Documentary Polyptychs

Multi-Screen Documentary
on a Theme of Climate Change
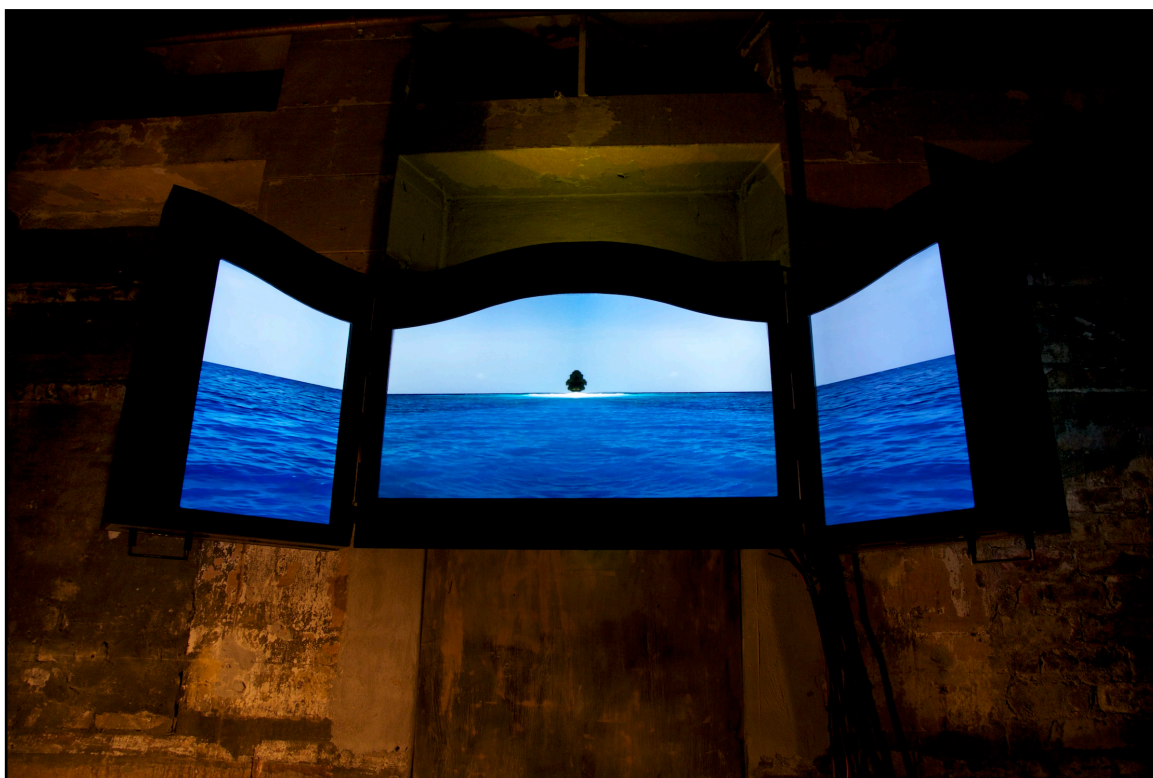
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Statement

This volume is presented as a record of the work undertaken for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney.

Acknowledgement

I'd like to express most grateful thanks to my truly excellent supervisor, Ryszard Dabek.

List of Illustrations

Abstract

This MFA explores how the problematic phenomenology of climate change might be approached by revisiting an ancient visual art form, the Early Renaissance polyptych.

The research paper posits the polyptych as a proleptic form of installation art, providing a historical overview and analysis of multi-channel forms up to contemporary expanded cinema, before narrowing its focus to documentary film & video installations. It proposes that principles of dialectical montage apply between spatialised screens and that, as a richly affective form, the relationship between screens coexisting within a single field of view might productively be considered using Deleuze's notion of the time-image crystal. Furthermore that the visitor, in becoming an 'editor' via bodily movement, might be positioned in a lineage to Vertov's kino-eye, thus becoming a *kinaesthetic eye*. The author uses Mark Boulos' *All That is Solid Melts Into Air* (2008) and Isaac Julien's *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010), two- and nine-channel works respectively, to discuss these ideas.

The 'unseen' nature of anthropogenic climate change poses particular challenges both for a culture that emphasises 'seeing is believing' and for documentary forms traditionally reliant on visible evidence. The creative work focuses on the phenomenon of sea level rise, and is presented in the form of a documentary polyptych with which the viewer physically engages. Without delivering a climate change polemic, the work explores crucial dissociations — of cause from effect, of today's action from tomorrow's result, of behaviour here from outcome there — through an open, affective form that replaces documentary's traditionally temporal strategies with spatialised montage.

More generally the paper positions the form amidst both the veritable renaissance of multi-channel video art and the proliferation of multiple screen devices throughout society. How might documentary's potential for creating meaning — and perhaps inspiring agency — change when it moves to multiple screens?

Introduction

As with any cultural history, cinema leaves behind it a vast trail of roads not taken and paths that petered out, often in combination with the rise and fall of certain philosophies. What if, for example, the moving image had been standardised within a *circular* frame; or if single-screen, fixed seat auditoria were considered anomalous whilst multi-screen installations became the norm for presenting and viewing moving images?

Today, digital screens are rapidly altering our lives, and our gaze is adjusting to their ubiquity. Simultaneously, multi-screen video installations are undergoing a renaissance as the proliferation of cheap recording and projection apparatuses combines with the curatorial desire to attract new audiences by remaking galleries' white-cube image. This research paper explores what happens when documentary screens 'leave the cinema' to become multiplied, polyptychal. My practical work meanwhile revives an art form over 500 years old, the Early Renaissance polyptych. Its rituals of viewing, its fragmentation and revelation of imagery, and its hitherto ignored promise of kinaesthetic engagement make it an area ripe for re-engagement.

Chapter One establishes a lineage of artworks which feature more than one screen or break free of the frame altogether. The rhetoric surrounding expanded cinema in the 1960s offers some indication of the utopianism embodied in such forms. I ask, when and why did these forms appear and disappear? How did artists engage their possibilities? And how does the visitor relate to a multi-screen work?

(Throughout the paper I employ Margaret Morse's term 'visitor' to connote the *engaged* viewing subject of the installation form in contradistinction to 'viewer' or 'spectator'.[1] And although I use the terms multi-screen and multi-channel more or less interchangeably, I acknowledge that a more encompassing phrase — though overly-wordy — might be 'screen reliant

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[1] Margaret Morse, *Virtualities : Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

installation' as Kate Mondloch retrospectively rebadges the genre in order to encompass the enormous range of materials that may constitute screens.[2])

Chapter One continues by dissecting the utopian promise of 'visitor-as-editor' in a multi-screen installation, as well as repurposing Eisenstein's theory of dialectical montage to address the situation in which shots operate under a logic of spatial coexistence rather than temporal replacement. (The Appendix further sketches a tentative taxonomy of relationships between coexistent screens.) Whilst acknowledging the difficulty of accounting for the role of 'affect', I propose that coexistent screens are not only rich in affective potential, but that the interval between screens may be the locus of Deleuze's fabled 'crystal image'. And last but not least I suggest that the multi-screen documentary form might widen Dziga Vertov's kino-eye to become the kinaesthetic eye, a state in which the visitor actively constructs meaning between multiple screens.

Chapter Two considers how one genre, documentary, changes when it moves from a cinematic or televisual context to exhibition as an installation. As a documentary filmmaker myself I explore the impact upon the traditional understanding of documentary meaning as something produced during the process of montage.

Chapter Three looks at the agency of documentary art in ecological issues, and particularly the limitations of reliance upon 'visible evidence' in this context. More generally I ask, how has our species come upon a predicament such as climate change?

> "Climate change is the issue of our day because it is trans-species, trans-global, and transpersonal in its potential impacts".[3]

Its geographical and temporal dimensions, its unseen processes and 'tipping points' of no return make climate change a uniquely challenging problem to

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[2] Kate Mondloch, *Screens : Viewing Media Installation Art*, Electronic Mediations (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[3] Peter White, "Coping with Climate Change" in Robert Bosnak and Jonathan Paul Marshall, *Depth Psychology, Disorder and Climate Change*, 1st ed. (Sydney: JungDownunder Books, 2009), 308.

comprehend, let alone address. To do so our senses must enlist our intelligence; yet cognition is not the same as emotional engagement. Thus there appears a valuable role for art to play, to offer a different kind of 'knowing'.

And so at a time when anthropogenic climate change is forcing us to question some of our society's fundamental philosophies, I propose a formalistic development — the documentary polyptych — to engage the peculiar phenomenology of anthropogenic climate change. A spatially disjointed form to explore the cognitive disconnections between the way we live our lives and the effects of our actions upon the environment. The resultant practical work will be exhibited for assessment in December 2013 and is dealt with in Chapter Four.

Lastly I should note that this paper does not claim exhaustiveness in any one of these areas, but rather aims to throw open areas for future research in a PhD.

1. Multi-Channel Images in Art History

1.1 Early Renaissance Polyptychs

The polyptych was an anachronism from the beginning. As a term, 'polyptych' appeared in 1859 in a text referring to the van Eyck brothers' *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (1432) discussed below. Its etymology is ancient Greek meaning something folded many times.[4][5] In their heyday, these works were known simply as 'paintings with doors'. Today, the Library of Congress catalogues them as 'panel paintings', although 'winged altarpieces' is another term.

Most western scholars look back to bi- and tripartite Roman writing tablets for polyptychs' origins: two or three waxed leaves joined together by detachable hinges, to protect the interior inscriptions during transportation.[6][7] There exist carved Byzantine polyptychs from the tenth century. Mediaeval Italy was whence polyptychal paintings first sprang in the Occident, but it was the Low Countries (today's Benelux) in the second half of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries where the form matured. Triptychs were the most common form of panel painting, with wings roughly half the width of the central panel in order to close over it. Small diptychs, featuring a saint on one panel and a portrait of the owner on the other became an element of *Devotio Moderna*, a new form of Christian devotion which emphasised

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[4] The Oxford English Dictionary Online, (Oxford: Oxford University Press,, 2000), http://ezproxy.library.usyd.edu.au/login?url=http://www.oed.com. Accessed 01 October 2013.

[5] There are disagreements over what constitutes a polyptych: some sources state four or more panels, whilst others simply define it as several. In the interests of inclusiveness, I favour the latter in this paper, since, lamentably, most polyptychs are displayed with only one side visible, most commonly as triptychs, denying the true wonder of their form.

[6] John Oliver Hand et al., *Prayers and Portraits : Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych* (Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 2006).; Mark Nash, "Electric Shadows," (London: Metro Pictures and Victoria Miro, 2010), 2.

[7] However, in a discussion with a Japanese scholar, I was intrigued to hear of boyōbu: Japanese folding screen paintings which date from the eighth century. Evidence suggests they originated in China during the Han Dynasty (206BC—220AD): images of them appear in tombs from that era. Significantly, such a folding screen was amongst the treasures Marco Polo is believed to have taken from China to Venice during his voyages (1275-1292), predating by only a decade or two the time of the earliest surviving paintings-with-doors in Italy by Duccio and others. At the time of writing I've found no evidence of any connection, yet the remarkable convergence of these dates may warrant further investigation.

individual, meditative worship. Thus their ritualised opening and closure symbolised an act of adoration and submission by their owner.

Figure 1. Hubert & Jan van Eyck, *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, 1432. Oil on panel, 350x461cm. Photographic replica in Vijd Chapel, open view, St Bravo Cathedral, Ghent.
Photo: Adam Sébire, Jan 2013.
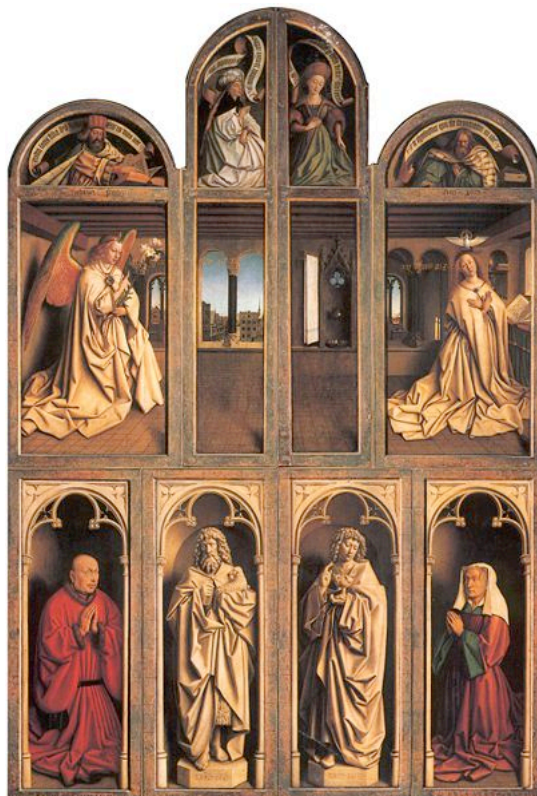
Figure 2. Hubert & Jan van Eyck, *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, 1432. Oil on panel, 350x223cm. Closed view, St Bravo Cathedral, Ghent. Reproduced from Closer to Van Eyck http://closertovaneyck.kikirpa.be/Accessed 31 October 2013.

The van Eyck brothers' *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (also known as *The Ghent Altarpiece* or *The Lamb of God,* 1432) has been the subject of 13 crimes against it according to church records, including seizure by Hitler's forces and the theft and ransom of two panels in 1934 (one of which has never been recovered). Never having studied art previously, I'd not heard of

this work until my Master's exchange beginning January 2013 in Ghent, Belgium. At our induction, an art lecturer told exchange students, in a heavy Flemish accent further modulated by a winter's cold, that we would be taken to see "domestic lamp". Needless to say, our expectations were low as we trudged through snow and ice — until we arrived at *The Mystic Lamb* in Ghent Cathedral.

Begun by Hubert van Eyck but completed by Jan after his death, this multi-hinged polyptych of 24 panels was commissioned by donors who are portrayed kneeling on the exterior panels. The panels above them are notable for the shadows painted on the floor of the room, which appear as if cast by light from the Vijd Chapel window — where it was housed till 1986 — hitting the frame of the polyptych. One of many interesting ideas inside the polyptych is the *trompe-l'œil* effect applied to Adam & Eve, accentuated by the angle created by opening the large wings in the rather-too-small space.

A common trait of Early Netherlandish paintings-with-doors is the grisaille exterior, the muted tones of which contrast spectacularly with the lush interiors. One might also consider the outer panels' role as that of an overture, building suspense before the curtain up — in this case the opening, the moment of revelation. Discussing the closed view of Duccio's *The Virgin & Child with Saints* (ca.1300) Bomford et al note that an "inner dark stripe" carefully painted on the central edges of the doors creates "the impression of an architectural niche, almost like a small chapel in which the worshipper could open the altarpiece for devotion." [8]

Since 1986 a full-size replica of *The Mystic Lamb* has been installed in the Vijd Chapel (figure 1). It is possible to open and close it when church attendants are not looking. The original — with the now replicated missing panel but excluding a predella that was destroyed — has been relocated to the baptistry behind temperature-controlled, bullet-proof glass and remains

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[8] David Bomford and National Gallery (Great Britain), *Italian Painting before 1400 : National Gallery, London, 29 November 1989-28 February 1990*, Art in the Making (London: National Gallery Publications, 1989), 90.

untouchable, denying this powerful visceral element in the interests of conservation.

Most church polyptychs of the Early Renaissance, as altarpieces, were opened only on religious holidays — in stark contrast to their display today, where their interiors are often the only parts visible. There is some speculation that *The Mystic Lamb* may have featured a mechanical opening device that also played music,[9] but it is more likely that a person was employed in this role, given the size, fragility and difficulty of manoeuvring the panels.

From personal experience, I can attest to the enormous affect associated with opening or closing such a work. If, on the level of personal worship, opening a small diptych was an act of adoration, then the affect of opening a much larger work, which requires careful coordination of one's whole body, is revelational. The movement of one's arms and hands, from the central axis of the body outwards, at close proximity to the work, is one of vulnerability, of establishing a personal connection with, and of opening oneself to the realm of experience, placing it on a par with cognition. It is an act, not of narrative revelation, like turning the pages of a book, but of unfolding the mystery within. One deserted winter's evening I surreptitiously tried opening and closing much smaller, 15th century polyptychs in the same Cathedral's crypt, each around 0.5m tall, but found most lacking affect due to their lightness, scale, build and action.

The hinged aspect of polyptychs is integral. A pendant painting may comprise two or more works simply designed to be hung adjacent, but a polyptych implies movement upon hinges. The most complicated polyptychs even offered differing permutations of panel openings while larger polyptychs sometimes featured a predella for support, hinged to open downwards to reveal a long additional panel.

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[9] Lotte Brand Philip, *The Ghent Altarpiece and the Art of Jan Van Eyck* (Princeton, N.J.,: Princeton University Press, 1971).

Early Renaissance polyptychs have long been associated with displaying mixed temporalities. In a triptych, scenes depicted in side panels often prefigure or postdate the events of the main panel; inside Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490-1510) lie visions of Eden and the Last Judgement on the left and right respectively, with the main theme evident in the centrepiece. Curiously, some Bosch figures appear to be moving from one panel to the next, from past, to present, to future. Offsetting any temporal displacement, an important part of many triptychs is the continuity of the background landscape across contiguous panels.

Many Early Netherlandish artists employ lunettes. Historically, lunettes — usually semicircular in shape — were a practical response to the problem of painting vaulted roof-spaces. In a polyptych, they suggest a unity and symmetry of composition, while their complementarity perhaps offers a sense of the natural resting position of the work, closed. Open, a polyptych or diptych sets up a system of harmonies and dissonances (Hand et al note that the gazes in some become aligned when the wings are angled to each other.)[10] Closed, it becomes a unified object, yet something more than 2D. Indeed, the polyptych sits somewhere between sculpture and painting. It is essentially an early form of site-specific installation art.

The placement of the altarpiece high up speaks of religious authority and power structures, yet is an essential element of the sublime as manifest in these works. Film scholars from Jean-Luc Godard on have associated looking up in reverence at the cinema screen with the same experience in a church, underpinning our relationship with the screen as institutional apparatus.

In the mid 1500s, mannerism, with its emphasis on tension over balance, largely displaced multi-panelled paintings. Canvas supplanted oak panels owing to cost and ease of use in larger compositions. Thus many paintings-with-doors became 'unhinged' if you will: broken up into their individual panels, either as pedants, or to be sold off separately. The form was considered old-fashioned.

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[10] Hand et al., *Prayers and Portraits : Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*, 5.

1.2 Modern Polyptychs

Artists have occasionally resurrected the polyptych, though with varying motives. Francis Bacon (1909-1992), who claimed to dream in image series, employs it; in Australia's best-know triptych, *The Pioneer* (1904), Frederick McCubbin uses the spatial form narratively, telling a story as much through increasingly deforested backgrounds as through the foreground characters.

Figure 3. Frederick McCubbin, *The Pioneer*, 1904. Oil on panel, 225×295.7cm. Exhibition view. National Gallery of Victoria. Reproduced from The Age, http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/celebration-of-australian-art-20130502-2ivw7.html Accessed 31 October 2013.

Figure 4. Bill Viola, *Ocean Without a Shore*, 2007. Colour HD video triptych, two 65" plasma screens, one 103" screen mounted vertically, six loudspeakers (three pairs stereo sound). Installation view, Church of San Gallo, Venice. Reproduced from http://www.jamescohan.com/artists/bill-viola/selected-works/ Photo: Thierry Bal, accessed 31 October 2013.
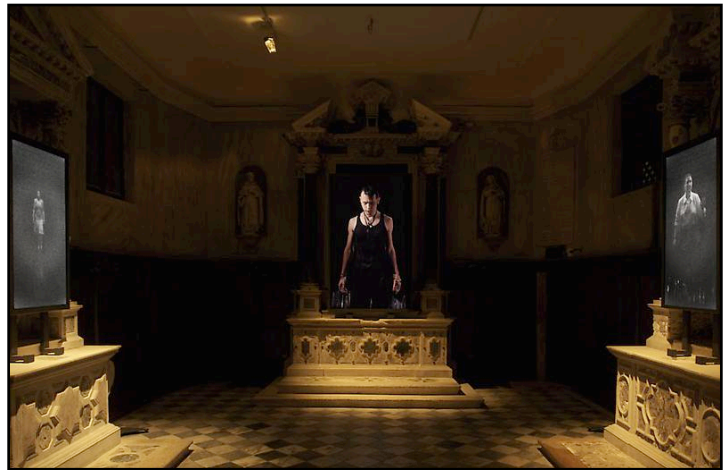
Figure 5. Bill Viola, *Dolorosa*, 2000. Colour video diptych on two freestanding vertical LCD flat panels framed and hinged together, 11 minute loop, 16x24.5 x5.75'', edition of 5. http://interartive.org/2011/06/bill_viola_mater_dolorosa/ Accessed 31 October 2013.

