Fragmented Continuity:

an investigation

into autobiographical time via time-lapse

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author’s knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Caroline Huf

March 2019
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Abstract

This exegesis is an account of my practise led research which explored ideas of self-representation as the embodied experience of time, through the medium of digital video using single frame editing. This research culminated in an installation of digital video ‘weavings’ entitled *Threadbare*.

My studio research grappled with the genres of autobiography and self-portraiture and questioned how these genres related to concepts of self. I found the distinction between autobiography and self-portraiture mirrored a similar distinction between the narrative self and the sense of being a continuous self in time, or presence. In the studio practice I tested ways of de-emphasising the narrative self to make presence visible. I related presence to the experience of meditation and drew on Buddhist philosophy of no-self. In the studio I began by relating the sequencing of single frames in time-lapse to temporal order and the sense of presence. These works, the *Meditations*, had a single point of view and the look of surveillance. I then explored ways of breaking up the linear movement of time-lapse by re-creating atomistic films by Jan Švankmajer and Marie Menken which led to an investigation of the division between self as identity and self-presence. Following these *Re-creations*, my work shifted away from the single point of view of the surveillance camera and single frame editing that was reminiscent of analogue filmmakers. Through the final series of works I developed the process of ‘video weaving’ to create multiple temporal points of view and explore a ‘digital materiality’. In this way I found *Threadbare* conveyed an image of presence as the experience of multiple distinct temporal mechanisms through duration; an experience of presence as both fragmented and continuous.
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**Fragmented Continuity: an investigation into autobiographical time via time-lapse**

**Introduction**

This exegesis is an account of my practice-led research which explored the embodied experience of time, subjective time or temporality, through digital single frame editing and culminated in the work entitled *Threadbare*. This final work is an installation of digital ‘video weavings’ and incorporates my reading into diverse ideas of time to convey the embodied experience of time in the present as a reflection of self-portraiture.

This exegesis outlines the ideas, research questions and methodology I employed as a digital video artist and shows how the various threads of investigation into film theory and studio practice, alongside my exploration of the philosophy, neuroscience and psychology of temporality have led to making this final work for examination. As I explored self-representation through the medium of digital video my parallel reading program led me to diverse theories on ‘self’. The key themes which emerged for me, in relation to the self-portraiture of my video works, were: narrative self, first person perspective or minimal self, identification, ‘atomistic film’ and meditation. I will discuss each of these in the following chapters. Because my video work relies on intricate single frame editing, I have been influenced by many experimental filmmakers and digital artists who also used single frame editing: Stan Brakhage, Robert Breer, Tony Conrad, Abigail Childs, Paul Sharits, to name a few, but the artists whose works I have specifically mentioned in this paper are Hiroshi Yamazaki, Chris Welsby and Jenny Oaken, Marie Menken, Jan Švankmajer, and Martin Arnold, Rose Lowder and Daniel Crooks. Most importantly the deconstructive autobiographical texts by French writer George Perec have been particularly relevant to my own studio experiments.

The questions I asked during my research were:

1. How could I employ single frame editing to investigate the embodied experience of time?
2. How might the process of single frame editing engage with concepts of self, and the genres of autobiography and self-portraiture?
3. How does the digital medium affect the representation of embodied time?
Figure 1 Installation shot of testing Threadbare 2018; School of Art Gallery

The catalyst for this exploration of presence was a number of personal experiences. These experiences made me feel the thread of presence in time that links us to a sense of ourselves, is very fragile. The understanding of linear time is essential to the sense of being a continuous self in time to forming autobiographical memories. But what happens if one is unable to distinguish the temporal order of events? Who is the self then? When my father had a stroke, he lost his speech, and although he regained his speech a few days later, he was never the same. In the last years of his life with early dementia, my father’s personality subtly changed, but he was still our father. I was also worried about my own state of mind with obsessive compulsive disorder which has a pattern of thinking, of repetition, that has its own agitated logic. Much of my art work has involved obsessive weaving of discarded objects or improvised stop motion animation which has its own obsessive quality.

The experience of death has also shifted my attention to idea of presence in time. A few months before I began my research project my sister had died of cancer. During her illness I had witnessed how time became more precious, and saw the effects of illness and medication on her in those final weeks of her life. Then I moved to Canberra to begin my research project which was originally to make stop motion animations, but seven months into the work I returned to Queensland to be with my mother who had cancer. As I sat by her It suddenly hit me that all the experiences she had lived, the story of her childhood, the school years, loves, family, work, achievements, hardships, travel, friendships, all these things she had experienced in her life, were in the past. My mother was a woman in pain, dying. My eldest sister and I

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were present with my mother when she died at home on a new moon. When death came, it was an invisible transition, a line crossed over; some moments past, and she was still, her breathing stopped.

On the full moon six weeks after our mother passed away, my father died. He had decided to go for a swim one night, but I (his carer at the time), had been distracted, lost track of time, and later found my father drowned in the pool. The thought stayed with me, ‘if I had been present, in the moment, not lost in my thoughts, my father wouldn’t have died that night’. I had skipped a beat in the thread of moments. I tried to remember what had happened, and wished I could have turned the clock back.

According to psychologist Marc Wittman time consciousness and consciousness of self are perhaps the same\(^2\). And so, my exploration of presence is also about self, and self-portraiture. How we each have a temporal fingerprint, a unique rhythm that defines the way we move through time, the way we think in time and how we feel present? Why do some people like to be early for flights, organise their time well and talk fast, while others (like myself) run late, lose track of time and talk slowly? Why in my family the Huf’s, is there a recognisable trait of Vagueness, (inherited by some more than others), what does the neural circuitry of vagueness look like? I considered how our experience was the result of individually and socially defined concepts of time, the binary of fast and slow in an accelerated culture which values speed over slowness, or is my experience of time and how I live and respond to my environment a result of my particular combination of nerves of various speeds, my pulse rate and blood pressure, the time it takes for my eyes to focus, or my ears to respond to sounds? Why did I lose track of time that night?

When I returned to my research, instead of stop motion animation, I began time-lapsing the view from my window. Time seemed to move so fast I found it difficult to look away; time seemed to move faster because I was so still. For the next six months and then the next few years I watched time-pass by my window via the time-lapse camera, as though trying to grasp each ordinary moment, so it could be remembered. When I began time-lapsing I described the process as “stepping out of the picture to see what was there”; rather than manipulating objects in stop motion animation to create the metamorphosis of those objects on screen, I wanted to

simply watch. Of course, this was impossible, but what “stepping out of the picture” had meant was opening up a space to experience and reflect on time-passing; my presence in time and place.

Through my studio practise I began to relate my experience of the tenuous nature of our experience of time to the sequencing of single frames in the moving image, but I did not want to tell this story, I was searching for a way to convey a feeling of time passing, or presence. At first, I had not thought of it as an autobiographical project. However, through my practise I found that in order to convey an experience of presence, I had to create an autobiographical point of view to create a first-person perspective. Film theorist Alissa Lebow defines ‘personal cinema’ or ‘first person’ as “…foremost about a mode of address: these films ‘speak’ from the articulated point of view of the filmmaker who readily acknowledges her subjective position.”3 Through research I gradually articulated differences between self as the narrative we tell of our lives, and self as presence, and how this related to autobiographical moving images.

**Chapter outline**

The first chapter describes how I began time-lapsing and discovered I had to construct the autobiographical point of view to convey a subjective experience of presence. In this chapter I explain how my first time-lapse established the “point of view of the filmmaker” with diary text and this led to an investigation of the distinction between autobiography and self-portraiture and how I related these terms to a similar division in concept of self: self as a story and the self we experience as presence. I discuss how I related Buddhist concepts of no-self and meditation to the process of making videos with time-lapse: *Meditation I, Meditation II* and *the cat sat on the mat*.

The second chapter describes how I explored presence through the re-creation of films by Marie Menken, Jan Švankmajer and also a text by George Perec. I give an account of the fieldwork I undertook which involved travelling to the sites in which these works were originally made in order to re-create them in situ. When I re-created Perec’s text, I found his approach to autobiography in this work accentuated his presence at the site. This led to an understanding of the central role presence played in my project and how it might be revealed

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as a self-portrait. Then I discuss how I framed my presence in re-creating Švankmajer’s and Menken’s films in a series called the *Re-creations*.

The third chapter gives an account of how I explored alternative methods of editing the time-lapse that would breakdown their linear order of time, and convey self-presence as fragmented as well as continuous. This chapter describes how I also endeavoured to find editing methods that highlighted the qualities of the digital image I worked. The outcome of this experimentation was a process of editing I called ‘video weaving’ with which I developed the works *Intranist* and *Threadbare*. The chapter explains how the weaving engaged with concepts of self, meditation, identification, time via the warp and weft of the woven grid. I discuss how the ‘weaving’ extended my initial approach to time-lapse discussed in chapter one by depicting presence as multiple and layered experiences in the present.

Each chapter describes a series of self-portraits which in different ways explored the relationship between experience of self as presence and self as narrative identity. I found presence was emphasised by inhabiting a form or structural constraint. For example, in the works described in the first chapter I inhabited or embodied the form of surveillance; in the second chapter I inhabited films by other artists by re-creating them; in the third chapter I inhabited the warp and weft of the woven grid. These pre-fabricated forms which I inhabited de-emphasised the narrative self and allowed the experience of presence to come to the foreground.

Over the course of my research, the way presence was depicted in my videos shifted. The *Meditation* time-lapse works described in chapter one conveyed presence as the experience of a string of moments, while the final work *Threadbare* visualised presence as an experience woven from many overlapping processes of sensory experience. The continuity of the single channel works unravelled into multiple temporalities. This representation of presence encroaches on the territory of ‘neuromedia’ because it engaged with current ideas in temporal neuroscience.⁴ Within the constraint of warp and weft, through the rhythm and placement of the threads, the ‘video weavings’ conveyed my sense of time, my temporal body, my temporal fingerprint.

⁴ Jill & Stoeckli Scott, Esther., ed. *Neuromedia: Art and Neuroscience Research*. (Springer). I have taken the term neuromedia from this book. The preface states "Neuromedia is an innovative examination of shared territores in neurobiological anatomy, physiology, and media art." The book proposes "...interpretative forms of media art can help to demystify these complexities for diverse audiences". p.v
Chapter 1. The *Meditations*

**Introduction**

Following the deaths of my parents I returned to Canberra and began time-lapsing the view from my room. I had not set out to make autobiographical works, but I saw reflected in the early time-lapse sequences the numbness yet heightened experience of time-passing I had felt in those months. The fixed point of view of the camera and stillness of the room, contrasted with the impression of time streaming past my window. However, this was what I saw in the image, and is not necessarily what was experienced by the viewer. To convey this felt experience to viewers, I found I had to construct an autobiographical framework to connect the camera’s point of view to my own as the subject and artist. This was established using a diary form, but as I wrote the text, I was conscious of not wanting to tell the story of my life or give details about my family. I did not want to explain what happened that night, but rather convey the texture of embodied time felt in the wake of that experience. I gave just enough information to create an autobiographical framework so viewers could engage with my subjective experience of time. I was also conscious of wanting to reflect on the experience of time as something we share and to do this by referring to the video medium I worked with.

This chapter begins with a discussion of autobiography and self-portraiture and how I related these forms to concepts of self and time in philosophy and psychology. Then I give an account of how I began experimenting with time-lapse and how I related this technique to these concepts of self and linked the video sequences to myself as the author in order to reflect on embodied time as self-portraiture in the videos *Meditation I*, *Meditation II* and *the cat sat on the mat*.

**Autobiography and self-portraiture, narrative self and presence**

I was at first uncertain if I should distinguish if I was creating a self-portrait or a video autobiography, and whether it made any difference. In *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film*, theorist Laura Rascaroli examines the distinction between autobiography and self-portraiture and cites Raymond Bellour: “the self-portrait is distinguished from autobiography by the absence of a story one is obliged to follow…” and defines the coherence of self-portraiture as being poetic, analogical and metaphorical, and
lies in a system of remembrances, afterthoughts, superimpositions, correspondences. Whereas autobiography is reliant on narrative, thus forming an ‘appearance of discontinuity, of anachronistic juxtaposition, of montage.’ Rascaroli writes that the two are distinguished in that they close in on, or open up on ideas of continuity. For Bellour, ‘where autobiography closes in on the life it recounts, the self-portrait opens itself up to a limitless totality’. This distinction between the two terms resonated with my ideas as I was not interested in creating still images in the tradition of self-portraiture, nor wanting to develop a documentary style autobiography; I wanted to create work that was less reliant on narrative but enabled me to explore more poetic forms of self-portraiture. In representing myself through a self-exploratory form of digital media, I was searching for a view of myself in two different ways; one that was continuous and open ended, and another that was of fragmented and discontinuous experience.

Alissa Lebow states “The matter of knowing ourselves or coming to consciousness about ourselves…” is “…at the centre of the project of self-representation.” But what is the self, or are there many selves, or is there a self at all? Lebow adds “… is the desire to represent this self (in language, through images) a formative one, constituting rather than re-presenting this self”?. How does the idea of self affect the re-presentation, or does the re-presentation change the concept of self? For example, Laura Rascaroli proposes that self-portraiture “reflects the notion of the self that prevailed in Western societies in the late-eighteenth century, with Romanticism and its ‘invention’ of the self as a self-contained object of awareness.”

This led to researching philosophies of self/selves/no-self, where I came across a distinction between narrative self and first-person self which resembled the distinction between autobiography and self-portraiture. For example, the contemporary Australian philosopher Patrick Stokes argues that ‘in broad terms there are two ideas of self: a person’s identity in the world, which is one’s life story “that anyone can tell”, the other is the first-person experience which is the sense we have of being a self in time. Stokes is investigating a new philosophical approach to the problem of personal identity. In his research he is moving away from traditional

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7 Ibid.
8 Lebow, 4.
9 Ibid.
metaphysics that treats the self as just another object that is established through a set of conditions but only examined through the present tense. His research is addressing the concept of self as being something that also exists in the present tense, but ‘the self’ as being continuous through space and time.\textsuperscript{11} If as Stokes says, the first-person perspective is changing every moment, then there is no single identity of self, but we experience ourselves in the changing moment.

According to Patrick Stokes the concept of self requires continuity and what constitutes that continuity has been a central problem in philosophy because whether that continuity is found to be in the body, the mind, the soul, or identity, all of these things change.\textsuperscript{12} Stokes argues that this problem of continuity is avoided in “no-self” philosophies such as Buddhism.\textsuperscript{13} My introduction to the concept of ‘no-self’ was via \textit{Vipassana} meditation the in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. \textit{Anatta} or no-self, proposes that what we call the self is actually “ever-changing patterns of physical form, sensations, conceptions, other mental factors such as volitions, and the flow of consciousness…”\textsuperscript{14} The everyday notion of what we call self is “illusory” \textsuperscript{[ref]}. As the philosopher Miri Albihari explains it is not that the aspects one understands to be oneself do not exist, it is that those aspects are not fixed, thus it is called the illusory self. Albihari’s interpretation of Buddhist philosophy proposes a two-tiered philosophy of no-self: one tier is the illusory self and the other tier is a witness consciousness which is continuous.

This distinction also resembled the distinction between a narrative self, and the first-person experience of self. In making my videos I was interested in whether the perspective of no-self resulted in a different kind of self-portrait. To restate Albihari, the aspects we consider to be self do exist but they are not fixed. Albihari describes the self, that is I, as a “bounded concept”, that puts a boundary around experiences and attributes we consider as “belonging” to oneself. I came to think of autobiographical video as also bounded in the \textit{Meditation} works as the word “I” cast a net over the whole image. It is problematic to draw parallels such as this across contrasting philosophical and cultural traditions. However, there is common ground between no-self philosophies in the philosophical tradition of Europe and America.

\textsuperscript{12} Personal Identity: A Primer Podcast Audio. Who Am I? Glad You Asked; Now for Two Millenia of Thinking.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
Stokes’ philosophy, which I am more inclined towards, is similar to the Buddhist concept of no-self. However, Buddhism aims at an experiential understanding of no-self through meditation practice. It is intended that this felt understanding of no-self will reduce the “suffering” that is caused by attachment to oneself as a fixed identity. Through meditation one observes how sensations constantly change, that everything is impermanent. Therefore, the beliefs and emotions and ideas which distress us are not permanent, nor a fixed part of ourselves. Throughout this paper, I often refer to meditation in order to articulate my approach to making video because the experiential nature of meditation was closer than philosophy to my experience of art-making.

Pivotal to my video practice was to learn the Buddhist concept of no-self is linked the concept of Annica or the doctrine of momentariness or impermanence, that everything is constantly changing. Furthermore this is an ‘atomistic’ philosophy of time as The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy states:

> Rather than atomizing time into moments, it atomizes phenomena temporally by dissecting them into a succession of discrete momentary entities. Its fundamental proposition is that everything passes out of existence as soon as it has originated and in this sense is momentary.

This notion of ‘atomising’ time had also emerged in my reading of experimental film. Film theorist Laura U Marks in Enfoldment and Infinity an Islamic genealogy of New Media described the work of 1960-1970s experimental filmmakers who explored single frame filmmaking as ‘atomistic’. ‘Atom’ means ‘uncuttable’ and so the smallest element of film is the frame. These works have a characteristic flicker or fragmentation and Marks described these works as ‘atomistic’ because they worked with the ‘most minimal part’ of the film strip, that is the frame.

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15 Buddhist philosophy developed primarily to support meditation practice which is central to all forms of Buddhism.


