers: “Bates Motel,” it reads (fig. 2.14).

This tension repositions us as viewers: Even as we move closer to inspect the screen, a gesture mirrored by Leigh’s face, these compounded distortions push us back with the obtrusive electric static of video and fix us with the legibility offered by distance. Here, that refocus is signaled by the welcoming beacon of its infamous crime scene. Each lumbering image radiates like the motel’s vacancy sign, which portends both discovery and potential danger. Gordon’s visitor looks with the same intrigue and trepidation as Hitchcock’s conflicted viewer, whom Wood imagines pleading, “We want to know, and we dread knowing.” Like Psycho’s audience or Marion herself, the installation’s spectators adjust their positions to best read the Bates Motel sign. Unlike those others, however, 24 Hour Psycho draws viewers out into this radiant spotlight among the open and exposed floor of the gallery, transfixed by the trembling figures on screen.

**Between Darkness and Light**

24 Hour Psycho remaps its surrounding environment with a single video source. Furthermore, it is the excessive legibility of Psycho’s images which transform the gallery and color the experience of standing within it. Given the potent effects that this pared-

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75 Wood, 147.
down structure has on its viewer and the gallery itself, we might ask how an expansion of the screened image would interact with and affect the space of its screening.

For his 1997 installation *Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake)*, Gordon projected two films onto one screen: Henry King’s *The Song of Bernadette* from 1943, and William Friedkin’s 1973 horror classic *The Exorcist* (fig. 2.15). Gordon again uses videotape transfers, but these films are played at normal speed, with sound, and from projectors placed on either side of the screen. But the films merge on the screen, which is here made of semi-transparent material that allows its images to bleed into each other, effectively constructing viewing scenarios which compromise the screened image while foregrounding the spatial conditions that produce them. By again applying the spatial terms of cinematic suture theory to the site of spectatorship, I will argue that Gordon’s dual projection offers a more stable experience for the viewer, one which ultimately makes their mobility into an opportunity for an embodied exploration of the screen and space through the senses. By expanding cinematic projection to illuminate its spatial dimensions, *Between Darkness and Light* constructs a visual event which ultimately empowers its viewer in a phenomenological state of self-awareness and self-possession.

In *The Song of Bernadette*, a French peasant girl witnesses ecstatic visions of the Virgin Mary, a condition which incites fervor and suspicion within her community. *The Exorcist*’s Regan MacNeil undergoes a more physical manifestation of faith, as her body becomes possessed and grotesquely deformed by the devil. In Gordon’s installation, these two texts merge. Its jumbled images displace plot, leaving behind only glimpses of a French village, a townhouse, or a family. Those familiar with the films might recognize that both girls are overtaken by visual manifestations of faith: Regan’s mother helplessly
watches her daughters’ monstrous deformation, and Bernadette’s last vision occurs as she succumbs to the pain of a bone disease she withholds until the movie’s end. Knowledgeable viewers might also look for those images in the installation. Both films depict their supernatural forms, and the voices of the demonic girl and the Blessed Virgin are both heard on their audio tracks. Nevertheless, their superimposition on screen reduces the chance that these moments will be clear, or even noticed.

And yet, out of its chaos, Between Darkness and Light also bears new moments of clarity. Highly saturated shots of The Exorcist can effectively colorize the black and white world of Bernadette (fig. 2.16). At times, two scenes produce parallel movements, or the violins of each score harmonize for brief measures in a shared key. A dark interior shot from The Exorcist might provide enough low light to reveal Bernadette’s humble home. The black cloak of a figure could provide a temporary void, a patch of pitch blackness that yields the emergence of Regan’s face passing over it (fig. 2.17). The transparent screen makes contrast doubly significant, as one film provides a background for the other. Their images appear only in conjunction, an ebb and flow that mimics the conditions of the gallery, which must maintain darkness as a backdrop for light. The installation allows one film to impose itself upon another, an additive process much different than Gordon’s earlier works. His slowing of Psycho elongates the film but also breaks it apart. In contrast, Between Darkness and Light overstimulates, doubling the act of projection and forcing the viewer to distinguish forms from a morass of shadows.

We might look to Michael Snow’s Wavelength (1967) and Two Sides to Every Story (1974) as predecessors to Gordon’s spatial experiments with projection. Wavelength attempts to align the projected image with the mechanical properties of its
camera. The film shows a New York loft interior in a single, 45-minute zoom from the camera to its opposite wall. *Two Sides to Every Story* extends this exploration of space to the art gallery by unmooring the screen from the theater wall to hang it in the center of the room. From here, two 16mm projectors point toward either side of the opaque screen, where they reveal mirrored images of a woman. She stands in a room similar in size to the gallery and interacts with cameramen on either side of the space (fig. 2.18).

*Wavelength* executes a modernist gesture of medium specificity, whereby the work references or acts in accordance with the unique traits of its own material. However, in *Two Sides to Every Story*, Snow reveals the celluloid filmstrip to be inherently resistant to reduction, as its creation and exhibition are inevitably split between two mechanisms: the camera and the projector. Rosalind Krauss situates structural film as the end of medium specificity, and the beginning of a “post-medium condition.”76 Subsequent video installations collect media rather than simplify them, and at stake is the ability of the art work to sustain a critical discourse with its own medium. However, Snow’s double-sided screen opens up the projected image – and, following structuralist logic, the innate function of the camera – into the space of spectatorship. *Two Sides to Every Story* thus spotlights the limitations of *Wavelength*’s zoom as a representative operation of cinema, revealing its obstinate forward motion as a contraction of space which precludes the viewer as a part of the projection system.

The two-sided screen facilitates the replication of *Two Sides to Every Story*’s 180-degree, two-camera production model within the space of its projection. This divergence

from *Wavelength*’s unilateral push forward makes room for the spectator’s willing participation, and it even invites their mobility by removing seats in the gallery. This construction of the spectator’s space by the screened image again recalls the suture theory of Dayan and Silverman. In fact, *Wavelength*’s singular gesture finds a narrative corollary in the opening sequence of *Psycho*, which Silverman suggests denies the typical reabsorption of the viewer by withholding any reverse shot to orient themselves into the fictional space.\(^{77}\) If we apply this theory to Snow’s avant-garde film and its modernist gesture, we can approach *Two Sides to Every Story* as a spatial antidote to the stagnated gaze of the absent one. By opening up the screened space to the surrounding site of projection, Snow forges an alternative path for the viewer who is stuck between an obviously illusory screened image and the uncomfortable gaze of its projector. Instead, that confined corner is widened enough to move our bodies in resolute action.

We might see *Between Darkness and Light* as a similar spatial construction, which focuses more intensely on the site of reception by severing its explicit link with the filmed event. These Hollywood films are not synced in any visual way, and yet their insertion into the two-sided screen structure actualizes the spatial conceit of structuralism in terms of suture. Its cascading overlay of film upon film, and fictional space upon lived environment, encircles and spotlights the viewers themselves.

By again modifying projection, Gordon foregoes Snow’s filmmaker role to play the projectionist, the programmer of films. *Between Darkness and Light* thus exhibits a double-feature collapsed into a single showtime. The individual stories of Bernadette and Regan envelop each other rather than unfold over time. In combination, the films become

\(^{77}\) Silverman, 206.
confusing and distorted. One story cannot be followed for the presence of the other. An otherwise legible scene becomes caught up within the action unfolding on top of it. At times, and by coincidence, figures might seem to line up or inhabit one common set. But just as quickly, they diverge, at first like apparitions floating through walls and other bodies, and then falling completely out of sync. Each film transforms the other’s crisp figures into ghosts of their original form. The transparent screen is only made visible by the images projected on either side, and so as the figures of French peasants and elderly priests dissolve into each other, the materiality of the screen itself evaporates. The viewer sees instead images of two films flittering toward their own disappearance. As cinema’s materials dissolve, we are left with this sustained interference and the sensation of our own presence amid the beams of projected light.

**Convergent Screens**

The use of two pre-existing movies obscures narrative flow, but it does offer the viewer a temporal framework. Just as one might make out the figure of a priest, a staircase, or a French grotto, the framerate of the films can also spark recognition, not of a shape but of a familiar movement, or the natural speed of bodies in motion. Editing also emerges through the fog of images, as one might notice a cut from one face to another, and then back to the first, as indicative of a conversation unfolding on film. The fixed durations of the films – even though they are different lengths – establish a track of time in which the viewer walks around Gordon’s screen. The gallery has no windows through which to gauge our place in time, but we can look through this screen and measure our own sense of the present against the fragments of moving bodies. In a reversal of 24
*Hour Psycho*, fragments of natural motion anchor our viewing. But these moments are too infrequent for close reading. Rather, this displacement of narrative activates a sensation of our own embodied watching.

The screen no longer supports linear narrative development. But as a site of convergence, it allows us to experience the interference as such, and its overlapping images read as the act of projection itself. As a new media term coined by Henry Jenkins, convergence describes the evolution of technologies toward a single form, as binary code becomes used in the digital storage and replay of film, music, and other media.\(^{78}\)

Convergence sees all media collapsing inward into ones and zeros, in contrast to the stubborn outward expansion of cinema’s equipment described by Krauss’ post-medium condition. But both presage the undoing of medium specificity. Erika Balsom reconciles these two counter-trajectories by offering an alternative to the search for medium’s essential purity. We might instead “see medium as delimiting itself precisely in relation to the aggregate mixtures it enters into with other media.”\(^{79}\)

The literal intersection of the projector’s beams in *Between Darkness and Light* facilitates such a self-determining outlining of space, one demarcated by the screen and its intuitive revealing of the two projectors placed at 180-degrees from each other. In this way, the sense of fixed time, a spatial schematic, and natural bodily motion can be found in the screen but ultimately underscore the viewer’s sensations as part of a living body within that space.

*Between Darkness and Light* projects two movies, both videotape transfers of celluloid film that embody that intersection of old and new media. As I have explained

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above, video is a medium which reprocesses celluloid prints by compressing a series of individual film frames into a continuous electrical signal. The black bars between frames are eliminated, but an inverse effect occurs regularly by which two frames are condensed into a single, hybrid video image. *Between Darkness and Light* doubles this gesture of compression: first, by using inherently compressed video sources, and second, by physically combining those interlaced images across three-dimensional space onto a single, flattened field on its screen. If *24 Hour Psycho* exposed the compressed makeup of its video source by extending its runtime, *Between Darkness and Light* isolates that logic of convergence and stretches it out across the gallery space itself. Here, convergence is not merely an electric echo from the screen; rather, it becomes evident in the equipment traced by light from the screen to the gallery walls.

Since Snow’s *Two Sides to Every Story*, other moving-image artists have utilized a double-sided screen as a way of activating the space around the screened image. Peter Campus designed a similar structure for his early video work *Interface* (1972), which used a glass screen to separate a closed-circuit video camera and monitor. The gallery space is foregrounded by this schematic, as the transparent glass reveals one side, reflects another, and sustains its projected image at the same time. The site of projection is here conflated with the illusory, projected space. Several of Bill Viola’s video works utilize a dual-sided projection but dispense with the temporal fluidity of closed-circuit video. *The Veiling* (1995), for instance, hangs a series of parallel cloth squares from the ceiling, upon which two distinct, pre-taped sequences are projected from opposite sides of the room. The two images feature approaching figures, one of a man and the other of a woman, who meet only in the intervening layers of drapery. Here, the screen is a catalyst
for synthesizing two distinct projected images, a feature which *Between Darkness and Light* uses to more chaotic ends.

*Between Darkness and Light* does not reflect the image of the spectator as a glass screen would, but its semi-permeability nevertheless foregrounds its viewer’s awareness of their own presence as a part of the cinematic system of projection. The distinction can be illustrated through another two-sided screen, Albrecht Dürer’s 17th century woodcut *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman* (fig. 2.19). The print is itself bisected by a screen through which its depicted artist peers, and that symmetry is underscored by the two windows which flank both sitters and neatly frames them for our oblique perspective. However, embedded within these various planes of distance, Dürer also depicts the method by which they are created. The screen of *Between Darkness and Light* offers a similar utility in its semitransparence. Facing it, the viewer sees beyond the screen and into the illusory perspective of two projected worlds. Yet these views also push back, as the distortion cause by both films in competition diminishes their illusions, thereby reaffirming the solid material of the screen. This tension between illusion and sculpture inevitably puts into relief the viewer’s own self-awareness as a figure engaged in the act of watching. Both bearer of the look and object of its gaze, Gordon’s spectators see their own looking through the chaos projected onto the screen.

**The Screened Spectator**

By compressing its two films into a morass of fractured images, Gordon’s projection sacrifices the creation of illusionistic space in order to project a sense of the actual space, as well as the viewer’s position in it. How then do we characterize the
experience of this viewer? I argue that it is not the paranoid anxiety of 24 Hour Psycho’s participant, stuck between the eerie, distended visions of Psycho and a lingering sense of being watched. In terms of suture theory, we might say that this installation repeats the gesture of 24 Hour Psycho by withholding a reverse shot to reassure its unanchored viewer. However, Between Darkness of Light does not even offer a discernable initial shot to absorb its viewer within a fictional world. Rather, the doubled projection offers an instantaneous and ever-changing web of fractured figures, a sight not of illusionistic space but which redirects the viewer’s attention to the actual space of projection which they inhabit. With this projected view, the two-sided screen reveals the viewer as both the object of the gaze and its subject. This duality provides a pathway out of the mid-suture trap set by 24 Hour Psycho, and that escape is achieved through the viewer’s own control of their mobility, an invitation to movement made by conjuring the image of their own bodies, looking.

The dual projection does not offer refuge in the fantasy on screen, but neither does it conjure abandonment and paranoia; rather, the semi-transparent screen directs us to an awareness of our own image as viewing subjects. Though the structure of Between Darkness and Light follows suture’s model of spatial orientation, the viewer of this installation finds a natural way through the discomfort caused by the absent one’s gaze. In fact, this newfound awareness as gazing objects elevates viewers themselves to the role of absent ones viewing our own visual engagement. At once gazing and gazed upon, the symmetry of Between Darkness and Light is transferred to its spectator, no longer dispossessed but, rather, self-possessed. More intensely aware of the role of our senses in the cinematic event before us, we find ourselves more empowered than Regan and
Bernadette, the two possessed subjects of the films before us. Overcome with the barrage of images on screen, this projected chaos nevertheless guides us to an image of ourselves entranced, but also able to perform the free will of our bodies. While our self-image as entranced viewers might recall the figures of the two possessed women on screen, our path out of that powerless state lies in physical exercise rather than spiritual exorcism. Yet for a moment, that empowering embodiment becomes visual as well, as the shapes of our turning bodies cast their shadows on the screen, beside the radiant faces of the two girls, but also obscuring them. Gordon’s light conjures our embodied sense of viewing and projects it as a virtual world, overlaid upon our own in a flickering back and forth of light and dark.

5 Year Drive-By

I have attempted thus far to show the ways in which Gordon’s video installations remodel their surroundings to provide a self-aware viewing experience. By foregrounding borrowed films and the signs of their complex makeup simultaneously, 24 Hour Psycho and Between Darkness and Light expand the cinematic experience from an audio-visual illusion to a multi-sensory phenomenon processed through the imminent site of projection. Gordon’s spatial arrangements allow the viewer to access the original cinematic texts through indirect, yet often more intensely perceived, means. Visitors to 24 Hour Psycho might sense the generalized anxiety of Marion’s plight in the present circumstances of the darkened gallery, where the awareness of a blind spot can manifest along the hairs of one’s neck. In what follows, I will explore what happens when we
follow Gordon’s interventions to their logical extremes, specifically by removing the spatial barrier of the theater or gallery and introducing projection into the natural world.

5 Year Drive-By, originally conceived by Gordon in 1995 but only shown in part, extends the conceits of previous installations by re-siting the screening room in a specific, natural environment. Relying again on home-video technology, Gordon would slow down John Ford’s The Searchers, extending its typical two-hour runtime to five years, the time spent searching in the fiction of the film (fig. 2.20). The proposal suggests an outdoor screening in the American West, later specified as Monument Valley, Utah, shooting location used for much of The Searchers. Gordon would thus surround the film with the landscape of its original setting and inevitably sacrifice visibility during daylight hours. This spatial condition effectively aligns the screening of the movie with its screened images, further connecting the viewer’s experience to that of the film’s narrative. In fact, I argue that 5 Year Drive-By transfers The Searchers’ anguish and hope outward, and onto the installation’s formal elements.

John Ford’s 1956 film The Searchers holds a unique position as a critical and popular standard-bearer of an otherwise contentious Hollywood genre. Critics often cite the Western as an example of studio-era Hollywood’s irresponsible historical and social revisionism. Most generally, these complaints focus on the reimagining of the nineteenth-century American frontier as a binary of savagery against civilization, a caricature which excuses travesties committed against Native Americans by placing ruthless imperialism

80 Nancy Spector, “Interview with Douglas Gordon,” Art from the UK (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1997), 84.
81 Monk, 86.
in terms of triumphant manifest destiny. Yet *The Searchers* has avoided much of this criticism, in part due to its characters’ psychological complexity. Although Ford’s Western features the same token settings and figures, including its most famous leading man, John Wayne, the conflicts in which these settlers find themselves suggest a chronic lack of power.

The film begins with a home invasion and the murder of almost all the characters initially introduced. Afterward, Ethan Edwards – played by Wayne – goes looking for his abducted niece Debbie, who remains captive as a presence always just beyond the visible horizon of a land which dominates Ethan and his young companion Martin. This search thus faces the aggressive antagonist of the Comanche raiders, but also of the American wilderness itself. The fears of the white male are not suppressed in characters like the racist and vengeful Ethan, who would rather murder his kidnapped niece, now “gone native,” than rescue her. A constant sense of alienation and disorientation during the search renders the very achievement of its goals questionable. Such divestment of authority within desperate circumstances invites the viewer of the film to interrogate the genre at large. And yet the focus away from fast-paced action might puzzle some audiences. Gordon, for instance, recalls his childhood, and asking his father how a film could be about nothing, only to be told that “the film was not at all about nothing; it was about searching and waiting, and waiting and searching and hoping when all hope has

gone and how this was a very important thing in life.”

This is all to say that *The Searchers* takes its time. If not slowly paced, the film foregrounds its narrative duration in a way that makes its viewer reflective. Is this a typical Western? Does it subvert or perpetuate the genre’s common social criticisms? *The Searchers* quietly deflects these questions back onto its spectator.

**Time in *The Searchers***

Gordon’s prolonged screening dissolves *The Searchers*’ narrative continuity within an excess of time. The film’s opening shot establishes a point-of-view with Martha, the matriarch of the doomed Texas family. However, this alignment with the domestic interior is the first in a sequence of shots; Martha’s gaze pushes outward with the camera but is cauterized by a reverse shot of Ethan as her implied object (fig. 2.21). At 16 minutes per frame, this visual dialogue between Martha’s gaze and Ethan’s approach is lost to the viewer. That relationship, linked by a cut in the film, becomes an instant drowned in the time relegated to now redundant, lingering images. The deceleration likewise dissolves actors’ dialogue, interactions, or any natural gesture.

In lieu of associations between consecutive film frames, Gordon establishes a visual connection between the image within the screen and the landscape without. The desert setting, here doubled with this installation, plays a role in pacing the film’s narrative, which takes a cue from its open vistas: The trails followed in *The Searchers* are swallowed up in the vast and dangerous Southwestern landscape, obscuring any concrete

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directionality. Rather than follow a linear progression, *The Searchers* features a more cyclical structure.\(^{86}\) The film’s iconic closing shot, for instance, finds Ethan leaving the home to which he returned in the first scene. In fact, the framing of this final shot recalls its opening so closely as to imply a bookended tale, one which ends with its protagonist leaving the same nomadic life from which he came. The disorienting wilderness may have infected Ethan before the film began. Upon his homecoming, he picks up young Debbie and remarks on how little she has grown in his years gone, only to be corrected by Debbie herself that he has confused her with her older sister, Lucy. Wayne’s character effectively tricks himself into thinking that time passes imperceptibly but is abruptly corrected in the domestic space.

This enfolding of time has a filmmaking analog in editing. For the most part, *The Searchers* avoids frenzied splicing or frenetic sequences. Instead, Ford connects images to compress the narrative’s duration from five years to a more practical two hours. The cut as ellipsis emerges as *The Searchers*’ characteristic maneuver, a functional one that sacrifices stylistic flourish for the sake of going unnoticed. Commercial success depends on such economical editing to compress time. Each gap that separates linear frames in a film reel is an opportunity for a cut but also for a connection. This duality reveals itself in *The Searchers*: Several consecutive sequences feature Wayne and his companions tracking across sweeping vistas. Ford’s camera compositions are just different enough to suggest a steady passing of time – but for hours or days, we are not sure. Suddenly another cut finds the men among falling snow, and we are caught off guard. Nature tips

us off to a more expansive, seasonal timeframe. The next scene, back among dry dust, confirms with dialogue that the first shot occurred one year ago. Gordon preserves the film’s form as a series of frames along the reel, and yet he draws out that established order so exhaustively as to deny narrative expression. Instead, his screening preserves the five years within *The Searchers* by projecting it outward, into the space of the viewer, left to measure time from the land, or just as easily be tricked by it.

Where Ford used editing to disguise the tedium of a five-year period, Gordon reverses the process, exposing his spectator to that temporal vastness. But what does a restaging of *The Searchers*’ diegetic time preserve of its narrative effect? Ford’s film does forego linear design for a meandering setting and structure. The plot of *The Searchers*, however, is far more direct: Ethan simply looks for Debbie. Emotion arises not from twists and surprises but, rather, from the stoic persistence in the face of the unbearable vastness of time and space. As the days pass, the chance of finding Debbie alive lessens. It is the duration of the search that heightens conflict in the film.

Events in *The Searchers* merely mark time in the intractable crawl with which the search endures. Centered around its single, unwavering task, the action of *The Searchers* is, more accurately, inaction. Ethan rides, tracks, talks, and looks, with only the occasional fight against a swarm of Comanche. And Ford undercuts the excitement of these scenes, avoiding the chaos of a close-up of charging hooves for wider compositions, where towering buttes subdue frenetic action. Even the “searching,” becomes more aligned with “waiting.” Constant “traveling” begins to resemble “wandering,” as Ford’s desert trails are not the distinct asphalt roads of Marion Crane’s Southwest. And yet *The Searchers* is not boring. Rather, its narrative is driven by an
acknowledged lack: a search for someone against the odds, odds which become
increasingly antagonistic with every passing day. Like the overbearing rock formations,
the enormity of Ethan’s goal sacrifices immediacy for a bigger picture. Gordon recalls his
own frustration with the incongruity between diegetic time and the film’s duration: “How
can one film, which lasts only two hours, possibly convey the fear, the desperation, the
heartache, the real ‘searching and waiting and hoping’ that my father had tried to explain
to me?”

The Monument in the Valley

Each isolated still image cannot help but evoke its larger narrative context. The
film’s stasis underscores the mobility taken for granted in a traditional projection. 5 Year
Drive-By thus emphasizes narrative pace by its very absence. No longer immersed in the
projected world, the once passive viewer of film becomes what Laura Mulvey, borrowing
from Raymond Bellour, calls a pensive spectator. No longer mesmerized at 24 frames
per second, attention gives way to contemplation – of one’s own responses to these
diffused images, and of the time they bracket off as associations with, and
misrememberings of, Ford’s film. Mulvey’s pensive viewing makes room within the
viewer to consider the nature of cinema. Physically, however, Gordon’s screening
reroutes attention outward. With less distraction on screen, attention escapes to the world
surrounding the image, and the screening room becomes exceedingly public as other
spectators come into view. Gordon’s outdoor projection takes that viewing further, from

87 Gordon, 138.
88 Mulvey, 195.
89 Biesenbach, 15.
a public to a natural space. This open environment is anathema to the theater experience in general, and yet intensely aligned with The Searchers in particular.

