TRANSITIONS

An Exhibition of Installation Art

by

Daria Magas-Zamaria

A thesis exhibition presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfilment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
in
Studio Art

The Alton Mill Gallery
Alton, Ontario L9W 2P6

April 25 – 30, 2008

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada 2008

© Daria Magas-Zamaria 2008

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

Transitions is a three part series, examining themes which define our human condition. Utilizing traditional, digital, and interactive media, including sound, video, clay, paper, polyvoile material, and electronic devices, I create responsive installation environments that allow me to share my personal stories with those of the viewers. Collaboratively and co-creatively we examine issues of existence, self-awareness, and embodied spatiality within an arena that incorporates stories, memories and histories. As the viewer engages and participates in the work, they become the conduit between the brief moments of the present and the fragmented illusory images of the past.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my two precious children, Sophia and Matteo and to my husband, Charles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

TRANSITIONS

I am interested in the expression and exploration of intimate personal stories which emanate from the fundamental themes of the human condition. As humans we all share certain commonalities that are central to our existence. Within these broad commonalities we deal with our own unique individual experiences. My artistic explorations deal with themes of existence, time, spatiality, causality and memory.

I am interested in exploring our individual perceptions of time and the temporal nature of time as it relates to each of our own individual notions of being and existence. I strive to emphasize the frailty of our grasp on time through manifestations of fragmentation and overlapping in my installations. As viewers enter the installation spaces they find themselves in a fragmented, non-linear time. Their actual physical bodily presence within the works becomes the only representation of the present linear continuum of time and the conduit between past, present, and future.

Transitions consists of three separate installations. They are entitled "Passages", "revelation: from the shadows", and "Sheets of Time". *Transitions* is the result of my need to incorporate and combine two seemingly antithetical realities that have been my primary influences for more than thirty years. These realities are the natural physical world around us and the digital virtual world. The natural, tactile world of the countryside of my childhood greatly contributed to my formative years and later dictated the type of art that I created. I grew to regard nature as a protective, pure, balanced life-force of

which I was a part. As a practicing artist in my early twenties, I was immersed in traditional media of clay, printmaking, and sculpture, which provided me with a satisfying exploration of materiality, the beauty of form, of space, of texture, and colour. I reveled in the sensuousness of tactility which to me was an extension of my own corporeality and the natural environment around me.

During my early adult years I became fascinated by newly available computer graphic technology such as the Apple Macintosh platform, Adobe graphics software, and time-based authoring programs such as Macromedia Director. Creating images using the computer as a tool became a significant part of my oeuvre. It also became my career as a professor of Digital Media Arts beginning in 1988. While I had concentrated on digital art since 1985, I had not embraced its characteristic lack of tactility. I wanted to feel the physicality of the works that I was creating. Yet I found that I could not easily resolve the assimilation of these two worlds – the natural, tactile and the virtual – until recently. For many years I strove to somehow fuse the inherent characteristics of the two. It was not until I finally broke away from the rigid frame of the computer screen that I began to create works which successfully combined elements of the physical and of the simulated.

In my art work I begin with the expressions and interpretations of my own personal stories that are born out of my life journey and the mini-journeys within it. They are stories emanating out of my roles and relationships as daughter, sister, wife, mother, and educator. These expressions are at the centre of each of my works and are the pivot point from which further meaning is derived. Sharing of stories and experiences is an

important aspect in my work. By sharing and overlapping our unique individual experiences we begin to compose a metaphorical tapestry within the larger context of the human condition.

I construct installation environments in which the sharing and overlapping of experience can actively occur. They are responsive spatial environments that acknowledge the presence and involvement of the viewer. An important component of the meaning of the work is generated by the viewer through their actions and reactions within the art work's environment. It is my interest to elicit a gradual, yet heightened self-awareness within the viewer by engaging them in a multi-sensory experience. The installations include sound, real time video and recorded video playback along with the incorporation of computerized interaction devices. When a viewer enters each installation's space, they are presented with a situation that appears quiet, and passive. The viewer becomes aware of their physicality within the space through the manner in which the works begin to acknowledge, respond and communicate to them. The viewer's initial awareness that their presence somehow affects the work is the first step toward recognizing the importance of their state of being in the space. Further, through this experience, an active symbiotic dialogue ensues between the viewer and the artwork. The initial private introduction of my personal story becomes a more shared and expanded discourse ultimately resulting in a unique and intimate experience for each viewer. Each work responds with an immediacy to the viewer which elicits a conscious awareness of themselves and a focus on their actions, reactions, thoughts, emotions, and feelings. These are all incorporated and overlaid as important aspects of the works.

As I was interested in creating a multi-sensorial experience for the viewers within an installation space and wanted the viewers to be active participants, I referred to the work of Allan Kaprow in my early investigations. Kaprow's approach toward the installation space and toward the audience helped to provide history and context for what I was interested in. In Allan Kaprow's *18 Happening in 6 Parts*, (1959), guests were invited to participate through instructions to perform certain activities including when to applaud.[1] In this performance piece viewers became integral elements in the composition and realization of the artwork. Participants were formally instructed when and how to perform. It is my interest to create experiences that are more collaborative in the authorship of content generation. By setting up art works that are somewhat open-ended, the participant is provided a freedom of expression and a degree of choice. They can decide how much or how little to engage with the work.

Within installations that accept and respond to the viewers' existence, the realities of the viewer, and that of the artwork are confronted, intermingled, and questioned. The viewer/participant is provided with the power to manipulate and experience these realities, through their actions and interactions. Three core elements that are inherent to interactive installations are time, space, and the existence of the viewer. For the works to be responsive, the viewer is required to engage with the spatial environment within a construct of time. To understand the relationships and dynamics between these three elements, I referred to Heidegger's arguments in *Being and Time*.

