Slowness as a Strategy of the Contemporary through Films

Karen Heald [a]

In Future Studies and the History of Technology accelerating change is a perceived increase in the rate of technological change throughout history. This may suggest faster and more profound change in the future and may or may not be accompanied by equally profound social and cultural change. Responding to the accelerating technological landscape and contemporary life, this paper researches how the concept of 'time' plays a significant role. The author, an experimental filmmaker, charts an experiential journey within several pivotal 'dream films', along with relevant artists' moving images in relation to time and slowness in the moving image as critical media. As contemporary life has become more and more fast paced, and one year on the impact of COVID-19 is still being felt, the idea of stillness is beginning to become a more desirable commodity. The author explores 'slow cinema', acknowledging seminal directors Andrei Tarkovsky and Claire Denis, as well as art films which frequently emphasise long takes, offering minimalist aesthetics with little or no narrative. In an endeavour to portray different temporalities and reveal and allude to the invisibility of time, the author relates to Julia Kristeva's notions of intertextuality, transposition and time, and Lutz Koepnik's concept of slowness as a strategy of the contemporary. The author discusses four 'dream films', where painterly, poetic, non-linear narratives, and 'in-between' spaces are played out: *FRIDA Travels to Ibiza*, *Cycle*, *Llafarganu Papagei* and *Frock.*

Keywords: Dream Films, Contemporary Art, Moving Image, Time, Slow Cinema, In-between-ness, Being in-between, Transitory Strata.

Accelerated Technological Change and Contemporary Life

Declan Butler referenced futurist Ray Kurzweil's cult essay the *Law of Accelerating Returns* (2001), which argued that humans found it hard to comprehend their own future. Kurzweil is now a Director of Engineering at Google, where researchers have investigated 'disruptive exponentials': growths predicted in technological change in Artificial Intelligence (AI). Dangers of the singularity involve reverse engineering the human brain by tapping into the blueprint of intelligent process via five parallel auditory pathways and downloading the brain to understand why intelligence is more powerful than physics. It envisages the emergence of human-like intelligent entities of astonishing diversity and scope. Although these entities will be capable of passing the 'Turing test' (able to fool humans that they are human), the question arises as to whether these 'people' are conscious, or just appear that way, as well as the importance of having a body. There has been a plethora of feature films which explore these ideas but none more so than *The Matrix* series (1999-), *Inception* (2010) and *Ex Machina* (2014). Yet not everyone is convinced of Kurzweil's predictions. Engineer Ken Goldberg from the University of Berkley, California, notes that: "recent warnings that AI and robots risk surpassing human intelligence are greatly exaggerated" (Butler 2016, 399). Additionally, Stuart Russell, a Computer Scientist also from the University of Berkley, questions the notion that

---

a. Karen Heald, Senior Lecturer (MA Art and Design Practice), Wrexham Glyndwr University, karen.heald@glyndwr.ac.uk

exponential advances in technology necessarily leads to transformative leaps (Butler 2016). Public figures such as the late Stephen Hawking as well as Elon Musk have expressed concern that full artificial intelligence could result in human extinction (Butler 2016). Now, physicists at CERN, Switzerland, using the Large Hadron Collider have uncovered a potential flaw in a theory that explains how the building blocks of the Universe behave and have found possible signs of a fifth fundamental force of nature – muons (Ghosh 2021).

Contemporary Artist's Response through Moving Image and 'Slow Cinema'

Responding to the accelerating technological landscape and contemporary life, the concept of 'time' plays a significant role. As contemporary life has become more and more fast paced, and one year on the impact of COVID-19 is still being felt, the idea of stillness is beginning to become a more desirable commodity for artists and filmmakers through moving image and slow cinema. Certain aesthetic aspects of slow cinema were initially discussed by academic, screenwriter and director, Paul Schrader in his seminal book, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozo, Bressen, Dreyer* (2018). Slow cinema is defined as a genre of art cinema filmmaking which is typically characterised by stillness, the use of static, long duration and tracking shots, as well as pans and a narrative focus on the more mundane aspects of life.

Various artists such as Tacita Dean and Charlotte Prodger have embraced this aesthetic. Dean's moving images are poetic, contemplative and encompass examples of 'slow cinema'. Her early works such as *Disappearance at Sea* (1996) featured seven lengthy slow-paced shots of a rotating lighthouse bulb along with footage looking out to sea (Tate n.d.); *Prisoner Pair* (2008), a still life composition of inanimate objects, depicts a close-up study of two bottled pears suspended in schnapps, filmed subtly decaying in sunlight (Schwarz 2018). In the *Portrait* series (2016) the artist captures idiosyncratic sequences depicting unique qualities of various celebrities, as revealed in the meditative film of the renowned painter David Hockney smoking, and choreographer Merce Cunningham performing stillness (National Portrait Gallery 2018). Dean's films often nurture a relationship with the genre of painting which includes traditions of landscape, portraiture and still life, and are as much about time passing as they are a homage to the material of film itself.

In 2011, Tate Modern commissioned Dean to create an artwork for the Turbine Hall. The piece titled *FILM* was an eleven-minute silent 35 mm film which was projected in the hall onto a tall 13-metre-high vertical column (Searle 2011). Shot in 35 mm film it featured a mix of monochrome and colour hand-tinted images, collaged in-camera via a complex masking system, the images were projected upright and tumbled down the pillar. Exploring the complex relationship of time and space, the work incorporated images from the natural world and felt like a surreal visual poem described as evoking the: "monumental mysterious black monolith from the classic science fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey*" (Tate 2011).

FILM was the first work in the Unilever Series dedicated to moving image and celebrated Dean's adept techniques in analogue and chemical filmmaking in preference to digitalisation. It acknowledged Dean's passion for film in relation to her ongoing championing of medium specificity. Dean's latest creation *Antigone* (2018), exhibited at the Royal Academy in London, consisted of two synchronised 35mm anamorphic colour films, featuring optical sound synced to commence on the hour (Yentob 2018). It incorporated the same experimental and precarious analogue film masking techniques first developed in *FILM*. To produce the various visual effects in *FILM* Dean used both in-camera and studio techniques, such as masking, double-exposure and glass matte painting. *FILM* had sprocket holes evocative of the analogue medium down the right and left-hand sides. Dean's edit of the material, as well as her additions and manipulations, established a relationship between the artist's hand and the mechanically produced film. *Antigone* was filmed in a variety of sites and used split images to provide multiple perspectives on

its landscapes, from Bodmin Moor to the mud pools of Yellowstone national park. Echoing the subtle cosmic connotations of *FILM*, it included the 2017 solar eclipse which at times was presented as a single frame. It held a personal and historical context to Dean referencing her older sister's name. Commenting on *Antigone* Dean said: "[i]t's about blindness, to a certain extent: the solar eclipse being the ultimate natural blindness, and Oedipus's blindness and then the blindness of the whole process of masking the film" (Griffin 2018).

Referencing Greek Mythology, blindness is used here both literally and metaphorically. In *Blindness as Metaphor* (1999), Naomi Schor explains that "just as blindness can be viewed in a certain figural tradition as a higher form of insight, in a modern scientific vocabulary such as that of Oliver Sacks it is viewed as the paradoxical means to achieve a higher form of creativity" (Schor 1999, 102). Dean also recalled the durational span of the project which took over 20 years to reach fruition. She defined it as being: "more than a landscape, it's a portrait too, and the most ambitious thing I have ever done". She describes her creative process as a diptych "so that it can never be shown theatrically. It can't be a feature film" (Buck 2018).