To better understand this outdoor projection as a phenomenological experience, I will again invoke cinematic suture theory. In 24 Hour Psycho, Gordon actualizes the uncomfortable second stage of suture, effectively expanding the otherwise instantaneous transition between shots into an imminent crisis forged between the screen and the perceived wall of the gallery. Between Darkness and Light elaborates on this schematic, employing a doubled projection to further obstruct the illusion of space on screen and instead foreground the spectator’s awareness of their own viewing position. Both installations construct a space based on suture’s spatial model, in which a viewer’s comfort is derived from the spatial coherence suggested by the cinematic convention of presenting a shot followed by one from the reverse angle. Furthermore, both projections obstruct narrative coherence, thus transferring this emotionally charged spatial sensation to the physical walls of the gallery, a barrier always perceived over one’s shoulder. 5 Year Drive-By literally dismantles that limit, and its open-air theater allows that paranoia of disrupted suture to spread toward the horizon and seep into the earth. This dissemination functions in two opposing ways: The vastness of the land dissipates the acuteness of the viewer’s sense of objectification, but it also never annihilates it. Instead, the oppressive gaze of the absent projectionist is absorbed into the dirt and air surrounding us from every side. Gordon’s viewer is deserted amid this land of eyes. In the dark gallery, the strangely creeping images might breed suspense. Here, they portend extinction.
Gordon integrates the natural landscape and establishes a site specificity that relinquishes projection, and his viewer, to the desert. How, then, do we reconcile the scale of this outdoor theater to the embodied experience of the individual spectator? Once the potent discomfort of suture is transferred outward from narrative to physical and, ultimately, natural space, how does such a nebulous and untamed absent one operate? For answers, we might look to environmental monuments of artist and writer Robert Smithson. Most famously, Smithson’s 1970 *Spiral Jetty* inhabits a similar Southwestern setting. Just as Gordon uses tools of appropriation and manipulation, Smithson mines the Earth for his natural materials, which he then rearranges and ultimately offers back to the land. Smithson’s spiral also suffers deterioration from weather and erosion, not to mention its decades-long submersion within the Great Salt Lake. Gordon exposes *The Searchers’* visibility to similar environmental challenges. Smithson’s geological formations conflate the ancient with the immediate by emphasizing the entropy in all materials, a tendency toward chaos and decay, given enough time. He describes solids by their solubility: “particles built up around flux…, objective illusions supporting grit, a collection of surfaces ready to be cracked.”

Gordon spotlights this geology with light, another material with overtly entropic properties: The light that projects *The Searchers* does not require eons of aging to expose its vulnerabilities. By pairing unsustainable, porous light with the aggressively fluctuating setting of the Western landscape, Gordon invites the destruction of his work. I would argue further that the outdoor placement of Gordon’s screen becomes less significant in terms of geographical location as much as in

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terms of that location’s susceptibility to natural signifiers of time – the rise and fall of the Sun across the Earth. It is not space which causes the fluctuating visibility of *The Searchers* but, rather, time mediated through space.

*5 Year Drive-By* is situated in the same geological setting of *Spiral Jetty*, but its cinematic elements also align with Smithson’s own film theory. In fact, Smithson proposes his own natural theater, one built in an underground cave and furnished with crude wood and rock.\(^{91}\) This underground cinema would impose limits to counter Gordon’s open projection, a borderless phenomenon which Smithson deems essential to cinema itself: “The longer we look through a camera or watch a projected image the remoter the world becomes, yet we begin to understand that remoteness more.”\(^{92}\) For Smithson, the state of cinematic spectatorship is one of perceived limitlessness. Were we to apply suture’s spatial schematic to his “cinematic atopia,” we would find that the ever present back wall of the theater has evaporated. Yet the cave theater provides a way of reinstating that border, and in doing so it labels the space of the absent one – maybe not by name, but with an age: Paleolithic.

Gordon foregrounds the natural materials of cinema, bypassing the constructed shelter of the theater. As a result, the spectator faces the elements, the Earth made bare and essential, and viewing is no longer about merely watching *The Searchers*, where one found safety in the distance separating the theater from its screened past. As the immensity of the film is also made immediate, Gordon’s description of Ethan’s search resonates with us: five *long* years. Five years of waning hope but, also, an ebbing drive of

\(^{92}\) Smithson, “A Cinematic Atopia,” 141.
life. Orbiting planets and stars may be beyond us, but the motion of the movie reel mirrors our own perception. Given enough time, any linear structure comes to an end. This is made abundantly clear in the stilled film frames which projects into the desert landscape like ossified traces of life, vulnerably waiting for its fossilization by the daylight which seep into its pores.

I would argue that by dismantling the theater, Gordon activates even the immobile image to express human drama. In The Searchers, that drama is entwined with its five-year duration and the anguish and determination it circumscribes. The duration as a hiatus – as waiting, as hoping, and as suffering – persists, both in the excruciating slow projection and in the desolate landscape on either side of the frame. Outside of The Searchers there is now only Monument Valley, whose geography conveys time more than solid matter. Here is an environment defined by sparseness and absence, a binary of rock and air – testaments to erosion by evaporated waters that have left a footprint of negative space. The valley itself thus embodies the passing of time on a vast geological scale: “Biblical,” as The Searchers has been described, approximates a date long before American expansion West.93

Gordon’s expansion nevertheless implies a human spectator. His images, even in washed-out stasis, offer a verticality that pushes against the flatness of the desert valley. These projections are proclamations of a stubborn determination to resist time’s decay. They memorialize the event of cinema: The Searchers itself conjures memories not only of the American frontier but also of Hollywood in the 1950s, with its own outdoor

monument, the drive-in theater. A five-year movie is long but, we should remember, not interminable. Its pace is still perceptible to a human audience, even a distracted one who can only extrapolate a larger film. And so, how is The Searchers seen by Gordon’s spectator? Most often, the visible image would double that sparse landscape. But, even in optimal drive-in conditions, the projection of a warm, Technicolor Earth might appear artificial, oversaturated against its present-day incarnation. A close-up of Wayne fits in here, as Ethan is implicitly surrounded by the same canyons, though his stoic heroism now tips over into an impotent stillness. Even a triumphant widescreen interior shot offers a visual discourse, as domestic spaces within The Searchers are never sanctuaries, only temporary refuges from the wilderness. Here cool indoor light reaches a doorframe, a threshold fixed by a blinding blue; but further passage from Ford’s sky to ours is not seamless, and the bright glory of this scene is diminished by the inauspicious emptiness of the Monument Valley around it.

The Stranded Spectator

Gordon aligns the domestic interior of 1868 with the movie house that projected its fantastic reimagining in 1956. Time pushes the viewer away from narrative and toward Monument Valley, where survival infringes upon enjoyment. Marooned in this desert, the spectator paradoxically never leaves the frame of the movie. Rather, the five-year interval immerses that viewer in the time and in space of The Searchers. The search and the projection persist, despite natural obstacles. The concept of 5 Year Drive-By might attract visitors out into the desert. Gordon fittingly reduces Ford’s western to a

94 Monteiro, 157.
billboard, a format that drew audiences to its first screenings. However, I would argue that this spectator is more than pensive. Mulvey’s spectator is empowered by home viewing technology to pause film; Gordon’s spectator is pensive but without control. Pauses instead become a new prescribed mode of viewing. Pushed away by the time of the projection, Gordon’s audience turns to find no desirable alternatives, and no respite. Rather, 5 Year Drive-By produces a *stranded* spectator. Driven out and abandoned, this viewer leaves the uninviting screen only to face an even less hospitable desert landscape. Tedium remains a constant companion in this place, not far from ghost towns called Tombstone and Deadwood, names like warnings. These badlands threaten human existence, hence Gordon’s suggestion that we simply drive *by*.95 With so little here to orient the mind, one is exposed, endangered, and lost.96 Yet it is this capacity of time to overwhelm the individual which drives *The Searchers*. Ethan faces his odds head-on in the cyclone narrative of the film, with a vow to find Debbie, “as sure as the turnin’ of the Earth.”97

As I have shown, Gordon’s interventions in cinema’s projection disrupt suture in a way that both threatens and empowers its viewer. 5 Year Drive-By heightens those conditions, culminating in a spectating environment at once infinite and stifling. Its spectator is stranded, removed from the contained crisis of *24 Hour Psycho* and dropped into the dilemma of desertion. Not only does this rupture of suture place the viewer

95 Tompkins, 71.
96 This oceanic analogy becomes increasingly appropriate when one considers the empty desert in relation to other quintessentially American geographical locations, especially in the nineteenth century when “the desert replaced the mountains as the classic American landscape”: Edward Buscombe, “Inventing Monument Valley: Nineteenth-Century Landscape Photography and the Western Film,” in *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video*, ed. Patrice Petro (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 93.
97 Hutson, 94.
outside the virtual space of the projected narrative, it also removes the physical barriers of the theater altogether. As the cosmic becomes imminently and intimately experienced, the reassuring enclosure becomes not the reverse shot or the theater doors but, rather, the outward projection of the horizon. Monument Valley provides the ultimate setting for the absent one. It does not just offer the anticipation of unseen space, but one that is dangerous and boundless. But by the same logic, the stranded spectator is best equipped to retake control of this new cinematic experience. Openness becomes an opportunity to enact one’s imaginary identification with the cinema as a deliberate mode of embodiment. In Monument Valley, that active engagement is not optional, but a biological imperative.

And so, despite the alienation, even because of it, the film’s desperation, fortitude, and faith become a lived experience. But, as I have proposed that Gordon’s installations require close looking, we might also ask how this embodiment feels. What opportunities does the viewer find there? Lost in the desert, Gordon’s nomadic cinephile resembles Ethan, who desires a stable home but finds it invaded, who comes and goes with the wild Western landscape, which infects him with a fatal time-sickness. But time can also uncover hidden artifacts: the duration of 5 Year Drive-By makes Wayne’s abundant screen time irrelevant, but it also allows for the emergence of a marginalized character like the abducted Debbie. Natalie Wood appears only briefly in the film, but here her absent presence grows immeasurably as the search’s objective (fig. 2.22). Shadowed by her image within the Comanche camp, the stranded spectator also becomes a captive one. By relocating the site of projection, Gordon translates without words the psychological tensions of the film’s premise to his spectator, lost in an open land that also threatens to
inter its visitor. No longer captivated but, rather, held captive by the expanded film, the stranded spectator understands more fully Ford’s Western, one defined not by a showdown as much as a search. And *The Searchers* renders even that act a passive one of waiting, of hoping and holding out against time. Accordingly, Gordon constructs a screening that offers the film back to its origin, a vastness of nature that encroaches upon the individual, regardless of identity.

Gordon’s screenings, whether slowed, oversaturated, or exposed, reveal their films’ dense materials and expressive layers by obscuring much of their imagery. Yet this tension between the hidden and revealed does not simply diminish their expressive content. Rather, it forces viewers to look through the projected films and compels them to look differently for the myriad meanings hidden beyond the horizon of one’s immediate vision. In that distant gaze, various perspectives converge: historical, textual, and technical, but also personal. Facing these transformed screens, we might feel like the tormented maidens, possessed to reach forward in our eager gaze. In that reflex, we also find ourselves dispossessed, trapped in this futile gesture like the frozen Marion Crane who reaches out toward us in her final, predetermined action. The recognition of these roles does not just occur by sight. More than a mirror, these strange screens map the cinematic condition onto our senses, where they are felt as localized sensations within a vast landscape measured in video footage.
Introduction

American artist Jim Campbell might be described as a video artist, though his custom-built screens often reduce his found footage to binary operations, sometimes just the flicker of a single bulb. At times, Campbell has explicitly taken narrative film as his source material, subjecting these texts to his experimental mechanization. *Illuminated Average #1, Hitchcock’s Psycho* (2000) (fig. 3.1) compresses the entirety of *Psycho* to display its sequential frames as a single image. Campbell’s panel reroutes the filmic text, as “the image is an ensemble average not only of the car or breakfast table, but also of the viewer’s visual perception.”98 This picture’s ghostly lines invert Douglas Gordon’s 24 Hour Psycho, discussed in the previous chapter, which stretches the film out to a point which obliterates its narrative continuity. If Gordon’s day-long screening of *Psycho* encourages the inspection of each individual moment, Campbell’s image compresses every frame into a calculated whole that resembles the texture of erased charcoal. Though one might excavate the antiquated interiors of the Bates Motel through the dust and cobwebs of Campbell’s panel, those obstructions are only artefacts of the numerous compounded frames overlapping at various points. It is the many still frames of *Psycho* itself which creates interference between the viewer and the original film. The material

fact of its one-hour-and-fifty-minute footage blocks out the clarity of its illusory world while still inviting one to peek through its clouded surface to search for familiar images.

*Psycho* also provides the raw data that drives *Night Light* (1995-98), which channels the sound and video tracks of the film into two blinking lightbulbs (fig. 3.2). The luminosity of one bulb is regulated by the amplitude of *Psycho*’s soundtrack, and the other by the brightness of its images. Campbell here translates the vital signs of the cinematic text into pure light, mediated only by its fluctuating luminosity and the plastic coverings that resemble discrete nightlights that jut out from hallways and bedroom walls. When installed at eye level, these generic bulbs also resemble sconces that might adorn older homes like that of Norman Bates. *Night Light* thus reduces cinema to a single light while simultaneously evoking the set design of the film’s notorious murder site in the heart-racing flitter of its light signal. If Gordon’s installation prompts a sensuous exploration of Hitchcock’s visual minutia, Campbell evidences *Psycho*’s impact beyond the screen by removing the picture altogether. And though his machines reduce the cinematic effect to variations of flickering light, this reduction is not for the sake of foregrounding material specificity over its projected images. Rather, the isolation of this light effect is used to redistribute the screens, lights, and images of the conventional cinema into variously reconstructed systems of projection. By compressing, expanding, and rearranging the parts of moving-image projection *around* the images of the fictional text, Campbell’s installations absorb viewers into the visual illusion only by underscoring their role in the machinery of projection.

Campbell’s works often envelope images within an elaborate and interactive visual system. His installations use a disparate array of hardware and software, including
close-circuit video, delayed playback, and low-resolution imagery, to construct systems
in which, as John Hanhardt says, “the viewer is regularly layered into the text of the
artwork itself.”99 In these works of hybrid technologies and equipment, “artist and
engineer come together to handle time.” But those temporal experiments notably play out
in the precise moments and particular senses of the spectator. Marita Sturken asserts that
these “machines designed to respond to viewers” exhibit Campbell’s interactivity at its
“most obvious.”100 And yet, many of the artist’s interactive works are noticeably void of
any closed-circuit or other equipment that translates the physical movement or image of
the spectator into the operations of the installation. Rather, the artist pairs visual anchors
like personal photographs and home videos with modified projection equipment and
computer-driven programs. Though they do not explicitly react to the spectator’s body,
these custom visual systems nevertheless loop the viewer’s presence into their structures.

As in his translation of Psycho into light, Campbell’s works to which I will
attend here place their images alongside their mechanisms of projection to construct a
narrative scene. Three such works – Photo of my Mother (1996), Glimpse (2007), and
Moreover, their images are half-constructed, visibly limited by engineered light
interference and low-resolution displays. These are narratives of sons and mothers, of
family vacations, of familiar houses and faces, but also of the contraptions which
illuminate them. By inviting the obstruction of their own images, these porous systems

99 John G. Hanhardt, “Intersection(s) of Self and Place: The Art of Jim Campbell,” in Jim Campbell:
100 Marita Sturken, “The Space of Electronic Time: The Memory Machines of Jim Campbell,” in Space,
Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
allow for the redistribution of projection’s component parts in accordance with the viewer’s body. In doing so, Campbell’s schemes also reroute the reception of the image itself through the viewer, who hears, feels, and anticipates the visual stimulus even when it is hidden from sight. All that is revealed and withheld throughout these open-ended scenarios ultimately draws us into the screened illusion by activating in us operations similar to the projector itself.

As I will show in this chapter, Campbell rewires projectors to construct orchestrated visual events in which light-based images are presented alongside and integrated with the operations of the projectors themselves. I use the term interference to describe the various distortions that Campbell applies to his images. I believe this word underscores the close relationship between these visual impediments and standard cinematic projection. All movies depend upon interference, as thrown light requires a flat surface of particular color, size, and distance as a terminal plane. Campbell’s use of low-resolution and digital haze thus modifies this necessary interference of the screen to reach subversive and generative ends. These projections reveal the presence of the apparatus not as a gesture of Modernist material reduction, but as sensory accents which punctuate their visual elements. Taken together as a chorus of sensations, these projections and their expressive mechanisms orchestrate an expansive and multisensory cinematic experience, one which resonates through the medium of the human body.

These installations rearrange conventional models of private and public screening, and each exhibits an expanded modality of traditional cinematic projection. Projected light can enhance images through many configurations: by spotlighting an object, by concentrating on a flat surface to form its own image, or even thrown outward to remodel
one’s surroundings, as with a magic lantern or a planetarium. Campbell’s contraptions exploit each of these operations, like re-engineered projectors enacting a complex program of revealing and obscuring which foregrounds the image, its spectator, and the image-producing system at once. As a result, these new cinematic designs engage the viewer with a projected image that also mirrors their own mode of looking. Campbell’s projectors often obscure more of their images than they reveal, but the patterns by which they create this obstruction ultimately resembles the psychology of looking, an engagement no doubt stoked by desire.101 This tendency to reduce visibility prompts Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson to ask of Campbell’s work, “What meaning does a viewer extract from small amounts of information”?

In what follows, I will ask instead: What do these installations cause us to project into the gaps of what glimpses they so carefully parcel out?

**Photo of my Mother**

*Photo of My Mother* (1996) takes a personal memento from Campbell’s life and displays it within a complex system of electronic hardware and software (fig. 3.3). The installation’s central point of focus is the titular 3½-by-5-inch photograph of the artist’s mother (fig. 3.4). She wears a light, patterned dress covered by a sweater, buttoned at her neck and opening at her torso to reveal a ruffled neckline. She sits on the grass and smiles at the camera, completely visible but for the lower edge of the image, which ends before

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102 Heidi Zuckerman Jacobson, “Memory Array,” in *Quantizing Effects: The Liminal Art of Jim Campbell* (Santa Fe, NM: Site Santa Fe, 2005), 32.
revealing her feet and the left hand which supports her upright posture. The photograph is centered within a square frame of transparent glass which gives the image a slightly green tint and the suggestion of being encased between two thick, resin panels. This framing allows the image to float from direct contact with the wall, suspended at around the viewer’s height. However, roughly every second, the front panel becomes fogged, dissolving the image into an abstract shape of shadowy haze before returning to its transparent form (fig. 3.5). This intermittent interruption in the photograph’s legibility shifts one’s attention to the wires that hang down from the frame’s left side. These two cables lead to a brick-shaped metal encasement, engraved with the text “My Breath / January 1996 1 hour.” This recording of the artist’s own respiration provides the source for the electronically programmed interference which obstructs and reveals the photograph above.

Part of the same Memory Works series as Night Light, Photo of my Mother commemorates a private token rather than a cultural one. In fact, its autobiographical subject pairs most neatly with another work in the series: Portrait of my Father (1994-5), which applies a more rapid flickering obstruction to another private photograph, and at the rate of the artist’s recorded heartbeat. However, just as Campbell suggests the various personal receptions to which Hitchcock’s film is susceptible, his mother’s photograph expresses of a multitude of cultural signifiers. For one, the size and black-and-white pallet of the picture seems typical of snapshot photography in the mid-twentieth century, further substantiated by the wavy, hand-cut appearance of its deckled edge. The sitter’s attire – especially the long dress, conservatively buttoned cardigan, and ribboned bow tied around her hair – evoke the same period of the photograph’s formal features. She sits
with her head nearly centered, her face tilted slightly downward as she smiles at the camera. An irregular shadow on the ground to her right suggests the shoulders and head of the photographer, a glimpse which nevertheless provides a surrogate for our own gaze at her receptive affection. Just as the photograph’s form signals a particular format of recorded memories from mid-century America, its subject embodies the ideal of a mother fondly remembered: kind, composed, and effortlessly attentive.

The distant trees escape the relatively shallow focus on the image. Their leaves and branches are busy, abstract rhythms, and the strong vertical lines of the trunks enact an angular dance across the horizon. Among this interplay of crisp and indistinct shadows are the subject’s eyes, just too dark and out of focus to complete the intimate connection between her gaze and ours. This lack of legibility at the center of the photograph is aggressively echoed by the more explicit obscuring caused by Campbell’s digital interference. What was in one moment a familiar photographic composition is now an abstract field of shadowy gradient. Spaces of bright light between the distant trees become patches of relative whiteness, distinguishable not as natural forms but only as vague geometric patterns that separate black from white to form an irregular shape: maybe a distorted landscape, but just as easily an off-kilter letter in some large, block font. Here, as the topography in the photograph becomes the typeface of a fictional script, the image reads as a binary field of light and dark. The distant horizon and the woman’s skirt merge in the same surface categories of “white,” or “not dark.” In fact, the use of
snow as a familiar metaphor of electronic static only underscores the unnatural appearance of the distortion.103

Of course, the interference in *Photo of my Mother* dissipates as often as it returns, thereby reconstituting the image with a frequency which allows clarity and distortion to merge as a dependable ebb and flow. I argue that *Photo of My Mother* constructs a viewing experience which includes the intimate engagement of its viewer without resorting to mechanisms like mirrors or closed-circuit video equipment which directly implicate the viewer’s own image of themselves as a participant in its mechanism. Despite this absence of the viewer as a direct image in the visual apparatus, Campbell’s presentation of his photograph nevertheless solicits an intimate psychological engagement from its spectator, one which resonates with both the electrical apparatus and its human subject.

In fact, I would argue that intimacy permeates *Photo of my Mother*, not only in its visibly precious content or the implicit physiology of the artist in its rhythmic fading in and out. Rather, these visual signs of human proximity which culminate in viewers’ eyes also resound through their own bodies in acute and visceral ways. In this, I follow Mary Ann Doane’s suggestion that Campbell’s display of his family photographs finds its true medium in the viewer who witnesses them.104 With *Photo of my Mother*, I will show how the personal nature of Campbell’s photograph is amplified through the oscillating light that hides and reveals it. From there, I will show that this uniquely private mode of

projection provokes a similarly intimate engagement of the viewer’s body. In the second half of this chapter, I will use *Glimpse* and *Home Movie*, works in which Campbell electronically reveals and obscures amateur videos, to show that this quality of projection persists throughout moving-image technology, even after digital conversion. Campbell frames the apparatus as a vehicle for its human responses, placing machine and spectator in an operational dialogue spoken in a respiratory lullaby. His projectors do not simply refer back to their own mechanisms or transfer attention to the self-aware spectator; rather, the apparatus and its emotionally laden projections comingle with the breath of the viewer. Here, images of family vacations and smiling faces play in tandem with the shifting gears and blinking lights of their mechanical sources in a co-expressive fugue for the living body.

**Photographic Memory**

Among its elaborate hardware and mysterious computerized effect, the central focus of *Photo of My Mother* remains the photograph, borrowed from the artist’s personal memories, and the intermittent interference imposed upon it. The prominent placement and labelling of the box encode the photograph’s elaborate apparatus with the artist’s own physiological signature, made explicit by the engraving on the metal casing: “My Breath / January 1996 1 hour.” Each of Campbell’s exhalations explodes the image into an innumerable collection of microscopic points of ink which rush to the surface of the frame in a thick fog. This visual frequency of revealing and obstructing suggests a synchronized opening and closing of a box of snapshots by Campbell and the viewer at once. The interference itself establishes a distance between the viewer and the image,
prompting one to consider the act of seeing, an experience made as apparent as its elaborate wires and frames. However, that distance created now becomes partially occupied by Campbell himself.\textsuperscript{105} The artist here emerges as the source of the photographic memento, its original viewer, but also the cause of its obstruction. For us, the blur blocks our vision and encourages closer viewing. With this trace of the artist’s breath, however, the interference takes on the additional resonance of Campbell’s inspective gaze, an association described by the artist himself.\textsuperscript{106} Thus, \textit{Photo of my Mother} not only presents a photograph as an experience of looking; fitting for a work part of a \textit{Memory Works} series, it situates our own looking within the mediated, recorded viewing of Campbell as the artist, but also the son. The cinematic flicker thus effects a resuscitation of the artist’s distilled memory.

Campbell’s recorded breath perennially hides his personal photograph from the viewer, and this visible interjection of the artist underscores the biological bond between image and viewer. Campbell’s familial ties to the photographic subject is made explicit by the genitive phrasing of “my mother” and its echo of “my breath” on the box. Furthermore, the rhythmic, visual evocation of respiration also establishes a connection between looking and breathing which plays out in the spectator’s act of viewing. The sound of our own breathing, for instance, might surface in our attention, or even rhyme with the visual trace of Campbell’s own breath. These elemental signs of life become particularly significant when considering the artist’s relationship to the sitter in the

\textsuperscript{105} Jacobson, 31.

