

Let's Take This Outside

developing models for locative narrative



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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Chris Caines – August 2011

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There are many people who have collaborated with and assisted me in producing the projects, the text and the ideas that make up this DCA thesis and to all of them I am exceedingly grateful. Firstly to my two supervisors, Ross Gibson and Paul Ashton who have given invaluable advice and guidance. Early on in the candidacy Ross described my research approach during the discussion that followed my Assessment presentation as working with 'all the windows open' which is a phrase I've held on to throughout the rest of the process. Paul provided an inspiring exemplar through his own locative history research practice and in many ways deepened and made more rigorous the historical turn my practice has taken.

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All other omissions, errors and mistakes remain, humbly, my own.

Abstract

Locative Media while relatively newly distinct as an artform has a rich hybrid history that threads together elements of literature, performance art, experimental cinema and the artform(s) previously known as new media. Equally it contains influences from the development of mobile telephony and portable media playback devices and the cultures that surround the use and rapid technical transformation of those technologies. All this in the context of shifting ideas around the meaning of place and history particularly as lived at daily street level.

The works presented for this thesis in combination with this text represent a long ongoing research trajectory exploring the development of models of poetic narrative in locative media. Using keys ideas from semiotics, expanded cinema and urban geography it uses a portfolio of works across many forms to examine how the combination of media and location create narrative.

The Contents of the DVD

The DVD contains documentation, development material and self contained works as follows:

- a) Three short video works. **Flight Recorder** (2005), **Flags of Convenience** (2009) and **Mathematics** (2010)
- b) Documentation of three Locative Works and two developmental pieces. **Go This Way** (2004), **iWall** (2006), **Thumb Candy** (2007) and **Orbital** (2010)
- c) Documentation and selected source material from five Live AV performances. **Supernatural** (2004), **Homepage** (2007), **Sound of Failure** (2008), **The Field** (2009), **Headwater** (2010).

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Introduction:

It was the late afternoon of the 26th of June 2004 and I was riding the airport shuttle from the Melbourne CBD to catch a flight back to Sydney. The night before had been the opening of a large-scale survey show of Australian art at the National Gallery of Victoria and the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) (Rackham 2004) which was home to a locative fiction piece for mobiles that I had been commissioned by ACMI to produce.

The show had only been open one day and ACMI was providing gallery visitors with instructions on how to access my piece *Go This Way* on (mobile) handsets over the then fledgling mobile web. The work is essentially a six stop walking tour with six stories to be read in locations that began across the street from ACMI at the back of St Paul's Cathedral. I had written these stories sitting in these locations and they were part of an attempt to create a fiction that worked powerfully with the resonance of place, and in doing so would produce an extra layer of narrative affect that augmented both place and story. The individual short fictions were wrapped in the conceit of being posts on the website of the Royal Melbourne Society of Emotional Geocachers (RMSEG). I constructed a simulation in simple HTML of the mobile version of an active forum message board site using many of the design cues from both enthusiast message board communities and the then current state of the mobile web. The central idea of the RMSEG was that members would leave memories of peak emotional experiences they had had in certain places as stories to be read by other members visiting those particular locations via the guidance of the mobile version of the website.

As the bus left the inner suburbs and rolled out onto Tullamarine freeway I pulled my phone out of my pocket to check my email and found that I already had quite a few emails generated from the RMSEG site. The comments field at the end of each story was in fact a simple web form that generated the comment as an email to me that I then could manually add to the site to maintain the fiction of a live conversation. The thing that immediately shocked

me about these 'comments' was, firstly, how heartfelt and personal they were as responses and secondly, how none of the respondents seemed to be reading the work as fiction, even with the obvious contextual framing of ACMI, or the '2004' exhibition itself.

What was going on here? Although I had been working toward this type of affect in the months leading up to the show in the production of the work and the writing of the stories, I was genuinely surprised by the reactions to the piece.

This experience opened up a variety of inter-related research questions that are explored in this thesis and the suite of creative works that I have used as a means of material thinking (Carter 2004) in examining the ramifications and possibilities afforded by these ideas. These investigations are comprised of three short films, three locative media pieces, four live audiovisual performance works, a photographic installation and an interactive audio installation. These works enable the exploration of research questions concerning *the aesthetic effects of location and narrative in combination*. Through this thesis, I will explore the questions:

How can location can transform story and vice versa?

How does the culture of mobile devices affect the way content delivered via these devices is received?

How can a cinematic practice of text and image juxtaposition, and the practice of a type of live cinema, develop a cinema of place that provides a foundational language for the creation and reception of locative narrative?

As a framework for discussing this series of works and the questions they explore I will be considering the works as forms of expanded writing. I will draw on the foundational ideas of 'camera as pen' (Bellour 1990) and the well-recognised and well explored ideas of experimental cinema language and early history as foundational to new media (Manovich 2001) the expanded cinema tradition (Youngblood 1970) and the relation it has to current live cinema practice. Combining the legacy and current practice of these approaches with the added layer of the locative, I will explore how the

modalities developed by these aesthetic traditions combine with resonances inherent in location, travel and place to create new aesthetic forms and understandings. This approach also makes use of ideas of multimodality (Robillard 2010) in its unravelling of the hybridisation of aesthetic forms and traditions in the creation of a new artistic language.

1) Locative Media and Narrative

It is often remarked (McVay 2003) that ideas and techniques of storytelling and narrative inform all human activity. From our narratives of self, historical worldviews, our sense of the possibilities of the future and our imaginings in everything from science to democracy, narrative, whether as a mental or societal process -- or as a 'story object' created with aesthetic intent. It is also crucially, a function of time. Narrative can even be said to be a part of how our human consciousness deals with the experience of time (Tyrrell 2009).

Many artforms, notably music and cinema, manipulate our sense of time for aesthetic affect. Playing with ideas of duration and time passing at different speeds and with different levels of intensity is part of the 'toolbox' available to musicians and filmmakers. Locative media, in its more sophisticated forms, attempts to combine the aesthetic techniques used in what we might call 'narrative time' with the resonances of place. It does this partly by calling on the most elemental of human stories; that of the journey through physical space. In this way locative media is different from forms of site specific art typified by the installation form in the visual arts. Firstly, it moves its audience through physical territory, often outdoors and often while they carry a media delivery device with them. Secondly, locative media relies for its effectiveness on the interaction between this changing physical territory and the *in-situ* media being presented to the audience during navigation of the story space being represented in the work.

For both the creators and audiences of locative media works there are a wide range of factors that affect the reception of these works *in-situ*. Firstly there is

as mentioned, the hybrid collision of an amalgam of pre-existing creative forms with a variety of specifically defined locations. Secondly and crucially there is also the delivery mechanism for the work and the social conventions of use that surround these (usually handheld) devices. Particularly in the case of delivery via mobile phones, the social norms that apply to these devices play strongly into production and reception of new work that utilise them as delivery devices. The conventions of mobile usage that have developed have seen the mobile come to be viewed as a personal and private device closely associated with the body and body language. These conventions have led to many locative works that use mobiles being produced as intimate, confessional, one-on-one pieces addressed to singular handset user.

I will be examining both the rapid mutation of these norms and the effects on locative media reception and production later in this thesis. To do this I will focus on the three projects completed as a part of this thesis, *Go This Way* (Caines 2004) a locative fiction work, *Thumb Candy* (Caines 2008), an online documentary about mobile phone texting culture in the Philippines and *Orbital* (Caines 2010) a locative and gallery based sound work. These pieces will be presented as examples of material thinking (Carter 2004) that explore the research questions surrounding the aesthetic effects of location and narrative in combination.

2) Text and the Moving Image

Cinema and the moving image forms that have followed it are in essence, as media, literally all about motion (Manovich 2001). In that sense they are also about travel. Every film can be regarded as a travel film (Amerika 2010) in that the medium of film is about structured movement through space usually orchestrated either through montage or actual movement of the camera.

In a series of short films exploring ideas of place and travel I have been developing an idea of cinema as a writing form built from the juxtaposition of narrative material in counterpoint. Pieces included as part of this research project utilise onscreen animated text in concert with spoken material, both woven together with a layered collage of image and sound, to create a gestalt of affect not possible with the usual repertoire of cinematic language techniques. Like the third meaning famously theorised in montage by Eisenstein (Eisenstein 1969), this technique creates layers of signifiers that float across each other interacting both in the moment as collaged elements and also backwards and forwards across time as the film progresses.

The development of this extension of cinematic visual language is important for a number of reasons. In the context of this thesis it forms the underlying narrative modality for the locative works examined here and importantly extends the language of the moving image within its genre. It does this primarily through narrative layering, extending a cinematic grammar built around montage and *mise en scene* into a language where what you read and hear and see form a much more complex gestalt than is possible in traditional screen-based media.

Some of the ideas that form this language are based in the visual arts, specifically the work of Ed Ruscha (Ruscha 1958 - 2011) and Barbara Kruger (Kruger 1979 - 2011). Many draw inspiration from the performances and music of Laurie Anderson (Anderson 1975 - 2011) and the chamber operas of Mikel Rouse (Rouse 1980 - 2011). In discussing the development of this language later in the thesis, I will examine a suite of short films, a kind of

travel omnibus film, collectively called *A Year on the Road* (Caines 2011) which I have produced over the past few years as part of this research project.

3) Live Cinema and Performance

There is in the field of sound art and music a longstanding practice that involves the primary use of field recordings as source material. In the Australian context the recordings and performances of Social Interiors (Rik Rue, Julian Knowles and Shane Fahey) forms a key body of work over the past decade (Interiors 2007). Typically these recordings are, after collection and editing, then mixed, treated, re-pitched and re-modulated to enable the 'playing' of place, where a location, multiple locations or movement through locations is edited and performed as music. With a strong background in the audio ecology practice pioneered by Murray Schafer (Schafer 1994) these compositions are rooted in a sense of landscape and place while still retaining the abstract flexibility that allows the sound material to be constructed as musical pieces.

The camera can also be viewed as a field-recording device (Schafer 1994), as a visual microphone collecting 'field images' from locations in front of the lens. This approach to image collection has been key to developing work of the live performance collective that has come to be known as The Field. Starting in 2006 with myself and Jes Tyrrell and adding Shannon O'Neill in 2009, The Field is a live audiovisual performance group that collectively improvises with sound and image material collected around certain locations and 'performs' those environments from banks of video, text and sound material collaboratively.

Often using multichannel surround sound, multiple screens and live vocal and performative elements, The Field performances offer another way of working through ideas of narrative and location. While the works reference and build upon ideas developed in 1970s expanded cinema, early video art and

musique concrete, they also work against these traditions with a wilful hybridity and determination that the 'live' aspect of the work is the crucial ingredient.

Audience members often read these performances as a type of live cinema and however augmented by multiple screens, performance elements and gestures, the physical fact of sound and projection allows that type of interaction. The foundational part of the performance pieces that destabilises this reading is the improvisatory nature of the works themselves. Operating from databases of video clips, sounds and texts, the pieces come together as a type of database narrative (Manovich 2001) improvised collectively. It is primarily this type of interaction with the locational media database and amongst the performers that foregrounds these performances as useful techniques for developing ideas about narrative and place.

Using performance documentation and media from three pieces: *Homepage* (2007), *Lighthorse* (2008) and *Headwater* (2010) in later chapters I will discuss how the hybrid approaches used in these pieces contribute to a language of locational narrative.

4) Research approach

In his 2004 book, Paul Carter wrote as a series of case studies on the type of creative practice-based research he called 'Material Thinking'. Carter identified that practitioners of this type of work needed to be specialists in 'alloying' blending ideas and forms into new wholes (Carter 2004, p179). In his approach, which has greatly influenced this thesis, the tools of thinking are materialised literally into artworks and the process is described from inside, from the maker's point of view. My process, described in detail in the following chapters, involves working across a variety of emerging and more established artforms. Pushing the aesthetic properties of those forms to combine into new forms of knowledge that not only transform and extend understandings of those types of creative practice, but also our readings of landscape and its

interaction with media, portable devices and the cultural history of media arts practice.

As an early supervisor of this doctorate, Ross Gibson has also had a defining influence on the method of investigation characterised here, especially as regards the thesis/artwork relationship. In his words: 'the text is not an explanation of the artwork; rather, the text is an explicit, word-specific representation of processes that occur during the iterative art-making routine, processes of gradual, cyclical speculation, realisation or revelation leading to momentary, contingent degrees of understanding' (Gibson 2007). This viewpoint is pertinent in understanding the processes of documentation and description of the creative works produced during the candidacy and also captures some of the fluid contingency of these new pieces of knowledge being part as they are of a quickly changing field at the intersection of media art and media technologies and usage. Gibson goes on to say, 'To this extent, the text that one produces is a kind of narrative about the flux of perception-cognition-intuition. The text accounts for the iterative process that carries on until the artist decrees that the artwork is complete and available for critique, 'appreciation', interpretation, description, and evaluation. All these particular practices can entail other particular texts' (Gibson 2007).

I am also guided in my thinking about doctoral research based on creative practice by my involvement over the past five years with debates and trials in the tertiary research sector regarding the measurement of creative research. I have helped formulate submissions to government from the Australian Screen Production, Research and Education (<http://www.aspera.org.au/>) body as part of the ERA process and participated in smaller trials at a faculty level. These experiences have been crucial in developing my thinking in the creative research field outside the practice of simply trying to map creative practice onto established research metrics, a practice which is often attempted out of a sense of institutional desperation and has not to date met with much success.

In this thinking I am also influenced by the practical guide to practice based research produced by Linda Candy at Creativity & Cognition Studios at UTS. Recognising the pioneering history of the Creative Doctorate at UTS and

UOW and the corresponding UK experience, Candy makes a crucial distinction between Practice-Based and Practice-Led research. The former she outlines as '...an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. In a doctoral thesis, claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes in the form of designs, music, digital media, performances and exhibitions. Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes' (Candy 2006)

Although by 2014 the Creative Doctorate in Australia will be thirty years old, questions still remain regarding process, research weighting and the nature of the knowledge produced. This is why I believe it is relevant to outline the influences on my approach. The suite of creative projects presented here and the complex alchemy of the interactions between them that has given rise to these new understandings was necessary to undertake if those understandings were to be arrived at. Of course the route taken, as is often the case in exploratory research, has sometimes been circuitous and the decisions about directions (at least in the moment) often more instinctive than reasoned. As I present and discuss these projects in the chapters that follow I feel confident that the connections, both material and theoretical, will become evident and the 'alloyed' whole will be easy to recognise.

Background and Approach

Deep Love

On Christmas Eve 2003 I was travelling on the last train back to Kyoto from the sprawl between it and Osaka where I had spent the day at Art Technology Research having fumbling conversations in broken English in my role there as Artist in Residence. As the train swayed through the darkness, all around me my fellow passengers were almost to a person transfixed by the small screens they held in front of them. A few months earlier the first popular cell phone novel '*Deep Love*' (Blog 2009) had swept the nation and it seemed that most of the carriage had caught the cell phone novel bug. I had come to Japan specifically to experience the mobile phone culture and here it seemed I was observing another aspect of its flowering.

In this chapter I will outline the background to the research described in this thesis and embodied in the creative projects I've produced. I will detail specific works and aesthetic approaches that have informed the direction my research has taken.

Part of my methodology has involved the study of aspects of technology, media and mobile use throughout Asia as it relates to my central research enquiry. This travel has included periods in Japan, The Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and China. It has also involved working across a number of different mediums and cross-pollination using a range of aesthetic traditions and creative modes.

This journey began in Japan with *Deep Love* which turned out, as an early example of the mobile fiction genre, to contain many of the riffs of the confessional, the intimate, the secret, that I came to recognise as hallmarks of mobile storytelling. I will return to the cell phone novel, Japanese 'keitai'

culture and in the particular affect of mobile devices later in this chapter and in much more detail in describing the Philippines online project *Thumb Candy* in later chapters.

1) Walking as Narrative

In undertaking the projects in this thesis a key touchstone from the outset was the idea of movement, of travel through space as a basic building block of narrative and, in particular, the idea of walking as a narrative device. The concept of the journey as a vehicle for narrative is of course commonplace in literature and closely associated with ideas of pilgrimage in many spiritual traditions. Developing in turn from these traditions into what was to become the novel via travel narratives such as *The Canterbury Tales* (Chaucer 1405) and *Pilgrim's Progress* (Bunyan 1678). In cinema it finds contemporary expression as the road movie, but it has roots in the very technology of the celluloid apparatus itself as a medium designed to capture and replay motion where the span of a film is simply referred to as its timeline.

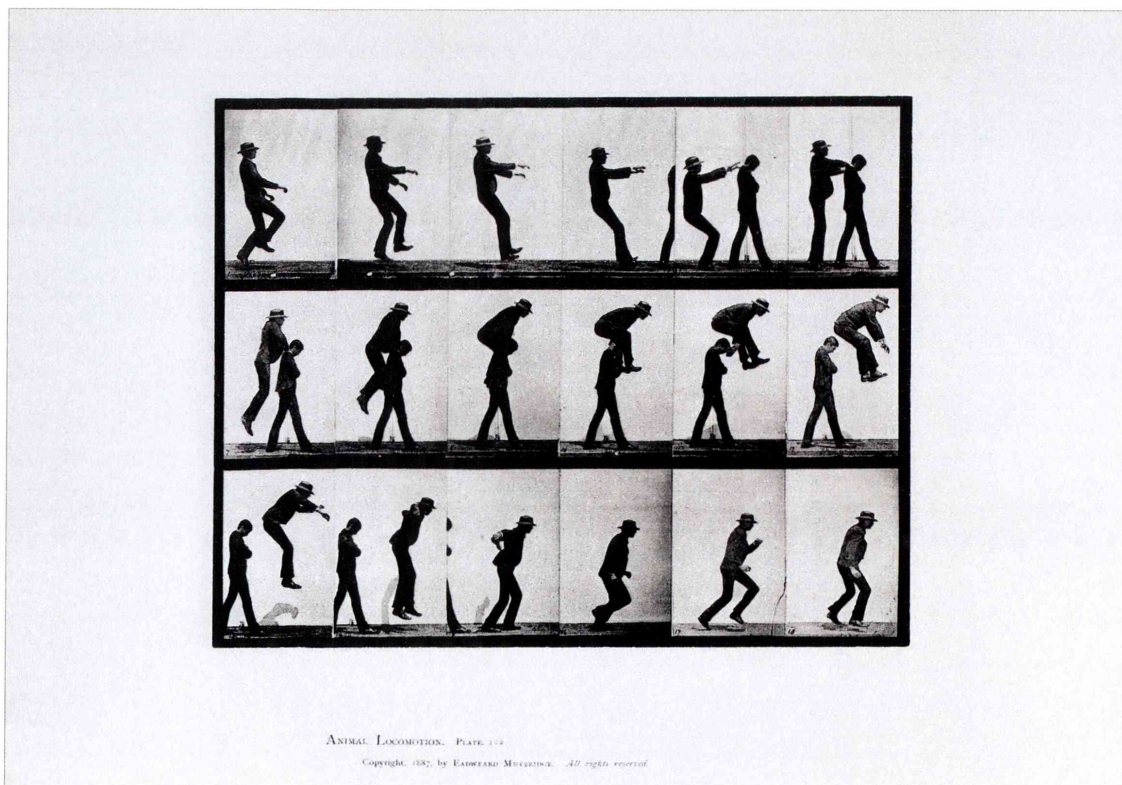


Figure 1. (Muybridge, 1887) Animal Locomotion

Since the pre-cinematic photographic experiments of Eadweard Muybridge and the series of late 19th century devices that included the Zoetrope, the Phonoscope and the Kinetoscope, there has been an obsessive focus on detailing motion in sequences. Cinema has been built on the idea of capturing and mediating motion in photographic and animated forms. As these techniques were refined and the temporal grammar of the edit was developed cinema as a form became almost completely identified with narrative, with story, with the motion of unfolding temporal and spatial events organised in sequence. Crucial to the understandings I have developed in the course of producing the works detailed here is the melding of these narrative traditions with the act of physical walking, in particular with reference to the works of Richard Long and Janet Cardiff. In 1967 a 22-year-old Long, then a student at St Martin's College in London, took a train from Waterloo station and disembarked at nearby Wiltshire where he found a grassy field. He walked back and forth diagonally across the field until the flattened grass became visible as a straight line in the sunlight. Whereupon he took a photograph of the line and recommenced his journey home toward Bristol.



Figure 2. (Long, 1967) A Line Made By Walking

A Line Made By Walking (Long 1967) is a foundational piece in the performance art of the last 40 years. Long's performance was able to connect an everyday act with ritual, place, religion and history in a way that was so easily replicable it has become an often quoted riff in the performance work that has followed in its wake. Long has developed much of his career from that once piece, onwards into a practice that is increasingly concerned conceptually with the relationship between the performance and the environment, both in terms of locative setting of the piece and broader environmental concerns. This practice often involves the construction of temporary stone structures at the sites of the walks that act as a more environmentally sensitive version of the Land Art produced by his contemporaries while also echoing the site-specific sculptures of another contemporary, Andy Goldsworthy.

Of the many performance pieces produced in the intervening years utilising ideas of walking, ritual, pilgrimage, narrative and location, one piece in particular stands out in the context of the ideas being explored here. This is *The Lovers* (Abramovic-Ulay 1988) Abramovic and Ulay were partners in life and art and in a final performance work Ulay and Marina Abramovic walked for 90 days along the Great Wall of China.

'Ulay and I end our relations with this project.

The concept is to approach each other from the two ends of the Great Wall of China. He begins in the Gobi Desert and I begin at the Yellow Sea; we meet halfway in between. We each walked 2000 kilometers to say good-bye.

Duration: 90 days. Last meeting on June 3, 1988.' – Marina Abramovic (Abramovic-Ulay 1988)

This utilitarian text, typical of the descriptions artists wrote for performance works in the 1970s and 1980s, nonetheless contains all the mythic resonance of the act. The narrative of loss, love, pilgrimage and sacrifice are contained in the confluence of the idea, the act and the location itself, all coming together to create the piece.