19 Ibid.
Marks states:

*Experimental film and video took early to the idea that the minimal part of their media is not a unit of narrative but a formal or physical unit. Most such works use deconstructive techniques to discover meanings hidden at the level of narrative, but some shatter the media object into crystalline fragments that aim to dazzle and disorient as much as certain muqarnas domes do. The gradual shift in practices based on the minimal part from film, to video, to digital and interactive media shows atomistic ideas increasingly at home in the latter, but already a twinkle (or flicker) in the eye of frame-based media. ...*20

I searched for a way to convey autobiographical time as presence via the atom of the moving image, the single frame, and explored self in atomistic time. I sought out ideas that explored self/no-self as atomistic which might relate to the sequencing of frames and found theories in psychology and neuroscience suggesting experience of time as made up of discrete units. For example, psychologist Marc Wittmann describes how the experience of presence in time is formed from smaller events. Wittmann also differentiates between autobiographical self and the experience of presence. He states:

*...the self forms out of memory. This is often described as the narrative self that creates itself from stories we tell about ourselves. But there is also a sense of self that exists as “the mere feeling of being” without autobiographical knowledge. This is minimal or core self.*21

To explain our experience of the minimal self, Wittmann draws on research done in neuroscience to propose a theory of “integrated moments” in which a series of events merge together to form the experience of self that is “a moving window… of continuous presence”. The “functional moments”, occur at a duration of under a second merge over three seconds to form the “experienced now” which we usually think of as ‘now’ or a moment, and over about thirty seconds these events merge to become an experience of “psychological presence” which is a the sense of self as continuous in time.22 The time periods Wittmann refers to are drawn from studies in neuroscience. In the article “The Duration of Presence” Wittmann argues these different periods of time relate to philosophical debates on the instant versus continuous flow.

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20 Ibid., 197.
21 Wittmann. 100.
22 Wittmann.
of time.\textsuperscript{23} It was important in my research to consider ‘now’ as an experience that forms over the duration of a few seconds, and that the sense of self in time occurs over a duration of half a minute, and I wondered how these time periods might apply to the duration of video, what it meant for viewers’ experience, and began to imagine how video self-portraiture made from time-lapse sequences could allude to the idea of self as “window…of continuous presence” and utilise this correspondence between the idea of self in the work and the viewers’ experience of self.

Subsequently, I began to look at neurocognitive film theory which studies the effect of the moving image on perception, in order to understand how viewers experienced the duration of the moving image. Two main articles in my research were "The Illusion of Continuity: Active Perception and the Classical Editing System" by Todd and Berliner and “Brain Science and Film Theory: Reassessing the Place of Cognitive Discontinuity in Cinema” by Maria Poulaki. Poulaki’s article was particularly important to my research because she applied neurocognitive film research to experimental films which use alternative editing; for example, films with an ‘atomistic aesthetic’ such as Paul Sharits, Tony Conrad, and flicker films, as well as looking at extremely long films like Andy Warhol’s Empire State. Poulaki points out most of the research in this field has examined how perceptual processes relate to ‘continuity editing’ which we see in most narrative cinema and television, it uses discontinuous takes to create the continuity of narrative time and space.\textsuperscript{24} Researchers study two important perceptual processes: event segmentation which is the way we divide situations into actions events, places, and attentional continuity which is how we tend to see continuity between events.\textsuperscript{25} Neurocognitive film researchers Todd and Berliner examined the affect of ‘continuity editing’, and found edited cuts were usually made where event segmentation would take place in everyday perception, while ‘attentional continuity’ allowed viewers to knit disparate takes into a continuous narrative.\textsuperscript{26}


\textsuperscript{24} Annette Kuhn & Guy Westwell, "A Dictionary of Film Studies," in A Dictionary of Film Studies (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2012), 93.


\textsuperscript{26} Todd & Cohen Berliner, Dale J. , "The Illusion of Continuity: Active Perception and the Classical Editing System.," Journal of Film and Video 63 no. 1 no. Spring, 2011 (2011).Todd and Berliner define continuity editing and relate it to everyday perception: "Continuity , in both real-world perception and cinema perception, is an illusion, enabled by our brain's ability to conjoin fragmented images when such images follow certain patterns and logical principles. We propose that the series of images produced through classical editing are similar to those experienced in everyday life in that both types are noncontinuous (images come upon our
Instead Poulaki examines what happens to these same perceptual processes when viewing experimental films and proposes that the editing strategies of these films “disable” or “delay” perceptual processes. 27 For example Andy Warhol’s eight-hour Empire State is an example of what Poulaki calls “radical continuity”. Flicker film is an example of “extreme discontinuity” which disables event segmentation because the events were so rapid, they are under the threshold of event segmentation.

Our world and our perception of it—just like contemporary cognitive science shows—are discontinuous by default, and films can make us aware of their boundaries and also stretch them to the point that genuine perceptions become possible... 28

Poulaki argues that continuity has been ‘naturalised’ so these perceptual processes are taken for granted but experimental films make us aware of the boundaries of our perception. Often these films can be uncomfortable to watch, but this is part of bringing the viewers awareness of how they are watching. 29 This is typical of structural filmmaking which film theorist Rachel Moore defined as “…films in which you think about your watching and watch what you are thinking whilst the sights and sounds communicate directly with your nervous system” 30 In my work I wanted viewers to think about the time of watching my video as self-portraiture.

Another aspect of Poulaki’s study that intrigued me was the idea of ‘everyday’ perception. She points out that the same processes we use in everyday perception of time are also used in viewing moving images, but experimental editing pushes against those processes so they become aware of them. Everyday time is like perception, it is time in our lives that has become so habitual and familiar we are no longer aware of it, it is invisible. In the works described in this chapter the time-lapse made visible the everyday time. This notion of the everyday led me to the writing of George Perec. Autobiography was the other main theme of Perec’s work and his work also interrogates everyday concepts of self, the author. By making visible the everyday Perec reclaimed the experience of ‘being present’ as autobiographical.

sesnes in a fragmented way), both follow patterns that people regularly perceive in their everyday experience, and both obey the same logic (the progression of images in both situation adhere to many of the same principles). Because of these similarities, the same perceptual systems that create the illusion of continuity in the real world also create the illusion of continuity in classical cinema space.” p 46

27 Poulaki, 23, 24.
28 Ibid., 38.
29 Ibid.
**Time-lapse**

Considering the idea of self as the experience of series of moments, I started thinking about my experiences in sequences of time: my lifeline as a video timeline. The temporal order of events that moment A is followed by moment B and then moment C is essential to the sense of being a continuous self in time and the foundation for our autobiographical memories—the minimal self. I began using time-lapse to convey this experience of continuous presence. Time-lapse is a technique of taking snapshots at intervals, for example an image is captured every twenty seconds. It divides time into precise increments according to clock time rather than subjective experience. When these images are sequenced in the linear order in which they were captured, with each image held for one frame, the video gives the impression time is moving fast. However, each image is held on screen longer than the instant it existed. As a result, time-lapse video seems to grab at the moment. The images are repositioned in the order in which they were captured which gives a sense of intentionality, that accentuates linear order and the concept of time as a string of moments.

I was drawn to the reflexive quality of time-lapse because it draws attention to the subject of time. Tom Gunning states "This fusion of discontinuous instants, which defines film movement technically, plays a backstage role in our reception of cinema, whose dominant phenomenological effect is the perception of the flow of motion." Film theorist Alan Cholodenko argues all moving images are animation because they are all sequences of single frames. However Gunning points out what is usually called ‘animation’ "… makes this production of motion more evident." Tom Gunning states "… the wonder triggered by animation comes from its pivot from stillness to motion…which I call the production of the instant." Although time-lapse differs in many respects from drawn animation, because the frames are discontinuously captured, it shares this “production of the instant”. In the following section, I describe how I related these ideas about time-lapse to explore the concept of self in time in autobiographical videos.

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31 Wittmann, "Moments in Time". 2.
33 Ibid., 39.
35 Gunning, 41.
Meditation I

In this section I return to the discussion of the process of making *Meditation I* [Fig.1] and how I related concepts of self and time to time-lapse. When I began time-lapsing the view from my room I intuitively related the linear sequencing of frames to the notion of temporal order. Then I used a classic form of autobiography, the diary, to indicate myself as the filmmaker, but I also employed the diary in a way that separated the narrative self from the experience of presence. When a friend went on a meditation course this connected the work with concepts of self in meditation and became the timeframe for my diary. For eight days I time-lapsed the view from my window. Each day I moved the camera to a slightly different position and wrote a few short diary entries. I separated the diary text from the time-lapse sequences so they alternated: day one text followed by day one time-lapse and so on.

In *Personal Cinema* Laura Rascaroli examines various genres of autobiographical film such as the notebook, essay film, self-portrait film and diary film. She also points out “…the diary obeys at least two rules: it must say ‘I’, and it must say ‘now’.” Rascaroli cites Culley who explains the reader’s experience of the diaries: “The text created in a continuous presence but now fixed in time, must be recreated by a reader in a new, continuous present….” I realised the way I had edited my video had brought the viewer into an image that unfolded in the present. For the diary text I had used the typewriter text in the editing programme so the words appeared letter by letter as they were ‘typed’ across the screen, which meant viewers read the text at the moment of its unfolding. The way the time-lapse scanned the back yard focussed the viewer’s attention on the shapes of the shadows as they shifted incrementally across the screen in the present. Most importantly, Rascaroli explains the diary is linked to the life of its author and only ends with the author’s death. It is this link with the finitude of one’s lifetime that conjures up subjective experiences of time. Because the diary was written in first person and present tense the viewer identified the author, the narrator “I”, as also the camera’s point of view and embodied image in the present.

The process whereby the viewer links the text “I” to the camera as “I” the author, is identification. In *A Dictionary of film studies* identification is defined as “a merging of identities in the imagination….” and the "experience of consuming a fictional work whereby

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36 Rascaroli, 60.
37 , 120-21.
38 Ibid.
the reader becomes caught up with the actions and motivations of a character or characters.” 39

In autobiographical film, Laura Rascaroli proposes a paradoxical identification is created because it is “addressed "...to the Self as the other" and "the reader or spectator is let into the privacy of the addressee’s dialogue with his or her Self...” and in this way “the spectator becomes the addresser.” 40 This led me to consider how the process of identification played out in my own work.

In Meditation I the viewer identifies with “I” the filmmaker who was the narrator of the text and the camera watching from the window. Because I had separated the text and the time-lapse, when the narrator was present, the camera was absent. This created a separation between the narrative self of the diary and the experience of presence in the time-lapse sequences. Thus, viewers identified with these aspects of self alternately. However, there were some sections when this partition collapsed. When I came into the room at night and turned the light on, the window pane became a mirror which reflected the interior of the room while also showing the backyard at night, as well as myself standing next to the camera [Fig 3]. At these moments when “I” appeared in the room, the camera who was “I” was suddenly observing itself/myself as though observing as another. In these entangled images the subject of the video (myself) merged with the object of the video (myself). Lebow explains:

when a filmmaker makes a film with herself as a subject, she is already divided as both the subject matter of the film and the subject making the film...the matter and the making – thus the two ways of being subjectified as, if you will, both subject and object.

Lebow then sums up the situation “In the very awkward simultaneity of being subject in and subject of, it actually unsettles the dualism of the objective/subjective divide, rendering it inoperative.” 41 Therefore after I had set up the distinction between the text and the cameras point of view, these few scenes dissolved the boundaries between them reminding us that such categories although useful in communication are ultimately artificial and the self and environment are ultimately continuous.

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39 Westwell, 217.
40 Rascaroli, 60.
41 Lebow, 5.
Day 1 Sunday

I’m texting a friend who is driving to the Blue Mountains for a seven-day silent meditation. While I wait for her return I will time-lapse the view from my room.

Day 2 Monday

No texting.
I wonder which way the wind will blow.
Perhaps I let something important go by.
Day 3. Tuesday
There’s a hole in the day.
I slept in and missed the rising Sun.
My eldest brother arrived from WA.
He’s here on work for 3 days.
Today, I’ll sit in the back yard and read
"How to take your time" Alain De Botton.

Figure 2 Meditation I: (2014) video stills from Day 1, 2 and 3.
Similarly, Meditation I and the next work Meditation II, blurred the binary of presence and absence. Although I was absent from the room, the camera was an extension of myself, while I was absent the camera was my presence. Through the camera I observed my room in my absence. Aspects of my environment previously invisible to me became visible; I saw birds gathered on the electrical wires outside my window, clouds swirling over Mount Majura, a possum on a midnight walk, cars coming and going from the Motel next door, and shadows of trees shimmying across the back yard. The quietude of these videos became absorbed into my memory of that house. Rascaroli states “…the filmmaker can choose to signal [her] presence in the act of filming through [her] absence, a strategy that equates a subjective camera with the filmmaker’s consciousness”.\footnote{Rascaroli, 8. Rascaroli quotes Maureen Turim "This marking of presence through absence entails the following implicit enunciations:"I was there behind the camera. I chose this image. I chose this transformative process of registering the image to mark my presence as filmmaker. I inscribed myself through the ways I manipulated the camera."} Despite my absence, the arrangement of the camera, and my choice not to be present signalled my involvement in making the video. All these characters, the camera, the friend, the text, the scene, the room, are all aspects of myself. In contrast to the narrative self of the diary, the fixed view of the camera became the witness consciousness.

An unintended side effect of my absence from the room coupled with the fixed view point of the camera was the look of surveillance about my video [Fig.2]. Surveillance cameras are located in train stations, shopping centres, streets, airports, they film continually regardless of what is in view. The static framing of my room over many days whether I was there or not, and the indiscriminate mechanical rhythm of time-lapse, gave a similar impression of surveillance in my video. I considered how this look of surveillance impacted on the work and the idea of embodied time and the concept of self.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Figure3.png}
\caption{The surveillance camera at my window.}
\end{figure}
The video was structured around two subjective experiences of time; waiting and meditating: while my friend meditated, I waited. Both these actions, waiting and meditating, have a quality of stillness but differed in their temporal orientation: waiting is orientated towards the future, while meditating is focussed on the present. In contrast to these subjective experiences, surveillance represented objectivity, present, yet incapable of subjectivity. However, because the viewer identified with the camera’s point of view and therefore embodied the camera’s perspective, the surveillance was endowed with the viewer’s subjective experience; it became a conduit for the experiences of waiting and meditating. Surveillance embodied the non-judgmental witness consciousness that is, according to Alibhari, is continuously present. 43 To me the surveillance was like an empty vessel. I entered the sustained stare of the lens and the stillness of that room. The surveillance image emptied of emotional cues, allowed me to embody the image with my presence. This related to the Buddhist concept emptiness which the philosopher Anne Game explains “is not opposite of presence” it is to be “…emptied of the constructed false self identities”. 44 By “false self identities” Game is referring to the illusion that one’s has a self that is fixed. Game adds that the ‘self’ that is empty of “false self identities” can be more present. 45

45 " The 'solution' is an understading of the self that might be found via phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty), Derrida or Buddhism, depending on your taste-" Game p 119
Figure 4 *Meditation I* (2014) stills reflections in the window at night.
Meditation II

In the next work, *Meditation II* [Fig.4&5], I pushed the idea of surveillance as perceptual experience further. This time I went on a meditation course and left my camera to time-lapse the view from my room. I added a single line at the beginning of the video to establish the camera’s point of view as an extension of myself: “I am going on a ten-day meditation course 11 May till 22nd May. While I am away the camera will meditate on the view from my bedroom window”. For the duration of the course, the camera remained in the same position facing the window and took a frame every forty-five seconds. Those ten days translated to twenty minutes of video.

Unlike *Meditation I* which demarcated the days with diary entries and change of camera angles, after the one line of text, the *Meditation II* time-lapse sequence continues unbroken by text or camera movements. The narrator became the meditator. The camera’s point of view was in a sense a proxy for the narrator “I” who was meditating. Thus, the surveillance camera became the presence of the meditator and stood in for the idea of meditation. The surveillance image was internalised, not as an authority figure of state power, but the non-judgmental observer or witness’ consciousness, a pure perceptual experience aspired to in meditation. In this way, the usual notion of surveillance as state control was quietly expanded to encompass perceptual experience.

The way I had focused the camera echoed the introspection of meditation. On the meditation course we had to maintain “noble silence” and avoid eye contact with other students. We sat in one position for many hours a day, with our eyes closed and focused on the feeling of the breath on the skin just below the nose, and on the last seven days we were taught the Vipassana meditation technique which involves continually scanning the body head to toe to observe sensations; such as tingling, pins and needles, aches, hot and cold, drowsiness, hunger, sounds, images and thoughts. In *Meditation II*, the lens was focussed on the glass pane so that the view outside the window was blurred and the wire mesh of the fly screen enclosed the image in a feint veil [fig.5]. The glass window felt close to camera, and this closeness echoed the intimate observation of my body in meditation, such as the feel of my breath, the physical sensation of my skin all over the body. Although the meditator’s eyes were closed and the camera’s eye was open, because the image was blurred, there were no details of the clouds or trees to catch one’s eye, thus the image highlighted sensations of light and colour.
Unlike *Meditation I*, where there had been details of the scene outside and shadows of trees and buildings to gauge the passing of time through the day, *Meditation II* was blurred, a pulse of blues, indigos, violets, and greys from night to day, with periods of darkness when nothing seemed to be happening and sections when it became difficult to tell if it was night or day. Because the subject was muted, the video focused on a sensuous wash of light and colour, just as in the practise of meditation when one tries to observe sensations arise and pass away without fixing onto them; to observes impermanence. When I returned from the course and looked at the images on my camera, there was a sense that those images were my experience of meditation; more so. Whereas my own meditation had been interrupted by thoughts, what I saw on screen was what I imagined pure perception might feel like.