\textsuperscript{106} For Campbell, the fog is admittedly “as though I am breathing on the glass in front of the photograph: “Jim Campbell: Portfolio: Objects: Memory Works Series: Photo Of My Mother,” https://www.jimcampbell.tv/portfolio/objects/memory_works/photo_of_my_mother/.
photograph: not merely a relative, but his mother. We might understand the picture as depicting Campbell’s origin, a genealogical record animated by the umbilic wires and the encased recording of the biological imperative expressed through his lungs. The artist embeds his own presence within the photograph by constructing a computerized apparatus around it, a mechanism which overlays his viewership over our own.

Campbell both exposes and withholds his mother from our sight, yet this obscuring of the maternal has photographic precedents. Roland Barthes frames half of his written exploration of photography *Camera Lucida* as a first-person expedition to locate the essence of his mother through family albums. After navigating the indexical tie between the photographic record and its subject, Barthes ultimately finds the photograph which expresses his own filial bond with his deceased mother. And yet he does not include its reproduction among the text’s numerous illustrations. Barthes refuses us access to his photograph, and he does so in a paragraph entirely contained within parentheses.\(^\text{107}\) This textual frame contains the imposed distance which he maintains between his readers and his own personal photograph, an expanded version of the distance he feels between himself and his late mother even as he looks upon her. Barthes even introduces us to the photograph by its blunt edges and faded surface, the physical traces which manage his interaction with the photograph while insisting on its glossy surface as a barrier – *just* a photograph.\(^\text{108}\) The reader witnesses Barthes’ reaction to the photo with a doubled distance, one which underscores the act of standing before a photograph as inherently imbued with a gesture of looking toward the past:

\(^{108}\) Barthes, 67.
The name of photography’s noeme will therefore be: ‘That-has-been,’ or again: the Intractable. In Latin… this would doubtless be said: interfuit: what I see has been here, in this place which extends between infinity and the subject (operator or spectator); it has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred.\textsuperscript{109}

Barthes amplifies the potent distance between the viewer and the photographic subject by constructing his own interference to vision, an obstruction that blurs any sharp outlines for the reader and echoes his own act of looking at his mother’s image. In fact, the author links his relationship with his deceased mother directly to his impulse to look at photographs, framing photography as a form of what Elissa Marder calls a “maternal writing.”\textsuperscript{110} That attraction to photography he describes as a “thread,” an image which becomes biological when coupled with that of the “umbilical cord [which] links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.”\textsuperscript{111} We might similarly read Campbell’s work as a construction of his own relationship both with the photographic image and, more precisely, that of his mother. In what follows, I will consider this private, human mode of viewing which Campbell’s photograph evokes as it transforms the way we experience the formal mechanics of \textit{Photo of my Mother}.

**Cinematic Remembering**

Campbell does not alter his photograph’s material makeup, but the distortive effect does activate a particular engagement with the image. Furthermore, I argue that

\textsuperscript{109} Barthes, 77.
\textsuperscript{110} Elissa Marder, \textit{The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Psychoanalysis, Photography, Deconstruction} (Fordham University Press, 2012), 163.
\textsuperscript{111} Barthes, 73, 81.
this mode of looking is essentially cinematic in that the binary nature of Campbell’s
electrical framework exposes the distinction between still and moving images as
ambiguous. Of course, the constant shifting from portrait to blur never prompts a change
in the image itself once it reemerges. There is no sense of progress for the woman within
the grassy expanse. However, the respiratory interruption activates a dynamism absent
from the constantly exposed image, an animation characterized as a vital sign by both the
picture and its etched description. The interference destabilizes the static photograph for
viewers, who suspect that they might not notice if slight changes had occurred to the
placement of the woman’s hair or the darkness of a particular gray patch of landscape.

Though we are sure of the picture’s constancy, Campbell imbues his photograph
with a rhythmic punctuation, a visible percussion that suggests motion in its most
minimal terms, and change despite its logical stasis. In fact, the use of still photography
as the focus of the complex light effect ultimately foregrounds the way that projected
light can suggest the cinematic, even in a static image. For such a concept of the
cinematic, we might look to a definition as ethereal and porous as the light material that
drives these projections. The group of silent-era French film theorists which Richard
Abel labels “Impressionist” sought a medium specificity of cinema beyond the material
and, instead, within the transformative rhythms of its interrelated parts.\textsuperscript{112} The concepts
of such authors are similarly difficult to define, most notably that of \textit{photogénie}, which
Jean Epstein warns, “one runs into a brick wall trying to define it.”\textsuperscript{113} An obstacle as

\textsuperscript{113} Jean Epstein, “The Senses I (b),” \textit{Bonjour Cinema} (Paris: Editions de la sirene, 1921) translated by Tom
Milne, reprinted in Richard Abel, \textit{French Film Theory and Criticism: 1907-1929} (Princeton University
much as a functional tool, *photogénie* refers to an effect of cinema that occurs, however imprecisely, in the transcendence of the still frames into an orchestrated illusion of movement. For Epstein, this element of projection was a rhythmic event, a “cadenced movement” which occurs in the viewer’s sensations as well as on screen. As in Campbell’s restricted visualizations, the viewer of Epstein’s cinema senses “symbols not of matter…, but of energy; that is, of something which in itself seems not to be, except in its effects as they affect us.”

This Impressionist theory of an amorphous materiality, one which occurs only when ignited by projected light, finds a suitable counterpart to the intricate schematics of Campbell’s projection systems. William Wees has placed a similar primacy on light in the cinematic image which, when activated with time and movement, manifests Louis Delluc’s definition of *photogénie* as “shots and shadows [which] move, are decomposed, or are reconstructed according to the necessities of a powerful orchestration.” This description of the cinematic in general recalls the interference of Campbell’s photograph, which does not shine *at* the image but *through* its already visible state. For *Photo of my Mother*, the rhythmic dance of light acts in unexpected ways. It does not just illuminate but also disperses, dislocates, and ultimately dissolves the image.

The evasive nature of *photogénie* also makes it dynamic and amenable to a variety of different constructions. It offers a theory of cinematic essentialism structured around negation, reliant on metaphors of rhythm and the ethereal material of light. As a

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114 Epstein, 244.
catalyst for disruption, light functions differently in Campbell’s installation than in standard cinema screenings, or even in gallery exhibition designs. However, I would argue that conceiving the interference as a unique form of projection offers a way of understanding the role of light in the cinema. One could most precisely locate an interference operation within a feature film screening at the level of the filmstrip. Within the interlaced projector occurs a complex concert of gears, gates, and flapping celluloid, all of which undergoes a calibrated rhythm of light and dark. Each film frame, of course, is separated by strips of blank celluloid. However, the projector itself is also equipped with a rotating shutter that blocks the light from its lamp at precise intervals. This essential function of film projection is foregrounded in several “flicker films” of the 1960s, including Peter Kubelka’s *Arnulf Rainer* (1960), which consists only of entirely black and entirely white frames. By reducing film’s celluloid material to a binary, Kubelka deploys projection as its own screened image. Moreover, the lack of photographic imagery conjures a unique sensory experience, as the quick alternations produce a strobe effect on the screen which rebounds off into the theater. This experiment in reducing film’s material components thus exposes light as a product of the projected image, not just a catalyst of its creation.

Like Kubelka’s film, Campbell’s light patterns are minimal yet inarguably dynamic. The former’s ballistic projection papers the walls of the theater with flashing light which consequently animates the viewer’s pupils as much as the screen itself. *Photo of my Mother* harnesses this inherently dynamic property of projection by using light as a tool for interrupting visibility. Campbell’s system also does not completely reveal its innerworkings. His circuit boards lay hidden within encasements, and their algorithms
only appear indirectly through the visual interference they produce.\footnote{Sturken, 292.} For this reason, I would argue that although \textit{Photo of my Mother} reduces the cinematic to projected light, it does not reach toward a modernist focus of material isolation. Rather, Campbell’s projection exercises light and exhibits its effects. His software exploits light’s tendency to produce a sense of animation when alternated between “on and off,” a binary which corresponds to “transparency and obstruction” when placed in dialogue with a photographic image. Tom Gunning takes this phenomenological view of flicker, which he suggests “fundamentally depends on a rhythm of not seeing, a pattern of recurrent obscurity…. The dialectic here involves the fact that as the actual movement to the filmstrip within the projector is concealed, the virtual movement appears in the viewer’s perception.”\footnote{Tom Gunning, “Flicker and Shutter: Exploring Cinema’s Shuddering Shadow” in \textit{Indefinite Visions: Cinema and the Attractions of Uncertainty} (Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 63.} As a catalyst which obscures as much as it reveals, light thus functions as a material of projection, but one which also incites a cinematic phenomenon.

Within these elaborate mechanisms, the cinematic cannot be isolated in the projector or on the screen; rather, it is an expression of both material and image which occurs in the viewer’s responsive body. Doane describes Campbell’s hiding and revealing of his personal photographs:

\begin{quote}
[It] forces its viewer to \textit{strain} to see. And in that straining, the viewer is made cognizant, again, of the work, the very presence of the body, not as immersed in a simulated sensory universe but as a resistance and as subject itself to technological measure/recording, as part of a network that is only legible in flickering moments.\footnote{Doane, “Scale,” 19.}
\end{quote}
While machines whir and projected figures move, these stimuli are joined by abstract sensory phenomena and their response in the viewer: A strain, suggesting both physical exertion and labored attention, affects the viewer of Photo of my Mother. Through a flicker and a photograph coalescing in a dance of sharpness and diffusion, Campbell’s reprogrammed projection plays out not on the glass as much as in the retinal lens across which the pupils dilate.

By imposing this interruption, the artist presents his still image within a framework of movement, despite its apparent stasis. The recurring spark of light ignites an instability which relays across the image, coercing the viewer with the seductive if improbable possibility that Campbell’s mother has moved, or even that a change in contrast has revealed a nuance to her smile. Only after several minutes of looking might the viewer notice the otherwise prominent pole rising from the woman’s head to the top of the frame, most likely a streetlamp or signpost against which she sits. Given the framework of Campbell’s personal relations, these slight changes amount to revelations for the viewer who witnesses them. In this installation, as in the cinema screening, interference functions not as a void but as an “image of potentiality,” powerful for its very suggestion of change.\(^\text{120}\) However, while Gunning describes the flicker’s obstruction as an alternation of light and darkness, Photo of my Mother interrupts its central image with the interference of additional light. Campbell wields light as an additive component atop the visible photograph, which is already developed to reveal its chemically fixed exposure and situated below the spotlights of gallery bulbs. In a sense, the installation reroutes the outward, stroboscopic effect of flicker back into the image, producing a new

\(^{120}\) Gunning, 66.
light within the frame which scrambles the once clear lines and shadows of a dress, its pattern, and the surrounding trees.

**Projecting across the Apparatus**

Projection in *Photo of my Mother* does not travel in a beam to illuminate its photograph. Even as an agent of disruption, this light creates opacity not by covering but rather by re-dispersing the contours of the picture. In this way, the photograph becomes blurred not by removing its features but by introducing an *excess* of continuity, whereby acute points of black, white, and gray blend more gradually. Light is not aimed but, rather, spreads out across the frame like a disturbance on the water’s surface, rearranging the lines and shadows of the image with a fog of indistinction. This event scrambles localized points of the image – say, the quarter-inch in its center where the woman’s light skirt cuts a patch of warmth into the darker grays of the field behind her – readjusting the contrast of its figures to dissolve the distinct lines into an amorphous abstraction. Unlike the spotlight of the gallery, the light that emerges from within the frame enacts a sort of refraction, dispersing the image in myriad and random points of light.

Campbell’s added light does not facilitate his image’s legibility. The interference instead generates a heightened engagement with the perpetually disappearing figures of mother and land. With this, a second refraction occurs: a displacement of the viewer’s attention across the surfaces of the image, frame, and gallery in addition to that of the shuffled points of light and dark in the image itself. Any identification with the mother, the location, or the nostalgic quality of the photograph itself is here amplified, as Campbell’s viewer is invited to look closer, a desire that grows more urgent when access
to that visual object is restricted.\footnote{Sturken, 288.} By displaying his photograph between two moments of static, Campbell also frames the intervening instant of clarity as an opportunity. The electronic disturbance narrows the window for viewing the image, but it also inserts breaks from viewing, pauses which regularly accumulate to inject the very act of looking with an urge to look more.

To better understand the effects of this distortion, we might read Campbell’s projections through Édouard Glissant’s social theory of opacity. Glissant advocates a universal right to resist divisions between the self and other and to embrace the obstructive opacities that refuse to define us.\footnote{Édouard Glissant, Poetics of Relation (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 193.} Campbell’s image is entwined with the eclipsing traces of its source mechanism. By impeding visual resolution, the added glare frames light itself as a material irreducible but not impenetrable. In fact, like Glissant’s theory of identity, the layered opacities of these materials are productive not for their underlying natures but for the ecstatic phenomenon which occurs in their interactions, a process laid bare which encourages us to “focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components.”\footnote{Glissant, 190.}

If we take Campbell’s interference as a dense fabric of electrical resistance – one which spreads across the photograph, its wired hardware, and the spectators themselves – then the self-expressed opacity exhibited by Photo of my Mother ignites a charge which nearly animates its maternal subject in the imagination of its viewer. Given that the interface of Campbell’s installation resembles the design of a simple capacitor – two parallel panels separated by a small gap – it would seem that the visual interference of Photo of my Mother is such a generative opacity, one which stores a
charge whose visual resistance is indirectly proportional to the impedance of our engagement with it.

Were we to read Campbell’s hazy light in terms of Glissant’s opacity, it might seem that his photograph is being protected from our sight. And yet, its recurring glimpses solicit us to keep looking at this image that does not change. The photograph now seems to have missing pieces. And, of course, there are innumerable details of a person or family history that are omitted by a still photograph. However tantalizing its flicker, the frame will always restrict knowledge of anything off-screen, including the fact that Campbell’s father took the photograph, or any details of the couple’s courtship. The lack of such details no doubt seeps into the photographic frame through the intermittently shutter of its static, where it breeds narrative expectations of couples meeting, and even an inevitable retrospective gaze by their son, here yet to be born. Instead, Campbell’s system constantly reiterates the certainty that some facts remain hidden beyond the frame. Thus, the light effects in the viewer a curiosity at what lies beyond the image, but it also functions as a privacy fence which guards Campbell’s family photograph.

The interference of Photo of my Mother calls out to its spectator, not unlike the siren beam of a lighthouse. However, along that illuminated path, we are compelled not just to look closer, but to look elsewhere, namely at the mechanisms that support this phenomenon. Unlike the unrestrained flicker that reflects off Kubelka’s screen, Campbell’s light interference takes place at a specific point between the image and its spectator. The concentration of the blurring effect within the square glass panels effectively frames the distortion itself, in addition to and alongside the artist’s
photograph. By exhibiting the phenomenon of interference as such, Campbell’s installation invites us to investigate the physical space which light occupies, not only its effect on the flat surface which it illuminates. Within this framework, the interference imposed upon Campbell’s photograph reveals its own mechanical supports. As blur scrambles the photograph’s distinct angle of the woman’s lap and the textures of the grass, its clouded form also draws attention to the emerald hue of the glass itself. One’s attention migrates along this route from the photograph to its frame, including its more elaborate vestiges: dangling cables, an engraved box, and even the invisible computer programming that generates the disruptive fog. Like smoke floating upward from the cigarette of an audience member and into the path of the projector beam, this attention reorganizes the light ray, exposing its otherwise invisible shape as a pool of erratic fractals. *Photo of my Mother* contains that distortion within the vitrine of the frame, locked in and entangled with the image, yet visible from the outside.

Anthony McCall’s *Line Describing a Cone* (1972) foregrounds a similar tension between the projected image and its mechanical source. A projector sits exposed in the gallery, casting its light on the opposite wall where it produces the image of an emerging arc. The curved line grows until it inscribes a full circle on the wall, but its viewer is equally attentive to the projected light itself (fig. 3.6). With this, McCall’s simplified projection incites an expansion of space.\(^{124}\) Viewers can walk the distance from the image to its mechanical source, crossing through the intangible cone of light that connects the two. At once, McCall’s installation makes a sculpture of projected light and a film of a

\(^{124}\) Walley, 20.
moving arc. In foregrounding the multiple axes of film projection, the phenomenological process of light’s presentation emerges as the content of the work.

While the abstract geometry on McCall’s screen draws the viewer’s attention to the projector itself, Campbell’s image abounds with photographic detail and decidedly personal content. His dangling cords are not doubled on the glass frame as streaks of light; rather, their loose hang is rhymed in the soft focus of tree branches wavering in and out of pure diffusion. Like the warm figure of its title, Photo of my Mother avoids the mechanical coldness of a modernist presentation of cinema’s supports. Instead, the apparatus is infused with its builder’s own respiration, a process coded with an intimacy which is matched by the maternal figure of the photograph it presents. Campbell’s interference originates in his lungs but emerges here to hug the displayed photograph of his mother, whose welcoming smile and modest pose echoes through the quiet flicker. This luminescent shroud reroutes the viewer’s attention through its source apparatus, but that mechanism nevertheless vibrates with a rhythm of affection which links the humanity of viewer and viewed.

Photo of my Mother leaves its wires exposed and lays bare the labeled encasement of its digital programming, and yet these material supports never reduce the installation to a display of mechanical parts. These extraneous components lead toward its hidden programming without revealing it explicitly. The cables are not merely exposed. They hang loosely and at the whim of any strong breeze from a passing visitor. Their plastic coatings provide enough rigidity to hold up against gravity in sharp angles which lead in a circuitous path down to a polished, metallic box protruding from the wall. Their

125 Shiff, 71.
arbitrary path from the frame echoes the whimsy of the snapshot, and both appear vulnerable next to the solid, cold exterior of the box below. The raw metal of the box itself resembles objects which suggest both a living presence and its absence – namely, a bomb, deceptively still for the potential damage pressurizing inside it, or a memorial plaque which honors life as it announces death. These suggestive images echo the physical one above, an image which distills the past and embodies it within a once living being. Of course, the box and wires also introduce the interference which gives that photograph a sense of animation, like a pulse delivered throughout this Frankenstein memory machine.

Historically, the cinema camera and projector were developed as two opposing functions housed in the same mechanism. Étienne-Jules Marey, for instance, insisted upon this synthesis in his early cinematographic cameras, which captured moving subjects rather than edited narratives. Photo of my Mother suggests a similar inverse faculty, in which the pulsating flicker effectively reverses the calcifying operation of the still camera. It is this life-giving character of Campbell’s interference which frames it as an emotional operation of moments and glances, rather than a Modernist one of mechanical objects.

Photo of my Mother and its regulated interference does not stultify the viewer’s engagement within the cold reality of the mechanism which produces the image. Rather, it redirects the mechanical operation of projection through the humanity of the viewer’s gaze. Much like its overlay of a dynamic digital program atop the fixed light-etching of his analog photograph, Campbell’s installation exposes the rigid materials of its light

126 Jimena Canales, A Tenth of a Second (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 146.
display only to reveal them as vivacious components of a shrine to sentimental memory – or, more accurately, the ritual of fond remembering. The spectator does not read the attached cables as undercutting the fantasy of the photograph. Rather, the apparatus orchestrates our sensory experience as participants who emerge within the vitalized confluence of its mechanized projection. The smiling face, its photographic grain, and its imposing light disturbance come together as an echo of the spectating breath, the tether between artist and his viewer through which we interact with the photograph in all its human resonance. Here, among strange pulses of light, we recognize a human figure and a mother, but also a son, an artist, an engineer, and a longing gaze. Suffused with the momentary passing of one’s breath and facing that of Campbell’s on the glass, the act of looking at *Photo of my Mother* thus becomes as intimate as the photograph at its center.

In *Photo of my Mother*, the box which houses its obstructive digital programming is not only labeled, it also speaks in a vibrant rhythm across the photograph and on pitch with the intimate character of its content. Among the photograph and its oscillating frame, our bodies sense in the digital operations of fluctuating interference, what Margaret Morse calls the apparatus’s own “semiautonomous agency.” Campbell’s strange system, the re-animated image of his mother, and our own bodies share the same physical space and evidence the same, rhythmic vital signs. In Campbell’s hardwired panels, we find an object analogous to the theatrical vitality of Samuel Beckett’s *Breath* (1969), a one-page play whose performance lasts approximately 35 seconds and consists

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only of a pile of rubbish, a child’s cry, and a playback of recorded breathing, all of which emerge and recede with an increase of stage lighting.\textsuperscript{128}

Campbell’s installation hardwires his personal photograph with a rhythmic interference that invokes the presence of the artist looking. Like Barthes, who describes while also withholding the resonant image of his mother, the artist’s construction positions our own viewing of his photograph with a calculated distance, one which nevertheless suggests intimacy.\textsuperscript{129} Indeed, this conceptual distance takes on literal meaning when the photographic figures become blurred, a symptom that could be biologically rationalized as myopia.\textsuperscript{130} We are rerouted through Campbell’s cables and software, a network which compresses and reconstructs the surrogate biology of a more invested viewer. It is more precisely the interference where we overlap with Campbell himself, for the fog simulates both his own breath and ours as we peer closer toward the image. Luce Irigaray writes of the mother’s breath as a successor to the umbilical connection, one necessary for the child to gain autonomy and, eventually, divinity.\textsuperscript{131} This spiritual connection between breath and life abounds in numerous traditions, including Judeo-Christian.\textsuperscript{132} Traditional and contemporary meditation practices use the breath as an anchor to ground one’s thoughts and connect the mind to body, a reminder that we are \textit{here}. Morse points out that the fogging of mirrors has historically been used

\textsuperscript{131} Luce Irigaray, “The Age of Breath,” in \textit{Luce Irigaray: Key Writings} (London ; Continuum, 2004), 165.
to detect life in a body, a visual and reflective alternative to pulse-taking with one’s fingers.\textsuperscript{133} The fogged glass is thus a synthetic sign of Campbell’s and our own act of looking, a projection of the physical symptoms of both gazes.

These virtual-biological connections again recall Epstein’s \textit{photogénie}, which intertwines cinematic essence with that of life and frames projection as an operation of energy transference:\textsuperscript{134} “The Bell and Howell is a metal brain…,” from which “[a] sense of expectancy grows. Sources of vitality spring up in the corners one had through exhausted and sterile. The epidermis reveals a tender luminosity.”\textsuperscript{135} Revived by its biologically resonant interference, \textit{Photo of my Mother} functions as a sort of pacemaker for this memory machine, breathing a vitality into the image that absorbs the viewer, now engaged in virtual empathy with this partially obstructed gaze. Its flicker, evocative of both shutter and pulse, redirects the viewer’s gaze through Campbell’s strange apparatus and the surrogate biology of his own look, which blocks our vision in a parallel syncopation to the rhythm of our blinking. The characterization of Campbell’s viewing apparatus as biological offers a human element to his electrical hardware. Furthermore, that humanity colors the viewing experience itself. The photograph’s interference underscores the distance between the viewer and the personal memento. By framing that distortion as breath, that act of looking becomes a narrative engagement, a story of mother, child, and home, played out through the bursts of fog like the mental friction of an attempt at remembering.

\textsuperscript{134} Abel, 241.
\textsuperscript{135} Epstein, 244-5.
Campbell’s panel underscores distance – between his mother, himself, and us – with an explicit, regular burst of distortion. This field is thick enough to support Sturken’s textile analogy for Campbell’s work, a metaphor echoed by Glissant: “memory is the fabric through which time is rendered continuous, through which the present and the past are interwoven and interdependent.”\textsuperscript{136} Indeed, in \textit{Photo of my Mother}, this cloudy tapestry is fragile enough to be cut at regular intervals by the emergence of the image. Like the bomb-like appendage which revives the still photograph, this slicing gesture recalls the destructive creativity of Gunning’s flicker, whose “rhythm of light slashed by darkness gives cinema its pulse, its process of bringing still images to life.”\textsuperscript{137} Likewise, Epstein executes his own metaphor for cinematic essentialism as an “amputation,” a process of elimination that conjures the generative phenomenon of \textit{photogénie}.\textsuperscript{138} With its pulsating give-and-take, the installation presents the photograph as a lost object, yet one which an incessant interference urges us not only to remember, but also to \textit{remember} in the image of Campbell’s mother, a mental reconstitution of both the phenomenon of projection and the photographic body. Like the Impressionists’ photogenic object which is “lost and yet as present as a dead person is to his relatives,” Campbell’s luminary distortion enacts a séance which turns looking into an active, palpable remembering.\textsuperscript{139}

\begin{thebibliography}
\bibitem{Sturken} Sturken, 290.
\bibitem{Gunning} Gunning, 63.
\bibitem{Willemen} Willemen, 126.
\end{thebibliography}
Though arranged in an unfamiliar way, the combination of projected light and an intermittently obscured photograph achieves a cinematic mode of looking, one which engages the viewer and draws them into the unchanging image. It is that thin border between perceived motion and still image where Barthes finds his own phenomenological response to his mother’s photograph, which is “in no way animated… but it animates me: This is what creates every adventure.” Barthes frames his engaged looking not as a fascinating spell but as an excursion, one in which he explores across a shadowed surface for evidence of his own presence – and absence – in the image of his mother before his conception. The oscillating Photo of my Mother similarly functions as a totem for the return home, less like ruby slippers and more akin to the sepia cyclone that offers brief glimpses of familiar people as they cycle through an abstract haze. For all its furious visual noise, Campbell’s machine causes no change in the woman or her familiar smile. Her distortion incites not a transformation but, rather, a revolution. This rapid turning and returning pulls our gaze into its gravity with the promise of some revelation, compelling us to look for more in the same place.