Among artists working in video Sam Taylor-Wood is notable for resurrecting the form of the predella in her *Soliloquy* series, displaying photographic panoramas which work in fantasied counterpoint to her main panel subject.

Bill Viola is the sole video artist I've encountered who addresses the '-ptych' (fold) component of polyptychal etymology.[11] Directly referring to triptychal altarpieces in several of his works, his *Ocean Without a Shore* (2007) taps religious art's sense of mystery, transfiguration and transmigration to other realms. Each of the three screens are displayed at right angles to the next, creating an ersatz 'fold' between them. Viola shot slow motion on both an ageing security camera and a high definition video camera using a mirror system. This allowed him to change from grainy black and white to colour at the cathartic moment when each life-size figure breaks through a liminal curtain of water, as if from the spirit realm to that of the living. On alternating screens each figure reacts differently, and the moment of vulnerability as their eyeline connects with the viewer's is deeply affective.

Viola's piece is immersive, sonically and visually despite large interstices of black between each of the three screens. Or more accurately, *because* of them; they open up a quasi-spiritual void into which the black of the moving image bleeds. Viola's *Dolorosa* (2000) meanwhile refers directly to Early Netherlandish diptychs. Though moving, his works do not invite interaction, and thus a crucial element of the form's affective vocabulary remains absent.

Reminiscent of the fate of many of the world's remaining Early Renaissance polyptychs — broken into their constituent panels to be sold — it is worth noting much of today's multi-screen video art is viewable only in single screen form, either as split-screen, or re-versioned for one channel — unless one happens upon it at an exhibition.

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[11] According to online documentation, artist Jean Michel Bruyère at ZKM in Germany is creating an interactive work he calls Polyptych with 8 "mobile leaves" (16 screens) moveable by visitors. However the project's webpage has remained dormant for over a year now: http://www.epidemic.net/en/art/bruyere/proj/polyptych.html (accessed 31 October 2013)

1.3 Multi-Channel Moving Images.

1.3.1 The Medium is the Message.

Any interface accentuates particular ways of understanding the world by the way it presents its ideas or data. Our *modes of seeing* are as important as what we see. Marshall McLuhan suggests that Renaissance perspective painting created an immobile, monocular viewing subject: a mode which persists in our present day visual culture, giving us the illusion of unmediated access to the world whilst pacifying us as 'spectators' under the dominant ideology.[12] On the same doorstep Robert Romanyshyn lays blame for our disengagement with the environment (which I discuss in Chapter Three). He argues that framed, perspectival representation paved the way for our estrangement from nature and our tendency to view it as if through a window.[13]

An awareness of underlying media codes and structures is thus critical to developing an engaged viewing subject. As multiple screen devices proliferate, the moving image installation — dubbed by Margaret Morse as "undoubtedly the most complex art form in contemporary culture"[14] — takes on a renewed relevance for its ability to engage with such structures. The creation of an engaged or empowered visitor becomes an integral element of the work:

> "Contemporary art, especially art that overtly engages publicly with sustainability and activism, appeals to its viewers to think for themselves and is premised on critical and creative thinking as ends in themselves".[15]

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[12] Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Massage*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York ; Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 52-3.

[13] see Robert D. Romanyshyn, *Technology as Symptom and Dream* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1989).

[14] Morse, *Virtualities : Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture*, introduction.

[15] Lesley Duxbury, "A Change in the Climate: New Interpretations and Perceptions of Climate Change through Artistic Interventions and Representations," (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia: Paper for School of Art, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, 2009), 8.

The way that visitor and screen(s) are situated can be as important as the content. Omer Fast's *The Casting* (2007) and Stan Douglas' *Hors-champs* (1992) are two works that project on both sides of suspended screens, foregrounding their physicality and exploding their workings.

Figure 6. Stan Douglas, *Hors-champs*, 1992. Two-channel video installation with stereo sound; 13:20 min., looped.Collection of the artist. Reproduced from http://www.david zwirner.com/exhibition/ hors-champs/ Accessed 31 October 2013.

In both, the audience can step 'behind the conventions' of cinema, to access another 'truth' so to speak, by walking around to the screens' obverse. Such works add kinaesthesia to the visual and aural experiences offered.

> "The underlying premise of the installation [form] appears to be that the audiovisual experience supplemented kinaesthetically can be a kind of learning, not with the mind alone, but with the body itself ... A conceptual world is made manifest as literal objects and images set in physical relation to each other."[16]

Indeed, I would go further to say that the visitor, in certain installations, may take on a *metaphorical* role, for example as explorer, investigator, or time-and-space traveller.

1.3.2 From Illusionism to Structuralism.

For the entire duration of the twentieth century, mainstream cinema never moved far from the single-screen/fixed seating/rectangular flat frontal projection technique that the Lumières designed to suit the Grand Café in

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[16] Morse, *Virtualities : Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture*, 169.

Paris in 1895. Its strategy involves dividing on- and off-screen space to create the "illusion ... of being physically present somewhere else" via a suspension of disbelief.[17]

As early as the 1920s, László Moholy-Nagy had proposed large spherical screens and simultaneous projections, even onto steam: *poly-cinema*.[18] Instead the inventive history of cinematic techniques and devices has focussed on maximising this verisimilitude and immersion within the confines of the single screen auditorium. Our present-day enthralment with the 3D moving image, widescreen and surround sound are examples of such. When our peripheral senses are filled, there is an uncanny sense presence. Works of ever-greater scale and image definition create a hyperrealism which 'absorbs' the viewer while the technics become increasingly inconspicuous. The utopian framelessness of virtual reality and holography beckon as means of 'representation' turn towards 'simulation'.

This pursuit of ever greater realism, resolution or immersion, if celebrated technologically, is often dismissed as an opiate of the masses by theorists who chide that by "peddling nearness"[19] it inspires passive consumption and negates criticality (that is, in everyone except theorists). Oliver Grau traces such polarised responses from the advent of the panorama, circa 1800, to today. Historically, he shows that if the majority of people celebrate a form's immersive illusionism a minority will identify a threat to both perception and consciousness.[20] And so against the strong currents washing the popular

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[17] Lev Manovich, writing at a time when most screens were 4:3, notes that this aspect ratio hasn't changed in 500 years. Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Leonardo. (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 2001), 99.
 It most likely derives from the visual angle of human eyesight, approximately 155° x 120°, yet today the cease-fire lines between cinematic and televisual aspects have been drawn at 16:9.

[18] Jeffrey Shaw and Peter Weibel, eds., *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary after Film* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003), 44. The reference to steam projections come from Alejandro Jodorowski interviewed in Doug Aitken and Noel Daniel, *Broken Screen : 26 Conversations with Doug Aitken : Expanding the Image, Breaking the Narrative* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2006), 187.

[19] Adam Kossoff, *On Terra Firma : Space, Place and the Moving Image* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr Müller, 2008), 12.

[20] Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art : From Illusion to Immersion*, Leonardo (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 62.

moving image towards illusionism today, it is a minority — installation artists — who attempt to swim in different directions, some paddling harder against the tide than others. Some respond by stripping the form back to reveal the apparatus and artifice involved; some embrace quasi-immersive forms for their experiential and affective strengths; others engage with the screen and surrounding space sculpturally, *fragmenting* audiovisual streams, drawing attention to the frame as a reflexive strategy, and beckoning the visitor to 'complete' the work. In common, these expanded forms of time-based image promise to allow us to see the world 'with new eyes', to open new forms of engagement.

1.3.3 Spatial vs. Temporal.

As the physical form of cinema changes, so too its internal logic of organisation. Multi-screen forms especially suggest a rebalancing of time and space, a shift apposite to our era in which simultaneity and juxtaposition reign and in which *spatial* modes of socio-analysis, long subordinate to historical analyses, are resurrected in concepts such as geopolitics and globalisation according to Edward Soja.[21]

In *The Language of New Media* (2001) Lev Manovich theorises the loss of these spatial modes in his account of the aesthetic and technological evolution of screen images from static (painting and photography), to moving, to real-time (surveillance), to interactive (computer screens). A Giotto fresco may represent a kind of frameless screen space, for example, wherein multiple events taking place at different times can be viewed "in a single glance … within a single pictorial space."[22] Such 'spatialised' modes of art — prevalent in European art for centuries — were marginalised by temporal modalities upon the arrival of the single screen moving image. Cinema, according to Manovich, shares the logic of the (contemporaneous) industrial assembly-line: the linear addition of elements to construct a sequential narrative. Asked what he had against narrative, expanded cinema

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[21] Edward Soja, quoted in Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 270.

[22] Ibid.

pioneer Malcolm Le Grice declared narrative equivalent to perspective: it immobilised spectatorial agency in order to present a coherent illusion to which there is but a single line of access.[23]

In multi-screen installations, repetitions, suspensions and broken spatio-temporal relationships "blast apart classical chronology" and narrative driven by cause and effect.[24] Structure becomes more rhizomatic, to borrow Deleuze & Guattari's term[25]; there are numerous entry- and exit-points to the work, and it becomes more like a database, unlike arborescent (tree-like) narrative structure of cinema. In tandem with the creation of the autonomous visitor, the authorial voice becomes decentred; the door to multiple perspectives is thrown open and the montage logic becomes "next to" rather than "next", placing the visitor in a spatio-temporal "meanwhile".[26]

1.3.4 Utopianism.

If this all sounds a little utopian, you haven't read Gene Youngblood's astonishing techno-utopian thesis from 1970, *Expanded Cinema*. By the last sentence, on page 419, one does not doubt for a moment his sincerity in predicting "heaven on earth" through expanded cinema. Youngblood critiques classical cinema for its policeman-like insistence on directing our eyes and for its false imposition of cause-and-effect narrative upon a world we experience in a more complex non-linear way. Expanded cinema by contrast facilitates "cosmic consciousness", allowing us to harness the possibilities of an era characterised by technological simultaneity. For Youngblood, overwhelmed senses are to be equated with expanding minds. The synaesthetic cinema that results is thus synergistic, greater than the sum of its parts.

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[23] Malcolm Le Grice, "Documentation of Malcolm Le Grice's Talk.," in *Narrative Exploration in Expanded Cinema* (BFI Southbank, London2008). http://www.rewind.ac.uk/expanded/Narrative/BFI_MLG_Talk_1.html

[24] Shaw and Weibel, *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary after Film*, 124.

[25] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004).

[26] Catherine Fowler, "Room for Experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eija Liisa Ahtila," *Screen* 45, no. 4 (2004): 339.

Youngblood was not the first multi-screen synaesthete to prophesies pictorial paradise. From Abel Gance, director of the three-screen *Napoléon* (1927):

> "...I invented the triple screen. And visual harmony became symphonic. I could project three separate but synchronised images on three screens arranged like a triptych and thus broaden considerably the field of our spiritual vision. Note, I say spiritual and not pictorial because it isn't the dimensions of the field of action that count, but the creation of visual harmonies, the transporting of the spectators imagination into a new and sublime world."[27] [28] [29]

Utopianism is also evident in the dome form of expanded cinema, which eschews the frame to draw upon deep-rooted responses, as artist Lynette Wallworth has observed.[30] Like American artists of the 1950s, she uses planetaria as affective spaces of immersion, contemplation and connection in her work exploring the fragile beauty of coral reefs, *Rekindling Venus* (2011).

> "[The dome's] enclosed round shape refers us back to the fundamental modern desire to construct a perfect self-sufficient utopia, whether visual (the nineteenth century panorama) or social."[31]

Many 1960s' expanded cinema movements favoured geodesic domes as a structure for superimpositional projections. In this form all compositional elements are equal, embodying ideals of openness, diversity and multiperspectivality. Inside, the subject was 'free' — although immobilised — to derive her or his own meanings and experiences from multiple pattern events in contrast to the univocal experience of the cinema.

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[27] Norman King, *Abel Gance : A Politics of Spectacle* (London: BFI Pub, 1984), 72-3.

[28] Abel Gance's claim to have invented the three-screen projection might have seemed questionable to anybody who saw Oskar Fischinger's highly abstract *Raumlichtkunst* (Space Light Art) (1926/2012) resurrected at the Whitney or Tate Modern recently.

[29] Gance saved the effect of the triptych for the final reel of his film. Sadly, distributors discarded the peripheral reels so it could be shown in standard cinematic release — a fate similar to many polyptychs, broken up for commercial reasons — and it was not seen in Polyvision again till a restored version screened in the USA in 1979, two years before Gance's death. See Ibid.

[30] "Interview with Lynette Wallworth," http://coralrekindlingvenus.com/about/interview-with-lynette-wallworth/. Accessed 31 October 2013.

[31] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 242.

> "Multiple projection environments became an important factor in the quest for a new imaging technology capable of articulating a new perception of the world."[32]

Not everybody perceived the world like members the Counterculture did though. If North American expanded cinema focused on 'liberation' of mind, body and image, much English and Australian expanded cinema tended to be less cosmic in its ideals and more anchored in structuralist critiques.

1.3.5 Decentred Authorship.

Manovich, Kinder, Morse et al suggest that all art is interactive in a number of ways. The viewer must complete an art work's representational "ellipses" says Manovich, from kinaesthetic appreciation of installation art to psychological comprehension of montage in film editing.[33] It's fair to assume that the more 'open' the structure of the work — more screens, for instance — the greater the potential variance of those interpretations.

In a multi-screen environment the viewer must make a choice of what to focus upon, necessitating the generative movement of body in relation to screens. This 'viewer-as-editor' paradigm is the cause for celebration amongst some theorists (if less so for underemployed editors) because it implies ethical decisions by the viewer and a shared authorship. The newfound 'freedom' of the viewer in a video installation is hardly comparable to unshackling Plato's Cave dwellers however; they are still stuck within a cave filled by the artists' choices. Significantly, but often overlooked, they don't get to become cinematographer or director.

> "The viewer's desire for agency is addressed but is channeled through a narrow set of interventions that are both expected and encouraged, short-circuiting the potential for an unruly, active, critical engagement

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[32] Peter Weibel, "Expanded Cinema, Video and Virtual Environments," in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary after Film*, ed. Jeffrey Shaw, Peter Weibel, and Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe. (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 2003), 117.

[33] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 71.

with the artwork on the viewer's terms, as part of a struggle for a place in the work."[34]

Insofar as the rhetoric surrounding decentred authorship in time-based art overlaps substantially with the promise of so-called 'interactive new media', limitations are not necessarily a bad thing; too much openness or randomness can lead to emptiness: "It is the completely unstructured openness of the interaction that causes the associative power of the images to remain inert" as if the artist "has abdicated the power of his own insight."[35]

Decentring the authorial voice — without abandoning it — can be a rich strategy for those artists who embrace it as a primary feature of the form. However, if the price of a link is context, as the old New Media adage has it, the price of the mobile viewer, hyperlinking their way through a gallery, is about the same. The visitor may arrive or leave at any time, creating their own beginnings and endings, as well as uncertainty about which screen they might be looking at at any one time. Such disruption creates a difficult space in which to maintain engagement. A "consumer is always right" ethos and the "distracted quality of fast-paced, media-saturated contemporary life" mitigate against the gallery as a subversive or indeed, reflective space, writes Skoller. [36] [37] However it has been argued that what is lost in terms of sustained attention is replaced by affect or epiphanic moments.[38] And it seems probable that galleries exhibitions might reach people who wouldn't otherwise commit to a full documentary screening.

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[34] Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards : Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 185.

[35] Skoller, but here discussing CD ROMs, in Ibid., 186.

[36] Ibid., 177., passim; also making a similar point is Mondloch, *Screens : Viewing Media Installation Art*, 54-5.

[37] Skoller notes that Michael Snow re-made *Wavelength,* calling it *WVLNT* (Wavelength for Those Who Don't Have the Time) (1967/2003, 15 mins, video, Canada).

[38] Catherine & Voci Fowler, Paola, "Brief Encounters: Theorizing Screen Attachments Outside the Movie Theatre," *Screening The Past* 32(2011). In theorising our "screen attachments" — relationship to new forms of screens — the authors propose that despite their fragmentation, moments of epiphanic attachment are possible, partly *due* to the distracted context of reception, not in spite of it.

Mondloch cheekily suggests that the different "temporal commitment" that an installation demands of the "ambulatory art viewer" is a reason for its popularity amongst institutions.[39] The institutional desire to become more 'public' meets the time-shifting, web-surfing viewer-as-consumer who demands an experience, who wants control, and who likes to window-shop. Again, on the flipside, only in the gallery, with its ties to durational performance art, could I find a home for my eight hour work *raise | retreat | rise* (2013 — detailed in Ch.8) or Douglas Gordon for his *24 Hour Psycho* (1993). These works do not rely upon the viewer watching the complete duration, rather their visualisation of its continuance after leaving.

1.3.6 The World's Fairs.

For a brief but heady period in the history of expanded documentary the world teetered on the brink of a multi-screen arms race. The testing grounds were the World's Fairs of the twentieth century. Here the superpowers were Czechoslovak, Canadian and American; the French having overreached themselves early on with Raoul Grimoin-Sanson's immersive ten-screen *Cinéorama* at the 1900 Paris Exposition, shut down after only four days by police fearful of a catastrophic fire. So it wasn't until 1958 in the Brussels World's Fair that the Czechoslovakians' 7-screen promotional documentary, *Pražské jaro* (*Prague Spring music festival*) set the cat among the pidgeons.[40] In Moscow the following year the USA responded with 2,200 images, some moving but most still, in Charles & Ray Eames' 7-screen *Glimpses of the USA*, housed in a geodesic dome designed by Buckminster Fuller. A more modest three-screen documentary *To Be Alive* stole the show at the 1964 New York World's Fair, which contained numerous multiscreen projections including *Glimpses of the USA* now on 14 screens at the IBM Pavilion. This one/three/seven-upmanship set the scene for a final showdown in Montréal, where for six months in 1967, 61 countries presented at an exposition still unsurpassed for its sheer scale and variety of expanded cinema.

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[39] Mondloch, *Screens : Viewing Media Installation Art*, 56.

[40] Jiří Voráč, "Emil Radok and the Taming of Demons," *Kinema* (undated), http://www.kinema.uwaterloo.ca/article.php?id=128&feature.

Expo 67 offered everything from 1- to 112-screen works (the mosaic-like *Diapolyecran* from Czechoslovakia). New architectures promised new sensory environments for cinema, whilst an overabundance of screens became "one of the expressive metaphors for this fantasy of modernity,"[41] writes Janine Marchessault in her fascinating account of the Canadian pavilion in Montréal, *Labyrinthe*. An extraordinary 'intermedia experience',

its first chamber contained two 38-foot portrait-orientation 70mm screens, viewed from balconies, and was joined by a maze of mirrors leading to another chamber, with more conventional seating but a cruciform screen arrangement of five 35mm projections conceived according to musical principles.[42]

Figure 7. Roman Kroitor, Colin Low, Hugh O'Connor, *Labyrinthe*, 1967 (1st chamber), 2x70mm film projections. Reproduced from Labyrinth, http://www.westland.net/expo67/map-docs/labyrinth.htm accessed 31 Oct 2013.

Simultaneity was a key concept underlying *Labyrinthe*. Marshall McLuhan, who had visited it, later noted:

> "Multi-screen projection tends to end the storyline, as the symbolist poem ends narrative in verse. That is, multiple screen in creating a simultaneous syntax eliminates the literary medium from film."[43]

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[41] Janine Marchessault, "Living Space: The New Media City of Expo 67," in *Media in Transition 6: Stone and Papyrus; Storage and Transmission* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA 2009), 31.

[42] Ibid.

[43] McLuhan and Fiore, *The Medium Is the Massage*, 24.

Whilst it's true that many multi-screen works rely on a database-like structure, narrative may remain present, as a work like *Ten Thousand Waves*, discussed below, shows.