According to Poulaki’s understanding of how alternative film editing affects perceptual processes, in the smooth sections of *Meditation II* when it became hard to know if it was day or night, the viewer’s attention becomes focussed on the small internal changes, so that event segmentation is delayed, and the video becomes still like a photograph. In the sections where
the clouds break up into a flicker, the process of event segmentation cannot take place because each frame is an event which changes too quickly for the viewer to follow. Although the time-lapse appears fast, the camera is also in one place for the days that are passing, and so the work ironically suggests a static quality. There were also sections where the clouds flickered, revealing the underlying frame by frame structure of the moving image. Art critic Rosalind Krauss describes the perceptual effect of flicker:

_The flicker film was invented to stop time’’ unhinging each frame from the continuity, the afterimage persists and “What we "see" in those interstitial spaces is not the material surface of the "frame," nor the abstract condition of the cinematic "field", but the bodily production of our own nervous systems, the rhythmic beat of the neural network's feedback, of its "retention" and "potention," as the nerve tissue retains and releases its impressions._


I mention this here because Krauss’ description of flicker, that we “see” the “bodily production of our nervous system” resonates with the aim of _Vipassana_ meditation, when one scans the body for sensations in order to observe the impermanence of those sensations.
Figure 6 *Meditation II*; (2016) digital video stills
To understand how the perceptual experience of my videos might relate to the states experienced in meditation, I read further on the practice of meditation. In “Cracking the Buddhist Code: A Contemporary Theory of First-Stage Awakening”, philosopher Richard Boyle proposes all meditation practices aim for a state of pure perceptual awareness in which “basic perceptual processing systems are not interfered with by symbol processing systems, especially language”.47 He argues that the practice of meditation limits the symbolic processing system, and the default meaning network which is the self-talk we experience when our minds are not occupied.48 Meditation techniques do this by focussing on a “meditation object”, such as the breath, and avoiding distraction from that object by closing one’s eyes and maintaining one’s posture. I considered how the process of time-lapse might relate to these techniques. In Meditation II, the narrator of the text represents symbolic processing and narrative identity, while the time-lapses represent the pure perceptual experience in the absence of symbolic processing. Did the time-lapse operate like a meditation object?

Another writer on meditation, Wolfgang Fasching, states that “meditation in its different forms is a means of becoming aware of one’s consciousness as the event of presence”.49 I began to wonder if Poulaki’s proposition of how experimental film can challenge the boundaries of our perception and bring one’s awareness to perceptual experience, which she called “genuine perception” could also be seen as a kind of “event of presence”? In other words, can the “genuine perception” generated by such films produce a brief experience of pure perceptual presence; but beyond the context of Buddhism or other spiritual practices that apply to the experience of one’s life.

Two time-lapse films

The stillness which was essential to suggest meditation and surveillance was established by fixing the camera on a tripod. In order to gain a deeper understanding of how this fixed point of view affected my work and related to ideas of self, I researched experimental time-lapse films at the National Film and Sound Archives (NFSA) and found two films which have been important to my research: Heliography 1979 by Japanese artist Hiroshi Yamazaki[Fig.7] 50 and

48 Ibid.
50 Hiroshi Yamazaki, Heliography, 1979. 16 mm, physical colour, sound.
Seven days 1974 by UK artists by Chris Welsby and Jenny Oaken [Fig.6]. Both these films use tracking sequences. The camera tracked through space as it was time-lapsing. Therefore, each frame was taken from a different point in space as well as time, so that the camera’s point of view continuously changes through time. This continually changing point of view is like Stokes’ description of the self that is changing in every moment. However, these films used tracking in contrasting ways; Heliography is an example of extreme continuity while Seven Days is fragmented and reflexive.

In Heliography the camera glides seamlessly in one long tracking shot. When watching the film, I felt I was moving forward into space, soaring over the ocean towards the midday sun on the horizon, but as I got closer, the sun set over the land mass and the screen became night. Then, out of the darkness, the sun began to rise from the bottom of the screen. Although I had felt I was travelling forward I realised I had been travelling around the Earth and so I had ended up upside down. Thus, the continuous tracking in Heliography, gave the impression of continually moving forward into the picture frame to arrive at the same point. This film was an example of what Poulaki called “radical continuity”, where event segmentation was delayed. This effect added to the surprise of the work. Because the film unfolded gradually in one movement, with no breaks, the viewer can only conclude they have travelled around the planet in a few minutes and yet one’s position in front of the film has not changed. In this way Yamazaki has imagined the concept that time and space are one and challenged the viewer’s embodied perception that the notion of up, down left and right is perceived in relation to our body.

In Seven Days, the camera continually tracks but because the scene changes so frequently the film is at first fragmented and confusing. I had to work hard as a viewer to understand the system structure which motivated Seven Days; and then one is rewarded when the system becomes clear; the camera goes out each day of the week across the same patch of land. The camera is set on an equatorial stand so as it tracks across the landscape, it rotates, and captures three to ten second of film that seem random; takes of the sky, the ground, the clouds, the rain, the stream, the hill, the rocks, the grass its’ own shadow, the night falling. The film cuts abruptly, without transitions. These short takes mimic saccadic eye movement but they are not

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51 Jenny Okun, & Chris Welsby., Seven Days 1974. 16 mm, sound, colour. sponsored by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

52 Heliography means “written by the Sun” a reference to early photography by Niecpce. This film is literally written by the sun onto analogue film.
hidden in the way cuts are hidden in ‘continuity editing’. This is because there is no narrative, plot, instead there is the absurd daily routine of the camera.

In comparison to these films, the Meditations were neither as smooth as Heliography nor as fragmented as Seven Says. Like Seven Days, which clearly showed the viewer that the camera on its tripod was watching its own shadow, the Meditations made the camera’s presence clear to the viewer. In both films, one identifies with the camera; in Seven Days the tripod stooped like a figure earnestly going about its’ daily task. There was a sense of absurdity and pathos to the camera following its shadow, unable to see past its immediate surroundings to the planets beyond the Earth’s atmosphere. The camera’s routine was similar to our own habitual behaviour in our own lives. In the Meditations the surveillance created a sense of detachment. Whereas Heliography and Seven Days, give one the impression of moving through space, the Meditations gave the impression that time moved passed the viewer. The viewer identified with the fixed point of view of the camera and the shadows indicated the day was passing quickly.

If there are few events demarcating time it passes slowly, but in retrospect it has passed quickly because there are few events to remember it by. In Meditation I the screen time was demarcated by the change of the camera angle and text, but there no major events occur on screen. In Meditation II there were no changes in the camera angle, and there were few events to demarcate the twenty minutes of screen time, the video may have felt slower at the time of watching but in retrospect there was no plot to remember it by.

Furthermore, although the image appears fast in Meditation II, the text indicated to the viewer that the camera stayed in one position for ten days and this knowledge changed how one relates to the camera and the image; the viewer was reminded of the ten days which made making the ten minutes of the video seem longer. The body’s mirror neuron system can empathise with the fixed gaze of the lens, our bodies have a memory of extreme stillness; memories of calmness, or constraint, or an intense focus. The viewers identification with this point of view was uninterrupted for ten minutes, allowing one to be immersed in this experience and to internalise the image. There was a contradiction between the speed of the image with the static position of the body. Those moments in our lives when time feels like it is going fast, such as major accidents people experience being able to think things through even though it was only a few seconds. In contrast, there is a numbness in Meditations.

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53 Wittmann relates this research to conditions such as depression where time is felt by the patient as slower, for example thirty minutes may feel like an hour. Wittmann; ibid.
Figure 7 Chris Welsby and Jenny Okun: Seven Days: (1976); 16mm colour, sound, Stills
After a couple of years in my studio practice, time-lapse began to feel like a dead end. Although I tested different camera angles and closeups, the linear direction of the sequences seemed predictable. As a result, I searched for ways to disrupt the time-lapse fragment it somehow, whilst somehow also maintaining a link to the temporal order of the experience of minimal self. In the triptych called *The Cat Sat on the Mat*, I tried contrasting time-lapse with real-time video [fig.8]. I had moved house at this stage and no longer had the second storey view, so...
instead I had time-lapsed the shadow cast by the window frame as it moved across my new bedroom floor each day. It was a neat grid of shadow and sunlight that shimmied back and forth across the floor. Then I captured real time video of the same patch of carpet with the shadow of the window frame fading in and out as clouds passed over. I also took a video of my cat Lucky Melba grooming herself on what was a warm patch of carpet in winter. I placed these three contrasting temporal perspectives of the same location next to each other: the time-lapse was placed between the two real time sequences.

The three video sequences are held together as aspects of one moment because they have a similar composition and a single sound scape. The sound was from the video of Lucky Melba and captured quiet incidental sounds in the house; Lucky licking herself clean, myself making tea in the kitchen, and the sound of the wind chime floating in from the garden. The soundscape implied spaces: the room, garden, kitchen, which allowed the video to drift. The cat has a sense of intimacy of a first-person film without any text or direct reference to being autobiographical; this was because of the everyday sounds, the bedroom, the ordinariness of the cat. The cat broke the single point of view that was used in the Meditations, but because of the similarity of the composition and the soundscape, the sequences merge as though they are remembered aspects of the place. Although looped, each of these sequences were still linear and I wanted to do more to break this linear frame while still maintaining a sense of stillness. The process of making the cat was important to my research because it led me to question the focus of my project on single frame editing as I discussed earlier in this chapter. The juxtaposition of time-lapse with real-time suggested the fluidity of time.

The subject matter of my videos discussed in this chapter was “the everyday” and I researched this topic further to find out how the everyday related to the time-lapse. I came across the writing of George Perec who defined the everyday as:

> What is really happening, what we live through, what happens every day and recurs every day: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infraordinary, the background noise, the habitual…

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Perec had used lists, word games, and other devices to make the everyday unfamiliar and therefore visible.\textsuperscript{55} Likewise, time-lapse had been a tool to make visible time passing in my everyday life. It made visible what I had taken for granted, and gave the urgency I had felt when my sister and my parents had died. Thus, time-lapse had been for me what lists were to Perec. The term everyday had popped up in other contexts; in neurocognitive film studies everyday perception, in philosophy the everyday notion of self. I concluded everyday time was the minimal self which is not noticed as we go about our lives. As Wittmann stated, time consciousness is consciousness of self.\textsuperscript{56} The notion of self is often taken for granted in autobiographical work and the time-lapse had been a way to reveal this mundane everyday experience of time. However, I only came to this conclusion after re-creating one of Perec’s texts which is described in the next chapter.

\textbf{Figure 9} \textit{The Cat Sat on the Mat}; 2013, still.
Left: the real-time sequence of the shadow fading in and out; middle: the time-lapse sequence; right: the real-time sequence of Lucky.

\section*{Summary}

In this chapter I started out by describing how the proposed disparity between the two terms ‘self-portraiture’ and ‘autobiography’ led me to consider how this differentiation represented the potential for exploring the division in the experience of self; first-person experience and the story about the self. Then I showed how these aspects of self were explored in the studio practice by relating the linear sequencing of frames in time-lapse to the experience of minimal self. I found this division between narrative self and the sense of self as presence was reflected in my videos in the separation of the diary text from the surveillance camera. Within the context

\textsuperscript{55} Ben Highmore, ed. \textit{The Everyday Reader}. Ben Highmore states “Everyday life is not simply the name that is given to a reality readily available for scrutiny; it is also the name for aspects of life that lie hidden.”

\textsuperscript{56} Wittmann.
of diary video, one identified with the surveillance image and it became my presence. In this way the work appropriated the emptiness of surveillance to imagine a Buddhist concept of emptiness or pure perceptual presence.

Through this process I came to understand, as Rascaroli argued, that the concept of self was intrinsic to autobiographical video. I found that, just as Albahari had described self as a “bounded” concept, autobiographical video was also “bounded”, that is autobiographical video holds together many disparate aspects of sound, text, image, rhythm to create the illusion of the author’s voice. However, the context of autobiographical self was necessary to suggest the possibility of no-self. This was done by employing reflexive video strategies to bring the viewer’s awareness to the ‘boundedness’ of the video. In this chapter I showed how my presence was established by the surveillance camera that time-lapsed the view from my room. In the next chapter I set out to break the rhythm of time-lapse by re-creating films by other artists. This meant I had to find another way to reveal my presence in the work.

Chapter 2. The Re-creations

Introduction

This chapter describes the field work project The Re-creations. In the previous chapter I had explained how I attempted to break open the linear direction of time-lapse in the triptych the cat sat on the mat, but this did not go far enough. In order to fully break with the linear direction of time-lapse I designed to undertake field work which required me to immerse myself in “atomistic”, non-linear representations of time by re-creating short films by other artists. However, this project itself became a series of vicarious, autobiographical videos called The Re-creations which continued my investigation into the division between narrative self and the sense of presence. In The Re-creations I hid the narrative self by inhabiting films by other artists, yet in this process my presence was made visible through the act of re-creating the films.

I had set out to re-create films very different from my own as an exercise to understand how they organised time and space: they were fast paced montages with multiple camera points of view and all set to music. I also selected three site-specific films so I could re-create them at the same locations, and thus compare the approaches these filmmakers had taken with my own site-specific video of my home. The films included two works by Marie Menken Arabesque for Kenneth Anger (1958 filmed at the Alhambra in Granada, and Bagatelle for Willard Maas (1958) filmed in the gardens of the Palace of Versailles. I included a film by Jan Švankmajer called Kostnice (Ossuary) (1970) which was filmed in the Sedlec Ossuary in Czech Republic. I also re-created a site-specific text by George Perc called “An Attempt at exhausting a Place in Paris” 1974. I then travelled to Europe to reshoot these works at the sites in which they were originally made.

The field work project

I had chosen works by Marie Menken and Jan Švankmajer because I had long admired their stop motion animations; for example, Menken’s film Notebook (1962-1963), and

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60 Jan Švankmajer, "Kostnice " (Czech Republic1970).
62 Marie Menken, "Notebook ".

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Švankmajer’s *Možnosti dialogu (Dimensions of Dialogue)* 1982.\(^{63}\) When I came across the site-specific films made by Menken and Švankmajer, I was curious to see how they had responded to the sites they had chosen and whether there were similarities to their animated works. My journey to these sites became the hidden narrative behind my re-creation of their films. *Arabesque*, *Bagatelle* and *Kostnice* were made in places I could physically visit to re-create the works. I came to think of these films as ‘site-specific’, in the way of performances or installations as the places in which these films are made were embedded within the films. Prior to this project I had thought of autobiographical film as a separate genre from the genre of site-specific documentary filmmaking. This led me to consider the time-lapse of my home as ‘site-specific’ as well as autobiographical. This revealed a broader shift observed by Laura Rascaroli as an increase in desire for the authentic voice implied by autobiography: “the subjectivisation of documentary” that blurs the boundaries between documentary and autobiography\(^{64}\).

As I re-traced the artist’s footsteps through these historical locations, I identified with the artists through their films, I related the dates of the films and events in the filmmakers lives to my own life: *Kostnice* was made in the year I was born Menken had travelled to Europe about the same time my mother had. However, I also felt a connection with the sites and the successive societies that had inhabited them. In contrast to the *Meditations* which enclosed my experience of time within an intimate domestic space, re-creating these works had the effect of opening up autobiographical time to the flux of human history. When making these films the main problem I confronted was how to convey my experience of re-creating them as autobiographical, which raised the obvious question, how could they be autobiographical when they weren’t my films?

This question was partly answered when I re-created Perec’s *Attempt*. In this work Perec redefined autobiography from narrative forms such as memoir to the author’s observations of their experience in the present. *Attempt* is a slim volume of observations written by Perec on site. Rather than re-create the writing of the text, I made a video which responded to the concept of presence that was evident in Perec’s work. This was achieved by constructing a sense of my presence at the site through my videos [fig 13 &14]. This process led me to consider the re-creation of the films as being about my presence at the sites and how *The Re-creations* might somehow reveal my presence as autobiographical. My solution was to make a series of diptychs.

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\(^{64}\) Rascaroli, 4-6.
which showed copies of the original films along-side my re-creations. First, I will give an account of re-creating the films, then I explain how making *Attempt* was the key to understanding presence as autobiographical. I then resolved the fieldwork as a self-portrait comprised of four diptychs.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 1** Jan Švankmajer, *Možnosti dialou (Dimensions of Dialogue)*; (1982), still

**Arabesque for Kenneth Anger**

Marie Menken lived and worked in New York and was part of the experimental film scene from 1945 to 65. Menken was involved in the American Filmmakers-Coop started by filmmaker Jonas Mekas, she filmed Andy Warhol and appeared in his films, she worked with Maya Deren and supported filmmakers like Stan Brakage. She and her husband Willard Maas had started Gryphon films and collaborated with filmmakers such as Norman McLaren, but they were also known for their volatile relationship which was the inspiration for Edward Albee’s play *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolf*. What drew me to Menken’s work was the humility and absurdist humour, the Fluxist playfulness and her approach to stop motion animation in films like *Notebook* and *Dwightomania*.

Menken’s first-person films have a quality of intimacy and humility. Her identity as the author is conveyed in a number of ways, such as by using the titles of her films to dedicate the works to people close to her. *Arabesque for Kenneth Anger* was dedicated to her friend and filmmaker.

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65 Martina Kudláček, "Notes on Marie Menken," (USA2006). In the documentary "Notes on Marie Menken" shows footage of Menken and Andy Warhol doing an duel with bolex cameras. She had appeared in Warhols Screen tests. Menken had also animated the chess sequence in Maya Deren’s film "At Land".

Kenneth Anger who travelled with her through Spain and helped her to film two works, while *Bagatelle for Willard Maas* was dedicated to her husband. 67 With these titles, Menken acknowledges herself as the author and transforms the films into gifts; they become part of a personal exchange rather than a rarefied art object. As a viewer, I feel I am witnessing a private conversation between Menken and the person to whom she has dedicated the film. Marie Menken made a feature of this blurring of boundaries between art and her personal life. I found Menken had made many montage films based on her friend’s homes or studios: for example, *Glimpse of the Garden* (1957) based on her friend Dwight Ripley’s garden, 68 *Visual Variations on Noguchi* (1945) of the sculptor Isamu Noguchi’s studio, 69 *Andy Warhol* (1965) based on her friend Andy Warhol’s studio. 70

In *Arabesque*. Menken’s first-person perspective was reinforced by the handheld camera. Handheld camera work was considered Avant Gard in its day. As film historian Sitney stated: "Marie Menken pioneered the radical transformation of the handheld, somatic camera into a formal matrix that would underpin an entire work in the films she made between 1945 and 1965." 71 Liberated from the tripod, her camera was responsive to light, pattern, colour, and at one point followed birds taking flight. Menken’s film takes its title from arabesques of cast stucco designs decorating the walls and arches of the Alhambra *Arabesque*. 72 The *Arabesques* are referenced as fragments of camera movements, cut into a colourful montage [Fig.2].