These works and the traditions and aesthetic trends they embody can be seen as precursors for many locative media works that combine ideas of place, motion and ritual with ideas that come from the media arts, in particular work done by media artists in sound, video and new media from the 1970s to the present. A key figure in this continuum is the Canadian sound/locative and installation artist Janet Cardiff. In particular the binaural soundwalks she has been producing for specific locations over the last decade.

Cardiff produces soundwalks for specific locations and sometimes calls these pieces 'interventions' using the language of site-specific sculptors and land artists. The approach that Cardiff uses has been so influential on my works presented here that I will discuss her body of audio works in general, rather than talk specifically about any key works.



Figure 3. (Cardiff, 2004) Picture from Long Black Hair audiowalk

'We're trying to connect right away to the remembered experiences that your body knows....The walks make you hyper aware of your environment around

you. I thought it would take away from that because you put a headphone on and walk around with a Discman, but all of a sudden, your senses are alert. They say media kills your senses, but it is not true because it can actually enliven them.' (Cardiff 2005)

The works Janet Cardiff now produces with her partner and collaborator George Bures Miller in cities around the world are elaborately post produced mobile audio fictions. These works still, however, contain the DNA of her first walk, produced along a forest trail in Banff, Canada. Created live by recording her spoken observations and thoughts into a portable recorder as she walked, on playback Cardiff found that she had discovered a way of making locative sound works where the core of the work was the intimate guidance of her voice and the pace of her footfalls. In later works she and Miller began to record with stereo binaural microphones and to carefully script and choreograph a complex theatre of voices and sound effects to further envelop the listener in the work. However, always at its centre there has remained the pace of her footfalls and the hypnotic rhythm of her voice.

Considering this 'physical cinema', film director Atom Egoyan admits that he is somewhat embarrassed by the stiff formality of the conventional cinema: here you have the audience, there is the screen, and opposite the projector. By contrast, Cardiff's method of plucking the drama from the screen and conveying it through the headphones to each participant effectively transforms the world around us into a kind of backdrop. Real life takes on an almost exemplary quality. This does not make reality 'unreal' nor is it suddenly 'pluralized'. On the contrary, Cardiff's approach suggests that our seemingly dull everyday existence has the potential to reveal 'simultaneous magical worlds of experience'. (Cardiff 2005)

2) The Cinema of Place

For the photographers who participate in the 'Looking into the Past' group on Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/groups/lookingintothepast/>) the act of combining media, in this case photographic media, with place throws up resonances

from both that in combination are more affecting than the sum of their parts. Developed by Jason Powell in 2009, the technique that the group is centered on involves selecting an archival image of a particular location and holding it to line up in front of you in one hand in a precise location so the archival image stands in for part of the contemporary scene and with your other hand snapping a picture of the two in combination.

While there are members of the group who have taken the idea in the direction of simply photoshopping together archival and contemporary images, it is the act of standing in the space and physically holding the archival image that works most strongly in terms of imaginative affect. Note the similarities in the image below to the one pictured above produced as a part of the Cardiff Central Park audio walk piece.

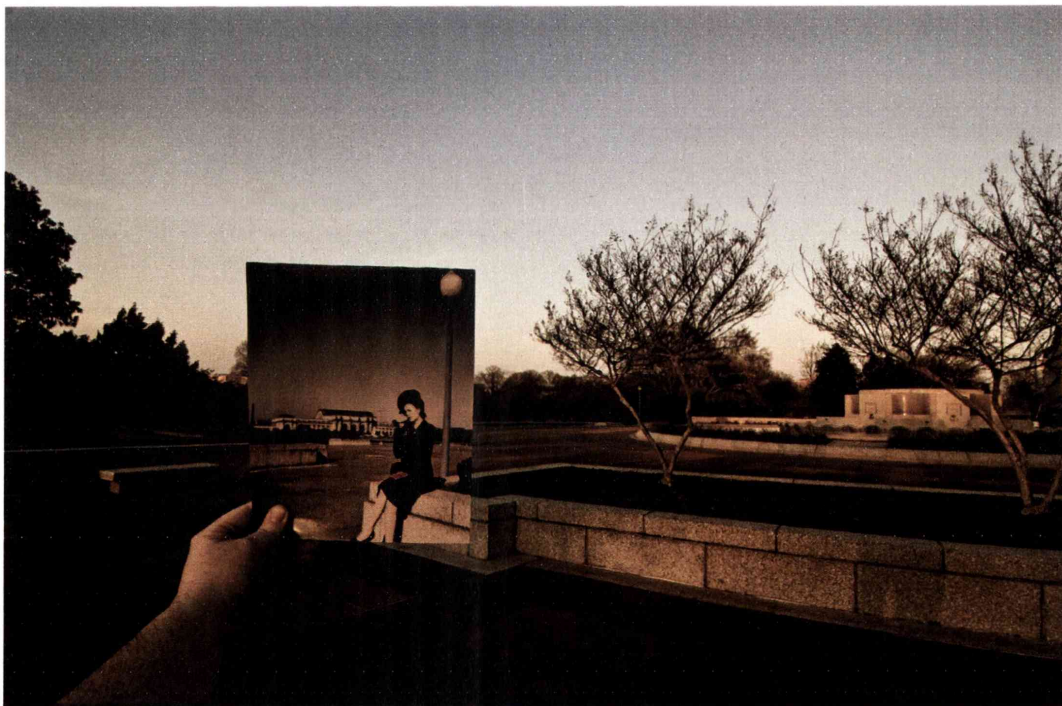


Figure 4. (Powell, 2008) Looking Into The Past (flickr group)

Through the combination of media in location and performative affect, the most successful of the 'Looking into the Past' images contain the same qualities of the personal, intimate and confessional that are an identifiable hallmark of much locative media. Naturally every photograph, every

recording, be it video or audio is necessarily of the past. The important relationship of historical and locative media, of projects that enable the experience of the past and present to interact, is also an aspect of 'Looking into the Past' that strongly influences the projects produced alongside this thesis. I will be exploring these ideas in greater detail in the following chapter.

The video artist Bill Viola famously described the video camera as a sort of visual microphone. A location recording device for making visual field recordings not unlike the practice of sound field recordings, video being more allied as a technology to audio than to film. This approach to the camera as a device for recording place, for documenting locations, follows the rich development of a sound practice known as acoustic ecology in the early 1970s most famously by the composer Murray Schafer in his book *Tuning the World* (Schafer 1994). Acoustic ecologists often refer to audio environments with regard to their relative sonic 'health' and identify endangered and threatened sounds and sound environments. In his essay 'Radical Radio' Schafer suggested we might –

'put microphones in remote locations uninhabited by humans and broadcast what ever might be happening out there; the sounds of wind and rain, the cries of birds and animals -- all the uneventful events of the natural landscape transmitted without editing into the hearts of the cities' (Schafer 1994).

More recently sound artists and musicians have used field recordings as source material to be reworked and remixed into a performance of place. The recordings and performances of the Australian group Social Interiors and the solo practice of Rik Rue from the group is an exemplar of this tendency. In particular the group composition *Spatial Circumference* (Interiors 2007) utilizes recordings from the rainforest regions of the south coast of NSW processed and synthesized into a work that both sings the landscape in that location as well as commenting upon, playing with and transforming it.

A similar approach to playing with layers of landscape recordings and time is taken with the Viola videotape *The Reflecting Pool* (Viola 1977-1979) In this piece we see at first a locked off camera presenting to us a still pool of water in a lush green forested setting.



Figure 5. (Viola 1977) Video Still from The Reflecting Pool

Slowly the figure of a man walks up out of the trees to the edge of the pool and stands there unmoving as small ripples fan out across the water. As the piece progresses a meditative feel is created with the figure reflected in the water of the pool and insects and birds droning hypnotically on the soundtrack. Suddenly the figure jumps up, brings his knees up into a ball as if he is about to 'bomb' the tranquil pool and in mid-air his image freezes, hanging above the pool which ripples on seemingly under him as before. After holding on this combined image for a long period the mid-jump figure slowly dissolves into the forest trees behind him. We are left again with the empty pool, only now the surface of the water is interrupted by drops and ripples that appear to come from nowhere, until at last we see the figure climb out of the pool and walk back into the forest the way he came. In layering multiple takes of the same locked off shot together Viola 'plays' the pool location and our expectations of time, motion and meditative space in a way that is both musical and cinematic in structure.

A central work in my thinking about location, cinema, place and database narrative is the 1929 Dziga Vertov film *Man With a Movie Camera*. I will return to different aspects of this key work throughout this thesis. But in the context of my discussion of cinema and place I will highlight the 'city symphony' structure of the film. Using the duration of a day in 1920s Odessa, the film uses the visual music of modernist Russia to build a moving platform that creates place as story. As Manovich writes about the film in 'The Language of New Media' (Manovich 2001) we see here both the link between pre-cinema techniques and the modern motion picture, as well as motion through space itself as the essence of the cinematic.

'Cinema's birth from a loop form was reenacted at least once during its history. In one of the sequences of *A Man with a Movie Camera*, Vertov shows us a cameraman standing in the back of a moving automobile. As he is being carried forward by an automobile, he cranks the handle of his camera. A loop, a repetition, created by the circular movement of the handle, gives birth to a progression of events -- a very basic narrative which is also quintessentially modern: a camera moving through space recording whatever is in its way.' (Manovich 2001) p207.

Another crucial quality of the visual language developed in *Man With a...* is the fertile and inventive way Vertov has with what are still called in moving image culture 'effects'. In contrast to the realistic cinematic conventions that came to hold sway after this period of pioneering Soviet cinema, here we see an embrace of the visual possibilities of the moving image that now has its legacy in the arts/experimental filmmaking lineage. This lineage can be seen through the schools of formal and structural cinema, video art and the more commercially driven forms like music video and advertising that borrow language and techniques from these fields of practice. In the use of these visual effects (collage, double exposure) we see Vertov 'playing' place in the way Social Interiors do with sound, using these techniques to comment on, enhance and remix the social reality of the city and the filmmakers who try and document it.

'And this is why Vertov's film has a particular relevance to new media. It proves that it is possible to turn 'effects' into a meaningful artistic language. Why in the case of Whitney's computer films and music videos the effects are just effects, while in the hands of Vertov they acquire meaning? Because in Vertov's film they are motivated by a particular argument, this being that the new techniques to obtain images and manipulate them, summed up by Vertov in his term 'kino-eye', can be used to decode the world. As the film progresses, 'straight' footage gives way to manipulated footage; newer techniques appear one after one, reaching a roller coaster intensity by the film's end, a true orgy of cinematography. It is as though Vertov re-stages his discovery of the kino-eye for us. Along with Vertov, we gradually realize the full range of possibilities offered by the camera. Vertov's goal is to seduce us into his way of seeing and thinking, to make us share his excitement, his gradual process of discovery of film's new language.' (Manovich 2001)

3) Database as Performance Tool

On the evening of 17 June 2005 at a nightclub in Amsterdam, film director Peter Greenaway stood up in front of a large touch screen control panel with banks of clips from his many films. And with a large projector at the front of the club and a DJ providing musical accompaniment he began to 'perform' his oeuvre. This Live Cinema remix of a database of sequences from his body of work is not so surprising when you consider that the most basic form of database (the list) has been at the heart of Greenaway's film work since his early pieces. From films like *The Falls* (1980) which consists entirely of a list of quotations, to the more recent *Tulse Luper's Suitcase* (2003) that features a 'list' of 92 suitcases that correspond to the atomic number of uranium as a narrative navigational device (both in the linear and interactive versions of the piece), the list has been a central motif in Greenaway's body of work. Also in 2005, Greenaway performed a live 12 screen version of *Tulse Luper* entitled *Lupercyclopedia* (Greenaway 2010) and continues to perform visuals on a regular basis as a strategy for recapturing the possibility for invention with the moving image that argues was so prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s and has been lost in present day moving image practice.



Figure 6. (Greenaway 2006) Greenaway performing as a VJ

'In a sense I think it's already too late: Cinema is an old technology. I think we've seen an incredibly moribund cinema in the last 30 years. In a sense Godard destroyed everything — a great, great director, but in a sense he rang the death knell, because he broke cinema all apart, fragmented it, made it very, very self-conscious. Like all the aesthetic movements, it's basically lasted about 100 years, with the three generations: the grandfather who organized everything, the father who basically consolidated it and the young guy who chucks it all away. It's just a human pattern.' – (Greenaway 2005)

In his seminal 'The Language of New Media', Manovich sees the project of Greenaway's career being about trying to reconcile the database with traditional narrative forms (Manovich 2001) and groups him with Vertov as one of the major database film artists of the past century. For Manovich, Greenaway very consciously works with a process that underpins all cinema but is mostly suppressed in favour of (usually Hollywood style) conventional narrative.

'We can think of all the material accumulated during shooting forming a database, especially since the shooting schedule usually does not follow the narrative of the film but is determined by production logistics. During editing the editor constructs a film narrative out of this database, creating a unique

trajectory through the conceptual space of all possible films which could have been constructed. From this perspective, every filmmaker engages with the database-narrative problem in every film, although only a few have done this self-consciously.' - (Manovich 2001) pg208

Another important approach to database performance that has informed this thesis is that of the locative art collective Blast Theory, in particular the 2007 work *Rider Spoke* (Blast-Theory 2009) that was performed at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney in early 2008. In *Rider Spoke* participants ride bicycles around a particular location where the work is hosted, in the case of my experience the Rocks area around the MCA. These bicycles are equipped with phone/GPS units and attached headphone/microphone headsets. The units trigger audio and image events at certain locations while the rider is in motion.



Figure 7. (Blast Theory 2009) *Rider Spoke* documentation

The work begins with a number of provocations that come as a voice over the headsets for riders to seek out places where they can leave confessions or

stories for other riders to hear in particular locations. Riders are asked to respond with their own voice recordings to questions like 'When was the last time you felt afraid?' and 'Tell me about a party you went to that got out of hand'. Asked for individually, anonymously and in an intimate voice, the questions tend to evoke earnest personal answers from participants. After the work has been running a while in a particular location it generates a rich database of responses for participants to navigate. The cold Tuesday night I experienced the work, riding the deserted streets down near the old wharves, I heard harrowing confessions of loss and terror alongside funny stories of embarrassment and mortification. Though not as tied to place as a piece made for that particular location might be, *Rider Spoke* nevertheless provides an instructive model for both ideas of locatively writing urban space and of physically performing a database narrative.

In her paper about mobile fictions (Chandler 2004), Chandler parallels my locative fiction work *Go This Way* (Caines 2004) which was presented in Melbourne with an earlier Blast Theory work *I Like Frank* (Blast Theory 2004), presented in Adelaide. She observes that:

'Mobile fictions also create the challenge to activate a consciousness of place with publics and 'writing the place' in this mix of urban and electronic environments which can also be understood in terms of the participatory pleasures of publics for engagement with personal modes of address and agency'. (Chandler 2004)

For Chandler this combination of personal narrative in public space is a key feature of locative media.

4) The Ambiguous Pleasure of Text-Image

In *Reading Images- The Grammar of Visual Design* Kress and Van Leeuwen assert that writing itself is of course a visual language (Kress-Van-Leeuwen 1996). In much of the video and performance work included in this thesis I have been exploring the parallels between the layering of text and picture in the moving image and the layering of narrative and landscape/context in

locative media. In his essay 'The Rhetoric of the Image' Roland Barthes spoke of two types of image-text relationships, one in which the text extends the image (as in a cartoon speech balloon) and one in which the text elaborates the image. These relationships he spoke of as anchorage (Barthes 1977), Kress and Van Leeuwen helpfully extend this idea to recognise that text and image can exist interdependently in the same visual space.

'But Barthes' account misses an important point: the visual component of a text is an independently organised and structured message – and connected with the verbal text, but in no way dependent on it : and similarly the other way around...We take the view that language and visual communication both realise the same more fundamental and far reaching systems of meaning that constitute our cultures, but that each does so by means of its own specific forms and independently.' (Kress-Van-Leeuwen 1996)

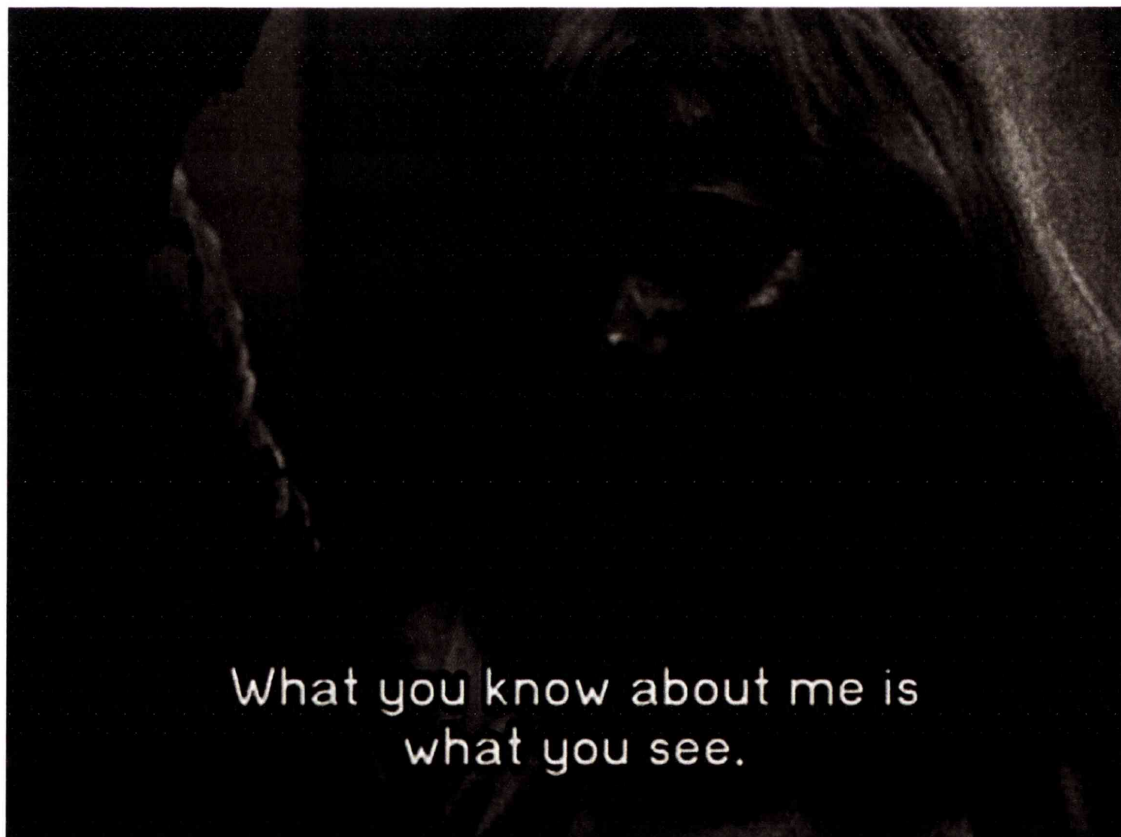


Figure 8. (Rossellini 1945) still from 'Rome, Open City'

In *Subtitles*, the anthology editors, director Atom Egoyan and critic Ian Balfour, argue that every film is a foreign film requiring an act of translation by

the viewer. Furthermore they suggest that the image-text relationship of the subtitle itself can function as a way of regarding our relationship to reading the film, to how many possible readings can be conjured from the matrix of signifiers onscreen. (Egoyan-Balfour 2002)

In thinking about this way of approaching text as a visual form that works for, against or simply beside image and pictorial/temporal context I took as precedents the work of two key artists and one arts collective: painter Ed Ruscha, the installation/text artist Jenny Holzer and the internet art collective Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries. For Ruscha who came up in the American Pop movement of the 1960s, the texts he uses in his paintings began as signifiers of advertising and the urban environment but became more complex and multilayered in their poetics as his practice developed.

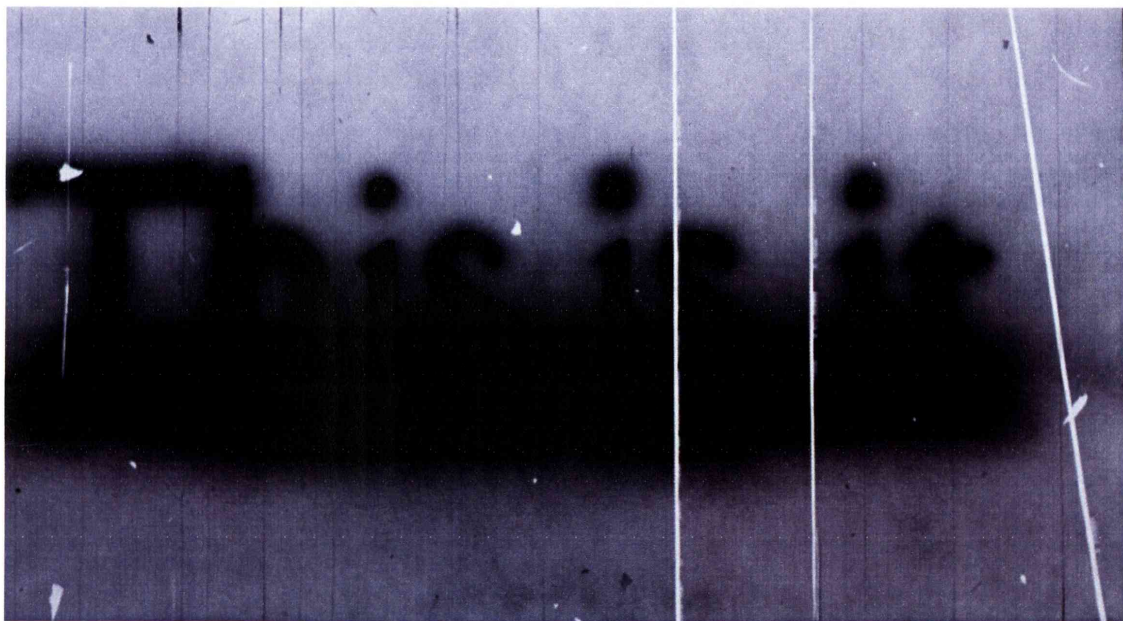


Figure 9. (Ruscha 2008) 'This Is It' a painting by Ruscha

'If I'm influenced by movies it's from way down underneath, not just on the surface. A lot of my paintings are anonymous backdrops for the drama of words. In a way they're the words in front of the old Paramount mountain...They're just meant to support the drama, like the 'Hollywood' sign being held up by sticks'. (Ruscha 2008)

Ruscha's painting texts, single words, phrases, fragments, float out of context taking on an iconic visual status and inviting ambiguous readings of the status they have of being viewed as written language. In contrast Jenny Holzer, coming up with a generation of American conceptual artists during the 1970s, immediately embraced text as a visual medium in itself and also as a conveyer of pithy, often poignant, one sentence slogans. Importantly in the context of this thesis these works are often shown/displayed in public space on electronic billboards, on street posters, t-shirts, flyers or as large-scale outdoor projections. Holzer's central series *Truisms* (1977-present) is an ever growing and sometimes ambiguous series of instructions, pronouncements and reflections that are often read by an audience when displayed in public advertising spaces or in non fine art forms (t-shirts, etc) as a commentary on the display context they inhabit.



