SITUATING THE IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE:
EXPLORING INTERMEDIAL SITUATIONS IN ART/CINEMA INSTALLATIONS

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Melanie Thekala Wilmink
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Melanie Thekala Wilmink, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, has presented a thesis titled, *Situating the Immersive Experience: Exploring Intermedial Situations in Art/Cinema Installations*, in an oral examination held on April 24, 2014. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

**External Examiner:** *Dr. Christine Sprengler, University of Western Ontario*

**Supervisor:** Dr. Christine Ramsay, Department of Film

**Co-Supervisor:** Prof. Rachelle Viader Knowles, Department of Visual Arts

**Committee Member:** **Dr. Sheila Petty, Faculty of Fine Arts**

**Committee Member:** **Timothy Long, Adjunct**

**Committee Member:** Dr. Carmen Robertson, Department of Visual Arts

**Chair of Defense:** Dr. Carlos Londono Sulkin, Department of Anthropology

*Via tele-conference
**Not present at defense
Abstract

This thesis performs an analysis of three art/cinema case-studies in relation to a selection of cinematic, art historical and cultural theory. The text is split into three theoretical chapters with accompanying case-studies, each of which connects to the others in order to develop contemporary critical theory which corresponds to the experience of affective spectatorial engagement. The first chapter analyzes the 20th century philosophical, psychoanalytic and cultural theories of “aura” as per Walter Benjamin and filtered through Miriam Bratu Hansen, Henri Bergson's conception of “memory”, and Julia Kristeva's “chora” in regards to the creation of equivocal experiences in William Kentridge's *The Refusal of Time* (2012). The second chapter activates theories around haptic visuality and spectatorial embodiment as developed by Laura Marks via Vivian Sobchack and Henri Bergson. It also applies related affect and embodiment theories by Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Greg, Jill Bennett and Sylvia Lavin in order to explore the tactile spectatorial relationship between the physical and virtual in Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* (2012). The final chapter explores research around the nature of the event and contingency through the research of Mary Ann Doane, Malcolm Le Grice, the situationist international movement and Johannes Huizinga. These theories are brought together to explore the active spectatorial participation within Anthony McCall's *Five Minutes of Pure Sculpture* (2012). This research concludes by collecting all of the above theories and positing ways in which they might be productively applied to the creation of new, affective and participatory experiences of contemporary art. It also presents directions for continued research.
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Dedication

I dedicate this research to my incredible partner-in-crime, Luke Black. Without him, I could never have even begun this amazing academic journey. His love and support enabled me to leap from the cliff of steady-employment back into academia, and no words could express my gratitude at his unhesitating willingness to put his own plans on hold and move to Saskatchewan so that I could pursue my dreams. All my love and thanks to him.

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INTRODUCTION

The act of immersion commonly describes submerging one solid body into another—usually liquid or fluid. One immerses a sore ankle into a bath for relief, a tea-bag into hot water to steep, or an object into paint. Among these familiar occurrences, the *Oxford English Dictionary* also references the use of the term within the practice of alchemy, referencing the “[r]eduction of a metal in some solvent”. This is striking, since alchemy is famously known as a pseudo-scientific method for transforming lead into gold, but lesser-known is its adoption as an allegory for spiritual transformation and enlightenment. Using interactions and reactions between chemical bodies as a metaphor, alchemists sought to understand the human condition and transcend earthly reality (McLean). I have long applied this same metaphor to the artistic process, imagining the spectatorial engagement with an art object as a type of crucible of experience, where the spectator’s body and that of the artwork come together in a reaction that transcends their individual properties to create something greater.

This research explores the convergence of the spectatorial body, spatial situation and cinematic art object in order to create an immersive viewing space of simultaneous affect and critical contemplation. Art/cinema installations are engaged here as the point of intersection for these experiences, since these types of works are often characterized by liminal approaches to space and theoretical content. Installation is arguably the epitome of hybrid artistic practices, a position supported by media theorist Kate Mondloch in the introduction to *Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art*. She writes that installation art often overlaps:
...fluxus, land art, minimalism, video art, performance, conceptual art, and process, all of which share an interest in issues such as site specificity, participation, institutional critique, temporality, and ephemerality... These pieces are meant to be experienced as activated spaces rather than as discrete objects: they are designed to ‘unfold’ during the spectator’s experience in time rather than to be known visually all at once. (xii)

Mondloch’s description connects installation art with a new form of engagement with visual art, one that disrupts the notion of art as a single material object, valued for its longevity and attachment to the cult of the author as much as for its aesthetics. It disrupts both the traditional exhibition venues of the art gallery and the cinema in order to create a new zone of experience, which does not rest on either materiality or illusion, but rather on an ambiguous constructed reality that blurs the lines between the two.

In order to understand how these new methodologies of art activate spatial and temporal situations over literal materiality, it is important to understand the appeal of a material art object. Cultural theorist Walter Benjamin described this value as “aura”, or a metaphoric “distance” created by marks of ownership (“The Work of Art” 1169). In his famous essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, Benjamin attaches aura to a bourgeois culture of ownership, and suggests that mechanical technologies of reproduction such as printmaking and cinema might destroy auratic appeal through mass distribution, enabling the proletariat to access art. However, Benjamin’s writings on aura are more complicated than the simple destruction of aura for socialist purposes, and it is particularly important to recognize his interest in cinema as a new way to envision the world. He describes the camera-operator’s vision as “a microcosmic, cellular world that the surgeon operates within” (1179), which both fragments and magnifies our vision, allowing us to fictionally re-construct space and
time, while simultaneously referencing the documentary “truth” of reality created by photography.

In this understanding cinema acts as a double medium, which allows reality and fiction to exist side-by-side, oscillating our perception between real and virtual spaces. It could be said that installation art intensifies this physical and conceptual space/time by creating scenarios and architectures which draw the spectator into a constructed reality. Such works become especially powerful upon the inclusion of media art technologies which blur the boundaries of space, time, reality, fiction and subjectivity even further.

Mondloch writes that:

...[i]nstillations made with media screens are especially evocative in that as environmental, experiential sculptures, they stage temporal and spatialized encounters between viewing subjects and technological objects, between bodies and screens. A potentially new mode of screen-reliant spectatorship emerges in the process... how one sees is just as important as what one sees. (xiii)

This research shares Mondloch’s interest in the process of spectatorship, and similarly investigates media art. However, rather than targeting broadly screen-reliant works, I have selected art/cinema installations which specifically reference both cinematic and visual art contexts and exist in a border-zone between movie theatre, art gallery and public spaces.

Although the screen plays an obvious role in cinematic art, I wish to refrain from limiting what the idea of “screen” might imply. Since this thesis investigates hybrid and interdisciplinary intersections between cinema and visual arts, it requires a re-definition of cinema—one that is more conducive to cross-boundary movement. To that end, I utilize the term art/cinema—borrowed from the book of the same name by Paul Young
and Paul Duncan—to refer to any number of works, single-channel and multi-screen, that “[set themselves] apart from commercial, mainstream fare through aesthetic, ideological, and/or political means” (9). This demarcates works which tread the boundary between visual arts and commercial cinema, and mingle their histories and approaches. It is an interpretation shaped by cinema theorist Jackie Hatfield, who sets forth a broad definition of cinema in her article, “Expanded Cinema: Proto-, Photo and Post-Photo Cinema”. She explains that:

...the term is not yoked to the material conditions of a medium, and the cinematic experience can cross media boundaries or be achieved through a range of media combinations. A cinematic configuration could involve intermedia, performance, spectacle, video, art and technology in addition to film, and could be located within the 'black space' or the 'white cube'...

(262).

As with Mondloch's definition of installation art, this terminology is open to blurred boundaries and hybrid practices. It provides a means to accept past, current and future technologies and approaches into cinematic practice, and accepts visual arts and filmmaking traditions as equal contributors to the work.

In order to distinguish art/cinema from video art or new media installations, I emphasize Hatfield’s focus on cinema history and spectatorial experience. Artist Anthony McCall aptly describes cinema as a “social institution” (qtd. in Young 11); as such, I imagine the cinema as connected less to medium, and more to a set of rituals involving immersion into a narrative over time. Temporality and narrative should not be confused with linearity—there is a strong tradition of non-linear cinema—rather, art/cinema signals an awareness of temporality, duration, and social environment, which become integral to the work. Often, cinema is also linked to the film medium or to a
projected image; however with changing technology and the decline of celluloid in cinema production and exhibition, it would be limiting to exclude works that reference cinematic traditions using non-celluloid mediums. In addition there are many examples of projections that would be classified more in line with visual art, as well as new media presentation screens such as mobile devices, HDTV monitors and computer monitors, which might present cinematic works outside of a formal gallery or theatrical context. This makes it problematic to exclusively deal with single-channel projections. Therefore, this research will examine a variety of art/cinema installation configurations that broadly engage visual arts discourse around situation and spectatorial engagement, while maintaining theoretical and historical connections to cinema.

Artist and filmmaker Malcolm Le Grice describes cinema as “...an act of collusion by the spectator” which hinges on a “...desire for its magic transport [and] resists recognition of the artifice in favour of immersion in the illusion” (230). However this immersion is often critiqued as passive, with its static seating, single point perspective and spectacular narratives. In response to this supposed passivity and commercialism, film and video artists have over time turned to the gallery as a space which might activate the viewer in critical discourse. The gallery traditionally supports a peripatetic circulation of space, where the viewer is in complete control to spend whatever time they like with the objects (Mondloch 56-57). It supposedly creates a distanciated approach to the art-object which encourages contemplation about its conceptual nature, however it often does not provide the immersive durational experience that many cinematic works need to function as intended. This binary of the
black box (theatre) and white cube (gallery) is now part of a common discourse around cinematic exhibition strategies in the gallery, which becomes most interesting and relevant when the boundaries of that binary are blurred. I am interested in the complication of the duality of the white cube and black box because those intermedial spaces offer exciting potential for unusual and active engagements with art/cinema. Works that tread interdisciplinary boundaries draw attention to the situation of the work; they require a reconsideration of the positions of spectator and performer, the role of artwork in the space, the ways that we interact with it, and how we carry that engagement forward into dialogue with other artworks, spectators, and our own subjectivity. Although one could analyze any number of other types of hybrid artistic practices to explore this interdisciplinary complication of situation, of particular interest to my research are works of art/cinema that specifically incorporate hybrid cinema-installation practices, and draw on issues of embodiment, spatiality, performance, situations, and interactivity. These installations are designed to immerse and embody the viewer simultaneously, activating both the supposed critical contemplation of the white cube and the reputed immersion of the black box. Moreover, these works occasionally extend outside of traditional gallery and theatre spaces to incorporate alternative venues such as the outdoors, public space, private space, media facades, virtual space etc. This creates dialogue around the placement of work within a continuum (or in some cases—perhaps more appropriately—a network) that resides between the binary.

Art and film theorist Karyn Sandlos describes the difference between the durational experience of cinema, and that of a non-durational work such as a painting or
sculpture, as one of “deferred action” (“Curating and Pedagogy” 20). This deferred action is a type of unconscious learning, where the spectator must exist in the moment-to-moment of the film in order to fully experience it. It is only after a durational experience of the work is completed that critical dialogue can occur. She elaborates on the emotional connotations of this type of experience, declaring that there is a “temporal difference between... learning about and learning from... as an audience, we cannot learn these histories off by heart; instead, we become implicated with the works in the time of hints, subtle gestures, and flirtatious innuendo” (30). It is in this affective power that the strength of cinematic art lies. It is a power that is often lost when displaced into a gallery where the qualities of darkness, immersion and duration are discarded in favour of documentation and distanciation. Although both poles of the binary maintain their own positive qualities, what is enticing here is the ways in which they are able to co-mingle to create a new type of engagement. Multiplicity is emphasized within these hybrid spaces, with many different perspectives and experiences circulating at the same time to stimulate dialogue. This serves to create a holistic experience of art, one that activates the mind and body in a rich, thoughtful and memorable event.

It is an approach to experience which is best described within affect theory. Employing emotion and embodied experience, affect theory engages our subjective bodies in a relationship with the world around us. Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg write about the power of affective experience in their essay “An Inventory of Shimmers”, where they explain that affect creates a sense of being in the world and interacting with it. It is created from intersections and relations between bodies and
forces which act on one another. It is the way that we build experiences, learn from the past, and engage with the present. However, affect is an amorphous concept, experienced differently by different people. My approach to the art/cinema case-studies in this thesis is one of lived-affect; I have personally experienced each of the following case-studies in exhibition settings. Although this thesis examines spectatorial experiences, it is not a generalized overview of spectatorial theory. Rather, it is an application of theories of aura, affect, situation and experience to my singular perspective as a participant within the immersive spaces of engagement in these works. I argue that these spaces set up a multi-perspectival engagement; therefore, it would be a fallacy to assume that my experience will be identical to that of every other viewer. Additionally, although these works were all presented within larger curatorial contexts, this research is not concerned with curatorial history. I seek to learn from the works themselves, analyzing and interpreting the ways in which the artwork shapes space and spectatorial experience. In many cases, site-specificity is an integral factor in the artwork, creating a dualistic experience of space in a way that does not reduce it to the binary between white cube and black box; instead, these art/cinema installations provide complicated experiences of space, time, spectatorial relations and artistic dialogue.

This analysis is one approach to understanding, which might apply, in part or in whole, to other situations. By understanding how affect is created within the situation of these art experiences, this research furthers the accumulation of knowledge around the spectatorship in relation to interdisciplinary art/cinema exhibition practices. My methodological approach includes qualitative textual analyses of the case-studies,
developing an interpretation using film, visual art, cultural, phenomenological and psychoanalytic theory. It embodies Vivian Sobchak’s cinematic phenomenology as a means to turn us “towards the origins of our experience… acknowledging both the objective enworldedness of phenomena and the subjective embodied experiencing of them… [opening] up fresh possibilities for reflective knowledge… living knowledge and experiencing phenomena, for seeing the world and ourselves in a critically aware way” (28). This approach provides a useful and productive framework for discussion around the individual phenomenological experience of these immersive art/cinema installations.

The following chapters elaborate on theoretical approaches which shape spectatorial engagement within three case-studies of works by leading international practitioners of immersive art/cinema—William Kentridge, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, and Anthony McCall. These works addressed in these case studies were all situated in re-purposed train stations, spaces converted from their original transit functions into artistic contexts. Although the theory and case-studies do not strictly analyze the role of the train-station-gallery spaces as part of their engagement (which would be beyond the scope of this thesis), it is worth noting this commonality between the three, emotionally-driven case-studies. The station-galleries shift the placement of each of the three works out of either the gallery or cinema space into a zone of liminality, transformation, transportation and layered narratives. This certainly influences the artworks as they explore memory, materiality, tactility and contingency to constitute affective spectatorial experiences.

The first chapter elaborates on Benjamin’s theory of “aura” in conjunction with
affective experience and Julia Kristeva’s notion of “chora” as a metaphoric dialogue between the art object and the spectator. This chapter applies these theories to an analysis of Kentridge’s installation, *The Refusal of Time*, exhibited in 2012 at dOCUMENTA 13 in Kassel, Germany. Chapter two introduces Laura Marks' and Vivian Sobchak’s ideas around cinematic subjectivity and “haptic visuality”, incorporating affective relations between the aesthetics of trauma discussed by Jill Bennett and architectural theorist Sylvia Lavin’s metaphoric understanding of the intersections between architecture and cinema as a “kiss”. These theories are then applied to Cardiff and Bures Miller’s *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, also exhibited in 2012 at dOCUMENTA 13 in Kassel, Germany. Finally, chapter three examines the role of the durational event and play when developing active spectatorship. Using writings by film theorist Mary-Ann Doane, artist Malcolm Le Grice, and the situationist international movement, this chapter examines the role of the duration and contingency in constructing experience. This chapter concludes with an analysis of McCall’s *Five Minutes of Pure Sculpture*, exhibited in 2012 at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, Germany.