Glimpse

Photo of my Mother recreates the essential phenomenon of projection in its most reduced and binary terms. Its complex rig of custom software and exposed wires ultimately draws the viewer into the intimate psychology of the photograph. That image is offered and withheld simultaneously by Campbell, a gesture which grants the photograph the illusion of life. Other of Campbell’s works similarly explore the potency

140 Barthes, 20.
of light effects on intensifying its spectator’s engagement, again without relying on closed-circuit surveillance equipment to loop the viewer’s body directly into the installation.

*Glimpse* (2007) reengineers consumer-grade projection equipment to isolate the acute moment of longing cultivated by the calculated tension between visual stimulus and its sudden disappearance. The installation consists of two commercially available machines, one a slide projector and the other video, placed in vertical alignment and aimed at a shared point on the gallery wall (fig. 3.7). These two visual outputs clash in a calculated way. The empty slide carousel produces only solid white, blocking out the home video footage presented by the movie projector. However, during for the brief instants when the slide advances, the light relents, allowing the family movies to momentarily emerge. Furthermore, the movement from one slide to the next is timed to the visual rhythm of the video. The forward movement of the carousel is triggered by each edit point in the video, thus intertwining the functions of both machines. Decisions made during filming, now embedded in the video stream, are translated over time and into the current moment. For instance, when the camera operator switched off the machine to save tape for future filming, that instantaneous jump between one scene and the other now echoes in the gallery with an opposite effect. Here, the viewer does not orient themselves to the new filmed location. Rather, the changeover of the slide carousel provides the only clear sight of the video. Each new shot explodes with vibrant faces on screen, only to again become swallowed up in light in the next second.

The bright white of the slide overpowers the video at almost every moment, and yet Campbell’s use of home movies informs both the screened space and that of the gallery. The video and slide projectors themselves suggest domestic screenings, an association echoed in
the grainy stock and pale colors of the home-movie footage that sporadically appears. The blank images of the slide projector threaten to undermine those visual conventions and their associations with intimate, living-room screenings. However, when viewed as periods of waiting that connect the intermittent images, the bright light of the slides become a catalyst for enhancing the flashes of family vacations and friendly visits. A roadside stop at some Southwestern canyon is reduced to a snapshot of three figures huddled around an historical marker, each vibrating with an instantaneous twitch of movement before being relegated again to a luminescent non-space (fig. 3.8). However, in the meantime – which is where the slide projector situates us for most of the video’s duration – those scenes continue to live in the viewer’s memory, not as static pictures but as dynamic possibilities of further action by figures now off screen. A playful jostling by children to gain the optimal viewing position, a collective return to the car, or even a grinning wave at the camera are all scenes imagined but never witnessed. Glimpse thus induces projection from the viewers themselves. In doing so, it equates looking with waiting, an activation of the body which frames the projected image as a sensory event. But, more than that, it provides a specific visual motif to that conceptual shift, one in which expression and anticipation appear as moments of backyard play and highway attractions, peppered across an obstinate and annihilating aura.

As I will argue, these fleeting bursts of video illusion punctuate the otherwise blank, technical focus of the rest of the installation; however, these moments are in turn excessively charged by their removal from the viewer while hidden under the blinding light of the slides. Light in Glimpse plays out along two parallel trajectories, only meeting at the terminus of the wall. Though the moments of footage offer bursts of visual energy, the video stream has an inverse effect on the larger installation. The obstructive light of the slides is relatively brighter than the dim, faded, and sometimes underexposed family movies. Thus, it is the vibrant apparitions which in fact shroud the projectors themselves. To gaze at the equipment
directly, the upper circle of the slide projector’s lens would extinguish during a changeover, receding the mechanism into darkness and leaving only the video projector’s soft morass of colors, a projection which seems comparatively dull.

In *Glimpse*, Campbell again introduces an excess of light to interrupt the visibility of photographic images. However, that interference here derives from the placement of prefabricated machines that contrast to the internal, custom programming that blinked across *Photo of my Mother*. This structure recalls the pioneering film and video installations of Nam June Paik in the 1960s. Paik’s *Zen for Film* (1965) equips a 16mm projector with clear film leader, resulting in a similar white glare as Campbell’s slide projector (fig. 3.9). This essentialized system of projection is elaborated in Paik’s subsequent works, many of which fuse various consumer-grade VCRs and televisions into flickering sculptures. At their most humanoid, these figures reflect a duality of screened image and manufactured machinery also seen in Campbell’s work. Engineers as much as sculptors or video technicians, Paik and Campbell reveal the tendency to collect audiovisual equipment in their borrowed materials.

As in Paik’s works, *Glimpse* consigns its entangling of the machines’ functions to the invisible level of software. Yet on the surface, its video and slides seem to work against each other in a competition played out over the screened image. In fact, the fleeting glimpses of children’s faces and intimate get-togethers become welcome breaks from the more monotonous blank white. They are proof of the video’s existence under its luminescent membrane.

*Glimpse* leaves only enough time for abbreviated actions to appear on screen, and with that brevity we are never watching the footage but always just missing it and waiting for its next appearance. The quick bursts of imagery also distort their movements. For instance, the emergence of two children’s faces is not quick enough to render them motionless. Rather, the half-second of action spurts forward like a glitch, and each casual movement of the head
is rendered as a tick or a violent whipping forth. The footage is so abbreviated that one might say it becomes the distraction from the machinery and the white light. With this substantial impact of the photographic imagery, Campbell’s installation reinforces the significance of the screened image even within the modernist gesture of exposing its source materials. As a result, *Glimpse* engineers a guided mode of viewing, a cinematic experience built of mechanized light and flashes of recorded memory. I would argue that this installation situates its viewer in a particular visual position, one attached to the gallery wall but also in between two intersecting media. The slide and video projectors collide in a square patch of light. One might call it a steady glow broken up by fits of momentary home-video footage, or else a compilation of intimate video memories parceled out between an invasive brightness. Regardless, this unique cinematic phenomenon provides the viewer a focal point whose dynamism can be traced to its competing machines. Within this framework, spectators find themselves drawn to the video glimpses with a heightened anticipation, a language of expectation in which appearance and obstruction are articulated in mechanical terms.

**The Exterminating Slideshow**

*Glimpse* places its two projectors in opposition, but they do not create a simple binary of the image and its disappearance. Rather, the perpetual signs of visual life under the slide projection emerge as irregular and unpredictable moments. Like the title itself, *Glimpse* is defined not by any one image but by the narrow window to which its video is relegated. It is not a sight but a fleeting view, one colored as much by its images as by their anticipation – and by the non-visual sensory stimulus which accompanies it: the hum of the
projectors, the heat of the room, and one’s held breath in expecting the next projector turn.

The variety of images also ensures that narrative is suggested and subverted in a complex tension. A series of related shots begin to form a narrative arc: an underexposed landscape leaving only a vibrant sky just visible at the top of the frame; a clearer, high-angle shot of a snow-covered mountainside; and, eventually, a sign reading “Loveland Pass” names the location, its elevation, and by synecdoche an entire vacation weekend. Yet, far more numerous consecutive shots feature disparate locations and events with no continuity. Furthermore, the timing of the blank slides begins to engage the viewer’s attention more than the vacation images themselves, and the curiosity of what lies underneath the bright white eclipses the moments of actual visibility. As several two-second whiteouts are followed by a relatively interminable nine-second gap, one cannot help but wonder what is happening during that break. Though it is likely more of the same footage, we cannot help but ascribe it added significance.

*Glimpse* announces the presence of its projectors without foregrounding their physical presence, and it never abandons the two-dimensional photographic image. The slide works of James Coleman offer similar tensions between the projector and its illuminated images. The first of many such works, 1972’s *Slide Piece* features only one image of a car park in Milan, repeated across multiple slides. Using the progress of the slide carousel to repeat a single image rather than reveal a series, *Slide Piece* foreshadows the minimal narrative elements of *Glimpse*. And, though Coleman’s slides are coupled with an audio track – voice-overs of different descriptions of the photograph – this sonic element corresponds to the image without serving it. That is, the variety of descriptions
do not contribute to a more stable reading of the picture as much as they complicate the notion of an absolute reading. In this way, these narrations function similarly to Campbell’s blank slides, which are significant for their reframing of the visual kernels and not necessarily for their own radiant content.

Though *Slide Piece* offers a productive comparison to *Glimpse*, a previous, non-slide work of Coleman’s provides a fuller triangulation of the installation’s effects. Coleman’s *Flash Piece* (1970) does not use photographic images but, rather, acute points of pure light. These fragments of light engage the viewer directly in a phenomenological dialogue, placing the spectator in an introspective state where, as Jean Fisher describes, “meaning is to be sought not through mediated, inherited structures of knowledge but through the disjunctions and incongruities we discover in our own enunciations.” Like Coleman’s flashes, the slide carousel’s movement induces a phenomenological reflex in the spectator. In *Glimpse*, these impulses are instigated not by the projector’s visual output as much as by its method of transmission, namely its sudden and irregular rhythms and their accompanying sound.

Like the flicker films of the 1960s, *Glimpse* foregrounds its cinematic equipment primarily through its corresponding visual phenomenon, characterized by an irregular rhythm. In fact, I will argue below that its exposure of cinematic materials steers away from Modernism and toward a phenomenological model. *Glimpse* expands these experiments of cinematic reduction in two significant ways. First, and unlike the

disruptive, sometimes nauseating, stroboscopic flashes produced by the flicker,
Campbell’s visual dialogue induces a series of multisensory responses, concentrated
primarily in the viewer’s ears and in subtle bodily reflexes. Secondly, this expanded
sensory experience works in support of the installation’s evocative and personal imagery,
which retains the element of photographic illusion even while putting its projecting
mechanism into relief. In what follows, I will show that Glimpse redefines cinema’s
material supports not as visible objects – here, the slide carousel, the screen, or even the
projected image – but rather as the myriad sensory components ignited across the body of
its viewer.

As stated above, the moments of visual stimulus in Glimpse are brief yet enticing,
and the viewer’s anticipation for those moments is made stronger by the irregularity of
their occurrences. That suddenness holds the viewer in a state of heightened anticipation,
and it assures that each burst of Kodachrome action delivers a genuine jolt. The
multisensory character of this surprise can be located most clearly in the literal click of
the revolving slide carousel which heralds each appearance of the video. This acute
sensory stimulus acts as a lightning rod which compresses the attention of the viewer into
one charged point. Announcing itself as an imminent physical reaction, this powerful
phenomenon is seen but also sensed with one’s entire body. This signature sound of the
slide projector is made detectable by the lack of audio in the video. Given its
interruption amid the continuous drone of the projectors’ fans and the light sustained on
the wall, the sound of the progressing slides becomes significant, shocking the viewer

\[\text{\footnotesize 143 For a thorough study of the sounds of the projector as aids for the projectionist see: Michael Pigott,}
\text{“Sounds of the Projection Box: Liner Notes for a Phonographic Method,” Journal of British Cinema and}
\text{Television 15, no. 1 (January 2018): 27–45.}\]
who now unconsciously braces for the brief but vibrant window of illusion like a Pavlovian reward delivered by a Kuleshovian signal.

I would argue that the visceral click of the slide projector is only the most pointed extra-visual component of Glimpse’s larger network of felt sensations. The glimpses are not simply visual; within this context of obscured footage they are also felt, as a skipped heartbeat, a dilated pupil, and an excitement released through the hairs on one’s neck as the shoulders clench in attention. As such, the installation is less a clockwork system of cogs and gears and more a network of bodily responses. The current of electricity and the metal parts it enlivens are now replaced by adrenaline and the involuntary twitching of musculature. Within this schematic, the simple exposure of blank slide atop video output plays out as an aural whiteout, and its temporary shuttering of the projector’s bulb manifests in the viewer’s body as a jump of authentic surprise. As a collection of sensory clicks, tics, and flinches felt from within, Glimpse adapts the cinematic mechanism of projection to our own bodies. Its trigger makes us suddenly aware of our imminent presence within this system with every click of the slides.

**Glimpse’s Expansion of the Edit**

Glimpse’s activation of embodied viewership does not diminish its visual component but rather elaborates and punctuates the video’s infrequent appearances. Within this extrasensory framework, each brief glimpse takes on a palpable intensity which connects the viewer to its images: we shift our weight from one leg to the other, in time with the momentary images of bodies in play. The temperature of the gallery synchs with road stops and their weary, wandering travelers. The projector’s click thus provides
a substantial, even visceral index of the anticipation accrued by *Glimpse*’s extended blank projection, as well as the expectation of its temporary release in the visible video stream. Of course, the echoing clicks of the slide projector also correspond to the edit points in the video which intertwine the two machines. Below, I will further explore how this noise defines a precise moment of visual engagement while simultaneously acknowledging the installation’s hardwired schematic and cinematic nature.

Margaret Morse locates real-world analogues for the rich textures of the cinematic experience which Campbell’s installations evoke, especially in overlooked flourishes like “the power drag as refrigerators open at halftime during a televised game.” For Morse, “the awareness of watching the fluctuation of light in the cinema is a part of watching films,” and I would offer *Glimpse*’s audible click and the flashbulb instantaneity of its projection as a strikingly unique sensation. In fact, the suddenness of the noise, combined with its clashing character and even more explicitly violent associations, reframes the intertwined media of *Glimpse* into a physical viewing experience, one based less on visual identification and more on the involuntary reflex of the body. By withholding the video images for such long intervals, the cinematic tensions between anticipation and surprise are heightened. In *Glimpse*, it manifests as a jolt sent through the input of the ear, sprung by the slide carousel and felt through tensed muscles, that frames the moments of visual expression and pinpoints the cinematic as occurring alongside one’s body. Like his *Line Describing a Cone*, Anthony McCall’s *Miniature in Black and White* (1972) similarly emphasizes the equipment of the slide projector by imposing a Plexiglass panel, roughly the size of the projector itself, inches in front of the

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144 Morse, *Virtualities*, 34.
machine’s lens, where it projects small images of plants (fig. 3.10).\textsuperscript{145} By prompting one to peer down and look back into projector’s beam of light, the installation also requires the viewer to contend closely with these components.

While McCall invites a phenomenological exploration of cinematic projection, Campbell’s experience is much more invasive, and much more personal. For one, the cold components of the projecting equipment are now reshaped as snaps, pulses, and vibrations that attest to each viewer’s presence in the gallery. However, even in the terms of its mechanical source, the calculated mechanism of \textit{Glimpse} is driven by a human impulse. Indeed, those bursts of cinematic satisfaction are not randomly generated. Each sudden glimpse is calibrated to the carousel’s rotation. But that mechanism is determined not by a choreography of cogs and gears but by the attentive and caring eye of the original videographer. Every decision to press \textit{record} and capture action is in anticipation of the event as a cherished keepsake. Susan Sontag suggests that contemporary families feel bound by moral obligation to make photographs of weddings, children, and other events.\textsuperscript{146} In light of the strength of this compulsion and the weight which she places on the family photograph as witness, one might interpret the loud and sudden clicks of \textit{Glimpse} as a sonic translation of the implicit loss attached to each preserved memory. Added light might revitalize a transparent slide or animate a film reel, but Campbell’s dual-projector system instead intensifies the immediacy of its loss by the repeated but irregular obliteration of the photographic image. Projected in Campbell’s installation, that

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fingertip pressure applied to a record button belatedly unravels in the gallery in fleeting bursts of humanity.

As a complex phenomenon of projection, Glimpse manufactures in the viewer a compulsion to look closer at its screened images, and in turn that footage offers a visual surrogate for the videographer’s compulsion to record. The entanglement between filming and screening which Glimpse cultivates in such physical ways suggests an inverse functionality in its mechanism, a shared genetic makeup between projecting and filming that again recalls the early cinematographic inventions of Marey. 147 Glimpse’s slide projector is tuned to the edit points of the video, and it is only at those points that images are visible to the viewer. With all other moments devoted to obscuring the movie, Campbell’s machine is rigged to project the inverse. It is the gaps between two continuous sequences of action that are expanded into a sustained white glow on the wall, with only brief interruptions by visible moving images. In fact, Glimpse uses its slide projector to limit video’s signature phenomenon of continuous movement, reducing that motion toward stillness and, thus, obstructing its tendency to project forward in time. Instead, we are left with slides that are blank, but not empty. What might be read as nothingness in a screening of the slide carousel alone here transforms into potent absences. Framed by the glimpses of home movies on either side, the bright glare of the slides reduces Campbell’s elaborate system to pure projection, screening light itself, both as material and as a catalyst for the anticipation that draws in the cinematic viewer.

Glimpse’s jolt forges a connection between filming and viewing, between filmmaker and spectator, made both visible and felt in the edit. Its slides are equipped

147 Canales, 149.
with an obliterating brightness, but that same interference also couples the two projections. Furthermore, it does so in a way that inverts the typical function of editing. As visible but instantaneous structuring elements, these cuts in the video are here made potent as brief jolts of illusion amid long stretches of monotonous bright light. As a result, Glimpse is all changeover and sustained transition. Mary Ann Doane offers the feature film trailer as the premier application of the edit, one which showcases “the strongly honed art of ellipsis, but it activates an ellipsis deprived of its semantic dimension and intensified as the carrier of loss.”148 More than simply a sign of longing, Doane conceives of the cut as an encapsulation of that sense of loss, something that can be held or possessed in a metaphorical sense. I would argue that Glimpse heightens this distillation of the cut, allowing it to be possessed in a literal, physical way within the body. We might even say that Glimpse offers a cinematic mode that is the antithesis of Doane’s trailer, one which punctuates its impenetrable blankness with brief signs of action, rather than the other way around. A smiling woman leaves the screen almost as soon as she arrives, and yet her compressed presence fixes her image into a precise moment and in a confined space on the wall. As we scramble to recall her face – did she not look just like an aunt I had? – we find ourselves already reshaping her with modular features of our imaginations. These extended gaps of white result in a porous film which lets in too much light. Light in Glimpse is thus as essential to engaging cinematic viewing as it is obtrusive, a gatekeeper which regulates our projective imaginings and amplifies

what Sontag calls photography’s “inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy.”\textsuperscript{149}

By activating pure light as a prolonged expectation, \textit{Glimpse} reverses the traditional conception of montage, expanding the edit point while minimizing the frames of footage which it links. By identifying the edited cut as an agent of expectation, \textit{Glimpse}’s equipment operates in a way that resonates with the content of its footage. Like the feature trailer, the home movie also utilizes the edit in its own characteristic way. Formal conventions of such amateur filmmaking include grainy footage, accidental overexposures, and subjects that often pander to the camera. But its editing also follows these haphazard qualities. Home movies are often edited in-camera, simply by turning the camera off and resuming recording elsewhere, essentially transferring the tools of post-production to the moment of production.\textsuperscript{150} As a result, their structures reflect the instantaneous, real-time nature of their creation, further solidifying their identity as deliberate attempts to create memories by capturing events as they occur. Long shots dominate the amateur movie toolkit, as continuous recording is necessary to catch the significant, spontaneous event. Likewise, a cut seldom reveals another angle of the same event but, instead, transports the viewer to an entirely new activity with jarring changes in location, costume, and lighting. Indeed, the shot-reverse-shot convention of narrative films, in which multiple angles of the same location fill out the diegetic space of a scene, is anathema to the large, block segments in amateur films.

\textsuperscript{149} Sontag. 17.
Glimpse inverts the operation of montage in its home video footage, a cinematic mode with otherwise minimal editing. In expanding those gaps into large swathes of blank light, the majority of the family movies are obliterated. In addition, its long, single shots are reduced to brief glimpses. Here, the spots of visible footage merely mark the time between edits, intervals that correspond not to calculated post-production techniques but to the very impulse by the camera operator to start recording the live event. In this way, Glimpse reframes the original footage and the operations of cinematic language through its modified and multiplied mode of projection. However, the slide projector’s restriction of the video footage also makes these home movies more enticing. Home movies rely on personal context to induce interest in the viewer, and the concept of borrowed home video limits such a connection for its public audience. Yet Glimpse saves its footage from that loss of context that can result in disengaged, bored spectators.151 Instead, the minimal and sporadic appearance of friends and family reconstitute their visibility as precious.

The extended gaps applied to Glimpse’s borrowed footage are too large to project any sense of a complete text. Instead, the slide projector stretches out the instantaneous cut of each edit point far wider than its medium intended. As a result, Glimpse enacts an expansion of the cinematic moment, the otherwise instantaneous present which turns each fading memory into a pleasurable anticipation of the next. This complex instant is inherently interstitial: It elides the just-missed and the coming-any-second, recreating in a dark vacuum how our brain functions with every shot of a feature film. Glimpse

demarcates a present which compresses the pleasure of viewing, the anticipation of the sight, and the period of reflection following what one has just seen. Furthermore, its mechanisms continuously re-grounds us in that present with the precise, pointed, and passing sensory stimuli of the projection system. By extending the blank, connective tissue of the cut, the slide projector also sustains its tendency to provoke anticipation for the moving images doled out.

A shot rings out from the projector itself, not from the screen. And yet that audible interference comingles with its visual counterpart, a sudden jolt that causes one to look for a commotion, only to find the happy families on screen, followed by their almost immediate obliteration by an eruption of bright light. The trigger of the slide projector covers the recorded families in a night of pale light and a fog which mutes their colorful shapes. We stand within this overexposed field, holding the picture already past in the anticipation of its charming return with each next moment.

**Home Movies**

Another group of Campbell’s works more explicitly features the amateur recording in image and in name. The *Home Movie* series installs uniquely designed screens of various sizes, each of which consists of hanging strands of LEDs to form a uniform grid of pixels facing the gallery wall. These bulbs work in concert to form the vague shapes and faces of home video recordings, soft images which emerge through openings between the hanging strands, situated in front of the wall itself. Larger versions of these works incorporate more LEDs and, consequently, more points of projection and a higher resolution. However, even in the largest of these installations, faces and figures
can only be vaguely discerned. *Home Movies 1248-1* (2008) is composed of 1,248 LEDs, which make up a 16-by-10-foot screen that floats about seven inches from the wall (fig. 3.11). Patches of dark grays emerge against white light to form radiating shapes of heads, houses, and highways which pass by the spectator in ghostly approximations of solid objects (fig. 3.12). A rippling series of interruptions thus occur: The stringed apparatus which produces the moving images stands between the viewer and the screen, a material obstacle which also directly corresponds to the general low resolution and difficult legibility of the images.

The *Home Movies* build upon Campbell’s use of amateur footage in *Glimpse*, in which the intensely personal content of its projected images mirrors the sensuous intimacy felt in the act of viewing them. Yet these gridded screens further align the viewed content and the viewing experience. That is, the hybrid nature of these mechanisms as both projectors and screens establishes a further synthesis of form and content. In what follows, I will argue that Campbell’s *Home Movie* works provide a streamlined form of projection, one which elides the formal characteristics of the apparatus with those of the images it projects. Furthermore, it is in these screens, which most closely resemble contemporary home viewing technologies, in which the projected videos reflect the intimacy of the bodily act of viewing these homeless memories.