Figure10. (Holzer 1980) Holzer billboard in New York

Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries (Chang 2011) is a collective from Korea who have been making online text animation works since the mid 1990s. They have developed an aesthetic heavily influenced by the limitations of the web

as it was in the mid to late 1990s when they began producing the text animations they have since become known for. These animations are very low bandwidth two colour (black and white) rapid fire poetics, words broken into rhythms that influence the sense and affect of the writing all set to a jaunty 1950s jazz pop soundtrack. From the groundbreaking *Rain On The Sea* with its juxtapositions of syllables at an almost too fast to read pace, to the installation versions they sometimes do currently, the style employed by YHCHI has not changed. The same type of music, the same homage to the early work of Len Lye, the same black on white, even the same font, has permeated YHCHI's oeuvre since the early online works. What has made YHCHI an important influence on the visual work done for this thesis is the fracturing of language through animation that is a hallmark of the work they produce. In that context they have advanced the visual language considerably and provide ways of thinking about using text in motion and the ways that motion can change the meanings contained in the written text.

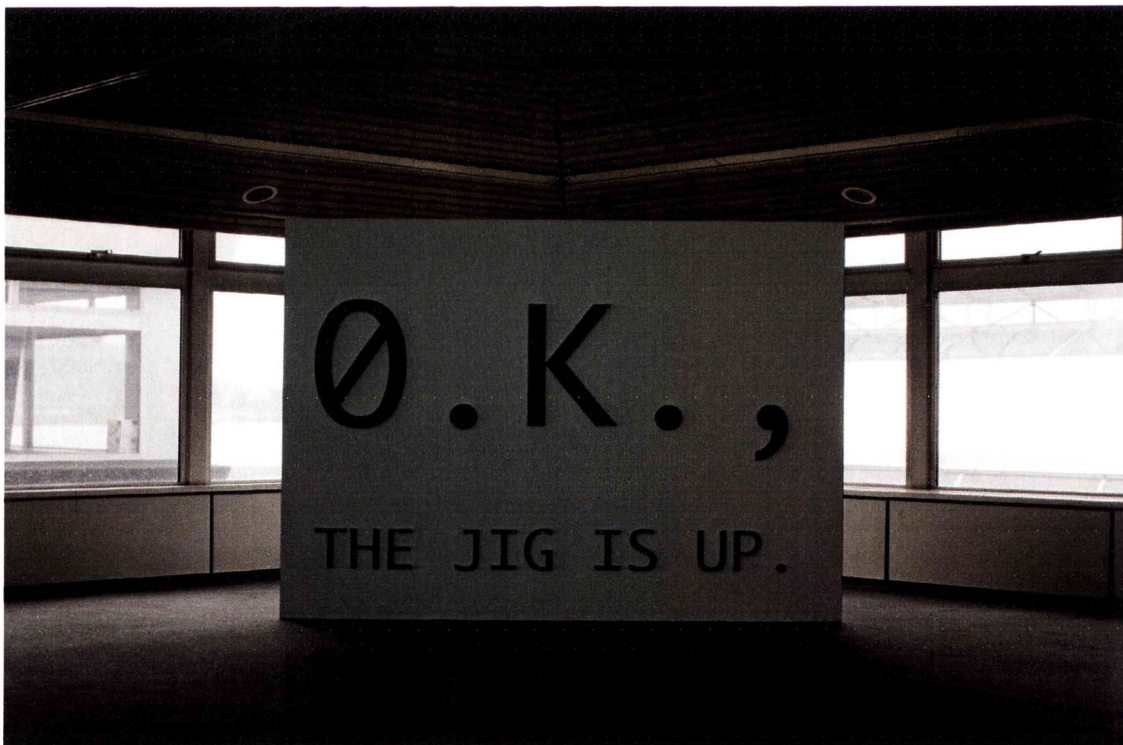


Figure 11. (YHCHI 2008) installation view version

5) Framing Devices

In my introduction I outlined how my approach to this research involves considering all of the different forms of creative work undertaken for this thesis as forms of 'Expanded Writing'. Partly this approach is informed by my own longstanding interdisciplinary practice going back to when I began, as an undergraduate, the work that I continue to develop now. As an undergraduate, the artschool I attended was the School of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong, which at the time in the mid 1980s was taking an experimental inter-arts approach to pedagogical design driven by its then Dean, the composer/writer/painter Edward Cowie. Cowie designed a degree where the cross pollination of artforms was built into the structure of the school. This fertile, hybrid environment had a strong influence on my practice of valuing the aesthetic worth of mixing traditions, technologies and techniques. Therefore, even though I was trained primarily in the practice of creative writing, I took this writerly approach to music, video and installation as well. This is an approach that is now widespread in the practice of visual artists in particular, although is still unrecognised broadly as a driver of new knowledge in arts and cultural production.

My term Expanded Writing of course directly borrows from the Gene Youngblood book that crystallised much of the activity that became the video art tradition in the 1970s and 1980s. In his seminal 1970 book *Expanded Cinema* (Youngblood 1970), Youngblood took the approach of defining the concept of expanded cinema as an extending and transforming of the cinematic impulse into extended takes on cinematic language, technique, technology and modes of reception.

Since the writing of that book cinematic media (broadly defined) has of course fractured further, inhabiting a myriad of screens and modes of production and reception. My aim in bringing my creative research pieces here under the rubric of Expanded Writing is to indentify new forms used and being developed as languages to be written with, that may in turn transform traditional written language. These forms include writing in

image, text, technology, place, sound and performance. My research aims to recognise these new forms; the locative, audiovisual performance and digital cinema, as essentially new media hybrids that, in the chronology of the media arts, derive primarily from the language of expanded video practice. Video, that hybrid of the cinematic, the musical, the tele-visual, the electronic that Raymond Bellour described as follows:

‘Everything attests to the fact that video is more deeply rooted in writing than in cinema, that it gives life to Alexandre Astruc’s prophecy hailing after the war the birth of an avant-garde he defined as the age of the pen-camera.’

(Bellour 1990)

Apart from the framing device afforded by this idea, another set of framing devices I will refer to here is that of the tools used for both the production and reception of these works. In the case of the locative works in particular the most common mode of interaction with a work over a mobile phone brings with it an array of preconceptions that are framed by the social conventions of the device. To a lesser extent this is also true in the reception of the performances and video pieces presented here. In cases such as these where the aesthetic language is in the act of being invented and audiences are working out how to respond to a work, the cues given by the delivery mechanisms, phones, multiple screens, performance conventions, looms large. For mobile phone delivered works the social conventions of usage also play strongly into the type of content that is developed for the devices. The production and presentation tools used to create and perform these works do also of course contain their own design logic, constraining, inspiring and enabling the pieces in equal measure. I will explore both of these modes of framing in the context of my discussion about my individual works presented as part of this thesis.

Locative Media, Mobile Cultures

1) Let's take this outside

For the individual in motion whether walking, driving or flying, movement through space is always an augmented experience. Augmented by history/memory, bodily sensation, the flows of urban space or imaginative intervention. Inasmuch as locative media attempts to bring types of site specific digital media into this equation it then aligns itself with a tradition that stretches back to some of the earliest narrative forms we know of.

Arguably, as posited by writer Bruce Chatwin (Chatwin 1988) the Songlines practiced for millennia in indigenous communities are a type of augmented experience of landscape using sung narratives to map space and mythic resonance.

'And it struck me, from what I now knew of the Songlines, that the whole of Classical mythology might represent the relics of a gigantic 'song-map': that all the to-ing and fro-ing of gods and goddesses, the caves and sacred springs, the sphinxes and chimaeras, and all the men and women who became nightingales or ravens, echoes or narcissi, stones or stars--could all be interpreted in terms of totemic geography.' (Chatwin 1988)

Some of the earliest remaining written stories depict journeys mapping place, using territory as a narrative device. Gilgamesh, the 3000 bc travel journey in search of immortality (*Gilgamesh* 1994) or The Histories by Herodotus (Herodotus 1968) from 500 bc the famously unreliable historical mapping journey of Egypt are prominent examples.

By the time Henry David Thoreau came to publish his book simply entitled 'Walking' in 1862 (Thoreau 2008) the walking book had become almost a micro-genre of it's own engaged with walking as an act of cogitation. Divorced by the more modern conveniences of transport from being a daily pedestrian necessity, walking was now free to be re-imagined in the minds of artists, philosophers and writers as a transcendental, philosophical act.

'I have met with but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of Walking, that is, of taking walks--who had a genius, so to speak, for SAUNTERING, which word is beautifully derived 'from idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretense of going a la Sainte Terre,' to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, 'There goes a Sainte-Terrer,' a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander. They who never go to the Holy Land in their walks, as they pretend, are indeed mere idlers and vagabonds; but they who do go there are saunterers in the good sense, such as I mean. Some, however, would derive the word from sans terre without land or a home, which, therefore, in the good sense, will mean, having no particular home, but equally at home everywhere. For this is the secret of successful sauntering. He who sits still in a house all the time may be the greatest vagrant of all; but the saunterer, in the good sense, is no more vagrant than the meandering river, which is all the while sedulously seeking the shortest course to the sea. But I prefer the first, which, indeed, is the most probable derivation. For every walk is a sort of crusade, preached by some Peter the Hermit in us, to go forth and reconquer this Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels.' (Thoreau 2008) pg1.

When Nietzsche famously wrote 'All truly great thoughts are conceived by walking.' (Nietzsche 1968) he was writing as part of a developing

intellectual tradition that saw walking both as an act of free thinking and in a modernizing world, as an act that both harkened back to a rural idyll and suggested strategies of individual agency in the new industrial urban sphere.

'The body's habituation to walking as normal stems from the good old days. It was the bourgeois form of locomotion: physical demythologization, free of the spell of hieratic pacing, roofless wandering, breathless flight. Human dignity insisted on the right to walk, a rhythm not extorted from the body by command or terror. The walk, the stroll, were private ways of passing time, the heritage of the feudal promenade in the nineteenth century.' (Adorno 2000)

When Benjamin celebrates the poet Baudelaire and his notion of the flaneur as being possessed of allegorical genius (Benjamin 1999) he applies Baudelaire's aesthetic strategies of creative derangement to a very 20th century vision of alienated urban space. For Baudelaire writing in the poem 'The Swan' 'Everything for me becomes allegory.' (Baudelaire 1982) and for Benjamin writing about his work eighty years later this becomes a key way of understanding how we might use the modern urban environment as a creative catalyst.

'Baudelaire's genius, which feeds on melancholy, is an allegorical genius. With Baudelaire, Paris becomes for the first time the subject of lyric poetry. This poetry of place is the opposite of all poetry of the soil the gaze which the allegorical genius turns on the city betrays, instead, a profound alienation. It is the gaze of the flaneur, whose way of life conceals behind a beneficent mirage the anxiety of the future inhabitants of our metropolises. The flaneur seeks refuge in the crowd. The crowd is the veil through which the familiar city is transformed for the flaneur into phantasmagoria.' (Benjamin 1999)

Between the poems of Baudelaire and the mid 20th century writings and practices of Guy Debord and the Situationists with the influential idea of the Derive as a psychogeographic practice lie the Surrealists and the concept of there being an urban unconscious (Breton 1924).

An unconscious only discoverable by allowing chance, creative intervention and the unexpected to penetrate and disturb the urban fabric. The idea of the *Derive*, unplanned journeys through the city using maps, markers and guides produced for other purposes (maps of Rome for trips around Paris for instance) allowed the unearthing of hidden psychogeographies, spaces within space invisible using other means.

'The lessons drawn from *dérives* enable us to draft the first surveys of the psychogeographical articulations of a modern city. Beyond the discovery of unities of ambience, of their main components and their spatial localization, one comes to perceive their principal axes of passage, their exits and their defenses. One arrives at the central hypothesis of the existence of psychogeographical pivotal points. One measures the distances that actually separate two regions of a city, distances that may have little relation with the physical distance between them. With the aid of old maps, aerial photographs and experimental *dérives*, one can draw up hitherto lacking maps of influences, maps whose inevitable imprecision at this early stage is no worse than that of the earliest navigational charts. The only difference is that it is no longer a matter of precisely delineating stable continents, but of changing architecture and urbanism.' Guy Debord, 'Théorie de la *dérive*' writing in the *Internationale Situationniste* #2 published in Paris, December 1958 (Debord 2002)

This lineage of ideas around writing as a spatial practice and the strategies of transformation of urban space in particular through creative intervention form the background for the works I describe in the remaining five sections of this chapter. In these works I progress iteratively through a material thinking process that explores how these ideas relate to locative media, how the tools used in the process impact delivered content and how well established creative forms transform or are transformed by the locative.

2) Go This Way

When I was contacted by the curator Melinda Rackham to propose some sort of networked art piece for the 2004 Australian Art Now show at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) and the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) I was in Kyoto being fascinated by the local mobile phone culture. I'd accepted an invitation to be artist in residence for a few months at Art Technology Research (ATR) in Kyoto because I had begun to imagine a new type of media art that might be possible using the mobile phone as a platform. In reading what I could about technologies and cultural uses of mobiles I came across the very different story of mobile development in Japan from the mid 1990s onward. Going back to the 1970s in the media arts field, Japan has had a tradition of being viewed in the western art world simply as 'the future' the leading edge of technology and urban culture that would trickle down to the slower non-Japan world after being developed in the fertile hothouse culture of Neo-Tokyo. While obviously part of a tradition of fascination with an other from the Orient that dates back at least to the Renaissance in western art and culture, in the case of mobile technology there was certainly something else entirely going on in Japan that made western phone systems look archaic.

On arriving at ATR it turned out that in the mobile arena Japan could be viewed not so much as the future but more like an alternate universe. In the last decade of the 20th century when much of the western developed world was embracing the web, in Japan the focus was on enabling the mobile network. The Japanese mobile network not only ran on a wireless standard unlike those in the rest of the world which meant only locally made handsets would work there but it also was dominated by just one company who had the power to dictate developments in the sector. In 1996 this company, NTT DoCoMo, instituted a new type of wireless mobile access system called iMode. Basically a walled internet controlled by the telephone company, it immediately gained huge popularity in Japan at a time when domestic access to the public desktop based internet was still quite rare across the country. This meant that at the time mobile handset connections to the internet far outstripped wired connections to the

network, a situation that has only come to pass in quite recently in Australia (2011).

iMode was the envy of telcos across the world not only for its technological sophistication but also because it had built a sustainable subscriber business model where both the third party content creators and the telco got paid. At a time when internet content companies in the west were burning cash at rates that would lead eventually to the dot com crash it seemed a sensible business model and there were many attempts to replicate it. Internationally many telcos (including Telstra) licensed and tried to implement iMode. In Australia you can still see the remnants of this model in the carrier specific content pools offered by mobile providers for 'free' to plan subscribers. In Japan the system was so ubiquitous that it created new behaviors that I observed as I developed ideas for the ACMI exhibition.

In its 2002 survey on mobile phone usage trends the Japanese Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts, and Telecommunications (Ito 2005) found the most frequent use of handsets (85%) was for the reading and writing of email. Japan bypassed the SMS stage that so gripped the rest of the world and in 2004 there were reports of Japanese teens starting to use SMS amongst their peers for its 'retro cool'.

It was this mobile reading and writing, this *locative* reading and writing, that started me thinking about this modality as a vehicle for fictive experience and what that might mean for the form the fiction might take. In the previous chapter I mentioned the rise of the cellphone novel in Japan which has since become a major publishing phenomenon in the country. The simplified form, adapted for small screens and commuting attention spans offered some ideas for how this might work but like the mobile email form itself it lacked the ability to exploit the location of the reader (or writer) the ability to exploit the essential locativity that being mobile with a networked media device afforded. I began looking for models that would serve as ideas to adapt into this new form and quickly happened upon two that formed a crucial basis for how the locative fiction project 'Go This

Way' that I would produce for ACMI and the Melbourne CBD would progress.

The first was steeped in ideas of play and location. Geocaching combines a number of existing activities into an activity enabled by online networking and GPS equipment. Essentially a blend of treasure hunting and orienteering where the co-ordinates of a 'cache' are given so that others may attempt to locate this bundle of objects using a GPS and some deductive skills. This 'cache' is often a container holding items that relate to the place in which they are found, notes, photos, documents, even food. Geocaching began to develop not long after personal GPS units became affordable in the early nineties and were taken up in bushwalking and camping communities. It's adoption really began to take off with the rise of the popular internet in the late nineties where Geocaching enthusiasts could post cache co-ordinates for others to find and also post stories and reports about the attempts to find these caches. What struck me most when I began reading these posts (Web 2005) was how the stories of adventures and mis-adventures of those out on the hunt for these secret bundles became more prominent than the fact of the caches themselves. Cache-hunters strove to top each other with more and more outrageous stories of the trials undergone in the recovery of the more hard to retrieve caches.

Combined with the intimate affect of locative and especially phone based media I'd observed in Japan I came up with the idea of emotional geocaching. This (in my locative fiction) was a construct where a community of users would visit locations where they had had peak emotional experiences, write about those experiences while in these locations, sometimes years or months after the fact. These stories would then be posted to be 'found' by other members of the community and read in those places where the events had been experienced and the stories had been written. The group I invented who engaged in this activity were the Royal Society of Emotional Geocachers, the 'royal' part a joke about the Melbourne location for the project where so many things seem to have the 'royal' prefix. I adapted the discussion forum look and feel of the

geocaching sites I'd seen online which also happily approximated the rudimentary design parameters that those used to the 2004 mobile web at the time would be familiar with.

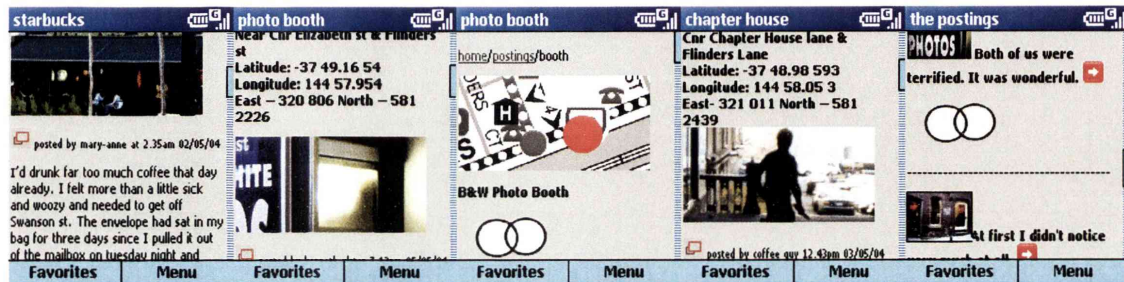


Figure 12. (Caines 2004) Phone screenshots from Go This Way

During the production of the piece I flew to Melbourne every Wednesday evening and spent every Thursday walking the area around ACMI and the CBD getting the feel for the city and writing stories in bars and cafes and at my ACMI hotdesk. I had never spent this much time in the city and it took a while to get to know the area and to incorporate the characters I saw on the streets into what became six fictions on a two kilometre walking trail from ACMI and back.

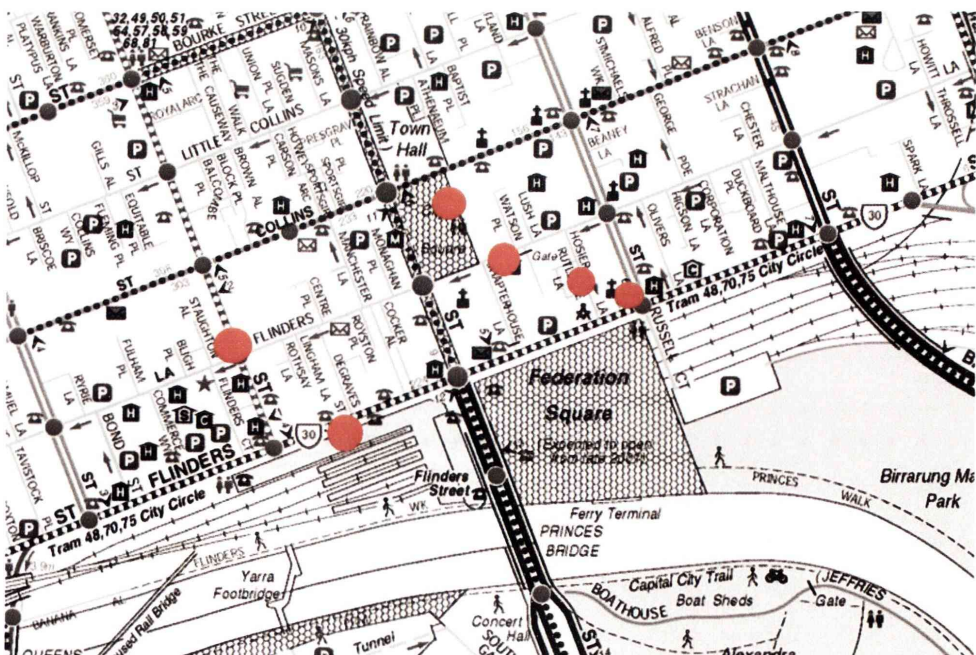


Figure 13. (Caines 2004) location map from Go This Way

The second important model I discovered, appropriated and adapted was that of the 1930s visual language that is known simply as Hobo Symbols (Urbanist 2006) These were a series of hand drawn signs (usually marked in chalk) that itinerant homeless in the depression era United States would use to mark out to one another places to avoid or where shelter, food or help might be available. They became standardized enough to become a language of sorts, a mobile hieroglyphics for the army of homeless on the move.