The overall goal of this research is to examine the ways in which the immersive architectures of the art/cinema installations by William Kentridge, Janet Cardiff, George Bures Miller and Anthony McCall transport and transform our experience of art. The various theories intertwine to examine aspects of engagement which might apply to future curatorial practices, and to reveal the complex factors which affect our engagement with the hybrid medium of art/cinema.
CHAPTER 1: Aura, Chora and William Kentridge

1.1 The Power of Mnemonic Distances

In exploring Walter Benjamin’s “aura”, Henri Bergson's analysis of “memory”, and Julia Kristeva’s “chora”, this chapter will activate these theories beyond their original purposes, and apply them to develop a new understanding of artistic spectatorship. Residing in the realms of philosophy and psychology, these concepts utilize abstracted descriptions of reality in order to describe the intangible activity that happens within the human psyche. They often border on metaphysics and spiritualism, and attempt to explain our engagement with the world around us in a way that scientific observation of the physical cannot, acting as a kind of metaphor. It is an approach that is congruent with Benjamin’s application of aura as described by film scholar Miriam Bratu-Hansen in her essay “Benjamin’s Aura”, where she enriches traditional readings of aura as “shorthand” for the unique authority and authenticity which is often attached to aesthetic objects. She suggests that this understanding is a “reductive reading”, which may not productively apply to contemporary film and media theory (336-337).

She positions an ambiguous reading of Benjamin's auralic theory—connected over his body of work, rather than solely on “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, which focuses on the dissipation of aura through mechanical reproduction. She writes that the purpose of this re-reading is to “...highlight the conflicting roles the concept played in his lifelong endeavor to theorize the conditions of possibility of experience (in the emphatic sense of *Erfahrung*) in modernity” (338). Similarly, this thesis draws on a productive re-reading of Benjamin's aura, among the
other philosophical theories noted previously, in order to create a new conceptualization of experientiality. Instead of confining aura to its historical definition—and the related, often negative, connotations of wealth, ownership and capitalism—I suggest that this theory might be productively applied to understanding how an engagement with an artwork might create a broader sense of empathic connection with the work. There remains an unstable fluctuation between the traditional understanding of aura as aesthetically linked to authenticity and valuation of work as a unique object, and new explorations of aura as an experience or presence created by engaging with an artwork. As demonstrated by Bratu-Hansen, this instability seems embodied in Benjamin's own process, which suggests productive possibility within paradoxes and a multiplicity of perspectives.

Bratu-Hansen notes that although Benjamin was aware of—and found distasteful—the mystical connotations of aura as linked to prognostication and spiritualism, he “...wrests from that field... broader anthropological, perceptual—mnemonic, and visionary dimensions of aura...” (338). Treating the subject with an ambivalence that at once embraced the aesthetic dimensions of the term, while denouncing sentimental mysticism, aura acts as an overarching descriptor for something which cannot be visualized simplistically. The complicated connotations of the term provides a space for discussion to occur and serves as a medium of communication (432), simultaneously carrying and structuring meaning between the spectator and the art object. The ambiguity in the term attempts to reconcile—or at least place in dialogue—the mythological and the analytical. The narrative aspect “aura” as a descriptor behaves
similarly to that of an artwork itself; where imagery and symbolism are used as carriers for information which cannot be directly represented. In every medium, artworks integrate some aspects of narrative, aesthetic structure, concept, affect and distanced criticality, in order to operate on the spectrum in-between the spectator’s mind and body. This holistic approach to spectatorial engagement is distinguished from more abstract academic approaches, which often isolate the mind from the body, valuing a supposedly detached, unemotional analysis that is more akin to the scientific method. The binary between the white cube and black box runs along these same divides of mind versus body, following the assumption that it must be either or. I hope that by situating this discourse within this grey zone, my academic language might resonate with the character of the hybrid works chosen as case-studies.

It is worth re-visiting the definition of aura as laid out by Walter Benjamin in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, which involves an awareness of “distance… however close it may be” (1170), and is connected with an object’s presence in space and time. Aura is distanced from the spectator through distinguishing features that indicate its history, value and meaning. We perceive it as separate from our subjective bodies through physical marks, chemical changes and other markers of past ownership (1168-1169). Even though we might hold it in our hands, the auratic object remains separate from us, because we are continually reminded of its history and the other bodies that have interacted with it. In some cases, the value of the object fluctuates depending on who created, owned or otherwise interacted with it. This character provides capitalist exchange value, increasing its value as a singular object which can be
owned, collected and displayed. Benjamin's research notes in *The Arcades Project* describe a fluctuation between the qualities of auratic distance (and the possibilities of ownership that accompany it) and nearness of trace (as seen in the cinematic image that fragments and replicates the image and disrupts singular possession) (447). One could imagine this idea of distanced aura and immediate traces as the forces of distanciated contemplation and embodied experience that commonly separate the schools of thought around optimal artistic engagements, especially around gallery-based and cinematic-based artworks. Since aura distances the subjectivity of the spectator by demarcating an object with its own history and story to tell, one can imagine that trace instead brings the spectator so close that they lose perspective and awareness of the boundaries between their subjectivity and that of the artwork. It draws us conceptually close to an object, and is tied to our current digital reality where we can access images from across the world at the touch of a finger. We are able to simulate the real object in front of us, and turn our focus from its history towards a more Platonic ideal: that the object is the same for everyone, everywhere. In much of his essay, Benjamin supports the idea that physical visual artworks, such as painting and sculpture, have traditionally contained aura, since they exist as unique objects in our environment. Cinema, on the other hand, is a medium born out of, and designed for, reproductive technology. It is replicable, and since it is not tied to a single object, it does not retain aura.

He further illustrates aura and trace through an analogous description of the painter as a faith-healer and the cameraman as a surgeon. The result of this image is an illustration of distance in the way that each artist works; the faith healer remains outside
of the body, whereas the surgeon decreases the distance so much so that the body becomes abstract—deconstructing into flesh, bones and cells (“The Work of Art” 1179). The fragmented fiction and visual abstraction of cinema distances it from our reality so that it can exist outside of our conceptions of space and time, which theoretically prevents it from referencing aura. However, in establishing this binary, Benjamin also disrupts it. At the end of the “Work of Art” essay, he acknowledges the criticism of passivity levied against cinematic immersion as part of an ancient tradition which underestimates the thoughtfulness of the masses. He describes the polar opposition of distraction and concentration, saying: “[a] man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it… the way the legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art” (1183). This quote highlights the ambiguity of auratic appeal. Spectators often wish to be swept away and transformed by an artwork; part of the mystical appeal of art is that it deeply affects us.

However, Benjamin also links aura to undesirable capitalist values of ownership, which restricts access to the rich. On the other hand, in order to provide everyone equal access to the work within this binary, the masses must take ownership of it. Instead of a singular, auratic experience of the work, the masses consume it. I would argue that this replaces affect with spectacle, and a fascination with ownership not based on the desire for a relationship with the work, but rather—as Guy Debord notes in The Society of the Spectacle—the appearance of possession in order to maintain social prestige (17). In response to this problem, Benjamin disrupts the binary positions by establishing another
option, declaring architecture as the epitome of art “which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction” (1183-1184). In this third space of reception, architecture activates both critical viewing of the design and history of the space—“of a tourist before a famous building”—and also of habitual movement, embodied and unplanned, but certainly essential to our experience of architectural spaces (1184). I would disagree with the term, ‘habit’, as it connotes repeated actions performed without consideration. This speaks most clearly of capitalist consumption, where one just swallows what is offered out of a desire to acquire it, no matter what “it” is. It seems fallacious to assume that any “it” would have no value beyond its ability to be consumed. As such, in the context of architecture (and art/cinema), I would suggest that instead of habit, we consider this approach as unplanned movement, or embodiment, in the durational experience of space—a kind of muscle memory. After all, we do not think about lifting our feet to walk down a hallway, or lifting our arm to move aside a curtain at the window, but both those actions incorporate both an aesthetic experience and a consumptive one. We use spaces, but we also value their beauty, history, and the way they make us feel. If architecture, as Benjamin posits, provides an experience of art that enriches and expands the space of engagement beyond the poles of distanced criticality and embodied muscle memory, then we might envision the ideal experience as one that merges the external values of history, memory and emotion found within the notion of the auratic, and the moment-to-moment affective and phenomenological experience of our bodies in space and time. Here, we begin to see aura as merely one portion of a larger series of interactions, between the mind, body and environment of the spectator.
and the mind (concept), body (form) and environment (architecture) of the art object, and when we apply these bodies to the experience of art/cinema, we may begin to understand how they operate in tandem.

This durational perspective of our bodies in relation to the space around us is explained best by French philosopher Henri Bergson. His 1896 text *Matter and Memory* continues to resonate in contemporary film studies, and the delineation of his ideas around the phenomenology of duration and memory has influenced authors such as Gilles Deleuze, Vivian Sobchak and Laura Marks. Suzanne Guerlac’s overarching analysis of the text in *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* draws attention to the significance of Bergson’s approach as a rejection of mind/body dualism. Unlike dualistic philosophical views which assume that “…perception occurs in the service of truth or knowledge about the empirical world…”, Guerlac explains Bergson's proposition that “[p]erception… serves action, not knowledge. It functions so that we might protect ourselves, or satisfy our needs.” (107). Instead of understanding our mental activity as a response to our environment, Bergson establishes consciousness as something more complicated, which simultaneously reacts and shapes our understanding of the world around us. He separates perception into two categories, Pure Perception, which is a hypothetical ideal of instant perception, and Concrete Perception, which is our reality. In Concrete Perception, it is never possible to fully and instantaneously experience anything, as it is filtered through our brains, creating a durational delay between experience and reaction. This perception is selective, recording only what is important to us, and filtering out the rest. Our consciousness collects perceptions of the
world around us, and compiles the data together in order to form a reaction. Since this data is always fragmented and refined based on our interests, it is a completely personal, phenomenological experience of the world around us. This durational perception creates a space of open possibility, where we attempt to formulate a reaction to our surroundings by comparing the object in front of us with our memories of previous interactions with similar objects. Bergson calls this idea “attentive recognition”, a concept where memory plays a crucial role in the process of perception, actively layering, augmenting, overwriting and modifying perception according to experience. Instead of understanding memory as a lucid, narrative remembrance, it is crucial to distinguish Bergson’s memory as process-based. It is not a compilation of fragmentary experiences into a straight line, but rather the cyclic, durational experience between the world, our memories of it, and the mental work we enact to compare them. Guerlac points out that this type of “[t]hinking in time… will always be incommensurable with language, which crushes duration through its very iterative structure” (2). Therefore, instead of existing as part of the binary between mind and body, memory exists and operates within an indefinable range in-between them. It is something that cannot be diagrammed or simply communicated through a linear structure such as language. Bergson proposes that “[t]he moment has come to reinstate memory in perception... to determine with more precision the point of contact between consciousness and things, between the body and the spirit” (70). This point of contact between body and spirit, affect and contemplation, embodiment and criticality is where Bergson’s conception of memory unites with artistic spectatorship. If we imagine memory as the primary interface for this hybrid experience
of body and mind, it is possible to understand, clearly and concisely, at least one way in
which artworks create affect.

If memory is an instigator of affect, then one of the best examples of the
intersection between memory, affect and art exists in the writings of cultural theorist
Roland Barthes. His emotional description of an image of his dead mother in Camera
Lucida exemplifies how a photographic image acquires affect through remembrance. In
the text, Barthes considers the photograph as an experience of a moment embalmed. This
moment is stuck in time, unable to move into the past as a memory, or into the future as
imagination. The image is a constant reminder of the subject and its existence as “past”,
since a photograph dutifully records the environment it observes, or as Barthes writes, is
“literally an emanation of the referent” (80). In every photograph the subject, as it was in
that specific moment, is gone; time slips beyond our grasp, only to exist in our memories
and in the photograph. Barthes likens this embalmed time to a corpse: “…the living
image of a dead thing… the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive”
(79). It is an uncanny experience of the past, reincarnated temporarily through the
photographic image, and it is this mnemonic draw of photography that Walter Benjamin
attributes to the success of the “cult value” of the photograph. Benjamin’s cult value is an
expression of aura in photography, which attempts to retain connections to history,
memory and affect through early portriature, by anchoring infinitely replicable image to
an object that is unique and irreplaceable (“The Work of Art” 1173).

Assuming that this auratic affect is at least partly desirable in order to create the
third—grey—space, then we must understand how memory activates Bergson’s
simultaneous contemplation and embodiment. As with attentive recognition, engagement with the photograph is at once informed by the presence of the photograph in the spectator's hands, and their memories of the event. This awareness oscillates between the emotional immersion in the image and the uncanny horror when the spectator pulls out of the immersion to observe a slip of paper and a chemical impression of a visage.

Gazing at the photograph of his dead mother, Barthes describes his emotions: “[h]ere again is the Winter Garden Photograph. I am alone with it, in front of it. The circle is closed, there is no escape. I suffer, motionless. Cruel, sterile, deficiency: I cannot transform my grief, I cannot let my gaze drift…” (90). Barthes indicates that in viewing the image, he is fully involved in the experience. He cannot contemplate or separate himself from his perception of the image, and this all-consuming emotion makes it impossible for Barthes to separate his subjectivity from that of the photograph; they are intermingled in the durational experience of memory. Barthes' grief holds him in attentive recognition—stuck between past and present—stimulated by the photograph. He is unable to express his experience, stating that: “…no culture will help me utter this suffering which I experience… when it is painful, nothing in it can transform grief into mourning” (90). This memory is impossible to communicate rationally and linguistically. It exists in a different realm of understanding, one that is experiential rather than descriptive. Barthes is trapped by the memory—he is unable to transform his experience from body to criticality, which would enable him to describe and memorialize it.

This emotional imprisonment is echoed in Jill Bennett's work on trauma and memory in *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma, and Contemporary Art*. In this text, she
develops a theory of common memory (which we use to communicate experiences) and sense memory (which makes a sensory impression of the event) in order to describe how works of art affectively relate art and trauma (3). Eschewing the idea that one can (or should) literally transmit traumatic experiences through art, she delves into works which engage dialogue using affect, in order to communicate something which is, as Guerlac phrases it, “incommensurable with language” (2). Akin to Bergson, Bennett underscores the role of memory in creating and describing experience. Positing that art might provide a non-linguistic framework for the communication of trauma, she draws on the ideas of sense and common memory as delineated by writer and former Auschwitz prisoner, Charlotte Delbo. Bennett and Delbo conceive of sense memory as the embodied experience of trauma, which registers a physical imprint of the event, and is not always present but continuously felt. This sense memory is—as with Barthes’ photograph—embalmed time. It cannot move forward or backward and has no linear narrative. It is durational experience which is not yet available for critical dissemination. Bennett suggests that we are eventually able to work-through and transform sense memory into common memory in order to describe it to other people. When sense moves into common, one is able to internalize it and break the continuity of the constantly re-living the trauma (25-26). Bennett proposes sense and common memory as an “uneasy relationship” which threatens the coherence between inside and outside. She promotes a Foucauldian interest in the arts as an open-ended inquiry, which activates an interdisciplinary approach in order to transgress normative boundaries and make new discoveries (26). This grey zone suspends moral judgement; it simply is an experience,
and allows for artistic spectators to step into the engagement freely without prior expectations. Within immersive art/cinema situations, one can imagine this embodied experience as a crucial aspect to the development of critical artistic meaning, and engaging spectators through the activation of their own memories and experiences.

This type of experience *immerses* the spectator into a space of engagement—one that fluctuates between criticality and embodiment. I imagine this space as the chora, based on the ideas of psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva in her essay “From Revolution in Poetic Language”. Although Jacques Derrida and Martin Heidegger also used the term for their own purposes, Kristeva's chora resonates with spectatorial theory since her work deals with the psychoanalytic development of subjectivity. The idea originates from Plato's *Timaeus*, where he describes it as a "space... everlasting, not admitting destruction; providing a situation for all things that come into being" (52a-b), issuing the caveat that it is a dream-space, envisioned because all things must occupy space in order to exist (52a-b). This imaginary space is a place-holder of possibility, which was adapted by Kristeva to describe a pre-linguistic realm where subjectivity and meaning is developed. It operates outside of signification—but is crucial to it—as a dream-space that must necessarily exist before consciousness. In order to explain the purpose of this space, Kristeva relies on the theories of Freud and Lacan, considering chora as a space delineated by energy generated between the movement and stases of Freud's primal drives (2169), and a threshold for Lacan's theories on the mirror stage and the development of subjectivity (2176). It is a phase in human development that precedes the development of the self as a being that is external to its environment (and mother). Since
it is tied to the Psychological Mother, it is an embodied way of engaging with the world, and references the feminine, dream-states, and non-verbal communications like rhythm, gesture and non-linguistic vocals (2170-2172).