The camera’s movement was Menken’s body, and her voice as the author. The lens captures Menken’s movement as she whirls about, swings, looks down, turns, stops, turns back. Viewer’s identify with this movement. A variety of shots, short takes, single frames, long shots and closeups of mosaics taken from different locations of the vast area of the Alhambra, were threaded together by the momentum of the camera’s movement [Fig. 2]. Menken edited her work in camera (which means there was little cutting and editing afterwards), and the film was

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67 Juan A. Suarez, “Myth, Matter, Queerness: The Cinema of Willard Maas, Marie Menken, and the Gryphon Group, 1943-1969,” *Grey Room*, no. 36 (2009). Menken wrote for the “These animated observations of tiles and Moorish architecture were made as a thank-you to Kenneth for helping to shoot on another film in Spain.”


70 "Andy Warhol" (1965).

71 Sitney, 23.

72 Marks, 110. Marks states “The idea of the arabesque challenged the Aristotleian poetics, as it had in fourteenth–century Arabic poetics, for it served not instruction and spiritual elevation but playful or informal invention.” “Arabesques and ornaments are embodied music “Novalis wrote in 1772-1801.
shot in one afternoon\textsuperscript{73}. When set to music by Teiji Ito which is inspired by the Andalusian flamenco dance music, the affect was a joyous flowing \textit{Arabesque}, intuitive, jazzy and free from time. While re-creating this film I compared Menken’s hand-held camera work to the fixed point of view in my \textit{Meditations}. In the \textit{Meditations} the fixed tripod indicated my point of view as the author and also related to the body of the viewer, but also conveyed a sense of stillness in one’s body over a long duration, an immobilised body.

I arrived at the Alhambra in late August, it was a short walk from where I was staying. Initially my intention was to visit the Alhambra like Menken and reshoot the film in a single afternoon.\textsuperscript{74} When I got there however, I found it was impossible. I had to contend with a number of challenges to recreate her film: wait for tourists to pass out of the frame, not draw the attention of security guards, keep within the guide ropes, and avoid wedding parties. The first feature I came across were the tessellated mosaics in the chamber of the Nazareth Palace. Menken had filmed these by swiftly swinging her camera across the wall. It took me a while to become comfortable whirling my camera around in front of the crowds of people, and to hold the camera as steadily as Marie Menken did. Over the next few days I located and filmed as many of the features as I could find. I retraced Menken’s camera work, embodying each take.

\textsuperscript{73} filmmakers’ coop, "Film-Makerscoop.Com," filmmakers’ coop, the new American Cinema Group, filmmakerscoop.com.

In the documentary "Notes on Marie Menken" Kenneth Anger described in an interview how Menken "danced" with the camera\textsuperscript{74}
Figure 2 Marie Menken, *Arabesque for Kenneth Anger*, (1958), 16mm film, sound, screenshots

a&b: Menken glided across the *Arabesque* with her camera, panning up or down left or right. c: The opening sequence. d: Menken followed the archways of *Arabesque*. e: Shots of fountains. f: Menken swung the camera across the mosaics. g: To film the stars in the ceiling of the Royal Bath House Menken spun around with the camera; h: unable to find these mosaics I substituted them with others I found.
Bagatelle for Willard Maas

Marie Menken filmed Bagatelle in the gardens of the Versailles palace and the Louvre. Bagatelle means a light and airy piece of music and Teiji Ito composed a rollicking composition with bagpipes and strings that ends with the executioner’s drum roll.\textsuperscript{75} Like Arabesque, Bagatelle is filmed with hand-held camera. However, rather than dancing with the camera, Bagatelle has a walking pace: there are long shots of avenues with tourists wandering through the frame, the camera lingers on a fountain and follows the spray into the sky and drifts into the treetops. The film is shot with an ease and lightness: an example of what the art critic Patricia Zimmerman called “reinvented amateurism”. This was a trend that Zimmerman had observed in the American avant garde filmmakers which appropriates a home movie style to create a sense of warmth and spontaneity and reinforces the feeling of watching a personal film.\textsuperscript{76}

Through this collage of statues and paintings against the backdrop of the French Revolution, Menken tells her own story. As I made my way through Versailles reshooting scenes, I imagine Menken speaking like a Sphinx in riddle of images to Willard Maas. Often Menken holds the camera still for a few seconds on a painting or a statue such as the Sphinx, Venus, Adonis, a cupid vase, Neptune, Neoclassical portraits. These still shots ask viewers to imagine what these artworks had witnessed over centuries, successive regimes, the French Revolution, the tourism today. It is important that the shots are held for a few seconds because this gives viewers time to identify with the characters and to empathise with their facial expressions and body language. It also allows the viewer space to imagine their own story between the figures.

I was sure Menken identified with Marie Antoinette and the women in the paintings and statues. One sequence in particular stands out for me, a sequence of held shots of French paintings which are mostly of women. The sequence begins with the romantic Rococo paintings from before the French revolution: Pilgrimage to the Isle of Cytherea (1717) [Fig.3] by Jean-Antoine Watteau,\textsuperscript{77} nudes by Bouchard to portraits of influential women in post-Revolutionary France,

\textsuperscript{75} A bagatelle is a kind of music from mid 17th century, is “a short, light piece of music, especially one for the piano”; another meaning is “something of little importance, a very easy task” [new American oxford dictionary].

\textsuperscript{76} MacDonald, 58.Patricia Zimmerman coined the term Reinvented ameuterism, which she explains“ Since the 1950s...the American avant-garde has appropriated home-movie style as a formal manifestation of a spontaneous, untempered form of filmmaking”

\textsuperscript{77} Gabriele & Konig Bartz, Eberhard., Art and Architecture, the Louvre  (Cologne: Konemann, 2001), 592.
the Neo Classical paintings *Madame Récamier* by Jaques-Louis David (1800)\(^{78}\), *Odalesque* (1805) by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, and *Liberty Leading the People* an allegory of France by Eugène Delacroix. As I re-performed Menken’s shots, standing on tip toe to get the right angle of the equestrian statue, or lying on the pavement next to a fountain to zoom into the mouth of Saturn, I was aware I was doing this because I identified with Menken who was one of the few female experimental filmmakers in the 1950’s-70’s, who had a full time job to support her art practice, and whose animation *Notebook* I adore. Just as Menken told her story through the sculptures and paintings of Versailles, I am telling my story through her films.

![Image of sculptures and paintings](image)

**Figure 3 The Re-creations: Bagatelle for Willard Maas by Marie Menken 1958-2014: 2018, diptych, digital video still**

As I retraced each shot of these films, there was an immediately clear contrast in medium between the original 16 mm film with the 3:4 format and the digital SLR camera I used which shot H.264 HD 16:9 and shot stills in 4:5. Instead of the shadowy atmosphere, my versions were clear and sharp [Fig.4]. I also realised I was unable to re-create Menken’s exact camera movements. As I filmed the fountains and tried gracefully to follow the spray of water into the sky, it was clear my hands were not as steady, nor my movements as smooth as Menken’s. When I danced about the equestrian statue the angles of my shots were not quite right and I think this was because I was shorter than Menken. I had noticed this when working on *Arabesque*, when I found I was unable to trace the wide arcs of *Arabesques*, or scan the rooftops

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\(^{78}\) It is a portrait of Juliette Récamier “One of the most admired women of her time” in post-revolution French society “...she epitomised the social ascension of the new post-revolutionary elite”. [REF de vergnette francois Louvre painting web site]
with the loose yet smooth swinging movements Menken had achieved. My camera work betrayed the unique limits of my body and my sense of time.

I also found an exact re-creation impossible because the sites had changed. At first, I had thought of this as a failure of the project. One of my favourite scenes in Bagatelle is the sensuous two-minute opening sequence in which Menken’s camera follows the curved golden spearheads of the gate [Fig.5c&d]. However I was unable to locate these black and gold gates and later learned they had been replaced during in the “Grand Versailles” restoration project in 2008 fifty years after Menken’s visit. In their place was an 80 metre gold fence which had no curved spears [Fig 19b].\(^79\) When I reshot the sequence of the equestrian statue of King Louis XVI, I noticed the background was different from the original film, and later discovered the statue had been moved a couple of blocks from the position Menken had filmed it [Fig.19c]. I spent a few days at the Louvre trying to locate the paintings Menken had filmed for Bagatelle, and found some, but not all of them as many of the paintings were on loan to other galleries or that particular room was closed for conservation. These ‘flaws’ in my remake which had worried me at the time, turned out to be the key to The Re-creations series, for they revealed the irreversibility of time and my own autobiographical presence.

Figure 4 A comparison between stills from Marie Menken’s film *Bagatelle for Willard Maas.*

Left, *Bagatelle for Willard Maas,* by Marie Menken: (1958) 16 mm film, stills. Right stills from my re-creations, taken with a Cannon 5D which shot H.264 HD 16:9. The stills from Menken’s film were more atmospheric and shadowy then my own which were too well lit.
Although I came to realise Kostnice was not a first-person film, I became absorbed in Švankmajer’s story, which was in the end what The Re-creations were all about. I had been inspired by Švankmajer’s Stop motion animations that emphasised materiality and the destruction of objects within this magical medium. Švankmajer usually worked in narrative film with a combination of live action, puppetry and animated objects; for example, Otesánek (Little Otik)\(^{80}\), and used a wide variety of animation techniques such as Historia naturae (suite) (Historia naturae- suite), a drawn and cut paper animation,\(^{81}\) and the plasticine animation Flora.\(^{82}\) I had been surprised to learn that the film Kostnice was site-specific. Švankmajer, as a Surrealist had stated "I repeat time and time again that it is my desire to make 'fantastic

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\(^{80}\) Jan Švankmajer, "Little Otik [Otesánek]," (Zeitgeist Films, 2000).
\(^{81}\) "Historia Naturae (Suita) (Historia Naturae- Suite)," (1967).
\(^{82}\) "Flora " (USA1989).
Film theorist Roger Cardinal suggested the site of Kostnice, a room of bones arranged to resemble chalices and a chandelier, was “already surreal” and that it was not necessary for Švankmajer to add animation “as if to say surrealist techniques are redundant here.”

I travelled to the town of Sedlec in the Czech Republic, an hour by train from Prague to the Ossuary which is a room of bones. The ossuary had held the skeletons of thousands of victims of Plague and the Hussite wars. In 1870 the local Schwarzenberg family had commissioned a woodcarver Otto Rinsk to make the *memento mori* - “a contemplation of the impermanence of life” “the reminder of the transient nature of vanity, and the meaningless of earthly life”. Rinsk arranged the bones into challises, crosses, pyramids, a chandelier and the Schwarzenberg family coat of arms.

For the Ossuary’s centenary in 1970, two years after Soviet tanks had occupied the streets of Prague, Švankmajer was commissioned to make the film. Švankmajer structured the film around the formations in the site with phrases on the chalice, the shield, the pyramid. The editing is extremely fast and employs many kinds of shots and transitions: shuddering sequences of single frames, jump cuts, extreme close ups, long shots, quick pans of the room, tracking shots, cross dissolves, swings and swipes. Like the skeletons dismembered into individual bones, the film strip is dissected into single film frames accentuating the film’s relationship with photography and death. In *Death x 24 Frames* filmmaker and theorist Laura Mulvey expands on the depth of this relationship:

> For human and all organic life, time marks the movement along a path to death, that is, to the stillness that represents the transformation of the animate into the inanimate. In cinema, the blending of movement and stillness touches on the point of uncertainty so that, buried in the cinema’s materiality lies a reminder of the difficulty of understanding passing time and ultimately, of understanding death.

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85 In 1870 the woodcarver Otto Rinsk was commissioned to make the Ossuary by the schwarzenberg family, it is their shield. Oto Rinsk signed his name in bones.
86 Švankmajer’s home town was prague. It would be another nineteen years before Václav Havel would lead the sametová revoluce (velvet revolution) November 17 to December 29, 1989 that would finally push out the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia after 41year communist regime. Reference
A reoccurring motif in the film was a jump cut from a mass of skulls to an individual skull; confronting viewers with large-empty-eye-sockets of death. Švankmajer’s film was an existentialist memento mori. Through re-creating this film, I came to understand that the stops of time-lapse in my Meditations also related to death.

In my research I discovered that Švankmajer’s film had two sound tracks. The visual editing is the same in both versions but when viewed with the vastly different sound tracks, they seem like two separate films. These two versions show the profound affect sound has on visual perception as the sound altered how the single frames were perceived. The original sound track for the film was a voice-over by a bored tour guide rattling off the history of the Ossuary. In this version, the camera seems to drift as though confused and disorientated and the images flutter like moth wings in one’s peripheral vision. This sound track was banned by the Communist Central Censorship Committee, and it was only available after the velvet revolution of 1989.88

Švankmajer then replaced the tour guide voice with a score by Czech composer Zdeněk Liška; an experimental jazz composition with piano, percussion, and an exquisite soprano singing the surrealist poem by Jacques Prévert Comment dessiner de portrait de oiseau or “How to paint the portrait of a bird”.89 Jazz during this era was also subversive, a symbol of the democratic West. The clear beat of the music clarified the visual phrasing, each frame became a discrete unit like a note. While working on this film I imagined Švankmajer’s experience under the communist regime, and the version with voice-over suggests the weight of living under the censorship and oppression of Soviet control. On the other hand, the sublime voice of the jazz was a defiant, absurd, and spiritual memento mori. Švankmajer seems to say death is part of the dance of life.

Again, when shooting this work, there were clear differences between the digital format I used in my re-creation and Švankmajer’s analogue film; I also shot in colour, while Švankmajer had chosen to use Black and White 35 mm film. The black and white film accentuated the contrast of life and death. There were differences in the quality of the shots; Švankmajer had worked with a crew and had special equipment for the feature tracking shots. By contrast my recreation

88 Hames. From 1973 to 1980 Švankmajer was “not allowed to make films at all”, was under “enforced silence between 1972 –79” and three of his films were banned p37 & 125.
89 Cardinal.
was hand held, I was not allowed to use a tripod, or lights. My tracking shots swayed as I walked quickly with the camera. The editing of this film was extremely tight and detailed.

Figure 6 “Defunct Ossuary Decoration”: A poster at the Ossuary; 2014, photo by C.Huf. This poster showed the damage that had been done to the Ossuary by tourists. The English translation read “…bones decoration partially fell to pieces and partially ended up as souvenir of undisciplined tourist.” I was unable to film many of the arrangements of skulls in Švankmajer’s film because they had been destroyed.

In re-creating Kostnice, I began to question how the relationship between photography and film played out in the time-lapse; it was a way to grip onto time, to halt the inevitable stream towards death. Further, I was encouraged to explore how sound could accentuate the atomistic quality of my video. After shooting the footage on site, I returned to Australia and spent a year experimenting with ways of editing them, but it was the re-creation of Perec’s work An Attempt that held the key to resolving the Re-creation series.
An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris (Tentative d’épuisement d’un lieu parisien)

My research on the ‘everyday’ subject matter of my time-lapse had led me to George Perec’s writing including Attempt. As well as the quotidian, Perec explores autobiography and a methodology of “creative constraints”[Fig.9&10]. For Attempt, Perec set himself the following constraints; for three days he would write at the Place Saint Sulpice, and he would write about everything he could observe but only the everyday things which he called the “infra-ordinary”. In the preface of Attempt Perec lists some of the important features of the site such as the fountain of the four Cardinals and the church, then states:

A great number, if not the majority, of these things have been described, inventoried, photographed, talked about, or registered. My intention in the pages that follow was to describe the rest instead; that which is not noticed, that which has no importance: what happens when nothing happens other than the weather, people, cars, and clouds.

In the essay which accompanies my copy of Attempt, the critic Marc Lowenthal points out that Perec deliberately set an impossible task- to observe everything - but what he succeeds in revealing is the “heterogeneity of time”, that is the infinite variation and change in the ordinary, that every moment is unrepeatable.

I arrived at Place Saint Sulpice in the 6th arrondissement on the same dates that Perec wrote Attempt: the18th, 19th and 20th of October 2014, relieved to find Café Maire where Perec wrote much of Attempt was still there [Fig.7]. After a couple of hours, I realized other people at the café were also re-performing the text for the 40th anniversary of Attempt. We, ‘the Perecians’, had copies of Attempt in our respective languages on our café tables and diligently jotted observations in our notebooks. There was a German journalist living in Paris, a Parisian art student, an artist couple who had driven from London, two women from a German radio station, a man from Marseilles who had brought a foldout chair [Fig.8]. and myself, the Australian. Discovering I was one of many Perecians had made me reconsider my presence, as

90 Sheringham.
91 Ibid.
the process of re-creating became more important than replicating the appearance of the work; that is, my first-person perspective within the constraints of Perec’s text.

Figure 7 A view of café Mairie

Figure 8 A Perecian at work.
Figure 9 George Perec’s *Attempt at Exhausting a place in Paris*: pages 10-11

Figure 10 George Perec’s *Attempt at Exhausting a place in Paris*; p 32-33
I sat at the Café juggling a note book and pen, a copy of Attempt, my camera, sound recorder and coffee as I figured out how to approximate Perec’s method of observation with the camera. It was important to be consistent with Perec’s everyday aesthetic and constraints for Attempt. To understand Perec’s process I began to write as he had done, the traffic, buses, pedestrians, cars, birds- however just as Perec conceded “…obvious limits to such an undertaking: even when my only goal is just to observe, I don’t see what takes place a few meters from me…” 94 What is foregrounded through the fragments of observations written in first person, in present tense, is Perec’s presence.