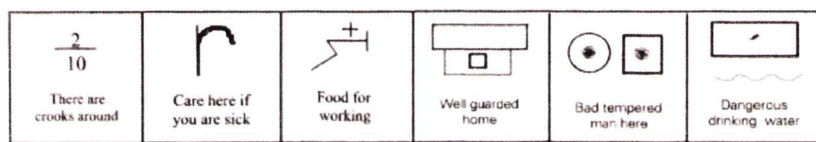


Figure 14. (Weburbanist 2003) depression era symbology

I'd first discovered these ten years earlier when during the advent of wifi technology the practice of roaming the streets and marking unsecured hotspots with chalk (called warchalking) referenced the practice (Net-security 2003) For 'Go This Way' I developed a series of my own signs and used them on the stickers used to identify the story sites to walkers navigating the piece from ACMI.

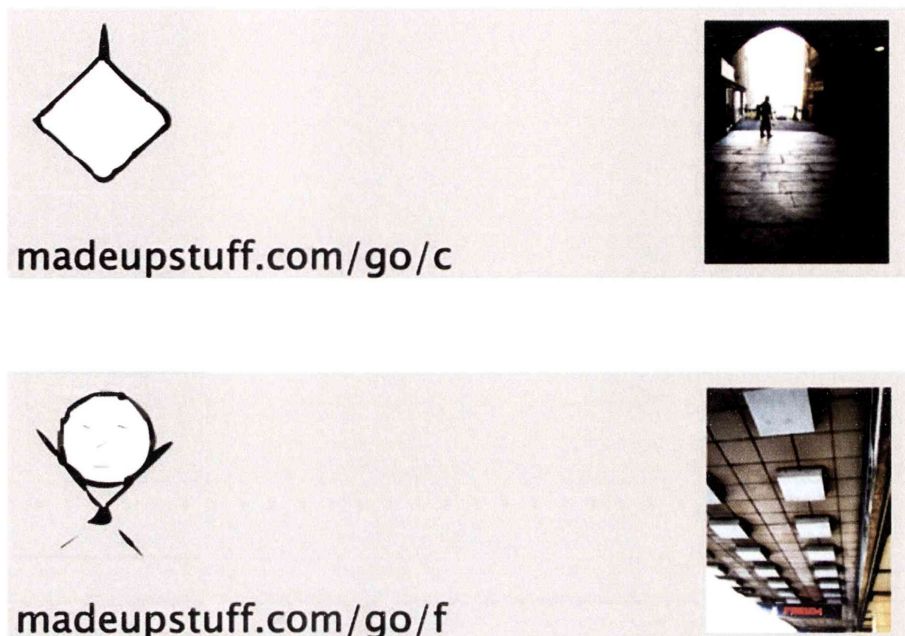


Figure 15. (Caines 2004) outdoor signage from Go This Way

One of the central challenges of the design and writing was riding the boundary between trying to allow a user the freedom to roam the city entering into fictive space of the work and designing the walk tightly enough that users wouldn't get bored or lost. I had originally written twelve story location stops along the walk but after testing with ACMI volunteers I found six struck the right balance between walking and reading taking forty five minutes to do the round trip. During the 'artist talk' weekends held by the gallery I did guided tour versions of the piece where I'd perform a reading of the stories in-situ and include pieces left out of the phone version.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter one of the things I hadn't expected to happen to 'Go This Way' was for the audience to read the work as a true confessional document. But in comments left on the site, in feedback to gallery staff and to me, a significant percentage of them did. This was in spite of the obvious framing of the piece in the exhibition, where apart from going through the process of getting handsets and directions from ACMI there was also the 'trailer' video promoting the work that cycled on all twenty five of the ACMI public screens throughout the

exhibition including the large Federation Square outdoor screen. Obviously in writing style, site design and general conceit, the piece was setup to be read as a set of locational stories masquerading as confessions. The reasons for them often being read as true reports could be speculated as follows.

Firstly there is issue of the technology, the tools themselves. At the time of the exhibition very few people in Australia would have been familiar with smartphones in general and in using the internet on a mobile phone in particular. This general naïveté combined with the audience being unused to consuming fiction on a phone let alone a fiction that pretended not to be a fiction, led to many simply viewing the piece at face value. Secondly there is the intimate nature of the phone itself as a device, a personal device so closely associated with the body and personal messages that lends itself to personal one on one modes of communication exploited in the way the stories were written and presented. Thirdly there is the affect of place and story resonating together to heighten the emotional investment readers would have in the narratives presented to them. Having them invest the physical reality of their surrounds with layers of character and event so that the locations being obviously real also lent the stories a reality they may not have possessed when simply read off a screen in another location.

For me these ‘answers’ simply led to other questions. How did the form and aesthetics of this new type of storytelling work exactly? What about the nature of locative media tools, phones in particular led to certain behaviours and affect. How did these types of narrative modes relate to those poetic story forms I’d explored in video, new media and sound and could they inform each other? I’d begin exploring these new questions firstly through focusing on the nature of the mobile phone as a social and political tool and also as a writing device. As a device for texting rather than talking. At the time I was asking these questions this sort of investigation would sooner or later lead you to one place, the world epicenter of the SMS message, The Philippines. So that is where we went.

3) Thumb Candy

During the middle of the 2000s it didn't take long for anyone reading and researching in the field of mobile phone cultures to come across the extraordinary example of The Philippines. From the mid 1990's till the present day the country has held the title of the World Capital of Texting, (Turrettini 2005) which while as an assertion this is an obviously moving target and impossible to measure definitively, the perception remains. In 2005 telco numbers state that in a country of eighty million where only a third have mobile phones two hundred million texts are sent each day (Turrettini 2005) 2009 numbers put the amount of messages at two billion a day. Part of this deep enshrinement of the SMS message in Pinoy culture has to do with the way mobiles were introduced into the country. Between 1994 and 2000 while the modern GSM mobile was being rolled out in The Philippines telecom companies didn't charge for texts, considering them too cheap to meter and also taking the view that the real usage and revenue would come from voice services. In a country with very few landlines and with most of them unreliable, but excellent wireless coverage even in remote jungle (because of the investment of foreign telcos) cheap GSM handsets spread like wildfire and have transformed many aspects of the society.

Perhaps most famously in 2001, in what became known as a Coup de Text, President Eric Estrada was ousted from power in a broad popular uprising that was organized through the distribution of SMS messages. The uprising culminated in hundreds of thousands of protesters blocking the main freeway into Manila, effectively shutting the capital down until Estrada resigned. The protests and the text techniques that facilitated them came to be known as EDSA after the motorway that was blocked by protestors and both have transformed popular politics in the country and furthered the focus on the humble SMS as a national obsession.

In 2006 I travelled with my co-producer Jes Tyrrell to Manila to research this texting culture and to produce a small online video documentary

project constructed from interviews and other material we would collect there. This project is submitted as part of the suite of works included in this doctorate:

Thumb Candy - <http://chopyourownwood.com/thumbcandy/>



Figure 16. (Caines 2007) screenshot from Thumb Candy site

My intention with Thumb Candy was to try and capture a sense of what was particular to the mobile as a networked writing device in The Philippines that had such far reaching social impacts. And how the knowledge gained in this microcosm might in turn inform the thinking about the aesthetics of location and narrative that are the focus of this thesis and it's collection of creative projects.

Our time in Manila was limited so in the interests of getting a broad picture of texting culture in the country we elected to concentrate on four central interviewees and extensive vox-popping on the streets of the city. Happily for us the people in the parks, boardwalks and public spaces of the city were very open to speaking on camera. Our first formal interviewee was with the anthropologist Raul Pertierra whose book on the roots of the Pinoy SMS phenomenon *Texting Selves* (Pertierra 2002) influenced the

formation of our inquiry more than anything else that had been published up to that point. His situating of texting as an extension of the pre-existing oral culture of the country is an important insight into the local context but also useful in the broader view of intersections of technology and culture.

‘..the mobile and in particular texting is an almost painless way of converting strangers into friends....so if you just dial a random number and say ‘can I be your text-mate’ I’d say that in 90% of cases they would say yes..’ (Pertierra 2006)

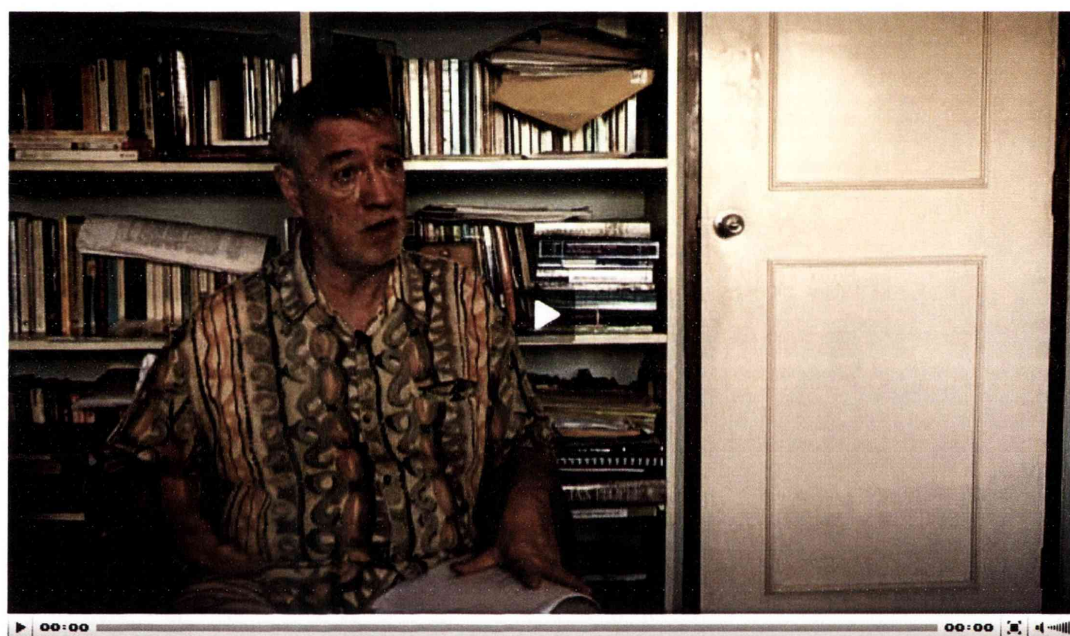


Figure 17. (Caines 2007) Pertierra interview on Thumb Candy site

‘..I think in terms of the The Philippines texting is a technology that fits into a very traditional framework. The Philippines is essentially an oral society, people like to talk all the time about anything.... of the many messages sent daily there will be many that are simply things like ‘good morning’, ‘hello’, things like that...’ (Pertierra 2006)

For Pertierra texting in Pinoy culture was not only a practice with deep roots in traditional oral society but it also enables the extension of small communities into the wider world. In holding family and village groupings together and allowing them to exist while members may be physically

distributed across the country and in the case of Philipino migrant workers, across the world.

As a way of examining the role of the SMS in politics and activism in a post EDSA Philippines we interviewed Trixie Concepcion and Ana Celestial from the political activist group Txtpower. Txtpower is the most prominent of the groups that sprang up in the wake of the EDSA protests with a focus on using the mobile as a tool for rallying and lobbying around political change. One of the central issues that Txtpower is concerned with is keeping wireless charges as low as possible to enable poor Filipinos to be able to access the technology. There have been repeated attempts which continue to the present (Turrettini 2005) to levy a tax on SMS messages because of the extraordinary revenues such a tax would generate.

‘...it only took a more political role during EDSA... during that time the impeachment hearings were being watched by a whole bunch of people. They know very well that Estrada was guilty, there was a certain point there where they refused to open evidence that would show if the President is or is not guilty and that actually sparked anger all over The Philippines. And just by using a simple thing like texting people were able to mobilize and go to EDSA and mass there and they stayed there for 5 days until Estrada was ousted. So that was the first big political use of texting in The Philippines.’ (Concepcion 2006)



Figure 18. (Caines 2007) Concepcion interview on Thumb Candy site

'..our experience with texting is that you can actually be in another country but still text the relevant government official in The Philippines regarding your opinion, regarding your grievances...we get the number from someone inside the congress of the politician and people can actually text in from anywhere straight to that person.' (Concepcion 2006)

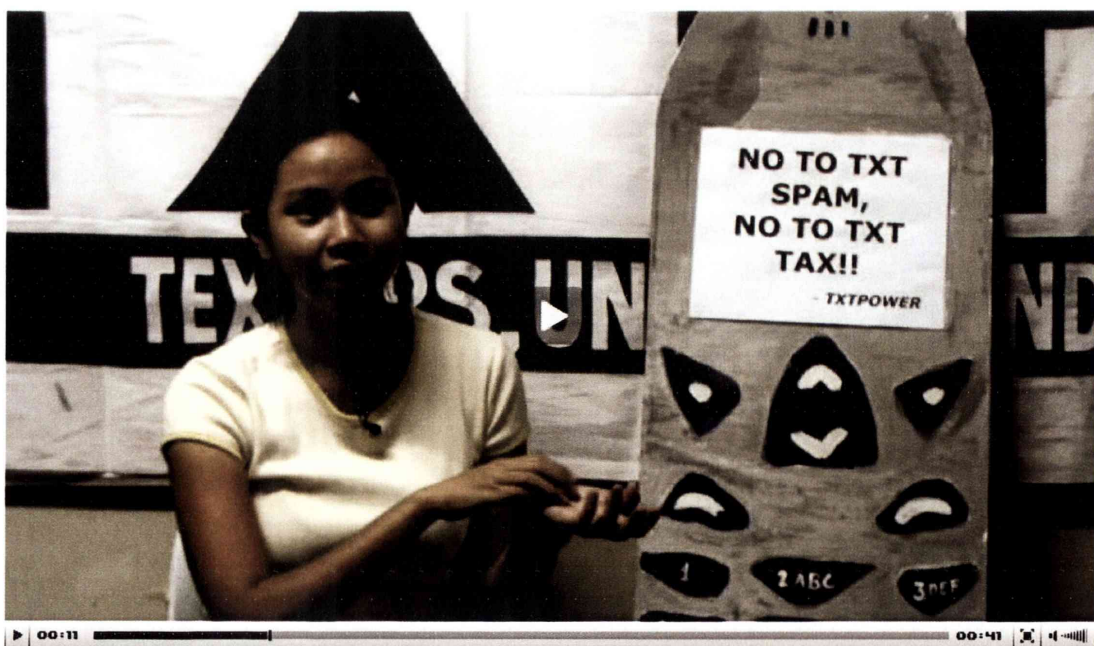


Figure 19. (Caines 2007) Celestial interview on Thumb Candy site

‘..texts propagate not only through your network but through your network’s network...in the University we have different mobilizations opposing budget cuts to education, advocating for greater state subsidy we mobilize the students through large mass text lists we send out on the internet..’ (Celestial 2006)

Concepcion and Celestial highlighted the how deeply texting practices had integrated themselves into local political practices. While we were there the then (and current) President Gloria Arroyo revealed how she often communicated to ministers in her government via text. Concepcion also strengthened what we had heard from Pertierra in discussing how texting enabled the diaspora of Filipino workers overseas to remain part of the body politic as much as it allowed them to remain in conversation with family communities. Her description of the bombarding of politicians phones with activist messages leveraged the intimate personal aspect of mobile technologies to political ends.

At the time of our visit the German media theorist Tilman Baumgartel had been resident in Manila for three years and had begun writing on the particular culture surrounding mobile use in the country. We were very interested to have him as one of our interviewees as he could speak about contrasts in texting cultures between Europe and The Philippines. But also to contribute his thoughts in terms of the impact of texting on societal structures. He had interesting things to say about how phones were being used economically by migrant workers to control poor communities back home. The inflow of cash from migrant workers remains the biggest form of foreign income to the country. ‘Load’ as mentioned in the quote below is mobile phone credit, which as Baumgartel explains has become a de facto currency.

‘...shortly after we came here it became possible to use cell phones to transfer money, to use your ‘load’ to transfer money to other people...it meant that the ‘load’ became a currency in itself .. the way it works is a maid in Hong Kong can transfer 10,000 pesos to their mother, husband,

children and then they can have that paid out in a cash amount... you have to remember that most of these families don't have bank accounts, in the past maids would return with pockets full of cash envelopes for people in the village.. now it's wireless.' (Baumgartel 2006)



Figure 20. (Caines 2007) Baumgartel interview on Thumb Candy site

'...Germans who are not normally known for being outgoing, for some reason they have no problem discussing very private issues in public when they are using the cell phone. Here is the etiquette is such that people, who like to be discreet here in the first place make calls in a very discrete way. And here is where the texting also comes in because no-one can see what you are writing or hear who you are communicating with...' (Baumgartel 2006)

What Baumgartel had to say about the role of phone credit 'load' as currency and therefore how migrant workers were able to control and manage families back in country brought home again the way traditional community structure had both been transformed by and had also expanded into the spaces made possible by the technology. For him the contrasts in the manner of the take up of the technology in The Philippines

compared to Germany in particular spoke to deep seated differences in the culture of speaking and cultural communication itself. Echoing in turn the anecdote told by Pertierra of the bare bones instrumentality of oral communication in Finland in comparison to The Philippines. (Baumgartel 2006)

Our last formal interview was with the Manila artist and director of Green Papaya Gallery, Norberto 'peewee' Roldan. Roldan also works as a TV Producer in Manila and he was able to corroborate what the previous interviewees had said regarding the 'fit' between texting and Filipino culture.

'..I believe the tool itself is very appropriate for Filipinos, being a both a very expressive people, but also having a reserved side....text messaging has worked for Filipinos who always want to be connected with someone, all the time.. and you get the urge to share with someone often who is not there with you at the moment.' (Roldan 2006)

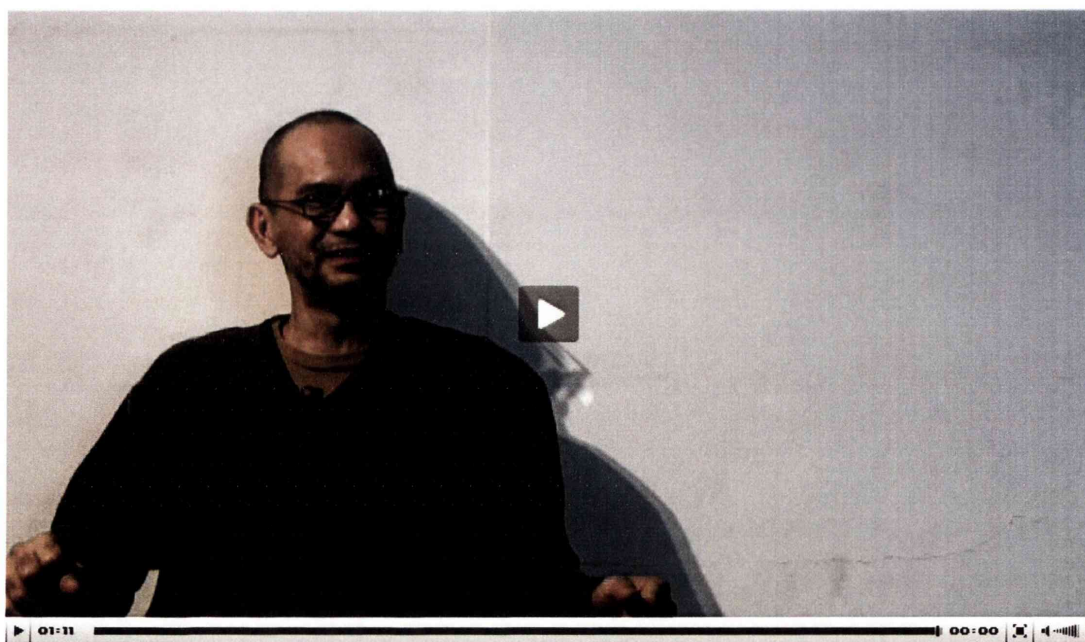


Figure 21. (Caines 2007) Roldan interview on Thumb Candy site

'...I don't think text messaging itself has lost it's magic..it's just that now it is very difficult to get a critical mass because the EDSA revolution mechanism was not able to put in place a government that could change the basic problems of society.' (Roldan 2006)

In sounding this note of pessimism Roldan identified how bound up with the hope of real political change SMS activism in for Filipinos had been and to an extent still was.

Much of the vox pop material that we collected in the public spaces around central Manila reflected especially what Pertierra had said about both the casual nature of most text conversations and the tendency for them to stray into flirting and sexualized banter.