As the opposite of the logic and reason associated with Western subjectivity, the chora could be associated with embodied and emotional contemplation. However, as much as Kristeva's chora is a place of forward motion towards subjectivity, it is also destabilizing. She asserts that the drives which circulate in the choratic are "ambiguous, simultaneously assimilating and destructive; this dualism... makes the semiotized body a place of permanent scission" (2172). This dichotomy suggests that the chora is something more than a phase we pass through to attain knowledge. The push-pull between poles draws into question the notion of how we arrive at truth or reason. If knowledge is the success of one pole over the other, then the process one used to reach that knowledge is equally important as the final answer. It also means that truth may not be stable. The destabilization of truth, and by proxy, of singular knowledge, opens up alternative methodologies for communicating knowledge while allowing multicultural voices to express their personal knowledge within a larger cultural mainstream.

Chora is the space which lies in-between creation, reception and understanding, and if it is a non-representational way of contemplating the world, then the artist is the ultimate pathfinder. The artist is able to freely navigate this space during the creative process, without needing to relay perfect truths, which may result in artwork that contains plural readings and allows for audiences to engage with it in different ways. It is the methodology of Postmodernism, described by Jean-Francois Lyotard as an
"incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv). This concept refuses a single authoritative view on any form of knowledge, something which Lyotard exemplifies in his "Introduction" to *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* as he states that "the author... is a philosopher, not an expert. The latter knows what he knows and does not know: the former does not" (xxv). This experimentation and groping blindly is what occurs within the choratic way of seeking knowledge, and it is this open discourse that offers the best possibilities of immersive engagement with art.


In this choratic space of discourse, an art/cinema installation which activates this embodied experience of knowledge might offer multiple entry points for spectators. Rather than simply “downloading” the message from the artwork, and grasping its singular purpose in a brief interaction, these situations require a significant investment of time and energy on the part of the viewer. The interdisciplinary nature of art/cinema installations often activates moving image elements in reference to the ritualistic and illusory experience of cinematic space, in conjunction with elements such as sculpture and architecture which reflect on the mobile nature of gallery-based experiences. Each element brings information and viewpoints to the discussion, and the development of critical meaning out of this experience occurs in this choratic back and forth between subjectivities. In an open ended art experience this communication offers the spectator a chance to develop their own meaning, rather than having it dictated, and is an embodied experience that emphasizes process as a working-through, rather than the attainment of
certain knowledge or truth.

A prime example of this type of art/cinema installation is William Kentridge's *The Refusal of Time*\(^1\), first presented at *dOCUMENTA 13* in Kassel Germany in 2012. As with many of the artworks presented at *dOCUMENTA*, *The Refusal of Time* was commissioned specifically for the exhibition and developed site-specifically. As the work draws upon the architecture and situation of the venue, the history of that space also holds some bearing on my interpretation of the work. Although *The Refusal of Time* fits perfectly within Kentridge’s larger body of work, referencing many of the other themes and imagery which have long influenced his practice, it is possible to draw additional connections between the placement of the work and the history of Nazi occupation and other German colonialist endeavours.

*The Refusal of Time* occupies a concrete room in an unused portion of Kassel’s historic Hauptbahnhof train station-turned-cultural-space. Residing in a decaying store-room adjacent to the tracks, and accessed through a purpose-built light lock, the space provides a unique intersection between the high-technology of projections, the early 20\(^{th}\) century technology referenced within the work, and markers of the history of the site as notated by the ageing walls and dusty floor. Once inside, my eyes adjust to a dim spotlight on a strange wooden contraption in the centre of the room. Three tall frames move in a sequential pumping rhythm over the top of a rectangular base made up of vertical lattices which allow viewers to see the components propelling the motion. Resembling an archaic bellows, accordion or even the wheels of an old steam train, the apparatus

\(^{1}\) *The Refusal of Time* (2012)

Images: “William Kentridge – Vertical Thinking.” - [neromagazine.it/n/?p=8882](http://neromagazine.it/n/?p=8882)

Video: Antonio Limonciello - [youtube.com/watch?v=uaPnBorIMmc](http://youtube.com/watch?v=uaPnBorIMmc)
moves its mechanical arms in the rhythmic ambulation of early industrial mechanisms, a repetitious system of parts that does not seem to do anything other than create movement. As the music begins in the space, the sound of clocks and tubas complement the motion of the machine and neighbouring projections.

Vintage wooden school-chairs surround the machine—nailed, immobile to the floor—and the industrial beams of the ceiling support several large, old-fashioned metal megaphones along with modern speakers. The room's decor aged—notably aided by the brick walls coated in a peeling white paint, numerical signage, dirt and other smudges of time passing. Overlaid on these walls are five digital projections, surrounding spectators who are able to stand or seat themselves in the middle of the room. When the projections begin, the group is surrounded by light and sound, and centred around the pulsing movement of the strange contraption. The sound and video starts with ticking metronomes, which un-sync, and meld into rhythmic music as the visual narrative progresses through live-action vignettes mixed with loosely sketched animations. The artist—as a character in the projections—hurdles plush colonial chairs, a hand turns and tears at maps and encyclopaedias of colonial Africa, Kentridge's distinctive drawings trace and morph into outer-space, a melodramatic romance-triangle of domesticity and adultery plays out, the workings of an alchemical laboratory explode and disintegrate into flying papers and drawings, and a procession of marching silhouettes loop the room to driving music and chanting. All of these images broadly circle the theme of time and our taxonomy of the world, using symbolic references to Greenwich Mean Time, mapping, scientific discovery, note-taking, hand-writing, star maps and the visual
processes of drawing and film.

The images often reference black and white films, emphasizing the kinds of stuttering movements, exaggerated body movement, lack of dialogue and optical illusions that characterize early cinema. The vignettes are shot using iris wipes, in-camera effects, hand-made sets and props, as well as layered surface textures such as smudges, scratches and film grain. As was often the case with silent cinema, *The Refusal of Time*, has musical accompaniment, however instead of tinkly piano music, the soundtrack is an energetic, orchestral mix of drums, ticking clocks, tubas, organs, chanting, operatic singing and speaking. The sound is a driving force, vibrating through the spectator's body and creating a unique rhythm which distinctly separates it from our experience of time in the “real world”. It manipulates duration through emotional thrill and suspense (as often seen in genres of narrative cinema, such as film noir, suspense, or the thriller, which often draw time out to create emotional affect) using wailing voices, spoken word and unsettling rhythms. It also disrupts the normal experience of cinema, with its single point seated vantage, by presenting five projections around the circumference of the room and enveloping our bodies with sound. The projected images surround the spectators, pressuring them to move around the space—or at least swivel their bodies—in order to see the disparate images of the work as a whole. The immersive experience bleeds the modular projections into one another and transgresses the boundaries of drawing, printmaking, sculpture, cinema and theatre.

The foremost aspect of *The Refusal of Time* is the 360° projections, which Walter Benjamin might argue are mechanically reproducible and therefore not auratic. I would
argue that despite this replicability, it retains a sense of mnemonic distance. Kentridge is best known for his animated drawings, which metamorphose through a process of layered marks and erasure. The artist creates changeable and unpredictable experimental narratives which capture direct traces of the authorial presence through hand-made sketches and drawings, the representation of his image, personal handwriting and the artist's voice used within the audio-scape. In addition to placing his own body in the work, the artist also draws attention to the embodied viewer. The seating is not only practical, but also thematic, referencing a space and time of colonialist intervention in new worlds through education. Whether still or mobile, the spectator's body is set in relation to the seating as part of the installation, creating a disjunctive relationship between the spectator, the surrounding static frames of moving images, and the pulsing movement of the sculptural contraption in the centre. It doubles the cinematic space and the “real”, and also references the historical traces of the train station venue. Throughout this work, my attention wavered between the projections, and the sculpture which shared my physical space. Reminiscent of Bertold Brecht’s “alienation effect”, where audiences are forced to contemplate the fictional setting and their role as audience from a critical distance, this work agitates the spectator’s attention between virtual and real (“Alienation Effect”). Unlike the single point perspective of the theatre, which Brecht disrupted by revealing the architecture of stage, proscenium, seating and spectators, this approach engages the fantastical transportation that happens within the so-called passive cinema, and applies it to a physical construction of space (Brecht). Instead of revealing the apparatus behind the fiction, it divulges layered constructions: the filmed image, the
constructed space of the installation (including the 360 degree projections and animated sculpture), the architecture of the space, the history connected to that architecture, and the situation of that architecture in its current use as a venue for art. It is a world within a world, within a world, living on the edge of day-to-day reality, and creating overlapping layers of immersive situations for contemplation.

Kentridge's image-making style is unique; instead of live-action or animation using a series of images to create the illusion of motion, he layers drawings to create his moving images. Unlike standard animation, which edits out any mistakes or markers of process in order to formulate a cohesive illusion of motion, these images are documents of the duration of drawing. The images overlap one another, collecting marks and erasures as they happen, showing the process of creating images rather than attempting to create an illusion of motion. It creates a sense of afterimages, or traces through time, a technique which straddles the line between the way that one would normally shoot live action film and the way one would create animation, freezing the gestural mark-making over a series of frames in order to create the illusion of motion and transformation. The gesture is key to a choratic understanding of the work—as an embodied, non-linguistic communication. From the perspective of artistic creation, the gesture is automatic, and relies on a sense of complete trust—in your skills and in the intimate knowledge of how the medium will react to certain pressures. If we consider the art form of "gesture drawing" (where an artist quickly sketches a model's suspended movement), it is a process of creating a rough impression of movement rather than a detailed, and static, likeness. The minimalist lines of gesture drawings require spectators to automatically
complete the sketched summary of the image, filling in the representation by comparing the drawing with their memories of what it should look like. It is a literal activation of Henri Bergson's attentive recognition, and this looking and thinking is key to understanding any images—which invariably will not be articulated exactly as it exists in three-dimensional, real space and time.

Kentridge's drawings layer over one another, referencing not only the time he took to make the image, but also the way that history stratifies in space and over time. It is a metaphor for the ways that we move forward in the world unknowingly, with the burden of our past traces still attached. We deal with past, present and future simultaneously, which makes all of our future paths increasingly unstable, and open to multiple possibilities. In the monograph William Kentridge: Five Themes, Kentridge writes about his process, saying:

The making of each film was the discovery of what each film was. A first image, phrase, or idea would justify itself in the unfolding of images, phrases, and ideas spawned by the work as it progressed. The imperfect erasures of the successive stages of each drawing become a record of the progress of an idea and record of the passage of time. The smudges of erasure thicken time in the film, but they also serve as a record of the days and months spent making the film—a record of thinking in slow motion. (67).

For Kentridge, the gesture of making the work is integrated into the larger themes. He envisions it as a means to find answers—a type of working through. His artwork records his thinking, and invites audiences to participate with it in the same way. By viewing the artist's process, the audience is tangibly connected to the marks, almost as if they were peeping over the artist's shoulder as he made them. His personal cinemas link the images to our reality, asking us to relate them to the world around us. The Refusal of Time, like
many of his other works, asks us to consider not only the driving, emotional mark-making, but also how the images and symbols associated with the work—Greenwich Mean Time, the train station, the standardization of time and measurements, as well as optical devices such as mirrors, telescopes and movie cameras—act as signs of imposed Western order in the broader context of history (such as the European colonization of Africa and the Nazi imperialism associated with Kassel) and also within more personal interactions between individuals and the world around us (Galison).

One of the most concise metaphors for this choratic thinking within *The Refusal of Time* is that of the shadow procession, a series of marching, dancing, chanting, drumming and moaning silhouettes that the artist re-works often. In "William Kentridge: A Portrait of the Artist", Mark Rosenthal associates the shadow procession to Plato’s cave. In this allegory, prisoners bound in the cave experience shadows on the wall as their reality, unaware of the more perfect reality that exists in the light outside of the cave. They are only able to see shadows cast from the true reality, which they could only access upon exiting the cavern. It is an allegory about the nature of our perception, and typifies Plato’s ideas about the perfect world of ideas versus our limited human senses. The shadows are facsimiles of the ideal; they are merely representations which we are unable to see in their true form due to our own limitations as imperfect, material beings (Plato *Book VIII*). It is one of the earliest examples of the philosophical binary between the mind and body, one which has influenced philosophical thinking to this day, questioning the nature of our reality and establishing an alternative utopia. Kentridge consistently rejects the feasibility of this modernist idealism, preferring a postmodern
vision of reality which lies between the poles of shadow and light (50). He emphasizes the shadow in order to find diverse voices and "truths", none of which hold precedent over the other. It embraces faceted perspectives, and offers the artist an occult space to deal with questions of trauma, especially in relation to own history with South Africa's apartheid. The shadow procession highlights these notions of trauma, referencing silhouetted protests of Marxist propaganda art and Russian constructivist techniques (Rosenthal 48), while simultaneously participating in joyful dancing and music. This ambiguity between protest and performance offers comparisons between the shadow procession and the chorus in ancient Greek theatre. The role of the chorus was to narrate, offer explanations and sometimes weigh judgement on the action unfolding in front of them. Here, the chorus is non-linguistic—they do not comment outright, but their metaphor as participants in, and also external to the other action in Kentridge's work, is clear. The etymological boundaries of *chorus* and *chora* are also blurred, as both words seem related to khoros as a "band of dancers or singers, dance, dancing ground... enclosed dancing floor" (Harper). This connects movement, process and performance in the choratic, as a non-verbal communication of experience.

As with his other work, *The Refusal of Time* is concerned with the ambiguous positioning of images and technology, and how they can be manipulated. In *The Refusal of Time* text published alongside the exhibition at *dOCUMENTA 13*, Peter Galison describes the roots of the project in the Enlightenment standardization of time and other measurements like the meter and kilogram. In contemporary society, these standards are impossible to live without, however they were also a tool for colonial governments to
control the world around them—a way to place their influence on colonized Africa. The continent was stamped with Modernist ideals of progress: trains, electricity, telephones, national boundaries and European government, all of which left their traces behind after the end of colonial rule. Like Kentridge's drawing process, one can see the traces of history on the landscape and culture of post-colonial countries, impossible to erase, and existing in the choratic landscape as past, present and future at once. Approaching knowledge equivocally and opening possibilities for plural readings, the artist notates issues around colonialism, but also returns agency to the characters within his work. In a cinematic reversal of time, the aftermath of an explosion in the alchemical lab presents the black female assistant (to the white male scientist) dancing alone, with assorted papers flying from ground to sky as the lab merges with a celestial scene from Kentridge's drawings. This act of un-making is an exciting pronouncement of new possibilities and a dissolution of our reality.

Kentridge's art/cinema underscores the importance of in-between spaces throughout the artistic process. It is articulated by the collaborative relationship between the installation itself—composed of sculptural, projection, audio and seating—and the space which houses it. The situation of the work within the historic train station activates many layers, drawing on German history, personal memory, as well as the nostalgia associated with trains: travel, exoticism, progress and discovery. This combination of artistic and real space overlap with the personal subjectivities of artwork, artist and spectator, to create an ambiguous zone of knowledge, where one must participate in the experience of it in order to unfold its meaning.
CHAPTER 2: Haptic Embodiment in Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller

2.1 The Conversational Potential of Haptic Engagement

The concepts of aura, Bergsonian memory and the choratic all describe the process of perception as a means to develop knowledge. Although they deal with an oscillation between the mind and body, they are, in reality, primarily theoretical. They do not literally activate the body; they merely offer us a metaphor to imagine what that oscillation between the abstract and the physical might look like. The following chapters portray processes which activate our attention in an equal partnership of criticality and embodied presence. While not comprehensive, these ideas offer productive opportunities to enrich the interactive relationship between the spectator and the art object.