1.3.7 Decline.

Not all multi-screen activity disappeared as dramatically as Cinéorama; indeed it's difficult to pinpoint any one factor to explain why the momentum of 60s expanded cinema was lost. Economic and technological limitations of 16mm film? Or did the 'empowered' viewer just run out of batteries and yearn to identify narratively with the viewpoint of the single camera once more? *Labyrinthe*'s creators, Roman Kroitor & Colin Low, believed they were developing a revolutionary new medium. [44] Kroitor founded the Multiscreen Corporation soon after Expo closed, but eventually chose the path of a single large image, founding the IMAX Corporation in 1979 (according to one source, because it was "more visually arresting" — more immersive? — than multiple screens). [45] Perhaps it was all part of the idealistic 60s trumped by more conservative instincts in the 70s and 80s? Peter Weibel attributes the "abrupt end to the development of expanded cinematic forms and video art" to the market-led rise of figurative painting in the 1980s. [46] Yet this seems odd as expanded cinema largely resisted commodification, until very recently.

1.3.8 Ten Thousand Waves.

If technological feasibility played any role in screen installation art's languishment, the form received succour from developments in the mid 1990s. Handycams, DVDs and video projectors suddenly enabled installations of greater complexity and scale than had been possible with 16mm film technology. It is not difficult to view Isaac Julien's extraordinary 9-screen work *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010) as emblematic of the contemporary

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[44] Marchessault, "Living Space: The New Media City of Expo 67," 41.

[45] William Uricchio, "Moments of Innovation: When Documentary and Technology Converge," MIT Open Documentary Lab and IDFA DocLab http://momentsofinnovation.mit.edu/. Accessed 31 October 2013.

[46] Weibel, "Expanded Cinema, Video and Virtual Environments," 119.

multi-screen renaissance that ensued. Indeed, the number of screens employed by Julien — a self-confessed "scopophile" — has been increasing incrementally, from just two each in *Trussed* and *Vagabondia* in 2000[47]. Yet his extraordinary skill means it never feels like excess for excess' sake.

An artwork of extraordinary beauty and complexity, *Ten Thousand Waves* weaves a story spanning oceans, centuries and mythologies across nine screens, mixing both documentary and fictional elements. At its world première at the Biennale of Sydney in 2010 it stood in marked formal contrast to the other nonaptych there, AES+F's *The Feast of Trimalchio* (2009). The latter creates a quasi-immersive, hyperreal world with its 360° projections in three groups of three. In contrast, Julien's work explores its themes by *fragmenting* its elements across screens: its imagery, sound, narrative, and coverage of scenes.

Figure 8. Isaac Julien, *Ten Thousand Waves*, 2010. 9 channel 35mm film projected as colour HD video with 9.2 surround sound. Reproduced from Huma3, courtesy Galería Helga de Alvear http://www.huma3.com/huma3-eng-reviews-id-588.html accessed 31 October 2013.

In a large, blackened room, the nine translucent screens are arranged in a spatialised orbit. We can view any screen from either side, but no one position allows a complete overview, frustrating panopticians and confounding any lingering post-Enlightenment desire to see and know all.

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[47] Nash, "Electric Shadows."

Some visitors perambulate, others stand at a location that simultaneously offers seven or eight screens at oblique angles. During the weekday morning I spend at Munich's Museum Brandhorst installation of the work, the dozen or so viewers generally hold their standing positions; those who move seem conscious of accidentally casting a shadow. One or two sit on the floor. Most are silent even if in company; few stay even half its 49-minute duration.[48]

As in Mike Figgis' *Timecode* (2000) — discussed later — the work begins with audio over black screens, establishing it as the guiding element. Here though it's a documentary moment, a telephone call to Lancashire constabulary in 2004 to report the imminent drowning of Chinese immigrant cockle-pickers beneath the incoming tide.

Each of the nine video channels has its own co-located audio channel. Sound is an indispensable part of the installation's affect, seemingly coming from all directions. When an image appears on a screen it is often heralded by audio from the associated speaker. A drum, a breath, an atmos; it is enough to provide the audience with a sense that this new screen is moving us forward, as opposed to simply layering the existing montage of a scene. The soundtrack is thus working not only to *support* the visuals, but to *drive* the multiplicity of images and help the viewer make sense of them. Audio provides another layer of sense data that works with or against the images to offer meaning.

Julien's screens do not overtly strive for immersion nor do they pretend to maintain any fixed relationship to one another. Moments of disjunctive montage between screens — we might also refer to them as *discontinuities* or *irrational intervals* — abound (the flying goddess Mazu heralded by the sound of a police rescue helicopter, for example) prompt the visitor to make connections. Using my taxonomy of montage strategies between coexistent

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[48] Julien's installation comprised one room when shown in Munich and Sydney, but was distributed across three rooms in Helsinki. For the Venice Film Festival, Julien "re-versioned" it as a 55-minute single-screen film entitled A Better Life (2010). And the final scene, in which a Chinese calligraphic artist paints large ideograms on an transparent pane of glass, is selling in an edition of 2,000 on the new s[edition] video art webstore http://www.seditionart.com/ Various galleries around the world sell his large format stills from the work. A comparison of editing strategies for the various versions would be fascinating.

screens (see Appendix), one might here identify examples of what I call 'screen correspondences' by:

> *repetition* (e.g. CGI waves on multiple screens)
> *translation* (green-screen studio scenes juxtaposed with the
> > composited shot)
>
> *simultaneity* (multiple cameras shooting 1930s Shanghai recreations)
> *coverage* (labourers walking along a river)
> *dialectics* (helicopter audio with Mazu flying)
> *alternation* (all screens go blank, replaced by just one or two at a time)
> *graphicality* (screens show the same green chromakey background)
> *commonality* (Mazu flies outside a contemporary Shanghai skyscraper
> > on some screens; over a timeless landscape on others)

Like a good video compression algorithm, Julien and his editor Adam Finch manage informational redundancy effectively. Four screens showing the same waves clearly don't require viewer attention to each individually, and consequently they can build affect as pattern events without detracting from visually dissimilar shots or voiceover texts that move the work's ideas forward.

> "Isaac's multi-screen method dramatically increases our 'perceptual density.' What is more important to note is that this kind of multi-screen, chaotic visual scenario is the typical sensory condition of our daily lives, while it is the fixed viewpoint of the cinema that is highly abnormal and institutionalised."[49]

Julien — who thinks of his role as that of bricoleur[50] — occasionally embraces visual overload outright, with all nine screens active and shots alternating at a rate of one every three seconds, though this is reserved to reinforce ideas involving scale, such as China's economic boom. And when he does, it is

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[49] Gao Shiming, ""Inextricable Entanglements"," in *Ten Thousand Waves : Isaac Julien* (London: Victoria Miro Gallery, 2010).

[50] Andrew Maerkle, "Isaac Julien: Not Global, Trans-Local," *Art-It Asia*, http://www.art-it.asia/u/admin_ed_feature_e/n6fMcR3eJU52sQuiTPqF. Accessed 11 October 2013.

almost always with a proliferation of largely *static* shots that can be acknowledged briefly but with a sense of completeness.

Reflexive strategies abound: we see clapperboards, green screens, and in the scenes set in 1930s Shanghai, Julien's three crews, hovering delicately over their dollies, getting in each other's shots, shots that deliberately cross the line — if 'the line' could even be said to exist in such a formation.

Fowler identifies "waves" of images and sounds flowing between screens, which push and pull viewers, occasionally washing up elements of Chinese visual history.[51] Julien calls this spatialised editing "parallel montage" and sees its function as "choreographing" the visitor and their gaze around an architectural space.[52]

Celebrating the installation form's mobile visitor, Friedberg, Païni[53] et al suggest we're witnessing the unexpected return of Baudelaire's flâneur while both Morse[54] and Kinder[55] suggest that the visitor becomes a performer on a stage. Adam Kossoff inverts Manovich's understanding of 'spatial montage' to suggest it is the *intervals between screens* (rather than their contents) which propel visitors from one to the other.[56] However, some such works feature contiguous screens and cannot satisfactorily be explained in this manner.

Fowler & Voci suggest that it is *Ten Thousand Waves* format — its spatialisation; its lack of linear narrative; problems of "wholeness" (one can never say one has experienced it exactly as the next person did); and its

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[51] Fowler, "Brief Encounters: Theorizing Screen Attachments Outside the Movie Theatre."

[52] Of course, parallel editing has been around since DW Griffith. What makes the Julien/Finch method different is that it's primarily implemented spatially across multiple screens, rather than temporally.

[53] Dominique Païni, quoted in Mondloch, *Screens : Viewing Media Installation Art*, 55.

[54] Morse, *Virtualities : Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture*. (passim)

[55] Marsha Kinder, "Hot Spots, Avatars, and Narrative Fields Forever: Buñuel's Legacy for New Digital Media and Interactive Database Narrative," *Film Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (Summer 2002) (2002): 4,6.

[56] Kossoff, *On Terra Firma : Space, Place and the Moving Image*, 22., passim.

potentially distracted modes of reception — that make it difficult for classical film theory to approach.[57] For his part, Julien acknowledges:

> "These formal elements are just as important as the other themes but are seldom discussed by critics, perhaps because it is easier to talk about post-coloniality."[58]

1.3.9 Split-screen vs. Multi-screen.

In order to understand how the polyptychal form might sit within expanded cinema, we must consider the differences not just between paintings and screens, but between multi-screen and split-screen. Both are a manipulation of cinematic space, but multi-screen is a strategy of multiplication while split-screen rests on division.[59] As such, split screen requires a large screen to begin with, which may explain its explosion in 1960s Cinemascope films such as *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968) as well as its resurrection in television series like *24* (2001-) as domestic flat-screen TVs continue to grow in size.

Questerbert suggests that "full-screen projection is a token of stability, of rationalism, of universalism, of humanism, of identification."[60] Perhaps for this reason documentary film has only rarely ventured into split screen, for example Vertov's *Man with the Movie Camera* (1929), Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock* (1970) and my own *Wild Swans* (2009), figure 9.

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[57] Fowler, "Brief Encounters: Theorizing Screen Attachments Outside the Movie Theatre."

[58] Maerkle, "Isaac Julien: Not Global, Trans-Local".

[59] As if to test the tenuous borders of the two forms, Harun Farocki's *Parallel* (2012, 2-channel video) was presented at Argos Brussels earlier this year as a single HD projection on a wide 8:3 strip of white paint on an otherwise black wall. This format allowed for two 4:3 images to be presented side-by-side, beamed by one 16:9 projector. Whilst the motivation seemed mostly expedience, it was an interesting venture into the no-man's-land between split- & multi-screen.

[60] Marie Christine Questerbert, "From Split-Screen to Multi-Screen: The Heritage," in *Du Split-Screen Au Multi-Screen : La Narration Vidéo-Filmique Spatialement Distribuée*, ed. Marcin Sobieszczanski and Céline Masoni Lacroix (Bern ; New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 261.
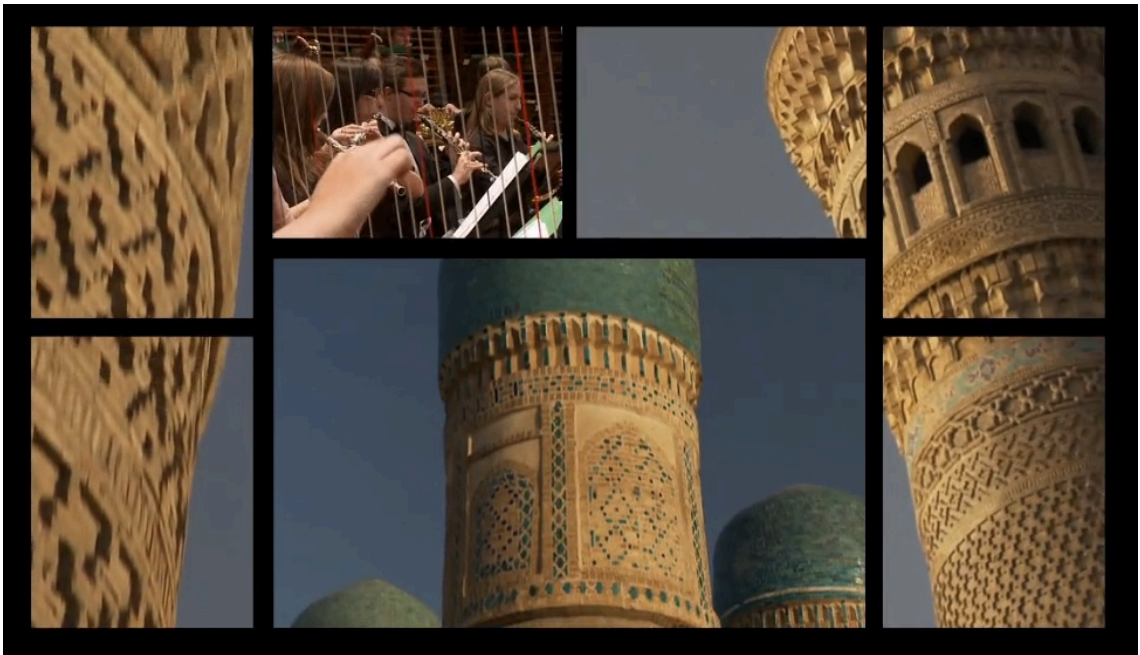
Figure 9. Adam Sébire, *Wild Swans*, 2009. HD video, 25'01''. SBS Television.

Figure 10. Victor Kossakovsky, *¡Vivan Las Antipodas!*, 2011. HD, 108 mins. Reproduced from aVoire aLire http://www.avoir-alire.com/vivan-las-antipodas-le-documentaire-qui-nous-fait-tourner-la-tete-critique accessed 31 October 2013.

Figure 11. Mike Figgis, *Timecode*, 2000. Reproduced from New Horizons IFF, http://www.nowehoryzonty.pl/aktualnosci.do?rss=true&lang=en&id=392 accessed 31 October 2013.

Eija-Liisa Ahtila critiques split-screen as a gimmick, lacking the physicality of the installation space where "the viewer uses their senses to make the meaning out of ... corresponding things."[61] Yet visceral sense is exactly what we rely upon when viewing Victor Kossakovsky's highly sophisticated version of split screen: *¡Vivan las Antipodas!* (2011) deploys the most extraordinary 180° rotational camera effect, combined with formal match-shots, to connect one documentary location to the next. For example, a dead whale on a New Zealand beach resembles a massive rock in its antipodes, Spain (figure 10). The discourse is of simultaneity and interconnection, but more fundamentally the split stands in for the earth's crust and works spatially to flip us across the planet.

More commonly split-screen is used to develop narrative tension through simultaneous (parallel) action. Figgis' celebrated feature film *Timecode* (figure 11) is a four-way split of four cameras, each running 92 minutes simultaneously. The epiphanic high point of the film is the unexpected convergence of four different facial closeups in all four quadrants, combined with our realisation that each character is present in the same room at the same moment.[62] It is a fascinating example of both Eisenstein's 'conflict within a shot' and 'conflict between shots'. Below, I would like to suggest that Eisenstein's principles of montage exist in both split- and multi-screen screen forms.

1.4 Montage, Affect and Deleuze's Time Image.

If split screen limits itself to the space within a screen's boundaries, multi-screen can work with the 3D space surrounding it, and with the sculptural or

[61] Chris Darke, "Split Screen: Finnish Artist Film-Maker Eije-Liisa Ahtila in Conversation," *Vertigo* 2, no. 3 (2002).

[62] Figgis notes that his audiences were "sitting up" attentive, "worried that they were missing something. Their eye movements were up and down, not just on one place... a kind of attention high... It was fascinating to observe that if you took the linear edit out, rather than decreasing attention, it actually increased attention." Aitken and Daniel, *Broken Screen : 26 Conversations with Doug Aitken : Expanding the Image, Breaking the Narrative*, 143.

In his director's commentary on the *Timecode* DVD (Screen Gems edition, 2000) Figgis further suggests that when working with multiple moving images scheduling the events and guiding the audience to them is important in order to avoid information overload. Of course, one must remember he is working with narrative forms.

architectural qualities of the screen.   Montage becomes physicalised;[63] in an installation one might even walk through an entire film.

1.4.1 Montage.

Montage can take place in different dimensions. The two main types of montage Lev Manovich identifies are temporal montage, the most common form in single-screen cinema to date, and what he calls 'spatial montage', where "separate realities form contingent parts of a single image".[64] Examples of cinema privileging spatial structure can be found in Figgis' *Timecode,* Peter Greenaway's *Pillow Book* (1996), some digitally composited films, and certain expanded cinema works. Manovich like many theorists reserves special mention for superimposed images due to their ability to form composites. Indeed Stan Brakhage's technique of long superimpositions between shots across multiple channels have been called "the closest cinema has come to the Joycean text".[65] Peter Weibel suggests that the value of a superimposed image is "replaced by the value of the image-gestalt or image-field" ie. the whole is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.[66] I believe this is similar to how we can approach an understanding of multi-screen works.

Montage across spaces where screens are physically separated is a combination of the editing strategy, the physical characteristics of the installation plus the visitor's degree of engagement. The logic becomes primarily one of "coexistence" of images rather than their sequential replacement.[67]

> "The framework offered by the multi-screen gallery films ... is not that of 'what happens next', in which the main reference points are 'before'

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[63] The possibilities of 3D split screen will not be considered here.

[64] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 140.

[65] Gene Youngblood, "Cinema and the Code," in *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary after Film*, ed. Jeffrey Shaw, Peter Weibel, and Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe. (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 2003), 158.

[66] Peter Weibel, "Expanded Cinema, Video and Virtual Environments," ibid., 160.

[67] Manovich (2001) uses the term 'coexistence' to refer to multiple windows on a computer display, but does not discuss multi-screen installations in his book.

and 'after', but one which is governed by a dialogue between images, inviting comparative states such as symmetry, filiation, and alternation and analysis of binaries, opposites or commonalities."[68]

Classical cinema's 'suspension of disbelief' relies upon accepted codes: for example, a dissolve is understood to imply a temporal jump. In multiple screens, I would argue there is as yet no established code, rendering images' temporal relationships largely speculative and malleable. Some theorists (Fowler (2004), Kossoff, Renov (2007)), prefer to interrogate multiple screens via Maya Deren's idea of 'vertical time'. For Deren, poetry springs from a 'vertical' investigation of a moment and its qualities.[69]

"In what is called a horizontal development the logic is a logic of actions. In a vertical development it is a logic of a central emotion or idea..."[70]

She manifests this verticality in her films via repetition and reversal. Multi-screen works can do the same spatially.

1.4.2 Eisenstein.

I believe the operation of spatial montage can be closely related to Eisenstein's formalistic principles. Kuleshov's experiments demonstrated an audience's tendency to read meaning *across* temporally consecutive shots, providing the foundation for continuity editing. Eisenstein's dialectical montage by contrast relies upon a visual thesis brought into collision (via montage) with its antithesis, producing a synthesis in the viewer's consciousness. A famous example is his juxtaposition of shots of workers being gunned down with shots of slaughtered animals in *Strike* (1925).

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[68] (Fowler, "Room for Experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eija Liisa Ahtila," 336.

[69] Ibid., 328.

[70] Maya Deren, quoted in Kossoff, *On Terra Firma : Space, Place and the Moving Image*, 99.

So how might Eisenstein's theory be applied across multiple screens, where the montage takes place spatially instead of just temporally? Although dealing only with single screen, Eisenstein did in fact take spatiality into account:

> "Conflict within a thesis (an abstract idea) … forms itself spatially in the conflict within the shot — and explodes … in montage-conflict among the separate shots."[71]

Furthermore, Eisenstein believed that "each sequential element is perceived not next to the other, but on top of the other". Dialectically, the images synthesise a new meaning or concept evident in neither the thesis shot nor its antithesis alone. According to Eisenstein, we find the following types of conflict *within* a shot:[72]

- Graphic
- Planar
- Volumetric
- Spatial
- Light/dark
- Tempo
- between matter and viewpoint
   (e.g. a camera angle that distorts space)
- between an object and its spatial nature
   (e.g. optical distortion)
- between an event and its temporal nature
   (e.g. slow- or stop-motion)
- between the optical complex and a different sphere
   (e.g. counterpoint of image with audio)

In a multi-screen context, I propose that these types of conflict may *also* be found when multiple screens can be seen within the same field of view — for humans, approximately 155° x 120°.

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[71] Sergei Eisenstein and Jay Leyda, *Film Form; Essays in Film Theory* (London: D. Dobson, 1949).

[72] Ibid.