In 2018, Turner Prize winner Charlotte Prodger presented her solo exhibition *BRIDGIT / Stoneymollen Trail* at Bergen Kunsthall in Norway. The title references the Neolithic deity Bridgit whose name has had various reiterations across time, diverse geographical locations and points in history. It draws upon disparate memories and associations from standing stones, retail sports shops, 1970s lesbian separatist ideas and renowned Jimi Hendrix's soundtracks. Moving image has been at the core of Prodger's work for two decades. In similar ways to Dean, Prodger incorporates art history and painterly aesthetics within her practice. Her work explores autobiographical content and lived experience, and is grounded in queerness, communality, technology, language and loss. She embraces new technologies and shot BRIDGIT on her iPhone, stating that she equates her smartphone to a "prosthesis or extension of the nervous system, intimately connected to time, social interaction and work. Body and device become extensions of each other, and the work becomes a unified meditation on shifting subjectivity" (Tate 2018).

Prodger's work is often concerned with what happens to speech and: "the medium of the self – as it metamorphises via time, space and technological systems". As LUX explains Prodger's practice has often "mined material properties of numerous moving image formats, not just because they inherently get replaced over time, but because she is fascinated by their formal parameters and socio-political histories, the sticky relationship between form and content. The non-linear miscellany of *Stoneymollan Trail* explores shifting interrelations between technology, time, landscape, language and loss" (Lux Scotland 2019).

The Concepts of Time and Film Theory in Bergson and Koepnik

The preoccupation with moving image and time began at the beginning of the 20th Century when Henri Bergson became one of the first philosophers to incorporate cinema into a philosophical discourse. Bergson developed the concepts of 'movement-image' and 'time-image'[1] (Totaro 2001). His primary philosophical themes considered that temporality be thought of as independent from concepts of spatiality. In comparing duration as experienced by the human consciousness, with scientific definitions of time, Bergson stated that the latter tended to "spatialize" time, whereas in the former: "no two moments are identical in a conscious being". He therefore used cinema as a contemporary analogy to reveal the method by which the intellect comprehends reality (Totaro 2001).

---

[1] Prior to this Henri Bergson presented lectures at the *College de France* (1902-03) where he implied the potential to compare "the mechanism of conceptual thought with that of the cinematograph". He considered images superior to concepts declaring the image's ability to evoke thought content in a more fluent and less abstract fashion.

But, then, I cannot escape the objection that there is no state of mind, however simple, which does not change every moment, since there is no consciousness without memory, and no continuation of a state without the addition, to the present feeling, of the memory of past moments. It is this which constitutes duration. Inner duration is the continuous life of a memory which prolongs the past into the present, the present either containing within it in a distinct form the ceaselessly growing image of the past, or, more profoundly, showing by its continual change of quality the heavier and still heavier load we drag behind us as we grow older. Without this survival of the past into the present there would be no duration, but only instantaneity. (Bergson 2017, 11)

In *The Cinematographic Illusion*: *Mechanism, Movement and Memory in Henri Bergson's Cinematograph* (2015), Linda Bertelli discusses how Bergson consequently abandoned any possibility of using film to construe examples of his ideas. Subsequent developments of Bergson's ideas on duration by Jean Epstein, Jean-Paul Sartre, or Gilles Deleuze therefore transcends his original thoughts on cinema "the broader philosophical and cultural context out of which it grew bears remarkable relevance for contemporary film theory and aesthetics. And not because of the increasing importance in recent film theory of Gilles Deleuze —who owes an enormous debt to Bergson— but because Bergson was the first to give philosophical expression to the 'idea' of cinema: moving images" (Totaro 2001).

Bergson analysed existing dichotomic knowledge of the intellect and intuition to devise his concepts on time and duration. He published his essay *Matière et Mémoire* in 1896 on the relationship of the body to the mind (Bergson 2005). Afterwards, in his doctoral thesis *Time and Free Will* (1899)*,* Bergson stated time (durée or duration) is the: "form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former state… The idea of the future, pregnant with an infinity of possibilities, is thus more fruitful than the future itself, and this is why we find more charm in hope than in possession, in dreams than in reality" (Totaro 2001).

Lutz Koepnik, encourages us to chronicle slowness through the multiple layers of time, history and motion – present and future – challenging the notion of the present as a naïve reiteration of the past:

A spatial as much as a temporal project, aesthetic slowness is much less about simply trying to decelerate the ticking of our clocks and exchange the exigencies of urban life for sluggish paces of the rural than it is about holding our gaze at our own age and reflecting about competing visions of time, movement, progress and change. We therefore should not be surprized to find instances of aesthetic slowness where today's self-help manuals and new age sages might expect them the least: on speed trains and high flying airplanes, vis-à-vis the nervous pace of action films and the beats of experimental music, in creative practices that employ today's entire arsenal of advanced computing and image-sound manipulation. (Koepnik 2014, 45)

We are currently living through an unprecedented era where our perceptions of time have altered due to COVID-19 and the global pandemic. For some people time appears to have slowed down whilst for others it is accelerating in velocity with people often experiencing both emotions at the same time. One of the main issues is the brain's ability to comprehend the loss of routine. Memories and emotions are linked so the blurring boundaries between home and work life as well as for lots of parents the stress of home schooling is causing huge changes in an individual's lived experience of the world. Whilst many people are flexible in their everyday schedules, for some this can be extremely testing and stressful. After a year of adaptation and immense change people are re-evaluating their values, reassessing the pace of life amid the flexibility of novel return to work formats proposed by companies with increasing automated job roles predicted. Here artists can play a pivotal role in reimaging and questioning future societies, social cohesion and/or potential utopias.

Digital technologies have affected and impacted people worldwide, digital skills have been learnt and advanced at breath taking speeds with artists and filmmakers having to respond in ways never imagined. For the creative industries this has meant closures and postponement of events with creative adaptations of online portfolios and galleries. For artists and creatives filmmaking has become a ubiquitous practice within television and film streaming services for instance Netflix, HBO and social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter offering increasing exposure whilst galleries, festivals and events are shut. Huge conglomerates are targeting Generation Z customers through the latest TikTok trend. The significant majority of content on social platforms is consumed without sound. In contrast, all TikTok users are watching content with sound on. To understand the significance of this, turn the volume off when watching a film and experience the change in pace and context. If you want to understand the artistic zeitgeist of a particular era, you only have to look at the politics, movies, fashion, and music of that time. *The Musical Human* published by Professor Michael Spitzer and broadcast on Radio 4 (2021) brings together a wealth of historical evidence and current theories to tell what Spitzer claims is 'A History of Life on Earth' from insects to apes, humans to AI.

Additionally, Koepnik invites audiences to question how we live and are represented today, and what aesthetic approaches could be influential in our world and why. "Aesthetic slowness is thus far from merely reactive, let alone reactionary; it wants us to belong to our time by exploring the now as a conduit of many different temporalities and durations that never join into the unity of one dynamic" (Koepnik 2014, 46).

'Dream Films' Time and Julia Kristeva's writings

Time for me depicts the time and space of 'being in-between', a feeling of being in two worlds simultaneously: a liminal space between reality and consciousness. I view time as an interface between two dynamic states, yet somehow beyond the visible. As an artist researcher exploring Slowness as a Strategy of the Contemporary through Films, I have become increasingly drawn to Julia Kristeva's concepts of a multilayered sense of time. I initially explored Kristeva's texts paying particular attention to her notions of cyclical, maternal and monumental time. In *Women's Time* (1981), Kristeva describes two temporal splits in her theory of time, cursive time (the time of linear history) and monumental time. Kristeva retains that repetition *and* the notions of eternity, biological rhythm *and* cosmic time express two types of temporality (cyclical and monumental) that are linked to female subjectivity. She discusses women's link with cyclical and monumental time as a conceptualising of time from the context of reproduction and motherhood, and the need for a future generation of feminists to confront the task of reconciling maternal time (motherhood), with linear (political and historical) time – labelled masculine. Kristeva posits that "the fact that these two types of temporality (cyclical and monumental) are traditionally linked to the female subjectivity in so far as the latter is thought of as a necessarily maternal should not make us forget that this repetition and this eternity are found to be fundamental, if not the sole, conceptions of time in numerous civilisations and experiences, particularly mystical ones" (Toril 1999, 192).