'...*Do you send many text messages?* **Him:** no not many, maybe 20 a day. *Who do you send them to?* **Him:** to her. *What would you do if you lost your phone?* **Her:** I can't live... I would die...' (Rojas 2006)

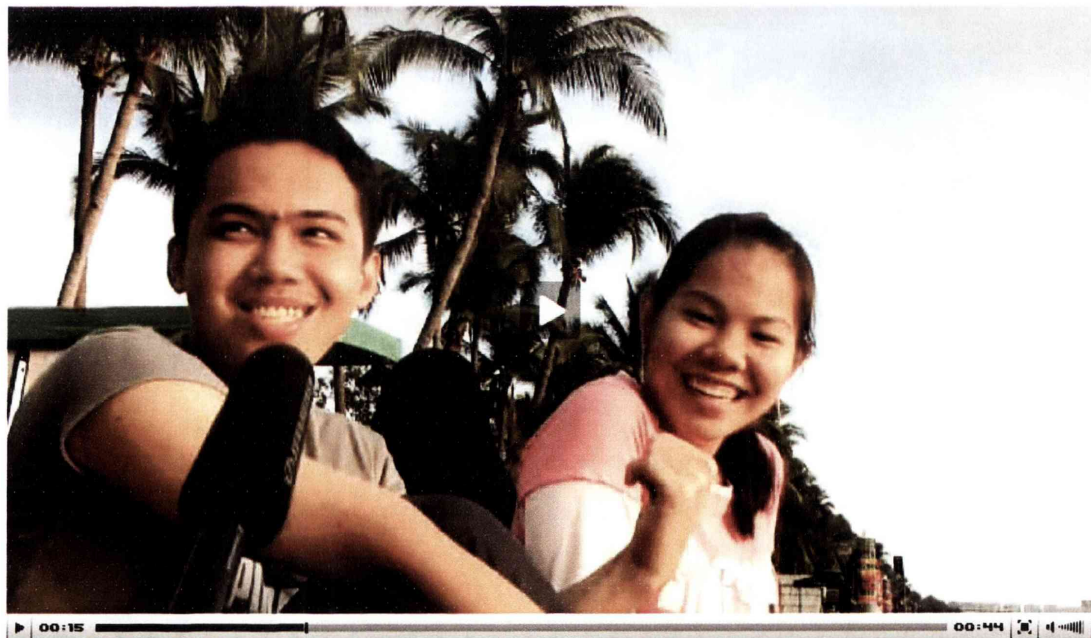


Figure 22. (Caines 2007) voxpop interview on Thumb Candy site

We saw many instances during our visit of the intimate affect of phones that I have remarked on in previous chapters and sections of this thesis.

Only here it was being used much more widely across societal relations to bind couples, communities and families, to cajole public officials and remotely administer family affairs. We also saw repeated evidence of the relationship between mobile phones and place, in the facilitation of political flash mobs to creation of networked place via virtual village networks held together simply by 160 character messages.

4) Chop Your Own Wood

On the evening of Thursday May 11th 2006 a small electrical fault in an electric kettle in the kitchen of the St Barnabas church on Broadway in Sydney ignited a fire which in the space of a few hours completely gutted the 150 year old building. At its height the heat was so intense nearby residents were evacuated from their apartments and poured out into the street where they watched the church burn. (St Barnabas 2010)



Figure 23. (7 news 2006) St Barnabas church on Broadway on fire

The next morning I stood on the footpath outside the church site and gazed at the still smoking shell wondering how the locative documentary

project I'd been researching and planning for the past year could continue. In early 2005 I'd begun working on a project called 'Chop Your Own Wood' which was to be a locative documentary delivered over mobile phones to the large pedestrian audience who walked up and down Broadway every day. St Barnabas was the locus for the project and designed to act as the central point in a wider historical story in the way that ACMI was a central locus for the fictive construct of 'Go This Way' in Melbourne. So with the church gone for the foreseeable future (it remains a shell at time of writing in 2011) I decided to shelve the project, perhaps indefinitely.

What I'd like to do in this section is briefly describe the ideas that I developed in working on the project as they form a crucial piece in the maturation of my ideas around the uses and possible modalities of locative media. While the projected remains uncompleted, the ideas around structure and locative use of historical archive I worked out during the development phase form an important part of the narrative of this thesis and are directly being applied in projects I will describe in the last chapter. Archive imagery, video interviews and research materials relating to 'Chop..' are included in the documentation section of the attached creative work portfolio.

The genesis of the project began a couple of years earlier when the Liverpool Regional Museum (Liverpool-Museum 2004) presented an exhibition about the history of the suburb of Hammondville. Hammondville still exists but is now subsumed into greater Liverpool, it was set up during the 1930s depression by the conservative temperance crusading, charismatic Anglican minister from St Barnabas church, Robert Hammond. The community was intended to act as a back to the land movement that broke the circle of poverty for the inner city urban poor who surrounded the church area during that time. Researching Hammond led me to discovering the more recent 1980s history of the 'conversation' that took place back and forth across Broadway during that decade between the then resident minister Bob Forsyth and the Broadway Hotel directly opposite. Every week Forsyth would post a short pithy religious message on the church billboard facing the street and shortly after the publican

would reply with a message posted in the pub window that looked across to the church. Forsyth, I discovered was resurrecting the practice (and some of the messages) from Hammond who brought the practice from the U.S.A where he had seen it during his temperance tours of the country. The full title of my project 'Chop Your Own Wood, It Will Warm You Twice' was taken by Hammond from the industrialist Henry Ford and exemplified the upright self help attitude that led Hammond to set up Hammondville so that the poor might bootstrap themselves out of the situation they were born into.

'Drink promises you heaven, but gives you hell!' – RB Hammond billboard.

I saw that by utilizing the more recent pub-church 'conversation' as the way in to a locative documentary the church could be used as the focal point for access to historical material that allowed a story to be told about Sydney, about class, the development of the suburbs and the particular social and religious ferment of 1930s Chippendale.

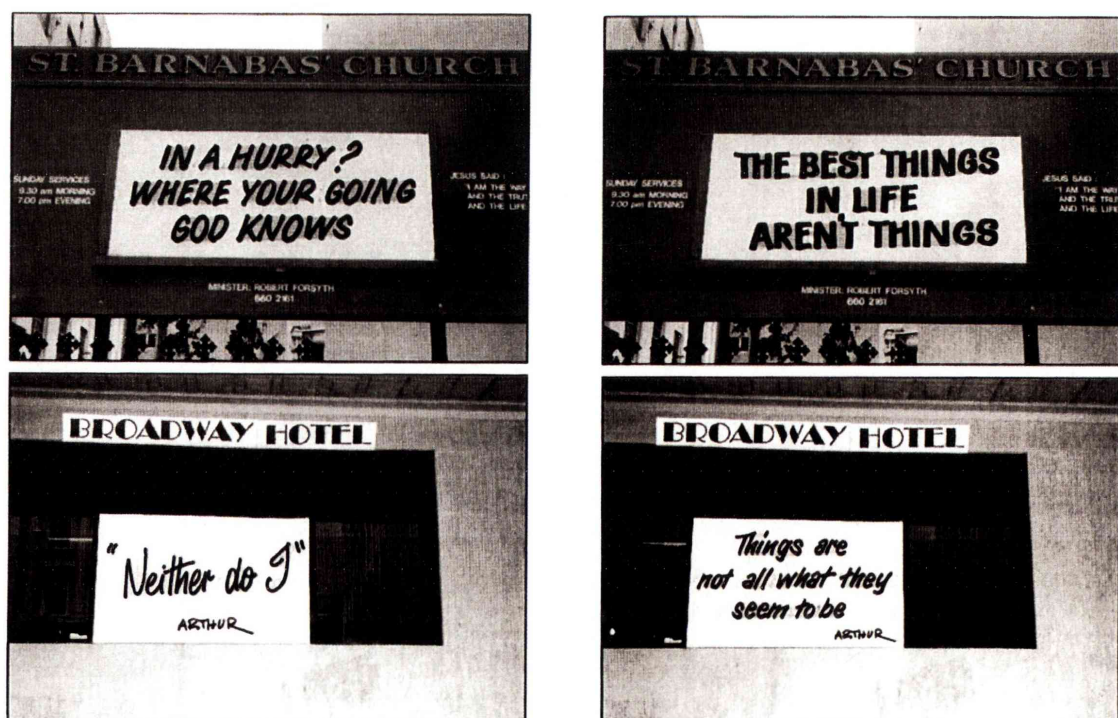


Figure 24. (1992) St Barnabas archive of the signs

Conscious of both allowing the broadest possible audience to access the piece and of providing different layers of content for different devices and appropriate usage modalities I devised a three layered approach. Over the space of a month when the work would be presented the 1980's 'conversation' would be recreated by being sent as SMS messages (both sides) each day to participating audience members. The second layer would be designed for the mobile web and contain historical images, the history of the church and Broadway strip and video interviews with Bob Forsyth (now Bishop of South Sydney) and text. The third layer would be designed for the desktop web and situate the second layer in the broader background of Hammond and the Sydney history surrounding that story.

'...Hammond's influence was very wide in Sydney. When both the church and the state were fumbling with what to do with unemployment during the crisis of the depression he had a whole range of activities, housing, Hammond Hotels he called them...unemployment benefits... and fighting alcohol which he saw as a major cause of working class poverty.' (Forsyth 2006)



Figure 25. (Caines 2006) Forsyth interview

‘When he died in 1946 efforts to maintain his program came to an end, it was just so built around that man. Someone described the church as like something out of Dickens.’ (Forsyth 2006)

Through the process of developing and imagining ‘Chop..’ I came to understand that the practice of intensification of affect through the combination of story and place that I had observed in fiction could also work with documentary, particularly with historical material. To use locative media to augment an imagining of the past was a powerful tool and another way that narrative and locative could interact to create new forms of story. I also came to understand that locative media could make use of a variety of platforms (SMS, mobile web, desktop web) to combine together in one experience. This is an idea I began to explore further in the last two projects I’ll describe in this chapter.

5) **iWall**

During mid 2006 I began work on a collaboration with the architect Steve Hazelletis and the designer Ian Gwilt. The project came to be known as iWall and was funded by the then active Australian Centre For Interaction Design based at Queensland University of Technology as a part of its Suburban Communities stream. Suburban Communities was a grouping of researchers from five universities around the country coming together to devise projects that would explore ways to use network and interaction technologies to facilitate a sense of place and cohesion in newly built suburbs. The project that Hazelletis, Gwilt and I came up with to explore these ideas and test them with audiences was a networked public display screen that functioned as a central point in a particular location.

The central idea behind iWall was that in any particular community location whether that be a residential space, a workplace or a busy public space much of the community activity that occurs is invisible, happening over networks both mobile and traditional fixed networks. iWall was essentially a strategy to make those data flows literally visible via a large public screen in a shared location in shared community space. This screen would act as a public nexus for readily available information relating to the

surrounding community or displayed in the location this information was being generated in or about. Tagged flickr feeds, blog posts, twitter messages could be fed into the display and once the community was aware of the display a feedback loop would begin to occur where community members could post tagged objects knowing they would appear on the screen to be seen by neighbours or co-workers. Through utilizing simple RSS feed technology we designed the system so that it might also display custom community news or marketplace information as well as feeds of network traffic, power, water use and weather data in real time. A core idea in the design of the system was that a community/audience would be able to interact with the screen while standing in front of it and to this end we built SMS and MMS gateways to the system so that anyone with a mobile could in-situ send text and images that would appear onscreen almost immediately. This marriage of the screen and the location especially as facilitated by mobiles was a key part of the project and one of the things we focused on developing further as we went on to build and deploy two public prototypes.



Figure 26. (Caines 2006) iWall in-situ on UTS campus

Technically the iWall consisted of little more than a cheap mac mini computer, projector, screen, a network connection and a small piece of software written in Adobe Flash. During the process of installing the first iteration in a public space in the Design building at the University of Technology, Sydney it became obvious that how successfully the screen was integrated into the environment and into the campus community relied somewhat on the ability to physically interact with the display. The Design building prototype iteration situated (as it was located in UTS) gathered material from online sources of UTS related material. Feeds from student and staff news, items from the university magazine, image feeds from images tagged UTS and a Bluetooth interface that invited passing Bluetooth enabled phone users to upload images from the phone into the system. To this we added (based on user feedback) a live camera feed that greatly enhanced the impact of the display both through making the screen feel a more interactive part of the space and also through simply getting passers by to simply notice it was there when they saw their own image monitored on the screen.



Figure 27. (Caines 2006) iWall in-situ at Customs House

During the second iteration of iWall we installed it in the ground floor of Customs House at Circular Quay where it formed a centerpiece for the Design Week festivities that year. At Customs House we added the SMS/MMS gateway to the system, this meant that we were able to run a promotion partnership with Pol Oxygen design magazine who were doing a Design Week issue asking the question 'What Is Art?' they invited readers and Design Week attendees to send an image in response that would appear on the iWall screen. Technically this worked flawlessly, though because most of the respondents to the Pol Oxygen question encountered the query right in front of the screen we ended up with a lot of mobile phone pics taken on the spot, often of the screen itself.

In terms of what was learnt from the iWall project in relation to my research concerns around the development of locative narrative language and aesthetics, as much was learnt from the failures as the successes. The project failed to find an effective combination of visual design, network services and mode of installation that enabled us to have a significant interaction with either 'communities' the prototypes were installed in. While much was learnt in terms of how to incorporate live networked sources into public displays if there was one central lesson from the process it was that effective public screens needed more sophisticated methods for public interaction to be able to engage. We had partial success with the use of the screen with mobiles but we felt to really be successful we needed a way to develop ways to use physical sensor based technologies to allow people to literally interact with the network in place. After the second iteration we began to experiment with camera and motion sensors that would work in concert with the display to change and manipulate content. Unfortunately the project funding ended and we didn't have the opportunity to try these ideas out in a third iteration but I did develop them further in the last project 'Orbital' I'll discuss in this chapter. From a personal practice perspective, the collaborative element of the process working with architects and designers, gave me different perspectives on the thinking about installation and physical user experience design in particular.

Source files and documentation of the project can be found in the documentation section of the included DVDs.

6) Orbital

During 2005 the visual arts curator from Blacktown Arts Centre Sophia Kouyoumdjian put together the first Western Sydney Arts biennale and called it Western Front. I was asked to contribute something to the show and produced a photographic installation consisting of nine images, the main triptych taken around the central western suburbs area that is the catchment of the gallery. Western Front was intended to be an exploration of the psychogeography of Western Sydney as a mythic zone by artists who either lived in or produced work with a connection to the expansive area.



Figure 28. (Caines 2006) The 8Th Crossing – from Western Front

What I was doing with the photographs I produced for the exhibition was making a piece that inscribed the space of the western suburban sprawl with narrative, monumentalizing its roads, bridges and construction sites with fictive energy. While I had over the years been involved in many cultural projects located in the Western Sydney area, my primary relationship with the region (having grown up in the lower Blue Mountains) was as a space to traverse. The physic space of the region is for me intimately bound up with driving through it or across it, journeys on motorways, highways and ring roads represents in the most literal sense how I know these places and act as a starting point for my illustrations of it's psychogeography.

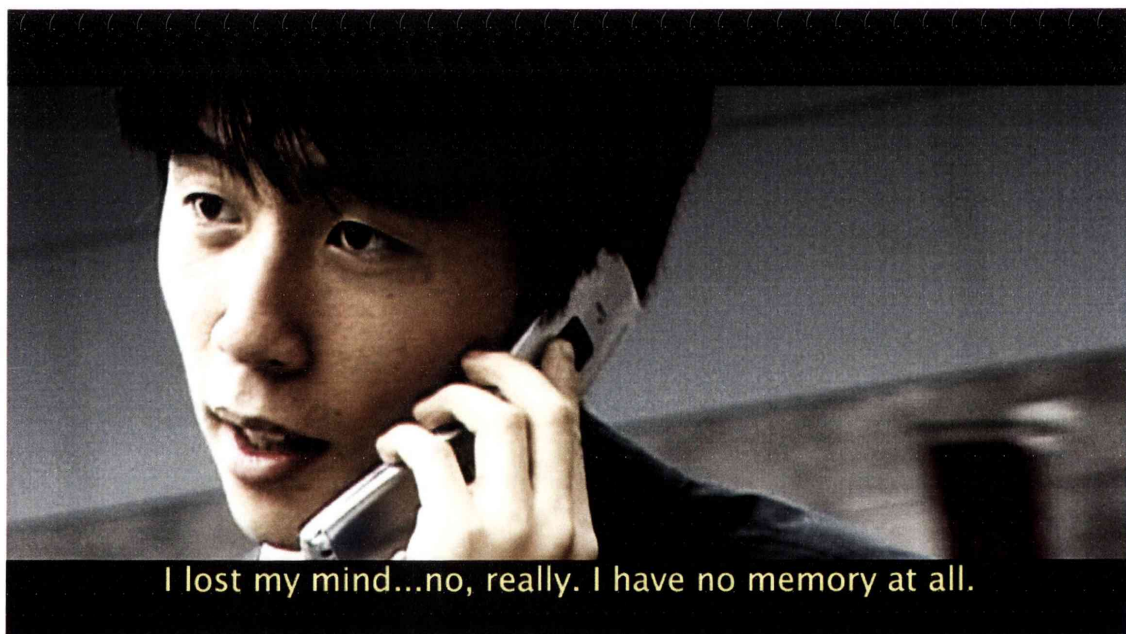


Figure 29. (Caines 2006) Subtitles 2 – from Western Front

In the wake of the exhibition I began discussions with Kouyoumdjian to develop the idea further into a project that focused on different ways of writing in place. On intersections of the visual arts with literature that included graffiti, locative media and other site specific strategies that visual

artists use as locative interventions to create works that make place as an aesthetic technique. This project came to be called Coded (BAC 2010) it was envisaged as a series of workshops, exhibitions and publications (that will continue into 2012) and after long excursions into fundraising and other distractions it eventually began in 2009.

The first official Coded activity was a panel at Blacktown Arts Centre as part of the Sydney Writers Festival discussing the project and in particular the intersections between writing, place and visual arts in the work of the artists involved.



Figure 30. (Adams 2009) Sydney Writers Festival 2009

The panel included Jason Wing, Megan Heyward, Kate Smolynec, myself and was chaired by Arts Centre director John Cheeseman. For my part I outlined some of my trajectory in locative narrative work (some of which is also presented in this thesis) and also spoke about the development of a new work designed as a series of locative audio monologues to be triggered over car stereos while driving on sections of the recently completed Sydney Orbital Freeway network. This piece 'Orbital' sprang directly from the work photographing traffic and freeways done for Western Front and as I began to develop the monologues and work out modes of delivery it occurred to me in light of the work on 'Chop...' and 'iWall' that

the piece could exist out on the roadway and in a gallery space simultaneously.

'Orbital' in the gallery space is an interactive audio installation where gallery visitors walk a floor map of the Sydney Orbital Freeway network and at six points along the map trigger two to three minute soundscape/audio monologues. These monologues represent the rambling inner narratives of drivers at those points in the road. The piece represents psychogeography as a hypnotised travelling fugue state, allowing the territory drivers are moving through at different points on the freeway to be free associated with memories of the road and pasts both personal and collective. This is mobile locative media, still with the personal confessional affect delivered either in the personal shell of the car or via speaker positioned by the ear as a file is triggered on the gallery map. But now motion itself becomes explicitly part of both the subject matter of the work as contained in the monologues and in the mode of delivery either in the imagined walking freeway or the literal driven one.

In the gallery version the floor map is an abstraction of the freeway network map from the eastern distributor out through the M2 toward the long pastoral drive of the M7 and back east on the M5.

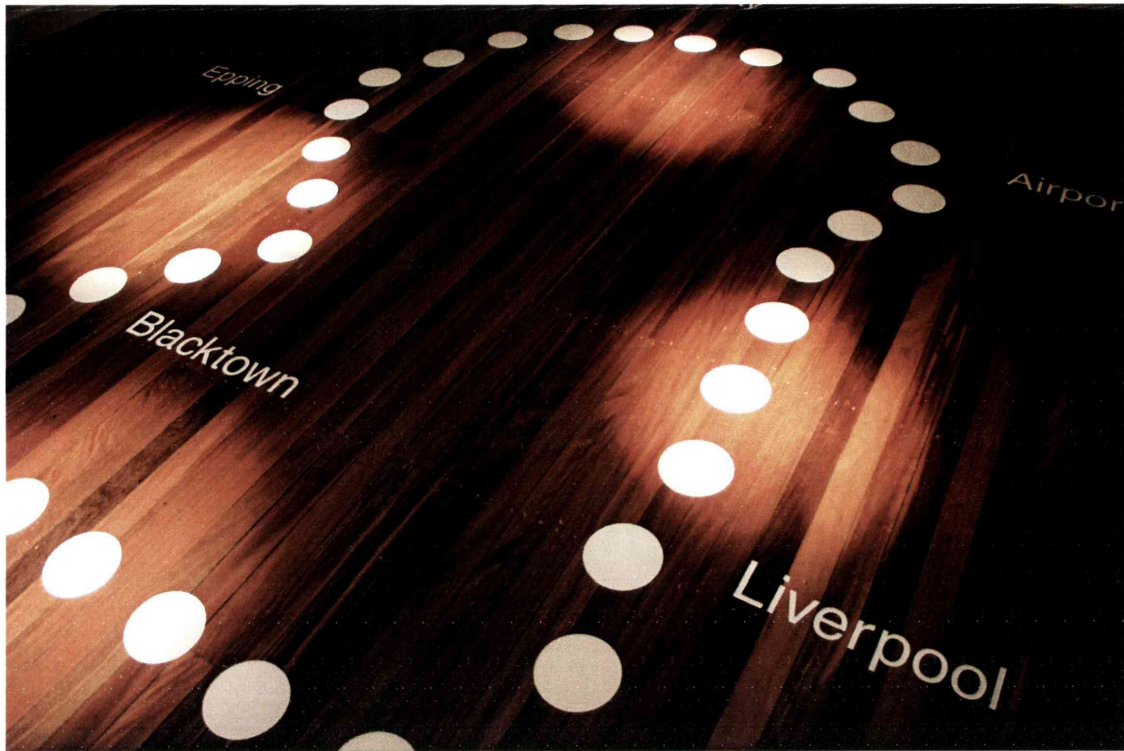


Figure 31. (Caines 2010) Installation view – Orbital

Technically it consists of a mac mini connected to a video camera on the ceiling with the floor map in field of view. The computer is running a piece of software written in Max/MSP that tracks movement in the space and when a gallery visitor walks into one of the lit up regions on the map a monologue is triggered to emerge from the speaker nearest to where they are standing.