Eisenstein's types of montage *between* shots are:-
- Metric (length of a shot)
- Rhythmic (movement within a frame; taking into account content, unlike metric)
- Tonal
- Overtonal (synthesised from the work's dominant tone, meter and rhythm).
- Intellectual (a combination of all the above, for example a synecdoche, working on a 'higher nerve centre' than that which is stimulated by rhythmic editing.)

I believe these types of montage, with the exception of metric montage, exist not only *within* each visual channel, but may also be experienced *between* multi-channel installation screens regardless of whether or not they can be apprehended within the same field of view.

1.4.3 Affect.

Let us take Mark Boulos' work *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (2008, 2 HD screens with back-projection, HDV, sound, 30'00") as an example which offers a form of spatialised dialectical montage but also works on the level of affect. On one screen we see traders speculating on oil futures at the former Chicago Mercantile Exchange; on the other rebels in the Nigerian Delta prepare to attack a Western oil refinery built on their appropriated lands. It is not a simple dichotomy of exploiters and exploited. Not only are the latter are fighting back, but both are quite evidently worshipping invisible deities through their respective rituals: in one, the market; in the other, spirits believed to confer bullet-proof status.

In the 2008 Biennale of Sydney, the screens were arranged in a detached V-shape, an angle of maybe 120°. However, when I saw it in Glasgow a year later, it was in a larger room, projected upon opposing walls, facing each other. On the level of personal response, the former created an overwhelming affect. The *oppositional* screens however circumvented simultaneous viewing, creating a strong intellectual response, but lacking the

same affect I'd experienced (although this may be partly attributable to it being a second viewing for me).

Figure 12. Mark Boulos, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 2008. Two-channel video (colour, sound), 15 min. 'Oppositional' view. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Diana Stigter, Amsterdam. © 2012 Mark Boulos

When two (or more) screens are situated *oppositionally* to each other as an either/or proposition (figure 12), dialectical montage from one screen to the other is usually dependent the viewer apprehending both images consecutively via a bodily pan, comparing one's 'recollection' (to borrow Husserl's term)[73] of one screen to one's subsequent perception of the other. In this circumstance, Eisenstein's "montage between shots" comes into play.

Figure 13. Mark Boulos, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, 2008. Production still illustrating a 'coexistent' view.[74] Courtesy the artist and Galerie Diana Stigter, Amsterdam.

Now, let us assume that at least two screens are both viewable in the same field of view. With these *coexistent* screens (figure 13), the viewer may

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[73] Husserl's phenomenology is very briefly outlined in Daniel Birnbaum, "Crystals," in *Memory*, ed. Ian Farr, *Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel Gallery Ventures Limited, 2012), 139.

[74] I am unable to source images of the installation at Cockatoo Island in Sydney, and so fig. 13 presents the two screens adjacent. The result remains similar though: both screens may be apprehended simultaneously.

choose to perceive more than one screen simultaneously as a kind of pattern event where their relationship to each other speaks foremost on the level of similarity or difference. Eisenstein's theory of "conflict within a shot" applies both within each screen *and* between them. In figure 13, even lacking audio and motion, we can find a number of such conflicts including, most obviously, volumetric conflict between the multitude of traders and the lone rebel.

These coexistent screens thus function analogous to the multi-dimensional possibilities of sonic arts: as with sounds, more than one may be perceived simultaneously, but with skill might be merged to create unison, dissonance, harmony, or counterpoint.[75] (Indeed if each screen is considered a perspective, a voice, then we might even consider a screen polyptych such as I propose to be *polyphonic*.)

I would argue that a *coexistent* spatialisation situates the screens as *coefficients* to each other, multiplying the *affect* of the images — the way they work upon our mind and body alike. This often occurs at the expense of the *dialectical effect*, since the shots do not 'explode' while they are in a state of co-presence. To reiterate: oppositional screens work more dialectically, as between shots in Eisenstein's theory, while coexistent screens may exhibit the conflicts he identified 'within a shot' — which in turn amplifies their affective potential.

In order to account for the affect we experience in multi-screen installations I would like to draw upon Gilles Deleuze's notion of the crystalline.

1.4.4 The Time-Image Crystal.

Deleuze's conception of "time-images" involves particular types of moving image which, brought together, "crystallise" in the mind of the viewer, allowing them to perceive the temporal structure theorised by Henri Bergson

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[75] It's no accident that trumpeter Mike Figgis used musical staves to notate the action for his *Timecode* (2000); multi-screen editing is closely related to the art of musical arrangement.

in which the past co-exists with the present.[76] I would like to draw upon Dyrk Ashton's interpretation of Deleuze to suggest that spatial montage of images may produce the crystal-image; indeed I propose that the multi-screen form is inherently a rich vein of such crystals, since they originate within the generative affect of time-image "discontinuities".

Moving images, says Ashton, are at their most powerful when they play with "absolute discontinuities" that do not make sense in the sensory-motor schema (for example, reflections, or events in two clearly different locations, montaged as if one). Through their discontinuity they offer insights into the nature of time and also "the possibility of alternative ways of perceiving, thinking, and even feeling, that is different from our everyday, habitual, sensory-motor existence."[77]

Deleuze does not insist that discontinuities in the crystalline regime be perceived solely in the temporal dimension. I would argue time-image discontinuities may also exist *spatially, between multiple screens*.

Between one such shot and the next forms a crystalline interval, according to Deleuze. In the crystalline "the common sense perception or understanding of things is suspended."[78] The parts do not add up to the whole because they exceed the experience of the sensory-motor schema. The connection between the images opens up, our experience becomes disrupted, and our perception moves from the sensory-motor towards the *intuitive* to fill the vacuum that is created, to make sense of it.

Thus for Ashton, affect lies "beyond the sensory-motor schema" that is assumed to dominate human experience in much Western philosophy. Under this schema, according to Bergson, we break phenomena into parts for analysis, to relate them to each other, to the whole, and to the ourselves, via

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Dyrk Ashton, "Feeling Time: Deleuze's Time-Image and Aesthetic Effect," *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*, no. 16 (2008), http://www.rhizomes.net/issue16/ashton/.

[78] Ibid., 42.

thought. Film emulates this via montage.[79] Therefore, I would suggest, affect must lie beyond montage.

The potential exists for a multi-screen installation to become a crystalline *space*. A place where intuition and affect reign over traditional theories of montage. Ashton (although he is discussing only single screens) describes affect as if it were some kind of pheromone:

> "If there is no definitive habitual sensory-motor response to be had when confronted with an image, then affection is released, in varying degrees, depending on the image as well as the proclivity of the viewer, providing a coincident image/viewer with a feeling, intensity, and quality that is not normally experienced in everyday life."[80]

Significantly, installations like *Ten Thousand Waves* which explore time spatially and open the door for new forms of documentary to explore the potential of the crystal image, are usually only described in the terms of fiction filmmaking. Writes curator Daniel Birnbaum:

> "If cinema could produce what Deleuze calls crystal-images capturing the structure of time itself, then the temporal possibilities of the 'other cinema', to use Raymond Bellour's concept, ie. multi-screen installations of today's artists exploring new forms of narration and synchronicity, are even richer. The simultaneity of several flows of moving imagery grants the possibility not only of crystal-images, but also of more intricate constellations and juxtapositions."[81]

1.5 Multiple Screens in 21st Century Society.

Today, profligate quantities of information follow us around on screens, bombarding us with multiple streams of data at every turn. Icons encourage

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[79] Ashton notes that for Deleuze, montage links not only one shot to another, but elements within shots, such as characters. Thus a two-shot may constitute a form of montage while what Ashton calls "formal strategies" such as pulling focus may exist within that.

[80] Ibid., 48.

[81] Birnbaum, "Crystals," 142.

us to make sense of information visually rather than textually; video walls offer a new take on the fresco. The screen has conquered the wristwatch and all but fused with our retina as Manovich predicted[82] in the form of Google Glass, again redefining our modes of engaging with moving images.

We are relying more and more upon screens for both information on, and representation of, the world — and less upon our own perception. Our portable i-Devices encourage us to engage haptically[83] while the same touchscreen technology, hitherto associated with informational applications, is transformed into an emotional engagement though works such as Lynette Wallworth's *Invisible by Night* (2004) and Studio Azure's *Creation* (2013).[84]

Multiple windows have developed on computers since 1973, ending the "one-image/one-screen logic"[85] but also encouraging a culture of "zapping" and distracted attention, claims Manovich.[86] It's a standard criticism; the gaze replaced by the glance. But we are becoming more adept at the languages of multiple screen usage, and if the 'zapping' is associative or generative — for example, an interactive documentary using Florian Thalhofer's Korsakov software system — then 'zapping' need not be a pejorative.

Domestically, the screen seems more likely to grow larger and fragment as split-screens, rather than multiply. The CSIRO's Geoff Heydon has predicted a future where consumers will have screens as big as a wall in their homes running multiple high-bandwidth apps. Viewers might use them to stream multiple different angles of an event at super high resolution, he suggests.[87] But what of filmmaking? Will *mise-en-scène* become more and more

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[82] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 113.

[83] Giuliana Bruno, "Intercourses: The Imaginary Landscapes of Jesper Just," http://intercourses.dk/index.php?page=essay&get=the-imaginary-landscapes-of-jesper-just. Accessed 10 October 2013.

[84] *Creation* was displayed at the Pavilion of the Holy See (Vatican) at the 55th Venice Biennale.

[85] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 271.

[86] (Ibid., 101., apparently channelling Deleuze)

[87] Asher Moses, "Building Today's Tech, Tomorrow," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 April 2013 2013. http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/building-todays-tech-tomorrow-20130412-2hqt0.html Accessed 31 October 2013.

important at the expense of cutaways as resolution increases, for example? Manovich writes:

> "I believe that the next generation of cinema – broadband cinema – will add multiple windows to its language," enabling the resurrection of spatial narrative.[88]

In the history of the moving image to date, there has been nothing that really approaches the physical form of the polyptych. However, certain applications for screens such as gaming and financial trading have given rise to a niche industry building stands to hold monitors in strangely polyptychal formations, even if opening & closing is not a primary function. Drawing on avionics head-up-displays (HUD), clearly the discourse here is one of immersion, the modern panopticon, of control in the face of simultaneity.

Figure 14. Ergotech Group, *APEX multi-monitor system*. Reproduced from http://ergotechgroup.com/multi-monitor/ accessed 31 Oct 13.

Personally I worry that my own work may turn out to be a premonition of the Ikea-catalogue must-have item of the future:

PØLYP

Your choice of a five, seven or nine screen cabinet of HD video curiosities*.
Choose from Bleached White or Civic Grey to match your soft furnishings.
*Video content downloadable from s[edition].

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[88] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, XXV.

2. Decentred Documentary

2.1 Documentary in the Gallery.

Documentary traditionally foregrounds its 'truth claims' ("believe me, I'm of the world" as Michael Renov puts it)[89] as the foundation of its persuasive strategy, drawing upon techniques such as archival footage, voice-over, intertitles, and long takes. Of Renov's "four fundamental tendencies or rhetorical/aesthetic functions attributable to documentary practice", audio-visual evidence forms the basis of the first three:

> • to record, reveal, or preserve
>
> • to persuade or promote
>
> • to analyse or interrogate.

Evidence and illustration are the rhetorical bread and butter of these modes. In an artistic environment this makes them an ill fit. The gallery's modes foreground symbolism, contemplation and affective engagement: if the documentary tradition holds fidelity to reality as its core value, art sees it as just another tool with certain effects arising from its use, suggests Ellis.[90]

Documentary has always loitered around the gallery or museum space in the form of photography, conceptual art or documentation.[91] But with the rise of art movements celebrating fakery and simulation — from Dada on — documentary and art began to feel uncomfortable in close proximity.[92] It's unsurprising therefore that documentary underwent a period of banishment from the art gallery late last century — as if punishment for its truth claims.

> "Documentary installation in the gallery disturbs the categories of
> both 'art' and 'documentary'. The 'artness' of the work is in jeopardy

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[89] Michael Renov, *Theorizing Documentary*, Afi Film Readers (New York: Routledge, 1993), 30.

[90] John Ellis, "Differences in Approaches to Factual Film-Making," in *Truth or Dare : Art & Documentary*, ed. Gail Pearce and Cahal McLaughlin (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), 64.

[91] Elizabeth Cowie, "On Documentary Sounds and Images in the Gallery," *Screen* 50, no. 1 (2009): 124-5.

[92] Even if docomentary had been 'faking it' from the earliest days in films such as Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) — see Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality : Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

not only because the referent is indexically traced, but insofar as it signifies — culturally and politically — independently of the aesthetic form."[93]

Documentary is always a partial truth, both in the sense that it constructs a frame that includes some things and not others; and in that it represents the partisan subjectivity of the filmmaker(s). It has never been a transparent window onto reality, but a much more opaque and subjective vision, as tacitly acknowledged in John Grierson's eminently durable definition of documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality" in 1933. Writing sixty years later Paula Rabinowitz identified a nascent move by documentary to free itself from its entanglement with truth claims.

> "This desire to dream, to provoke imagination, seems to lead the documentary away from the realm of history and truth into the realm of art and artifice."[94]

Isaac Julien's lyrical techniques embody the attitudinal change that saw documentary re-embraced by the gallery:

> "I see all images as being constructed, whether they're documentary or fiction. They're all fabricating a particular point of view, except one is a genre that we could call 'documentary' and the other is more stylised in form."[95]

In parallel to Renov, Bill Nichols identifies six modes of structuring documentary representations of reality, each the result of the dialectic between preceding modes.[96] Interestingly, this is two more than he had when I bought the first edition of his *Representing Reality* in the early 1990s:

> Expository
> Observational

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[93] Cowie, "On Documentary Sounds and Images in the Gallery," 126.

[94] Paula Rabinowitz, "Wreckage Upon Wreckage: History, Documentary and the Ruins of Memory," *History and Theory* 32, no. 2 (1993): 136.

[95] Maerkle, "Isaac Julien: Not Global, Trans-Local".

[96] Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2001).

> Participatory
>
> Reflexive
>
> Performative (added 1994)
>
> Poetic (added 2001)

The most recent 'poetic' mode, which "emphasises visual associations, tonal or rhythmic qualities, descriptive passages and formal organisation"[97] clearly represents a move away from earlier rhetorical, evidential modes. It is the natural partner of Renov's fourth mode, 'expressive documentary' and together they are the two modes most commonly identifiable in multi-screen installations. Based on my arguments in Chapter 1, I would suggest that even documentaries not specifically filmed in these modes take on their qualities when translated to multi-screen environments.

Renov himself clearly advocates 'the expressive' for its exploration of modes of seeing, its ethics, creativity and affect; techniques to open the way to greater connection with an audience via experience, memory and sensation. Nichols, advocating 'the poetic', writes that this mode sacrifices continuities of time and place to instead explore associations, patterns, rhythms and juxtapositions. People in these films function more as raw material than as full characters, while affect is more important than knowledge or persuasion.[98]

Generally speaking, poetics speaks on an aesthetic level while rhetoric attempts to persuade.[99] The two may coexist; aesthetics might add to an argument by, for example, a single closeup of a mundane detail. In my work, which is primarily poetic, the rhetorical elements (e.g. the two interviews) function as hieroglyphs, containers for a concept, here 'sensing' of climate change. They are given context by other shots while a form of montage between the coexistent screens develops by virtue of their physical

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[97] Ibid., 33.

[98] Ibid., 133.

[99] Ibid., 16.

relationship. For the engaged visitor, their meaning becomes not a sum of the images, but a product, its locus somewhere in between the screens.

Such poetic/expressive modes offer a way to approach the oft-supposed divide between authenticity in documentary and imagination in art. Thus when documentary relinquishes its "preservational instincts" — even if it appears to maintain them at face value — it opens itself up to what Renov calls a "visual epiphany or radical defamiliarisation".[100] Defamiliarisation of objects, images or situations we might think we recognise from reality is a central strategy of much art. For *The Enclave* (2013) Richard Mosse chooses a discontinued military film stock that makes the invisible (chlorophyl) visible, as a metaphor for making the long-running conflict in the Eastern Congo visible to a world that's lost interest. A brilliant example of 'making strange' a situation, Mosse deploys beauty as "the sharpest tool on the box".[101]

Figure 15. Richard Mosse, *The Enclave*, 2013. 6 channel video, 39'25", 16mm/HD, Irish Pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale. Reproduced from http://www.domusweb.it/en/art/2013/07/26/the_enclave.html accessed 31 October 2013.

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[100] Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary*, Visible Evidence (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 20.

[101] *Richard Mosse: The Impossible Image*, (Frieze, 2013). Online interview. http://vimeo.com/channels/staffpicks/67115692 Interestingly, Richard Mosse's decision to rear project his central trapezoidal quartet of screens allows the audience to approach close enough to be surrounded by them without casting a shadow.

Renov argues that the pitting of truth against beauty is an unfortunate dualism with ancestry in the art/science separation of the 18th century, when experience became subordinated to experiment.

> "It has frequently been presumed that the creation of beautiful forms and documentary's task of historical representation are altogether irreconcilable."[102]

This is in part due to documentary's penchant for logical argument, which makes it reliant on spoken word to communicate tenses, negatives and absences (e.g."no smoking"). [103] This predilection causes problems when dealing with a subject that's inherently conceptual. Mark Boulos describes his aforementioned work as a phenomenological, "anti-journalistic documentary" dealing with commodity fetishism:

> "In almost all documentary, there's this equivalence between what you see and what you can believe, and so documentary is often considered evidence, and that's why it's journalism. And so I'm trying to develop an anti-journalistic documentary… I'm starting from a philosophical point that isn't empiricist, but instead phenomenological."[104]

Another approach is evident in more experiential works such as *The Enclave* or Véréna Paravel & Lucien Castaing-Taylor's *Leviathan* (2012). Such works are often made with equipment offering extraordinarily visceral points of view (Steadicam and GoPro respectively). *Leviathan*, like *Ten Thousand Waves,* bridges two exhibition strategies (cinema and gallery) by creating separate works for each form. [105]

2.2 Documentary Strategies Across Multiple Screens.

In single-screen modes, the spectator is placed in a privileged position, that of the camera. In multi-screen, as discussed in Chapter 1, the viewer must become active in order to weave together meaning. Thus in designing an

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[102] *Theorizing Documentary*, 24.

[103] Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 30.

[104] Stedelijk Museum, *Mark Boulos - All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BX6rYfNzTJ8:YouTube, 2008), 10'29". Online interview. Accessed 23 August 2011.

[105] In *Leviathan*'s case, some of its shots were recontextualised in extreme slow motion at the 2013 Berlinale's Forum Expanded for projection in a domical environment entitled *Canst Thou Draw Out Leviathan With A Hook?*

installation, an artist must be cognisant of "a viewer's experience in time and space."[106] The form takes on an "exploratory duration" according to Mondloch; the decision how long to stay is the visitor's.[107] They cannot expect any closure, let alone a defined beginning or end. Yet classical documentary films usually order the world by narrativising it — be it through history, or following a character, for example.

Narrative is only one way to know the world, albeit one with deep cultural roots. More experiential approaches exist, offering "open texts" in which "accumulated understanding"[108] questions linear causality or the arbitrary imposition of beginnings and endings. Multiple screens can foreground and play with these ideas. As we perceive patterns in music, so too visual patterns can be established by the filmmaker between screens: motifs, inversions, augmentations, fugues, repetitions, etc.

Like knowledge itself, the multi-screen work can never be 'completed'. They might be considered Brechtian in their rejection of catharsis and closure. Looped installations may deliberately confound the importance of beginnings or endings — refusing to insert credits, titles or even the customary black screen. Bruno suggests loops have ancestry in pre-cinema apparatus[109] while Manovich posits it as a new narrative form appropriate for the computer age.[110] The rituals and etiquette of the cinema such as seating and fixed entry times do not apply in the gallery space — otherwise the gallery is masquerading as a cinema and you're likely to be watching a Steve McQueen or Eija-Liisa Ahtila work. One forgives Ahtila, whose work often relies upon deliberate disturbance of chronology and causality. However McQueen's habit of porting these cinematic conventions of control to his single-screen gallery documentaries such as *Giardini* (2009) might seem less

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[106] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 230.

[107] Mondloch, *Screens : Viewing Media Installation Art*, 41.

[108] Bettina Frankham, "Documentary and the Cinematic Thought Machine," in *Expanded Documentary Seminar* (University of Wollongong 2012). I also presented a paper on my own multi-screen research during the same panel, 7 September 2012.