In referring to an “art object”, I do not necessarily draw on a traditional understanding of objecthood; after all, art/cinema often deals with intangible projections or moving images. It is not something one can hold in one's hands, or as Benjamin points out, own as a unique souvenir of a moment in time. As with Henri Bergson’s conceptualization of memory, it requires contemplation of duration, and reflection on the past in order to understand the present situation. In The Arcades Project, Walter Benjamin connects Bergson’s attentive recognition with a certain tactility associated with duration— which is often associated with collecting and archiving. Benjamin's chapter titled “The Collector”, describes Bergson’s “idea that perception is a function of time”, saying that if we were to modulate our attention to duration based on the objects around us, “nothing would be ‘subsistent’ for us… everything would strike us” (205). In considering this idea based on Bergson’s “Pure Perception” versus “Concrete
Perception”, it is important to remember that since “Pure Perception” is instantaneous and unfiltered through memory, there is no time for a considered reaction. It is closest to instinct rather than critical contemplation. On the other end of the spectrum, Concrete Perception is filtered through our individual identities, memories and subjectivities. The more we engage in contemplation, the more extended the durational gap between experience and reaction. Benjamin explains that because of this duration, the collector is drawn to the experience of collecting. The collector pays attention to the way objects shape their rhythm of engagement with the world, which modifies their daily experience akin to a dream state where “the rhythm of perception and experience is altered in such a way that everything—even the seemingly most neutral—comes to strike us; everything concerns us” (205-206). Here, instead of the object itself, it is the perceptive relationship that the object stimulates which creates presence, or a connection between the spectator and object. The longer the duration between the experience of an object and our reaction to it, the more affective it becomes, since it activates all of our past memories and experiences in order to enrich the experience. Comparable to the auratic, it extends a distance of time, space and subjectivity between the object and spectator/collector. This indicates that the presence, or subjective “objecthood”, that is created within this relationship is based less on physicality, and more on the oscillating mental work that relates the object’s presence to our memories and past experiences of it.

So how does the cinematic installation create other connections to the tactile without taking on a literal physical form? There are usually obviously tangible elements of installation art, including the architecture of the space in which they reside, as well as
the screens, monitors, projectors and other technological paraphernalia which support the presentation of cinematic images. Beyond these incarnations, I propose that our long-standing cultural contact with cinematic works—and more recently computer-based interactions with screens—have developed a situation where physicality is immaterial to embodiment. Through these cultural experiences, we have become accustomed to telepresence, and are able to imaginatively substitute actual physicality for virtual physicality. In line with this, “haptic visuality”, as developed by film theorist Laura Marks, most effectively describes how audiences might share physical and conceptual spaces with artwork and synaesthetically experience tactile sensations, such as touch, taste and smell, within cinematic works. Through haptic visuality, spectators are able to connect with representational objects that do not reside in their physical environment. This sensory representation within a choratic experience of art creates a fully immersive situation, one that simultaneously affects body and mind, and draws the spectator close the film’s body, where one can touch—and be touched—by the cinematic image.

Laura Mark's haptic visuality is rooted in the work of cinema scholar Vivian Sobchak, who describes the phenomenology of the cinematic experience in her text The Address of the Eye. Sobchak applies the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty to develop a theory of film as a subjective body, which both observes and is observed. It is a relationship between the filmmaker, film and spectator, who share in the process of viewing one another. Sobchack notes that “[i]n its presence and activity of perception and expression, the film transcends the filmmaker to constitute and locate its own address, its own perceptual and expressive experience of being and becoming” (9).
Although the film is directed and constituted by the filmmaker, it is only in the act of being viewed by a spectator that the film actually fully exists; it is nothing without the duration of images strung together over time, and the mental work that the spectator does to connect these images together within a narrative. Comparable to Bergson’s attentive recognition, here the film’s body both affects and is affected by our perception. Sobchack employs Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory to formulate the experience of cinema as an exchange between two bodies: the self and the other (134). In the most simplistic terms, within Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage, childhood subjectivity is only crystallized when it recognizes itself as a unique subjective body, differentiated from its mother’s body and the rest of its environment. It is the child’s body situated against “The Other”, which establishes its own identity. Applying this concept to film theory, Sobchack writes that “…all film presents not only the seen but also the seeing. In doing so, it posits a lived, inhabitable, and intentional distance that structures and is structured by the act of vision, a distance that begins at and ends in a seer who is capable of seeing, who is embodied” (134). As such, acknowledging the different subjectivities which participate in the viewing relationship is in fact the key to creating embodiment and positioning our subjectivities in relation to the world around us. Without this subjective distance, it is impossible to actually participate in the oscillation between presence and criticality, since one is trapped in complete embodiment, or Bergson’s pure perception, unable to relate it to the past, compare it to experience or contemplate a reaction to it.

Sobchack argues that the notion of the passive cinematic experience is a fallacy. In this performance of seeing, the cinematic experience is always an active oscillation
between embodied experience and the contemplation of distance between the two
bodies—or aura, as Walter Benjamin would put it. Sobchack asserts that the engagement
between a film and spectator therefore cannot be monologic but is rather dialogic. I
would further posit that in order to understand this relationship as a true dialogue, one
must consider that both subjects are autonomous, and maintain their own viewpoints.
The subjectivities of spectator and artwork are formed based on the relations they have
with other subjects and objects in the environment. If two subjectivities meet, what
occurs is not a direct transfer of knowledge from one to the other, but rather a
conversation. The end result is that one affects the other, but the two do not merge into
one perspective. After all, when we meet with other human subjectivities, it is neither
possible nor desirable to completely synchronize our beliefs and intentions. We take in
other perspectives and modify them to suit our purposes; there is never a total
duplication of intention and meaning. Sobchack summarizes how this subjective
meaning develops at “…the intersection and correlation of consciousness and object
whose location is in the inhabited and intentional space lived temporally as the body
being-in-the-world” (66). This coming together of subjective bodies, which affect one
another, is reminiscent of Seigworth and Gregg's description of affect in their essay “An
Inventory of Shimmers”. It similarly emerges from intersections and in-betweens, in the
spaces where separate forces converge. They write that:

...affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human,
nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate
about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very
passages or variations between these intensities and resonances
themselves. Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to
those forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than
conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability. (1)

Side-by-side these quotes indicate a relationship between the development of meaning and of affect. If we return again to Bergson, Benjamin and Barthes, we can see this association between affect and investment in criticality. It is linked to the ways in which we selectively perceive only what is important to us within attentive recognition, develop emotional connections to auratic objects based on memory and history and relish the overwhelming immersion created by objects which affect us. It is through these emotional events that we emphasize our relation to the world around us—as bodies and histories that trace and are traced through time and space.

Laura Marks’ thinking around haptic visuality takes on a new importance as she uses it to open up space for multicultural voices. Often the senses of embodiment, like smell, taste and touch, are neglected in Western artistic practices. Marks posits that non-visual senses might provide an opportunity to express things that cannot be expressed within the constraints of these traditions—such as colonized culture and history, effaced voices and erased memories. It draws on personal affect in order to tell individual stories that exist outside of the mainstream. Her book, The Skin of the Film, examines short, “experimental” film and video to illustrate the idea of haptics as a synaesthetically tactile vision, and a kind of “touching a film with one's eyes” (xi). It develops the metaphor of the image surface of film (whether projected or encased in a monitor) as a conductive surface like skin (xii). In generating this metaphor, Marks references the cinematic image
as another (human-like) body. Drawing on Sobchack’s suppositions of film as an individual subjectivity, the cinematic surface literally becomes a body and mind with its own expression. She uses this intersubjective relationship to propose that film can act as a empathetic tool, which opens up liminal conversational spaces through a combination of experience and criticality. She writes that...

...[t]he contingent and contagious circumstances of intercultural cinema events effect a transformation in its audience. As hybrids, the works challenge the separateness of cultures and make visible the colonial and racist power relations that seek to maintain this separation. The works pollute viewer’s ideas of cultural distinction, implicating each of us in them. In addition, as well as bearing meanings to the audience, these works receive impressions from the people who have seen them. Intercultural cinema builds up these impressions like a palimpsest and passes them on to other audiences. The very circulation of a film among different viewers is like a series of skin contacts that leave mutual traces. (xii)

This notion of the filmic body affecting and creating affect on spectators is exciting, and extends beyond Mark’s application of haptic visuality as an intercultural tool.

The key issue behind building empathy with other cultural perspectives seems to be the creation of dialogue between separate subjectivities, to help them find a common ground and enact free dialogue which may change viewpoints. It disrupts rigid boundaries, and serves to create new paths for communicating alternative perspectives. Marks posits that cinema is an ideal format for doing this since, due to its temporal and hybrid image/sound/fiction/documentary nature, it operates at the boundary of experience and language. This stands in opposition to academic writing, which exists exclusively in the domain of language, and while it enables clear communication, it also limits what can be said since language is necessarily structured. Marks suggests that one
can only properly communicate the unknown in a less-structured, non-linguistic way, and cinema operates as a means to travel back and forth between the clarity of language and the obscurity of individual experience. Perhaps we can propose that the hybrid form of art/cinema might be even more amenable to this embodied expression of personalized phenomenological experience.

Relating back to Jill Bennett’s ideas of sense and common memory, we could connect these theories once again to embodiment and criticality, where the flux between the two allows for the development of meaning in a subtle and empathetic manner. In order to understand what this flux entails, Marks uses haptic visuality to describe a tactile and macroscopic approach to cinema. Instead of Benjamin’s auratic distance, where the spectator is separated from the image by their own thoughts, memories and reactions, the haptic gaze draws the spectator and the film together, rubbing skin on skin until neither can separate themselves. It is a fully immersive cinema, which dissolves the boundaries of spectator and image. Pointing out that most viewer emotion seems to be attached to places where “the image is thinnest, when there is the least available to represent” (72), Marks concludes that images which seem degraded, muffled, concentrated or erased might open up a void for new cultural imaginings. She suggests that it may be due to dread or exhilaration because these voids act as a placeholder for something that cannot be represented, allowing effaced images (of non-mainstream histories) to surface. This idea could be stretched even further to implement this void as a placeholder for the ideas, memories and experiences of the viewer. The blank space offers a way to integrate into the cinematic image, to draw so close that the two briefly
merge, a completely present experience which is stimulated by a haptic image—
abstracted or disrupted in some way as to be unrecognizable. It activates Bergson’s
memory image, comparing the present object with our memories, except that haptic
visuality confuses this process. By refusing recognition, it takes a familiar encounter—
which might provoke a simple and clichéd understanding or response—and it disrupts it,
compelling the spectator to spend more time analyzing the image in order to recognize it.
If a cliché is a stereotyped response to something, the implication is that it is has been
used to the point of losing its meaning or effect. This type of shallow reaction is rarely
the type of experience that provokes emotion (other than irritation), thoughtfulness or
further interest. In addition, the one-dimensionality of the clichéd image further implies
that it is a mnemonic sketch, or a diagram of the object’s meaning. The idea of a diagram
falls closer to a linguistic communication than an affective one, and therefore I would
suggest that the clichéd image might only contain visual and instructive information,
rather than the full range of bodily senses which are more difficult to turn into a diagram.
Here, Marks notes that Bergson considered the image as not only visual, but multi-
sensory, “comprising all the information that one’s senses perceive…” (146). If this is the
case, then within attentive recognition the memories one compares to the image are not
solely visual, but also the tactility, aurality, odour and flavour of the object image. These
experiences are not simply fragments that can be applied, but the memory of experience
as a whole, including emotions, knowledge, insight, fantasies, social relations and other
cultural factors which shape experience. It holistically activates the spectator’s body in a
durational relationship with the image object’s past, present and future. Within
art/cinema installations, the body straddles the environments of cinema and gallery, along with all of the haptic mental activity supported by Marks and the physicality which is supported by movement and material objects within the gallery space. This process of examining the intersections between the two highlights the role of duration in developing meaning, and activates the type of affective “strike” proposed by Benjamin.

Sensuality cannot be properly articulated within the structure of language; it resides within an individual perspective, and any communication of it is a translation, instead of a direct relation of that experience. Just as Jill Bennett implicates sense and common memory in the communication of trauma, one can imagine that haptics also acts as a carrier for affective events. Cinema has always excelled at communicating literal experiences; it documents everything exactly, so that a spectator in Canada can drop into the middle of a brutal battle, sun-drenched beach, a Paris cafe, or outer space. The epic immersion of the cinematic image, driven by the scale of projection, narrative momentum and attractive characters creates a thrall; however, it often fails to convey the unintelligible sensuality and embodiment which connects that experience with our experience. The spectator engaging with immersive art/cinematic is affected by the choratic nature of engagement itself, and the artistic experience becomes a part of the spectator’s own subjectivity, forming sense and common memories which can then be utilized within future experiences.

This reliance on the spectator’s presence in forming experience constitutes a participatory type of spectatorship. It shifts the one-on-one experience with a work of art from a simple download of meaning—inscribed by the artist and sustained by the
supposed authority of exhibition institutions—to a conversation, where both parties share information back and forth. The spectator is implicated in this relationship and it requires some sort of social effort. Vivian Sobchak vividly describes this as taking “possession of our own vision” (54). If we can control our vision and our interests, and actively shape our perception, then exciting possibilities arise for the design of spectatorial experience.

If, as Bergson states, we only perceive what is of interest to us, then in order to engage more richly with an artistic experience, we must be interested in it. I suspect that this level of interest is usually tied to our own well-being, and activates when confronted with things that impact our situation in the world. Therefore, I would suggest that the key to increased interest is to offer these voided spaces of experience, where it is possible to compare one’s own thoughts, memories and opinions with that presented by the artwork. It is an intimacy of shared experience which enables the spectator to come close to the cinematic body, encourage its touch, and stroke back.

Approaching the cinematic object in this way is almost erotic. Laura Marks often describes the haptic image as a type of eroticism, which provokes a blurred subjectivity and disruption of normative power dynamics. Unlike pornography, which is primarily visual and objectifies the sexual image, the erotic image teases—it only partly exposes itself and relies on the viewer to use their imagination to fill in the rest. The erotic thrill lies in the back and forth between seeing and not-seeing. Eroticism means relinquishing some of your power and control in order to receive pleasure. Marks points out that haptic visuality requires the spectator to make themselves “vulnerable to the image” (185), in order to enable the intimacy required for eroticism and to accept its affect. Although
Marks explores the erotics of viewing in a variety of ways, some sexual, others not, in using the word “erotic”, I rely primarily on this idea of the power balance and mutual touch between partners, rather than the idea that the image or experience must be sexually stimulating. This definition of erotic underscores the vulnerability of intimacy, the immersion in experience and the stimulation of affective dialogue, which emphasizes the ways immersive cinema installations create embodied dialogue between spectator and artwork.

In parallel with Marks' application of erotics to visuality, architectural theorist Sylvia Lavin also posits an erotic relationship between image, space and form when she refers to the tangential relationship between moving image art and architecture as a “kiss” in her book Kissing Architecture. In this metaphor, the kiss is a meeting of disparate surfaces, which “soften, flex, and deform when in contact” (5). The kiss temporarily breaks down the boundaries between the two subjectivities, drawing both so intimately into an experience that it is not possible to attain a critical distance. It disrupts and makes fluid our expectations of an experience, and situates us within the event of the kiss. In this text, Lavin concisely summarizes the potency of this metaphor for artistic engagement, observing that this:

...new sensibility…could simply and with devastating generosity slip itself on and over the old medium of architecture and its even older sensibilities of authority and autonomous intellection… [the] affective yet alien embrace marks a regime change that is happening with neither the confrontation or violence prescribed by the avant-garde nor the endless accommodations of new practice, but through the gesture of a sweetly gentle and yet thoroughly overpowering kiss. (4-5)

This metaphor of tactile immersion in bodily sensations describes a passionate approach
to art which I whole-heartedly embrace. Although here Lavin equates the kiss to
sweetness, she later states that no matter what emotion might provoke a kiss, once in the
midst of it, it is impossible to gain subjective distance between the two parties. It distorts
the boundaries of self, language and critical thinking in favour of affect, tactility and
duration. What is more, although this affect is wholly immersive in the moment, it is also
finite. Thinking returns with distance, as does the emotional consideration of what came
before, what happened and what will happen. These emotions are not standardized— as
noted previously, a kiss does not have to be initialized by love: it could be social
obligation, anger, desire, fear, loneliness, or any number of other conflicting feelings.
Laura Marks also suggests that eroticism contains some element of violence, which is
why vulnerability to an image might be quite difficult. Like the erotic image, a kiss often
complicates and transforms these emotions. It combines the past and present in order to
formulate a reaction to the present. Furthermore, since a kiss ordinarily occurs between
two living creatures, one has to not only account for one’s own feelings, but also those of
your partner. It creates a sense of risk, of emotional investment and mutual interest.
Without knowledge of the your partner’s perspective, there is no choice but to participate
in the experience and in the consequences, in the complicated and sensuous dialogue
between subjective bodies.
2.2 Case Study: Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller - Alter Bahnhof

Video Walk (2012)

Although the haptic approach in immersive art/cinema is most obviously activated by literal interactivity—pushing buttons, activating sensors, inputting data—or being able to physically touch surfaces of the work as part of the engagement, what is of particular interest here are more subtle approaches which might draw attention to spectatorial embodiment. Canadian artists Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller have dedicated their careers to the creation of art/cinema installations which use a variety of haptic techniques to draw spectators out of normal time and space and immerse them in dreamlike experiences of art. Many of their recent works are situated environments, created like theatre or film sets which can be inserted into a variety of gallery spaces. Walking into the environment created by these artists is an embodied cinematic transportation. Cardiff and Miller’s works reference the narrativity, duration, rituals and dream-like suspense of disbelief of the cinema, despite the fact that they do not always take on a cinematic form or use moving images. Instead they use montage, temporal flashbacks, narration and immersion as one sees in cinematic traditions, extracted from the square image framed in darkness and applied to the entire surrounding space.