The images projected in Campbell’s *Home Movie* series are perpetually out of focus, forcing their viewer to constantly strain to make out the blurred figures. At one point, several faint orbs of light dance together in a spiral as they grow and ebb in shining radiance at the top left of the screen. Suddenly, they cohere into a single patch of light, a stable field of white that quickly takes the shape of a torso. It is only when satellite
patches of gray fix themselves to the top and bottom of this luminous field that a young boy emerges from the shapes. Soon after, elbows appear to pump and propel his body forward and up to the camera’s lens. Just enough certainty of a crew cut and a smiling mouth appear before he runs back into the distance which evaporates his figure into scattered bits of luminous energy. These forms are difficult to discern from their background, the gradients of their outlines so gradual that each shape threatens to be overtaken by the hazy aura they emit. Perched on the barrier between recognition and confusion, Campbell’s viewers again find themselves transfixed in a state of excessive looking. These images are not hidden, but they also offer little detail. Certainly, the ambiguous shapes cannot be described in specific terms. At best, a building emerges as a house because of the proportions of its angular frame, whose width stretches further than its height and is followed by the horizontal reach of a sloping roof (fig. 3.13). A face is simply that: a patch of hair and an outline of a jaw confirming no positive identification other than potential age or gender. These are types with no firm place. Their constant movement on screen helps to affirm their basic characteristics, and they progress at such a rate that figures are replaced just as they begin to gain clarity.

If these are amateur photographs, expressive of the same “it has been” and similar in their black-and-white makeup as Barthes’ Winter Garden photograph, then Campbell’s *Home Movie* urges us to ask: When has it been? And how was it, exactly? Not detailed but nevertheless recognizable, these figures are digitally remade as general types. Though their forms appear common, they never reach familiarity. While universal in their ambiguity, they are also made foreign for all, never resembling one’s exact familial

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152 Shiff, 77.
references. Rather, these images are memories of no single person or particular place. Furthermore, the screens of *Home Movie* do not evoke the nostalgia of *Glimpse*’s slide projector or *Photo of my Mother*’s album-sized snapshot. Even the interference which holds these figures afloat in this shadowy world is non-specific. That is, the blurring effect is disseminated indiscriminately across the image, clouding each composition under a uniform, gray penumbra. And yet, by dissolving these images to the threshold of disappearance, Campbell also invests recognition itself with intensity. Though the people figured in these home movies would be unable to evoke in us the same spiritual recognition which Barthes finds only in his Winter Garden photograph, their obstructed legibility does revive an otherwise generic image of another human entity, one with energy and vitality.

In *Home Movies*, trees pass by like vertical markers which divides into rhythmic stanzas the steady movement from right to left of a roadside landscape. This scenery cannot be described in geographic specificity; rather, its low-definition picture comes together as variations of gray which shapes the land in only general terms. Consistent swaths of white along the top half of the screen suggest an open sky, and thus a possibly flat, rural location, but it stops short of differentiating between organized farmland and stark desert. Vertical peaks that recur in the middle portion of the frame could be distant hills but also houses removed from the road by a couple hundred feet. It is this sustained uncertainty which elides the form and content of *Home Movie*. Encountering strangers’ families from such an intimate point of view produces a calculable uncanniness, but here the glaring anonymity of the films’ subjects is also manifested visually in their blurred
details. Moreover, that ambiguity is directly linked to the surface of the screen, which sacrifices resolution as itforegrounds its individual pixels.

Just as the film’s content remains stuck between sharpness and complete illegibility, so is its viewer constantly held in a mental state of filling in as many of its details as possible. The vaguely smiling faces and somewhat provincial highway landscapes are also constantly accompanied by the black strands which produces them. More familiar than the location is the speed of the passing landscape, roughly the pace of a family car on an extended trip. That is to say that the images are recognizable only to a particular but consistent degree of familiar ambiguity, one which we might describe as memory. Its haze is an aesthetic of losing sight of an already lost moment, a form which supports its home video content as well as its process of reception, by which viewers must piece together low-resolution moments into solvent images. In this way, the mode of viewing prompted by Home Movies simulates remembering, despite the fact that these images do not belong to the viewer. This footage has the look of a memory, and it incites the feel of recollection for its spectators, who strain to reorient themselves with each cut from an open field to a closeup of a face. Each of these scenes incur extreme shifts in perspective, and yet they all share the same liminality as visions half-conceived under a penumbra of foggy motion.

The thick fog that radiates from each figure in the Home Movies has a similar effect on the installation as a whole. Indeed, the fact that this blur does not target specific sections of the screened image establishes a more even distribution of its hazy interference. This overall effect does not just render each house and tree line under a myopic membrane; rather, it frames each sequence as a haunting half-memory. However,
this broadly applied interference also effects a bond between the projections and the screen itself, one which invites the viewer to constantly shift focus from the images to the apparatus which produces them. Nowhere is this more apparent than at the edges of the frame, which are themselves blurred. Just as each gap between black strands emanates a visible light against the wall, the extreme ends of the projection also glow with a metamorphosing morass of gray tones that reach out from the screen and into the extinguishing brightness of the gallery lighting. These glowing edges outline the screen itself as a floating figure, and they spotlight the apparatus, supported by a pillow of soft haze. The projection as a cohesive rectangular field is thus delimited by an indistinct luminosity, one which also puts the hanging straps in relief against the radiant projections on the wall. *Home Movie* thus backlights its own gravity-supported mechanism of projection, even as it emits its apparitional forms on the wall behind it.

To watch these movies is to engage in an act of straining to make sense of them, not only as images but as images familiar to some person, even precious to them. The recorded event overshadows its apparatus even as it remains visible, forming a synthesis of projector, screen, and light-image which exhibits a dissolution of materiality and relocates its mechanical supports in the body of its viewer. The *Home Movies* thus elide form and content in service of the latter, which retains the illusory and even emotionally evocative images of families and friends, pieces of some fading memory which the banded screen keeps barely legible in its rigid positioning of gridded LEDs. Yet as the image constantly threatens to wash away the stark visibility of that apparatus, the materiality of this projection undergoes a shift. Materiality in *Home Movies* is no longer grounded in solid, mechanical equipment but instead shifted to the stable receptor of the
viewer’s body. Here, the fragments of amateur video find an even more resonant material in the living, breathing, and memory-laden viewer who pieces them together, and whose face glows in the unhindered radiance of the cloudy apparitions.

The Projecting Screen

As I have previously discussed, Anthony McCall’s *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) places a similar emphasis on the interference between projector and screen. Stan VanDerBeek and Joan Brigham expand that liminal space even further with their *Steam Screens* (1979). Here, water vapor acts as a contrast solution which exposes the projector’s light images. A suitably erratic complement to light itself, this concentrated steam allows viewers to sense the ethereal medium of projection on their skin and in their lungs, inhabiting a screen which is dissolved from any solid, two-dimensional fabric. Like Campbell’s *Home Movies*, steam’s formal properties cast the projected image with an even and homogenous blurring effect, one whose visibility ebbs and flows with the fluctuating ratios of light and water vapor, and it renders every projected shape with its own internal metamorphosis.

The structures of McCall and VanDerBeek and Brigham present materials of interference as agents of spatial expansion, investigating the two-dimensional screen by exploding it as a three-dimensional site. As Giulana Bruno says regarding works like *Steam Screens*, “projection was always a charged environment…. Screen space is a site haunted by the perturbations of surfaces.”

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sentiment with its use of ghostly yet ostensibly personal images. However, it more fully addresses Bruno’s conflation of interference’s haunting mood with its material textures. Campbell’s screens float from above, but they also hover inches from the wall upon which they project, and even their individual strings of light require significant gaps to reveal the reflections of their images. Though the spaces between the Home Movies are expanded, these structures also contain that expansion within a more controlled system. Light pours from within the cracks of the screen to expand from within, exposing the more acute crevices, and its projections push the mechanism out from the wall and stabilize it as a floating grid. This screen is delimited by its loosely draped cords, the dimpled sheen of the painted gallery wall, and the clouded light that conjoins them. Interference thus acts as a tool of dissection and adherence in Home Movies, the knife and the glue which together allow these radiant screens to backlight their own mechanisms through out-of-focus fantasies. With projections and projector both clouded in a luminous interference, Home Movies embody Brigham’s own assertion of her Steam Screens that “clouds enhance vision, not obscure it.”

Blur does not alternate atop the images of these installations or obscure them at measured intervals to reframe its visual content. Instead, interference composes the images of the Home Movie works and actively absorbs the apparatus itself into the projected footage. In these videos, soft grays emerge from inky black patches and almost immediately fade into bright white, a luminous void that shines from the wall and spotlights the hanging straps from which it emerges. At times, these bright spots threaten to overtake the increasingly thin wires like pools of deflected light seeping over pitch

black string. Here, projections spill over the projector itself, weaving between alternating strips of black and the lustrous glow to form a dynamic tapestry at once solid and porous. In this synthesis of erratic light and the mechanism of its projection, the images themselves are also always on the precipice of taking shape. These elements work in symbiosis: Gaps between strings allow for the image to cohere, while the projected light makes visible the material intricacies of the hanging grid. Furthermore, image and apparatus become inseparable, as the flashing LEDs hover over the black wires with no clean distinction between light and plastic, instead soldering them together with radiant glow.

Mimicking the dynamic figures on screen, the viewers of *Home Movie* exert energy to make sense of the hazy imagery before them, films whose personal natures seep through their surface vagueness, just as the physical conditions of the LEDs can be deciphered through the collective cloud of images. In this way, the low-resolution movies serve as a bridge between the video’s human origins and its mechanical source. These projections are an unstable fulcrum that sustains and regulates the perpetual oscillation between exploded screen and dissolving memories, two poles which are not diametrically opposed. The boy who runs to the camera and toward a coherent form does not do so at the expense of the apparatus. Even as he washes away into sparks of light, those shapes dance like trails of a lifelike presence. Similarly, a running dog comes into focus not as a particular size or breed, but with the unmistakable motion of a wagging tail. It is the visual rhythms of organic life which dictate recognizable pictures in these films. Even as it dissolves, traces of this calculated empathy resound in the soft flickers of LEDs which trickle like arpeggios of light down hanging rows and echo in the hairs on our skin. The
innate familiarity of bodies in motion resonates with Campbell’s viewer in a way that alters the makeup of the screen itself. These hanging lights are left transformed by their fleeting human images, no longer mechanical emissions of light but glowing like some bioluminescent organism.

The light which seeps through the hanging threads of the Home Movie screens threatens to dematerialize its apparatus, but it does so in a way that underscores the digital nature of its video. In terms of its commercial use in home video, digital recording devices have replaced more analog predecessors like 8mm film and videocassettes. However, the capacity for digital storage has also lengthened the lifetime of these filmed memories, as physical materials are converted to data on hard drives and clouds. Campbell’s Home Movie overlays digital and analog media, enacting a dematerialization of its very apparatus, whose hanging straps evidence their size and weight against the gravity that holds them in place. The schematic of the Home Movie series relays the low-resolution, analog imagery of its amateur films through a digital display. As Meredith Hoy explains, “it is precisely the filtering of the already ‘blurred’ moving pictures through a computational system that makes it less precise and more ambiguous. In Campbell’s pieces, a struggle ensues between the two layers of media: between the picture projected on the wall and the shadowy impressions crossing the LED grid.”\(^{155}\) It is this fractured structure of the striated screen which allows for light to seep out from within the apparatus, constructing a vague image while eclipsing the visible materiality of the screen. Just as amateur films become associated with the visual characteristics of their

original medium, the disappearance of that physicality becomes underscored in Campbell’s explicitly digital presentation. As Doane elegiacally puts it, “the 35mm film, in cans, on reels, requiring projectors, transported on trucks, trains, or planes, is the bearer of a terrestrial weight that we barely remember.” Campbell’s projections thus commemorate both lived moments and the obsolete materials they have absorbed. Even this pixelated projector-screen depends on an internal negative space to allow its images to emerge through its own gaps.

The digital processing of Campbell’s *Home Movies* is reflected in its appearance, which underscores the diminishing materiality of its screen-projector. Like the digital content itself, the screen suggests an openness and fluidity. As in *Photo of my Mother* and *Glimpse*, that expanded apparatus solicits the viewer’s body in a conversation with that of the visual content. *Steam Screens* has shown that fluidity to be not just passive, but palpable, even invasive. I would offer that the projector-screens of *Home Movie* offer a more cohesive apparatus, which nonetheless exhibits its own porous expansiveness when turned on. In one complex field of LEDs, a projection of memories illustrates what Sean Cubitt pinpoints as a primary characteristic of the digital: its complication of the concept of materiality. Cubitt asserts that “we can no longer refer to materiality as the mark of permanence…. The digital artwork must be material, and its materiality incorporates the bodies that come into contact with it and the local space and present time of their coexistence.” *Home Movie* relocates its materiality precisely in its spectator: first expanding outward from the screen, but then re-grounding its physicality in the viewer’s

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body with the intimate, human, and enigmatically veiled content of the video diaries it projects.

Here, projection’s material supports are not abandoned for a phenomenological experience; rather, it is the viewer’s body which resonates with the transmission of a hybrid signal, one constitutive of both the recorded image and the tactile materials of the equipment which produces it. As a transmission of the machine and its projected image through the sensing body, we might better understand the interference which Campbell imposes on his images as a type of feedback. Morse asserts that “feedback…is a capacity of a machine to signal or seem to respond to input instantaneously. A machine that thus ‘interacts’ with the user even at this minimal level can produce a feeling of ‘liveness’ and a sense of the machine's agency and – because it exchanges symbols – even of a subjective encounter with a persona.” Campbell’s machines incite such a feedback in the viewer, but not in the strictly visual sense typically induced by closed-circuit video installations. Unlike Bruce Nauman’s Live-Taped Video Corridor (1967-8), or even Campbell’s own closed-circuit video works, the viewer’s subjecthood is not here reaffirmed by surveillance cameras reproducing their own bodies in uncanny ways. These cinemas are not self-reflexive, but rather they project human subjects in a poetic rhythm that rhymes with their own mechanical expressions.

Conclusion

The sonic click of Glimpse’s slide carousel, the flickering opacity of Photo of my Mother, and the gridded parceling of Home Movie collude as parts of a larger,

158 Morse, 15.
multisensory system of projection which accompany but never eclipse their visual output. As a dual expression of machine and moving image, these projectors speak through the bodily reflexes of the viewer, who faces images rich with, above all, humanity. As imminent receivers of this feedback, we enter Campbell’s network, a circuit both electrical and cinematic whose signal is made visible in apparitions of affection. Within this system of connecting wires and emitted light, the spectator is a conductor. We absorb the energy of the feedback signal, a layered charge consisting of intimate photographs and amateur video redirected through the expressive dissonance of their source machines. As this voltage lights up the array of diodes on Campbell’s screens, it also ignites in us our own expressive tendencies, convulsions which inch us toward the screen and delay our blinking eyelids in anticipation of a spectacle. With this, the feedback loop adds another layer: We see the smiling faces and passing landscapes overlaid with the pulsing distortions of their projectors, but alongside these rhythmic memories we also feel the basso continuo of our hearts beating and our chests rising with each inhaled breath. In this orchestra of vitality, life courses through our veins as through the wires before us.

Campbell’s narratives are not stories but, as Epstein would suggest, situations, spatial scenarios not defined by a linear structure but by the collection of apparitions and their apparatuses in our continuously lived present.\textsuperscript{159} The interference imposed upon these photographs and movies does not offer a clear picture; rather, resolution is sacrificed for a productive resistance, one which generates a human compulsion to make familiar these traces of other people’s pasts. It is here that Barthes’ lost \textit{interfuit} becomes animated as visual \textit{interference}, a resistance in the cinematic current which blends the

\textsuperscript{159} Epstein, 242.
machine with its illusion and the viewer’s own sense awareness. As conductors of these electro-emotional charges, we must accept the images along with their interruptions. In doing so, we operate not as a difference engine, but as a machine which collects memories different from our own and processes them through the familiar and intensely human compulsion to recollect. Tolstoy tells us that “all happy families are alike, but every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” If so, then it is these recognizably joyous moments of radiant smiles and ecstatic waves toward the camera which Campbell’s electric systems prompts us to see as universal. Alive with the feeling of gazing upon these emotional totems, we exhale in syncopation with a mother’s smile. We lean our bodies forward with an energy that rhymes with the electric hum of the projector’s motor. We invest these glowing, familial testimonies on screen with our own equally warm affection.

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Chapter 4: Exposed Cinemas: The Projecting Spectators of Janet Cardiff George Bures-Miller

Introduction

One enters Janet Cardiff (b. 1957) and George Bures-Miller’s (b. 1960) *The Paradise Institute* only after traversing the doors and hallways of the gallery in which it is constructed. First erected at the Canadian Pavilion of the 2001 Venice Biennale, visitors walk through the bright walls and wide corridors of these exhibition spaces to find a polygonal structure (fig. 4.1). The largest part of this construction is a rectangular room roughly ten feet high and 36 feet long. Its shorter, eight-foot-wide sides are attached with two staircases leading up to two separate doors, one about a foot lower than the other. Another block section extends from one of the room’s long sides, a trapezoidal appendage beginning about a foot below its ceiling and sloping down several feet before dropping to the ground. The building’s bare, beige plywood façade suggests that the exterior is pragmatic, an exposed shell whose lack of adornment builds anticipation for something more significant hiding inside. Across the threshold of its elevated doorways, visitors find two rows of red velvet theater seats illuminated by a receding strip of lights down its front aisle. Upon entering this simulacrum of a standard multiplex interior, each attendee takes a seat to face a communal screen and an individual pair of headphones. The visual portion of this installation is thus physically separated from its audio
components, requiring the spectator to handle and wear the headset that will connect each participant more intimately to this semi-autonomous cinematheque.

Once seated, the lights lower, the foam coverings of the headsets press against the ears, and a familiar image appears on screen: a black-and-white interior of a movie theater, much larger than the one presently inhabited by the spectators (fig. 4.2). Within this rear-projected video, a dim light radiates from the interior screen at its center, tracing the patterned molding of its frame and highlighting a smooth floor in front of it. The light skips the area just below, indicating a raised proscenium, but across this gap it seeps into the double aisles and across the armrests of individual seats, creating a pixeled array of light and dark beneath the screen. The area above is dark, but laterally the light radiates across the side balconies. Within this shadowbox tableaux, the projected odeon’s surfaces take on an illuminated gray, like polished steel. In addition to the crispness of the image, its raised point of view also suggests a hyperreal relation to the miniature theater where the viewer sits, like a virtual extension of the plywood construction. Sitting in the front row, one imagines themselves in the balcony of this projected theater, looking over an expansive – and apparently empty – ground floor section with three aisles of seats. Two upper wings flank the cinema screen which covers the horizon for us, as it would for the presumed spectators who will fill this artificial auditorium. As viewers, we are thus positioned as both an audience member in Cardiff’s installation and one in the projected auditorium on screen.

Now seated, one participates in the installation as if in a traditional theater screening. The central screen-within-a-screen begins to flicker, an entrée into a 13-minute black-and-white movie created by the artists. Cardiff and Miller describe this embedded
film as a mixture of several genres, “part noir, part thriller, part sci-fi, and part experimental.”161 This dual audience experience becomes even more tightly tethered with the addition of Cardiff’s audio, which consists mostly of ambient theater noise and audience chatter around soundtrack of the film itself. A nurse on screen beckons to someone in the film “It’s time to wake up now,” but another voice seems to come from the auditorium itself: “I think I read about this film.” Coughs, laughs, and chatter compete with the film’s soundtrack, all of which reaches the spectator through a binaural recording. That is, the headsets transmit a sonic soundscape, recorded by Cardiff through a special microphone with two receivers. This mechanism essentially records sound in stereo, mimicking the sonic dimensions of one’s ears as if they sat in an auditorium like the one projected on screen. The ambient noises thus connote activity outside of the narrative film, but also a fictional space that seems to extend behind our shoulders.

A screen-within-a-screen and a projected auditorium-within-an-auditorium establishes a cascading terrace of illusory and physical viewing spaces. However, the artificial whispers of nearby spectators and other audio ephemera animate this room. We sit in a physical space with a projected annex whose parameters bleed into each other. Like its visual framework suggests, the installation is a cinematic experience about the cinematic experience. Unlike Douglas Gordon and Jim Campbell, who I have discussed in previous chapters, Cardiff and Miller – Canadian installation artists who I will henceforth refer to as Cardiff, the name most associated with and heard in the installations – offer an expansion of cinematic practices which are not completely open-

ended. The plywood theater fully encloses Cardiff’s multimedia installation, whose disparate parts cohere in the familiar experience of a feature film screening. Nevertheless, the borders between physical screen, projected auditorium, and projected screen persist, resulting in a cinematic screening that is segmented into telescoping frames of reality – the film *The Paradise Institute* which exists within the multimedia installation of the same name. The headsets produce a startlingly spatialized soundscape in which one can distinguish in space between dialogue of the film’s characters, ambient noise, and conversations from seemingly nearby audience members who are not actually present. Viewers experience a virtual audience, a sonic frame of fictional spectators sharing in the film that only belatedly occupies the screen.

The film within *The Paradise Institute*, like the familiar setting of the installation itself, trades on its recognizable tropes. Triggered by our knowledge of genre conventions, we fill in the gaps between eerie roadsides and surreptitious remarks from one-sided telephone conversations. Moreover, the illusory theater projects our cinematic experience on screen, displacing our presence into the virtual auditorium. In this way, I agree with Jim Ellis that *The Paradise Institute* is not quite absorptive. Rather than simply made aware of the surrounding space, “you are made conscious of the way this drama is playing itself out in your head, and that you are the apparatus of synthesis for the illusion.”

In what follows, I will explore this contained expansion of the cinematic experience, after which I will discuss Cardiff’s site-specific installation *Her Long Black Hair*, a walking tour through Central Park which animates the spectator within an audio

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narrative. This walk, too, provides a headset for each individual spectator, but the Discman to which they are attached allows for bodily movement within the soundscape. Both works isolate and expand components of the cinematic apparatus, and neither is technically a work of cinema. And yet the classical cinematic system provides the grounding for both works, and it is tethered together through the mobile participation of the viewer.

**The Paradise on Screen**

Above, I have described the physical conditions of *The Paradise Institute* and the experience of entering into it. However, after one chooses a staircase, sidles down the row of chairs, and takes a seat, that experience transitions to a more stationary and front-facing cinematic situation. Even if surrounded by fifteen other spectators, the headsets create a physical barrier between other patrons, a harness which replaces the sonic ambience of the plywood theater with that of the vast auditorium we see projected before us. The two rows of solid chairs give way to the more intense visual projection of nine grayscale rows, separated into three aisles. The twenty-foot screen only feet from our faces also dematerializes into the plunging depth of an auditorium with ribboned balconies and its own fixed rectangular wall of light. The reality of the constructed theater fades into the periphery and becomes a conditional support for the fictional world inset within. Of course, the tension of the seat springs and the warmth of the bodies compressed inside the installation never fully dissipate. Yet those sensations are contextualized by the projection on screen: a theater which screens a fragmented narrative movie. The lived space of *The Paradise Institute* recedes into the viewing of the
film of the same name, whose persistent cinematheque backdrop in turn recalls the physical components that surround our bodies – the chair, the headset, and the confined room. In what follows, I will focus on the narrative within Cardiff’s installation. I detail this cinematic experience to then show how watching a filmic text becomes an expanded, spatial, and embodied sensory experience in the larger Paradise Institute installation.

The audio of the viewer’s headset provides the initial stimuli that leads us into the narrative register of the projection. Footsteps abound, coughing startles, and a woman laughs before a cacophony of chatter ensues: “Where is she?” “Who are you?” “And…what do you do?” These voices do not belong to anybody present in the installation, but they do seem surprisingly familiar in this theater setting. Suddenly, amid this noisy proscenium projection, a movie begins to play on the screen-within-a-screen. A glowing, purplish gray field animated with the commotion of scratches and spots that signal the leader film which guides the projectionist and precedes the feature. Of course, the low ceiling and headset cables in the actual theater are still visible, but the fluttering screen-within-a-screen situates viewers squarely in a mode of cinematic spectatorship. Shortly after the flickering begins, the interior screen goes to black, and a man’s voiceover seems to pour out across the theater space. This blank screen gives way to several black-and-white close-ups of a man in bed with closed eyes in some nightmarish throes. These images soon turn to a nurse looking down upon the foot of the bed and speaking to the man. However, just as this hospital scene begins to cohere as a narrative space, another second of black void interrupts the continuity with a long, nighttime shot of a van driving across a valley surrounded by sloping hills.
That initial *medias res* of the hospital is thus blocked from further development, where it sits as a brief glimpse of a recovering patient (fig. 4.3). This amnesiac, war hero, or other Hollywood trope remains just that: a fragment that offers just enough information to trigger the viewer’s archive of Hollywood genres and characters. The furtive, night driver likewise ends without a closeup to identify the character and relieve our anxiety, as in the final stage of suture. The following cabaret singer image cuts to a reverse-shot of an overweight man on the phone, asking for updates on a situation in a deviously deliberate German accent. But this menacing sequence then cuts to another establishing shot, possibly of the hospital but too vague to be certain. Ultimately, every few seconds introduces a shot that seems to abbreviate the sequence before it, as if the editor has cut to a scene that belongs later in the film.