To be consistent with Perec’s work, I realised my video response would have to stress my presence at the site. I took hundreds of photographs and many videos, and when I returned, I experimented with editing, and found only one take gave the sense of presence I was looking for. At Café Mairie, the seating was arranged like a theatre, in rows facing the road and the square. I found a seat in the middle row and placed my camera on the café table so that my hands were free to write. The camera captured the back of a woman sitting in the front row. The woman was absorbed in her reading while all around her was movement of pedestrians, cars and buses [Fig.11]. All is still for a few minutes then the table is bumped and jolts the camera. This ‘accident’ lends authenticity to the video as material evidence of my physical presence at Place Saint Sulpice.

Again, I connected the video to myself as the author by using text. I wrote a few lines about why I was at the café and placed it over the video as subtitles. Because I wrote the subtitles as I edited, I wrote as though speaking directly to the viewer about what I saw in the image. For example, over the opening sequence I wrote “this is not me” [Fig.11]. This comment preempted the assumption that viewers might make, that the person in the film was the image of author, that a self-portrait show the image of its maker. In another sequence the text warns the viewer “in a few moments the camera will swing to the left and you will see the radio station at their café table” and then the camera turns to the radio station [Fig.12]. A sense of continuous presence is contrived from the separate elements: the text, the video. Like the Meditation II I am absent from the screen and the camera stands in for my presence.

94 Ibid., 15.
The Perec re-creation went through many permutations: one version ended with a still of the photograph of my mother with her friends in 1957 that was mentioned in the subtitled text, another version ended with a five-minute take of the crowd around the fountain, and in one version I superimposed my Perecian observations over the last scene [Fig 13]. These elements diluted the strength of video as a record of my experience so in the final version I pared the work back to the video taken from the café table.

One of the motivations for doing the re-enactments was to shed some light on the approach I had taken with the time-lapse. Unexpectedly through my re-enactment of Attempt, I discovered Perec’s concepts and his method of observation functioned in a similar way to the time-lapse I had made. What Marc Lowenthal wrote of Attempt could equally apply to the time-lapse: “everything that happens and that does not happen ultimately serves no other function than that of so many chronometers, so many signals, methods, and clues for marking time, for eroding permanence.”95 Lowenthal adds “what always remains after such an effort, what remains uncommunicated, is misery.”96 This misery is born of the limits of our perception and bodies, the finitude of life that is conveyed through the first-person perspective of Perec’s writing. In the Meditations, the diary had linked the camera to a first-person perspective, and the time-lapse camera although it gives the impression of indiscriminately capturing everything in its path, missed things that appeared in the intervals between takes. Another similarity was Perec’s deliberately “flat” writing style which challenges the notion of the artist as original, and my use of time-lapse which is no longer a novelty but a feature on most cameras and phones.97 In retrospect, I see my use of the time-lapse technique as a way to question the uniqueness of self.

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95 Ibid., 50.
96 Ibid.
97 Ørum.
Figure 11 Re-creation: Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris 1974-2014: (2016): video still
This is not me.
In a moment the camera will swing to the left – and you can see the radio station—with a microphone and recoder on their cafe table.

Figure 12 The Re-creations: Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris 1974-2014: (2016): video stills: In a moment the camera will turn and you will see the radio station.
A man on a bike riding one handed, a child in a pink helmet sits behind him. Clack of shoes. A girl with fluro phone and earphones. Sun going down its getting darker. Five people are sitting on the edge of the fountain. A woman on the bench fixes her hair. Church bells chime in thees, up to a hundred times. A man jogs past. A cartwheel. Saint Germaine De Pres. 86 bus pulls up. Three people get off.

Two couples walk past. A little girl with pink back pack. The mother walks behind with a plastic bag. A man and a woman look at the photos on the camera. There is a tiny boy on bike with training wheels. A young man goes past very fast on roller blades. I hear a bouncing ball. A girl is bouncing a soccer ball. Blue sky blue sky. There are a few white clouds to the right.

Figure 13 Re-creations: Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris 1974-2014: (2016) video still: I experimented with placing my Attempt at Perecian text over the final scene. In the final version I removed it.
**The Re-creations as diptychs**

This section describes how I resolved *The Re-creations* as a series of diptychs and how these works related to the themes of self/no-self and presence. The first diptych I made was the *Re-creation of Attempt*. In a group exhibition at M16 I showed my re-creation of *Attempt*, and next to it placed a copy of Perec’s book on a chair [Fig.14]. This extended the work beyond the screen and into the gallery space to signal the idea of presence. Because my ‘response’ to *Attempt* was in a different medium to the original, I had found it unproblematic to present as a diptych. By contrast, because the original films and my re-creations were all moving images, and I found it extremely difficult to negotiate the authorship of the ‘original films’ with the presentation of my re-creations as my presence. This became a major obstacle.

![Figure 14 The Re-creations: An Attempt at exhausting a Place in Paris 1974-2014; 2016; Installation view, M16 Gallery, group exhibition As It Is (2016). A copy of Perec’s book Attempt was placed on a chair beside the screen playing my video.](image)

When I reshoot the films, the differences between the medium of the original films and the digital video were immediately obvious. In post-production I could have manipulated the
timing, colour and cropped these videos to replicate the original films, but when I attempted this something was lost. More problematic was that when shown on their own the re-creations did not convey the sense of the project, in other words it was necessary for the viewer, to know their relationships to the original films.

To ‘make the re-creations my own’, I began incorporating video of sites that were unrelated to Švankmajer and Menken’s films. For example, I added video from my own travels on subways, in hotel rooms and museums. Like Menken, I began to interpret statues and paintings in the Louvre and Versailles through my own family story: for example, statues of Dianna and her dogs at the Louvre and Versailles reminded me of my sisters and their dogs. I also tried making the work ‘my own’ by editing effects such as reversing video, altering the speed, slicing and repeating sequences [Fig.16-20]. When I began to explore slicing video, I was aware of the work of time-based artist Daniel Crooks in particular, his time-slicing such as *Train no 1* (2002-13) [Fig.15].

Crooks, who I discuss more in chapter 3, taps into the fluid time-space that digital media is capable of. I found that slicing broke the quality of the original films because it broke the connection to the single frame and the photograph. For example, slicing the *Kostnice* re-creation diluted the relationship to death in Švankmajer’s film because time became too fluid and the sense of finitude of life was lost. Unlike Crooks I was trying to construct a fragmented ‘materiality’ to create a finite presence.

Figure 15 Daniel Crooks: *Train no 1* (2002-13); https://vimeo.com/77691957
I played with the speed and direction of the fountains. Some fountains were slowed to 20% of the original speed and others were sped up to 600%. I spliced the video horizontally and vertically.
Figure 17 *The Re-creations*: editing experimentation: stills; test slicing of Kostnice
Figure 18 *Re-creations* editing experiments: video stills. above: slow dissolves of mosaics. Figure 19 below: splicing the golden grille of Versailles
As I edited, it became clear to me there were enough discontinuities between my digital recreations and the original films, that it was unnecessary to manipulate the videos with editing. Instead, my task was to find a way to reveal to the viewer the differences between the originals and the re-creations. Eventually, it occurred to me to juxtapose them as diptychs [Fig 21&22]. I retrieved the copies of the films I had used as a guide while on the field trip; low quality versions on YOUTUBE streamed to my laptop and then videoed with my iPad. Bagatelle was not on the internet or DVD, I had videoed the original 16 mm film from the Steinbeck at NFSA. Then I retrieved the first drafts of my ‘re-creations’ which were edited as close to the original as possible. The juxtaposition of the remakes with the original films enabled the viewer to see the discontinuity in the materiality of the images. In this way the viewer could see my presence in the re-creations and see that I was absent from the originals.

When putting the split screen together, I found it was important that the two sides of the screen were similar but not the same. This meant there was often a time lag between the videos; one side trailed or occasionally they were in sync. This miss-match drew the viewer into a game of ‘spot the difference’ between the versions; different shot angles, different sphinxes, different colours and textures in the images. However, there were traces of the original analogue film strip; hints of scratches on film, evidence of re-processing and transcoding the films for YOUTUBE, and the reflections of the lap-top screen which show I had videoed the film from another screen. When the two sides of the screen were juxtaposed, these traces of analogue texture visibly signalled which version was the ‘original’ film and which was the recent re-creation.

Curiously, I found this juxtaposition also created continuity between the two versions as The Re-creations could also be seen as another stage in the re-processing of the original, or another re-telling of the film. Furthermore, in the juxtaposition of the two versions the iPad copy of the original film acquired an aura of authenticity. This trace of the original film was also a trace of the author’s life. By contrast my re-creations exist only in relation to the original. On the other hand, I had shot The Re-creations in their original locations and in this way they revealed a journey that lay off screen and became evidence of my presence at their original sites.
Figure 20 Re-creations- Bagatelle for Willard Maas:1958-2018: diptych, stills.
Above: the opening sequence of the curved spears. Middle: golden gates in the main palace. Below: the equestrian statue of Louis XIV installed by Louis the XVI. While reshooting this sequence of I discovered the statue had been moved in 2004 from the position Menken had seen it in 1958.
Figure 21 Re-creations: Kostnice 1970-2014;(2018); diptych: video stills:
Above: the short opening sequence outside the Ossuary. When I visited, repairs were being done. Middle: close-ups of skulls. Below: Tracking shot from the ante chamber, down the steps under this arched entrance into the Ossuary.
This series of diptychs was my self-portrait. Each diptych contains the original and the re-make within the same border. I was both present in *The Re-creations* and absent from the original which destabilised the presence/absence binary. The original and the re-creation are conjoined, two parts in a symbiotic relationship, that is the self as the process of identification where the re-creation is the act of identifying with the original film. The philosopher Miri Albahari defines identity as a process of identification, where identifying traits in another is a process of creating one’s identity, rather than finding aspects of oneself in the other.\(^9^9\) In re-creating these works I had created those aspects as part of my identity. Each film has a distinct identity which I inhabited like a hermit crab, my presence curled up in the image. *The Re-creations* were myself as an actor playing someone else’s story, but the real illusion is that the actor is pretending, for the actor is present in the performance. My presence was the diptych: presence, and presence of absence.

**Summary**

This fieldwork was the turning point in my research that led me to consider how a video self-portrait could be a reflection of presence rather than a story of oneself. The series of diptychs showed the self as an actor performing many roles, and revealed my presence in re-creating the films. In *The Re-creations*, I also discovered my subjective point of view as the author was created by the comparison between the analogue films and my re-creation in digital media. This situated myself in the archive of all moving images;\(^1^0^0\) as Alissa Lebow wrote the medium of the work does more than ‘re-present’ the self, it creates subjectivity.\(^1^0^1\) This led me to explore in more depth the potential of digital editing to convey a sense of presence and my point of view within the videos. Although I had discarded the experiments with editing my re-creations, in which I had tried slicing them and altering their speed, in the next chapter I applied those ideas to other time-lapse videos I had been working on.

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\(^9^9\) Albahari.  
\(^1^0^0\) Mulvey.  
\(^1^0^1\) Lebow.
Chapter 3. Threadbare

Introduction

In the previous chapter I had briefly described my experimentation with editing the re-creations of Kostnice, Arabesque and Bagatelle, which had altered the speed and direction of sequences and sliced the video. This was an invaluable part of the research process because it was a way of thinking through differences between analogue and digital media. I had realised that the atom of digital video was the pixel rather than the single frame, and concluded that an exploration into convey an atomistic sense of presence needed to explore what atomisation might look like in digital media. This chapter gives an account of how I explored a number of ways to break up the linear movement of time-lapse and led to the ‘woven’ videos which cut the single frame into multiple temporalities. The outcome of this process was Threadbare which depicted presence as the experience of duration through multiple temporal mechanisms.

To give a context for my own exploration, I begin this chapter with some examples of filmmakers who have worked with single frame editing. Then, I explain how I tested the boundaries of the single frame in Surfacing by printing frames, extending the frame, and through montage. I show how this experimentation led to slicing videos as a way of breaking up the time-lapse which resulted in the video Intransit. This section discusses the effect of slicing video in the work of time-based artist Daniel Crooks. Lastly, I discuss how ‘weaving’ was developed further in Threadbare and how I related it to ideas in temporal neuroscience.

Context: Single frame editing

I researched many artists who worked with single frame filmmaking in the1960-70’s, such as Tony Conrad, Robert Breer, Stan Brakhage.102 Paul Sharits who explored “flicker” in two of his most well-known films N.O.T.H.I.N.G (1968) [Fig.1] and T.O.U.C.H.I.N.G (1968)which alternate frames of colour such as black and white, with frames of images103. Sharits had also presented strips of film as the artwork in the Frozen Film Frame Series 1966-1977.104Pip Chodorov and Vincent Delville write that “This conception of film as a mosaic of tiny images

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103 Paul Sharits, “Paul Sharits: Mandala Films.”
104 Frozen Film Frame Series 1966-1976. 16mm filmstrips encased in Plexiglass.
spread out in a rectangle…” as a physical object allows “New relationships” to be “…woven between the juxtaposed strips, which do not exist in linear projection”. The Australian filmmakers Arthur and Corine Cantrill were prolific in their extensive exploration single frame film and, as they have insisted their work only be shown in the original format rather than transferred to DVD, I was fortunate to view their films at the National Film and Sound Archive. included Articulated Space [Fig.2]. This exploration of the single frame as a physical unit, presents a material quality which I have tried to find in my digital videos. Sharits took this further by exhibiting the film strip itself: in “Frozen Film Frames” strips of 16mm film were framed in plexiglass.

Important to my research was to discover the work of structuralist filmmaker Rose Lowder, who continues to intensely investigate single frame 16mm filmmaking. Lowder is interested in finding ways to convey the subtle fluctuation of human vision through the camera achieving this by altering the focus for every frame as in the silent film Les Tournesols 1982. The result were films that seem to hover as a shimmering presence in time. Many of Lowder’s films explore alternating frames of the same place taken at different times, as well as alternating frames taken of different sites. Lowder’s work was relevant to my process of ‘weaving’ Intransit in which I had cut between two places: video of curtains and video of travelling in Spain. Of her work Scenes de la vie Francaise: Paris (1986) Lowder writes that it “presents several Parisian landmarks from a single viewpoint by weaving frames recorded at different seasons during different years” (my emphasis). A scene of the Luxemborg Gardens alternates between winter frames and summer frames [Fig.3]. Lowder repeatedly examined this process in the Bouquets series, In Les Coquelious (2000) [fig 4] the film alternated between frames of poppies taken in Spring and the boats on the water in Summer. Her intention was to “… have the boats among the poppies”. I was fascinated by Lowder’s description of her film as ‘weaving’ frames, and in her notebooks [Fig.5] she has documented every frame in grid that look like weaving patterns.

109 "Les Coquelious (the Poppies),” (2000).
110 Rose by Rose Lowder. 88-87.
Figure 1 Paul Sharits: N.O.T.H.I.N.G: 1968: 16mm colour sound, still frames not in consecutive order.
Figure 2 Arthur and Corine Cantrill: *Articulated Image*: 16mm film: stills, taken from NFSA Steinbeck

Figure 3 Rose Lowder; *Scenes de la vie Francaise: Paris* (1986): 16 mm colour; Luxemburg Gardens.

Figure 4 Rose Lowder, *Les Coquiliots*: 2000; 16mm film: stills
I also came across the work of Martin Arnold who re-edits classic Hollywood films. In Passage À L’Acte (1993)\textsuperscript{111} Martin Arnold took domestic scenes from To Kill a Mocking Bird then rearranged the frames of the film with patterns such as two frames forward one frame back [Fig.6].\textsuperscript{112} By manipulating the frames, Arnold deconstructed everyday domestic actions such as opening doors and eating breakfast so that they appeared unfamiliar.\textsuperscript{113} The result was a jittering movement, a manic tension that erupted onto the surface of domesticity. For example, in one scene, Scout is eating breakfast, but as she raises her spoon it shudders back and forth, taking an eternity to reach her mouth. Watching Arnold’s algorithm dismember this Hollywood film also made me aware of how easily I identify with the worlds constructed in narrative films through ‘continuity editing’.

Bill Viola is another artist who alters the meaning of actions and gestures through the manipulation of time on the screen, in this instance by using extreme slowness. Although I have seen other works of Viola’s I mention Anima (2000) [Fig.7] which I have been unable to see, but that I read about in the article “The Affect of Time: or Bearing Witness to Life” by

\textsuperscript{111} Martin Arnold, ”Passage a L’acte,” (1993).
\textsuperscript{112} Marks.
\textsuperscript{113} Martin Arnold, ”Martinarnold.Info.”
media art theorist Mark Hansen. For this work, Viola filmed actors performing emotions, then slowed one minute of video so it was stretched to 81 minutes. At this speed the emotion became unrecognisable as Hansen states “It slowly dawns on you that what you are standing in front of are images portraying emotional vicissitudes of life that, paradoxically, remain imperceptible to your eye”. Hansen describes the way the videos appear static and unrecognisable for much of the time. The change from one frame to the next is so slight it delays the perceptual process of event segmentation and the image appears static like a photograph; what Poulaki called ‘radical continuity’ (described in Chapter 1). Hansen refers to the affect of Violas work and the power of new media to be able to give a new and more intimate experience of ‘self affect’ because it can make us more aware of what we do not know we are experiencing, a microscope to time. Hansen states “…technical expansion of self-affection allows for a fuller and more intense experience of subjectivity…” and Viola exposes the temporal aspect of emotions. What was important about this particular description for my research, was the way in which meaning is altered by temporality, that the meaning of those emotions was temporal. Hansen sums up the implication of Viola’s work for new media:

_technology allows for a closer relationship to ourselves, for a more intimate experience of the very vitality that forms the core of our being, our constitutive incompleteness, our mortal finitude._

This applies for artists like Arnold and also Lowder who manipulates time on screen in ways that allow us to see something about perception that is usually taken for granted. They bring an awareness to the hidden role of temporality in our understanding of emotions, gestures, films and our everyday perception. I was interested in somehow conveying the spectrum of time, from the very fast like Arnold’s work, to very slow like Viola’s, for our lives are lived in the relation between these speeds. In the ‘weavings’ I had found a way to combine multiple speeds of video into a single time-line.