Kristeva's notion of the semiotic *chora* and time in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) has acted as a model for this research. The complexity of Kristeva's theories in relation to linguistics and feminist critical theory has challenged me to create the 'unrepresentable' or the 'unspeakable' through moving image. In collaborations with artists operating in a variety of disciplines, I critiqued and engaged with Kristeva's propositions to give a re-interpretation of time.

I explored and visualised these concepts through my own 'dream films' and relevant artists' moving image, lens-based media, installations and writings. In contextualising the work, I expanded upon Kristeva's concepts of the semiotic 'chora' and Koepnik's theories on 'slowness' in relation to time, temporality and aesthetics. I subsequently

reflected upon these ideas within the digital revolution and identified a number of new concepts which I term and define as: '*In-between-ness*', *'Being in-between'* and *'Transitory strata'.*

'*In-between-ness*' offers a conceptual, reflective public space within collaborative arts and science practice. In this sense, 'in-between-ness' is a system which allows both an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary methodology for these two different subjects to meet through its approaches and media. As such the practice moves between different modes, responding uniquely to the qualities of individual artists and institutions. *'Being in-between'* is a space that oscillates between the public places of 'in-between-ness' and the personal preverbal space of 'transitory strata'. '*Transitory strata*' are preverbal, personal spaces which draw from Kristeva's semiotic 'chora' and, through the making of experimental 'dream films', visualise a feminist re-interpretation of passive / active sleep, the unconscious and experiential time. This differs from the split or the divided self as it pertains to fleeting parallels of time that exist within the creatives' or the depressives' state of being. This ephemerality is discovered within the individual, lying amidst the layers of consciousness, the realms of waking, reverie and wakefulness. These experiences seldom occur whilst asleep, but can be stirred by direct sensitivity to sounds, which when heightened under extreme moments of creativity, stress or illness, can take a person on a more profound pathway through abstruse associations and internal ruminations. These journeys, or 'transitory strata', have the ability to build and fragment, and the 'dream films' aim to echo the unarticulated and the unutterable.

Context / Background

Sonia Front, in her paper "Traumatic Bifurcation" (2012), explores Jaco van Dormael's film *Mr. Nobody* that employs Hugh Everett's theory of parallel universes as a narrative framework. Front's more recent paper "Trauma and Temporality on *The Leftovers*" (2019) explores Tom Perrotta's novel of the same name (2011) and the HBO television series based on it (2014-2017). Front (2019) cites how the fictional storyline depicts the disappearance of 140 million of the world's population with the event constituting: "a temporal rift that divides history into 'before and after'. It inaugurates a new mode of temporality, marked by inertia and a break with a clock-time-based economy."

Feminist filmmaker, writer and composer Trinh T. Minh-ha explored what she calls "tenseless time", filming her first digital video feature *The Fourth Dimension* (2001) in collaboration with Jean-Paul Bourdier. It represented a wonderfully poetic vision of contemporary Japan. Minh-ha, who was born in Vietnam, "rather than taking an ethnographic standpoint, presents a contemplative and multi-layered exploration of travel, space and the rhythms of the country" (Minh-ha and Bourdier 2001). Abhijan Gupta reflects on the idea of Asia-as-method, drawing from the work of the Taiwanese historian Kuan-Hsing Chen, as a possible paradigm from which to think about the art history of Asian art after 1989. In discussing Minha-ha's practice from 1989 to *Forgetting Vietnam* (2015), Gupta states that the artist, filmmaker and theorist provides: "a fertile ground from which to rethink the narrative of 'Asian' art histories of the recent past, and which necessitates the occupation of positions which are always in excess of themselves" (Kwan et al. 2017).

Minh-ha creates a third space of historical and cultural re-memory throughout the *The Fourth Dimension* addressing issues around her central theme of "the experience of time, the impossibility of truly 'seeing,' and the impact of video on image-making" (Women Make Movies n.d.). The film explored Japan's sensual landscape as seen through sliding doors and windows and moving frames of the train. Playing with the past and the present, Minh-ha deconstructed the meaning of ritual. She spoke within the film through the rituals of new technology and daily life and what is comprehended as conventional rituals such as festivals, religious rites, and theatrical performance. She stated: "'rituals' involve not only the regularity in the structure of everyday life, but also the dynamic agents in the world of meaning" (Women Make Movies n.d.). The film encouraged audiences to discover "what is sensually

brought on screen" is not "Japan, but the expansive reality of Japan as image and as time-light" (UCLA International Institute 2003). Minh-ha (2005, 10) discussed how "travel through Japan is through a camera, a travelogue of images, where a visual machine ritualizes the journey". This meeting between self and other, human and machine, viewer and image, the real and fiction, is where the feasibility of the connection between past and present occurs. The image that comes "alive in time also frames time in the film; this is where the actual and virtual meet – *The Fourth Dimension*" (Minh-ha 2005, 10).

The connections between 'tenseless time', ritual, the virtual and the real creates a third space of historical and cultural re-memory. Here filmmakers such as Minh-ha's discourses between the past, related to people and landscape, and the contemporary associated with changes in a time of rapid globalization communicates the acceleration of technology and slowness as a critical media. Kristeva writes about new concepts of the experience of embodied time and timelessness in *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature* (1994) "whether we are lost in time, losing time, or losing our lives without discovering anything in death, we are made of the same substance as time because it defines the boundaries of our speech. Speaking about time while time passes is a problem that circles in on itself, producing a painful cyclical motion in which the problem disappears in order to attain a rapture beyond words-and beyond time" (Kristeva 1994, 167).

In films such as *Night Passage* (2004), Minh-ha continues to address key issues around the theme of experiential time and film's influence on pictorial events. Here Minha-ha's nomadic film strategies destabilise the time-space configuration of the film narratives in both *The Fourth Dimension* and *Night Passage.* The concept of nomadism stems from Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and evolves into feminist and postcolonial critiques, which provides a philosophical basis for thinking of a nomadic film aesthetic (Fuser 2019). In *Night Passage* the film's narrative was based on Miyazawa Kenji's novel, *Milky Way Railroad* (1927) which revealed the spiritual journey of a young woman, her best friend and a little boy, who venture into a world of in-between realities. Filmed on a night train, the occupants travel into and out of the space of awakened dreams. Reminiscent of *The Fourth Dimension,* Minh-ha takes her audience through the passage of time, seen through the train's window, as a series of rhythmic sequences. Dreaming allows entrance into simultaneous time zones. My personal interest in Japan developed following an artist residency in the country titled *Dream Space* where I explored sleep experiences in contrasting spaces from 'capsule' hotels designed for speed and mass capitalisation to a Buddhist temple, requiring reflection, ritual and spirituality[2].