In Heidegger's view, human existence is confirmed by our encounters with all the entities that are in a world which we have been 'thrown' into. Here we can parallel the world of the installation space that the viewer enters. "The significance that things have is inextricably linked to the kind of being we are, we do not relate to the world as disembodied disinterested consciousnesses but as embodied agents." [2] As embodied agents how we interact with things in this world confirms our existence and state of being. This becomes a very significant result and example of the viewer's participation within a responsive installation artwork. By encountering the various objects and entities of the art work and especially by being able to affect it because of one's existence in relation to it, one's state of being is validated.

Such validation of existence through interaction with what is around us is clearly illustrated in a recent interactive installation work that requires the active choices of the viewers. *Intersection*, (1993) by Canadian installation artist Don Ritter is a work that consists of a darkened room filled with the sounds of cars rushing in traffic. In the distance a dimly lit exit sign instructs the viewers to venture into the dangerously moving traffic. Playing on their senses, their fears, and their instincts the work viscerally and explicitly enhances their self-awareness and the need for their active participation in order to get through the work successfully. [3] In relation to Heidegger's statement, the participants in Ritter's work became embodied agents that reacted to and interacted with the entities that they encountered within the spatial environment.

The layering of meaning and personal narrative that results from the physical and psychological interaction with the art work can be paralleled to our individual realities in everyday lives. In affording the participant a degree of autonomy, they are provided with a certain freedom of choice. They can choose how much or how little to engage with the work, how much to interact and participate. The more engagement, the more meaning is created and layered, and the more meaning is experienced and extracted. This becomes a personal narrative, a personal experience. If we consider Jean-Paul Sartre's statement,

> *…but I am always free in what I make of it.*
> *We try to fill our nothingness with actions to define what we are, but*
> *what we are is always, unto death, incomplete, since future choices*
> *characterizing the kind of persons we are always remain open to us.*[4]

As in life, in an interactive space we strive to fulfill voids with actions that provide us some explanations, some meaning and relevance. Being made aware of ourselves through participation in an augmented art installation space that responds to our presence and our actions, provides an arena for self-reflection and self-realization.

For the location of *Transitions* I specifically selected a historic mill in the small country village of Alton, Ontario. The mill has been converted into gallery and studio spaces. Since nature is such an important factor in my work, the mill's location amongst trees and beside a rushing river is ideal. Much of the original interior has been preserved and left exposed. The floors are wooden and creaky, large wooden support beams have been left exposed, thick walls have their stone revealed as the paint and plaster have both worn off and been cleaned off in places. Large windows allow good views of the country setting. The overall effect is of a large building that exudes history and that organically

incorporates its country setting. When viewers enter the building, their experience begins as they are affected by the natural surroundings, and the historical, organic nature of the site.

The installation, "Passages" places the viewer/participant in a space that incorporates both the external natural world with that of the artwork. Elements from the outside such as trees and the sounds of a river are integral components that echo, expand and enhance the work. The installation is presented as a passive environment, inviting the viewer to enter and to choose how they will engage as embodied agents.

"Passages" represents an inevitable, necessary journey, leaving the past and crossing over to a new beginning. All of us experience such journeys in our lives. Some of them are small, some are significant, some are traumatic and life changing. Within these experiences we deal with histories, emotions, memories, loss, re-birth and hope.

"Passages" is inspired by my own personal life. It is a reconciliation, acknowledgement, and testimonial of my father's life journey. It is also an acceptance and recognition of my own relationship to his journey and its affect on my own. On a personal level, this work also deals with my relationship to family, tradition and heritage. As products of our history, we travel on the backs of our ancestors and carry forward the remnants of their past. The symbolism of my artwork and its representation of a past cultural history emphasizes the touchstones of our identities as we become the templates for future generations. As I walk through the installation, I reflect on my father's experiences and

my earlier rebellious reactions to his stories. Now, as I've aged and have a young family of my own, I feel the importance of connecting to his past and to understanding its legacy.

My father's journey began with a bid to escape his occupied homeland and save his life. It began as a solitary journey through the woods in the dark of night to reach and eventually cross the border. The forest provided my father with protection. The passage through this forest was a transformational one of upheaval, loss, fear, hope, rebirth, and identity.

The poignant story of my father's experience is the catalyst for the metaphor of the journey in "Passages". I have chosen to create a minimalist interactive installation to represent this event. The intention of the work is to provide an opportunity for the viewer to experience suggestions of another place, another time, of a story and a relationship that occurred somewhere in the past. It is a backdrop, a template from which the viewer can overlay their own thoughts, emotions, and feelings as they discover and experience different aspects of the work.

"Passages" is intended to be a solitary and intimate experience where viewers enter the installation space one at a time. The work is situated in a room measuring twelve by twenty feet. This dimension provides a space large enough to move around in, yet is small enough to feel secure and personal. Centered in the room, five semi-translucent strips of light-weight fabric, measuring ten inches wide by sixteen feet tall, hang two feet

apart from each other in a single row. The distance between each strip provides the viewer with enough space to walk between them and brush up against them. The strips are mounted to the ceiling so that they hang flat with the bottoms resting and folding on the floor. Monochromatic images of large trees are printed on the fabric strips to reference a forest. At the far end of the row of 'trees' is a window that extends the interior environment to the outside where actual trees can be seen. The sound of a river can be heard from two other windows situated along the side wall of the room. The viewer enters this installation and is urged to venture forth through this forest, beginning their solitary journey by walking towards, around and in-between the strips of fabric. My close association to the positive, protective and life-giving forces of nature is a strong influence in this piece. The forest is representational of cleansing, transformation, and transcendence.