[109] Giuliana Bruno, *Public Intimacy : Architecture and the Visual Arts*, Writing Architecture. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007), 15.

[110] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 266.

fathomable to people waiting impatiently for the 'next session' outside his characterless temporary auditoria.

A multi-screen installation works with "collage, comparison, simultaneity, reinforcement and opposition"; while 'comparison in time' becomes 'comparison in space'.[111] If epistephilia (the desire to know) is what stimulates a documentary audience[112] it is perhaps also what propels us around a documentary installation:

> "We want to 'grasp' such installations in many different ways, we are excited by them and this excitement or interest is a pleasurable entwinement of intellectual, motor and perceptual activity."[113]

Manovich, discussing computer screen works, suggests that presentation of multiple images on screen simultaneously is insufficient to create montage; the filmmaker must construct a generative logic which underlies the image interrelationships. Some spatialised works appear as little more than visual cryptic crosswords: shots of melting ice + smokey chimneys, for example, would do little more than set up a riddle to be solved, after which the viewer can move on, unaffected. A generative installation encourages the viewer to embrace juxtapositions, oppositions and similarities; but also to question the act of seeing.

2.2.1 Ethical Opportunities.

Multiple screens can open up interesting ethical strategies at a time when 'Reality TV' has precipitated a crisis in documentary's troubled marriage with reality. Documentarians are caught on the rebound in art's waiting arms where they may seek solace in the interrogation of ethics and ways of seeing, abandoning their last pretence of verisimilitude. The eternal editing problem of juxtaposing one decontextualised interview grab with another

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[111] Fowler, "Room for Experiment: Gallery Films and Vertical Time from Maya Deren to Eija Liisa Ahtila," 329,36.

[112] Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 40.

[113] Susan Best, "What Is Affect?: Considering the Affective Dimension of Contemporary Installation Art," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 2/3, no. 2/1 (2002): 222.

might for example be approached by running each interview at full length on different screens to allow the visitor to choose between them. (Although this then risks obscuring the equally loaded decision of choosing who to interview!)

Vernon Ah Kee's *Tall Man* (figure 16) is a work that deploys both simultaneity and the rawness of archival footage to interrogate the ethics and power of what is shown and what is hidden in the mass media, in this case regarding the riots on Australia's Palm Island following a death in custody in 2004. It is a kind of 'aesthetic journalism'. Four contiguous screens line a wall, but immersion is not on Ah Kee's agenda; it's the opposite, deconstructing the seamlessness of television news coverage. Seamlessness that foregoes context, development or background in favour of the soundbite.

Anchored in the discourse of simultaneous perspectives, it's clear that there's more than one camera running simultaneously here: at least two news crews, some home-video, and a police-issue Handycam that runs continuously even as the policemen fretfully lace their boots. Occasionally all four screens cut to colour bars, as if emphasising rawness of the footage, but also as if to synchronise the different perspectives they provide. We have the sense we're being presented with multiple points of view to scrutinise for insights. It is a powerful work.
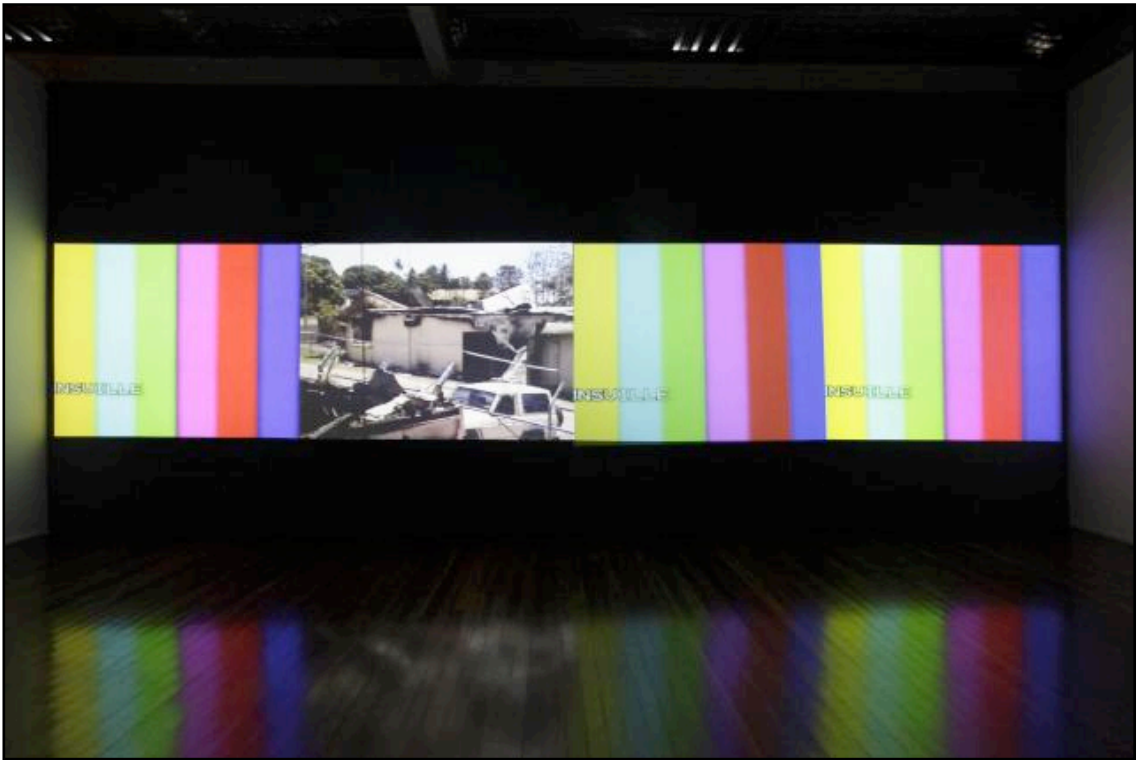
Figure 16. Vernon Ah Kee, *Tall Man,* 2010. 4 channel HD video, 11'10''. Reproduced from http://www.milanigallery.com.au/exhibit/tall-man accessed 31 October 2013.

Figure 17. Kutlug Ataman, *1+1=1*, 2002. 2 DVDs, each approximately 50 minutes, Two-screen video, installation with variable dimensions, Edition of 5. Reproduced from http://www.saatleriayarlamaenstitusu.com/site/artworks/work/56/ accessed 31 October 2013.

2.2.2 Arrangement of Screens.

The physical arrangement of screens in a space is often invested with significance, for example Patrick Keiller's distribution of 30 projected screens and soundtracks according to the actual spatial coordinates of each shot of a Bombay railway station in *Londres, Bombay* (2006).

The number of screens is both a stylistic and rhetorical choice: a singular view of the world? A dichotomous perspective? Or a polyphony of voices? Kutluğ Ataman's *1+1=1* (2002) comprises a diptych, *North to South* 50'39" and *South to North* 47'38" projected into the corner of a room, as if the image were trying to become architecture. Two-channels is an obvious but apt synecdoche for a work about division, in this case a Turkish Cypriot woman who speaks of her experiences first on one side of the divide in Cyprus, and then the other, before and after the 1973 conflict. The two interviews are presented simultaneously and contiguously.

Visually the effect is striking: Ataman has reversed the angle so the table seems to join itself across the 90° angle of the wall, setting her in a kind of self-dialogue. The visitor may align themselves with one screen/speaker combination or the other — 'taking sides' for a time — to hear one particular account more clearly. One begins to notice certain confluences and contradictions in her accounts of life on both sides, casting her as slightly bipolar — like the island itself — in the context of two memories existing simultaneously. The relationship to the early Renaissance diptych is apparent, with the centripetal eye-lines, creating a tension between the two frames (although the lack of a dividing line between each frame effectively creates a single image).

Nash writes that more screens allow "more complex poetic structures" via repetitions and echoes. He observes that even numbers of screens set up a symmetry that "can work against the imbalance needed to keep the sequence going."[114]   Too often, however, multiple screens are employed

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[114] Nash, "Electric Shadows."

gratuitously: without forethought, motivation, or a coherent plan for their spatialisation; or as a solution for "too much material". Zineb Sedira's *Floating Coffins* (2009, 8 mins, 14 screens, 8.2 surround audio) illustrates the problem of visual prolixity; indeed Sedira concedes that the installation's *raison d'être* derived from having too much rushes material.[115] Jane & Louise Wilson have acknowledged that their (admittedly fine) body of work could function just as well on one screen[116] while Sam Smith's *Cameraman* (2011) became a dual-screen work only during editing.[117] I would argue that the best multi-screen works simply cannot be explored in any other way.

2.2.3 The Kinaesthetic Eye.

Dziga Vertov's kino-eye sought to overcome the limitations of the human eye. It found truth though its "conquest of space, the visual linkage of people throughout the entire world ... [and] conquest of time," while new camera and montage techniques including split-screen and superimposition enabled new revelations from the visible world.[118] But this "infinitely perfectible prosthesis to the human sensorium" represents a path not taken by documentary, which instead took that of realism. Michael Renov convincingly argues that looming conflict during the 1930s was one of the main reasons for the decline of visual poetics in documentary; mimesis was considered a sharper tool in a time of crisis.[119]

I suggest that multi-screen documentary may represent a reinvigoration of the kino-eye ideals, a further step towards its "perfection" (kino-ear having

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[115] In an interview, now removed, *"Interview with Zineb Sedira"*, (http://www.artreview.com/video/zineb-sedira: Art Review, 2009). Accessed 21 January 2013.

[116] Stella Bruzzi, "Collaborations & Technologies," in *Truth or Dare : Art & Documentary*, ed. Gail Pearce and Cahal McLaughlin (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), 78.

[117] Q&A with Sam Smith after a screening of the single channel version of his work at Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney, 10 August 2011.

[118] Dziga Vertov and Annette Michelson, *Kino-Eye : The Writings of Dziga Vertov* (London: Pluto, 1984), xxv.

[119] Gail Pearce and Cahal McLaughlin, *Truth or Dare : Art & Documentary* (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), 15-6.

long since been added)[120]. That indeed, kino-eye, with its aim of making us look anew at unfamiliar representations of the world by bridging times and spaces, is inherent to the multi-screen form in which we perceive spatio-temporal relationships through movement on the part of the visitor. Kino-eye thus becomes *the kinaesthetic eye* and offers a rich set of possibilities with which to approach conceptually dense subject matter — such as we will explore in the next chapter.

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[120] According to Manovich, in the digital era, the moving image becomes a branch of painting that works with time: a "kino-brush". Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 413.

3. Documentary Art & Climate Change

3.1 Background to Sea Level Rise.

According to the *Fifth Assessment Report* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC AR5) released 30 September 2013, atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gasses have reached levels unprecedented in the last 800,000 years, and human influence is "extremely likely" to be the dominant cause.[121] These gasses act as a blanket for heat that would normally escape from the atmosphere; to date the ocean has absorbed 90% of that heat increase. Due to its subsequent thermal expansion (and, since 1990, melting of the world's ice sheets) the planet's oceans have already experienced an average of 19cm sea-level rise from 1901-2010, more than in the past 2000 years, and this is expected to accelerate.[122] Sea levels at the end of this century are predicted to be between 0.26m to 0.82m higher than at the beginning of it, of which thermal expansion is expected to account for 30-55%, and melting glaciers 15-35%.[123] Due to uncertainties, the report, controversially, does not consider the latest, worse-than-expected data on methane released during permafrost melt.[124] Note the conditionality of the language used throughout the IPCC summary for policy-makers:

> "The basis for higher projections of global mean sea level rise in the 21st century has been considered and it has been concluded that there is currently insufficient evidence to evaluate the probability of specific levels above the assessed likely range. Many semi-empirical model projections of global mean sea level rise are higher than process-based model projections (up to about twice as large), but

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[121] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group I Contribution to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, "Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis: Summary for Policymakers " (Stockholm, Sweden: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2013), 12.

[122] "Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis," (Stockholm, Sweden: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2013). 6, Section B4.

[123] "Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis: Summary for Policymakers ". 18, section E6.

[124] Edward A. G. Schuur and Benjamin Abbott, "Climate Change: High Risk of Permafrost Thaw," *Nature* 480, no. 01 December 2011 (2011).

there is no consensus in the scientific community about their reliability and there is thus low confidence in their projections."[125]

Our planet's surface temperature rose by 0.89°C over the period 1901–2012.[126] Relative to the years 1850-1900 it is expected to warm by between 1.5°C and 4.5°C by the end of this century.[127] Just over 2°C is expected to destroy most coral reef systems, create enormous population displacement in low-lying countries and lead to an eventual sea level rise of 25m;[128] one of many aspects of climate change that will persist for many centuries even if anthropogenic emissions of CO_2 are halted.[129]

3.1.1 Small Island States.

Sea level rise is expected to engulf several small island states by century's end, though these islands will likely be rendered uninhabitable well before then by an increased prevalence of extreme events as well as coral bleaching, lessened freshwater supply, worsening storms, and associated effects such as health problems. Atolls are the most vulnerable of them all, usually averaging only 1-2m above mean sea level. In the Pacific alone, four countries are comprised solely of low-lying atolls: Tuvalu, Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Tokelau. What these countries lack in political power they make up for with moral pressure.[130] The Maldives, an Indian Ocean nation of some 200 islands, is the flattest country on earth: eighty percent of its land is less than 1m above sea level. Fourteen of those islands have already been

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[125] Working Group I Contribution to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, "Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis: Summary for Policymakers ". 18, section E6.

[126] "Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis." Technical Summary, TS-5, section 2.2.1

[127] "Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis: Summary for Policymakers ". 11, section D2.

[128] Clive Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species : Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change* (London ; Washington, DC: Earthscan, 2010), 11,198.

[129] Working Group I Contribution to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, "Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis: Summary for Policymakers ". 20, Section E8.

[130] Jon Barnett and John Campbell, *Climate Change and Small Island States : Power, Knowledge, and the South Pacific* (London ; Sterling, VA: Earthscan, 2010), 4.

evacuated due to dangerous erosion while seventy others are dependent on desalinated water due to salt water intrusion in their aquifers.[131] [132]

It is difficult however to find visible evidence that can be linked unequivocally to climate change. Takuu, a disappearing atoll between the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, was the focus of Briar March & Lyn Collie's award-winning documentary about climate-change, *There Once Was An Island* (2010). Barnett & Campbell suggest that there is considerable evidence that climate change may not be the primary cause of Takuu's problems, but rather population growth, changing wave and wind patterns, and tectonic movement.[133] They warn that the danger of such publicity is that, if debunked, it sows doubt in the mind of the public and boosts sceptics. It also casts them as powerless victims in need of help, joining "polar bears and penguins" as "poster-children" of climate change whereas it's the industrialised countries that need help to break their fossil fuel habit.[134]

3.1.2 Adaptation & Geoengineering.

These industrialised countries resist talk of compensating island nations on the grounds that it implies guilt; they offer to supply adaptation funds only. As a response to climate change, adaptation is a practical solution only for wealthier countries: my practical work includes shots of the installation of the King Canute-style sea barriers to protect the Venice lagoon, the €4.6 billion MOSE project. Nations lacking such funds, or indeed other species, are unlikely to 'adapt' in time.

One large but immensely troubling step beyond adaptation lies geoengineering. Since the Industrial Revolution humans have unwittingly

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[131] However, speaking to islanders neighbouring one such abandoned atoll, I was told that it was abandoned primarily for reasons of economic viability. The same islanders showed me how man-made changes, in their case a harbour breakwater, had caused major beach erosion that could be mistaken for the effects of sea level rise.

[132] Ben Doherty, "That Sinking Feeling," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 07 January 2012.

[133] Barnett and Campbell, *Climate Change and Small Island States : Power, Knowledge, and the South Pacific*, 173.

[134] Ibid., 170.

created a new geological era, the Anthropocene, in which our impact rivals the forces of nature. To borrow from Tim Flannery's 2005 book title, we have become *The Weather Makers.* Indications are that our desperate response to climate change is likely to follow the same pattern: deliberate large-scale manipulation of the Earth's environment,"hacking the climate".[135] Its potential outcomes and side-effects are numerous and could not be predicted with any certainty, while its 'moral hazard' is that it lessens the imperative to reduce emissions by simply masking their effect. It forms part of a long line of hubristic attempts by humans to prove their dominion over nature.

3.2 Disconnection: the Psychology of Climate Change.

When faced with such problems, what can art possibly do, besides perhaps reinforce a few shorelines with Anish Kapoor sculptures? If anything, the key perhaps lies in the anthropogenic nature of the problem. What humans have unbalanced, we must be persuaded to rebalance. But the dimensions of climate change make this a battle of psychology as much as knowledge.

Australia's philosopher-ethicist Clive Hamilton points out that our recent relationship to the environment has been to seek mastery.

> "As much as anything else, the objective of industrial society has
> been to isolate ourselves from the effects of the weather."[136]

If for centuries our survival depended on reading the landscape, our urbanised, indoor climate-controlled society is losing that ability. As we cocoon ourselves from nature, the vicissitudes of the natural world lie increasingly outside daily experience. And within a culture imbued with the idea that seeing is believing, the epistemology of climate science, of models

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[135] Clive Hamilton, Earthmasters Playing God with the Climate, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin,, 2013), http://ezproxy.library.usyd.edu.au/login?url=http://USYD.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=1134870. Accessed 31 October 2013.

[136] *Requiem for a Species : Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change*, 118.

and predictions, sits uncomfortably.[137] The two discourses occupy different tenses: present, and future conditional. It is a fundamental mismatch.

Further epistemological problems of climate change derive from three key points:

- The cause — greenhouse gasses — are both invisible and dispersive.
- The effects may be displaced spatially, beyond where they were emitted.
- The effects are displaced temporally to some time in the future.

A metaview of the problem is impossible since we are all embroiled in its causes, effects and failures to address it. Earth system science has revealed feedback cycles that fall outside our knowledge and control, particularly 'tipping points', thresholds that, once crossed, become irreversible and set in train a host of other changes. Our techno-rationalist worldview is failing us as nature reveals its decidedly non-linear workings. We lack frameworks both through which to *deal* with climate change as a phenomenon, and to *represent* it.

3.2.1 Visual Representation.

The environment has come to be defined not by our experience of it but by visual representations such as the famous *Blue Marble* photograph from Apollo 17 (1972) which Duxbury suggests "shifted our understanding of the world from a national to a global perspective".[138] Today photographic evidence remains a mainstay of environmental NGOs even if it has lost its indexically-derived authority in the digital era. Doyle claims that Greenpeace International's 1997 photograph "of the crack in the Larsen B ice shelf can be regarded as the first influential and recognisable photographic evidence of global warming."[139] Prior to glacial disintegration, the visual lexicon for environmental NGOs had been scorched earth photos,

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[137] Julie Doyle, *Seeing the Climate? The Problematic Status of Visual Evidence in Climate Change Campaigning*, ed. Sidney I. Dobrin and Sean Morey, Ecosee : Image, Rhetoric, Nature (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 281.

[138] Duxbury, "A Change in the Climate: New Interpretations and Perceptions of Climate Change through Artistic Interventions and Representations," 5.

[139] Ibid., 288.

manipulated towards a warmer colour-balance, or shots of extreme weather events as harbingers of what was to come.[140]

Figure 18. Greenpeace & Steve Morgan,*Crack in Larsen B ice shelf, Antarctica,* 1 February 1997. Colour photograph. Reproduced from http://www.ibtimes.com/antarctica-ice-melting-global-warming-707620 accessed 31 October 2013.

3.2.2 The Unseen.

A common trope when representing climate change through stills photography is before-and-after shots. Usually presented as a diptych (perhaps in the future as polyptychs?), the strategy is one of comparison: the same landscape, across time. Cinema, similarly, deploys time-lapse, such as the shifting glaciers of Jeff Orlowski's 2012 documentary *Chasing Ice*, to make perceptible a process which ordinarily inhabits imperceptible, 'geological time'. It is part of cinema's lexicon of strategies dealing with time, including slow-motion, split-screen and dissolves.[141]

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[140] The use of imagery predicting apocalyptic scenarios was also common in the renaissance polyptych; Bosch in particular used the rightmost panel in works such as *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and *The Haywain Triptych* (ca. 1516) to suggest the consequences of disobeying biblical edicts.