Cardiff’s film lives in the generic, a mode that withholds information but, in doing so, prompts us to make connections with what little we have. Most obviously, the black-and-white stock and quiet uneasiness of its sequences are suggestive of Hollywood *film noir*, especially darker and more threatening fare in the 1950s like Robert Aldrich’s *Kiss Me Deadly* (U.S., 1955) and Orson Welles’s *Touch of Evil* (U.S., 1959). At the same time, the gloss which permeates Cardiff’s images signals a more contemporary, digital era of filmmaking. This visual style suggests an entirely different era of directors who look back to the classical Hollywood tradition while also experimenting with newer digital formats. Resemblances to David Lynch, for instance, occur as early as the digitally superimposed scratches that approximate the film’s celluloid emulsion. That uncanny

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Lynchian archaicism also adds a sinister and supernatural surrealism to these already seedy scenes.

The film within *The Paradise Institute* compounds these overlapping references, but, more significantly, its fragmentary nature deploys the associations in effective ways. A voice-over seems to establish a protagonist, but that introduction fails to cohere. Instead, a series of indirectly related sequences arrive in equal intervals: a disoriented patient awakes in a hospital, a car drives in the desert at night, a house burns. Without an organic rhythm to its editing, the film remains floating in the imagination of the viewer, now become the (possibly) amnesiac patient on screen. We even wonder if those indirect relations between shots are as apparent as they seem. Do we put in work for the film, hoping that its pieces come together into something whole? It could be that one recognizes the insistent tedium of a dark American road, even claims it for a tradition of mysterious cinema, without anchoring the image in Hollywood *noir* past or present. In fact, Lynch and Spillane could be only a faint tingle on the tip of one’s tongue while the spectator still untangles the morass of atmosphere and mood established by these black-and-white sequences. These cinematic origins are most potent in the general, and *The Paradise Institute* allows that potency to affect its viewer. Cardiff calls the narrative “Cubist,” and its fragments cannot help but evoke muddled half-rememberings of genres, a tapestry of generalizations that wallpaper the viewer’s experience much like the persistent visual frame of the empty auditorium.\(^{164}\)

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The places that contextualize the narrative of *The Paradise Institute* are presented as generic types, like the abbreviated story itself. Were it a feature length film, we might expect a double-cross, an anonymous tip, the severe incapacitation of our protagonist. Here, we have only the seeds which cultivate these expectations. They are not filmed but hang in a pulpy, shadow-laced anticipation. As these traditional plot points are given over to pure tone and atmosphere, the mise-en-scène itself channels their implied presence. An actor’s stoic face hides but still suggests the double-cross that never comes. A shadowy figure outlines a hidden identity that will never be revealed. However, these objects enact acute moments of pointed inference in our imaginations. More consistently, the *noir* devices that Hollywood has conditioned us to expect from such a film move through the locations themselves. The fragmentary narrative of *The Paradise Institute* makes setting more than just backdrop for action. These spaces begin to frame our interpolations of character relationships and plot points.

With set decoration playing such a heightened role in Cardiff’s projection, we might consider them as signifiers of *noir* themes that simultaneously inform the experience of spectatorship itself, as emblematized by the darkened theater. The seated spectator, strapped in by the cables of the headphones, is distracted from the chair in front of them. But those furnishings are replaced by their multiplied doppelgangers on screen, alongside the dark two-lane, the desert highway, and the dreary hospital. Vivian Sobchack borrows Mikhail Bakhtin’s term “chronotope” to label these typical sites of *noir* narratives, places which “serve as the spatiotemporal currency between two different orders of existence and discourse, between the historicity of the lived world and the
literary world (here, the world of cinema).” 165 Cardiff trades on the power of these black- and-white settings to situate us in a cinematic tradition, but these pieces do more than simply look back to film history. Rather, we take these references as raw material to construct narrative meaning for the loose story before us. The installation’s narrative core also abstains from any conventional framing of the production with opening credits. Indeed, without a title card to introduce the film, we passively adopt for it the only nearby proper name available by association: that of the installation itself, The Paradise Institute. The term “institute” proves most pliable as both a formal organization and, by synecdoche, the buildings in which they function. Cinema itself has been theorized as an institution – as opposed to its textual counterpart, “film” – with the movie theater as its brick-and-mortar manifestation. Cardiff’s title is suggestive of her film locations but never explicitly named. Without firm anchoring of the title in the diegesis, “Paradise Institute” becomes more evocative of the cinematic experience itself, illustrating D.N. Rodowick’s assertion that “When film disappears, cinema persists.” 166

I would argue that The Paradise Institute overlays its noir-inspired locations with its own signature chronotope: the movie theater. Indeed, the cavernous hospital which initiates us into Cardiff’s film has the same high-ceiling openness as the hyperreal theater, rendered in sharp enough quality to convince us that the screen we face is traversable.

166 D.N. Rodowick, The Virtual Life of Film (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007), ix.
Hiroshi Sugimoto captures this symbiotic visualization of auditorium and screen in his *Theater* photographs, which use long exposures to document entire films from the back-wall perspective of the projector booth. In *Metropolitan Orpheum, Los Angeles* (1993), the former vaudeville theater’s projector provides a diffuse light which reveals the unbroken horseshoe of the proscenium arch, the beaded tracing of the lunettes on the ceiling, and the two vertical speakers affixed like horns to the top of the screen (fig. 4.4). The exposures are timed to the duration of the film shown, which turns its screen to a radiating bright white. This rectangle of light extinguishes the film but illuminates the architecture of the cinema, a reversal of the traditional screening which uses the dim theater to provide contrast for projected images. As a result, the theater becomes the subject of the image. Sugimoto’s still camera inverts the film projector, shifting focus to the screening room, a space necessarily invisible for the cinematic experience. His expansive exposure performs in miniature the representation of the Orpheum in films throughout cinema history. One can see the marquee in a street scene of Rudolph Mate’s *D.O.A.* (U.S., 1949), the backstage in *Barton Fink* (Ethan and Joel Coen, U.S., 1991), or the stage itself, again coated in black-and-white to recreate the premier of *Plan 9 from Outer Space* in Tim Burton’s *Ed Wood* (Tim Burton, U.S., 1994). Lynch’s *Inland Empire* (U.S., 2006) features Laura Dern strolling through the Orpheum aisles as she watches herself on screen in a *Paradise Institute* doubling.\textsuperscript{167} Cardiff’s installation, through it extends beyond its screen, allows its viewers to explore the theater auditorium in tandem with the projected image.

The Paradise Institute projects a visual synthesis of the cinematic as both object and situation. Furthermore, by aligning our own spectating gaze with that of the implied audience, the film at its center is mediated through the framework of a fictional audience. There is no reverse shot or alternate angle, nor do we ever see the bodies that occupy these rows, even as a front-facing silhouette. With her projected auditorium on screen, Cardiff does not just offer us a mirror, for our own displaced bodies would quell the illusion quickly. Turned 180-degrees to match our own point-of-view, the images in The Paradise Institute propose that we might walk through the looking glass to the other side. In front of Cardiff’s second-row spectator, the first set of seats merges into the black-and-white auditorium projected on screen. The structure of Cardiff’s installation thus leans emphatically forward, resembling not a mirror but a tunnel, an open viaduct which ends not in exterminating brightness but in a fluctuation of shadow and light. Here, I would amend Josette Feral’s characterization of The Paradise Institute as causing the spectator to “seesaw” between the real and fictional. Instead, I argue that the cinematic effects are notably synthesized in a continuous, if uncanny, sensation. Moreover, the continuity of Cardiff’s illusory auditorium with our own creates a portal rather than a terminus. Hence, the extension of the theater from actual to illusory continues in that forward direction. In this way, the projected theater of The Paradise Institute itself projects, continuing the trajectory of our attention toward the vanishing point occluded by the fictional narrative on screen. The screen covers the horizon, and yet it also absorbs our gaze within its fragments of plot and sequence.

In fact, the grayscale aisles resemble our space so much that we might crane our necks to peek into the crevices between chairs, searching for the noir viewer as a character in its own story of cinephilia. Of course, we will not be able to penetrate the corners of this flat image. And yet, by conjuring in us the possibility that we might navigate this illusory space, that spectral spectator does appear: not as a photographic image, but in the tensing of our own muscles as we shift to gain a better view. We gaze forward into this doubled cinemateque, and by inhabiting that artificial theater, we also embody the fictional spectator that is never seen. Here, we do not just imagine what it would feel like to occupy the space between the grisaille theater and its noir feature. That question is answered by our very bodies as we ask it. Proprioception, when entrenched so intensely in a cinematic frame of screen and seat, could more appropriately be called projection, as whatever muscular impulse we feel is constantly paired with the movements we follow on screen. While no bodies appear in that deluxe theater, their voices vividly echo the same spectating action with which we are preoccupied in Cardiff’s installation.

The Soundscape of the Cinema

The Paradise Institute stages a theater as both an on-screen place and off-screen room for exhibition. In its cultivation of the general, The Paradise Institute constructs a porous system, one that makes room for its viewer’s imagination, but also their body. Even the installation’s two-word title was a collaborative effort by its two artists, an exquisite corpse as evocative as its Cubist film. It is noteworthy, then, that the

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169 Kolle, 17.
installation’s primary device for activating this multilayered space is neither visual nor haptic. Rather, it is sound which propels the unique cinematic mechanism of The Paradise Institute. In what follows, I will unpack the sonic components of Cardiff’s installation and argue that sound’s inherent qualities make it the most appropriate agent for engaging this porous structure and activating its framework of expansion and absorption.

As I will show, sound moves freely between the more strictly delineated visual registers of The Paradise Institute. However, it is also notable that sound precedes image in the central screen. Before the gloomy hospital or the arid roadside, the screen is dark and provides minimal light for its surrounding auditorium. Among a soft cacophony of coughing and chatter, the screen of this artificial theater begins to flicker like the marked-up leader of a film reel. Much like the sonic mélange of an orchestra tuning before an overture, the audience noise concentrates into a pregnant silence and an attentive energy, punctuated by a bright flash and a single voice who whispers, “Shhh, it’s starting.” The theater disappears in darkness.

In this few seconds of blackness, the soundtrack shifts from audience ambience to the sounds of a narrative film. A child’s singing alongside piano accompaniment grows in volume as the audience rustling diminishes. The music is diffused across the sonic space of the headphones, unlike the pointed directionality of the coughs and laughs before. However, it is unclear whether the score comes from the inner-screen or the projected auditorium. Only context allows one to assume the former. The saturated glow of this lullaby is soon overlaid by the precise clomps of leather shoes making contact with a hard floor and the scraping that connects one step to the other. Is this part of the film, or a late
comer rushing to their seats? These clues come together with the addition of a male voice, whose reverberation echoes through the sound mix and fills up more sonic space for the listener, suggesting the wide of a surround-sound system. The voice’s humming tenor further excavates the projected space of the auditorium, but it also establishes the identity of the speaker as a character in the movie played within the fictional theater. This voice-over guides us through the dim screen, matching sounds to potential images much like the fictional audience would find solace within their dark surroundings: “I heard a man pass by under my window last night. I listened to hist footsteps as they faded into the distance,” it contemplates.

At these last words, an on-screen image appears, and only here does the screen catch up to the soundtrack. The close-up of a man in a restless sleep offers a viable landing spot for the voice-over. A subsequent wide shot of a hospital retroactively provides a suitable home for the echoing footsteps. As the camera pulls back, sounds settle within the diegetic world. The ambient soundtrack thus navigates the threshold between actual and fictional audience, but it also ushers in the central visual component, as well as another layer of projected reality. Like the inset film of *The Paradise Institute*, these initial moments parcel out fragments of information for the viewer to organize into a viable meaning. A stray sound and a glimpse of an interior attract one another in this open sea of stimuli, and we compulsively connect them. The soundtrack of *The Paradise Institute* thus proves more dynamic than its visuals, as sounds emerge from various spatial positions and seem at times to navigate between the diegetic *noir* places and the meta-narrative space of the dark theater.
Above, I emphasize the visual structure of *The Paradise Institute* as forward-looking and that this strong directionality focuses the various registers of the installation – the narrative film and the meta-diegetic spectatorship – within the position of cinematic viewing. Sound, however, complicates this visual directionality. As I have described, asynchronous sound like the footsteps maintain an ambiguity without a concrete visual counterpart. Nevertheless, the evocative quality of this produced sound effect compels us to guess its location, whether in the theater or the film. Cardiff obscures her sounds’ visual counterparts intermittently, or decisively in the case of the hidden audience members of the projected theater. With this maneuver, the artist forces us to rely more intensely on the sonic traces to map out the spaces before us.

Michael Chion pinpoints footsteps as exemplary of sound’s tendency to extend the fictional world on screen, though in an indeterminate way. “[W]e recognize a human step,” he says, “but we have no precise image of the person walking, even whether it’s a man or a woman.”\(^{170}\) Narrative cinema often exploits sound’s ability to transgress strict boundaries of space and time, most notably in a “sound bridge.” This type of sonic connector occurs when the soundtrack pertaining to one scene or image is still audible in the subsequent shot. Classical continuity editing implements this sonic glue to emphasize continuity between two shots. In *The Paradise Institute*, the hospitalized man’s voice occurs during a black screen but continues seamlessly when the man’s face appears. The first moments of dialogue thus function as a prelude to the image, which catches up with the audio track soon after. Unseen footsteps also suggest a bridge, though one between on-screen and off-, rather than from one image to the next. In *The Paradise Institute*,

however, the sound unifies elements across two different axes. That is, the dialogue
tethers one shot of the linear filmstrip to the next, but it also reaches outward into the
fictional audience by attaching extra-diegetic narration to the on-screen world of the
hospital.

Sound’s natural expansiveness weaves throughout the structure of The Paradise
Institute. The installation itself is an open space for directed viewing. However, its
projected visual components emerge through intermittent darkness, and through each
other’s obstructive tendences. The limiting frame of the camera lens and the abbreviating
edit from one scene to another add to the dark corners of the hyperreal theater to
construct a system that reveals and obscures simultaneously. While I have discussed this
tension between the visible and invisible in previous chapters, I argue that Cardiff
implements sound as an active component that travels between these registers and
ultimately tethers them together. In fact, sound elaborates a spatial fiction in The
Paradise Institute while simultaneously compressing its narrative layers around the body
of the viewer. In this way, Cardiff’s prioritized sonic element offers a sensory corollary to
the mental projection of its spectator, who rearranges the installation’s myriad pieces into
an interconnected whole.

Sound’s invisibility makes it a conduit for passing between walls, or here between
the designated visual registers: shot, scene, sequence, screen, screened auditorium, and
our plush velvet seats. It has been pointed out that “paradise” derives from the Persian for
a “walled-in space.”171 Yet The Paradise Institute imposes sound as an agent of chaos

171 Andrew V. Uroskie, Between the Black Box and the White Cube (University of Chicago Press, 2014)
that pointedly disrupts these boundaries. As sound transcends these cascading segments and reaches out into our world, it also connects them, leaving sonic breadcrumbs that link diegesis to its shadowy meta-spectators. Chion says that “sound seeks its place,” suggesting a predisposition of sound to home in on a visible corollary. Cardiff sustains these uncertain moments, forcing her spectator to constantly connect threads. Does a footstep belong to the film? Or the fictional audience? Could it be another visitor entering the installation itself? Kaja Silverman suggests a complementary tendency that unmoored sound “carves out space.” One might say that when sound does not synchronize, it projects outward in a chaotic array of open passages. In *The Paradise Institute*, both sides of this tension are at work. Disparate trajectories of sounds traverse these fluid barriers and touch down in our decidedly tangible space.

The intermediary film theater is at once an established visual artifice and a doubled extension of our own surroundings. However, unlike the *noir* fantasy on screen, the auditorium does not change. There is no repositioning of the camera and, more significantly, no reverse-shot to complete the environment for us. The traditional theater schematic does not encourage us to look behind our backs. Instead, as I discuss with *24 Hour Psycho*, that spatial closure is complete in the visual register of the projected image. However, with this static theater imposed between us and the film, that questionable space of the over-our-shoulder again becomes palpable.

In previous chapters, I have invoked Silverman’s conception of suture theory and the characterization of shot/reverse-shot editing structure as a device to orient the viewer

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172 Chion, 68.
within the cinematic world. Silverman has notably also described the withholding of a reverse-shot as a sort of crisis for the viewer, who is restrained and stranded in the forward view without knowledge of what, or whom, might be behind them.\textsuperscript{174} Here, that inability to turn one’s head is compounded by another perceptual absence, that of the disembodied voices and ambient noise of the recorded audience. Mary Ann Doane describes this discontinuity of asynchronous sound in similarly destructive terms: a “fissure,” a rupture which opens up the on-screen world into the expanded world of the extra-diegetic and, further, even the cinematic apparatus itself.\textsuperscript{175} Of course, The Paradise Institute insistently frames one particular aspect of the cinematic apparatus: not the camera or projector, but the venue of spectatorship itself. As such, Cardiff’s installation expands the traditional cinematic schema into the spectator’s world, but it does so by including our surroundings on its screen. As a logical extension of that on-screen theater, our bodies lie just off-screen in the wings.

As noted above, sound can stretch beyond the concrete visuals of the film to suggest extended space. I offer that The Paradise Institute does the same with its recorded audience as it infringes upon the literal theater. The unchanging theater may reinforce our body’s sense of constraint. Sound, however, provides a surrogate to the visual reverse-shot. The off-screen space projected by an echoing footstep or the crunching of popcorn here becomes a place of refuge. Silverman has characterized asynchronous sounds like voice-off as a sonic analogy of the reverse-shot. She suggests that sound can prompt us to refocus our attention beyond the screen images, especially

\textsuperscript{174} Silverman, \textit{Acoustic}, 45.
when audio is notably absent. If a film suddenly goes silent, we are prompted to “look elsewhere” for a voice, such is the power of anticipated synchronization. In a narrative film, that “elsewhere” might be the expectation of some subsequent shot that accounts for the anomaly, or even the post-production booth in which the director cuts and splices. In *The Paradise Institute*, the static shot of the theater provides this impetus for the viewer to “look elsewhere,” and Cardiff provides a visual representation of that ambiguous realm in a theater that belongs to both the film and to our physical surroundings. The footsteps of Cardiff’s audio track initiate offscreen space, one beyond the image which nevertheless attaches itself to the visible hospital. This nondiegetic sound comments on the narrative and contextualizes its images, but its environment is ambiguous, even invisible. Indeed, Chion imagines these nondiegetic sources as part of the theater auditorium, “an imaginary orchestra pit (nondiegetic music) or on a sort of balcony, the place of voiceovers.” *The Paradise Institute* gives an onscreen image to this otherwise offscreen non-space.

In Cardiff’s installation, that “acoustic mirror,” the invisible but audible sign of extended space *beyond* the screen, here sounds more like the extended space *behind* our own bodies. Through this sonic reflection, the edited reverse-shot thus manifests in physical and imminent space in *The Paradise Institute*. As such, we might see the installation as using classical cinematic maneuvers to imagine the continuation of a diegetic space which mimics our actual surroundings. Of course, this echo of the last wall of the theater wall is not visually concrete, but the constellation of sounds provides a firm

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177 Chion, 69.
scaffolding for our imaginations. Like the traditional theater experience that it imitates, *The Paradise Institute* does not encourage us to physically turn around. Furthermore, the voices themselves reaffirm this doubling of our spectatorship within the field of vision. Their voices do not suggest an authority dictating our restrained experience in the theater. In fact, some pose questions or recollections – for instance, “I think it’s based on a true story… or maybe that was another movie.” These comments convey an uncertainty and half-distraction that again mirrors our own attention in this expansive web of sensations. Like the reverse-shot of the camera, this echo resolves space for us, orienting us within the narrative of this hyperreal theater which just so happens to correspond to our immediate bodily experience.

If we consider the sonic extension of space in *The Paradise Institute* as a corollary to the ruptures of spectatorship posited by Silverman and Doane, then we must also consider how acutely Cardiff’s sounds are focused around the human body. Silverman, Doane, and Chion place particular significance on the voice in their theories of cinematic sounds. Likewise, the most potent soundbites in Cardiff’s installation are spoken words. One might argue that even ambient sounds like cell phone rings and honking horns are as indexical of human activity as the patter of footsteps. In this way, the disembodied voices function like a cinematic voice-off of the metadiegetic image of the hyperreal theater. Again, *The Paradise Institute* frames our own spectatorship as a projected fiction.

Silverman suggests that the most pointed off-screen sounds can function as “structural absences” in the story. The distant screams of Mrs. Bates and Norman’s cries to her in *Psycho*, for instance, encircle an invisible presence which stands in for the plot’s central
mystery. In The Paradise Institute, however, those invisible bodies sound intimately nearby. Furthermore, they seem to be engaged in the same activity as us: watching the film. And so the absence of visual references for the audience noise does not confuse Cardiff’s spectator, but rather it reframes for us our own bodies as an on-screen event. As such, we can gaze around the plywood interior of The Paradise Institute as a character in the film, looking out and seeing the limits of the screen that holds them. The structuring absences in The Paradise Institute are surrogates for us, displaced to our side and a row or two back. These bodies we hear but cannot see, in fact, are as invisible as our own during the absorptive cinematic experience. As structuring absences, the audience chatter outlines in sound a cinematic support for our own bodies, sonic cushions that prop up our backs like the chairs we sit in. These invisible spectators thus structure the main plot of The Paradise Institute: our own spectatorship. We are participants in the narrative itself, even if only the one just outside the noir film.

The sounds of The Paradise Institute suggest hidden corners in the very tight space we occupy. Chatter fills in the gaps of our environment through room tone that sonically suggests the size of the space. More importantly, those sounds indicate that other bodies occupy the same theater. Their utterances are sonic evidence of companions in spectatorship, effectively constructing space by describing a communal activity of cinematic engagement. Again, it is theatergoing as a shared multisensory experience which the various components of Cardiff’s installation articulate.

The delineation of space by way of the bodies therein also has particular resonance with Doane’s theory of cinematic sound. For her, asynchronous sound does not

178 Silverman, Acoustic, 48.
just rupture the diegesis of the film in an abstract way. Instead, Doane characterizes Silverman’s “structuring absences” as a “mise-en-scène of bodies.” An off-screen entity evoked by an unmoored voice does not just signify a diegetic character that exists in an expanded illusionistic space. The fact that these bodies emerge through an aporia in the film’s audio-visual synchronization means that they also signify the film’s hidden apparatuses. More precisely, she labels these off-screen entities as part of a “fantasmatic body… a body reconstituted by the technology and practices of the cinema” and “which offers a support as well as a point of identification for the subject addressed by the film.” The fantasmatic body is at once a diegetic character and a humanized form of cinema’s mechanical supports.

Doane speaks of the corporeal apparatus metaphorically, but Cardiff’s signature surround sound makes that image literal. Her binaural sound effects a lived space because it reflects the humanoid microphone that recorded it. This equipment features two miniature microphones are situated within the mold of a human head. Thus, the spacing of the microphones remains at a constant, calculated distance that mimics the physical location of human ears, effectively allowing Cardiff to record in stereo, not just transmit. As a result, any sound recorded, no matter how pointed or isolated, is environmentally situated like a sonic tapestry. Moreover, Cardiff’s combination of neo-noir and auditorium visuals reiterate the familiar humanity of the fantasmatic body: They sound human, but they also sound just like us. The Paradise Institute thus urges us to play the

179 Doane, 37.
180 Doane, 34.
fantasmatic body. As such, we sense in ourselves the just-beyond of the screen, but also the sense of the mechanical contrivances that make up the cinematic experience.

In *The Paradise Institute*, sound expands the space of the theater, reiterating the room that contains our own bodies. However, those same sounds also describe the fantasmatic bodies of invisible spectators in that same room, companions who are displaced from our bodies and yet mimic our own. Sound thus creates other bodies, but as models that mirror our own presence. Christian Metz offers a similarly bifurcated structure of viewer identification which corresponds to Doane’s fantasmatic body: Spectators identify with the visible bodies of characters on screen, but also with the camera itself as an entity with similar visual capabilities as our own. Of course, the latter suggests a body that we cannot see but which we inhabit more intimately. In *The Paradise Institute*, that invisible body is not revealed completely, but it is outlined by the murmurs heard nearby. By identifying these off-screen characters as viewers themselves, *The Paradise Institute* synthesizes these modes of identification. The implied bodies just around our shoulders allow us to experience the cinematic event as a viewed object and as a viewing subject. Thus, Cardiff does not just collapse the spaces of viewership – diegetic, extradiegetic, and spectatorial; by constructing imagined space around our periphery in terms of imagined bodies, she also collapses the first- and third-person perspectives onto our immediate sensations. This film’s extras emerge only in passing whispers, the practiced mutterings of background actors which bolster our role as protagonists.