When they pass two certain points in the installation space, participants unknowingly enter 'hot spots' that trigger sound loops to play. Each 'hot spot' contains three separate twenty second sound files that are randomly selected by a computer program.[5] I have intentionally broken up a narrative into fragments of events, thoughts, and emotions to give the viewer slight hints of a story, but with enough openness to allow for the engagement of their own imagination. The first trigger starts an audio recording of my father describing the journey of his fateful night. As the viewer continues walking, the first audio begins to fade away. As it is fading, the viewer enters another 'hot spot' area and triggers a recording from a second set of three separate audio files. These are recordings of my voice as I recite random words that emphasize or describe current

9

feelings, apprehensions, and hopes. As the viewer walks around they become the physical

conduit that connects the two detached realities of father and daughter. The distance

between the triggers is such that both audio recordings of father and daughter overlap

each other. If the viewer continues walking and triggering, the audio recordings overlap

and repeat in such a manner as to become indiscernible. The intention is that the viewer

eventually abandons the audio information and starts to focus on their own experience

and personal interpretations in what is now becoming their own intimate journey.

It is my intent to keep the technical triggers hidden and indiscernible so that they do not

detract from the experience. The technical aspects of the installation are not the focus.

Rather they are vehicles that enable the viewer to become consciously aware of

themselves in present-time, as well as their relationship to a time in the past that is

meaningful to them. I consciously avoided the use of apparent technical devices such as

headphones to transmit the audio recordings, opting instead for two white speakers that

passively blended in with the white walls. I wanted the viewers to walk through the

installation in a fluid and uninterrupted manner, focusing their attention on the

environment, background sounds, their bodily presence within the space and the

artwork's consequential responses. I did not want the audio to become the most important

component in the installation.

A year prior to the conception of "Passages", I had the opportunity to experience a work

entitled "A Large Slow River", (2000) by artist Janet Cardiff. It was an audio walk that

incorporated the interior and exterior spaces of the Oakville Galleries, in Oakville,

Ontario. Cardiff's use of the viewer as an integral component in the realization of her works has directly influenced me. My earlier screen-based interactive works, such as "enCLOSing INTERsections", only required the point and click actions of the viewer. I still had not yet resolved the assimilation of the natural and virtual realties as these interactive works only existed inside the computer and were experienced by viewing the images on the screen. With Cardiff's work, I realized that by incorporating the viewer as an essential physical component of a work, the fusion of the physical and virtual worlds became possible.

What is fascinating to me about Cardiff's works is the interweaving of realities and the play of time and space. As the viewer/participant walks through the artwork's locations, the recorded sounds are mixed with the real-life sounds from the environment. By this uncanny intermingling there is an uncertainty as to what is recorded and what is not; what is reality in the viewer's world and what is fiction; what is present tense and what is past. The viewer is given fragments of the story, of sounds, of visuals, of experiences, of realities, leaving the open-endedness of the work to impressions that are created within the viewer/participant.

In 2003 I spent a year in the Canadian Film Centre's Interactive Art and Entertainment program where the notion of using the viewer as an actual embodied agent in a creative work was further confirmed for me. My colleagues and I produced a work entitled "West Queen West". It was an interactive locative installation that was mapped over six sites in the Queen West neighbourhood of Toronto. A virtual narrative was laid over these

physical locations that required the viewer's participation, decisions and actions to reveal and fulfil the work. Similarly to Cardiff's works, "West Queen West" also layered the realities of the environment and the participant with the narrative.

"revelation: from the shadows" is an expression of our deepest physical connection to the earth, to traditions, ancestors, community, stories, and memories. In this piece I wanted to create a very close and intimate relationship with the viewer. I also wanted to create a heightened awareness in the viewer of their perception of time as it related to their existence within the installation and ultimately in the world. All the images in this piece are projected real-time video captures of the viewers themselves. They become the freshly captured stories of the viewer's immediate and brief existence in present-time. As time passes the images fade away and are added to and intermingled with the histories of past stories that had also once been projected in the space. The dissolution of the image plays with the viewer's perceptions of memory. As present-time recedes, notions of forgetfulness and remembering are encouraged by the monochromatic images, their fading and blurring effects, and the slowness of the images' playback movements.

It was very important that this work expressed a strong relationship to the earth. I have long used clay in my tactile works and chose to include it in "revelation: from the shadows" because of its strong association as the medium used for fabricating containers or vessels by cultures worldwide over millennia. I've chosen to reference the metaphor of a clay vessel as a container of memories, songs, and stories. However, the clay vessel in this work has been transformed into a grid of 48 white clay tiles that are mounted on a

surface measuring three by four feet. In computer graphics images are composed of pixels arranged in a grid on the monitor. In the virtual world of computer graphics it is the pixels that are the containers of stories. In this work the clay tiles are also referencing pixels and giving them an actual physicality. The 3 x 4 aspect ratio of the surface onto which the tiles were mounted, was an intentional proportion based on the video frame ratio as well as the ratios used in computer graphic displays, creating a relationship between the physicality of the earthen tiles of the physical world with the more ethereal video and virtual worlds.