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114 Bill Viola, _Anima_, 2000. colour video triptych, 3 LCD flat panels with DVD playback and 3 DVDs
116 Poulaki.
117 Hansen.
Figure 6 In *Passage À L’Acte* (1993): by Martin Arnold: black and white, sound, 12:00 mins.

Figure 7 Bill Viola: *Anima*: 2000
Surfacing

The question I asked myself was how could I manipulate time, at the level of the pixel, to reveal something about embodied presence? After the field trip, I experimented with ways to break the linear rhythm of time-lapse. I developed a series of works based on video of the family home in Yeppoon, Queensland, where my parents had retired. Some of these works exaggerated the single frame structure of the moving image while others dissolved it. These works included *Surfacing: Lawn*, *Surfacing: Pool*, *Surfacing: Stone* which were shown in an exhibition called *Surfacing*, at PhotoAccess in Manuka, Canberra 2016 [Fi 3-5]. Of all the works described in this thesis, *Surfacing* was the one which dealt most directly with the experience of my parents’ deaths. However, rather than tell a story, I reflected on the impermanence of our lives and the flux of matter.

Surfacing: Lawn

I had time-lapsed the house and back yard of the family home over a couple of years. The house cast a dramatic angular shadow that changed shape as it scanned across the neat green lawn, and over the course of the day it grew until it engulfed the backyard. In *Surfacing: Lawn*, this video was shown next to a series of sixty or more stills from the same time-lapse which were printed onto individual frames of glass 9x11 cm [Fig.8].

The glass pieces showed time as brittle, breakable; they expressed the desire to collect time, to hold it, and stop the flow of time toward death. Bits of the ephemeral video had been made solid. This was reminiscent of Sharits’ *Frozen Film Frame Series* in the making of physical objects from the ephemeral moving image. However, the digital image was not originally recorded onto a film strip but was instead data captured by the digital sensor. Printing this data onto glass exaggerated a desire for a physical presence. These glass pieces were placed on shelves along either side of the gallery space, and positioned at the height of a hand rail to invite viewers to touch the images. I arranged pieces in the same order in which they were captured, and in groups with blank spaces on the shelf between them to signify absent moments. It was like pressing pause on the video, allowing viewers to examine the change in the shadow on the lawn from one glass frame to the next, from dawn to sunset.118 One is invited to pinpoint

118 Mulvey, 30.
the moment of change, but change was not present in one image, it was only existed in the comparison between two images.

The same time-lapse sequences of the lawn which appeared in the glass, were also made into a video called *Lawn Cuttings*. In contrast to the glass prints, time in this video was fluid. I had played with the speed and direction of the-lapse so the shadow swung back and forth like a tide flowing in and out. I also explored the time-lapse within the context of a montage. The video cut between the time-lapse [Fig.9a] to short takes of trees bending in the wind, my sister’s dogs Portia and Milo waiting in the house [Fig.9d] and a short stop motion animation sequence of the time-lapse printed on acetate [Fig.9c]. These cutaways released the viewer from the locked-in rhythm of time-lapse; they were a breath of fresh air. The sound for the video also gave an impression of the space of the house as it creaked in the wind of an approaching coastal storm. This sound had the effect of softening the intense surveillance of the time-lapse camera. The stop motion animation of the stills on acetate heightened the sense of materiality of the video [Fig. 9c].\textsuperscript{119} By incorporating the printed sequences of the glass series back into the video, a transition was created between the glass and the pixilated light of the screen.

\textbf{Figure 8 Surfacing: Lawn; 2016, time-lapse images printed onto matelux glass; installation shots.}

\textsuperscript{119} This acetate animation referenced the work of the Australian filmmakers the Arthur and Corrine Cantrill in Flotilla which had animated strips of film so the viewer saw the moving image appear from the film strip within the film.
Figure 9 a-d *Surfacing: Lawn Cuttings* video: 2016 digital video, stills from cutaways
From top a: lawn time-lapse. b: cutaway of trees. c: stop motion animation of contact sheets printed onto acetate. D: pets waiting.
Surfacing: Stone and Surfacing: Pool

In another room of the PhotoAccess exhibition were two videos: Surfacing: Stone [Fig.12] and Surfacing: Pool, [Fig.11]. These works resonated in the space because their subjects were both circular; Stone was a video of circular stone carvings, while Pool was a video of a life ring and its’ dark circular shadow drifting about the pool. In the same room there was also a series of ten stills from the pool video that were printed on thick acrylic pieces and mounted in a steel frame [Fig.10].

This was the pool where my father loved to swim, and where he drowned, and this was the inflatable life ring that my father had swum with. Holding my camera, I followed the life ring and took fast consecutive single frames as it drifted about the pool blown by the sea breeze. When these images were sequenced, the video had a jolting movement which deconstructed the flow of the water.

In stark contrast, Surfacing: Stone was a slow video of the grey carvings continuously dissolving. On the field trip I had taken about sixty still images with an iPad of these stone carvings which paved the courtyard of the Cathedral of Saint Mary of Girona in Spain. They were engraved designs of family insignia, (presumably those who had patronised the church). The carvings had images of shields, castles, bells, animals, plants, cherubs. The stones had been worn by centuries of use. Some of the carvings were almost the same, like frames from an animation, but some were worn more than others. Each stone image was held for about sixty seconds, then between these stills I inserted cross dissolves of twenty-five seconds or more which made the stone morph so gradually it appeared as though it was still. This was similar to Viola’s use of extreme slowness in Anima, however the affect on stone was to create a contrast with the shadow of the life ring in Pool to reflect on the impermanence of matter.

The juxtaposition of materials in Surfacing- stone, lawn, water and shadows, pieces of glass and video- suggested that the sense of self in time was interdependent with our environment. The experience of self in time is not only based on one’s relation to oneself and other people, but also as Valteri Arstila and Dan Lloyd state in “The Philosophy, Psychology and Neuroscience of Temporality” subjective time is:

...a complex structure built of many parts. It is embodied and embedded in the world....it is not all about perceptions of the external world, nor is it defined by some
localised centre for time processing in the brain...Subjective time is dependent not just on the state of the brain but on all the time cues of the world, second by second.120

_Surfacing_ had employed physical materials in the installation as a means of bringing the viewer’s awareness to their own presence in the space as part of this flux and decay. The representation of those materials through the use of printed stills was an attempt to make the digital video seem more solid, present or touchable, but it also suggested everything was in transition from one state to another. As a result of the exhibition _Surfacing_, I began to consider digital media as having a kind of materiality and unique temporality that I would explore further in my practice.

_Figure 10 Surfacing: Pool: 2016; steel, acrylic, length approximately 3m x 25 cm x 30 cm._
Frames from the video were printed onto thick pieces of acrylic and mounted in a steel frame made by Janet Long.

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Figure 11 *Surfacing: Pool: 2016: video stills*
Figure 12 Surfacing: Stone. 2016, digital video still
‘Video Weaving’

While working on Surfacing, I was also exploring ‘weaving video’. By ‘weaving’ I mean editing sequences to give the appearance of ‘weaving’. The computer was my loom.\textsuperscript{121} The first computer was developed by Babbage and Aida Lovelace who was arguably the first computer programmer; their difference machine had developed ideas of the card system used in the Jacquard looms. The action of weaving, over and under, was replaced by digital code (Cobol) one-zero - on-off - I O. Multiple copies of the same video were cropped into strips, their speed was altered, and then the tracks are stacked on top of each other [Fig.14]. The metaphor of weaving brought together many themes in my research including the neuroscience of temporality, identification and autobiography.

I have a strong personal connection with weaving. I remember my mother working at the tapestry loom that took up most of her studio which was known to us as ‘the weaving room’. In the past I have ‘woven’ everyday detritus such as medication packets, cat tin lids, matchboxes. The boxes were pulled apart, shredded and woven back together into wonky versions of their original shape. I wove Sydney train tickets into a ‘\textit{tRaincoat}’ and a stop motion animation called \textit{Ticketweavels} depicting the process of weaving the tickets together which was shown at the European Media Arts Festival, Osnabruck Germany 2006. For Unravel which screened at the Edinburgh International Film Festival in 2009 I animated medication boxes weaving together. When I started this research, I had made another stop motion animation of pain killer packets being woven called \textit{Softening the Blow} [Fig.13]. The two boxes wove together, but through the weaving process, the boxes eventually disintegrated. The action of weaving with my hands was tactile, meditative, instinctive and compulsive and these qualities also emerged in the video ‘weavings’. However, when ‘woven’, the video did something very different to the handwoven objects. By shredding the video into warp and weft, then changing the speed, the single channel point of view of the time-lapse was shattered into threads of multiple time-zones. Each thread has a different temporal point of view. This kaleidoscopic flicker reflected the multiple temporal processes through which we experience ourselves in time.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{121} Sadie. Plant, "The Future Looms: Weaving Women and Cybernetics," \textit{Body and Society} 1, no. 3-4 (1995). Babbage and Aida Lovelace developed the difference machine was based on the Jacquard loom. This was the origin of the computer. Aida Lovelace was arguably the first computer programer.

\textsuperscript{122}
Figure 13: Softening the blow: stop motion animation, stills.
Two pain killer packets wove together and apart.
Figure 14 Screen shot of Final Cut Pro project file *Threadbare*.
This image shows the stack of video tracks. The horizontal blue bars are the video tracks V16 to V 59, and the green bars below are the sound tracks. There were so many tracks I could not see all of them at once. The same video sequence was used over sixty times, and then cut into vertical or horizontal threads. Because the speed was changed the sequences started and stopped at different times.
Intransit

This section gives an account of how I developed the first ‘video weaving’ Intransit [Fig.18]. This work developed out of a desire to integrate two videos of different places which I had worked on independently of each other: the time-lapse my curtains and a video of myself on a train in Spain.

The curtain time-lapse

Over many months I time-lapsed the curtain in my room [Fig.15]. The window frame cast a neat grid of shadow that glided over the folds of the curtain every day. Over the months I began to alter the composition in order to immerse the viewer in the folds of fabric. Instead of including the whole room in the composition, I shot close-ups and used a macro lens to highlight the textured grain of the cloth. I moved the camera to capture the curtain from a different angle and then changed the video to black and white to emphasise the tone and form of the folds. Because the video framed only the curtain folds, there was no sense of the world outside the window. Despite the passing of days, time did not progress, the sequences were only demarcated by the change of angle. The focus on the shadow’s movement across the curtain was like the single pointed focus on breath in meditation. After a few minutes of watching the curtains I found the initial beauty wore off and a sense of fixation and containment crept in.

Aspects of the curtain video resonated with themes in a novel by George Perec called A Man Asleep. In Asleep Perec plays with subtle nuances of stillness such as calmness, repetition, boredom, depression, stagnation, tiredness, solitude, isolation, self-containment. Asleep is about a young man who rejects society, withdraws from friends and family and largely confines himself to his bedroom. Perec’s antihero avoided society in an effort to avoid change and to keep each day the same. This desire to stop change is a desire to stop time in order to evade the inevitable progression of time toward death. The curtain time-lapse had also touched on these states of stillness.

124 Sheringham.
125 Game.
Like Perec’s antihero, the curtain sequence was insular. I began to see the stillness of the curtain video as an expression of the desire to stop time moving forward. The camera was confined to my room and the curtains were drawn closed. Although the movement of the shadow was constant, there was no transformation in the sequence, and in a sense, time had come to a standstill. However, in *Asleep*, Perec had asserted another point of view through the main character. As literary theorist Michael Sheringham points out, the main character of *Asleep* finally comes to the realisation of “the impossibility of separating oneself completely from society”. This led me to search for ways I could reflect, as Perec had done, on this insular quality of stillness in the curtain video. I compared the withdrawn character in Perec's novel to the Buddhist idea of detachment. In this way I translated the duality of the video between meditative stillness and withdrawal, to the concept in meditation of nonattachment to emotions and other experiences. Nonattachment is often confused with withdrawal and avoidance of sensations or emotions, but the aim is to observe sensations to understand impermanence. In order to give another perspective on the curtain video, I edited it with a video I had taken while travelling through Spain on the field trip.

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126 Sheringham, 127.

127 I compared the withdrawn character in Perec's novel to the Buddhist idea of detatchment. The two are often confused as Lauren Pruinski states ”... the nonattachment which Buddhism claims is necessary for eradicating suffering is not a radical withdrawal from the world. Instead, it is a transformation in awareness which stems from a realization of the impermanence and ultimate emptiness of things and of the truth of dependent origination." Lauren Prusinski, "Wabi-Sabi, Mono No Aware, and Ma: Tracing Traditional Japanese Aesthetics through Japanese History," *Studies on Asia* Series IV, 2, no. 1 (2012): 126-27.
Figure 15 The curtain time-lapse sequence: 2016, stills
The train video
I had taken the video of myself with my iPad while I was on a train in Madrid. It was a ‘selfie’ [Fig 16]. Through the window behind me, one can see the train passing by people waiting on platforms, advertising billboards, and reflections. One can see in the window, the reflection of the iPad screen, and in the image of the reflected iPad one can see another window with the reflection of the iPad and so on. Whereas the curtain video had prevented the viewer seeing out the window into the distance, this infinite reflection led the viewer into the image. However, like the curtain video which held the viewer close, in the train I held the iPad close to me. Thus, the train video gave two perspectives of myself; near and far. In this video, myself as the subject merged with myself as the maker of the video. In the still image below my reflection appears to be watching the myself as the camera had caught a minute delay: in the foreground my eyes are closed, but in the delayed reflection of the iPad my eyes were open.

Like the curtain video, the train video also had a quality of stillness. Although the train is moving, the point of view of the iPad remained with me in the same position for ten minutes until I got off at my stop. However, within this stillness there was another kind of movement. I had been listening for the station names as they were announced in Spanish, keeping an eye on my luggage, and filming. The expression on my face subtly betrayed my thoughts; fleeting glimpses of embarrassment, fear, amusement, tiredness, nervousness, excitement. As Hansen

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Figure 16 *Intransit*; digital video; still
explains in his article on Bill Viola, our mirror neuron system enables empathic identification with facial expressions.128

**Weaving the curtains and the train video together**

In this section I describe why I combined the curtain with the train video, how I related it to autobiographical time and how this led me to weaving video. When I returned from the field trip, my practice was split between the time-lapse I had been doing of my room, and *The Reconstructions* made in public places. I wondered how this dislocation related to the concept of self, and how it might be incorporated into my work. I began to think of this fracture in terms of the Buddhist notion of illusory self and no-self which I introduced in chapter one. The aspects of my practice could be seen as aspects of my identity; I was one person while travelling and another while at home. These selves were represented by the curtain video and the train video. Slicing these videos together made this division visible and questioned the notion of a continuous unified self.

The philosopher Anne Game argues the concept of self inevitably causes rupture. In the article *Time Unhinged*, Game draws on Henri Bergson’s philosophy of duration and Buddhist philosophy to examine “experiences of rupture”. She examines the experience of rupture described by the American writer F.Scott Fitzgerald in his autobiographical account of his own break-down in *The Crack-Up*.129 Game picks up on Fitzgerald’s description of having “mortgaged the present for the future” to illustrate how the concept of self and all the expectations, emotions, dreams and hopes that come with the sense of identity, leads to a rupture when life does not match these ideas or hopes of ones future self. The concept of self can be broken, but with no-self there is nothing to break.130 She argues that “…discontinuities and moments of stasis are integral to the movement of lived experience…”131 Game argues that Bergson’s philosophy of duration privileges flow, leaving little room for this embodied experience of time which is full of breaks and stasis:

...a disruption to the future implies an unsettling of the whole structure of relations. One of the implications of this is that living requires an awareness of a temporality marked by breaks in movement; it involves living a temporality that in some ways

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128 Hansen.
129 Game. 117.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., 115.
undoes time itself. This would consist both of paying attention to the moment, and recognizing the dependency of the quality of moments on the simultaneity of other times. Breaks imply multiplicity: break and flow, movement and stasis.\textsuperscript{132}

The Buddhist concept of no-self, she proposes, copes with the inevitability of change and allows for the discontinuities and breakages of time, by understanding the impermanence of everything, moment by moment. In retrospect, I find the last sentence of this quote: “Breaks imply multiplicity: break and flow movement and stasis” sums up what I found in slicing and ‘weaving’ video.

In my research I found George Perec’s autobiography \textit{W or A memory of Childhood} had explored a form for conveying this kind of rupture [Fig.17]. \textit{W} alternates sharply between chapters of memoir and fantasy: chapters written from the perspective of an adult Perec looking back on his childhood as an orphan, and chapters of a fantasy story Perec had written as a boy with his school friends about a land called \textit{W}. The silent gap between these worlds was a wound. Yet these worlds were held together by the same force that had pulled them apart. Rather than write about his experience as a narrative, which suggests a continuous self, Perec relates the experience of rupture through the formal structure of his text, destabilising the concept of the continuity of self by juxtaposing two selves.

The compulsion to edit the curtain video and the train video together was an attempt to frame this discontinuity within the work. When editing, I attempted to integrate the sequences but also keep them separate. I found superimposing the videos merged them too much, and the split-screen separated them too much. Instead I began slicing the videos. I was aware of Daniel Crooks time-slice works (discussed in the next section), but I was searching for an alternative method. I sliced the videos horizontally as well as vertically, and played with various combinations until I struck on the idea of ‘weaving’. Through trial and error, I managed to stack the video layers and crop them in a way that gave the appearance of ‘weaving’[Fig.18]. The video strips were placed over each other, like planks of wood in a pile, it created an illusion of spatial depth. Although the strips of video did not go over and under and over, it looked like weaving to me because the video tracks appeared to move as separate strands within the warp and weft.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid.
I had found that the speed of each thread had to be different from the others to give the appearance they were separate. For if several slices of video moved at the same speed, started and stopped at the same time, even if they were on opposite sides of the screen, one read them as the same image plane. Consequently, I moved the threads to different points along the timeline so they were out of sync, and varied their speed. I found if the strips of video varied in width this also added to the sense of their being individual threads. That each strand of video appeared to exist in a separate time zone accentuated the illusion of spatial depth.