The *Dream Space* became further inspired after viewing *Wandafuru Raifu* (*After Life*) by Hirokazu Kore-Eda (1998/2007) where the director thinking that people forgot everything when they die realised how critical memories are to our identity, to a sense of self, so enhanced, reinterpreted, staged and recreated them in the film. In contrast Alejandro González Iñárritu's film *Babel* (2006), referenced the biblical story of the same name and through the films multidimensional narration depicted the simultaneous developments of incidents across borders, countries and space. The various characters were linked through time which could only be perceived through rapid communications developing in a globalized world. *Wandafuru Raifu* was a beautifully slow-paced film about the lives and 'after-lives' of several different generations of people who enter a mid-way station after dying. It was reminiscent of Akira Kurosawa's film *Dreams* (1990) from the numerous individual narrations and mise-en-scènes which built upon, recreated and staged dreams portraying Kurosawa's own reveries from being a young boy to growing up as a man. This beautifully meditative art film establishes very early scenes appearing extremely abstract whilst others are more lucid. *The Blizzard,* one of eight vignettes featured, is particularly exquisite and made me think of Bill Viola's film *Chott el-Djerid* (*A Portrait in Light and Heat*) (1979). Here Viola metamorphoses a snow

---

[2] http://www.karenheald.co.uk/the-dream-space-2

blizzard into a desert storm. These multi-narrative film dramas and cited international artworks impacted on my sense of time, my relationship to travelling, whether physically or via the imagination through sleeping and dreaming.

'Dream films'

Such associations between poetic images and text are central to my art practice. The visual language that develops within the films cultivates non-verbal communications that translates through the performative use of time-based media. My films, photographs and installations endeavour to create unique lyrical dialogues of evolving painterly and sculptural video language through the incorporation of found objects, imbued with multiple meanings. The visual architecture upon which images hang is like the phrasing, meter, rhyming of words in a poem. The titles of the films foster intertextuality enabling the viewer access to the artworks with names such as *Catch, Slip, Embrace: the Reverie* and *Quietly Slumbering She Slipped Away* (Heald and Akamatsu 2007).

This process enables the work to attain integrity, sustaining my holistic practice which supports quiet reflective time and space to think. Whether through editing films, text or photographic stills, contemplation forms an immense part of the practice. Essential to the final video artwork is my system of editing which involves shooting approximately two to three hours of footage during each session, the films are then edited down to a final duration of approximately three to ten minutes each. This forms a process of meditative synthesis where time, shot length, layering, interplay of edits and cuts, restructure the work. Slowing the frame rate of a film down, besides referencing time, also draws out its poetics, a technique used among artists such as Bill Viola in *Hatsu-Yume: First Dream* (1981) Abigail Child in *This Is Called Moving: A Critical Poetics of Film* (2005) examines the parallel associations between poetry and film as two powerful art forms to re-construct and re-present social meanings and representations both private and collective. As part of the process Child analyses similarities between words and frames, lines and shots, stanzas and scenes. In Pippilotti Rist's *Sip My Ocean* (1996), the audience were presented with two beautifully surreal underwater mirrored images projected into the corner of an art gallery, evoking a dream like submerged world of the unconscious. The effects of the mirroring and Rist's accompanying singing of Chris Isaak's 'I never thought I fall in love with someone like you' alludes to the dualities of love and desire. The surreal images are juxtaposed with emotional subtexts when Rist continues her singing as mundane domestic objects – a plate, cup, toaster – are seen slowly floating to the bottom of the abyss.

In comparison to the poetics of *The Fourth Dimension*; *Hatsu-Yume: First Dream; and Sip My Ocean*, Stephen Daldry's *The Hours* (2002) adopts a more dialogical approach portraying three women in three different decades and locations. It depicts three suicide attempts, two of which are successful and all of which are linked to Virginia Woolf's novel Mrs Dalloway (1925). The 'dream films' subtly connect to these films and in turn evoke time through a 'painterly reverie' and a 'poetics of *its* space'. The former depicts a poetic visual language that engages with the differences and similarities between painting, photography and film, to allude to a cinematic language of textural and tonal dreams. The latter term differs from Gaston Bachelard's (1958) "poetics of space" (*La Poétique de l'Espace*) where, through his use of quoted poems and discussion, he attunes the reader to the poetics of domestic spaces. My films are occasionally sited in domestic locations such as *Not Still at Home* (Heald and Sabin, 2010), a collaboration between Caroline Sabine and I with the artwork created in response to Sabine's dance performance in her own home (2007). However, more frequently, the films are set within public institutional sites and places of learning, for example, hospitals and academic buildings or alternatively in the landscape, such as *FRIDA Travels to Ibiza* (Heald and Turner 2017)[3] or in cityscapes such as *pra II* (Heald 2005)[4].

---

[3] http://www.karenheald.co.uk/the-fridam-series2
[4] http://www.karenheald.co.uk/pra

My practice synthesises the relationship between travel, art history, film and painting. This is especially significant in the FRIDAm Series (2017), an ongoing collaborative project with artist Sally Turner researching the life of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Turner and I first began collaborating in 2003; Turner working as a performance artist and myself as a fine art filmmaker. The title of FRIDAm was chosen as a play on the words 'freedom' and 'Frida', Kahlo's first name. The focus was on Kahlo's legacy, her approach to politics, women's equality, overcoming disability and establishing herself as a painter. Exploring the concept of how Kahlo might react and respond to an evolving art scene, FRIDAm attempts to capture the essence of Kahlo's spirit in a contemporary world. Working closely with Turner, who has a striking resemblance to Frida, has enabled a relationship to unfold, a rapport to evolve that transcribes through the films.

Figure 1: *FRIDA Travels to Ibiza*, film still of performance, Old Town, Ibiza, Spain
Source: Heald and Turner 2017

Together Turner and I create visual poetry using colour and tone to suggest another space and time. We believe to act is to pretend, whereas as performance artists we perform with intent. As such Turner and I have developed a relationship that is extremely responsive, allowing our performances to be both spontaneous and experimental in nature. Trust and empathy are important elements in the collaboration and FRIDAm was born out of different experiences and responses in a variety of contexts and sites. Filming was predetermined in the sense that locations and attire were pre-arranged, but we allowed for an intuitive response to the site. The films are conceptual, exploring feminist notions of art theory yet are also concerned with the graphics of line, colour and form. The aesthetic response is constantly reassessed through a process of critical reflection. Varying the speed of the films by slow motion techniques emphasised the films' poetics. Working out of a suitcase, Turner and I have travelled together nationally and internationally 'staging' live art performances. These ephemeral events have been portrayed through time-based media and transformed into films and installations.

Following on from this experience, I related to the intermediaries between 'prenarrative envelopes' and 'cognitive representations'. In the sense that the mental construction that surfaces from the "real" world as an emergent property of thought and the types of concepts and relations that are used by people to interpret and represent

Airea: Arts and Interdisciplinary Research, 2021, **3**, 82-102 | **90**

their physical world as it is understood and described through natural language. I considered these concepts being neither a pure experience nor a pure abstraction to my moving images and films created by contemporary artists Minh-ha, Zeinabu Irene Davis, whose narrative, documentary and experimental films incorporate the unique experiences of African American women and Shirin Neshat whose artwork centres on the contrasts between Islam and the West, femininity and masculinity, public life and private life, antiquity and *modernity* and bridges the spaces between these subjects.

I reflected on the oscillation between semiotic and symbolic language and the audience's relationship to my artwork when undertaking an artist residency with Elizia Volkmann as part of *7 quiet Acts of Domestic Violence* (*7qADV*) (Heald and Volkmann 2010)[5]. This series of live art events took place over a seven-week period in 58 Shelmerdine Close, a condemned maisonette in the East End of London (2010). The artistic enquiry was curated by Tanya Cottingham, its last tenant, to mark the final months of the maisonette's life as a Bow Arts live/work flat. Cottingham set out to highlight the politics and prejudices placed on urban space by deconstructing private place and social reality through this series of seven 'Acts'. Taking place over seven weekends in the Autumn, Cottingham invited artists to spend six days responding to the flat, which culminated in a closing event to a participatory guest audience. Volkmann and I, collectively known as K&E, were the final act of the series.