[141] Pinkus suggests that in his film *Red Desert* (1964), Michelangelo Antonioni "proleptically anticipates climate change in all of its radical specificity, linking it with colour and sound, and positing cinema as the medium best equipped to capture its peculiar temporality. In other words … Antonioni thinks about the strange time and space of climate change — profoundly." Karen Pinkus, "Antonioni's Cinematic Poetics of Climate Change," in *Antonioni : Centenary Essays*, ed. Laura Rascaroli and John David Rhodes (London: British Film Institute / Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 263.

Powerfully, time-lapse footage disconcerts us with its suggestion of invisible agency: we see only the resultant movement. Doyle however raises the problem of the 'after' image(s), taken after climate change has occurred, negating the possibility of *preventative* action.[142] As our relationship with the landscape becomes evermore mediated by images, we're trapped by the documentary form's paradox that it cannot 'document' an issue such as nature's degradation until it is already manifest.[143]

> "They appear to invite us to look at the beauty of the landscape, to experience shock, and to feel loss. The problem with this, however, is that while they may generate a feeling or an emotion through the sense of loss, they do not contribute to understanding the causes of climate change or relate them to everyday life, that is, on a level where people can actually make a difference. They say little about the future."[144]

Properly contextualised however, I suggest that an audience can read such imagery as a dystopian example that may be avoidable on a larger scale if they act in a certain way. The strategy thus becomes

- to counteract doubt;
- to show what is beginning to happen; and
- to make visible what had hitherto been "unseen",

all with the aim of preventing *further* damage.

3.2.3 Fear.

There is disagreement between those who call for optimism...

> "How we understand climate change through story and meaning is vital to necessary and positive action. A story that is too frightening paralyses us or is too depressing … We need stories that inspire."[145]

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[142] Doyle, *Seeing the Climate? The Problematic Status of Visual Evidence in Climate Change Campaigning*, 291.

[143] Ibid., 280.

[144] Ibid., 291.

[145] Sally Gillespie, "Descent in the Time of Climate Change," in *Depth Psychology, Disorder and Climate Change*, ed. Robert Bosnak and Jonathan Paul Marshall (Sydney: JungDownunder Books, 2009), 409.

...and those who argue that cloistering the general populace from disturbing evidence does a dangerous disservice. Regarding "self-censorship in the environmental movement" Jan Lundberg notes that "the idea of significant die-off is taboo outside private, frank conversations."[146] The worry is that more fundamental human responses to fear may be activated. To 'fight or flight' Clive Hamilton adds another 'f' — freeze:

> "If humans evolved to survive by assessing risks through instant
> visceral reactions we are at a loss when confronted with global
> warming which requires us to rely heavily on cognitive processing".[147]

Whilst evolution may have adapted humans to avoid certain physical threats, invisible particles were not one of them. We may object to the smell or look of pollution, but we don't perceive its atmospheric effects, except by their eventual repercussions. This radical dislocation of cause from effect also ensures there will never be an obituary written that so-and-so died because of climate change (cf. the current bushfire debate in Australia). It will cause millions of deaths but never be directly attributable to a flight we took, or car we bought.[148] On a per capita basis, Australians remain the biggest polluters in the developed world.[149]

3.2.4 Denial.

In psychology, a patient exhibiting symptoms of cognitive dissonance will listen to opinions which support one's own beliefs whilst filtering out those which are not. It is an example of a 'maladaptive strategy' that can be identified in people not coping well with threats. Other such strategies including distracting oneself, pessimism/despair, apathy, wishful thinking or shifting responsibility to others.[150]

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[146] Jan Lundberg, "Ancient Innovations for Present Conventions toward Extinction," http://www.culturechange.org/cms/content/view/114/1/. Accessed 31 October 2013.

[147] Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species : Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change*, 120-1.

[148] Dale Jamieson, "Living with Climate Change," in *Sydney Ideas* (University of Sydney2012).

[149] Australian Associated Press, "Lies Told About Climate Action: Flannery," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 August 2012 2012.

[150] Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species : Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change*, 127-8.

Despite overwhelming consensus regarding anthropogenic climate change amongst scientists[151] they have been unable to take the general populace with them. Climate science insists on the most cautious of methodologies and is driven by uncertainty, which is easily misrepresented by vested interests. Typically, scientists are not good at communicating with the general public. In a 2012 CSIRO study of 5,081 Australians, only 43.6% of respondents thought climate change was being caused primarily by humans. 7.7% thought it wasn't happening at all[152] yet respondents overestimated this latter figure by a factor of three,[153] suggesting that undue media exposure is still being given to so-called 'climate sceptics'.

3.2.5 Approaches.

Cognition is one thing; empathy is another. It is hard for humans to develop emotional attachments to scientific theories. 'Classic' climate change images such as polar bears seen in the mass media are often disconnected from our own experience. Psychological theory suggests localisation of climate change scenarios can be generative. One might for example, ask someone to imagine the destruction of a place they hold dear.[154] Or they might observe snow melting quicker, birds and flowers appearing earlier, or fire danger levels increasing.[155]

We need reconnection with the natural world, a more holistic conception of nature in contrast to the Enlightenment's atomistic one. Narratives that move us towards living in equilibrium with, not at the expense of, the planet.

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[151] "Among abstracts expressing a position on AGW, 97.1% endorsed the consensus position that humans are causing global warming." http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/8/2/024024/article Accessed 30 September 2013.

[152] Zoe Leviston, Iain Walker, and Sarah Malkin, "Third Annual Survey of Australian Attitudes to Climate Change: Interim Report," in *Annual surveys of Australian attitudes to climate change* (Australia: CSIRO, 2012), 2-3.

[153] Ibid., 4.

[154] Bosnak and Marshall, *Depth Psychology, Disorder and Climate Change*, 310. A side effect though may be the tendency to exoticise destruction, *a la* Hollywood's disaster movie genre.

[155] Stephen Sheppard, *Visualizing Climate Change : A Guide to Visual Communication of Climate Change and Developing Local Solutions* (Washington, DC: Earthscan, 2011), 132.

Mythologically, Australian Aborigines have long told 'warning stories' regarding both asbestos ('Golden Orb Dreaming') and uranium ('Green Ant Dreaming')[156] while European mythology includes Prometheus (who stole fire from Zeus) and Phaeton ("who, against all warnings, decided to take control of the forces of the Sun").[157] We now need new myths, about human hubris, or what ethical behaviour might look like in the Anthropocene era.

> "A good myth joins psyche and world, and has the potential to reconfigure the way we look at the world and act within the world."[158]

Such insights can help humans reformulate our relationship with the environment, where other narratives fall short:

> "The problem is that the big areas where power is being exercised – finance, managerial theory, computers – are not reducible to dramatic stories. … These worlds have made themselves 'unstorifyable' – they have become deliberately dull."[159]

If master essay documentarist Adam Curtis cannot tell these stories, then perhaps documentary needs to look in other directions. Bill Nichols places documentary squarely alongside other 'discourses of sobriety' — science, economics, politics, education, etc. — all burdened by their relationship with the real.[160] Documentary comes tied to reason, weighed down with information. However, artists — and documentarians who jump ship from the *SS Sobriety* — find themselves granted a unique 'license' that scientists, politicians, et al don't have. They can deconstruct society in a way that investigative journalists can't; take trends to their (il)logical extremes; and draw conclusions that scientists' *modus operandi* won't countenance. Indeed artists can act as translators for these hamstrung professionals, sometimes transmogrifying their data into sound, sculpture, performance or image. Statistics may be replaced by parables, evidence by metaphor, didacticism

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[156] Susan Murphy, "Conversation with Dulumnmun, Uncle Max Harrison," in *Depth Psychology, Disorder and Climate Change*, ed. Robert Bosnak and Jonathan Paul Marshall (Sydney: JungDownunder Books, 2009), 118.

[157] Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species : Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change*, 23.

[158] Bosnak and Marshall, *Depth Psychology, Disorder and Climate Change*, 418.

[159] Sarfraz Manzoor, "Adam Curtis Argues Tv Needs 'New Tools' to Tell Its Stories," *The Guardian*, 22 August 2012 2012.

[160] Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 39.

by juxtaposition, easy explanation by paradox and contradiction. Documentary artists can sneak in under the radar of vested interests to expose the workings of society or, as Curtis suggests, they can approach these worlds from above or beneath, rather than within.

3.3 Sustainable Art.

"Sustainability is the art of living well, within the ecological limits of a finite planet."[161]

Art of all cultures has long sought to make sense of our relationship with the natural world. Ecological concerns have been present in art since prehistoric cave paintings. Romantic artists reacted to the 'Death of Nature':

> "In resisting the Cartesian division between the human and the non-human the romantic poets and philosophers stood before a tide of history that would soon wash over them. This was a pity because their conception has been vindicated now that Nature has struck back".[162]

Ecological art as a genre blossomed during the 1970s, while the branch addressing climate change burgeoned in the wake of *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) and the IPCC 4AR (2007). Today a better description, which also encompasses its practise, may be 'sustainable art'.

> "Sustainable art reaches beyond the intersection of environment and aesthetics to attend to ethical issues like social justice and intergenerational equity."[163]

3.3.1 Dangers.

In allying itself with ecological 'issues' however, there are many potential traps for art. Art can articulate a vision of the future or it can offer

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[161] Tim Jackson, "Keeping out the Giraffes," in *Long Horizons: An Exploration of Art and Climate Change*, ed. Julie's Bicycle (British Council, 2010), 20.

[162] Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species : Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change*, 139.

[163] Lucy R. Lippard and Stephanie Smith, *Weather Report : Art and Climate Change*, ed. Andrew Revkin (Boulder, Colorado: Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007), 13-5.

"consolation for our failures".[164] Art can offer alternative conceptions of ourselves by becoming sustainable. But it cannot be subordinated to reason:

> "The issue of climate change needs persuasion rather than propaganda and art understands the psychology of persuasion. It is hard to allow oneself to be drawn by overt dogma, which is delivered in the daylight areas of the mind. Art works in the shuttered twilights where darkness bestows a tenderness and protection, a secret place where the psyche feels safe enough to alter. It is always easier to change one's mind in the dark."[165]

Today there is almost a glut of 'worthy' low-calibre 'eco-art'. Lack of critical edge, play, rigour, paradox and profundity risks not only blunting the artwork itself, but contamination-by-association of other artworks which touch environmental themes:

> "Perceptions of inaccurate use of data, over-earnestness, or alarmism can irritate potential allies and alienate potential audiences. … If handled bluntly by artists or by institutions, they [shallow works] could flatten work or leach out criticality, paradox, mess, play and poetry."[166]

It's very easy to pick up a sticky coating of cynicism and thus art should not allow itself to be co-opted as propaganda, regardless of the urgency of the situation. Propaganda tends to be prescriptive, to shut down interpretive space, whilst artists seek to open it up. The Tuvalu pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale provides a case in point. Along with the Maldives, Tuvalu decided to engage in an "art as diplomacy" experiment this year. In a blog post I wrote:

> "The Tuvaluan pavilion, by contrast, was in Mestre, Venice's dormitory suburb on the mainland, placing it decidedly off the beaten track. Which may not have been a bad thing. Taiwanese artist Vincent J Huang's exhibition — held in Tuvalu's name — is the kind of 'climate change art' that makes me want to scream. Except that there were already fake turtles doing just that; one had to walk across them to

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[164] Julie's Bicycle, Long Horizons, (British Council, 2010), http://www.juliesbicycle.com/media/downloads/LongHorizons.pdf. 9. Accessed 20 October 2013.

[165] Ibid., 7.

[166] Lippard and Smith, *Weather Report : Art and Climate Change*, 14.

enter the exhibition. The 'interactive' centrepiece of the show was a petrol bowser attached to an oil pumpjack. Activate the pump and you would decapitate a turtle (which thankfully at least didn't scream) while the Wall Street Bull would take an upwards trajectory. Even Greenpeace would have been embarrassed.

The line between propaganda and art is usually fairly easy to spot.

> 'You can see agit-prop coming a mile away, barging along the street towards you, giving you time to turn the other way or shake it warmly by the hand. Art can steal up more quietly, coming alongside, maybe with a scent of jasmine or rum, speaking intrigue.'[167]

Not content merely to barge up to you, Huang's exhibition also hits you over the head with its message, before chasing you along the canal shouting, 'You bastard! You absolute bastard!'   It was in the middle of this pursuit that I paused briefly to consider how many containers of air freight from Taiwan this extravaganza had taken up; but I took a wrong turn and found myself cornered by an army of ice penguins."[168]

Figure 19. Vincent J.F. Huang, *Destiny Intertwined,* Tuvalu Pavilion, 55th Venice Biennale of Art, 2013. Reproduced from Tuvalu Pavilion, www.tuvalupavilion.com accessed 31 Oct 2013.

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[167] Julie's Bicycle, *Long Horizons.* 7.

[168] Blog post by Adam Sébire (not accessible outside USYD).
http://midm.sca.sydney.edu.au/mfaseminar3/blog/ Posted 1 October 2013.

Perhaps anticipating such cynical or pre-programmed responses from audiences, some artists refuse environmental labels:

> "'It would be a mistake if one says this is climate art, because then art starts to think on behalf of people,' [Olafur] Eliasson says. 'This is the last thing we want as we head into a time when people need to take responsibility: ... to see institutions take responsibility on people's behalf.'"[169]

Another challenge is to work constructively rather than write humanity's obituary. So-called 'green porn'[170] (exciting but superficial environmentalism) produced by those who hope to goad action, may produce immediate gratification but can easily result in little positive effect, instead engendering paralysis or worse. Psychologists Tom Crompton & Tim Kasser state that

> "Reminded of their mortality, people will tend to orient towards self-enhancing, materialistic values."[171]

Equally there are dangers in over-individualising the problem. Clive Hamilton argues that powerful interests exploit our personal responses to climate change.

> "A privatisation and individualisation of responsibility for environmental problems shifts blame from state elites and powerful producer groups to more amorphous culprits like 'human nature' or 'all of us'."[172]

Systemic problems are thus personalised to the point where we're encouraged to calculate our 'ecological footprint' at the expense of structural change. Our social conscience is being commodified.[173]

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[169] Elizabeth Fortescue, "Artist Olafur Eliasson Weathers Climate Change Storm, Apart of Sydney Festival 2010," *Daily Telegraph*, 24 December 2009.

[170] Lippard and Smith, *Weather Report : Art and Climate Change*, 14.

[171] Tom Crompton and Tim Kasser, quoted in Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species : Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change*, 158.

[172] Michael Maniates quoted in Ibid., 79.

[173] Ibid., 80.

3.3.2 Documentary Films and Climate Change.

As climate change begins to wash over us, we lack an elevated vantage point from which to see all its tributaries. Without actual exposure to its consequences, it is very difficult to inspire a visceral engagement in people. Most documentaries about climate change have felt the need to feature a central character — "an actor in history"[174] to provide a personal/emotional angle in counterpoint to the science and politics. Think campaigner Al Gore in *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006); photographer James Balog in *Chasing Ice* (2012); or I-Kiribati expatriate Maria Tiimon in *The Hungry Tide* (2011). As well as engendering empathy, the 'personal angle' is a way to add narrativity and couch subjectivity in the evidence-based television documentary form.[175] Doyle quotes a Greenpeace picture editor who cites a picture of a walrus stranded on an ice floe as their single most requested shot.[176] This suggests a mass media trope that relies upon empathy, scale, perspective, and emotion to communicate climate change.

What we don't need is information overload; instead we need meaning, which can provoke reflection and action. By eschewing its evidential modes, and working poetically and expressively, documentary may be able to offer us access to that which cannot (yet) be documented.

Rather than cheap symbolism (melting polar bear ice sculptures etc.) more thoughtful approaches might touch upon larger questions, such as how we came to this point as humans. Whilst not a documentary, Superflex's *Flooded*

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[174] Rabinowitz, "Wreckage Upon Wreckage: History, Documentary and the Ruins of Memory," 129.

[175] But even this strategy may fail to satisfy pressures from climate 'skeptics' and denialists upon a public broadcaster. My own film for ABC TV, *High Tide in Tuvalu* (2003) featured three main characters: Hosea, an old fisherman, Hilia, Tuvalu's meteorologist and Paani, its Foreign Secretary. It was funded to pilot stage by the AFC and even further by Film Australia, but each time rejected by broadcasters — in part for including the characters' blunt espousal of climate change as fact, without providing a so-called 'balancing' viewpoint. A few years later, ABC TV showed the largely discredited The Great Global Warming Swindle (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boj9ccV9htk) in July 2007; not until a change of federal government did SBS commission a film showing a Pacific Islander's perspective on sea level rise in Tom Zubrycki's *The Hungry Tide* (2011). An examination of the 'gatekeeping' roles of commissioning editors and art curators alike could easily fill a thesis!

[176] Doyle, *Seeing the Climate? The Problematic Status of Visual Evidence in Climate Change Campaigning*, 288.

McDonalds (2009, 20mins) shifts the time and space of some unmentioned disaster to the hyperreal landscape of an abandoned McDonalds store in which the floodwaters steadily rise. In so doing, Superflex provide a humorous yet unsettling example of the power of artistic ambiguity.

Figure 20. Superflex, *Flooded McDonalds*, 2008. HD Video, 21mins. Pilot Galeri, http://www.pilotgaleri.com/exhibitions/detail/12 - accessed 31 October 2013.

Without going too far down the "two cultures" dead end, if classical scientific practise seeks to eliminate ambiguity from its enquiries, art's power derives *from* its ambiguity, its affect, taking us by surprise to make us think, interpret and respond. Science offers "truths" based on evidence and data, but we take different sorts of truths from art when they are encapsulated within "profound aesthetic experiences".[177]

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[177] Lippard and Smith, *Weather Report : Art and Climate Change*, 14.

4. Discussion of my Creative Works

4.1 *Raise | Retreat | Rise (Polyptych N°1)* **(2013)**

Midway through the course of my MFA, I became quite frustrated: as a documentarist, I was accustomed to working evidentially, yet climate change is a subject that is largely 'unseen'. My response was to make a work which interrogates the idea of imperceptibility. Please refer to Section 8.1 on p.93 for further elaboration upon the work's themes.

Initially I'd conceived the work as a hinged triptych of one iPad flanked by two iPhones, a commentary on our adoration of i-Devices (in which the 'i' prefix signifies the primacy of individualistic modes of self-construal). As I was on exchange at the time, it was eventually completed as a split-screen pseudo-triptych of portholes (ie. it did not fold), for reasons of cost and simplicity. A wooden housing built over a monitor gives a slight depth to the apertures and also replaces the problematic rectangular frame with a circle, a shape that carries a host of cultural, ecological and scientific associations.

At 8hrs05mins the work embodies what Mondloch terms an "open-ended temporality"[178] in that viewer leaves the work mentally visualising its continuance; it becomes projected forwards in their minds. The rhetoric is of real-time observation and interconnectedness. And yet it's also about our failure to perceive fundamental changes.

The work is exhibited as part of *Re:Cinema — The Persistence of the Cinematic in Contemporary Practice*, a research collaboration between Sydney College of the Arts and Parsons The New School for Design, in Sydney May/June and New York December 2013. It was also presented at "Climate Innovate", an arts/sciences symposium organised by Culture at Work in Sydney on 21 September 2013.

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[178] Mondloch, *Screens : Viewing Media Installation Art*, 43.

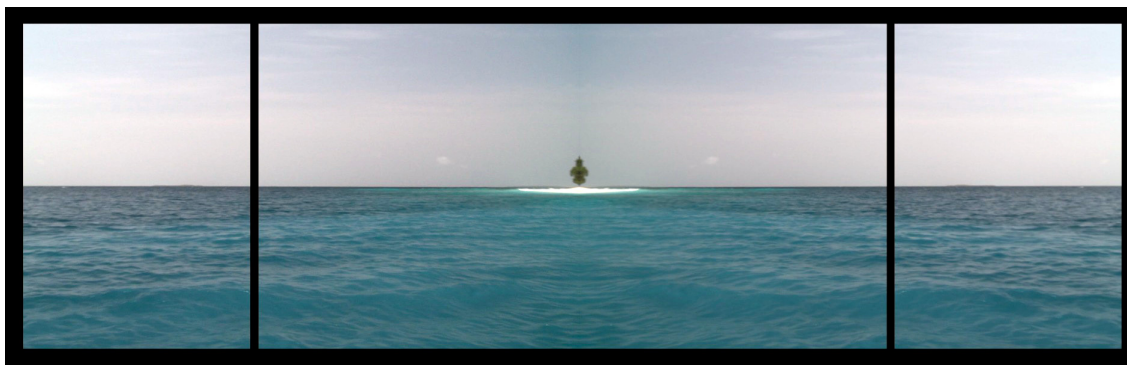**4.2** *No Man is an Island (Polyptych N°2)* **(2013)**

Figure 21. Adam Sébire, *Polyptych N°2*, 2013. Work-in-progress screen-capture, Oct 2013.