My intent was to create clay tiles in the simplest way with the least amount of technical intervention. The clay was worked and formed by hand as I wanted to maintain my connection to it and to the earth as directly as possible. It was important for me to feel the clay in my hands, to knead it, to squeeze it through my fingers, and to form it. I rolled the clay flat leaving the edges rough and not entirely straight. The surfaces of each tile contain slight marks, undulations and indentations created by my fingers as I handled the clay. When looking at the overall arrangement of the grid of tiles, there is movement, texture, and dimensionality which emphasizes the physicality and organic nature of the material, and creates a less rigid composition. In certain small Nigerian villages such as Gwari, it is the responsibility of women to create earthen pots.[6] There the clay is taken directly from the ground, worked, formed, and fired in the open air. This represents a very pure form of creation and connection to the earth because there is not any intervention of technology, such as processed clay, wheels and kilns. Most of the time these pots are created by a group of women sitting on the ground, sharing stories, helping

each other as they work – a communal arrangement. It was this very basic and simple communal activity that I referenced.

My interest in this piece is to emphasize our close relationships with each other, our communities, our histories as human beings, connections to our ancestors and our past. One of the reasons I chose to create an interactive piece for this work was to provide a continuum of these close relationships with the viewer. The clay tiles are intentionally unglazed, undecorated, like a blank canvas waiting for the viewer to generate their stories onto it. As the viewer enters the space in front of the grid, their image is captured and projected onto the grid of tiles. The monochromatic image of the viewer becomes clearer, more in focus, the longer they remain in a fixed position. When the viewer moves, their image blurs and fades away as if being absorbed into the clay, to be replaced by a refreshed and updated image of themselves. At first the viewer is unaware what the subject of the projection is. Slowly, as the image comes into focus they realize it is their own image. As the images fade and the viewer leaves the space, their story is added to, and becomes part of the clay's metaphor as a vehicle for containers of stories, songs, memories, histories. To realize the work in a meaningful way, it is essential for the viewer to be present. They become part of the continuum and dis-continuum, of existence and non-existence, presence and absence.

There are several components in Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's work entitled "Body Movies: Relational Architecture #6", 2001 that are important considerations in my work. "Body Movies" consisted of thousands of images taken of people in the streets of Linz,

Rotterdam, Madrid, and Mexico City projected onto giant screens erected in the town

square of Linz. When passers-by walked in front of powerful lights placed at ground

level their shadows were cast onto the large screens. If their shadows fell over the already

projected still images an automatic command introduced a new set of portraits.[7] In this

work there is a focus on the essence of time and the layering of different states of time as

representations of the past are depicted by the thousands of portraits and are

superimposed with the real-time shadows of current passers-by to create relationships and

new realities. The brevity of present-time is accentuated by the split second projections of

the playful shadows of the pedestrians. The layering of personal narratives created

during the involvement with the work is another important component. In *Body Movies*,

individual personal stories are created and layered not only with oneself but also

interwoven with the stories of a larger community. *Body Movies* also exercises the issues

of embodiment in an augmented space. Participants become aware of their corporeality,

their pinpointed locations within a space and the importance of this physicality to the

realization of meaning within the piece. Although Lozano-Hemmer's works are very

large scale public installations, their importance in relation to my work is in the notion of

capturing the viewers' real-time actions, involvement, and presence within the works, as

well as the overlay and overlapping of different time space realities. My works explore

these notions in a more intimate and direct manner to evoke the subtleties of histories,

memories, and personal experiences. To create a personal, intimate experience, to

emphasize that others were in the same space, and to evoke connections between

participants, "revelations: from the shadows" is installed in a small room that measures

eight feet wide by twenty feet long. The mounted tiles hang from the ceiling at eye level and away from the back wall by thirty inches to give them physicality within the space.

Lozano-Hemmer's works are set-up as open-ended installations therefore inviting the viewer to participate in order to fulfill the works and generate content as well as derive meaning from the total experience. The content consists of viewers' cast shadows, and the manner in which the work responds to the viewers and their reactions to it. This is dependant upon the decisions they make in how to participate within the piece. In creating "revelation: from the shadows", I consciously considered my role as artist. In order to overlap and communicate my stories, histories, and memories with the viewer, it was important for me to allow the viewers a degree of participatory freedom within the work. Along with my role as artist, I needed to become a facilitator, setting up a piece that presents an invitation to the viewer for their presence, their movements and their engagement. In this way the viewer expresses their feelings, thoughts, and emotions and contributes to the realization of the work.

The engagement and participation of the viewer is also required in Gary Hill's work entitled "Tall Ships", (1992).[8] "Tall Ships" was a work that constantly inspired me during my course of study at Waterloo and especially during the development of "Sheets of Time". I referred to Hill's employment of the viewer in a responsive interactive space, his use of video to elicit notions of memory and histories, and his juxtaposition of past and present time within the installation space.

"Tall Ships" is an immersive video installation that silently yet powerfully beckons the viewer to enter its dark space. At first the images in the twelve video projections are still. It is only when the presence and movements of the viewer (now participant) are detected that the work itself begins to respond. The work is thus open-ended allowing the viewer to generate meaning through their choices and actions. Once the work responds a dialogue begins between the viewer and the art work and relationships are established. The video images are murky, dark, and ethereal emphasizing issues of memory, past reflections and enigmatic human stories. Each of the figures exists in their individual and isolated video spaces and are locked in their personal conditions. When motion is detected they attempt to reach out to the viewer, yet are never successful at truly escaping their fate. It is as if their only hope of freedom is through the existence and persistent presence of the viewer.

The connections Hill created between the isolated figures in the video and the viewer/participant inspired how I would treat the video projections, the physicality of the installation space, and the responsive interactivity in my work "Sheets of Time".
I also referred to works created by Bill Viola to study his manipulation of video in relation to the issues of time and content. Viola's concerns with themes generated out of the universal human condition also provided me with insight in relation to the explorations I was pursuing in my work regarding personal human stories.