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As I have described above, *The Paradise Institute* expands the cinematic image with sound, only to contract that extended illusion within our own bodily sense of presence. The plywood theater may support our physical bodies within the installation, but sound projects a deluxe movie palace around our backs. Ultimately, I argue here that *The Paradise Institute* depends upon its invisible theatergoers as a device which allows us to project our own embodied spectatorship as nearby but invisible other. As acoustic mirrors, their whispers expand the theater, enfolding us in the fiction by orienting our bodies in the presumption of its hidden corners. In effect, this echolocation is an analog to visual shot/reverse-shot structures which traditionally orient the viewer’s sense their own bodies in space. In this way, our sense of physical embodiment is molded by the nearby voices. Our manufactured companions are surrogate spectators, off-screen characters who mirror our own actions. However, they also signify the apparatus of cinematic recording itself.

The phantom theatergoers heard in *The Paradise Institute* mediate the film for Cardiff’s viewer. Ultimately, these nearby spectators are surrogates for many different aspects of the cinematic experience. They are at once signs of the recording process, a testament to its ability to conjure a fantasy diegetic world, and our own scripted roles as viewers. As a result, the cinematic text of the installation is not just the fragmented film at its center, but a depiction of spectatorship itself. Above, I have invoked psychoanalytic film theory to support the primacy of the body in this cinematic experience. Silverman suggests that sound can function like a reverse-shot to orient our bodies. Doane characterizes voice-off as a fantasmatic body that speaks for off-screen characters and the mechanical supports of film itself. Metz’s bifurcated models of identification also
resonates with the dual identity of Cardiff’s spectator: both us, here, and them, in the row behind us. Additionally, Roland Barthes’s divided cinematic spectator is both Narcissistic and perverse, fascinated with the absorptive illusion and its material details at once.\footnote{182}{Roland Barthes, “Leaving the Movie Theater,” in \textit{The Rustle of Language} (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 349.} Cardiff’s conflation of these spaces makes one feel as if they straddle both realms, constantly on the precipice of leaving the theater, even while firmly entrenched in their seat.

However, it is Vivian Sobchack that offers the most functional theory of bodily film spectatorship. Sobchack treats viewing itself as an act which transcends the body of the spectator and extends our fixed position in a gesture of potential mobility and displacement. Countering foundational film theories which frame the film as an object or text, her conception of the film as an entity, with faculties like the subjective viewer, renders the cinematic experience as a dialogue between viewer and film. Taking from Merleau-Ponty, she envisions our faculties of perception and expression to be reciprocal: “The body thus provides a \textit{commutative function} between my \textit{introceptivity} and the other’s \textit{exteriority} – that is, between seeing and being seen, between perception and its expression.”\footnote{183}{Vivian Sobchack, \textit{The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 125.} \textit{The Paradise Institute} illustrates this conception of film viewing as an open and reciprocal interaction between viewer and the film as a perceived other, in this case the obscured but detectable theatergoers heard through the headsets. Sobchack characterizes as human not just the \textit{apparatus}, but the filmic text itself. She thus provides
a turn from a psychoanalytic to a phenomenological theory, appropriate for an art installation that renders cinematic viewing as a multisensory experience.

As a hyperreal film of a theater also housed within a theater itself, Cardiff’s installation constructs a space both architectural and cinematic, focused on our own bodies. Sobchack’s theory does not prioritize sound; however, she does note that such off-screen elements of a film tend to be the most problematic for theorists who treat film as an objective visual text. Sobchack offers that off-screen sound can support the understanding of film as an entity, like Doane’s fantasmatic body, but counters that “the description of this ‘invisible’ cinematic space is rigorously objective – and does not extend to or include the space inhabited by the spectator.”

Yet this last caveat is exactly what Cardiff’s layered cinematheque adds to the traditional viewing experience. *The Paradise Institute* stages our own viewing experience as part of its cinematic text – and in such a multisensory and interactive fashion that it seems a misnomer to call it a “text” at all. Such a maneuver supports Sobchack’s notion of cinematic spectatorship as a dialogue between viewer and film, “a visual address always housed in the situated body experienced as ‘mine’ and yet always also able to extend itself to where the body is not.”

That is, the cinematic body is distinct from the viewer’s own, yet understood in terms of our imminent physical experience.

In terms of *The Paradise Institute*, we sense ourselves in the slightly displaced whispers behind us, but we do so through the immediate experience of our backs against the velvet seats. It is not enough that we watch the film, because that film is about the

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184 Sobchack, *Address*, 263.
people who are watching it. As an “interworld,” the theater forms a place of social exchange between its spectators and, following Sobchack’s cinematic theory, the film as an entity. The essential material of The Paradise Institute is, in fact, our bodies as they sense the elusive presence of others. Giuliana Bruno accurately calls this a “linking [of] introjection and projection.” The biological facts of our ears are present only insofar as they can receive the vibrations muttered by the woman answering her phone in Italian or filtered along the padded walls of the auditorium. Our skin, too, must anticipate the warmth emanating from the couple ruminating on their running stove, even if they only exist as sonic dents in the air. The negative space in our periphery is positively charged. Sobchack puts it cinematically: “Outside the realm of the visible, both the spectator’s expressed and intentional vision and the film’s visual perceptive body are ‘ghosts in the machine’ that produces cinematic meaning.”

We hear ourselves in these invisible companions, but more importantly it causes us to feel the viewing experience more urgently. Above, I described one’s sense of a back wall of a room behind our backs as a sort of support for the body, a limiting horizon only indirectly perceived. This notion of containment within a space becomes physically manifest in the pressure of our backs against the velvet chairs. Of course, these seats suspend our bodies for rapt attention toward the screen, but they also offer a grain of physical perception. The springs within the cushions push against our backs with a specific degree of tension. If we shift our bodies, we might note the density of the pile, or

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186 Sobchack, Address, 276.
188 Sobchack, Address, 263.
brush its surprising smoothness with the inside of our forearms. Sobchack borrows the term “echo focus” from the technological phenomenology of Don Ihde to label such tactile intersections between the human body and the cinematic mechanisms.\textsuperscript{189} The phrase itself suggests a two-directional movement, a repetition of outward sensory expansion that somehow also homes in on one’s physical body. For the filmmaker, a significant juncture occurs between the padding of the viewfinder and the socket of the director’s orbital bone. This slight pressure testifies to an “instrument-mediated perception as an extension of the spectator’s being.”\textsuperscript{190} Sobchack states that the projector does the same for the film viewer, although its “echo focus” is felt more diffusely, primarily in the visual edge of the screen. However, because Cardiff expands the cinematic text to include the viewer’s act of spectatorship, I would argue that more pointed, tactile sensations of pressure and resistance become part of \textit{The Paradise Institute}’s content.

In \textit{The Paradise Institute}, physical details do not just bolster the familiarity of the theatrical location as a framework; instead, felt sensations contribute to the cinematic illusion. Nowhere is that intersection of our bodies with fictional spectatorship more pointed than in the headphones pressing against our heads. The illusion of the theatrical setting necessitates these technical appendages, situated at the edge of our periphery as they provide the sounds of bodies that similarly avoid visibility. Tightness can be adjusted for comfort, but the pressure remains, as does the dry sponge of the foam coverings against our ears. After the initial hollow, underwater muting that occurs when

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\textsuperscript{189} Sobchack, \textit{Address}, 178. \\
\textsuperscript{190} Sobchack, \textit{Address}, 177.
\end{flushright}
flat surfaces make a seal against our ears, one might not notice the feel of the apparatus. However, their physical factuality becomes unavoidable were one to move out of the seat. The headphones are both projectors and restraints. They create the illusion while requiring that we remain even more static than in a traditional theater. In this way, the “echo focus” of The Paradise Institute guards its vivid fidelity like the shackles in Plato’s Cave. These voices seem real, and they make believable, if sometimes scripted, small talk. But were we to fall for the trick so much that we turn our heads to respond, the cables of the headset would announce with a jarring tautness how individual this cinematic experience truly is.

The apparatus of The Paradise Institute supports both spectacle and spectatorship at once. True, those off-screen utterances emanate from a quasi-diegetic realm, and they also speak to the apparatus that recorded it, which is to say their own artificiality. But these whispering others are also alter egos. That is, while we understand these sounds come from the hidden supports of the cinematic installation, we also understand that support as a human subject, not a textual object. Sobchack offers just such a model of cinematic spectatorship: one which literalizes the Doane’s metaphor of the film as a body. In The Paradise Institute, a woman quietly answering her phone also speaks to the dynamic range of the humanoid microphone that recorded it. We hear a simulation of the small talk of a distracted spectator straying from the community of silent spectacle seekers. In this last one, we hear an echo of our own voices.
The Other Side of *Paradise*

Staring ahead at Cardiff’s screen, the spectator of *The Paradise Institute* finds a fantastical expansion of their present surroundings. One watches the noir film simultaneously with the projected auditorium, and alongside sonic traces of phantom co-viewers. But what would it take for that anticipated movement to become action, without leaving the position of spectator? That same circular logic takes shape on film in Jean Cocteau’s *Orphée* (France, 1950), a modern retelling of the Orpheus and Eurydice story. The director’s major contribution to the myth is the gateway through which Orpheus passes to his surreal underworld to pursue Eurydice and Death: a permeable mirror, which allows the hero to walk forward into the same location from which he left (fig. 4.5). Cardiff’s cinematic screen functions in much the same way as Cocteau’s, facilitating not just reflection but also projection in the anticipation of a potential forward movement. We imagine ourselves crossing this threshold not with our eyes but on our skin. Cocteau’s mirror is also tactile. Presumably, Cocteau first intended to use water but abandoned the idea to search for a more viscous liquid, one that would not ripple in concentric circles.191 That fantastical solution became liquid mercury, toxic enough to require the actor Jean Marais to wear protective gloves for his fingers to pass through the rippling surface, a wardrobe necessity incorporated into the on-screen diegesis. Thus, like *The Paradise Institute*, the moment in *Orphée* collapses multiple diegetic and extradiegetic spaces: Orpheus’s Paris, its inverted underworld, and the set in which the

scene is shot. Moreover, its exaggerated first-person point of view situates us on the other end of Orpheus’s gloved hands (fig. 4.6).

Like Cocteau’s mirror, The Paradise Institute reflects a porous spectacle, one with the opportunity for passage by its spectator. The gaps which animate the cinematic illusion are not simply blank voids. These openings are less \textit{aporia}, and more \textit{lacuna}. Like the shimmering surface of a pool, a lacuna presents itself as a flattened image of the world, but one that is permeable, and even seduces us to plunge in with the promise of a refreshing sensation that engulfs our bodies. Like us, Cocteau’s Orpheus hears disembodied voices, electronic transmissions from the other side who speak cryptically of the shimmering lacuna: “A glass of water lights the world.” Unlike Narcissus, we would not need to confront our own mirrored faces should we decide to dive into the unknown. Instead, the radiating light from the cinematic screen beckons our bodies forward into a River Lethe, where we might emerge not in Paradise but a mesmerizing dreamworld.

\textit{The Paradise Institute} reflects on its screen the spectator’s own viewing environment. However, the doubled theater does not simply reaffirm the psychoanalytic conception of the screen as a mirror. Instead, the on-screen image of our surroundings without the inclusion of bodies in its aisles frames the projected as something to be moved through – to project, as it were, our own bodies into the open space created by projected light. We may not be able to physically perform this movement, but Cardiff’s audio-visual framework is enough to activate our bodies \textit{in anticipation of movement}. The soft mutterings of other spectating voices remind us that our bodies persist within the cinematic experience, and that we retain enough agency to move from our seats.
But what would it take for that anticipated movement to become action, without leaving the position of spectator? Even Lacan’s foundational writing on the “mirror stage” – a seminal metaphor for film theory from Mulvey to Sobchack – includes the anticipation of physical movement before the reflective glass. As children first recognizing ourselves, we “adopt a slightly leaning-forward position” toward our mirror image.192 This outpacing of the motor function does not just predict a future developmental stage; rather, the recognition of one’s own image manifests physically in the involuntary leaning forward of the subject. That eagerness is expressed by our mass against gravity but stops short of the glass threshold whose transgression we know would damage both the pleasurable illusion and our bodies. And yet, in this flourish of Lacan’s mirror metaphor, we might recognize a subtle but significant phenomenon of our cinematic engagement, as does Metz when he observes audiences jump at a film’s exciting scare or lean forward in anticipation of a resolution in a suspenseful scene.193 Hidden in the tightening of our muscles and the dilating of our eyes is a psychosomatic response to the cinema that confirms we are a part of it.

In Cardiff’s walking projects, the artist offers an expanded form of cinema which not only presents itself as a reflection of our world, but also allows us to pass through it onto the other side. Her Long Black Hair is a site-specific walk created by Cardiff along the southeast corner of Central Park in New York during the summer of 2005. Contemporaneous with Jean Claude and Christo’s The Gates project, Cardiff constructed her own Central Park installation with cinematic projection rather than industrial

193 Metz, 101.
materials. In fact, her material supports could be seen as elements of a traditional cinematic screening that are broken apart and made portable for the mobile viewer. Participants check out a packet from a kiosk, including five photographs, a map, and a Discman with a pair of headphones. The viewer is now an ambulator, attending to the public space as others, but within a quasi-alienating bubble of this private interface. Armed with the Discman and photographs, one is addressed by Cardiff herself: “It’s just after rain. The streets are still wet, but I think it’s stopped for a while. It’s loud here, isn’t it? When you’re in a city like New York, you have to think of all the sounds as a symphony, otherwise you go a bit crazy.” At this point, the sounds of carriage horses and traffic swell into a cacophonic storm of foley art expressive of Central Park South. Then, Cardiff continues, mildly, “I have some photographs to show you. Take out the first one.” It is a black-and-white image of this same street view (fig. 4.7).

In *The Paradise Institute*, Cardiff expands the cinematic experiment while still tethering that expanded space to the two-dimensional projected image. The cinema we watch becomes invaded by the presence of our own selves, watching. As a result, the film is not just about spectatorship in general, but about our own, current act of spectating. *Her Long Black Hair* uses many of the same expanded cinematic components, namely asynchronous binaural sound and images which reflect the exhibition environment. However, the walking installation isolates these elements into portable objects, breaking apart the cohesive theater experience more decidedly than in *The Paradise Institute*. As a result of this fracturing and expansion, our bodies step in to tether together this perceptual network. It is worth quoting Lutz Koepnick at length:

> In Cardiff’s work, the experience of presence and embodied perception doesn’t confine the walker to the materiality of space and the bounds of
her identity. On the contrary, presence is what allows the walker to touch upon the inconclusiveness and flux of his own body image. It places us in various actual and virtual worlds at once and in this way allows us, with our very haptic body, to sense and navigate acute contractions, expansions, and multiplications of space.\footnote{Lutz P. Koepnick, \textit{On Slowness: Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary} (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 231.}

With this, the viewer’s body is liberated from the auditorium chair, assuming the additional roles of apparatus and protagonist. In previous chapters, I have argued that the term “projection” can be used to encompass the entirety of the cinematic phenomenon, from its material apparatus to its active reception by engaged viewers. \textit{Her Long Black Hair} proves that hypothesis by fracturing, reducing, and spreading apart the audio-visual components of standard cinematic projection. Our palms become moist after carrying the Discman, and a clumsy trip might resound in a glitch in the audio track, even an irritated whirr from the device itself. The bodies of its spectators take on a more active role by moving their bodies to the next “scene.” Wearing the headset and carrying the photographs turns viewing bodies into a tethering apparatus, a glue that holds the units of dispersed cinematic equipment together. Projection thus takes on greater meaning: It is the ligament which connects the audio-visual experience, but also the produced text, here in the form of our own bodies, moving. In Cardiff’s paracinematic perambulations, the spectator steps in to fulfill the duties of the most glaring omission of from the traditional cinematic apparatus: the projector. Eirini Nedelkopolou likens listening to Cardiff to a spiritual projection from the body, a “mediati(zati)on, understood as an instance of ‘ecstasis,’ or an act which triggers the ‘ecstatic’ modality of the spectatorial body, which is then enabled to project
As such, the viewer must actively handle the visual images, align them with the sonic narrative, and project their own body through the curated landscape that is at once diegetic location and exhibition space.

**The Mobile Cinema**

Cardiff’s walks dematerialize the materials of cinema at precise, calculated points. If *The Paradise Institute* compartmentalizes Dolby Surround speakers into a personal headset, the walks make our heads into mobilized theaters. Other installations use more cinematic handheld devices: a mini-DV camcorder, an iPad, or even the viewer’s own smartphone. *Her Long Black Hair*, however, reduces even the handheld moving image to five still photographs: an early 20th-century view of the park’s southern Sixth Avenue entrance (and the walk’s starting place); a contemporary Winter view of the large pond just Northeast; and three photographs of an unknown woman at various park locations, purportedly found at a thrift shop (fig. 4.8). Viewers may hold these pictures up to their corresponding locations in the park, but they must also flip through them, keep them in order, and generally be responsible for their sequence in a way that the celluloid filmstrip never asked of us. Moreover, these images also correspond to our space of spectatorship. Most are of sites along the route Cardiff has mapped out for us. The woman’s dark hair serves as the most visually concrete reference for the title of the work, though Cardiff intertwines her description with passages from Baudelaire’s poem “Her Hair,” which describes the poet’s lover. In the first photograph, she is brushing her hair out of her face

and described in Cardiff’s first track as “getting ready to pose, but he took the photo too soon.” Behind her is the same bridge which Cardiff’s own voice has beckoned us to walk toward, and to suddenly stop before, where we gaze upon the structure, doubled. The Paradise Institute constructs a similar echo of on- and off-screen space. Here, however, that screening room is opened up to the outside world. Rather than reproduce the theatrical auditorium on screen, Her Long Black Hair requires its text be screened in its own diegetic setting.

Cardiff’s walk requires its viewer to inhabit the space of its narrative, and, thus, it conflates the act of spectatorship with the active mobility of an actor or camera. Above, I describe The Paradise Institute as synthesizing Metz’s two cinematic modes of viewer identification – primary identification with the camera’s point of view, and secondary identification with the characters seen on screen – as well as its focusing those first- and third-person perspectives on our own lived bodies.\textsuperscript{196} I now argue that Her Long Black Hair further engages that embodiment. Though others have pointed out the relative nature of this installation, which changes every moment for any given participant, I hesitate to emphasize that conceptual view of Cardiff’s tour for fear that it misses the infinite flow of sensory minutiae that unfolds with every second.\textsuperscript{197} As viewers retracing the steps of the story, we also embody the camera and its characters. Our ability to view each of Cardiff’s planned “shots” requires us to move our bodies to that location. Her description of the park through the headphones prompts us to imagine her as a character in this same space. Of course, we cannot see her, but the movement of our legs and the

\textsuperscript{196}Metz, 48.
\textsuperscript{197}David Pinder, “Ghostly Footsteps: Voices, Memories and Walks in the City,” Ecumene 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2001), 12.
smell of this urban oasis allows us to perceive her agency in the strain of our muscles rather than our attending gaze.

With Cardiff as our guide, we generate her work’s cinematic images in the same way that we look ahead to navigate our bodies, or sideways to better orient ourselves. This framework suggests that our mobile bodies within that text serve a more exploratory role that I call “cinematic.” Michel De Certeau’s theory of urban walking can be aligned with Sobchack’s concept of embodied cinematic spectatorship, allowing us to understand Cardiff’s walks as a mobilized cinema, with its viewer playing the role of character, camera, and spectator. De Certeau speaks in the metaphor of a written text, but his foundational structure for walking recalls the cinematic structure of projection: “First, if it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further, then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities.”198 This model of a push-and-pull between points of opacity and transparency recall such tensions in the filmic apparatus. Cardiff’s walkers move between passages whose limits are dictated by walls and the edges of concrete, much like the light of a film projector passes through a permeable celluloid frame to amplify its image on a solid screen. For de Certeau, “to walk is to lack a place,” a mode of displacement that echoes Chion’s characterization of sound as “search[ing] for its place.”199 In Cardiff’s mobile cinema, she asks us to keep pace with her footsteps, the dynamic metronome of Her Long Black Hair with which we match our strides. Pierre Schaeffer describes passive hearing as an inevitably active

199 De Certeau, 96.
performance: “In spite of myself, I impose a rhythm on it: stressed beat, unstressed beat.”²⁰⁰ With this impulse, we search with our ears and bodies as much as our eyes, moving like sound through the air and displacing our former selves with every step. We are in a constant attempt to find our place in Cardiff’s projected park.

Movement is here characterized in the same way as I have discussed viewership in *The Paradise Institute*, as a repeated sequence of displacements. In the walks, Cardiff actualizes that imagined spatial displacement, making navigable the apparatus and diegetic text of cinema. With our bodies, we comprehend opacity and transparency – between a wall and a path, between on-screen and off-, between “here” and “there.” We retrace Cardiff’s steps as she recorded, photographed, and mapped *Her Long Black Hair*. But this mobile outline of the artist offers a more intimate identification than seeing her body move through the same space. Rather, we feel her moving, a gaze that de Certeau might characterize as both “[p]erspective vision and prospective vision [which] constitute the twofold projection of an opaque past and an uncertain future onto a surface that can be dealt with.”²⁰¹ The unseen space of our next steps are also the off-screen of Cardiff’s lived tableaux, here perceived by our bodies as an around-the-bend.

**The Ear of Orpheus and the Eye of Ophuls**

If navigating the crowded city lends itself to a certain brand of cinematic energy, Central Park offers a uniquely cinematic landscape for the pedestrian. The Park is an oasis within the sharp edges of the gridded blocks that surround it, an appropriate meta-

²⁰¹ De Certeau, 94.
space for Cardiff’s walker, one with similar characteristics as the hyperreal theater of *The Paradise Institute*. As we cannot see within beyond the backs of chairs in that projected auditorium, the park’s winding paths bend sharply through a varied topography. Hills, rock formations, trees, and bridges were meticulously planned by Frederick Law Olmsted to construct not only a picturesque view, but innumerable idyllic pockets that unfold as the viewer approaches. Cardiff directs us to this design in the sonic text of *Her Long Black Hair*, as we leave a detour through the Central Park Zoo and bear left up a slope whose grade obscures its summit and holds us in sustained anticipation (fig. 4.9). To the right, a craggy rock formation juts up like the massive trunk of a granite tree, and Cardiff says:

> Olmsted designed this park with the aesthetics of landscape painting in mind. There’s a foreground of trees and grass with a winding lane, then the rough texture of the rock contrasts with the lightness of the tree foliage. We’re following the course of an old stream that they put underground when they began building the park. They uncovered human bones that were buried a hundred years before.

From instructions to description to a secret geography and an excavation of ancient burial: These are the organic twists and turns that Cardiff makes, like the splashing of a rippling current that drowns out her musings and lead to a man’s recitation of Baudelaire on the kisses of worms on corpses – and suddenly another, first-person narrative of an escaped slave fleeing to Canada around when the Park was built. By this time, her viewer has emerged at the top of the hill by the statue of Balto, canine hero of Nome, Alaska.

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202 Scott Macdonald goes so far as describing Central Park as cinematic on the ground and in general, suggesting that its shape echoes the widescreen format of film in the second half of the twentieth century: “The Country in the City: Central Park in Jonas Mekas’s ‘Walden’ and William Greaves’s ‘Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One,’” *Journal of American Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 339.
Like her winding story, Central Park’s curated components are intended to be visible but also to hide other objects from view at calculated times. Cardiff’s spectator is thus charged with uncovering these sights for themselves. At these moments where discrete spectacles unfold over winding hills and in synchronization with Cardiff’s guidance, the cinematic aspect of both Central Park and Cardiff’s installation come into relief. Her narration mentions an evening setting, seldom seen during the official installation of *Her Long Black Hair*. But seconds later she says “it’s daytime again,” a mistimed experience that could be likened to a jump cut in a film. Furthermore, despite our freedom, we focus on the straight ahead, as looking behind us reveals what sounds are actually present and which come from Cardiff’s foley work. We thus naturally look forward, but Cardiff states it to us as a cinematic regulation: “I feel like there’s someone behind us, but we can’t look back: It’s one of the rules today.” As soon as she acknowledges our own uncanny feelings toward the realistic recording, she also denies us the cinematic reverse-shot, which traditionally fills in the vulnerable space around the spectator with diegetic orientation.