As well as varying the speed of the threads, it was also important to mix the threads from the two source sequences into both the warp and weft. When I started ‘weaving’ the video my intention had been to use the train video as the warp and the curtain as the weft, but this was too ordered and I was searching for a way to convey how these separate worlds were enmeshed and impacted on each other but failed to find cohesion. Therefore, I mixed both sequences into the warp and weft. Furthermore, I found this action of progressively mixing the warp and weft over the duration the video could be the journey of the work. I began Intransit with the curtain video which divides into slices, then strand by strand I introduced the train video, and then mixed both videos into the warp and weft. The video ends with the sequences dropping out one by one into the black background. This breakdown of the image evoked the idea of entropy and also intimated the disintegration of the boundary between domestic and public identities.

The public world and the domestic space never fully merged. Instead, the juxtaposition of the curtain video and the train video, like montage, created a third space for the viewer in the experience of dislocation. When I showed Intransit in the exhibition As It Is at M16 Gallery 2016, a friend commented that it was how she had felt when travelling. When making Intransit, it had been important that the video was cut into wide strips so the viewer could read the subject matter of each strand. Although the strands were disconnected, one could still read the overall images of the train and the curtain. This meant the viewer clearly saw the two worlds: domestic and public. The relationship between these spaces was coloured by the pattern and rhythm of the weaving. Our mirror neuron system perceives this perceptual discordance as a physical or psychological disturbance of some kind. For example, the asymmetrical design of the ‘weaving’ gave the feeling of being off kilter and ‘time out of joint’.
SIX

I was born on Saturday, 7 March 1936, towards nine in the evening, in a maternity clinic located at 19 Rue de l’Atlas, in the xviem arrondissement of Paris. My father, I believe, was the one who went to register me at the mairie. He gave me only one forename – Georges – and declared me to be French. Both he and my mother were Polish. My father was not quite twenty-seven and my mother was not yet twenty-three. They had been married for a year and a half. Apart from the fact that they lived a few yards from each other, I don’t know quite what circumstances led to their meeting. I was their first child. They had a second, in 1938 or 1939, a little girl whom they named Louise, but she lived for only a few days.

For years I thought that Hitler had marched into Poland on 7 March 1936. I was wrong, about the date or about the country, but that’s of no real importance. Hitler was already in power and the camps were working very smoothly. It wasn’t Warsaw Hitler was taking, but it could have been, or it could have been the Danzig Corridor, or Austria, or the Saar, or Czechoslovakia. What is certain is that a story had already begun, a history which for me and for all my people was soon to become a matter of life and for the most part a matter of death.

EIGHTEEN

It is clear that the overall organization of sporting life on W (the villages, the way teams are made up, selection methods, to mention only the basic elements) has as its sole aim to heighten competitiveness or, to put it another way, to glorify victory. In this respect it can indeed be said that no other human society can rival W. The survival of the fittest is the law of this land; yet the struggle itself is nothing; for it is not Sport for Sport’s sake, achievement for the sake of achievement, which motivates the men of W, but thirst for victory, victory at any price. Just as the spectators in the stadiums do not forgive an Athlete for losing, neither do they spare their applause for the winners. All hail to the victorious! Woe betide the vanquished! For the village citizens, professional sportsmen all, nothing but victory is conceivable – victory at every level: against their own team mates, in inter-village meetings, and finally, above all, in the Games.

Like all the other moral values of the society of W, the glorification of success has a concrete expression in daily life: grandiose ceremonies are held in honour of victorious Athletes. True, in all ages victors have been celebrated: they have gone up to the podium, had their country’s national anthem played, been awarded medals, statues, cups, certificates, crowns, have been made freemen of their native towns, been decorated by their governments. But such celebrations and honours are as nothing beside what the Nation of W accords to its deserving. Every evening, irrespective of the type of contest held that day, the first done in each event mount the podium, are clapped and cheered at
Figure 18 *Intransit*: 2016; video stills.
Intransit had woven two places together to create an embodied experience of subjective time. Rather than a singular pure essence, this was a presence affected by memory and the disruption of habitual patterns. The shuddering image of Intransit brings to mind a side comment Laura Marks made in her book The Skin of Film that has stayed with me: “memory is more like a minefield (or bed of fossils) than like the limpid reflecting pool that Bergson describes.” She points out that not all of us have Bergson’s skill to calmly analyse experience “…moving back and forth between the circuity of perception and recollection with ever-increasing satisfactions, as though at some great phenomenological buffet table.” While Meditation II in chapter 1 conveyed meditative nonattachment, by comparison Intransit conveyed a discombobulated presence. This image of presence is not isolated or contained in the self, rather it responds deeply to our environment, and reverberates with experiential memory. There is a sense that the process of ‘weaving’, of cutting up images to interact with other images, was a means of establishing connections with other spaces in society, other environments.

Daniel Crooks’ time-slice video

Before explaining how I developed the ‘weaving’ further in Threadbare, I will discuss the work of video artist Daniel Crooks whose technique of time-slicing has been a major influence on my videos [Figs 19&20]. Although Crooks’ subject matter is also the everyday, such as trains, parks, streets, curator Rachel Kent states that Crooks “transforms the everyday and takes us on a mesmerising journey into the time-space continuum.” Crooks’ work depicts a fluid universal time. My ‘weavings’ diverged from Crooks’ time-slicing toward a messier embodied subjective time.

I first saw Crooks’ time-slice series Train no.1 2002-2005 which he has been working with since 1999.[Fig.19&20] Then at the Sydney Biennale in 2010, I saw Static no 12 (seek stillness in movement) [Fig.21]. Kent explains the time-slice works are made by using "…multiple cameras and a special digital editing technique, whereby small segments of

133 Laura U. Marks, The Skin of the Film; Intercultural Cinema , Embodiament and the Senses (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000), 64. Marks also acknowledges the profound influence of Henri Berson’s philosophy of duration. She states “In Bergson’s model, perception is not only inherently social, but also radically embodied, plastic, and instrumental, variable according to culture and local need.” p.146
136 "Static No.12 (Seek Stillness in Movement)," (2009-2010).
moving images are selected, warped and recombined across the screen.” In *Train no. 1*, Crooks gives the viewer an image of ‘now’ as unfolding through duration. Each vertical slice is part of the whole image of the train which opens out time like a concertina. The image stretches horizontally through time and space. One gets the impression the number of lines could be increased, infinitely dissecting the image. It is like dominoes falling. Crooks calls this multiplicity of consecutive temporal perspective a “polyocular view.” Significantly, these slices of time were placed symmetrically and evenly across the screen, which generates an image of order and stability. There is a sense that Crooks’ work explores universal time studied by science - the physics and maths of science - rather than an embodied experience of time.

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137 Kent.


139 David Couzens Hoy, *The Time of Our Lives; a Critical History of Temporality* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 2012). David Couzens Hoy states “”The term “time” can be used to refer to universal time, clock time, or objective time. In contrast, “temporality” is time insofar as it manifests itself in human existence.” p. XIII
Crooks took this method of slicing further in *Static no. 12* which shows the graceful movements of a skilled Thai chi practitioner which initially unfolds from the centre. In this work Crooks masterfully aligns the paradox of flow and stillness with the philosophies that underpin practices such as Thai Chi and meditation, which have long understood the self as continually changing. *Static no. 12* was like a pool of viscous paint slowly expanding, the coloured pixels slurring into each other. Into this movement, Crooks then introduced static planes that, are also moving. There were moments where still images expanded, froze, and drifted like icebergs across the screen. It reminded me of the process of screen printing when one drags the ink across the silk screen with a squeegee, leaving the fixed print behind. As Daniel Palmer observes of Crooks work “…time is spatialised by its digital mapping”\(^{140}\) It is as though time becomes a substance and time is blending the pixels of the screen surface.

In contrast to Crooks’ work which imagines the time-space continuum, a time that is unencumbered by human experience, my ‘weavings’ evoked the messiness of life experience and embodied time through the asymmetrical placement of the threads and the unevenness of their speeds. Crooks’ ‘polyocular’ vision flows across the screen with precision, whereas in the ‘weavings’ time got caught in the cross-currents and circuitry of cross stitches.

\(^{140}\) Palmer.
Figure 21 Daniel Crooks, *Static no. 12 (seek stillness in movement)* (2010): 05:23 min, 16:9, 1080p24, Stereo: stills
‘Weaving’ experiments

After making Intransit I tried ‘weaving’ other videos in the same way. I explored numerous combinations which were not successful [Fig.22-24], but these experiments led to developments in the ‘weaving’ method which culminated in Threadbare. The most important of these developments included incorporating the black background space into the design and ‘weaving’ the same sequence with itself; which is what I had done with the handwoven packets. Through these experiments I also worked out what kind of video suited my aims in the work. For example, in one test I ‘wove’ Marie Menken’s film Arabesque with my re-creation [Fig 22]. By doing this I found the hand-held camera work of Menken’s film worked well because the movement of the video made the woven grid more dynamic. However, the Arabesque ‘weaving’ was not autobiographical. Consequently, I tried ‘weaving’ video that documented an aspect of my life such as the Lawn time-lapse but this sequence became static when it was woven because the suspense of watching the shadow across the lawn was broken by the grid [Fig.24]. With the hand-held camera every pixel in the frame was changing.

In another test I ‘wove’ hand held video I had taken with an iPad of a crowded train platform at Gare Du Norde Paris [Fig.23] but it seemed too smooth and time blurred across the boundaries, whereas I was searching for a way to convey the disconnection between the strands. This sense of discontinuity was created by the black background spaces. In the last minute of Intransit the black background space had appeared when the strands of video dropped into darkness, and I was curious to explore this affect further. I began to expose the black background spaces between instead of filling these gaps with video. This became a crucial aspect of Threadbare.
Figure 22 Weaving tests: weaving Menken's *Arabesque* with my re-creation; stills from 'woven' video.
Figure 23 Weaving tests: weaving video taken with my iPad of a crowd at Gare DU Norde in Paris
Figure 24 Weaving experimentation: Lawn time-lapse test; 2018
Threadbare

This section gives an account of making *Threadbare* and discusses how the editing of ‘weaving’ and the digital medium affected perception and the experience of time in the work. After testing various combinations of video, I tried using some time-lapse I had taken of moving house from Newtown to Redfern in Sydney in 2003, then to Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains and again ten years later when I moved house from Downer to Ainslie in Canberra in 2013 [Fig.25]. Previously, I had disregarded these sequences because they were very jumpy, this was because the tripod had been moved a lot to follow the progress of packing up house. However, when this video was cut into thin threads, this ‘jumpiness’ activated the grid and created the fragmented quality I was searching for. Because I appeared in the video moving boxes and packing, this ‘weaving’ was linked to myself as its author.

These sequences of moving house had been the basis of a video installation called *Still-moving* which I had made earlier in my research. This installation, which was shown at M16 Gallery 2014, was based on my pattern of moving house; 42 times in 42 years [Fig. 26-27]. In the decade that had passed between my house moves, the medium of video had changed; in 2003 I had used a Mini DV video camera and DV tape (a format between analogue and digital now obsolete), and in 2013 I had used a digital SLR camera. When the Mini DV was transcoded from 23.98 to 25 FPS the sequence looked faster, had poor resolution and corrupted sections of multi-coloured squares. For the installation I had projected the videos onto separate formations of cardboard boxes [Fig 26]. Another video with a hand-written list of houses I had lived in was projected onto a wall of boxes [Fig.27]. The videos in this installation were narrative in form but when I wove them the focus shifted to the experience of presence.
Figure 26 Still Moving: 2014; installation shot, diptych of moving house in 2003-4, projected onto boxes.

Figure 27 Still Moving: 2014; installation shot, the list of “the number of times I’ve moved houses”, Realtime video projected onto a wall of boxes.
As I had done with *Intransit*, I tried to ‘weave’ the two videos of moving house together to capture the gap of time between them, but the result was so busy that the videos were indistinguishable. I realised it was important that the viewer could recognise the source video at least some of the time. Subsequently, I began to make ‘weavings’ from one source video which was copied over seventy times, cut and cropped into threads of varying widths and speeds, and then arranged in a grid. The outcome was *Threadbare 1* (2018) [Figs.29] which was ‘woven’ from the video of moving house in 2003-4 and *Threadbare 2* (2018) [Figs.30] which was woven from the video of moving house in 2013. Because of original mini dv video format, *Threadbare 1* appeared faded and tatty in comparison to the newer saturated colour of *Threadbare 2*.

When the threads were extremely fine, one or two pixels wide, it was difficult to read the content of the video. When the threads were cut so finely the image was unrecognisable those sections became abstract fields of flicker. The more clearly recognisable the subject of the video in the threads, the more one could see the distortion of time across the strands. This fluctuation between representation and abstraction had a relationship to the narrative self and self as the experience of presence. However, in *Threadbare* the video was mostly legible and representational, it distorted the image just enough to focus on movement within the present.
Digital materiality: the black background and cutting the threads of video

My third research question asked how the digital medium affected the representation of autobiographical time? I found that aspects of the digital medium leant themselves to certain imagery and this affected the way time was experienced in the work. Rosalind Krauss defined a medium as “… a set of conventions derived from (but not identical with) the material conditions of a given technical support, conventions out of which to develop a form of expressiveness that can be both projective and mnemonic…”141. Krauss took the term ‘support’ from the tradition of painting which referred to the canvas as the ‘support’ for the medium of paint, and she applies this term to artforms such as film and digital video. The ‘technical supports’ of the ‘medium’ of digital video are the frames, the pixels, the coding. Single frame editing such as flicker was a response to the medium of the analogue filmstrip.142 The digital video artist works with the pixel and the code. However, many video artists draw on analogue editing techniques as I have done. In Cinema in the Digital Age Nicholas Rombes argues, that this reference to analogue techniques it a way to give warmth and humanity to the immaterial perfection of digital media.143 Rombes states: “…cinema in the digital era is deeply humanistic with its detournement of the cold logic of the digital code…”144 Rombes shows the strategies of movements such as “Mistakism” which includes filmmakers such as Harmony Korine, and “Dogme” filmmakers such as Lars Von Trier, employ shaky hand held camera, glitch, low resolution, imitated scratches, decays, tears in film strip, imitate solarisation of film, and also processes of filmmaking which open the work up to mistakes and accidents145. He argues “[t]he introduction of 'mistakes' into movies- which basically amounts to a human signature- is the most humanistic, the most tragic of things.”146 The corrupted mini dv tape from 2003 was a good example of this; the transcoding of the old tape had introduced coded errors. This is “digital glitch” which Jihoon Kim argues “…belong to and update the larger traditions of experimental film and video that have explored the materiality of media and brought it into relief”.147 The purpose of glitch is to make to the peculiar properties of digital media visible to the viewer through what it can do.148

143 Ibid.
144 Ibid., 24.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid., 27.
147 Kim, 101.
148 Ibid., 100-08.
Figure 29 Threadbare 1: (2018) digital video still.
Figure 30 *Threadbare 2*: (2018) digital video still.
My reference to ‘weaving’ was also way to suggest materiality, decay, and therefore the finite embodied experience of time. Following Intransit, I began to cut the strands of video finely so they appeared more threadlike, and densely layered like a tapestry. Thus these ‘weavings’ became ‘object like’. This was done by cutting threads of video with black back ground spaces woven into the design. Furthermore, the slicing in my work was chaotic, asymmetrical, obsessive, raggedly. It looked as though some pieces were missing. When the video became increasingly shredded, it was as though the work was breaking down over time, and when the strands became further apart as though threads were missing, it was the fabric becoming worn with age. The coherence of the image disintegrated; just as memory fades. However humanistic impression of this disintegration is contradicted by the cool slicing of the grid which disregards the content of the video.

This material quality of my work comes from a desire to make one’s presence in digital time tangible. Rombes argues “… no matter how abstract or avant-garde a film might have been during the analogue era, it was still perceived as reality by its materially identifiable and recognisable existence. It was a concrete thing” I found the static black spaces in the ‘weaving’ made the video more concrete. Even the title Threadbare references materiality and entropy: “(of cloth, clothing, or soft furnishings) becoming thin and tattered with age”\footnote{150} A major shift in the development of the ‘weaving’ was to incorporate the black background space into the design. It was like leaving part of the canvas unpainted. What was this background space? While the threads represented the ‘moving image’, the black spaces were the remainder, the non-moving image, they were the absence of movement and light; they represented the screen without image, the background to the moving picture. They were the presence of the absence of the image. The black background spaces in my digital ‘weavings’ made visible the “interstitial spaces” of flicker film. The black areas read both as static flat planes of blackness, and also as the illusion of a space behind the strands of moving image. They represent the idea of emptiness, of stillness in contrast to the idea of the threads of ‘moving image’.

Whereas ‘continuity editing’ conceals the cuts, my slicing drew attention to the cut. As Mary-Anne Doane writes in the Emergence of Cinematic time that continuity and discontinuity is

\footnote{149} Rombes, 31.  
\footnote{150} “Oxford Dictionaries Oxford University Press.”  
\footnote{151} Krauss, 161.
embedded in the film time in two ways: “in the gap between the frames, which is effaced in the production of the illusion of movement, and in the cut, which is also often concealed through techniques of continuity editing.” From this perspective, the intervals in the time-lapse of the Meditations were concealed by the impression of time passing or ‘moving’, but in Threadbare the cuts were not ‘concealed’ by ‘continuity editing’ but were featured, spread across the screen. This gave the slicing a material quality than Intransit reminiscent of analogue filmmaking which involved literally cutting the film strip. This was because in Threadbare the threads of ‘moving image’ were juxtaposed with the static black spaces of ‘non image’.