This hybrid environment blurs the lines between fiction and reality by oscillating between the traditions of the supposedly passive theatre space, where spectators are expected to stay still and observe what is presented to them, and the peripatetic voyeurism often associated with the art gallery or museum. By creating large-scale immersive environments, which invite entry and—to some extent—touching, the artists
create scenarios where the spectator is able to approach the work from a variety of angles and perspectives. They often draw attention to the viewers’ body as an outsider within the space of the installation, by limiting or opening access to the set of the narrative as an immersive and interactive space. One of the most renowned examples is *The Paradise Institute* (2001), which replicates a cinematic theatre space in miniature. Spectators enter the space, seat themselves on the plush cinema-seats, and place headphones over their ears, at which point the lights dim and the screen begins to play a black and white film. The film is immediately interrupted by crunching popcorn, audience whispers and cell-phones ringing, all integrated into the immersive soundscape of the work. In this work, the artists highlight the spectator’s presence in the traditional theatre—a space which is commonly assumed to fade away any sense of your own body—but disrupt the ability to passively sink into the illusion. The experience is instead one which requires a constant re-evaluation of reality in order to determine which sounds are generated in real space by other audience members, or are part of the recorded sound. Other works in their oeuvre recall the spectator’s body through a series of sensors that activate audio recordings based on the spectator’s movement or touch, such as their *Telephone Series* (2008-2010), which requires the spectator to use the rotary phone and lift the handset to their ear in order to hear the audio.

Sound is crucial to the experience of these works, and in order to generate this strong sense of presence, Cardiff and Miller utilize a technique of binaural sound recording. This method creates hyper-realistic sound by capturing audio just as our ears would, using microphones embedded in a dummy-head, which captures echoed sound
waves in mannequin's ears just as with our own. This audio is also captured and played in stereo, with some sound coming from one side of the spectator’s body, and the rest seemingly from other locations in real space, an effect which very viscerally shapes an artificial audio landscape around the listener’s body, especially when used in conjunction with headphones which partially cancel out real-time sound from the environment (Hanssen 41-42). This effect, writes Tina Rigby Hanssen in her essay “The Whispering Voice: Materiality, aural qualities and the reconstruction of memories in the works of Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller”, “moves the listener into the scene of an original performance, in contrast to other space-related recording techniques—like Dolby surround sound, for example—that move the acoustic event to the listener” (41). Here, while the cinematic fully encloses the spectator in a new space, Cardiff and Miller’s work disconcertingly transports the spectator instead. It emphasizes our bodies as out of place, out of time, and out-of-sync with reality.

These physical references to the spectatorial body become especially important in the context of Cardiff and Miller’s “walk” projects. Often commissions, the works are usually site-specific, and build unusual contexts in museum, outdoor or other spaces. These works usually consist of audio distributed on mobile audio devices, and turn the spectators into participants as they follow Cardiff’s soft voice on a physical tour of the space. As with the installation works, Cardiff and Miller’s walks merge reality and virtuality, using audio recordings to relay dreams, memories and fictions, which in turn layer over top of the history, physicality and the experience of the supposedly real space. In 2012, they expanded these audio-only walks and incorporated moving images into
The Alter Bahnhof Video Walk\textsuperscript{2} at dOCUMENTA 13. Situated in the historic main hall of the Hauptbahnhof train station in Kassel, spectators are given a video iPod containing the work and directed to a starting point in the main foyer of the station. Taking a seat on the small bench, the experience begins by adopting the headphones, holding up the screen and pressing play. From that moment on, the experience is one of an uncanny doubling. The real station frames the device containing a tiny virtual version of the space, and Janet Cardiff’s voice whispers in your ear.

“Okay. Turn the camera on. Press the video button. I’m sitting here right now with you in the train station in Kassel, watching the people pass by. It’s very intimate in ways, watching people. You can see how they walk, so you can tell if they’re happy, or sad, or lost somewhere in their minds” (Cardiff and Miller “Alter Bahnhof”). In this short duration the screen turns from shiny and black into an exact replica of the station as it appears in front of your physical body. Pedestrians stroll through both the real and virtual stations and suddenly the image on the screen transforms into a luscious forest walk, with leaves crunching underfoot and solitary breathing. We flip from reality into dream- scape within mere sentences, and quickly establish expectations about the experience we are about to undertake. The screen returns to the train station as Janet Cardiff murmurs: “We’re like those prisoners stuck in Plato’s cave, who watch the flickering shadows on the screen”. A trombone begins to play, its deep and rich audio reverberating around the historic stone station, and Cardiff continues to instruct the spectator to align their movements with “hers” (that of the camera). From there, the

\textsuperscript{2} The Alter Bahnhof Video Walk (2012)
Image: Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller - cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/bahnhof.html
Video: Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller - youtube.com/watch?v=sOkQE7m31Pw
doubled experience continues, as you stand and walk along with the movement of the camera. Trombone players appear from the front doors and you follow them down the hall as they enact a performance with a ballerina and a film crew. The shoot is interrupted by a barking dog (which re-appears later to pee on a pillar) and the walk continues to explore the space, passing two elderly men discussing their experiences of the second world war.

As a historic train station in Germany, the reality of the space is one of intricately layered memories, especially around Nazi-era politics, war, genocide and other trauma. The film explores some of these historical issues by analyzing a memorial installation set up at the station, and then directing you to walk out to the train platforms where Cardiff talks about the history of the space, simultaneously layering her memories, dreams, experiences and fantasies over top of the existing stories. The walk continues in this manner, directing spectators up a flight of stairs to engage in a film noir scenario where the spectator is accosted for seeming suspicious and Cardiff elaborates on spy fantasies, finally concluding back down in the main station lobby with a fantastical ballet performance in the middle of an empty room. During the entire “walk” experience, the spectator must navigate both the virtually documented site and the actual one at the same time. Holding the iPod and navigating the station becomes a doubling of time and space, underscoring the ease in which we synchronize with virtual reality, as well as the collisions of reality and virtuality as the walk disrupts and aligns incidents from both worlds. Viewing the fiction while operating in the space is powerfully affective. In my experience of the piece, sounds, smells and people in the actual train station added
perceptive depth to the virtual image of the station. I often lost track of reality, flinching as virtual pedestrians passed by too closely, and stumbling through re-examination of reality when the dog pees on the pillar inside the confines of the train station. “Try to align your movement with mine” (Cardiff and Miller “Alter Bahnhof”). Certainly, beyond that first introduction, my movement was automatically aligned, shifting subtly with the image and managing to smoothly react to both real and virtual obstacles.

In a 2002 interview with Cardiff, Canadian filmmaker Atom Egoyan described the way that the artist takes “…dramatic narratives off the screen and into streets and gardens… characters occupy our physical space. The degree of interaction is profoundly respectful, yet extremely invasive” (62). I would rather suggest that, as noted by Hanssen regarding the binaural audio, Cardiff and Miller’s art creates a situation where the spectators occupy the virtual space. The work transports us into the moving image, although it does not do so completely. Instead, the situation created by Cardiff and Miller’s video walk is not one of complete immersion of our bodies in a virtual one, or a virtual image in our reality, but rather a space which intermingles the two. This creates a complex and conflicting experience, where we are carried back and forth between both worlds. It is in this back and forth where Egoyan’s characterization of the interaction as both respectful and invasive becomes fully realized. We as audiences have chosen to participate in the interaction, and to some extent enjoy the immersion in the cinematic storytelling, visuals and suspense, and Cardiff treats this interaction as valuable; indeed, it is a crucial factor in the experience, after all, the walk loses much of its power if viewed away from the Hauptbahnhof, or without the physical engagement of moving in
space. However the effect is shocking in those moments where reality and the virtual collide, like the dog peeing, pedestrians passing, and other conflicting imagery between the real and recorded train stations. I recall several moments in the walk where my stomach would drop or my body would tense to react to the virtual world. Indeed, even viewing the video documentation of the work on Cardiff and Miller’s website, the sound of the trombone echos through the station, diverging from what I know should be the reality of the train station and becoming akin to a cinematic soundtrack; it swells to accompany the perambulation of the camera and emotionally changes the tone of the environment. At first the sound is disconnected from the actual performers, since they do not appear until a minute or so after the music begins. When they do, the image maintains this cinematic performativity, with the musicians and the ballerina operating completely outside of the normal context of a train station environment, until it becomes clear that instead of a cinematic illusion of narrative, it is a meta-documentation of shooting a cinematic scene. This collision of perspectives is likely impossible to achieve with either traditional cinema or gallery spectatorship, as the power lies in the collision between virtual and real, mind and body, theatre and the every-day.

Unlike Cardiff and Miller’s other installations which require touch or interaction with sensors to activate the work, the Alter Bahnhof Video Walk does not require literal interaction to engage its narrative. However, the physicality of holding the video device, stroking its smooth case, adjusting audio buttons, and tilting the screen to avoid reflections are all physical interactions which are generally unusual within artistic experiences. Interacting with this small device is a common experience for many
contemporary spectators who own smartphones, mp3 players, hand-held gaming devices and other media artifacts which mediate and obscure our reality. Beyond making phone calls, many of these devices do not usually require us to interact with one-on-one real-time situations. Instead, they stretch and compress time and space as needed to connect us with virtual environments, such as email, the Internet, games and social media. The media device is rarely a tool used to engage with the physical space directly in front of you; rather, it always transports you elsewhere and abstracts the world into diagrammatic information. By focusing on this quality of the work, we are able to easily slide into the habit (or muscle memory) of virtual immersion. The act of physically navigating the space also activates haptic senses in an interesting manner. You retain awareness of your surroundings—you must know what is happening in front, next to and behind you in order to avoid tripping, stubbing your toe or falling over. It is a 360º perception that is unique to installation art, which creates an immersive environment rather than a single-point perspective. Your world is at once broad and narrow, contained in a small screen, while Cardiff’s binaural audio expands the world three-dimensionally into your head.

The intimacy of Cardiff’s low tone, the confessional nature of the memories she recalls, and fantasies she shares creates closeness between the spectator and artist. Unlike other artworks, where the omniscient narrator speaks to a generalized audience, the walk triggers a one-on-one dynamic that is heightened by the isolation of headphones. “I’m sitting here right now with you in the train station in Kassel” (Cardiff and Miller Alter Bahnhof), Cardiff pronounces, and with these first few words she situates herself into your experience of the work. You seem to look through her eyes as the image moves
around the station, and she speaks directly to you as she narrates her thoughts and experiences. The artwork is defined as a relationship between “you” and “her”, two people walking and sharing an experience. One could easily imagine that it is possible to converse with the artist as you walk. She is also not established as an all-knowing, authoritative narrator, and although she does discuss some of the historical artifacts in the space, she does so from the perspective of personal experience. We overhear an old man narrating his war-time experiences, before Cardiff takes us over to the display case. She discusses the artwork enclosed within, where the artist worked with schoolchildren to research and write stories about deported Jews. The project itself collects layered memory and stories, and rather than lecture about the history of deportation and concentration camps, Cardiff approaches the subject through mediation—by looking at, experiencing and talking about art. Furthermore, as she advances to the train platform, she points to a figure which she claims is herself. This connects her own (current) presence on the platform with her use of the platform on another occasion, co-mingling past and present. Cardiff then furthers this complication by discussing her own memories, and imagining the experiences of Jewish deportees as you physically stand in the same place they would have seven decades ago during the Holocaust.

This personalized dialogue between Cardiff and the spectator is exciting because it constitutes Vivian Sobchack’s filmic triad, where spectator, filmmaker and the filmic image each relies on the other to activate the experience (21). Sobchack writes that “[t]he direct engagement, then, between spectator and film in the film experience cannot be considered a monologic one between a viewing subject and a viewed object. Rather, it is
a dialogical and dialectical engagement of two viewing subjects who also exist as visible
objects…” (23). In Cardiff and Miller’s *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* this tripartite
relationship becomes clearly visible. The author is in direct conversation with the
spectator, and relies on their participation, movement and interaction in order to
complete the experience of the artwork. Furthermore, although the spectator is unable to
speak directly to Cardiff, there are moments in time where she draws attention to your
situation in the surroundings, noting that you should be careful, hold on to the railings
etc, which in effect suggests that the author can see the spectator’s body. She is aware
enough of your presence as an individual body to know how you are moving. Granted,
they are standardized instructions which take into account the way the artists have
directed your body around space, and which overlaps with the fiction occurring within
the screen image. However, there is still enough notation built within the narrative, to
underscore the intimate relationship and dialogue between Cardiff and the spectator as
one of seeing and being seen. Sobchak's filmic image requires a sense of duration to
function, and the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* similarly relies on the spectator to question
the image, to actively consider reality, virtuality, fiction, document, memory and history.

Cardiff and Miller's spectatorial embodiment recalls Laura Marks’ haptics. Since
the haptic image draws you so close that the image becomes abstracted, it resists
recognition and requires the spectator to work harder in order to generate the distance of
criticality in order to understand the image. As noted previously, these voids provide the
opportunity for spectators to fill in the information with their own experiences and
memory, creating an emotional and embodied experience of the work. Laura Marks
states that “[m]oments of crisis seem to occur when the image is the thinnest, when there is the least available to represent. These works tend to be the most powerfully moving…” (72). Low resolution, blank leader, decayed materials, effaced images, and muffled dialogue all provide these points of entry, where spectators can draw close enough to the artwork in order to affect the meaning with their own histories, and be affected in return. Instead of doing this through visual means, Cardiff and Miller open up these haptic voids within the audio. As with normal conversation, there are spaces of silence; Cardiff often pauses to allow the viewer to gaze at the scene unfolding, and regularly allows for breath and thoughtfulness. The pacing of her narrative is trance-like and impulsive; it seems as if she was just participating in a normal conversation or internal monologue rather than a constructed performance. She seems to make up the dialogue as she experiences what is happening, and regularly stops to think about it. In the voids where Cardiff is silent, it is possible for us to compare our thoughts and the blank space that represents hers. Just as with a regular conversation, we have no idea what she might be thinking, we simply have to make our best guess and react as we think fit. Additionally, as her voice directs us around the space—although it would be ridiculous to disobey her instructions—there is also the possibility of disregarding her. There is a certain tension in being directed to do something, but without any other physical guides (for instance, a chair which encourages seating in a certain position, darkness which prohibits movement, or architecture which constrains access). Within the walk the only guide besides Cardiff’s voice is the moving image. It is amazing how much the image controls our movement subconsciously. Our gaze and that of the
camera's align, and as the camera pans up, sideways or moves forward, the spectator’s body responds in part. The void between being told to do perform a motion and enacting it provides a pivot point of concentration, much like Henri Bergson’s attentive recognition, where the spectator must decide whether to comply in their reaction.