Like Orpheus in the underworld, we must look forward, but we seldom care to check over our shoulders and break the conjunction of our world and Cardiff’s. The look behind is not assuring, as in the reverse-shot, but rather it reveals the odd asynchronization in the cinematic system. It is forward motion that feels most natural in Cardiff’s walk. For this reason, I hesitate to agree with authors who emphasize the anxiety caused by the dual soundscape.\(^{203}\) True, an uncanny presence begins to emerge as

one looks back to find that a woman calling her son is simply a ghost of Cardiff’s world. However, such moments insulate us in the narrative, gently pushing us forward, where the actual and illusory align. In this way, the cinematic reverse-shot is inverted within this mirror realm: The over-our-shoulders does not reassure us, but instead provides a disorientation that conditions us to find comfort in the straight ahead. Mirjam Schaub describes the congruence effect of hearing Cardiff’s audio synchronized with our world as a “‘vampirization’ of sound” which “strikes the listener like a bite on the neck” and “is highly contagious.”

Schaub’s metaphor for absorption evokes anxiety but only as a catalyst for thrilling engagement. Her Murnau imagery shares the same horror tradition as William Castle’s “tingler,” the vibrating novelty seats which shocked theatergoers into the spectacle before them. Just as Cardiff’s fiction seems at times vividly real, our present reality also seems fictional. The feeling of uncanny congruence and its intermittent breaks thus both locate and dislocate our bodies in the park. The effect does not freeze us in anxiety; rather, it softens our porous reality by letting in its airy fiction and making us lighter.

I would put forth that the movement of our bodies is not only what drives Her Long Black Hair, but also what makes it most cinematic. Above, I outlined the displacement between our bodies “here” and the invisible spectator perceived to be next to us in The Paradise Institute. If the binaural sounds of those spectators are like a vessel that facilitates being at once “here” and “there” in the cinema, then Cardiff’s audio-tour collapses those dual spaces on our own mobilized vision of the park. If Sobchack’s model states that the spectator and the film are equipped with the same reciprocal capacities of

204 Schaub, 216.
perception and expression, it is thus fitting that Cardiff mobilized her spectator as a camera-projector. We are receptive to her guided transmission yet still responsible for tracking down the visual components ourselves. Sobchack notes that mobile camera shots in films align particularly well with the natural expression of the human view of the world, but not because the photomechanical character of the camera is diluted; rather, “we understand the movement precisely because we never regarded it as mechanical in the first place.”

Looking upward with the grade of the hill, then allowing our gaze to drift laterally toward Olmsted’s rock as our bodies pass it obliquely, we perform a cinematic maneuver modeled after our own biological sense of movement. In this way, *Her Long Black Hair* favors the elegant continuity of the long shot. As such, Cardiff’s closest cinematic ancestor would be director Max Ophuls, whose *La Ronde* (France, 1950) follows the crossed paths and overlapping story arcs of characters strolling through a Viennese park. Made the same year as Cocteau’s film, *La Ronde* does not depict bodily passage as much as he traces it in projection across time. Ophuls’s camera navigates these shifts from one vignette to another not with a jump but with a fluid passage, a pivot of trajectory, or a slight acceleration across the stone tracks of the park. The *ronde* of the title here names the dance of its characters and the camera that follows them. Cardiff leads us to enact Ophuls through our Orphic journey, and we recognize her mobile cinematic analogue not from theaters of our past, but in our bones.

Unlike the theater in *The Paradise Institute*, the park is a meta-space in which we *feel* ourselves in terms of its shifting cinematic landscape, a movement which we control.

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In *The Paradise Institute*, sound could generatively confuse its audience by conflating its layers of *film noir*, its off-screen space, and the further removed world in which we sit. I have described that radical expansion into our physical space in terms of a cinematic “sound bridge,” which connects exhibition and diegetic spaces like they would typically link linear sequences of shots in a film. *Her Long Black Hair* makes those sound bridges literal. They do not project out at us, as much as we project across them. Schaub describes such an active spectator: a walker who turns his environment “into something with ‘a mobile organicity,’ defines the space through events that he himself inserts into it.”\(^{206}\) It is the viewer’s mobile senses which collaborate with Cardiff’s voice to generate the site of *Her Long Black Hair*. As we project our bodies forward, our gazes generate the views like a projector throwing light images on screen. Cardiff’s voice carries around our heads and speaks of the same Central Park locations in which we stand. She muses on a rock, on Baudelaire, and on our own bodies, present and awaiting instruction. But as she mentions the ubiquitous vendors in the park, we hear their carts going by, despite the fact that there are none in front of us. This detail of foley art carries from the narrative she reads into the world we occupy, thereby constructing a conduit between worlds. That passage is for us, not to gaze at but to step through, as a *flâneur* who crosses a sonic bridge that meets our leap of faith with a solid asphalt surface.

Cardiff pointedly summons the invisible presence of Doane’s fantasmatic body in our footsteps through the park, but she also gives it a voice: her own. Cardiff allows us to move as our own camera, and her role as director is executed through the sound of her voice. Although the artist also voices many of the spectators in *The Paradise Institute*,

\(^{206}\) Schaub, 224.
Her Long Black Hair gives that voice agency in a character who experiences the park alongside us, but who also addresses us from a more privileged vantage point. Cardiff instructs us, describes to us, and guides us. In cinema, disembodied voices suggest and look for a visual source, and here it finds us. Cardiff’s body is invisible, but we perform it for her. Asynchronous sound thus becomes synched not to our visibly open mouths but to our breathing and the pace of our legs toward the next stop in the trajectory charted by Cardiff’s steady murmurs. Like the spectators of The Paradise Institute, this ghost Cardiff becomes a support of this cinematic system, a fragile fiction in which our bodies become essential materials that must be propped up. As the projection of what lies behind our backs, we put our trust in Cardiff’s voice. There are indeed moments in which she might mislead us into thinking we are alone when, in fact, a jogger is trying to pass us on the left. However, if Schaub is correct that “the ear is the organ of anxiety,” it is also that of tenderness, reassuring us that after being lost, we are then found. 207 If Cardiff is our Euridice, only present in sound, then she is also our Virgil, who both writes the story around us and guides us like Dante through its unknown realm. Cardiff cedes the role of protagonist to us in Her Long Black Hair, but her comforting whispers reveal our path. Her cinematic walks trade projected light for the leitmotif of her voice, which does not push us forward as much as it leads us, and we follow.

Conclusion

What happens to us once we step through the mirror? In Cardiff’s fictional world, mapped atop our own physical reality in 1:1 scale, the frame of the cinematic screen

207 Schaub, 226.
becomes a threshold that imbues us with a gaze that is active and passive, generative and receptive. In Cardiff’s tour of Central Park, fiction is made real, but reality is also loosened by fiction. For Sugimoto, Gordon, and Campbell, that border between fantasy and reality is ultimately negotiated in the vicinity of the screen’s framing edge. Cardiff’s audio rewrites those borders on a site just outside of our vision, eliminating the seams rather than blurring them. This confusion of reality and fiction becomes most potent when we hear the crunch of a leaf, unsure of whether it emanates from Cardiff’s recording or from under our feet.

When Cardiff’s steps become indistinguishable from the sound of our own feet in the park, we occupy a space at once fantastical and tangible. As Kaja Silverman says of the cinematic voyeur, we are suddenly “conjured out of nothingness into existence in the guise of an image for that Other who is evoked by the footsteps or the leaves. The voyeur now vibrates with an awareness of himself-as-spectacle, and through that awareness a consciousness of self is produced in him.” In this liminal world where fiction takes real form and reality is covered in a fictional ether, vision becomes a potential for action, and the projected images with which we identify become mapped onto the spaces we occupy. The visible provides only a skeletal structure for this experience. It can only be perceived in the vibrating circulation of our bodies.

Cardiff’s sonic reverberations map out a site of convergence between Other and I. Larissa Harris calls Cardiff’s locations both established and punctured, making room for a productive rupture. Here, we walk through that porous spectacle. Cardiff’s cinema is

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sustained through our projection – not necessarily of light and image, but of a
displacement across space that threatens, or promises, a potential loss of self. One might
imagine Cardiff’s spectator loose to explore the crevices of her cinematic system,
constructed on firm ground but riddled with invisible aporia. As an analog to the gaps
between celluloid frames or off-screen space, the artist whispers in our ear sweet
nothingness, Sartre’s tantalizing void which Silverman suggests allows us to transcend
our bodies.²¹⁰ Do these expanded cinemas offer us the opportunity to not just imagine a
new subjectivity, but to live differently? One wonders if, after Cardiff leads us across the
threshold of the screened image, we might lose ourselves with the hope of seeing alterity
through the intimate experience of being ourselves, what Silverman calls the “possibility
of productive vision – of an eye capable of seeing something other than what is given to
be seen, and over which the self does not hold absolute sway.”²¹¹ If we follow the
scripted lieder of Cardiff’s voice, do we then step through the park and outside of our
confining biology at every turn of the path? How do we harness such transcendental
motion?

I have suggested that Douglas Gordon’s 5-Year Drive By allows us to reclaim the
revisionist history of the Hollywood Western and re-view it in a literal way. His exiled
projection of The Searchers positions us see the film differently, and its marginalized
supporting characters more often. Similarly, Jim Campbell reduces the phenomenon of
projection to flickering lights, stimuli which trigger our bodies to share in his personal
memories more intimately than simple sight would allow. Like Cardiff’s portable

²¹⁰ Silverman, Threshold, 164.
²¹¹ Silverman, Threshold, 227.
equipment, these non-invasive modifications to the cinematic apparatus prove that “[m]edia doesn’t kill our senses, it enlivens them.”

Unlike virtual reality, these experiments immerse the viewer in fantasy while preserving their agency in the real world. Cardiff’s walks position us to realize that with our bodies. Her cinematic equipment threatens to displace our bones and evaporate the physical ground below us. Yet in that transcendence there is a potential for not just a different mode of looking, but a different body to look through. By reconfiguring, expanding, and sometimes diluting the components of projection we may ultimately view cinema as something to be occupied and moved throughout.

As I mention in my introduction, the works of Gordon, Campbell, and Cardiff are all decidedly cinematic in that their expansion into the gallery and beyond is still bracketed by the viewer and a central, diegetic screen. As such, they also all have an ending, even if that terminus is dictated by us as we walk away. It is appropriate, then, to end at the last stop of *Her Long Black Hair*, the climax of Cardiff’s teleological tracking shot. After stopping at Bow Bridge and pointing out the reflection of the Dakota across the surface of the lake, her voice directs us to keep going, just a few feet, before detouring off the asphalt and down a dirt path to a landing at the water’s level. Here, we listen to Cardiff without any barrier between us and the lake, except for the last photograph. The mysterious woman, now with her back turned, faces the same, glassy water (fig. 4.10). As Gluck’s *Orpheo and Eurydice* fades in, the opera harmonizes with Cardiff’s description of us as a traumatized Orpheus, who must take the long walk back.

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bearing the weight of what he has lost. She has already made the comparison, describing the strange congruency effect of her park tour as a journey through the dreamworld.

Though Cardiff nudges us to take this myth home with us, in this last moment we can contemplate it fully. This point in our Orphic journey is a juncture. We have been led forward by a voice whose body we cannot see, and yet we gaze now at a cascading confluence of surfaces and voids. The photograph we hold presents us with our cinematic object, but the woman’s turned back refocuses our attention to the environment around her, and around us. Invited in by this surrogate viewer, we are both the character in the film and the spectator, object and subject. And though the edge of the photograph distinguishes the two realms, we can look at the lake, the object of her view, both through the picture and around it. The water’s surface has replaced the screen of *The Paradise Institute*, a lagoon as literal *lacuna*. Again, we find ourselves as Cocteau’s cinematic Orpheus, whose mirror reflects as it reveals a liquid passage for his body. This murky surface recalls screens I have previously discussed: the distortion of *24 Hour Psycho*, whose cloudy traces of transcoding from film to videocassette is at times indistinguishable from the rain on Marion Crane’s windshield; or Campbell’s low-resolution blur, which entices viewers into the home videos of strangers. Even Morgan Fisher’s *Projection Instructions* fades in and out of focus, calling his viewer’s attention not to the frame or the filmmaker, but to the projectionist orchestrating the cinematic event.

Perhaps the most emblematic of all these screens is that of Sugimoto’s *Orpheum*, which compresses every cinematic moment into a single, glowing light. His camera inverts the film projector, reconstituting the screen as a light which reveals the theatrical
space itself. Importantly, the camera does not turn away from the screen to focus on the auditorium. Instead, the lens modifies the way the screen is captured and presented, transforming it from a support for images and into a lighting prop. Viewers of the photograph are directed toward the undulating wings and the lunging depth of the ceiling, but they do so by following the path of light from the projector *through* the screen and rebounding outward. With this reversal, Sugimoto stages an Orphic passage into an elaborate set piece: the vernacular architecture of the movie house, the scene of the spectator’s action. In this Orpheum, whose name hints at the entranced attention of its spectators before the entertainments inside, viewers are engaged with the framework of a spectacle, an open passage navigated with the eyes like the bodies of theatergoers that might creep along its dim aisles. In this set, we do not anticipate a visual display, but rather we are compelled to find the text ourselves. Projecting through this cinematic space, we close-read familiar images of Hitchcock and Ford made new, and we feel the embodied rhythms of our gaze at Campbell’s family photograph. As with Sugimoto’s screenings, time is compressed but also opened up around us to be felt imminently, and intimately.

Sugimoto’s temporal compression transforms a film’s projection into a backlight. The extended exposure of the camera implodes every frame of Steven Spielberg’s *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (U.S., 1977), sacrificing the film in an extinguishing glow that in turn expands outward to emboss the curves of the proscenium and the gentle slope of its aisles. Iconic images of the film – a desert canyon, a fiery spectacle of light, a mound of mashed potatoes – contract within the still screen, leaving the Orpheum in shadowy ambience. The luminous trace of the compressed film benefits this *noir* scenery.
Timing the camera’s exposure to the projector’s duration renders the blacks of the theater surface as shimmering puddles of ink, casting the room in uncanny fidelity like the mirrored underworld of its namesake.

No audience appears in Sugimoto’s Orpheum, but, like The Paradise Institute, its empty seats invite viewers of the photograph to take the place of theatergoers. Similarly, no sign of the film remains. Rather, the projector’s beam takes us through the brilliant screen and back into the Orpheum from another dimension. Though static, Sugimoto’s photograph does elicit a sense of this passage, a transformation incited by a reversal of photographic equipment and felt in the uncanny stillness of the blown-out screen. As spectators of the site of spectatorship itself, we have come out the other side of this theater, staring from the other side of the screen. From this perspective, Sugimoto’s screen is not a terminus but a light at the end of the tunnel, a beacon that guides us through an Orphic journey like the sound of Cardiff’s voice through Central Park. Even the protagonist of Spielberg’s film, now drowned out in the collapsed collection of its entirety, is drawn to an ineffable intergalactic hum. The beckoning signal in Close Encounters is not a spectral vision but a five-note leitmotif, a sonic transmission that compels its characters to abandon their quotidian lives for an unspecified spectacle.

What Sugimoto visualizes in his house of Orpheus, Cardiff allows us to inhabit, and even determine for ourselves. The walks answer what it must feel like to follow through the Orpheum screen to the other side. Through this mirror, we sense ourselves viewing a landscape that is both the screening room and shooting location. What this environment looks like is secondary to what it feels like to look at it. We move through space, guided by her voice and the photographs like insets in the map of our other hand.
Traveling through our own spectatorial condition, taking in sights that rhyme with the vibrations of our steps and the turning of our heads as we walk the paths. Ultimately, we end up at the lake, and the last photograph which appropriately reflects our position while also forming a tunneling mise-en-abyme of movement forward.

Facing the lake and Cardiff’s photograph, we find ourselves looking upon an image of a body that we understand as both Other and ourselves, and within an environment which suggests we can project ourselves forward within it. Two voids lie before us: the glimmering surface of the lake, but also the woman’s dark hair, this prose poem’s titular McGuffin which beckons us to keep moving toward it. Cardiff has already recited Baudelaire for us, laying the groundwork for this moment of bodily projection, where we might “plunge…in this black ocean that engulfs her form” like the pool before us.213 Like the poet, we face a surface which is also an open door that “reflects the blue of the sky,” a shot and reverse-shot in one view. It is through this shimmering paradox that Orpheus found Death as his own raven-haired object of desire, but also as the puppeteer of his circumstances. She desires him too, and she seems to see him for what he is. She whispers like Cardiff: “Will you do whatever I ask? Obey me at all costs?”

With his subjugation, Death gives Orpheus a happy ending by turning time backward. That retracing of the intractable defies the forward progress of the cinema, and yet Cocteau offers another special effect to reconcile the two trajectories. More than the reflective surface of the shimmering mirror, this later shot portrays bodily motion as refracted through time and space, and it does so through a composition which mirrors our

own gaze on the lake shore, looking at the photograph of a woman’s back: Here, the camera looks at the back of the angel Heurtebise, also with black hair, as he looks forward at pre-filmed footage of Orpheus walking backward with the camera tracking toward him (fig. 4.11). Again, we look forward, alongside a surrogate viewer on screen and a mobile camera which pushes into an open space as a reverse-shot. Furthermore, Orpheus’s uncanny backward motion reveals the apparatus of its production, and post-production: The reversed footage is also rear-projected so that we and Heurtebise look into the projector itself, as from the other side of a mirror. With camera and projector facing each other, the intense motion seems somehow loosened from a rigid directionality. We feel as if we are both moving forward with the camera, but also that movement through space is being rewound by the rear projection. Walter Benjamin writes of an angel of history, blown forward into the future while looking back to the collapsed moments of history. Behind Heurtebise, we witness the same distancing storm, if only mediated by a mirror which confuses the directions.

Within these expanded cinemas, we are aware of ourselves as part of the apparatus and the audience, both projecting bodies whose gazes conduct an immersive experience. Should we look back, we would see not the extinguishing light of the projector. Instead, we would witness the physical expression of our own bodies having turned. Likewise, we listen to Cardiff who entreats us to look ahead as both viewer and viewed. As projectors of this cinematic illusion ourselves, the shimmering lacuna of the lake reflects us as refracted fragments of pure light, thrown forth. Perhaps what is most

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remarkable about the cinematic is not the loosening of our bodies from reality. That trick is not a spectacle in itself, but becomes a potential for our own action when we realize that, even in this transcendent state, we have the choice to step forward and push our weight against the solid ground.
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Attention projectionist:
This film is a series of instructions addressed to you. The instructions must be followed if the film is to be shown correctly.

Figure 1.1: Morgan Fisher, *Projection Instructions* (1974), 16mm, film still
Figure 1.2: Robert Whitman, *Shower* (1964), 16mm loop, projector, shower stall and curtain, water, water pump
Figure 1.3: Samuel van Hoogstraten, *A Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House* (c. 1655-60), oil and egg on wood

Figure 2.1: Douglas Gordon, 24 Hour Psycho (1993), video installation, dimensions variable, Installation view, Douglas Gordon: Timeline, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2006
Figure 2.2: Douglas Gordon, 24 Hour Psycho (1993), video installation, dimensions variable, Installation view, Douglas Gordon: Timeline, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2006

Figure 2.3: A.K. Dewdney, The Maltese Cross Movement (1964), 16mm, film still
Figure 2.4: Bill Viola, *Cycles* (1973), videotape, video still

Figure 2.6: Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960), video still transferred from 35mm

Figure 2.8: Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960), video transferred from 35mm, video still

Figure 2.9: Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960), video transferred from 35mm, video still
Figure 2.10: Alexandre O. Philippe, 78/52 (2017), digital, video still

Figure 2.11: Sophie Feinnes, *The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema* (2006), 35mm, film still
Figure 2.12: Gus van Sant, *Psycho* (1998), 35mm, film still

Figure 2.13: Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960), video transferred from 35mm, video still
Figure 2.14: Alfred Hitchcock, *Psycho* (1960), videocassette transferred from 35mm, digital, photograph of video screen
Figure 2.15: Douglas Gordon, *Between Darkness and Light (after William Blake)* (1997), video installation, dimensions variable
Figure 2.16: Douglas Gordon, *Between Darkness and Light (after William Blake)* (1997), video installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery and the artist.

Figure 2.17: Douglas Gordon, *Between Darkness and Light (after William Blake)* (1997), video installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy Gagosian Gallery and the artist.
Figure 2.18: Michael Snow, *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974), 16mm film loop, two projectors, switching device, and aluminum screen, 9½’x19 ½’x41’ Installation view, Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis, MN, 1974

Figure 2.19: Albrecht Dürer, *Draughtsman Making a Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman* (c. 1600), woodcut print, 3”x8½”
Figure 2.20: Douglas Gordon, *5 Year Drive-By* (1995), video projection, dimensions variable, screening at 29 Palms Inn, Twentynine Palms, CA, September 22, 2001
Photographer: Kay Pallister

Figure 2.21: John Ford, *The Searchers* (1956), 35mm, film stills
Figure 2.22: John Ford, *The Searchers* (1956), 35mm, film still

Figure 3.1: Jim Campbell, *Illuminated Averages #1: Hitchcock’s Psycho* (2000), photographic transparency in lightbox, 30”x18”
Figure 3.2: Jim Campbell, *Night Light* (1995-98), custom electronic, light bulbs, glass, 71”x15”x6”
Figure 3.3: Jim Campbell, *Photo of my Mother* (1996), custom electronics, glass, photograph, LCD material, 71”x15”x6” Photographer: Sarah Christianson
Figure 3.4: Jim Campbell, *Photo of my Mother* (1996), custom electronics, glass, photograph, LCD material, 71”x15”x6” Photographer: Sarah Christianson
Figure 3.5: Jim Campbell, *Photo of my Mother* (1996), custom electronics, glass, photograph, LCD material, 71”x15”x6” Photographer: Sarah Christianson
Figure 3.6: Anthony McCall, Line Describing a Cone (1973), 16mm film projection, projection 118”x157”, overall dimensions variable
Figure 3.7: Jim Campbell, *Glimpse* (2007), Custom electronics, video projector, DVD player, slide projector, blank slides, dimensions variable Photography credit: Courtesy of the Artist
Figure 3.8: Jim Campbell, *Glimpse* (2007), Custom electronics, video projector, DVD player, slide projector, blank slides, dimensions variable
Installation View, Espacio Fundacion Telefonica Madrid, Madrid, Spain, 2015
Photography credit: Courtesy of Espacio Fundacion Telefonica Madrid
Figure 3.9: Nam June Paik, *Zen for Film* (c. 1964), 16mm film projector, 16mm leader
Installation view, Pulitzer Art Foundation, St. Louis, MO, 2014 Photographer: David Johnson
Figure 3.10: Anthony McCall, Miniature in Black and White (1972), Eighty-one 35mm black and white slides (continuous loop), carousel slide projector, and miniature Plexiglas screen, 16”x11”x24”
Figure 3.11: Jim Campbell, *Home Movies 1248-1* (2008), Video installation: custom electronics, 1,248 LEDs, 16’x10’x7½”
Installation View, Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA, 2008
Photography credit: Courtesy of the artist
Figure 3.12: Jim Campbell, *Home Movies 1248-1* (2008), Video installation: custom electronics, 1,248 LEDs, 16’x10’x7½”
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Installation View, Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA, 2008
Photography credit: Courtesy of the artist
Figure 4.1: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *The Paradise Institute* (2001), mixed media, 16.6’x36’x9.8’
Figure 4.2: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *The Paradise Institute* (2001), mixed media, 16.6’x36’x9.8’

Figure 4.3: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *The Paradise Institute* (2001), mixed media, 16.6’x36’x9.8’
Figure 4.4: Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Metropolitan Orpheum, Los Angeles* (1993), gelatin silver print, 16½”x21¼”

Figure 4.5: Jean Cocteau, *Orphée* (1950), 35mm, film still
Figure 4.6: Jean Cocteau, *Orphée* (1950), 35mm, film still

Figure 4.7: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *Her Long Black Hair*, audio walk with photographs
Figure 4.8: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *Her Long Black Hair*, audio walk with photographs
Figure 4.9: Author’s photograph, Central Park, New York
Figure 4.10: Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *Her Long Black Hair*, audio walk with photographs

Figure 4.11: Jean Cocteau, *Orphée* (1950), 35mm, film still