Viola imbues his video installations with universal themes of human experiences such as birth, death, loss, joy, tragedy. It is through his use of video that he explores humanistic

metaphysical concerns. He manipulates the images giving them a painterly, transparent and ethereal quality. At times, his works are presented at an exaggerated slow motion pace which focuses attention directly at the nuances of the content, as evidenced in his work entitled "The Greeting" of 1995 where an event that actually lasted 45 seconds was extended to 10 minutes. [9]

Primarily, it is Viola's manipulation of time through video that helped to inform my explorations. In regard to his work "The Reflecting Pool", 1977-79, he states "the frame is broken up into three distinct levels of time – real time, still, and time lapse – and reconstructed to look like a complete image of a single space" [10] This division of the three distinct levels of time substantiated my attempts at illustrating the fragmentation of time and its presentation in a non-linear manner.

"Sheets of Time" explores the notion of our existence within the construct of time, our personal perceptions of time, and the layering of different states of time. It also addresses our frailty, impermanence, and need for human connection. "Sheets of Time" is the result of the growing awareness of my own placement within a space of time. As I become part of the 'sandwich generation'; placed between my elderly parents in their waning years, and my children who eagerly embrace their unfolding life, I am increasingly questioning the notion of the subjectivity of time and how it is relative to each of our own personal placements within its construct. Individually we exist in our own spaces of time, placed between birth and death. It is here that we must confront, understand, and ultimately succumb to the reality of our finiteness. As I feel with intensity the fleeting nature of

time, I experience moments of apprehension, sadness, fear, helplessness, a need to remember how things were, how people dear to me once were. At other times I feel joy and elation as I watch my children grow up to be adolescents excitedly embracing the world around them, looking to the future. What interests me is that while we each perform within our own time-spaces, we are simultaneously overlapping the time-spaces of those with whom we share the same present-time.

Bill Viola's video/sound installation *Il Vapore*, 1975 addresses the notion of overlapping individual time-spaces. Viewers entering an empty room containing only a boiling pot of water, a camera, and a monitor view a pre-recorded video of a man that existed in the same room at an earlier time. Simultaneously, their real-time existence within this space is captured and overlaid onto the pre-recorded one presented on the monitor. "Both merge as ghostlike images inhabiting the present moment". [11]   The viewer is thus confronted with the layering of past and present time within the same physical space.

"Sheets of Time" is an interactive video installation where the viewer becomes an integral component of the work. Issues of temporality, linearity of time, time past, time present are all held in abeyance as the art piece and the participant interact. As the viewer enters the installation space, they notice three vertical off-white paper panels hanging on the far white wall. These sheets are waiting to accept and absorb the stories and histories of the viewers as they exist and participate with the piece and as their images project onto the sheets. I have referenced paper as the medium that has long been used for recording and conveying human thoughts, emotions, and memories. I created handmade paper with

a rough texture. I allowed the wet pulp to settle onto the screen without much intervention. It was important for me that the paper created its own individuality and physicality, similarly to how I withheld technical intervention in the creation of the clay tiles. Organic integrity was important to convey in these tactile components as an expression of the physical natural world. The pulp did not settle onto the screen in a uniform way, creating thick and thin areas. In some areas the pulp was so thin that holes developed. In other parts of the paper there are wrinkles and creases. The edges are jagged. All these characteristics became important metaphors for human memories and time. They are physical representations of such notions as frailty, forgetfulness, gaps in memory, and folds in time. When the video images are projected onto the paper, some of the image is absorbed by the paper material, softening any harsh qualities. The rough surface of the paper breaks up the flatness of the video, giving it a textural quality.

In this piece I am striving to give a sense of physicality, an embodiment, to the video image through the use of paper. The size of the paper and the video image projected onto it are in relation to human scale so that there is an immediate and direct relationship with the viewer as they stand before it and confront the projected images of themselves. The three paper panels measure two by five feet each. The video projection has also been segmented into three sections of similar size, with each section corresponding with a paper panel. The installation room is dimly lit. The video images are monochromatic to conjure associations of memory and time past. The off-white colour of the paper adds warmth to the grayish images.

From a river outside, the sound of rushing water is heard coming in through a window located on the side wall to the left of "Sheets of Time". The sound is a constant reminder of the incessant flow of time. How do we measure present-time? How long is its duration before it becomes the past? If we use video as a measure, present-time is one thirtieth of a second. If we slowed the video down, as in Bill Viola's works, we could closely consider that portion, that instance of present-time. This is the brief 'state of being' before it recedes into time past. Herein lies the irony. Just as the video image will never really have physicality, neither will we be able to capture our past-time. This is the tragedy of our incessant 'mini deaths of present-time'.

When the viewer enters the installation space, they notice several short video clips projecting onto each of the three paper panels. Each of these video clips plays independently of the others and at random. What the viewer sees are non-linear, fragmented clips of previous viewers that had occupied and participated in the space at an earlier time. Since there is no apparent immediate relationship to the viewer, they briefly observe and interpret these images from an objective point of view. Yet the video clips show that the previous participants were aware of themselves in the space and of their interactions with the projected images of themselves. To be shown in real-time, the video capture of the installation needs to detect movement. As soon as the current viewer's movements are detected, previously recorded images fade away and the real-time actions and images of the viewer are projected. I wanted the panels to refer to the individual time-spaces that each of us exists in. Each panel recognizes movement independently. Whatever panel the viewer stands in front of, that is the panel that will display them in

real-time. If they stand and move across all three panels, then they will be shown in those three panels in real-time. This places the viewer into a subjective, conscious, self-aware state as they see themselves on the panels. The longer they move, the more they are acknowledged in present-time by seeing their actions in the video projections. When they stand still, their images fade and recede into time-past and are quickly replaced by any random mixture of previously recorded clips, both of themselves and of previous viewers. In Camera Lucida, Roland Barthes states that a photograph assuredly freezes a subject in a particular moment in time, and that as soon as their image is captured the subject immediately exists in the past. He further states that a photograph is a "flat death", a precursor to the inevitable and actual death of the subject. [12] In "Sheets of Time" there is the hint of a subversive, unspoken need to keep oneself in present-time, or, keep oneself alive. I have observed that once viewers understand that movement keeps them in real-time, they have a tendency to actively participate for longer periods of time.