'Lou was buried on a sunny day like this. High summer, that long period after Christmas when the days repeat themselves. Baking hot by 9am, stillness in the afternoons, swimming drying off and swimming again. The only time you ever saw people dressed up like that in summer was at night, going to a party or a club. They looked strange in the sunlight, beating down on the suits and dresses, ties, makeup and hairdos. The garden all around, rows of roses like a council park, the wide manicured lawn bordered by cars, half of them with P plates. And in the middle supported by golden side rails suspended over a neat hole in the ground was a gleaming cherrywood coffin.' Audio monologue portion. (Caines 2010)

The version for driving the freeway network runs on an iPhone application called A-GPS which triggers audio files from the ipod music library of the phone when certain preset GPS co-ordinates are reached and when the device is connected to the car stereo, plays the monologue files through the car.



Figure 32. (Caines 2010) iPhone interface – Orbital

Extensive video, image and audio documentation of this installation is included on the DVDs included with this thesis. 'Orbital' was an important step in managing multisite locative work and relates directly to the installation project 'Open Air' currently being developed which I'll discuss in further detail in the last chapter.

Video and Performance Works

In this chapter I discuss the video and performance works produced as part of this doctorate. Of the six performance works, three video pieces and one installation, all but two of these ten are collaborative works. My main collaborator for these pieces in five of the performance pieces, the installation and one of the videos is the artist Jes Tyrrell. We have worked together very fruitfully over this period developing the aesthetic and structural ideas that I'll discuss further in this chapter. I'm very grateful to her for her creative generosity and collaborative spirit as well as to my other collaborators, John Cheesman, Malte Steiner and sound artist Shannon O'Neill who now forms part of The Field audiovisual performance group with Ms Tyrrell and myself.

In the understanding of these pieces stretching between 2004 and 2010 as a narrative of iterative research investigations, the idea of creative collaboration forms a core underpinning. In working through these pieces as a way to develop a narrative language that responds to ideas of location, the central practical research strategy was to bring together different creative forms, media and aesthetic traditions into composite works that were able to bring new artistic forms of knowledge into being through the blending and juxtaposition of these forms. The collaborative acts embodied in many of these pieces develop this process by using the varied different artistic approaches of the practitioners involved as a starting point for creation of new understandings.

I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis that ideas surrounding the concept of Multimodality were a useful way of thinking about the creative

approaches taken as a part of this doctorate. Multimodality is usefully applied in this context not as a way of analyzing the finished works (though this is possible) but as a strategy of creative production where from the outset these pieces are composed using a variety of semiotic codes and these codes are combined, juxtaposed and remixed to generate newer codes. Kress and Van Leeuwen introduce the idea of reading multimodal texts in an integrated fashion.

‘In the analysis of multimodal texts (and any text whose meanings are realized through more than one semiotic code is multimodal) the question arises whether the products of the various codes should be analysed separately or in an integrated way; whether the meanings of the whole should be treated as the sum of the meaning of the parts, or whether the parts should be looked upon as interacting with and affecting one another....We seek to be able to look at the whole page as an integrated text.’ (Kress-Van-Leeuwen 1996)

In these productions my collaborators and I use the combining of these semiotic codes as our field of practice, as our method of creation. Working with the relative weightings of sound art, music, cinematic codes, poetry, architecture and place to create new aesthetic totalities. Another Kress and Van Leeuwen idea, that of salience is useful here, that being the way these semiotic codes are ‘composed’ relative to one another together inside one piece.

‘The viewers of a spatial composition are intuitively able to judge the ‘weight’ of the various elements in a composition, and the greater the weight of an element, the greater its salience.’ (Kress-Van-Leeuwen 1996) pg 212

This idea of the ‘weightings’ of different elements within a multimodal work as a compositional technique is not only at the heart of the pieces described in this chapter but also is a crucial idea in the understanding of audience reception to these works. There is often a ‘push and pull’ in these pieces where different elements (onscreen text, moving image and voice for instance) are set up in parallel creating an intended tension regarding where audience attention should be focused given that audiences search for clues about what they should be concentrating on at any one time. Release from

this tension is achieved by allowing a free-floating engagement where attention wanders from place to place and the interrelation between the elements and a sense of the composition as a whole can be comprehended.

In this way these pieces relate directly to the narrative language and modes of audience interaction described in the outline of the locative works in the previous chapter. Place or setting, media, device and physical motion or presence all command the ambient floating attention of the audience member and combine to create an experience of the piece. The videos, live performance works and installation described in this chapter all relate to ideas of place and location. Either through being actually site specific in the case of the performance at Wat Chedi Luang in Chiang Mai or about imaginary landscapes as in *Sound of Failure* or literally performances of place as in the *Headwater* performance by The Field of the Parramatta River location recordings.

Locative art, while a hybrid form in itself can be most usefully understood in terms of its aesthetic traditions and the ideas and pre-conceptions both practitioners and audiences bring to it as a part of the long history of creative experimentation in the media arts. In particular as part of the lineage of de-centered and interactive work known in the eighties, nineties and early part of the 21st century as new media art. Locative art grows out of this tradition as a sort of physical hypertext using space and place literally to stand in for the screen based navigation typical of hypermedia. New media art as outlined by Manovich (Manovich 2001) has deep roots in the experimental moving image tradition especially in cinema and expanded cinema. It, like locative art after it contains the DNA of a century of creative media experimentation and it is in this way, by manipulating the semiotic and historical codes of locative art via working through its aesthetic and historical underlying forms that the work here creates new knowledge across mediums and new modes of practice.

Documentation of live performances and installation work as well as video pieces in their entirety are included on the accompanying DVD.

Locations and Transience – Supernatural

In his memoir feature article on an addiction with videogames and cocaine (Bissel 2010) the novelist Tom Bissel makes the point that videogames turn narrative into an active experience. Unlike the way narrative scenes are experienced in film, in a complex sandbox game like Grand Theft Auto IV story exists amongst a myriad of other active distractions that actually activate the experience of the story being told. This idea of active participation in creating narrative sense and flow is related to ideas I was exploring in the series of works outlined below. In the experience of locative media an audience must also turn story into an active experience and in doing so they must consider the relative weight of both the media elements and locative setting and motion and construct an aesthetic whole from the experience. This work required of an audience member to do this, I explored in constructing a series of live audiovisual performances and videos most of which focused on or actively used ideas of place or location. These works completed over a six year period are an iterative exploration of the process of constructing a visual, sonic and locative language that worked to hone the idea of creating a framework of active audience reception of a work through an appreciation of competing elements in the one holistic space.



Figure 33. (Caines 2004) performance still

During 2001 while artist in residence at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok I began developing with the curator Gridthiya Gaeweewong the idea of doing locative projections in the city as part of the Bangkok Biennale she was then developing. The idea for these projections in essence was to explore representations of the mythic underbelly of contemporary urban Bangkok and the ways it was woven into otherwise stressed and mediated lives of the city denizens.

For various reasons the Biennale (it became the Bangkok Experimental Film Festival) never eventuated but in 2004 Gridthiya invited me to the Switch Media Arts Festival in Chiang Mai to do a short residency there and somehow realize the piece we had long planned. On arrival I discovered the festival directors had already chosen a location, that of Wat Chedi Luang, a large Buddhist temple and teaching monastery in the middle of town for me to use.

Visiting the site I realized that the only way to produce a site specific work that had any authenticity as a 'fly in' artist was to make the work about the transience of my own visit and that of the visiting tourists around me who flocked to the temple everyday. Happily this approach on a deeper level echoed ideas of impermanence central to Buddhist teaching and in my weekly meetings with the Abbott of the temple we would look at the ghosting video images I was producing and talk about death, re-incarnation and walking spirits.

This piece came to be called 'Supernatural' and it was both my first live AV performance and my first site specific work. In inviting the German sound and installation artist Malte Steiner (who was also in residence at the festival) to produce a sound work that he would perform alongside my visuals I was starting to explore the idea of the presentation of 'parallel' elements that I explore throughout this series of pieces. On the night of the performance student monks built a screen on the front gate of the temple and projecting from trestle tables on the footpath we performed for a small audience of festival attendees and a large audience of passers by who spilled out and blocked traffic while Malte and I played for 90 minutes.



Figure 34. (Heyward 2004) Caines & Steiner

The language developed for this work, though in its early stages in this piece became a template of sorts that I continued to look back to and build upon, even as late as the 2010 'headwater' performance. As I've described in earlier chapters, later in 2004 I also produced my first substantive locative media piece and the dialogue between these forms has been a guiding principle throughout the work produced for this thesis.

Text and Voice Counterpoint – Flight Recorder

Much of the work in video that I've produced since starting to exhibit widely in the early 1990s has been characterized by a complex visual density usually comprised of multiple composited layers inhabiting the same visual plane. In 2005 with the production of *Flight Recorder* I began thinking of making video that was composed of four separate parallel tracks of information, image, text,

voice and sound. The video would be composed and read by a viewer as a set of fluid interrelationships that built throughout in moments of counterpoint.



Figure 35. (Caines 2005) Flight Recorder

I knew that viewers would through habit of cinema viewing attempt at first to keep up with all four tracks at once. I wanted to make this just about possible while also keeping a tension between which parts were meant for attention. To this end I radically simplified the image track using landscape shots of a mountain in Kyoto with a large kanji character carved into it's face (which means large or mountainous). The sound (apart from voice) also was reduced to a slow harmonic drone, both of these techniques had the effect of focusing attention on the voice and text tracks and the relationship between them.

Both of the short narratives related in the voice and text tracks seemed to be remembrances of a short affair or relationship though from different viewpoints or narrated by different characters. The tension between all four of these elements began to take me toward an ideal that I continued to develop where the process of actively working out how the interlocking parts fit together becomes as much part of the piece as any other element. It is in fact

the overriding creative structural idea in the work, with Flight Recorder, the idea of using elements of style and relative perceived 'density' to point audience attention became something that developed that I would refine further in later works.

Imaginary Landscapes – A Place You Can Never Go To

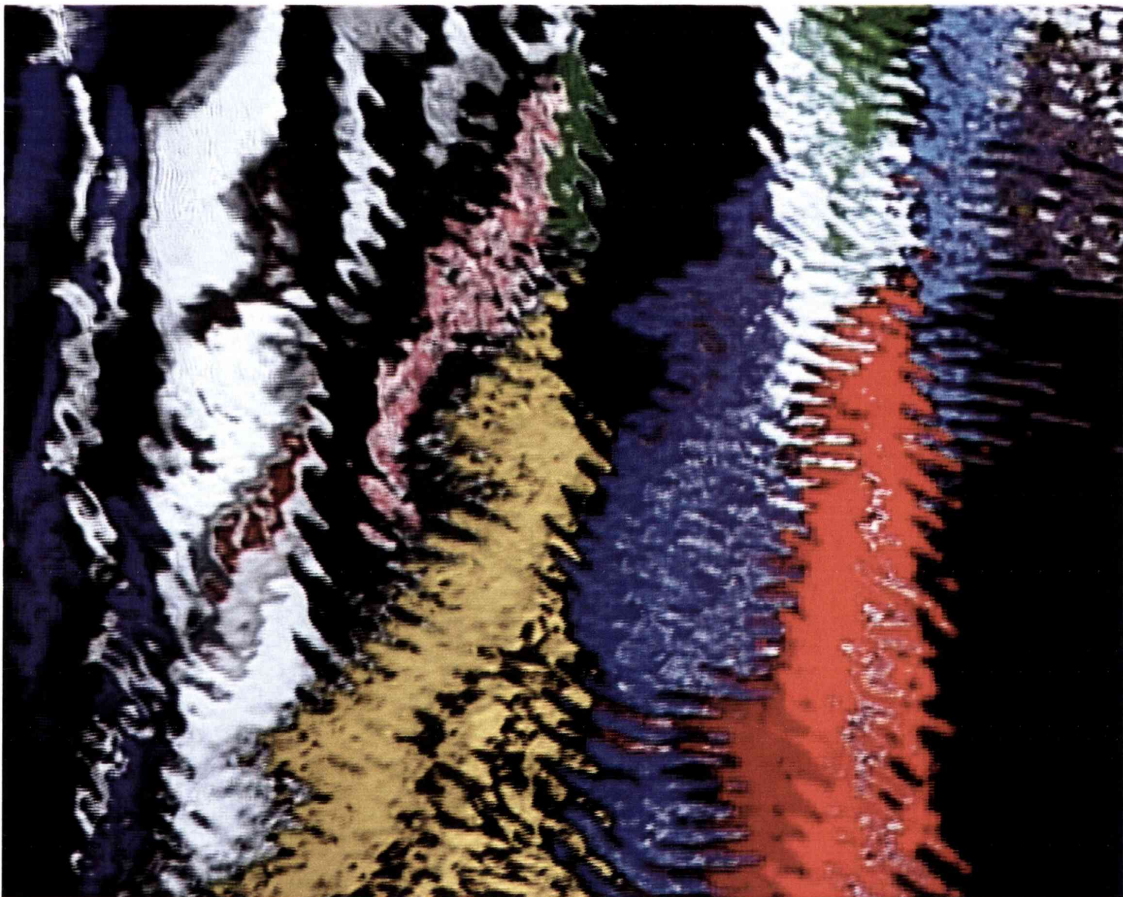


Figure 36. (Caines/Tyrrell 2006) A Place You Can Never Go To

In a radio interview artist musician and turntable theorist Paul Miller (dj spooky) draws a lineage for DJ practice back into conceptual art music.

'I really feel like to me DJing itself these days is like an inheritance of these two guys like John Cage's notion of what he called the 'imaginary landscape.'

It's where he re-corded frequencies of an urban situation and put it to vinyl – back in 1939. That's one of the first turntable channelings, if you want to go like that.' (Amerika 2005)

In early 2006 Jes Tyrell and I devised a live cinema performance based around ideas of travel as a utopian 'no place' a mobile process of longing for an imaginary landscape. It was performed as part of the long running Disorientation experimental sound performance series held then at Sydney University campus and curated by Brooke Olsen. Generated out of a collaborative writing practice, it echoed ideas of 'video writing' (Bellour 1990) and Mark Amerika's idea of '*image écriture* repositioning the movie loop as the primary semantic unit of energy' (Amerika 2005). In 2005/6 when these early performances were done there were few contemporary exemplars for live video performance as anything other than the eye candy visuals that grew out of the dance and rave scene of the 1990s. This heritage had an enormous effect on the design of the tools that were available to use for this type of performance.

The primary interface metaphor was (and continues to be) that of the sampler, in particular the sampler as used in 90s hip hop and dance production as a holder of musical phrases and fragments that could then be triggered in a musical flow to create songs as a series of live or sequenced collaged sample loops. Many software designs used a grid based visual clip triggering interface that was obviously inspired by the famous Akai MPC series of performance samplers that became the central production tool of hip hop in the 1990s.

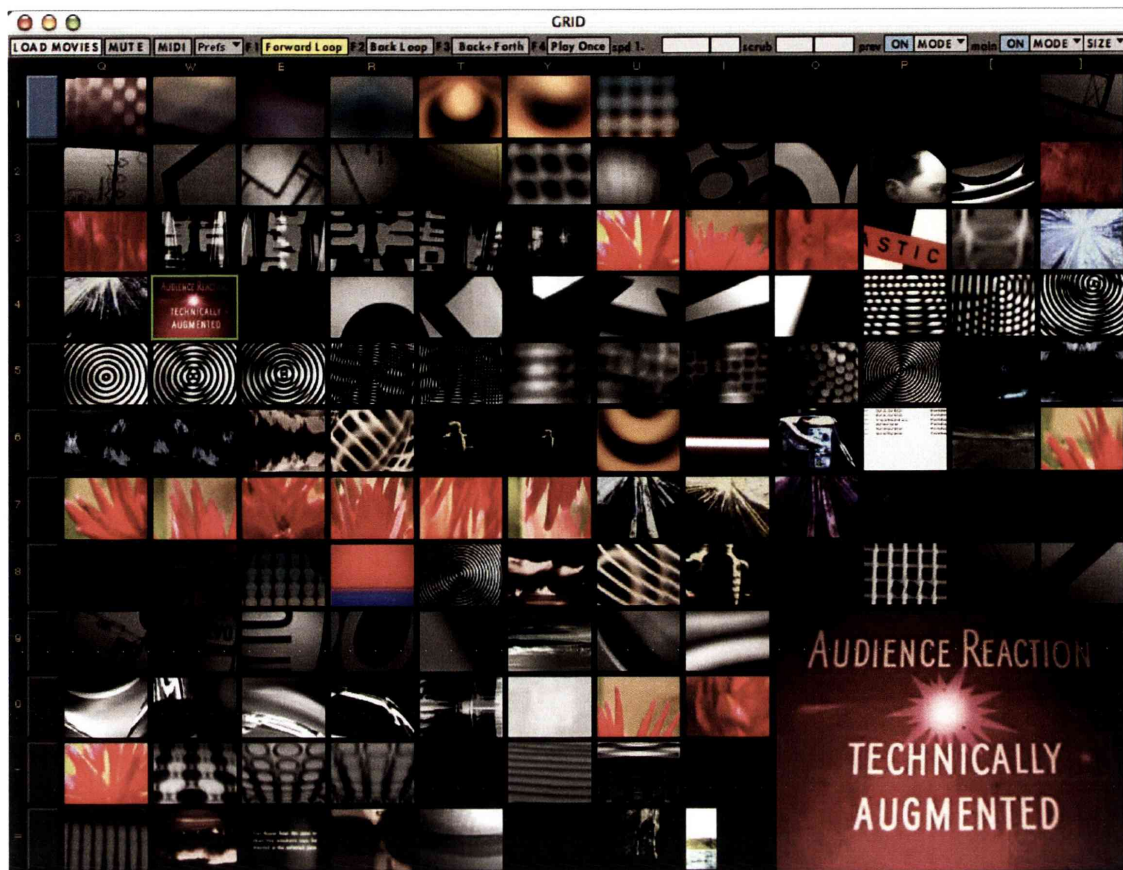


Figure 37. (Vidvox 2003) Grid Pro screenshot

Unquestionably these interface designs influenced how Tyrell and I approached the development of our collaborative style. The loose model was that of musical improvisation, a call and response mode inside larger vaguely defined 'sections' where play with pacing and juxtaposition could happen. Alongside the tension of reading the weighting of parallel media in the performance for the performers and the audience there was also the tension of reading meaning, syntax and cinematic intent. This tension between the performance as a 'played' musical event with all of the attendant aesthetic abstractions of music and the performance as live cinema with the implied language of cinematic meaning was something we began to explore in earnest in developing this piece. We continued to refine and work with this tension over the next few years in the remaining performance pieces I'll describe in the rest of this chapter.

What are they doing down there? – Homepage

Over the course of the 2000's when what came to be known as 'laptop performance' was in it's ascendancy there was an anxiety on the part of audiences about what a laptop performer was actually doing and how it related to what an audience was experiencing. Where in other words was the 'performativity'? There were jokes that a performer hunched over a keyboard making minute mouse movements might easily be doing tax returns or sorting through unanswered email while the 'performance' continued on autopilot.



Figure 38. (Homepage 2007) Carriage Works

When we were asked in 2007 to devise a piece to perform at that years Liquid Architecture Festival by curator Ben Byrne we decided to both up the obvious 'performativity' in this new work and while doing this to take a maximalist approach to the number of parallel elements we were using at once. In doing

this we could make plain that because it was clearly too much to take in at once attention could drift between focusing on elements and appreciating the general gestalt. This work 'Homepage' is an evocation of Manila using mainly footage from the archive of material collected for the 'Thumb Candy' project mentioned in a previous chapter. It consisted of almost continuous live voice (by me) a dense soundtrack using audio elements from the Manila archive and two video screens in parallel one of which also had a ongoing text animation that ran alongside the live voice. In the small book of documenting this performance included with this thesis you can track all of the parallel elements on each following page.

Different Trains – The Sound of Failure

This piece, part of the Sound of Failure Festival curated by Greg Shapely at Factory Theatre in 2008, was all about continual motion – essentially one long twenty minute tracking shot both visually and sonically. In collaborating Tyrrell and I were not strict about the division of creative roles, but in the development of this piece we divided into delineated visual and sound roles, with me on the audio. In the included video documentation you can see us focused more exclusively on separate roles than in other pieces presented here.



Figure 39. (Sound Of Failure 2008) Enmore Theatre

The visual source material was made up of continual movement shots from travel around Sydney, under bridges, from moving cars and trains, along motorized walkways. For my part the sound work for this piece was a creative milestone in the development of my ideas around sound composition for these series of works. I began to work for the first time with the compositional tool Nodal developed by the CMDC centre at Monash University (McCormack 2008) and adapted the idea of parallel streams from the structure of previous performance to layers of midi notes in Nodal that were then forced into particular key signatures and used to drive synths with sound I had shaped to echo the continual motion of the visual source. The sound developed for this piece eventually became the basis of the soundtrack for the 'Flags of Convenience' video piece I'll discuss later in this chapter and the technique became the basis for all of the audio subsequently produced as part of these works up to and including 'Mathematics' from late 2010.

A Series of Fieldworks – The Field

Building on the collaborations between Tyrrell and I and a collaborative performance devised by Shannon O'Neill and myself for the occasion of the launch of the Centre For Media Arts Innovation at UTS in 2008, the three of us decided to form an AV performance 'band' of sorts. The initial purpose for the coming together of this group was to produce a series of pieces under the umbrella of the Memory Flows project. Memory Flows was a collective project that involved fifteen artists working in 2009 and 2010 on two exhibitions and two performances (by The Field) all focused on the relationships between water, memory, location and landscape. I suggested the name The Field for our group for the prosaic reason that we were to treat the video and audio material we collected and performed with as field recordings. The operating notion for The Field was to literally play landscape with all the attendant layers of memory, ecological history and culture.