4.2.1 Aims & Intentions.

In Chapter 3, I explored how the extent of climate change is almost in inverse proportion to our collective willingness to confront it. I argued that humans are prone to dissociation from that which they have no experience of and that traditional forms of representation failed to engage with the issue on many levels.

In approaching my practical work, I sought a spatialised form through which I could explore the dislocated phenomenology of climate change on an affective level. I aimed to make perceptible certain interrelationships which might not be apparent in our everyday consideration of climate change, while engaging the audience kinaesthetically. Rather than present any great truth or insight, I sought a form that might provoke an engaged visitor to make active and autonomous connections between ideas. As "the portal of sense-making"[179], form often determines the power of a documentary to transform an audience. The form here is clearly of the expressive/poetic modes but it is also physicalised in a way that references the dissociated spatial discourses of climate change and our need for a deeper relationship with the natural world. Finally, I wanted to share the affect and contemplation that I believed lay latent in the time-honoured form of the polyptych.

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[179] Michael Renov, "Away from Copying: The Art of Documentary Practice" in Pearce and McLaughlin, *Truth or Dare : Art & Documentary*, 17.

4.2.2 Background.

The closed polyptych is inspired by *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Bosch's exterior panels appear to depict Earth on the third day of the Creation Myth, when dry land was separated from ocean. In my work the exterior prefigures the spatial discontinuities of the interior and, like any grisaille, beckons us in.

My polyptych attempts to explore dissociation: spatial, temporal and cognitive. The islands I have filmed, particularly in Venice and the Maldives, embody the idea of the self-contained utopia, paradise on the verge of loss.

My emphasis on the meniscus (waterline) perspective replaces the familiar 'tourist' view of these locations with a sense of unease. The meniscus holds a strange liminal quality; the sense of a threshold, beyond which lies drowning or submergence. Heightened by slow-motion filming, these are sensations that work upon humans in an elemental way.[180] Interestingly, the meniscus line further relates to the aesthetics of the divided image on a purely graphical level.

4.2.3 Techniques & Technologies.

If visiting dozens of multiscreen installations has convinced me of anything it's that a collection of pleasing images functioning on the level of spectacle alone is unsatisfying. It is quite clear that materials needed to be shot with a coherent theoretical programme and organising principles in mind.

Before the shoot, I decided which locations would be spatialised on which sides of the polyptych, where the horizon would lie, and planned certain shot sizes. This ensured I had a number of frameworks in place before editing. Of course, as in any documentary shoot, circumstances contrived to frustrate about 90% of planned shots. Furthermore, shooting 9:16 was a lesson in normative technics. Some stills tripods enable it but even then, a camera

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[180] Indeed it might be noted that water and carbon, at the heart of the predicament of sea level rise, are two extremely elemental substances for human beings, comprising approximately 53% and 18% of our mass respectively. See Earl Frieden, "The Chemical Elements of Life" in *Scientific American* (Jul 1972): 52-60.

placed at 90° to the angle it's designed for obscures the display for most shots.[181] Similarly, editing technology remains very much designed for 16:9 single-screen continuity editing; to edit multi-screen works, one must laboriously reduce them to split screen versions first.

4.2.4 Audiovisual Strategies.

My shots attempt to keep horizons consistent to create a sense of disparate islands that, regardless of their glamour, are unified by the ocean as the great leveller. This visual connection makes conjoint locales that we know to be separated. Similarly, moments of simultaneous movement between screens (eg. pans) can provide not only a formal but visceral sense of connectedness. Certain directionally-coordinated pans in coexistent screens can either physically repel the visitor or draw them into the image. At one point, a wide shot of an atoll begins panning in opposite directions, creating a strange gravity towards the centre of the frame. The image, here a disappearing island, is reminiscent of moving Rorschach technique test, used in psychoanalysis to diagnose underlying disorders of patients who are reluctant to talk about their thoughts. It seemed apposite in a work dealing with climate change.

Manovich laments that the trend to fill every space on a screen, the information density of capitalist culture which "leaves no place for the aesthetics of emptiness and minimalism".[182] My work is not striving for immersion or excess. If immersion typically aims to efface the divisions between screen(s) and viewer my wings create very obvious 'seams' in the structure. They do lend a sense of engulfment nonetheless, a sense of the image becoming architectural to escape the flatness of the screen/wall plane; a kind of 2½ D. The wings open only to around 150°, in order to suggest a chapel-like space of personal reflection. Contemplation of the interior panels' multiple spatio-temporal conjunctions, and "the revelation of

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[181] Matthew Barney tells Doug Aitken that he wanted to shoot *Cremaster 3* (2002) in portrait orientation, but was thwarted simply by the logistical nightmare of exhibiting it. See Aitken and Daniel, *Broken Screen : 26 Conversations with Doug Aitken : Expanding the Image, Breaking the Narrative*.

[182] Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 274-5.

previously unrecognised relationships between existing phenomena, both physical and metaphysical."[183]

The empty, corked bottle we see on-screen (referencing invisibility of CO_2) is displayed as a ready-made sculptural form suspended from the exhibition space ceiling, an interventionist presence that breaks from the screen-plane to access a more museum-like discourse. As an onscreen motif it functions as what Marsha Kinder calls a "disruptive" or "disjunctive" object to navigate "from one scene or discursive level to another".[184] I strictly avoid narrativity in my shot structure; instead the shots form a database of impressions from around the world at a particular juncture in its geological history.

The work steers clear of truth claims, but presents two interviews offering different types of knowing or 'sensing'. The old lady's interview in the Maldives initially seemed problematic in the sense that it risked casting her as a victim. However, in juxtaposition with the Italian coastal morphologists, she becomes representative of 'citizen sensing'.[185] She senses with her body; the scientists with their instruments. The interviews present not truths, but people seeking comprehension of environmental changes. The interviews offer a kind of polyphony while the overall sound design emphasises spatialisation; acoustics being one of the ways by which we come to know an architectural space, whether we're conscious of it or not.

4.2.5 Presentation.

The installation is proposed for the perfectly-sized and textured chapel-like space beneath SCA's Venetian clock tower, topped appositely with its copper tidal-ball spire to measure water levels in the underground reservoir.

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[183] Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (London: Studio Vista, 1970), 346.

[184] Kinder examines Buñuel's use of such "incongruous objects" or "hotspots" in Kinder, "Hot Spots, Avatars, and Narrative Fields Forever: Buñuel's Legacy for New Digital Media and Interactive Database Narrative," 7.

[185] Jennifer Gabrys, "Planet Sensing," in *Sense of Planet: The Arts and Ecology at Earth Magnitude* (Radisson Blu Hotel, O'Connell St, Sydney: A NIEA Symposium convened by Douglas Kahn and Jill Bennett, 2012). Gabrys uses the term to connote individuals becoming more involved in understanding and aware of their environmental changes. It is thus less about scientific research than about citizen engagement.

Moving image artists face the perennial problem of exhibition spaces ill-suited to controlled darkness or audio. Kossoff argues against blackened exhibition spaces on the rather tired grounds that it makes invisible the institutional framework that encompasses it.[186] On an affective level however, I feel darkness decontextualises the space and brings with it a state of vulnerability.

If the cinema implies a communal space of shared emotion my work requires another mode of viewing. It is important that the viewer make physical contact with the polyptych. It is fair to say that simply opening or closing the wings is a limited, predetermined action; there is no choice beyond when to move them. Such compulsory viewer 'participation' can emerge "as a form of submission", argues Mondloch.[187] My point with the moving panels however, is not about making a choice but about the action, with all its physical, historical and affective baggage including the Early Netherlandish diptych's qualities of personal experience, reflection and revelation. The kinaesthetic experience represents an investment by the viewer who actively engages with the work. Moving the wing panels ideally requires collaboration by visitors. The form also situates the visitors' actions metaphorically: the wings offering a portal to an phenomenon that we can 'shut out' because it is alien to us. The action of opening (or closing) the polyptych's wings, seeks to open the visitor's receptiveness to other modes of knowing climate change.

The lunettes provide complementarity and art-historical references but also signal to the viewer that the panels are designed to be opened and closed. Doing so engages our haptic senses, specifically our kinaesthetic (also called proprioceptive) senses, which give us information about the muscular forces we are applying and bodily motion it creates.[188] It has long been denied visitors to polyptychs, both in churches and galleries, despite the enormous

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[186] Kossoff, *On Terra Firma : Space, Place and the Moving Image*, 112.

[187] Mondloch, *Screens : Viewing Media Installation Art*, 26.

[188] Haptic sense data can be either tactile or kinaesthetic. See Christine Youngblut et al, "Review of Virtual Environment Interface Technology", Institute for Defense Analyses, 1996. http://www.hitl.washington.edu/scivw/scivw-ftp/publications/IDA-pdf/HAPTIC1.PDF Accessed 31 October 2013.

significance to the form. The gallery discourse usually constrains its visitors to visual, sonic and (occasionally) olfactory elements. Partly in the interests of conservation, it is also due to institutional conventions which emphasise 'consumption' of art over engagement with it. Touching a work can thus become a minor act of subversion for the visitor.

To show work on a cathode ray tube television nowadays would risk referencing what Morse terms "the primordial American video installation – the home TV set".[189] Yet as flatscreen anorexia takes its course (the LED screens that make my work newly feasible are a mere 65mm deep), wall-mounted screens become less sculptural and more 'moving paintings'. This technological counter-trajectory makes a revival of painting's more sculptural Early Renaissance forms oddly apt.

4.2.5 Power Structures.

I was concerned that my creation of an art 'object', particularly one comprised of such icons of consumerism would contradict the ideals of sustainable art. Employing solar panels to power the screens risked greenwashing this hypocrisy. By using solar I would not be critiquing the power structures that keep renewable energies from replacing fossil fuels; it is already common knowledge that base-load solar power is both possible and desirable. Instead I decided to foreground the 'out of sight, out of mind' mentality that enables the continuation of fossil-fuel power in Australia.

Normally Sydney University's power comes from the coal-fired power grid. We can switch on a light here, blissfully unconcerned that a coal fired power station in the Hunter Valley starts working slightly harder, emitting more invisible pollutants that will remain in the atmosphere for up to a thousand years' hence, and which may one day have some degree of impact on the world's ice sheets and consequently, sea levels. Fundamentally, dozens of times a day, cause is being separated from effect by each of us accessing fossil fuel energy.

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189 Morse, *Virtualities : Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture*, 162.

Thus to critique underlying power structures — literally! — I intend to hire a noisy, stinky two-stroke generator to place outside the clock tower and run a red cable to link it to my installation inside. I propose to calculate and purchase carbon credits to cover the generator's use for the duration of the exhibition. These will be displayed next to the generator in the style of ancient church indulgences (sometimes called 'tariff penances' or 'absolution certificates'). It was writer George Monbiot who linked the two, noting that indulgences, popular in the Early Renaissance, enabled the purchase of absolution, allowing the rich to feel better about sinful behaviour without actually changing their ways.

> "This [carbon offsets] is not the first time such schemes have been sold. Just as in the 15th and 16th centuries you could sleep with your sister and kill and lie without fear of eternal damnation, today you can live exactly as you please as long as you give your ducats to one of the companies selling indulgences. It is pernicious and destructive nonsense."[190]

The work is under construction at the time of writing and is expected to be exhibited at SCA from 4th to 11th December, 2013. An appendix containing documentation, Section 8.2 on p.94, will be added after the exhibition and examiners' appraisal of the work.

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[190] George Monbiot, "Paying for Our Sins," *The Guardian*, 18 October 2006 2006. http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2006/oct/18/green.guardiansocietysupplement Accessed 31 October 2013.

5. Conclusion

If our failure to engage with the issues presented by climate change is at least partly due to disconnection (from the impact of our invisible CO_2 emissions in places and times that seem remote to us) then as well as new ways of perceiving our relationship with the environment and new models of behaviour, we also need new forms of representation. Forms that interrogate space as well as time, that replace the passive spectator with the critical and creative visitor, and that offer different ways of knowing the world.

This is not a new goal by any means, as I showed in Chapter 1, tracing multi-channeled art forms from the Early Renaissance to the present-day renaissance of spatialised video installation art. Whether using moving images immersively or fragmenting and deconstructing them, the common aim has been to enable us to understand and engage with the world in new ways. From the Netherlandish diptych's emphasis on personal devotion to immersive 1960s intermedia events promising "oceanic consciousness" to *Ten Thousand Waves'* controlled explosion of screens and speakers, kinaesthetic engagement has always opened wide art's affective potential.

For a documentary filmmaker such as myself, the move to multiple screens requires a total rethink of approaches. Rather than work against the limitations of such installations the canny filmmaker embraces them, handing the decentred authorship to the mobile (and possibly distracted) visitor.

The form suits modes of documentary that do not rely on a narrative unfurling of visible and audible evidence; modes which work with spatialised image flows in which 'next' is trumped by 'next to' and in which echoes & loops replace beginnings & endings. The documentary artist supplants the form's traditional truth claims with acknowledgement of the constructedness of all images.

This paper has attempted to provide a historical context for the form I propose, the Documentary Polyptych. On the way back from the Early Renaissance it collected Vertov, Eisenstein and Deleuze in order to re-evaluate their theories amidst the image relationships proposed by multiple screen environments. Specifically I argued that montage, when spatialised, works dialectically *between* screens, and might be interrogated using Eisenstein's ideas. Further I argued that coexistent screens become coefficients, thus multiplying the affective potential of installations (at the expense of rhetorical capacity) in a way that might be approached through Deleuze's time-image crystal. For the installation form is at its strongest when intuition and contemplation are foregrounded, when understanding accumulates and the visitor locates meaning *between* the screens.

This opens up new possibilities for the documentary genre and brings me to the third prong of my investigation: how documentary art might address the phenomenon of climate change, lying as it does outside the realms of both visible evidence and our cocooned quotidian experience. In my practical works *Polyptych N°1* raises questions about how we relate to and document that which is largely imperceptible while *Polyptych N°2* addresses one predicted manifestation of climate change, the disappearance of low-lying islands beneath sea level rise. My work explores whether affect can work upon the psyche in ways that rational cognition cannot.

The formal language of spatialised screens is still searching for a syntax. Perhaps it is futile to try to establish one (though my taxonomy of multi-screen correspondences in the Appendix makes an attempt) given the variegated possibilities suggested by expanded cinema to date. Our screen-obsessed contemporary society creates a field ripe for exploration however.

Further research is warranted into some of the possibilities I raise, from the suggestion that the polyptychal tradition may be indebted to Marco Polo and The Orient, to my tentative propositions of the crystalline space, dialectical montage between screens, screen correspondences and the kinaesthetic eye.

By plucking the form of the polyptych from the fast-flowing currents of art history after 500 years I hope to open another channel for documentary in the gallery. The *documentary polyptych* enables the metaphorical spatialisation of conceptual relationships and the elevation of kinaesthetic and affective engagement above rhetorical or narrative structures, in this case to approach the dislocated phenomenology of climate change.

As screens become cheaper, wider, thinner and ever more prolific, the question is perhaps less whether split-screen will triumph over the more sculptural multiple-screen form than what we will see upon them. What might 'broadband cinema' look like? Will distracted zapping reign supreme amidst simplistic tropes of simultaneity and control? Or can documentary rebound from its ethical crises in poetic, spatialised screen forms that offer new ways of seeing once more?

As entire nations teeter on submergence, our befuddled society craves meaning, but drowns in information. Art — if it can withstand co-option as propaganda — offers documentary a way out of the Discourses of Sobriety through paradox, parable and juxtaposition; rhetoric replaced by visceral engagement; and ambiguity celebrated rather than shunned. The kinaesthetic eye of the active visitor let loose in the multi-screen installation picks up Vertov's broken dream of new means of perceiving the world across time and space — just when, more than ever, we sorely need to see it with fresh eyes.

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7. Appendix: a tentative taxonomy of multi-screen documentary

A taxonomy can be helpful when exploring a genre, and it might be argued that multi-screen works constitute just that.[191] Instead of Eisenstein's *oppositional* dialectics this genre is instead driven by *correspondences* or commonalities. In a multi-screen work these correspondences may overlap, and may change from one type to another. Various correspondences between sound and image may also exist.

At the most basic level we engage with multi-screen works on an innate level of pattern recognition: commonalities and differences. Pattern recognition is a skill that gave humans the upper hand, evolutionarily.

> "Confronted with complex interactions and wide-ranging inputs, we manage to sort through the clutter, emerging with dots that we can connect and actions we can take. Pattern recognition requires abstraction, distinguishing data from noise."[192]

Only after patterns do we search for structural principles, synergies, conceptual commonalities and subtexts.

I propose the following *types of visual correspondences*, identifiable when relating images to each other across two or more screens, and offer examples for each.

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[191] Marchessault describes how *Labyrinthe* editor Colin Low sketched a list of editing possibilities enabled by the multi-screen form following Expo 67. My taxonomy however is a separate attempt to codify potential strategies.
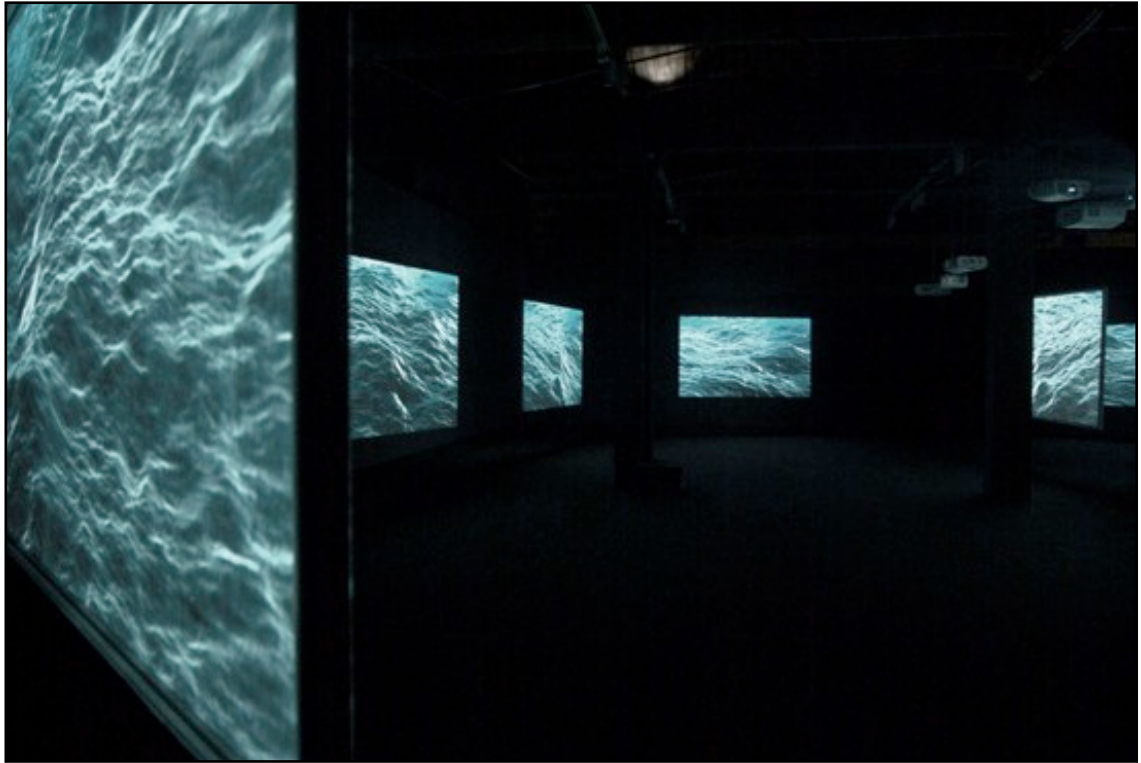
[192] Uricchio, "Moments of Innovation: When Documentary and Technology Converge".