Temporality, spatiality, and causality are components in "Sheets of Time". By engaging and playing within the augmented space each participant becomes very aware of their existence and their embodiment within the space. Once the participant realizes that they actually affect the content of the work, there is a conscious self-awareness and a self-realization not only of one's bodily existence but also of their body as being the one constant element in time. Only the participant is engaged in linear real time, in the extremely brief measure of 'present' time. Once their image is captured it is absorbed and placed in the continuous layering of the past. It is as though there is a constant compilation of sheets of time.

Through this three part series, I have endeavoured to express and examine the personal stories that emanate from themes which define our human condition as we exist in our real world. In my work, I begin with the nuances of my own personal stories. As I formulate them, they become expressions that utilize traditional, digital, and interactive media. Through this combination I create responsive installation environments that allow me to share my personal stories with those of the viewers. Collaboratively, and through the viewer's presence and participation, we examine issues of existence, self-awareness, and embodied spatiality within an arena incorporating stories, memories and histories. The viewer's existence becomes a vital representation of present reality and present-time. As they engage and participate in the work they become the conduit between the brief moments of the present and the fragmented illusory images of the past.

I had referred to this body of work as the culmination and fusion of my art practices both in the traditional and digital media. Having spent years developing and seeing this body of work come to fruition, I realize that I am at the beginning of further examinations and developments that consider the use of the viewer within responsive interactive environments while exploring themes which define our human condition.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: *Passages,* 2006 (installation view)
Polyvoile, audio, motion sensors, computer, MAX software

Figure 2: *Passages,* 2006 (installation view)
Polyvoile, audio, motion sensors, computer, MAX software

Figure 3: ***Passages,*** *2006 (detail)*
Polyvoile, audio, motion sensors, computer, MAX software

Figure 4: *Passages*, 2006 (detail)
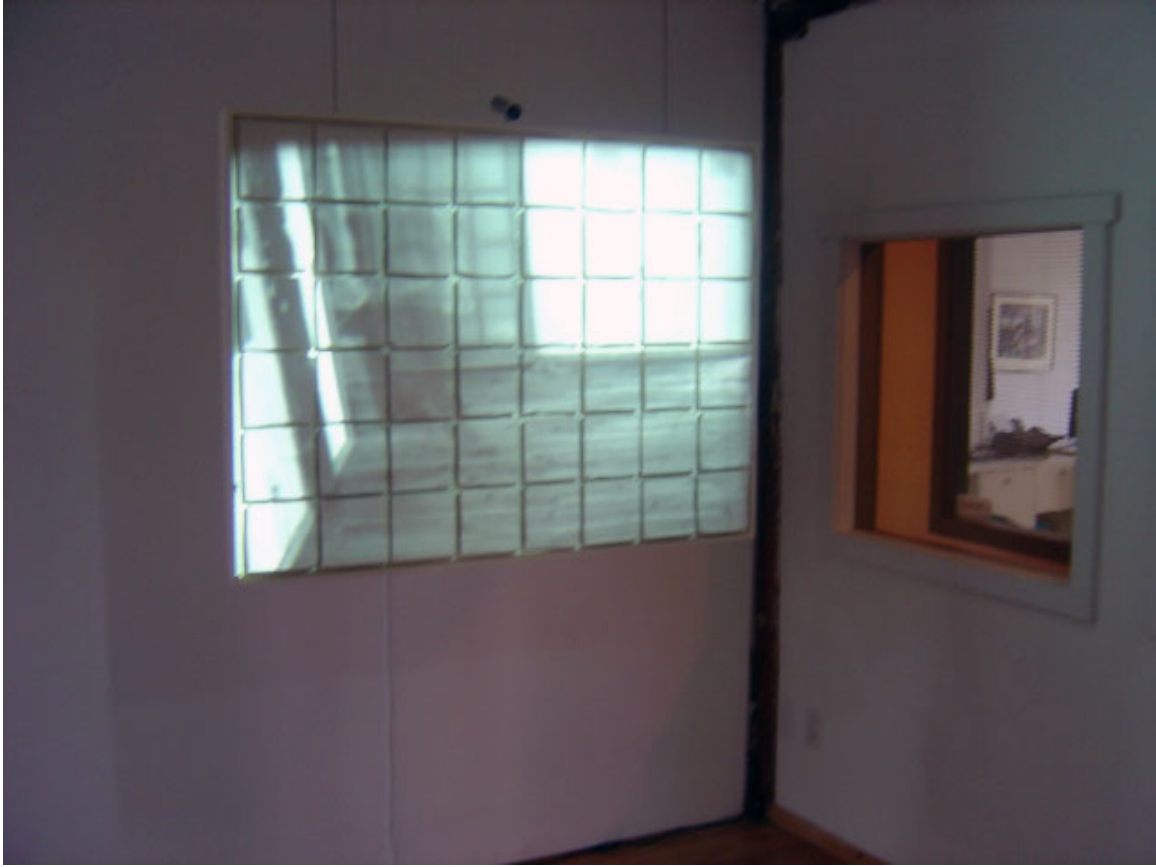Polyvoile, audio, motion sensors, computer, MAX software