I'll describe here the three projects The Field did as part of the Memory Flows project in 2009 and 2010, two performance works and one video installation. The first in 2009 was also part of the Sydney leg of that years Liquid Architecture festival, it was performed in the Bon Marche theatre at UTS and streamed live online.



Figure 40. (The Field 2009) Liquid Architecture

As the name of the project and some of the description above may suggest the central idea behind Memory Flows concerned the interrelationship between water and landscape, using water as a metaphor for the layers of memory both public and personal we invest in locations. Part of the process for the collective group of artists working on the project was to meet regularly and discuss these themes and ideas, this resulted in the setting up of a group on the ABC Pool website (ABC Pool producer Sherre Delys was one of the artists) where group members could deposit video, audio, image or text material as notes toward the planned exhibitions. Members of The Field, in the development of our material for the performance were invited to make use of any of this creative commons licensed material to weave into our piece. It was hoped that in this way our work, while composed of many specifically sourced field recordings could also act as a Memory Flows meta work remixing the material produced by other artists in the group alongside our own.

Naturally, The Field has a collaborative dynamic unlike that of any of the participants performing as duos or singly. Perhaps because of the presence of O'Neill who has a long history in improvised musical collectivism with the Splinter Orchestra the group took on a looser more fluid style. It also took on some of the more abstract aesthetic values of music, losing much of the text driven impulse that had characterized many of the pieces Tyrrell and I devised together. Working with multiple screens also became a feature of Field performances, influenced by the playful work of the French group La Cellule d'Intervention *Metamkine* (Metamkine 2008) and the formality of the Teaching and Learning cinema's 'cover versions' of 1970s expanded cinema works (Teach_Learn 2010). Tyrrell's work in The Field in particular, slowly constructing a series of translucent mobile screens during the performance and then moving them in relation to a portable projector provided another focus for an audience.

In 2010 the venue for the final Memory Flows event, was an exhibition and performance at the Armoury Gallery at Sydney Olympic Park on the banks of the Parramatta river. Due to the proximity of the river and it's obvious site specific relation to the themes of the project, also in relation to the personal histories of many of the artists and the industrial/urban history of the waterway itself, this iteration of Memory Flows was very focused on it's location.

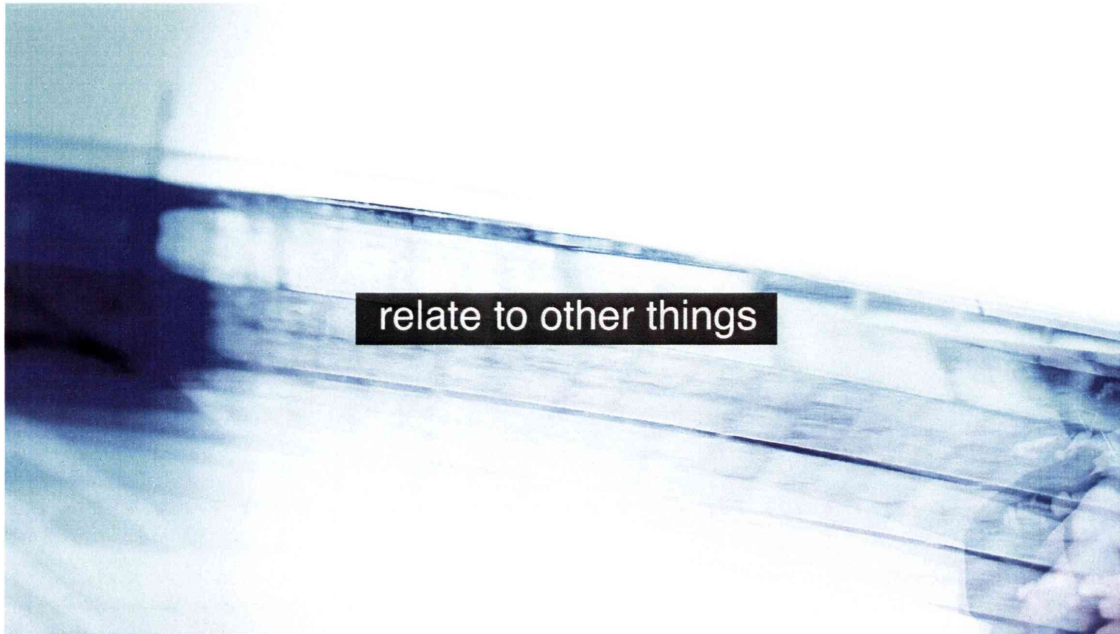


Figure 41. (Headwater 2010) The Armoury

For The Field this meant collecting a large database of video and audio material by travelling up and down the river from the harbour to the weir at Parramatta beyond which no boats could travel. It was these trips that gave the piece we devised its name 'Headwater', and it was also these trips that gave the work its underlying theme of the movement of water through the landscape, mountains, rivers, the sea. It's perhaps because of becoming used to our group dynamic that while the performance roles, 'ingredients' and process remained the same from the 2009 piece - 'Headwater' while just as loose and 'performed' felt more composed, resolved and serene than our previous effort.

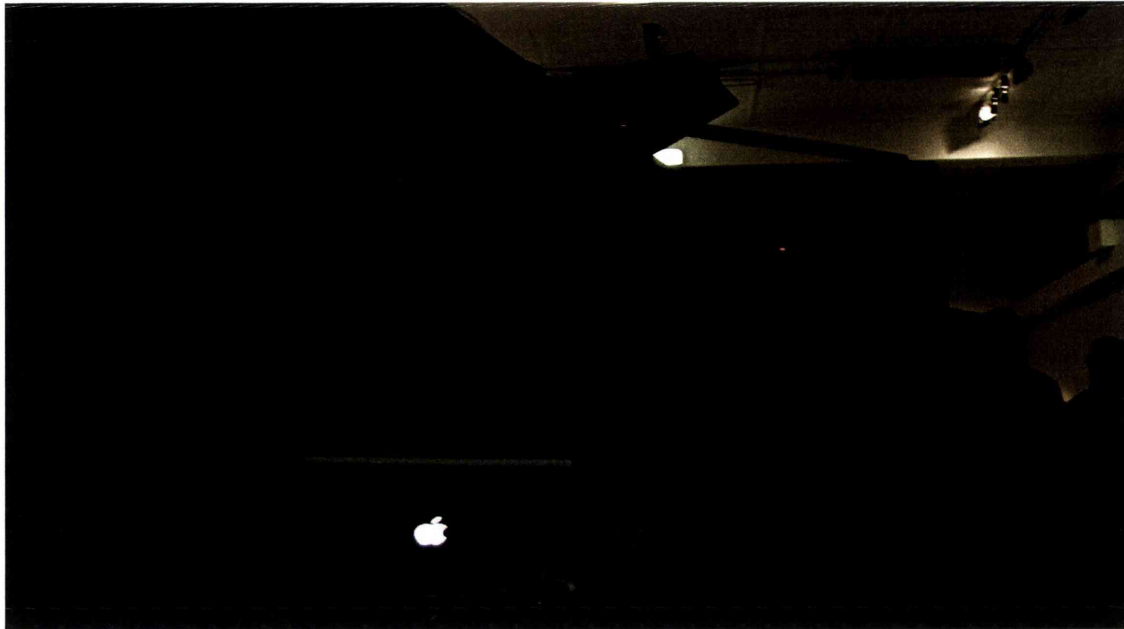


Figure 42. (Headwater 2010) The Armoury

Also as part of the Armoury show we made an interactive video installation that related to the performance piece done on opening night in the space. While simply called 'The Field' and credited to the group it was created by Tyrrell and I while O'Neill worked on another installation included in the show. Utilising video and text material collected and produced for the performance it was like many of our collaborations an exploration of the combination of text and moving image. It presented a slow dreamy tracking shot of the bank of the river not far from where viewers were standing as they watched it played on a projected screen, ghosted and blurred with saturated bleeding colour. As they stepped into the space where it was installed approaching the screen a motion tracking sensor brought up another layer over the moving image. Text in slow fading sentence fragments telling a story of drifting on the river in a trance of heatstroke, sun and light.

Video documentation of the two described performances in their entirety as well as images of the installation and a catalogue of the final exhibition accompany this thesis.

Spatial Narrative in Linear Time – Two Video Works

In speaking about the transformational influence underlying digital tools and technologies are having on cinematic language in his 2010 essay in *Senses of Cinema* journal, Sean Cubitt points to the formal ubiquity of the spatial database at the heart of these the softwares.

‘The grid of the raster display echoes those of the key instruments of our times: databases, spreadsheets and geographical information systems. These are media which convert time - a year of transactions, a student’s career, the movements of populations – into a spatial representation.’ (Cubitt 2010)

In the extraordinary video installation *Ten Thousand Waves* by Isaac Julien (Julien 2010) over twenty two simultaneously playing hanging video screens in a large gallery space form a documentary art narrative about the deaths of Chinese illegal immigrants into the UK and the ghost lives they now lead back in China.



Figure 43. (Julien 2010) – *Ten Thousand Waves*

What is so notable about this work is that it goes beyond the usual abstraction of associative linkage seen in many multiscreen video installations and engages successfully with the task of spatialising what we might still recognize as the poetic documentary essay form. Also in the work of Eija-Liisa Ahtila (Ahtila 2008) and many of the multiscreen video installations of Doug Aitken (Aitken 2007) we see narratives that in the case of these two artists are multiscreen narrative evocations of place. They may contain (Ahtila 2008) 'trace characters' we follow through the work but often the function of these characters through their movements is to demonstrate the spatial relationships represented by the screens and how they are joined in time. It is interesting to reflect on how the fictive spatialised video works of these two artists work less strongly in relating to traditional narrative than the documentary based form of the Julien work. Possibly this can be related to the closeness documentary has traditionally been seen to have to 'information', to empirical data, the raw stuff of databases.



Figure 44. (Ahtila 2007) – The House

In the work of video artist Omer Fast for instance who works with the re-thinking of documentary conventions for installation, multiscreen presentation allows audiences to use the learnt skills of watching/reading documentary to understand his pieces in a gallery context (Fast 2008). Responses between talking heads, recreations, expository sections are all spatialised in relation to one another to allow different readings of the material being screened. An earlier work by Fast '**CNN Concatenated**' (Fast 2002) is pure database video. Using a massive archive of US TV news reports about the war in Iraq and Afghanistan Fast edits together one word snippets to weave a funny and affecting meta-monologue about the dread and unease behind acts of journalism.

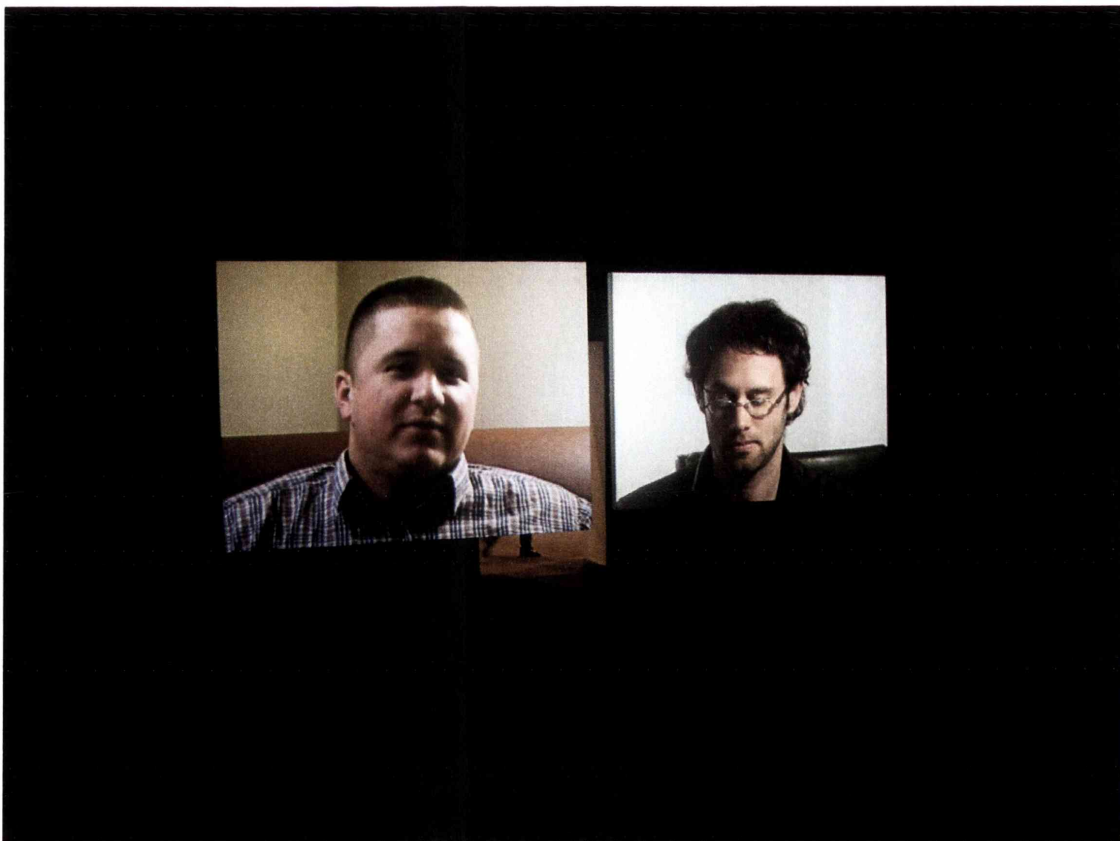


Figure 45. (Fast 2007) The Casting

As Laurie Anderson said paraphrasing William Burroughs 'you join up the pieces, you connect the dots' (Anderson 1984) or to refer again to the Tom Bissel in his video gaming memoir 'You have to appreciate it. *It* does not

come to you.’ (Bissel 2010). In all of these works that might be termed ‘ambient narratives’ the work of the viewer to decode the temporal and spatial relationships anew in every work is a crucial ingredient in both the creative intent of the pieces and the audience reception of them. In the last two single channel video pieces I’ve produced for this thesis and will discuss here, the intention has been to hone, in the context of single screen works, the connection of those dots. To bring the knowledge gained in producing locative and live AV works about the interrelation of parallel elements both narrative and not to bear in the conception and production of short single screen video works. And to have the knowledge gained as a part of that process in turn inform those other mediums and modes of working.

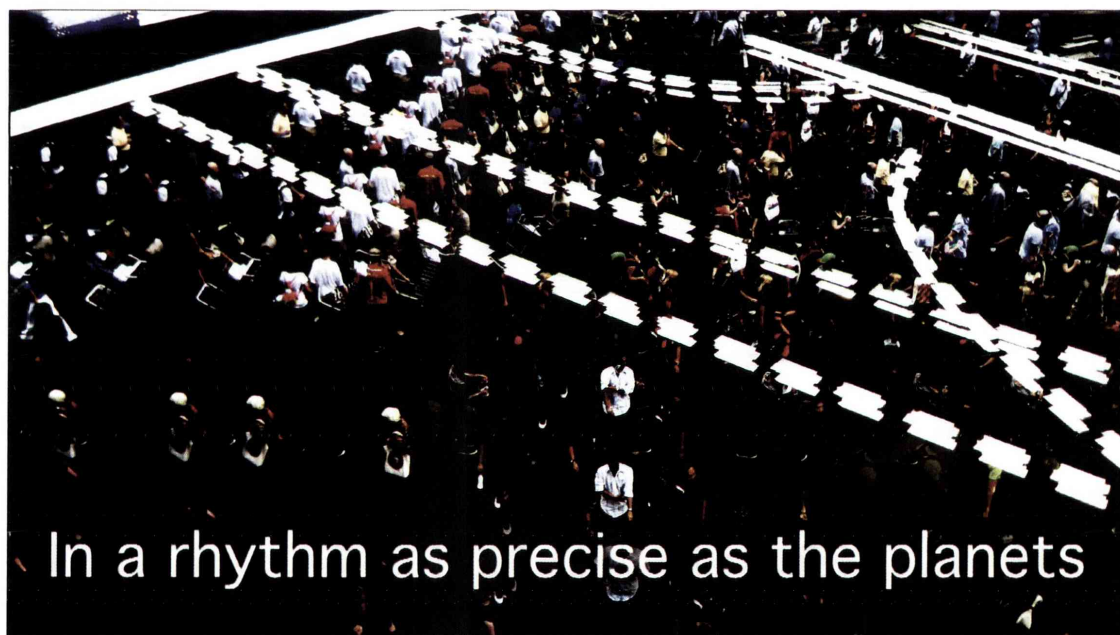


Figure 46. (Caines 2009) Flags of Convenience

‘Flags Of Convenience’ is a collaboration with the poet, curator and gallery director John Cheeseman who wrote a long piece of text at the start of the process working on this piece entirely in response to the title of the work, which was all there was at the time. In response to Cheeseman’s piece I wrote a text to run in parallel to it to be animated onscreen in counterpoint to his words which were recorded being read by him and by Tyrrell into a phone recorder. I decided on this method after it started to become clear that the

video was to be about the navigation of urban space, commuting, the flow of networks above it and the phone sound gave the right quality of 'air'. The rest of the soundtrack, as I mentioned above, came out of the sound I produced for *Sound Of Failure* the previous year and I came upon a final mix for this material while using it in a performance at the launch of *Runway* arts magazine in Fraser St Studios on Broadway. The image track was almost entirely shot as sequences of stills rather than video and came out of material I began to work on developing for the first *Memory Flows* performance in 2009.

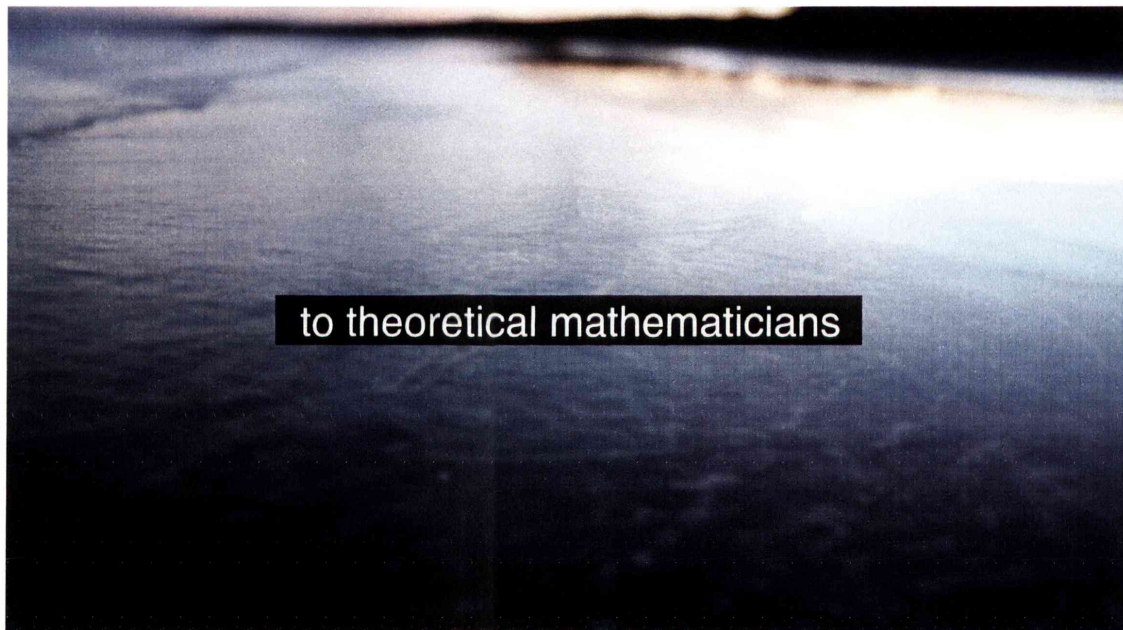


Figure 47. (Caines 2010) *Mathematics*, video still

The production on 'Mathematics' was finished while I was on a residency in Beijing in mid 2010 and it was exhibited at Pickle Space Gallery in the 798 arts precinct there. Much of the original video material was developed as part of the 'Headwater' performance earlier that year. In some ways a full circle return to the techniques of 'Flight Recorder' five years earlier, it also used a slower more minimal approach to both sound and image while the narrative in the onscreen text hypnotise viewers as a reading experience with a slow relentless metronome of sentence fragments. Only this time, the balance and

salient weighting of the elements is far more refined and while being discontinuous, fragmentary and still demanding full engagement, it does so with a holistic grace not quite as present in the previous pieces.

Endings, Reflections, Futures

Artistic creation, after all, is not subject to absolute laws, valid from age to age; since it is related to the more general aim of mastery of the world, it has an infinite number of facets, the vincula that connect man with his vital activity; and even if the path towards knowledge is unending, no step that takes man nearer to a full understanding of the meaning of his existence can be too small to count.

Andrei Tarkovsky (Tarkovsky 1987)

1) The Spatial Turn

What I have concentrated on over the course of this thesis is in investigating a particular practice trajectory in relation to my creative research and I have attempted here to contextualize that research with regard to the aesthetic ideas that relate to it. This work and these ideas however are only a tiny expression of the zeitgeist that the urbanist Edward Soja began describing a decade ago as the Spatial Turn (Soja 2000). In exploring the idea of the importance of cities and spatial thinking in understanding the development of culture he writes about how these ideas have permeated an extraordinarily wide range of fields.

‘...something has been happening in the past 10 years that is leading to a transdisciplinary resurgence of interest in both cities and critical spatial thinking, an almost simultaneous spatial and urban turn that is slowly leading to a major rethinking of canonical ideas in almost every field of endeavor, from archaeology and literary criticism to accounting and ethnography.’ (Soja 2000).