Although these cuts are actually lines of pixels where the encoded digital information changed, the contrast between the moving threads and the still background heightened the idea that the threads appeared to be ‘moving things’ against a still background. This impacted on the perceptual experience of screen time. The abrupt change from the ‘moving image’ to the threads of ‘non-moving image’ meant the viewers’ perception shifted abruptly between ‘moving image’ and static areas which had the effect of slowing down the reading of the image. The digital screen does not move in the way the analogue film strip moved through the projector, rather it continually scans data. However, as Justin Remes proposes in “Motion[less] Pictures” “movement …is not a necessary condition of cinema but a contingent one”. Remes points out the experience time is what is central to the experience of film.

Although Threadbare resembled analogue flicker, it differed in significant ways. Whereas flicker alternates whole frames which are different from the one before, Threadbare broke the single frame into smaller blocks that, was a fraction of a thread of time-lapse. Although only a part of a single frame, they were still continuous strings of contingently sequenced frames. The threads were continuous; from one frame to the next; they ran across the ‘weaving’ as well as through the duration of the video. Furthermore, the grid of the weave was fixed from one frame to the next, much like the window frame in the Meditations.

**Multiple temporalities and the multiplicity of presence**

Whereas the installation Still Moving had depicted the overall story of moving house, when the videos were shredded and ‘woven’ into Threadbare they examined the experience of self as a

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152 Doane, 29.
153 Ibid., 335.
presence through time. First, I had cut each thread so that it was in a similar position to where it was in the source sequence, for example a thread from the left side of the room was positioned on the left of the screen. This meant that even with gaps between the threads the viewer could reconstruct the subject of the source video; one recognised a room, a window, or a figure the allowing the whole image to be reconstructed from just a few threads. Second, when editing, I had found it worked best when there was a slight delay between threads taken from the same image; if the interval of time between the threads was too wide it became harder to recognise if the threads were from the same video. Being slightly out of sync created an echo between the threads, a reverberation of the same instant, that alluded to our embodied perception of change and movement. This delay held the viewer’s attention within an entangled present.

The delay between the threads related to ideas of ‘now’ as having a duration or in other words the ‘specious present’. As Physicist Dr Peter Riggs argues that as our experience of time is embodied, it is stuck in the present, this is because it takes time to sync different sensory inputs, as they each travel at different speeds: sound travels slower than the speed of light. Intuitively, I had altered the speeds of the video threads to within a range of a few seconds between the fastest thread and the slowest thread. One can see the splinters of the same sequence, each thread was a fraction of a second or more behind or in front of another thread. Thus, at any point in the video the present, past and future were visible on the screen within this period of time that correlated with Marc Wittmann’s theory the experienced now occurs over three seconds and merge over a period of thirty seconds into the experience of psychological presence. The viewer’s attention was held within this time-frame.

However, the ‘video weavings’ showed many speeds concurrently moving, broken off, interrupted; presence as fractured. Within each moment there are many different sensory processes taking place at different speeds. As Arstila and Lloyd state the idea of subjective time as “The metaphorical river might be replaced by a sputtering fireworks display. Timing is multifaceted, inconsistent, and variable.” They state there is no “localised centre for time processing in the brain”, and subjective time “…is full of dissociations like the divergent

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156 Peter Riggs, J., “What Do We Feel When We 'Feel' Time 'Passing'? ,” Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research 3, no. 9 (2012).
157 Wittmann, "Moments in Time".
158 Arstila.
judgements of heard and seen durations. Non temporal differences of many kinds have subjective temporal effects.” artsila argues

...temporal phenomenology results from separate mechanisms, different temporal experiences can have different temporal thresholds.” our experiences of causality, change, motion, succession and so forth would be due to mechanisms separate from each other, and subsequently also separate from more general mechanisms such as working memory.

Instead, of the specious present artsila proposes a theory he calls “the dynamic snapshot theory”. This he says is a development of the ‘cinematic model’ which explained our experience of time as like the frames in film.

Scientist alex holcombe researches the temporal aspect of visual processing and in “seeing slow and seeing fast” argues “the human visual system has multiple temporal limits...”. He proposes they form two distinct groups: one fast the other slow “working at very different timescales, the two groups of mechanisms collaborate to create our unified visual experience.”

A fast group comprises specialized mechanisms for extracting perceptual qualities such as motion direction, depth and edges. The second group, with coarse temporal resolution, includes judgements of the pairing of color and motion, the joint identification of arbitrary spatially separated features, the recognition of words and high-level motion.

Holcombe’s research has found the gap between these groups is definite and significant, but they are unable to explain why one group is slower than the other. Holcombe points out that despite the disparate mechanisms “our visual processing is more continuous”. Each mechanism has a different temporal grain, the time it takes to process, slow or fast, and there

159 Ibid., 658.
160 Arstila. 300.
161 Ibid., 288.
162 Ibid.
164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
is also a ‘temporal resolution’ which is the speed at which various mechanisms integrate, and
different mechanisms have different temporal resolutions.

Valteri Arstila describes the example of the waterfall affect where one temporal mechanism
registers moving objects and another observes change, so that after a while of watching the
waterfall it is both stationary and moving. Arstila argues that:

our experiences of causality, change, motion, succession...would be due to mechanisms
separate from each other, and subsequently also separate from more general
mechanisms such as working memory.”

Wittmann proposes that the discrepancy between specious presence and the discrete moment
of the snapshot view is a result of the different thresholds of time integration. Therefore he
proposes there are a few kinds of presence which correspond to the thresholds of the functional
moment, the experienced now and the experience of psychological presence. However, rather
than weigh in on the debates of neuroscience, I see my role as a video artist as conveying
these questions, and explore how they impact on everyday lives. How then does this research
relate to my autobiographical video research?

I did not set out to illustrate these theories, but rather convey how my subjective everyday
experience of time was riddled by inconsistencies. There was a similarity in the experience of
Threadbare and this temporal neuroscience. Film is not as subtle and complex as human
perception, film breaks the image into frames and as Holcombe points out film has only one
temporal grain, its’ frame rate, meaning film has only one temporal resolution. For example,
the frame rate of my video was 25 frames per second. However Doane argues “The cinema
engages multiple temporalities...” there is the projector, or in digital media the code, the
computer, there is the “diegesis” that is the world of the picture, there is the space of the gallery
and there is sound and the light. These temporalities are manipulated to convey metaphors
or to bring our awareness to the boundaries of our perception as Poulaki had argued. By the
varying the width and speed of the threads I could create a metaphor for the multiple of
temporal mechanisms. This was similar to the way Rose Lowder had in Les Tournesols,

166 Arstila. 290.
167 Ibid., 288.
168 Wittmann, ”The Duration of Presence.”
169 Holcombe.
170 Doane, 30.
171 Poulaki, 38.
portrayed the subtle complexity of human vision by adjusting the focus of the lens in each frame. Instead, I had altered the speed. The overall image - the fabric - suggests our experience of a continuous presence in time, while the variation of each thread suggested this continuity was derived from the fusion of many parts. The overlapping of threads suggested these processes were occurring simultaneously yet at different speeds, the points of intersection between sensory processes, the building up of layers of threads, thicken our present actions into habits or memories.

Figure 31 Threadbare:1; 2018; still

**Identification**

As well as my appearance in the video, my point of view as the author and subject of *Threadbare* was conveyed through the pattern and temporal design of the video. Filmmaker and writer Malcolm Le Grice argues that in non-representational film the spectator may identify with the sequencing frames as the author. I shall briefly summarise his argument. Le Grice begins by arguing that the ‘single person film’ developed from the narrator in “…the existentialist novel” he explains the shift that occurred as “the narrator - the source of the narration - became an element in, and often central to, the narrative…”. A consequence of this, he says, was the blurring of the boundary between fact and fiction. Le Grice then argues that this narrator was carried over into “single person film”. In these films, viewers identified with
the narration as the physical presence of the filmmaker: “[e]ven though not necessarily bodily represented in the film, the film became an expression of the film-maker's vision.”¹⁷² My works the Meditations in Chapter one and my Re-creation of Attempt, were good examples of this. In these works, the narrative subtitles replaced my presence in the film and identified myself as the author and subject of the videos.

Le Grice develops this argument further by suggesting that the sequencing of frames is inherently narrative and that the design of this sequencing is identified as the filmmaker’s voice. In this way, non-representational experimental film can be identified with as personal films. The sequencing of single frames like words in a sentence, is the author’s voice:

Even in formal or structuralist film, the act and prerogative of structuration attests authorship. The special conditions of temporal structuring- its inevitable priorities of sequence- lend to its control the quality of narration. The control of significance determined in the sequential relations is narrational and thereby identification tends to be located, via concern for the structural outcome, in the originator of the narration.¹⁷³

In this way, the pattern of my ‘weavings’, where the threads were places, the tempo of the time-lapse, all represent myself as the subject and author of the video. The subject was embedded in the timing and colour of the design.

Summary

At the beginning of this chapter I described how I had set out to disrupt the linear direction of my time-lapse videos. I did this by developing a method of ‘weaving’ video which created multiple temporal points of view. I found the ‘weaving’ shifted emphasis from the narrative of the source videos to the experience of duration over a few seconds and this time-frame related to Wittmann’s notion of “psychological presence”. However, in Threadbare there were many time zones within this window of presence which I related to the multiple distinct temporal mechanisms. The pattern and design of the sequencing of frames were linked to myself as the author. Thus, my ‘weavings’ reflect the neural pathways that generated the compulsion to weave in the first place.

¹⁷³ 201.
Another aspect of my research was to evoke a sense of materiality in order to summon a tangible presence in my videos. *Surfacing* had used images of materials as well as objects in an installation which showed how we experience time in relation to our environment.\footnote{174} This experiment led me to explore the materiality of digital media. ‘Weaving’ was one way to suggest materiality. The first weaving *Intransit* attempted to literally cut two places together to create a subjective experience of time while *Threadbare* referenced ‘materiality’ in the way the threads were cut. This suggestion of materiality reinforced the finitude of embodied time of the personal voice of self-portraiture.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{threadbare_2_2018_detail.jpg}
\caption{\textit{Threadbare 2:} 2018; still close-up detail}
\end{figure}

\footnote{174 Arstila. 657-59.}
Conclusion

This practice-led research project explored autobiographical time through video art which touched on the fields of temporal neuroscience, philosophies of self and no-self, meditation, video art, Jan Švankmajer, Marie Menken and George Perec. The research questions that guided my studio practice were: how could I investigate the embodied experience of time via single frame editing techniques such as time-lapse how did this process engage with concepts of self and the genres of autobiographical time and self-portraiture, and how did the medium of digital media affect self-representation as embodied time? The results of my research are embedded in the work Threadbare.

In the introduction to this exegesis, I quoted Alissa Lebow’s definition of autobiographical film as showing the filmmakers acknowledgment of their subjective point of view. Through my research I explored how this subjective point view might convey a broader notion of autobiographical time as the first-person experience of presence in duration. Further exploration into presence lead me to the research of neuroscientists and philosophers such as Valteri and Holcombe who find that our embodied experience is created via multiple temporal mechanisms of different temporal thresholds. I resolved that presence is a fragmented continuity of embodied experience through time which I have conveyed visually in Threadbare as multiple video threads of varying speeds. These disconnected threads of processes thoughts and sensations are the fragmented continuity through which we experience the self in time. However, although the continuity of self may be illusory, it is part of our everyday lives.

In the first chapter I reflected on how the genres of autobiography and self-portraiture are connected to the concept of self. I found Patrick Stoke’s distinction between two experiences of self, the first- person sense of self and the narrative of a person’s life, related to the distinction between autobiography and self-portraiture. As Rascaroli proposed, autobiography engages narrative self and self-portraiture weaves a metaphorical web. Also important to my work was Stokes’ discussion on concepts of no-self including Buddhist philosophy. I found the autobiographical video necessarily engages with the ideas of self. In light of this research I endeavoured to make the distinction between presence and narrative self visible in my videos.

175 Lebow.
176 Hoffman, 77. Eva Hoffmann beautifully states: "The conviction of time’s seamless flow may to some extent be an illusion; but a sense of temporal continuity - the ability to make connections between past and present, and the ongoing stream of experience - is one of the prerequisites of a genuinely human identity."
and emphasise presence rather than story. I also sought ways to suggest the concept of no-self in my video. When re-creating Perec’s text Attempt, described in the second chapter, I realised Perec had framed his presence at the site as autobiographical. I also realised that the time-lapse from my window had captured the everyday experience of presence.

In editing my videos I have found strategies to reflect on the divide between narrative self and presence. I also found that presence was emphasised by inhabiting various forms of constraint such as the surveillance camera, works by other artists, and the warp and weft of weaving. When I inhabited these forms, the narrative of self was subdued. In Chapter One, I showed how Meditation I juxtaposed the diary text as narrative self, with the surveillance camera as the author’s presence. In Meditation II the diary text fell away leaving the presence of surveillance. In Chapter Two my field work and The Re-creations framed my presence in re-creating the films by Švankmajer and Menken by placing them next to the original. This showed self, myself, as an actor inhabiting the form of the original film. This hid the narrative of my life whilst revealing my presence. In Chapter three I described how Threadbare created a perceptual experience that brings viewers into the duration of the present. The narrative of the time-lapse of moving house was obliterated by shredding it, shifting focus to the experience of presence in the three second delay of now in the woven texture of the video.

My practice also journeyed from a single point perspective to the multiple points of view in the ‘weaving’. When I embarked on this research project, I had set out to explore the single frame with time-lapse and found the consecutive linear order of frames in time-lapse reinforced the notion of the minimal self as the experience of time as string of consecutive moments. These initial works, the Meditations, had a single point of view that resembled the gaze of the surveillance camera. However, I found the viewer identified with the surveillance camera and embodied this point of view as perceptual experience. This resonated with ideas of meditation and the philosophy of no-self.

I then explored multiple temporal perspectives in my videos and found this destabilised the notion of a continuous unified self. The first of these works was the triptych the cat sat on the mat which had three temporal snapshots of the same space. Then, in The Re-creations diptychs the temporal perspectives of the original films by Švankmajer and Menken were placed alongside the digital re-creations made over forty-five years later. The single point of view was further shattered through the process of video ‘weaving’. Intransit ‘wove’ video from two
different time-zones together to create a subjective experience. In *Threadbare* the source videos were shredded to and then ‘woven’, to create an experience of presence through a kaleidoscope of temporal perspectives. Whereas the surveillance camera stood in for my presence as the author, in the ‘weaving’ my presence was conveyed through the temporal vibration between the threads. Rather than tell a narrative of my life, I found, as Le Grice had argued, that spectators identify with the compulsive layering of threads, the particular texture, rhythms, discontinuities, the asymmetrical pattern of *Intransit* and *Threadbare* as an expression of the filmmaker’s subjective voice.¹⁷⁷ This is my temporal fingerprint.

An important outcome of this research project was to discover that *Threadbare* interpreted presence in a way that resonated with research in neuroscience which finds there are many distinct temporal mechanisms with multiple temporal resolutions and grains which do not always align. Video is unable to recreate the complexity of the temporality of visual perception but instead I discovered a way to create a metaphor of the complexity of temporal experience by ‘weaving’, threads of video of varying speeds and dimensions. I had created the impression of the rich textures of nuanced temporality. I also concluded that the delay between threads was similar to the experience of self over duration, that Wittmann had called *psychological presence*. Presence, the sense of being as a continuous self-presence, involves continuities, discontinuities and stasis.

This project began as an investigation into single frame filmmaking, and my work is a continuation of the project of atomistic filmmakers of the 1960-80’s into the investigation of a digital atomisation. This journey started with the single point of view of time-lapse, and through the re-creation of atomistic films by Menken and Švankmajer I began to see that my autobiographical subjectivity in the videos was partly defined by the digital media of my work. This field work had inspired me to experiment with the qualities of the digital medium in order to fragment the time-lapse. This led to the experiments with slicing and ‘weaving’ that led to the multiplicity of temporal perspectives in *Threadbare*.

Throughout this research, from *the Re-creations* to *Surfacing* and *Threadbare*, I was preoccupied with conjuring a tangible presence in order to endow my video with aura of the human life time.¹⁷⁸ In *The Re-creations* the original films became material traces of the artist’s

¹⁷⁷ Le Grice, 201.
¹⁷⁸ Rombes, 28.
lives; in the exhibition *Surfacing* frames of video were translated to the sequence of glass prints; in *Threadbare* materiality was suggested by the reference to the handwoven textiles and the memory of my mother’s weaving. Although fractured, the threads of video reveal the desire for continuity of self through time. Perec wrote in his autobiography *W or the Memory of Childhood*:

*I don’t’ know where the break is in the threads that tie me to my childhood…My childhood belongs to those things which I know I don’t know much about. It is behind me; yet it is the ground on which I grew, and it once belonged to me, however obstinately I assert that it no longer does.*"179

There is a sense in *Threadbare* that the threads are the links to ones past and the future, they are the threads to my childhood on the farm, the landscape of the past. Like Perec I wonder where the break is in these threads, but the threads still vibrate from the events long ago that are no longer remembered.

There is still much more to be explored in the ‘weaving’ project. Many possibilities have opened up for further research into the relationship between temporal neuroscience, and the patterns of woven design and neurocognitive film research. One avenue of investigation is to weave video according to particular weaving patterns such as twills, satins, or crêpes [Fig.34] and explore how the design alters the perception of the image, and how these patterns relate to various temporal processes. Within the framework of traditional ‘woven’ designs there is also much to explore in the relationship between the image, its speed, the algorithms of the patterns and how they relate to perception and presence.

Figure 33 *Fig. 1805*: a 16-shaft crêpe weave pattern: from a Handbook of Weaving by Gustav Herman Oelsner, Hardpress Classics, p.376
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