Figure 5: *revelations: from the shadows*, 2006 (installation view)
bisque fired clay, web camera, video projection, computer, MAX and softVNS software

Figure 6: *revelations: from the shadows*, 2006 (installation view)
bisque fired clay, web camera, video projection, computer, MAX and softVNS software
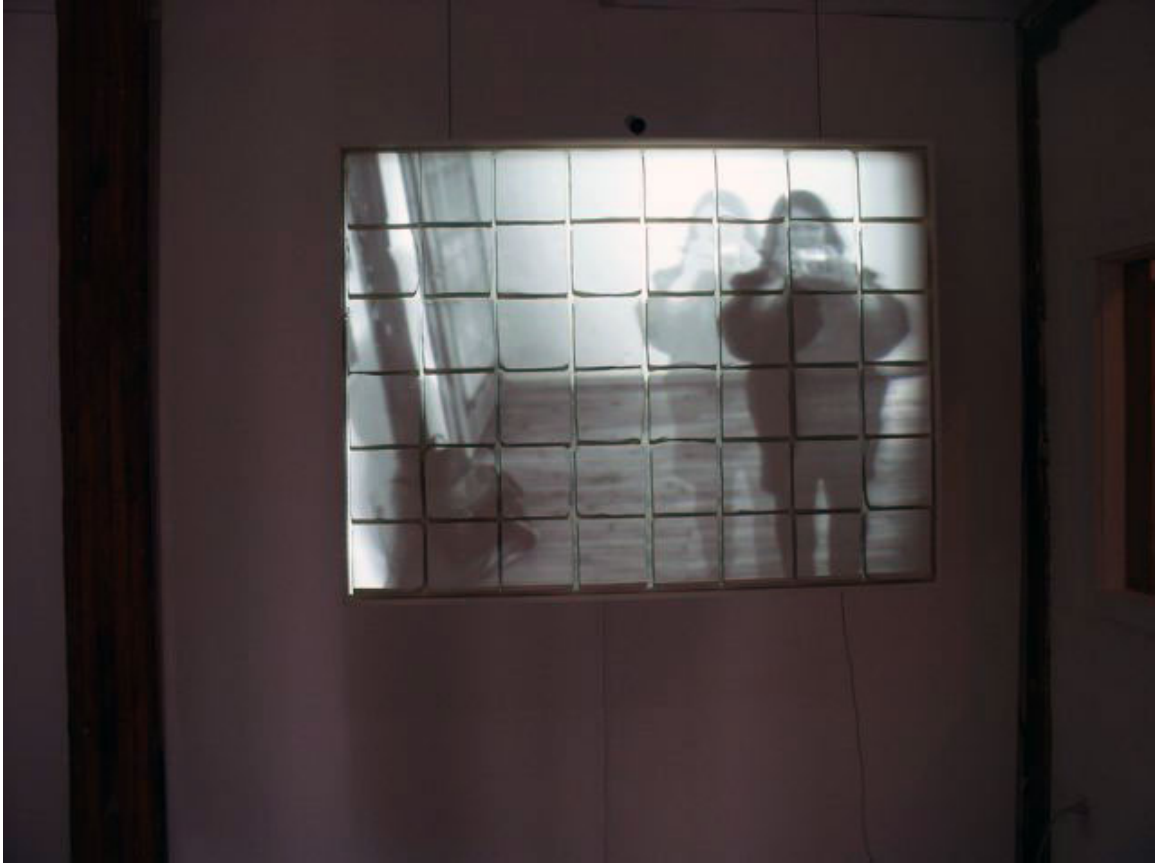
Figure 7: *revelations: from the shadows*, 2006 (with video projection)
bisque fired clay, web camera, video projection, computer, MAX and softVNS software

Figure 8: *revelations: from the shadows*, 2006 (detail of tiles)
bisque fired clay, web camera, video projection, computer, MAX and softVNS software

Figure 9: *Sheets of Time*, 2008 (installation view)
Handmade paper, web camera, video projection, computer, MAX/JITTER and softVNS
software

Figure 10: *Sheets of Time*, 2008 (installation view)
Handmade paper, web camera, video projection, computer, MAX/JITTER and softVNS software

Figure 11: *Sheets of Time*, 2008 (with video projection)
Handmade paper, web camera, video projection, computer, MAX/JITTER and softVNS software

Figure 12: *Sheets of Time*, 2008 (detail with video projection)
Handmade paper, web camera, video projection, computer, MAX/JITTER and softVNS software

Figure 13: *Sheets of Time*, 2008 (detail of paper)
Handmade paper, web camera, video projection, computer, MAX/JITTER and softVNS
software

Figure 14: *Sheets of Time*, 2008 (detail of paper)
Handmade paper, web camera, video projection, computer, MAX/JITTER and softVNS software

ENDNOTES

[1] Goldberg, RoseLee. <u>Performance, Live Art 1909 to the Present</u>. (1979). New York: Harry N. Abrams Incorporated. page 82.

[2] Shand, John. <u>Philosophy and Philosophers. An Introduction to Western Philosophy</u>. (1993) Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. page 234.

[3] Indyke, Dottie. <u>Dana Schutz, Charles Long, Don Ritter.</u> *ARTnews*, March 2006

[4] Spade, Paul Vincent. <u>Jean Paul Sartre's "Being and Nothingness</u>. <pvspade.com/Sartre/pdf/sartre2.pdf> [accessed September, 2005].

[5] **Computer Software used**: MAX/MSP/JITTER from Cycling'74. Cycling'74 started as a software company in 1997. MAX is an interactive programming environment for music, audio, and media. It allows interfacing between several external components. softVNS 2 is real time video processing and tracking software for Max developed and owned by David Rokeby.