“Memories are like a different form of travelling. It’s like filling a suitcase that we pull behind us. And we open and close when we need to. … How do other people deal with memories that they don’t want? Do they just close the suitcase…?” (Cardiff and Miller Alter Bahnhof). At the heart of Cardiff and Miller's affective artworks is the twining of historical and personal memory with Janet Cardiff’s voice and the fictional narratives she creates. The Alter Bahnhof Video Walk successfully extracts the immersive power of the cinema and injects it into the bright and airy space of the everyday. This convergence creates an affective experience, which underscores our roles as spectators and challenges us to reconsider the ways we engage in space—not only the real, but also the virtual, imaginative, dream and historical. It is layered artistic engagement, which creates a haptic and embodied connection between the spectator and the artwork in order to disrupt the traditional notion of the artistic experience as a one-way delivery of meaning. Instead, the art/cinema installation invites spectators to participate in an experience, to work with the artist and with the artwork to create something new—an immersive engagement with space and time, but also an experience of powerful and memorable affect.
CHAPTER 3: The Situation of Time and Anthony McCall

3.1 Playful Events and Participatory Spectatorship

Sensuality or haptics are merely one element of participatory or embodied spectatorship. Interactivity—as a sensory or affective relationship between bodies—also plays a part and is explored within this chapter. Since we have already established that physicality is not crucial for an embodied engagement with art, then we must also consider that not all participation is equally appreciable. Many “interactive” artworks draw on a type of cause and effect relationship, where the spectator activates a trigger—sensors, buttons, switches, moving components or other technological interfaces—which seem to give the spectator a form of control over the outcome of the work. It is an approach to art which is becoming more common with the advent of new technologies, usually computer based, which provide artists the ability to program a network or database of situations, and which might provide a variety of changeable experiences within the broader construct of an artwork. I would argue, however, that the ability to literally affect changes to the narrative or structure of an artwork does not fully encompass the spectrum of possibility that participatory work provides. In “The Poetics of the Open Work”, semiotician and philosopher Umberto Eco defines the titular “open work” as a practice of spectatorship which can be both the literal completion of a work on behalf of a performer or spectator, and a more loose application of the term in aesthetic theory, where our personal biases inform our interpretation of the work in different ways. (49). As such, we can understand this type of participation as a type of mental work performed by the spectator in order to engage in the dialogue of the piece.
Eco proposes that there has been a proliferation of works which require literal completion by the spectator, and that through a re-arrangement or performance of structural elements, these works set “...in motion a new cycle of relations between the artist and his audience. ...a new relationship between the contemplation and the utilization of a work of art” (65). The Modernist cause and effect relationship generally prizes the conceptual meaning of the work, embedded there by the “genius” artist, and delivered to the spectator, whose “job” it was to ponder that meaning in order to “understand” the work. This new type of relationship instead values the discourse between the art object and spectator as more playful, open, explorative, and dialogic. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines interactivity as “reciprocally active; acting upon or influencing each other”, a definition which again points to a conversational model of information, flowing back and forth between spectator and art object. A recent example of this type of work includes auteur filmmaker David Cronenberg’s recent hybrid cinema, video game, real world and social media project *Body Mind Change* (2013). In this collaboration with the Toronto International Film Festival and the Canadian Film Centre, the spectator/player/user activates a cinematic narrative through an online system which requires them to input their own data and social media information in order to develop a relationship with their “POD”, a Cronenbergerian artificial intelligence creature which is to be implanted at the end of the process (participants receive their own semi-unique 3D printed pod, generated using the data provided). Although one could simply input false data, the narrative insists that you be honest, and returns this favour by publishing it publicly on social media. It is a shocking turn which emphasizes the value
we place on our digital information, secrets and technology. The narrative uses this interaction between the user and the artificial intelligence POD in order to create the uncanny atmosphere of horror-science fiction that is so prevalent in Cronenberg’s early films. These types of practices are usually associated with a video-gaming type of narrative rather than a cinematic one, as they require the participation of the spectator in order to direct the activity of characters. Recent developments in video game design have established the possibilities of multiple narratives embedded in a single game, or for a select amount of user decision making to alter the final outcome of the game. Games such as *BioShock* (2007) and *Silent Hill Shattered Memories* (2009), integrate player choice into the gameplay, modifying aspects of the game-play and the ending. All of these works create durational and atmospheric relationships with the spectator which extend into a sense of contingency or implication in the progression of the narrative.

I appropriate the term contingency from noted film theorist Mary Ann Doane and her writings on the event in *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*. Although it usually refers to chance, or lack of predetermination, and this is the manner in which Doane most often utilizes the word, it is also exciting to note that contingency has some connection to haptics, touching and contact, as: “the infinitesimal angle between the circumference of a circle and its tangent, or between two tangents to a curve at consecutive points” (“Contingence” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*). This draws parallels between the notions of chance, the nature of the event and of affect. In the chapter “Dead Time, or the Concept of the Event”, Doane explores “dead time” within a cinematic framework, in order to “recover” the sense of “novelty” and
“destabilizing potential” of early cinema (141). In order to do so, she establishes the cinematic image as one that is allied with both the “indexical record of time”—as a document of what has been—and the event—which is entirely present and dependent on the indeterminable nature of the next moment (140). She notes that the event might be associated with both the accidental and the constructed (as in a social event), and as such, holds numerous productive contradictions (141) which stress the duration and spectatorial experience of the event. The fractured nature of the filmic montage at once documents and re-imagines fragments of an event in order to compile a representation. It subsequently re-creates a hybrid “event-ness” upon screening the film to an audience. As such, it is an illusion of the instantaneous present—speeding, slowing and erasing time in order to translate real duration and experience to the spectator. Instead of being an observer in a precise illusion of space and time (Doane uses the example of 19th century panoramas), when the film’s “...unity is not a direct reflection of the space and time it records, the spectator is no longer an onlooker or bystander, but occupies an unthinkable space or site. This discourse, together with the development of the narrative cinema, traces the reduction of this embodiment and contingency of the spectator” (158). Shifting the conceptual site of the spectator, suggests Doane, removes them from the present as a singular, durational experience of time, space and one’s body.

Further to this, Doane describes the editing of Thomas Edison’s Electrocuting an Elephant (1903), which visually positions the spectator as if they were an attendee at the event. She remarks that the film spectator sees both less and more than those at the “live” event, since the camera structures the spectatorial vision both in terms of framing and
editing it regulates the experience. The edit—where setup time or other moments that were edited out for interest’s sake—acts as an ellipsis, marking the space of “dead” time, or time which is denoted as “uneventful”. In attempting to document the real event, this void draws attention to the constructed nature of cinema. Doane writes that:

...[t]he disruption is itself a signifier of a certain closeness to the real... In an actuality, the time that is excluded or elided is constituted as 'dead time'—time which by definition is outside the event, 'uneventful'. But such an explanation assumes that the event is simply 'out there' and dead time a by-product of grasping the event’s clear cut and inherent structure. It would be more accurate, I think, to assume that an understanding of 'dead time'—time in which nothing happens, time which is in some sense 'wasted', expanded without product—is the condition of a conceptualization of the event. (159-160)

As such, it is possible to posit that an awareness of time passing is to some extent required for an event to take place. It is a linear duration of experience, with—I would propose—a beginning, middle and end. This suggests that an experience which emphasizes elements of duration—whether it is preparation, the suspense beforehand, the duration of activity, boredom, exiting the space and participating in discussion or contemplation afterwards—become crucial aspects of the experience as a whole.

Furthermore, this awareness of duration would not be possible without drawing attention to an oscillation of contemplation and experience, a notion which coincides with the previously mentioned concepts of aura, the choratic and haptic engagement.

So how does one create a sense of event-ness within art/cinema? Experimental film and video artist Malcolm Le Grice breaks down three elements needed in order to create realistic experiences in his essay “Virtual Reality - Tautological Oxymoron”. As noted in the introduction to my research, Le Grice considers cinema as an “act of
collusion” for the spectator, where they willingly immerse themselves in illusion (230). Far from treating this as a drawback, Le Grice analyzes this experience as a historical tradition that is interested in the simulation of reality, or “representational facsimile” (228). This collusive aspect of cinema spectatorship is the first of his three requirements for an immersive experience. This first element is connected to visual methodologies of cinema, including narrativity, realism and linear storytelling; however, it is an illusion that we are all familiar with, and which does not necessarily create the semblance of “real” experience. We are always aware of the fiction, since it only engages our visual senses and forces the rest of our bodies to fade away. In order to break beyond the illusion and create a truly immersive experience, Le Grice suggests that one must also take into account instanteneity and interactivity. Instanteneity, his second feature of realism, is perhaps most connected to Doane’s event, in that it requires a sense of liveness or presentness; it is dependent on an awareness of time passing and, as Le Grice notes, “continuous uncertainty, which is fundamental to the lived moment” (231). This feature, unlike the cinematic, seems more connected to broadcast and tele-communication technologies, which are able to stream the event in real-time, with seemingly little-or-no editing. Le Grice notes that this factor is less about whether the footage is actually unedited or truthful, but rather about the experience of not-knowing how something will end, “because it is unknowable—the event is continuing in the uncertainty of the present moment” (231),

Further to this, Le Grice distinguishes between “a condition of illusion where the representation makes the apparent object present for us, and a condition where we seem
to be brought into the space and time of the event” (232). One could easily compare this to Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures Miller’s *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, where Cardiff’s binaural whispers create an immersive audio-scape which transports the spectator into the space of the artwork by simulating her voice exactly as one would experience it in reality. However, as the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* illustrates, this alone is not enough to create a simulation of reality. After all, we can make ourselves believe in the illusion of real-time as much as we can believe in a visual illusion, and Cardiff and Miller utilize this idea in to draw attention to the disjunction between reality and perception. In order to complete the illusion of realism, Le Grice suggests that interactivity must be provided. He points out that “[w]here the cinematic implicates us as spectators through the process of identification supported on a layer of photographic, sensory simulation, and an illusion of instantaneous presence, interactivity promises us implication as protagonists” (234). This sense of implication is where the truest sense of contingency occurs.

Implicating the spectator in the work suggests that it cannot be completed without their participation, whether it be literally or through Umberto Eco’s mental “open work”. If both narrative and instanteneity can be illusory, then Le Grice explains that:

...[it] would seem that the only viable basis for retaining a concept of the real is this ‘cruciality’ of our encounter. We might then define the real as being the arena of irreversible consequence… not always a matter of choice, but always a matter of our implication in the dynamic unfolding of events. At its most dramatic it is evident in mortality and loss and in the echo of this in the impossibility of owning—holding on to—any moment. More positively it is evident in potentiality and transformation and in the exercise of choice, power or creativity. (233-234)

Just as Doane’s “dead time” indicates the passing of real time, whether it is deemed cinematically important or not, Le Grice’s “interactivity” implicates our presence in that
time as important to the contingency of the event, since we shape the experience and it would not exist without our presence there. It becomes Vivian Sobchack’s dialogic gaze, with the artistic event, spectator and artist sharing the experience. As such, one could conclude that if all parties must exist in an equal relationship in order to participate in the artistic conversation, all three must also participate in Le Grice’s three factors of realistic experience. Together, they must participate in the storytelling, share instanteneity, and be implicated in contingently creating the event.

Although in this particular essay Le Grice uses these theories to support a sense of realism, what is inherently at stake is the issue of engaging a spectator in an experience of an artwork and using that engagement to transform them somehow. It is reminiscent of the tactics employed by the situationist international movement, who proposed a revolutionary politicization. Active from the late 1950's and early 1960's, the movement supported the idea of art as a tool for radical transformation of society, using subversive tactics to undermine the mainstream and blur the boundaries between art and life. The situationists planned a variety of tactics, but the one that is most renowned—and is embedded in their namesake—is that of “situations”. Situations were described by Guy Debord (one of the movement’s best known and most outspoken members) as “...ephemeral, without a future. Passageways. Our only concern is real life; we care nothing about the permanence of art or of anything else. Eternity is the grossest idea a person can conceive of in connection with his acts...” (“Report on the Construction of Situations”). Existing in the present moment, the situationists sought constant transformation in order to prevent the stagnation and rigidity that overtook other
Modernist art revolutions like Futurism, Surrealism and Dadaism. They refused to delineate any clear goals or intentions, avoiding institutionalization, and also supposedly preventing any clear definition of their activities which might restrict their work. Their anarchic approach was questionably successful without clear direction, however, there are still productive aspects from their activities which might be applied to modern artistic practices—practices such as art/cinema, which often characterize the hybridity, changeability and undefinability proposed by the situationists.

If we return to the notion of presentness or contingency, one might point to Debord’s description of situations as spatio-temporal. Situations engage both the duration and space of an encounter in order to create “moments of rupture, of acceleration, revolutions in individual everyday life” (“Theory of Moments”). Emphasizing these elements within the our daily lives, the situation stimulates the spectator in an exciting new engagement with their environment. In many ways, it again connects to Vivian Sobchack’s insistence that we take “…possession of our vision…” (54), an ownership which suggests that we have the ability to change the world around us—or at least our perceptions of it. Situations are a combination of a structured artistic impulses or narrative, a presence in time and place and an implication in the events that unfold around us, a description which aligns nicely with Le Grice’s three aspects of immersive realism. In the article “Preliminary Problems in Constructing a Situation”, published in the first issue of Internationale Situationniste by an unnamed member of the situationist international, the group laments that “…[t]he partisans of ‘industrial design’…” (or the evil empire of modernist capitalism) “…complain that their projects
are spoiled by people’s playful tendencies. At the same time, industrial commerce crudely exploits these tendencies by diverting them to a demand for constant superficial renovation of utilitarian products”. Play appears here as an important aspect of situationist practices, something which is repeated in many of their other texts. The idea of play spoiling “proper” design brings to mind the modern practice of playful modification of technology, clothing, architecture etc., in order to personalize and take ownership over a generic product. It is a scenario most regularly seen in technology “mods”, where users change and decorate the casing for computer hardware, “hack” electronics to perform unusual tasks or manipulate code to provide greater access to the way that software operates. By connecting the idea of ownership with playfulness, the situationists create a productive dialogue around the role of play in engaging people in a critique of their surroundings.

One of the situationists’ other major concepts included the theory of détournement, an approach to making art which included subversion of mainstream expectations. Although it could be considered petulant, it is also lighthearted, recalling the silly or mad images of the Surrealists, that disrupted the cohesiveness between image and reality. In the article “Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play”, the situationists delineate play as an opposition to the traditional categorization of games as competitions or battles. Instead, they propose that “the element of competition must disappear in favor of a more authentically collective concept of play: the common creation of selected ludic ambiances”. The spontaneity suggested by the term “ludic” is a reminder of the undetermined or contingent moment that Doane and Le Grice suggest
creates an event. This type of playfulness takes us out of the everyday moment and creates an awareness of a new situation, where we experience the contingency of the moment as an embodied experience (fully mentally and physically present in the moment of the “game”) and also as a state of critical contemplation (where game is contemplated as different than everyday life). Debord describes this state as a “playful-constructive behaviour”, which distinguishes situations from passive leisure, and activates it to transform our approach to the world (“Theory of the Dérive”).

In the “Contribution to a Situationist Definition of Play”, the situationists quote cultural historian Johan Huizinga, renowned for his work around play in cultural and aesthetic contexts. They point to Huizinga’s idea that the fiction and fun of play does not necessarily exclude seriousness, and that in fact, play can often be of utmost seriousness. This dual nature of play—as complete presence and embodied affect (or fun!), and also as a serious investigation of the world—is what makes it such a useful tool for considering audience engagement within art/cinema. It is a world that is enclosed and an isolated experience, but which exists within a broader reality. In *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1949), Huizinga illustrates the primal nature of play as something which “is older than culture”, that transcends individuals, generations and even species, since:

...[a]nimals play just like men. We have only to watch young dogs to see that all the essentials of human play are present in their merry gambols. They invite one another to play by a certain ceremoniousness of attitude and gesture. They keep to the rule that you shall not bite, or note bite hard, your brother’s ear. They pretend to get terribly angry. And—what is most important—in all these doings they plainly experience tremendous fun and enjoyment. (1)
Since play is found in most forms of multi-cellular life, it seems unlikely that it would simply be a cultural or accidental development. Huizinga recognizes that scientists have attempted to determine the origins of play—with little success—determining a range of theories that include play as a discharge of energy, mimicry, relaxation, competition, power-play and even education.