In preparation for the residency, Volkmann and I arranged a site visit to the building and local area. We took photographs and produced an archive of the building in its transitional phase. Bearing in mind the title of the series, with its emphasis on stillness and given that the maisonette was both a domestic home and an art space, we wanted to produce something that challenged the audience in subtle and ambiguous ways. Our proposal had been to collect and transform objects that Volkmann and I obtained from Freecycle[6]. Behind the concept was the recognition of Freecycle's community network and the fact that many women and their children flee their homes, leaving all their personal possessions, to escape domestic violence and consequently setting up home again from 'scratch'.

It was important to challenge the role of woman as object and to rethink gender and object relations with regards to some of the household items and objects that Cottingham had gathered in her home. I asked if she could leave several of them, such as the array of mirrors and the art deco dressing table, so that we could incorporate them into our work. Volkmann and I then engaged in telephone conversations and intense preparation. We discussed various Freecycle items, debating which would best narrate the space and how we could become more strategic in our bids. By the start of the artist residency, we had procured a diverse selection of items, such as a birdcage, cigarillo tins and voile with connotations to restraint, harm and the veil with its depictions of chastity and obedience.

In addition to the items from Freecycle, we were presented with further objects from Cottingham that either had been left in the flat or were part of her own personal memorabilia. Selected stereotypical gendered objects included a heavy framed bicycle and a long powder-blue sundress. The contrast between the solid structure of the bike and the soft transparency of the fabric, combined with the mirrors framing the domestic space of the living room, inspired a performance with the bicycle. Kinaesthetically the performance slowly began with an attempt to steer the bike within the confines of the living room. Drawing upon this tactic knowledge the film *Cycle* (Heald and Volkmann 2010) documents the initial awkward manoeuvring of the body in relation to the bike, performing the unexpected in a domestic space. Over the course of the act, it was as though the machine and I became one and the uncoordinated movements gradually transformed into an intuitive dance through increasingly improvising the movements. I positioned two camcorders to record the event. One was situated on the dressing table, between the

---

[5] http://www.karenheald.co.uk/projects-7qadv2
[6] Freecycle is a worldwide community network for people to dispose of household and other objects by passing them onto others. It works by subscription to local online groups: www.freecycle.org

edges of two transparent photo frames. This captured fragmented images through the mirrors, which slightly revolved from the current in the air caused by the bike's passage. The other camera lens was set up to face the window, documenting my body as it wove back and forth, blocking out the view of the exterior facing maisonettes. With the objects being used as triggers for the work, the 'dream film' not only explored the frame of painting in the rethinking of Jacques Derrida's broader critical context of the parergon in *The Truth in Painting* but also through perception, spontaneity which incorporates tactic knowledge and free association.

Through this method of filming and editing I aimed to determine where the audience might focus their gaze and the viewers duration. In cinema, time is not linear, Sergei Eisenstein coined the term montage as being the main element of cinema where narrative is presented in pieces. André Bazin defines the basic definition of montage as "the creation of a sense or meaning not objectively contained in the images themselves, but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition" (Bazin 2004, 25). Cinema and theatre and the fusion of these two art languages further instigates dialogues concerning performance art. In *Cycle,* a non-text based performance to film, the use of in camera techniques, reflections and mirrors movement, sound, natural lighting, and gestures are the materials used to create moving image to engage audiences. In the editing process, there follows a chopping of real time through montage, so that when the film is viewed it builds upon the visual architecture of the work rhythmically to create another sense of time and space associated with the dramatic imagination and cinematic theatre.

In Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image Laura Mulvey's (2006) notion of the 'Pensive Spectator'*,* argues that easy access to repetition, slow motion and the freeze-frame may well shift the spectator's pleasure to a fetishistic rather than a voyeuristic investment in the cinematic object. The manipulation of the cinematic image by the viewer also makes visible cinema's material and aesthetic attributes. By exploring how new technologies can give contemporary life to 'old' cinema, *Death 24x a Second* offers an original re-evaluation of film's history and also its historical usefulness.

Figure 2: *Cycle*, film still 1 of performance, Shelmerdine Close, East London, UK
Source: Heald and Volkmann 2010

Figure 3: *Cycle*, photograph of performance, Shelmerdine Close, East London, UK
Source: Heald and Volkmann 2010

The two selected camera viewpoints (one situated on the dressing table and the other facing the window) as presented in the film *Cycle* eventually became intertwined in the editing process[7]. For an instant I appeared to transcend and then multiply, becoming one with the maisonette's interior, exploring existence and objects through time and space. Francesca Woodman's photographic gelatin silver prints from the *House* series (1975-1976) influenced the aesthetics of my project, for example through the layering of a female body, blurred by movement and long exposure (Lomas 2009). Although in *Cycle* the film's varying viewpoints are in colour and record the sequence of movements. On the relationship of the viewer with the actor or action in conventional film, Gravity 7 notes "the signifying production of moving image and sound would have to peel off the printed page to unravel on the cutting room floor, awaiting new modes of reconstruction and assemblage" (Chan 2007).

Figure 4: *Cycle,* photographs of performance (author), Shelmerdine Close, London, UK
Source: Heald and Volkmann 2010

---

[7] http://www.karenheald.co.uk/projects-7qadv2

In discussing the editing process and the abstract optical and sound images I want to refer to Mulholland's description of ambience within sound, and the sound installation titled *Llafarganu Papagei*[8] (Heald & Volkmann, 2010) created for *7qADV*. The artwork was installed in a small bedroom, housed in-between two other rooms containing our installations. The piece consisted of a parrot cage and an accompanying sound work. The acquisition of the birdcage via Freecycle was from a small Welsh village. The audio narrated the tale conveyed to me by the owner of Spock the parrot. It recounted the life and death of Spock, its former resident, which intertwined with the surrounding of Shelmerdine Close. I created a text that synthesised the two environments with Volkmann and I and two other women's voices hauntingly reciting the words[9].

The twenty-minute looped audio commenced with a quiet two-minute solo recital. This monologue was repeated until midway through a second voice melded with the first. As the piece progressed, the two additional female voices joined the collective, all with different regional accents, which depicted the diversity of the local population. As the voices increased, they clamoured for attention until reaching a crescendo and then, slowly finding their own rhythm, they reduced to a single monologue once again. The sound seeped through small speakers situated around the perimeters of the room. Within this audio installation, just as in my 'dream films', the piece was as much about sounds, textures, colours and compositions as about social commitments.

Figure 5: *Llafarganu Papagei,* photograph of installation, Shelmerdine Close, East London, UK
Source: K&E, Heald and Volkmann 2010

Philosopher Marilyn Frye's speeches and lectures collated in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (1983) are timeless. They detail discussions on significant themes still relevant in contemporary societies. In her first essay on oppression Frye uses the bird cage as an analogy for why many people do not see oppression. The birdcage in this instance occurs as a metaphor. Whereas *Drifting on a Pink Cloud* (Heald and Kearney, 2007)[10] made the viewer question where they looked and where to pin-point their attention, in *Llafarganu Papagei* the focus was on the

---

[8] 'Llafarganu' is Welsh for chant, literally meaning speech singing and 'Papagei' is German for Parrot.
[9] The additional women reciting the performance were the film director Gabrielle Russell and the fashion writer and stylist Gemma Winter.
[10] *Drifting on a Pink Cloud*, formed part of The Dream Space series. http://www.karenheald.co.uk/the-dream-space-2

bars of the birdcage, producing a different form of editing. The cacophony of sounds enabled the audience to edit too by flitting their eyes and ears. Through its pauses and variations of the female voice *Llafarganu Papagei* juxtaposed audio with the visual of the bird cage. The artwork invited the audience to experience a direct non-narrative 'time-image' as described by Deleuze and created a notion I term 'sonic dreamscape' (discussed after 'time image' below).