[6] Corkran, F. Lee. "African Voices," <u>Work and Environment; Working in Clay</u>. < http://www.rit.edu/~africa/pottery/potteryPg2.shtml> [accessed September, 2005].

[7] <u>Canadian Art. Body Movies; interview Rafael Lozano-Hemmer.</u> (Winter 2002). Volume 19. Number 4. page 57.

[8] Morgan, Robert C. <u>Gary Hill.</u> (2000). Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press. page 140.

[9] Ross, David A., Sellars, Peter. <u>Bill Viola.</u> (1998). New York: The Whitney Museum of American Art. page 122.

[10] Ibid. page 62.

[11] London, Barbara. <u>Bill Viola: Installations and Videotapes</u> (1987). New York: The Museum of Modern Art. page 27.

[12] Barthes, Roland; translated by Richard Howard. <u>Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography</u>. (1981). New York: Hill and Wang. page 92.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alberro, Alexander; Stimson, Blake. (1999). <u>Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology.</u> Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Archer, Micheal. (2002). <u>Art Since 1960</u>. London: Thames and Hudson.

Ardenne, Paul; Beausse, Pascal; Goumarre, Laurent. (1999). <u>Contemporary Practices: Art As Experience</u>. Paris: Editions Dis Voir.

Balkema, Annette; Slager, Henk. (2000). <u>Screen-Based Art</u>. Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V.

Barthes, Roland; translated by Richard Howard. (1981). <u>Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography</u>. New York: Hill and Wang.

Benjamin, Andrew. (1993). <u>Installation Art</u>. Deerfield Beech, Florida: VCH Publishers

Bishop, Janet; Garrels, Gary; Weber, John. (1997). <u>Present Tense: Nine Artists in the Nineties</u>. San Francisco: Museum of Modern Art.

Bronson, AA., Gale, Peggy. (1979). <u>Performance by Artists</u>. Art Metropole and the artists/writers. Toronto.

<u>Canadian Art. Body Movies; interview Rafael Lozano-Hemmer.</u> (Winter 2002). Volume 19. Number 4.

Cancel, Luis, R. <u>The Second Emerging Expression Biennial: The Artist and the Computer</u>. (1987). New York: The Bronx Museum of the Arts.

Corkran, F. Lee. "African Voices," <u>Work and Environment; Working in Clay</u>.
< http://www.rit.edu/~africa/pottery/potteryPg2.shtml>

Courschesne, Luc. (2002). Montreal. <u>Experiential Art: A Case Study.</u>
http://www.din.umontreal.ca/courchesne/experientialart.
html#introduction#introduction.

Davies, Hugh (1997). <u>Blurring the Boundaries</u>. San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art.

De Oliveira, Nicholas, Oxley, Nicola, Petry, Michael. (1994). <u>Installation Art</u>. USA: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Durham, Meenakshi Gigi; Kellner, Douglas M. (2001) Media and Cultural Studies, Keyworks. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

During, Simon. (1999). The Cultural Studies Reader. New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Goldberg, RoseLee. Performance, Live Art 1909 to the Present. (1979). New York: Harry N. Abrams Incorporated.

Everett, Anna; Caldwell, John T. (2003). New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality. New York: Routledge.

Gordon, Douglas. (2002). What Have I Done. London: Hayward Gallery Publishing.

Grau, Oliver. (2003). Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Grynsztejn, Madeleine. (1995). About Place: Recent Art of the Americas. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago.

Hahne, Marille. (2003). Coded Characters. Media Art by Jill Scott. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers.

Hock, Beata. Installation Art. (1994). http://www.artpool.hu/Recenzio/Installation.html

Indyke, Dottie. Dana Schutz, Charles Long, Don Ritter. *ARTnews*, March 2006

Iverson, Margaret; Crimp, Douglas; Bhabha, Homi K. (1997). Mary Kelly. London: Phaidon Press Limited.

Lister, Martin; Dovey, Jon; Giddings, Seth; Grant, Iain; Kelly, Kieran. (2003). New Media: A Critical Introduction. New York: Routledge.

London, Barbara. (1987). Bill Viola: Installations and Videotapes New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

Lovejoy, Margot. (2004). Digital Currents: Art in the Electronic Age. New York: Routledge.

Manovich, Lev. (2001). The Language of New Media. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Monk, Philip. (2001). Double-Cross The Hollywood Films of Douglas Gordon. Toronto: The Power Plant and Art Gallery of York University.

Meyrowitz, Joshua. (1985). No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behaviour. New York. Oxford University Press.

Morgan. Robert (2000). <u>Gary Hill.</u> Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Naimark, Michael. (2003). <u>Design Research: Methods and Perspectives: Sensory Anomalies.</u> Cambridge, MA. The MIT Press. (http://www.naimark.net/writing/anomalies.html

Paul, Christiane. (2003). <u>Digital Art</u>. New York: Thames and Hudson world of art.

Paul, Christiane; Zhang Ga. (2004). Symposium: <u>"Negotiating Realities: New Media Art and the PostObject"</u> . http://www.chelseaartmuseum.org/projectroom/ 2004/passageofmirage/.

Ross, David A., Sellars, Peter. (1998). <u>Bill Viola.</u> New York: The Whitney Museum of American Art.

Shand, John.   (1993). <u>Philosophy and Philosophers. An Introduction to Western Philosophy</u>. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Spade, Paul Vincent. <u>Jean Paul Sartre's "Being and Nothingness</u>. <pvspade.com/Sartre/pdf/sartre2.pdf>

Vattimo, Gianni. (1992). <u>The Transparent Society</u>. Baltimore, Maryland. The Johns Hopkins University Press.