While all of these factors are plausible, Huizinga objects that these scientific approaches are fallacious, since the “...intensity of, and absorption in, play finds no explanation in biological analysis. Yet in this intensity, this absorption, this power of maddening, lies the very essence, the primordial quality of play. … with its tension, its mirth, and its fun” (2-3). By connecting play to aesthetics, Huizinga removes it from the realm of necessity and utility. It is able be understood simply as an embodied experience that exists for, in, and of, itself (a description often levied toward art). Art for art’s sake.

Play for play’s sake. Art and play operate as two features of a similar social phenomenon, providing opportunities to observe features of playfulness which might apply to the experience of art. After all, everyone—regardless of social status, race, gender, ability, background, or citizenship—takes part in play. We do it as often as we can, without worrying whether it is good for us, useful or is changing the world, we just do it. Play has no moral valuations, writes Huizinga, and “…it stands outside the immediate satisfaction of wants and appetites… It interpolates itself as a temporary activity satisfying in itself and ending there” (9). Playfulness is an exploration of the world, without regard to formal structures, historical limitations or mainstream values. It provides an open space for new possibility, for being anything and anyone you want to
be at that moment. Additionally, play is always voluntary—if someone pressures you to play something, it stops being fun and becomes a chore. You can’t force engagement.

Due to its disinterested nature, play provides us the opportunity to step outside of our wants, needs and daily responsibilities. It constructs a bubble in space and time where we pretend, all the while remaining aware that pretend is a temporary activity. Play is an ephemeral duration, with a beginning and end, and Huizinga notes that “...[t]his ‘only pretending’ quality of play betrays a consciousness of the inferiority of play compared with ‘seriousness’...”(8). This again indicates an oscillation between the embodied experience of the moment, and the critical distance that is required for thoughtful contemplation. He explains that imaginary aspects of play do not “...prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness, with an absorption, a devotion that passes into rapture and, temporarily at least, completely abolishes that troublesome ‘only feeling. Any game can at any time wholly run away with the players. The contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid” (8). This tension between seriousness and fun indicates the zone in which play is effective. On one hand, you are too rigidly set apart from the “game” to lose your inhibitions and have fun, and on the other, you are completely lost in fantasy, something which society has deemed unhealthy and unproductive, as seen in the stereotype of the role-playing “geek”, who (presumably) is obese, and lives in his parent's basement while playing World of Warcraft around the clock instead of working. Rather than fall into the trap of this binary, in the zone between one is able to both have fun and maintain enough distance to contemplate the game in relation to the Other of your everyday life.
If we apply this scenario to immersive art/cinema situations, one can imagine how a space which engages playfulness might create rich spectatorial experiences. As with the metaphors of aura, chora and haptics, play fluctuates between the subjective bodies of the spectator, artwork and artist, and also engages the venue and cultural context of its surroundings. Supporting the idea that play provides possibilities for social experiences in art, digital media artist Mary Flanagan writes in her essay “Creating Critical Play” that

...[o]ne of the things that is attractive about games and play is the sense they offer for encountering something special—games may provide a framework for a new system of thinking, or offer glimpses of divergent logic. Play, both in an open sense and within the structure of a game, can serve as a lens for creating something beautiful. In other words, games are systems for imagining what is possible. 50

Whether structured in games or developed in playful situations, the idea of play as a factor in spectatorship is a valuable one. It engages people freely, and entices them to place value on an experience which may not ordinarily be valued. Through participation and dialogue, these events are then able to proliferate, building on past, present and future experiences to carry them forward as embodied memory.

3.2 Case Study: Anthony McCall - Five Minutes of Pure Sculpture (2012)

Anthony McCall's “solid light films” extend our understanding of interactivity to include subtle forms of situation and playfulness, creating a type of participatory spectatorship which does not rely on literal button-pushing. In the essay “Film Beyond Its Limits”, art historian George Baker places McCall’s practice in a category he calls “Post-minimalism”, which, instead of only emphasizing the physical space of the art
object, extends its reach to include the phenomenology of the object in both space and
time. Perception, writes Baker, “in itself was in some form the new modality of artistic
practice” (98). Although both movements take the formal structure of the work and its
relation to space and spectator as key concerns, Post-minimalism discards the idea that
form has to be a physical construct. It anticipates our contemporary perception of the
world, which is often mediated by technology and disconnected from physicality.

Working from this idea, McCall’s films mimic the solid materialism of minimalist
sculpture—epitomized by sculptor Richard Serra's geometric forms—through the
ephemeral medium of light. The term “solid light film” was created by McCall in order
to describe these works, and refers to the way in which the artist creates luminous
sculptural forms through a simple black and white linear animations, projected in a
darkened room filled with smoky haze. These films disrupt the traditional notions of
cinema by activating the entire space of projection, from lens to screen, and engaging the
peripatetic nature of the gallery by presenting these works in non-theatrical spaces where
spectators are able to move around and engage with the light. Quoted in Baker’s essay,
McCall asserts that these films deal “with the projected light beam itself, rather than
treating the light-beam as a mere carrier of coded information, which is decoded when it
strikes a flat surface (the screen)” (94). Although I would argue that artwork can never be
fully emptied of meaning, McCall clearly intended to break from the institutional
connotations that structure discourse around both cinematic and gallery-based art.

In 2012, the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin housed an exhibition entitled: Five
Minutes of Pure Sculpture\(^3\). This solo-exhibition of new works by McCall presented seven new solid light films in the massive central hall of the historic train station-turned art gallery. In this case-study, I deal with the collection as a whole rather than as individual works, since they work in tandem as components of a related series. Although there are subtle differences in form and execution, these works are structured around the relationship between the spectator and artwork, in the flux between sculpture and cinema, and the blurred boundaries of body and imagination. Instead of a traditional cinema, with seating and frontal perspective for each work, the films are presented all together in the enormous blacked-out great hall of the train station. Interspersed in the dark are spotlights, projected on the walls and floor. The films trace white geometric lines on the walls and floor, while the darkness of the gallery combined with an atmospheric haze creates a sculptural effect in the space between the projector and screen. Viewers are able to walk through, touch and interact with the light as it shifts in time and space, making the intangible projection gloriously tactile. By placing their body in between the light source and screen, the spectator is able to become part of the work, changing the shape of the line in the air and on the screen surface. The dark becomes a space of play, experimentation, immersion and meditation, completely subverting the traditional distance of the white-cube gallery.

I describe my experience romantically—there is something about the solidification of light as a sculptural form that is transcendental and invokes notions of

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\(^3\) *Five Minutes of Pure Sculpture* (2012)
Images: “anthony mcall: five minutes of pure sculpture at hamburger bahnhof” - designboom.com/art/anthony-mccall-five-minutes-of-pure-sculpture-at-hamburger-bahnhof/
Video: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - youtube.com/watch?v=E4FDLe2HbAY
the sublime. The awareness of my solid body within an ephemeral space seems impossible—like walking on clouds—where the density of my form should not be able to share space with forms that are incorporeal. It calls attention to the experience of interaction as something special—an event that walks a fragile line between materiality and vapour. You hold your breath so as not to fall off the knife’s edge that is the boundary between everyday reality and the immersive dream that is light materialized. It requires accepting that the worlds of imagination and body exist side-by-side, and that the spectator must make an active choice to straddle the boundary without tipping over too far into one or the other. I am not alone in ascribing these romantic qualities to McCall’s work. In the exhibition catalogue, *Anthony McCall Five Minutes of Pure Sculpture*, Noam M. Elcott points to Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin's assertion that “...[i]mmediacy depends on hypermediacy.” (quoted in Elcott 43), and that we fill our world with technology which mediates it, while attempting to sublimate that same technology until we are no longer even aware of its existence. In regards to this, Elcott describes how:

McCall makes this dependence visible by maximizing the tension between immediacy and mediation... insisting on spaces, times and bodies that are ‘neither fully there nor entirely here’... [the solid light films] breathe and throb like body parts, actively deracinate their sites, and stand alone in the darkness... fusing Minimalist sculpture and cinematic media, McCall places immanence and mediation in maximum and constant tension. (43)

This tension positions the artworks as bodies in themselves, which exist as both separate from and blurred with our subjectivities. The real fades into the background through darkness and the imaginary is given an interactive form. In a promotional video for the exhibition, created by the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, McCall points out that almost everyone reaches up to touch the planes of light. There is a desire to touch, to see if it is
real, and once that occurs, you realize that it is possible for the light to touch you, to envelop and include you as part of the work itself. It is a haptic engagement with light that draws you close to the film, blurring our normal perception of both the filmic body and our surroundings. The real space of the gallery fades into the background and the spectator is transported into a zone which is not attached to our reality or a fictional one, but rather a third, liminal space which activates both reality and fiction simultaneously.

In the outline of the form, the projection creates an interior space which is not quite as stark as the white outline, nor quite as dense as the black space that surrounds it. The gradation of light within the mass reveals an interior to the body of the film: one that is porous to light, mist and spectatorial bodies. Like a jellyfish, one can see through the translucent shell into its inner workings and out the other side. George Baker notes that the experience of this filmic body is strange since we can interact with it, but the movement of mist within light and the transformation of its outlines makes it unstable, “fluctuating as pointedly as the spectatorial body itself” (109). It stimulates an awareness of the space moving around you, and draws attention to the ways in which the boundaries between your body and the film’s body are distinct, porous and blurred simultaneously. Several authors have written about this phenomenon in McCall’s work, with Noam Elcott noting in the catalogue essay for the exhibition that “…the immaterial blades of light cut up the space… [a]nd imposed themselves on the bodies therein” (44), and Brandon W. Joseph suggesting that the experience of moving in and out of the interior and exterior boundaries of light “…undermines any comfortable sense of one’s disembodiment” (133). The constant shifting of situation relates your body to that of the
film, and compels the spectator into a process of dialogue with the work, where one has to react to its movements in order affect its appearance. This intermingling of interior and exterior enables a space of transition—of being ‘neither here nor there’—and stimulates dialogue around public and private experience.

Writing about McCall’s earlier works, Joseph points to the “traumatic interactions of inside and outside… passing through an interior of another of the work’s cavities—can be understood to reflect upon the increasing privatization of the public sphere (as has occurred within the museum)…” (133). Joseph indicates that the privatization itself is socially traumatic (as it is linked to capitalist valuation of artistic artifacts in the museum, and insistence on spectacle in order to attract the greatest number of ‘customers’), however I find it more productive to approach this “trauma” of situation through Jill Bennett’s earlier application of trauma as embodied emotion, which is incommunicable through language.

This intense focus on the intersections between space and time is a reminder of the role that spectatorial contingency plays within the immersive art/cinema experience. If we recall Mary Anne Doane and Malcolm Le Grice’s writings around the contingency of the event, we will recall that it requires an awareness of time passing in collaboration with a sense of contingency, or the unknown quality of future events. The spectator must feel as if their presence is crucial to whatever happens in the next moment, whether they participate in it, or merely witness it. McCall’s films draw attention to duration in a number of ways. Temporally, each animation ranges between 15-50 minutes in length, without narrative, and the works loop so that one can walk in at any point; it is nearly
impossible to tell when they start and stop. Each film lives in a microcosm of its own, and the spectator is able to step into the contained light-universes to experience that duration on its own terms, without excessive distraction from the outside world. However, the spectator is also able to interrupt that duration by stepping in front of the light. In doing so, your shadow covers the animated tracings, blocking the internal workings of the light-void with your body, and forcing it to go around your mass. It lies on top of your skin, and surrounds you as your body changes the way the sculpture is formed in space. Meanwhile, the light keeps changing and circumventing your presence.

You may adjust to it, but have very little chance of recreating the same moment of experience twice, unless you stood exactly still in for the entire loop of the piece. This is unlikely due to the duration of the work, but also because of the other spectators in the space, all jostling to participate in their own interaction with the work. It is a reminder that it is not just your body alone with the light void, but also your bodies in relation to all the other spectatorial bodies.

The films are simple constructions—merely white lines tracing patterns on the projection surfaces, whether they be floor, wall or skin. However, by situating the works within a misty, darkened space, McCall shapes time in space. The animated image shifts forms three-dimensionally, simultaneously enclosing and excising the spectator from the film’s internal voids. Elcott notes that almost all of the films in the exhibition are structured around the idea of the filmic wipe, referencing one of the most basic elements of cinema: the edit. He points out that the wipe is not commonly used as an editing tool; its basic structure allows two images to exist together on screen, as one replaces the other.
in a durational shift, but often infamously does this using shapes like circles, stars, hearts or flowers—as in cheesy wedding videos or commercials. In McCall’s work, the simplicity of the wipe, and the images that it contains, rescues it from kitsch and repurposes it as a means to materialize time. As the wipe focuses on the existence and movement of two or more images sharing the same frame, one could suggest that it represents the durational life-span of an image. This positions McCall’s films as diagrams, illustrating time in space. One could also metaphorically imagine the solid light films as a realization of wormholes from theoretical physics. Their physicality is reminiscent of science-fiction depictions of wormholes: a black funnel leading into the unknown, consuming light and all other surrounding particles within its void. As a connecting point between space and time (Ridpath), the wormhole is an excellent metaphor for the ways in which McCall’s solid light films connect our space with the imaginary, creating a swirling, unknowable vortex in between. This vortex, while connected to two points, contracts space and time to open up multi-dimensional possibilities, or as described by Umberto Eco in his “Poetics of the Open Work”, quoting Luigi Pareyson, a model of art which is “an infinite contained within finiteness” (63).

By considering McCall’s solid light films as a type of wormhole, compressing and expanding our reality into a point of limitless possibility, we are brought back to the situationist international movement’s use of situations as spatio-temporal events. As with situations, McCall’s art/cinema installations incorporate architecture, urbanism, poetry and cinema in a wonderful consolidation of hybridized practice (Debord “Report on the Construction of Situations”). Although his “films” reference cinema, they have stripped
away all of the qualities that one would normally associate with a theatrical experience of film; there are no comfortable seats, no frontal perspective, no illusion of reality, no time-line. Rather, they emphasize the apparatus of projection, along with the immersive darkness that the theatre is renowned for, in order to draw our attention to the expectations we may have of a cinematic experience. In addition, the solid light films also disrupt our expectations of what gallery-based experiences should be. Darkness hides the architecture of the gallery, and the white walls—which normally would be the frame for artwork—are stretched out and effaced.

In the darkened Hamburger Bahnhof, I watch other spectators. I sit in dark corners, quietly observing their thrill, as they stop in the light, put out their hands to touch it, and let it run over their bodies. They block, dance and dodge, all the while displaying an unusual characteristic in normal gallery viewing: playfulness. Children run back and forth between the light and dark, even running around the larger gallery space from spotlight to spotlight. One man lies on the gallery floor in a single, vertical spot of light, staring up at the cone surrounding him for the entire time I am present in the exhibition—probably about an hour. If it is not transcendent to forget yourself so completely, to lie down in public, or to run around in a space normally reserved for library-like silence, respectable distance from artworks, and sullen security guards in every corner, then I don’t know what is. All of these normal gallery conditions returned instantly when I stepped outside of the McCall black box. I was chided by several guards for minor infractions in the main space, but within that darkened hall, all the normal rules were off.
Everyone seemed excited for this chance to play freely, to modify the artwork with their own bodies and engage with it in a one-on-one dialogue. Spectators rarely worked together to interact with the artwork. What attracted most people, it seemed, was the play of light on their own bodies; the excitement lay in the shape of the light on their skin, and the way in which their body could block and modify the projected beam—not how it ended up affecting the animation. People related better to the three-dimensional space of mist and light than the flat two-dimensional drawing shifting on the wall.