Multi-screen correspondence by:

Repetition:

    Multiple uses of the same shot(s), whether synched or not.

        e.g. CGI wave sequences of Isaac Julien's *Ten Thousand Waves*

Translation:

    Recognisably altered versions of a shot (eg. mirrored or slowed)

        Mirrored shots on flanking screens in Abel Gance's *Napoleon*

Distribution:

Spatialising different parts of the one shot across multiple screens

AES+F's *The Feast of Trimalchio*

Roman Kroitor & Colin Low's *In The Labyrinth* (1967) (below)

Simultaneity:

Shots recorded at the same time by multiple cameras. Usually different angles on elements of the same scene, but sometimes also spatially separated scenes.

Steve McQueen's *Drumroll* (1998)

Vernon Ah Kee's *Tall Man* (2010) (below)
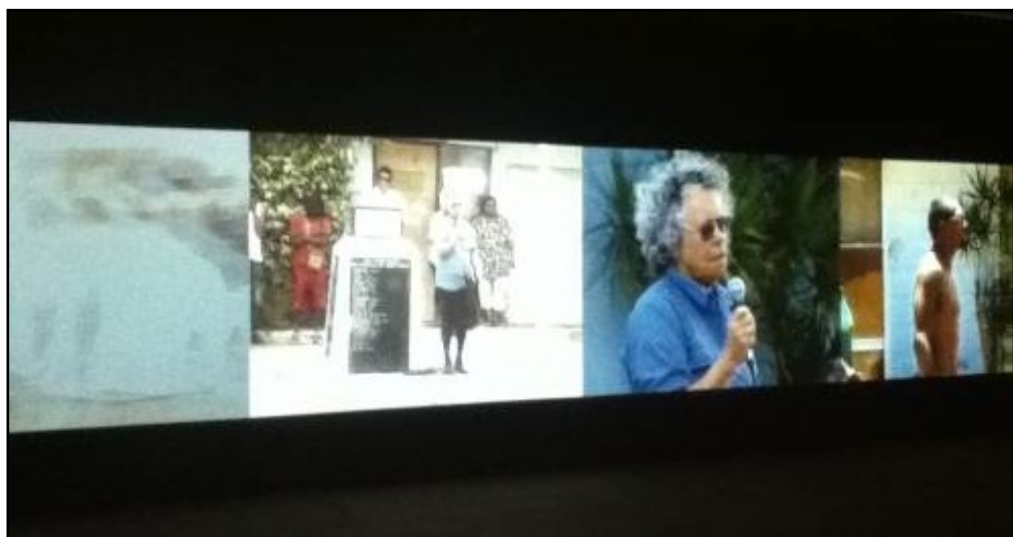
Coverage:

Shots relating to the same place, captured at different times. (Often
presented to give a sense of simultaneity.)

Eija-Liisa Ahtila's *Horizontal* (2011) (below) (Ahtila filmed
the tree in stages, ascending between each on a cherry-picker)

Dialectics:

Shots neither from the same scene nor same time, where a connection
is implied not through continuity, but subtext.

Mark Boulos' *All that is Solid Melts Into Air* (2008)
Ali Karma's *Obstructions* (2005-) (below)
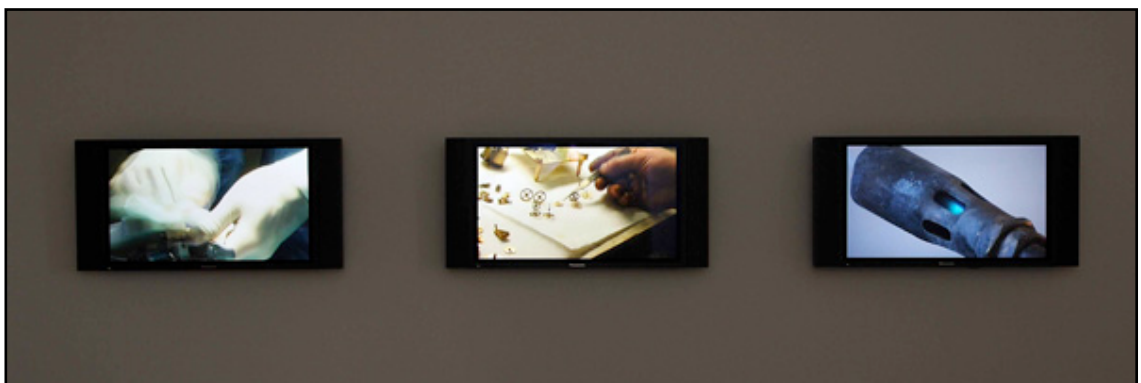
Alternation:

One (or more) screen(s) is active while others are frozen, blank or otherwise inactive.

Adel Abidin's *Three Love Songs* (2010) (below) (at any one time two of Abidin's three screens show a chanteuse resting, whilst on the third she is performing)

Graphicality:

Abstract or textual relationships across multiple screens.

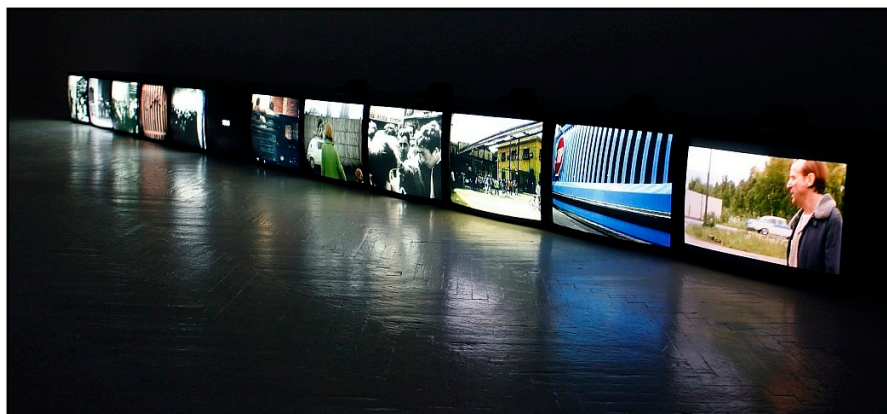Oskar Fischinger's *Raumlichtkunst* (1926) (below)
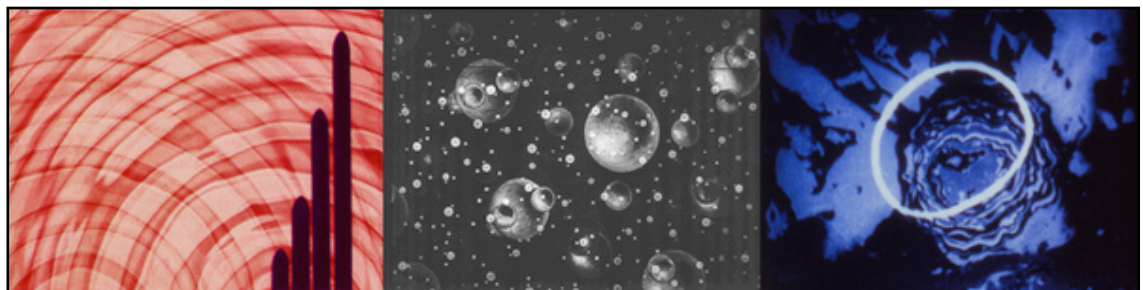
Commonality:

An single element in common across multiple screens/locations

Kutluğ Ataman's *1+1=1* (2002)

Harun Farocki's *Workers Leaving the Factory in 11 Decades* (2006)

8. Documentation of Works for Examination

8.1 *Polyptych N°1: raise | retreat | rise* **(2013)**

Three HD videos, each 8hrs05mins at 24fps.

HD monitor. Wooden housing 100 x 100 x 9cm with three circular apertures.

Adam Sébire's video triptych deals with the sensory imperceptibility of climate change in our day-to-day existence, postulating it as one explanation for our collective inaction in the face of an existential threat.

Figure 22. Adam Sébire, *Polyptych N°1: raise | retreat | rise* , 2013. Production maquette by the author.

We are presented with three porthole-like apertures which take their cue from various spheres of the Earth sciences: in this case, the atmosphere, cryosphere, and hydrosphere. Through them the viewer encounters three shots of extraordinary duration. Each shot, recorded at 60 frames per second and played back at 24, runs simultaneously and continuously for eight hours and five minutes. They are recorded using digital technology unencumbered by the need to swap film-rolls or videotapes.

The duration references another work which plays with the idea of imperceptibility: Andy Warhol's 1964 film *Empire* also runs for

Figure 23. Adam Sébire, *Polyptych N°1: raise | retreat | rise* , 2013.
Re:Cinema Exhibition, SCA, June 2013.
Installation photo by Ryszard Dabek.
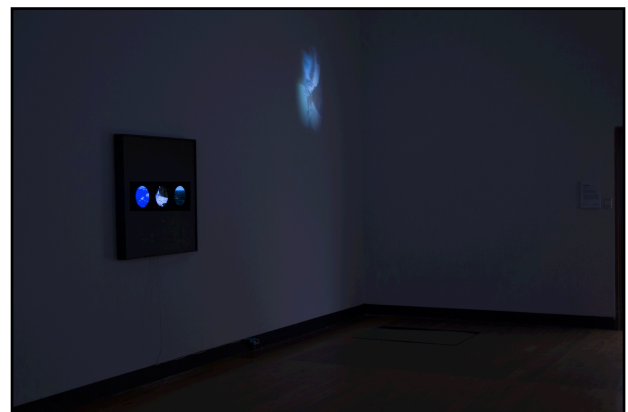
8hr05min. A single shot (but for film-roll changes) of New York's Empire State Building as it disappears into the night, *Empire* was filmed at 24 frames per second but is slowed to 16 during projection to further the imperceptibility of the on-screen changes.

In *raise | retreat | rise* each shot appears essentially unchanging but for waves, passing clouds and periodic lens-cleaning by the artist. Yet in the time taken to view the work once from beginning to end, peer-reviewed science tells us anthropogenic atmospheric CO_2 levels will be raised by approximately 14 million metric tonnes; Switzerland's mountain glaciers will retreat an average of 20mm; and the world's oceans will rise by at least 0.003mm. These changes — though disturbingly rapid in geoscience terms — lie beyond the perceptual limits of both the medium, and our senses.

8.2 *No Man is an Island (Polyptych Nº2)* **(2013)**

Duration: 29 mins.
5-channel HD video, 5.1 surround audio.
5 LED displays, steel & wooden frames, hinges, handles, corked bottle.
Electricity generator, oil, petrol, offset credits for 82kg of CO_2e.
Closed: 1200 x 905 x 340 mm
Open: 2400 x 905 x 170mm

Figure 24. Adam Sébire, *No Man is an Island (Polyptych Nº2),* 2013. Installation view.

This work, discussed prior to its execution in Section 4.2 on p.72, was first shown in the SCA Postgraduate Exhibition at Sydney College of the Arts from 4-11 December 2013. Documentation is available both online at http://www.adamsebire.info/ and in the digital stills and videos that accompany this paper on Sydney eScholarship Repository. The explanatory text from the above website is reproduced in italics below:

No Man is an Island is a 5-channel "documentary polyptych", a form artist/ filmmaker Adam Sébire has been developing ever since an encounter with the van Eyck brothers' Adoration of the Mystic Lamb (1432), perhaps the world's most famous 'painting with doors' in Ghent, Belgium. The few polyptychs still in existence can no longer be opened or closed as intended, denying the form its unique kinaesthetic affect.

This affect is vital: the work reveals itself via physical engagement, through a gesture of openness made by the visitor's arms. The wings perhaps constitute an Early Renaissance form of immersive interaction, and here they are updated for an era marked by the proliferation of digital screens. Only very recently have new, thin LED screens made such a work possible.

The artwork takes as its theme the phenomenon of sea level rise, contrasting experiences on two 'utopian' isles (Venice & Maldives), and juxtaposing them with Norway's rapidly retreating glaciers. Shots at meniscus-level create a sense of drowning while consistent horizons and parallel actions link geographically disparate locations.

The 'unseen' nature of anthropogenic climate change poses particular challenges, both for a culture that emphasises 'seeing is believing' and for documentary forms traditionally reliant on visible evidence. The work explores crucial dislocations — of cause from effect, of today's action from tomorrow's result, of behaviour here from outcome there — through the spatialised form of a multi-panelled polyptych with which the visitor physically interacts.

Rather than displace its own carbon emissions to a coal-fired power station out of both sight & mind, the polyptych is powered by a fossil-fuelled generator outside the exhibition venue, challenging our habitual dislocation of responsibility, of action from consequence, every time we flick a power switch.

Carbon offsets have been bought according to the work's projected emissions, and are displayed in the style of a Church indulgence certificate. Indulgences were popular in the Netherlands during polyptychs' 15th century heyday. It was writer George Monbiot who linked carbon offsets with indulgences, noting that

both enable the purchase of absolution, allowing the rich to feel better about sinful behaviour without actually changing their ways:

"This [carbon offsetting] is not the first time such schemes have been sold. Just as in the 15th and 16th centuries you could sleep with your sister and kill and lie without fear of eternal damnation, today you can live exactly as you please as long as you give your ducats to one of the companies selling indulgences." [1]

[1] George Monbiot, "Paying for Our Sins," The Guardian, 18 October 2006.

Adam Sébire is a photographer & filmmaker with numerous broadcast credits to his name. His artistic practice focuses on multi-screen documentary polyptychs to explore both sea level rise and the cognitive dissociations underlying climate change.

His previous gallery exhibitions include Roads to Nowhere (2012, part of the Head On Photo Festival, Vivid Sydney and Rocks Pop-Up); and Raise | Retreat | Rise (2013, part of the Re:Cinema exhibition in Sydney & New York City and a collateral event of ISEA Sydney). Adam's films include Echoes Across the Divide (2006) and Carried by the Wind (2008).

Film excerpt from La Bête Humaine (Dir: Jean Renoir, 1938)

After some discussion, the School decided against the proposed exhibition space in the water tower's ground floor, and instead the work was allocated SCA's so-called "Dark Space" in what was, at the time, the Sculpture Building. The space featured three crumbling sandstone walls and a fourth black wooden wall, with a dog-legged entranceway and black felt curtain providing the requisite darkness.

During installation it was observed that despite the light focused on the suspended bottle, the black frame of the polyptych tended to disappear into the darkness. Several small LED lights were added atop and below the central panel, the latter serving to highlight the handles. (Still the visitor needed to allow a few minutes for their eyes to adjust in order to make out the topmost wave-like outline of the structure.)

A portable petrol-powered generator was placed in front of the Sculpture Building, connected to the polyptych via fifty metres of alarmingly orange extension lead. It powered all five screens, the Mac Mini, LED lighting and audio (but not, alas, the Mac Pro, which would have risked spiking the limited electrical current available). The generator's four-stroke petrol supply lasted approximately four hours, requiring the work to be shut down for fifteen minutes a day to allow refuelling. The indulgence certificate was embossed with a wax seal, framed, and placed adjacent to the generator.

After some discussion with the curator, I was permitted to add a wall text briefly describing the role of the generator in 'making present' the work's carbon emissions. (A paragraph explaining my choice of the polyptych form was removed however, because the School does not normally permit explanatory wall-texts, and the powers-that-be apparently considered this third paragraph excessive. I am strongly in favour of supplying a little interpretative guidance to those who seek it and feel that a readily available text can be particularly useful where the artist desires their work to have agency. I did not pursue the matter, as I was grateful to be the one student permitted any text at all!)

In order to encourage people to engage with the work physically, an additional sign was placed just outside the black curtain:

Please open/close the polyptych slowly & with great care.
Return the wings to the closed position before leaving.
Children must be supervised.

Some visitors nonetheless failed to engage with the work. Perhaps they did not read the sign, or were content to view the closed polyptych only, so alien was the object, or so ingrained were their assumptions that one could not touch an artwork. Two friends sheepishly reported that they'd stayed for ten minutes, listening to the audio (which could be heard even when the panels were closed) but had not thought to open the wings nor seen the handles as invitations to engage with the object. At the other extreme, one family on opening night destroyed the centre surround speaker and very nearly the bottle, illustrating the perils of encouraging audience members to engage with an art object!

For those who did engage, the work exuded a sense of gravitas; weighing 110kg in total, there was a satisfying sense of solidity as one opened and closed the doors, each 170mm thick. When opened, the polyptych was just over 2 metres wide, enabling the angled wings to fill one's peripheral vision when standing less than a metre away. The frame was mounted with french cleats, attached to 4x2" pine which was dynabolted into cement, and sat around 1.5m from the ground, placing the meniscus shots at approximately eye-level for most visitors.

The ongoing smell and noise of the generator (well within OH&S guidelines at approximately 70dB) caused controversy amongst some faculty administration staff who passed by daily and who, without any apparent irony, made approaches to relocate the generator "out the back somewhere".

In retrospect, sound of the polyptych itself could have been improved by a decent speaker system and proper surround mixing. Additionally, the work was too long. At 29 minutes, looped, I was able to test a lot of visual ideas

which practicalities such as monitor hire and construction had prevented before the exhibition. For me to see the result of various techniques and conjunctions was invaluable. However, this may have best been reserved for a "director's cut" as the length clearly worked against the audience's willingness to open and close the wings, as did the presence of multiple visitors in the space at any one time: there was no ideal moment, let alone any audiovisual cue, for a viewer to move the wings. No seating was provided, to encourage people to view and interact with the work at close quarters; however this was another element that perhaps called for a shorter duration.

The sheer weight, technical complexity, and expense of the large LED screens conspire against *No Man is an Island (Polyptych No.2)* being shown again at present; however I remain hopeful that a revised version may one day be able to be experienced by a wider audience.
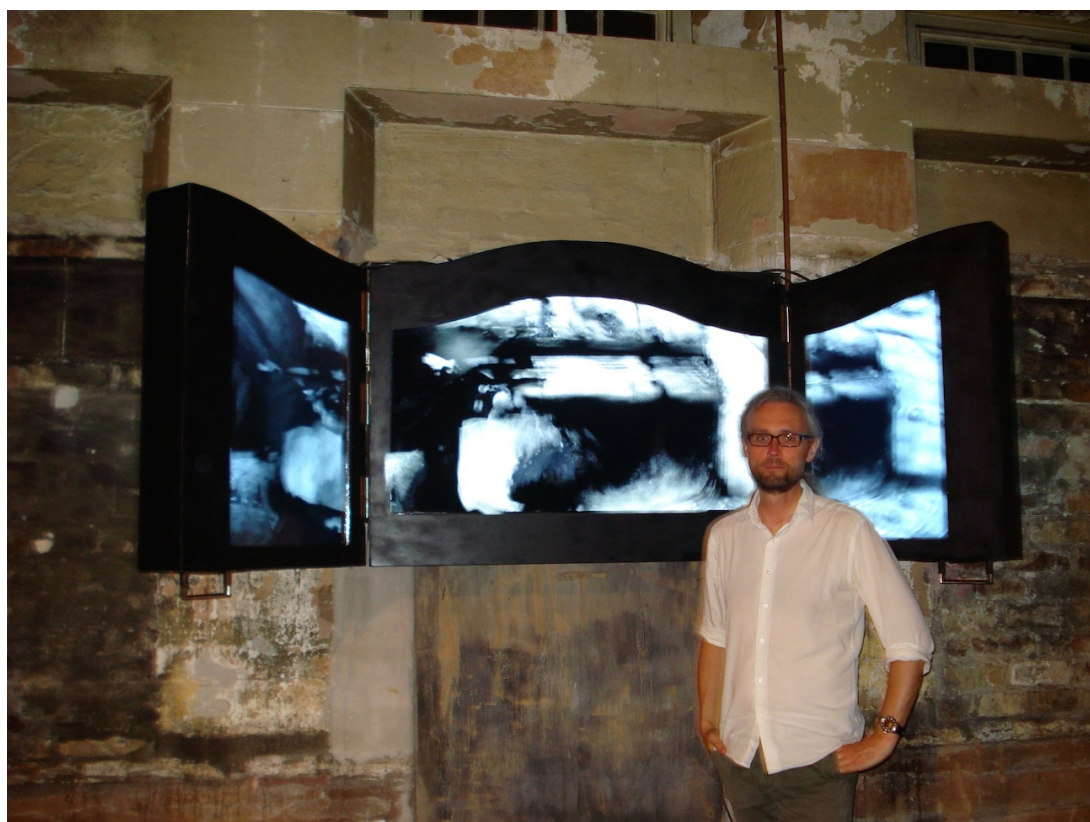

Figure 25. The author with his work *No Man is an Island (Polyptych N°2)*.
Photo taken during installation at Sydney College of the Arts, 3 December 2013.