Foucault writing in the late 1960s about heterotopias predicted that the ‘present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space’ (Foucault 1972). It is

these ideas about the social construction of urban space in particular that relate strongly to the aesthetic strategies of practitioners of locative media, especially those interested in developing languages for navigating these spaces through creative intervention. The economist Neil Smith thinking in the late 1980s about the geography of development remarks ‘...the twentieth century has ushered in the discovery of *Deep Space* or at least it’s social construction, and yet it is only as the century draws to a close that this fundamental discovery is becoming apparent...deep space is quintessentially social space; it is physical intent infused with social intent.’ (Smith 1984)

Over the years that the works for this doctorate were being produced a huge upswell in access to locative data, services and technologies was also occurring in the society at large. When ‘Go This Way’ (Caines 2004) was exhibited in 2004 the internet on mobile phones was not something that many of even the most technologically savvy had experienced although a simplified version known as WAP had been available for many years. Smartphones using Windows Mobile and Symbian operating systems were in their earliest iteration., At the time of this writing, the term smartphone has begun to fade from existence such is the widespread ubiquity of the functions this term was once used to represent. GPS chips have now become cheap and widespread moving from the common in car navigation systems to phones and cameras. When the Google Android and Apple iPhone handsets began flooding onto the market in the late 2000s telcos responded by including data allowances with phone plans as a matter of course for the first time. This in combination with the directional and locational capabilities of the handsets themselves has led over the past few years to an explosion of games, applications and services that could broadly be grouped under the heading of locative computing. Technologies such augmented reality which had been restricted to research centres until recently became mainstream with browser services such as Layar (Layar 2011). Geotagging of videos, photos and tweets has become commonplace while social locative services like 4sqr (Foursquare 2011) and the casual sex partner locator Grindr continuing to gain acceptance.

Increasingly over this period we have also seen videogames making more sophisticated use of 3D space (Halo 2006), virtual territory and mapping as navigational and gameplay tropes. The directional orientation mode of the first person shooter that emulates the POV of a user navigating real space has spread beyond shooting games and influenced TV, cinema and advertising design. We have seen many of the design riffs and attendant culture built up in gameplay, leveling up, noobs, extra lives, power boosts, etc, become part of the visual and linguistic language of the culture at large. We are perhaps now beginning to see the start of a process where the visual modes and languages of locational navigation, GPS maps, augmented reality overlays, markers, begin infiltrating our visual culture over the new few years.

For media artists working with emergent technologies there is always a tension between the notions you may have for the creative utilization of these technologies and what these pieces of tech are designed to do. For technology companies, telcos and technology journalists the product cycle that unfolds with its relentless update driven determinism is the narrative that matters. Art practice that works in this arena operates at both a faster and slower pace than that of technological development itself. Faster because in many areas artists are often quicker to see the creative and hidden, latent potentials in new media and networking technologies. Slower, because the challenges in making new creative work that responds to a current social and technological context are not allied to the production cycle of the commercial technical world. They engage with cultural and aesthetic ideas that may reach back millennia, use technologies that may be old and obsolete in new ways, combining and re-combining media, materials and aesthetic philosophies. The intersection of these creative practices with new technologies and their attendant business cycle enmeshes art with the engines of the contemporary world in a way that no other field of art does, in the process producing the some of the most relevant creative work currently being made.

In the remainder of this final chapter I'll reflect further on the research methodology I've constructed over the course of the doctorate and discuss where it now leads. In particular I'll outline work on new locative history

projects and speculate on futures for my ongoing work, new technologies and the field in general.

2) Drawing a Circle

It is striking on reading the thesis component of a wide range of creative doctorates (Nelson 2009) how many of them feel it necessary to re-define and re-justify the practice of creative research in the academy. Throughout the period the works I've described here were produced and this thesis was written there has been a particularly active debate in the creative research community about issues to do with the quantification and weighting of such work in a research context. At first it may appear that the continual rehashing of these issues in the doctoral thesis texts was a simply an expression of the anxiety surrounding these questions.

My experience going through the process myself however has led me to understand that while the ongoing justification of creative practice inside the University is a factor, these arguments are primarily put forward for a different reason. Doctoral candidates are not motivated so much by institutional factors as by the need to find a way to think about defining the parameters of the practice they are undertaking throughout the doctoral process and how they might think about the shape of this practice in research terms. This is a task that varies from practice to practice and even within a practice from project to project. It is materially different every time and hence the need to grapple over and over again with questions of shape and method.

Of course every doctorate needs to be given a shape, fashioned into a story, this one included. Decisions need to be made about what to include and what to leave outside the circle. Even when a practice is as open ended and process based as that which Ranciere in *The Aesthetic Revolution* describes as 'rejecting its partitioning of times and spaces, sites and functions' (Rancière 2009) or as fluid as that which Mark Amerika describes as 'lifestyle practice' (Amerika 2005). There is still the need to decide what to include given that no matter how ambitious, a creative doctorate cannot contain the entire world, though it remains a vital way to think about and investigate the ideas that make up a corner of that world.

In the case of this particular doctoral thesis, the process of conceiving of these works consciously as enquiry, of thinking of them as a body of work with an overall shape has transformed my creative practice at a fundamental level. Firstly this has been through, as I've mentioned in previous chapters, the extension of the *camera stylo* idea of writing in other media. Locative writing, writing through installation, live performance and video.

'In this sense 'creative' writing is always improvisation - that's what makes it creative. The difference between this kind of writing and so-called non-creative writing is that in the former thinking is simultaneous with the moment of composition while the latter is largely a report of thinking that's already been done. Thinking in the moment of composition calls up faculties distinct from those that dominate more logical thought.'

Writes Amerika, quoting Ronald Sukenick in 'Narralogues' (Amerika 2005).

Secondly in the idea of using multimodal composition techniques, playing with the salient weightings of media in parallel and in oppositional tension as a way of allowing new meanings to arise in a creative work. This technique as it has been used here as a way of developing a poetic media arts language related to location and landscape, is also useful as a compositional 'strategy' that I continue to explore in the production of new work. This idea is in some ways a development and distillation of the processes of collage and juxtaposition that I have long used variations of in my video and writing practice in particular. Processes that are historically descended from the modernist visual arts collage tradition and the allied literary cutup school. As described aptly here by William Burroughs in the introduction to the cutup novel '*Third Mind*' he produced with Brion Gysin in the mid 60s.

I've been interested in precisely how word and image get around on very, very complex association lines. I do a lot of exercises in what I call time travel, in taking coordinates, such as what I photographed on the train, what I was thinking about at the time, what I was reading and what I wrote; all of this to see how completely I can project myself back to that one point in time. (Gysin-Burroughs 1965)

As someone with a long established practice in producing film and video work with all its time consuming minutiae and complex post production pathways it is hard to express how freeing the realtime aspects of the AV performances are. Simply at the level of speed, improvisation and 'play', these collaborations have rewired my moving image practice at a basic level. In one sense this is a rediscovery of the possibilities of the moving image that was there at the outset of the form and became a core part of the dream of the modernist aesthetic as expressed here in declarative manifesto mode by Marinetti in *Futurist Cinema*.

'One must free the cinema as an expressive medium in order to make it the ideal instrument of a new art, immensely faster, lighter than all existing arts. We are convinced that only in this way can one reach that poly-expressiveness toward which all the most modern artistic researches are moving.' (Marinetti 1909)

But also in the re-engagement with and extension of expanded cinema ideas developed in the 60s and 70s, the practice points the way forward for moving image work using multiple, site specific, networked and interactive screens. And in doing so allows a reinvigoration of the screen based languages that still dominate our visual discourse.

'This current experimental moving image era physically and conceptually transcends traditional media boundaries and is evolving new cinematic concepts and intertextual languages, providing an imperative to reconsider and review the under-explored *practical* histories of the avant-garde.' (Hatfield 2003)

3) Places In The Past

Many of the key attributes of locative media to do with making use of the resonance of place and the multimodal combination of elements are particularly attractive tools for site specific representations of history. The imaginative act required to immerse oneself in the history of a place while

moving through that location can be usefully 'augmented' with locative media to evoke powerful experiences of the imagined past.

The first project I encountered that attempted to work with this locative affect (and perhaps still the most ambitious and well funded) was the project 'LifePlus' done in the excavated city of Pompei in 2004 (Magenat-Thalmann 2004).



Figure 48. (LifePlus 2004) Virtual Pompei

In a time before AR/GPS capable handsets and network based locative media was a richly viable option, 'LifePlus' made use of full-blown virtual reality headset style augmented reality to populate the empty city of Pompei with its vanished citizenry. The work of MIRA Lab at the University of Geneva, the project abstract describes the piece as... '....an innovative revival of life in ancient fresco paintings and creation of immersive narrative spaces, featuring real scenes with behaved virtual fauna and flora. Ancient Pompeian

paintings are 'brought to life' through 3D animation of their content, superimposed on their real environment.'

In the context of locative history work in a Sydney setting, the 'Razorhurst' project (Franklin 2009) from 2009 by Richard Franklin is notable for a blending of structural gaming ideas with historical content.

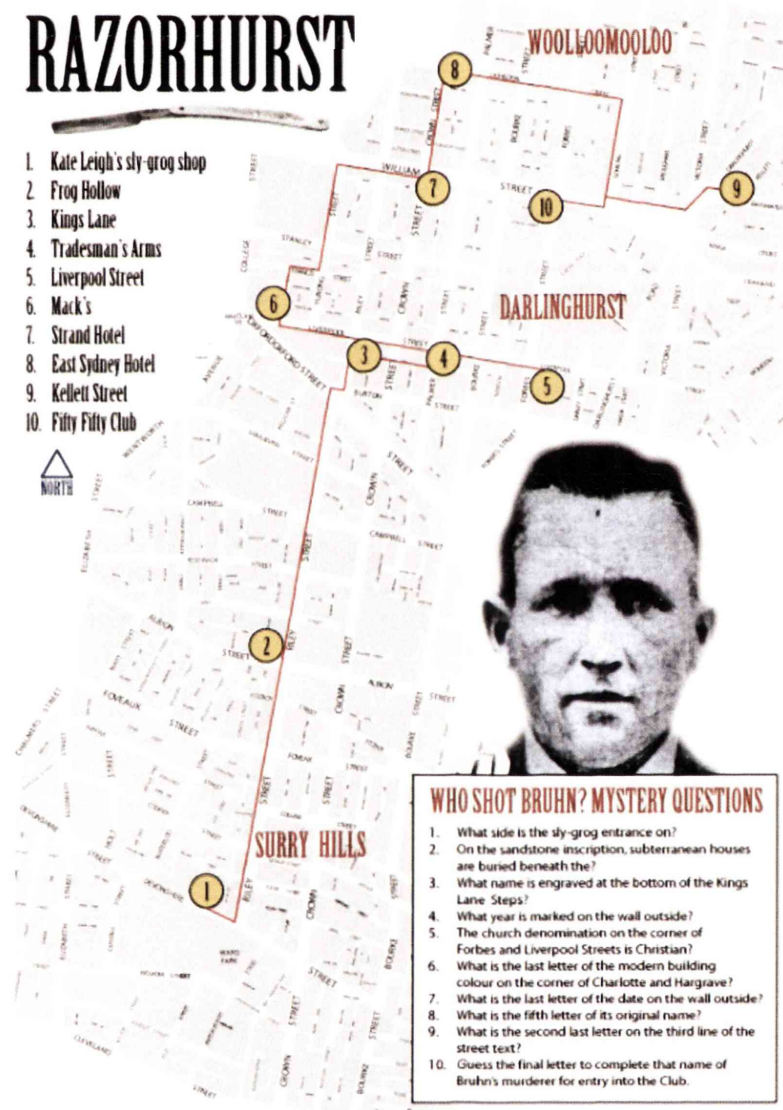


Figure 49. (Fox 2009) Razorhurst navmap

Using handheld windows PDA devices with GPS receivers in 'Razorhurst' and its 2010 successor 'Newtown Project', users walk the streets where the 'history game' is set encountering historical characters and situations (through

text and audio) as a participant. The feeling of walking through a 'field' of the historical past even augmented by quite minimal media is at times palpable.

In 2010 I began working on two projects that utilize the techniques of 'augmented history' and I will briefly outline them here as they flow directly on from the research described earlier in this thesis and demonstrate the continuation and further development of that creative research.

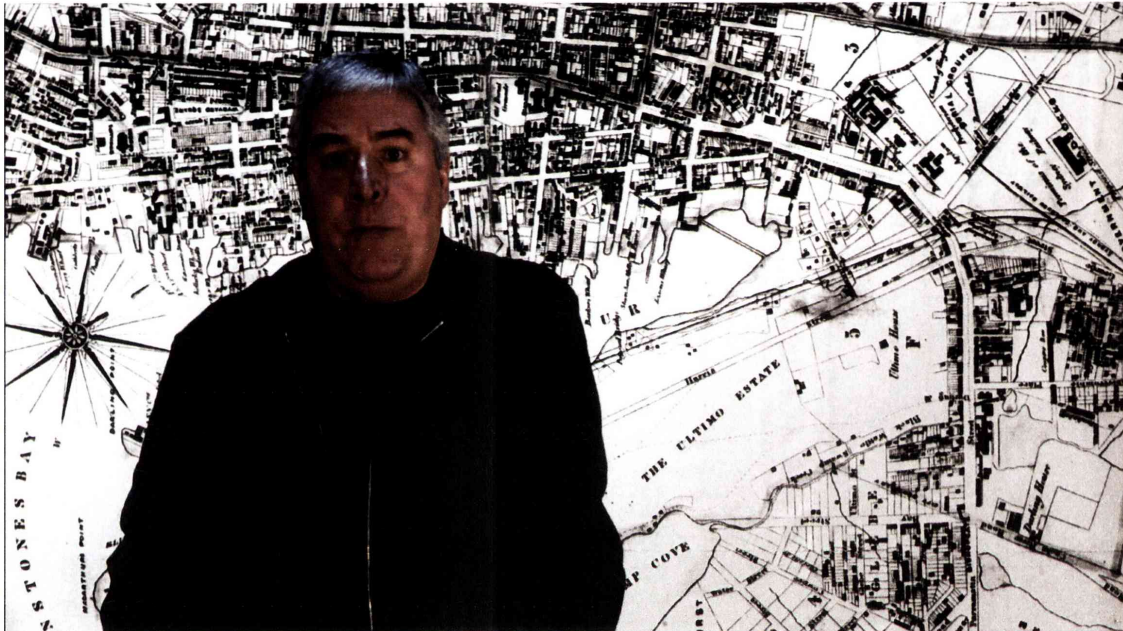


Figure 50. (Caines 2009) Screenshot from The Ultimo

'The Ultimo' is a small scale collaboration with historian Prof Paul Ashton, essentially a walking tour of the Ultimo/ABC/UTS precinct taking in Broadway and parts of Chinatown. Constructed out of archival photos, text, animations and interviews with Ashton it uses his depth of knowledge about the area to fashion a walk that flits between layers of history that permeate that part of the city. Primarily conceived as a small developmental project with Ashton to work through our collaborative process, interface/navigation ideas and technical issues. It uses as it's medium nothing more complex than a digital video file that can be played on any number of PDAs, mp3 players (ipods, etc) and phones. Using stop/start instructions in the video in the manner of a guided headset tour in a gallery, the decision to experiment with this mode of delivery was to do with issues of access. Many of the locative projects I've described

here, both my own and those of others require specific handset technologies with fast network access that limit the audience greatly. The other consideration here was that we knew that we wanted to make a lot of use of video and still at the time of writing the only way to have reliable pristine looking video on demand on a mobile device (especially while mobile) is to store it locally and distribute it to devices via the web or iTunes prior to the user going to the location to begin the walk. We feel these tradeoffs are worth it for quality reasons and the wide access potential and even in the design and stages it is interesting to hear reports of the increased immersion in the space that is felt by users when they have to actively navigate using the real setting in conjunction with photos and maps as opposed to reliance on a GPS chip.

In early 2010 I received an invitation from Mosman Gallery to develop a piece for that municipality that worked in a similar way to the 'Orbital' installation/locative project I did at Blacktown Arts Centre in Western Sydney. In other words, something that worked simultaneously using a locative setting in the local area and also was an installation in the gallery space. After much reading, researching and scouting (AGNSW 1991) I decided on using Little Sirius Cove, the site of Curlew Camp, the artists camp used in the 19th century most notably by Arthur Streeton , Tom Roberts and Frederick McCubbin where a number of defining impressionist images of the harbour were created.



Figure 51. (Mosman Council 2006) Foreshore walk

The appeal of the site and of its historical significance was that the images produced there (and the mythos of their production) became bound up in the nation building fervour that led up to federation so strongly that they came to embody a national (and nationalist) aesthetic.

‘We cannot ... urge too strongly ... how requisite it is that we should as soon as possible fill our National Gallery with representative works of our artists and our nation, its early historical scenes, and pictures of the true rude life that must have and did exist in the early days of the colony.’ The Australian Magazine (Tusque 1886)



Figure 52. (Streeton 1895) Sirius Cove

After a (relatively short) period of being shunned by the colonial art establishment the Curlew paintings along with those produced at Heidelberg were embraced and celebrated as truly national imagery without the pictorial and textural conventions of old Europe produced by earlier artists. This idea of there being a foundational National Visual Aesthetic is what I want to explore in the production of this work. Using some of the techniques of locative history to place the original paintings in the locations they were produced while also alongside those images produce alternate visions that might have produced alternate histories, alternate national stories. These alternate visions and histories will be more fully fleshed out in the installation version of the work in the Mosman Gallery where a small recreation of the path along the cove will trigger a variety of video sequences exploring these ideas. The 'voice' of

these visions and alternate histories will be based on that of the real life Streeton that we know from his letters to fellow artists, half mad with the sublime heatstroked wonder of the surrounding landscape. As illustrated here in a 1891 letter from Streeton to fellow artist McCubbin written from his camp in the lower Blue Mountains.

'I came up to the scratch again and looking down over the vast Emu Plains behold all the sweeping grandeur of a thunder cloud suspended over the plain - the different air currents play round its edges - but the bulk is the same and grows angry and purple in its vast strength which measures miles. - I contemplate - and ejaculate 'Glory, Glory, Glory' -what a sight. Tis like the human race, its crown is beautiful snowy happy like a damsels ivory bosom and all peace and smiles as it curls and rolls gently reclining against the deep azure dome of heaven. Then the other side - underneath, it is a lowering sullen color and lightning like a death - agony leaps downward from its heart, and it moans and thunders and then despairingly sweeps the earth with tears.'

(Streeton 1891)

4) Known Unknowns

It has been remarked by novelist William Gibson and by many in others in regard to the perception of Science Fiction as a speculative form (Gibson 2010), that it is never about the future and always about the present. And as Donald Rumsfeld famously remarked (Guardian 2003) about what we can know of the uncertainty of the present and the future, '..there are known unknowns.. and unknown unknowns'. He was speaking at the time about military intelligence but his koan about the nature of knowing and the limits of knowledge can also be applied to future speculations in this context.

In thinking about future directions both in the creative research narrative described in this thesis and the broader related field I can only extrapolate from present interests and tendencies and tease out where they might lead. It does not seem to be going out on a limb to say that the creative use of

locative media as a form is still in its infancy. This is a form where the most rudimentary of authoring tools, like Seven Scenes (7scenes 2010) are just now starting to appear. This is analogous to screen based new media just as HyperCard (Apple 1987) was released, or the web prior to the first wysiwyg editors starting to appear. It is also a form where there is a very small audience who are familiar enough with locative work to be able to read and appreciate the complexities of new work. This is also true to a large degree even of practitioners in the field, due to the often site specific nature of locative pieces, to the custom hardware they use and the time limited window of exhibitions, many practitioners have not experienced a very broad range of the work of fellow artists. The relative difficulty of documenting these works compounds this problem, locative media at present benefits little from the 'network effect' online distribution can provide.

Given however, the swiftly rising almost tsunami like tide of interest in the locative theoretically, technologically, commercially, creatively and broadly across the culture it is hard to imagine that these things won't change in the near future. The form of just how these changes may happen and what we might gain and lose in the process is where we fall into the category of 'unknown unknowns'. It seems clear from current trends that the locative broadly defined is on the cusp of major integration into the internet, both in terms of authoring tools and services and in integration with social networking trends. There has already been a crude first wave of such locative networking tools as exemplified by 4Sqr (Foursquare 2011) and it only seems a matter of time before something compelling enough for a mass audience happens in this arena. When that occurs in conjunction with even more widespread adoption of mobile broadband and locative aware devices is where things will get interesting and the picture begins to correspondingly get a little fuzzy.

In his book 'Software Takes Command' Lev Manovich makes a counter argument to the oft repeated claim that each successive wave of new media technology offers 'new possibilities to artists'. On the contrary he argues:

'But what if instead of automatically accepting this idea of 'expanding possibilities,' we imagine its opposite? What if new media technologies impact

professional arts in a very different way? Let us explore the thesis that, instead of offering arts new options, each new modern media technology has put further limits on the kinds of activities and strategies for making media that artists can claim as unique.' (Manovich 2008)

His thesis that new mediums can crowd out and supplant earlier ones, reducing creative choice and that commercial interests and broad uptake of new technologies can supercede artist skillsets and erode aesthetic points of difference is compelling. Naturally it begs the question of a future for locative media as an art practice, will it go the way of net art or the cd-rom? Probably in its current form yes, is the best answer I can give to this. What will continue is the development of an ever more sophisticated aesthetic language of locative and augmented space. Continually hybridizing, co-opting and transforming all other digital media and philosophies of movement, place and space that fall into its orbit.

In light of the ideas I've discussed in this thesis and the creative work that accompanies it, I also cannot escape the idea that concepts of landscape, navigation and place are so deeply embedded in our culture that locative media will in one form or another have a rich and complex future. That like the ancient hydra headed ludic impulse that drives gaming, it taps a wellspring so deep in our consciousness that we will continue to explore its forms, aesthetic codes and cultural ramifications until we no longer need to tell each other stories of journey or make maps of where we have been.

Appendix.

The following six photographic prints appended to this thesis are included because they are best represented as physical prints.

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