McCall points this out in the promotional video, where he notes that the solid light films have two “faces… volumetric form and two-dimensional drawing”. In the two-dimensional form, we are easily able to grasp the shapes being illustrated, as an abstraction, or diagram of form, whereas the three-dimensional shape is too complex to grasp quickly and easily; there is too much flux for us to clearly model it. However this complex, unknowable form easily shares the same physical space as the spectator. In the interaction between the two autonomous bodies of spectator and film, each with their own subjective visions, it is impossible to communicate clear meaning. Instead, it must be developed slowly and methodically through embodied and shared experience.
CONCLUSION

Although the three case-studies within this project are broken into categories, and are examined in terms of how they activate the theories and metaphors contained in their respective chapters, it is important to note that all three art/cinema installations have significant cross-over. Each of them can be understood through all of the theoretical constructs employed here: mobilizing critical distanciation as shown by Walter Benjamin’s theory of aura; drawing on our personal memories and subjectivity in order to develop a subtle relationship between the spectator and art object as seen with Julia Kristeva’s concept of chora and Henri Bergson’s understanding of memory; as well as embodying experience through haptic approaches to the image and playful situationism. For the purposes of this project, I have focused on specific theories which provide the best tools to understand the way in which the individual case-studies create immersive experiences, however what likely enables their visceral affect is their deployment of all of these theoretical tools in order to create a holistic experience. They oscillate between interior and exterior, mind and body, thoughts and experiences, public and private, as well as the binaries between ourselves and the other. Rather than focusing on the binaries themselves—as post-colonialist, feminist, Marxist and other academic movements have often done—these artists cross and blur the boundaries. By choosing a more ambiguous approach to this discourse, the works succeed in providing a space for Umberto Eco’s “open work” to occur (for spectators to supplement their understanding of an artwork with their own perspectives) and in creating a contingent experience. Positioning the spectator as someone who must play an active role in their own engagement with the
art/cinema installation, Kentridge, Cardiff, Miller and McCall shift the traditional understanding of artistic experiences from an authoritative enlightenment to equivocal discovery.

In recognizing the engagement with art/cinema as both a situated and durational activity, we become aware of the event-ness of the experience. This notion is a reminder of Malcolm Le Grice’s contingent moments, which—while structured within the artwork—are unknowable because they have yet to happen. Engaging with the duration of these artworks is different for each spectator; it is not simply the work in isolation which is important, but the histories and experiences that we bring to it, and the ways in which we formulate reactions to the experience by combining our subjectivities with our experience of the work as its own subjectivity, and also in relation to other spectators.

Walking up to the work, experiencing it, walking away and then contemplating it should all be considered as valuable aspects of a durational art engagement, and no art illustrates this better than the art/cinema installation, which activates the duration and situation of experience in conjunction with the spectatorial body.

This attention to the duration of experience, and disruption our normalized habits, is something which the situationists would have greatly appreciated. In “The Construction of Situations”, Debord proposed a dynamic of constant change and surprise, outlining that, “[i]n contrast to the aesthetic modes that strive to fix and eternalize some emotion, the situationist attitude consists in going with the flow of time. In so doing, in pushing ever further the game of creating new, emotionally provocative situations, the situationists are gambling that change will usually be for the better”.

Constantly trying something new, turning the game against itself and drawing attention to its unfamiliarity, the situationists hoped to create active and politicized spectators. Although the situationist international movement failed its goal of total revolution (they disbanded the group in the early 1970’s), their ideas survive in modern artistic movements. British curator Claire Doherty, has published several books including Contemporary Art: from Studio to Situation (2004) and SITUATION (2009), which outline her contemporary application of situationist practices within her own curatorial methodology. Doherty’s approach to situationism focuses on the ideas of ephemerality and dialogue, as well as an interest in site-specific art. Her curatorial projects often involve commissioning works for specific locales, including the One Day Sculpture project in New Zealand, which not only asked artists to create works for set places, but also focused on the temporality of the projects as part of public engagement. Each artwork had a set location and duration (each lasted only 24 hours), and used those constraints to engage public spectators with their everyday places in a new and unique manner (Litmus Research Initiative).

Doherty’s primary curatorial focus is the Situations project, a commissioning and artistic creation group based in Bristol, UK. This group funds and produces temporary and long term artworks, “acting as a connector” to stimulate dialogue around public art, both in the UK and internationally. On their website, they note that their mandate:

…is guided by our belief in the capacity for the arts to change, enhance and inform the way we think about and interact with the world around us… public spaces outside conventional arts venues offer the most rich and rewarding contexts in which that can happen…. This consideration of situations (a set of conditions, locations, people, moments in time and circumstance) rather than location means that every newly commissioned
project starts with a process of becoming locally embedded. (Situations “About”)

Although I would suggest that situated work does not require a site-specific commission, I do think that Doherty’s Situations group brings to life an exciting approach to public art. It is an approach which values the conversational aspect of engagement with art, and places the location, community, spectatorial subjectivities, artistic content, artists’ intent, and curatorial design in equal dialogue. Instead of teaching the public about what is best for them, it structures an act of playful discovery. It draws spectators into a conversation that integrates their reality, local environment and cultural context into the broader themes that constitute the artwork.

Doherty’s Situations activate the best elements from the situationist international movement, in order to carry forward the same objective: social revolution through art. As part of this revolution, Doherty and Situations have put forth “The New Rules of Public Art”, which was published onto the Public Art Now blog in December 2013. An excerpt from these rules reads:

1 - IT DOESN’T HAVE TO LOOK LIKE PUBLIC ART… The days of bronze heroes and roundabout baubles are numbered.
2 - IT’S NOT FOREVER… Places don’t remain still and unchanged, so why should public art?
3 - CREATE SPACE FOR THE UNPLANNED… Moments of uncertainty and rethinking are the points at which the artwork comes into focus.
4 - DON’T MAKE IT FOR A COMMUNITY. CREATE A COMMUNITY… Community is rarely born out of geography, but rather out of common purpose,
5 - WITHDRAW FROM THE CULTURAL ARMS RACE… Towns and cities across the world are locked into a one-size fits all style of public art.
6 - DEMAND MORE THAN FIREWORKS… It’s often in the silence of a solitary moment, or in a shared moment of recognition, rather than the exhilaration of whizzes and bangs, that transformation occurs.
7 - DON’T EMBELLISH, INTERRUPT… Interruptions to our
surroundings or everyday activities can open our eyes to new possibilities beyond artistic embellishment.

8 - **SHARE OWNERSHIP FREELY, BUT AUTHORSHIP WISELY**… Public art is of the people and made with the people, but not always by the people… Trust the artist’s judgement, follow their lead and invest in their process.

9 - **WELCOME OUTSIDERS**… Outsiders challenge our assumptions about what we believe to be true of a place.

10 - **DON’T WASTE TIME ON DEFINITIONS**… There are more important questions to ask. Does it move you? Does it shake up your perceptions of the world around you, or your backyard? Do you want to tell someone else about it? Does it make you curious to see more?

11 - **SUSPEND YOUR DISBELIEF**… Local specifics might have been the stepping off point – but public art is not a history lesson. Be prepared that it might not always tell the truth.

12 - **GET LOST**… Public art is neither a destination nor a way-finder. Artists encourage us to follow them down unexpected paths as a work unfolds. (Situations “The New Rules of Public Art”)

There is a lighthearted tone to this list which resonates with the situationist international approach. The language is informal and questioning—it leaves room for error, changes of perspective and of heart. It positions itself foremost in opposition to the traditional context of art in galleries and museums and as decorative or propaganda… “the days of bronze heroes and roundabout baubles are numbered”. Instead of describing what the object of public art should look like, the manifesto of the new Situations focuses on the ephemeral elements of social context, dialogue and imagination. It suggests an approach to public art which does not focus on the medium or content of the art, but rather chooses to emphasize the relationship between the art and spectator

The work put forth in this research is in some ways a continuation of this list. I appreciate that the Situations list of rules is numbered, seemingly arbitrarily, at twelve. This suggests that it is not perfect or complete, but rather a work in progress. Based on
my earlier explorations of aura, chora, memory, haptics and play, I might suggest the following additions:

13 - **PAY ATTENTION TO THE JOURNEY**… Observe the differences between standing at a distance and drawing so close that you lose yourself. Each step you take in any direction, through space and time, changes your relationship with the artwork.

14 - **INSIST ON CONVERSATION, NOT DICTATION**… Engaging with an artwork should be more complex and ambiguous than being told something is either right or wrong. Your opinion shapes the work and the work shapes you.

15 - **BRING YOUR BAGGAGE**… Your memories, experiences and point of view are crucial to creating an active, and rich, engagement for everyone involved, be it artist, artwork or spectator.

16 - **EXPERIENCE IS A COLLECTION OF MOMENTS**… The duration of an art experience is not only a few moments of being in the presence of an artwork, it is also the before and after, both of which are as important to the experience as the art object itself.

17 - **TOUCH AND BE TOUCHED**… Whether it is literally or figuratively, an interaction with art should engage the entire body in order to create an experience rather than a description of experience.

18 - **PLAY**… Art doesn’t have to be serious, and play doesn’t have to be frivolous. There are many ways to create engagement, and play lifts us out of the real world into a space of imagination and possibility.

Of these suggestions, the notions of play and haptics provide the most concrete
possibilities for the design of situationist and conversational engagements with art. As noted previously, these concepts can be taken literally or metaphorically. How these theories are applied to spectatorial engagement depends on the artworks showcased, as well as the context and goals of the exhibition, however they all approach artistic presentation in a way that supports ambiguity and personal experience over didacticism and singular authority. What this means for contemporary curating is a shift in the contextual architecture of the artistic experience, moving from the truthful authority of the museum to exploratory and interventionist situations. It emphasizes experiences which engage both mind and body equally, and which exist durationally as well as spatially. Instead of sliding toward binary opposition, this new approach to curatorial design is one of sliding scales, shades of grey and ambiguity; it can be many things at the same time to many different people at the same time, and it does not determine truth or falsity. Rather the experience of engaging with art acts as a starting point for a dialogue.

It is crucial to maintain subtle approaches in order to avoid spectacularization—and therefore a reduction to use value—of artistic engagements. Spectacle is generally frowned upon; it is seen as selling out, or a suppression of criticality in favour of “bums in seats”. Granted, the works in these case studies are shaped by a certain commodification: Kentridge and Cardiff were supported by *dOCUMENTA 13* and McCall’s installation in Berlin could not have been accomplished without the generous financial support of the museum. Both *dOCUMENTA* and the Hamburger Bahnhof charge money for admission to the experience, and for many visitors, accessing that experience requires significant financial and time investment in order to travel to and/or
across Europe. It is not available to everybody, but rather the elite that can afford the pilgrimage. What may help to avoid this spectacularization is to maintain awareness of it.

Immersive art/cinema works—such as the ones examined here—provide a useful form for analysis, since they often develop a context where technology and institutional interferences operate at the periphery, repressed by the immersive environment of the installation. It is an environment within an environment, and therefore somewhat separated from reality.

If we consider Guy Debord’s original definition of spectacle in *The Society of the Spectacle*, we may understand it as not merely a collection of images, but a social relation which relies on the isolation and separation of the spectator from others, and from the product of their work. He writes that the “spectacle does not realize philosophy, it philosophizes reality, reducing everyone’s concrete life to a universe of speculation” (Paragraph 19). In other words, it disconnects us from our bodies, reducing everything to the mind, and separates us from a sense that the world is interconnected. It is linked to the Marxist worker, who is unable to relate his or her labour to the products which they produce, removing a sense of ownership over their daily activity (Marx “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1944” 765). Our reality becomes a sense of binaries, of ME and EVERYTHING ELSE, that sets everything around us in relation to our wants and needs. It is not until this disconnect is revealed that we can deal with it, subvert it, and change the ways in which we forge a relationship with the world around us. Here, rather than treating the spectator as a consumer, by handing back a sense of cruciality, and of power to participate in and influence the experience, one is able to subvert the system of
dominance and repression that created by the spectacle. Within these case studies, each of the works maintain a sense of affect without falling into spectacle. They do this, despite existing in a spectacular festival and/or museum context, by resisting ownership. They exist in time, duration and memory and depend on the event of engagement, the relationship between artwork, spatial situation and the social nature of conversation between the artwork and spectators—dynamics which are integral to the affective power of the works. You cannot own a social interaction or emotional affect, and therefore it disrupts the power dynamic of capitalistic consumerism.

This research is the beginning of more in-depth explorations around this topic, which has been greatly furthered by these first steps toward defining what types of engagements are the most useful, and what sorts of situations might create productive affect. It will require further investigation into similar affective and social relation theories, such as relational aesthetics as proposed by Nicolas Bourriaud, the power dynamics of the individual in their surroundings as positioned by cultural theorist Michel de Certeau, aesthetic theorist Jacques Rancière’s work around spectatorship, along with more generalized research around affect theory.

It will also require further exploration around situated art and projects, specifically around similar curatorial approaches. In the United Kingdom, groups such as the Situations, The Foundation for Art and Technology, and Furtherfield stage public engagements with hybrid art—often moving image or media based—and work within a practice which emphasizes our social relationships with art in order to instigate social change. Closer to home, in 2013 the interdisciplinary situated exhibition Land|Slide in
Markham, Ontario, investigated many of the issues contained here. The project commissioned artworks for the site, in conjunction with augmented reality, performances, lectures and other audience engagement events in order to create a sense of public involvement in the project and support dialogue. In addition, Halifax-based filmmaker Solomon Nagler has recently completed a series of public cinema installations for looping 16mm short films, titled *Situated Cinema* (2012-2014). In this series of installations, Nagler creates mobile cinema spaces for the presentation of the works, which are moved to a variety of public spaces. Shaped like black boxes, accordions, and more recently a vertical construction which requires spectators to lie on the ground in order to view the images—much like a planetarium—these spaces engage spectators with the ritual, and spatial design of cinematic spaces, interrupting our normative expectations and drawing attention to our bodies in a new relationship with the image. A similar project, entitled *Vertical Cinema* has also been installed as part of the 2014 Rotterdam International Film Festival.

One of commonalities between each of these projects is their exploration of the architectural and spatial contexts of art environments. *Land|Slide* contrasted the historic frontier buildings and high-technology media (in conjunction with sculpture, land art and other mediums), and Nagler’s work integrates architecture into the experience of the moving image. This return to architecture is particularly interesting in the design ofspectatorial engagements, since it is the one element which is most clearly under the control of the curator. The work exists on its own, often in a context that is directed by the artist or technical requirements. Armed with a nuanced understanding of how these
works operate in space—and with space—a curator may be able to underscore certain affects or critical elements, and to draw attention to the role of the embodied spectator in continued dialogue. This re-occurrence of architecture as a leading player in the design of spectatorial experiences suggests that further exploration around this topic is needed. To that end, I will to continue to investigate works which activate architecture as part of their structure, and which are situated within interesting architectural contexts. This brings us back to Sylvia Lavin’s metaphor of the interaction between moving images and architecture as a type of “kiss”. The affective power of this relationship provides a sense of the types of possibility that is opened by considering spectatorial engagement in this new way, a way that is “generous”, sensual, explorative, risk-taking, thrilling, comforting, giving and taking at the same time.

Each of the art/cinema case studies examined here is able to create this affective “kiss” due to the immersive architecture of their design. Just as Benjamin positions architecture as the third space which allows both critical contemplation and the muscle-memory of embodiment, these works have structured their own environments through audio, visuals, inter-subjective relationships and a sense of contingency. It is interesting to note that during the course of compiling this research, it came to my attention that all three of the case-studies included here were originally presented within exhibition architecture of a re-purposed train station. There are many other elements of the experience which influenced my reception of the work more strongly than the literal site in which they were placed, however the train station offers productive metaphors of transportation, movement and imagination, themes which all three works share. As noted
in the William Kentridge case-study, trains were an integral part of Modernist mythology, facilitating previously unimaginable freedom of movement, exploration and encounters with other cultures. Although it was partially driven by a colonialist impulse, imperialist conquest and industrial development, it also transformed the porosity of previously stable national boundaries, beginning international and transnational cultural palimpsests which are integral to the way nations around the world operate within our globalized society. We are more connected to the rest of the world than ever, sharing stories, ideas, news, mythology, art and experiences through our systems of telecommunications, all of which grew out of the increase of technological mediation that occurred at the beginning of the 19th century, with railways playing a major role in that development.

In the first decades of the 21st century, the metaphor of the train still retains its connections to travel, exotic discovery and the act of journeying. In examining each of these art/cinema installations, we can see how architecture influences spectatorship by actively layering an auratic history of space over the themes and narratives brought to light by the artworks. The memory of space, art and spectator intermingle, creating a zone of thoughtfulness which activates attention toward the experience and duration of engaging with the artwork. In this way, the installations bring together diverse subjective bodies, to share space, time and experience in a way which affects all of them. Although the role of architecture within this experience has not been expressly articulated within this project, it is important to acknowledge the role that it plays, since it provides a primary concentration point for further analysis and future research.
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