In *Cinema II: Time Image* (1985) Deleuze interprets Bergson's concept of time and his own notion of 'time image' (2005). A 'time-image', for Deleuze, was an image infused with time. That is, "it is an image, which is different from itself, which is virtual to itself, which is infused with past/future" (Deleuze 2005, page 34). Here the present is a dynamic interpenetration of past and future. The actual is an aspect of our lived world experience that occurs in the here and now, in the present moment and it feels the most real to us. For example, holding an object feels more real than the memory of holding an object or an image of that object on a screen, the latter are two examples of the virtual. People frequently use time-images. We recall images in our memories or fantasies to help us navigate the world. We do not consider these images are as real as those provided by our senses at the present moment, but they exist for us, nevertheless. Deleuze suggests there are three basic 'time images': recognition, recollection and dream. Recognition being the lowest level into the depth with recollection following and finally dream. This relates to my 'dream films' in terms of the non-narrative moment and different temporalities. When recognising a physical object in real life we connect it up in our mind with virtual images from the past. Recognition is the merging of virtual and actual images, and with practice this process becomes semi-automatic. Encountering further experiences extends this process. Deleuze calls recognition and recollection images forms of mnemo-signs, essentially, memory signs and dream-images types of oneiro-signs. We often see the process of recognition, recollection, or dream depicted for us in films. For example, when a flashback occurs, it provides us with recollection-images or when someone falls asleep and dreams, or hallucinates, we have dream-images. However, these three types of images differ from the actual images discussed by Deleuze in Cinema I as they are not fully what they seem, they are virtual images and they function as signs. An image of an object in a dream is not completely real as it is just a dream. The images in a dream are more virtual, and less actual, than others, because they are imbued with context (a person waking up, falling asleep or recounting a dream), difference and otherness as they are only partly there. Deleuze links these frameworks of difference, time, representation and relation to concepts of virtuality. Deleuze discusses the indirect imaging of time via montage within which attempts to capture and image movement used cuts, and cuts indicate a form of pure difference which registered and impacted the images they connected. Montage is therefore an indirect image of time, a version that speaks through the movement-image.

My concept of the 'sonic dreamscape' in *Llafarganu Papagei* treats the optical and sound image, the present and the past, the here and the elsewhere to comprise internal elements, sensations and connections deciphered in non-linear poetic contexts. The acoustic within the 'sonic dreamscape' can therefore include ambient, asynchronous (non-diegetic) or found sounds, compositions or even the absence of any soundtrack. These auditory devices enable various perceptions of time to evolve. This idea of the 'sonic dreamscape' is continued in the 'silent' long take video installation *Frock* (Heald and Volkmann 2010) where visitors to the maisonette were as Volkmann (2010) recounts "greeted by a haunting video work projected onto a huge sheet of voile (that flowed over the banisters) of Karen in my green 1950's ball gown, either standing to face them or looking out of the window of the room behind. Her ethereal image blocked the direct route into the living room forcing the viewers to be redirected into the kitchen before exploring the living room".

Initially in the looped 20-minute film, my figure appears static as if a photographic image, apart from the subtle shifting of weight from side to side and the slight angle of my head as I glance out of the window. In *Poetics of*

Space, Bachelard (1958) philosophically writes a lyrical exploration of the home, discussing outside and inside as forming "a dialectic of division, the obvious geometry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains". Bachelard's philosophical meditation on oneiric (dream) space was how creative thought comes into being. The authentic poetic image emerges from a form of forgetting or not-knowing that is not ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge. The viewer, on looking more closely, could see the evidence of the pixels from the moving images resonating on the fabric, which intensified as the light faded. Half-way through the film I leisurely rotate 180 degrees turning to face the window. Here, great attention to detail was given, through mise-en-scène over experiments in editing and post-production special effects, referencing back to an earlier tableau created in *Drift* (Heald 2005) and André Bazin's notion of 'true continuity'[11]. Bazin's critical theory argued for objective reality and applauded in camera techniques as opposed to the film theory focus of the 1920s and 1930s on how cinema could manipulate reality (2004). The concentration on objective reality, deep focus, and absence of montage enabled the audience to draw upon their own interpretations of *Frock*.
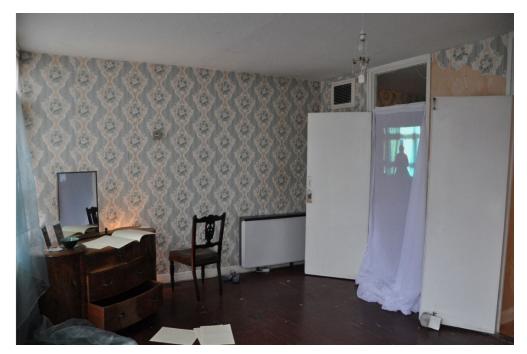

Figure 6: *Frock*, photograph of filmed performance / installation, Shelmerdine Close, East London, UK.
Source: Heald and Volkmann 2010

As Volkmann documented the performance, the difference between the still photographic image and the film was accentuated by the intensity of the colours. The photographs displayed depth in the lushness of the tonal range of the green fabrics, the mellowness of the sunlight and the warmth of the wooden furniture. The use of colour palettes and hues is a subtle way to visually enhance the emotional aspect of a film and guide the contemporary viewer to respond to it viscerally. Green, the mixture of blue and yellow, can generally be seen everywhere and in countless shades, the human eye commonly sees green better than any colour in the spectrum making this earthly colour an essential part of our everyday lives. On the other hand, yellow is the most visible as it is the first colour that the human eye notices. The perception of colour, colour combinations and colour memory are however not

---

[11] Andrea Bazin believed realism to be the most significant purpose of cinema, considering the interpretation of a film or scene should be left to the spectator. He promoted the use of 'true continuity' through *mise-en-scène* rather than visual effects and unconventional editing (2004).

universal but affected by the language we speak, our culture, environmental factors and our gender. Colour perception is also affected by sound as well as other colours and therefore audience durational perception of time can be influenced to slow or increase films tempo. The symbolism of colour in films can mean many seemingly contradictory concepts even within the same film, demonstrating the major contextual roles in its meaning.

Figure 7: *Frock*, photograph of filmed performance / installation, Shelmerdine Close, East London, UK
Source: K&E, Heald and Volkmann 2010

The challenge of whether to create live or pre-recorded film performances produced profound discussions between Volkmann and I. Before the doors opened to the public, we addressed issues around our presence and audience interaction. The previous six acts had produced a penchant for live 'performance' where the audience engaged in physical acts, making us question whether we 'performed' or were merely present in the space. We had decided beforehand that we would invite our audience via the Freecycle network[12] so that a good percentage of our audience were unaware as to what they were coming to. Volkmann (2010) comments "I felt strongly that we had to be there and to create a way of engaging. We stripped away any ruses that may have been contrived via performing as the biggest ruse had already been set in motion on-line via Freecycle. Guests were invited via posts saying – *Small boxed art works to give away to make way for larger works*".

As I concentrated on editing the photographs, videos and sound performances, Volkmann attended to the online interactions. I made a decision for the opening, that my performance in *Frock* was to be presented as a video installation and the documentation of *Cycle* was to be handed out as 'small, boxed artworks', whilst I felt that *Llafarganu Papagei* would create a resonance with my presence.

The site of 58 Shelmerdine Close, a condemned maisonette in the East End of London gave context to the work and enabled the audience to connect with issues associated with the dysfunctional family environment while engaging with professional Fine Art practice. Working with the whole house, *Act 7* had multiple layers. Following the week-

---

[12] As well as other social networks, arts mailing lists and listing sites like Art Review.

long artist residency, we created artworks, installations, live and recorded performances. The exhibition was about process – interventions, happenings and interactions, crossing Fine Art genres. The emphasis was on layering and experimentation through time via the incorporation of found objects. Volkmann notes:

> Most people were delighted to find something other than just an artist's home studio and [to] take part in an artwork that was about them as much as the pieces in the space. There was a sense of people feeling that they were part of something special, of achievement for being brave enough or even smart enough to take up the invitation from Freecycle, some were so excited that they had come to one of the 'mysterious art happenings' that they had heard of but never been to as they were not 'in the art world' (Heald 2014, 118–119).

Figures 8 and 9: Boxed artworks, photographs of filmed performance / installation and audience member cutting up photographs. Shelmerdine Close, East London, UK.
Source: Heald and Volkmann 2010

These crossings of boundaries had arisen from our sense of commitment to the process as we rigorously debated and challenged our practice especially the live or recorded events through performance, installation, sculpture and socially engaged art. There was a synthesis and transcendence, which rose above our investigations. Bachelard's association with the idea of house, in contrast to the reverie of a maternal, womblike, stable home offering shelter, reflects the terrible urban reality that the twentieth century instituted through socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices. Michel Foucault advances this debate shifting from intimate space to "other spaces", spaces of crisis, deviance, exclusion, and illusion in his seminal essay on Heterotopia (1967). Considering the increase in domestic abuse in the UK due to the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, these issues are still significant.

The artworks created at 58 Shelmerdine Close were never didactic but a synthesis of contextual and philosophical concepts. The site-specific maisonette in East London was significant to the creation of these artworks. Transcendence evolved through our distinct lyrical, non-verbal communications, in response to each other's language in the space. It transformed our intuitive, intellectual and reflective investigation into experiential moments in time with tangible objects.

Conclusion

Kristeva, in referencing the signification of the semiotic, discusses how in the first place, the terms *semiotic* and *chora* frequently remind us that the *chora* is the space in which the meaning that is produced is *semiotic*. Kristeva uses maternal language when discussing the *chora*, speaking of its motility and comparing it to contractions and the maternal part of giving birth and the birth itself. She describes the "'energy' charges as well as 'psychical' marks, [which] articulate what we call a *chora*: a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated and cannot be represented" (Kristeva 1984, 26). For example: the preverbal sounds of an infant; the psychotic who has lost the ability to use language in a meaningful way; or the artistic avant-garde, which mobilises the semiotic in its push for originality, creativity and critique (Lechte and Zournazi 2003). The *semiotic* refers to the effects of meaning that are not reducible to language or that operate outside of language even if language is necessary as an immediate context. Examples include the repetition of speech by a child learning to talk before verbal language is actually articulated or the meaningless repetition of another person's spoken words as a symptom of psychiatric disorder. The former describes how the child's attempt at speech presupposes the possibility of language because they live in the environment where their parent's speech exists.

Kristeva (1974, 25) extracts the *chora* from Plato's *Timeaus* (360 BC) to "denote an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases". Plato's theories on how the universe was created, describes the *chora* as a space, *"*meaning both a receptacle and nurse, that is, the container and the producer, of what the universe is before anything else exists" (Sullivan 2008). Kristeva focuses on the fact that the theoretical description of the *chora* is itself part of the discourse of representation that offers it as evidence - the *chora*, as rupture and articulation (rhythm), precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality, and temporality. In this sense all discourse moves with and against the *chora* as it simultaneously depends upon and declines it. As even though the *chora* can be termed and structured it can never absolutely be hypothesised. Consequently, one can position the *chora* and, if necessary, give it properties of continuous deformations but one can never give it obvious form. As such the *chora* is not a sign or not yet a signifier either but is generated to reach this signifying position. So, neither a model or a copy the *chora* precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularisation is equivalent only to vocal or kinetic rhythm. As an artist creating poetic non-linear 'dream films' exploring the *chora* has enabled me to restore the motility's gestural and vocal play on the level of the socialised body. I am continuing to visualise and reframe female representation in a medium that embraces sound and moving image.

Koepnik notes that in the work of the apparatus theorists of the 1970s such as Jean-Louis Baudry:

> Plato's cave foreshadowed the perceptual conditions of cinematic experience: the way in which both the womblike darkness of the auditorium and the mechanical time of cinematic projection immobilize spectators so as to entertain them with captivating illusion – the way in which the dream screen of filmic representation, rather than merely helping to disseminate certain ideological perspectives, is ideological in its very institutional nature as it simultaneously exploits and reinscribes the Western duality of mind and body, the real and the imaginary. (Koepnik 2014, 134–135)

In the 'dream films' the semiotic implied and inferred subtexts are signified but not stated, they are initiated from the semiotic *chora* as a space for the preverbal[13]. Kristeva states heterogeneity in language implies the equivalence of temporary positioning of meaning which is necessary for communication. So that the semiotic, symbolic modalities of signification do not exist independently of the bodily subject. Instead, they are processes through which the body is both represented and constrained in signification. Building upon Kristeva's *chora*, this approach

---

[13] Kristeva's use of the term '*semiotic'* should not be confused with the discipline of semiotics suggested by Ferdinand de Saussure.

is employed as a method for creating artworks and using video as a creative tool. Situated between the body and culture the semiotic and symbolic dynamic, and the dialectic relationship between the two, produces significance through contemporary films. By using the video camera and editing in an unconventional and novel way, the aspiration for the reader/viewer is that they will experience my experimental films through multiple layers using the semiotic *chora* and slowness as critical media strategy.

The treatment of time in 'slow cinema' is therefore offered as a mechanism with which to devise significant artistic methodologies, on the 'in-between-ness' of film and research as collaborative practice. Using non-traditional gallery sites, I explored the scientific techniques of film employing the camera lens as a microscope to focus on minutiae, whilst investigating the notions of 'poetics of *its* space' and 'painterly reverie'.

I am making this tactile-kinaesthetic language increasingly prevalent within my 'dream films'. In this rapidly advancing technological age by exploring diverse temporalities, slow cinema, and non-linear narratives the 'dream films' act as contemporary cinematic strategies. In the words of Lutz Koepnik "we understand slowness as a strategy of the contemporary – a decidedly modern practice that gazes firmly at and into the present's velocity" (Koepnik 2014, 134).

Through experimental, minimalist and complex approaches, the 'dream films' aim to explore slowness as a critical medium to transpose the present's velocity. The films invite audience interpretations and responses to the zeitgeist.

References

Bachelard, Gaston. 1958. *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press.

———. 1994. *Poetics of Space*. Translated by Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bazin, André. 2004. *What Is Cinema?* Vol. 1. California: University of California Press.

Bergson, Henri. 2017. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Translated by Thomas Ernest Hulme. Delhi: Kalpaz Publications.

———. 2005. *Matter and Memory*. New York: Zone Books.

Buck, Louisa. 2018. "Tacita Dean on her three major London shows: From genre fluidity to the British artist's love of analogue film." Accessed 21 September 21, 2019. https://www.theartnewspaper.com/interview/genre-fluidity-tacita-dean-on-her-three-london-shows.

Butler, Declan. 2016 "A world where everyone has a robot: why 2040 could blow your mind." *Nature* 530: 398–401. https://doi.org/10.1038/530398a.

Daldry, Stephen, dir. 2002. *The Hours*. Hollywood; Paramount Pictures and Miramax Films, 2003. DVD.

Deleuze, Gilles. 2005. *Cinema II: Time Image*. London: Continuum.

Foucault, Michel. 1967. "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias." Accessed September 28, 2021. https://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.

Front, Sonia. 2012. "Traumatic Bifurcation – Jaco van Dormael's Mr. Nobody." In *Time & Temporality in Language and Human Experience*, edited by Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 371–384. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

———. 2019. "Trauma and Temporality on The Leftover." Paper presented at Narratives of Temporality: Continuities, Discontinuities, Ruptures conference, Cambridge University, UK, July 27, 2019. http://spatiality.temporality.lcir.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Preliminary-Programme.pdf.

Fuser, Marina. 2019. "Nomadism in the Cinema of Trinh T. Minh-ha." PhD diss., University of Sussex.

Ghosh, Pallab, 2021. "Machine finds tantalising hints of new physics." Accessed March 23, 2021. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-56491033.

Chan, Adrian. 2007. "Gilles Deleuze and Contemplative Cinema." *Gravity7*. Accessed September 13, 2019. http://gravity7.com/blog/film/2007/01/gilles-deleuze-and-contemplative-cinema.

Griffin, Jonathan. 2018. "Tacita Dean: "I don't care about the long run. I care about now." *Royal Academy*. Accessed September 21, 2019. https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/magazine-tacita-dean.

Heald, Karen and Takeko Akamatsu. 2007. "The Dream Space." Accessed August 1, 2019. http://www.karenheald.co.uk/the-dream-space-2.

Heald, Karen and Caroline Sabin. 2007. "Not still at home..." Accessed October 6, 2019. http://www.karenheald.co.uk/not-still-at-home.

Heald, Karen and Sally Turner. 2017. "The FRIDAm Series: FRIDA Travels to Ibiza." Accessed September 1, 2019. http://www.karenheald.co.uk/the-fridam-series2.

Heald, Karen and Elizia Volkmann. 2010. "7quiet Acts of Domestic Violence." Accessed 1 September 2019. http://www.karenheald.co.uk/projects-7qadv2.

Heald, Karen, 2005. "pra II". Accessed September 1, 2019. http://www.karenheald.co.uk/pra.

———. 2014. "Dream Films and Research as Collaborative Practice through Contemporary Art and Science Methodologies". PhD diss., Leeds Beckett University.

Humm, Maggie. 1995. *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory*. London: Prentice Hall, Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Iñárritu, Alejandro González, dir. 2006. *Babel*. Hollywood, LA: Paramount Pictures, 2006. DVD.

Koepnik, Lutz. 2014. *On Slowness: Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Kore-Eda, Hirokazu, dir. 1998. ワンダフルライフ *(Wandafuru Raifu) After Life.* London: Soda Pictures Ltd, 2007. DVD.

Kristeva, Julia. 1974. *La Révolution Du Langage Poétique : l'avant-garde à la fin du 19e siècle : Lautréamont et Mallarmé* [The Revolution of Poetic Language. The avant-garde at the end of the 19th century: Lautréamont and Mallarmé]. Seuil: Paris.

———. 1984. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Translated by Margaret Waller. New York, Columbia University Press.

———. 1994. *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature*. Translated by Ross Guberman. 1996. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kurosawa, Akira, dir. 1990. *Dreams*. Hollywood, LA: Warner Bros, 2011. DVD.

Kurzweil, Ray, 2001. "The Law of Accelerating Returns." Accessed October 6, 2019. https://www.kurzweilai.net/the-law-of-accelerating-returns.

Kwan, Annie Jael, Mia Yu, Abhijan Gupta, and Midori Yamamura. 2017. "Territories Disrupted: Asian Art After 1989." *Tate*. Accessed October 2, 2019. https://www.tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-asia/event-report-territories-disrupted.

Lechte, John, and Mary Zournazi, eds. 2003. *The Kristeva Critical Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Lomas, David. 2009. "Psychic Disturbance and Interiority in Surrealism and Contemporary Art." In *Subversive Spaces: Surrealism and Contemporary Art*, edited by Maria Balshaw, 13–63. Manchester: The Whitworth Art Gallery.

Lux Scotland. 2019. "Charlotte Prodger: Stoneymollan Trail." Accessed September 24, 2019. https://luxscotland.org.uk/event/charlotteprodgerstoneymollantrail/.

Minh-ha, Trinh T, and Bourdier, Jean-Paul, dirs. 2001. *The Fourth Dimension*. New York: Women Make Movies, 2003. DVD.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. 2005. *The Digital Film Event*. New York: Routledge.

Minh-ha, Trinh T., dir. 2004. *Night Passage*. New York: Women Make Movies, 2004. DVD.

Miyazawa, Kenji. 1927. *Milky Way Railroad*. Translated by Joseph Sigrist and D.M. Stroud. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press.

Mulvey, Laura. 2006. *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*. London: Reaktion Books.

National Portrait Gallery. 2018. *"*Tacita Dean Portrait." Accessed September 21, 2019. https://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/tacita-dean/exhibition/.

Rist, Pipilloti. 1996. Sip My Ocean, film/video installation. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York.

———. 2007. Sip My Ocean, Gravity Be My Friend, video installation. Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT), Liverpool, England.

Schor, Naomin. 1999. "Blindness as Metaphor." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2(Summer): 76–105. https://muse.jhu.edu/issue/503.

Schrader, Paul. 2018. *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozo, Bressen, Dreyer.* Oakland: University California Press.

Schwarz, Gabrielle, 2018. "Tacita Dean's mediations on a medium." Accessed September 21, 2019. https://www.apollo-magazine.com/tacita-deans-meditations-on-a-medium/.

Searle, Adrian. 2011. "Tacita Dean Film – review." Accessed September 21, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/oct/10/tacita-dean-film-review.

Sullivan, Mary Ann. 2008. "Digital Poetry and the Greek Notion of Nous." *Tower Journal*. http://www.towerjournal.com/chora.html.

Tate. 2011. "Unilever Series: Tacita Dean: FILM." Accessed September 21, 2019. https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibitionseries/unilever-series/unilever-series-tacita-dean-film.

———. 2018. "Charlotte Prodger." Accessed September 24, 2019. https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/turner-prize-2018/charlotte-prodger.

———. n.d. "Tacita Dean Disappearance at Sea 1996." Accessed September 21, 2019. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/dean-disappearance-at-sea-t07455.

Toril, Moi, ed. 1999. *The Kristeva Reader: Women's Time*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Totaro, Donato. 2001. "Time, Bergson, and the Cinematographical Mechanism." *Off Screen* 5, no.1 (January). https://offscreen.com/view/bergson1.

UCLA International Institute. 2003. "The Fourth Dimension: Digital Video and Lecture by Trinh T. Minh-ha, An exploration of time, life and art in Japanese culture." Accessed August 20, 2019. https://international.ucla.edu/institute/event/458.

Viola, Bill, dir. 1979. *Chott el-Djerid* (*A Portrait in Light and Heat*). Netherlands, IBMb, 2010. DVD.

———. 1981. *Hatsu-Yume: First Dream*. Cambridge: Quantum Leap, 2007. DVD.

Vitale, Christopher. 2011. "Guide to Reading Deleuze's Cinema II: The Time-Image, Part I: Towards a Direct Imaging of Time to Crystal-Images." Accessed September 13, 2019. https://networkologies.wordpress.com/2011/04/29/tips-for-reading-deleuzes-cinema-ii-the-time-image-towards-a-direct-imaging-of-time/.

Women Make Movies. n.d. "The Fourth Dimension." Accessed August 28, 2019. http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c546.shtml.

Yentob, Alan. 2018. "Tacita Dean: Looking to See." *BBC One Imagine…* Accessed August 21, 2018. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bczlrw.